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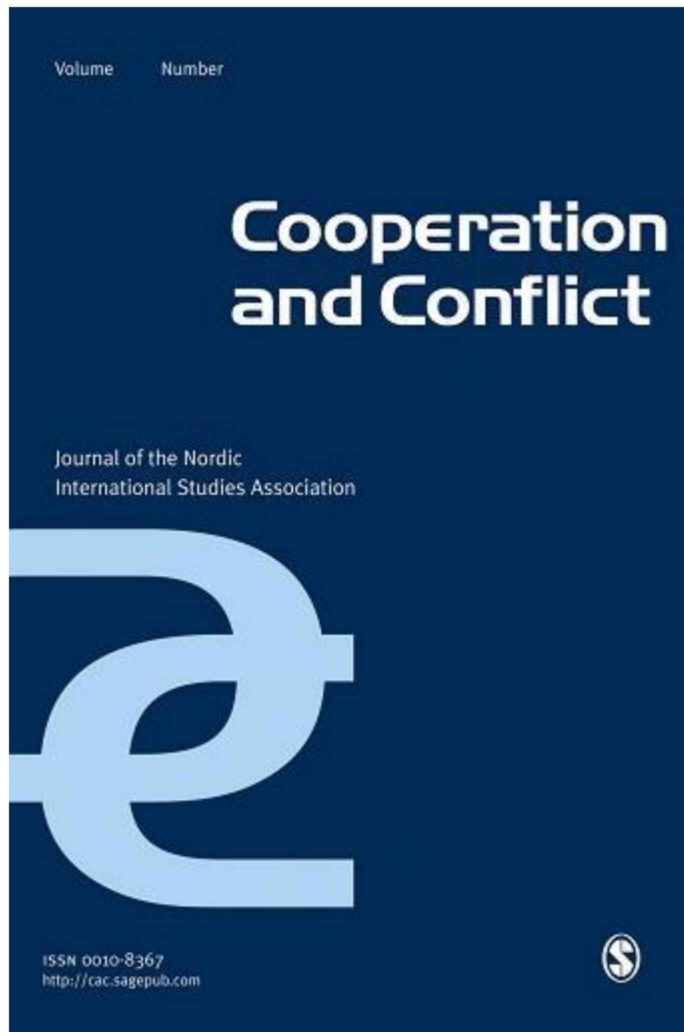

Food, Multiplicity, and Imperialism: Patterns of Domination and Subversion in the Modern International System

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Abstract:	This paper mobilises the notion of global food regime to explore ways in which modern international relations are reproduced through distinctive patterns of alimentary domination and subversion. It considers three ideal-typical international encounters – the Spanish conquest of the Americas, British rule in South Asia, and the US occupation of Japan – to offer a stylised historical-sociological comparison of how food becomes a powerful site of interaction between conflicting dynamics of social differentiation and incorporation, segregation and admixture, and

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	domination and subversion. The Spanish, British and Americans deployed different strategies of alimentary domination in these contexts, which can in large measure be explained with reference to their prevailing mode of production. But they also unleashed equally potent forces of culinary adaptation, transculturation and innovation which, in bringing together a multiplicity of foodways, subverted both the rigid structures of imperial rule and notions of a pristine pre-colonial or national cultural traditions.

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Food, Multiplicity, and Imperialism: Patterns of Domination and Subversion in the Modern International System

Of all the universal 'social facts', the human need for food and drink is perhaps the most elementary. Few would dispute today that our forms of collective subsistence have, throughout time, been central to the nature and evolution of human societies. Like other fundamental socio-cultural phenomena, the arguments concerning such universals tend to be over the differences, both between and within societies, in the way and extent that food and drink are produced, processed, prepared, consumed and disposed of. In this context, the notion of societal multiplicity offers a fertile heuristic when exploring both how foodways are constituted through 'the international' and how the former is also created through different food cultures. If as Justin Rosenberg (2016) suggests, co-existence, difference, interaction, combination, and dialectics are the key consequences of societal multiplicity, then culinary cultures of the world, and the political ecologies that foster them, are at the core of international relations. But we must add a key ingredient to this mix, namely hierarchy. For there is no societal multiplicity without aspirations to political domination, and so the story of how food contributes to the fragmentation of humanity into multiple political communities is inevitably also that of modern imperialism.

Livestock, tea and wheat-flour are three products consumed today by billions across the world on a daily basis. They are also emblematic of food regimes associated to three different types of modern empire: the Iberoamerican tributary domains of the long sixteenth century; British mercantilist rule in south Asia during the nineteenth century; and the recent Pax Americana. The rest of this paper takes these foodstuffs and their diverse historical trajectories as a point of departure to outline some general patterns in the imperial mobilisation of food and drink as instruments of colonial expansion. It shows how culinary cultures are not only important markers of social differentiation and integration across and within societies, but also powerful carriers of political and socio-economic hierarchies which, through complex (dialectical) processes of accommodation and resistance (or, if one wishes, 'combined and uneven development'), have created or reinforced the societal multiplicity that characterises the international.

Here, it is important to underline that the term 'multiplicity' implies more than a simple co-existence and interaction – it involves instead the conflictual transformation and transculturation of diverse societies (Ortíz,1995 [1940]). This in turn requires close attention to the multiple, generally synchronic layers of social interaction that define any given society or political community at a specific time. Long-standing institutions, dynamic social forces, cultural or ideological norms and values all creatively interact within and across social formations to produce enduring international orders or regimes. Thus, when considering below the place of food and drink in the reproduction of societal multiplicity, the whole food chain has to be factored into the analysis: foodstuffs like meat, tea and wheat appear as ingestible commodities to consumers only after land, labour and technology have been harnessed into their production, processing, distribution, preparation, delivery and disposal. Property regimes, water and land management, labour recruitment, transport systems, trade networks, marketing campaigns and all their associated legal-administrative infrastructure are critical to the reproduction of societal multiplicity. The next section introduces the category of the 'global food regime' as an analytical tool in fathoming these complex

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interactions. Three subsequent sections consider the contrasting strategies of alimentary domination adopted by successive imperial powers since the sixteenth century. A picture emerges from these big structures, large process and huge comparisons (with apologies to Charles Tilly) where societal multiplicity is the product of contradictory and often violent confrontations and adaptations between and within peoples and polities, and where food and empire are closely intertwined. In this sense, the universal human need of nourishment and subsistence itself becomes an ontological premise for the multiplicity problematic in International Relations: we IR what we eat.

Global Food Regimes

Because food (and in different ways, drink) have since the beginning been vital to the organisation of, and interaction between human societies, it is useful to identify broad patterns of historical change and continuity in our food systems. Harriett Friedmann and Philip McMichael (1989) argued in their seminal article that during the modern period the global food system initially articulated around a 'settler-colonial' regime from 1870-1914, built on wheat-livestock production in the 'White Dominions' and cultivation of tropical 'drug foods' like sugar, coffee or tea, and thereafter around a post-war regime characterised by a Washington-led multilateral order that promoted large, intensive, mechanised, highly integrated and concentrated agribusiness. Since the 'neo-liberal revolution' of the 1990s, McMichael and Friedmann have also posited a third, 'corporate' food regime distinguished by the multi-pronged privatisation, financialisation, input commodification, genetic modification, retailer consolidation, and peasant and smallholder dispossession across the global food system.

Friedmann and McMichael deliberately borrow the term 'regime' from the French regualtionist school of political economy so as to connect the 'international relations of food production and consumption to forms of accumulation', thereby also charting the interdependence between the industrialisation of agriculture and the universalisation of an international system of states in the course of the twentieth century. The benefit of a term like global food regime is that it encourages us to consider the multiple layers of interaction mentioned earlier between political institutions, market dynamics, social forces and environmental constraints across a determinate historical period. As McMichael himself has observed, the notion of global food regime leads to a 'refocusing from the food commodity as an *object*, to the commodity as *relation*, with definite geo-political, social, cultural, ecological and nutritional relations at significant historical moments' (McMichael, 2009: 281). From an IR perspective, this underscores the multiplicity problematic as one that is *emergent* from the interaction between different societies, but also from the relation between those societies and the specific ecologies they inhabit. The potential drawbacks of deploying the category involve both the challenges of periodisation and pin-pointing the causal connections between the different institutional, socio-cultural and ecological dynamics encompassed within specific global food regimes.

With regard to the former, McMichael in particular has justified the association of a 'first' global food regime to the new imperialism of the late nineteenth century by emphasising the role of sterling as a world currency that stabilised the international trade in agricultural commodities. 'Ultimately' McMichael asserts, 'a food regime involves the subjection of international circuits of foodstuffs to a governing market price' - a process which he suggests, 'only emerged during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with wheat as the principal [staple food price-marker]' (McMichael, 2013: 24). There is of course much to recommend this stricter definition of a global food regime as obtaining only when there is a world price for staple foods – among other things, it underscores

the centrality of agricultural commodification and the attendant cheapening of food in sustaining a given regime. Yet this very stress on the

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reproduction of food regimes would suggest earlier episodes of colonial expansion, particularly the conquest of the Americas, were critical – through the proliferation of slave plantations, the incorporation of arable and grazing 'ghost acreage' into the world market, the consolidation of transnational credit institutions, and the expanded circulation of bullion - to the emergence of a global food regime. In other words, far from acting as mere 'antecedent' to the first settler-colonial food regime, the sixteenth-century creation of a world market – in large measure *through* agrarian conquest and trade in foodstuffs – arguably marks the inauguration of a global food regime understood as a fairly stable yet complex alimentary interdependence between world regions. In what follows, therefore, the tributary-cum-plantation societies of the Americas in particular will be taken to represent a fulcrum of an early-colonial food regime rooted in the Columbian Exchange.

The second related problem of the term 'food regime' is the eminently historical one of explaining change and continuity. Friedmann and McMichael have been accused of crude functionalism when linking specific food regimes to price and geopolitical stability, at the expense of the volatility and contestation that has often accompanied the globalisation of agribusiness. In response, McMichael has insisted that a food regime approach can, and indeed must incorporate the destabilising dynamics of social movements and environmental limits as well as those of states and markets, but that these are inescapably subsumed to the logic of capitalist social relations. Food regimes on this account are 'not the direct expression of interest, so much as the distillation of political struggles among contending groups. Nonetheless', he continues, 'power in the capitalist era ultimately resides in property relations and the force of commodification, so while each episode reflects distinctive contention as social and ecological landscapes change, a politics of capital frames a resolution' (McMichael, 2013: 11).

The rest of this paper also adopts the latter view by insisting that it is the dominant mode of production – that is, 'a qualitatively different mode of committing social labour to the transformation of nature' (Wolf, 1982: 298) - that ultimately 'frames a resolution' of the conflicts and contradictions that accompany the development of global food regimes. In contrast to McMichael and Friedmann, I apply the notion of food regimes to a period before the advent of capitalism proper (in effect, to the process of primitive accumulation). But in line with their own more recent revisions, and very much in line with Tilzey's (2018) powerful reformulation of food regimes, I endeavour in what follows to incorporate diverse social forces and ecological determinants when analysing the place of food and beverages in the generation of societal multiplicity. The key turning points in this story are, following convention, connected to particular crises in the prevailing regimes of accumulation – tributary, mercantile and capitalist respectively. Yet the causal power of custom, exchange, authority or terrain will vary according to the concrete articulation of states, markets, social forces and ecologies. In all this, it is worth stressing, a complex multiplicity should not be confused with a bland pluralism: naturally, various socio-economic, (geo)political and environmental forces come into play in concrete analysis, but some of these are more powerful than others, and there is therefore no evading some explanatory hierarchy. With this latter caveat in mind, I now sketch out how successive food regimes have since the long sixteenth century generated societal multiplicities constitutive of international relations.[1]

[1] There is a powerful argument to suggest that such complex multiplicity in culinary cultures has a transhistorical character in that, from the beginning of humanity, people have exchanged, combined, appropriated or rejected foodstuffs across different societies - see for instance, Nabhan (2014) and Spengler III (2020). My assumption, however, is that the Columbian Exchange marked a qualitative

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Sheep Devouring Men

The Columbian Exchange which followed the European invasion of the Americas is unquestionably a foundational moment in the development of the global food system (Crosby, 1972). As is well known, the encounter introduced to the rest of the world American staples like corn, potatoes and squashes, as well as numerous other ingredients such as chiles, tomatoes, cassava, peanuts or cacao beans, so essential to many culinary repertoires across the globe, and so critical to the reproduction of peasants, workers and soldiers in all continents. American landscapes and foodways were in turn radically transformed by the import of livestock, wheat and Old World plants like sugarcane, vines and citruses. Peoples from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Pacific arrived to the New World as enslaved, indentured or free persons, and brought with them distinctive food items, recipes, eating habits and cooking methods. Out of this exchange there thus emerged not just a world market in staples such as grain, sugar or beef, but also unique hybrid or Creole food styles which combined ingredients, tastes and techniques of the Old and New Worlds. In a purely empirical sense, the Columbian Exchange generated a societal multiplicity through creation of new regional foodways connected to a global food system.

There are, however, two further fundamental dimensions to an analysis of how such creative destruction of multiplicities unfolded in the post-Columbian food system. The first is the fact that the Columbian Exchange was also a colonial conquest. This means that the social interactions and cultural differentiations accompanying the European invasion were necessarily hierarchical. As we'll shortly see, Spanish norms of taste and civility were, together with their property relations and agrarian systems, imposed upon the Amerindian majority - albeit in the process appropriating pre-existing mechanisms of exploitation and rule in the domination of subject populations. The response to colonialism involved, as in other modern instances of the phenomenon, both resistance and accommodation. This is the second key factor in understanding the place of food and drink in generating societal multiplicity through imperialism: as both indigenous and, subsequently, foreign populations simultaneously adopted, adapted and rejected (or were excluded from) Peninsular diets, new, syncretic cuisines gradually emerged which challenged, and in many ways subverted the dominant culinary repertoires. The fact that very few Iberian women initially accompanied the overwhelmingly male colonial settlers, meant that even in Spanish households of the Americas, food was generally prepared by women of colour who at the very least added distinctive ethnic inflections to dishes like *calalou* (a Caribbean version of gumbo), pumpkin roti or *mole*. The racist and patriarchal structures that underpinned Iberoamerican societies in future centuries sealed this continuity across pre-Hispanic and colonial diets, revealing the immense power of female labour -both inside and outside the household- in shaping the cultural dynamics of resistance and collaboration under colonial rule (Long, 1996; Mörner, 1967).

Food acted as an ideological, political-economic and environmental source of power in the Iberian conquest of the Americas, thus underscoring the role of difference - and its everyday social recognition - in the domination of indigenous and other subaltern

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shift in this societal multiplicity by virtue of inaugurating a *world-historical scale* in such alimentary interaction.

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populations. The occupation of Caribbean islands and subsequently, the overthrow of the Mexica and Inca empires was conducted by a tiny number of Spanish conquistadors and their retinue who used food, among other cultural signifiers, to legitimise minority rule. With the gradual increase of European settlers in the first few decades of conquest, an idealised Iberian menu of wheat bread, red meats, olive oil and wine became a marker of elevated status against the corn (in the Inca highlands, potato), plant, fish, insect and game-based diet of native populations. As sacraments of the Christian Eucharist, bread and wine were considered inherently superior to corn *tortillas*, *arepas* or *tamales* associated to the maize-protecting deities of Amerindian cosmologies. In addition, Galenic conceptions of bodily health, Rebecca Earle has argued, deeply influenced the conquering power's attitude to food, since maintaining a humoral balance was linked to consuming only metropolitan foodstuffs and indeed to recreating homeland environments when travelling: 'Food acted as an essential defense against the myriad threats that travel posed to the physical integrity of the human body, and thus came to hold an importance in colonial society that far outstripped its role in demarcating social distinctions' (Earle, 2014: 147).

Food and drink were thus added to religion, language, dress and residential segregation as quotidian mechanisms of social differentiation in a context of physical proximity (both literally, and figuratively when encompassing inter-ethnic sexual or affective relations). Yet, despite the attempts by temporal and religious authorities to quarantine the diverse ethnic groups which increasingly characterised the Americas, inter-racial unions (whether or not equal and consensual) delivered an ever-more complex admixture of peoples - beyond those characterised as creoles, mestizos or mulattos - which severely complicated the everyday enforcement of a rigid colour-caste system (Israel, 1975). The abundance of red meats in particular, and the enthusiastic adoption by indigenous populations of Old World ingredients, animals, cooking instruments and methods gave way to a veritable cornucopia of repertoires, increasingly determined by social status and ecology, rather than static moral benchmarks policed by Spanish authorities.

For several centuries after the conquest, the production, provisioning and preparation of food was based around Old World forms of rule and exploitation that were grafted onto existing Amerindian tributary structures. The *encomienda* (later *repartimiento*), or 'grant' of native workers assigned to conduct forced labour and pay tribute to a named conquistador (and subsequently the Crown) became the dominant mechanism of exploitation in the former Mexica and Inca dominions; slavery in the Caribbean islands and Brazil. In turn, Iberian invaders brought to the Meso- and South American plains and sierras Castilian practices of extensive livestock grazing and browsing, and Old World plantations (large-scale managed monoculture) to the coastal lowlands of both Pacific and Atlantic seaboards. These developments formed the basis of what was later to become the temperate wheat-livestock and tropical 'drug food' complex of the first, settler-colonial food regime. It was accompanied by the decimation of aboriginal populations through contact with pathogens brought by European settlers (exacerbated by overwork, oppression, physical and cultural violence and dislocation) which in turn prompted the import of millions of enslaved Africans to sustain the emerging colonial food regime of the Americas. The gradual but irreversible transformation of native horticulture into settler agriculture; the colonisation of communal or open grasslands by European ungulates (cows, sheep, pigs, horses); the conversion of whole islands and vast estates for cash crop cultivation by enslaved

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labour, all gave rise to forms of land tenure and organisation – *ranchos*, *fincas*, *estancias*, *ingenios* – which replicated the Old World latifundia and plantations, albeit on an incomparably grander scale, and through the racialised subjection of non-European populations.

In sum, what may have initially been a response to the needs and desires of a conquering Iberian elite had by the start of the seventeenth century become a regional food system where all manner of local populations were fed on a diet of Mesoamerican (and later Southern Cone) grain and livestock, tropical fruits and stimulants; the widespread cultivation of autochthonous staples including squashes, chiles, manioc and the ubiquitous potato; as well as carry-overs from other continents like rice, okra, aubergines or plantains. A process of colonial differentiation which had initially sought to use food as a means of maintaining social distance by rigidly distinguishing Iberian from Amerinidian eating habits, soon gave way to more complex, hybrid or *mestizo* culinary cultures where status was determined less by physiognomy than by purchasing power (though plainly the two continued to be closely intertwined). Even among the most unfree of American workers toiling on plantations, a limited access to small gardens allowed cultivation of legumes and raising of chickens for subsistence or sale in informal markets, thus adding distinctive dishes to the circum-Caribbean repertoire, while other labourers dependent on rations – most notably sailors – encouraged the growth of a regional and cross-Atlantic trade in salt cod, jerked beef, wheat tack (biscuits) or rum (Carney and Rosomoff, 2009).

It is important, then, to recognise that in the process of forging American multiplicities, food and drink played a dialectical role as both a homogenising and a diversifying force (a 'unity of opposites' in Hegelian terms). This was especially salient when considering the environmental transformation of American ecologies following the European conquest; a process similar to the dispossessions and enclosures experienced in Europe whereby, in a phrase attributed to Sir Thomas More, 'sheep devoured men'.
The introduction of livestock perhaps had the most enduring impact given that sheep, cattle and pigs were not only a source of protein for human consumption, but themselves transformed the landscape through extensive grazing and browsing. Woodland, shrubland, wild grassland and tropical forest was literally eaten away by the 'ungulate irruption' which, according to Elinor Melville, in Mexico alone was responsible for 'the irreversible damage to vegetation, social and water resources' (Melville, 1997: 8). In the Caribbean and other tropical regions too, plantation economies delivered monocultural landscapes where only topography and soils hostile to the extensive cultivation of sugar, tobacco or coffee managed to evade cash cropping. Indeed, many of these terrains – montane, swamps, deserts and densely canopied forests – became centres of resistance to, and autonomy from colonial domination (Richards, 1997). The Columbian Exchange was thus also an instance of ecological imperialism: 'neo-Europes' were replicated across South American regions with climatic and environmental characteristics similar to Mediterranean and temperate parts of the Old World, organised economically in mercantilist style to provision metropolitan markets (Crosby Jr, 2004). The exchange was also deeply uneven: the rest of the world benefitted enormously from the introduction of Amerindian produce into their diets, but very few, if any, cooking instruments, animal protein and even less so, cultivation techniques, were adopted from pre-Hispanic civilizations.

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An Imperial Beverage

The one agrarian form issuing from the Columbian Exchange which did take root in the rest of the world was the tropical plantation. In several important respects, the single-crop estates in tea, coffee, cocoa, spices, vanilla, tropical fruits (and also rubber, tobacco, palm oil and the like) that continue into the present, replicated labour regimes, racialised identities and expression of cultural and political resistance first essayed in the Americas. In the nineteenth-century British-owned tea plantations of South Asia, multi-ethnic workforces under a minority-colonial authority also transformed complex local ecologies into tightly-managed 'Gardens of Empire' (Sharma, 2011) producing export commodities for the world market. The abolition of the slave trade and later, the overthrow of slavery itself in French and British dominions at the start that century occasioned the rise of diverse forms of free and indentured labour, often imported from other colonies, in the foundation and reproduction of tea gardens. It moreover generated distinctive ethno-regional identities and mixed-race populations which further complicated colonial attempts at delimiting, homogenising and administering otherwise diverse territories. The historical novelty in this instance of food-related societal multiplicity lies in the world market into which tea estates were integrated. Rather than sustaining a fundamentally tributary relation to the metropole, or reflecting a merely monetised economy as had been the case of the Iberoamerican food regime, the South Asian tea plantations were incorporated into a fully commodified food system where colonial authorities facilitated the cultivation, harvesting, processing, marketing and sale by private companies of a global food item like tea (Liu, 2010). In contrast to the Spanish attempts at upholding social distinction through food in the colonies, tea (especially with added sugar) popularised the consumption of this exotic stimulant across the British Empire. Most importantly for our purposes, the British-dominated production of tea in South Asia was driven by geopolitical rivalry with China, and propelled by the revenue it raised for the British state through domestic duties. Tea was twinned with opium to 'batter down Chinese walls', as Marx and Engels had prophesied in their Manifesto. It became an imperial beverage not just through trade, but also through war against other states and violence exercised over colonial subjects. The societal multiplicities tea generated were thus intimately connected to domination as much as co-existence, difference, interaction, combination or dialectics.

Once imperialism – that is, hierarchical expansion – is inserted into accounts of modern international relations, the trajectory of a global product like tea becomes central to the narrative, in the process also illustrating how various socio-natural structures and dynamics, including that of states and markets, shape world politics. Take the case of labour recruitment for the tea plantations of Assam between the Brahmaputra river and the southern Himalayan foothills. Although tea had been consumed by autochthonous populations long before the East India Company annexed the region into its Bengal Presidency, it was concerted botanical bioprospecting and hybridisation by Company agents which by 1840 led to the London flotation of the Assam Company with a monopoly over planting and production in what today is the world's single largest tea-producing region. In the early years, tea cultivation in Assam was associated to the unique expertise of Chinese growers, recruited from the emerging colonial labour exchanges in Singapore, Penang and Calcutta to establish and work on the estates. Problems of indiscipline and antagonism with locals, who had themselves from the beginning resisted the Company invasion of

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Assam and refused poorly-paid wage work, led planters to gradually replace Chinese with indentured 'coolie' labour hired by intermediary agents (*sirdars*) from among the rural poor of Bengal, Orissa, the Northwest Provinces, Oudh and beyond (Rappaport, 2017).

Directly inspired by the New World plantations, the labour regime of the Planter Raj was characterised by unfree labour, ethnic and patriarchal segmentation and stratification, physical violence, spatial confinement, and social marginalisation. It concentrated diverse ethnic groups and nationalities along new commodity frontiers, in the process reaffirming and codifying existing communal, caste and regional identities, including that of Assamese elites formed in Calcutta, or Anglo-Indians born from the union of British planters and their south Asian consorts. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Assam had, together with other major tea-producing regions in Ceylon and Northern Bengal, been fully inserted into a world commodity market via imperial circuits and institutions, thus reproducing international relations in a very material sense. At the very same time, international relations were generating societal multiplicity on a local scale, mediated, as we have just seen, by the combination of political authority and market dynamics.

Insofar as tea - together with other tropical stimulants like tobacco, coffee, and sugar – was integral to the first global food regime, ecological imperialism was once again central to this process. As in the Americas, the 'wild' jungles of Assam or Ceylon's central highlands gave way to carefully managed 'gardens' and 'estates' where, through bespoke colonial legislation, violent dispossession, comprehensive overhaul of land titles and the large-scale recruitment of 'tribal' workforces in the razing of forests, nature was tamed and improved by civilisation (Sharma, 2011; Chaterjee, 2001). Moreover, the radical transformation of landscapes and ecologies that accompanied the raising of tea kingdoms was literally accelerated by the construction of railways – and their attendant bridges, tunnels, stations, and telegraph networks - linking the remote upland plantations to the coastal entrepots like Calcutta or Colombo, from whence the lucrative export was shipped across the Empire and beyond.

The culinary cultures that followed the expansion of tea as an imperial beverage at the turn of the twentieth century bore both similarities and unique differences to those resulting from the Iberian conquest of the Americas. For a start, the numerically insignificant enclaves of white settlement in south Asia did not replicate vast neo-Europes. In the first century of East India Company rule over its Indian presidencies, a distinctive menu of Anglo-Indian dishes such as mulligatawny soup or kedgeree emerged, combining eastern and western ingredients, techniques and tastes. Indeed, for Lizzie Collingham, 'Although it lacked sophistication, Anglo-Indian cookery was the first truly pan-Indian cuisine', a distinguishing characteristic being 'its tendency to apply appealing aspects of particular regional dishes to all sorts of curries. In this way, mangoes, which were sometimes added to fish curries in parts of the southern coastal areas found their way into Bengali prawn curries; coconut was added to Mughlai dishes, where it was an alien ingredient' (2006: 118). Company nabobs, like their Iberian conquistador counterparts, generally went to south Asia unaccompanied by spouses or family, and thus took native mistresses and servants, and with them adopted local ways of eating, drinking, smoking, dressing and even speaking. Although they reportedly consumed gargantuan amounts of meat and game, even outdoing the notoriously carnivorous Mughal aristocracy, British nabobs also happily

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indulged in the intoxicating powers of arrack or the pleasures of inhaling tobacco, cannabis or opium through a narghile or hookah pipe. This should all be seen as part of a much longer history of transculturation, both through trade and conquest, which in the culinary realm had during previous centuries yielded popular Turko-Persian Mughlai dishes ranging from biryani and pilafs to rogan josh, korma and assorted kebabs, or incorporating celebrated Parsee items like dhansak. Christian populations of Goa and Kerala also developed their own syncretic fare including the famous pork vindaloo, while Cantonese Hakka communities drawn to the commercial hub of Calcutta made their own culinary contribution through Sino-Indian dishes like Manchow soup or lollypop chicken.

Yet tea was only consolidated as a global commodity in the second half of the nineteenth century, and by then, the end of Company rule in India signalled a wider shift toward a much more acute late-Victorian sense of Britishness among the colonial expatriate communities. Together with technological innovations such as refrigeration, canning and pasteurizing, and the reduction in transit times facilitated by steamships and railways, as well as the more subtle social changes elicited by the arrival of female *memsahibs* to colonial households, the meals on offer at the tea planter's home or the district *dak bungalow* seems to have mimicked the most stereotypical of metropolitan repertoires: 'Many complained that it was absurd to don black evening dress in the stifling heat and sit down and eat roast beef and suet puddings but this is precisely what the British did' (Collingham, 2006: 159). Even then, however, climatic constraints and competing cooking methods continued to produce hybrid dishes like masala roasts or spicy minced-meat 'cutlets' which convey the refractive nature of everyday culinary cultures toward attempts at gastronomic homogenisation.

In all this, and in contrast to the Iberoamerican experience, the most rigid form of social exclusion and gradation through food and drink remained that determined by caste and religion, with Brahmins refusing to share foods, crockery and cutlery, let alone eating spaces, with those they perceived to be lower castes and Dalits, while Hindus and Muslims ate not just different religiously-prescribed foods, but were also sold water from separate, socially-defined vessels. For the bulk of planation workers, and indeed for all but a minority of Indians more generally, British rule barely altered the staple combination of rice, vegetables and the occasional meat or fish and in many instances reinforced food shortages, undernourishment and *in extremis*, famine. Immigrant coolies labouring on tea plantations, like their enslaved American counterparts, relied on local *haats* (markets) to purchase grains and vegetables cultivated by indigenous Assamese farmers (Sharma, 2011). It was only during the interwar decades – after years of intensive marketing campaigns and, more importantly, the development of tea canteens in mills, factories and barracks, aswell as the ubiquitous presence of tea vendors at transport hubs - that Indians began to drink tea on an everyday basis. Indeed, for many, tea and its associated routines became in the course of the twentieth century a vehicle for cross-communal interaction underpinning secular notions of Indian nationalism (Rappaport, 2017; Collingham, 2006).

The 'manufacturing of imperial tastes' for tea, Erika Rappaport has argued,

> [w]as not a democratizing or equalizing notion and it did not create homogenous global consumer culture. When discussing North Americans and Australians,

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> for example planters imagined they were bringing civilized drinks to sophisticated "British consumers". When they worked in India, planters held they were carrying the gospel of consumerism to people they regarded as untouched by the market. Pre-existing ideas, local economies and politics, and consumer and retail practices shaped the meaning and uses surrounding the commodity (2017: 221).

Tea production (like that of coffee, sugar and tobacco) recreated the alimentary hierarchy and unevenness of tributary empires – with its expansion of commodity frontiers for metropolitan consumption and profit – whilst simultaneously widening and deepening market dependence through the very same imperial circuits. The contradictory consequences of capitalist imperialism which Marx had already identified in the British Raj are also discernible in the food politics of a product like tea, where plantation complexes fostered new social classes at the point of production which in turn articulated with novel transnational publics at the point of consumption.

'The Era of Flour has Arrived'

The import of cash crops from their respective colonies was a key element in the reproduction of the two ideal -typical imperial forms – one tributary, the other mercantilist - we have considered thus far. Post-war American imperialism reversed this pattern by organising its food regime around exports from core to periphery. While in the Americas, Old World agrarian systems delivered neo-Europes and plantation complexes with creole cuisines, in the Indian sub-continent British schemes for 'improvement' yielded monocultural estates geared toward imperial markets which did not significantly alter the existing South Asian culinary foodways, but did arguably change British (and by extension 'White Dominion') eating and drinking habits. The case of American alimentary imperialism is peculiar because, in ruling *through* rather *over* states and peoples, its overarching aim was to stabilise regions that came under Washington's postwar aegis and integrate them fully into a US-led capitalist world order (Panitch and Gindin, 2012). This strategic objective was undoubtedly driven by a will to American primacy, and plainly had significant implications for the political economies of all states involved. Yet in a truly hegemonic fashion, a new culinary culture was not so much imposed as elicited from subject populations, in turn generating weird and frequently wonderful fusion cuisines that drew irreverently from different histories and geographies.

Japan was, among other east Asian postwar protectorates, foremost in extending the use wheat-based foods into the country's diet. The immediate cause for this lay in the danger of civil unrest – or worse, communist subversion – occasioned by the famine-like conditions Japan experienced in the years after its surrender. War-time devastation and the generalised socio-economic, political and cultural disruption it fostered was powerfully reflected in the fact that between 1946 and 1947 the Supreme Command of Allied Powers (SCAP) was only able to secure around a quarter to a third of the 2,200 calories the government stipulated healthy adults needed to consume daily (Dower, 1999: 96-97). With the country's own agricultural sector in disarray and other neighbouring rice-producing states affected by war-time shortages, the only other obvious source of cheap calories became American food aid heavily reliant on grain, meat and dairy. Rice rations were replaced for the 'era of flour' with a reported eleven-fold increase in Japanese wheat consumption during the American occupation

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(Bobrow-Strain, 2011: 89). In the autumn of 1946, 'bread-eating races' spread across primary schools and by the 1949, the SCAP introduced a 'complete lunch program' providing every schoolchild with 100g of 'pure white bread and butter' for twenty days a month (Bobrow-Strain,2011: 87). Housewives were introduced to the *Hōmu Beikā* (or 'Home Baker') – a 'Bread-maker That Does Not Need Charcoal, Gas or an Electric Burner' – in a country where only a tiny proportion of households had baking ovens (Dower, 1999: 160 -70). The occupying power's promotion of the wheat-meat-diary diet also inadvertently revalorised noodle and dumpling dishes of Chinese origin like *rāmen*, *gyōza* or *udon* as everyday sources of carbohydrates and protein. Despite the prohibition against public food-vending between 1947 and 1950, Japanese returnees from colonised Korea, Manchuria or Taiwan joined Korean and Chinese immigrants in setting up black market *yatai* (foodstalls) selling various affordable starch-based meals (Soltd: 2010). Moreover, 'the militarization of nutrition' one leading historian of food in Japan has maintained, 'set the stage for the post-war transformation of Japanese diet represented by the diminishing quantitative importance of rice and increased consumption of bread, noodle and industrially processed food' (Cwiertka, 2006: 137).

As in the previous examples of alimentary imperialism, the US occupation of Japan aimed explicitly at 'improving', 'rationalising' and even 'correcting' local diets - in this case with a view to pacifying and radically reforming what was deemed to be an inherently bellicose society. Yet in line with other experiences too, the postwar Japanese culinary canon resisted any facile or unmediated 'Americanisation'. For a start, many of the trends connected to wheat and meat consumption long predated the US occupation. Katarzyna J. Cwiertka's (2002) detailed research demonstrates that it was Japanese imperial militarism which during the interwar years established the conditions for a new, distinctively hybrid repertoire that is most commonly associated to the postwar period. Meat, lard, potatoes, onions, cabbage and flour - previously marginal to Japanese cooking - were transformed into calorie-rich dishes including *Nikumeshi* (meat rice), *Furai* (fries), *Katsuretsu* (cutlet), *Korokke* (croquette), *Buta Kareni* (curried pork stew) or *Donatsu* (doughnut) by using foreign techniques such as deep-frying, pan-frying and stewing. The dissemination of this new range of dishes was secured through servings at school, workplace and hospital canteens, promotion in housekeeping magazines and state-sponsored public information campaigns, and continued into the postwar period to become staples of Japanese comfort food or 'soul cookery'.

Although the role of state intervention into these dietary changes cannot be underplayed, it is also important to recognize the place of a more banal, democratic preference for ready-to-eat, flavoursome and affordable dishes prepared for and by Japanese and immigrant popular classes. The real protagonist in this story is *rāmen*, particularly in its 'instant' form. As Barak Kushner (2012) has ably shown, *rāmen*'s path to becoming Japan's postwar national dish was long, winding and littered with cultural myths and historical half-truths. There is no question that the Chinese pulled noodles (*la-mian*) that give the dish its name are key to understanding the uniqueness of *rāmen*, but their distinctive combination in a deep bowl or *donburi* with broth, meat, fish or vegetables, and assorted toppings is, for Kushner, an almost serendipitous outcome of twentieth century developments in Japan. Colonisation and subsequent mass migration from neighbouring China and Korea, western socio-cultural influences, and the eventual postwar recovery all contributed decisively to the popularisation of *rāmen*. The invention of instant ramen in 1958 was prompted according to the

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product's inventor, Andō Momofuku, by the desire of postwar Japanese authorities to absorb surpluses of American wheat flour whilst adjusting for the Japanese reluctance to adopt bread as a regular staple. Thus ramen was to give millions in Japan and beyond a meal that was 'tasty, nutritious and filling' as well as being 'quick and easy to use', in a context of accelerated urbanization, industrialization and feminization of the public workforce:

> It belongs to a cuisine of the masses, a food that is part of the unstructured, egalitarian postwar Japanese society. Instant ramen is distinctly the result of several postwar phenomena – increased availability of wheat, changing food desires arising from civilian experiences in colonial China and elsewhere in the empire, and an expanding urban landscape where a larger number of hungry office and factory workers wanted filling meals that were not necessarily rice-based (Kushner, 2012: 204-5).

The example of ramen conveys many of the contradictory dynamics of power and transculturation that characterised previous imperial experiences. It was certainly the product of a unique international conjuncture characterised by military defeat, occupation, and subsequent economic growth under American auspices. But it also reflects the inventive and resourceful (re)appropriation of transnational foodways in postwar Japan by combining a foreign meat-wheat regime with preceding interwar legacies, to deliver unique Japanese renditions of sandwiches (*katsu sando*), pancakes (*okonomiyaki*), noodle soup (*rāmen*) and pork curry cutlets (*katsu karē*). Thus co-existence, difference, interaction, combination, and dialectics were all present in the development of new culinary forms where the US provided western ingredients and technologies, while the Japanese (and Chinese and Koreans) cooked them according to local tastes.

Conclusions: Food and Empire in the Production of Multiplicity

The whistle-stop tour of different culinary cultures emerging from imperial encounters across time and place illustrates how food and drink are integral to the social multiplicity of international relations. Through processes of social interaction, notions of difference and co-existence are dialectically combined to produce distinctive foodways. However, the latter do not emerge – to coin a phrase – under conditions of their own choosing. Imperial structures of domination, apparent both in the organisation of food production and its practices of consumption, strongly condition the development of diverse food cultures. Although the drive toward hierarchy and stratification is common to all three imperial experiences outlined above, their actual unfolding shows some variations. The Iberoamerican empires reproduced across the whole of the New World Eurasian ecologies and (re)invented tributary models of exploitation in the production of cash crops for export. These were then replicated in South Asia by a British mercantilism built on enclave plantations whose environmental and socio-political impact was more localised, even if it proved equally transformative for those affected. The American occupation of Japan accelerated food-related socio-economic and cultural trends present during the interwar period in that country and indeed the wider region, but gave these a distinctive hegemonic flavour in the process of incorporating postwar Japan into the US-led capitalist bloc. In all three cases, the aspirations to imperial domination were to different degrees accepted and subverted, always engendering new, often hybrid diets and cuisines. The imperial circulation of

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peoples, commodities, cultural forms, and technologies further compromised any one-sided, or rigid imposition of socio-economic, political and cultural hierarchies when it came to food and drink. Not everything that empires wanted, empires got. And so, to understand both the international constitution of culinary cultures and the role of imperial rule in their development, due attention needs to be placed on the often-unpredictable dialectic of resistance and accommodation that accompanied this process. Recognising the messy, international, conflictual, and destructively creative dynamics of most modern foodways, however, raises at least two other preliminary conclusions regarding the place of multiplicity in international relations.

The first relates to the socio-natural agents and geographical scales at play in the constitution of international relations through food and drink. The category of 'multiplicity' suggests a generative force whereby new agents and social phenomena emerge through complex and often antagonistic interaction. This is contrast to the more static 'plurality' which implies pre-existing, self-sustaining and fixed identities. But there is a risk that the former is conflated with the latter, and that we confuse international relations with the mere co-existence of different political communities. That is what would conventionally be called an anarchical international society. If 'multiplicity' is to retain an analytical dynamism which avoids both the reification of the sovereign state as the only meaningful agent of international relations, and a descriptive pluralism that merely list the endless number of social actors engaged in world politics, then some kind of causal hierarchy and basic explanatory framework needs to be identified in accounting for the power of food and drink in international relations. I have suggested here that the idea of a 'global food regime', allied to the cognate categories of class, exploitation, exchange, racialisation and productivity that accompany the notion of 'mode of production' can begin to do just this. Specifically, the place of food in imperial expansion is strongly conditioned by its role in reproducing social power: in the New World it was about conquest and extraction; in south Asia about profiting from cash crops for a world market; in Japan, about integrating a defeated power into a postwar American hegemony. These colonial schemes have always encountered obstacles and limitations. Nature is one of them; human agency another.

For all the resources dedicated to replicating neo-Europes across the world, climatic, topographical and ecological conditions in conquered lands did place limits to this endeavour – Caribbean montane generally evaded plantation regimes, South Asian water systems complicated the imposition of monocultures, and all manner of environmental feedback loops (e.g. the spread during the 1870s and 80s of the *Hemileia vastatrix* fungus or coffee leaf rust that destroyed coffee plantations in Sri Lanka) influenced the imperial patterns of agrarian exploitation (Bhattacharyya, 2019; Richards, 1997; Cederlöf, 2013; Amrith, 2018). Different degrees and forms of resistance and accommodation also shaped diverse food regimes: slave revolts, trade union organisation, national liberation struggles, as well as elite collaboration and the complicity of local middlemen with the imperial enterprise yielded different agrarian systems across time and place. Finally, and not least important, because food (and in different ways drink) are of necessity deeply embedded in our everyday routines, they can be powerfully mobilised against the subsumption of life itself to the law of value, or the attempts at using food as a means of domination. The unruly, motley and demotic culinary repertoires that emerged out of imperial encounters are a testament to this, thereby underscoring the dynamic character of any given food regime.

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The different geographical scales at play here also need to be integrated into some kind of causal chain. The Columbian Exchange, where food played a central role, inaugurated a world market which has since then served as the highest plane of determinations. But from the beginning, the global scale has been articulated with unique local ecologies, agrarian techniques and culinary cultures. In between these opposing geographical scales sit the diverse mediating structures and agencies like the state, nationalism, social movements, private corporations, consumer associations, and so forth. There is no *a priori* formula (beyond the truism of going from the abstract to the concrete) to determine how these various scales and mediations can be arranged into an explanatory framework, but there is no escaping adopting *some* kind of method.

The concept of a global food regime, I have argued, offers a sturdy analytical scaffolding from which to conduct concrete explanations of the relationship between foodways and social multiplicity. And so, a final issue in this interaction emerges, namely the distinctiveness of food as a lens through which to understand international relations. The cases explored above demonstrate that, like language, religion or dress, food has historically acted as an expression of the difference, interaction, and co-existence associated to societal multiplicity. Yet the vehicles through which such combinations have found expression are marked by both changes and continuities in the dominant forms of international relations. Thus, if territorial conquest represents the most notable manifestation of the international relations of tributary empires, the forging of internal markets open to global exchange reflect the moment of mercantilist and later capitalist imperialism. Here food, like other cultural forms just mentioned, generates and reinforces some of the most powerful new social structures of international relations, including the nation-state itself – acting as an everyday means of reproducing nationhood in both symbolic and material senses. At the same time, there is a rich seam of continuity in the transfer of cooking ingredients, recipes and techniques through the migration of peoples across societies which speaks to an almost inherently transnational quality to food and drink; always escaping the narrow confines of a given political regulation or identity. In the end, it is perhaps the simple universality of this most elemental of human cultural forms that make food and drink such fertile terrain when understanding the societal multiplicity of international relations.

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