



Asian Festivals and Customs

A Food Exporter's Guide

By Grant Vinning and Kaye Crippen
Asian Markets Research

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Foreword

Food has always been central to human activity. In a number of countries, it is a major element in people's cultural and spiritual activities. When food becomes closely associated with culture and religion, factors such as price recede as major buying influences.

Festive seasons and special celebrations, whether cultural or religious, can offer unique marketing opportunities. This publication provides a description of a number of the major Asian festivals and the foods popularly consumed at these festivals.

However the study goes beyond merely providing a list of what is consumed. It argues that the awareness of the potential marketing opportunities for special foods is related to an understanding of local cultures. It provides recommendations as to how Australian food exporters can increase their potential to participate in the provision of foods to the festive occasions by being culturally sensitive. In Australia, we do not tend to consider as important cultural issues such as the role of colours, numbers and symbols. As this publication shows, the adoption of auspicious cultural symbolism associated with packaging, signage, and logos can have a very positive influence in the market place.

Asia has been and will continue to be a major destination for Australian food exporters. The more that we can do to provide information regarding Asia's many festivals and customs, the more we will increase the prospects for food exports from Australia.

This report, a new addition to RIRDC's diverse range of over 400 research publications, forms part of our Global Competitiveness R&D program, which aims to identify important impediments to the development of a globally competitive Australian agricultural sector and support research that will lead to options and strategies that will remove these impediments.

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Peter Core
Managing Director
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Executive Summary

Festive seasons offer a major opportunity for food marketers. This is due not only to family celebrations and the tradition of open houses during these times but also the general festive mood. This results in a great deal of celebrations at work and between businesses. Gift giving, especially of food items, is extremely common. Most consumers are willing to spend more on food products at this time. This is particularly true for Chinese New Year, *Ramadan* /*Lebaran*, the fasting month of Muslims, and Christmas. Hotels and restaurants are important because they use the important festive seasons to continually differentiate themselves in a competitive business environment.

Three major festive periods were studied: the Chinese New Year, the Muslims' *Ramadan*, and the Christians' Christmas. The studies were conducted in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Chinese festivals

Chinese festivals are generally linked to the lunar calendar. They are celebrated by Chinese in most Asian countries as well as by the Chinese diaspora. A number of other festivals throughout Asia have their origins in China. Most of the festivals are considered cultural festivals and not linked to any one religion as Chinese may belong to one of any number of religions. Often times the celebration is based on their cultural rather than their religious significance. At the same time, many devout followers of a specific religion celebrate the festival at a temple or shrine and consider the event to be more than a cultural festival.

Whilst there are local variations in the celebration of these festivals, commonalities abound. Generally, the best festive season foods one can afford are consumed as a show of status and ability to provide. In some places the festive food becomes a symbol of cultural identity for isolated groups of Chinese. In Southeast Asia, other Asian cuisines and availability of new ingredients has influenced the festive foods showing that there is room for innovation in the introduction of new foods used during the Chinese festive seasons.

Actual food practices invariably occur in a cultural setting reflecting Chinese belief systems. These include the influence of symbols, colours, and numbering.

The study showed that certain foods are preferred with certain festivals. It also revealed that symbolism is a major issue in marketing. There are certain numbers, such as seven and eight, and colours, such as red, gold, and yellow, that have great symbolic appeal and are very auspicious whilst other numbers, such as four, and some colours, usually white, should be avoided. Most foods have great symbolic appeal - fish at Chinese New Year is a case in point. Other foods have particular meanings and to be able to incorporate these into one's food marketing strategy is a major advantage.

Other major lessons drawn from the study relate to the role of convenience because of stress placed upon the female head of the house during the festive periods, the role of helpers, the

challenge imposed by the limitations of the traditional Asian kitchen, the need for recipes, and the need to understand the role of *yin-yang* in producing a balanced meal.

Whilst retailing is often seen as the preferred outlet for food, the study showed that for the major festive periods, restaurants and hotels should be considered a primary target because of their need to differentiate themselves in this crowded period of dining out.

Muslim festivals

There are several major events for Muslims that have important food implications. *Ramadan*, the ninth month of the Arabic calendar, is known as the month of fasting. *Idul Fitri*, the feasts shared with family and friends, marks the end of the fasting month. During *Idul Fitri*, most people go to their families or visit close relatives and friends. The tenth month of the Arabic calendar is *Lebaran*. Many special foods are consumed during these two long Muslim festive seasons. Ironically, total food consumption increases during the fasting month. The day of sacrifice *Idul Adha* is the day that goats, sheep, and cows are slaughtered and the meat is distributed to the poor.

The increasing incidence of breaking the daily fast during *Ramadan* is leading to many food opportunities. Break fast *buaka puasa* buffets at hotels are becoming increasingly popular and offer a ready vehicle for the introduction of new foods. The popularity of dates as a high sugar food to break the fast is well known. This raises the possibility of developing a high energy break fast food for children as they learn to fast.

The food service sector should be a major market target during the Muslim festivals. Whilst the competitive nature of hotels will lead them to explore new foods as they seek to differentiate themselves as the desired place to break the fast, the role of small food outlets in shopping malls is rapidly increasing.

At the retail level there is the need to think of unit purchases of a much larger size compared with Australia. This is partly because of the larger family sizes but also because Ramadan and *Idul Fitri* are festivals where one is allowed to spoil one's family with extra food treats. The fasting month is a good time to market prestigious foods.

Above all, food marketers need to become conversant with *halal* requirements to the point of having their product registered with either their own or the importing countries' Islamic authorities.

Christian festivals

Christmas is the major Christian festive season celebrated in Asia. It is invariably viewed as a universal celebration with a secular meaning of peace, joy and sharing. It is an official holiday in the three countries studied. However the amount of time and attention it receives varies widely.

Christmas is widely celebrated in Singapore not just by Christians but by many more as a universal celebration of hope. The country's traditional year-end bonuses gives the religious

festival an added secular boost. There is an increase in the number of food items offered by the supermarkets. Their delicatessens offer elaborate meals including items that traditionally appeal more to Chinese. In Jakarta, the focus in the supermarkets was on chocolates and colas in special packaging. Restaurants catering to tourists and hotel restaurants are keys in providing high quality complete Christmas meals and/or the total Christmas environment. It is noted that many tourists visit areas such as Bali to spend the holidays in the tropics. Ironically, whilst they have travelled to a “foreign” country for Christmas, many tourists still demand the traditional fare from “home”.

Clubs and associations often hold parties, lunches or dinners at this time. Businesses may have special dinners or parties. Thus Christmas is a major marketing opportunity for foods traditionally associated with Christmas in the Occident.

The Asian consumer

In addition, to understanding the festive seasons, it is also necessary to understand the changing Asian consumer. Be careful of generalisations, as the “Asian consumer” like the previously much-vaunted “Asian values” is far from being a homogenous identity.

Packaging size and packaging design are important. Because specific groups have their own cultural requirements, it is necessary to consider designing packaging for each festive season. Thus one may need red and gold packaging for Chinese festive seasons, and green colour with *ketupat* symbols packaging for the Muslim festive seasons. Colours and/ or symbols from one group may not be appropriate for another. Names are important and many products for Chinese New Year use auspicious names written in Chinese characters. In designing special packaging to appeal to a number of the above festive seasons, it is important that the design be neutral; for example, even the use of red with gold lettering would indicate either a Christmas or Chinese New Year or festive season product to a Muslim.

It must be noted that an increased number of Asians live in Australia, North America, and Europe. It is possible that they would also want special foods during festive seasons. Although there might be differences in taste preferences, one should develop the product with their main geographic targets in mind.

Markets in Asia will continue to develop for specialty products. Festive seasons can offer an opportunity to reach the consumer with your product initially. Then suggestions for future usage can be offered. Convenience foods will continue to increase so that products introduced during festive seasons such as a frozen or chilled products may gain usage at other times.

The length of time of the three festive seasons offers a good period of time to promote one’s product. In contrast, western festivals such as New Year’s Day and Valentines Day have a much shorter promotional period.

There are numerous other festive seasons in Asia, for example the Hindu celebration of *Deepavali* has much in common with family sharing food. Asia is rich with traditional rituals

associated with agriculture and bringing the rain for the crops. It is hoped that these rich traditions as well as the tremendous diversity of traditional foods will be continued.

The Asian consumer is changing but the demand for traditional foods remains especially during festive seasons. Thus divergent trends are often found and at first may appear confusing. Although there is a visible interest in western foods including fast foods, there is also an interest in foods from other regions of Asia. So it is possible that new Asian dishes will be created for festive seasons while others may prefer to eat the very best of the very traditional.

Chinese Festive Seasons

Overview

Chinese festivals, generally linked to the lunar calendar, are celebrated in most Asian countries as well as by the Chinese diaspora. A number of other festivals throughout Asia have their origins in China. The major festivals are usually celebrated by most Chinese. They are considered cultural festivals and not linked to any one religion as Chinese may be Buddhist, Christian, Confucist, Muslim, Taoist, or members of minority ethnic groups to name a few. Often times the celebration is based on their cultural rather than their religious significance.

At the same time, many devout followers of a specific religion celebrate the festival at a temple or shrine and consider the event to be more than a cultural festival.

Reflecting Chinese cultural, historical, and religious diversity, Chinese festivals cover a myriad of activities. This section concentrates on five major festivals:

- Chinese New Year
- Mid Autumn Festival.
- The Feast of the Hungry Ghosts
- *Qing Ming*
- Dragon Boat Festival

In concentrating on these five festivals, it is recognised that there are any other number of other significant festivals that may be very important to specific groups. Examples are the Nine Emperor Gods, Double Ninth Festival, Festival of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maiden, *Tian Hou*, and *Double Yang Day*.

Whilst there are local variations in the celebration of these festivals, commonalities abound. Generally, the best festive season foods one can afford are consumed as a show of status and ability to provide. In some places the festive food becomes a symbol of cultural identity for isolated groups of Chinese. In southeast Asia, other Asian cuisines and availability of new ingredients has influenced the festive foods used such as the incorporation of durian and coconut in moon cakes in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Economic growth in the three countries studied during the research period has also influenced the celebration of the festivals and the foods used: the increasing commonality of abalone and expensive cognac are examples. These examples show that there is room for innovation in the introduction of new foods used during the Chinese festive seasons.

The intent of this section is to show some of the actual food practices in this region. Those practices invariably occur in a cultural setting reflecting Chinese belief systems. These include issues such as the influence of symbols, colours, and numbering. These are discussed before proceeding to the five festivals themselves.

Chinese belief systems

Naming

On auspicious occasions such as Chinese New Year, dishes are given auspicious names to help usher in good luck and wealth.

However, names can be very important even beyond a particular festival or celebration. It is noted that Chinese have eight basic dialect groups as well as numerous sub-groups. Since there are many dialects, marketers of products must determine if the name or character sounds like anything that would be detrimental to the product. For example, a hospital name in Singapore sounded like “a thousand dollars a pill”. Already a premium priced operation, this name concern was critical. Since Chinese see spirits and have many superstitions, one must view names from the Chinese perspective.

Always test out a name before launching it. Even a name like *Black Swan*, used for cauliflower in the Singapore market, could be negative since cauliflower is not supposed to be black. Conversely, a good name can boost a product’s image and often sales. A prime example is *88 Red* the brand name used by a group of fruit producers from Australia who sought to enter the markets of Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Very positive responses were received to the name as the number 88 was auspicious, and the colour *Red* was a favourite for Chinese. At the same time, the colour red related to the products - apple, peaches, plums.

Many words sound similar in the various Chinese languages since it is tonal. There are four tones including high, rising, falling-rising, and falling. Many cultures like word plays. In English we call them “puns”. But in Chinese culture, foods which sound like another often come to symbolise that. So when they look at that product, they don’t see say for example a peach, but they may see what it symbolises, in this case longevity and a portend of future happiness.

Symbols

Many foods have an auspicious meaning because their name sounds like something good or lucky. There are many unique ways to pair items to give even better names¹.

Some motifs are relatively easily understood. For example, the traditional Chinese coins, which have the square center, when paired, represent wealth. In northern China, *jiao zi* is the dumpling which can include a coin designed to bring good fortune. Ingots also represent wealth and are popular at Chinese New Year as ornamental decorations on many things. Ingot mooncakes have progressed from being available for just the mooncake festival to year-round availability.

Other items are important for what they look like. Chicken feet are valued because they look like an open palm which is symbolic of receiving. Some food items are important mainly because of their colour. Dates (*q.v.*) are used during Chinese New Year due to their red colour and the fact that their name *hong zao* means “prosperity comes early”. Another symbol often seen at Chinese New Year is a pair of fat babies. The origins are in ancient

¹ An exhibit at the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore had a display in 1997 that showed objects and explained a number of dual symbology. Taipei’s National Palace Museum has a wonderful permanent display of Chinese cultural history rich in symbolism. Museums as well as art and civilization books are excellent ways to begin to understand symbols.

China where food was not as abundant as it is today in the three target countries. Babies, especially healthy babies, traditionally were and are still today, prized. A healthy baby is depicted as a fat baby. Previously, this depiction was of a single fat baby, usually a boy who was treasured for the potential to carry on the family lineage and providing for the family. Today, we often find both the baby boy and girl depicted. Another symbol, Love Letters, a sweet, are popular because they look like unopened Chinese fans, Fig.1

Other symbols are more subtle. Many relate to fertility. Thus fruit, such as pomegranate (*q.v.*), which their abundant seeds, are popular when reference is needed to infer fertility or explicitly future children such as at a wedding. An elaborate stuffed chicken symbolises plenitude and satisfaction. The endless knot, often seen with in jade, means longevity.

Colours

Colours (*q.v.*) are extremely symbolic in most cultures, but especially with Chinese. With Chinese, they can be used in conjunction with naming and even the item itself. Thus, there are fruit whose colour looks like gold (*q.v.*), such as oranges (*q.v.*) and kumquats (*q.v.*), or whose name is homonymous with an auspicious object such as gold and persimmon. A red date (*q.v.*) is used at Chinese New Year since the colour is more auspicious than the brown date even though they are from the same botanic species.

We saw one particularly innovative use of colour as a vehicle to enter a new market. In Singapore a store was marketing at Chinese New Year a small pumpkin whose colour was comparable with that of a nearby and traditionally strong selling orange, Plate 1. The aim was to link the common colour orange even though the two products were vastly different. One informant mentioned that some youths in Kuala Lumpur had started wearing black clothes on Chinese New Year. This is frowned on by the older generation who associate black (*q.v.*) with funerals. The increased wearing of black was related to a fashion trend. Department stores selling clothing for the Chinese New Year generally have departments with only red (*q.v.*) clothing for this time of the year. Most would buy new clothing for the New Year.

In Chinese cooking, colour shares equal importance with aroma and flavour in the preparation of each dish. Normally, any one entree will combine three to five colours, selected from ingredients that are light green, dark green, red, yellow, white, black, or caramel-coloured. Usually, a meat and vegetable dish is prepared from one main ingredient and two to three secondary ingredients of contrasting colours. It is then cooked with the appropriate method, seasonings and sauce to result in an aesthetically attractive dish.

Numbering

Numbers (*q.v.*) and prices go together. Eight (*q.v.*) is an auspicious number. The pricing of banquet tables for the Chinese New Year family reunion dinner at restaurants always use auspicious number systems so one price point is often \$888.88. Other products sold during this time also use such numbers. License plates with auspicious numbers are in demand. Numbers considered inauspicious are considered to bring bad luck. As one interviewee stated “if you charge me that I will leave the store and fall down and break a leg”. Holidays can take on special significance when associated with numbers. It is possible for last day of Chinese New Year to fall on Valentine’s Day. The connection is easy. New Year *Chop Goh Mei* is also Chinese Lover’s Day. This is when young maidens used to go toss oranges into the sea in the hope of finding a suitor. When the two festivals coincide, restaurants do an even better than usual business as do jewellers. Many marriages also

occurred on that day. After all, what better way to insure one's future luck than to start married life off on an auspicious day. In 1997 when the Gregorian calendar read 9/9 it was 8/8 on the Chinese lunar calendar.

This was another auspicious day. But the most auspicious of the century was 8/8 88 so on August 8th, 1988, there were numerous weddings.

Food Culture

Chinese food is considered one of the great cuisines of the world; it is perhaps the oldest and arguably the most sophisticated.

Underpinning this cuisine are a number of Confucian (*q.v.*) principles of filial obligation and family loyalty. Chinese eat a wide variety of food items with few taboos associated with what they eat. The slogan "live to eat not eat to live" summarises the attitude of many Chinese. This is notwithstanding that many Chinese still live in poverty and whose food intake is minimal: it also recognises that China has had more than its share of famine, the last great one as recent as the 1960s.

The obvious exceptions are Buddhists (*q.v.*) who are either vegetarian or partial vegetarians abstaining from all or some meats. Buddhist and Taoist (*q.v.*) monasteries introduced vegetarian cooking to China. Zen Buddhism (*q.v.*) in particular observes the Buddha's strictures on eating fish, fowl, or flesh (called "sentient" creatures)². Some believe that the practice was originally related to reincarnation. Vegetarian has developed into a secular cuisine. Foods that taste similar to the entire range of meat products are made using soy beak curd skin for mock poultry and wheat gluten for meat. There are also Chinese Muslims who would not eat pork or other products deemed *haram* (*q.v.*).

Scarcity is another underlying theme in Chinese cuisine.

Vegetarian cuisine may have evolved also from scarcity due to a large population on a relatively small amount of arable land compounded by flooding and political problems. Cooking techniques were developed that used a minimal amount of cooking fuel, another precious commodity for the commoner. Hence wok cooking developed based on cooking small uniform pieces of food which maximises contact with the hot surface area in a round shaped metal cooker. It cooks the food much faster and thus requires less fuel. Steaming is also popular.

Steam for cooking travels up through baskets containing delicacies stacked on top of one another. Thus, the one use of fuel can be used to cook several dishes. Whilst these cooking techniques had their origins in adversity, the two methods are ubiquitous to Chinese everywhere today.

Scarcity also contributed to the development of pickles *dongcai*³ as this was probably the only method for many to consume vegetable during the long Chinese winter. Like vegetarianism though, what may have started off as a necessity has since evolved into its own cuisine form. Today, many Chinese and non-Chinese are familiar with century eggs. Scarcity is probably the

² The result has been the development of a sophisticated Zen Buddhist vegetarian cuisine: see Yoneda (1982).

³ For details on pickles see *tsukemono* (*q.v.*).

reason why Chinese use all the parts of an animal and vegetable as a food item. Again, chicken feet and duck's tongues are now delicacies.

Another factor in the evolution of Chinese food culture was the availability of ingredients. Dairy products are generally missing from most Chinese diets. Protein substitutes were in the form of soybean-based *doufu*⁴. Soybean milk and desserts from the “cow of China” are now universally popular. Sauces have evolved which are not based on the West's cream but instead black beans, oyster, soy, and lemon. Sauces using soy milk are now being promoted in western cooking to replace milk.

Food as medicine is another aspect of Chinese food culture. Many items may have been used for medicinal purposes even before they were used for food. Double boiled soups and herbal teas are two obvious examples. Pregnant women or women who have just given birth often consume special foods. Imperial cuisine was based on preserving the health of the emperor so large kitchen staff numbers evolved. One imperial household had a staff of four thousand, of whom about sixty percent were involved in the planning and preparation of food and wine. There are also many food beliefs associated with specific foods. Not all are scientifically based such as a grandmother in Singapore telling her grandchildren to “eat chicken feet to be good in math”.

The concept of opposing *yin* (*q.v.*) and *yang* (*q.v.*) and the balancing of the two is important in Chinese cooking. Chinese also speak about a food being for “heating” and “cooling”. Food must be a balance between the two. Thus the rapid growth of durian (*q.v.*) imports into Taiwan has been accompanied by a comparable growth in mangosteen (*q.v.*) imports with the “cool” of mangosteens offsetting the “heat” of the durian.

Chinese cooking is an interplay between colour, aroma, and flavour. Texture is often said to be particularly important in Chinese cuisine, and certain foods are prized for their textures. The concept of the harmonisation of foods *ting nai t'iao ho* is based on the works of Yi Yin, a scholar from the Shang Dynasty in the 16th to 11th century BC. He related the five flavours of sweet, sour, bitter, piquant, and salty to the nutritional needs of the five major organ systems of the heart, liver, pancreas, lungs, and kidneys. Yi-Yin's teachings underpin the relationship of food and medicine. This involves issues such as the need for balance of meat and vegetables (for example, one-third of meat-based dishes should be vegetable ingredients, and *vice versa*). Often complex combinations evolve to produce balance. The result could be a dish may look bland but is valued because of its unique taste or texture or combination of those. One chef interviewed showed a dish he was preparing for Chinese New Year which was not based not on taste but rather the bringing good fortune.

Chinese cuisine can be categorised into, essentially, Northern and Southern styles.

Northern dishes reflect the fact that the region's prime grain is wheat rather than rice. Wheat-based dishes are noodles, dumplings, steamed buns, and steamed bread. Similarly, the north consumes lamb reflecting the Mongolian influence of previous invader-rulers. Northern dishes are considered are more oily than Southern dishes. Garlic flavour is pronounced. Typical dishes are smoked chicken, sliced lamb, fish slices in sauce, beef with green pepper, dried scallops with Chinese white radish balls, and the legendary Peking Duck. The latter is one of the few Asian dishes to be glazed and roasted in an oven.

⁴ For details, see *tofu* (*q.v.*).

Southern cooking styles cover three basic cuisines. One is the fiery fare of Szechwan and Hunan which has a heavy use of spices and garlic. Another is the Kiangsu and Chekiang styles which are noted for their freshness and tenderness. The third cuisine is that of the Cantonese which tends to be somewhat sweet. Variety comes from the region's generous natural bounty of a plethora of vegetables, plentiful seafood, and a double rice crop. Cantonese cooking is the most famous of the Chinese cuisines as it is the fare of perhaps the most energetic of China's emigrants. Cantonese cooking also has two other famous ambassadors: *dim sum* "touch the heart" and stir-fry. Rice and rice products, such as rice noodles, rice cakes, and rice congee, are the usual accompaniments to Southern style cooking. Typical dishes are duck smoked with camphor and tea, chicken baked in salt, honey glazed ham, flash-fried shrimp, eggplant in soy sauce, and Szechwan style beancurd. *Nian gao* is the sweet steamed glutinous rice pudding.

Chinese cuisine in southeast Asia has evolved to incorporate spices and food items found in the local tropical environment. *Peranakan* (q.v.) and *Nonya* (q.v.) cuisine combine, literally, Chinese and Malay cooking styles. Squid and fish in spicy sauces are used heavily in Indonesian and Malay cooking. A Malaysian treat nicknamed "top hats" are fried "hats" which contain a mixture of chopped vegetables and meat.

The Chinese have a number of rules and customs associated with eating. Among these are:

- meals must be taken while seated
- there is a set order of who may be seated first among men, women, old and young
- the main courses must be eaten with chopsticks, and soup with a spoon.

Banquets are arranged on a per table basis, with each table usually seating ten to twelve persons. A typical banquet consists of four appetiser dishes, such as cold cut platters or *hors d'oeuvres*; six to eight main courses; then one savoury snack-type dish and a dessert. The methods of preparation include stir-frying, stewing, steaming, deep-frying, flash-frying, and pan-frying. A dish may be savoury, sweet, tart, or piquant. The main colours of a dish may include red, yellow, green, white and caramel colour. Food garnishes, such as cut or sculptured tomatoes, Chinese white radishes (radish q.v.), cucumbers, and so forth, may be used to add to the visual appeal of a dish. All of these elements contribute to making Chinese food a true feast for all the senses and not just the tastebuds.

Major festive seasons

Chinese New Year

Also *Kuo Nien* ("Passing into the New Year"), *Yuan Tan* ("First Morning"), and *San Chao* ("Three Mornings"), *Ch'un Chieh / Chun Jie* ("Spring Festival"), *Li Chun* ("Advent of Spring"). Occurs on the first month of lunar year.

Chinese New Year is the pinnacle of all Chinese festive seasons. The Lunar New Year was traditionally celebrated to mark the beginning of spring after what was often a long winter. Food invariably would have been in short supply by this time. Chinese New Year is about clearing away the old year and welcoming in the new year: it is about bringing wealth, good luck, and fortune to the family. The title of the menu in Fig.4 says it all:

Ch'u hsi is the day before the New Year. All debts must be settled and the house spotlessly cleaned before the new year begins. The same notion of settling debt and making the place clean applies to businesses.

A typical Cantonese greeting is *gong xi fa cai*⁵. It is heard throughout the season and is seen on greeting cards. It simply offers wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year. Another tradition is for friends to exchange two Mandarin oranges. During the exchange one says *da ji da lis* “good fortune and the best of luck”.

Role of status

Families celebrate in the manner and style that they can afford. One family in Indonesia, where it is more difficult to get a wide variety of special foods for Chinese New Year, reported that they ate their favorite things. They are, after all, eating their way to a successful and prosperous New Year. One Chinese proverb says “you have to put out some money to bring more in”. Auspicious foods are important. The head of the family wants to provide the family with the best foods possible. They also want to be seen by others in their families or communities as being good providers. This also involves the Confucian aspect of relationship and obligations on behalf of the head of the family. By taking care of the family, they show they are providing for the family, that they are doing what is expected of them.

Status is often important across all economic classes. One interviewee said “I want to be seen drinking the best beer that I can afford”. Those who can eat at the best restaurant, eat the most expensive New Year’s reunion dinner menu, eat the biggest abalone, and have the best liquor. Conspicuous consumption is a major element in the ushering in a prosperous New Year. Many companies in Asia give year - end bonuses in December, so families often use their bonuses for their New Year’s celebration.

Role of food

Chinese New Year is often said to make or break a family in the new year. Since food has great symbolic meanings, it is a very important element in securing good fortune for the coming year. So the Western slogan, “you are what you eat” becomes “you receive what you eat”. Thus, eat good luck and it will surely follow; eat longevity dishes and you will surely achieve a long life.

The following examples of “you receive what you eat” are from Singapore and refer to the Hakka dialect

- *Fa cai man hua tang* “prosperity for the whole family”. The dish involves seaweed *fai cai* (“prosperity”), lotus seeds (*q.v.*) *ling zhi* (“numerous offspring and longevity”), and sea cucumber *shen* (“to give happiness”).
- *Man zhang wan jin qian* (“palmful of golden coins”). Sea cucumber with fish paste.
- *Chun yi luan mien* (“a very warm welcome to the New Year”). A dessert featuring tapioca, oatmeal, and sago.
- *Bao luo man you* (“you have everything”). Abalone *bah* (“guaranteed wealth”) stuffed with *fai cai*, dried oysters, fish maw, sea cucumber, black mushroom (mushroom *q.v.*), cucumber, and sauce.
- *Da zan hong tu* (“big increase in prosperity and good luck”). Shark’s fin, crab, and crab roe (Fig 2).

Other food-based symbolisms include:

- the word for blood clams *pang* sounds like “fat” so eating them makes one rich and plump;
- fish balls mean reunion;

⁵ Also *kung hey fat choy* or *gong xi fa cai*.

- turnips are an augury of good fortune;
- black moss and dried oysters are an augury of prosperity;
- pig trotters and tongues mean good fortune in gambling;
- abalone *bah* is a symbol of wealth.

Family activities⁶

The New Year festival lasts fifteen days. The celebration involves three major meals:

- the reunion dinner on the eve of New Year
- the vegetarian meal on New Year's day
- another reunion dinner at the end of the fifteen day period called *Chop Goh Mei*⁷

The most important event is the family reunion dinner on the eve of the lunar New Year. The family includes the patriarch and matriarch, all the sons and their wives and children, as well as any unmarried daughters. Married daughters would celebrate the reunion dinner with the family of her husband. She and her family would visit her family during the round of visitations. This may be the only time of year that family members come together as a group. Some Singaporeans return to their family towns and cities in Malaysia, Indonesia or other countries⁸.

Another important feature is the distribution of red money packets *ang pow* (*q.v.*) to children and unmarried adults. Some families dress their young children in traditional Chinese costumes.

Chinatown does a brisk business at this period in boy's hats with an attached long Chinese braid. This is the one time of year that tradition wins over modernity in dress practices in Singapore (Fig 3).

Visitations

There are also visitations to the homes of families, friends, and business in the first few days of the New Year.

The rules of visitation are interpreted differently by the various dialect group. Some conduct their visits on the first day and some start on the second. Business groups having open houses for colleagues will often have an open house for two days in order to not offend the practices of any one group. Gifts are often taken to open houses. Two mandarins are often exchanged between the host family and the guest.

Generally, cakes (*q.v.*) *nian gao* (*q.v.*), snacks and beverages are served at open houses. Eight-treasures boxes (*q.v.*) containing preserved fruits and watermelon seeds are always present as are many types of snacks such as curry puffs. Beverages include coffee, tea, carbonate beverages, and perhaps alcohol. Those wanting to take the hostess a small gift, apart from the Mandarin oranges, might want to take a special treat from their country such as

⁶ A personal account of Chinese New Year is given in Appendix 1.

⁷ *Chap Goh Meh* in Hokkien dialect. It is noted that celebration of this varies, it having less significance in Indonesia compared with Malaysia and Singapore.

⁸ In 1997 there was much discussion in the Singapore newspapers about the fact that due to the long week-end many had opted to travel outside of the country, thus missing the sacrosanct reunion dinner. Some noted that their families had celebrated earlier or that the particular family members going away paid their respects to their family before or after departing. It will be interesting to see whether this trend continues.

macadamia nuts, tea, candies, cookies, or savoury snacks. Generally, *ang pow* would be given to the host's small children.

Snacks and sweets served at open house are both symbolic and a real treat that all look forward to during the festive season. Many are not available outside the festive season unless they are used by other cultural groups. Previously the snacks were made at home. Now most are ordered from small local producers or purchased at supermarkets or stalls in Chinatown. One interview stated that her mother starts making the treats about one month in advance as they are usually time consuming to make.

Reunion dinner

Ideally, all family members should be present for the reunion dinner. This is held on the first day of the festival. Reunion dinner dishes are about prosperity and good fortune: as one chef told us, reunion dinners are not primarily about taste although most dishes do taste good. The family meal together on the first day of the New Year is generally vegetarian. This reflects that Buddhist belief in not killing animals. Remembering that Chinese Lunar New Year festival is a cultural celebration, there are variations to this practice. Nevertheless, it is widely celebrated by Chinese of many various religious groups.

The host and hostess are responsible for a feast which is more than just good nutrition and pretty food. The feast is essentially to insure the families good fortunes for the coming year.

Key factors relating to preparation of foods for the period include:

- extended families living together
- number of guests during Chinese New Year
- increase in working women
- length of working week
- maids
- cooking habits of the females in the household
- kitchen and cooking equipment
- other household responsibility in order to prepare for Chinese New Year
- retail outlets.

The role of the woman is important here. In an extended family living together, in many cases three generations, the preparation of food often falls to the son's wife. Be it either the daughter or the daughter-in-law, it must be considered that often times she usually works five and a half days a week. Most have children and perhaps an extended family to care for. Whilst most career women would have a maid, the son's wife is still responsible for running much of the household related to cooking. The maid may do the wet market or all the shopping and food preparation during the year. But at Chinese New Year, something unique happens. The wife must suddenly cook, and not only cook, but prepare intricate delicacies that will ensure their families good fortunes for the new year.

That is the beginning of her challenge.

Most Asian kitchens are small. Usually they consist of just a counter top gas unit with two burners. The preparation area is equally small. Serving dishes and utensils are also limited by available space. Many maids would not know how to prepare Chinese food delicacies as most local families have maids from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia or the Philippines.

But before she can start the cooking, the wife/daughter must clean the household and help settle all bills. If she works at a family business she will have more responsibilities here and will also perhaps have to help clean the family business as well.

So one begins to see the picture. We have a busy female who probably doesn't cook very much most of the year who is suddenly confronted with preparing a feast large enough to feed the extended family in a small kitchen. She must make many special treats for the reunion dinner on the eve of the New Year and then, depending on the strength of their Buddhist convictions, have the vegetarian meal ready the next day. Treats for the open house and children are necessary.

If *Idul Fitri* (*q.v.*) coincides, her Muslim maid is most likely to return home. So she can't even rely on the maid for assistance in acquiring and preparing the food, and then the cleaning up after the meal. Most solutions to her challenges evolve around dining out for the entire period, see Fig.5.

In rural Indonesia the dining out option is vastly reduced because of the small number of Chinese restaurants.

Another option is supermarkets. In Singapore and Malaysia they have expanded their product range for the festive season. Delicatessen offerings have expanded enormously and complete meals are also now available, Fig.6. The latter can be in disposable serving dishes. Chinatowns have a wide array of products. The exception is Jakarta where there is much less selection.

Special tents and stalls are set up just for special items. Specialties included wax duck⁹ (Fig.7), Chinese sausages, pomelo (*q.v.*) hung on string, mandarins, flowers such as pussy willow stalks just ready to bud, kumquat trees, watermelon seeds, preserved fruits, and pork¹⁰.

Maids usually do most or part of the shopping: many employees send the maid to the wet market whilst they do the supermarket shopping. As it is the woman who knows what delicacies are required and what is needed it is she who must do the shopping. Families without maids often eat many of their meals at hawker centers (*q.v.*).

In purchasing the food one needs to be aware of the cost of fame. In Singapore, a famous pork floss seller has long queues outside his shop well before he even opens, Fig.8.

One creative solution we found was a *Peranakan* family that took its maids to the designated household to assist in the preparation of the reunion dinner. Most of these women had already trained their maids in the tedious art of preparing *Peranakan* food delicacies that require elaborate preparation.

Reunion dinner - eating out

⁹ Waxed and dried by the North winds in China, they are brought into Malaysia and Singapore for New Year. They can be combined with sausages and other ingredients for a hearty hot pot dish.

¹⁰ While photographing in Singapore, we saw a long line one Sunday morning. It transpired that this stall specialised in flat pieces of barbecued pork whose square pieces were about the size of usual serving from a delicatessen. It is served cold.

Most hotel restaurants and Chinese restaurants have reunion dinners. Most offer three or four set menus with eight to ten course giving a spread of price-quantity-quality options. Several restaurateurs mentioned that privacy was very important and that there is a rush to get the private dining rooms first. Many diners have their favourite restaurant and continue to patronise the same one each year: why change if one's luck has been good.

Other options exist. Consumers who can't afford the luxury of dining out may opt to have their reunion dinner purchased at a supermarket that offers entire meals in disposable serving dishes, Fig.6.

Gift hampers containing food and liquor are very important. Companies specialise in preparing and delivering the pyramid shaped hampers. Many of the hampers have auspicious names and auspicious prices. Hampers are also available at supermarkets. In 1997, Cold Storage in Singapore had a small grocery cart hamper designed for a child. Generally businesses give hampers to their customers. Close friends might send them to long time friends.

Many who can afford to eat do may find that they prefer to eat at home for reasons of sentimentality and privacy.

Modern adaptations

A new "tradition" that has evolved recently in Singapore and Malaysia is having *yu sheng* on this day.

Yu sheng or *yee shang*¹¹ is made from shredded vegetables and fish and topped with a special sauce¹², Fig.9. The dish is a very popular way for business people to celebrate.

The salad is tossed to mix the fish, vegetables, and sauce. Everyone takes their chopsticks (*q.v.*) and tosses while shouting *lo hei*. They try to toss the ingredients as high as they can. Tossing symbolises tossing good fortune and *lo hei* means "rising". High tossing symbolises striving to increase one's good fortunes for the coming year.

This creation became a hit in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1990s. Both countries claim to have concocted *yu sheng*. In reality, its inspiration is probably ancient China where references to raw fish being eaten during this festive season were found in the Sixteenth Century Qing Dynasty. Since there is so much shredding involved, few families want to make it at home so *yu sheng* kits have been developed. *Yu sheng* commands premium prices, partly because of the labour involved but also because of its auspicious nature.

Furthermore, *yu sheng* is being upscaled. Given the role of status, there is a notion that the more premium the fish, the better chance of good fortune. Thus *yu sheng* can involve lobster, salmon, abalone, prawns, even duck. Some hotels differentiate their product by their ingredients. They also report that it is now so popular that it is not just limited to eating on the seventh day of the New Year.

¹¹ Variations in spelling terms in English arises from the different dialect groups.

¹² The following ingredients were noted in different *yu sheng*: pine nuts, ground peanuts, carrots, pomelos, sweet potatoes, sweet turnips, spring onions, cracker crumbs, shredded ginger, Chinese parsley, shredded red chilies, lime strips, and jellyfish. Sauce ingredients included white vinegar, sugar, whole peppercorns, even plum sauce. One variation used cognac.

Mid-Autumn Festival

The Mid-Autumn Festival, *Zhong Qiu Jie*, also called Moon Festival and Mooncake Festival.

The festival is on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, when the moon is at its greatest distance from the earth, and thus its fullest and most luminous.

This festival illustrates amply the living nature of festivals and celebrations and the evolving nature of symbology.

In this case, the festival's origins derive a great deal from ancient worship of the moon and thus the period is associated with a large number of legends involving the moon. Whilst not definitive, the following are given as some of the origins of the festival.

One suite of legends commemorates Chang Er, the Moon Lady, a beautiful woman who saved children from being sacrificed to ensure the immortality of the King Hou Yi. Chang Er escaped from Hou Yi and, refusing the entreaties of the Jade Emperor, lived on the moon. Moon cakes thus celebrate Chang Er's heroism and stoicism.

Another group of legends relate to fertility. In Chinese culture, the moon is more important than the sun; it is also more closely aligned with the agrarian cycle. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month when the moon is supposed to be the brightest, people gather outside for ceremonies. This suite of legends reflects the festival's origins as a harvest festival. High ranking officials in Northern China supposedly exchanged gifts of round mirrors to reflect the full moon. These gifts symbolised whole or complete success in their endeavours due to the shape of the mirror. On the same theme of fertility, formerly the festival had great significance for women as the festival was the chance to get out of the house. In Chinese mythology the moon has always been associated with females: the West's concept of the man in the moon is the reverse of the Chinese concept of the woman in the moon. The moon is *yin*, the feminine side of the sun. Thus, the festival is associated with fertility and from there with harvest time, the time of great fertility.

A quite separate suite of legends commemorates the uprising of the Han Chinese against their Mongol invaders in fourteenth century Yuan Dynasty. To coordinate the uprising the leaders placed inside moon cakes message that the citizens should kill the Tartars on the fifteenth night of the eighth moon. The eventual overthrow of the Yuan Dynasty saw the formation of the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644) whose founder commemorated the events of 1351 by having his people eat sweet mooncakes on the fifteenth night of the Eighth Moon.

Whatever its origins, Mid-Autumn festival is one the major festivals of the Chinese calendar. The festive table is spread with joss sticks, red candles, and gold-leafed joss paper is burned. Foods such as mooncakes, fruit such as pomelos (*q.v.*), pear (*q.v.*), peach (*q.v.*), pomegranate, peanuts (*q.v.*), melons (*q.v.*), wine, and tea are consumed.

Reflecting the Han Rebellion legends, when those supporting the rebellion put a lantern outside their house, Singapore's Chinese Gardens draws large crowds to view their lanterns. Hotels and others decorate with lanterns in their Chinese restaurants during the festival. Stands selling mooncakes are decorated with traditional lanterns.

Mooncakes come in a variety of shapes and with fillings. The most common fillings are: sugar, melon seed, almond, orange peel, sweetened cassia blossom, ham, preserved beef, ground lotus and sesame seeds, dates, salted duck egg yolk, and sweet red bean paste. Some have two salted duck eggs for extra good fortune: when cut, the yoke is said to resemble the full moon. One restaurant in Singapore sold mooncakes with XO cognac liqueur in them. Wheat -flour mooncakes are moulded into various shapes such as fish (*q.v.*), and dragon (*q.v.*), animals with auspicious meanings. “Snow skin” mooncakes are a confectionery *kiat hong ko* made from glutinous rice. *Teochew* mooncakes use flaky pastry. Mooncakes can be decorated on the outside with a sculpted look.

The simpler versions are stamped with a red stamp; these tend to look very traditional. The correct way to serve mooncakes is to place them on a platter and slice them into wedges like a cake. Packaging has become more elaborate. One style is to place them in red boxes with elaborate covers that have interesting openings and tie shut with a red cord.

Mooncakes are both very rich to eat and quite expensive to buy¹³, Fig 10. However, everyone eats them and everyone gives them as gifts. When given as a gift they are invariably given in pairs. Mooncakes are also offered to the ancestors.

In **Malaysia**, there are many types of mooncakes. Red lotus and lotus seed paste are popular fillings. A larger version is made out of melon and olive seeds, almonds, and sesame. Newer versions of mooncakes are made from durian (*q.v.*) yam, and prune. Another adaptation involves coconut.

In **Singapore**, upscaling of mooncakes has been a trend with more “snow skin” style appearing. These are very soft and delicate and many are now colored to match the filling inside i.e. green for durian or pink for strawberry. Mooncake stalls abound during the festival. They are operated by small entrepreneurs as well as the larger supermarket chains such as NTUC Fairprice. In 1997 Kerry’s Department Store imported a group from Hong Kong to make the cakes. Being mainly Cantonese, this venture introduced a different style of mooncakes. Some of their fillings included fruits and nuts.

¹³ “Often outrageously expensive” according to a Taiwan Tourism Bureau’s publication.

(figure 10 here)

With hotels becoming more competitive, they have also established stalls in the popular shopping centres. Most Singaporeans have their favourite sources and will wait in long lines to get them.

The persistence of mooncakes and the growth of outlets puts paid to the notion that such traditions would die out with the modern generation. Indeed, of all the traditional food, the modern focus seems to be on mooncakes. For example, in 1997 mooncake making classes were held. Kog-Hwang (1991) noted that some still bake mooncakes as a symbol of the freedom of their ancestors.

In **Jakarta**, where Chinese festivals are much less visible, a mooncake stall was seen in Sogo Department Store with two happy attendants dressed in traditional Chinese clothing. However, there were few customers on the several days we visited.

Feast of the Hungry Ghosts

The Feast of the Hungry Ghosts, *Gui Jie*, falls in the Seventh Lunar month.

This is not be an easy month. The gates of Hell are opened and the ghosts are allowed to roam the land of the living. These are not pleasant ghosts. They have tiny mouths, narrow throats and unsatiable appetites. For one month they roam the world of the living, stirring up trouble, and generally being mischevius. The spirits are the wandering ghosts of strangers and of the dead who have not been properly cared for. The ghosts may be of people who met tragic deaths away from home. The ghosts may also be those who, when alive, led unsavoury lives consumed by either greed or improper desires¹⁴.

Gui Jie is to appease these ghosts. It is also for those ghosts or spirits whose souls were not properly cared for in the afterlife. Thus *Gui Jie* also cares for those souls who have been overlooked in *Qing Ming*¹⁵ (see over). Appeasement is through rituals usually performed by Buddhist and Taoist priests. Burning paper money is one form of appeasement. Importantly, ghosts are also appeased by food and drink, and entertainment. During this time, families perform rituals and offer gifts and foods in an attempt to pacify the ghosts. The ceremony appears to date from the first century AD and started as a Buddhist ceremony honouring the unhappy dead or orphaned spirits. Vegetarian foods were thought to appease the ghosts and prevent them from eating the flesh of humans.

The month long celebration culminates on the 15th day of the seventh lunar month. A special ghost feeding ritual occurs which is a large community celebration. At the community celebrations one can see well decorated and well endowed banquet tables. Food offered includes noodles and rice, chicken and ducks, whole pigs, dumplings, sweets, copious fruits, and liquor. The ritual area is quite large and has elaborate decorations at the front.

¹⁴ Chinese death rites involve the belief that there is a bridge the dead must cross. A coin and black pearl are placed in the mouth of the deceased to assist in this passage. Souls who do not successfully cross the bridge or who can't find their graves represent potential problems to the living.

¹⁵ This is why Chinese are so careful in both the death rites and in celebrations of *Qing Ming*.

Associated with the festival is *Phor Thor Kong*, known variously as the God of Hell, the Evil King, the King of the Underworld, and the King of the Hungry Ghosts¹⁶. His job is to control the spirits. His effigy is usually clothed in bright colours of pink, blue, and red. He is burned on the last day of the celebration. *Phor Thor Kong* was created by *Kuan Yin* the Goddess of Mercy who is a popular figure for worship¹⁷.

He has four assistants. *Tua Pek*, Grand Uncle, who is the Chief Inspector of Hades; *Jee Pek* Second Uncle, *Phor Kua* who is the Secretary of Hades - it is his task to record good and bad deeds; *Thor Tay Kong* the local Earth God. Like all good officials, these can be bribed. Hence, the festival uses copious quantities of faked gold ingots.

Not only must the ghosts be fed, they also must be entertained. Hence Chinese opera and other forms of entertainment are common. A special area, replete with chairs, is set aside for the ghosts who may attend the concert. Incinerators are set up for the burning of paper money, joss paper, and paper clothes

Malaysia. Chinese merchants who started celebrating *Gui Jie* during colonial times faced the problem that whilst they were all were familiar with *Phor Thor Kong* they had difficulties telling the paper mache artist what he looked like. Thus he appears in a variety of styles. Nearly all of them involve the protruding tongue, the common sign for evil aversion¹⁸. Penang, a traditional Chinese city in Northern Malaysia, is the area for elaborate celebrations.

In **Singapore**, a schedule of events are printed in Chinese language newspapers. Many communities in Singapore hold special auctions during this festive season.

Qing Ming

*Qing Ming*¹⁹, also Pure and Bright Festival, Pure and Clear Brightness Festival, Grave Sweeping Ceremony.

This is a solar based festival which falls on April 4th, 5th, or 6th. The festival extends over a week, allowing families time to visit the graves of their ancestors.

Qing Ming involves a number of fundamental Chinese beliefs. These include ancestor worship, appeasement of spirits, and filial duty. Ancestor worship has long been a cornerstone of Chinese culture. The dead are considered to be still living. Stepanchuk and Wong (1991) note that the dead are connected with life and the distinction between the living and the dead is less sharp than it is in the West. The dead's new home is the grave so the living are simply visiting them. *Feng Shui* (q.v.) is very important in grave siting. Stepanchuk and Wong also note that the fertility of the family and fields is connected to the ancestors.

With *Qing Ming*, the deceased being recognised are from one's family. *Qing Ming* involves filial duty, with the family performing ceremonies both at their home altars or at the grave

¹⁶ In Penang, in Malaysia's north, he is also called *Tai Su Lah*, the Great Intellect.

¹⁷ One informant's great grandmother carried a beautiful statue of Kuan Yi from China to Malaysia and it is still used in daily worship at the family altar.

¹⁸ This gesture is commonly seen in dancers in Bali as a part of a dancer's mask or the barong.

¹⁹ Also *Qingming Jie*, *Ching Ming*, and *Ching Beng*

site. The participation of the entire family in rituals helps to train the next generation to, first, understand the importance of such ritual ceremonies and, second, to understand how to perform the necessary rituals to avert bad luck.

Qing Ming is to honor the ancestors and help them in their other world. In doing so, the living seek the help of their ancestors to protect the family. A trip to the cemetery or resting place is taken by family members. Family members perform the grave cleaning ceremony *sao mu* “sweep the grave” hence the other term for the festival. Candles and incense are placed at the grave, and prayers and food offered. Food offerings include rice, chicken, pork and wine. Paper money, the bank notes from hell, are offered to the ancestors for their use in their new life.

As with most festivals, the practice of the celebration has evolved over time. At one stage, it was a joyous occasion celebrated by dancing, singing and picnicking. Some families just visit the tombs and do not eat while others eat a meal at the grave site. Some families take a treat such as *popiah* which can be easily served at the site. Painted boiled eggs have traditionally been eaten or at least used in the ritual.

The *Cold Food Feast* is the celebration held the day before *Qing Ming*, although some communities join both celebrations. With the Cold Food Feast, all fires are put out and cold or uncooked foods is eaten during this day. A popular origin to the custom tells of Chong Er, the son of a nobleman who was wrongfully exiled. Zit Jie was one of the few retainers who stayed with him. When Er's fortunes changed and he returned from exile he wanted to reward Zit for his loyal service. The latter would accept nothing. Instead, he and his mother retired to a life of seclusion on a mountain. Chong thought that if he set the mountain ablaze he would smoke Zit and his mother out and then reward them. Regretfully, after he had reduced the place to ashes, Chong found the two retainers dead. To honour Zitui, people put out their kitchen fires and eat cold dishes prepared beforehand.

In **Singapore**, *Qing Ming* is widely practiced. However with the increase in the number of working women, it is more difficult to schedule an outing on what might be one's only day off which is usually designated for shopping.

Dragon Boat Festival

The Dragon Boat Festival, *Duanwu Jie*, occurs on the Fifth day of the Fifth Lunar Month.

Like most ancient festival, there are a number of explanations for the origin of Duanwu Jie. One group of legends relates to the suicide in the Fourth Century BC of Qu Yuan / Chua Yuan. Qu Yuan is described variously as a poet, a scholar, and counsellor to the Emperor. He was sorely disappointed that the Emperor failed to heed his advice, especially in regard to the Emperor's penchant for war and the affliction it caused the common people. Qu Yuan read aloud a protesting poem and then jumped into a river. Local fishermen paddled out to the spot where he disappeared whilst beating drums in an effort to keep away fish who might attack him. Some variations of the legend have the fishermen throwing rice dumplings *zhong zhi* into the water to, variously, placate his spirit, or encourage the fish to eat food other than Qu Yuan's body.

Another suite of origins relate to the worshipping of the river deity. The festival is held on the fifth day of the fifth moon, the period of summer flooding in China. Thus the festival was to appease the river god and prevent flooding. In the same vein but at the other end of the spectrum, the festival was a fertility rite performed to insure adequate rainfall. This ceremony was conducted during the times when young rice plants had been transplanted and the summer rains were about to start. The rice plant is seen to be in the same state as a person who has drowned. So the rowers, who represent ancestors, row the dragon boat to recall the rice's soul through their singing and drumming. In complex symbolgy, fertility was assured by sacrifice, boats capsizing, and the loss of human life.

At the same time, because the fifth lunar month was one of great heat and humidity, there was usually a great deal of disease at this period. As a result, a number of complicated health practices evolved. These are associated with the "five poisonous creatures" - the snake, toad, scorpion, lizard, and centipede. These are symbolically killed by piercing pictures of them. Amongst the more practical health-enhancing practices are the orchid bath, the taking of a bath in water which has been boiled with dried orchids. Artemisia or mugwort *Artemisia spp.*, a perennial edible weed, and sweet flag herbs are other remedies employed to ensure healthiness.

One eats steamed rice dumplings *zong zi/dzung dz* during the festival. These are glutinous rice balls usually stuffed with savoury pork or sweet bean paste and wrapped in bamboo leaf. One informant in Singapore who still made her own traditional dumplings lamented that when she was young she and her brother would go to collect the palm leaves. Now the leaves are imported from China.

Muslim Festive Seasons

Overview

There are several major events for Muslims which have important food implications. *Ramadan*²⁰, the ninth month of the Arabic calendar, is known as the month of fasting. This long fasting period culminates with feasts shared with family and friends on *Idul Fitri* in Indonesia²¹. During *Idul Fitri*, most people go to their families or visit close relatives and friends. The tenth month of the Arabic calendar, *Sacral*, is commonly called *Lebanon* in Indonesia²². Many special foods are consumed during these two long Muslim festive seasons.

Millions of pilgrims from this region make the *Hadji* pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. In Indonesia, the pilgrims are housed in dormitories near various official air departure points. Feeding these pilgrims, both before their departure and while travelling in the air, requires much food and logistical planning.

The day of sacrifice *Idul Adha*²³ is the day that goats *kambing*, sheep *domba*, and cows *sapi* are slaughtered and the meat is distributed to the poor. In Singapore, it is called *Hari Raya Haji* is a day of prayer and commemorates the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. In Malaysia, it is known as *Hari Raya Qurban*.

*Maulid Nabi Muhammad*²⁴, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad²⁵, is a national holiday in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. It is celebrated with prayers and in some cases a *selamatan*²⁶, a feast with religious ceremonies.

Information on Muslim festive periods was not as easy to obtain as for other festive seasons. Fewer writings are available for interested non-Muslims compared with Christmas, Chinese New Year, Hindu, and Buddhist festive seasons. To many non-Muslims, the colorful joyous side of the religion is perhaps not seen unless they have experienced it first-hand.

Islam

Islam is the religion; Muslims are the followers of the religion. The religion was started in 610 A.D. in what is today Saudi Arabia by the Prophet Muhammad who preached a belief in one God, Allah. There are many similarities to Christianity and Judaism including the notions of Heaven, Hell, Judgment Day, and Creation. Life on earth is believed to be a forerunner for the afterlife. The fatalistic attitude is based on life being in Allah's hands. "Islam" derives from the word *salam* "peace" thus Islam means "peace through surrender".

²⁰ Also *Ramadhan*

²¹ *Idul Fitri* in Indonesia or *Aidilfitri* in Malaysia. The text will use the terms *Idul Fitri* for Indonesia and *Aidilfitri* when specifically referring to Malaysia. Terms in italics will be given in *Bahasa Indonesian* unless otherwise noted; in some cases the *Bahasa Malay* terms used in Malaysia may vary.

²² In Malaysia, the term *Lebaran* is used less frequently.

²³ Geertz (1960) refers to *Idha Adul*, the Javanese term; the term *Idul Adha* will be used in this text.

²⁴ Called *Maulidin Nabi* in Singapore.

²⁵ Also found as "Muhammed" and "Mohammed".

²⁶ Also *slametan*.

Reportedly some of the appeal of Islam in Asia, and especially Indonesia, was the focus on the individual. In Islam, all individuals are equal in the eyes of God. The one - God belief, “no God but Allah”, and the focus on the individual was in marked contrast to religions with many gods and many levels of society which were prevalent in Asia before the spread of Islam. The fatalistic view of many Muslims is related to all things being in the hands of Allah. In Malaysia and Indonesia, current Islamic practises include some pre-Islamic practises including, in some cases, animistic practices. There is even an influence of Hinduism and Buddhism. An example is that grave cleaning during *Ramadan* is accompanied not just by water but in Java may include the use of flowers. This is probably a carry-over from Hindu traditions in Java before Islam arrived.

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad are in the holy *Koran (Qur'an)* which was written after his death. They describe how a Muslim should live. Prayer is an important aspect of this. Some details are given below.

Formal prayers occur in a mosque. There are various types of mosques but all are for praying as well as sermons. The interior of the mosque is a large open expanse where Muslims place their prayer rugs facing Mecca, the Holy City. The only decoration inside the mosque are verses in Arabic script - there are no chairs, no statues, and no altars. There are no special items such as fruit offerings. The use of idols and images is forbidden; hence textiles are not supposed to carry images of living creatures.²⁷

One of the first encounters with Islam for visitors to Malaysia, Indonesia, and even Singapore, is seeing a mosque with the minaret *menara* on the top or perhaps hearing the call of the *muezzin* who calls the faithful in the neighboring area to prayers. His voice or a tape-recording is broadcast over a loud speaker so all in the neighborhood can hear. Every community with a mosque would hear the call to prayers. They are also broadcast on television and radio. Even in Bali, where most people are Hindu, there are more mosques since many Javanese workers have moved there for work.

Those wishing to visit a mosque should request permission before entering and be dressed correctly. Women should cover their hair, body including arms and legs before entering. Shoes must be removed. In the three countries studied, many women wear a scarf over their head or a veil, also called a *cedar* or *jilbab*. There is wide variation in whether women use the scarf and many devout women in business may not use it except during religious holidays or while saying prayers.

Women attending a *pesantren*, an Islamic boarding school, are required to wear veils.

In these schools, women are taught to manage a household and live one's life in accordance with a woman's life at the time of Muhammad. Indonesia reports a growth in such boarding schools. Some areas of Indonesia and Malaysia are known for being more strict in their practise of Islam and are referred to as *santri*.

It is estimated that there are 250 million Muslim consumers in Southeast Asia and 1.4 billion internationally.

²⁷ In Cirebon on the North Coast of Java animal figures on batik were modified to look like rocks so as not to be seen as depicting living creatures. Other batiks in Indonesia use arabic script with Islamization.

Some basic Islamic tenants

To avoid an adverse decision on Judgment Day, Muslims undertake five ritual acts. These Five Pillars are obligatory for each believer. The Five Pillars refer to:

- Declaration of faith *shahada*.
- Prayers *salat* are to be said five times a day, starting at daybreak and continuing until after sunset. Ablution before prayers includes washing the hands, face, and feet.
- Fasting during *Ramadan*.
- The pilgrimage to Mecca known as the *haji* should be performed, for those who can afford it, at least once in every Muslim's lifetime.
- *Zaket*, a religious tax or alms is given to the poor or needy.

Prayer is a fundamental aspect of faith. A Muslim should pray five times a day. Prayers can be said anywhere except on Friday, the holy day. Then, men should go to a mosque *mesjid*, literally a place for prostration. At the mosque, sermons are given. Most women pray at home on Friday although they may go to the mosque. Men and women pray in separate areas of the mosque. The Muslim cleanses the body with water before praying; if water is not available such as in the desert, sand can be used. Women wear a *jilbab* or *mukena* which covers the head and part of the upper body while praying. Men wear their Muslim hat, *peci* or *kopiah* in Indonesia and *songkok* in Singapore. In Malaysia, a short *sarong* is worn over the trousers. Shoes are removed before entering the mosque.

Most hotels in countries in the study, indeed a number of hotels world-wide, will have an arrow, either in a desk drawer or on the ceiling, pointing to the direction of *Ka'abah* in Mecca. Airplanes may also have such markers; there are rules for what to do in case of turbulence inhibiting passenger from getting out of their seat to pray. There are prayer rooms at airports, many conferences centres, and a number of other public areas in the three countries studied. Most hotels also have prayer areas during *Ramadan*.

Basic food practices

The *Koran* is precise about dietary practices. The two key precepts are *halal* (q.v.), that which is permissible, and *haram* (q.v.), that which is prohibited.

Haram prohibits the consumption of:

- pork
- meat from non-fissiped animals such as donkeys and horses
- meat from birds with talons
- meat from dead animals
- meat from mammals with claws such as dogs and cats
- meat from snake and similar creepers
- spleen and sex organs of animals
- non-scaly fishes
- milk from animals with prohibited meat
- alcoholic beverages
- animal products from animals not killed in the approved manner such as in the countries studied where the Muslim slaughterer says *bismillahirrahmanirrahim*.

Halal recommends that Moslems

- fast for one month by not eating or drinking for about 17 hours from morning call to prayers to the night call to prayers: for people who are ill or travelling the prescribed number of days should be made up later
- not to start eating before feeling hungry
- not to eat large amounts of meat
- to eat more fruit and vegetables: the consumption of wheat bread, honey, fig, olive, dates and grapes are strongly recommended
- to breastfeed babies for two years if possible.

These simple edicts can be immensely complicated to implement. An obvious example is that food should not be cooked in the same pans as pork dishes or in the same area. If pork has been cooked in the area, it is necessary to cleanse the area by washing seven times with water or sand. The use of food trays of different colors, with one colour for Muslims. More extreme are the challenges. Modern food technology has complicated the matter further through the use of gelatins, emulsifiers, extenders and other forms of food bio-technology. Efforts to simplify matters have culminated in the use of a *halal* mark on processed foods and in restaurants, Fig.11.

In Indonesia, a law covering ingredients labelling on processed food is due to come into effect in 1998. Some larger food companies include this information, but many of the smaller companies do not.

Cultural food practices

A great deal of Muslim cultural food practices revolve around *Ramadan*. There are a number of misconceptions held by non-Muslims *Ramadan*. One common misconception is that the fasting consists of just the omission of food. The reality is that the fast includes both food and water. Little is also understood about breaking the fast other than that one eats dates. Above all, non-Muslims often fail to recognise that those who have completed the fasting month of *Ramadan* feel a joy of accomplishment and anticipation of the visitations associated with *Idul Fitri*. Instead they tend to see only the austere side of fasting.

When one is breaking the fast or eating with friends or business associates, the simplest rule is to follow your host. Generally, the host advises or signals when the guests should begin. Do not go to a *buka puasa* buffet area until your host does. During *Ramadan*, restaurants signal guests when the time has arrived to break fast by striking a drum or broadcasting over the public address system.

There are some variations in cultural food practices with regard to breaking the fast. Generally, one eats very slowly even after fasting. In Malaysia, people go through the buffet line and fill their plates with food and sit in front of them until the signal to eat is given. In Indonesia, people wait until after the time is signalled to even start filling up their plates.

Apart from the breaking of the fast, Muslims have a number of cultural food practices. Do not use your left hand for touching or eating any food whenever possible. Do not remove food from your mouth such as bones or date pits using your left hand. If you are eating without utensils and find you need to break off a large piece of food, try to just slightly touch the food with your left hand at the edge of the food to steady it.

Generally, a guest visiting a home or a business is offered some refreshments, a drink and or snacks. In many countries in Asia, hot tea or coffee often comes already with a lot of sugar.

Please advise if you do not want sugar. Even if the drink is not right to your taste, take a few sips anyway as one should always taste the food and beverages offered. When requesting water, indicate whether you want it hot or cold; otherwise you may get hot water. Ice should also be requested. In some areas of Indonesia, one should not drink all of the beverage since it would be considered rude and that one wants more which connotes an element of greed.

Entertaining

Remember do not invite people out to lunch during *Ramadan*. People planning events with food should check to make sure that their event is not held during *Ramadan* or on another fasting day²⁸. Major events are not held during *Ramadan*. (Fig 12)

Since there are many rules governing what is *halal* and what is not, be sure you take guests to a restaurant that is serving *halal* food. This is sometimes difficult to determine since in Indonesia many restaurants do not say on the menu that their food is *halal*. It is best to either check with the restaurant or hotel or ask the guest in advance where they would like to go. One interviewee mentioned that he was always concerned about international restaurants. Evidence for this concern is omnipresence. At a Chinese banquet at a conference in Hong Kong in 1997 one of the authors noted that many Indonesian Muslims had difficulty discerning what they could eat. They were finally served a rice dish toward the end of the meal only to find out it was not *halal* and this was only after one of them had inquired. Moreover, at the same banquet, there were vegetarian Hindus who remained hungry.

It is noted that in Singapore, most hotel banquets either serve a variety of styles of food or are all *halal*. Even if the food is overtly *halal* there can be the sneaking concern that pork may have been cooked in the same area or that the same utensils were used to cook pork and non-pork food. Some five star hotels with international restaurants address these potential pitfalls by having two kitchens, one for *halal* food and the second for “other” food. In Indonesia, with its very small Chinese, many hotels do not serve pork in their Chinese restaurants. Although this is hard to image for anyone familiar with Chinese food, it does create a positive environment for Muslims to dine in the Chinese restaurant.

When entertaining friends in one’s home for the first time, it is best to reassure them before they ask that you do not have any pork in the dishes. Better still, tell them what is in the dishes, for example, the spaghetti has minced beef, because many can not tell what would be in western style foods.

Muslim festive season motifs and colours

Certain colors and motifs are associated with Islam. These can be used during the festive seasons in packaging, decorations, and advertising.

Colors

Green is by far the most predominate color used during this season but it does not have any special meaning. Green is invariably associated with Muslim items. It is often combined with yellow, or yellow and gold although it is not so brilliant as the gold color used for Chinese New Year. White is associated with religious purity and is the color women wear when praying, but it is not used for products marketed during festive seasons.

²⁸ Javanese might fast on *syura* before the Javanese New Year.

Motifs

Many motifs are popular during this season. Packages often have a yellow or gold crescent moon. Lights with tinsel or a stylized version are popular. The *ketupat* is by far the most frequently used symbol. This is rice steamed inside a woven basket-like container. It is eaten mainly at *Idul Fitri*. Traditionally, *ketupat* is said to represent equality amongst man. However, many interviewees said that it did not have any deep symbolic meaning but instead was commonly associated with the season. It is usually either green, or green and yellow-gold although the natural color is tan. The *ketupat* is used in all three countries in the study but does not appear to be used in many other Islamic countries. The *ketupat* appears on greeting cards for *Idul Fitri*, hanging decorations in malls and supermarkets, and in - store windows (Fig 13).

Textiles and dress

Traditional textiles or fabrics popularly used in the three countries includes *batiks* and *songkets*. *Batik* fabrics use a wide variety of motifs and feature numerous bright colors. Women use them for *sarongs*, a tubular or wrapped fabric skirt with no seams or defined waist. Urban women would wear these mainly during festive seasons. The woman always covers her head and should be depicted properly dressed with long sleeves in any advertising. They may also use them as a scarf *selendang* to drape over their shoulders.

It is very important to look one's best and to be dressed in traditional attire especially during *Idul Fitri*. Those who can afford to often buy new clothing: those even richer even purchase new interior furnishings. Often men get a new Muslim hat as well. Men frequently wear *batik* shirts for evening meetings and during festive seasons. *Songket* textiles, traditional to the Malay Peninsula, use bright colored cloth. Usually made of silk, they have a metallic thread inserted in the filling direction to give the pattern. Historically, many of these beautiful fabrics used real gold or other metals. Men and women both wear *songket* textiles. Men are often seen with the textile wrapped either as a head dress or around the body over trousers to give an apron like appearance. Actual textiles or stylized versions of *batik* prints and *songket* patterns are also used in print media. Women may also wear a *kebaya* the traditional jacket with no buttons.

Decorations

In Singapore, the Gelling area is renowned for its many festive seasons' lightings and is the center of activity during the Muslim festive seasons. Food stalls and decorations are prevalent. Many local Muslim families decorate with lights on the balconies of their flats. Tinsel poles line the streets and decorate celebration areas such as the Malay Village. In Jakarta and in Kuala Lumpur, the central city areas have many decorations.

Retailers, such as department stores and supermarkets as well as hotels and restaurants, commonly have special decorations for all or part of the festive season. Mega, a supermarket in Jakarta, had a large display at the front of their store featuring green syrups for drinks, green labels, and a festive season message. In 1997, the major Singapore supermarket chain NTUC Fairprice used green decoration on one side of the store for *Idul Fitri* and red on the other side featuring Chinese motifs as the two festive seasons were close together that year. Long green banners with gold lettering are common. The *ketupat* motif is often used for decorations.

The most unusual decorations were found in Kuala Lumpur. Both the Muslim *Aidul Fitri* and the Chinese New Year were celebrated almost simultaneously in 1997. Hotels had one side

of the entrance decorated with a Muslim theme and the other would feature a Chinese New Year motif, Fig.14. Greeting cards often used motifs from each season.

RAMADAN

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic and Arabic calendars. Throughout *Ramadan* Muslims fast. Historically, this month was holy to Arabs before Islam. The month starts with the physical sighting of the new moon. Since *Ramadan* is a lunar festival, its occurrence varies. This means that seasonal favourites, especially fruits and vegetables, will change as the timing of the festive season changes.

A “day” begins at sunrise and ends at sunset. The fast period starts from sunrise after the first meal *makan sahur* which is considered a late night meal, until sunset when the fast is broken. During *Ramadan*, most people eat more food and the *sahur* would in most cases be more substantial than their normal breakfast. Hotels serve a special *sahur* very early in the morning.

This requires special staffing considerations since the staff must rise very early to prepare both an early meal and the later *buka puasa* buffet. Often special foods are made or eaten for breaking fast. *Ramadan* is a time of year when people enjoy and anticipate special foods.

During the fasting day, no food or liquid including water is taken. These should only be consumed at sunset. Sunset itself is officially broadcast. Historically cannons were used in the Middle East to announce the end of fasting. Today in parts of rural Malaysia bamboo cannons *meriam buluh* are still used. In hotels, it is announced often by a gong, drum or over a public address system, Fig.15.

Children learn to fast gradually and would not start by fasting for an entire period from sunrise to sunset. Those who are ill or sick do not fast. Pregnant and nursing mothers are exempt from fasting. Menstruating women are also exempt but must make up the fast days during the year. There are also rules for virtually every situation, such as for travellers and for those participating in sporting competitions, especially those outside their country.

People with special health considerations can be exempted. We interviewed some people who had health conditions that would have exempted them but they wanted to fast both for spiritual and possibly psychological reasons. If one’s friends are fasting, the peer pressure to fast may be a factor for those with special health concerns. Some with health concerns may not realize possible problems that could be associated with fasting. There is also great personal reward in fasting which could also be a reason for such people to want to complete the fast for the month of *Ramadan*.

Several persons interviewed mentioned the difficulties of fasting in warm weather or tropical climates where the temperature and humidity are high. People working out-doors, such as construction workers, might have high water loss. Out-door labourers may make up the fast day when economic conditions allow.

Chefs state tasting is crucial before a dish could be served. This produces problems during *Ramadan*. One hotel, after checking with the proper authorities, allowed its chef to taste the dishes. At other hotels, some relied on non-Muslim workers to do the tasting.

Other religions and cultural groups also fast. What distinguishes Muslims' fasting during *Ramadan* is, first, the duration and, second, the abstinence of liquids during the fast. It is the duration of one month that makes this somewhat more difficult at least in the eyes of the non-Muslims.

To actually fast for a month during the month is viewed as an accomplishment by Muslims and is cause for joy. Non-Muslims not familiar with these traditions often see the fasting as a sacrifice or a difficult time. In contrast, Muslims tend to see it as a blessed month. This is a month when families and friends will break fast together and share one another's company. In urban areas, where friends may be separated by long distances and busy work schedules and family schedules make it difficult to visit during the year, many will use *Ramadan* to meet and break fast together. Hence in urban areas with a larger number of high and middle income families, more and more people are breaking fast at *buka puasa* buffets at large hotels with friends and families. Many non-Muslims look at the period following *Ramadan* as the time for meeting family and friends, but this research pointed to the importance of meeting friends and even business associates to break fast. Hotels, restaurants and shopping malls are easy places for people to meet due to their central location especially in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The twin philosophies behind fasting are control and limitation. So being able to attain the fast for the month is an achievement. It symbolizes purification and renewal. In addition, *Ramadan* emphasizes the equality of mankind as Islam stresses equality with all being equal in the eyes of God. Fasting also reminds Muslims of the suffering of the poor. Although fasting is one of the most obvious outward manifestations of *Ramadan*, it is in general a time for abstinence or control of all desires. One should abstain from sex, listening to music, and other sensual pleasures between sunrise and sunset. Muslims are prohibited from smoking during the fasting period. Muslims must prepare themselves for fasting. During the day they must not be angry or gossip; they should try to think good thoughts. Fasting is intended to make the body holy and to feel and remember the suffering that the poor go through every day. Thus fasting is a mental challenge that must be prepared for. Some Muslims interviewees stated that it was good for one's body to fast. They felt that they lead a less stressful life during *Ramadan*. Spiritually they are proud of their accomplishments.

There are no other fasting periods in the Muslim religious calendar. Some Muslims will fast one day a week before the holy day of Friday.

Celebrations are normally not held during this month. This is a time to ready and study the *Koran*. Some have study classes where they discuss the meaning of the *Koran*. *Koran* reading competition are often held especially in villages; Malaysia hosts an international competition. There is no special greetings used during this time nor exchanges of gifts or cards. These activities occur in the following month.

Takbiran, the evening before *Idul Fitri*, is marked by drumming and chanting *Allah Akbar* "God is Great". The chanting, known as *Takbiran*, may last several hours or even almost all night. The giving of alms *Zakat*, in this case rice or money, occurs before *Idul Fitri*.

Breaking fast

Location

A fast can be broken in a variety of places or ways. It can occur at home, at the mosque, at shopping center food courts, or in restaurants, Fig.16.

The latter has grown with the growth in the number of middle class in Indonesia and Malaysia. Hotels, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia, have started serving large buffets that contain many savories, snacks, drinks, and desserts to break the fast. Some include regional and national favorites as well as international cuisine. Again, this has become prevalent with the growth of the middle class. Breaking fast at the mosque offers a communal spirit which is shared with friends. A neighbor took bananas to the mosque to share and to break fast with friends in the community. Lower income families would generally break fast by getting food from a stall, foodcarts, or *warungs* (q.v.).

How to Break Fast

How does one break the fast? After not eating food for such a long period some prefer to do it slowly.

It is common to start eating something sweet such as a date or *korma* since this was the food Mohammed reportedly used. An additional consideration is that the first food most of our interviewees generally ate was something sweet in order to get their sugar up after not eating for such a long period of time. Dates fit this criterium superbly, Fig 17.

During *Ramandan* large volumes of dates are imported into the three countries. Dates from the Middle Eastern countries are especially popular. Many breaking fast techniques were observed: sipping tea or water, having a sweet soup *kolak* made with fruit and vegetables²⁹, and eating iced fruits *es buah*.

Some break fast, eat a meal then pray. Others break fast by eating and drinking a small amount followed by praying then eating the larger meal.

Hotels have in-house prayer facilities during this time. Those with space erect special tents near the buffet area. Others convert temporarily rooms such as ballrooms for praying.

Hotel buffets offer a wide range of items to start breaking fast. There can be hot and cold fruit and starch soups, savories, and desserts. *Kolaks*, including pumpkin soup *kolak labu* and banana soup *kolak pisang*, are popular. Contradictions abound. Supposedly lower income foods such as cassava and banana with sweet potato *ubi* are favourites at the high end Sari Pan Pacific Hotel. Le Meridian in Jakarta used durian with banana and chilled with ice. Sweet drinks such as the pink *bandung* made with condensed milk and other colorful drinks are offered.

Major differences in the foods served were observed in all three countries. Singapore, which has the smallest percentage of Muslims, also had the fewest hotel *buka puasa* buffets. Malaysia has a multi-cultural ethic. As a result many Chinese would go with their Muslim friends to break fast.

As stated earlier, in Indonesia hotel guests at the buffet waited until the sound to go to the buffet line; in Malaysia guests would go through the line and put their plate in front of them

²⁹ Strictly speaking, *kolaks* use coconut milk and sugar. Hotels use white sugar to keep the color light whereas home cooks generally use palm sugar and thus their *kolaks* are darker in color.

and wait until the sound was given. In Indonesia, the food stalls started dispensing food much later in the day than in Singapore and Malaysia.

It is odd to see a lack of food vendors during the daytime in Indonesia. One food area near a hospital had their stalls covered in white; of course there was no food, Fig.18. It was also unusual to see fast food outlets not crowded during the daytime even in downtown Jakarta; in some areas such as West Sumatra even fast food outlets are closed.

Ramadan in Indonesia

With 175 million adherents, Indonesia has the largest Islamic population in the world. Indonesia is also the fourth largest country in the world. The country spans well over 2 000 km east-to-west. Indonesia's ethnic, cultural and geographic diversity means that there are many regional variations in the manner by which the same religious festival is celebrated. Incomes are increasing: the average exceeded US\$1000 for the first time in 1996. As to be expected the average hides a large disparity. The growth of the middle class has been a key factor in the expansion of middle to high end restaurants. Franchises are extremely popular and growing quickly. Common brand names include Sizzler, Chilies, Fashion Café, Hard Rock Café, McDonald's, Wendy's, and California Fried Chicken. Their clean, colorful, cheerful environments make them very popular with both the young and old. They offer potential sites to break fast.

Retail supermarket expansion has been rapid; minimarkets and fast food restaurants are very popular. The growth of shopping centers and malls comes with an increase in food courts and food outlets. Shopping is a very popular pastime with family outings to shopping centers being common.

An unusual experience was breaking fast at the Karawachi Mall, a new large mall with an expansive food court area and numerous restaurants. Even the Mega Supermarket in the Mall had large amount of food in stock and an area for selling traditional foods used for breaking fast, Fig.19. One could actually see people preparing foods. This is a new part of the popular culture, breaking fast at malls with one's families.

Kemchick's had a large area selling special food items; this same area is often used to present foods for festive seasons. We found the owner of the store selecting his favorite items for breaking fast, illustrating that people prefer to break fast with some special foods.

The word *paket* refers to *buka puasa* meal or "set". It is popular to offer a special *paket* to entice customers to purchase. This is a good example of using the correct term when marketing one's product. Many marketers in Indonesia have specials during this time. Some of the most beautiful *buka puasa* buffets were found in Jakarta. Certainly the largest variety of traditional foods served as buffets was found here. The large number of items at the buffets and the beautiful colorful presentation of food was impressive. During *Ramadan* government and some private sector workers are officially allowed to leave work earlier to get home in time to break fast with their families.

Traditionally most think of visitations occurring during *Idul Fitri* that follows *Ramadan*, but many families prepare a special meal for visitors during this time. It differs from the buffet style meal they prepare during *Ramadan*.

Halal Foods

Ingredient labelling is not mandatory in Indonesia. However this is likely to change in the near future. Imported foods that are sold in a number of countries frequently have the *halal* certificate but generally the use is not widespread. As *halal* certification is rather new to Indonesia, some have taken to using it as a tool to gain customer support. Some supermarkets have a section of meats labelled *halal* although this is not required. We saw one such labelled section during *Ramadan*; next to it was the area selling pork bacon.

Dunkin' Donuts took out half-page advertisement in *Kompas*, a major daily Bahasa newspaper advising customers that its products are 100% *halal*. The advertisement showed a copy of the actual certificate. The "100%" was formed by using Dunkin' Donuts' products: the "1" was a croissant with meat showing the absence of pork and the "00" were two donuts, one topped with green bits, the other glazed with chocolate. A pink-glazed pastry was also shown. The graphic illustrated the use of favorite colors, pink and green, and favorite foods, chocolate, to gain attention.

Ramadan in Malaysia

Malaysia has over twenty million people: a little over 50 percent claim to be Muslim. In Malaysia, a Muslim is "one who practices Islam". About 95 percent of the Muslims are Malay. A large percentage of legal expatriates are Muslim, a reflection of Malaysia's need to import workers for factories, construction, and domestic helpers.

In Kuala Lumpur, ubiquitous small stalls sell snacks for breaking fast during *Ramadan*. The stalls start operating much earlier in the day than they do in Indonesia. Some stalls were set up in front of major downtown shopping centers, Fig.20. Food purchased at the are taken away to be eaten at the proper time.

The unit size of purchases is immense. This requires large stock keeping by retailers, Fig.21.

In one mall there was a special large area with boxes of sodas that was roped off with plastic in front of the store. Another retailer had cartons stacked nearly two metres high. These scenes were common in the greater Kuala Lumpur area which has over one million people. Malaysia also has large scale retailers such as Makro and Carrefours. The amount of traffic in these stores on a busy Saturday before Chinese New Year and *Aidul Fitri* was staggering. People were waiting for taxis or drivers by the roadside with boxes and boxes of food. Women in Malaysia tend to have four children, a much higher number compared with the other two countries. In addition, Muslims in Malaysia can have up to four wives. With households being larger, greater quantities of food are naturally required. Even fast food chains marketed larger carry-out specials which catered to the larger sized families. The other positive images were the use of decorations and even greeting cards that combined both the Muslim festive season and the Chinese New Year circa 1997. The most vivid was the Hard Rock Café Kuala Lumpur which had a rotating circle overhead with two motorcycles; one was dressed in a red Chinese costume, and the other in green Malay costume. Malaysia has

done much to promote racial harmony and equality. Such displays are very much a tribute to its multiculturalism.

Hotels and private restaurants tended to have a much larger range of types of foods offered. One hotel offered Thai food for *buka puasa* in order to differentiate itself. It also had a Thai master fruit carver. Because of the proximity of Thailand, it was common to see Thai Muslim dishes such as *kaeng masaman*, *tom yam khan*, *pla cian*, and *ted man nuer*.

Competition between hotel restaurants means that hotels must be creative to attract customers. Seven new five - star hotels are scheduled for completion for the Commonwealth Games in 1998. Hence there will be more competition in the future so perhaps there will be even more unique *buka puasa* buffets.

The Seri Melayu restaurant was a very special place to break fast. One enters a traditional wooden building and is greeted by hostesses and assistants who are wearing traditional costumes. The buffet has an amazing diversity with the menu rotating to offer different items. One favourite was *ulam-ulam* which featured a number of greens from East Malaysia. A large number of condiments were offered including fermented durian³⁰ to dress the salad. In the front was a large spit with a goat. Many non-Muslims came here for the great food as well breaking the fast with Muslim friends. There was also a cultural show. This was one of the most memorable *buka puasa* experiences.

The Hilton Kuala Lumpur featured Middle East food. As Muslims feel a kindred spirit during *Ramadan* with the geographic foundations of Islam, the consumer appeal was strong. Interestingly, there were not many such restaurants in the three countries.

In Johor Bahru in 1997 it was possible to eat a *buka puasa* buffet and watch a *Chingay* parade to celebrate the ending of Chinese New Year on the same day. Johor Bahru, with a population of about half a million, is close to Singapore and many Singaporeans shop there. In general prices are cheaper in Johor Bahru and many shoppers from Singapore often go there to shop and eat. It is unknown how many Singaporeans shop there during the festive season. The Puteri Pan Pacific Hotel in Johore Baru was the first to achieve *halal* certification for *charcuterie* items in Malaysia. It has about 900 items marketed under the "Puteri" brand that are sold to supermarkets and hotels.

Halal food

All eating places which offer *halal* food have an Arabic inscription. All Muslim owned restaurants are *halal*. Many four and five star hotels have two kitchens for *halal* and non-*halal* foods. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs and the Islamic Centre have the responsibility of supervising and enforcing the law regarding *halal*. Products such as imported meats must have a *halal* certificate which would usually be obtained in the exporting country by the appropriate Muslim organization.

Ramadan in Singapore

³⁰ This was not found in Singapore or Indonesia.

The Muslim population in Singapore is comparatively small and appears to be less affluent than the majority. In 1990 only 15 percent of the population are Muslim; 86 percent of these are Malays with the remainder originating mainly from India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Middle East. The expatriates in particular have a wide span in income.

Expatriate Muslims tend to eat the foods they are accustomed to in their countries if they can get them. An Egyptian Muslim stated that he considered that in Singapore more sweet items are consumed during the breaking of the fast compared with Egypt. Due to the large variety of food items in supermarkets in Singapore one can prepare whatever foods one needs.

In addition, there is a rather high usage of domestic helpers so there may be a tendency for more of the higher income level expatriates to prepare food at home since there are fewer buffets to choose from. Some of the expatriate Muslims interviewed did mention that it would be nice to have more hotels serving foods for breaking fast for *Ramadan* during this time. This would give them a greater variety of foods to eat and offer a more festive environment.

The festive season is less visible in downtown Singapore since the decorations and special foods are mainly found in the Geylang area near the Malay Village. A large number of food stalls are found inside tents. Non-food stalls also line the perimeter since new clothing and household items are also purchased during this time. Sweet layered cakes, and a wide variety of sweets, snacks, and drinks are sold (Fig 22). The sweets have a wide variety of colors including pinks and greens which uses *pandan* leaf to give a green coloring. People purchase the snacks to take with them to use for breaking fast.

Although stalls are found in other countries, this was the largest area found in one location. There were no supermarkets with special sections set-up for selling items to break fast comparable with Indonesia. Retailers consider that they do not have a large enough clientele to warrant setting up such an area. Singapore also has a large number of food courts and areas easily accessible for purchasing foods.

A *buaka puasa* buffet was offered at the Singapore Hilton: there was a visiting chef from Dubai. The food was characteristically Middle Eastern and had a very different variety of items from the buffets seen in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta. The guests included a wide range of people: it was impossible to tell which customers were Muslim and who were coming for the Middle Eastern food.

Since Singapore has a smaller population of Muslims compared with the other two countries this is a good approach to offering a *buka puasa* buffet. More-over, all items were labelled and the chef was accessible to explain all the details of the food. The Middle Eastern buffets were in sharp contrast to the other *buka puasa* buffets with regard to the fewer sweet items used.

Another option for Muslim in Singapore during *Ramadan* would be to break fast at many of the hotels' high teas. In these cases there would not be the use of specific foods such as dates, sweets, snacks, or *kolaks*.

The major supermarket catering to the local Muslim community is NTUC Fairprice, the largest supermarket chain in Singapore. Their retail units are invariably near housing estates. Newer stores decorate for *Idul Fitri* and offer special items. However, one does not find

many special foods for Muslims for breaking fast in the other supermarkets. For example in Indonesia, several premium supermarkets had an area for foods for breaking fast. Another item not found in Singapore but seen in the other two countries were the especially decorated cakes from the major hotels' bakeries. With the high incomes in Singapore, this might represent an opportunity. The fast food outlets visited did not have *buka puasa* specials for breaking fast.

We visited a large mosque and found them making a large quantity of *bubur* also found in the other countries. Others were bringing in packets of food from outside to use for breaking fast. They offered to share their food and everyone was very friendly and helpful. They had a large number of places set at long communal tables. The feeling of breaking fast in a mosque is more spiritual than in a restaurant.

Due to the small size of the Muslim population, it might be difficult to develop a market for new processed items unless it was a product that could be used year - round.

Halal food

Shops and restaurants selling *halal* products display a *halal* logo. The A&W fast food chain was the first restaurant to attain the *halal* logo in Singapore. The control of the use of the *halal* logo lies with the *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* (MUIS).

LEBERAN

Lebanon in Indonesia is in the tenth month of the Islamic calendar, following immediately after *Ramadan*. The first day is known as *Idul Fitri* in Indonesia and the month is called *Aidilfitri* in Malaysia.

Malaysia is the only country in Southeast Asia that uses the actual sighting of the new moon to set the specific starting date for *Aidilfitri*. Published dates must be considered only as tentative as the actual celebration does not begin until the physical sighting of the moon.

The week before *Idul Fitri* is special as the anticipation of *Idul Fitri* grows. This is the week that the angel Gabriel may come to earth.

Tension and excitement builds in anticipation of the culmination of *Ramadan* that ends with *Idul Fitri*. The evening before *Idul Fitri* is spent playing the large drum *budug* accompanied by chanting and praying throughout the year.

The typical greetings used include *Selamat Hari Raya Idul Fitri*³¹ or *Hari Raya Idul Fitri* in Singapore or *Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri* or *Hari Raya Aidilfitri* in Malaysia. People greet one another by touching clasped hands *salam* to forgive one another of any sins or transgressions. The day starts by bathing the children. Indonesian kiss the hands of their parents and ask for their forgiveness and blessings³². Next, they attend mass prayers conducted in the public square in an area specially set up for this; women wear all white to this prayer session. The men wear *sarongs* of *songket* or plaid textile *kain*. Women wear

³¹ *Hari Raya* means "great day" and *Idil Fitr* or *AidilFitri* are Bahasa Indonesian and Bahasa Malay spellings for the Arabic words.

³² This is similar to an Indian custom.

traditional dress and cover their heads during *Idul Fitri* visitations although they may chose not to do so the rest of the year.

Many visit and clean the graves of deceased relatives. The souls of the dead are considered to visit the house during *Ramadan* and return at the start of *Lebaran* so the family takes them back and performs a ceremony using water or rose water and flowers. Then the family visits close family and friends or have their own open house. Politicians, government officials, and others often have open houses where they entertain large numbers of people.

The first three days are very important in Indonesia and Malaysia. The visitations continues throughout the month. Those who can afford new traditional clothing buy them.

Although *Lebanon* lasts the entire month, the length of time spent in actively celebrating varies. Generally, one spends the first day with the closest family and friends and the next few days with close family and friends. If possible, they return to their home towns or villages. Later in the month, one visits neighbors and friends who are not quite so close.

One may take a *Parcel Lebanon* to a close relative, a snack or small item to a close friend or neighbor. Gifts are not required for others.

The important thing is to visit and forgive one another for any possible transgressions that have occurred over the year. People touch folded hands and slightly bow their heads as they say *harap dima afkan lahir batin* “forgive me the wrongs I have done you, whether of thought or deed”. This is the key element of *Idul Fitri*.

Urbanites may go back to their home towns for a while or they may make several outings to visit family. One would try to visit all members of their family, especially older members. Previously, families were larger and older people had more family members to visit. Urban professionals who can not leave Jakarta for a long period of time may choose to continue to make visitations on the week-ends throughout the month. People generally wear new traditional clothing during this time.

In Jakarta, large numbers of people exit the city for *Lebaran* by using all forms of public transportation. Most maids in Indonesia return to their villages and stay for two or more weeks; this may be their only trip home during the year. They will take back much of their savings to spend on food for their families.

IDUL FITRI

During the major festivals, but especially before *Idul Fiti*, in Indonesia and Malaysia there are television programs that featured dishes specifically for the festive seasons. Women’s magazines such as *Femina* featured foods and fashion for *Idul Fitri/Lebaran*³³. In Malaysia, television and magazines featured how to make popular dishes, especially a wide range of savories including many curries and other dishes derived from Indian cuisine. All are made in advance of the actual festive occasion.

These are served with rice dishes, such as *ketupat* and *lontong*, or glutinous rice cooked in bamboo *lemang*, Fig.23. These rice dishes are based on the confinement of the rice in a container; as the rice swells during cooking it becomes compacted.

³³ We were unable to find cookbooks for this or other Islamic festive seasons.

The *ketupat* is cut into small pieces and the *lontong* and *lemang* are cut into circles. Savories are poured over the rice. *Lontong* is traditional Javanese fare: it goes with *sate*, small pieces of meat such as chicken, goat, or beef on small skewers cooked on a brassiere and *gulai*. Whilst *lontong* and *ketupat* are primarily found during *Idul Fitri*, they are also associated with festivities on the Prophet's Birthday. Regular steamed white rice *nasi putih* is not served during *Idul Fitri*.

Since historically in this region little has been written about food, there is no record of how the *ketupat* and other items developed. As most people cook the night before *Idul Fitri*, some think that it might have been an easy way of cooking the rice before hand and keeping it so it did not spoil. Because the meal does not have a set time comparable with a Christmas lunch or dinner, people eat as they stop in during the day. Also due to limited space, ideally *ketupat* should be hung so it did not occupy much space.

As noted, *ketupat* and/or *lontong* rice dishes are suppose to show equality. However, not all view the *ketupat* as a symbol of equality. Instead they merely equate it with *Idul Fitri*: Malaysia has *ketupat* making competitions. Unmarried children usually assist their mothers in the preparation of *ketupat* the day before *Idul Fitri*. Generally, the woven casing for making *ketupats* is bought from street vendors and wet markets a few days before *Idul Fitri*. The *ketupat* shell measures about four square inches. Washed uncooked rice is spooned in through an opening at the top and the long palm leaves are woven shut. Rice fills about one-half of the woven structure. It is then cooked and hung after cooking. The *ketupat* is opened and the compressed rice cut in cubes and put in a dish by itself. It is eaten with savory dishes such as chicken in coconut milk with spices *opor ayam*.

In Malaysia, a plastic version *ketupat* was found in a supermarket. While examining this modern *ketupat* wrapper, a lady came up and kindly advised us not to purchase this that it did not work well. Festive Foods Malaysia, a national government initiative, shows how to make compressed rice *nasi himpi* in a polyethylene bag. This is not made this way in Indonesia. A display at the Nikko Hotel in Kuala Lumpur was the only one that depicted making *ketupat* and *lontong*. This was as much interest to Muslims as it was to non-Muslim.

A friend in Malaysia writes, "It is a must for everybody to be together at *Aidil Fitri*, its a family reunion. The night before *Aidil Fitri*, we will prepare the chicken *rendang*, or shredded meat *serunding*. We also have *lemang*, and *ketupat pulit* that is *lemang*, wrapped up in *palas* leaves. We also have *ketupat nasi* from boiled rice wrapped in the coconut laves and eaten with peanut gravy³⁴. There are lots of traditional dishes and sweet cookies as well as modern cookies and cakes³⁵.

Buffets and Visitations

Since people do not come for a sit down dinner but arrive throughout the day, the food is kept out on a table. When guests arrive they are encouraged to eat. Guests will eat even though they have already eaten, albeit they may eat only small portions.

Although *Idul Fitri* is a religious celebration, there are aspects similar to a family reunion in the West. One major difference is that not all the guests come at the same time. It also

³⁴ What many westerners would call sauce is referred to as a gravy in much of Southeast Asia.

³⁵ Correspondence from Nazlina Shaari, UNIMAS, lecturer, Textile Fashion and Design, August 1, 1997.

differs from the Chinese New Year celebration in the same respect. Given Indonesia's "rubber time", the all-day buffet is an excellent way to be flexible.

Green Packets

In Singapore, we saw green packets for Malays to give to children. One is to put money in the packets. Although this is not so widely practised in the Malay community, it does show an introduction based on cultural "borrowing", in this case the Chinese *ang pow* (q.v.). Singapore even offers a special aerogramme in green colors featuring *batik* and a boy and girl in traditional clothing.

IDHUL ADHA

This day acknowledges Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Jakarta's streets are lined with animals before *Idul Adha*, Fig.24. Those who can afford it donate a goat: the more wealthy donate a cow.

The animals are then taken to the neighborhood area set apart for the slaughter of the animals. After the slaughter, another crew cut up and weigh the meat, Fig.25.

Distribution is then made to the needy. Each area visited had a roster of the needy and their address. Each adult receives four kilograms of meat.

This is a joyous day for the poor since their diet does not often include much meat.

Christian Festive Seasons

Overview

Christmas is the major festive season celebrated in Asia. It is invariably viewed as a universal celebration with a secular meaning of peace, joy and sharing: a small Japanese boy in Singapore climbing onto a display in pursuit of a moving Santa makes one realize the universal appeal of many of the symbols especially to children.

It is an official holiday in the three countries studied. However the amount of time and attention it receives varies widely.

Christmas is widely celebrated in Singapore not just by Christians but by many more as a universal celebration of hope. The country's traditional year-end bonuses gives the religious festival an added secular boost. Few people interviewed realized it was a religious holiday since the images of Christ in a manger or the Three Wise Men were rarely seen outside churches. Singapore for many years decorated the main shopping area, Orchard Boulevard, to help attract tourists when it was an inexpensive shopping haven. The latter concept has gone but former intent remains. There is an increase in the number of food items offered by the supermarkets. Their delicatessens offer elaborate meals including items that traditionally appeal more to Chinese.

In Jakarta, the amount of festive season's decorations in the city was less than in Singapore. Nevertheless, there were festive lightings in many areas and the decorations have been increasing over the years. The focus in the supermarkets was more on chocolates and colas in special packaging. Restaurants catering to tourists and hotel restaurants are key in providing high quality complete Christmas meals and/or the total Christmas environment. Many tourists visit areas such as Bali to spend the holidays in the tropics. In addition, since the festive season is too short in duration to travel home, many expatriates go to a neighboring country: for example, those living in Singapore often frequent Bali and those living in Indonesia may spend the holiday in Singapore. The latter is especially true for those with children seeking a Christmas environment since hotels and events feature Christmas caroling and other traditional Christmas activities. Clubs and associations often hold parties, lunches or dinners at this time. Businesses may have special dinners or parties. Golkar, Indonesia's major political party, held a party at Christmas in 1996.

Resorts and hotels in Bali and Lombok in Indonesia gear up for tourists. Ironically, whilst they have travelled to a "foreign" country for Christmas, many tourists still demand the traditional fare from "home". Thus, turkey with all the trimmings are required.

Easter receives minimal attention. It is noted that few Christians celebrate the period with special foods. Celebration is mainly confined to buffets at major hotel restaurants. Some of these focus on the children with Easter egg hunts and toys. Supermarkets have only a minimal amount of special products such as candies and special chocolates in the shape of bunnies and other motifs associated with Easter. Most stock ham throughout the year although it is mainly seen as a deli item. The presence of expatriates has been important in creating demand for the latter as it reminds them of home.

In Singapore, local Chinese Christians often have a meal together outside the home after church services. This is also the traditional weekly family meal together.

Festive season colours, motifs, and decorations

Colours

The most obvious colors are red, green, gold, and white. Green is used for Christmas trees and green plant decorations and is not quite so prominent in cards and other items as is red. Red is a favorite color for decorations as it compliments the Chinese love of red. Gold is also a good choice for the same reason and it is often combined with red. White is important because of the lack of snow and the desire for many who live in this region to see it or to get the feeling of snow.

Motifs

Christmas is a secular holiday to non-Christians in this region as well as a religious holiday to Christians celebrating it. There are few religious motifs or icons used in most of the countries studied with of course the exception of religious Christmas cards and displays in churches such as angels and nativity scenes. Popular motifs include Santas, Christmas stockings, candy canes, reindeers, and Christmas tree bulbs and ornaments, as well as the tree itself.

Decorations

In Singapore, there is a wide variety of Christmas decorations. An initial impetus was the desire to attract tourists to cheap shopping. For example, the country has light-ups for all major festive seasons and the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board initially organized a Christmas light-up to attract tourists. With its strong dollar and the availability of more items in neighboring countries, Singapore is not so popular as a Christmas shopping destination as it once was. Nevertheless, with the increased number of expatriates and the increased earning power of the Singaporeans, merchants still decorate. The earlier competition between retailers and hoteliers has continued. Hotels especially have become increasingly sophisticated in their decorations.

The growth of five star hotels in the three countries is important since they have high quality decorations. Some try to be authentic while others might use a different theme each year such as a tropical Christmas. They all try to decorate to appeal to their target audience and to give an image of what they want to represent to the consumer. The Christmas tree is a favorite in all areas especially for decorating buildings.

Festive foods

Christmas in Indonesia

Christianity has been in Indonesia from colonial times. Areas such as the Batak region of North Sumatra, and Flores and East Timor all have some Christian population. About 10 percent of the population is Christian³⁶. Cross-cultural influences exist: the Jakarta Hilton Hotel describes a pageant which had the Three Wise Men wearing *batik sarongs*.

³⁶ Indonesia is not a Muslim state. **Pancasila**, the national ethos, tolerates all religions. However, everyone must declare their religion from one of the official religions

In addition, in Jakarta there are many lights in the city streets and on buildings. Shopping malls, retailers, and hotels feature decorations although private buildings do not have so many decorations as can be found in other major cities such as Singapore. One building featured a tall artificial tree which played Christmas music. The festive season mood is generally found in hotels and churches. There are some Christmas bazaars that sell crafts and gift items; these are usually held at hotels.

Indonesia is a popular tourist destination for Christmas, especially Bali and Lombok. This suggests that the overt aspects of Christmas will be centred on the tourist hotels. Hotels in the major centres will provide for the business traveller away from home as well as for local expatriates.

Supermarkets

The warm spot of the season was a visit to a favourite supermarket Kemchick's, in the Kamang area of Jakarta. Many of its customers are expatriates as well as locals who have lived abroad. All that is needed to make a complete Christmas meal is available: cheeses, pre-marinated meat items, *hor d'oeuvres* of German *pate*, goose liver with cognac, and *chapin pate* varieties from France (one of which was in the shape of a pig). Within the store there was even a roof covered with artificial snow and decorations done by local artists.

For those with unique products to market, Kemchick's should be the first stop in Jakarta. In addition, they have a section of the store that sells home items and offered a wide variety of Christmas napkins, tablecloths, and plates. Many other supermarkets featured some Christmas products. Hero, Wal-Mart, Mega, Gelael, Mitra, Golden Truly, and Sogo all had some items. Even Indomaret minimarts had some Christmas candy with special packaging.

Restaurants

Caterers and private clubs are potential food outlets in Jakarta at Christmas. The Meridan Hotel had Yule Logs and a menu with traditional roasted turkey with truffles and boneless leg ham that was baked, sliced, and served with chestnut and assorted dressings and sauces. In addition, goose, *foie grois*, smoked salmon, oysters, and lobsters were served.

The Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in Jakarta offers a special holiday room package for the season from December 15th - January 15th for Indonesian nationals and official work permit holders only.

They have Christmas Carols in the lobby, fiesta music in the Spanish bar, three auspicious menus in the Chinese restaurant, an appearance by Santa Claus, and a Dixie band. In sum, a focus clearly on entertainment and food.

Christmas in Malaysia

The number of Christians in Malaysia is about seven percent, the same as for the Hindu population. However because of other expatriates, such as Filipino domestics, the number celebrating Christmas would be higher. Moreover, they represent the higher income levels.

Supermarkets feature Christmas items with the premium end featuring a wider range of Christmas products. The largest variety of special items for Christmas is found in Kuala Lumpur and the greater Klang Valley. Chinese traditionally love fish so Chinese Christians

have fish. In Sarawak, they use roast chicken instead of turkey but they have coleslaw and potato salad with it.

Christmas in Malaysia is heavily influenced by the Malay tradition of having open houses such as during *Idul Fitri*. People attend church on Christmas Eve and come back for “supper”: the *Malaysian Customs & Etiquette: A Practical Handbook* states that this is very important. On Christmas Day, there are open houses generally with family: on Boxing Day, friends attend the open houses.

One observation worth noting is that in countries where late night partying is in order, there is little food service demand on the following day. For this reason, food demand on New Year’s Day is often vastly less than that on New Year’s Eve.

Easter

Easter is celebrated in churches in all three countries. One city in Flores, an island in Indonesia’s Nusa Tenggara, has a special Easter pageant that attracts tourists. Areas colonized by the Portuguese such as East Timor also celebrate Easter. In Malaysia Good Friday is a holiday only in Sabah and Sarawak. Malacca on Peninsula Malaysia also celebrates this festival. In Indonesia, Good Friday *Wafat Isa Al Masih* is an official holiday as it is in Singapore.

Most of the Christians interviewed do not eat special foods on that day. It appears that Easter is celebrated mainly as a religious event in these three countries and that the use of special foods is not so widespread as at many other festive seasons. There are probably also some churches which serve special foods or have bazaars.

The symbols associated with Easter include the decorated Easter egg, the cross in the hot cross buns, and the baby chick. Colors such as yellow and other pastels are popular. In some areas of Malaysia, greeting cards may be exchanged.

Shopping centres are almost devoid of special decorations. Retailers may carry egg coloring. A number of them are increasing their stock keeping units of speciality chocolates. Hotel bakeries make some special Easter items such as the hot cross buns, and chocolates in special shapes. These shops usually place their treats near the front of the hotel so everyone can see them.

Hotels generally reported that Easter was not a very big event for them. Some are gaining in popularity by focusing on the children.

Opportunities

Asians celebrate numerous religious and cultural festivals and have many special rituals that use food. This case study examined major Chinese, Christian, and Muslim festive seasons in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Although there are differences in the celebration of the major festive seasons, the theme of sharing festive foods with family and friends was common.

This section will start with a discussion of the commonalities of these festive seasons. It then raises issues related to the market chain during festive seasons, identifies opportunities related to the specific festive seasons studied, and makes some recommendations for developing new markets.

Celebration commonalities

Festive seasons offer opportunities to market and promote either new and/or existing products into the market. Although Chinese New Year, Christmas, and the Muslim celebrations of *Ramadan* and *Idul Fitri* are vastly different, they all include sharing food with families and friends. It is easiest to view the commonalities before addressing specific opportunities by market. Many opportunities exist for developing and expanding markets for many food items during festive seasons including but not limited to beverages, fresh fruits and vegetables, dried foods, meats, confectionery items, seafood, wines, and even traditional Asian foods.

It is important to understand where food is consumed and under what conditions. The following categories apply to most of the festive seasons:

- Family at home - open houses
- Business and associations open houses
- Restaurants catering for locals having meals with family and friends
- Restaurants catering to tourism during festive seasons
- Airline and other travel catering for tourism and travel - domestic, regional, and international
- Gift giving i.e. food hampers or *pakets* or food parcels

Family reunions - open houses

Some celebrations involve mainly the extended family whereas others are open houses with many family and friends attending. Both types require that a large quantity of food be offered to guests.

Options for preparing the food include:

- * preparation in the home with or without assistance
- * event catered or partially catered
- * food bought outside or partially bought outside the home.

Convenience products could become more important because of:

- * the increased number of women working outside the home;
- * many women, not all in the middle and upper incomes, do not cook frequently since they often have domestic helpers;
- * domestic helpers may not be familiar with special delicacies associated with festive seasons because of different cultural, religious and geographic reasons.

Business open houses

Businesses, associations, and even public figures have open houses during the festive seasons. These are important because they may introduce people to new food items³⁷ and the quantity of food needed. In many cases caterers might be used. In Indonesia, numerous public figures hosted *buka puasa* events; one was for members of the press.

Restaurant used for entertaining by locals

Restaurants are often convenient or preferred places to entertain or meet friends. The growth of *buka puasa* buffets at hotels is influential in introducing new produce and new dishes to customers in the middle and upper income brackets. Hotels often rotate menus and thus have a need for a large number of dishes. Many are willing to try new items.

Idul Fitri is not such a big event as *buka puasa* for restaurants since most potential clients are visiting family and friends. Many hotels at least serve buffets for the first few days. They also offer *pakets* for guests whose domestic helpers have returned to their village and they have no one to cook for them. Special hotel rates for this period apply only to citizens or those holding work permits.

Christmas and Chinese New Year celebrations with special emphasis on the reunion dinner are important times for hotels as well. Restaurants often view these major festive seasons as an important time to establish their credentials in the community. Not only is the food important, but the total experience of any of these seasons helps to tell the community what the hotel stands for example, “tradition”, “quality”, “modern” or whatever.

Hotels and restaurateurs take a long time to develop their menus and the total experience. Few marketeers appear to promote new products or to have hotels mention specific ingredients country of origin or brand name. New foods and new dishes are often introduced to locals through hotels and or bakeries: Black Forest cake and *Idul Fitri* cakes in general are very popular in Indonesia. Many hotels are combining western and traditional foods for some of their buffets thus giving more exposure to western dishes.

Traditional New Year’s Eve celebrations are also popular in most countries. Many stay overnight at the hotel so again special packages are offered. Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day are also times when locals entertain at restaurants.

Restaurants catering to tourists

Tourism during festive seasons is important in areas such as Bali and Singapore as well as other parts of Indonesia and Malaysia. Tourists come especially during Christmas, but some may visit other countries for Chinese New Year. We observed Muslim and Non-Muslim

³⁷ An interviewee noted that they had seen a new type of date, probably a Modjool, at a *buka puasa* buffet hosted by President Soeharto in the Republic of Indonesia.

tourists and business travellers at various *buaka puasa* buffets. The Hotel Nikko in Kuala Lumpur had a display that gave the visitor some background on the event.

The reason the *buaka puasa* buffets might be of interest to some tourists is that there is a larger and different variety of traditional foods available during these buffets. Many also feature western food as well so tourists feel that it is a safe choice.

Guests at five star hotels expect the best and they often want foods traditional to the season but may also like to try some tropical fruits and local dishes. This is an opportunity to expose future potential consumers, especially international tourists, to new exotic fruits for example or new desserts using these fruits. Hotel chefs mentioned that guests are always amazed by the range of tropical fruits available.

Once a consumer has eaten papaya, mangosteen, rambutan, *chiku*, longan, or whatever exotic fruits one finds, they may be good targets for buying such a product when they return to their own countries. There has been an increased interest internationally in Asian foods and a few hotels and establishments offer cooking classes as a part of the tourist experience. In Australia, where many Asian vegetables and fruits are grown, tourists may see new uses for produce while they are travelling.

Airline and other travel catering

Food needs during air travel is important during festive seasons. One can imagine being on a flight during a key festive season and not seeing anything recognising the occasion. Airlines must be sensitive to the timing and special needs of Muslims breaking fast during *Ramadan*. Flights to Mecca from Indonesia during the *Haj* pilgrimage have to meet massive food requirements at the dormitories where pilgrims stay before departure.

Gift giving

Food is often a popular gift in many countries. Hampers were found for all festive seasons. Hampers are traditionally pyramid shaped and come in a variety of sizes and price points. In Indonesia, there is also a smaller gift item called *pakets* or food parcels. Some hamper consolidators are starting to upscale their offerings. Opportunities exist to develop hampers dedicated to either a product, such as all - fruit or all - chocolate, or a dedicated country. Hampers represent a way to introduce new products to consumers. However, it is important to educate consumers in terms of what to do with it, how to use it, and even how to store it once they have opened it. Even confectionery items are given as gifts which suggests another reason why packaging is important.

Visualising market opportunities

By using the framework outlined above to analyse food markets, it can be seen that the opportunities and usages are both perhaps greater but even more complex than initially thought.

Before one can evaluate the various marketing opportunities, one must have some understanding of the culture. For example, in Jakarta we saw bread in the shape of a crocodile in the bakery at the upscale food retail outlet. We were advised that crocodile shaped bread was used by the *Betawi* culture in Jakarta as it was traditionally shared during special ceremonies such as weddings.

Even birthday celebrations vary from the western birthday cake, to rice cones in Java, to noodles for Chinese as noodles signify longevity because they are long. Chinese foods are especially rich in symbolism so at auspicious times such as Chinese New Year's it is not surprising to see much symbology related to food usage. Some of the more common symbols are noted in the Compendium section.

The market

To really find new uses for products one must not only understand the festive season, but also begin to visualise the market.

Asian families tend to be extremely close knit and the extended family can be quite large. Rapid urbanisation, dual income families, and generally good economies have helped to accelerate demand for food products as well as creating demand for new products. In addition, there has been tremendous growth in the number of supermarkets, shopping malls, food courts, fast food chains, franchise food operations, and five star hotels in the three countries studied.

With a rapidly expanding urban middle classes, more Asian consumers are able to acquire festive foods even though they may not use these products daily. This represents an opportunity to make consumers aware of your products and induce trial of your product. But you must tell them what your product is and how to use it. In addition, give them other ideas for uses beyond the specific festive season.

In Malaysia and Indonesia, people working in major cities return to their villages with money to assist in buying special foods. This indicates that one should not just eliminate the lower end consumer. One of the key concepts that makes festive seasons attractive markets is that it is not just the middle and upper income families that eat festive foods. For premium products, they would not be a target, but during *Idul Fitri* most families eat special foods which results in a wide market spectrum of potential consumers.

Due to the wide range of incomes and wealth distribution in some countries, there may be consumers at the high end where cost is not an issue. However, it is the growth of the middle class that has particularly helped supermarkets and restaurants. In many cases the amount of food purchased and consumed increases markedly during festive seasons. Many families are willing to spend more on luxury items or items they perceive to be special during this time: in some Southeast Asian countries, the use of gold in foods was reported during Chinese New Year a few years ago.

Although it is always important to understand the market chain, festive seasons put additional demands at all points in the chain. This section will explore various aspects related that are especially important during festive seasons. Let's start with the consumer.

Consumer factors

Festive food preparation can be a challenge for most people anywhere. Special considerations found in this study included women who may not normally do the food preparation suddenly confronted with preparing a feast in a small kitchen.

Some say the *ketupat*, rice cooked in a woven type basket, came into use in these countries because it can be made in advance and hung up out of the way in a small area until serving time.

Kitchen Equipment

Many people in some of the countries studied do not have ovens. They usually cook on a small counter top burner equipped with two gas burners that run from bottled gas. Many, even in urban areas, do not even have these burners and have to use traditional ways of preparing at home the likes of *rendang*, spicy beef cubes cooked slowly cooked for *Idul Fitri*. There has been some movement toward upscaling kitchens and some new housing offers stoves and other items. One interviewee had a stove with an oven. Her domestic helper did most of the cooking. Neither person had any idea as to how to use the oven.

By understanding the actual cooking methods, the role of refrigerated storage, and general kitchen utensils and serving equipment, one gains a feel for the potential market. For example, smaller refrigerators, which are common, make it difficult to buy large quantities of food in advance to store for the special day. Thus products in UHT packaging are in demand. One consequence of the relatively minor role of refrigeration is that many do not drink cold drinks or do not want ice in their drinks.

Traditionally, foods are cooked in the morning and then left out during much of the day. Any ingredients or items that require immediate refrigeration or refrigeration after opening should state this clearly and prominently on the label. Special instructions should be given on the package in language that is commonly used. Many products now show graphics to depict cooking and storage techniques.

It is also important to show how the food item should be served; many fear making a mistake such as putting an item which should be on a flat plate in a bowl. It is common to illustrate canned or convenience mixes with items that are not in the package. Remember to give suggestions that are applicable to their food culture. For example, a noodle illustrated with pork or beef may be inappropriate to some.

Household Helpers

Many families have domestic helpers who usually do the shopping and/or cooking throughout the region. Some households have several helpers, *pimbantus* in Bahasa Indonesia and *amah* in Chinese, most of whom have specific tasks. Some helpers are very adept at preparing foods while others are not.

In most cases the helpers would not know how to prepare special festive season foods especially for employers of quite different cultural backgrounds³⁸, for example, a Christian family in Singapore may have a Christian helper from the Philippines. When a Muslim helper works for a Muslim family, the problem is that the helper would return home to her family during *Lebaran* thus leaving the family without someone to help with meal preparation during the time of year when families do the most entertaining in the home. Even when a Christian family has a Christian helper from, say, the Philippines, the dishes used during a specific festive season would probably be different. When the *Idul Fitri* and Chinese New

³⁸ This recognises that a *pimbantus* from, say, northern Sumatra may be culturally different from the Indonesian employee from Bali, and that the rural Malaysian helper may have a completely different cultural framework than the city-based Malaysian employee whose major formative years were spent overseas.

Year are close together, Chinese families with domestic helpers who are celebrating *Idul Fitri* find that their domestic helpers have returned to their villages. This obviously suggests the need for convenience at this time of the year. Such needs may not be economical. At a 1997 food promotion at an upmarket supermarket in Jakarta, people were buying canned chicken stew that was featured at the demonstration.

Although some might predict that there was little need for such products where chicken is readily available and has been a traditional part of the diets of most people, the notion of convenience is a compelling one in determining food choice.

Many women interviewed previously associated cooking with work that a domestic helper should do. Often young professional women do not learn the art of cooking while studying to earn a place in a university. Attitudes toward cooking appear to have changed since some of their mothers cooked. Even when one knows the art of cooking, skills decline when not used frequently. Hence with the use of household helpers to do much of the cooking and the ready availability of food at hawker stalls, many women find that they face a difficult culinary task when it comes to festive seasons. So in many cases Asian women struggle to create an elaborate traditional festive meal for guests with limited, or even no, domestic help.

Many tend to think that the use of household helpers is limited to the middle and upper classes. This is not necessarily the case. In Indonesia, help is less expensive so a wide range of income levels have helpers. This is common in urban areas. We interviewed people with relatively low incomes who brought helpers to Jakarta and paid them wages common in rural areas. However household helpers are not the exclusive domain of urban Indonesia. In the rural areas where wages are very low, families with modest incomes often have domestic helpers who do the cooking. The implication for this is that perhaps even fewer women heads of household than expected are involved with daily food preparation.

Trends - Need For Convenience

The above emphasises the importance of convenience. This is why supermarkets and hotels have done so well with complete take-away meals, entrees, or desserts. In a number of cultures, part of the joy of the celebration is enjoying a home cooked meal. This is now undergoing change.

With more women entering the work force there is little time to cook especially from “scratch”. In Singapore, there is a five and one-half day work week. So women working, maintaining a family, and running the household have little time for gourmet cooking. In urban areas in Malaysia and Jakarta, commuting time can be extensive with women leaving home early and returning late.

One example of convenience is pre-mixed packaged spice kits. Shelf-space for these items has increased in many supermarkets over the last few years. In Indonesia, there was heavy television advertising for the pre-mixed packaged spices for chicken stew in spices and coconut milk *opor ayam*, a necessary dish for *Idul Fitri*. The advertising was to try to induce product trial to a new target audience during the festive season with the intention that they may buy other pre-mixed packaged spice kits available for many traditional dishes popular during *Idul Fitri* such as *rendang* and curry *kare*. For Christmas, gravy mixes, stove-top stuffing kits, and pie mixes were examples of convenience oriented products at the supermarket.

The use of pre-mixed spices in Asia is interesting due to the very cheap price of the spices in Indonesia and the other countries studied. Various regional dishes often require first having all the necessary spices available, and second the grinding and blending of numerous spices. Using the raw ingredient is thus a tedious and time consuming job. Some spices must be cooked just before other ingredients are added.

Many domestic helpers do not know how to do these traditional dishes. A growing number of consumers in the original spice islands, Indonesia, now use the prepackaged spices which are sold at a premium: proof of how the consumer values convenience.

Expatriates

With increased globalization, there is an increased number of expatriates in Asia. They come from a very large number of countries. This variation is reflected in the way they celebrate a common festival such as Christmas. Here there are variations in food items used between various countries or even various regions within countries.

In Singapore a wide range of food items typical of many countries can be found. Some bakeries even specialise in foods from specific European countries. Many hotels have chefs from various geographic areas and many have had a wide variety of work experience. This adds to the variety of food involved. An example of an expatriate introduced food item is the Black Forest cake in Indonesia. This is extremely popular for *Idul Fitri*. Unfortunately, no one remembers who was responsible for its introduction.

Many Chinese expatriates return home during Chinese New Year. Some interviewees take home special food gifts. Singaporeans returning to Indonesia during Chinese festive seasons find a larger selection of items for this season in Singapore.

Regional Variations

There is also a wide variation in the celebration of various festive seasons within Asia. Chinese New Year in Singapore, and various parts of Malaysia and Indonesia have many similarities but also some differences³⁹.

It must be remembered that Chinese New Year, *Ramadan*, and *Idul Fitri* are lunar celebrations. Thus there will also be variations in produce availability and even suitability from year to year. Hence it is important for marketers to inform importers, wholesalers, retailers, and others of unique products that may fit their festive season food requirements.

The authors also found differences in food snacks eaten to break the fast in all three countries. Buffets in the three also had some variations. Lesser variation was found in the *Idul Fitri* buffets.

Food Service Sector

This sector is concerned about securing and training qualified personnel to work in food preparation and service areas. The Novotel Hotel in Jambi on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia hosted a conference fairly soon after its opening. In response to comments as to how personable the food service staff were, the manager advised that the hotel had to train the

³⁹ One interviewee who celebrated Chinese New Year in Singapore, Indonesia, and a small ancestral village in China noted tremendous differences.

staff starting with the basics since most did not know what a knife and fork were: traditionally most eat with their hands from a banana leaf.

Many staff in the food service sector are simply not familiar with the food items they are preparing. At a major five star hotel in Bali, photographs of what the food was supposed to look like when served were posted above the preparation area. The hotel provided showers and soap for employees to use before work. During festive seasons, many staff also want to celebrate. When there are dual holidays there is an even bigger problem. This was the case in Malaysia in 1997 with *Hari Raya* and Chinese New Year. Most hotel outlets served special foods. So convenience and ease of use, such as with minimally processed fruits and salad greens, are important to this sector as well.

Hotel planning is especially important. For example, in 1996-97, Christmas, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, the month-long *buaka puasa* buffets, *Idul Fitri* buffets, fifteen days of Chinese New Year, and Valentine's Day were all celebrated from the end of November until February. In many cases, all food outlets offer special menus so as to appeal to a wider audience; the exception of course is with *buaka puasa* buffets and *Idul Fitri* buffets. This requires much advance planning. As hotels are often hesitant to work with new suppliers; potential suppliers must access the hotel or restaurant's approved list of suppliers.

Retail factors

Planning

Supermarkets generally start planning for the Christmas season at least six months in advance: some hotels start a year in advance.

Supermarkets may have trouble visualising certain types of new products especially those for Christmas. Many mentioned that they liked to see a catalogue with the product. A sample would be better. Some have their staff do tastings. When special items are obtained locally or regionally as is often the case for many items during *Ramadan* less lead time is required. Cookies and snacks for *Idul Fitri* are generally local whilst dates, meats and other items may be imported.

Retailers increase the number of special items or stock keeping units carried for each festive season. This is especially challenging when two major holiday periods overlaps as it did in 1997 with *Idul Fitri* and Chinese New Year. In addition, extra space is required for festive season decorations and special point-of-sale displays, Fig.26. Crowd control and staffing during festive seasons are also concerns.

Wholesalers/Distributors

Festive seasons put additional demands on importers, wholesalers, and distributors. Timing is critical so the first step is to get your product into the country on time. Refrigerated delivery trucks and storage facilities may be in higher demand during this period. Traffic jams may make deliveries difficult.

Marketing and promotional aspects

Pricing

Variations in pricing to retailers exists throughout the region. In some cases, this had led to “grey” markets. This is where products find their way into more expensive markets such as Singapore by alternative channels. Product pricing varies because it may be produced in a low cost country and exported. In many cases, companies find that new premium products must be value-priced in emerging markets which can not afford or will not try the product at its normal price. This is common with cosmetic and toiletries. A smaller sized package can be used to make the product more affordable as well.

Products targeted primarily at expatriates, that is, premium products for Christmas such as cheeses, wines, *pates*, and fruit cakes, would not have lower prices. Low pricing in some cases sends the wrong message; so where premium pricing indicates status and quality, a premium pricing policy should be used.

Product

New products can be launched or developed for specific festive seasons such as the *yu sheng* kit and the vegetarian pork products for Chinese New Year. Developing a totally new product takes time and resources. Many use a two pronged strategy with product modification being a first strategy followed by new product development at a later stage. Product modification can mean reformulation that can involve considerable time and money. This is in order to get into the market early with a product that is deemed satisfactory. Please note: this does not mean skipping the market evaluation and trial phase.

For those who want to develop new products, one must take into account local or regional tastes. An Australian manufacturer of frozen meat pies exhibited at a trade show the traditional meat pie but in addition offered a *rendang* meat pie. The latter has secured shelf space. Since *rendang* is a traditional dish at *Lebaran*, this would have been a good time to promote this product.

Other products that refer to the festive season can also be developed. For example, recently traditional Chinese desserts have become available either in the canned or instant form. Chinese double boiled soups especially popular at Chinese New Year could be developed in such forms.

Some products have entered the market with minor product modification. Minimal modification can include package design.

Packaging

Packaging is an key feature during the major festive seasons, especially Christmas and the western New Year, Chinese New Year, and *Idul Fitri*. Although providing special packaging for the three seasons discussed may seem expensive, it should be viewed as a key way to generate sales not only during the festive season but throughout the year.

Packaging includes the use of appropriate colours, symbols, and festive season greetings. Chinese characters with auspicious meanings are important during Chinese New Year. Note that Chinese characters should not be used on products sold in Indonesia. Although *halal* labelling is important for some Muslim consumers, Chinese consumer may view products with such labels as being for a different target market. Since many items such as candy are

given as gifts, it is another reason to use special packaging with colours, motifs, and greetings specific to the festive season.

Small sized packages are often used to induce trial and increase affordability for many products. It may be important to have these smaller packages for trial before the festive season in order for more consumers to become familiar with them. This may encourage them to buy larger packages at festive seasons.

On the other hand, in some cases large quantities of items are needed for festive seasons selling. Oranges in crates or small boxes are popular for Chinese New Year. Drinks are another product where “bigger is better” during Chinese New Year (Fig 27).

Labelling

Ingredients labelling will come into effect in Indonesia in 1998, albeit some companies are currently doing it. Our observations are that most consumers in Indonesia are not used to reading labels, and, like many consumers elsewhere, do not understand the labels.

Labelling is particularly important to Muslim consumers. To be *halal* is of great importance. But in Indonesia where the *halal* label is not required, many consumers would not think to read the label of, say, an imported spaghetti sauce to determine if it contains pork or pork products. With a label of many strange sounding ingredients, consumers often cannot tell if the item contains pork products. So items should use either the *halal* label or clearly state on the front of the package terms such as “contains no pork or pork products”.

Branding

The issue of branding in developing awareness and loyalty is well known. The relevant issue here is language, especially the written word as well as the sound of the word. In developing the brand name for Asia, a western company could either have its name translated by sound or have it translated by meaning. Kotler et al (1996) gives a number of excellent examples of company-brand names that combine the company’s name, Chinese, and auspicious meanings:

- Coca-Cola became *ke kou ke le* in Mandarin and *ho hau ho honk* in Cantonese meaning “tasty and happy”
- Mercedes Benz whose Chinese name means “striving forward fast”
- Boeing became “wave of sound”
- Sharp became “treasure of sound”

Colours and symbols are one means of addressing the challenge of the written word, be it in Chinese characters, Arabic script, or alphabet-based letters. Chapter Five contains a large number of examples of auspicious and inauspicious colours, numbers and symbols.

Display

Many supermarkets and restaurants spend a lot of time and effort to provide the right shopping environment that is conducive to sales and conveys the mood of the festive season. A stand-out example was the use of extensive green buntings and banners used by a Japanese retailer in Jakarta during *Ramadan*.

Signage

Signage can draw attention to your product. An excellent example was a large overhead sign for special Chinese New Year soups. The manufacturer chose to use signage to focus on the product and to describe a special recipe booklet available at the cashiers counter, Fig 28.

Sampling

Product sampling helps especially with new and exotic products. A premium fruitcake line moved well at Christmas for the Japanese department store Sogo in Singapore because of product sampling (Fig 29). Comparable results occurred for the same festive period with a chocolate line and an Australian nougat manufacturer.

Ideally, the retailer should have a dedicated sampling area, *vide* Kemchick's in Jakarta, with trained demonstrators.

Advertising

Advertising during the festive season must have themes pertinent to the festival. In Indonesia, a noodle company ran an extensive television ad campaign during *Ramadan* and *Idul Fitri*. It showed the mother cooking for a happy family; others featured someone returning home to the family then the family was shown enjoying a meal together. The key was the family reunion at this joyous occasion.

Publicity

There are a number of specialised women's magazines in the region such as *Femina* in Indonesia and *Her World* in Singapore that feature recipes. Specialty gourmet publications carrying festive season articles include *Wine & Dine* in Singapore and *Flavours* in Malaysia. Newspapers also run articles and carry recipes during festive seasons. In Singapore and Indonesia, both of the business daily newspapers carry reviews of restaurants and food related articles.

Publicity opportunities are numerous in Asia as the print media are eager for items. Popular articles are new product information, nutritional information, healthy cooking tips, cooking information, and stories on new ways to prepare foods for festive seasons.

An excellent case study we observed was a cheese dessert. The manufacturer developed recipes that were suitable for various festive seasons. A press kit for each festive season was sent to suitable media as well as supermarkets, and restaurants. Suggestions for other uses were developed.

Other good lessons we saw relating to the general theme of publicity and information was the use of pictorial information as well as words in the local language. Food manufacturers should be aware that many people involved along the distribution chain do not know much about proper storage techniques so information should be directed at them.

Recipe Booklets

Cook books are common in the three target countries. We observed that despite many consumers in Indonesia not having even a recipe booklet, there was tremendous interest in them. From this observation we consider that it might be feasible for several types of products to band together to produce a small booklet for a festive season such as *Idul Fitri*, Fig.30. Recipes should be simplified and photos of how the dish looks should be included. One example would be to suggest the use of spaghetti for *buaka puasa* or *Idul Fitri*. Make the photograph look Indonesian by, say, showing *acar acar* pickled vegetables served with it. The booklet could be obtained by purchasing certain items.

Special Promotions

Special promotions related to festivals require innovation. A number of examples were observed:

- A supermarket that expanded its deli offerings during Christmas by featuring roasted meats.
- A supermarket that placed poinsettia flowers, a red flower commonly associated with Christmas, near its entrance.
- A department store in Jakarta that held a pumpkin carving event for Halloween with a “Buy a pumpkin and get free carving” with the key being that the carving was not just any free carving but that the carving was done by talented Balinese carvers whose skills are world renowned for carving wood.

Cooking Classes

It would appear that few food marketers in the countries studied have recognised that cooking classes are an easy way to reach their target audience. Hotels such as the Hilton in Singapore and the Raffles Culinary Institute often have special classes focusing on preparing special foods for the festive seasons. In Jakarta, cooking classes are just starting to be held at hotels although there are several independent schools. It might be possible to link cooking classes with hotels and/or supermarkets.

Many people do not know how to cook a turkey so if a hotel that was serving turkey for Christmas gave a class on preparing turkey including how to prepare the smaller parts this could perhaps encourage people to try to make the product at home. Many of the people who are taking cooking classes in hotels or independent schools are very interested in cooking. They are thus a niche that can be highly targeted. Although they might reach fewer consumers than a general advertisement, for some products this can be worthwhile.

Islam

Islam and its dietary requirements imposes heavy requirements on the food marketer. In order to understand some aspects of the requirements the following is excerpted from Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS), Singapore’s Islamic authority.

The MUIS *Halal* Certification Scheme was introduced in 1978. It is an internationally-recognised scheme that certifies a particular food or product as *halal*. Four types of certificates are issued:

- Product Certificate: issued to food manufacturers for their locally-made products.
- Eating Establishment Certificate: issued to eating establishments such as restaurants, foodstalls and fast-food chains.
- Imported Meat Certificate: issued to local meat importers to endorse foreign *halal* slaughtering certificates. Poultry Abattoir Certificate: issued to abattoir owners for their fresh *halal*-slaughtered poultry.

An establishment that is awarded a *halal* certificate is allowed to affix the MUIS *Halal* logo on its products or display the logo on its premises. Applicant must meet MUIS conditions of application before submitting a prescribed form. Surprise visits are conducted to the applicant's premises to verify information given and to ascertain whether the product or food meets *halal* requirements. If approved, the MUIS *Halal* certificate is issued. Periodic inspections will be made thereafter. Applicant must submit renewal application.

A more complex issue is the role of food additives. Appendix 2 is the MUIS's listing of the *halal* status of various food additives⁴⁰.

“[our] certificate is an authoritative, reliable and independent testimony to support the claim as a food manufacturer or food-based operator that your product meets halal requirements.... Muslim consumers will have greater confidence in consuming such products or foods. If you are an exporter, the certificate may also help meet the importing country's trade entry requirements. This may enhance your product's marketability.”

Whilst its comments are directed to Singaporean food purveyors, the advice is universal.

Finding and creating marketing opportunities

Opportunities exist during festive seasons for beverages, chocolate and confectionery products, dairy products, fresh fruits, livestock, meat, seafood, snacks, sugar, wheat products, and wines. Demand for premium products in certain categories also increases, for example, products such as the premium seafoods of abalone and shark's fin are in demand for Chinese New Year. Many countries are also seeing a growth in the use of processed foods as convenience becomes more important. Opportunities exist with middle and upper income consumers, restaurants and caterers, and fast food chains.

Strategy

The strategy is to use the festive season to introduce the product then try to build on that after the season. Take turkey. Turkey is popular during Christmas, but what happens with turkey after Christmas? Christmas is the time to tell the turkey story for the whole year. Editorials discussing turkey or giving recipes and cooking even carving tips should position it as a healthy food suitable for eating all year round. Tell the consumer where turkey breast deli items can be purchased as well as how do you eat it and what do you eat with it for Christmas as well as the rest of the year. *Halal* turkeys were promoted at the IMFEX 97, the exhibition dedicated to *halal* products held in Singapore. Some restaurants mentioned that they did *tandoori* turkey for Christmas.

Canned date honey was purchased at the *halal* food show, Fig 31. Unfortunately, there were no instructions on what to do with it or how to use it. What about a date shake? What about using it over other fruit?. *Rujak*, a popular fruit salad in the three target countries, is served with a dressing, *bumbu rujak*, that usually includes at least chillies, salt, and tamarind.

In order to develop new markets for your products at festive seasons, think of the needs of the festive season. If the need is to create auspicious dishes, as with Chinese New Year, research should be directed toward this goal. From there it may be possible to develop auspicious dishes for a Chinese Valentine's Day. It is then necessary to promote the concept. Very little work is done by food marketers to promote foods during festive seasons outside traditional methods such as advertising and mailers, and showcasing at supermarkets and restaurants. A good Australian promotion at a key *buaka puasa* buffet would probably reach more locals due to its time duration than a short special promotion at another time.

⁴⁰ Taken directly from MUIS's home page.

The increase in western food consumption in many areas plus some familiarity with other cuisines may help create opportunities for new dishes. Remember that at some *buka puasa* buffets, western dishes are served along with traditional ones.

It is important to follow key trends and try to capitalise on them during festive seasons. Chinese New Year would in most cases not be the time to promote healthy eating. Instead, Chinese New Year creations should stress the auspicious nature of the food.

Fruit

Pomelos (*q.v.*), the giant citrus, is popular at Chinese New Year as well as being used as a temple offering prior to consumption. A new opportunity could be pomelo sorbet. Chinese and Asians like fruit so what about multi-colored melon balls? Green honeydew melon balls for *Idul Fitri* served with a sauce? Or a melon trio featuring three colored melon balls in gold, green, and orange, all good colours for Chinese New Year? An aspect worth remembering is the tossed fish salad *yu sheng*. This is not just a dish but an event. It probably sounded strange at first as it still does to some Chinese from Hong Kong or other areas where it is not yet popular.

Healthy Cooking - Healthy Diet

Many consider that Asian diets are healthy. After all, they involve:

- a low use of animal protein especially red meats
- a high use of grain and seafoods
- a high variety of vegetables.

The irony is that whilst the food is healthy, there are some unhealthy aspects of the cooking process:

- some of the fats and oils used are considered unhealthy
- it can involve the extensive re-use of cooking oils
- the use of rancid oils is somewhat common
- fried foods are seldom properly drained
- common use of newspapers to rest the fried food on.

Thus whilst the foundations of the cuisine are healthy, it is possible to make the cooking healthier. As healthy cooking becomes a more important, it might be useful to introduce healthy cooking for certain festive seasons such as *Idul Fitri*. Although information concerning healthy diets may be increasing, especially in Singapore, information can be difficult to obtain in Indonesia and parts of Malaysia.

It might be possible to run a healthy foods campaign before *Idul Fitri* showing how to cook a healthier *rendang* and *opor ayam*. Many of these food items have much grease floating on the surface since it is not skimmed off after cooking. Removing chicken skin, and reducing the use of thick coconut cream are some ways to make more healthy dishes.

Country of Origin

It is important to understand the role of country of origin when developing a healthy produce campaign. In general, Australia has a positive image. Concerted marketing programs must

support such positioning. There is some increase in usage of signage supporting Australian products at retail but there is no clear image on this signage. Much of the activity appears to have been made by the retailer who recognised the importance of telling the consumer the country of origin.

A number of interviewees who have been to Australia noted the vast array of fresh produce including Asian vegetables and fruits. At the same time there is a perception among food writers that Australian cuisine is very creative and interesting. Thus it may be possible to introduce new Australian concepts into Asian cuisine. In 1997 a few hotels featured Middle Eastern cuisines for *Ramadan*. A novel, and perhaps newsworthy approach, would be to ask a guest chef from Australia to work with a hotel to develop a *buka puasa* buffet or menus during other festive seasons.

Convenience

Convenience is important. The female head of household is usually responsible for meals prepared at home or served in the home. In many cases, she does not cook. Convenient foods make her look like a winner. In many cases her meals will also reflect on the male head of household. So make them both winners. Whole meal solutions is a concept promoted as a way for families to put food on the table in countries where domestic helpers are not the norm. This concept could perhaps be extended to the festive seasons in Asia. Hotels and supermarkets which offer complete meals have used this approach. Since cooking traditional meals often does not have the same connotation in Asia, getting food on the table may be the important concept, not the fact that it was home made in many cases.

A few years ago, several traditional foods started appearing in convenient forms. *Popiah*, a popular food for Chinese New Year, requires a special shell. Although frozen *won ton* skins were available, the frozen or chilled skins for the *popiah* were only popularised quite recently.

Other traditional foods including desserts are now sold as canned, chilled, or frozen products. It is likely that there will be a growth in traditional Asian food products in the future to serve not only the market in Asia but the international market for such products.

Product categories

Beverages

Muslims consume non-alcoholic beverages. They may be willing to try special new drinks. A new sparkling beverage from Spain was shown at the 1997 IMFEX trade show in Singapore. This could be used for *Idul Fitri*, Chinese New Year's celebrations, and other life cycle celebrations such as weddings. One might think that since sparkling beverages in many countries are heavily associated with champagne this would be *harum* for a Muslim, that Muslims would not be interested in a sparkling drink. It is noted that the product was introduced by a company whose principals are Muslims.

Many opportunities exist for new drinks during festive seasons. Suggestions for punch from fruit juices would be another non-alcoholic festive option for those who prefer not to drink either because of religious beliefs or personal beliefs. Already popular in Singapore, bottled and packaged juices are becoming very popular in Indonesia and Malaysia. Opportunities exist for marketing beer, liquor, and wines during some festive seasons as tourists may wish to drink their favourite beverages during festive seasons.

Chocolate Candies

Chocolates are once viewed as a luxury item. Consumption ballooned when they became widely available in convenience stores and small shops. Festive seasons are a time when special or premium chocolates may be consumed. Some are purchased for guests while others are given as gifts. Since many festive seasons have open houses or meals with a large number of people attending, many food items are left out on a main or side table. One approach observed was to package the chocolates in special festive season tins. Sampling programs were more common in Singapore during Christmas compared with Indonesia and Malaysia.

Premium brands are starting to appear in Indonesia, some of which are made under a licensing agreement. Packages of small individually wrapped chocolates are now being sold. During the festive season many chocolates are sold in special tins or boxes or have special wrappers appropriate for the festive season. A highly innovative package was two orange plastic Mandarin orange boxes filled with chocolates, Fig 32.

Imported chocolates for Easter are increasing, reflecting the increasing number of western expatriates living in the region. In Singapore, retailers eager to please and retain consumers in the face of increased competition, have complied with consumer's demands even though we gained the impression that they did not really understand the Easter Bunny concept.

Confectionery Products

The market for confectionery products is good at festive seasons. Each festive season has special biscuits and cakes associated with the traditional festive season. Upper and middle income households might purchase cakes for *Idul Fitri*. Many would not have an oven or the kitchen utensils necessary to bake a cake. Many have never baked a traditional western cake but they are liked.

Traditional puddings are popular at Christmas. "Little Sister" brand from Australia was a good seller in Singapore. The pudding is sold in a plastic container that is suitable for steaming the pudding. This concept could be transferred to other products for other festive seasons since most Asians are familiar with steaming. This in turn leads to the suggestions of a steamed date pudding for *Idul Fitri* or a carrot cake for Chinese New Year.

Numerous confectionery items are imported from Australia especially for the Easter and Christmas seasons. The bulk of the Easter products are for children as are some of the Christmas products such as candy canes. It is not clear whether special confectionery items are purchased for children during the Muslim festive seasons and Chinese festive seasons. This might be an opportunity to explore as it appears that children play a role in the decision making in routine confectionery purchases and many packages are designed to appeal to children.

Icecream is becoming more popular throughout Asia. Some non-traditional ice cream flavours have been developed for local markets. Examples are yam, sweet potato, taro, durian, and red bean. However, in the target countries no one appears to have suggested to consumers how to use icecream at festive seasons, for example, with a yule log. Logistics can be a challenge. In Indonesia, ice cream bars are very popular at convenience stores. However, manufacturers frequently have to supply the freezer unit. Distribution of frozen products can still be a problem in much of Indonesia and rural Malaysia.

In Singapore there was tremendous variation of new flavours offered in traditional mooncakes. This is done mainly to differentiate products and hotels making them. New flavours were positioned as premium products.

Dairy Products

Consumption of dairy products in many Asian countries remains comparatively low although some products such as yogurt and drinking yogurts are experiencing increases. Nevertheless, butter, cheese, and cream usage increases at certain festive seasons. Butter is often sold as bulk butter for use by hotels and bakeries (Figs 33, 34). Cheese usage increases during *Ramadan* and *Idul Fitri* due to its use in snacks and sweets. Cream is used by bakeries and hotels.

There are a number of development opportunities. Desserts that do not require special baking but use fruits and cream, similar to some used at Christmas, might be promoted for other festive seasons. Whipping cream can be colored red or green for various seasons. This might be a way to introduce whipping cream into more households for cooking purposes. And don't forget to mention that it is good in coffee!

Eggnog has been a popular Christmas drink in northern Europe and North America. Is it possible to develop milk based drinks for other festive seasons? Is it possible to incorporate the traditional *pandan* flavour that is green in colour. With green being a popular colour for Muslims, a special package for *Ramadan* and *Idul Fitri* could be promoted as a healthy drink for children.

Meat

Demand for meat increases during most festive seasons. It is particularly high for the first few days of *Idul Fitri* when beef *rendang* and *sate* are popular. Some of this demand is filled by domestic beef or cheap imports from India, but there has been some increase in demand for premium beef⁴¹. Hotels would use premium meats for the *Ramadan* and *Idul Fitri* buffets; however the first is the largest user.

Country of origin appears to be important. Sogo supermarket in Jakarta separates beef into different chillers and advises its consumer of the country of origin of the beef: Australian, U.S., and New Zealand. Some hotels also identify country of origin. Promotions during festive seasons giving reasons and recipes could perhaps help increase sales.

Seafood and Shellfish

There is a demand for premium fish and seafood products mainly at Chinese New Year. Australian abalone, especially canned product, is well known. Lobster is also used especially during Chinese New Year, Christmas, and the western New Year. Again, country of origin is important: the Regent Hotel and The Legend in Kuala Lumpur promoted the lobster on their menus as being from Australia.

Snacks

Snacks are popular in Asian cuisines. They are especially prevalent during the festive seasons. Many are either made at home or purchased from small vendors or markets. These often are packaged in clear packages or packages with minimal information. Newer snacks using the latest packages are becoming more important. Special promotions could perhaps

⁴¹ One *Idul Fitri* party attended by Crippen used high quality imported beef in its *sate Madura*.

help increase sales. Youth could play a role in influencing the decision to include new snacks during *Idul Fitri*: a meal with an Indonesian family consisted of pizza thanks to their daughter.

Sugar

Sugar is an important item for *Idul Fitri* when it is used in beverages at home such as hot tea and coffee and in the preparation of traditional desserts. One interviewee stated that sugar was a status item in Indonesia. Thus, being able to serve guests and family a status item, such as sugar with tea or coffee, during a festive season is important⁴². This illustrates that even a basic item usually taken for granted can be viewed as a status item.

Demand for sugar is also high for the production of confectionery products and beverages such as squashes and carbonated beverages that are consumed during festive seasons. Many interviewees suggested that sweets are very popular in the three countries in the study. However, there are regional variations. A number of informants mentioned that the Sundanese, from Java, have a special love for sweets. Sugar is sprinkled over breads or found inside breads sold at bakery stands including cheese breads. Sugar or chocolate treats are sometimes sprinkled over buttered breads and eaten for breakfast.

Special sweets are made from all the major festive seasons in the case study. In Southeast Asia, there has been some mingling of desserts used traditionally by the Malays and Chinese. This suggests that there is perhaps room for new ideas especially using the traditional steaming technique for those who do not have ovens or other tradition baking ovens. Steamed puddings sold for Christmas that allow the user to warm the pudding by steaming at home could be one way to sell new desserts. Many elaborate desserts such as cakes are sold through bakery chains or at bakeries in hotels or supermarkets.

Vegetables

One of the few instances we saw of vegetables being marketed specifically with a festive motif was the small gourds promoted during Chinese New Year and the pumpkins for Halloween.

Wines

Wines are used for Christmas, New Year and other festive seasons. Liquor is often served for Chinese festive seasons, especially Chinese New Year.

The need to position the female consumer is important. Generally, women do not drink the likes of cognac and other stronger alcohols. Whilst more and more are drinking at home, overall female consumption of liquor is less than that of males. Women would not ask for a glass of wine unless it is offered. Thus, wine companies could take the lead in suggesting their products be positioned as an option for those who want an alcoholic beverage but not spirits.

Appreciation of wines is increasing in Asia. The concept of different wines for different courses for the Chinese reunion or other meals during this festive season could be used at hotels. It could be done as an optional cost to the set dinner. However, many do not know how to select the appropriate wine for specific dishes, so education and marketing is important. Several mentioned the status aspect of wine consumption which should not be

⁴² Traditionally, palm sugar has been used in home cooking in Indonesia.

overlooked. In Singapore, the Cold Storage and NTUC supermarket chains ran advertisements reminding consumers to purchase wines for their Christmas season. Wines are often taken as gifts to homes during festive seasons such as Christmas and New Year. Western expatriates tend to take a bottle of wine as a gift during Chinese open houses. This represents another opportunity to promote wine.

Festive season opportunities

After the above presentation of some general needs for specific food categories during festive seasons, it is useful to consider some key aspects for specific festive seasons.

Chinese New Year

Although one associates Chinese New Year with tradition, one has to examine possibilities for new products. Hampers are important gifts during Chinese New Year.

New ideas for premium hampers would include fruit hampers or a combination of premium fruit and wine hampers with cheese and biscuits. Hampers could even contain prestigious items such as abalone and shark's fin, Figs.35 and 36.

Ramadan

Several informants suggested that the role of breaking the fast and the foods used to break the fast may be changing. The increasing popularity of the *buaka puasa* buffets at hotels and restaurants has been noted above. We were given a number of reasons for their popularity:

- meeting friends at a convenient location to share this joyous occasion;
- experiencing traditional favourite foods as well as new foods;
- to savour the premium products and healthy food preparation techniques common in hotels and restaurants.

The hefty price tag at most *buaka puasas* excludes the lower class. In contrast, offering new and premium products for this time for the middle and upper classes may be important.

Are there possibilities for new products for breaking the fast such as isotonic drinks and high energy snack foods such as date leathers or granola bars? Children learn how to fast generally by starting slowly; in some cases they may fast only a part of the day. Are there products which can be promoted as giving them fast energy when they break the fast?

Idul Fitri

Although *Idul Fitri* is characterised by similar dishes served by the majority, there are possibilities to upgrade consumers to use more premium meats such as with *satays* and *rendangs*. Healthy meals is another concept. Convenience is also important. No take out deli items were commonly found in supermarkets, although food catering is important for large parties. This may be an opportunity for supermarkets and local food sellers. Is it possible to introduce a modern *ketupat* perhaps using white and green rice? Breads, cakes, other desserts and milk are already available in green.

Christmas

There are increased choices of food products for this festive season for the home cook as well as for restaurants. Premium restaurants offer the best of the best for this festive season. Many hotels have a well planned and executed meal with several courses that would be impossible to recreate at home. As hotels and supermarkets strive to differentiate themselves

in an era of increased competition, gala premium meals will be served. These occasions at outlets such as hotels and supermarkets may serve in some cases to introduce products for use at other times of the year. Upscale retailers import a plethora of exotic products for this season.

One area of interest is to feature traditional dishes from other regions. For example, a wide variety of baked goods from various countries are available in Singapore. What about a buffet featuring authentic Christmas dishes from specific countries or regions?

Easter

Easter celebrations are gaining importance at restaurants and hotels and are often viewed as having a component for the children while providing an Easter buffet for all. Increased visibility at hotels by using publicity to reach a wider audience is important. Delicatessens should promote special hams and other items. Special candies and confectionaries specifically for this season are growing due to interest especially by the western expatriate community. Some parents interviewed suggested the importance of having their children see traditional items for special seasons.

Denouement

The above section discusses opportunities in Asia for those seeking to capitalise on the food-cuisine aspects of select Asian festive seasons.

It must be emphasised that “Asia” is a market place as well as a geographic place. It is noted that there are sizeable Asian populations outside of Asia such as Australia, New Zealand⁴³, the entire West Coast of North America, the northeast of the United States, and parts of Europe. The observations noted above are equally applicable to the general expatriate Asian population in those places as what they are to the three target countries.

⁴³ “Asians” are the fastest growing component of New Zealand’s immigration.

Compendium

Abalone

Bah in Chinese.

To Chinese, abalone symbolises guaranteed wealth.

Agama Hindu Dharma

Indonesia

Literally, *the religion of water*.

Also *Agama Tirta*

The form of Hinduism (*q.v.*) that has developed on most of Bali.

Aku cinta makanan Indonesia

Indonesia

The Government program to promote indigenous food: literally *I love to eat Indonesian food*.

The program arose from the concern that young Indonesians are moving too much towards a western-style diet. To counter the influence of western foods, the program encourages a diversification of the diet by emphasising the importance of traditional foods. Local tastes and nutritional values are advocated as being superior to imported foods.

Aspects of the program include research into the application of traditional foods in modern Indonesia, assessing the role of traditional foods in the social economy, and the promotion of traditional foods such as fruit and vegetables. A tangible aspect of the program is the emphasis on the traditional form of fermented soybean *tempeh*(*q.v.*). The government has established a factory to manufacture the starter culture needed for *tempeh* production. It is hoped that with the ready availability of cheap and safe starters, people will be encouraged to make their own *tempeh*.

Ambulung

Brunei Daarussalam

Sago (*q.v.*). The dish *ambuyat* comes from *ambulung*. It is made into a clear paste by adding boiling water. The warm mixture is rolled into a small ball, dipped into a sour fruit sauce and then swallowed whole without chewing. A traditional rural dish which has gained popularity in the towns, *ambuyat* is best eaten with vegetables, fish, meat or prawns.

Ang pow

Ang paus in Malaysia, *hong bao* in Taiwan.

Packets of lucky money given to children and unmarried adults on major Chinese festivals. They are usually made of bright red with various Chinese heroes and legends on them..

In Japan, children receive *o-toshidama* gift money from parents, relatives and friends on New Year's Day. The initial intention was for the gods to encourage children to do their best.

Animals

Animals are both auspicious and inauspicious symbols in Asia. Some examples are given alphabetically. The most widespread use of animal symbolism is the animal zodiac.

The origin of this is obscure: historically, the linking of animals with the years can be traced back to China's Eastern Han dynasty of around 220 AD.

There are 12 animal years.

1998: Year of the Tiger

1999: Year of the Rabbit

2000: Year of the Dragon

2001: Year of the Snake

2002: Year of the Horse

2003: Year of the Goat

2004: Year of the Monkey

2005: Year of the Cock

2006: Year of the Dog

2007: Year of the Pig

2008: Year of the Rat

2009: Year of the Ox

Fig 37

The popular origin of the animal zodiac is when the Buddha (*q.v.*) was dying he summonsed all the animals of the forest to bid him farewell. The first twelve to reach his bedside were honoured in their order of arrival. The twelve animals form a cycle, starting with the rat (*q.v.*) and ending with the boar (*q.v.*).

There are specific times of the day that have their own animals.

Fig 38

Apple

For Chinese, the apple *ping quo* symbolises peace as the first character in the word sounds like “peace”. The throwing of an apple into the water by a young man is suppose to result in the getting of a good wife. Apples should not be given to an invalid as the Chinese word for illness *bing* sound very much like *ping*. Apple blossoms symbolise female beauty.

Asalha Puja

Thailand

Public holiday on the full moon of the eighth lunar month (July).

Celebrates the first sermon preached by the Buddha (*q.v.*) to his five disciples after attaining Enlightenment.

Bamboo

Along with the pine tree, the Japanese consider the bamboo a symbol of nobleness and integrity as it retains its leaves in winter.

To the Chinese, bamboo represents a series of symbols. One symbol is that the bamboo represents modesty as the bamboo leaves droop because its insides or heart is empty and an empty heart is virtuous and modest. Another symbol associated with bamboo is old age. When combined with other potent symbols, another suite of symbols emerge; with the plum, bamboo symbolises man and wife; with a vase, peace; and with the plum and pine tree, three enduring friends.

Banten tegeh

Indonesia - Bali

The offering of fruit in Bali’s Hindu ceremonies. The term refers to the heaped display of fruit on a tray (Fig 39). *Banten tegeh* can be stacked as high as one metre (Fig 40). The fruit is taken to the temples where the essence of the fruit is consumed. The offering is then taken home to be eaten by the family.

Temperate fruit, such as orange, red apples, and large purple grapes, are being used to give shape and colour to the *banten tegeh*.

Bat

An auspicious symbol of good fortune, good luck, and happiness amongst Chinese as it derives from the pun *fu* “good fortune” as bat is *pian-fu*. A red bat is a symbol of especially good fortune as red *hong* is homonymous with “enormous”. Five bats represent the Five Blessings: a long life, health, wealth, a love of virtue, and a natural death.

Balut

Philippines

Fertilised duck egg, best eaten when the chick has formed. Can be served raw, par-cooked or salted. Said to be beneficial for pregnant women and an aphrodisiac for men.

Whilst most noticeably associated with the Philippines, the eating of fertilised eggs also occurs in Indonesia.

Belacon

Malaysia, Singapore

Indonesia: *tras*, *patis*.

Thailand: *nam pla*

Philippines: *patis*, *bagoong*

A pungent seasoning made from shrimp paste common to many dishes in south east Asia. In some places the term refers to fermented product. In Indonesia, *tras* is the dry form and *patis* is the liquid form.

Betel nut

Tropical Asia

Chinese: *bin lau*, *bin lang*

Malaysia: *pinang*⁴⁴

Indonesia: *pinang*, *sirih*

Thai: *maak*

Vietnamese: *la lop*

Strictly speaking, the betel “nut” is really a seed. It comes from *Areca catechu*, a thin palm tree of about 15 metres in height. The seed is produced by drying the nut and then removing the outer husk. Users claim that the seed is a digestive as it produces copious volumes of saliva. Betel is quite astringent. The seed can be chewed with lime in different forms.

When chewing, one’s mouth becomes full of liquid that is usually sprayed out, preferably at white stones. Chewers are identified by their reddened lips and blacken teeth. As the combination is alkaloid, it wears the enamel off teeth. Some claim betel to be a stimulant. There is evidence of it also being a carcinogen.

Betel nut is a fruit of many talents. Solomon (1996) quotes work translated for her attributing to betel nut “it makes a drunken person sober, a sober person drunk. It makes a hungry person feel satisfied and a person who has eaten too well, feel ready for his next meal”. Chinese attribute a number of medicinal properties. The *Illustrated Chinese Materia Medica* (Yen 1992) states that *bin lang* “kills worms, breaks accumulation, precipitates *qi*, and moves water”. Betel nut has entered the languages of Asia as a parable: “two halves of a betel nut” refers to people who are well matched whilst “a peeled betel nut” is a Filipino term for someone who has dissipated their fortune by gambling or wild abandonment. In traditional Malay courtship, the betel leaf signifies the girl and the nut the boy: acceptance of the marriage proposal is crowned with the chewing by the couple of betel. In Thailand, the collecting of

⁴⁴ Malaysia’s Penang is named after *pinang*.

carved mainly wooden boxes containing the various accoutrements of betel nut chewing became an art form, especially amongst the aristocracy.

Betel is a crop of economic significance. World wide it is estimated that over 800 000 t are produced. In Taiwan, production has more than quadrupled in the ten years to 1994 to 137 000 tons. Betel is the country's third most valuable crop after rice and pork. Internationally, more than 50 000 t are traded annually, mainly in Asia but also to the Middle East.

Betel leaf is not the leaf of the betel palm. It comes from *Piper betel*. A number of Asian cultures use betel leaf when consuming the betel nut. Called *kapar/kapur sirih* in Indonesia and *pboon* in Thailand, the "dish" is a sliver of betel nut with a smear of slaked lime or a lime-based paste. The lime is to mask the astringency. Different countries add different products to enhance the taste: cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, turmeric, and finely shredded tobacco were amongst identified additives. *Pann* is an Indian form where it is commonly consumed after a meal: "*It is the essential postprandial pleasure, a good curative for the digestive system*" (Barker 1996).

Birds' nest soup

Chinese cuisine but collected in Thailand and Indonesia

Birds' nests soup is one of the most expensive dishes in Chinese cuisine. The dish appears to have originated in China's Ming dynasty in the Seventeenth Century.

The soup itself is made from the saliva used by the birds to make the nest. The birds' chewing produces a saliva that is smeared on the edges of the nest. Gradually the saliva hardens allowing another layer to be smeared on. When soaked, the nests expand to up to 20 times their volume. New nests are considered be of a higher quality compared with older nests as the latter are dirtier and thinner. The bird is the Swiftlet *Aerodramus spp*. The Black Nest Swiftlet *A. maximus* uses its black feathers to build the nest, hence "black nests", whilst the White Nest Swiftlet *A. fuciphagus* builds its nest solely from saliva. White nests are considered to be higher quality and thus more expensive. The Swiftlets nest high on the walls of caves in Thailand and Indonesia. Collecting in Thailand takes place in between February and July.

There is concern that the current rate of nest collecting is interfering with the bird's normal nest building cycle and adversely affecting their reproduction cycle. Thailand now requires collectors to be licensed in an effort to control the rate of collecting.

Black

Black is generally a colour to be avoided when using in connection with Chinese. One reason for this can be traced to Shi Huang-di, the first Emperor of China. After he defeated the red Zhou Dynasty, he choose black as the dynastic colour as black was associated with water and water squelches fire: in turn, fire is associated with red.

In Chinese terms, black symbolises darkness, death, and honour. In some countries, black is used to border death notices.

Boar

In the animal zodiac, boars are symbols of ferocity, courage, and steadfastness. At the same time, it is easy to see the opposite side of the boar: reckless courage, senselessly attacking without provocation. So boar-year people are courageous but headstrong, have tremendous fortitude but are impulsive. The boar is the twelfth of the twelve animals in the zodiac.

Pork generally symbolises for Chinese at least prosperity: a fat pig is a symbol of wealth. China's Hokkien people present roast pigs to their fellow in-laws as funeral gifts. Pig trotters and tongues auger good fortune in gambling.

Bone China

In the West, Bone China may be synonymous with quality. In Asia it can raise problems. Moslems (*q.v.*) and Hindus (*q.v.*) are inhibited from eating from Bone China as they harbour the fear that the "bone" could be from either pigs or cows.

Bprehd

Thailand

A festival in southern Thailand that parallels China's Festival of the Hungry Ghost (*q.v.* ghosts) and Japan's *obon* (*q.v.*). A fifteen day period when hungry ghost ancestors *bprehd* that have been damned to hell are permitted to visit the world of the living. The living prepare merit-making food to ease the suffering of those who have yet to find peaceful reincarnation. Foods include the sweet *kanom lah* that is made of fine thread-like bits of batter. The thin threads are needed as *bprehd* have only tiny mouths.

Bubur

Indonesia

A rice porridge, the traditional way of starting the day. Usually accompanied by dried fish and chillies. Often eaten for breaking the fast at mosques where large pots of *bubur* are made and served.

Buddhism⁴⁵

The religious and philosophical system of thought associated with the Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha Gautama, the Historical Buddha also known as Gautama Buddha and Sakyamuni Buddha (*Sakyamuni* "Sage of the Sakyas", the clan from which Siddhartha Gautama came), was the scion of a princely Hindu family who lived approximately 560-480 BC. At age 29 he left his wife, children, and political obligations to seek the truth. This followed his having inadvertently seen aspects of life which had been previously shielded from him in his princely isolation. The leaving of one's family "to seek the truth" appears to have been somewhat accepted in those days. He studied and rejected Brahmanism. He reached enlightenment in 535 BC and became the **Buddha** *one who has awakened*. The Buddha is also referred to as the Sakyamuni *fully enlightened one*.

⁴⁵ Our thanks to Ani Thublen Chokyi, an Australian Tibetan Buddhist nun who commented on this section.

Ironically, in India, the birthplace of Buddhism, less than one percent of the population now practices Buddhism. This is partly due to the inculcation of Buddhism into Hinduism - the Buddha is viewed as one of the reincarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu - and partly to the destruction wrecked by the Islamic invasion.

There are many schools of Buddhism: Dhyana, Tendai⁴⁶, Prajna, Pure Land Buddhism, Theravada (q.v.), Mahayana (q.v.), and Zen (q.v.). Buddhism promotes the Middle Way, a rejection of both hedonism and severe asceticism. It involves the belief in a transcendent and all pervading God, the power of prayer, and reincarnation. With the latter concept, one must go through many cycles of birth, living and death in order to release one's attachment to desire and thus attain *Nirvana*.

The essence of Buddhism is that to escape the delusions of this world it is necessary to have both wisdom and compassion. Unlike the Hindu background from which he came, Siddhartha Gautama believed that every-one was capable of knowledge and that no caste had exclusive access to knowledge. Enlightenment is hard but practical as Buddhism places a heavy emphasis on the liberation from earthly desires. There are two main elements: the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Eightfold Path*.

The *Four Noble Truths* relate to suffering, its cause, the elimination of the cause, and the way to that elimination. Specifically, the *Four Noble Truths* are:

- all humans suffer;
- suffering is caused by unfulfilled desire: humans are unfulfilled because they want more - more money, more power, more love;
- the fulfilment that humans want can only be satisfied from within;
- the key to inner fulfilment comes from self knowledge.

The means of overcoming suffering and achieving self-knowledge lies in the *Eightfold Path* which consists of:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| * right understanding and knowledge | * right thinking or aspiration |
| * right speech | * right actions |
| * right livelihood | * right effort |
| * right mindfulness | * right meditation |

Adherence to the *Eightfold Path* leads to *Nirvana*, literally “blowing out”, the extinguishment of the flames of desire. The Buddha preached that each individual must find his own path to *Nirvana*. The *Eightfold Path* is also called the *Middle Path* because it steers a middle course between the materialists and the ascetics.

Buddhism in practice

As it spread throughout Asia, countries both absorbed and assimilated Buddhism within their own cultural imperatives. Thus, the Buddhism that reached Japan in the middle of the 6th Century had inculcated aspects of Chinese and Korean culture as it passed through those countries. Prior to this, Buddhism in China had been localised due to translations into different Chinese dialects and the addition or omission of passages depending on the translator. Because it was at core a philosophical system, there was little conflict with local

⁴⁶ The founder of the sect was Saicho who is said to have carved the three monkeys to represent his idealism of not seeing evil *mizaru*, not hearing evil *kikazaru*, and not speaking evil *iwazaru*.

beliefs, rituals, and customs. Thus local beliefs became readily incorporated into the imported Buddhism. For this reason it is possible to identify “Chinese Buddhism”, “Japanese Buddhism”, “Thai Buddhism”, and “Tibetan Buddhism”.

There was a gap of over a century between the Buddha’s preaching of his sermons and the collecting of these in the written form. This allowed different interpretations to be made of his sermons. This in turn led to the development of streams of Buddhism such as Mahayana (*q.v.*), and Theravada (*q.v.*).

In an effort to discover “pure” Buddhism, over the centuries monks from the various countries return to India. When they returned to their home countries they invariably introduced another form of Buddhism.

Buddhism spread along the trade routes of Asia. It entered China in the first century AD, and arrived in Korea in 372 AD. There it flourished under royal patronage but suffered with the rise of Confucian bureaucratic philosophy in the late 14th century. It arrived in Japan in sixth century. In Japan, Buddhism was one of the country’s first systematic thought processes influencing art, architecture, literature, technology, and philosophy.

Buddhist Festivals

Most Buddhists, with the exception of the Japanese, use a lunar calendar. The dates of Buddhism festivals vary from country to country and between Buddhism traditions. In some countries there are compromises: in Singapore, *Vesak* is celebrated by all Buddhists since it deemed a holiday by the government.

Buddhist New Year.

- * Celebrated by Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese Buddhists in late January and early February according to the lunar calendar.
- * Tibetans Buddhists celebrate about one month later.
- * Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia celebrate for three days in the middle of April.

Birth, death and enlightenment.

- * Theravada Buddhists in Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia celebrate the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha on the one day. This is the first full moon day in May. An exception is made for leap years when the festival is held in June. This celebration is called *Vesak*, *Wesak*, or *Vaisakha* (the latter is the name of the month in the Indian calendar).
- * Japanese Buddhists have used the Gregorian calendar to fix the dates for the anniversary of the birth and death of the Buddha on 8 April, The Day of Enlightenment on 8 December, and The Buddha’s Death Day on 15 February.
- * Mahayana Buddhists, other than the Japanese, observe the Buddha’s Birthday on the 8th day of the fifth lunar month (seven days before the Full Moon). Enlightenment Day is the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. The Buddha’s Death Day is celebrated on the eighth day of the second lunar month.
- * The Tibetan (Vajrayana) tradition, unlike its Mahayana source but in common with the Theravada, holds the celebration of the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha on the full moon day 15th day of the fifth lunar month.

There are moves by the World Fellowship of Buddhists to have Vesak Day celebrated by Buddhists of all traditions, as Buddha Day on the Full Moon day of May.

Bush warbler

The Japanese bush warbler *uguisu* symbolises good fortune and rejoicing.

Butterfly

A Chinese symbol of long life. When shown with a plum blossom, the picture symbolises long life and immaculate beauty.

Cakes

Cakes *nian gao* are very traditional, especially during Chinese New Year, representing not only good food but also the Chinese penchant for puns. *Gao* is homonymous with “higher status”, “eternal friendship”, and “sweeter life”. Year cakes *nian gao* symbolise “may you rise in rank every year”. *Nian gao* thus portrays the seeing of a friend through thick and thin. Another image is unity and togetherness. As the image can be applied to friends and family, *nian gao* are popular at Chinese New Year. Yet another use for *nian gao* is the giving of the cake to children with the wish *pu-pu kao sheng* “rise gradually to eminence”, an expression arising from a pun on the word *gao*.

Made from glutinous rice, flour, water and sugar, they weigh about 300 g. *Nian gao* are dark brown and usually wrapped in leaves. At Chinese New Year their labels can be of orange (*q.v.*) and gold (*q.v.*) characters. An especially auspicious label has two Mandarin oranges outlined in gold with gold dots on the oranges.

Generally, a cake would be put on the altar and then eaten much later. There are two ways to eat them; one is to steam with grated coconut, the other is slice it, dip it in batter and fry it. Both ways the cake becomes soft and creamy. **(Figure 42)**

Camellia

This flower is associated with the Chinese New Year and that festival’s seasonal occurrence in spring, thereby symbolising hope for the future.

Caodaism

Viet Nam

Cao “high” and *Dai* “palace”, thus *The supreme place where God reigns*. Also written as Dao Cao Dai.

Caodaism combines elements from many of the world's main religions, including Buddhism (*q.v.*), Confucianism (*q.v.*), Christianity, Hinduism (*q.v.*), Islam (*q.v.*), Judaism, and Taoism (*q.v.*). The headquarters is at Tay Ninh, about 100 km north west Saigon. There is about 8 million followers in Vietnam.

Caodaism recognises a number of the major religions but believes that due to the frailty of the principal religious leaders, truth has become distorted in that truth has become ethno-centric, reflecting those religion’s geographic origins. Caodaism argues that the multiplicity of

religions prevented people from living in harmony. Through spiritism, it was felt that God could communicate with humanity. Caodaism was formally instituted in the 1920s. Whilst activities have been restricted since the unification of Vietnam, Caodaist rituals and ceremonies have continued.

Caodaists believe in reincarnation where a person experiences a series of lives. Thus Caodaism stresses the need to live a correct life in order to prevent being reincarnated into a more miserable life. Caodaists believe in a hierarchy of responsibilities to self, family, society, and humanity.

Caodaists worship Sakyamuni who represents Buddha, Lao Tse who represents Taoism, Jesus Christ who represents Christianity, Confucius who represents Confucianism, and Khuong Thai Cong who represents Geniism.

Three saints are recognised: Sun-Yat-Sen (1866-1925), leader of the Chinese Revolution of 1911, Victor Hugo (1802-1885), French poet, and Trang Trinh (1492-1587), Vietnamese poet and prophet.

Caodaist seek to

- * practice good and avoid evil
- * show kindness to humans, other species, plants and nature
- * follow the Confucian duties relating to the role of the king and the citizen, father and child, and husband and wife
- * adhere to the five virtues of humanity, obligation, civility, knowledge, and reliability.

Adherents are expected to follow three rules:

- * pray at least once per day, at 6 AM, noon, 6 PM, and/or midnight
- * eat a vegetarian diet at least ten days each month
- * observe the five interdictions of not killing living beings, not to be dishonest, not to commit adultery, not to get drunk, and not to sin by word.

Carp

Cyprinus carpio

In Chinese, carp *li* is homonymous with “advantage”. Thus the carp symbolises advantage in business.

In Japan, the carp *koi* symbolise the hope that sons will be as vigorous and healthy. There is a parallel symbolism in Chinese where the carp can jump rapids in order to progress upstream. In this case, the carp symbolises success in state examinations.

Cat

The “beckoning cat” *maneki-neko* is a common sign in Japanese business houses, especially shops and restaurants.

The cat has one paw raised, as if beckoning customers into the shop.

Fig 43

The statues vary from elaborate porcelain models to simple paper mache one. More elaborate models have their own cushion on which to sit. They are invariably painted white.

Some Chinese models have a series of auspicious greetings placed on the body. When pictured with a butterfly, the two symbols represent the wish that the recipient of the picture reach at least 80 years.

In Vietnam cat meat restaurants are licensed.

Catty

Chinese

The term used to describe the unit of weight traditionally used in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and occasionally Singapore. The basic unit is the *jin* (*q.v.*). Goods in Taiwan's wet markets *tsai shr chang* (*q.v.*) are sold by units, that is *x* number for NT\$, or by weight based on the *jin*. The term often appears on menus in Hong Kong and Taiwan in regard to seafood, eg. X\$ per *jin*. Some older Chinese use the term in cooking and constructing menus. Seafoods especially are sold as, say, fresh lobster at \$x / *catty*.

Cellophane noodles

Cellophane noodles are known as “bean thread”, “mung beans”, “clear/transparent/glass” noodles. These are very fine or thin noodles made from mung beans. They can be white to translucent in colour, light and slippery in texture, and bland in flavour.

Chanko

Japan

Chanko is the basic staple of Japan's enormously sized sumo wrestlers.

Basically a stew, *chanko* is made from a variety of ingredients and flavoured with soy sauce and miso. A typical stew consists of pork, sausage, *tofu* (*q.v.*), *konnyaku* (*q.v.*), eggs, and assorted vegetables. All of this is accompanied by copious volumes of rice.

Traditionally meat was not used in the dish as this is the flesh of quadrupeds. This has the image of defeat as in sumo the only parts of the body that can touch the ground are the feet.

Each meal consists of about 3700 kilocalories, more than four times the average in Japan. In addition, sumo wrestlers will often eat just two meals a day. This means that when they do eat, the cells take in nutrients quickly causing body fat to sharply increase.

Chestnut

Castanea crenata

In Chinese chestnut *lih tze* is a homonym for “beget children”. They are thus a popular wedding gift.

In Japan, sweet chestnut *amaguri* is made from heating chestnuts *kuri* in a barrel of heated pebbles and with a sweet syrup. The syrup increases the *kuri*’s sweetness as well as making it easier to peel the skin.

China

Home to nearly a third of mankind, being one of the largest countries on earth, and with a civilisation at least 5 000 years old, China has arguably the world’s greatest tradition of festivals, customs, and food. Moreover, China’s influence in such traditions has permeated through most of Asia through early military adventurism and a century-old diaspora. Ironically, many of the examples of festivals and faith which originated in China virtually disappeared there in the near fifty years of austere communist rule (see Latsch 1984). There is anecdotal evidence that many of these practices are reappearing, especially in the south east. Given the vastness of that tradition, one can only give the briefest of explanations here.

The word “China” is derived from the Western interpretation of Emperor Ch’in Shih Huang Ti whose Ch’in / Qin Dynasty was founded in the Third Century BC: today Emperor Ch’in is more famed for the terracotta army guarding his tomb. In contrast, Chinese used to call their country *Zhongguo* “the Middle Kingdom”.

Festivals

Gregorian

January 1	New Year’s Day
March 8	International Women’s Working Day
May 1	International Labor Day
May 4	Youth Day
June 1	Children’s Day
July 1	Anniversary of the Founding of Communist Party
August	Anniversary of Founding Of Chinese People’s Liberation Army
October 1-3	National Day

Lunar

Chinese New Year (<i>q.v.</i>)	1998	January 28
	1999	February 16
	2000	February 5
Dragon Boat Day (<i>q.v.</i>)		
Qing Ming Festival (<i>q.v.</i>)		

Faith

China's main faiths are Tao (*q.v.*), Buddhism (*q.v.*), Confucianism (*q.v.*), and Islam (*q.v.*). On the other hand, China's mythology has a pantheon of gods and spirits that live in heaven, hell and purgatory. In contrast to a number of faiths that advocate esoteric objectives for their worshippers, Chinese worship is seen as very pragmatic seeking immediate solutions to practical problems such as good health or good fortune. Throughout all, the Chinese believe in balance - *yang-yin* (*q.v.*). The notion of balance enables Chinese to accept the good with the bad. *Yang-yin* permeates a number of Chinese beliefs such as *feng shui* (*q.v.*), and the more institutionalised faiths such as Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. *Yang-yin* balance is also critical in food.

Chinese New Year

Chinese communities.

Also *Kuo Nien* ("Passing into the New Year"), *Yuan Tan* ("First Morning"), and *San Chao* ("Three Mornings"), *Ch'un Chieh / Chun Jie* ("Spring Festival"), *Li Chun* ("Advent of Spring").

Occurs on the first month of lunar year.

This is the most important of all Chinese festivals. Chinese New Year is about clearing away the old year and welcoming in the new year: it is about bringing wealth, good luck, and fortune to the family.

All debts must be settled and the house spotlessly cleaned before the new year begins. Members of the family gather to share a sumptuous meal. Children are handed lucky money packets *ang pow* (*q.v.*). Most Chinese communities welcome the actual day with fireworks at midnight to scare away demons and bad luck.

On the actual day one should offer ritual homage to one's ancestors with generous food offerings. The family first pays homage to its ancestors, then to the gods, and finally the younger generations pay their respects to the elder generation. After that the family can receive visitors or take part in visitations.

Special foods are served and more meat than usual is prepared. Many of the dishes are heavily symbolic.

Chondo-gyo

Korea

An indigenous religion started in the 1800s which combines elements of Confucianism (*q.v.*), Buddhism (*q.v.*), Taoism (*q.v.*), and Christianity. The literal meaning is *Religion of the Heavenly Way*. It is also called *Donghak* or Eastern Learning.

Chondo-gyo grew out of *Tonghak*, a socialist movement that originated in the south of the country. *Tonghak* taught that right and wrong were determined by whether an action

contributed to the welfare of the community. In this regard the movement reflected strongly the harsh environment of peasant life in 19th century Korea.

Tonghak rejected belief in a divine being, sin and salvation, and hell and heaven. It emphasised equality amongst all humans. What started as a socialist movement gradually became a religion after a series of reforms introduced by Sohn Byong-hui. The movement was repressed by the Japanese when they colonised Korea as it represented a potential focus for anti-Japanese feeling.

Chonoyu

Japan

The highly ritualised tea ceremony that derived from Zen (*q.v.*). The current form of the ceremony was developed around the Sixteenth Century. It fell into decline in the early part of the Meiji Restoration in the mid Nineteenth Century but has since experienced a strong renaissance.

Chop

Chinese, and Japanese communities

Also *jang* (Chinese) and *hanko* (Japanese)(*q.v.*).

In Chinese communities the chop is the personal seal of an individual that is recognised officially as the western equivalent of a signature. It is also the seal used by bureaucrats in the public and private sectors which authorises a document, such as a contract, receipt, invoice, as being official. The chop itself is carved from a hard substance - at one stage ivory seals were very prestigious - and is used with a vermilion ink.

Chopstick

Asia

Hashi in Japanese.

Kuaiz and *zhu* in Chinese

The word derives from the Cantonese word *chi* “quick”.

The origin of chopsticks is supposed to lie in China’s perennial shortage of fuel. To save time on cooking, the food was chopped into small bite-sized pieces. As a result there was no need to develop eating utensils that required cutting of the cooked food at the table.

Chopsticks are made of many materials but the most common ones are wooded and plastic. Japanese chopsticks are invariably wooden whilst Chinese chopsticks are plastic, considerably longer and not as pointed. Chopsticks in Japan are presented in the form of a single piece of wood with a partial split down the middle that when separated form the chopsticks. This shows that no one else has used the chopsticks. *Waribashi* are Japan’s throw-away wooden chopsticks.

Good manners in Japan suggest that one does not pass food from chopstick to chopstick as this mirrors a funeral rite. In Chinese communities, the word *zhu* is not used at New Year because it is homonymous with *zhu* “to come to a halt”.

Chrysanthemum

A flower with a multiplicity of symbols. It is considered to be the flower of the recluse, a symbol of autumn, and a symbol of fortune.

Legend depicts the chrysanthemum as growing alongside a mountain spring from which it has absorbed the elixir of immortality. When a rock is included in the picture it is a potent double symbol of long life. Association with long life comes from the Chinese word *ju* that is homonymous with nine *jiu* that in turn is phonetically identical to “long time”. As it symbolises the full year, chrysanthemum tea is commonly served during Chinese New Year.

Chugen

Japan

mid-year

Also *O-chugen*⁴⁷

One of the two major gift giving periods to express thanks for special daily services. It coincides with the mid-summer half yearly bonuses all salaried people receive.

The ten most popular gift items are:

beer	dried sea weed
dried noodles	canned food
soft drinks	processed meat products
confectionary	whisky and brandy
edible oil and seasoning	coffee and tea

Chung Yuan

Chinese

Fifteenth Day of Seven Lunar Month

The climax of the Feast of the Hungry Ghosts. Large sacrificial feasts are set up in temples and community areas and elaborate ceremonies for the dead are conducted by Taoist and Buddhist priests⁴⁸.

Chuseog

Korean

Lunar: September

Also *Chusok*.

One of Korea's four lunar national holidays. *Chuseog* falls on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon. Being neither too hot nor too cold, the festival is one of the great national holidays as it coincides with the autumn harvest.

⁴⁷ The adding of an “O” in Japanese turns a normal word into an honorific one.

⁴⁸ The Festival's timing coincides with the end of the three month training period for Buddhist monks and nuns and parallels Khao Pansa (*q.v.*) in Thailand.

Traditionally, taro *t'oran* was served in a soup eaten at breakfast and at home. However, the practice is waning.

Whilst *chuseog* is still observed, the eating of *t'oran* soup is not as widespread. *T'oran* is also popular as a food during the autumn picnic season. This limits demand to a two month window of September-October.

Demand is for the golf-ball sized product, preferably slightly oblong in shape. As generally the demand in Asia is for a larger sized taro, the Korean demand reflects its Japanese antecedents. Preference is for a cream coloured rather than pure white product. Product is usually sold in the minimally processed form, that is, peeled and then placed in a brine-like preservative.

Cock

As part of the animal zodiac see Rooster (*q.v.*)

A popular Japanese symbol associated with funerals. The association derives from the thought that just as the cock crows at dawn drives away the darkness so the cock can drive away evil and misfortune. In a parallel approach, the Chinese consider that cocks can ward off evil.

Cock fighting

Cock fighting is a popular sport in a number of Asian communities. Thailand exports a number of birds to its neighbours. In Thailand raising cocks is a dedicated industry: growers are very aware of their genetic stock and prize animals are keenly sought after and cared for. (**Figure 45**)

In Bali, cock-fighting has religious overtones, with the spilt blood considered necessary to purify the earth that was infested by the devils cast out by the Lord of Hell Yama. A 1974 law limits cock-fighting for religious reasons or for major events such as the opening of a new house.

Colour

Many cultures incorporate auspicious and inauspicious meanings to colours. The symbology behind a number of colours is complex. The juxtaposition of colours expresses the balance of forces and thus colours can be paired on a *yang-yin* (*q.v.*) basis.

Some examples are:

Yang
red

Yin
blue

red

green

white
gold

black
silver

Thus, one can see paintings of a blue dragon *yin* against a red background *yang*
Details for a number of colours are given in alphabetical order.

Confucius

Korean - *Kongja*

Chinese - *Kong Fu-zi, Kong Zi, K'ung Fu Tzu*⁴⁹

Born 551 BC in Shandong Province, China, died 479 BC. Confucius came from a very old aristocratic family whose fortunes had been in decline for some time. To some extent this gave Confucius a nostalgic even romantic view of the past.

It was from this romanticised view of the past that Confucius constructed his model ruler. His early life was as a minor government official. He then became an itinerant adviser to China's many feudal lords offering advice on better administration and improving the lot of the common people. To a large extent when he died Confucius was a failure. He had been unable to secure permanent work and was hounded from state to state. When he died it was with just a handful of followers.

Gradually his teachings were collected and his view of a hierarchical structured society began to be implemented. By the Han Dynasty in the Third Century his teachings were the state religion.

In the Sung Dynasty 960-1280 AD there was renewed interest in his work. This period was known as Neo-Confucianism when his writings were updated to reflect the changes which had occurred in the 1500 years since his death. From then until the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 his writings formed the basis of good scholarship and, optimistically, better bureaucracy. Entrance to the Chinese civil service and progression up the bureaucratic ladder was based on a sound knowledge of his works especially the **Five Classics** and **The Analects**. Diagram at right: *"If you do not give thought to distant future you will be in trouble when it comes near"*.

Fig 46

Confucius did not advocate a religion even though there were aspects of religion in his approach to life. He advocated that the state should be governed according to an ethical system which all should abide by. Confucius taught a system of ethics and beliefs which drew upon and transformed Chinese social tradition.

Teaching by proverbs, stories and aphorisms, he provided the basis for Chinese social morality. His teachings spanned the breadth of possible social interaction from that of individuals and family to local communities to nations and governments. The initial strength of Confucius' teachings derived from his efforts to impose a notion of order and social harmony from the chaotic anarchy which then prevailed. Whilst some argue that Confucianism leads to conformity, even stifling conformity, all

Fig 47

⁴⁹ Confucius, the traditional Western rendering of the Chinese name, is used below.

agree that it produced a disciplined moral society that looked after all its members.

“To learn without thinking is fatal, but to think without learning is just as bad”

Confucianism

The social ethics and moral teachings of Confucius are blended with the Taoist (*q.v.*) attitude towards nature and the Buddhism (*q.v.*) concepts of the afterlife to form complementary and ecumenical religions. Confucianism has a number of schools, such as Neo-Confucianism, Korean Confucianism, Japanese Confucianism, and Singaporean Confucianism.

There is some debate as to whether Confucianism is a religion, an ethical code with social ritual, or a political philosophy. Confucianism emphasises the importance of human relationships within the family, between friends, and between governments and their citizens. Confucius' ideas set out the desired ethical character of human beings and how that person relates to others. A man is born into certain relationships and as a result he has certain duties.

Confucianism principles

Five principles govern Confucianism:

- * *Jen*. The Chinese ideogram for *jen* comprises the two characters “man” and “two”. While it essentially means “humanness,” *jen* is perhaps better understood as the respect for and love of humanity. A person's dignity is a combination of self-respect, and respect and sympathy towards others. This will result in magnanimity, charity, good faith, courteousness, and diligence.
- * *Chunzi* / *Chun Tzu* is the perfected human being or someone who can do the tasks intended of him with confidence and equanimity. Such an ideal person is mature, magnanimous, respectful and helpful towards others. This person is poised and always in control of himself. As one ages one is thought to embody *chun tzu* more and more. For this reason elders should always be respected.
- * *Li* is the notion of proper behaviour. It involves showing grace and propriety, whatever the circumstances, in terms of the right thing to do. Central to *Li* is the notion of the proper rites, etiquette, ceremonies, laws and regulations of the state, and rituals. To have *li* is to be able to compromise and not indulge in excesses.
- * *De* (also *Te*). A complex term for both “power” as well as “virtue”. With “power”, it refers to the power by which people are ruled. However, people must be ruled through justice and virtue. Government not only must be honest, it must be seen to be honest. Rulers had to earn respect.
- * *Wen*, the arts of music, painting, poetry, and literature. The arts are important instruments for the advancing the moral edification of the people.

Confucianism advocates the Doctrine of the Mean. This is the Confucian ideal of avoiding the extremes, instead finding a way between two conflicting, radical solutions. In practice this means negotiation and compromise instead of confrontation and conflict.

Confucianism places great store in the family. Respect for the family unit is critical as *Li* defines the respect for age, the relationship between the father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and to any one older by any one younger. Family is important in the Five Constant Relationships which are parent - child, husband - wife, elder sibling - junior sibling, elder friend - junior friend, and ruler - subject. These are the central relationships of which one must always be aware. One's place in a relationship provides a specific role for a person to fulfil with respect to the other person. Confucianism makes it clear that although one is an individual, one is always acting in relation to other people. Confucius' model ruler is epitomised by Palmer (1996) interpretation of *Analects*, XX, 2:

Zi Zhang asked Confucius "What must a man be like before he can take part in government?" The Master said "If he honours the five excellent practices and repudiates the four wicked practices he can take part in government".

Zi Zhang said "What is meant by the five excellent practices?" The Master said "The noble leader will be generous to the masses without being extravagant; works others hard without rousing resentment; has wants without being covetous; is magnanimous without being arrogant and is awe inspiring without being fierce".

Zi Zhang said "What is meant by being generous without being extravagant?" The Master said "To give to the masses that which benefits them, is not that being generous without being extravagant? For tasks to be undertaken, choose those who are capable of such labour so who will complain? If you wish to be benevolent, how can one be called covetous? The noble leader never dares to forget how to behave whether he is dealing with the masses or the select, with the young or the old. Is this not being magnanimous without being arrogant? A noble leader dresses according to tradition and looks the part. Is this not being awe inspiring without being fierce?"

Zi Zhang asked "What is meant by the four wicked practices?" The Master said "To impose the death penalty without first trying to educate people about what is right and wrong, this is cruel; demanding things be done on time without giving due warning and time. that is tyrannical; to let things drift then demand action, that is to cause injury; to be mean minded when giving to others, that is being bureaucratic".

Cow

Hindu communities

The cow is the source of food, fuel, and fertiliser. It is thus a symbol of prosperity and fertility. The cow's bounteousness is its five *pancagavga* of milk, curd, butter, urine, and dung that is used in Hindu religious ceremonies in the role of purification. Hoof prints may be drawn at the entrance of a house as an auspicious blessing for all who may enter the house.

Crane

Represents longevity to Chinese and Japanese.

The expression "the voice of the crane" refers to how a high ranking official makes a decisions which breaks a deadlock: the analogy derived from the crane being a rank in Imperial China's mandarin system.

Fig 48

Daikoku

Japan

Also *Daikokuten*.

One of the most popular of the seven gods of good luck *Shichi-fuku-jin* (q.v.). *Daikoku* is the God of Wealth. He is usually depicted standing or sitting on top of some rice bags. The rattle in his hand is a wish granting mallet from which he can shake out money or good wishes.

Daikoku appears to have derived from the Indian god Mahakala who fought the forces of evil.

Dano

Korean

Lunar: June

The Fifth of the Fifth Moon *cheon-jung-jeol*. One of Korea's four national lunar holidays.

Dano falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. In Korea the character for "five" is regarded as positive, brilliant and male: the double date merely doubles this good fortune.

The festival is celebrated by people visiting the family's ancestral shrine. Offerings are made of summer food specialities. Other festival activities include swinging *geune ddwigi*,

wrestling *ssireum daehow*, bull fighting *so-ssam*, and mask dancing. Calamus Bath *changpo-tang* consists of children washing their face and hair in water boiled with calamus plants.

The root can be used to make a hair pin. Mugwort Tiger *Ssug beom* are mugwort plants fashioned into a scare-crow in an effort to ward off bad luck and disaster. *Jeho-tang* and *Ogchu-dan* are medicines made from dried plums *o-mae-yug*, cardamom, and sandalwood *baeg-dan-hyang* which help avoid unlucky disasters.

Daruma

Japan

The *daruma* symbolises not being beaten, of always rebounding. The *daruma* is usually represented as a red doll with a weighted bottom. Legend has it that the dolls derived from

Bodhidharma the Buddhist priest who assumed the lotus position for nine years and lost the use of his legs. *Daruma* dolls are sold as symbols of good health and good luck. They are commonly sold at New Year.

Daruma dolls can come with no eyes. With these dolls, a popular custom is to paint one eye at the commencement of an activity, eg the start of a political campaign or the laying of the keel of a boat, and then to paint in the other eye when the activity is successfully completed, eg being elected and the launching of the vessel, respectively.

Fig 49

Dates

Zizyphus jujube, Chinese date or Chinese jujube.

There are two colours: - yellowish to reddish, and blackish. Taste varies between sweet to acid depending on variety. As a fresh fruit the Chinese jujube is considered superior to the Indian date or jujube *Z. mauritania*.

Red dates are popular during Chinese New Year due to their colour. In one of China's main languages, their name *hong zao* means "prosperity comes early". Another name *tsao tze* is an homonymy for "have children quickly". It is therefore associated with weddings. Date soup is a popular wedding dish. (Figure 50)

Wood from the date tree was the fuel initially used to make Peking Duck as it gave off a special fragrance with relatively little smoke.

Dates have gained popularity in the Occident as a modern herbal supplement that strengthens the spleen and stomach.

Deepavali

Hindu communities

Also *Divali*, *Dipavali*.

Translated as the *Festival of Lights*.

Late October or early November, the Seventh Month of the Hindu calendar.

The Festival celebrates Rama's victory over the demon King Ravana. The Festival has come to mean the victory of light over dark, of fortune over misfortune, and good over evil. The belief is that Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth, will not enter an unlit home. As a result, homes are lit with dozens of lights or oil lamps *vikku*. Businessmen treat it as the beginning of a new financial year with the more devout placing an image of Lakshmi before a sign of their trade in order to gain a blessing from her. The main food eaten is sweets.

Deer

A harbinger of good news to Japanese. For Chinese the deer can be a symbol of longevity and riches.

Dog

In the animal zodiac, dogs are seen as being indicators of great fortune. They are valued for their fidelity and for being guardians. On the other hand they are also associated with being scavengers. Dog-year people have a heavy sense of duty and loyalty, they are honest and get on well with others. They are good at business and remain calm while all else is in stress.

In Japan the dog is considered to provide protection against fire, theft or difficult child birth.

Dog meat is consumed in the Philippines (where it is called *aso*), northern Thailand, some parts of Indonesia (particularly north Sulawesi and northern Sumatra) and Vietnam. Usually it is only the meat that is eaten, although in some communities the liver is also eaten. When eaten in Indonesia, black skinned or haired dogs are preferred. Whilst some Chinese communities eat dog, in most it is considered one of the three creatures that should not be eaten as the dog is a symbol of faithfulness.

Double Fifth

Another name for the Dragon Boat Festival (*q.v.*)

Doyo no ushi

Japan

Ox day.

The hottest day of the year. To beat the heat, people traditionally eat protein-rich and vitamin-rich foods. Boiled eel *unagi* is a favourite.

Dragon

Most Asian communities

The dragon has been the symbol of Chinese imperial dignity and temporal authority since it was adopted by the founder of the Han Dynasty, Emperor Kao-ti in the Third Century BC. It is the highest celestial power, representing fire, authority, and power. Dragons are considered positive and benevolent.

In the animal zodiac, the dragon-year is the fifth in the twelve-year cycle. For Chinese, to be born in a dragon year is very auspicious. Dragon years are years of great deeds and high achievements. Dragon-year people are healthy, energetic, and brave. They are capable of doing anything they turn their mind to, especially worthy causes. People born in dragon years have the blessings of harmony, virtue, prosperity, and long life. It is the only mythical animal in the animal zodiac.

As the dragon is a symbol of rain in times of drought, it is a very important symbol in agricultural communities throughout much of Asia. Jade, a lucky stone in Asia, is the semen of the dragon. Vietnam's capital Hanoi was previously *Thanh Long* "dragon citadel".

Dragon Boat Festival

Chinese

Fifth Day of the Fifth Month of the Lunar calendar.

Dragon Boat Festival *Duan Wu Jie* / *Duan yang* is also called Upright Sun, Double Fifth, and Fifth Month Festival.

One of the major Chinese festivals. In Taiwan it is one of three public lunar holidays.

One eats steamed rice dumplings *zong zi/dzung dz* during the festival. These are glutinous rice balls usually filled with savoury pork or sweet bean paste and wrapped in bamboo leaves. Home-made dumplings are considered a special treat.

The festival has given rise to dragon boat races in a large number of centres with large Chinese communities.

Fig 51

Durian

Durio zibethinus

Cantonese *lau lin*

Indonesian: *durian*

Malay: *durian*

Thailand: *thurian*

Whilst distinctive in its appearance because of its shape, size (1-9 kg) and its covering of exceptionally hard sharp spikes⁵⁰, the usual delineating characteristic of the durian is its aroma. In fact, it is difficult to talk of durian without mentioning its aroma. Various

⁵⁰ The name is derived from the Malay word *duri* "thorn".

European writers have graphically described the aroma as “it’s like eating the finest custard whilst sitting over an open sewer”, and “a combination of rotten eggs and bad onions”.

Consider:

*The durian -neither Wallace⁵¹ nor Darwin agreed on it
Darwin said “may your worst enemy be forced to feed on it”
Wallace cried “it’s delicious”
Darwin replied “I’m suspicious - for the flavour is scented
like papaya fermented after a fruit eating bat had peed on it”*

HortScience 9 (1973)

Part of durian’s appeal amongst Chinese is its association with *yang* or the masculine side of the *yin-yang* (*q.v.*) concept. It is associated with virility. Durian is seen as a “hot” fruit and ideally should be eaten with a “cool” fruit such as mangosteen (*q.v.*). On the other hand, it is recommended that consuming alcohol when eating durian must be avoided as the effect can be “disastrous⁵²”, even fatal. **(Figure 52)**

Ebisu

Japan

One of the seven gods of fortune *Shichi-fuku-jin* (*q.v.*). *Ebisu* means “foreigner” and this enhances the view that the *Shichi-fuku-jin* have come from afar.

Ebisu is the God of Fishermen and Traders. He is usually depicted with a sea bream, a symbol of good luck, under his left arm. As he is a symbol of prosperity in business he tends to be venerated as the tutelary deity of one’s occupation. The first catch of the season is thrown back as an offering to him.

Eight

Asia

Eight is *ba* in Mandarin and *bat* in Cantonese. These sounds are homonymous with *fa* (Mandarin) and *fat* (Cantonese) both of which mean good fortune. Thus, eight is an auspicious number in Chinese communities. It is also considered auspicious in Japanese and Vietnamese communities.

Eight is a masculine concept, and eight rules a man: at eight months a man gets his milk teeth but at eight years he loses them; at 2 X 8 years he becomes a man but at 8 X 8 years he can no longer procreate. Seven (*q.v.*) is the female *yin* of the masculine *yang* eight.

Eight appears many times in Asian legends and symbolism.

⁵¹ Alfred Wallace, the great naturalist, is reported as saying “To eat durian is a new sensation, worth a visit to the East to experience, the more you eat of it the less you feel inclined to stop”.

⁵² I was told this on several occasions but no-one defined “disastrous”. GSV.

There are the Eight Symbols of the Scholar: pearls, musical stone, coin, money, rhombus, books/paintings, rhinoceros horn⁵³, and the mugwort (*Artemisia* spp.) leaf. Taoism (*q.v.*) has its Eight Immortals who had eight symbols: fan, sword, bottle-gourd, castanets, flower basket, bamboo cane, flute, and the lotus. Buddhism has its Eight Symbols: sea cucumber (*q.v.*), umbrella, canopy, lotus (*q.v.*), vase, fish, endless knot, and the wheel of learning. Taoism and *feng shui* (*q.v.*) has the Eight Trigram combination of three broken and three unbroken lines. Some famous "eights" in Chinese legends were the Eight Talents, a group of artists of the late Thirteenth Century who used their archaic style of paintings as a means of expressing their approval of the past and disapproval of the present; and the Eight Trigrams a peasant rebellion of the early Nineteenth Century against the Imperial Government. **(Figure 53)**

Eight Treasure Boxes

Chinese

Eight Treasure Boxes are popular throughout the Chinese New Year festive season. They are given as gifts and always available at open houses and even in offices. The octagonal plastic box usually has a red (*q.v.*) tray. Water melon seeds are usually in the center with red dates (dates *q.v.*), and preserved and dried fruits in the outer sections.

Elephant

A powerful symbol amongst Thais and Balinese Hindus. A white elephant is an auspicious Buddhist symbol of royalty and wealth. In Chinese symbology, elephant *hsiang* means "symbol" or "sign. It is relatively common to have depictions of the elephant associated with its carrying a multitude of symbols to form a complex meaning. The National Palace Museum in Taipei has a cloisonne enamel elephant with a vase *ping* on its back filled with a number of symbolic items with *ping* itself being a homonym for "peace".

Feng shui

Chinese

Feng shui is essentially about placement and design.

Its purpose is to align buildings, homes and offices with the flow of natural energy. Energy flows around and in and through everything. Proper alignment of the flows of energy should create good health, prosperity and harmonious relationships.

The practice's origins of living in harmony with the environment lay in the reality of farming in ancient China: the literal translation of *feng shui* is "wind and water".

Prosperity lay in choosing to farm up a hill at least away from the ravages of the floods.

Good crops were assured by gaining the maximum benefit from the winter sun whilst escaping the harshness of the summer sun and winter's cruel winds. The science of siting for optimum sunlight, water, soil quality and weather were gradually combined with elements of Taoism *yin / yang* (*q.v.*) into *feng shui* principles such as having a mountain backstop with the hills in the east being slightly higher than the White Tiger Hills in the west: combined

⁵³ We need to be reminded that the rhinoceros was once native to China.

these elements allowed for the auspicious flow of energy or *chi* / *qi*⁵⁴. *Feng shui* prescriptions for a house could involve moving furniture around, changing the colour of walls and curtains, and hanging wind-chimes.

However, some argue that *feng shui* is really the application of good location and design principles. Thus, the Black Dragon really means having an elated house which catches the breeze from the valley whilst having good views, aspects sought by those without an element of knowledge of *feng shui*⁵⁵.

Chi is at the heart of *feng shui*. *Chi* is energy, life's essence and motivating force. There is Living Chi *Sheng Chi*, Deadly Chi *Si Chi*, Generative or Active Chi *Yang Chi*, Receptive or Depressive Chi *Yin Chi*, Supportive Chi *Cheng Chi*, Gathering Chi *Ju Chi*, and Harmonising Chi *Li Chi*. *Feng shui* is about creating, capturing, and harnessing *qi* into one's life.

Feng shui is one of China's most ancient traditions: some claim it is at least 5 000 years old. It is practiced with varying degrees of consciousness by Chinese communities world wide. It has been known in the west since 1726 when a copy of the Imperial Encyclopedia *Ku Chin T'u Shu Chi Ch'eng* was placed in the British Museum. In more recent times, *feng shui* has entered western communities in a deliberative manner. Prior to that there were numerous examples of western business in Asia adopting *feng shui* on the principle that "whilst I don't believe in it personally, if my clients do then I do". Today, many westerners have adopted *feng shui* principles. There are books dealing with the *feng shui* of buildings, office and apartment designs and layout; *feng shui* for career success and business success; even *feng shui* for logos, trademarks and signboards. Articles on *feng shui* are carried in serious western business and general publications.

Feng shui adherents argue that there are no pre-set formulae in *feng shui*. The essence of *feng shui* is to customise the prescriptions to an individual's Five Elements. The Five Elements are determined through Chinese astrology by reference to an individual's birth year, birth month, birth day, and birth hour, and the *ying-yang* (*q.v.*) principles of the Tao (*q.v.*). Without detailed knowledge of these Elements it is argued that proper account is not taken of the several physical variables influencing both external and internal *feng-shui*. (**Figure 54, overleaf**)

⁵⁴ Most references varying between the spellings *qi* and *chi/ch'i*. Since my first exposure to *feng shui* used the form *chi* this will be used throughout. GSV.

⁵⁵ Some *feng shui* adherents have engaged in a north-south debate which questions the applications to the southern hemisphere of locational issues that are derived from the northern hemisphere's geographical-physical aspects.

Fig 54

Fish

Fish is extraordinarily rich in symbolism in Asia. In Chinese fish *yu / yee* is homonymous with abundance. It can also mean “extra money on hand”. This explains the popularity of fish dishes during Chinese New Year. It is an especially auspicious dish amongst businessmen. Be advised: do not flip the fish over to get the meat on the other side as it is bad luck.

Fish balls symbolise reunion. Eating the fish’s head is a privilege usually reserved for the patriarch of the family. Some vegetarians consider fish to be a sea vegetable and therefore can justify eating it. In Japan the favoured fish at New Year is *buri* yellowtail *Serila quinque-radiata*.

Flowers

Flowers are rich in symbolic meanings. In the Taoist *yin-yang* concept (*q.v.*), flower decorations might be used on tableware where the *yin* of the softer, more yielding qualities of plant life would be absorbed by the food served on it.

Food centre

Most major cities

A food centre is a collection of food stalls serving a variety of dishes from drinks, rice, main meals and desserts. They are very casual places to eat. Previously they were called hawker centres. Opening hours of food centres vary. In working class neighbourhood, some stalls open as early as 5 am,. Others open only in the evening to cater to the after-work, and after-movie crowds.

Examples of dishes commonly found in food centres in Singapore are:

- * Hainanese Chicken Rice: boiled chicken served with rice which has been cooked in chicken broth and spices. Cucumber and chilli sauces are near-obligatory side dishes. Usually served with a soup.
- * *Hakka Yong Tao Foo* or *Niang Dou Fu*: a selection of vegetables and meat stuffed with fish and served either dried with sauces, or in a soup with separate sauces.
- * *Mee (q.v.)*
- * *Kway Chup*: pork intestines, deep fried bean curd, mostly cooked in dark soy sauce. Served with rice noodle sheets in a dark soy soup with chilli sauce on the side.
- * *Laksa*: noodles, traditionally thick white rice noodles, in curry, served with various ingredients.
- * *Murtabak*: Indian flat fired bread. Various additions are minced mutton and chopped onions.
- * *Nasi Lemak*: coconut rice, usually served with anchovy *sambal ikan bilis*, fried fish, eggs and cucumber.

Drinks and desserts include:

- * *Airtebu*: sugar cane drink made from freshly squeezed sugar cane. Sometimes with lemon juice added.
- * *Bandung*: rose syrup and evaporated milk.
- * *Ban Jian Kway* (Hokkien) : a thick pan cake filled with peanuts or red bean paste. A common breakfast snack.
- * *Chendol* - coconut milk, palm sugar, red beans, and other sweet foods, served with shredded ice. Can be served as a drink or desert.

Food court

Most major cities

Food courts are usually located in shopping centres. They are air-conditioned and more up-market compared with food centres. Food courts serve international cuisine and local foods. Whilst the international cuisines are epitomised by the international franchises in hamburgers, pizzas, and fried chicken, some Asian cuisines other than those of the host country are entering food courts. Previously, food courts used to be just on the ground floor of malls. More recently opened malls segregate the food courts with different levels of sophistication and price being situated on different levels.

Fox

Japanese consider that the fox' ability to escape damage symbolises its power to bewitch people.

Frog

Symbolises wealth and protection with Chinese but an inauspicious symbol amongst Balinese Hindus.

Fruit

Asia produces a wonderful array of temperate and tropical fruit. Fruit is consumed in the fresh and preserved forms.

Fruit also has a number of symbolic meanings. Generally fresh fruit offerings symbolise a new beginning. This is especially true during Chinese New Year. In addition, usually being round, fruit tend to symbolise family unity.

Fugu

Japan

Tetraodontidae spp.

Fugu, "river pig" or "swellfish", is Japan's famous poisonous fish. *Fugu* are wild caught in winter although Japan has a rapidly expanding aquaculture sector. The extremely potent toxin is contained in the ovaries and liver and unless these are removed promptly after killing, the toxin will spread rapidly through the rest of the fish. For this reason *fugu* chefs must be licensed: in 1984 the selling of the liver was outlawed. When eating *fugu* a slight numbness of the lips or tongue can be experienced, reflecting the existence of some residual poison.

Hosking (1996) claimed that as the taste of the fugu is nothing particular, it is the excitement of eating a potential deadly dish that explains most of its attraction.

Consumption can be as *sashimi* (q.v.) or cooked in the hotpot *nabe* style *fuguchiri*. Its fin, spines and skin are toasted and soaked in hot *sake* (q.v.) to produce *hire-zake*. When presented in the raw fish style *fugusashi* the flesh is sliced to near transparency.

Around 900 t of *fugu* are sold annually at Tokyo's Tsukiji's fish markets at an average annual price of Y6 300 /kg.

Garuda

Indonesia, some Hindu communities

The mythical bird and mount of the Hindu God Vishnu.

In some communities the bird is also associated with royalty. In Indonesia the bird is incorporated, along with the symbolic representations of the five principles of the state ideology Pancasila, into the country's official coat of arms with the motto *Bhinneka tunggal ika* "they are many, they are one".

Ghee

Whilst not the exclusive domain of Indians, ghee is very much associated with them. It is made from pure butter fat by evaporating all the moisture through heat until the milk solids have browned. Its main attribute is that it can be heated to a high temperature without burning.

Ghee has high symbolic meaning in a number of Hindu ritual and ceremonies. For example, in *samskara* marriage sacrament ghee is offered to Agni the fire god as a symbol of prosperity and fertility desired from the union. The newly wedded couple put ghee onto the plates of the guests.

Ginseng

Ginseng was mentioned by the Emperor Shen Nung, the purported initiator of herbal medicine, in BC 3500. Called *ren shen* by the Chinese and *yin sam* by the Koreans, the scientific name *Panax spp.* was given by the German botanist Nees van Esenbeck in 1833. *Panax* derives from the Greek *pan* "all" and *ax* from *axos* "cure", thus *Panax* "cure all".

Lee (1992) identifies the following varieties:

<i>P. ginseng</i>	: grown in Korea
<i>P. quinquefolium</i>	:grown in North America
<i>P. notoginseng</i>	: grown in China
<i>P. trifolius</i>	: dwarf ginseng from the north east United States
<i>P. pseudoginseng</i>	: grown in Nepal and the eastern Himalayas
<i>P. japonicus</i>	: grown in Japan

The **Illustrated Chinese Materia Medica** (Yen 1992) and Lee (1992) detail the constituent properties of ginseng. Lee (1992) devotes over 20 pages to the positive health effects of the plant. There is a growing market for ginseng derivatives within alternative therapy as well as mainstream consumption. Asian ginseng *Panax ginseng* and Siberian ginseng *Eleutherococcus senticosus* were amongst the most rapid selling herbal supplements in the United States in 1997.

There are a multiplicity of ginseng grades and with them a multiplicity of prices. Manchurian Imperial is regarded as the best quality and Korean red ginseng second. White ginseng is further down the quality scale, then the north American type with Japanese ginseng at the bottom. Red ginseng roots are usually harvested after six years (Fig 57).

Ginseng sells for about US\$180 /kg. Whilst a hectare can have a gross revenue of around US\$500 000, ginseng suffers the disadvantages of it taking up to six years to attain a good harvest and that good farmers believe that after harvesting the land should be spelled for a decade.

Ghost Month

Also *Feast of the Hungry Ghosts*.

See Chapter One.

Comparable festivals are the Thai *Bprehd* (q.v.) and the Japanese *Obon* (q.v.).

On the first day of the seventh lunar month, the spirits from Hell are allowed into the world of the living for a month. To ensure that the ghosts enjoy their holiday with the living, and, equally important, to ensure that the living do not antagonise the ghosts, lavish feasts and entertainment are laid out. The climax of Ghost Month is the *Chung Yuan* Festival (q.v.).

The desire not to get off-side with the ghosts results in Taiwan in a period of reduced activity. Outdoor activities are curtailed, travel plans delayed, weddings postponed, and swimming nearly totalled abandoned. *Tou teng* are containers filled with rice and topped with evil-dispelling implements such as knives and mirrors. Specially raised and pampered pigs are sacrificed with the family raising the biggest animal being accorded special respect.

Gold

Arguably the most auspicious colour in Asia.

Goldfish

To Chinese the goldfish symbolises prosperity.

Golden week

Japan

First week in May.

The week which encompasses the national holidays of May Day (1 May), Constitution Day (3 May), and *Kodomo-no-hi* (q.v.) (5 May). Most Japanese take the entire week as a holiday.

Gogi

Korea

A form of cooking meat and fish.

Bolgogi “fire meat” is the Korean barbecue that uses marinated strips of beef to cook over a grill of coals. The grilling is done at the table.

Goose

Amongst Balinese Hindus the white goose symbolises wisdom. In some Chinese groups a goose is offered as the first present by a prospective groom to the intended bride’s family.

Gourd

“Gourd” includes a number of vegetables. Generally the term refers to *Benincasa hispida* var. *chien-gua* whose different Asian names translate in English to “hairy gourd”, “fuzzy gourd”, “hairy cucumber”, and “winter gourd”. Other gourds are the small gourd *Coccinia grandis* and the snake gourd *Trichosanthes spp.*

Because of their seeds, to Chinese gourds are a symbol of the abundance of sons. They are also a symbol of fertility as gourds can multiply several times from a single seed.

Bottle gourd *Lagenaria siceraria* in Chinese *hu-lu* is a common depiction in Taoist (q.v.) paraphernalia as its bottle shaped with its pinched middle represents the uniting of heaven and earth.

The Thais call the fuzzy gourd *fuck* and use it to symbolise a peaceful life. It is a common temple offering. (Figure 58)

Green

Green is invariably associated with Islam and Muslim items. It is often combined with yellow, or yellow and gold although it is not so brilliant as the gold colour used for Chinese New Year.

Gwandeung

Korea

Also *Feast of the Lanterns*.

Eighth day of the Fourth moon.

The feast of the lanterns is associated with the Buddha's birthday. Houses and temples are lit with candle lanterns. As the legend suggests that the brighter the light, the luckier the family there is some competition to create the most light. Although the Buddha's birthday has been celebrated for centuries, *Gwandeung* only became a public holiday in 1975.

Halal / haram

Moslem

The dietary requirements of Asia's Islamic community is governed by the ***Koran***. Adherence to the requirements varies between countries, between sects, and between individuals.

The *IMFEX'97 Food Conference on Halal Foods* in Singapore defined halal products as *those that are suitable to be consumed by Muslim consumers. They should not contain alcohol or pork or their derivatives. All meat will have to be processed according to Muslim rites.*

Moslems food practices are guided by two dictums: *Haram* is that which is prohibited whilst *halal* is that which is permissible

Modern food practices is resulting in a number of grey areas for *halal* religious authorities stretching *halal* strictures into the processing, packaging, and handling of food. Food related issues subject to scrutiny include medicine, drugs, vitamins, minerals enzymes, co-enzymes, processing techniques, lining, packaging, slaughtering, shipment, and storage. Foods suspected of being *haram* include most refined foods, especially those involving artificial additives and colourings. Brewers yeast extract is banned because, although it contains no alcohol, the yeast may have been used to generate alcohol in the brewing process. Manufacturing processes that use the same equipment for both *halal* and non-*halal* foods are not acceptable. Similarly, lubricants used on equipment may be contaminating if derived from animal sources. Adhesives used in food packaging is suspect.

On the other hand, religious authorities are being aided by increasingly sophisticated inspection methods. Qualified food technologists are employed in Muslim countries to analyse processed food to determine if the stated ingredients are correct. Appendix 3 contains

a listing of food additives and their halal status as defined by the Singaporean Muslim authority, *Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura*.

Evolving rules tend to be:

- Everything is *halal* unless specifically mentioned in the *Koran*.
- Everything doubtful must be avoided.
- Anything bad for the health is *haram*.

To date the Islamic countries have lacked uniformity in their control and enforcement of *halal* requirements. As a first step, the Islamic authorities have agreed that there is a need for a uniform certification scheme under which participating countries would follow the same *halal* policies and recognise a single logo on imported products. Increasingly the authorities in Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei are requiring food manufacturers and retailers to define their ingredients and handling methods to ensure that products reach the consumer conforms with *halal* law.

The *halal* certification logo on packets and cans is regarded as questionable by many shoppers. In the absence of detailed ingredient labelling, consumers have to trust their own judgment. Modern food manufacturing processes can jeopardise this. Gelatine, for example, may have come from pork or from animals not killed in a way approved by Moslems. Similarly, alcohol may be included as an ingredient in foods and medicines. Some retailers are making major efforts to assist consumers. In Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, many modern supermarkets now have *halal* and non-*halal* sections. One Brunei supermarket has a dividing wall and a sign next to a door which indicates that the food beyond is unfit for consumption by Moslems.

Singapore alone imports S\$3.2 billion worth of *halal* food a year and exports S\$1.3 billion. It manufactures *halal* food worth about S\$314 million a year. McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken years ago made a full conversion to *halal* requirements and have benefited ever since. The world *halal* food trade is estimated at US\$81 billion. Not only Moslem countries are potential markets for *halal* food. The United States, with 8 million Muslims, imports an estimated US\$6 billion annually of *halal* food. **(Figure 59)**

Hanamatsuri

Japan

8 April

Also called Flower Festival.

The date celebrated by Japanese for the birth of the Buddha. Adherents pour sweetened tea *amacha* on the statues of the Buddha.

Hanami

Japan

“Watching cherry blossom.”

Based on the cherry blossom front of warm weather *sakura zensen* that sweeps up from the south. This is extremely popular in spring with large crowds gathering in favourite spots to watch the cherry blossom in a picnic atmosphere. *Hana yori dango* is *watching the dumpling and not the flowers*, a reference to when drinking *sake* (*q.v.*) becomes the more dominant activity.

Hangul

Korea

Hangul is the language spoken by the Han people. The word derives from the term *dachanminkuk*, literally *Nation of Great Han People*.

Hangul is also the written alphabet. It was developed under the guidance of King Sejong. Legend has it that the king, the fourth ruler in the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910), gathered all the country's scholars and locked them in a castle with the instruction that they would only be released once they completed the task of developing a written language. Even without the legend, the date of the development of *hangul* is precisely identified as 25 December 1443 and its introduction to the royal court on 9 October 1446. Prior to then, Koreans spoke Korean but used Chinese as their written form. Being more simple than Chinese, the introduction of *hangul* led to the rapid spread of literacy and as a consequence a rise in national fervour.

Hangul is very phonetic. It consists of 10 simple vowels, 11 compound vowels, and 14 consonants. Written Korean consists of *hangul* and *han-ja* that are 1800 Chinese characters approved by the government. About 60 percent of the Korean language is comprised of Chinese words.

The use of *han-ja* does not mean that Korean is similar to Chinese as grammar and inflection are quite different. There are six main regional dialects: central, northeastern, northwestern, southeastern, southwestern, and Chejudo (in the far south).

Hanko

Japan

Also *inkan*, *jitsu-in*.

Like the Chinese *chop* (*q.v.*), the *hanko* is carved from a hard substance and is used with a vermilion ink. There are a number of different types of *hanko*.

Maruin is the seal of the company representative that is used to formalise contracts. *Kakuin* is the square seal with the company's name that, whilst having a number of uses, has little binding authority. *Shinten* “confidential” is used when a document is intended for just the one person. *Maruhi* means that the document can only be removed from the office after specific permission is given. *Sammonban* is the off-the-shelf seal that are massed produced and can be readily purchased from distinctive hexagonally-shaped containers from a large number of outlets. Because they are not purpose carved, *sammonbans* are used only for relatively unimportant documents.

An individual has a *mitome-in* for everyday use such as stamping documents at work and *jitsu-in* for more important documents. The latter must be registered.

Han Sik il

Korea

Lunar: April, 105th day of the lunar calendar.

Also *Hansig nal*.

Koreans visit their ancestors' graves (*seongmyo* "visiting graves"). *Hansig nal* means "cold food day": people prepare wine, fruit, vegetables, rice cakes, fish, and meat.

Hare

See rabbit (*q.v.*).

People born in the Year of the Hare, the fourth in the twelve-animal zodiac, are happy, albeit a little timid, and easily led by stronger characters. Ambitious and talented they will probably never actually become leaders. They are also smooth talkers.

Hari Raya Puasa

Malaysian Muslims

Literally "Fasting Celebration Day".

Also *Raya Aidilfitri*.

Hari Raya Puasa is a celebration marking the end of Ramadan (*q.v.*), the Muslim month of fasting and abstinence. *Hari Raya Puasa* officially begins at the sighting of the moon on the day before the next month on the Muslim calendar, *Shawal/Syawal*. The festival actually begins the following day, ushered in by prayers at the mosque early in the morning, and a visit to the cemetery to pray for the departed. Family reunions and open-house feasting are common. Popular foods are pastries, cakes and dates.

Wealthier families may sacrifice goats or cows whose meat is distributed to the needy.

Hawker centres

Singapore, Malaysia

A market outlet comparable with wet markets (*q.v.*). Usually, the centres have both an actual market centre and an eating area selling "hawker food". They can also be just an eating area.

In Singapore, every major housing estate has a hawker centre. It is estimated that there are over 100 hawker centers each containing between 50 and 100 food sellers. Each hawker is highly specialised producing only two or three dishes, or at least dishes based around a defined theme, eg noodle soup. In Singapore, it is estimated that approximately 70 percent of imported fruits and a little lesser volume of imported vegetables are sold through these centers.

Hibiscus

In Chinese hibiscus *fu jung* is a pun on the word for success *jung hua*. The hibiscus is often depicted with an egret.

Higan

Japan

Three days before and after the equinoxes when the ancestors' graves are visited. Flowers are exchanged and *ohagi* consumed: the latter is rice cake *moochigae* made from sticky rice and covered with a sauce made from sweet red beans.

Hinamatsuri

Japan

3 March.

Girls' Day when *hina ningyo* dollsets in ancient dress are displayed. Peach blossoms (*q.v.*) are used as decorations.

A sweet rice-based drink *shirozake* is offered. This is a slightly alcoholic drink made from rice malt and *sake* (*q.v.*). *Sakuramoochi* cherry leaves wrapped around moochi rice cake are eaten.

Hinduism

Unlike the other major religious and philosophical systems of Asia, Hinduism does not have a formative leader. At the same time it is decidedly older than the other major beliefs.

The faith's origins appear to be in the Indus Valley in the Sixteenth Century BC. It reflects the influence of the invading blue-eyed nomadic Aryans from around the Caspian Sea on the existing Brahman class and caste system of priests, nobles, warriors, artisans, traders, and serfs. By the Sixth Century BC the faith's basic tenants had been established. Despite the absence of a proselytising mission, Hinduism gradually spread into southeast Asia. It flourished under the Khmer kings of Ankor in modern Cambodia and in Bali in Indonesia. Most of the world's 600 million Hindus live in India.

Hindus believe that all living things have souls and all souls have equal merit. Souls are bound in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, going from one life form to another. Souls can accumulate good merit through *karma*. With enough *karma* a soul can attain *moksha* release from earthbound restrictions. One gains *karma* by the adherence of moral duty *dharma*.

Texts such as the *Ramayana*, the *Upanishads*, and the 220 000 line epic the *Mahabharata* set out how *dharma* is to be observed. Hinduism takes many forms, embraces many religious lifestyles, and refers to many authorities for guidance on spiritual and ethical matters. For this reason the faith is marked by a plethora of deities in a plethora of forms. The diversity merely reflects the belief that the divine is manifested in the human imagination. God has three manifestations: God the Creator, God the Preserver, and God the Destroyer. Each has its own form and multiple manifestations.

Hinduism emphasises hierarchy, specialised duties, rituals and priestly functions. The first two aspects are epitomised in the caste system. Over the years hundreds probably thousands of castes and sub-castes have evolved. Many resemble old fashioned craft guilds. Officially the caste system has been abandoned in India but as in most cultures, 3 000 years of tradition does not cease with government fiat. The graphic sculptures found on temple walls must be seen in the context of the Hindu belief in the prime role of the family and its propagation and survival.

Horse

In terms of the animal zodiac, the horse is a symbol of valour and endurance, speed and perseverance. It is valued for its alertness, intelligence and strength.

Horse-year people, the seventh in the twelve-year cycle, are cheerful, make friends easily, and are good at their finances.

Idul Fitri

Muslim communities in south east Asia

Also *Lebaran*, *Adil Fitri*.

Idul Fitri is the end of the fasting month of *Ramadan* (*q.v.*). It is celebrated by lighting fire crackers, praying at mosques, visiting families, exchanging gifts, cleaning the graves of relatives, and eating. It is the month for Moslems to make promises, apologise, and forgive and forget.

Special foods such as traditional foods, cakes, cookies, bottled soft drinks, chocolate and quality cigarettes, are served to guests. Sales of cheese increase dramatically during *Ramadan*, as cheese is used in the preparation of traditional *Lebaran* pastries. Indonesians usually send *Lebaran* gifts of cakes, fruit, flowers, or home appliances to their parents, relatives or business contacts. Roughly nine weeks later, goats, sheep and cattle on mosque property are sacrificed and their flesh given to the poor. **(Figure 60)**

Inari

Japan

God of prosperity.

Whilst usually associated with the rice and fruit harvests, *Inari* has become associated with prosperity and is thus popular with merchants. More shrines are dedicated to him compared with any other of the gods of fortune. *Inari* is usually seen with a fox.

Inari zushi is a rice ball wrapped in fried sweetened bean curd skin. This is an association with *Inari's* fox which is supposed to like beancurd.

Indonesia

“Indonesia” is derived from Greek *Indos* “India” and *Nesos* “islands”. Indonesia is the world’s

largest archipelago with five main islands and about 30 smaller archipelagos. Of the country's 13,677 islands about 6,000 are inhabited.

Ethnicity.

Indonesia has over 200 million people. Nearly the entire country is ethnic Indonesian. There are about 300 *suku* or delineated ethnic groups. Some of the ethnic groups are:

- * Achenese: from north west Sumatra, renowned for their *durian* (*q.v.*).
- * Badui: from Java with a culture and cuisine heavily influenced by Hindu ritual and drama.
- * Bugis: sea goers from Kalimantan and Sulawesi who were amongst the earliest to adopt Islam.
- * Javanese: the people from Java who refer to themselves as *Yawa*, Sanskrit for "barley".
- * Minahasa: the largely Christian group from northern Sulawesi.
- * Minangkubu: Muslim highlanders from west central Sumatra who have links with the former Hindu kingdom.

Faith.

The country has five officially acknowledged religions - Islam (*q.v.*), Buddhism (*q.v.*), Catholicism, Hinduism (*q.v.*), and Protestantism. In 1995 it was estimated that 87 percent of the population was Muslim, nearly 10 percent were Christians, nearly 2 percent Hindu, and the balance mainly Buddhist. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim community. Depending on a group's religious background, there are varying degrees of food taboos mainly related to meat. Chinese and Christians have the least number of restrictions.

Festivals.

The Indonesian festivals calendar combines civil and religious festivals, lunar and Gregorian dates, and the four main religious groups of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists.

Gregorian

January	1	New Year's Day
July	28	Birthday of Prophet Mohammad
August	17	National Independence Day
December	8	Prophet Mohammad's Ascension
	25	Christmas Day

Lunar

Religion / activity	1998	1999	2000
Islam			
Idul Fitri	30-31 January	19-20 January	28-29 December
Idul Adha	8 April	28 March	16 March
Christian			
Good Friday	10 April	4 April	21 April
Ascension of Christ	21 May	13 May	8 May
Hindu			
Nyepi day	30 March	17 April	6 April
Buddhist			
Waisak Day	12 May	1 May	18 June

Food

The middle and upper income consumer, and lower income consumer have different eating and food shopping patterns.

Middle and upper income groups generally eat breakfast at home, with the typical meal consisting of either bread, rice or noodles for both adults and children. School is usually five hours in the morning so children are home for lunch with a meal cooked by the mother or a maid. Working parents seldom

bring food from home. They usually eat either at a work cafeteria, have lunch delivered, eat outside at a food stall, or have a business lunch. Lunch is invariably rice or noodles, vegetables, and with a small portion of soybean products, eggs, seafood or meat. Dinner is usually eaten at home with the whole family.

Dinner contains rice and vegetables with eggs, meat, poultry or seafood. Most families in this income group have maids. The maid normally purchases only fruit and vegetables in the wet market while the wife does the rest of the shopping at a supermarket or a modern wet market. The maid may or may not help with the cooking. A number of Indonesians in this group rarely cook a meal. About once a week the family will eat out together. When shopping, women and children make most of the food buying decisions.

With the lower classes, the two or three daily meals do not differ significantly. Normally, the meals consist of rice or noodles with vegetables are eaten at home. For those working, lunch is usually purchased at food stalls. Food purchases are made daily at the wet market or small food stores. Meat consumption is low. Calories and protein come from soybean products, fish, and palm or coconut oil used for frying, and sauces. Imported food is purchased only rarely.

Food can be purchased through six basic outlets: supermarkets, Westernized fast food, food courts (*q.v.*), wet markets (*q.v.*), *warungs* (*q.v.*), wholesale markets, *pedangang kaki lima* (*q.v.*), and *rumah makan* - eating house or restaurant.

The centre-piece of any Indonesian meal is steamed or boiled white rice *nasi putih*.

Accompanying dishes include various preparations of chicken, duck, beef (pork on Bali), goat, seafood, and vegetables that can be steamed, boiled, braised, stir or deep fried, roasted or grilled over coconut husks. Ingredients used to give Indonesian food its unique flavours include chillies, coconut, peanuts, garlic, ginger, saffron, basil, cardamom, lemon grass, lime, nutmeg, pepper, shallots, soy sauce, tamarind, turmeric, and several kinds of shrimp paste.

The meal is usually cooked in the early morning, and consumed whenever the need arises, often as snacks. Most meals are eaten quickly and without fanfare. Chicken in coconut milk *opor ayam* would appear to be the favourite dish in Indonesia. Other favourites includes spicy beef *rendang*, and all types of *sate* such as *sate Madura* (featuring beef *sapi*), *sate ayam* (chicken), and *sate kambing* (goat).

Food styles

- * **Java:** Javanese dishes tend to be sweet and spicy: the Sundanese tooth is considered the sweetest in the country. In Central Java, rice and vegetables are the main dishes. Fruit is not commonly regarded as part of the menu. Eggs, meat and milk are rarely consumed. In East Java rice is the staple food with sweet potato the next most commonly consumed foodstuff. West Java food consumption centres on rice and cassava.
- * **Bali:** Rice is the staple with major side dishes of cassava, corn and sweet potato. The vegetables are incorporated into a spicy sauce. Meat is not uncommon with the main types of meat being pork, duck and chicken. Fruit is a major consumption item.
- * **Sumatra.** West Sumatra cooking, the *Padang* style (*q.v.*), incorporates Arabic and Indian influences. It is essentially hot and spicy. Beef is commonly consumed. *Medan* style, from North Sumatra, is also influenced by Indian food customs.
- * **Sulawesi** produces good volumes of rice, vegetables, and seafoods. In the north there is a strong Christian influence, thus meat dishes can involve pork. In the south not as much meat is consumed.

- * **Kalimantan.** Transmigration has seen an infusion of Javanese cooking styles. As usual rice accompanied by vegetables is the major dish. Meat consumption incorporates beef and pork, the latter being the preferred meat of the Dyaks of West Kalimantan.
- * **Maluku** / Moluccas does not have a rice tradition as the region is usually too dry for successful production. Vegetables are the staple dish. There is a strong root crop tradition - taro, cassava, yams, sweet potato. Seafood is common. As the Malukus are the original "Spice Islands", spices are an important ingredient in most foods.

Islam

Islam is an Arabic word meaning "surrender", that is, the surrender of the believer to God. The word has a number of different meanings. One is that it refers to the one true faith which has existed since the creation of the world. Another is that the word refers to the final phase of the revelation of God's word. In this regard, Islam recognises that there were a number of earlier prophets, such as Moses and the *Torah*, David and the *Psalms*, and Jesus and the *Gospel*. The Prophet Muhammad was the last and the greatest of the prophets, and his book the *Koran* / *Qur'an* completes and superseded the previous revelations of the earlier prophets.

Yet another meaning is that the term applies strictly to the religion taught by the Prophet Muhammad through the *Koran*. This interpretation of the word encompasses the Holy Law *shari'a* and Islamic theology *kalam*. Yet another meaning, the one usually adopted by non-Muslims, is that the term refers to Islamic civilisation.

Islam has five pillars. The first is the declaration of faith *shahada*. The second is prayer *salat*, the obligation of all adult males and females. This is the ritual of prayer with its prescribed words and motions that occur at sunrise, midday, afternoon, sunset, and evening. Worshippers must be in a state of ritual purity in a ritually clean place, and facing Mecca.

It is common for hotels in Malaysia and Indonesia to have green arrows indicating the direction of Mecca. The arrows may be in a drawer or on the ceiling. Ritual consists of the *shahada* and some passages from the *Koran*. *Salat* is different from *du'a*, the personal spontaneous prayer. One day a week, Friday, is set aside for public and communal prayer. Fridays are not necessarily a day of rest. Rather they have become days of considerable activity, especially in the markets.

The third pillar is the pilgrimage *hajj* with all Muslims who can afford it having the obligation of at least once in their life undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. The pilgrimage takes place between the seventh and tenth days of *Dhu'l-Hijja* / *Dzul-Hijjah* (see Islamic calendar *q.v.*). The highlight of the *hajj* is the circumambulation of the *Ka'ba*, the House of God *Bayt Allah*, the centre of the Mosque of Mecca that houses the revered Black Stone. For Muslims, the *Ka'ba* is the holiest place in the holiest city.

The fourth pillar is to fast during the ninth month of the Muslim year. The fast *Ramadan* (*q.v.*) is sketched in this chapter and case-studied in Chapter One. The fifth pillar is the financial contribution *zakat*.

Islamic calendar - *Hijri*

The Islamic Calendar is based on lunar cycles. It was introduced in 638 AD in an attempt to rationalise the various, and at times conflicting, dating systems then used. The starting date was the *Hijrah* that chronicled the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah in 622 AD. The led to the foundation of the first Muslim city-state that was a critical turning point in Islamic history. The precise starting date for the Calendar was the first day of the first month (1 *Muharram*) of the year of the *Hijrah*. The Islamic *Hijri* calendar is usually abbreviated A.H. in the West from the Latinised *Anno Hegirae*. Thus, Muharram 1, 1 A.H. corresponds to July 16, 622 AD.

The Islamic *Hijri* year consists of twelve lunar months:

* <i>Muharram</i>	* <i>Safar</i>	* <i>RabiulAwal</i>
* <i>RabiulAkhir</i>	* <i>JamadilAwal</i>	* <i>JamadilAkhir</i>
* <i>Rajab</i>	* <i>Sha`aban</i>	* <i>Ramadhan</i>
* <i>Shawal</i>	* <i>DzulQaidah</i>	* <i>Dzul-Hijja</i>

Since the Islamic calendar is lunar, the Muslim *Hijri* year is shorter than the Gregorian year by about 11 days. This means that important Muslim festivals, whilst always occurring in the same *Hijri* month, may occur in different seasons. For example, the *Hajj* and *Ramadan* can take place in the summer as well as the winter. It is only over a 33 year cycle that lunar months take a complete turn with festivals occurring in exactly the same season.

The beginning of a *Hijri* month is marked not by the start of a new moon, but by the actual physical sighting of the crescent moon at a given locale. Whilst the birth of a new moon may be precise, the actual visibility of the crescent may not be due to largely optical factors. This makes determining of the *Hijri* calendar difficult to produce well in advance. *Ikhtil Al Matala* refers to a local sighting whilst *Ittehad Al Matala* refers to a sighting anywhere in the Muslim world.

Itamae

Japan

Literally *in front of the chopping board*.

Master of Japanese cuisine. *Itamae* are usually dressed in white. The actual word refers to the chef's position at the head of the kitchen team.

Izakaya

Japan

Inexpensive drinking house. One drinks beer, *sake* (*q.v.*) and/or *sochu* (*q.v.*) and eats side dishes.

Izakaya are usually family runs. Some companies have in-house *izakaya* with low prices as a non-salary benefit for employees.

Jainism

Founded by Mahavira, the scion of one of modern India's noble warrior class. Like Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (*q.v.*), Mahavira rejected the easy life to find enlightenment. In Mahavira's case, he also rejected the caste system and his privileges as a Brahmin priest. Today the faith is concentrated in India.

Jainism advocates that the soul is immortal and migrates from living creature to living creature. Thus its adherents avoid killing all and every creature. One manifestation of this is the length to which adherents go to avoid inadvertently killing even insects: they wear mouth masks to avoid accidentally inhaling an insect, and will sweep the path before them to avoid treading on an insect.

Jains do not believe in a god or a god-creator. They do believe in *Nirvana*, the attainment of self enlightenment. However to Jains *nirvana* can only be attained by the ascetic monk and

not any citizen. There are two schools of Jains: the “sky clad” who go about naked, and the “white clad” who wear white cloth. The “sky clad” epitomise the faith as “Jain” is Sanskrit for “conqueror” and the “sky clad” have conquered their worldly desires.

Jakfruit

Artocarpus heterophyllus

Cantonese: *boh loh muk, tai sue bolaw*⁵⁶

Indonesian: *nangka, nangka muda*

Malaysian: *nangk*

Thailand: *kha-nun, kha-noon*

The jakfruit⁵⁷ is the world’s largest fruit, weighing up to 45 kg and being up to 100 cm long. Fruit of around 10 kg are the more common. While the fruit is still firm, it is boiled as a vegetable, but when fully ripe and soft it sweetens, and is then consumed as a fruit. The seeds are eaten after they have been either boiled, roasted, or dried and salted.

Executive chefs in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Jakarta stated that they prefer canned jakfruit to the fresh. This is despite all their training that emphasises food in the fresh form. Their preference is because the canned food gives them greater quality control as well as better portion control.

Thais like to plant a jackfruit in the backyard as it symbolises support. (**Figure 61**)

Jan-ken

Japan

The ancient game of “scissors”, “rock”, and “paper”.

Whilst perceived as a child’s game, it is a serious method of resolving deadlocks at Japanese fish auctions. These auctions are a form of openly-bidder one-off tender. When two or more buyers make the same bid, the auctioneer may halt the auction until the rival bidders determine by *jan-ken* who is the winner. (**Figure 62**)

Fig 62

Japan

The country is a string of islands stretching over 20 degrees of latitude. Nearly all the population is on the four main island of Hokkaido in the north, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu in the south. Extremely mountainous, the country has few plains for extensive agricultural production. As a result, agriculture has been intensively concentrated on rice and vegetables. In turn, these constitute the major ingredients in the cuisine. Japan has one of the world’s

⁵⁶ Literally, *big tree pineapple*

⁵⁷ *Jak* is probably a Portuguese corruption of the Malay word for “round”.

most diverse sources of vegetables, a fact reflected in its having one of the world's highest per capita consumption of vegetables.

Japan's poor natural endowment has resulted in an ability to feed itself. It is one of the largest importers of food in the world. In 1995 imports of the following 10 foods alone exceeded US\$21 billion: shrimp (and prawns), pork, beef, corn, bonito and tuna, soybeans, crab and crab meat, wheat and meslin, chicken, coffee beans.

Faith.

A little over half of the population is Shinto and about 40 percent is Buddhist.

Festivals.

Japan is unique in that it has no national lunar holidays.

January	1	<i>Shogatsu</i> New Year's Day.
	15	<i>Seijin-no-hi</i> , Coming of Age Day for those who reach 20 years.
February	11	<i>Kenkoku Kinebi</i> , National Foundation Day: based on the legendary.
March	20 / 21	<i>Shumbun-no-hi</i> , Vernal Equinox Day.
April	29	<i>Midori-no-hi</i> , Greenery Day: previously, Emperor Hirohito's birthday.
May	3	<i>Kenpo-kinebi</i> , Constitution Memorial Day: instituted in 1947.
	5	<i>Kodomo-no-hi</i> Children's Day.
July	20	Marine Day.
September	15	<i>Keiro-no-hi</i> , Respect for the Aged Day: instituted in 1966.
	23 / 24	<i>Shubun-no-hi</i> , Autumnal Equinox Day.
October	10	<i>Taiiku-no-hi</i> , Physical Culture Day
November	3	<i>Bunka-no-hi</i> , Culture Day.
	23	<i>Kinro-konsha-no-hi</i> , Labor Thanksgiving Day: previously <i>niinamesai</i> when it was a harvest thanksgiving festival.
	23	<i>Tennon tanjyou hi</i> Emperor's Birthday.
December	25	Christmas Day.
	31	<i>Omisoka</i> (q.v.), New Year's Eve Day.

Food.

The Japanese consider that their diet is nearly ideal. They claim that it has the optimal combination of fats, carbohydrates, low calories, high starches, and low animal protein. In support of the claimed "nearly ideal nutritional balance", Japanese point out that they have a lower percentage of death from heart disease and diabetes compared with the West and that their life expectancy is amongst the highest in the world. On the other, Japan has a high incidence of health problems associated with a heavy salt diet that reflects the high role of salt in everyday items such as *miso* (q.v.) and pickles (*tsukemono* q.v.).

The Japanese-style diet has received considerable attention in recent years to see if the changes in the traditional Japanese diet related to Japan's rapid economic development since the 1960s have been beneficial. Substantial reductions in the consumption of rice have been more than offset by increases in meat, dairy products, sugars, and fats and oils. These changes have been monitored to see if they can act as predictors of for dietary changes for the other Asian economies that are undergoing rapid modernisation.

Food styles.

Japanese food is presented in a number of major styles. Amongst the most popular are:

- * *Nabe*: The term refers to the pot in which the food is cooked. The style is hotpot with there being a number of specific *nabe* dishes that are named either for the ingredients used or then originating region. For example *chanko nabe* is an eclectic mix of meat, seafoods, and vegetables popular amongst *rikishi* or *sumo* wrestlers.
- * *Okonomiyaki*: Pancakes mixed with a variety of ingredients like seafood, meat and/or vegetables which is cooked at the table.
- * *Sashimi*: Sliced raw seafood. The essence of *sashimi* is the presentation - artistically cut and arranged pieces accompanied by *shiso* beefsteak leaf⁵⁸ and grated *wasabi* horseradish⁵⁹ for the dipping sauce.
- * *Shabu shabu*: Thinly sliced beef cooked in boiling water with an assortment of sliced vegetables. The cooked food is dipped in *ponzu* made from soy sauce vinegar and lemon juice, or *gomadare* made from sesame seed. The meat must be extremely thin and highly marbled in order to be cooked in the time it takes to say *shabu shabu*. Usually cooked at the table.
- * *Sukiyaki*: Thinly sliced vegetables, meat, *tofu* (q.v.), and jelly-like *shirataki* noodles cooked in *warishita* sauce made from soy sauce, sweet rice wine, and sugar. After being cooked, the food is dipped in a raw beaten egg. Usually cooked at the table.
- * *Sushi*: Basically a topping of raw and cooked seafood and vegetables *tane* served on specially prepared vinegar rice *shari*. In turn, there are a number of sushi styles:
 - ◇ *edomaezushi*: small oblong pieces of rice with *tane* made nearly solely of raw seafood
 - ◇ *chirashizushi*: *tane* is presented on top of the rice which is presented in a lacquer bowl
 - ◇ *makizushi*: rice and *tane* rolled into sheets of dried seaweed and cut into rounds:
 - ◇ *temakizushi*: the same as *makizushi* but presented in individual rolls
 - ◇ *inarizushi*: bags of fried *tofu* (q.v.) boiled in soy sauce and filled with rice
- * *Tempura*: Seafood and vegetables covered in a light batter and quickly deep-fried. Introduced by the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century.
- * *Yakitori*: Small pieces of chicken, vegetables and offal that are skewered and then grilled over charcoal.

Jin

Chinese communities

The basic unit of weight measurement.

$$1 \text{ kg} = 1.66 \text{ jin}$$

$$1 \text{ jin} = 0.6 \text{ kg}$$

⁵⁸ *Perilla spp.*

⁵⁹ *Wasabia japonica*.

Judo-shin Buddhism

Japan

Literarily, *True Pure Land*

The Jodo-shin sect, a major Buddhism (*q.v.*) sect, derives from Mahayana Buddhism (*q.v.*). It preaches the virtue of good behaviour and the punishment of being reborn in hell for bad behaviour. There are six lives: as a human, life in paradise, life as a animal, life in perpetual war, life in eternal starvation, and life in hell. The original Jodo sect was formed in ancient China, and came to Japan about 1000 years ago where it became infused with Shintoism (*q.v.*) and other forms of ancestor worships. As a result, Jodo Buddhism attaches a great deal of importance on funerals and services for the dead.

One sub-sect, *Jodo-shin-shu*, preached the belief in the afterlife. Fanatics did not fear death and were thus seen as being very aggressive. For this reason the sect was suppressed by most ancient rulers. In the Meiji Restoration - Civil War Era in the mid Nineteenth Century, *Jodo-shin-shu* was a major power among the feuding regional lords. In turn, *Jodo shin-shu* has sub-sects. *Jodo-shin-shu* is still powerful in Japan today.

Karapan sapi

Indonesia

September - October

The bull races held on Madura, an island near Surabaya in East Java. A series of village, district, and regional championships are held after the harvest in September and October. These culminate in the Grand Island Championship *Kerapan Besar* that is every bit as comparable with the Melbourne Cup in Australia.

Mekepong is another form of bull racing but here the animal is the water buffalo. Held on the island of Bali at Negara in the south west, the annual event also takes place in September and October. The track is two kilometres long and the water buffalos pull a small chariot. Thailand also has water buffalo racing festival.

A different sport involving bulls is the *Aduan sapi*. These are the bull-fights at Bondowoso in East Java. The bulls actually lock horn and push and shove each other in a trial of strength. It is considered that the sport leads to improved cow-breeding.

Khao Phansa

Thailand

Eighth lunar month.

The beginning of the three months Rains Retreat when Buddhist monks study and meditate in their monasteries. An auspicious time for Buddhist ordination as the period is one of renewed spiritual vigour. The origins of the festival are sound: the Buddha was concerned that if the monks were in the paddy fields at this period they could inadvertently damage the emerging rice crop. Merit making *Tak Bat Dok Mai*, when adherents make offerings of food, flowers and robes to the monks, marks the beginning of the period and *Tak Bat Devo/Temo* “to fill the bowls of the gods” marks the end.

The period has a number of special foods. One is the dessert *krayasad*, a rice cake comprised of rice mixed with coconut, brown sugar, sesame seed, peanuts, and immature rice or rice in the milky stage. The appearance is very much akin to a muesli bar.

At *Ok Phansa*, or the going out from the temples at the end of *Khao Phansa*, one gives *lukyon*, sticky rice wrapped in banana leaves and then steamed, to the monks. (Figure 63)

Kimchi

Korea

Kimchi is at the heart of virtually every Korean meal where it is eaten as a side dish (Fig 64). *Kimchi*'s origins stem from the need to preserve food during the peninsula's harsh winter. *Kimchang* was the task of salting, pickling and then burying the vegetables in order to keep them cold. Traditionally, *kimchang* occurred during the tenth lunar month. The primary ingredients are Chinese cabbage *paechu*⁶⁰, radish (*q.v.*) *mu*, garlic, red pepper, and fish sauce. The process produces a fermentation.

There are a plethora of *kimchi* styles and varieties. Different *kimchi* are available according to the seasons: "watery" *kimchi* and Chinese cabbage *kimchi* are popular in the spring; stuffed cucumber and young radish *kimchi* are a summer dish; and whole cabbage *kimchi*, radish root *kimchi* and *Altari kimchi* are served in autumn. *Kimchi* is invariably pungent and has a distinctive odour.

The dish has survived the millennia because of its storability over winter and because of its quintessential healthiness. Whilst legends abound about its miraculous curative powers, there is no doubt that *kimchi* is:

- * extremely high in roughage and fibroid materials
- * a marvellous source of Vitamins A, B, and C
- * rich in calcium, iron, and capsaicin
- * free from fat and cholesterol
- * rich in lactobacilli because of the fermentation process.

Kimchi consumption is supposed to be declining because of the modernisation of Korean society. Despite tradition and its admirable health properties, *kimchi* is time-consuming to make. As a result modern individual householders no longer make as much *kimchi* as their mothers did, let alone their grandmothers. In the face of the decline in home production, there has been an increase in the number of *kimchi* manufacturers.

In keeping with the individuality of *kimchi* production, there are manufacturers nation-wide exploiting the regional characteristics of the local product. The National Agricultural Cooperation Federation has 13 plants nation wide.

Kitchen God

Chinese communities

The Kitchen God Zao Wang Ye is the most important of the Chinese domestic deities. It is his task to report once a year to the Jade Emperor on the behaviour of the members of the household. This he does on the twenty third or twenty fourth day of the twelfth moon.

⁶⁰ *Brassica rapa* var. *pekinensis*

Honey is a major ingredient in his reporting process. In order to ensure that his report will be flattering, his mouth is sweetened with honey. To ensure that he does not give a bad report, he is muzzled by having his mouth wiped with honey or any other sticky confectionery. Some use a blackening substance to mimic opium, other douse him in rice wine to achieve the same effect.

Kodomo-no-hi

Japan

5 May.

Also Children's Day.

Originally in Japan the ceremony marked the growth of a son. Earlier, there was a high element of militarism. The dolls displayed were military in style, symbolising the hope that the boys would possess the Japanese ideals of manhood. Today the most common demonstration is *koi nobori*. Carp streamers *koi nobori* are flown symbolising the hope that sons will be as vigorous and healthy as carp (*q.v.*) swimming against the stream.

The festival was formally changed to Children's Day after the Second World War to incorporate girls.



Fig 65

Kuehs / kue

Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore

Also *kopiah*, *koah lau huay*.

The translation from Malaysian and Indonesian into English is “cake, but strictly speaking *kuehs* are more like a biscuit. Whilst variations are common, the biscuit must be sweet and

have an auspicious colour. *Kuehs* appear to have been adopted in Southeast Asia from China. In southeast Asia, most have assumed the popular Malay name.

They are generally small and fragile. Some are reminiscent of Christmas cakes. Small scale producers have been key in keeping these traditional cakes alive. Many women have developed good small scale businesses from producing these seasonal treats.

This is especially true in areas where most women work outside the home and do not have either the time or perhaps the interest in making them. **(Figure 66)**

- * *Ang koo kueh* are made from a stiff gelatinous material. They are often made in the shape of fish or even ingots. Whilst usually associated with Chinese New Year they have also been seen at Buddhist temples during *Vesak* Day. They are also consumed at *man yue*, the event that occurs about a month after a baby's birth where-at those who may not have heard of the event are duly informed.
- * *Kueh bangkit*. Made from rice flour, these were originally used for altar offerings for the ancestors. Then they were made in the shape of currency. Today they are made in various animal or floral shapes with their own symbolic meaning, eg, goldfish (*q.v.*), peonies (*q.v.*), and chrysanthemums (*q.v.*). They can be sprinkled with sesame seeds to symbolise fertility. Tan (1991) stated that *kueh bangkit* are typical of the evolution of the cultural osmosis from mainland China to overseas Chinese communities.
- * *Kueh chuchi mulu* (Bahasa Malay) or *kueh cuci mulu* (Bahasa Indonesian) translate to "cakes to wash the mouth with" (Tan T., *Wine & Dine*, February - March, 1997). This refers to cakes for the Kitchen God (*q.v.*) Popular during Chinese New Year.
- * *Kueh rose* is a traditional Malay festive item that uses batter and a rose mold. The batter is made from rice flour, coconut milk, eggs, and sugar. Origins appear to be Indonesian.

Kumquat

Kum means "gold" in Chinese so kumquats symbolise golden luck. This makes it a very auspicious symbol for Chinese New Year. Kumquat trees are very popular for decorations. **(Figure 67)**

Lantern festival

Chinese

Also *Yuan Hsiao Chieh*, *Shang*, *Hsiao Kuo Nien* ("Minor New Year"), *Yuen Siu* in Hong Kong, *Gwandeung* (*q.v.*) in Korea.

Occurs on the fifteenth day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar, when the moon is full for the first time of the year. The festival marks the end of the lunar New Year celebration.

There are a number of versions as to the origins of the festival. One relates to the feeling of gratitude that grew out of the increasing amount of sun and daylight that followed the New Year. Another is that the Tang dynasty Emperor Jui Tsung (AD 710-713) commanded on the

fifteenth night of the year that a thousand of the palace ladies sing and dance in a courtyard illuminated by lanterns.

Other link the origins to the love of singing and dancing by the artistic Emperor Hsuan Tsung (AD 713-756). Latsch (1984) gives a number of historical antecedents that go back to the Han dynasty in the Third Century BC. In that time the festival became linked to Buddhism with a Han emperor ordering that lights be lit on the fifteenth day of the first month as a mark respect for the Buddha. In a slight variation of this, Buddhist devotees believe that the carrying of a lantern on this night will improve their chances of seeing Buddhist deities that are believed to be abroad at this time.

The festival celebrates the belief that that celestial spirits could be seen flying about in the light of the first full moon of the lunar new year. The carrying of lanterns by children symbolises their parents hope that the children will have bright futures. Colourful lanterns are used to decorate homes, stores and restaurant.

Small glutinous rice dumplings *yuan hsiao / tang yuan* are eaten, usually with a sweet watery soup. The dumplings are round, symbolising both the full moon, and family unity and completeness. They can be filled with an array of sweet fillings.

One custom is the eating of taro *Colocasia esculenta* *woo tau / banlong woo tau* under the lantern. Around midnight, soft-boiled taro are eaten by the assembled family under a bright light.

Laughing cake

Chinese

Laughing cake *moh haw kueh* is popular during the Festival of the Hungry Ghost (Ghost Month *q.v.*). “Laughing” derives from the fissures on the cake’s top that make the cake look as if it is smiling. The fissures symbolise luck and prosperity. The dough is sweeter, the texture finer, and the cake more sticky compared with other types of *kuehs* (*q.v.*).

Lebaran

Indonesia

Also *Idul / Idil Fitri, Hari Idul Fitri*

Lebaran is the end of the fasting month of *Ramadan* (*q.v.*). It is celebrated by lighting fire crackers, praying at mosques, visiting families, exchanging gifts, cleaning the graves of relatives, and eating. It is the day for Moslems to make promises, apologise, forgive and forget.

Special foods such as traditional foods, cakes, cookies, bottled soft drinks, chocolate and quality cigarettes, are served to guests. Sales of cheese increase dramatically during *Ramadan* as cheese is used in the preparation of traditional *Lebaran* pastries. Indonesians usually send *Lebaran* gifts of cakes, fruit, flowers, or home appliances to their parents, relatives or business contacts.

Roughly nine weeks later, goats, sheep and cattle on mosque property are sacrificed and their flesh given to the poor.

Longan

Euphoria longan, *Dimocarpus longan*

Cantonese: *lungan*, *longyen*, *loon ngan*

Indonesia: *kelengkeng*, *lengkeng*

Malaysia: *lengkleng*

Thai: *lam yai*

A small fruit about three cm in diameter that is brown with a bumpy rough skin. Its translucent flesh has a sweet-sour taste. In Chinese communities the longan is an important ancestral offering as it symbolises happiness and union.

Lotus

Nelumbo nucifera, *Nelumbium speciosum*, *N.nucifera*

Somewhat looking like a wooden sausage, the rhizome is buff coloured about 60-90 cm long segmented into sausage-like bits about 15-20 cm long and 8-10 cm wide. A cross section of the rhizome has a wagon-wheel like appearance.

A plant of great versatility with all parts having an edible use: the leafs, the seeds, the stalk, and especially the rhizome that grows under the water.

An extremely common symbol in Asia The Buddha compared man to the lotus. He said that man like the lotus starts life in quite dirty circumstances but, like the lotus, man can also raise up through the murky water of life and bloom into a beautiful flower when exposed to the truth and enlightenment.

Lotus buds are one of the three basic offerings made by Thai Buddhists: incense sticks to symbolise life's fragrance, candles and flowers to symbolise life's transitory nature, and lotus buds to symbolise the impermanence of beauty.

With Chinese, the lotus is a symbol of purity. In Chinese, lotus *lien* is a pun on the term "in succession". Lotus seeds or lotus pods symbolise the phrase "may you have many sons in succession", a most auspicious greeting in a culture where to have a son to carry on the family name was of utmost priority. Lotus seed, in Chinese *ling zhi*, is a symbol of numerous offspring and longevity. The seeds taste best when the fruit is very young and tender. This is when the seeds are white with a light yellow centre. Older seeds are bigger and tend to be bitter. Lotus flowers and lotus fruit are commonly offered at temples dedicated to Kuan Lin, Goddess of Mercy. She is also a vegetarian deity.

In Hindu mythology, the lotus symbolises creation and beauty.

Lychee

Litchi chinensis

Cantonese: *laichi*

Indonesia: *lici*

Malaysia: *lichi*

Thailand: *lin chi*

A fruit of up to 8 cm in diameter, lychees have bright red dimpled skins. The thin but relatively firm skin covers a translucent flesh that in turn covers a stone. Stone size varies from the quite small so-called “chicken-head” to one that virtually constitutes the whole flesh. Aficionados take delight in picking lychees with chicken-head stones.

In Chinese, one of the two characters that make up the word lychee means “branches”. Thus the fruit can symbolise the hope that a business will branch out and bring prosperity. (**Figure 69**)

Maghpuja Day

Thailand

Literally Worship on the full moon day of the third lunar month.

Celebrates the Great Assembly of Disciples when nine months after he attained Enlightenment the Buddha preached to 1200 disciples who had spontaneously gathered at Wat Veluvan in Magadha. The event celebrates the miraculous gathering of so many disciples and the fact that all disciples had been ordained by the Buddha himself. His sermon preached three essential messages: abstain from all evil, do only good, and keep one’s mind pure. The ceremony was initiated by Rama IV, the king who spent 27 years as a monk.

Magpie

A pair of magpies are a Chinese symbol of conjugal bliss as the first character *hsi-ch’iao* / *hsi-ch’ueh* means happiness / joy.

Magnolia

Magnolia *yi lan* in Chinese is a pun on the words “noble leader”. Thus the flower symbolises wealth, honour and fame.

Mahayana Buddhism

Also **Eastern Buddhism, Northern Church**

Mahayana means “Greater Vehicle” as it is the Mahayanas’ belief that their approach is a greater vehicle by which large numbers can be saved from the wheel of suffering and rebirth.

One of the major streams of Buddhism. Adherents follow the examples of bodhisattvas by working to attain enlightenment to benefit all beings. Bodhisattvas are beings who over countless lives have built up banks of merit that are used to rescue suffering beings. They

could attain *nirvana* but have stayed on earth to help humans find their way. Like most Buddhists, Mahayanas' two tenets of faith are that good deeds will lead to better lives in future reincarnations, and that the historical Buddha is only one reincarnation in a lengthy series of reincarnations.

It is now the predominate Buddhist sect in China, Japan, Korea, much of Vietnam, Tibet and Mongolia. There are a number of distinct schools within the sect.

Malaysia

Food.

Malay cuisine, generally more subtly-spiced than Indian food, is closely aligned to Indonesian styles, albeit the diversity appears greater in Malaysia compared with Indonesia. Muslim dishes tend to be influenced heavily by Indian cuisine. Malay cuisine is popularly flavoured with peppers, peanut sauce, and freshly-squeezed coconut milk *santan*. Malay cooking draws heavily on poultry, goat, mutton, and chicken. Traditional Malay dishes include vegetables in coconut milk *sayur lodeh*, lentil rice *nasi dal*, black pomfret marinated and served in spices *ikan bawal panggang*, curried tuna *ikan tongal*, chicken curry *kurma ayam*, dried beef floss *beef serunding*, and the rice dishes of *nasi telur bungkus*, *nasi biryani gam*, and *nasi kunyit*.

Desserts are similar to those found in both Singapore and Indonesia, albeit with some variations. For example, fermented glutinous rice *tapai pulut* is eaten in Indonesia generally at the start or during the meal but not as a dessert. *Dodol* is found in all three countries; it uses glutinous rice flour and flavouring and has a texture similar to gummy jubes. *Putu kacang* uses mung bean flour and is moulded and sun dried to create a cookie. Since most Malays do not have traditional ovens, cakes are generally steamed when made at home. Another mentioned *es buah* iced fruit salad using items such as with papaya, pineapple, and a gourd served over ice.

Festivals.

Malaysians have festivals and holidays that celebrate the faiths of its Moslem, Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist citizens. Chinese cultural festivals, such as Chinese New Year, are also celebrated. Holidays can be celebrated nationally or in specific state or states.

National Gregorian holidays

January 1:	New Year's Day (selected states)
May 1:	Labour Day
August 31:	National Day Celebration
December 25:	Christmas Day

Festival	1998	1999	2000	Observance
Start of Ramadan	20 December	9 December	27 November	Selected states

Chinese New Year	28 February	16 February	5 February	National
Hari Raya Puasa (<i>Adil Fitri</i>)	30-31 January	19-20 January	8-9 January	National
Good Friday	10 April	2 April	21 April	Selected states
Hari Raya Haji (<i>Eid Al Adha</i>)	8-9 April	28-29 March	17-18 March	National
Islamic New Year (<i>Awae Muharram</i>)	28 April	18 April	6 April	National
Prophet's Birthday (<i>Maulid Nabi</i>)	7 July	26 June	15 June	National
Deepavali	19 October	7 November	26 October	National
Hari Hol Almarhum Sultan Ismail	17 November	6 November	26 October	Selected states

In addition, the birthday and/or enthronement days of a number of the sultans are celebrated in their respective states.

Mandarin duck

In Japan a pair of Mandarin ducks are a symbol of a happy married life.

Mangosteen

Garcinia mangostana.

Cantonese: *saan-jook*

Indonesia: *manggis*

Malay: *manggis*

Thai: *mangkhut, mangkhoot*

Mangosteens have a hard purple coloured skin and a white sweet, soft flesh considered by many to be the queen of fruits.

Considered by Indonesians to be the honest fruit because the number of inner white soft segments always corresponds in number to the hard petal-like marks that surrounds the calyx. For this reason products with mangosteen motifs are popular gifts at weddings.

Matsu

Birthday of Matsu

Chinese communities, especially Taiwan.
23rd day of third lunar month.

The festival is one of the major festivals on Taiwan. Its origins recount the devotion of Lin Mo-riang “Silent Maid” who, after losing her father at sea from an accident from which her two brothers were saved, stayed at home to look after her mother. From this action in the tenth century, Lin Mo-riang was gradually escalated from one of someone who was revered to being worshipped as a goddess to having the imperial court treat her as “Queen of Heaven”. Matsu’s close relation to the sea has particular significance for Taiwan where many of the early immigrants had to cross the treacherous strait from the China to the island. There are over 300 temples dedicated to her in Taiwan.

In Hong Kong the parallel festival is that of Tin Hau, Goddess of the Sea and Queen of Heaven. It is celebrated on the same day and commemorates the rescuing at sea of a young girl’s two brothers.

Meat

Buddhist doctrine holds that to kill another being whatever its form creates the cause for the killer being reborn as a lower life form. Thus, the killing of animals for meat became an aversion to Buddhists. In Japan this took the extreme form of the *Taiho-Ritsury* Law passed in the Asuka and Nara Periods (645-871 AD) by Emperor Temmu. This forbade the eating of meat from four-legged animals.

Other edicts gradually tightened the strictures relating to the trapping and killing of birds and animals. All of this was reversed with the Meiji Restoration in the late Nineteenth Century when the young Emperor declared in 1872 that meat was good for health and, further, he would take meat himself (Marubeni 1985). Despite the Emperor’s pronouncement, an edict issued in 1873 legalising the eating of meat from four-legged animals had to compete with over 1 000 years of cuisine culture. It took nearly 100 years before beef eating became any-where near widespread. Even today, Japan’s per capita consumption of beef is well below that of all the other OECD countries.

The influence of Buddhism and Shintoism has resulted in the predominant form of meat presentation in Japan being in wafer-thin slices that minimises the obvious showing of blood. Further, meat tends to be cooked in boiling water reflecting the Shinto teachings of the purity of water.

Beef:

Beef is not universally popular in Asia nor has beef eating ever really been an integral part of most Asian cuisines. This in turn stems from two issues. First, the general lack of adequate land upon which the animals can graze. Second, as cattle had greater productivity as draft animals rather than as sources of food, it was more efficient to use cattle to help raise rice than to raise cattle just for food. Thus it has only been in this century that Japan’s *wagyu* cattle has made the transition from draft animal to high cuisine and to its associated stratospheric prices.

In addition the Chinese notion of *yin-yang* (*q.v.*), beef is viewed as having “heat” properties. Generally, these are considered to be poor for one’s health.

Goat meat:

Kambing in Malaysia and Indonesia, is popular in *sate*. Goat meat is considered a delicacy. Whole goats are carved in Malaysia and Indonesia during *Ramadan* at high end buffets and for wedding celebrations.

Lamb-mutton:

The term “lamb” is used in Mongolian dishes where the raising of sheep is common. Everywhere else, whatever its age, the meat from sheep is referred to as “mutton”. Generally, mutton is not popular in Asia as its taste is considered too strong.

Pork:

Pork is used extensively in Chinese cooking. In Indonesia, with its large Muslim population, the pork meat counter may be separated from the sale of other meats. In Hindu Bali, pork is consumed, and a whole pig is roasted for ceremonial occasions. Muslim tourists to Bali often report concern over seeing pork for sale in restaurants. The head may be offered with fruit as a special offering to the gods by the Hindus during ceremonial events. Muslims must perform a special cleaning if they cook or eat near where pork has been cooked. Hence many restaurants in Malaysia either do not serve pork or have a separate kitchen⁶¹.

Mee

Mee are egg noodles, made from wheat flour and egg. Like most noodles, they vary in degrees of fineness and width and are sold in the fresh and dried forms. They have a multitude of names: Chinese - *mien*: Indonesia - *mee*: Japan - *tamago somen*: Philippines - *miki*: Singapore - *Hokkien mee*: Thailand - *mee, ba mee*: Vietnam - *mi*.

Mee can be presented in a multiplicity of styles⁶².

- * *Mee Goreng*: fried noodles
- * *Mee Pok*: a dish made of thin flat yellow noodles. Variations are *Mee Pok Tng* which is the noodles presented in a in soup form, and *Mee Pok Tar* where an accompanying soup is served in a separate bowl.
- * *Mee Rebus*: thick yellow noodle served in a rich, thick and somewhat spicy sauce with fried bean curd, hard boil eggs, bean sprouts and sometimes prawns. Eaten with fresh green chilli and black soy sauce over it.
- * *Mee Siam*: thin white rice noodle served in a spicy sourish sweet soup with *tao pok* deep fried bean curd, eggs, prawns and Chinese chives.
- * *Mee Soto / Soto Ayam*: Malay noodle and chicken noodle soup made with thick yellow noodles.
- * *Hokkien Mee*: wet fried noodles with eggs, squid, pork, shrimps, and some vegetables.

Melon

⁶¹ Harris (1997) has an excellent chapter discussing the basis of cultural inhibition associated with pork.

⁶² These draw upon Singapore examples.

A Chinese symbol of abundance of sons as the melons are connected by vines which look like belt and belt *tai* is a pun on the word “generation”. Melons can also symbolise the family unit. Melon seeds *gua zi* in Chinese symbolise fertility and the hope for future generations.

Fig 70

Mid autumn festival

Chinese

Fifteenth day of Eighth Moon (September or October in Gregorian terms)

Also *Moon Festival*, *Mooncake Festival*.

Zhongqiu jie (Taiwan).

The Mid-Autumn festival is one the major festivals of the Chinese calendar. There are a large number of alleged origins for the festival. They vary from traditional moon worship, to fertility rites, and even being a vehicle to raise insurrection. Mooncakes are synonymous with the festival. These are noted in mooncake (*q.v.*).

In Korea, pine needles are available in the wholesale markets for use in autumn festival rice cakes.

Miso

Japan

Miso is an essential ingredient to most Japanese meals. Its ubiquitousness ensures that there are numerous variations.

These evolve around three essential styles: rice *miso* that is made from rice, soybeans and salt; barley *miso* that is made from barley, soybeans and salt; and soybean *miso* that is made from just soybeans and salt. The latter is the most common. Hosking (1996) stated that Western Japan favours barley *miso* and sweet rice *miso*; central Japan favours soybean *miso*; and the rest of Japan prefers a salty rice *miso*.

Miso soup is as common to a Japanese meal as *kimchi* (q.v.) is to a Korean meal. Like *kimchi*, *miso* is high in protein. The parallels are not surprising as *miso* most likely came from Korea around the sixth century.

Monkey

In the animal zodiac, the monkey is a popular symbol of mischievousness but also some-one willing to help in times of trouble. Because of the use of its tail in stretching from one perch to another, monkeys can be seen sometimes as a bridge. The tail is also responsible for the monkey being viewed as a symbol of greed and avarice as it can over-stretch itself.

Monkey-year people, ninth in the twelve-year animal cycle, are clever and skilful, strongly inventive and original, curious and observant. They can solve problems easily and are good with their finances. On the other hand, they tend to be erratic, and lack constancy and perseverance.

Monkey God Festival

Chinese

Lunar: Sixteenth day of the eighth month.

Mainly celebrated in Chinese communities outside of China, but especially in Hong Kong.

The festival celebrates the Monkey who protected his master the monk Xuan Zang / Yuen Tsong who was sent to India to bring back the Buddhist Scriptures. The Monkey had previously stormed into Heaven and stolen the Peaches of Immortality that had made him indestructible and equipped him with miraculous powers. He had a magic weapon small enough to tuck behind his ear but which could become a club too heavy for anyone else to lift. The Monkey's bravery and craftiness protected his master from evil spirits.

In Chinese communities the Monkey God is revered as being a mischievous trickster of great talent and wit, one who can take on the establishment both on earth and in the heavens and get away with it.

Monkey manifests himself to believers by entering into the body of a medium and speaking through him on the first and fifteenth days of every moon. The medium goes into trance and takes on monkey-like characteristics of twitching, jumping, scratching, and grinning. Then, along with his "interpreter", he holds a clinic to which come people with a variety of illnesses. Monkey diagnoses diseases, prescribes treatment, and gives advice. More serious are the mediums who, traced, cut their tongues with swords, climb ladders made of knives, and walk across hot coals. Blood from the sword cuts is splashed onto slips of paper which are used as talismans against sickness and evil.

Hindu mythology has Hanuman the general of the monkey army. He has a similar role to the Chinese Monkey God being a model of humility and service who is respected for his knowledge and whose blessings is sought for protection and good health.

Mochi

Japan

Glutinous rice that is pounded until it forms a soft sticky ball. *Mochi tsuki* is eaten as part of New Year's feasting when it is served in a special New Year soup *zoni*. A regional peculiarity is that in eastern Japan the cake is cut with a knife but in western Japan they are shaped into circles.

Moon cake

Chinese

A cake popularly associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival (*q.v.*).

Mooncakes come in a variety of shapes and with fillings. The most common fillings are: sugar, melon seed, almond, orange peel, sweetened cassis blossom, ham, preserved beef, ground lotus and sesame seeds, dates, salted duck egg yolk, and sweet red bean paste. Some have two salted duck eggs for extra good fortune: when cut, the yoke is said to resemble the full moon. One restaurant in Singapore sold mooncakes with XO cognac liqueur in them. Wheat -flour mooncakes are moulded into various shapes such as fish (*q.v.*), and dragon (*q.v.*), animals with auspicious meanings. "Snow skin" mooncakes are a confectionery *kiat hong ko* made from glutinous rice. *Teochew* mooncakes use flaky pastry. Mooncakes can be decorated on the outside with a sculpted look. (**Figure 71**)

Mushroom

Mushrooms are a major food item in Asia. Recorded Asian production is in excess of two million tons, suggesting that a much higher volume is actually produced. Major species include *Auricularia*, *Collybis*, *Lentinus*, *Pholita*, *Pleurotus*, *Tremella*, *Volvariella*.

Scientific name	Common name	Comment
<i>Auricularia spp.</i> (also <i>Tremella spp.</i>)	Chinese: <i>mu erh</i> ("wood ear"), <i>yun erh</i> ("cloud ear"), <i>wan yee</i> , <i>bok bee</i> ("black wood ear fungus") English: Jew's ear, Judas Ear, wood ear	* References to "ear" comes from the shape of the fungi, especially when it is dried the usual form by which it is sold. Also valued for its medicinal properties because of its identified anticoagulant properties.

	<p>Indonesian: <i>jamur kuping, kuping sikus, supa lembur, kuping law</i></p> <p>Malaysian: <i>cendawan telinga tikus, kulat telinga tikus</i></p>	<p>* Its growth in popularity has accompanied the spread and "authentication" of regional Chinese cooking.</p> <p>* In Chinese, this mushroom because of its shape, symbolises intelligence.</p>
<p><i>Lentinus edodes</i></p> <p>Also <i>Cortnellus shiitake</i>, <i>Armillaria edodes</i></p>	<p>Chinese: <i>tung ku, dong gu, xianggu</i></p> <p>English: shiitake, forest mushroom</p> <p>Japanese: <i>shiitake</i></p> <p>Korean: <i>p'yogo</i></p>	<p>* In Japanese, the name <i>shiitake</i> derives from <i>shii</i>, the Golden Oak Tree <i>Pasama cuspedata</i>. In the fresh form <i>nama shiitake</i> has a brown cap about 5 cm in diameter. Most consumption is in the dried form. Larger, darker products are considered to be the cheaper ones. Light brown caps with prominent white cracks are considered the best.</p>
<i>Tricholoma matsutake</i>	<p>English Pine mushroom</p> <p>Japanese: <i>matsutake</i></p>	<p>* Name derived from <i>matsu</i>, the Japanese red pine. Its great fragrance and rich flavour has resulted in it being possibly the highest priced vegetable in the world: In Japan, the centre of world production and marketing, a two kilogram parcel sold at Tokyo's wholesale markets in May 1993 for Yen 363 075⁶³.</p> <p>* In Japan, for a couple to "go <i>matsutake</i> hunting" is a reference to the mushroom's phallic shape and the likelihood of the couple doing things other than <i>matsutake</i> hunting in the high pine forests.</p>

Muslim

From the Arabic word meaning "to surrender", thus some-one who performs the act of surrender to God.

See Islam (*q.v.*)

Navarathiri Festival

Singapore

A Hindu festival where homage is paid to the consorts of the gods of the Hindu trinity. *Navarathiri* "nine nights" indicates that the festival goes for nine nights - ten days. The festival ends with a procession bearing a silver horse.

⁶³ Roughly AUS\$3 000 'kg, circa early 1998.

Noodles

Asia

Noodles are the one of the two basic fares of Asia - the other is rice. Sometimes they are the entire meal, other times they are a side dish. In a number of countries customers are asked at the end of the meal if they would like to finish off with rice or noodles. Noodles come in a variety of forms; wheat-based, rice-based, and vegetable based. Within these basic styles are a number of sub-forms - round, flat, square, fat, thin, dried, fresh, translucent.

Invariably seen as a symbol of longevity because of their length. Common at birthday celebrations and a final course during family reunions. One needs to be careful not to bite the noodle off short as this symbolically may shorten the life of the person being honoured. Maybe this is why it is good form to slurp one's noodles.

Numbers

For Asians numbers can be both auspicious and inauspicious.

Some examples are:

- 3** An auspicious number in Japan. In Chinese communities three is homonymous with rise and symbolises prosperity and progress.
- 4** Inauspicious number in Japanese, Chinese and Korean communities as 4 is pronounced as *si/shi* that has a similar sound to "death". At the same time, numbers which add to four should be avoided, for example, two pairs of socks.
- 7** See Seven (*q.v.*).
- 8** An auspicious number with Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese communities. See Eight (*q.v.*).
- 9** One pronunciation in Japanese of nine *ku* sounds like the word meaning "pain and suffering" so it is an inauspicious number. In Thailand nine is *gau* that sounds like the word for step forward, hence the number is auspicious.

Many Asian communities number off with their hand by starting with an open fist and extending fingers and then as they count they close the fingers back into the palm.

Nyepi Day

Indonesia

March 21

Also *Day of Silence*

The Balinese Hindu New Year that occurs on the Spring Equinox. Complete silence occurs as no work is done and people stay in-doors. The previous day there are offerings considerable noise held to arouse the evil spirits. The next day, *Nyepi Day*, on seeing the empty streets, the spirits leave Bali alone.

Nyonya / nonya

Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia

Nyonya cuisine is derived from the Straits region of Singapore, West Malaysia, and Indonesia. Here, Chinese-born traders settled and married indigenous women. The cooking of the women, referred to as *Nonyas*, fused traditional Chinese ingredients with Malay spices. Unlike most Malays, *Nyonys*, the women, and *babas*, the men, eat pork that reflects their Chinese inheritance. Dishes are hot and spicy. Two famed dishes are *rempeh* that is a spice paste and *laksa* that is a spicy coconut milk soup.

See *Peranakan* (q.v.).

O-bon

Japan

Lunar: mid-July to mid-August

Also *Festival of Souls*.

This festival parallels the Chinese festival of the Feast of the Hungry Ghosts (*ghosts* q.v.) and the Thai *Bprehd* (q.v.).

A Buddhist based ceremony with the word *bon* (also *urabon*) originating from the Sanskrit word *ullambana* meaning “terrible affliction”. The festival derives from the belief that the souls of the deceased return to visit their birth place. *Haka mairi* is the visiting of the graves of ancestors to console the spirits of the dead. Graves can be decorated with vegetables carved into animal shapes.

Whilst it is not a national public holiday, many Japanese take leave in order to practice *haka-mairi* in their home village making this an extremely busy travel period. A number of festivals are held over the period. Neighbourhood groups gather for dancing *odori* and family gatherings. *Makaebi* is the lighting of fires to welcome the dead souls. *Okuribi* is the lighting of fires to send the souls of the dead back on their way. *Shoro-nagashi* sends the spirits off down rivers and streams to the sea in paper boats. Perhaps the most spectacular festival is *Daimonji Okuribi* when five fires are lit on Kyoto’s Mt Nyoigatake to form the giant character *dai*.

During *obon*, the consumption of beef increases through both the retail sector for eating at home and the food service sector for eating out.

O-misoka

Japan

31 December

Strictly speaking *misoka* is the last day of each month and *o-misoka* is the last day of the last month of the year. At this period one should welcome the new month.

Ceremonies held to drive out the sins of the old year. The temple bell should be rung 108 times, once each for the sins that man is held to possess. *Hatsudmode* is to go to the temple in the period New Year’s Eve until 7 January to pray for health and happiness in the New Year.

Special foods are consumed. *Toshikoshi-soba* is the buckwheat noodle that symbolises the passage from the old year to the new. *Osechi-ryori* are special New Year dishes that come in

a three-layered box. The food in the *osechi-ryori* are usually boiled or grilled such as boiled vegetables, grilled fish, and grilled eggs. The reason for doing this is to save the housewife working on New Year's Day. She cooks the food several days beforehand and then puts them in the *osechi-ryori*.

Oni-yarai

Japan

Early February

Whilst not a national holiday *Oni-yari* is widely celebrated as a fun day. One custom is the throwing of soybeans in homes and shrines to drive out the bad fortune and to usher in good luck.

Orange

“Orange” and “gold” pronounced *gam* in Cantonese are homonymous with “sweetness”. Thus the orange symbolises sweetness and wealth and is offered at auspicious times such as Chinese New Year in pairs. (**Figures 72 and 73**)

Orchid

Praised by the Buddha as the symbol of love and fertility.

Ox

The second in the twelve year cycle animal zodiac. The beast of burden common throughout Asia. A symbol of steady patient effort that backed by strength, can overcome all difficulties. Slow sure and steady, not impulsive and rash. Maybe a little too slow and thus indecisive but really patient and persevering. (**Figure 74**)

Padang

Indonesia

Literally “field”. Padang is the plains of West Sumatra.

Padang refers to a style of eating. When you sit down at a table, the waiter brings a bowl of rice and a plate of every dish to your table. You eat whatever you like, and are charged when you leave only for the food you've eaten. *Padang* style involves eating with your fingers.

Pasar / pasir

Malaysia and Indonesia

A market place comparable with a wholesale market, usually a terminal market.

In Malaysia the biggest wholesale centre is Pasir Borong at Kuala Lumpur. A new facility replaced the older one just across the road. Spread over 14 ha there is a central trading area for fruit, vegetables, and fish, as well as space for shops and offices. Unlike the older facility, buyers have to pay a parking fee. The centre also has only small cold storage capacity. In

Jakarta the central municipal wholesale market is Pasir Ujung Pandang. Because Singapore imports virtually all its food requirements, the Pasir Panjong wholesale market is quite active. It operates two selling periods daily to handle produce that is delivered by truck from Malaysia and Thailand.

Pasar malan are night markets in Indonesia and Malaysia where one can find varying numbers of *warungs* (*q.v.*) and thus are good places to eat.

Peach

Chinese

In the Chinese lunar calender, the third moon is named *tao* peach. The peach symbolises longevity and/or immortality and fertility. It is a portend of future happiness

Peach blossoms are a Chinese symbol of longevity. One legend tells that the peach tree of the Queen Mother of the West fruits once every three thousand years.

Fig 75

Shantao are cakes made in the shape of a peach from rice or wheat flour.

Peacock

A symbol of respect and honour amongst Chinese as the word for peacock *kungchywe* sounds like “Confucius”. Peacock feathers represent unsullied purity.

Peanuts

Also *groundnuts*.

A Chinese symbol of continuity as the second character in *hua sheng* meaning “to give birth”. The nutty flavour *ma* is one of the important flavours in Chinese cooking.

Pear

Chinese

Pear *li* / *lih tze* is an homonym for “beget children”. Pears are thus a popular wedding gift. At the same time *li* is phonetically the same as the word “separation” so lovers, relatives and friends should never divide a pear between them.

Pedagang kaki lima

Indonesia

The purveyors of street food. The *pedagang kaki lima* pushes the food cart *gerobak durang* from which is sold food in a ready-to-consume form. They provide a great range of food types as well as being a significant force in the provision of food.

Their importance in the food distribution system has been recognised formally with the government providing low interest capital loans in order to assist them to acquire their *gerobak durang*.

The Institut Pertanian Bogor has develop a more efficient and hygienic cart that involves a simple modifications such as including a fixed top to provide some shade, a metal working area to assist cleanliness, and a simple well in which to place ice in order to provide a degree of coolness to assist shelf life. **(Figures 76 and 77)**

Peony

A garden of peony flowers is the setting for intimate domesticity and faithfulness. The peony is the epitome of *yin* (q.v.) femininity. The abundant petals of a peony symbolise wealth and honour.

Peranakan

South east Asia

Peranakan culture resulted from the marriage of Chinese and Malay cultures. It arose from the Chinese men who came to work in south east Asian and married local women. *Peranakan* is a unique culture with its own language. They have a unique art sense. They had multi-coloured China made specifically for them and they made wonderful beadwork. *Peranakans* developed their own cuisine. Today Malacca and Penang in Malaysia have few *Babas* and *Nonyas* (q.v.), men and women respectively, left. The language has almost been forgotten.

Pesta Malaysia

Malaysia

September

Also *Malaysia Food Festival*

A Government program that aims to create awareness and appreciation of Malaysian culture, craft and cuisine. All thirteen states participate in the event that is held in Kuala Lumpur.

Pheasant

A Japanese symbol of courage as the pheasant is reputed to be able to devour snakes. It is also reputed to be able to foretell earthquakes.

Phoenix

A powerful symbol of masculine *yang* (*q.v.*) and longevity (Chinese). When paired with the dragon in the context of a wedding they symbolise union.

Pig

See Boar (*q.v.*)

Pine tree

Along with the bamboo, Japanese consider the pine tree a symbol of nobleness and integrity as it retains its leaves in winter. To Chinese the pine tree is a symbol of longevity.

Pineapple

Chinese

The pineapple has lucky connotations for Chinese. Pineapple tarts are an auspicious Chinese New Year symbol. After all, the leaves form a crown and the yellow skin is an auspicious colour. Pineapple tarts are also sold in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia for the Muslim festival of *Idil Fitri* (*q.v.*). (**Figure 78**)

Plum

A symbol of a pure and honest friend. With Chinese, an auspicious New Year symbol. Its five petals symbolise the five gods of good fortune. In Japan, the pine, bamboo and plum have collectively symbolised hope and good fortune since ancient times. In modern Japan the term has been extended to meals and restaurants where pine equates with “deluxe”, bamboo with “special” and plum with “regular”.

Pomegranate

Chinese

Amongst Chinese the many seeds in the pomegranate are seen to represent children and thus the fruit symbolises fertility. Also seed *tze* is homonymous with the character for son. Given at weddings, the pomegranate symbolises that the union will produce many children: a ripe pomegranate half-opened exposing the seed *tze* is a very popular wedding gift.

Pomelo

Chinese

Pomelos *Citrus grandis*, *C.maxima*, is the largest of the citrus family with some fruit weighing up to 10 kg. Its flesh is a little drier but sweeter than that of a grapefruit. There are pink and white fleshed types.

In Chinese culture, pomelos symbolise luck and prosperity. They are commonly offered as a temple food. Ideally, the fruit is left on the altar for fifteen days. Pomelo are very popular for this because the fruit does not normally eat well immediately after picking. Instead it gains in

flavour in the fifteen days. A very popular fruit during the Moon Festival or Mid-Autumn Festival (*q.v.* and Chapter One) as, like the moon, it is round.

In Taiwan, about 85 000 tons are produced annually. The main types are *wentan*, *tou*, and *pai*. *Wentan* pomelo is more ovoid than round and, weighing only around 600 g, is quite small. *Tou* and *Pai* are rounder in shape and thicker skinned compared with the *Wentan* type. Because they are very common at the time of the Mid Autumn Festival *Wentan* are not considered an appropriate gift. *Tou* and *pai* are popular gifts after the Festival.

In Thailand, there are a number of varieties: *Khao hom* - globular shaped, white fleshed, sweet and scented; *Khao namphung* - pear-shaped, yellowish white flesh, and has a sweet taste; *Khao paen* - shaped like a flatten globe, is white fleshed and with a sweet to slightly sour taste; *Khao phuang* - pear-shaped variety with a pronounced topknot; and *Thongd* - globular shaped fruit with a much darker green skin, pink flesh, and sweet and juicy. (**Figure 79**)

Porridge

Rice porridge is popular with Chinese.

Chok is Cantonese for rice porridge *congee*. Variations are *kai chok* chicken porridge, *yu-pin chok* fish porridge, and *zhu yok chok* pork porridge. *Teochew Porridge* is a watery rice porridge served with a choice of small dishes such as salted egg, century eggs, and fried anchovy. *Hokkien Porridge* is similar but thicker. *Cantonese Porridge* is a thick and gluey porridge with ingredients such as pork, egg, liver, dried squid, and fish. It is usually served with Chinese fried bread.

Purple

In Japan, purple is the colour of high ranking nobles.

In China purple *zi* is the colour associated with both the heavens and the emperor.

Traditionally in the theatre the colour was used to depict loyal officials. Today *zi* is the colour of grief and self-pity.

Qing Ming Jie

Chinese

Also *Ching Ming Festival*, *Tomb Sweeping Day*, *Pure and Light Festival*.

A festival of ancestor worship of the third lunar month. The festival's origins also relate to the emergence of nature from winter.

Still popular among more traditional Chinese. It is seen as a means of communicating with the ancestors to see if they are satisfied with their descendants. Graves are swept and cleaned. Food and wine are left for the spirits and incense and paper burned to reach the dead.

The festival is associated with the Cold Food Festival that is based on a legend of faithful service and inadvertent tragedy.

Radish

Raphanus sativus (daikon group), *R. sativus* (longipinnatus group), *R. sativus* (*radicola*)

Chinese: *loh bok, loh baak, loh bo, lai fu, lu fu, luobo*

English: Japanese radish, Chinese radish, daikon, long white radish, Oriental winter radish

Indonesia: *lobak merah, lobak beureum, radis, rades*

Malaysia: *lobak, lobak putih, lobak isi*

Asian radishes come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Usually straight and cylindrical in shape, there are some that are nearly globular. Most varieties are snubbed-nosed but there are taper types. Size varies: the giant *Sakurajima* variety of Japan has a girth of around 80 cm and the equally enormous *Moriguchi* can reach up to 1.2 m in length and weigh anything up to 30 kgs. Whilst plants up to 60 cm long may be marketed, they are more commonly marketed around 35-60 cm long and 5-10 cm in diameter. Flesh colour varies from white through green to pink.

There are three basic methods of consuming radish: as a root crop, as a leaf and sprout, and as a seed pod. The Oriental group of radishes is considered to be crisper.

It has a milder flavour compared with the Occidental's smaller radish, thus its use as a main stream vegetable and not as a relish prized for its pungency.

Radish is eaten in thick slices boiled in a stock with other vegetables. It is grated and eaten with soy sauce flavouring. Japanese add it to their dipping sauces for *tempura* (Japan - food *q.v.*) as the radish helps the digestion of oily foods. In Japan it is dried into long thin strips *kiriboshi daikon*. The Chinese carrot cake *law bark go* is really made from the radish. It is steamed then generally fried in sauce. This treat is seen throughout the year in Singapore and Malaysia. It is usually bought at a stall and not made at home.

To Chinese the radish symbolises abundance.

Ram

In the animal zodiac, three animals are depicted for this sign: the ram, the goat, and the deer. All represent slightly different attributes that tend to make this year a little confusing. For example, rams are gregarious so they are symbols of cooperation whilst the sheep is timid, defenceless, and a symbol of peace.

Ram-year people, the eighth in the twelve-year cycle, are considered to be very fortunate. They are tender hearted, sympathetic, and generous. However, their timidity results in their being taken advantage of. Ram-year people are adverse to being involved with power struggles and spurn leadership.

Ramadan

Muslim communities

see Islam (*q.v.*) and Chapter One.

The eighth month in the Muslim calendar when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. All adult Muslims are required to fast. Exemptions are applied to the aged, the sick, the very young, those on a journey or engaged in *jihad* holy war. In addition, one should abstain from sex, listening to loud music, and smoking. In many areas of Indonesia, restaurants are closed during the day out of respect to Muslims. This is a holy time for reflection and for acts of

kindness. It represents an ability to overcome temptations and requires rigour to succeed. *Ramadan* is an act of accomplishment.

The fast is broken often with water or tea, and a date or sweet soup *kolak*. Some devotees then say their evening prayers and eat more later while others eat an entire meal then say their evening prayers. Many break fast with their family, at the mosque, with friends, and with large groups. Hotels have started providing large elaborate buffets *buka puasa* for breaking fast.

Rat

The rat is the first animal in the twelve-year cycle of the animal zodiac. The rat is highly respected for the intelligence it displays in locating and then hoarding its booty. Many Asians consider the rat a symbol of industry and prosperity. To have a rat in the home/store is considered auspicious because the rat would only be there if there is food.

Rats are also respected for their guile and craftiness. The legend is that the ox, the first to respond to the Buddha's invitation to be with him as he lay dying, allowed the rat to climb on its back when it crossed the river. But when they neared land the rat jumped from the ox's back and was the first to the Buddha.

At the same time there are few references to the mouse in Chinese symbology.

Red

An auspicious colour for Chinese as red is believed to exorcise evil. It is also an auspicious colour in Thai, Vietnamese, and Filipino communities. Red ink should be handled judiciously, especially with signatures. When combined, red and white are auspicious and used on good and happy occasions in Japan. Japan's *kabuki* actors use red lines in their make-up to symbolise heroes: black lines are for villains.

In China, red is a life giving colour. It is associated with the giving of riches and is thus the colour of wealth.

Rice

In many parts of Asia, the importance of rice has led it to be being considered more than just an item of food. In Thailand, rice is considered to contain the spiritual essence of the nation and special ceremonies are associated with its planting and harvesting. Mae Pra Posop, the rice goddess, is one of Thailand's five goddesses who personify the five material elements. In Indonesia's Bali Dewi Sri reign supreme among the myriad of rice farming villages. Rice has a special appeal to the Japanese: "*A Japanese without rice is like a flower without water. Rice is the elixir of life. Rice he must have if he is not to lose his racial identity*" (Rudofsky 1971).

The Japanese turned eating rice into more than just a meal. Serving rice become an art form with, for example, the whiteness of the grain being contrasted against the different lacquered dishes in an aesthetic appeal unique to the Japanese: "*Japan has a visual culture, in which presentation, and the packaging, are as important as the product.*" (Porter 1990).

Like the Thais, the Japanese have a special rice planting ceremony involving the Emperor with the ceremony invoking *inadama*, the spirit of the rice plant⁶⁴: The Japanese have recently revived after a 50-year absence the practice of ceremonially planting rice in early June in Sanada-no-Osada, a field in Kagoshima Prefecture on the southern island of Kyushu considered to be the oldest rice field in the country.

For Chinese, the mature rice stalk *tao ho* is homonymous with *ho* “peace” and “tranquillity”, thus when painted with subjects such as a quail symbolises peace.

Rice underpins the social structure of south east Asia. This is because of the need to manage water for irrigation purposes across a community, even a region, requires a high degree of social cohesion.

Asian history has a number of examples where kings and dynasties fell because vital social functions surrounding the management of water, such as the keeping of the irrigation channels free of silt and weeds, fell into disrepair. From this it is easy to see how rice’s importance became epitomised by its inclusion in a number of everyday expressions:

- * *How it suffers, the rice pounding of the pestle
But once this is over, how white it will be.
So it is with man, living in this world.
To be a man one must be pounded by misfortune.* Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969)
- * *The Iron rice bowl* was the former dictum of Mao Tse Tung’s China where the state would look after every-one and no-one could be fired from their job.
- * *Be like the padi - it bows low when full of ripe grain but the lalang stands proudly tall but with nothing* is a Malaysian proverb urging humbleness.
- * *To make flour without rice* is to undertake a venture without the appropriate tools or backing.
- * *Rice on the spoon does not always get to the mouth* parallels the English proverb “twixt cup and lip there is many a slip”.
- * *If you plant grass you will not get rice* is the English proverb “so as you sow so shall you reap”.
- * *Eating from the big rice bowl* refers to adult children who still depend upon their parents.
- * *Don’t hope for some-one else’s rice* urges self-reliance.
- * For a Chinese businessmen to state that he is “dining on congee” indicates that business is poor but for him to state that he is dining on white rice then times are good.
- * *Gkin kao* “time to eat rice” is the announcement that it is mealtime in Thailand.

There are three majors rice subspecies:

⁶⁴ In ancient China the Emperor undertook a comparable ritual.

- * *Indica*. Grows in monsoonal Asia but is also drought tolerant. Grains are long and slender. Farmers' decision to plant the Indica variety is a trade off as he is exchanging a lack of high yields with a high assurance of at least harvesting a crop.
- * *Javanica*. Grows in equatorial Asia thus likes abundant water and therefore susceptible to drought. Essentially low yielding and low priced.
- * *Japonica*. Grows best in the more temperate climates of north Asia - northern China, Korea, Japan. The grain is broader and thicker than the other types. It is higher yielding but lower priced, artificial government pricing schemes notwithstanding, compared with other types.

The ceremonies involving rice are virtually too numerous to mention. Just one reference is noted. When making New Year visits to shrines and temples, Japanese drink *amazake*, a hot sweetened drink made by mixing cooked rice with water and rice infected with the mold *Aspergillus oryzae*.

Rice noodles are very fine in shape and size. They are invariably presented after being soaking in hot water for about ten minutes or lightly stir-fried.

Rice is not to be confused with "wild rice"⁶⁵ which is from the species *Zizania spp.* Wild rice is a spear-shaped perennial aquatic plant growing wild in pools and marshy areas. A fungal infection, *Ustilago esculenta* (*gau sun* in Chinese), in the stem makes the shoot swell and become tender. The origin of the fungus seems to originate from taking a cereal plant from, essentially, the drier regions of Manchuria to the moist southern regions of Asia. There has been a surge in wild rice's popularity.

In the ten years to 1993, China's exports have increased from virtually zero to around 110 000 tons. Prices have not declined in the face of this massive expansion and were around US\$0.90 /kg in late 1993.

Rooster

In the animal zodiac the rooster is the symbol of warmth, strength, and life. Roosters are associated with many legends that evolve around bringing good news and cleverness. Rooster-year people are considered deep thinkers, busy and devoted to their work. Unfortunately they take on more than they can handle and tend to be loners. The rooster is the tenth animal in the twelve animal cycle.

Sago

Tropical and sub-tropical Asia

Sago is harvested from *Arenga pinnata* and *Metroxylon sagus*, tall palms that have essentially died in producing a bountiful harvest of starch. With a starch content of 85 percent, sago is a very high energy food. Traditionally starch is used to make Indonesia's sweet *gula melaka*. Today the starch is used for the production of glucose and high fructose syrup, bread, noodles, crackers, baby and weaning foods, and feed and compost fertilisers.

⁶⁵ In English also "Manchurian water rice"; in Chinese *chiao-pai*, *chiao-sun*, *kau sun*, *gaau sun*, and *jiaobaisun*; in Thai *nomai-nam* and *kapek*.

The staple diet of Indonesia's Maluku Islands, sago is consumed in the porridge-like *papeda* along with fish sauce, seafood and chilli. It is also made into cakes of *peranakan* (q.v.) style.

On South China's coast young wives of sea-bound sailors and fishermen would tie a piece of their husband's clothing to a sago palm to ensure that they would return soon and safely.

Sake

Japan

The traditional rice wine brewed from fermented rice and water. The process of making *sake* is shown over⁶⁶. *Sake* can be classified according to its manufacturing process: *seishu* refined, *genshu* crude and *nigorizake* unrefined. *Seishu* is the most commonly consumed *sake*. It has an alcohol content of around 12-15 percent.

Sake can be either *amakuchi* sweet or *karakuchi* dry. It is served both hot and cold. With hot *sake*, *hito-hada* is *sake* warmed to the drinker's body temperature, whilst *nurukan* is lukewarm at about 30°C and *atsukan* is heated to about 50°C. One style of serving *sake* is to pour it into a square wooden pine box *masu* about 8 cm square with the pine imparting a delightful bouquet to the *sake*.

There are about 2 500 *sake* manufacturers producing about 4 000 brands. Local brands *jizake* are as appreciated as national brands. Over the past 20 years *sake* consumption has gradually declined. Family income and expenditure survey suggests that the rate of decline just about matches the rate of increase in price.

Sake still remains an important social ingredient in Japanese cultural life. *San-san-kudo* is the drinking of *sake* by the bride and groom at a Shinto wedding as a nuptial oath. Three sips are taken from three cups of different sizes for a total of nine sips. Major events often start with the chief guest(s) ceremonially breaking the lid of a *sake* cask. When drinking *sake* in a sushi bar, one should not fill one's own cup as this is the responsibility of one's drinking companion.

⁶⁶ Most of the following was gathered by visiting the Sake Stand at **Foodex** in Japan in March 1997.

Sambal

Indonesia, Malaysia

The spicy paste used to augment a dish. The term can also refer to a hot curry. There are different types of *sambals*:

- * *Sambal bajak*: based on red chilli, onion, garlic, prawn paste, tamarind⁶⁷, galangal⁶⁸, and palm sugar. One of Indonesia's most popular *sambals*.
- * *Sambal bawang*: has ingredients comparable with *sambal bajak*.
- * *Sambal kecap*: based on sweet soy sauce. Also used as a dipping sauce.
- * *Sambal trasis*: based around chilli and dried shrimp paste. Quite pungent.
- * *Sambal ulek*: based on crushed chillies, salt, and either vinegar or tamarind.

Sea cucumber

Pronounced *shen* in Chinese, the sea cucumber represents happiness.

The sea cucumber is one of the eight symbols of Buddhism (*q.v.* and *Eight q.v.*).

Seaweed

Huat chai in Chinese, seaweed symbolises luck and prosperity.

Seibo

Japan

Year end

Also *O-seibo*

One of two major gift giving periods. *Seibo* coincides with the half yearly bonus period.

Seibo gifts tend to be given to superiors, special customers, and those who the giver considers he /she has a special obligation. Shops prepare catalogues well in advance of the event.

Emphasis is on processed foods and foods that can be pre-ordered well in advance.

The ten most popular gift items are: processed meat products, dried sea weed, canned food, edible oil and seasoning, coffee, and tea, beer, Japanese delicacies, confectionery, whisky and brandy, perishable foods direct from producers.

Setsubun

⁶⁷ *Tamarundia occidentalis*, *T.indica*. The fibrous dark brown moist sticky flesh of a pod from the tamarind tree. When in the green pod form the tamarind is sour: in the red-brown form it is quite sweet. In its various forms it can be eaten from the hand, made into confectionary, and used as a souring agent.

⁶⁸ A member of the *Zingiberaceae* family from which ginger comes, galangal *Alpinia galanga* is also called Thai ginger and Java root. It is often substituted for ginger.

Japan

3 February

The period when winter is considered to turn into spring. Specifically, the day before the first day of spring. A number of regional ceremonies are held around this period including *oni-yarai* (q.v.). Doors of homes are opened and demons driven out by *mame-maki*, the throwing of soybeans. This expels the bad fortune and welcomes in good fortune. Other portends used are the decorating of doorways with grilled sardine heads and holly branches. Soy beans are an important aspect: they are used in the bean scattering ceremony and some believe that they can ensure themselves of good health by eating the same number of beans as their age.

Seven

In Chinese terms, the female equivalent of a man's eight (q.v.). That is, at seven months a female gets her baby teeth that she loses at seven years. At 2X7 she begins menstruation and at 7X7 she commences menopause.

Shichi fuku jin

Japan

Literally *shichi* seven, *fuku* happy, *jin* person, thus *Seven Gods of Fortune*.

Usually displayed on *takara-bune* treasure ship that docks on New Year's Eve bringing good fortune. Because they bring good fortune they are commonly kept in households and offices. Combined, *Shichi fuku jin* represent business prosperity, financial gain, victory, wisdom, virtue, longevity, and good luck. The gods are an eclectic mix of Indian, Chinese and Japanese myths. The seven are:

<i>Benten</i> ⁶⁹	The (female) God of Art, Literature, Music and Eloquence
<i>Bishamonten</i>	God of War and Benevolent Authority, the Protector of Buddhism
<i>Daikoku</i> (q.v.)	God of Wealth and Patron Saint of Farmers
<i>Ebisu</i> (q.v.)	God of Fishermen and Traders
<i>Fukurokuju</i>	God of Prophets
<i>Hotei</i>	God of Contentment and happiness, also open-mindedness and health
<i>Jurojin</i>	God of Longevity

Shintoism

Japan

The Way of the Gods

Shintoism is a mixture of ancestor worship and sun worship. Reflecting its eclectic nature, it has been heavily influenced by Buddhist (q.v.), Confucian (q.v.), and Taoist (q.v.) philosophies. It has no fixed ceremonies. Whilst there is no definitive Scripture, *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* are the two main texts. Written around the Eight Century, they outline the myths and legends of Japan.

⁶⁹ Also *Benzaiten*.

Shintoism focuses on the spirituality of very day life rather than the spirituality of salvation and the after-life. Shintoism is a system of beliefs that enables coexistence with the natural and spirit worlds: the rituals of the daily bath and the removing of shoes before entering a house are examples of Shintoism's pervasive influence of purification and reverence towards nature. To Shintoists, all natural phenomena and objects have their own spirit called *kami*.

There are various *kami*. Good *kami* is *Fuku-no-kami* whilst bad *kami* is *Magatsu-Kami*. Songs, dances and festivals are aimed at creating good *kami* and dispelling bad *kami*. *Kami* are for the most part unique to individual communities.

There is a pantheon of gods:

yaoyorozu no kami eight million gods illustrates the faith's belief that all natural phenomena and objects are gods. Obtaining the blessing of the gods for future events is common as is the blessing of children *shichigosan* thirty days after birth and the start of new enterprises. Shintoism is the most popular choice for a weddings *shinzen*. The quintessential Japanese characteristic of *wa* harmony reflects the Shintoist ideal of harmonious balance between mankind and the gods where each supports the other for the good of the whole. Because of the eclectic nature of the gods and *kami*, Shinto shrines tend to be self governing with their own ritual, customs and annual festivals.

Early Japanese rulers used Shintoism as a mean of ruling the people. The sun *Kami Amaterasu* was placed above all other *kami* and then the Emperor was declared to be her descendant. The Meiji Shrine in Tokyo deifies the visionary Emperor Meiji, the Emperor who was responsible for the opening of isolated Japan in 1868 to the West. Prior to the Second World War, Shintoism was tantamount to a state religion. State aid was given to shrines and Shinto priests were government employees. This ceased after the War.

Shinto shrines are typified by *tori* gates, usually two uprights with a cross-bar, and guardian lions or dogs *koma inu* at their entrances. Ideally, the mouth of one lion should be open *Ah* and the other closed *Um*. These are the sounds of birth and death, the Beginning and the End. At the end of the rice harvest, a rope made of rice straw can be suspended from the cross-bar.

Devotees make *gankake* prayers to obtain a specific request. When making *gankake* one offers food such as *mochi* rice cake and *sake* rice wine.

Shochu

Japan, Korea

Shochu is the spirit distilled from a series of products: sweet potato, buckwheat, molasses, barley, rye, rice, corn, sugar cane, and vegetables. *Awamori* is *shochu* made on Okinawa in the far south of Japan from millet. There are two classes of *shochu*: *otsu* that is made entirely from natural ingredients and does not contain any artificial alcohol; and *ko* that does contain artificial alcohol. *Shochu* has a relatively high alcoholic content of between 25-50 percent. It is usually consumed with boiling hot water, especially in winter, but it can be drunk on the rocks in summer.

Shochu is not a new drink. It has been made in Kagoshima Prefecture in southern Japan for at least 300 years using sweet potatoes or wheat. Nor is it a minor industry: in Kagoshima there

are about 5 000 *shochu* industry workers. In turn, about 40 000 producers grow sweet potato for distillation. Japan produces about 400 000 kilolitres annually.

Despite a doubling of price, *shochu* consumption has quadrupled in Japan over the past twenty years. In 1995 consumption was just less than half that of sake whilst the price was about 75 percent of *sake*'s. Data to 1991 for Korea shows a similar trend.

A great deal of the drink's appeal is its cheapness: the dictionary defines *shochu* as a low class drink and sales at Yen 250 per glass support the definition. However, *shochu* has experienced rapid and steep prices over the past decade. Most of the price increases are associated with excise tax increases. These have been quite hefty being 75 percent in 1989 and another 45 percent in 1994. Each time there has been an immediate post-increase price drop but sales have rebounded the following year.

In December 1997 the government announced a tax increase of 140 percent by Year 2001. This measure was in accordance with Japan's obligation under the World Trade Organisation to equalise the tax on distilled spirits. There are fears that the tax increase will make the price of *shochu* equal to that of *sake*. The *shochu* industry believes that this will be detrimental to sales. The argument that *shochu* will continued to be demanded because of its relationship with Kagoshima's traditionally sweet cuisine could force the product into being only a one-region drink that will limit total sales. Already some *shochu* producers have reacted by developing an organic *shochu* as well as trying to relocate its market profile away from that of a cheap drink.

Shogatsu

Japan

1 January

The ceremonies held in tandem with *omisoka* (q.v.) to pray for good fortunes for the forthcoming year.

Sijang

Korea

One of the traditional food outlets. The term encompasses the "mom-and-pop" store, street stall, and street vendor. *Sijangs* are ubiquitous and small: ubiquitous because Korea's food store density of one per 142 *circa* 1995 is amongst the most dense in the world, and small because half of all food shops in Korea are operated by two to four persons in an area of only 29 sq.m.

Sijangs' strengths are the freshness of the product, an emphasis on service, and their convenient location in a densely populated country where frequent shopping is required because of lack of refrigerated storage and crowded homes. *Sijangs* can be general food stores or specialised into fruit, vegetables, fish, rice and/or meat. Specialisation is the common approach.

Sijangs are the heart of the Korean food distribution system: *small scale shopkeepers dominate the retailing of food where the majority of Korean people live* (Kim 1995).

Snake

Because it sheds its skin, the snake is seen as representing death and birth, and the everlasting renewal of life. There are negative images associated with the snake's silence, stealth and deadly venom: it is associated with deceit and cunning. Snake-year people are considered wise and compassionate. They are also vain, usually unfortunate with money, and prefer to rely on their own judgement rather than seek the opinion of others. The snake is the sixth in the twelve animal zodiac. Since sickness can be seen as emanating from snake poison then parts of the snake are used to heal and give health and vitality.

Snake restaurants are found in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Taipei's Snake Alley has a number of purveyors of snake meat and other snake parts. The Alley is also in a red light district reflecting the alleged aphrodisiac effects of eating snake meat and drinking snake bile. (Figure 83)

Soba

Japan

Soba is made from buckwheat. Because of the strength of the buckwheat, few *soba* are made solely from buckwheat but instead are made from a mixture of buckwheat flour and wheat flour. This accounts for some of the variation in colour and taste of *soba*. The usual composition is around 40 percent of buckwheat.

Yabu soba is the darkest, least refined form whilst *gozen soba* is the white highly refined type. New season *soba* is greeted in Japan with the same fervour as that which accompanies England's first new season's Beaujolais. Because the flour of buckwheat goes rancid soon after it is gristed, the production of the *soba* noodles has to be geographically close to the actual gristing of the flour. *Soba* can be eaten hot or cold accompanied by a dipping sauce. There are dedicated *soba* restaurants in Japan. The sound of chopping means that the flour has been rolled out and the restaurant is cutting by hand the noodles. Aficionados know to ask for the broth in which the noodles have been cooked which is then drunk as a soup.

Somen

Japan

Somen is an extremely thin wheat noodle unique to Japan. Aficionados prefer the hand stretched version *tenobe somen* to the machine-made products as this method is alleged to result in an unpleasant oily odour. *Somen* is traditionally used in *shojin* or Zen temple cuisine. Yoneda (1982) states that the method of telling if the noodle is cooked is when a piece thrown against a wall sticks and does not fall off. *Somen* is eaten cold in summer. Egg *somen* and green tea *somen* are recent flavour innovations.

Songkran

Thailand

New Year Festival.

Songkran is a combination of formal ceremonies and merriment that takes place over three days and the weekend. Formal ceremonies include offerings in temples to mark the entrance of the sun into Aries. Buddha images are anointed with holy water. Monks and elders are also sprinkled with water. Elsewhere, homes are thoroughly cleaned, and homage paid to senior members of the family. Fish and birds are set free.

Less formal is the liberal dousing of everything in water. The latter occurs through well organised parades whilst more spontaneous is the bucket of water aimed at any passing vehicle. Many Thais extend the break to return to their villages. Many middle class people with servants find themselves having to fend for themselves. Thus prepared and convenience foods sell well and hotel occupancy can rise.

Swastika

Comes from the Sanskrit word *svastika* creating welfare. An auspicious mark which appears to derive from ancient India. In traditional Chinese art, “swastika” *wan wan* is a pun on the word “myriad” so when combined with other elements it symbolises a plenitude of good fortune.

In India the swastika tends to be a symbol of good luck whilst in China is a symbol of immortality. It is now used to indicate a place of worship in a number of Asian countries.

Fig 84

Fig 85

Tahu

Indonesia

See tofu (*q.v.*).

Bean curd made from soybean. The soybean is ground, the casein extracted, and the cake pressed into slabs that are then cut into cubes of about 5 cm. *Tahu* can be sold fresh or fried. When sold fresh the cubes are usually put in water to keep them moist. Either way, the shelf life is about three days.

Tangerine

In Chinese tangerine *kat* is an homonym for luck.

Tannabata

Japan

7 July

The Star Festival that celebrates when the two lovers *Kengyu* (the star Altair) and *Shokujo* (the star Vega) meet annually. Bamboo branches are set-up annually in household gardens and decorated with strips of paper on which are written wishes.

Taoism⁷⁰

Mainly Chinese communities

Taoism is one of the three great philosophies of ancient China. *Diagram at right: Lao Tzu and Confucius taking care of the future Buddha. 14th Century silk painting, China.*

Taoism is the philosophy of Lao Tzu (also “Lao Zi” and “Lao Tse”, 604-532 BC) who advocated the simplicity of existence and cooperation with the natural world. Little is known of Lao Tzu: he may even be mythical. He is credited with writing the ***Tao Te Ching***, the foundation book of Taoism, as the price for crossing through the Chinese border into Tibet. He does not seem to have taken steps to popularise or spread his teachings, choosing instead to retreat into solitude.

Fig 86

The other significant Taoist writer was Chuang Tzu (also Zhuang Zi, 369-286 BC) who emphasised the relative nature of what we know.

Taoism is not a formal religion nor a structured philosophy. Its three basic texts ***Tao te ching***, ***Chung-tzu*** and ***I-Ching*** are non-doctrinal. The former is a book of remarkable brevity. It introduces the Tao, the way to harmony through allusion and suggestion. ***Tao te ching*** makes great use of asking questions. The ***Chung-tzu*** continues from ***Tao-te-ching*** by examining the position of man in relation to the natural world whilst ***I-Ching*** the Book of Change lists possible actions without actually giving directions. Its origins were probably as a collection of traditional folk wisdom.

Tao is inadequately translated as "way" or "path". The way to *Tao* is to live naturally. There are three ways to understand *Tao*:

- * As the "way" of the cosmos or Ultimate Reality, it is beyond ability for human language and rationality to understand.
- * As the "way" of the known universe or nature. This approach is compatible with the modern scientific idea of ecology in its approach of looking at the natural way of things and their interaction.
- * As the "way" of humanity and its life.

Taoism seeks to enhance the *Tao* within oneself. This can be done in different ways. Although these ways are interconnected and inter-woven, three main approaches stand out:

⁷⁰ Also Daoism. As my first exposure was “Taoism” this will be used throughout. GSV.

- * *Philosophical Taoism* in which Taoists try to understand the *Tao* to use it efficiently. This is a reflective form of Taoism that is organised into school with teachers and students. The students learn an attitude towards life that enables them to live within the flow of *Tao*.
- * *Taoist Hygiene and Yoga* which attempts to increase the amount of *chi*, or vital energy (see *Feng shui q.v.*), within oneself. Greater self-discipline is achieved through physical and mental exercise. This refines the body and the spirit. There are three main approaches to accomplish this:
 - ◇ By eating substances that are thought to enhance *chi*.
 - ◇ By types of movement, such as dance, exercise and martial arts: from this comes (a) *tai chi* shadow boxing, the practice of physical exercises designed to align the practitioner with vital *chi* forces; (b) yoga where the Taoist attempts to refine his spiritual energies, and; (c) *qigong* which like *tai chi* is a system of exercises designed to cleanse and invigorate *chi*.
 - ◇ By meditation through which the practitioner brings the *Tao* into themselves and then directs it to others.
- * *Religious Taoism* which uses magic and other means to bring the *Tao's* benefits to the masses. The idea is that if a person can achieve a perfect fit with the *Tao*, then such feats can be accomplished. Religious Taoism uses feats of magic, meditation, and rituals to enhance believers' lives. It was developed in the Second Century BC.

Taoists believe that the natural forces of this world are the product of tension between *yin-yang* (*q.v.*). Nothing in the world is seen strictly as *yin* or strictly as *yang*, though one force may be slightly dominant in a given place, for a given time. Things that do not embody both forces relatively evenly do not endure and thus perish. No one object can embody a single force for any great period of time because the farther it strays from being balanced, the sooner it will have to change its way or else destruct.

Similarly, non-action *wu-wei* illustrates that attempts to interfere with the nature of things are bound to fail in the long term. *Wu wei* is the Taoist concept which emphasises the notion of accomplishing things by "going with the flow" rather than working against it. The idea is to align the self with the *Tao* and in that position to act spontaneously, or, more aptly, to act with the *Tao*. In this kind of action, the *Tao* can be likened to water. Just as water naturally moves downward, seeking the lowest place, so the *Tao* moves along the easiest, the most natural path. *Wu-wei* is when a person allows the *Tao* to carry them along its path.

Taoism's emphasis on balance is seen with the Five Elements: **wood** gives rise to **fire** whose ashes give rise to **earth** from which comes **metal** whose polished surface attracts **water** in the form of dew which cases **wood** to grow.

Taoism has three primary forms: *Lungmen*, *Chengyi*, and *Changtienssu*. *Lungmen* Taoists are ascetics who practice meditation and exist on a vegetable diet. *Chengyi Taoism* is similar to the *Lungmen* sect but its monks eat meat, drink wine, and marry. Its followers practice spiritism and exorcism, study magic, love lore, and ancient herbal medicine. *Chengyi Taoism* supports a pantheistic collection of gods and is associated with considerable ritual. *Changtienssu Taoism* was founded in the Han Dynasty in the Third Century BC. They concentrated on the writing of talismans and charms, black magic, and fortune telling and mediumistic phenomena.

Taoists venerate *Xian Hsien* the Eight Immortals, a group of eight wise men who are held to have drunk the elixir of life and thus attained eternal life. Less esoterically, the Xian Hsien's immortality arose from their observing the correct way in all things. Each of the *Xian* is endowed with a special specific power.

Tempe / tempeh

Indonesia

Like *tahu* (q.v.), *tempe* is made from soybean. The critical difference is that *tempe* includes a fermentation process. The beans are soaked, hulled, and steamed. After that the yeast starter *Rhizopus oligosporus* is added. The culture digests those parts of the soybean that the human digestive system cannot. It also gives the final product a mild nutty flavour. The final product is like *kimchi* (q.v.) in that it is rich in niacin, thiamine, and vitamin B12.

Tempe can be consumed steamed, boiled, shallow or deep fried, baked, or grilled.

Tet Nguyen Dan

Vietnam

Literally, *Festivity on the first morning*.

Tet Nguyen Dan is the Vietnamese New Year. As elsewhere with other cultures' new years, *Tet* is accompanied by much activity at cleaning the house and preparing food in order to usher in a brand new and hopefully lucky year. The festival can last for about a week.

Thaipusam

Hindu communities

Late January or early February.

Thai refers to the Hindu calendar between January 15 - February 15 when the moon is at its zenith. It is the day of consecration to the Hindu deity, Lord Murugan / Lord Subramaniam, who is the embodiment of beauty and virtue, valour and power. It is also celebrated as a day for penance and expiation for wrong doings as well as a day of thanksgiving. Finally, it is the day where the Hindu community fulfil its sacred vows.

As a form of repentance, some devotees carry a *kavadi* as a symbolic gesture of self inflicted atonement. The *kavadi* is a frame decorated with coloured paper and/or flowers and fruit. Carrying the *kavadi* is actually an early Indian practice when temples were built on mountain ridges. Devotees who wished to visit these temples would have to journey up hill by foot carrying with them heavy loads of offerings.

These venerable burdens were often wrapped in saffron cloth as a gesture of submission. Today, devotees do the same with one of the most spectacular efforts being the ascent up 272 steps to Kultarr Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur.

An extreme form of the *kavadi* has metal spokes that pierce the body of the penitent. Some devotees become tranced, and pierced their cheeks, tongues, or foreheads. These devotees must fast on only fruit and milk, and abstain from the pleasures of this world over a 41-day period prior to Thaipusam in order to mortify the senses and help suppress

passions. After the mortification of the flesh, devotees believe themselves to be cleansed. Other forms of devotion are practiced, such as offering honey or milk.

The festival is banned in India. (**Figure 87**)

Therevada Buddhism

Lit. “the Teaching of the Elders”.

Also **Lesser Vehicle, Southern Buddhism**

A major Buddhist sect which started in Sri Lanka by Indian Buddhist missionaries. The Buddha ensured that his teachings would continue by developing a body of teaching *Dharma* and an organised structure of monks and nuns *Sanga* who would pass on these teachings. *Theravada* means the *Teaching of the Elders*.

Theravada teaches that personal effort is the only way to enlightenment and being released from the wheel of suffering and rebirth. Desire must be suppressed in order to end the craving for permanence as it is this desire that feeds the wheel of suffering. Theravada focuses upon the individual undertaking meditation and concentration as this brings enlightenment. Unlike Mahayana (*q.v.*), Therevada does not worship a deity nor does it have a pantheon of bodhisattvas. Therevada art is more severe and less colourful compared with the Mahayana.

Theravada entered China as the *Dhyana* School. One tradition, the *Chan* tradition, was taken to China where it became known as *Zen Buddhism* (*q.v.*).

Theravada Buddhism has about 100 million followers and is centred largely on Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and parts of Vietnam.

Tiger

The third in the twelve animal zodiac.

A symbol of power, grandeur and glory. The Year of the Tiger is a year for great deeds, of strength and courage. Tiger-year people are thoughtful, sensitive, and sympathetic but prone to quick temper.

On the other hand, the Cantonese word for tiger is *lo fu* that is homonymous with “bitter”, leaving the impression that the 1998 Year of the Tiger will be far from auspicious.

Tofu

Tofu in Japanese, *Doufu* in Mandarin.

The whitish, soft, subtly flavoured, custard-like curd derived from soybeans. It is valued for being a high-protein, low-fat, nutritious, and economical food.

Consumption can be in fresh, dried, deep-fried, pickled, and fermented forms. It is incorporated into soups, sauces, *sukiyaki*, and stir fried as well as a cool custard in summer. Depending on the amount of moisture removed from the initial curd, *tofu* can be presented as

blocks, sheets and sticks. The following are Chinese forms and terms: Japanese have comparable forms.

In the full water form, *dou jiang* (bean sauce in Mandarin) is eaten as a soup. Fermented *dou jiang* is bean juice *dou jr*. When thickened and fermented it becomes a paste used as a fortifier in a number of dishes. When most of the water is removed it becomes *doufu* cake. If extruded it becomes bean curd threads *doufu sz*. Marinated dried *doufu* becomes *doufu gan*. Fermented *doufu* becomes smelly bean curd *chou doufu*. Deep fried *doufu* becomes *ja doufu*. Dried into sheets, it becomes bean curd skin *doufu pi*.

There are about fifteen commonly recognised types of *tofu*. They vary in texture from the very firm to the extremely soft. Japanese delineate between silk *tofu kinu dofu*⁷¹ and cotton *tofu men dofu*⁷². The former is a fine delicate custard-like product whilst the latter is a little more coarse and dense and thus easier to handle with chopsticks.

Tomb sweeping day

Chinese communities

Also Gravesweeping Day, Ching Ming Festival, Clear and Bright Festival.
106th day after the winter solstice.

Dedicated to the worshiping of ancestors. In so doing, the festival continues the Confucian tradition of strong emphasis on the family and deep reverence for elders. Within this value system, there is a recognition that everything is owed to one's forbears and that those forbears have an influence, for better or worse, on the living family. Thus the dead must be shown that they are still remembered and respected. Graves of ancestors are visited and cleaned, food and wine left for the spirits, and incense and paper are burned to reach the dead. The dead are communicated with to ensure that they are satisfied with their descendants. Rather than accentuate death, the day celebrates the continuity of life.

In Taiwan the day has been aligned on the Gregorian calendar to 5 April, the death of Chiang Kai Shek, Taiwan's first President, in 1975.

Tortoise

A symbol of permanence and longevity and thus good fortune with Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. Chinese may make paired tortoise cakes *shuangliangui* filled with red bean paste for birthdays.

Tsai shr chang

⁷¹ Also *kinu goshi* and *kinu*

⁷² Also *momen*.

Taiwan

Taiwan's wet markets (*q.v.*)

Tsukemono

Japan

Pickles *tsukemono* have been an integral part of Japanese cuisine for millennia.

Initially, pickling was used to preserve vegetables in the harsh winter when few fresh vegetables were to be had. What originated as a necessity has since become entwined in the cuisine culture: *tsukemono* are today consumed with virtually every Japanese meal.

Tsukemono is going through a boom-bust-boom cycle. The initial decline was a reaction to the heavily salted *tsukemono fuka-zuke*. In response, *tsukemono* manufacturers developed *ichiya-zuke* and *asa-zuke* or lightly salted products. At the same time there became an awareness that the high fibre content of *tsukemono* coupled with the micro-organisms produced during the fermentation process were in fact very healthy. This has resulted in a renaissance of interest in *tsukemono*.

Five basic pickling media are used in *tsukemono* production:

- soybean paste *miso*
- rice bran *nuka*
- sake lees *kasu*
- vinegar *su*
- salt

From these come a number of basic *tsukemono* styles:

- *shio-zuke*: uses heavy salting and a slow fermentation process
- *shin-zuke*: a very light pickle
- *nuka-zuke*: uses rice bran *nuka*, salt, sugar and flavouring ingredients
- *miso-zuke*: combines pre-salted vegetables with fermented soybean paste *miso*, rice wine *sake*, and sweet rice wine *mirin*
- *kasu-zuke*: salted vegetables are pickled in a mixture of sake lees and other preserving agents
- *koji-zuke*: pre-salted vegetable are pickled using fermented rice
- *su-zuke*: pre-salted vegetables are dried and to which is added rice vinegar
- *shoyu-zuk*: pre-salted vegetables are pickled by a mixture of soy sauce *shoyu* and other flavouring ingredients.

Apart from taste, the essential differences between the types is the time and effort required. *Nuka-zuke* is both a complex and lengthy process whereas the other processes are relatively straightforward. *Shin-zuke* can be made overnight or even in a few hours. Taste is adjusted by the use of various additives such as dried red chilli pepper and sugar. It is the combination of local ingredients that give *tsukemono* its various regional flavours and popularity.

Some pickled vegetables have their own name:

- *takuan* pickled radish (*q.v.*);
- *takana* pickled mustard leaf;

- *hakusaizuke* pickled Chinese cabbage;
- *chosen* pickled garlic;
- *nasu no shio-zuke* pickled eggplant.

Over the decade 1986-95, *tsukemono* production has been static. This is notwithstanding its gradual rise to a decade-high peak of 1.2 million tons in 1991 and its equally gradual decline since then.

In Japan, pickling extends across a number of products other than vegetables. *Umeboshi* is dried salt-pickled Japanese apricots. These are presented in a variety of styles ranging from the small, rock hard, bright red form to the large, soft, orange-coloured fruit. With seafoods, *tsukudani* is pickled fish entrails made from simmering the guts in a mixture of soy sauce and sugar whilst *shirokara* is salt-cured fish entrails but especially of squid. Both involve a degree of fermentation.

Tsukimi

Japan

Mid-September.

Moon gazing especially the full moon in September.

It is common to eat seasonal fruit at this time, pampas grass *susuki* and dumplings *dango*.

These are dumplings of sticky rice that, before being eaten, are displayed in big bowls.

Turo-turo

Philippines

A style of restaurant where there is no menu. Instead the food is displayed and one points to what one wants to eat. The name derives from *turo* “to point”.

Udon

Japan

Udon is a very white soft wheat noodle that can be round or square. Whilst in Japan there are regional variations, *udon* is invariably the thickest noodle in Japan. Usually served in hot soups and in dishes such as *sukiyaki* that are cooked at the table.

Vegetables

Vegetables are one of the two traditional pillars of Asian cuisine: the other is cereal. Geography was one of two imperatives determining the primacy of vegetables. Vegetables have a remarkable capacity to grow under all but near-impossible conditions. They survive in great heat whilst having a marvellous tolerance for cold; they are found at the edges of the oceans and flourish on the tops of mountains; they provide succour for desert nomads and sustenance for those living in rainforests. The other imperative was religion. In a number of cases, religious strictures, such as the prohibition against killing animals or limitations in the meat that could be eaten, reinforced the physical strictures.

Combined, geography and religion meant that over three millennia ago Asian cuisine became based around cereal and vegetables. In north Asia the cereal was wheat whereas in the crowded more mountainous south it was rice. Vegetables give differing colour, shape, texture and flavour to the monotony of cereal. The Orient uses a vastly greater range of vegetables than the Occident. Japan commonly uses over 30 vegetable families involving up to 300 species whilst the Chinese appear to cultivate more kinds of vegetables than any other people. The geographic and religious strictures that sometimes enforced being vegetarian evolved into a matter of choice for many modern Asians.

Asia's extreme variation in climate has a major influence on the form of vegetable grown and the style in which it is presented. One factor was the need to ensure the availability of vegetables in the non-production period of winter. Fermentation was the principal preservation technique. Drying, salting, and using sugar were also used. Pickles were the dominant form of preserving vegetables - thus Korea's *kimchi* (q.v.), China's *dongcai*, and Japan's *tsukemono* (q.v.). What started as a necessity developed into an art form. One virtually cannot eat a meal today in Japan or Korea without *tsukemono* or *kimchi*. Moreover, both countries now export these to the rest of the world.

The second vegetable-food tradition that evolved from Asia's climate is the overwhelming emphasis on freshness. Without refrigeration, produce must be eaten promptly after harvest. To a large extent this explains the near fanaticism many Asians have towards freshness. Again, cuisine culture dies slowly. Thus, even though household refrigerators are becoming widespread throughout the region, a very large percentage of the population continues to shop daily urged on by the notion of freshness.

The third geographic influence on the Asia's vegetable-food tradition relates to the type of food. Leafy vegetables predominate. There is good reason for this. Plants raised for their leaves are easier to raise than plants raised for either their stems, fruit, flowers, bulbs, or seed. Leaves produce a greater mass than any other part of the plant. In terms of reward for effort, high leaf matter has a good pay-off. With leafy plants, less time is involved with their production. This means reduced risk in the heat and high humidity. Leafy vegetables such as the ***Brassicas*** and ***Chrysanthemums*** are used virtually in every meal throughout the region. Asia also has a strong tradition of bulb type vegetables as these are easily storable: sweet potato ***Ipomoea batatas*** in China has saved many a peasant during the country's frequent famines⁷³. Bulb type vegetables are the yams ***Dioscorea spp.***, taros ***Colocasia spp.***, and radishes (q.v.).

Despite all of this, and in the context of this study, vegetables appear to be only rarely associated with festivals or customs in Asia. They are rarely used in temple offerings or any worshipping mode. Only a few vegetables have symbolic references. One example is the previous Chinese custom at the lunar New Year throwing vegetables onto the roof of the kitchen to celebrate the departure of the Kitchen God (q.v.). Some specific examples are given in alphabetical order.

Visakha Puja

Thailand

The holiest day in the Thai Buddhist calendar as it marks the birth, enlightenment and death of the Lord Buddha.

⁷³ Ironically, despite this and China being the world's largest producer, sweet potatoes are not indigenous to China as they were introduced by Spanish missionaries following their conquering of the Americas.

Warung

Indonesia

A small restaurant comparable with a hawker centre (*q.v.*) in Singapore and Malaysia.

Wabi

Japan

Also *wabi sabi*

The word *wabi* and *sabi* can be used synonymously or conjointly. The words refer to the notion of old age, loneliness, tranquillity, and the enjoyment of life free from worldly adornments: in sum, the Japanese notion of stark simplicity, an understatement of beauty.

Wabi sabi permeates everyday life in a number of forms such as the architectural design of a building, the decorating of a room, or a piece of pottery or wood carving. It is epitomised in *ikebana* flower arrangements. *Wabi sabi* is expressed quintessentially in the tea ceremony that strives for beauty through simplicity.

Wesak Day

Asia

The day marking the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. It is thus the most important day of the Buddhist Calendar. Buddhist devotees gather in temples throughout the country to release doves and to offer prayers. *Wesak* is also an occasion to offer alms to monks and give free meals to the needy. (**Figure 88**)

Wet market

Asia

A market centre where all manner of fresh foods - fruit, vegetables seafoods, meats - are available. The term “wet” comes from (a) the fact that the centres use copious volumes of rinse water and thus always wet and (b) all the food is fresh with there being no refrigeration in the centres. They vary in size to a few stalls to places involving up to 100 sellers.

Whilst the number of supermarkets is growing steadily in most Asian centres, wet markets are still the major source of fresh food. Again, whilst eating habits are changing with more exposure to Westernisation through media, travel and education abroad, the demand for traditional foods has ensured the continued future for wet markets.

Except in Japan, wet markets remain Asia’s biggest outlet for consumer-ready fresh products such of fruits, poultry, fish, and vegetables. In the Philippines and Indonesia, wet markets are also the major outlets for meat.

Because they handle only a few items, wet market sellers are considered to have a high degree of product knowledge compared with the less-specialised managers of produce sections in western-style retail outlets. In addition, wet markets are considered to have a higher degree of freshness. However, wet markets are losing out to the one-stop air-conditioned comfort of western-style retailers. In addition, there is the perception that retail outlets guarantee a higher level of food safety. (**Figure 89**)

White

White is associated with religious purity amongst Muslims. It is the colour women wear when praying. It should not be used for products marketed during the Muslim festive seasons.

White is not an auspicious colour for Chinese. In a number of Asian countries, white is associated with death, and is worn as the mourning colour. **(Figure 90)**

Yang / Yin

Chinese

The notion that from opposites come balance not conflict. Further, even though they are opposites, there is a little of each in the other and thus the elimination of one would mean the disappearance of the other.

A very strong Taoist (*q.v.*) concept, *yang - yin* is an integral part of *feng shui* (*q.v.*).

Notions of opposites creating balance are shown:

Yang	Yin
sun	shadow
summer	winter
dry	wet
hard	soft
heat	cold
day	night
light	dark
creative	receptive
male	female
active	passive
sky	earth

With foods, warm male *yang* energy needs hot food whilst cool female *yin* energy requires cold food. People with "hot" energy need cooling foods

"Hot" foods are those with high calories. The food itself is often cooked in oil or fried in animal fats. It is usually spicy and brightly coloured. Examples are alcohol and meat. In contrast, "cool" foods are bland, low in calories, and usually prepared in water such as being steamed or boiled, although stir fried is acceptable. Most greens are cool foods. "Hot" foods should be eaten with "cool" foods: thus the "hot" durian should be eaten with the "cool" mangosteen. Thus it is not without coincidence that Taiwan's surge in durian imports have been accompanied by a parallel rise in the importing of mangosteens.

The most well recognised notion of *yang - yin* is the *T'ai ch'i* or the Supreme Ultimate. This illustrates that from the two opposites comes balance, and that there is elements of each in the other, especially with the white dot in the black *yin* and the black dot in the white *yang*.

Fig 91

Yellow

An auspicious colour in most of Asia.

In Malaysia and Brunei, yellow is the colour of royalty.

Yogbul-il

Korean

The Buddha's birthday.

A lunar celebration it falls on the 8th day of the 4th moon.

Zen Buddhism

Zen is a sect of Buddhism (*q.v.*) derived from Hinayana Buddhism (*q.v.*). *Zen* is said to have originated with Bodhidharma an Indian monk who arrived in China around 520 AD.

Bodhidharma, *Da Mo* in Chinese, stated that the key to understanding was that everything was nothing. *Zen* preaches that spiritual awakening is attained by meditation which results in a serenity of the mind. *Zen* priests meditate *zazen* and then question each other. The answer comes after, and, it is argued by *Zen* adherents, only by meditation. Through meditation and question, *Zen* adherents attain spiritual awakening.

Zen rejects sutras, discussions or academic study. Instead, there is the exclusive concentration on meditation. Without texts, there is teaching of minds from other minds. Each novice is taken on by a master who instructs the pupil. *Zen Buddhism* teaches that the Buddha is within you. The Buddha-nature can only be grasped when the whole world of phenomena is appreciated to be nothing, to be empty of all meaning.

One of the two major *Zen* sects *Rinzai Zen* uses the *koan* riddle with no apparent answer to concentrate the mind and from which either in a blinding flash of light or after years of contemplation the answer, and enlightenment, comes. A classic *koan* is the question “what is the sound of one hand clapping”.

The discipline involved with *Zen* found ready favour with Japan’s highly disciplined ruling military elite, the samurai. *Zen* has heavily influenced the samurai spirit, the austerity of the tea ceremony, and *ikibana* flower arrangement.

Appendix 1

Chinese New Year: a personal experience

Malaysia. One Chinese New Year was spent with a family in Ipoh. Ipoh, along with Penang, is famed in Malaysia for its Chinese food. Much of the food is sold at small hawker stands or small restaurants. During Chinese New Year these restaurants are crowded and the streets leading to them are clogged. People come home to see family, friends, and of course to eat at their favourite hawker stalls or restaurants.

The city has a high percentage of Chinese and was once a very wealthy city due to its being the centre of the country's tin mining activity. Compared with Singapore, Ipoh seemed like a vision of yesteryear with traditional Chinese shops. There appears to be just the one shopping mall: no fast food franchises were seen.

Arrival into Ipoh at five am was via a full bus that was en route to Thailand, proof that airline seats are difficult to get during the festive season. The matriarch was in her room with the altar candles burning. Altar oranges were decorated with bits of red paper around the center of the orange. The altar was beautiful. The matriarch placed the oranges, carried as a gift, on her altar leaving them in the red net carrying bag. Intended as a utensil to carry the fruit, the red bag serendipitously is the perfect inexpensive gift package.

Shopping for the food was done just before the preparation of the reunion dinner and again on the first day of the New Year. Special activities on the eve consisted of the distribution of the *ang pow* to the young and single. The youngest member spotted some remaining packets in the matriarch's purse and grabbed them - a sign that this young man would be able to grab fortunes?

Outside, red paper items with cut-outs were ignited. Family members formed a circle under them. The symbology was not clear, but the excitement and event were invigorating. Then the sound of explosions in the neighbourhood were heard. Firecrackers were ignited to go off consecutively. Whilst banned in a number of countries, Chinese New Year without crackers is not really Chinese New Year. After all, fire crackers are to drive out evil spirits!

Chinese New Year's day started with shopping at the wet market for the vegetarian meal, served traditionally for lunch on the first day. The daughters-in-law of the matriarch did the cooking; her daughters (married and unmarried) did not help. Cooking was in a large outdoor kitchen attached to the indoor kitchen with the regular stove. The challenge for the women was trying to remember the recipe for the "carrot" cake. Large round cake tins were filled with the mixture then the mixture was altered before steaming. The result was more like a radish cake than a Western carrot cake. It was more savoury than sweet.

Extra tables were set up and the entire family dined together. Large crates of *swatow* oranges and canisters of other traditional New Year's goodies were in abundance. Food was never in short supply. In this family, food was both prepared at home and bought fresh from the wet market.

Later, a trip by the entire family was made to where the ashes of the patriarch were stored in a small container. His site was highlighted by his photograph.

My friend said, “Let me introduce you to my grandfather.” This illustrates the concept that the dead are not really dead.

This rich experience gave a much deeper feeling of Chinese New Year than visiting Chinatown tens of times. It gave the feeling of family, fun, and feasting. The reunion dinner turned into a reunion week⁷⁴.

Singapore. Another *Chop Goh Mei* was spent with friends who prepared the meal for their widowed mother. The secret of preparing the shrimp was to add XO cognac to the dish while it was in the wok. A steamboat with fish balls and fish was enjoyed at another friends with her family. The steamboat, popular in Singapore and Malaysia, is an easy meal to prepare. The difficulty is in assembling all of the ingredients. The family sit round a broth dip and cook their vegetables and meat items as they chat. In all cases, a feeling of family, friends and festive food was in evidence.

Visits were made to Chinatown. One year a statue of the Goddess of Mercy *Kuan Yi* was in the waterfront areas in Singapore. Singapore decorates the waterfront in the Marina area and brings in performers from China and craftspeople who sell their items. One group was selling the traditional Chinese cut-outs: their dreams of a prosperous New Year were being met early in the year while spending Chinese New Year away from their homeland.

Lion and Dragon dances abound. Troupes ride in the back of open bed trucks as they make their way from one performance to another. Hotels welcome the New Year with a Lion Dance. The lion cavorts, dances, and jumps in the air in order to win its reward: lettuce leaves and *ang pow*. Drummers using traditional drums keep the time. These dances are found only in Singapore and Malaysia during the festive season. They can no longer be performed in Indonesia. These friendly lions also open new business establishments.

Singapore has most elaborate street decorations, especially in Chinatown and Orchard Road. With 1997 being the Year of the Ox, ox symbols proliferated. A golden ox with oranges was used at one entrance.

Indonesia. Cities in Indonesia have the quietest Chinese New Year of any in the region. No firecrackers, no lion or dragon dances, no *Chingay* Parades. The only celebrations were in the home or a few Chinese restaurants. In cities with sizeable Chinese populations, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Pontianak and Pekalongan, instructions are to keep the decorations inside the home. Chinese families traditionally hang a red banner outside their door during the season. Inside would be decorated with many festive items such as miniature lanterns, good luck characters, Chinese New Year cards, and long folding paper-cut decorations from China.

⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the matriarch of the family died before the next lunar New Year. Consequently, the family chose to forego the festival. As one person said, when an elder dies it is like burning a library as they are the keepers of tradition.

Appendix 2

Expanding target markets - a case study

The generalities of doing business in Asia are well known. Principles such as visit the market place; work with select partners; have short, medium, and long term promotional plans; and ensure that the appropriate distribution infrastructure is in place are now relatively common business practices. These principles are now applied to a case study of how a manufacturer of speciality nuts and candies was able to use an aspect of festivals and culture to develop their product.

The company had *halal* certification for its products which was prominently displayed on the packaging. Four - colour packaging showed the product inside. The product was exhibited at the IMFEX '97 *Halal* food exhibition in Singapore. A number of consumers attending the show bought the product after sampling. After purchasing the product and trying it again, it became clear that other possibilities existed for the product. Although further evaluation was needed, the opportunity for these products to be marketed as premium snacks and gifts at Christmas and Chinese New Year was raised.

One candy stood out. However it was sold in a bar form. Could smaller pieces be individually wrapped for a premium treat or gift for Chinese New Year? The candy initially seemed of interest for this season because the combination of textures and flavours was something that Chinese often like.

So instead of just positioning the product as a *halal* product, the manufacturer explored other festive seasons such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Chinese New Year. Although it is often difficult for smaller manufacturers to change packaging, in some cases this is very beneficial and of key importance in terms of targeting specific consumers. The manufacturer decided to aim for the Chinese New Year market. The packaging solution was to use a stick-on *halal* label for the Muslim market which was not used for Chinese New Year market.

Appendix 3

Islamic status for the permissibility of various food additives

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