

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SETTING THE TRANSPACIFIC KITCHEN
TABLE: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF
FOOD IN THE KOREAN AMERICAN
DIASPORA

Jung Min (Kevin) Kim, Doctor of Philosophy,
2023

Dissertation directed by: Professor and Chair, Psyche Williams-Forson,
Department of American Studies

“Setting the Transpacific Kitchen Table: The Cultural Politics of Food in the Korean American Diaspora” is a material culture analysis of key dishes and ingredients of the Korean American diaspora. The study begins in South Korea following the Armistice on July 27, 1953 and follows the movement of Korean people, foods, and ideas to the United States in the decades after the war to the present day with a specific focus on three dishes: *Budae jjigae* (Army Base Stew), *kimchi* (traditional fermented vegetable), and rice. This dissertation unpacks the recipes and some of the meanings of these dishes to understand and contextualize their importance in Korean and Korean American foodways historically and into the present moment. Central to this project is the material “afterlife” of these ingredients and dishes- some introduced by foreign powers, while others are the most Korean of dishes- the lingering impact on how Korean and Korean Americans create place and meaning from these dishes. How do these dishes come to be? How do they come together to become symbolic of the

Korean diasporic experience? In answering these questions, I hope to document and interrogate the range of emotional, cultural, and material responses that *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice have engendered from artists, chefs, mothers, and everyday Koreans and Korean Americans. With the increase in visibility and popularity of Korean foods in the American food lexicon, the aim of this study is to help historicize and contextualize this rise through exploring the complex relationship between Korea and the United States through foodways. In doing so it will interrogate and analyze the “entanglements” of transpacific power and political economies through foodways to understand the dialectic between state power and community resilience and resistance.

SETTING THE TRANSPACIFIC TABLE: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF FOOD
IN THE KOREAN AMERICAN DIASPORA

by

Jung Min (Kevin) Kim

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2023

Advisory Committee:

Professor Psyche Williams-Forsen, Chair
Professor Mary Sies
Professor Nancy Mirabal
Professor Edlie Wong
Professor Janelle Wong

© Copyright by
Jung Min (Kevin) Kim
2023

Preface

This project began years ago when my parents had grits for the first time when I was in high school. I had prepared the classic New Orleans dish of grillades and grits for dinner one day, and as they tasted my cheesy grits, my mother looked at my father and said, “It’s just like the corn porridge we had in elementary school”. This led them to talk about the gruel that they ate as a part of their school lunches. Fast forward to Seoul after graduating college. After ordering a pizza, my American friends wondered why there was corn on their pizza and in their spaghetti. I explained my theory to them as such: “I imagine it was because after the Armistice, the US government flooded the Korean peninsula with cheap American surplus corn. Just a theory.” Wouldn’t that make an interesting project, I thought.

When I started my graduate school career, I came in thinking I was going to focus on my research on the intersections of food and gender in popular culture. But food studies was always in my core academic focus. I thought my dissertation was going to be on the nascent (at least at that time) look at “food porn”. Those glossy images of food and excess, almost pornographic in nature, created to elicit bodily responses.

But I kept coming back to those questions about how Koreans embraced or rejected the influx of American food ingredients. I wanted to connect the dots between the gruel of my parent’s generation, the corn on my pizza in Seoul, and the rise of *kimchi* tacos I was seeing on the menus of TGI Fridays. This was not the

dissertation I thought I was going to write. But here we are. This is the dissertation that I wrote.

Dedication

엄마, 아빠, 은비, 우리 가족 모두 파이팅!

To all my friends and family who were with me through the ups and down, the dips and dives. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Truly.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who helped me get to the finish line. Dr. Psyche Williams-Forsen was there from the beginning of my graduate career as advisor and then as chair of the dissertation committee. I am forever grateful for her mentorship in all aspects of my academic career. Dr. Mary Sies has guided me through my museum scholarship work (an integral part of this project) and through some of the hardest questions of this dissertation, some personal, some scholarly, all important to getting me to where I am. I will forever cherish the carpool rides back to DC with Dr. Nancy Mirabal where we shared important conversations about the project and about life in Washington, DC that were central to the way I approached this project. Dr. Janelle Wong came onboard during the crucial final descent to help land the plane. I will always value her insights on the cultural politics of the Asian American Pacific Islander community and her mentorship in the field of Asian American Studies. What began as encounters in the Tawes office corridor and our discussions about our shared interest in Chinese American immigration history, Dr. Edlie Wong's help towards my project was invaluable. And finally, while she was not able to join us at the end, Dr. Jan Padios for her service and dedication to the project when it began.

I also want to express my deepest gratitude to all the honorary "midwives" that helped birth this project. You have seen me through my best and my worst. I am extremely grateful. To my dearest sibling, Eunbi, who kept me on my toes, asking the hard questions about care, community, and cultural preservation. To all my dear friends who were always there to lend a shoulder to cry on, who cheered me on, but also asked why I wasn't at home finishing up my dissertation. To my partner, Adri, the Cancer who calmed this anxious Gemini during the times when I felt I wasn't enough. To everyone I am forever grateful.

Table of Contents

Preface.....	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Illustrations	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Literature Review.....	8
Theoretical Frameworks	16
Chapter Outline.....	22
Chapter Two: Army Base Stew as Material and <i>Materiel</i>	25
<i>“Have you heard of Piggy Stew?”: The Origins of budae-jjigae</i>	26
<i>“Trash to Treasure” Feast</i>	28
<i>SPAM as Cultural Icon and Culinary Travesty</i>	32
Chapter 3: Glo-cal Kimchi.....	44
<i>“Kimchi Diplomacy”: The Global Kimchi Network</i>	46
<i>Kimchi as Local</i>	50
Chapter 4: The Material and Archival Afterlife of Rice.....	64
<i>“To Koreans Everything is a Crisis”</i>	64
Rice and Trauma at the Smithsonian	66
They Called Him the Asian Gatsby: Koreagate, Rice, and Washington, DC.....	80
Conclusion	92
Glossary	98
Bibliography	99

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Image of <i>budae jjigae</i>	1
Figure 2: Image of a "piggy stew" vendor on the streets of Seoul	27
Figure 3: <i>BooDaeChigae</i> Installation	38
Figure 4: Patrice Cunningham and Hong Cunningham Making Kimchi	57
Figure 5: Kimchi containers for sale at Lotte Plaza Market	61
Figure 6: <i>Kimjang</i> party with author and sibling	63
Figure 7: <i>Gamasot</i> pot at the National Museum of American History	69
Figure 8: Kurdish rice pot at the Nationam Museum of American History	71
Figure 9: Flour sack that contained surplus American flour	83
Figure 10: Workshop for mothers on cooking with American flour	84
Figure 11: Recipe sent from the Seoul office of the International Cooperation Administration (ICA).....	86

List of Abbreviations

- UNKRA- United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency
- ICA- International Cooperation Administration
- USAID- United States Agency for International Development
- DMV- District of Columbia Maryland and Virginia
- USDA- United States Department of Agriculture
- PL 480- Public Law 480
- ROK- Republic of Korea (South Korea)
- DPRK- Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

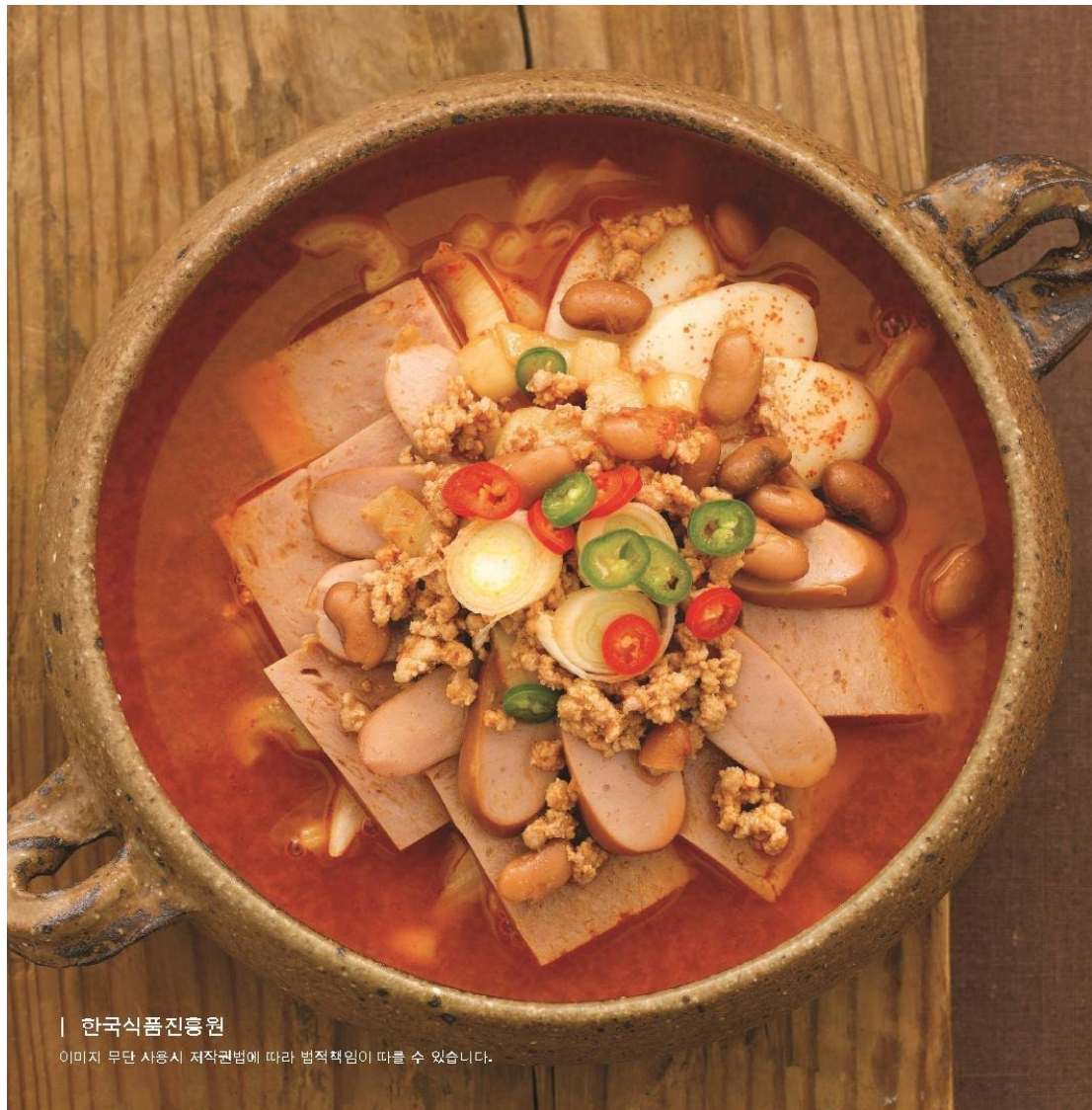


Figure 1: Image of budae jjigae (Korean for “army base stew”). Photo Credit: National Folk Museum of Korea, Seoul, South Korea.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is *that* smell? It’s pungent. Wow. I can honestly say that this is the last thing in the world I want to eat.

- Anderson Cooper, *CNN*, 2015¹

Why are we eating that junk food, we only ate that during the *mot-saldeon sijeol*

- Mama Kim

¹ “Anthony Bourdain Cooks Korean Food for Anderson Cooper,” (CNN, Youtube, April 24, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1IUZljoNk>.

The quotations above are pulled from two vignettes centered on the same dish, *budae jjigae* or army base stew in Korean, an amalgam of instant noodles, *kimchi*, and Spam. The first is from a promotional video for *CNN* where chef and television personality Anthony Bourdain prepared *budae jjigae* for Anderson Cooper. *Budae jjigae*, which translates loosely in the army base stew in Korean, is a stew usually made with ramen noodles, Spam, *kimchi*, assorted vegetables, and sometimes topped with cheese and baked beans. Its roots date back to the Korean War (1950-1953), with the ingredients a mix of traditional Korean ingredients with ingredients scavenged from American military rations. And as Bourdain layered slices of SPAM, hot dogs, and onion, he opened a jar of *kimchi*, to which Cooper winced, commenting on the pungent aromas and complaining to Bourdain on why he was cooking such a “freaky” dish. The second vignette, a scene from my own kitchen, occurred when my father cuts up sausage and Spam into a boiling pot of *budae jjigae*. My mother winces at the sight of the nitrated meats. “We only ate that during the *mot-saldeon sijeol*,” she says.² That particular phrase has a lot of salience to South Koreans of my mother’s generation.³ Directly translated it means “season when everything was dead”, referring to the period in South Korean history when a country decimated by war, ruled by a line of US-backed autocratic

² *Mot-Salden sijeol* (못살던 시절) directly translates into the “the season when there was no life” and is a common phrase used by Koreans who survived the Korean War and the period of post-war development when poverty and food scarcity was commonplace.

³ This dissertation focuses on the cultural politics of foods with Koreans and Korean Americans from South Korea. While it is important to note in the years before, during, and immediately after Armistice and the imposition of the border between North and South at the 38th parallel line, there was much movement between the North and South, this project will focus on foods and recipes from the South Korean experience.

dictators, did what it could to survive. Here are two vignettes of one dish, both producing a sense of dread. One is of disgust. The other of a past history that many wished to forget.

“Setting the Transpacific Kitchen Table: The Cultural Politics of Food in the Korean American Diaspora” is a material culture analysis of key dishes and ingredients of the Korean American diaspora. The study begins in South Korea following the Armistice on July 27, 1953 and follows the movement of Korean people, foods, and ideas to the United States in the decades after the war to the present day with a specific focus on three dishes: *Budae jjigae* (Army Base Stew), *kimchi* (traditional fermented vegetables), and rice. This dissertation unpacks the recipes and some of the meanings associated with these dishes to understand and contextualize their importance in Korean and Korean American foodways historically and into the present moment.

Central to this project is the material “afterlife” of these ingredients and dishes--some were introduced by foreign powers, while others are typically seen as traditionally Korean dishes. That is to say, there is a lingering political and cultural impact on how Korean and Korean Americans create place and meaning from food. An additional question that is explored is how have these dishes come together to become symbolic of Korean diasporic experiences? In answering these questions, this study documents and interrogates the range of emotional, cultural, and material responses of *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice. And I do this, by listening to the voices of artists, chefs, mothers, and everyday Koreans and Korean Americans through conducting and listening to oral history interviews.

With the increase in visibility and popularity of Korean foods in the American food lexicon, this study historicizes and contextualizes the rise of the popularity of Korean food in the America by exploring the complex relationship between Korea and the United States through food culture. This study builds from what Asian American scholars Y  n L   Espiritu, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama refer to as the “transpacific entanglements” of U.S. empire and militarism in Asia. These geopolitical, military, and epistemological “entanglements” between the United States, Asia, and the Pacific are what they consider to be “historical and ongoing settler logics of invasion, removal, and seizure that continuously articulate with other forms of appropriation and subjugation”.⁴ This “settler logic” that L   Espiritu, Lowe, and Yoneyama present in their works will be extended in this project to include the ways in which US military presence and the globalized networks of trade and commerce between Korea and the United States influenced Korean and Korean American food culture, specifically through the introduction, integration, and for some, rejection of “western” foods (such as Spam) into the Korean culinary lexicon.

This project uses *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice as both material and *materiel* for disentangling the history of invasion, removal, and seizure both on the Korean peninsula and the Korean American experience.⁵ In doing so, I argue that these recipes will become a kind of archive, one that is living and breathing. But as I will lay out in the coming chapters this archive of recipes is a “messy” space. Scholars

⁴Y  n L   Espiritu, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama, “Transpacific Entanglements,” in *Flashpoints for Asian American Studies*, ed. Viet Thanh Nguyen and Cathy J. Schlund-Vials (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 175.

⁵ To clarify the term *materiel* emphasized refers to supplies and equipment processed by a military supply chain. In this project it is meant to symbolize the larger networks of logistics and supply chain of the United States military during and after the conflict in Korea.

such as Martin Manalansan and Elizabeth Englehardt have referred to ways in which the concept of “messiness” can be applied to food in ways that reveal how people reorganize their identities, lives, and spaces within and outside of normative spaces.⁶ Englehardt, for example, in her exploration of Southern cookbooks and curb markets notes how a “messy” writer might tackle the stories of gender and Southern food culture:

Rather than tell a single story, rather than draw a final conclusion, the mess writing here explores the disorderly, collective, and communal spaces of cookbooks and curb markets. We let them be wild, be what they were or what they might have been; this chapter dwells less on proof and more on possibility, acknowledging that messes are more than their individual parts.⁷

Ultimately in thinking of these recipes set on the transpacific table as a “messy” archive of affect, taste, and memory, this project discusses how the messy chaotic nature of migration has influenced the ways that food can complicate the ways in which to be Korean.

“Setting the Transpacific Table” suggests that food is inherently messy because it is directly and intimately tied to historical memory, movement, and in a case like *budae jjigae*, a literal “mess.” The dish is, after all, has its roots in a stew composed of ingredients scavenged from the trash can. It has also become a near mythical symbol for the reconstruction of Korea after the Korean War, a dish that has come to be a metaphor for the survival of the Korean spirit against all odds by its

⁶ Martin F Manalansan IV, “The ‘Stuff’ of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives,” *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (October 2014): 94–107, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2703742>; Elizabeth S. D. (Elizabeth Sanders Delwiche) Englehardt, *A Mess of Green: Southern Gender and Southern Food* (Athens, Ga. : University of Georgia Press, 2011).

⁷ Englehardt, *A Mess of Greens*, 167.

champions, but also a marker of pain, loss, and trauma to those like my mother who lived through the “season that had no life”.

In the end, this project is about revering the process, as muddled and chaotic as it may be, that informs a unique Korean diasporic identity borne out of the foods and recipes that come from memory, movement/migration, and mess. This “messy” process speaks to the production, cultivation, preparation, service, and disposal of ingredients that come together to make *kimchi* and *budae jjigae*, as well as to explain the importance of rice within the Korean and Korean American experience.

An important part of this process also means engaging with the Korean philosophy of *han* that informs Korean diasporic identity. As Elaine Kim explained in her now iconic essay, “Home is Where the *Han* Is,” the concept of refers to “the sorrow and anger that grow from the accumulated experiences of oppression.”⁸ *Han* is both felt and known in Korean culture, but is not easily translatable in the US context inasmuch it has not direct English cognate.⁹ As Kim goes on to argue, people of the Korean American diaspora carry this *han* with them wherever they go because the history of colonial conquest and oppression is layered in their flesh and “smuggled in with our baggage.”¹⁰ Kim’s use of *han* as a mode of explaining the traumas of migration and hunger can be an effective way of thinking about the topic

⁸Elaine H. Kim, “Home Is Where the Han Is: A Korean American Perspective on the Los Angeles Upheavals,” *Social Justice* (Social Justice/Global Options, n.d.), <https://doi.org/10.2307/29766728>.

⁹ While the philosophy of *han* might be Korean in context, it is important to note that marginalized communities throughout the world have come to understand the meaning of *han* in their own experiences. The notion, for example, of persevering through trauma and using trauma as a source of strength can be understood in the traumas born out of enslavement or genocide. The lasting impacts of these traumas and the resistance and resilience borne out of these experiences is a continuing part of the American experience.

¹⁰ Kim, 2.

as it touches on the material world. This project's use of *han* as an analytic in food and material culture is particularly important to explain the trauma of the Korean war and diasporic experiences. It also explains the ways in which Korean and Korean Americans used *kimchi*, *budae jjigae*, and rice to survive, but also resist and persevere their experiences.

To think about the cultural and affective politics of “foreign” foods in South Korea and how that affective “baggage” travels across the Pacific, this project brings fields of food studies and material culture studies into conversation with transpacific critique to understand the intricacies and legacies of US militarism and imperialism. Currently there are several scholars in Asian American and Korean American studies who are actively engaging in researching the legacies of US military intervention on the Korean Peninsula. However, what sets this project apart is the use of the materiality of food and foodways as a central analytic to understand the Korean American diaspora on **both** sides of the Pacific.

This dissertation comes at a prescient time given the current anxieties surrounding the geopolitics of the Korean peninsula or as Korean American scholar Jodi Kim refers to it, the anxiety around the “good” versus the “bad” Koreans. Additionally, there is a renewed engagement in Cold War-era political discourse.¹¹ Given the current debates and explosion around the increased cultural presence of Korean foods, goods, and cultural products and its connections to soft power projection, this is an important conversation to have on Korean American. While

¹¹ Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire : Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

kimchi might be creeping more and more on menus throughout the United States as a new and trendy food, this project hopes to explore the history and context of how and why it got there. What is exciting about this project is that it bridges the voices of scholars living in both Korea and in the United States and it bridges the work that has been done on the lasting legacies of Cold War politics in both countries.

This project builds upon their experiences in a wide variety of fields—political and military history, literary studies, and ethnic studies. It also builds upon Korean American experiences, as many scholars in this area incorporate their own autoethnographies. This material analysis of *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice, traces the “entanglements” of these complex paths and spaces of discourse that connect food politics with the legacies of US military intervention. Consequently, it is vital to hear from those who have first-hand experiences. To this end, I include some of my own family’s recipes, including my family’s recipe for *budae jjigae*, a mish mash of different ingredients that includes hot dogs, ramen noodles, and whatever vegetables we have often had on hand.¹² Though I will return to this point momentarily, the inclusion of such voices is buttressed by the recent literature on food and Asian American identity.

Literature Review

With the publication of *Eating Asian America* in 2013 there was a spotlight on a new emerging field of scholarship in Asian American Studies centering on food and culinary practices in the formation of Asian American identities in the United

¹² Perhaps recipe is a being generous here. As my mother tells it, *budae jjigae* at our house really is just whatever vegetables are in the house, cooked with some Korean ramen, and some kind of ham or hot dog sliced into the pot.

States.¹³ Particularly important to this study was the interdisciplinarity of the scholars found in the volume, whose work span across space, place, and time to interrogate the multiple inequalities that undergird the Asian American experience in America through the production of Asian American culinary practices. In the years since, scholars such as Robert Ji-Song Ku, Grace Cho, and Sonia Ryang have produced books that have looked at the larger racial, political, and social impact of foodways among people of the Korean American diaspora.¹⁴ Ku's *Dubious Gastronomy*, in particular his chapter on *kimchi*, is important to this project as it sets out to critically interrogate duality of the authentic/inauthentic that inhabits the discourse around food products of the Asian American experience with a more nuanced approach where the "dubious" can exist alongside the "delicious". Cho in her deeply personal and deeply political works on her family's history, and in particular the marriage between her mother and her father, an American serviceman, shows the intimate histories of loss, resilience, and survival that many Korean Americans endured as they immigrated to the United States. And finally, Ryang's ethnographies of Korean food cultivation, production, and consumption throughout the United States, shows the ways in which Korean food has adapted (or not) to ingredients that cannot be easily found. It is within this body of literature that I hope to contribute my conceptualization of the "transpacific kitchen table". By connecting the globalized political economies with

¹³ Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur, *Eating Asian America : A Food Studies Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Robert Ji-Song Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013); Grace M. Cho, *Tastes like War : A Memoir*, First Feminist Press edition. (New York, NY: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2021); Sonia Ryang, *Eating Korean in America : Gastronomic Ethnography of Authenticity*, 1 online resource vols., Food in Asia and the Pacific (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).

local community voices, stories, and recipes, this project will produce a nuanced look at the ways in which *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice has come to symbolized nuanced, sometimes paradoxical effects of the movement of foods, recipes, people, and ideas within the Korean American diaspora.

At times the kitchen table is somewhat of a mythic space in political discourse in America. For example, during the height of the Cold War, Americans tuned into the Kitchen Table debates between then US Vice President Richard Nixon and the Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev to discuss political superiority. During election seasons politicians promise to talk of “kitchen table” issues that symbolize the economic struggles of American families to put “food on the table” and to provide for their families. But more than just mere metaphor, the kitchen table has stood as an important theoretical anchor for a number of scholars, including those whose work holds particular resonance to this dissertation. Most notably is the group of feminist women of color who organized to form the Kitchen Table Press, a collective of African American, Native American, Latinx, and Asian American women writers and scholars.¹⁵ For Smith and others of the Kitchen Table Press, the kitchen table was not just a space for conversation and work, but also symbolic of a grassroots social movement that seeks to represent the marginalized voices of color within larger feminist social movements that has ignored or even at times rejected such lived experience. This dissertation builds upon and incorporate this idea of the kitchen table as both a space of work and conversation, as well as a symbol of social movement, by

¹⁵ Barbara Smith, “A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 10, no. 3 (1989): 11.

specifically connecting it to food and foodways through the lens of transpacific critique.

This dissertation provides a more nuanced understanding of not just the Korean American experience, but also how these dishes are related to the imperial discourses of the Japanese empire.¹⁶ Interrogating imperial Japanese discourse is particularly important to this dissertation, as it has left an enduring legacy in South Korea. Scholars like Elaine Kim and Chungmoo Choi note the importance of thinking about the “palimpsest” of colonialism within the Korean American identity, as U.S. hegemony “superimposed” systems of power and dominator over a neo-colonial infrastructure that was built by Japanese imperialism.¹⁷ Especially central to the neo-colonial domination over South Korea, as argued by the group of Korean and Korean American scholars who contributed to the volume, was the way that the US-Korean relationship reproduced gendered and sexualized discourses around family, nationhood, and home. For example, Choi and Kim argue how even in the anti-colonial activism of the revolutionary liberation struggles, self-sacrificing women were seen as key cultural symbols. Thus, the boundaries between home and nation were set along patriarchal lines, rendering many women to the periphery of civic life and discourse.¹⁸

Another example of such feminist scholarship that informs this project is Katherine Moon and Hyun Sook Kim’s work on the experiences of women in sex work around the US military camp towns. These works further expose the legacies of

¹⁶ Yoneyama, “Toward a Decolonial Genealogy of the Transpacific,” 473.

¹⁷ Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo. Choi, *Dangerous Women : Gender and Korean Nationalism* (New York : Routledge, 1998).

¹⁸ Kim and Choi.

Korean women's exploitation under Japanese colonial rule and the neo-colonial financial dependent economies of the US military industrial complex.¹⁹ Their work on the legacies of Korean women and their exploitation is useful to this project because it is helpful to understanding the ways in which the black market in food trade in American food products is often times associated with the sexualized legacies of women's exploitation in military towns.

Another area of scholarship that has purchase in this project involves transnational movements of art and literature, as demonstrated by Hyun Yi Kang's analysis of Korean American women artists. I build on this work precisely because it interrogates, complicates, and extends the meanings of home and "nation" in the Korean diaspora.²⁰ "Setting the Transpacific Table" hopes to build upon these lines of inquiry to view foodways as an important sector for state power and control, but also a powerful tool for emancipation and resistance, vis-à-vis, the home.

Contestations over women's labor are especially important to this dissertation's approach to the transpacific kitchen table. Connecting literature of womanhood and women's labor prior to and after the Korean War with interviews and archival materials that speaks to the introduction of western foods as a mark of a "modern" nation and family. The Korean feminist scholar Cho Haejung characterized women of the post-war period from the end of the Korean War through the 50s and

¹⁹ Katharine H.S. Moon, "Re-membering the Korean Military Comfort Women: Nationalism, Sexuality, and Silencing," in *Dangerous Women : Gender and Korean Nationalism* ed. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo. Choi (New York : Routledge, 1998), 141-174; Hyun Sook Kim, "Yanggonju as an Allegory of the National: Images of Working-Class Women in Popular and Radical Texts," in *Dangerous Women : Gender and Korean Nationalism* ed. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo. Choi (New York : Routledge, 1998),

²⁰ Hyun Yi Kang, "Re-membering Home", in *Dangerous Women : Gender and Korean Nationalism* ed. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo. Choi (New York : Routledge, 1998)

the 60s as “backstage managers of hustling industrialization.”²¹ In the years after the war, Korea saw rapid industrialization and a mass exodus to the cities. This period saw an era of mass industrialization under authoritarian military dictatorship and statist economic policies (much of which was backed by US intervention), where the guiding slogan was “Economic growth first by all means!”

Tied to this mantra on growth is another interesting concept that presents itself as a gap in the literature is how the economics of the “hustle gets translated into the Korean diaspora. What was interesting about this economy of the “hustle”, as Cho argues, is that this period also saw the cementing of women’s role as managers of nuclear households. It was during this time that the so called “good wife, wise mother” model emerged. They were considered larger than life rather than a part of a large familial collective. Both Cho and the feminist scholar Kim Eun Shil, contend that the idea of the “modern” Korean woman as partner to the husband was not new to Korea, but is in fact a holdover from the early modernists of the colonial era under Meiji Japanese rule. This dissertation therefore connects food and statist policies in a way that largely shaped food policy overall in post-war Korea

With the introduction and popularization of western foods like Spam, some of the lingering vestiges of Japanese colonial policies are revealed. Eun Shil Kim points to the period before the Korean War and to the Korean intelligentsia of the 20s and 30s who were influenced by the enlightenment of the Meiji restoration. According to Kim, these intellectuals pushed forth the idea that “westernizing” the Korean diet, that

²¹ Haejong Cho, “Living with Conflicting Subjectivities: Mother, Motherly Wife, and Sexy Women, in the Transition From Colonial-Modern to Postmodern Korea,” in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea* (Honolulu : University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 165–95.

is to increase the use of foreign ingredients like milk and increase the intake of sugar in their recipes, was the key to “modernization.”²² This notion of westernizing Korean diets as a basis for modernizing the country, Kim continues, was pushed by the proponents of western foods and the scientific adoption of the belief in their “power” to do so. Specifically, nutritionists called for the “scientification” of food and portrayed women as rational consumers and arguing that American processed foods was the pinnacle of civilization.²³

Mi-Hye Kim and Hae-Kyung Chung, writing in the *Korean Journal of Food Culture*, studied how this debate played out on the pages of popular women’s magazines of the period. Relying on both in-depth interviews of women and textual analysis of women’s magazine they discuss how mass media, both Korean and imported American media, showed that “cultivated” women were the ones who could cook Western foods, which were seen also seen as markers of “high culture.”²⁴ It is important to note that these conversations around the “modern” woman and the kitchen do not occur in a vacuum. Connecting the prevailing discourse around modern motherhood, labor, and the consumption of western foods within South Korea is further considered by looking at the changes in the relationship between women and the kitchen during the 1950s in America.²⁵

²² Eun-Shil Kim, “The Postcolonial Politics of Food: Creating ‘Locality’ through Local Knowledge,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 19, no. 4 (January 4, 2013): 7–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2013.11666164>.

²³ Kim.

²⁴ Mi-Hye Kim and Hae-Kyung Chung, “Food Consumption Discussion in 1950’s Women’s Culture,” *Korean Journal of Food Culture* 25, no. 6 (2010): 639–51.

²⁵ Laura. Shapiro, *Something from the Oven : Reinventing Dinner in 1950’s America* (New York, N.Y. : Viking, 2004).

This notion of the “hustle” is further unpacked in this dissertation through oral histories and self-ethnography, which I will discuss more in depth in a moment. Growing up with a Korean mother told me constantly of having to navigate the cultural politics of raising me “the Korean” or “the American” way, there is quite a bit of personal connection to this question over the “hustling” mentality felt in communities of color. My mother (as many mothers alike) would constantly tell me that as a Korean American I had to work twice as hard for only half the recognition. How, for example, then does this narrative of the “hustle” get somehow morphed into the narrative of the “tiger mom” that we see today popularized by authors like Amy Chua. Another interesting research question that presents itself in the gap of literature on Korean and Korean American experience is how the economics of the “hustle” gets translated into the Korean diaspora. The sociologist Seungsook Moon’s research on transnational parenting based on her case studies of two generations of Korean immigrant women in New York touches on some of these issues.²⁶ In particular, she focuses on navigating these parental pressures to the reality of most immigrant women’s necessity to join the labor force, something that may have been new for them prior to their migration.

On a more transnational scale, the Asian American studies scholar Grace Hong and her book *Ruptures of American Capital*, touches on the cultures of immigrant labor within the globalized network of US imperialism and US capitalism. While her dominant method of literary criticism is not directly related to the Korean American

²⁶ Seungsook Moon, “Immigration and Mothering,” *Gender & Society* 17, no. 6 (December 29, 2003): 840–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243203257200>.

diaspora, her methodology of comparative analysis that emphasizes intersectionality and women of color feminism to interrogate the complex citizen-subjectivity of immigrant labor will add to this project.

Theoretical Frameworks

In extending the concept of the transpacific kitchen table for this dissertation, I hope to also think about the concept of the kitchen table and the food products that grace it as objects of material culture. Material culture studies gives this dissertation both a theoretical framework, but also a set of methods to work with. Scholars like Barbara Carson and Jules Prown provide an important methodological framework to think about *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice within the larger context of history and society across time and space, allowing for deduction and speculation as an important part of material cultural analysis. Merely just thinking about these food products as food stuff, but the very material for Korean and Korean American identities and cultural production.²⁷

This dissertation highlights the “anxieties” surrounding food that I explore through a material culture analysis of *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice using a transpacific critique. This dissertation unpacks some of the cultural and social “anxieties” around these foods as a constituent part of the Korean and Korean American experiences. Take for instance, Spam, a central ingredient in many *budae jjigae* recipes. Introduced in in 1937 by the Hormel Corporation as a means of using

²⁷ Barbara Carson, “Interpreting History Through Objects,” in *The Journal of Museum Education* 10, no. 3 (1985): 2–5.; Jules Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method.” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1–19.

up excess pork shoulders in their meat processing operations, Spam combines ground pork shoulder, with bits of “real” ham, with assorted spices and preservatives and canned in its trademark bright blue tin with yellow lettering.²⁸ The cultural symbolism of Spam as both the product of the heartland and “frankenfood” is indicative of a larger narrative surrounding the importance of food as a material manifestation of cultural, social, and political systems.

A large segment of the food studies as a field is dedicated to analyzing the materiality of food to make visible otherwise invisible systems of power. This dissertation tracks some of the ways in which the Korean government “sold” these foods to the masses and how it eventually became a fixture of the Korean diet. I hope to do this by engaging in archival research of popular periodicals of the time period. As indicated by research scholars like Kim Eun Shil whose work I referenced previously, foods that included western ingredients like Spam, flour, and corn were pushed by the Korean popular press, as well as government propaganda to be healthy and nutritious and essential to “modernizing” the nation. In particular I am interested in looking at the ways in which second generation Korean Americans, born in the United States to parents who lived through the development of Korea, have begun to reclaim “trash” foods like Spam as a part of a diasporic identity and cuisine. But what were the everyday experiences of the Korean people when it came to integrating these foods into their diets? And what kind of resistance was there (if there was any) to

²⁸ George H. Lewis, “From Minnesota Fat to Seoul Food: Spam in America and the Pacific Rim,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 2 (September 1, 2000): 83–105.

these foods? Archival research of popular periodical of the time, as well as literature and oral histories helps to reveal answers to these questions.

Jodi Kim's concept of "gendered racial rehabilitation" also brings to mind the Yên Lê Espiritu's idea of "critical juxtaposing" in which she argues that the history of settler colonial violence across Asia led to US intervention in Vietnam as preordained as a form of "rescue" which then facilitated attempts of assimilation of refugees of the SE Asian wars into the United States.²⁹ This notion of "racial rehabilitation" through food is an important concept in my own intervention into the field by specifically looking at the lingering cultural politics and histories of surplus US food aid to South Korea. And where Jodi Kim looks specifically at the US intervention, I also hope to build upon her work as well as others in looking at the multilayered colonial histories which include Japanese colonial discourse on Western food as a means of modernization.

I draw upon my training in history, material culture, and museum scholarship to employ four methods of analysis for this project: archival research, literary analysis, material analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork. In the realm of archival research there are two general areas of inquiry. First there are government documents pertaining to food aid programs and policy in both South Korea and in the United States. There are materials associated with Public Law 480 or the Agricultural Trade and Development Assistance Act of 1954 and the Food for Peace Act of 1966, which were both influential pieces of legislation that dictated food aid programs in South

²⁹ Yên Lê Espiritu, *Body Counts : The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(Es)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, n.d.).

Korea. While the economics and politics around food aid as a tool of US foreign policy and agrobusiness is well documented, I wanted a more targeted reading of these documents to understand how these foods were cooked and received by the people of South Korea. This material is spread out at several repositories, including at the National Archives in College Park, MD and the USDA National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, MD. What was interesting as I reading these materials was that there was quite a bit of material that was still classified or was heavily redacted under the aegis of “national security.” This produced some challenges, but also provoked some interesting connections across the materials and discussion in my chapter on the archives. In looking at the Korean government’s response to these aid programs, the National Archives of Korea and the Korean Development Institute (KDI) were valuable depositories of information. Here I was particularly interested in the propaganda films and brochures produced by the Korean government to educate Koreans on how to cook, store, and incorporate these seemingly “Western” food products such as SPAM into Korean diets.

To guide this material culture research, I have assembled a set of tools to help understand the importance of *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice in the cultural politics of Korean and Korean American identity formation. First is the importance of recipes in sketching out, what I would like to call the “material afterlife” of the ingredients that make up *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice. I will draw upon the work of Lisa Lowe. Her latest book *Intimacies of Four Continents* engaging in a deep reading (many times reading between the lines) of archival repositories to produce complex questions around how European colonial policies intertwine with the built world to produce

hierarchical discourses across vast oceans. Most importantly her archival research was also based in material analysis of the decorative arts of the period. One particularly striking example was a desk and bookcase made in the mid-eighteenth century in Puebla, Mexico and now housed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Commissioned by a merchant family in Mexico, made of indigenous materials, with inlaid patterns of Moorish Spain, fashioned into an Anglo-Dutch style bureau, and embellished with Chinese and Japanese motifs, it serves as a material marker of transcontinental histories. Lowe argues the desk is a part of a vast colonial archive that forms an “unsettling genealogy” of European liberalism, settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic African slave trade, and the East Indies, and China trades of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁰ Understanding the processes in which foods like Spam get produced will be important. In addition, understanding the basics of how surplus American food aid in the form of flour, corn, and milk get packaged and distributed to Korea will also be important.

Another collection of artifacts that I hope to integrate into my dissertation come from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History and their Division of Home and Community Life. Engaging in this collection on immigration history, I have come to think about the “secret” histories of migration, what I would like the term the “baggage” of the Korean diaspora. As a part of my work with the material culture studies certificate I helped accession a number of objects that destined for the museum’s exhibition on the history of migration in the United States. These collections included artifacts from Bill and Mary Kim who donated a number

³⁰ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 3.

of traditional Korean kitchenware objects, a balikbayan box (also known as repatriation boxes, they were corrugated boxes that were shipped by overseas Filipinos back to the Philippines), and objects discarded along undocumented border crossings unearthed by archaeologist Jason De Leon. I would have been remiss if I did not engage in a material analysis of the actual baggage that migrants have carried.

Finally, to understand the impact the legacies of US military intervention and immigration policy has had on the Korean American diaspora, I will incorporate the oral history interviews from my work with the Smithsonian's Asian Pacific American Foodways Project. A joint project between the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center and the Anacostia Community Museum, I served as the project coordinator and collected interviews, objects, and archival materials from Asian American families, restaurants, and food businesses throughout the Washington, DC Metropolitan region to document the contributions of APA communities to local and regional food cultures. Through the project, I have also compiled archival materials on the history of the Korean American community in the Capital Region. These oral history interviews also understand and connect the legacies of US Cold War politics to the current debates about fusion food in the Korean American diaspora, as I have interviewed chefs and restaurateurs whose menus and creations reflect these histories and entanglements.

Guiding my ethnographic practice is the work of John Caughey. In his own work on reflexive fieldwork, Caughey demands that scholars engaged in the practice to understand and work with their own biases and assumptions to realize

that they can never truly be “objective” in their observations.³¹ His works is particularly important as I navigate my own status as both an insider (as it relates to my identity as a Korean and American), but also an outsider (as it also relates to my status as a Korean American). Much of this reflection will include the kind of radical pedagogy of empathy, understanding, and love that scholars like Virginia Dominguez have pushed forth and that Gayatri Spivak have also wrote about when translating the stories and experiences from one language to another.

Chapter Outline

The second chapter is an analysis of the complex spatial and material relationship between foodways of the Korea and the Korean American diaspora and the U.S. military industrial complex through Spam and *budae-chigae* or (army base stew). The dish is often employed by Koreans as a potent cultural symbol of both resilience and resistance during and after the Korean war. But how did these ingredients get to the Korean peninsula and how did they come together? I hope to unpack both the recipe and the metaphor through archival research from both sides of the Pacific, oral histories from Koreans and Korean American about the mix of emotions of shame, resilience, and pride that the dish engenders. There is also a growing body of work by Korean and Korean American artists who view the dish, as noted by the historian Grace Cho, “as a culinary travesty and an iconic symbol of US imperialism.”³² Documenting and interpreting these complex and sometimes contradictory feelings towards the evolution of *budae jjigae* will contribute to a better

³¹ John L. Caughey, “The Ethnography of Everyday Life: Theories and Methods for American Culture Studies,” *American Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (January 1, 1982): 239-40.

³² Grace M. Cho, “Eating Military Base Stew,” *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (August 22, 2014): 38–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504214545759>.

understanding of the intimacies of the impact of US military intervention on the Korean peninsula. I'm looking at the complex understanding of the Korean American people and Koreaness through the complex and contradictory feelings towards the evolution of *budae jjigae*.

The third chapter is dedicated to *kimchi*, one of the most representative of Korean foods in both the local and global context. Special attention will be put on the contestations over ownership and authority of *kimchi* through a look at the *kimchi* taco and the second generation of Korean American chefs, influencers, and artists who are take inspiration from the histories of displacement and diaspora to create new hybridities within the Washington, DC area. Questions around placemaking, food, and authenticity play heavily against the backdrop of dueling narratives coming from increased interest in Korean foods driven by the Korean government and their push towards globalizing Korean foods through the *Hallyu* or “Korean wave” initiatives. This chapter will explore these controversies between authority and authenticity over Korean food to show an increased globalizing network of taste and capital that provides for a rich text for analyzing how chefs, cooks, and artists are thinking about Korean American foodways. This is especially important given the city's unique place as both local and global nexus of diplomatic and political power and a real lack of scholarship on Korean American communities of the DMV.

The fourth chapter will focus on rice. To do so I will on my curatorial and archival practices around food, trauma, and migration in Korean American foodways in and around the Washington, DC area. This includes collections at the National Museum of American History and the Anacostia Community Museum, as well as

archival materials from the National Archives. In this chapter I look at how rice becomes a central ingredient in the archives surrounding the Korean diasporic table, from its centrality in Korean food ways to its centrality in social movements connecting both Korean and Korean Americans in the Washington, DC to social movements in Korea. I will argue that rice, as material and *materiel*, becomes a nexus of the intimacies of space, place, and geographies in a myriad of ways. It becomes a central ingredient for state power, but also resistance, local food traditions, but also global aspirations.

Chapter Two: Army Base Stew as Material and *Materiel*

My parents referred to it as the “The season when we were all hungry.” 배고픈 시절. in Korean. Growing up in Korea in 1950s and 1960s, they would say that whenever they had a chance to get a tin of Spam or a piece of Hershey’s Chocolate it always tasted good. “Because when you’re hungry,” my mother would say, “anything and everything tasted good.” For Koreans and Korean Americans of my parents’ generation, the period between Armistice in 1953 and the Democracy movements of the 1980s served as a time of immense hardship and immense change.³³ It was a time of hunger, but also rapid growth and rapid inequality. One of the dishes that have come to symbolize the traumas of the “hungry season” in Korea is *budae-jjigae*.

Ramen noodles. Spam. Kimchi. Broth. Add to that some canned beans, vegetables like cabbage, onions, and leeks, and top with slices of American processed cheese. All together you have the makings of *budae-jjigae*. Long seen as a dish of survival, it is now one of the most popular dishes for Korean families to eat while dining out. Much of what is written about this dish is couched in the trauma and struggles of war, of black-market trade, and of food insecurity. What this chapter hopes to do is unpack these narratives through the lens of *budae-jjigae* as both

³³ Referred widely by historians and politicians alike as “the Miracle on the Han River” (referring to the main river that flows through the heart of Seoul, the capital city of South Korea), the period after the Korean War to the 1990s saw rapid transformation of Korea as one of the poorest nations by GDP to an important economic power in East Asia and the world economies. While rapid industrialization created wealth, it also marked rapid inequality in the nation, and the concentration of power and consolidation and integration of economic development to just a handful of powerful families, known as *chaebols*. In addition, rulers of Korea during this period, such as Park Chung Hee, complicates this myth of the “miracle”, as the brutality of his regime against opposition and activists was an important part of his Statist and autocratic rule.

metaphor -the meta-discourse surrounding the dish- and material/materiel- the ingredients, techniques, and logistics- of United States military presence. It became an important, yet complicated symbol, of both disgust and survival, between trash and treasure, and cultural icon and culinary travesty. All going to symbolize the larger traumas and anxieties of a rapidly industrializing nation.

“Have you heard of Piggy Stew?”: The Origins of *budae-jjigae*

The origins of *budae jjigae* can be traced to the years after the armistice of the Korean War. Vendors outside the gates of American and United Nations military installations began selling a stew made from excess rations either purchased on the black market, stolen, or picked from the trash taken off the bases. According to newspaper reports at the time, vendors began to call this dish, *kkul-kkul-i-jook*, or “piggy stew” named for the bits of ham and/or sausage that were often times featured as the main protein.³⁴ Those bits of ham were thrown into simmering cauldrons with other ingredients from the base, including leftover bread, soup, and French fries, seasoned with *kimchi* and bulked up with rice. “For just 30 won of rice,” as a 1964 newspaper article on the prevalence of piggy stew sold on the streets of Seoul reported, “8 family members broke a cold sweat as they sat for lunch... cigarette butts and bits of tissue (who knows what they were used for) were mixed in and the stench of the stew filled the air .”³⁵

³⁴ Tae Hwan Kim, “Piggy Stew,” in *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture*, n.d.

³⁵ 신영각 [Young Gak Shin], “허기진 군상” [The Hungry Army Dining Table], *경향신문* [Kyung Han Newspaper], May 20, 1964.

熊山구西部二村동에서
난해 8월부터 꿀꿀이
죽을 자전지예신고 팔
려다닌다는 朴春植(33)
永登浦구 羅昌洞(四七)
씨는『대개는 사면지만
못사먹는 사람이 많
다』면서 의상거매는안

서울의春窮地帶

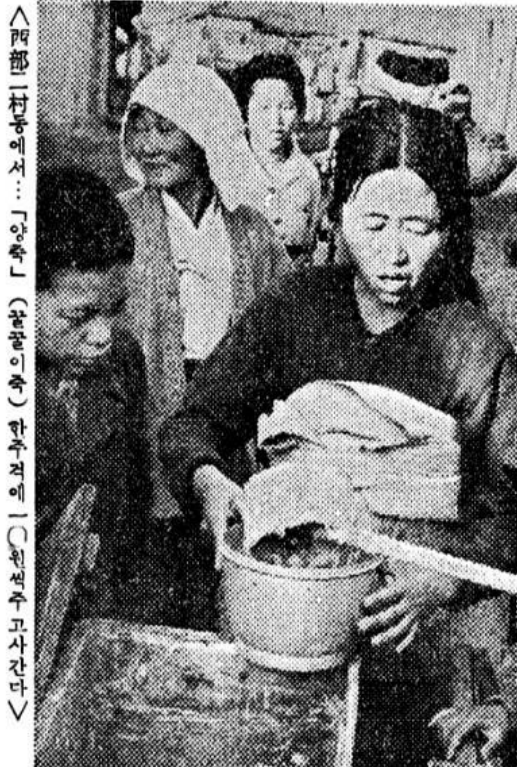
西部二村洞 ①

경기도이젠지났고 거리엔早春의인경이 혼돈하다. 벌써서울鬧
邊엔 이른봄의 賞春客이 모여들고...이들은살에서달린 울적한
마음을 가다듬기도하지만 대부분은 서울시민은 지름길로달려
온「春困」와「春窮」에 몸서리치고있다. 서울시는 救濟對象
戶(18세미만 65세이상생활능력없는자)를매년약三四만명.策
無策으로 飢寒을배급하고있지만 서울의春窮地帶
주민의주요인. 모두배채워줄수는 없는노릇! 이
제변두리 영세민의 실정을물아본다. (源·敦·根·庚)

하느네 金相厚(60·一
三동六반) 씨집은 학도 상을 주었다고 언짢은

꿀꿀이죽·지게미로延命

돈없어 쌀配給도못타고



△西部二村동에서...『양쪽』(꿀꿀이죽) 한주머니 △원석주교사잔다▽

표정이다. 보통전참 여덟식구가
사흘을 내리 굶고 부황
해며 누워있는 金씨집
앞을 朴씨가 마친지나
다 여섯살짜리 막내가
문밖으로『죽속에 매있
는 감자즙 달라』는말
을 목이메어 꿀꿀이죽
두장통(한장통에四
원)의 상봉은것이 인
연이되어 외상이 三패
원이나 밀렸다는것. 그

려나『내가 죽을판이니
머의상은 못갈겠다』고
막해했다.
그런데 이 동네에는 7
일부러 술지게미장사도
등장했다. 조그만 사발
에 가득담아 (원석
박아도 골질팔리는메사
는사람보다 구경하는아
낙네가 더 많았다는것.
젊은 남편과 어린애
셋인 張元順(37·一三
동七반) 씨집은 세모골
천막이 지붕이자 담벽
가마가 온돌 구실인데
사흘전부터 굶어 누워
있었다. 남편崔씨가 교
통사고로 다친발이도져
발거리가잡힌 초겨울부
터張씨는 구걸한 김
치를팔아 비지물사다 끓
여먹었는데 사흘전부터
는張씨마저 몸져누워
코박굶었다는것.
이 동네에서 밤맛을아
는집이 몇이나될지?
굶지않으면 한주머니에
○원씩하는 비지, 술지
게미가 고작이다.
7일부터 시에서 방
출하는 양곡도 이 동네
에는 해먹을 못주고있
다. 一三동六반四二과구
에 합당된 배급『카드
』는 一五배분 그나마
돈가지고 배급바라간집
은 만주집뿐이다.

Figure 2: Image of a "piggy stew" vendor on the streets of Seoul taken from the Dong-a Ilbo (동아일보) Newspaper, March 11, 1964. Photo Credit: National Folk Museum of Korea

Newspapers reports from the period stressed its readers to stay away from the dish, including one report from June 1964 that declared multiple incidents of food

poisoning, including a family of five that became “critically ill.”³⁶ The stigma and shame attached to the piggy stew by popular media at the time was bolstered by Korean government decrees that forbade civilians from accessing and advertising foods made from army rations.³⁷ To skirt those rules vendors also referred to it as UN soup or UN *tang* named for the presence of United Nations peacekeepers on the peninsula, as well as Johnson *tang* for the American president Lyndon Baines Johnson. The transformation from piggy stew to *budae jjigae* occurred as the US military presence grew and remained permanent facilitating trade in the “illicit” cans of SPAM. By the 1970s Spam and frankfurters appeared in the soup bowl, as piggy stew began to be known as *budae jjigae* or army base stew (even though the restrictions on the use of that term were still on the books). Added to the canned ham, was ramen noodles, which because of the abundance of surplus American flour began to appear on store shelves with relative ease and cost. Surplus K-rations from the Korean army’s intervention in the Vietnam War, in the form of canned *kimchi* was another popular item to mix in.³⁸ And soon by the late 70s, restaurants that specializing in dish began springing up in camp towns throughout Korea, with only getting the government’s official imprimatur in the 1990s.

“Trash to Treasure” Feast

Budae jjigae’s associations with piggy stew and the detritus of military occupation after the Korean War elicits a range of emotions and responses from

³⁶ Kim, “Piggy Stew.”

³⁷ 김동정 [Kim Dong Jung], *한국인의 밥상 - 가장 슬픈 한 끼 “전쟁과 밥상,”* [The Korean's Dining Table] (KBS, 2013).

³⁸ Kim, “Piggy Stew.”

Koreans and Korean Americans. In an official memo from the Korean government's Cultural Heritage Administration (the agency tasked with the preservation and protection of the country's cultural and intangible heritage), it writes of *budae jjigae* as the "original fusion cuisine that the Korean War brought."³⁹ Do Hyun Shin, the cultural critic and historian in his essay on the dish wrote of the creativity and ingenuity of a people who were hungry and deprived. "While the ingredients may have been scavenged from the trash can, for a citizenry savaged by war and starvation, this trash might as well have been a veritable feast."⁴⁰ But, as he continues in his book *The History of Food that War has Cooked Up*, acquiring so-called "trash" for the dishes was no small feat. He writes of how the trash was heavily guarded, with those of the lowest of laborers, usually local Koreans hired for janitorial labor having been monitored closely. The act of smuggling a crime. He points to others risking life and limb to sneak on to American bases during the night to find whatever scraps they can, a vignette featured in Ahn Jung Hyo's influential novel *White Badge: A Novel on Korea*.⁴¹ Ahn, an influential journalist and cultural critic, wrote the semi-autobiographical novel whose main character, Han Kiju, an idealistic editor of a publishing firm whose idealism is slowly drained by war and the deadening maze of urban life in Park Chung Hee's Korea. Han recounts his life as a "a succession of wars", having been born during World War II, surviving the traumas of the Korean

³⁹문화재청[Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea], "한국전쟁이 낳은 퓨전음식 부대찌개 인문학" ["*Budae jjigae*, the Fusion Food Brought by the Korean War"], *문화재사랑*[*Cultural Heritage Love*], May 31, 2018, <http://www.cha.go.kr/love/link.html>.

⁴⁰도현신[Do Hyun Shin], "한국전쟁이 만든 부대찌개"[*Budae jjigae*, Brought to You by the Korean War] *월간 샘터* [*Sam Toh Journal*], 2021, 104

⁴¹도현신[Do Hyun Shin], *전쟁이 요리한 음식의 역* [*The History of Food Created by War*], (Seoul, South Korea, Sidae Books, 2017).

War, only to go fight in Vietnam where he saw the same horrors of civil war play out. In the opening chapter of the novel, Han, recollected a childhood of “snow covered bridges and hills” he and his family traversed over days and nights “with the serpentine procession of refugees” to Seoul from his home village in the North. His family arrives to the “dark smoke rising from the Yongsan Depot, [scrounging for] bread the retreating American soldiers left at the children’s playground, the C-ration cans the GIS threw at us from passing trucks... the miserable meals of ‘piggie soup’ (the garbage from the U.S. mess halls boiled again after removing coffee-grounds, cellophane paper, broken razors, and other inedibles)”⁴²

On the part of the US government and its non-governmental agency partners in Korea, the safeguarding of relief commodities from “improper” use was an important mission. In audit reports commissioned by the United States Operations Mission to Korea (USOM), the government entity tasked to oversee postwar reconstruction of South Korea, the government auditors were keen on making sure that release of this “trash” was properly documented and disposed of.⁴³ Spent grain, for example, was to go to feeding poultry and hogs. However, as the John C. Kay, Chief Auditor at USOM noted in one report, that the black-market trade in “improperly disposed of commodities” were being used to shore up operating expenses for places like orphanages, schools, and other non-profit organizations. This came even in the light of the ROK Special Law of the Prohibition of Sales of Specific

⁴² Chŏng-hyo An, *White Badge : A Novel of Korea*, (New York: Soho Press, 1989).

⁴³ Robert Curtis and John C. Kay, Preliminary Report on Current Audit of Title III, PL480, August 10, 1962, RG 286. P 582, Container 32, Central Subject File, 1961-1962, Records of the Agency for International Development, Department of State. Agency for International Development. USAID Mission to Korea. Executive Office. 11/4/1961-10/1/1979, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Foreign Goods (Law No. 616) as stressed by the audit reporting. Law No. 616 was passed by the Korean government at the urging of the USOM and forced onto the Korean population by decree. It was hardly enforced, however. In recalling this particular period in his life, my father was quite pointed about having eaten some of this “improperly disposed of commodities.” He recalled, “I remember we were given slop that was meant for pigs. Some of us got sick from it too. But you have to understand that growing up after the war, that’s sometimes all we could have.” For the United States government, the regulation of “improperly disposed of commodities” were put in place for exactly those reasons, to keep the food supply safe. However, while not directly stated at the time, declassified reports from the NSA showed that the US government was increasingly worried about Communist propaganda from the Soviet Union and the North Korean governments over the dumping of rotten foods into the food aid supply.⁴⁴

While fictional, An’s account of “piggie soup” mirrors the experiences of countless wartime refugees in post-armistice Korea. “Hunger,” as anthropologist Laura Nelson wrote in her book *Measured Excess*, “is a recurrent theme in individual memory and popular representation of the past.”⁴⁵ It calls to the proximity of piggie soup and its more “refined” cousin, army base stew, to the stigma of “trash” that is both a source of trauma and of pride for Koreans of a certain generation.⁴⁶ According

⁴⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Council, Briefing, East German Action Against the Western Food Program, August 4, 1953, Top Secret Canoe, National Security Archives, Washington, DC.

⁴⁵ Laura C. Nelson, *Measured Excess : Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶ The African American Studies scholar Alexander Weheliye in his book *Habeus Viscus* gives us a way of looking at hunger in and of and beyond the flesh.⁴⁶ Steeped in the work of CLR James, Weheliye refers to the affectations of cravings brought on by hunger and deprivation under state violence as a

to the Korean feminist scholar Cho Hae Jeong, the brunt of this was born by Korean women. These women, as defined by Cho as the “backstage managers of hustling industrialization” of the Korean nation after the war was presented in mass media narratives as the urban mother who did everything and everything to help her family and children.⁴⁷ This is in contrast to the generation before, the generation of the “motherly woman” who was to serve as a refuge and a pillar of strength in the a time of great disruption and war.⁴⁸ These “modern wives” were often referred to as *pokpuin* or “Madam Realtor” for their abilities to wheel and deal through all facets of life, bribing principals to allow their children a place in better schools, forcing their husbands to make money by any means necessary, and generally “hustling” to make and spend their household incomes. These “hustling” women, in turn, as Cho concludes, were expected to be the *real* drivers of the post-war industrialization of Korea after the war. As indicated by popular media at the time, they were seen as the drivers for economic and social revitalization by any means necessary.

SPAM as Cultural Icon and Culinary Travesty

Shin concludes his essay on *budae jjigae* with a ready admission. While he loves the flavors of Spam, *kimchi*, ramen, and spice together in *budae jjigae*, he notes that knowing the larger history of these flavors came together and the history of his

way of understanding the self.⁴⁶ Scholars and writers in post-colonial literature have looked at hunger and famine in these ways, as well. For example, Tsitsi Dangaremba’s novel *Nervous Conditions* explored the ways in which coloniality and patriarchy was inscribed onto the main character Nyasha’s body in ways that were manifested through her hybrid subjectivity and her anorexia as a Rhodesian living in Britain in relative affluence while others in her native country were suffering from war and famine.⁴⁶ In

⁴⁷ “Living with Conflicting Subjectivities” in *Under Construction*, 172

⁴⁸ “Living with Conflicting Subjectivities” in *Under Construction*, 170

own family's suffering during the war leaves him with a "bad taste."⁴⁹ For some Korean, including my mother, the "bad taste" that *budae jjigae* left wasn't just from the memories of war. It was an actual taste. Growing up, my mother would often say that the dish was too 느끼 해 for her taste. That particular expression *neukkihada*, does not have a direct English translation.⁵⁰ The closest that many come up with is that it means "greasy" or "queasy", certainly not a pleasant taste.⁵¹ The chief culprit for the "greasy" taste was, Spam, the main ingredient of *budae jjigae*.

Touted as a "miracle meal in a can", Spam came into prominence with the American entry into WWII, serving both as a way of conserving meat at home, as well as shipped overseas as rations in the European and Asian theaters. Introduced in 1937 by the Hormel Corporation, Hormel took advantage of this connection to the war effort to connect its products with American nationalism as a product of the "heartland", even after the war.⁵² However, as the Asian American studies scholar Robert Ku writes, one person's "miracle meal" is another's "mystery meat." Ku argues in his chapter on Spam that it also serves a very potent cultural symbol of all that is "wrong" with the American food system, an indictment to the factory farming regime that Hormel (and just a handful of other corporations) have become most known for. He writes, "Spam is both unholy and unhealthy, a noxious culinary

⁴⁹ Shin, "Budae jjigae, Brought to You by the Korean War"

⁵⁰ "느끼하다," in *Naver Korean-English Dictionary*, n.d., <https://korean.dict.naver.com/koendict/#/search?query=느끼하다>.

⁵¹ The expression, *neukkihae* or *neukkihada*, can also be extended to behavior and/or people. For example, it can mean a "cheesy" personality or a "unpleasant" person.

⁵² George H. Lewis, "From Minnesota Fat to Seoul Food: Spam in America and the Pacific Rim," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 2 (September 2000): 83–105.

miscreant that is not only unnatural, but also unrepentant... Spam is confusing, frightening, and amusing in all sorts of ways.⁵³

For Koreans in the aftermath of the Korean War this “Frankenfood” was considered a luxury. In a documentary interview that aired to commemorate Memorial Day in Korea, a film crew interviewed Ki Sook Huh, the owner of the historic *budae jjigae* restaurant, *Odeng Sikdang*, to describe her secrets to making a good *budae jjigae*.⁵⁴ She recollected the variety of luncheon meats, including Spam, ground hamburger, and frankfurters that were bought on the black market from the US army base close to her shop and the lengths she went to mask the “greasy” taste. Spices like chiles, vegetables like spring onions and daikon, aromatics like dried fish heads and *kimchi* were all added to create a “clean”⁵⁵ tasting broth to help mask the Spam’s taste. What was also notable in that interview was her characterization of Spam, frankfurters, and hamburger meat as “army base meats.” Her restaurant originally served *odeng* (the Korean version of the Japanese *oden*, a stew of fish cake in broth served with vegetables and rice cakes), but she recalled one day a person from the neighborhood bringing to her restaurant scraps of leftover Spam, sausage, and hamburger meat. He had wrapped it in butcher paper and hid it under his clothes. From there she used the scraps of meat in a stew, similar to the spicy stews that are a

⁵³ Robert Ji-Song Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2013).

⁵⁴ Kim, *The Korean Dining Table*

⁵⁵ Huh uses the expression *깨운하다* (*kkae eun ha da*) to describe the broth. This is another expression with a lack of English cognates, but it is used to refer to feelings of “cleanliness” or to simple, “clean” flavors. It is often used in Korean cuisine towards dishes that are vegetable and seafood dominant, as opposed to meat heavy, which until the 20th century had been uncommon in Korean cuisine.

mainstay in Korean cuisine. Though it contained “army base meats”, she noted, she could not sell it as such, as the sale of US army surplus foods were prohibited by law.

In listening to Huh talk about the origins of her *budae jjigae* restaurant and the lengths she went to mask the taste of Spam, I couldn’t help but remember my mother’s insistence that whenever we cooked with it, we had to add spices, like chiles, and aromatics like *kimchi* to dishes that used Spam and frankfurters (sometimes the most affordable meat products at the grocery store). The melding of “army meats” with traditional Korean ingredients and techniques brought to mind Jodi Kim’s analysis of post-World War II Japan. Jodi Kim argues that the filmic and literary presentations (which also includes Steven Okasaki’s documentary *Survivors* and David Mura’s memoir *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei*) of Japan during the Cold War thematizes what she terms “gendered racial rehabilitation” or the transnationally linked projects that bring together the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese American incarceration during WWII, and U.S. occupation in Japan to present “properly assimilated and anticommunist liberal Japanese and Japanese-American citizen subjects... that would serve as America’s junior Cold War partner in Asia.”⁵⁶ In Ozeki’s *My Year of Meats*, the story of racial rehabilitation centers around food, specifically US imported beef. The story alternates between the hapa (mixed race) American producer of a documentary series *My American Wife!* and Akiko Ueno a Japanese housewife. Jane is tasked by BEEF EX, a syndicate of US beef exporters, to develop programming designed to sell hormone enriched

⁵⁶ Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire : Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

American beef to “dutiful” Japanese housewives. Akiko in turns fulfills this role, dutifully and meticulously recreating these foreign dishes to serve to her family. However, as the story unfolds both Jane and Akiko’s connection to this “rehabilitation” project begins to disintegrate as Jane refuses to continue selling both the meat and the image of the “perfect American Housewife” as does Akiko who becomes disgusted of the food, she creates for her husband’s wishes she be his “American wife.”

This duality between *budae jjigae* as tasty as much as it is “stomach churning” (another way that *neukkihae* gets translated) is not lost on the Korean American artists, chefs, and thinkers who view it as both cultural icon and dinner staple. Asian American scholars Grace Cho and Mun Hye Baik note the use of *budae jjigae* as an important theme and metaphor for Korean and Korean American artists to remember and commemorate the war, while also exploring the complex identities of living with these histories within their own diasporic identities.

One site where this duality is present is how the dish is how the dish is marketed commercially. In South Korea, *budae jjigae* is simultaneously marked as both “western” and “Korean” in its origin in commercial materials. The city of Jeonbuk, once home to Korea’s most prominent military installation, hosts a commercial district it calls “*Budae jjigae* Street”, a cluster of restaurants dedicated to serving the dish to hungry tourists, Korean and non-Koreans alike. In the official city and national brochures visitors are introduced to *budae jjigae* as “sausage stew which is made by boiling Western ingredients such as ham, sausage, canned American

beans, mixed with kimchi and hot pepper paste.”⁵⁷ For the Korean language version the header reads, “ The flavors of East and West meet to produce the foremost in fusion flavors” (mirroring the talking point about the stew on the Ministry of Cultural Heritage).⁵⁸ And finally on the tourist information page for the city of *Uijeongbu*, the dish is known as *Uijeongbu*-stew, as the city tries to market the dish as the birthplace of the stew.⁵⁹ The sociologist Grace Cho, in her essay dedicated to *budae jjigae*, noted the popularity of the *budae jjigae* restaurants in and around college campuses, where young people with “little cultural memory of the stew’s dark past.”⁶⁰

Rather than shy away from the “dark past” associated with the stew, Korean American artists Ji Young Yoo and Cindy Ji Hye Kim confronts this history head on in their artwork. Ji Young Yoo, a Korean born artist based in New York and Seoul created *BooDaeChiGae*, a mixed media installation created for “Still Present Pasts: Korean Americans and the ‘Forgotten War’”, a traveling art exhibition on the lasting legacies of the Korean War on the Korean American community.⁶¹ The piece is in two parts. First on the wall you see squares on the walls with what looks to be a topographical map burned on.

⁵⁷ Korea Tourism Organization, *Regional Guide*, “Uijeongbu Budaejjigae Street (의정부 부대찌개거리)”, https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/ATR/SI_EN_3_1_1_1.jsp?cid=822969# (accessed June 2, 2023) [English]

⁵⁸ 한국관광공사 [Korea Tourism Organization], *Korea: Corner to Corner*, “의정부 부대찌개거리” [Uijeongbu Budaejjigae Street], https://korean.visitkorea.or.kr/detail/ms_detail.do?cotid=f7575b45-9c86-4e37-aa44-858f475adc47&big_category=A02&mid_category=A0203&big_area=31 (accessed

⁵⁹ <https://www.ui4u.go.kr/bestfood/contents.do?mId=0500000000>

⁶⁰ Grace M. Cho, “Eating Military Base Stew,” *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (August 22, 2014): 38–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504214545759>.

⁶¹ Ji Young Yoo, *BooDaeChiGae 부대찌개*, 2005, video, Korean rice paper, Korean table, C-ration cans, video monitor, 82" x 99", 2005.



Figure 3: *BooDaeChigae* Installation

In front is a c-ration can, similar to the c-ration cans used in the US Army. Visitors are invited to look into the can, where a video loop plays a pair of hands slicing Spam, hot dogs, and making *budae jjigae*.



Figure 4: Close up of C-ration Can





Figure 5: Video Stills from *BooDaeChiGae*

Accompanying the video is fragments of audio in Korean and English. “This is good food!” [in English] “They said it was tasty.” [in Korean] “There was cabbage, bits of paper, and meat” [in Korean] “Toothpaste, napkins, prunes, and meat, everything was in there.” [in English]. In Yoo’s visualization of *budae jjigae*, she layers all the ingredients together in an orderly fashion: the Spam, followed by the vegetables, followed by the canned beans and processed cheese. The final dish cooked down into a murky, stew bubbles away, ready to be enjoyed. In the description of the piece Yoo wrote:

In Korea, *BooDaeChiGae*, which embodies the memory of this hunger, has become popular among the post-war generation. In a way, *BooDaeChiGae* can be read as a phenomenon of the post-modern era because it embodies different cultural elements. But, *BooDaeChiGae* is actually a distorted relic of the drastic social upheaval caused by U.S intervention and the Korean War while Post-modernism is a product of post-capitalist relations, and its circulation in the West. Although the Armistice Treaty was signed over fifty years ago, this food is still on the Korean dining table, reproducing the memory of the War in present-day Korea.

For Yoo, *budae jjigae* is both metaphor and material for the past and present of the Korean dining table. The murky stew, with its distorted flavors and ingredients, a relic of the “social upheaval” of US military intervention. And yet, in the

reproduction of this culinary memory, the dish still is enjoyed by Korean families to this day. A metaphor for the “postmodern” moment where the tragic history of the “social upheaval” of war is both erased, but still present (as the title of the exhibition indicates).

For the Korean American artist Cindy Jihye Kim, the stew’s most prominent ingredient, Spam, becomes an important theme in her series *Celibate Machines*.⁶² Describing the mixed-media installation pieces commissioned for Interstate Projects in Brooklyn, Kim looks at the contested histories, both personal and national, around the processed meat product. Kim writes:

SPAM was first introduced in Korea as rations for American G.I.s during the Korean War and was regarded as a luxury item amongst Koreans when food was scarce throughout the postwar era. This foreign “fake” meat has now become a staple ingredient in Korean cuisine, a novelty item given as holiday gifts in contemporary South Korea. People don't need to rummage through the army dumpster or befriend American officers to acquire SPAM anymore, but its history of rarity and association with wealth has sedimented its cultural value, like a layer that can mask and override its violent past.

As visitors enter the space, they are greeted with a large scale and intricately detailed mural titled, *The Parable of the Blind, after Bruegel*, a bucolic landscape inspired by the Dutch Renaissance master Pieter Bruegel.⁶³ In front of the mural sits sculptures made of rice molded into fists. That piece, titled “주먹밥” is a play on words.⁶⁴

Directly translated it means “fists of rice” and refers a popular snack/lunch item found in Korean lunches, where rice is mixed in with different seasonings and filling

⁶² Cindy Ji Hye Kim, *SPAM*, 2018, Silicone Rubber, 4" x 4" x 1, 2018.

⁶³ Cindy Ji Hye Kim, *The Parable of the Blind, after Bruegel*, 2018, Latex acrylic and graphite on wall, 28' x 10', 2018.

⁶⁴ Cindy Ji Hye Kim, *주먹밥: Azza, Brook, Geetha, Jenny, Sara*, 2018., Rice and gum arabic, dimensions variable, n.d.

and formed into a rice ball (similar to Japanese *onigiri*). Here the rice is molded into actual fists, held in the air, a striking symbol of protest and resistance. Then finally in molded silicone, set on a pedestal of polycarbonate, is a replica of a can of Spam. The silicone is dyed pink and eerily resembled the product itself. On the front facia, in Korean, is the word “Spam”, with an English translation stamped on top. Both the *BooDaeChigae* and *Celibate Machines* show the ways in which food can hold multiple and sometimes multiple, and in the case of *budae jjigae*, contradictory meanings. *Budae jjigae* in Yoo’s piece was considered “good food”, but also filled with trash. The image of the murky soup, almost grotesque in its depiction on the screen. But it was a necessity for survival. The Spam featured in the work of Cindy Kim, literally placed on a pedestal, is striking against the backdrop of black concrete and the intricate details of the Renaissance mural. The rice balls molded into fists pairs well with the Spam in both form and meaning, as Spam is often served with rice in Korea. Reflecting on Yoo’s *BoodaeChiGae*, the Korean American scholar Crystal Baik noted it’s connection to her theory of “reencounters” or the way in which “diasporic memory works to catalyze moments of return and remembering that denaturalize naturalized temporalities, solidified resumptions, and historical knowledges.”⁶⁵ Outside of the art piece, *budae jjigae* itself, I argue, becomes the carrier and symbol of these memories and cultural politics of violence and survival. It is intrinsically tied to the Korean expression of *han*, itself a contradiction in meaning. To gain strength from the injustice of colonialism, which is the essence of *han* in the

⁶⁵ Crystal Mun-hye Baik, *Reencounters: On the Korean War and Diasporic Memory Critique*, vols., Asian American History and Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020), 6.

Korean experience, is exactly what *budae jjigae* becomes in the Korean imaginary, a murky stew of both violence and war, but also novelty and the quotidian. It is both the product and the answer to *han*.

Chapter 3: Glo-cal Kimchi

Cucumber Kimchi

Kimchi

10 Kirby or Pickling Cucumbers

*1 cup buchú (Garlic Chives), cut into ½ inch pieces**

1 medium carrot, cut into thin matchsticks

1 cup green onion, sliced thin

Seasoning Mixture

2 tablespoons salt

1 ½ tablespoons garlic, minced

1 teaspoon ginger, minced

½ cup gochugaru (Korean red pepper flakes)

2 tablespoons fish sauce

1 tablespoon saeujeot (Korean fermented shrimp sauce)

1 tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon water

1 red jalapeño (optional)

- 1. To prepare the cucumbers for the kimchi, wash well in cold water. Trim blossom ends then quarter lengthwise to produce spears. Set aside.*
- 2. Next, prepare the seasoning mixture. Add all the ingredients into a food processor and process, being careful not to process too finely.*
- 3. In a large mixing bowl, combine the cucumber spears, buchú, shredded carrots, and green onion. Pour in the seasoning mixture and thoroughly mix with the vegetable.*
- 4. Pack the kimchi into jars and let sit in room temperature for 5 hours to ferment, then place into the refrigerator.*

This recipe is for my mother's cucumber *kimchi*. In 2014, I was asked by the Southern Foodways Alliance to review a new cookbook on the global South, as well as help consult on a documentation project on Asian American immigrants in Houston. To go along with those works I was asked to provide a recipe for *kimchi* that they could post to go along side my review. Slightly embarrassed, I realized that I didn't really have a recipe for *kimchi* I could call my own. So, I did what I knew best. I called my mom. During that conversation, I remembered some hesitation about giving up her recipe for *kimchi*. At first, I thought it was because she did not want to

give up a secret family recipe, she admitted it was because she did not think average Americans would be able to find and make her family's *kimchi*. It was also because, for her, *kimchi*, was seasonal, regional, and making do with what you have. No one could recreate HER recipe. Eventually she gave it some thought and settled on her cucumber *kimchi*, something I had grown up eating all my life. Traditionally *oi so bae go* (as it is known in Korean) was labor intensive. It requires carefully splitting Kirby cucumbers into quarters, but not all the way, creating a flower like shape. Then the seasoning mixture of shredded carrots, sliced onion, spices, and fermented fish are carefully stuffed into the folds. My mother's recipe is not so dainty. "You know me. I'm always busy. I'm a working mom. I don't have time to be dainty", I recollect telling me. For her, the food processor took care of the shredding. The cucumbers were cut into spears. And everything was mixed together. The other thing I recollect was her telling me that this recipe was easily adaptable. In Little Rock, Arkansas where we lived, access to Korean groceries were hard to come by. It was often times too expensive when we did. For this recipe, she told me, if she didn't have the Korean red pepper flake (often times indispensable in traditional Korean *kimchi* recipes), she would sometimes use Italian red pepper flakes. The fermented salted shrimp (or *sae u jeot* in Korean) she used the Thai fish sauce she found at the local Kroger. Before I hung up, I remember her emphasizing that, while this was not the traditional Korean *kimchi* recipe that the SFA might have been looking for, it was HER recipe.

If the previous chapter was about the "afterlife" of US militarism and the lasting effects of American food products on the Korean cultural and political economy after the Armistice, then this chapter is about the effects of cultural and

political economies of *kimchi*, an important Korean food product, in the United States. While its origins date back centuries, contestations over the cultural politics of what it represents to Koreans and Korean Americans in both the local and global contexts has been playing out in recent decades. It is seen through local festivals, cottage producers, and family recipes. It is seen through government communiques, backroom diplomatic channels, and government backed conglomerates. *Kimchi* is not just a potent cultural symbol; it is also big business. *Kimchi* is not just an iconic Korean dish, it's a symbol of Korean soft power. The contestations over the cultural meaning of *kimchi* are especially interesting when looking at the Korean American communities of the Washington, DC Metropolitan Region. If Spam and *budae jjigae* symbolized the intricate myths and memories of the Korea past, then *kimchi* might be seen as a cultural symbol of its present, hopes, and futures.

"Kimchi Diplomacy": The Global Kimchi Network

On November 2020 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea (the formal name for South Korea) sent out an official communique launching its "Kimchi Diplomacy" initiative through its embassy in Stockholm, Sweden.⁶⁶ It touted the delivery of freshly-mad *kimchi* to members of the royal family, government and parliament officials, and to the diplomatic corps to celebrate the designation of November 22 as "Kimchi Day", a legal holiday in Korea. Closer to home, the Korean embassy in Washington, DC commemorated then President-Elect Obama's 2008

⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, "Kimchi Diplomacy," Press Release, November 26, 2020, https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/se-en/brd/m_23402/view.do?seq=57&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=

meeting with Korean president Lee Myung Bak by highlighting Obama's love of *kimchi* and *bulgogi* (soy-marinated grilled beef) that he ate as a child growing up in Hawaii as they reiterated strong bilateral ties between the United States and South Korea.⁶⁷ *Kimchi*, has always been an important food product in Korea, as it has been an enduring cultural product. My mother would often say growing up as we made *kimchi* together that for Koreans, all you need is some *kimchi* and some hot rice and you're set for a meal. But beginning in the early 2000s, and officially beginning in 2009 with the introduction of the Korean Cuisine to the World it became a foreign policy imperative. The Korean government through the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery and the country's Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism launched the Korean Cuisine to the World to quadruple the number of Korean restaurants abroad and to get Korean cuisine into the upper echelons of world cuisine.⁶⁸ After the US launch of the campaign, speaking to the *New York Times*, she remarked through her interpreter, "I wanted to give them a new taste of Korea as something positive and delicious... From the war, they do not have many pleasant food memories." The star of the campaign, was none other than *kimchi*.

Kimchi at its most basic is a traditional fermented vegetables that serves as the main side dish in a Korean meal. Vegetables like napa cabbage, radish, or dark leafy greens like mustard are salted, then mixed with spices and other flavorings, typically garlic, onions, and salted and fermented seafood. While in the United States it is most

⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea, "President Lee, President-Elect Obama Stress Stronger Korea-U.S. Relationship," Press Release, November 7, 2008, https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/us-en/brd/m_4511/view.do?seq=684662.

⁶⁸ "Korean Cuisine Seeks to Globalize," April 8, 2009, <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2009/04/08/politics/Korean-cuisine-seeks-to-globalize/2903289.html>.

often thought of and reported on as fermented Chinese (or Napa) cabbage, there are about 200 documented varieties of *kimchi* in Korea, each with its own regionality and seasonality.⁶⁹ In official Korean government documents (published by the World Institute of Kimchi, a Korean government funded research institute dedicated to the growth of the *kimchi* industry) it is referred to as Korea's "soul food", "... a representative cultural icon of Korea. This Korea soul food conjures up nostalgic memories and the taste of Mom's homemade cooking while linking us to the past lives of Koreans throughout history."⁷⁰ The process and celebration of making *kimchi*, known as *kimjang* in Korean is also an important symbol for Koreans. It is a time, usually in the early fall after the harvest of napa cabbage, where neighbors, family members, and communities alike join in on making *kimchi* for the winter season. Of particular importance is the rituals that stem from passing down recipes and knowledge of *kimchi* making from generations down with special importance given to women in the community as sustainers and guardians of regional and local *kimchi* making recipes, processes, production, storage, and service.⁷¹ In concert with its "Korean Cuisine to the World" campaign, there was an aggressive lobbying effort to get *kimjang* included into the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural

⁶⁹ Reggie Surya and David Nugroho, "Kimchi throughout Millennia: A Narrative Review on the Early and Modern History of Kimchi," *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 10, no. 1 (April 3, 2023): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-023-00171-w>.

⁷⁰ World Institute of Kimchi, *Hello Kimchi: Korean Soul Food*, English Edition (Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, 2021).

⁷¹ Reggie Surya and Anne Ga-Yeon Lee, "Exploring the Philosophical Values of Kimchi and Kimjang Culture," *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 9, no. 1 (June 20, 2022): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-022-00136-5>.

Organization's (UNESCO) list of Intangible Cultural Heritage with those efforts succeeding in 2013.⁷²

Efforts like the Korean Cuisine to the World campaign and the international lobbying efforts by the Korean government to list *kimjang* into the UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage constitute what both political scientists and food studies scholars have called, "gastrodiplomacy."⁷³ The term, first thought to have been coined in an *Economist* article on the efforts by the government of Thailand to increase awareness of Thai food and culture and gain political clout in the process, specifically refers to the use of soft power diplomacy emphasizing food- production, cultivation, preparation- as a means of generating political and economic benefits.⁷⁴ While this "gastrodiplomacy" is often seen through positive encounters between foreign powers, as in President Obama's overtures to the Korean president on his love of *kimchi*, *kimchi* has also been at the center of when "gastrodiplomacy" has negative consequences. *Kimchi* created both diplomatic and political troubles between Korea and its East Asian neighbors in Japan and China over the supposed Chinese origins of *kimchi* and the proper labelling of *kimchi* versus the Japanese variant of *kimuchi*. as well as the import of Chinese cabbage in use for Korean *kimchi*

⁷² "UNESCO - Decision of the Intergovernmental Committee: 8.COM 8.23," accessed April 21, 2023, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions>.

⁷³ Fabio Parasecoli, "How Countries Use Food to Win Friends and Influence People," *Foreign Policy*, August 20, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/20/food-diplomacy-countries-identity-culture-marketing-gastrodiplomacy-gastronativism/>.

⁷⁴ Fabio Parasecoli, *Gastronativism : Food, Identity, Politics, Arts and Traditions of the Table : Perspectives on Culinary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022); "Thailand's Gastro-Diplomacy," *The Economist*, accessed April 28, 2023, https://www.economist.com/asia/2002/02/21/thailands-gastro-diplomacy?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=17210591673&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=Cj0KCQjw3a2iBhCFARIsAD4jQB3a7mGNtNQVTacgu2sraq__c86C3jkA1_UOzc2JGli9ohdwLAB7cBAaAgOqEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds.

production.⁷⁵ In the case of the supposed Chinese origins of *kimchi*, a vocal and vociferous response by scholars backed by the World Institute of Kimchi have been disseminated.⁷⁶ The diplomatic and political row over the origins of *kimchi* have become such a cultural touchstone that it was parodied in an advertisement campaign by a Korean pizza chain with a “mockumentary” of how Korean researchers and scientists have discovered the “true” origins of pizza as coming from Korea.⁷⁷

While the so-called “*kimchi wars*” of East Asia might have caused some headaches in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo, the literature suggests that soft power gastrodiploacy has had mixed results when it comes to hard power political decision making.⁷⁸ However, when it comes to generating political “goodwill”, *kimchi* seems to have garnered its fair share in the United States due to the constant pressure and efforts of the Korean government.

Kimchi as Local

On a Sunday afternoon in September 2021, the Korean government hoped to generate some political goodwill of their own in the Washington, DC area through *kimchi*.⁷⁹ Community members, diplomats, and press all gathered for the annual KFood Cook Off, a cooking competition organized by a consortium of Korean

⁷⁵ Kyung Koo Han, “The ‘Kimchi Wars’ in Globalizing East Asia: Consuming Class, Gender, Health, and National Identity,” in *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity: Commodification, Tourism, and Performance*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁷⁶ Dai-Ja Jang et al., “Discussion on the Origin of Kimchi, Representative of Korean Unique Fermented Vegetables,” *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 126–36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2015.08.005>.

⁷⁷ Paula Forbes, “Here’s a Video That Argues Pizza Originated in Korea,” *Eater*, October 11, 2011, <https://www.eater.com/2011/10/11/6645069/heres-a-video-that-argues-pizza-originated-in-korea>.

⁷⁸ JUYAN ZHANG, “The Foods of the Worlds: Mapping and Comparing Contemporary Gastrodiploacy Campaigns,” *International Journal of Communication (19328036)* 9 (January 2015): 1–24.

⁷⁹ Gimga Group, “KFood in the US- 2021 KFood Cook Off,” (Hyatt Regency Hotel, Tysons Corner, VA September 26, 2021).

governmental organizations tasked with promoting and selling Korean food in the United States.⁸⁰ Four contestants, all amateur cooks chosen by the organizing committee, were given one hour to create dishes highlighting the secret ingredient of the day, *kimchi*.

But behind the lights and the cameras, there was controversy. In promotional literature leading up to the event, one of the judges, Daniel Kramer, owner of Gogi Yogi (who is white), a Korean barbecue restaurant in Washington, DC wrote that there was a “lack of Korean restaurants in the DMV area.”⁸¹ Rightly so, those comments struck a nerve with Korean and Korean Americans in the Washington, DC region. Comments started to pour into the social media channels related to the event from the Korean American community. One commenter named Grace wrote:

This is supposed to celebrate Korean culture and community but you continue to actively silence the Korean community who live here and have lackluster representation of Koreans. This is a PR nightmare ya’ll better get it together before your event is protested.⁸²

Others were upset about the diversity of the panel of judges. Kramer, again, was singled out in particular for the way in which he was presented in the promotional material:

Daniel lived near Koreatown in Los Angeles and has fond memories of eating out at the restaurants in the area. He saw there was a lack in Korean Restaurants in the DMV area so he created Gogi Yogi.⁸³

⁸⁰ Gimga Group, “2021 K-Food Cook Off,” <https://kfoodinus.com/k-food-cook-off-2021/>

⁸¹ Laura Hayes, “Judges Quit, Chef Speaks Out After Social Media Stir Over Korean Cooking Contest,” *Washington City Paper*, September 7th, 2021, <https://washingtoncitypaper.com/article/530487/judges-quit-after-social-media-stir-over-k-food-cook-off-contest/> (accessed June 16th, 2023).

⁸² Hayes, “Judges Quit, Chef Speaks Out After Social Media Stir Over Korean Cooking Contest.”

⁸³ Hayes, “Judges Quit, Chef Speaks Out After Social Media Stir Over Korean Cooking Contest.”

In response, local food professional Eddie Kim had this to say to the *Washington City Paper*:

He grew up where there's a Koreatown and he ate Korean food sometimes. It harkens to the stereotype we used to hear from chefs. "Oh, I spent two weeks in Thailand and I fell in love with the food and so I took a crash course and now I'm cooking it."⁸⁴

In the Washington, DC *kimchi* takes on a cultural economy of its own. It is a city where the global meets the local and the local goes on to become globalized, everything is political. The local politics of *kimchi* takes shape in ways that both fits within the larger narratives of globalized *kimchi* diplomacy, that is to say for politics of recognition and soft power, as well as pushing back against those logics. The production, procuring, storage, and consumption of *kimchi* take on a multitude of meanings for Korean and Korean Americans in the Capital region.⁸⁵ It is a means of preserving family traditions and histories, of cottage food production, and of placemaking.

*Korean American Community in the Washington, DC/Capital Region*⁸⁶

Behind the popular Koreatowns of Los Angeles and New York, the Washington, DC/Capital Region hosts the third largest Korean population in the United States.⁸⁷ Historically, Washington, DC has a particular place in the cultural

⁸⁴ Hayes, "Judges Quit, Chef Speaks Out After Social Media Stir Over Korean Cooking Contest."

⁸⁵ Frank Cha and Sonia Ryang have both written about Korean and Korean Americans in the Washington, DC area through the lens of the region's "Southern-ness." Through their work, Korean and Korean Americans are presented as a class of "interstitial" Americans that have formed a niche of neither White nor Black in a racialized dyad that privileges white supremacy

⁸⁶ The Washington, DC/Capital Region comprises of the greater Washington, DC/Arlington/Alexandria metropolitan areas and includes Fairfax and Loudoun Counties in Northern Virginia, and Howard and Montgomery counties in Maryland.

⁸⁷ Pew Research Center, "Top 10 U.S. metropolitan areas by Korean population, 2015", September 8, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/chart/top-10-u-s-metropolitan-areas-by-korean-population/> (accessed October 19, 2023).

politics of the Korean diaspora. While Koreans immigrated to the DC since the late 19th century, at the beginning of the 20th century, it became the overseas headquarters of the movement for independence from the Japanese empire.⁸⁸ Activists like Phillip Jaesohn (Soh Jaepil) and Syngman Rhee (who would go on to become the first president of the Republic of Korea after independence from Japan after World War II). Today there are around 80,000 Koreans in the broader DC Metro area, with the largest populations in Fairfax County in Virginia, and Montgomery and Howard Counties in Maryland.⁸⁹ In Fairfax County, the city of Annandale hosts one of the epicenters of Korean and Korean American life. Along the main thoroughfare of Little River Turnpike, Korean-owned businesses operate featuring typeface in both Korean and English. Supermarkets, restaurants, hair salons, cafes, and karaoke parlors all play host to Korean and non-Korean clientele alike.⁹⁰ Further out in Loudoun County, the city of Centreville hosts a growing Korean population and business district centered around multiple shopping plazas and strip malls anchored by H Mart and Lotte Plaza, two of the largest Korean-owned supermarket chains in the United States.

Documenting Asian Pacific American Foodways in the Capital Region

⁸⁸ Young Chang Chae (채영창), and Korean American Community Association of Washington, DC. 워싱턴한인회. *워싱턴한인사, 1883-1993*. (Annandale, Va.: Korean American Community Association of Washington, DC Wösingt'on Haninhoe, 1994) 48-56.

⁸⁹ Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University, "Korea: Korean Population in the Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD Metropolitan Areas," <https://iir.gmu.edu/immigrant-stories-dc-baltimore/korea/korea-analysis> (accessed October 19, 2023).

⁹⁰ For an interesting reading of Annandale's status as multi-ethnic enclave see Frank Cha, "Remapping the 38th Parallel in the Global South: Korean Immigration in Southern Spaces." *The Global South* 3, no. 2 (2009): 32–49.

In September 2020 I was brought on by the collections and curatorial team at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum as a contract collections researcher to help curate and develop a diverse collection of materials to document contributions from Asian American communities to the Washington, DC region's food culture and history. With the support of the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center (APAC), work began on the Asian Pacific American (APA) Foodways Project in October 2020. The Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese communities were the target communities for documentation. Organizations that I met with included the 1882 Foundation, a Washington, DC-based organization dedicated to preserving the history of DC's Chinatown, as well as the Korean American Grocers Association of Washington, DC, a trade group of Korean American grocers, liquor store, and convenience store owners.

Consultation also began with other Smithsonian Institution (SI) units to survey and evaluate current holdings and collecting initiatives. This survey concluded with a preliminary research and collection plan that was circulated in late October 2020. It noted that, while SI had a notable collection of APA foodways-related objects (namely in the form of cookware and tableware), that the collection was strongest with objects from Japanese and Chinese American communities from the West Coast, as well as extensive holdings from the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, there were some APA foodways related archival collections at the Archives Center. However, there was a lot of room left to develop holdings that reflect local and regional APA foodways in the Washington, DC region. This includes adding to and working in consultation with existing initiatives, namely that are occurring at the Center for

Folklife and Cultural Heritage through their collaboration with the DC Oral History Collaborative to document APA chefs in Washington, DC.

During the fall of 2020, I was also asked to help develop APA foodways related content for *Food for the People: Eating and Activism in Greater Washington*. Integral to food security and food justice, as seen in the exhibition, is the preservation and continuation of local food culture. Working within the confines of that topic, we looked towards three areas of APA foodways that resonated both within the scope of collecting of the APA Foodways Project and the aims of the exhibition. Access to culturally specific ingredients and cookware is an important part of preserving local food culture and as such documenting ethnic supermarkets (an often-overlooked part of the larger food network) was an important first step. Working with Samir Meghelli, chief curator at ACM, we went out to document Lotte Plaza Market in Rockville, MD. Founded in 1978 as a wholesale importer of food products from Korean and Japan, they later went into retail in 1989. They are the most well-known Asian supermarket chain to be based in the Washington, DC region, hence why we decided to begin there. Interviewed for the project was the Rockville location's general manager, Jae Don (Benjamin) Cho, who was able to discuss the history of the store, day to day interactions with customers, as well as the diversity of supply chains for ingredients he stocks at the store that not only caters to Korean and Japanese communities, but other APA communities as well. In addition to an oral history interview, the museum acquired a uniform vest as a part of the permanent collection.

To guide the collection and documentation efforts, I developed a series of six collection categories: tradition, exchange, innovation, hybridity, resistance/resilience,

and social justice. These were adapted from the project goals as renumerated in the proposal deliverables to serve as thematic guides to aid in the documentation and collection around the multitude of ways that food touches on the everyday lives of Asian Pacific Americans in the Washington, DC region. Preserving and/or adapting recipes, rituals, and traditions was an important part of this project. This included documenting important holidays such as Lunar New Year or the Mid-Autumn festival. Documenting sites of exchange included looking at ethnic markets and shopping centers where intercultural and intergenerational meetings occur. Shopping centers and districts like the historic Eden Center (which is a center for Vietnamese American community building in the Washington, DC region) offer Asian American communities a place to gather during important holidays and festivals, as well as center for food businesses to grow.

While many ethnic markets began catering to a specific Asian American community, as with Lotte Plaza which started with Korean and Japanese products, as multicultural and multiethnic suburbs began to grow in cities like Rockville and Annandale these markets adapted to changing demographics to serve these communities with culturally relevant foods. These markets, while an important part of local food systems, have not been studied as much and so this documentation effort presents a unique opportunity for food studies researchers. The innovation category was meant to capture any businesses that were showcase new ways of delivering, processing, or marketing food. Hybridity was meant to capture changes, adaptations, or hybridization of cultures across ethnic or generational lines. And finally, resistance

and social justice was meant to capture the history of APA communities challenging the social and economic inequalities present in the current food system.

Taegu Kimchi



Figure 6: Patrice Cunningham and her mother Hong Cunningham making kimchi together in their ghost kitchen space in NE Washington, DC. Patrice is the founder of Taegu Kimchi. Small to mid-sized cottage food producers in the Washington, DC region like Taegu Kimchi fill an important part of the Korean American culinary landscape as it provides consumers with products that are between the commercially available (often times imported into the country from South Korea) and homemade goods. During the pandemic, cottage food producers were especially important in sustaining traditional food practices and production as import and supply chain issues often times hindered access to imported kimchi. Photo Credit: Asian Pacific American Foodways Project Collection, Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, DC. Photographer: Michael Barnes

Outside of traditional supermarkets, Korean American communities often rely on a complex network of producers and distributors to deliver, produce, grow, and cultivate foods and ingredients that are important to sustaining food traditions. Cottage food producers provide economic opportunities for home cooks and can also be an innovative space to test new modes of delivery and service, while wholesale

merchants help import and cultural significant ingredients from not only Asia, but other parts of the world and the United States.

Patrice Cunningham is a native Washingtonian and owner of Taegu Kimchi.⁹¹ After a career as a chef in Washington, DC, she decided to start Taegu Kimchi using her mother's *kimchi* recipe with plans to get *kimchi* into mainline supermarkets in Washington, DC that was fresher and more traditional. Her mother is from Taegu (now written as Daegu) in Korea's central region. She married an African American serviceman and came to the United States and raised Patrice in the Brookland neighborhood of Washington, DC, as well as in Prince George's County, Maryland. In her previous career she worked as the executive chef at Gogi Yogi (yes, that Gogi Yogi) in Washington, DC, but was let go during the pandemic lull. Taegu Kimchi was born with her mother, Hong Cunningham's recipe for *kimchi*. As her mother tells it, it is a pretty simple recipe, using cabbage, Korean red pepper flakes, and other seasonings.⁹² One seasoning in particular stuck out to me. In Hong's recipe, she called for the use of aspartame, the artificial sweetener. This is a common ingredient for *kimchi*, as you only need a very little amount to give the *kimchi* the right sweetness to balance the saltiness of the brine.⁹³ As my previous chapter noted, in the years after the Korean War, the introduction of food science and chemistry introduced processed foods into the Korean diet as a way to increase production. Ingredients like aspartame were introduced to the Korean diet and were readily incorporated into

⁹¹ Patrice Cunningham, interviewed by Kevin Kim, October 8th, 2021, in Washington, DC, Asian Pacific American Foodways Project, Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, DC.

⁹² Patrice and Hong Cunningham, interviewed by Kevin Kim, November 30, 2021, in Washington, DC, Asian Pacific American Foodways Project, Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, DC.

recipes. However, as Patrice came to find out, many of the American supermarkets would not take her (and her mother's) *kimchi* if she kept the aspartame in the recipe and asked that she change the recipe if she wanted their stores to carry it.⁹⁴

Kimchi Juice

Julia Chon aka Kimchi Juice is a Korean American mixed-media artist based in Washington, DC and Fairfax, VA. Her current project features meticulously painted *onggi* pots (traditional clay vessels typically used to store fermented foods in Korea) that reflects her family's Korean food traditions. The piece that was donated by her to the museum is titled *I Gave a Lot of Water to My Flower of Laughter* (단지) and features a *danji* (or medium sized *onggi* pot) with chrysanthemum flowers painted directly on the pot in various stages of bloom. The pot was purchased locally at an HMart in Northern Virginia, sanded down and the flowers painted by hand with acrylic paint. Chrysanthemum flowers are traditionally known in Korean as a funerary flower and symbolize death. However, for Chon, she drew the flowers in various stages of bloom to note the constant cycle of life and death.

Onggi pots are the most traditional form of storage for fermented foods like *kimchi* in the Korean kitchen. They are coarse earthenware pots that contain small microscopic holes that allow for air to flow through while still maintaining the correct temperature. Traditionally these crocks are buried underground or stored in huts or caves to age. The area set aside for these pots is referred to as the *jangdokdae*. While in traditional Korean *hanok* homes this area is usually outdoors in the courtyard, in

⁹⁴ Cottage food producers like Patrice Cunningham are often subject to differing laws, regulations, permitting procedures, or in her case, a distaste of certain ingredients, that they must follow that leads to altering family or traditional recipes.

more modern homes and apartments, *jangdokdaes* can be found in balconies and terraces. That was the case in my childhood home, as my grandmother kept a her *onggi* pots in her terrace, scooping soy sauce and *gochujang* (Korean fermented red pepper paste) as needed. When I was working for the Smithsonian collecting and documenting Asian American food cultures in the Washington, DC area, the Korean American community members who had immigrated from Korea spoke fondly of the *onggi* tradition. However, they were also quick to acknowledge how changes in technology have also changed their personal use of *onggi* pots. Hong Cunningham of Taegu Kimchi relies on her *kimchi* refrigerator to keep the temperature regulated for her product at home.⁹⁵ That being said, others like Sonia Lee of Annandale Catering insists on using her *onggi* pots she brought back from Korea to ferment her *jang* (fermented sauces) the traditional way.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Patrice and Hong Cunningham, interviewed by Kevin Kim, November 30, 2021, in Washington, DC, Asian Pacific American Foodways Project, Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, DC.

⁹⁶ Sonia Lee, interviewed by Kevin Kim, May 7, 2021, in Annandale, VA, Asian Pacific American Foodways Project, Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, DC.



Figure 7: Kimchi containers for sale at Lotte Plaza Market in Rockville, MD. They mimic the color and feature the designs of traditional onggi crock ware that is traditionally used to store fermented foods such as kimchi. Photo Courtesy of the Author.

Kimjang

Kimjang refers to the traditional practice of preparing and storing kimchi (traditional Korean fermented vegetables). Traditionally done in the fall and spring, *kimjang* is often a multigenerational event that involves salting the vegetables, making a seasoning paste, layering and/or mixing the salted vegetables with the marinade, then carefully packing the kimchi into jars/containers for storage. It is often left at room temperature to start lactic acid fermentation, then stored in cooler temperatures to age. The most common vegetable for kimchi during *kimjang* is napa cabbage, but kimchi is regional and seasonal and can be made with a wide variety of vegetables including Korean radish, mustard greens, and Chinese garlic chives.

Much like other traditional culinary practices, *kimjang* has also changed as it moved to the United States. The seasonality of *kimjang*, for example has changed. Due to the abundance of produce all year long coming from California, among the

Korean American community members I have talked to state that *kimjang* is no longer reserved for just the fall months, but rather can occur all year long. That being said, in the early autumn months of October, it is not uncommon to find vegetables and ingredients for *kimjang* on sale at local Korean supermarkets, marking the cultural symbolism of the event. In local politics, Korean American political activists have lobbied in both the Virginia and Maryland legislatures to commemorate the season by passing legislation to celebrate “Kimchi Day” on November 22nd (coinciding with Korea’s National Kimchi Day).⁹⁷ On a more personal note, my younger sibling and I still get together to make our own *kimchi* and host a *kimjang* “party” of sorts in the fall. This was spurred on during a trip to a farmers’ market and seeing a small jar of *kimchi* made from kale being sold for an exorbitant amount. Having grown up relying on what we called the “*kimchi* network”, it was hard to swallow seeing such a small amount of *kimchi* being sold for so much. The “*kimchi* network”, was the informal relationship with neighbors, church members, family, and friends who would exchange *kimchi* that they had made. To recreate this tradition, my younger sibling and I would host *kimjang* parties at our home, inviting our friends, neighbors, and family members to bring an empty jar to be filled with homemade *kimchi*.

⁹⁷ Gianna Melillo, “Maryland, Virginia celebrate first Kimchi Day,” *The Hill*, November 22, 2022, <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/diversity-inclusion/3746436-maryland-virginia-celebrate-first-kimchi-day/> (accessed July 14, 2023).



Figure 8: Me and my younger sibling during one of our kimjang parties in 2019. We were inspired by our family history of community kimchi making by hosting a kimjang day of our own, inviting friends, family, neighbors to bring an empty jar to take some kimchi. Photo Courtesy of Author.

Chapter 4: The Material and Archival Afterlife of Rice

“To Koreans Everything is a Crisis”

In high stakes negotiations between the United States and South Korea over shipments of much needed food aid, a lot was riding a single one word : “crisis.”⁹⁸ During a meeting in Washington with diplomats from the Korean Embassy, State Department officials at the Office of East Asian Affairs were given an terse response to recent charges from James “Big Jim” Killen (Director of United States Operations Mission to South Korea) that the Korean government had “deliberately created [a] crisis” in order to force the United States to send more surplus grain to the nation. According to the State Department memo of the conversation, Pak Kun, a lawyer with the Korean Embassy interjected by stating that Koreans used the term “crisis” to mean “difficulty or a serious problem”, not a “food or economic crisis” and to believe otherwise would have meant that Killen “questioned the integrity of the Korean government and the public.”⁹⁹ To the Koreans, State Department officials concluded, everything was a “crisis.”

But while diplomats in Washington were debating what was meant by the term “crisis”, letters were coming in to the USOM in Seoul from Koreans about a looming food shortage crisis due to poor harvests, inadequate supply, and general mismanagement. While expressing sympathy to their concerns in in one reply the chief of the Rural Development Division, noted that “According to reports reaching

⁹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, “Additional Aid to Korea; Mr. Killen’s Speech; Korea-Japan Negotiations,” May 16, 1963, file Entry 1963 Aid-Economic, box 3323, Subject Numeric File 1963-73, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives II, College Park, MD.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

this office, work relief is available in your area, but some individuals are unwilling to work in order to obtain food.”¹⁰⁰ For Koreans, American officials concluded, everything was a “crisis.”

This chapter disentangles the multivariant power structures that controlled the flow of one of Korea’s most valuable commodities, rice, through the haunting of the archives and the material world. It is the story of Cold War Politics and US military expansionism built upon pre-existing colonial logistical networks. It is the story of a corrupt military junta that ate well, got rich in the process, but let a country starve. For diplomats what were numbers on a spreadsheet that were weaponized in the “fight against Communists” turned out to be a get-rich-quick scheme for elites. But for the average Korean, growing, procuring, and cooking rice presents an important marker of not only Korean food culture, but of life. As with many cultures, one of the first things Koreans will ask when they greet you is not “hello”, but have you eaten. And when they ask, they will ask, “Have you had your rice for the day?” In this chapter rice- from production to distribution to consumption- becomes metaphor and material to a “secret” history of Korean American diasporic identity. It begins with a material analysis of traces of burnt rice on a cooking pot, a look into the archives surrounding the “Asian Gatsby” of Washington, DC, then ends with stories from producers and distributors of rice and rice cakes in the Korean American suburbs of Annandale, VA and Howard County. These vignettes into the material afterlife of rice

¹⁰⁰ Joe Motheral, Chief, Rural Development Division, United States Operations Mission, Korea, to Sung Chong Moon, Ko Sung Gun, Kangwon Do, Korea, May 24, 1963; p586, Container 16; Record of the Agency for International Development, Record Group 286.

shows that sometimes what is not written, what is not said, and what is mistranslated marks the Korean American experience.

Rice and Trauma at the Smithsonian

This gets to my own work at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH) and situating a framework of analysis linking food, memory and trauma at a variety of levels from the point of accession through to the interpretation stage. Trauma as a topic of interpretation in the museum space has a long history. It comes mainly through thinking about collective memory and the materiality of trauma through artefact, with much of the scholarship running through public memorials and museums of remembrance. Marita Sturken's book *Tangled Memories* is an example, focusing on the AIDS Quilt and the Vietnam War Memorial as sites that served as a place where contested meanings of nationalism and history converged, diverged and were exposed.¹⁰¹ However, in connecting foodways to a conversation about trauma, I was also drawn to literature outside of museum studies and specifically to the concept of "root shock" coined by clinical psychiatrist Mindy Thompson Fullilove. Writing about the individual and community level effects that urban renewal and gentrification had on many communities of color in American cities, Fullilove defined the concept as "the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem" and compared it to the way in which the body both succumbs to and fights off the traumatic stresses of injury.¹⁰² In thinking about trauma as pedagogy, much like the body's defenses, it is important to include ways in which

¹⁰¹ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memory: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁰² Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Ballentine Books, 2004), 11.

individuals and communities resist and fight back against these traumatic stresses of uproot.

As such I argue that the artifacts, I analyzed at the Smithsonian serve as potent examples of not only people's connection to trauma through foodways, but also the ways in which food production, consumption, and acquisition serves as important modes of resistance and place making as a way to cope and make sense of this trauma. One of the first artifacts that that came to my attention was this "black cooking pot", as described by the museum's catalog. A modern-day example of a Korean *gama-sot* (가마솥), it was donated to the museum by Bill Kim who came to the United States as an economic migrant in the aftermath of the Korean War. To many Koreans the *Gama-sot* pot serve as a particularly potent symbol in Korean history and culture. They were the most prominent features in pre-modern Korean kitchens and used primarily to cook rice, a staple part of the Korean diet. Particularly prized was the scorched rice that was left after the rice had finished cooking. After the rice was scooped out and served, water would be added to the pot, and scraped of the bits of rice that were left to make, *sung nyung* (숭늘) or scorched rice tea. The influential Korean cultural critic, O- Young Lee notes of sung nyung's role as a potent cultural symbol in his classic book of essays on Korean material culture, *In This Earth and In that Wind: This is Korea*. Lee described sung nyung as a distinctively Korean beverage. He writes:

Likewise, they say that Korean taste lies in scorched rice tea. Whenever I drink it for breakfast or dinner, I feel Korea. It seems that while it has a color, it really has no color, and while it has a taste, really hasn't.¹⁰³

Lee goes on to argue that this scorched rice tea gets to the heart of "Koreaness", writing, "So while we emit passion, we are restrained, and while we cry, we smile, and while we obey, we rebel... From such a life a taste like scorched rice tea is produced".¹⁰⁴ This is in contrast to the taste of Coca Cola which Lee found "bitter and tangy" with "the belch of a capitalist civilization".¹⁰⁵ Lee's positioning of the scorched rice tea as a palliative against capitalism connects strongly to Elaine Kim's treatment of *han* a Korean word and condition that escapes easy English translation but refers to the melancholy that is born from oppression.¹⁰⁶ In particular is how Kim notes that way in which members of the Korean American diaspora carry this *han* with them wherever they go, the history of colonial conquest and oppression layered in their flesh and "smuggled in with our baggage". Kim's use of *han* as mode of explaining the traumas of migration can be an effective way of thinking about the topic as it touches on the material world.

¹⁰³ O-Young Lee, *In This Earth and In That Wind: This is Korea*, trans. David Steinberg (Seoul: Hollym, 1969), 67.

¹⁰⁴ O-Young Lee, *In This Earth and In That Wind*, 69.

¹⁰⁵ O-Young Lee, *In This Earth and In That Wind*, 67.

¹⁰⁶ Elaine Kim, "Home is Where the Han is: A Korean American Perspective on the Los Angeles Upheavals," *Social Justice* 20 (Summer 1993): 1-21.



Figure 9: Image of a gamasot (or cast-iron pot) from the Bill and Mary Kim Collection at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. While hard to see from the above image, the pot had use wear patterns and bits of burnt rice stuck to the bottom. These patterns were missed during the initial intake, but are crucial to understanding the importance of the pot to cooking rice in the traditional way in the Korean kitchen. This particular pot is a much smaller version of traditional gamasot pots (often used in open hearth cooking) for the modern kitchen. Photo Credit: Gift of Bill and Mary Kim, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC.

Carrying trauma as baggage was quite an interesting concept and here, I found it to be an interesting coincidence when in the same room I was pointed to this cooking pot. Donated by the family of Muhamed A. Kareem, the pot had travelled from Iraqi Kurdistan with the Kareems as they fled the region as refugees of Saddam Hussein's reign of terror against the Kurdish minority. First to Guam, where they were held for processing then onto Houston where they were further processed before eventually settling in Harrisonburg, VA, a small city in the Shenandoah Valley home a to a growing Kurdish expat community. What drew me to this pot, referred by the

donor as a *manjal*, a rice pot, was that its connection to war. I was particularly interested in the story of the pot as it moved to Virginia; the Kareems noted that as they got better pots, they had pretty much forgotten about this particular pot and had relegated it to storing chicken feed. It reminded me of my own kitchen growing up in an immigrant family, the well patina-ed woks and pots that I wanted to save that survived a transpacific voyage, but was told by my mother to throw away because they had gotten newer, better pans now. The French-Canadian anthropologist Jean Sebastian Marcoux, argues that in times of migration and movement, how material culture, specifically the things we carry or not is a means of “refurbishing” their memories and reorienting relationships between the material world and the personal.¹⁰⁷

While the history of war drew me to the pot, as I began to analyze the object, I saw that the two pots both used to cook rice also both bore similar use wear patterns. The two pots, miles apart in location and time, but tied to the traumas of war and violence, Kareems at the hands of a murderous dictatorial regime, and for Bill Kim an economic migrant in the aftermath of the Korean War, both had traces of crisp rice on the bottom. And while I might not be as familiar with the cultural history of *tahdig*, the tradition of cooking crispy rice in the Persian cooking tradition, I found the two pots in a kind of culinary dialogue along the lines of the cultural preservation practices that Psyche Williams Forson wrote about in Langley Park through its connections with war and state violence.

¹⁰⁷ Marcoux, “The Refurbishment of Memory” in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller (Oxford: Berg. 2001):69-86.



Figure 10: Located just a few cabinets away from the Korean gamasot pot was this manjal from a Kurdish family who came to the United States as refugees escaping the state sanctioned violence of Kurdish minorities in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Both pots had similar use wear patterns of burnt rice on the bottom. Photo Credit: Gift of Mrs. Muhamed A. Kareem, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC.

My experience in finding the pots and filling in the corresponding contextual information reminded me of the experience that Cheryl La Roche and Michael Blakey had while interpreting artefacts their team uncovered at the African Burial Ground in New York City. Writing on the subjective and contentious nature of material cultural analysis in archaeology, La Roche and Blakey recounted an instance when a pattern of nail heads was interpreted as forming a heart-shaped pattern, but upon closer inspection by an African American scientist (who by all accounts was not a specialist in African symbolic systems), noted that the ornate heart-shaped pattern closely resembled that of an Ashanti Adrinka symbol.¹⁰⁸ This analysis was further backed up

¹⁰⁸ Cheryl La Roche, "Seizing Intellectual Power."

by a Ghanaian historian of African Art, who also saw similarities to the Adrinka and to the larger cultural context of the African Burial Ground. In reflecting upon this episode, La Roche and Blakey argue that when it comes to the difficult task of interpretation, where several narratives and meanings converge, scholars should take care to look beyond myopic interpretative strategies based on narrow disciplinary blinders. Such a concept was made abundantly clear in the work of archaeologist Leland Ferguson and his study of early African American communities in South Carolina and Virginia.¹⁰⁹ Addressing a real deficit in knowledge surrounding the pioneering contributions of enslaved African communities to American cultural and material life, Ferguson argued that the excavations that he oversaw and the artifacts he unearthed helped make concrete various modes of cultural resistance on the part of enslaved peoples, while also producing material evidence towards a “creolized” mixing of African, European, and Native American traditions.¹¹⁰ Specifically Ferguson points to his research on Colono Ware pottery. Low-fired, unglazed, and hand built, Colono Ware had been, up to Ferguson’s work largely classified as being the product of Native American communities. However, Ferguson argued that his excavations in South Carolina produced Colono Ware that both Africans and Native Americans produced this pottery and had incorporated European, indigenous, and African designs, highlighting the complex networks of colonial creolization.¹¹¹

Creolization, which Ferguson described as the “interaction, exchange, and creativity” associated with colonial exchange has also been a widely used term to

¹⁰⁹ Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1992).

¹¹⁰ Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground*, 119-120.

¹¹¹ Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground*, 22.

describe the cultural politics of food and migration in America.¹¹² The culinary historian Donna Gabbaccia highlights this process of mix and mingling of food cultures through the lens of migration in her book *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food in America*. Much of this “creolization” Gabbaccia contends, was driven by the entrepreneurial spirit of ethnic businessmen who catered to both the tastes of their fellow countrymen, but also those sought new tastes and wanted to experience “authentic” tastes of ethnic cuisines.¹¹³ Gabbaccia also note the ways in which these multicultural culinary exchanges are driven in part by larger globalized systems of trade. Immigrant enclaves in New York and Los Angeles, for example, Gabbaccia notes that the influx of migrants from the Caribbean and Southeast Asia has driven the increase in the importation of tropical fruits and vegetables, as a discerning clientele demand fresher and fresher produce. And when breadfruit flown in by air from Jamaica is not “fresh” enough, an infrastructure to grow them in Florida can arise. According to Gabbaccia these ethnic enclaves also spurs “cross-over eating” between communities as dramatically highlighted by the experience of Sung Hong of L.A.’s El Molino Panaderia Argentina.

Hong, who is Korean American, runs the Argentine bakery using the baking knowledge he learned from his father who had himself learned it from Jewish bakers.¹¹⁴ However, what is interesting about Gabbaccia’s contention around these

¹¹² Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground*, xli.

¹¹³ Donna Gabbaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 203. Psyche Williams-Forsen also demonstrates much of what Gabbaccia emphasizes in her research on Red Apple Market in Langley Park, MD, a local hub for West African, Latin American, and Caribbean foodstuff. (Psyche Williams-Forsen, “‘I Haven’t Eaten If I Don’t Have My Soup and Fufu’: Cultural Preservation through Food and Foodways among Ghanaian Migrants in the United States,” *Africa Today* 61, no. 1 (2014): 69–87.

¹¹⁴ Gabbaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 207.

ethnic enclaves is how they also fall along the spatial lines of what Asian American studies theorist Lisa Lowe described as “neo-liberal multiculturalism”.¹¹⁵ After observing an arts festival where Cambodian singers, flamenco dancers, Japanese puppet theater, and a Balinese children’s choir performed at the same event, she asserts that the way that the city (and to a larger extent the nation) practices a kind of pluralistic multiculturalism that intentionally hides the material and economic differences of these different communities that call L.A. home. This melting pot multiculturalism, which marks the city of LA and is vociferously championed by its boosters, thus becomes easy to swallow, as it washes away the material and economic differences felt by displaced people. In rejecting this neo-liberal production of consumable multiculturalism were the women shop owners featured in the documentary *Sa-I-Gu*. As Lowe argues the Korean American women business owners featured in this documentary, all of whom lost their businesses (and some even their family member’s lives) to the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings, are a “radical objection to multiculturalism and a forceful testimony and critique of the conjunction of global capitalism with racism and patriarchy in Los Angeles”.¹¹⁶ The testimonies of these women, many of whom escaped political and social authoritarianism in their native land and seduced by the promises of a liberal democracy, show that this “melting pot” idea to be a mirage to the racialized spatiality of Los Angeles, driven by this neoliberal multiculturalism.

¹¹⁵ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 85.

¹¹⁶ Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 95.

Also important to the discussion of the “creolization” of American food culture is the ways in which foodways and citizenship intersect. The social and cultural historian Vicki Ruiz in her essay, “Citizen Restaurant: American Imaginaries, American Communities” outlines a “citizenship of the everyday”, where race “infuses” itself into “ordinary acts of reaction, resistance, appropriation, and ambivalence as they have played out in relation to food, labor, and immigration.”¹¹⁷ In the United States, Ruiz contends, inequality frames much of these interactions as ethnic and racial foodscapes serve as markers for both the familiar and the “exotic” other. While Ruiz points to scholars like Donna Gabbacia who note how food brings people and cultures together, she can also provide a myriad of examples in which food and eating has served to racialize marginalize people and contest their citizenship. In one example Ruiz cites political leaders like James G. Blaine (one-time presidential candidate and U.S. Secretary of State) who in the 1920s declared, “You cannot work a man who must have beef and bread alongside of a man who could live on rice” as it pertained to the eating habits of Asian Americans.¹¹⁸ Citing the work of the historian Valerie Matsumoto, Ruiz argued that separating workers between “beef and bread men” versus “meat and rice” eaters allowed for the continuation and justification of the Chinese Exclusion Act that prevented the immigration of Chinese to America and for Chinese who were in the United States to be barred from owning property. Adding this conversation around food and the Asian American “other” is legal scholar Frank Wu, whose essay “The Best ‘Chink’ Food: Dog Eating and the

¹¹⁷ Vicki Ruiz, “Citizen Restaurant: American Imaginaries, American Communities,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2008): 1.

¹¹⁸Ruiz, 6.

Dilemma of Diversity”, attempts to understand the Asian American body politic through the lens of “diversity”. He does so by exploring the multitude of cultural meanings and questions that arise from the question “Do Asians eat dog?” This question is set along a larger cultural landscape that prioritizes only a superficial “taste” of diversity. “We only sample diversity”, he writes, going to argue that it most prevalent in those who consider themselves more open-minded, and as such he argues that any dialogue on diversity must include a certain amount of self-reflection, critical, and perhaps at times uncomfortable.¹¹⁹ Wu goes on to analyze the variety of potential answers that people might use to respond to the connection between “Asians” and dog eating. One response might be to completely refute the notion that Asians eat dog, which is not entirely true. A “multiculturalist” response might entail someone saying “Asians eat dog, and who are you to criticize them”?¹²⁰ Wu notes how such a response reorients the question to a subject level that is to turn the meal into a spectacle. Wu rather asks us to respond to the question with another question. “What is the point of asking whether I eat dogs”?¹²¹ In doing so, Wu argues, we engage in a larger project on the “meta-discourse” of diversity, “talking about the way we talk”. This involves thinking about proportion (does dog eating in a certain sector of a certain part of Asian society mean that Asians eat dog?), about thinking about the context and history of the cultural practice, and thinking critically about your own cultural practices. This concept around exploring the “meta-discourse” around a stereotypical image associated between one group and a particular food item is also

¹¹⁹ Frank H. Wu, “The Best "Chink" Food: Dog Eating and the Dilemma of Diversity,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 2, no. 2 (2002).

¹²⁰ Wu.

¹²¹ Wu.

the heart of American Studies scholar Psyche Williams-Forson's book *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs*. In the book Williams-Forson explores the complex histories and layered meanings that chicken holds for African American women and analyzes how some of this history got morphed into the mass-mediated racist and stereotypical imagery that lingers to this day.¹²² She delved into a wide range of sources, some historical, others contemporary, and still others personal to view the relationship between an item as mundane as chicken through the lens of social, political, and economic systems. While she is deeply self-reflexive of her own history of "gnawing on the chicken bone and sucking out the marrow" (an act that was signified as that of working-class blackness), Williams-Forson also considered how African American women sold, cooked, presented, and otherwise utilized chicken to challenge prevailing images, tropes, and identities that presented a misrepresentation by both white culture and African American men. The waiter carriers of Gordonsville, VA, for example, were African American women who prepared meals to sell to travelers along the railroad line in the post-Emancipation South, precisely time when their citizenship was challenged by a brutal white supremacist regime.¹²³ Williams-Forson argues that the "gender malpractice", a concept adapted from Tommy Lott's notion of cultural malpractice that argued that hegemonic cultures kept in place stereotypical images to benefit political and social systems, was challenged by African American women's self-definition and self-reliance to craft their own identities in their own voices.¹²⁴

¹²² Psyche A. Williams-Forson, *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs : Black Women, Food, and Power* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹²³ Williams-Forson.

¹²⁴ Williams-Forson.

In an institution the size of NMAH, with the scope and size of its massive collections, it can be very difficult for curatorial staff to devote time and energy to the kind of careful analysis that might be warranted. However, my experience with writing the accession notes for the *gamasot* and the *manjal* pots serves as an example of the importance of careful analysis at the first stage of accession. Careful consideration to accession files allows for a more nuanced interpretation strategy down the road. This might mean going back into the archive of the collections files to connect archival source materials with artifacts. This was the case with my experience surveying the artifacts connected to the archival documents in the Faris and Yamma Naff Arab American Collection.¹²⁵ Acquired by the museum in multiple stages starting the late 80s, early 90s, the Naff collection was one of the museum's legacy collection, established and well researched. As I was looking over the collections for artifacts that connected to my research theme of foodways and trauma, I noticed that there were still some gaps in the collection's documentation. Some of these documents were also in different sections or mislabeled. I thought it would be prudent to connect these documents together for the collection file and consolidate them in the chance that curators and researchers would like to utilize the collection in future exhibitions. This document connected the artifacts in the museum with the treasure trove of oral histories and documents found in the Naff Arab American Collection in the Archives Center. It was broken down by the donor's family name, the objects they had donated, and the location of their oral history files. While

¹²⁵ Faris and Yamma Naff Arab American Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.

preparing this document, I also found ways of augmenting existing collections files. I found ways to connect artifacts with the archives.

At an institution like the Smithsonian that might also mean interpreting across divisions. This particular artifact came to my attention through my work in a previous curatorial internship in the Division of Armed Forces History. These pair of chopsticks were donated by the family of Jane Oka and may have belonged to Sadao Oka, who was incarcerated at the Poston Camp during WWII. Sadao Oka's intricately carved bird figurines which he also carved during his period of incarceration were featured in the NMAH's influential 1987 exhibition "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the US Constitution", one of the first major national exhibitions to approach the subject of Japanese incarceration during WWII. Jane Dusselier in her book *Artifacts of Loss* argue that arts and crafts produced by the incarcerated served as a form of radical resistance rooted in the quotidian towards mental, emotional, and physical survival under a regime that robbed families, communities, and individuals of their humanity.¹²⁶ Heidi Kim also note how these modes of resistance extended into the mess halls, where the War Relocation Authority policed social and familial practices around meals. Crafting these chopsticks out of scrap wood, particularly in a time and space when Japanese cultural practices were highly policed, connects these conversations of resistance and placemaking to that proverbial "kitchen table".¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Jane Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University

¹²⁷ Heidi Kim, "Incarceration, Cafeteria Style: The Politics of the Mess Hall in the Japanese American Incarceration," in *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader*, edited by Robert Ji-Song Ku, et al., (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 125-146.

As I reflect on my time at the Smithsonian, I found that applying this particular intervention of tying food to modes of resistance and meaning making as it related to migration opened up new possibilities going forward. It can provide new ways of interpreting legacy collections and provide guidelines for accessing collection in the future. However, just down the road from the Smithsonian, at the National Archives, however, was another place where rice would make an appearance and would take shape in unexpected places.

They Called Him the Asian Gatsby: Koreagate, Rice, and Washington, DC

The Washington DC press called him the Asian Gatsby, the Korean rice merchant, a “common rice peddler”. Tongsun Park, an enigmatic Korean American businessman, educated at Georgetown, amassed a fortune and spread it around Washington, DC in the late 60s and through to the mid-to-late 1970s. From his fashionable condo at the Watergate or his palatial home in McLean, Virginia, or his private club in Georgetown, Park entertained a cadre of Congressmen, State Department officials, and members of the Washington elite. As one Washington society magazine declared, “His were always the most perfect parties, the most lavish, the most interesting... When Tongsun invited people came”.¹²⁸

But behind the lavish parties in Georgetown or the galas in McLean, was a complex web of bribes and deceit that would be termed “Koreagate”. In 1976, the Department of Justice (DOJ) began a wide sweeping investigation of illegal influence peddling and bribery in both the House and the Senate. By the end of the DOJ’s

¹²⁸ Warren Adler, “Tandy Meem Dickinson: A Washington Story,” *Washington Dossier*, 1977.

investigation, more than 115 members of the House and Senate would be implicated in the scandal.

Much was written about Koreagate at the time and one of the first scandals to have the now ubiquitous “-gate” suffix attached. But behind the spotlight of the Congressional committees, the press coverage of the “Who took what?” and “When did they take it” and behind the lavish parties and galas, much of the press coverage (and the academic literature) on the scandal overlooked the chief product of Tongsun Park and his wealth, American rice. The importation of surplus American rice and other agricultural products from states like California, Louisiana, and Texas would provide fuel for the militarized industrialization of post-war Korea under the autocratic rule of Park Chung Hee.

Fueling of Korean post-war modernity was the consumption of cheap, mass-produced foods that was being provided by the United States government in the form of surplus agricultural products. While rice was the main staple grain in Korean diets, the Korean war had severely decimated the Korean farming industry. As it sought to rebuild, the United States provided food aid through the US Food for Peace Program (also referred to as the Public Law 480 or PL 480, the act that established the program under President John F. Kennedy) to South Korea using surplus American agricultural grain and flour to fill the gap outside of its rice shipments. For Tong Sun Park, the surplus rice he sought to buy at reduced cost from American rice producers (whose corporate bottom line was in turn subsidized by American tax payers), would go on to create a slush fund for lobbying efforts to buy more rice at reduced cost. This

American rice and grain that was being imported would provide the Korean government increased food supplies to fuel its industrial development.¹²⁹

While imported American rice was a necessity to fill the gap in supply and to help bolster national reserves, the government also sought to impose American wheat and grain onto the populace. In both government propaganda and policy, as well as popular media (most of which was under tight control of the government), bread and noodles utilizing surplus American grain milled in Korea was seen as the tool for modernization. Mi Hye Kim and Hae Kyung Chung in their analysis of popular newspaper and magazine articles pushed for the adoption of “western” foods in the form of bread, pastries, and pasta as a source of nutritious, inexpensive, “fuel” for hungry families at a time when local agricultural economies were still being rebuilt and regenerated after war time destruction.¹³⁰ The Korean government policy of *honsik*, a national campaign started in 1962 by the Park Chung Hee administration, where citizens were required to replace at least one meal per week with grains alternate to rice, was put into place to codify some of this changing dietary patterns.¹³¹ Park’s administration justified to the public of this new regulation utilizing the same nutritional science as found in popular press to the health benefits of bread versus rice.¹³² As seen in promotional films at the time, it was also a means

¹²⁹ “THE RICE CONNECTION - The Washington Post,” accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1977/08/07/the-rice-connection/9a5b168a-da35-49e9-892a-a22ae2353924/>.

¹³⁰ Kim and Chung, “Food Consumption Discussion in 1950’s Women’s Culture.”

¹³¹ Tae-Ho Kim, “6. The Good, the Bad, and the Foreign: Trajectories of Three Grains in Modern South Korea,” in *The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*, ed. Angela Ki Che Leung et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019), 130–49, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/9780824879570-008>.

¹³² Kim.

of national revitalization of food industry utilizing cheap American grain that was also used as means to justify this push. To help get the populace to accept these new “western” food products, the International Cooperation Administration (the predecessor to the USAID), pushed for the development of recipes that incorporated surplus American grain with “native foods” to help foreign governments in helping native populations adopt these “foreign” grains.¹³³



Figure 11: This image is of a flour sack that contained surplus American flour that was donated to the Korean government. In the text at the bottom, it explicitly states that it cannot be sold or exchanged for goods. Photo Credit: National Folk Museum of Korea, Seoul, South Korea.

¹³³ ICATO Circular 47, Request for Recipes



Figure 12: Image of a workshop for mothers on the benefits of cooking with flour and alternative grains other than white rice. During the Honsik movement of the 1960s, Koreans were encouraged to, then later mandated to replace their diet of white rice with flour-based foods like noodles and/or bread at least one day a week. Photo Credit: National Archives of Korea, Seoul, South Korea.

An example of such recipes was the utilization of cornmeal to create steam loaves slightly sweetened with molasses or served with *kimchi*. This dish was a staple of Korean school nutrition programs through the centralized Korean government's education system. Finally, another important food product to come out of this period would be the Korean instant *ramen*, the ready to eat noodle that would become a staple of the Korean diet in the post-war years and an important ingredient in *budae jjigae*'s evolution from "piggy stew". Another political use of this surplus rice and grain was found buried deep in recently declassified documents at the National Archives. In a familiar bit of *quid pro quo* of international diplomacy, the Korean government used the importation of surplus rice and grain (or in the case of the

cable's contents, the lack of guarantees of surplus grain) as a part of its bargaining position in its efforts to develop nuclear weapons.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ "State Department Telegram 305630 to U.S. Embassy Seoul, 'ROK Nuclear Reprocessing,' 31 December 1975, Secret," n.d.

But also behind the glitz and the glamour of the galas and junkets, the international intrigue, and frantic diplomatic cables, there was local repercussions to the Korean American community in the Washington, DC area tied to the scandal. Headlines from the *Pacific Citizen*, a newsletter published by the National Japanese American Citizens League, noted how the bribery scandal affected local Korean owned businesses and the Korean American community in general. One article quoted Clifford Koh, the president of the Korean Residents Association of Washington D.C. noted how Korean Americans were “innocent bystanders” and reported his organization’s members feeling singled out and scrutinized in financial matters, some claiming that teachers explicitly refusing any of their children’s Christmas presents.¹³⁵ Another article noted how Korean American clergy heard from their parishioners how they have felt discriminated against because of Tong Sung Park. “Many Korean-Americans are Americans first,” remarked Rev. Peter Sun, “But when people go to look for a job, they have been told. ‘Oh, you need money, too? Why don’t you ask Tongsun Park?’” In the records of the Korean American Community Association of Washington, DC, it noted Korean American merchants felt they were being denied access to capital and loans from their businesses due to the scandal, especially after the Diplomat National Bank, an Asian American bank that catered to immigrant communities came under suspicion of undeclared foreign investiture.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ National Japanese American Citizens League, “Koreans in DC Affected by Bribery Scandal,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 4, 1977.

¹³⁶ {Citation}

While rice might have been a forgotten line in the story of Koreagate, it clearly had major implications for Korean back on the Korean peninsula and Korean Americans in the Washington, DC area. And an interesting coda to this story. While Tong Sun Park was never prosecuted for his crimes in the Koreagate scandal, his name would resurface decades later when he was found guilty for taking bribes from the regime of Sadaam Hussein of Iraq in what would become the Oil-For-Food scandal.¹³⁷

Rice in the DMV

In some ways rice has continued to flow through Washington, DC. Robin Rhee hopes that it stays that way. He is the president of Rhee Bros, a Korean American owned and operated importer and distributor of food products from Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Robin and Kevin Rhee, the executive director of operations (and Robin's cousin) were interviewed as a part of the Asian Pacific American Foodways Project.¹³⁸ During the interview they discussed the history of the company, their respective roles within the company, as well as their experience in being asked by their parents to continue in the family business. The company was founded by Robin Rhee's father Syngman Rhee, who came to study in the United States at George Washington University in Washington, DC. To help financially with this student expenses, he began selling dried seafood that was sent to him by his

¹³⁷ "Park Sentenced to 5 Years in U.N. Oil-for-Food Bribery Scandal South Korean Businessman Had Promised to Get Sanctions Eased for Hussein's Government - The Washington Post," accessed April 30, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2007/02/23/park-sentenced-to-5-years-in-un-oil-for-food-bribery-scandal-span-classbankheadsouth-korean-businessman-had-promised-to-get-sanctions-eased-for-husseins-governmentspan/f72e5783-f506-49cf-af0d-ffb061ec858b/>.

¹³⁸ Kevin and Robin Rhee, Interviewed by Kevin Kim, 21 October 2021, Asian American Foodways Project Records, Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

mother from South Korea. When demand outstripped their ability to sell out of suitcases, Syngman Rhee and his brothers opened a warehouse in Silver Spring and began importing Korean and Japanese products for a growing Asian American community in the Washington, DC area. They soon outgrew that space in Silver Spring and finally to their current headquarters, a massive warehouse near the Baltimore-Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport in Howard County, Maryland.

After the interview, I was able to take a tour of the warehouse facilities. As we walked along the corridors stacked high with products from across East and Southeast Asia, one product stuck out to me in particular. Piled high were bags of Rhee Chun Rice®. It was a brand that was familiar to me, as I had grown up seeing those bags in my house. Kevin Rhee, explained that Rhee Chun was their house brand of Calrose rice, a medium-grain rice that is prized in Korean and Korean American homes for the right balance of flavor and texture. The family had been growing and distributing it through a cooperative of growers in the Sacramento Valley for about 30 years. Calrose rice has a complicated history for Koreans. It was long prized in Korea for being a “luxury” rice, imported from California in the 1970s and 80s to Korea (when the native Korean rice industry was still developing), often smuggled from American military bases.¹³⁹ In the 1990s, however, it became a touchstone for protests by Korean farmers for the increasing reliance of “American” rice by Koreans and set off

¹³⁹ “Imported U.S. Rice Loses Its Luster,” *Chosun Ilbo*, English Edition, May 8, 2006, https://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2006/05/08/2006050861018.html (accessed October 22, 2023).

violent street protests in Seoul.¹⁴⁰ However, for many Korean Americans (my parents included), Calrose rice brands, including Rhee Chun, still holds a particular salience (not to mention taste, texture, and flavor) that makes them still seek out Calrose rice.

Calrose rice also makes its way into Sonia Lee, the owner and operator of Annandale Catering. Annandale Catering is the English language name for Annandale Dduk-Jip (아난데일 떡집), a legacy institution that has been making *dduk* or Korean rice cakes for the Korean American community for over 40 years. They branched out into catering events, as well as making banchan or side-dishes essential to the Korean dining table. They also mill their own flours and spices, an important function of rice cake makers in Korean culture. The store began in 1975 in the basement of her mother-in-law's home making rice cakes for local churches. As word spread, they began to take on catering orders and soon out grew their home and began their operation in their current location in Annandale in 1992. As mentioned in the chapter on *kimchi*, cottage food producers form an important part of the food system for Korean Americans in the DMV. And like the complicated regulations place on Patrice Cunningham and her startup *kimchi* company, Taegu Kimchi, Sonia Lee in her interview for the Asian American Foodways Project mentioned her troubles with the state of Virginia, complicated more so by difficulty with language.¹⁴¹ As they grew from abasement operations to a brick-and-mortar store, they found that the regulations set by the state of Virginia were totally inadequate for their operations.

¹⁴⁰ National Institute of Korean History (국사편찬위원회), *What Rice is to Koreans (쌀은 우리에게 무엇이었나)*, Seoul: Doosan Donga, 2009.

¹⁴¹ Sonia Lee, Interviewed by Kevin Kim, 7 May 2021, Asian American Foodways Project Records, Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

The “bakery” license on their rice cake making operations set guidelines on temperature and storage that would have made their products inedible. As such, they spent months getting specialty machines and changing their recipes to allow for their products to taste good and still comply with state and local regulations.

This notion of treating *ddeok* producers as a “bakery” was something that I remember finding odd as a child. Having seen *ddeok* being made at my local *ddeok* producer in Los Angeles, I knew that it was a product that had to be steamed. And yet, in most English translations for *ddeok*, it was referred to as rice *cakes* and the producers of *ddeok* as rice cake *bakeries*. Hearing Mrs. Lee talk about the struggles of getting her *ddeok* recipe right to still taste good and comport to state regulations for bakeries and trying to reason with state inspectors who were clueless to the procedures of *ddeok* making, how Korean American cottage producers had to create new recipes so that they could carry on and adapt their food traditions. Here the history of rice was about what wasn’t written. The regulations that didn’t make sense for a product the state had little clue to what it was.

Conclusion: From Spam to Kimchi Tacos: Towards a New Transpacific Food Politics

Today was a rough one. As many of you know I have been doing archival research at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park on the first part of my dissertation which looks at the legacies of US militarism and food aid on the Korean peninsula. Today was the day that I reserved to open up the box with folders marked "intelligence/insurgency/arrests/riots". It was filled with stories of corrupt military strongmen, torture, disappearances, "student radicals", and exasperated civil servants trying to make sense of it all.

I prepared myself for this day. Refreshed myself on the history of US involvement into the Cold War era politics on the Korean peninsula. I told myself that nothing was going to surprise me. And yet, there I was at Giant doing some grocery shopping after leaving NARA, starting to get emotional in between the seafood section and the vegetable aisle, on the verge of tears.

I went home and found myself wanting to create. So, I cooked nonstop for three hours. Sometimes the body knows what it needs.¹⁴²

This dissertation is the story of the entangled lines of food, commerce, culture, and ideas across the Pacific. Between the influence of American militarism and Cold War Politics and the outward project of Korean cultural and political economies to the United States. But as the journal entry I wrote after spending a day at the National Archives suggests, it is also a personal story. This project sheds light on the ways in which three food products-*budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice- have shaped the cultural politics of the Korean American diaspora from after the Armistice was signed in July 1953 to the present day. As my reflection shows, this story is not an unfamiliar one. We see *kimchi* everywhere these days. It flavors everything from our chips to our tacos. But what we don't see is how it got there. That is what this dissertation is about.

¹⁴² Jung Kim, "Today was a rough one," August 19, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/kevin.kim.3133>

To be honest, this dissertation was not the dissertation that I thought I was going to write. In fact, I avoided this project for a long time. I came to graduate school with a background and interest in diaspora cuisines, but wanted to move on to new projects. There was a whole host of reasons I felt that this project was not right for me. I wanted to study the intersections of gender, sexualities, and food. I did not want to get “pigeonholed” (whatever that might mean) as an ethnic food studies scholar. I felt that as a historian I could not be “objective” enough to study my own community. It was just too personal a story for me to work on.

However, the project kept coming back to me. It was always in the back of my mind as I went through graduate school. It came back when my mother wanted me to make her some grits one day. It came back when my friends begged for my *kimchi* recipe. It came back when I saw *kimchi* tacos on the menu of the TGI Friday’s. While I wanted to run away from this project, it felt like the world kept insisting I take another look.

Taking all these vignettes into account, I felt this dissertation had to be written. Partially because as I looked around to see scholarship on the internecine connections between food, war, diaspora in the Korean American community there was very little written about the topic in the ways I envisioned it should be written. I wanted to take the recipes that I had grown up with and denature them, deconstruct, and put them back together again. To make sense of all the contradictions I saw. And if anything, this project was an exercise in contradictions. How can you have a food product that is both reviled and loved? How can you have a history that is both very much opaque and entangled, but also so straight forward and in your face? Perhaps

that is the beauty of this project. The twist and turns. The glaring texts on the page and the silences in between the lines. I had mentors on this dissertation committee who encouraged me to ask the deep questions and to look within my own backyard. They had me read Virginia Dominguez's work on practicing a "politics of love" for my community. That not only was it okay to have complex and complicated feelings towards working with and within communities of your own, but to incorporate those pedagogies of love, care, and respect into the projects.¹⁴³ I thought deeply about the communities that I was a part of and the location in which I wanted to study. A global pandemic had changed everything about my research plans and fieldwork opportunities in Los Angeles and in South Korea, but because of that I also discovered that there was a lack of scholarship about Korean American communities in the nation's capital. "I find it very surprising that there isn't a lot of scholarship on Korean American communities in the DMV, especially given the community's intimate links with the military industrial complex", I remember asking one of my advisors, Dr. Mary Sies. "That's why you have to write it." She replied. That was when I knew that this was the dissertation that I was going to write.

I had the where, but what about the foods themselves. Why *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice? As I wrote throughout this dissertation, *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice are important food products that have also become important cultural symbols to Korean and Korean American culture. *Budae jjigae* was and is a dish that brings together histories of war, occupation and survival. Culinary art of making do. It took

¹⁴³ Virginia R. Dominguez, "For a Politics of Love and Rescue." *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 361–93.

on a number of names, first piggy stew, then UN Tang/stew, then finally army base stew or *budae jjigae*. It is both popular as it is reviled. *Kimchi* is important because it is and has become an important cultural and culinary product and symbol of Korean food. It is an important food product in Korean cuisine. It has also become an important cultural symbol for multiple structure of power. Rice is an important staple grain for Korean culture. Growing up with all my Korean aunties around me, the first thing they would ask me was “Have you eaten your rice for the day?”. The word for rice is synonymous with food and to life itself. But the ways in Korean rice ended up in the Capital region and how American rice ended up on Korean shores is a part of the secret histories of food and war. These secret histories are often on the margins, literally scribbled on the margins of State Department cables. It was about the competition between rice and other grains, including surplus American wheat, corn, and others.

Uncovering these secrets histories around Korean food culture and politics are especially important to understanding the current moment we live in where Korean food and food culture is being to enter the mainstream American food landscape and media. But not just food. Understanding the development of Korean soft power through the marketing of food products like *budae jjigae*, *kimchi*, and rice help understand and contextualize the growing popularity of Korean food and Korean culture. Korean cultural politics has been seen as influential and the increase use of soft power in the form of food has been an important driver of these discussions. This project and its interrogations into the history of food, power, and militarism is especially important in the current moment when the United States expands its

complex relations with South Korea. Whether it's the global reach of K-pop, the seeming saturation of Korean food products into American supermarkets, the Korean government has used food and culture as a means of soft power diplomacy for decades. It is now looking to cash in their soft power capital for deeper connections with the United States military and political establishments. While this project is more about the long history of the cultural politics of food in the Korean American experience, it sets the stage for future inquiry into how soft power diplomacy translates into hard power.

This project will also build upon the literature on Korean American food within Asian American studies. Korean food is having moment. Scholars like Grace Cho's newest book, *Taste Like War*, chefs like David Chang are all seeing their work being published on print and on screen. While writers in recent years have taken a nuanced approach to food, Korean food in public media and in public history (when it is even featured) insists on a celebratory narrative. Celebratory aspects are an important part of the Korean American food story, but food allows us to discuss the uncomfortable as a pedagogical space to look at the intersections of war and migration. Yes, we can celebrate the foods of the Korean American diaspora. But it is also a highly visible archive of these traumas and sometimes a way to discover the hidden histories and stories of these intersections as well. There is still more to come in this story of Korean food in America and American food in Korea. There is still more to write, to investigate, and to eat.

Glossary

Budae jjigae: Korean for “army base stew, a stew traditionally comprised of ingredients scavenged from American army bases during and after the Korean War.

Kimchi: traditional Korean fermented vegetables

Banchan: side dishes that are a part of a Korean meal, often served with rice

Note: The romanization scheme used for this dissertation follows the Revised Romanization of Korean (RR). However, in historic documents and texts might contain the traditional McCune-Reischauer scheme.

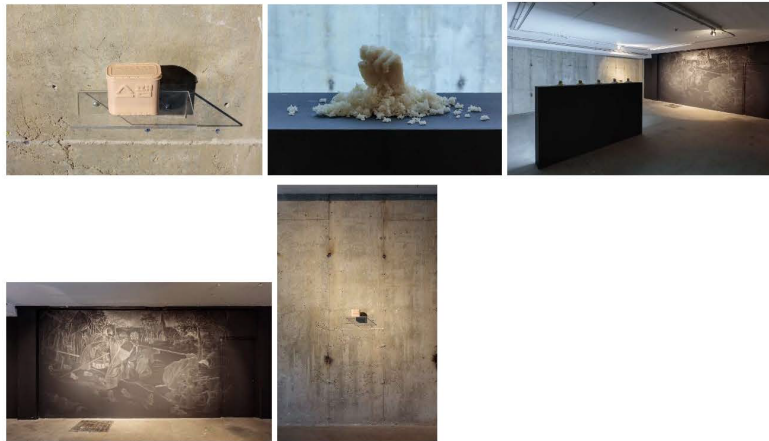
Appendix 1: Artist Copyright Permissions

Jung Min (Kevin) Kim
Department of American Studies
University of Maryland, College Park
1328 Tawes Hall
Francis Scott Key Hall
College Park, MD 20742

Dear Ms. Kim

Hello, my name is Jung Min (Kevin) Kim and I am currently a PhD student in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland. I recently defended my dissertation entitled, "Setting the Transpacific Kitchen Table: The Cultural Politics of Food in the Korean American Diaspora" over the summer and am currently in the process of uploading it to the University of Maryland's Graduate School. It will be published in November 2023 through ProQuest (though it will be no visible by the general public as I will have it embargoed for 2 years).

I hope to include some images of your work, specifically from the *The Celibate Machine*, as a part of my dissertation. The following images are the ones that I write about in my work and hope to include in my dissertation. I pulled them from your website: <http://cindyjihyekim.com/archive/the-celibate-machine>



Please let me know if you allow for them to be used and if so, any conditions that are required for me to be aware of. I am happy to follow up with you in more detail and send along my dissertation draft for your reference. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jung Min (Kevin) Kim
Department of American Studies

University of Maryland, College Park
Permission to reprint above material granted by:

Name/Title: Cindy Ji Hye Kim

Conditions:

Photography credit: Tom Weinrich & Jamie Sterns

Exhibition credit: Curated by Jonah Porter, Interstate Projects, Brooklyn NY. 2018.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cindy Ji Hye Kim' in a stylized, cursive script.

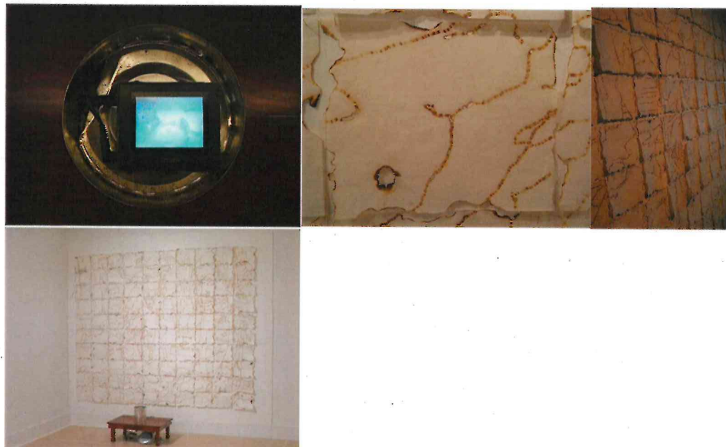
Jung Min (Kevin) Kim
Department of American Studies
University of Maryland, College Park
1328 Tawes Hall
Francis Scott Key Hall
College Park, MD 20742

Ji Young Jerry Yoo, PhD
#1101, 11, Jeungsan-ro 21-gil, Eunpyeong-gu,
Seoul, Republic of Korea zip: 03451

Dear Dr. Yoo:

Hello, my name is Jung Min (Kevin) Kim and I am currently a PhD student in the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland. I recently defended my dissertation entitled, *Setting the Transpacific Kitchen Table: The Cultural Politics of Food in the Korean American Diaspora* over the summer and am currently in the process of uploading it to the University of Maryland's Graduate School. It will be published in November 2023 through ProQuest (though it will be no visible by the general public as I will have it embargoed for 2 years).

I hope to include some images of your work, specifically from *BOODAECHIGAE*, as a part of my dissertation. The following images are the ones that I write about in my work and hope to include in my dissertation. I pulled them from the website of *Still Present Pasts: Korean Americans and the "Forgotten War"*. They also still images pulled from the video portion of the installation.





Please let me know if you allow for them to be used and if so, any conditions that are required for me to be aware of. I am happy to follow up with you in more detail and send along my dissertation draft for your reference. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jung Min (Kevin) Kim
Department of American Studies
University of Maryland, College Park

Permission to reprint above material granted by:

Name/Title: *Ji Young Jerry Yoo*

Conditions: only for your dissertation

Signature:

Ji Young Jerry Yoo

Bibliography

An, Chông-hyo 1941-. *White Badge : A Novel of Korea. TA - TT* -. New York, NY SE - 337 pages ; 25 cm: Soho, 1989.

Baik, Crystal Mun-hye. *Reencounters : On the Korean War and Diasporic Memory Critique*. 1 online resource (xix, 227 pages) vols. Asian American History and Culture. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020.

Bernstein, Robin. "Dances with Things." *Social Text* 27, no. 4 (December 1, 2009): 67–94.

Cho, Grace M. "Eating Military Base Stew." *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (August 22, 2014): 38–43.

———. *Tastes like War : A Memoir*. First Feminist Press edition. New York, NY: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2021.

Cho, Haejong. "Living with Conflicting Subjectivities: Mother, Motherly Wife, and Sexy Women, in the Transition From Colonial-Modern to Postmodern Korea." In *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, 165–95. Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.

Do, Hyunsin [도현신] . 전쟁이 요리한 음식의 역사 [*The History of Food Created by War*] *Jeonjaeng i yori han eumsik ui yeoksa*. Seoul, South Korea: Sidae Books [시대의창], 2017.

———. "한국전쟁이 만든 부대찌개." 월간 샘터, 2021, 102–4.

도현신[Do Hyun Shin], "한국전쟁이 만든 부대찌개"[*Budae jjigae, Brought to You by the Korean War*] 월간 샘터 [*Sam Toh Journal*], 2021, 104

¹ 도현신[Do Hyun Shin], *전쟁이 요리한 음식의 역* [*The History of Food Created by War*], (Seoul, South Korea, Sidae Books, 2017).

Domínguez, Virginia R. "For a Politics of Love and Rescue." *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 361–93.

Engelhardt, Elizabeth S. D. (Elizabeth Sanders Delwiche). *A Mess of Greens : Southern Gender and Southern Food*. Athens, Ga. : University of Georgia Press, 2011.

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Body Counts : The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(Es)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, .

Espiritu, Yên Lê, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama. "Transpacific Entanglements." In *Flashpoints for Asian American Studies*, edited by Viet Thanh Nguyen and Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, 175–89. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Han, Kyung Koo. "The 'Kimchi Wars' in Globalizing East Asia: Consuming Class, Gender, Health, and National Identity." In *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity: Commodification, Tourism, and Performance*, edited by Laurel Kendall. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Jang, Dai-Ja, Kyung Rhan Chung, Hye Jeong Yang, Kang-sung Kim, and Dae Young Kwon. "Discussion on the Origin of Kimchi, Representative of Korean Unique Fermented Vegetables." *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 126–36.

JUYAN ZHANG. "The Foods of the Worlds: Mapping and Comparing Contemporary Gastrodiploamacy Campaigns." *International Journal of Communication* (19328036) 9 (January 2015): 1–24.

Kim, Cindy Ji Hye. *SPAM*. 2018. Silicone Rubber, 4" x 4" x 1.
———. *The Parable of the Blind, after Bruegel*. 2018. Latex acrylic and graphite on wall, 28' x 10'.
———. *जू떡밥: Azza, Brook, Geetha, Jenny, Sara*. 2018. Rice and gum arabic, dimensions variable.

Kim, Elaine H. "Home Is Where the Han Is: A Korean American Perspective on the Los Angeles Upheavals." *Social Justice* 20, no. 1/2 (51-52) (1993): 1–21.

Kim, Elaine H., and Chungmoo. Choi. *Dangerous Women : Gender and Korean Nationalism*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Kim, Eun-Shil. "The Postcolonial Politics of Food: Creating 'Locality' through Local Knowledge." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 4 (January 4, 2013): 7–38.

Kim, Jodi. *Ends of Empire : Asian American Critique and the Cold War*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Kim, Mi-Hye, and Hae-Kyung Chung. "Food Consumption Discussion in 1950's Women's Culture." *Korean Journal of Food Culture* 25, no. 6 (2010): 639–51.

Kim, Tae Hwan. "Piggy Stew." In *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Culture*, n.d.

Kim, Tae-Ho. "6. The Good, the Bad, and the Foreign: Trajectories of Three Grains in Modern South Korea." In *The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*, edited by Angela Ki Che Leung, Melissa L Caldwell, Robert Ji-Song Ku, and Christine R Yano, 130–49. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019.

Korean Broadcasting System. *한국인의 밥상 - 가장 슬픈 한 끼 전쟁과 밥상* [*The Korean Table: The Saddest Meal, The Table Brought on by War*]. YouTube Video. KBS, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uT_JY28VXGA.

Ku, Robert Ji-Song. *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2013.

Ku, Robert Ji-Song, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur. *Eating Asian America : A Food Studies Reader*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.

Lewis, George H. "From Minnesota Fat to Seoul Food: Spam in America and the Pacific Rim." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 2 (September 2000): 83–105.

Manalansan IV, Martin F. "The 'Stuff' of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives." *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (October 2014): 94–107.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. Press Release. "Kimchi Diplomacy." Press Release, November 26, 2020. https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/en/brd/m_23402/view.do?seq=57&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=.

———. Press Release. "President Lee, President-Elect Obama Stress Stronger Korea-U.S. Relationship." Press Release, November 7, 2008. https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/us-en/brd/m_4511/view.do?seq=684662.

Moon, Seungsook. "Immigration and Mothering." *Gender & Society* 17, no. 6 (December 29, 2003): 840–60.

National Japanese American Citizens League. "Koreans in DC Affected by Bribery Scandal." *Pacific Citizen*, February 4, 1977.

Parasecoli, Fabio. *Gastronativism : Food, Identity, Politics*. Arts and Traditions of the Table : Perspectives on Culinary History. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.

———. "How Countries Use Food to Win Friends and Influence People." *Foreign Policy*, August 20, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/20/food-diplomacy-countries-identity-culture-marketing-gastrodiplomacy-gastronativism/>.

Ryang, Sonia. *Eating Korean in America : Gastronomic Ethnography of Authenticity*. 1 online resource vols. Food in Asia and the Pacific. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. <https://www.degruyter.com/doi/book/10.21313/9780824854911>.

Shapiro, Laura. *Something from the Oven : Reinventing Dinner in 1950's America*. New York, N.Y. : Viking, 2004.

Smith, Barbara. "A Press of Our Own Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 10, no. 3 (1989): 11.

Surya, Reggie, and Anne Ga-Yeon Lee. "Exploring the Philosophical Values of Kimchi and Kimjang Culture." *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 9, no. 1 (June 20, 2022): 20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-022-00136-5>.

Surya, Reggie, and David Nugroho. "Kimchi throughout Millennia: A Narrative Review on the Early and Modern History of Kimchi." *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 10, no. 1 (April 3, 2023): 5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-023-00171-w>.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. "UNESCO - Decision of the Intergovernmental Committee: 8.COM 8.23." Accessed April 21, 2023. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions>.

Williams-Forson, Psyche A. *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs : Black Women, Food, and Power*. Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

World Institute of Kimchi. *Hello Kimchi: Korean Soul Food*. English Edition. Seoul, South Korea: Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, 2021.

Wu, Frank H. "The Best "Chink" Food: Dog Eating and the Dilemma of Diversity." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 2, no. 2 (2002).

Yoo, Ji Young. *BooDaeChiGae 부대찌개*. 2005. Video, Korean rice paper, Korean table, C-ration cans, video monitor, 82" x 99".

Archives and Repositories

Asian American Foodways Project Records, Anacostia Community Museum,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

National Archives, College Park, MD

National Archives of Korea, Seoul, South Korea

National Security Archives, Washington, DC

USDA Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD

Periodicals

Washington Post

The Economist

Washington Dossier