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THE CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRADITIONAL FOOD IN TIMOR LESTE

Jose Barreto[1], Januario Maria Neto Mok[2], Antonio Guterres[3]
[1,2] Instituto Superior Cristal (ISC), Timor Leste
[3] Universidade Oreintal Timor Lorosa'e, Timor Leste
Email: antonioguterres85@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The despite centuries of colonization and multiple occupations, along with the current white noise of popular culture, East Timor have to get back in touch with its heritage especially food – for the well-being of its people and a potential tourism bounty. The traditional food is needed to be set into the school curriculum. To facilitate the research team in this study, in order to run systematically, Bogdan was used in Sugiono, which is the process of finding and compiling systematically the data obtained from interviews, field notes, international conferences, seminars, and other materials, so that it can be easily understood and the findings can be informed to others, qualitative data analysis is inductive, namely analysis based on the data obtained. There has never been an established book-reading or textbook-learning tradition in Timor-Leste). The youth are "active practitioners of popular culture" … and "not interested in having the traditional approach". Survey data among Indian youth revealed that they were "astounded by Western culture", and were influenced by it in several areas that included Western Culture (32% strongly agreed; 29% agreed), music (36%; 31%), trends (29%; 26%), behavior (23%; 17%), and ideology (23%; 14%).

KEYWORDS *Cultural Identity, Traditional food, Timor Leste*

INTRODUCTION

It is perhaps taken on faith that was a young age is the best time to attempt such as learning challenges as a new language or the mastery of a musical instrument. This is needed to be expanded upon and include the instruction of culture – both the learner's own culture (if it is considered "lost" or "fading") and the culture in which young learners to find themselves.

This paper will show how is the Food can be a significant stepping-stone to re-build a strong Indigenous culture that must begin with a creative school curriculum. The Researcher Lisa Palmer has found: "… local food practices are

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integral to people's sense of community and relationships with others". This is became one of the key discoveries made by our Timorese delegation to a conference in Central , Australia and its contact with Indigenous people there, some of whom were living much as they always had for tens of thousands of years; others who had earned PhDs in the Western Education system. It was true culture that Shock for us, but certainly not in a bad way. What really amazed us was the way Indigenous, Australians could live off the land: no shops, no imported goods. There, in the middle of one of the world's most unforgiving deserts, they knew where located of water, where to find edible, wild fruit and plants, which roots to dig up and consume.

This went through some lively debate. Part of this, we decided, was that Australia has subject to be comparatively recent colonization (250 years, and even more recently in the Central Desert, as compared to 600 years (and nine foreign occupations) in Timor-Leste. A cross the region, colonization was rampant and had begun centuries earlier – the Dutch in Indonesia, French in Vietnam and Cambodia, Spanish in the Philippines, Germans in the Papua, and the odious English in India, Australia, also, New Zealand. Before it was the United States, America was colonized by the Dutch, French and English and needed to fight the English for the East Coast, and the Spanish for the West Coast. It paid France for the Louisiana Territory, from New Orleans right through to the Canadian border; bought Alaska from Russia; and annexed the Hawaiian Islands after its royal family was overthrown. For some of these cultures, their traditional ways have all but been forgotten. For Indigenous Australians, however, it is a recent memory – one or two generations. But in both circumstances, you will hear Elders make the same lament: "When I die, all my knowledge dies also … I will die with all my knowledge inside me. All my Tjukurpa. All the young people – granddaughters and grandsons – they won't have that knowledge. It will go with me because it's inside me." Unless we can inspire the young people to accept the challenge, unless traditional culture is put onto the school curriculum. This is a matter of changing the concept of Leadership within the Education system. Teachers need to be "re-trained" if they are to inspire students to "follow his or her direction."

This paper is an expanded version of the presentation and I delivered at the Uluru conference on August 2023. While the main research and reading has been to discuss the problems that had face Cultural Identity, it's also considers for Popular Culture and its impact for a culture, especially among youth. I asked some questions to a pair of academics who have done extensive work on Timorese education and culture. Otherwise, there entailed general observation, including those who made among the Elders at the Uluru conference, and those made as director of the registered training organization, The East Timor Development Agency (ETDA); extensive reading, archive examination, and participated in overseas conferences; interviews with food professionals and hospitality interns; time was also spent to witness and question for Timorese chefs as they selected, prepared and presented local dishes for guests.

RESEARCH METHODS

To facilitate the research team in this study, in order to run systematically, Bogdan was used in Sugiono, which is the process of finding and compiling systematically the data obtained from interviews, field notes, international conferences, seminars, and other materials, so that it can be easily understood and the findings can be informed to others, qualitative data analysis is inductive, namely analysis based on the data obtained. Meanwhile, according to Miles & Huberman (1992: 16), the date analysis technique consists of three lines of activity that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/ verification.

To obtain the results of this research, in depth and for the benefit of cultural identity and traditional foods, then, the data collection techniques by used in this study, in the form of; In-depth interviews, filling out questionnaires, surveys, international conferences, seminars, direct observation in the field, document analysis and focus group discussion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Food as Culture

The East Timor Development Agency (ETDA) – for which I have worked for 20 years, the last three years as a Director – we train a young people in area of Hospitality and Tourism. It has a restaurant, open to the public for week day lunches and where the interns, graduates gain valuable and practical experience. We have a strong belief in Local Culture and while we train our chefs in Western cuisine (some will find work overseas), we also provide place great value on traditional Timorese food. Some dishes are so bound into the culture, they do not even have names. We used old family recipes and local ingredients. We believe that food can open the door to Timorese culture that may have been lost many generations ago. This food may now even seem "foreign" to some young Timorese, but they need to be shown that this is a part of their culture. It must be revealed to them that, if they do not learn how to recognize the ingredients and learn recipes from their Elders, and from organizations such as ETDA, there is a chance that it will be forever lost. And that once you bring in an evil pestilence such as McDonald's, it will be finishing for Timorese culture.

The trouble, we believe is what was said earlier: because Timor-Leste was colonized over many centuries and generations, and by many different cultures – from the "benign neglect" of the Portuguese to the Year-Zero approach of the Indonesians (which included food imports and an oppressive education system, in which Timorese were taught nothing of their language, history, geography or food). Despite independence, we feel that the window to bring light to Timorese people is closing. Food is a vital way to engage and educate. No matter the way local culture has been battered and beaten, and despite the loss of traditional ways, all humans require food.

The need for food brings us all together, even while the ingredients, preparation and presentation styles make us "different" – a difference to celebrate.

Often, an introduced food clashes with traditional methods, which makes it stop making cultural sense.

"Timor-Leste barely recognizes food as a culture, unlike Vanuatu which celebrated the 'Year of the Traditional Economy' and uses crops in all kinds of ceremonies."

Considering the case of Ceylon, where – during an extreme war-time food shortage – American-style bread was introduced. Thirty years later, the Ceylonese still craved that bread as a staple, despite the island not growing a single grain of wheat. The traditional skill to grow cassava – which grows quickly, but also exhausts the soil within a year – has been forgotten. "[All of] which makes bread as inconvenient a staple … as water chestnuts would be in Nevada".

But it is not only good practice in hygiene, nutrition, and health that was appear lacking in school-aged Timorese: "Youth in Timor-Leste are performing extremely poorly in education, core civic values, at 21st-century, knowledge and skills, the ability to manage finances, the use of basic information and communication technology (ICT)", all of which can be improved by an increased feeling of well-being and belonging – that is, when they are more culturally-engaged.

The Indigenous Timorese seem to no longer recognize which wild berries to gather and what roots to dig up – unlike the Indigenous Australians. ETDA believes that knowledge and skills can be reclaimed with an early introduction to Timorese food culture. School gardens and the creation of self-grown school lunches can put traditional food, nutrition, and sustainability into the curriculum. It just might inspire youth to further explore other aspects of their culture.

ETDA believes that food can – and should be – a way to celebrate and re-ignite culture, and to pass for younger generations. When the United Nations' World Food Program (UNWFO) and other aid organizations advise on food, they tend to concentrate on Food Security. All well and good – food security is a noble goal – however, if all food needs to be imported it is not sustainable, and it is not relevant to a cultural experience. It becomes the same globalized supply as everywhere else.

Hill: "Food is a part of culture reflecting the history of a country, its cuisine, status of crops as ingredients, and influence of tradition or disruption of it all play a part."

The most telling way to discuss Timorese "food culture" is from observation at a Wedding Banquet. There you will find – alongside Timorese food – Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, and Indonesian offerings. Timor-Leste is not as "multi-cultural" as Australia, nor as culturally isolated as the Central Desert Indigenous Australians were for many years, it has been forced to absorb other cultures for centuries. "The ethno-linguistic diversity currently existing in Timor-Leste is very significant. From the 16 local languages spoken, three are Papuan, and the remaining is Austronesian. People speaking such languages would have arrived in Timor 3500 years ago …."

Noodle factor

Food is just a part of a wider culture – a culture that is both physical and unseen: symbols, language, norms, values, and sacred objects. It means different things to different people, but it brings to them the same feelings and emotions as they have towards for their families. They share common understanding, traditions, and values – a sense of localized solidarity and identity. Culture can be at the very heart of development because it is about their individual – and their community's – well-being and a desire for self-improvement. This is especially true of how we can apply culture to education and training at ETDA. We encourage culture to be strong, instead of trying to smother or replace it. This makes the training more relevant to learners. When learners see that education respects them culturally, acknowledges their goals and identity of place, they will retain their dignity and welcome the means to shape their future.

We have seen how a strong culture is based on shared values, opinions, and elements such as food. Cultural identity – even if many of us are unaware of how a cultural identity "influences every single aspect of our lives" – faces further erosion of the dependence we have on each other for survival. We need our cultural context to interpret and react to the world around us when modernization and globalization threaten to overwhelm a culture that has been passed down through generations. Humans are social animals, but also susceptible to a "group-think" mentality. In this way, our natural, traditional culture must not be confused with "popular culture" – brought about by mass media, the information industry, and a global market place. Popular, or "mass" culture – music, the cinema, TV shows, fashion, and food – will be accepted by a majority of people in the society and will drag social capital in a new direction – "the effect of changing faces of people, especially the youth, is well-marked in their expression as popular culture". Yes, we will persist with the local food culture program, but at times it will struggle to compete with such "world food" as hamburgers and pizza. Not to mention the constant advertising and promotion – animated billboards and TV spots – of the "instant" two-minute noodle options from across the border. (Another sample of this global reach is the number of young Timorese who come to ETDA to build their English language skills after teaching themselves the basics from music and films. There has never been an established book-reading or textbook-learning tradition in Timor-Leste). The youth are "active practitioners of popular culture" … and "not interested in having the traditional approach". Survey data among Indian youth revealed that they were "astounded by Western culture", and were influenced by it in several areas that included Western Culture (32% strongly agreed; 29% agreed), music (36%; 31%), trends (29%; 26%), behavior (23%; 17%), and ideology (23%; 14%). However, it is when youth, in particular, "even believed that foreign culture was superior to their own traditions" that things can be difficult to reverse, due to youth becoming the primary consumers and users who characterize the difference between dominant ("pop") culture and the decline of the traditional culture.

Therefore, "young people are really experiencing the great impact of media globalization in changing their perceptions and acceptance of popular culture in terms of ethnicity, language, music, and festivals as representations of a new flavor

and social eminence, which further indicates the importance of popular culture identity".

But, as Wilson suggests, the popular culture "novelty" might wear off – or, at least, level off – "as you navigate your life and the social constructs around you … you have experiences or develop skills, interests, you join and leave certain communities because you have or lack commonality with their group members [including] education institutions, professional organizations, social clubs, online communities, political or special interest groups" , and support groups. But important parts of your cultural identity are harder to shed, some of which are (as a culture) assigned to you at birth, including: origin family, local community, geography, gender, religion, sexuality, generation, physical ability, nationality and language.

But it is can called of traditional culture still be heard through the busy, modern, white noise of popular culture?

Culture ban

The Central Desert Elders of Australia's Indigenous have a range of reactions to their plight. While many lament that "with no stories: [there] is no culture. No language, no culture. If we don't have language, what have we got to bargain with? Schools should be teaching the [children] with the language because while ever we have language, our culture will survive." The loss is "all the more painful for a people whose culture, language and family lore were never written down".

But it is their (faith, dreaming, ways, law) that binds them to their sense of place: trees, grasses, landforms, hills, and rocks that given them such knowledge of nature and land management. Consider the controlled burn-offs they used across the Central Desert for generations: the fire would result in new growth, which attracted grazing animals which the Anangu ("people") could then both harvest and hunt for traditional food. But, Europeans considered such as a practice to be dangerous and put an end to it. After massive fires that fed on the overabundance of growth in the 1950s, which wiped out one-third of Uluru-Kat Tjunta National Park, and another in 1976, when three-quarters of the Park was lost, the whites finally went back to the Anangu for advice and help.

It is a poignant example of cultural blindness. But through the second-half of the 19th century and first-half of the 20th, succeeding missionaries and governments believed "whitefella" education and classroom learning were more valuable than "primitive" ways. Says Muriel Olsson, who was taken from her birth family at age five: "It was forbidden for us to talk in our own language. If we had been able, we would have retained it … we weren't allowed to talk about anything that belonged to our tribal life".

As we will see, this is a common refrain, echoed by colonized and subjugated Indigenous people the world over, such as the Guarijios Indians of Central Sierra Madre, Mexico.

Asked what part of the traditional life should be retained in the distractions of the modern world, tribal governor Javier Zazueta says: the tuburada – this is our [two-day] ceremonial dance and feast where we all come together. The tuburada and our language is what make us Guarijios.

"… our priority is education. We need doctors, lawyers, engineers, and teachers to make our lives better here. At the same time, we must keep our traditions and language alive. At the moment there are some Guarijios who speaks no Spanish and some young ones who speak no Guarijios. Most of us speak both languages and this is best. This is what we want."

Grant considers: "It may be that their culture was once a richer, deeper river but now it appeared to be a very thin trickle indeed. The elders had a thorough knowledge of edible and medicinal plants but that was being lost. Younger Guarijios were more interested in clearing the forest to plant marijuana."

However, this is not just evidence of a loss of traditional knowledge in the onslaught of modern times. It is a very real loss of "belonging" – especially as it applies to younger generations. And especially if the youth feel trapped between two cultures and feel they belong to neither.

"In the workplace and educational there is sometimes a tendency to disregard or diminish this [cultural] identity and encourage the adoption of Western or presumed neutral or more modern cultural values," finds Palmer.

More than one study has shown that "isolation and lack of social relationships are connected to shorter lifespans".

Heyl takes this one step further and finds that "having a strong cultural identity can result in enhanced mental health".

When an individual feels seen, heard, and connected, not only is the sense of self and self-esteem enhanced, "but it may also provide a community of support". Heyl draws on a 2018 study into Maori youth in New Zealand that found "those who experienced a strong cultural identity had increased well-being".

And posits: "Cultural identity is often embraced by the most marginalized communities. Dominant/privileged groups may not feel the need to embrace their cultural identity and may not crave that support as much since they are subject to less discrimination." In Australia, in the post-war immigration boom, migrant students were taught about Australian (British-centric) geography and history, but on Saturday mornings went off to study their own heritage, while living in the new culture.

Greek/Italian/Chinese schools, taught by elders and cultural experts, explored their traditions of language, dress, song, dance, history, and food. They grew to understand their origin culture while living in the new. It is not necessary for Timor-Leste youth to have "Saturday school" but it is necessary to introduce more relevant cultural elements into the curriculum.

This not only improves the individual's understanding of shared values and background, but it builds confidence and commonality, and will provide a solid bridge to their family members and elders.

This works both ways, insomuch as Indigenous people feel greater well-being when they're involved in "passing on knowledge to young people, engaging with their community, participating in cultural events and developing a strong sense of identity and self-worth".

Culture class

In place of Saturday school, Timorese children need the cultural context provided for them in the home, through parents, extended family, and elders. If this is somewhat lacking (many Timorese move to Dili for work and study, while their families remain in district villages), then it should be a central part of the school curriculum. Only then will they be comfortable "in their own skin," and feel part of a place and culture that is relevant to them and that empowers them. Colonizers' "assimilation" policies willfully "destroyed Indigenous culture and communities" and happened the world over.

However, Berkeley University (California) researchers Doery and all contend, that many times this had a reverse effect: it "forced First Nations people to look to their communities, their country, and their culture as sources of resilience and positive well-being".

They point out that the Western concept of well-being differs from the First Nations' understanding of it. They also cite the late Gunditjmara and Bundjalong singer/songwriter, Archie Roach, who advises that "healing for First Nations people happens on-country, and through connection with culture".

Higher psychological well-being, they decide, was to be found in First Nations people who were more culturally engaged.

There are examples when mid-generational First Nations people, such as artist Mitch Mahoney, have taken the "old teachings" and passed them on, not only to Indigenous youth, but the host community. His recent project, in Australia's south-east , constructing a traditional, sea-going canoe, much as his ancestors had, from the outer layers of the Stringybark Gum tree, drew Indigenous youth and the wider community to watch or help in its creation.

"The [local] Aboriginal artists have really unique voices, they have unique techniques, and they have unique styles," offers Mahoney.

"Passing on cultural knowledge was extremely important" and "it helps Indigenous kids see that community is out there making things and it's something they can do, and they can get involved in their culture".

When young learners feel that their traditions are valued, and not dominated by the modern culture they often feel overwhelmed, they can settle into a dual world view where intercultural understanding can grow.

Hungry children

Over in another hemisphere, Canadian government researchers describe a similar scenario, where its First Nations preschoolers learn the Indigenous language South Slavey, sing songs, make crafts, learn about ceremonies, and take part in community events. "Culture and language are woven into every activity."

Indigenous communities have always tried to preserve and protect their culture. Finally, some non-Indigenous authorities are working to restore and encourage besieged and endangered minority members of their communities. They recognize that children can learn respect and wisdom from their elders.

"Language and culture are critical. Children are hungry for it. They must know who they

are." Says the Katl'odeeche First Nations Children's Centre's Elaine Rene-Tambour. "The children sing, dance, keep a nearly-lost language alive – "we also have an elder who comes to our center to cook traditional meals."

Earlier attempts to educate and assimilate the children in distant schools, away from families, and where they were forbidden from speaking their own language or practicing traditional customs were "disastrous." But the enlightened approach now is to build pride, restore identity and "have Aboriginal communities develop solutions that they know will work best for their children". Learning some Indigenous words and craft skills will not hurt non-Indigenous students either.

Young people. Learning a language. (English will now be the second tongue.) Getting back in touch with culture. Being introduced to traditional cuisine (before being tempted by bad-eating habits) – this is where we came in. In this way, this generation will not need to play "cultural catch-up" later in life.

Canadian child development experts know that "children with positive self-identity are more likely to grow up healthy [and when it] feels a sense of belonging to family, community, and peers, he or she is better able to deal with adversity".

Why did colonizers forcibly impose their foreign culture on the Indigenous – power? commerce? misguided charity? Why did they do their best to dominate, bury, and "disappear" the lives of the original inhabitants? That would be the subject of a much broader study than this one. While the invaders of Australia cleared land, brought about the extinction of many native species, and introduced such pests as rabbits, cats, goats, camels, deer, and cane toads, their battle was ultimately doomed to failure. Humans are resilient and their cause never as righteous as when they are being oppressed and disenfranchised.

"Colonization has limited [the Indigenous] ability to engage with their cultures and develop a strong sense of cultural identity."

National demographics are changing. Census data shows that almost half of Australian residents have a parent or parents born overseas. The white, Anglo-Saxon-Celtic population could be in the minority by the century's end. America is already fast approaching a 50% Hispanic, African-American, Asian-Pacific multi-racial demographic. In a way, it's another form of globalization and it inspires people to cling even tighter to their culture.

What is needed, now more than ever, is a culturally responsive curriculum that reflects the traditions and prior experiences of learners. And it should encourage intercultural understanding.

Cultural competence is a critical set of skills that teachers need to practice, if they are to help all students reach their full potential. Positive self-esteem and emotional well-being provide a strong foundation for the development of their cognitive abilities.

Understandably, many elders have fallen into deep despair about their loss of culture and land, the lack of connection with the youth, and the erosion of traditional ways. But does the preservation and sharing of knowledge and history really need to be "a race against the generational clock"? Timor-Leste observers lament "Things that were sacred are now just ceremonial … value is missing … you need to find your identity early in life".

Otherwise, it becomes just motion without meaning and presents as a "spectacle of dancers and singers … performing numbers whose badness asked to be excused on the grounds it was traditional".

Pockets of traditional life exist across the world – reduced and marginalized, victims of prejudice, ignorance, stigma, and greed. In Chile, colonizers of the 1800s all but wiped out the native Selk'nam: farmers posted a bounty on their heads, and thousands were slain. But now, with their rights being restored, people like Jose Luis Vasquez Chogue can declare: "I am not a 'descendant'. I am Selk'nam, just like my mother and grandfather." These people were hunter-gatherers who lived in harmony with nature until European farmers and sheep-breeders arrived.

Members of parliament expressed regret over the role Chilean and Argentinian states played in serial massacres against Selk'nam people and in 1995 returned parts of their traditional lands to them.

Chogue's grandfather never spoke of Selk'nam life. He was sent to the Salesian mission on Dawson Island until put up for adoption.

Selk'nam representative Hema'ny Molina says this was common: "I always knew that I was Selk'nam but that didn't mean living as such or understanding how to do it … it was a feeling of emptiness and total loneliness. Who am I going to talk to? Who am I going to tell? Will people believe me?"

Survivors raised their children without emphasizing their ethnicity. Testifies Miguel Pantoja: "To protect subsequent generations, the elders did not transmit our language. That's why I don't speak Selk'nam."

Over the past decade, many Selk'nam has "undertaken emotional and physical journeys to learn and recognize the history of their ancestors".

A similar story emerges from Japan, where laws have only just been passed to officially recognize the Ainu people, an Indigenous part of the population. Again: "Our parents' generation didn't pass down the Ainu culture at all." Far from being culturally and ethnically homogenous, there were Indigenous enclaves among the Yamoto colonizers. The Ainu were found in the nation's north, most noticeably on the large island of Hokkaido; they had their own history, language, and culture.

In an attempt to fold Hokkaido into Japan, the Ainu were banned from fishing for salmon between 1868 and 1912. Salmon fishing was revered in Ainu culture, with the Ashiri Chep Nomi ceremony that welcomed the salmon back from the ocean and into the Tokachi River.

Culturally cauterized and starved-out, the Ainu began to "disappear." This is despite Japan being a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous People.

It is estimated that less than two percent of Hokkaido is thought to be Ainu, but that "many people aren't aware of their heritage".

The Ainu, encouraged by consultation with First Nations people in America, are now learning about food, dance, and other aspects of their culture.

Kaito Ichikawa says his grandmother told him to keep his Ainu identity a secret, but he now embraces it: "I think it's cool that it's out in the open like this and we're fighting in court."

Let us end this short, Indigenous world-tour to consider the Evenki people of northern Russia. Reindeer hunters, who guided Soviet prospectors to gold and diamond deposits, they were rewarded with decimated forests, ransacked rivers, and polluted groundwater.

Like many Indigenous people, to the Evenki, nature is everything. Traditional hunters who roamed the eastern forests of Siberia for centuries, they were pushed out of their original homeland, but they remain attached to their land, and are an integral part of their ecosystem.

However: "Children are taught the Evenki language in kindergarten in Iengra, the only village in Yakutia, where the inhabitants have retained its use."

Miraculously, the Yakutia people have even withstood the invasion of the weird evangelical Baptists who blew into town in 1992.

What these anecdotes – and others – confirm is that after generations of injustice, including land, displacement and slaughter, Indigenous culture is deep and strong. To survive hundreds of years of bullying, brutality, exploitation, and massacre, Indigenous culture can now rise and take on their tormentors in court. At the same time, once-fearful elders can openly pass on their culture to youth, who want to embrace it. To introduce bilingual language to primary- or even kindergarten-level children builds a richer culture. Timorese students have the bulk of their lessons in Tetum, but also begin to learn English (or, depending on the school, Portuguese), and there is no reason why Australian students should not be instructed in an Indigenous language (depending on their region).

Elders say the same thing: "The children must have their education, but they also need to know their history, and their culture".

Traditional Anangu in Australia's Central Desert will more likely answer the 'phone by their country or totem or their place, rather than by their birth-name, as would Piranpa (Europeans). They gain a wealth of knowledge by being out on-country and walking their homeland.

"Imagine that: walking out into the desert and an elder will say 'Try this' and 'Try that' – they can find food in the middle of this land." No two-minute noodles.

Survivors always

The young Timorese do not need to go out and find wild food – they can if they need to – but they "need to be proud of cultural education and cuisine".

There are other training institutions and restaurants that feature Timorese cuisine in some form or another, but ETDA chefs and interns are instructed to present the meals to clients in every aspect: its regional provenance, cultural significance, ingredients, preparation, and presentation.

Whether they ate wallaby or reindeer, salmon or guanaco (related to the llama); made Stringybark canoes or kept their language alive in the face of smothering, brutal colonizers; challenged, and often won, land, and hunting/fishing rights; Indigenous cultures showed a hardiness through the heartbreak. Some fought, some fled, but they never truly forgot who they were. And this formidable character was not written down, nor was it formally taught.

Beaten-down and betrayed by colonizers, now bombarded by the clutter of popular culture, the world's Indigenous peoples have managed to cling to

important vestiges of their lands and traditions. Theirs are stories of loss, small triumphs, and protection of heritage. Traditional culture is a valuable depositary of knowledge, meaning and environmental protection. When neglected, tradition is easily lost, diluted, or destroyed. While the "modern world" looks on these people as "primitive or sinful", they fail to appreciate that they have survived sustainably for generations in a specific location. These societies built identity, ownership, tradition, and acceptance, and not from structures imported from outside their region.

FOOD AND IDENTITY

Kittler, Sucher, and Nelms (2012) coined the term food habits (also known as food culture or foodways) to describe the manner in which humans use food , including everything from how it is chosen, acquired, and distributed to who prepares, serves, and eats it. They stated that the significance of the food habits process is that it is unique to human beings. They pondered why people spend so much time, energy, money, and creativity on eating. A familiar saying that epitomizes the idea of food and identity is, "You are what you eat." This expression addresses two of the questions considered in the research: What does the food on my plate signify? and how do food practices contribute to personal identity? These questions address the concept of food as a cultural signifier and encompass fields as diverse as literature, anthropology, sociology, and history. Research shows that the relationship between the foods people eat and how others perceive them and how they see themselves is remarkable. Sadella and Burroughs (1981) surveyed individuals about their perceptions of themselves as consumers of food and how they viewed others based on their dietary habits. The researchers listed foods which were distinctive to five different diets: fast food (pizza, hamburgers, and fired chicken), synthetic food (Carnation Instant Breakfast, Cheez Whiz), health food (yogurt, protein shake, and wheat germ), vegetarian (bean sprout sandwich, broccoli quiche, avocado, and brown rice), and gourmet food (French roast coffee, caviar, oysters). They learned participants in the study associated different personality types with the food choices made for each of the five diets.

The People who eat fast food and synthetic food were classified as religious conservatives who often wore polyester clothing. Health food personalities were characterized as antinuclear activists and Democrats. Vegetarians were likely to be perceived as pacifists who have driven foreign cars. Gourmet food eaters were seen as individuals who were liberal and sophisticated. These stereotypes were established through self-descriptions and personality tests which were completed by individuals whose diets fell into the five categories. Another study examined people's perceptions of similar looking individuals based on the foods they consumed. Stein and Nemeroff (1995) asked university students to rate profiles of individuals based on their diets. The students were shown pictures of sets of two nearly identical looking people. One person in each pair was classified as the "good" food eater and the other was the "bad" food eater. Physically, all else was similar. Students judged the people who ate "good" foods in a more favorable light. They found the "good" food eaters to be thinner, active and fit than persons with the same physical characteristics and exercise habits who ate "bad" foods. In

addition, the persons who ate "good" foods were rated as more attractive, likable, quiet, practical, methodical, and analytical than those who ate "bad" foods.

Social and psychological factors have an influence on people's food habits and choices. Larson and Story (2009) examined these influences on the choices people make in food consumption. They learned that children tend to choose foods eaten by admired adults, like their teachers but not their parents. Children also chose food similar to that eaten by favorite fictional characters, peers, and especially their older brothers and sisters. Social conscience and peer pressure impact food choices (Brown, 2011). It was found that group approval or disapproval of a given food had an impact on food choices. If the group favored the food choice, a person is more likely to accept that food as part of his or her diet. On the other hand, when the group disapproves of a food choice, the person making the selection generally rejects the food in question. This may explain why some relatively unpalatable food items such as unsweetened espresso coffee were enjoyed by the author and her colleagues at numerous coffee bars in Naples, Italy. The culture in which she and her cohorts were immersed strongly approved of coffee breaks with espresso being the coffee of choice.

Food as an expression of identity is apparent in the experience of going out to eat. McComber and Postel (1992) suggested that restaurants serve more than food. They strive to satisfy nutritional and emotional needs in their clientele. When deciding where to dine out, consumers may consider a variety of factors, such as, the menu, atmosphere, service, location, and cost or value of the meal. It was found most restaurants cater to specific types of customers and that the same diner may choose a venue based on current needs. For instance, in the parent role, a quick, inexpensive restaurant with a playground is a good choice. That same diner may choose a business club which features a conservative setting for a work-related meeting. A candle-lit bistro with soft music and bottles of wine would be appropriate for a romantic evening out with a significant other. Ethnic restaurants hold an allure to clients as well. They appeal to natives of the homeland represented by offering familiarity and authenticity in foods served. For those who do not share the ethnicity of a dining establishment, the experience allows them to explore the novelty of a different and maybe even unfamiliar culinary adventure. Psychological needs intertwine with social factors when foods are used more for the meaning they represent more than the nourishment they offer or provide (Brown, 2011).

Cultural Identity

Culturally speaking, in essence, what one eats defines who one is and is not. This statement addresses the third question asked in the research, what are examples of how food and food habits contribute to the development and transmission of culture? Culture is defined as the beliefs, values, and attitudes practiced and accepted by members of a group or community. Culture is not inherited; it is learned. The food choices of different cultural groups are often connected to ethnic behaviors and religious beliefs. Kittler, P.G., Sucher, K.P., & Nelms (2012) addressed the influence of food habits on an individual's self-identity by stating, "Eating is a daily reaffirmation of [one's] cultural identity".

Many people affiliate the foods from their culture, their childhood with warm, good feelings and memories. The food is part of who we are and become. It ties us to our families and holds a special worth to a person. Foods from our culture and from our family often become the comfort foods we seek as adults in times of frustration and stress.

As an Italian American, the author began to consider how her heritage, handed down through the food on her plate, signified who has become today. During the seminar held in Naples, Italy, a focus of the lectures was an examination of how "Italian" food and the "Mediterranean diet" are marketed and have affected the socioeconomic reality of the region. During a lecture, the author asked about food traditions in Italian families. She learned a custom was the Sunday dinner. Every Sunday, the matriarch of the family prepared a large pot of spaghetti. The entire family then gathers to eat pasta and enjoy each other's company at Nana's (Grandmother's) house. The author is a second generation Italian American. As a child, every Sunday morning her father (first- generation Italian) and sometimes her mother (non-Italian) made spaghetti. It was a family tradition. Dear old Aunt Julia would come by precisely at dinner time with a hot loaf of bread (another Italian tradition is bring brea Food as a Culture or dinner) and the family ate and laughed and shared stori

The warm buttered br ere always served with the spaghetti. The memory as well as the spaghetti was delicious. This memory, connected to family's heritage and culture, confirmed to Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies Volume 8 – June 2014 Food and Identity, page 6 the author that food is much more than nutrients. There were emotional connections, a sense of belonging, and ethnic pride found in the food on the author's Italian plate.

Cultural identity, however, is not restricted by the specific foods one associates with a given ethnic or racial group. One's social class, standing in the community and profession are signifiers of culture as well. For instance, in American society, there are norms and standards which are followed in social settings when dining. The proper use of food and behaviors connected with civilized eating habits, also known as manners or etiquette is an expression of group membership. In the United States, a certain set of appropriate dining expectations exist for a variety of dining occasions. One does not speak with a mouth full of food, especially during formal dining occasions. Certain conversational topics would be inappropriate to share at the dinner table. Sharing a meal with another person connotes equality and is a way to show acceptance of one another professionally and personally.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the Indigenous Australians of the Central Desert – many of whom still live in remote communities – are slowly educating the dominant (European) culture. They successfully lobbied for a ban on scaling Uluru; for 70 years it distressed elders to watch tourists desecrating such a sacred site. Now, they much prefer to run their own tours, where Anangu people can better inform tourists of traditional life, art, food, and culture. The hope is that, through "fostering a

greater understanding of their culture, others will help with its preservation". When tourists can sit down with elders, hear their stories, and try some "bush tucker", they will leave with a truly rich cultural experience – more so than they would by clambering over a massive chunk of sandstone. A recent Australian referendum to have a consultative Indigenous "voice to parliament" was lost. But some Australian states will now consider drafting individual treaties with the Indigenous. This would have been useful one hundred years ago but reveals an inkling of enlightenment. For them, the oldest continuous culture on earth, it is now about finding a balance that "honors the past, accepts and embraces the present, and looks to the future". In all likelihood, our first childhood meals were traditional fare. Later in life, there are many choices – pizza, two-minute noodles – but we need to remember that heritage has real meaning, while globalization works to make us all the same. Food and heritage form the core identity of a people and a place. You can eat anything you want in locations like New York City and Australia – Greek, Italian, Indian, Chinese, Korean, Mexican, African and Turkish – because they have long-been multicultural destinations. The wedding feast mentioned earlier notwithstanding, Timor-Leste is largely homogenous. This is why it is so vital to celebrate what makes it so different. Food has always been a window into cultural history and shows the movement of people across time and place. This is exactly what drives the relatively new trend of gastronomic tourism. Travelers have become curious and passionate about what is put on their plates in an exotic location. Peru has apparently just accomplished this. Some visitors will sign up for cooking classes or get "hands-on" in meal preparation. It plugs them directly into the destination and will keep the memory alive. When they experience the taste and learn of the nutritional benefits and sustainability of such heritage-based dishes, they become part of the journey. This would be a potential pathway for Timor-Leste tourism. But for it to present itself as a food destination, the Timorese people need to culturally re-invest in heritage cuisine. It starts with School Gardens and Kitchen Gardens. And it must begin with the youth. Which means it must be a significant part of the school curriculum. Young learners are life-long learners. This needs to be a major element of Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan that "reflects the aspirations of the Timorese people to create a prosperous and strong nation". Says Reggie Uluru: "I want to be able to take the young people out bush and to show them everything about their country; all the different species and foods … learn about the perentie [monitor lizard] and the kangaroo … all the different foods and learn all the things like my father taught me." Individually, people can live healthier, happier lives through cultural food traditions. Or they may become entrepreneurial and run interactive cooking classes for tourists. But the key to it all is a vibrant curriculum, where students learn about Timor-Leste's history, geography, politics, art, and food. "Different cultures have different things to teach each other. So, when you have a strong sense of culture – and you have been taught values and respect from a young age – it creates equal and valuable cross-cultural understanding." And then, they can share, because everybody has a different story and a different way to communicate it.

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