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Helenka Lepkowski Ostrum
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Effects of Globalization and Tourism on the Commercialization of Hue Royal Cuisine

Helenka Lepkowski Ostrum

World Learning
School for International Training
Vietnam: Culture, Development, and Social Change
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Abstract:

The ancient royal city of Hue, located in the center of Vietnam, is known for being the former capital of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty from 1802-1945. Since receiving the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993, Hue has become a popular tourist destination in Vietnam. Many foreigners visit the city to experience the remnants of an ancient past still visible in the architecture, music, and cuisine and to see how the people live today. The royal cuisine of Hue, created under the Nguyen Dynasty, is one element of the city's royal history that is becoming increasingly available for tourists who wish to try food fit for an emperor.

This study explores the culinary traditions of the ancient city of Hue in the modern era, specifically how modern culinary techniques, the influx of tourism, and the availability of foreign ingredients has influenced the commercialization of the royal cuisine in Hue. This study looks at how restaurants offer the royal cuisine to tourists and Vietnamese people. Through participant observations at two Hue restaurants and comprehensive interviews and questionnaires with Vietnamese restaurant chefs, historians, and students, this research examines how globalization and tourism are affecting Hue's royal cuisine characteristics. This study also investigates the attempts being made by Hue people to actively preserve their cuisine traditions in a city that is becoming increasingly globalized.

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Introduction:

The focus of this paper is to research how the Hue royal cuisine is currently commercialized to tourists and Vietnamese people in the ancient royal city of Hue. Through a holistic research approach by completing comprehensive interviews, questionnaires, and participant observations this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What effects did the presence of the royal family in Hue have on the city's food culture?
- How have modern culinary techniques, the influx of tourism, and the availability of foreign ingredients influenced the commercialization of the royal cuisine in Hue both to tourists and Hue people?
- As globalization and tourism are occurring in Hue, how are traditional food preparations, presentations, and recipes being preserved in Hue for future generations?

Why study the Hue cuisine in Vietnam?

When Vietnam is mentioned to people from the United States, most associate the Southeast Asian country with U.S. war protests, the military draft, and the devastating lingering effects of chemical warfare like Agent Orange. When I told people I was studying abroad in Vietnam, I either received one of two responses. Either, I was told, "That's so interesting! Vietnam is becoming a much more developed country." or "Why would you want to go there? Isn't Vietnam a third-world country with a war-torn landscape?" What most people from the United States do not realize is that the Vietnam War, better known as the American War to the Vietnamese people, was one period of Vietnam's long history of foreign occupation. Vietnam struggled many years to become an independent country, but eventually achieved sovereignty.

Vietnam has come a long way since the American War. Following the American War, the north and south of Vietnam was united and the country focused on developing modern

infrastructure, expanding economic and trade policies, and creating higher education programs. Change was gradual and Vietnam has had to overcome many challenges to achieve these goals. After Vietnam opened its markets to overseas trading, Vietnamese people had more access to foreign goods and people around the world had a new window into Vietnam. As Vietnam developed the country's infrastructure, foreigners were able to experience Vietnam through tourism. Currently, many cities in Vietnam, like Hue, derive their main income from tourism. Vietnam has also benefitted from gaining UNESCO World Heritage Site recognition in several cities, which boosted the number of tourists who wanted to gain a glimpse and an understanding of an important, exotic location.

Hue, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a city in Vietnam whose economy revolves around the presence and consumption patterns of tourists. The city is filled with hotels and tourism agencies selling tour packages around the city's citadel and ancient tombs. Along the edge of the park, dragon boats float in the river waiting for tourists to buy an hour-long ride to see the scenery from the Perfume River. Hue offers a wide variety of restaurants that specialize in Italian, Indian, French, American, local Hue cuisine, and the royal cuisine of Hue.

Besides tourist blogs there is little to no research that looks at how the commercialization of Hue royal cuisine is affected by the presence of tourists in Hue city. Additionally, there is no research focusing on how tourism and globalization influences the consumption patterns of people who live in Hue. How Hue food traditions are being continued or changed is important to study to understand how globalization is being intertwined with traditional Hue food consumption patterns both by tourists and locals.

Background:

Influence from the Emperors: Royal Cuisine in Hue

Located in central Vietnam, the ancient royal city of Hue was home to the Nguyen Dynasty from 1802-1945. A citadel, which enclosed the forbidden city and the innermost structure of the forbidden purple city, housed the emperors, their families, and servants. During the emperors' reign in Hue, architecture, music, and the culinary arts flourished within the citadel's walls. The best chefs from around Vietnam were selected to travel to Hue and cook for the emperors. The chosen chefs were expected to take traditional dishes and infuse them with new textures and flavors to develop new dishes, worthy of the king (Tasting Hue Royal Heritage). Each chef had their own unique culinary background and brought culinary traditions from their home region to Hue. Cooking the royal cuisine required a thorough knowledge in the culinary arts, but also required a great deal of creativity and focus on design aesthetics. How the food was plated and presented became just as important as how the food tasted.

Cooking for the emperor required a wide selection of ingredients. Hue's central location allowed many provinces to send different types of food to the city. Many types of fruits that were grown in the south and birds from Hanoi in the north were shipped to Hue. A lagoon close to Hue, allowed for easy access to fresh seafood like shrimp, crabs, fish, and clams. Even foreign imported goods, like cognac from France, was present in the citadel (Vo The Long). For banquets, depending on the importance of the invited guests, the average number of dishes was around 100-150 (Nhu Huy).

The chefs' goal was to create a dish that would "impress and amuse" the emperor ("Hue's history of the Nguyen Dynasty"). Skillful chefs created lively carvings out of vegetables and fruit to make the dishes more beautiful, which often took form in the shape of

animals, like dragons and phoenixes. Composing the royal cuisine created new fusion dishes and started a precedent for an emphasis on presentation in Hue food. However, the food also served as a way to emphasize the social divide between the emperor and his people. While the emperors were living in luxury, the quality of life of the common people living in Hue and around Vietnam was much lower.

Common people were forbidden from copying any of the royal style, including the cuisine (Tasting Hue Royal Heritage). After the last emperor gave up his title, citizens in Hue were no longer prohibited from eating royal cuisine. Despite the lifted restriction, future wars, a countrywide economic depression, and multiple famines prevented the Hue people from having sufficient funds and access to purchase a variety of foods. It would be decades before royal cuisine would become a commercialized product in Hue, available to those outside the royal family.

Vietnam's Economic Struggles: The Effects of Famine and War

The Vietnamese people have had a long history with famine. While the French occupied Vietnam from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, "Precious land and manpower were commandeered to exploit natural resources and produce crops such as cotton, jute, and oil-bearing plants, rather than food for the local population" (Fay, 68). Food products, like rice, that could be grown in the north, had to be shipped in from the south. Vietnam was dependent on small regions to produce agricultural crops for human consumption of the entire country. "Between October 1944 and May 1945, up to two million people died of starvation in Vietnam" (68). This same year, 1945, the last emperor, Bao Dai, abdicated the throne and passed the country's leadership over to the communist leader Ho Chi Minh ("Hue's History of the Nguyen Dynasty").

Ho Chi Minh continued to fight for Vietnam's independence and rallied the country against French and American occupations. At the Geneva Conference in 1954, Vietnam was divided into two parts: the north and the south. The division was suppose to last two years, but instead Vietnam was separated for twenty (Dung Ngoc Duong). During the American War, the north/south division also affected Vietnamese people's access to food products. North Vietnam had trouble obtaining imports from South Vietnam and the South relied heavily on U.S. aid. With America's strong support in the south, the residents had better access to food (Fay, 69).

Eventually, after defeating the Americans, the country was reunified in 1975. Reunification came with many challenges. When the country was unified, a socialist system was implemented and 90% of the economy was controlled by the government. All the resources, like land and capital were owned by the government. Inflation was high, fluctuating from 60-700%. Economic growth was at 0.5% per person per year and the average yearly income per person was \$100.00. Perhaps the most staggering statistic is that the poverty rate was 90%. Famine affected a variety of regions in Vietnam, but was still a national problem (Hoai Trong Nguyen).

Kim Fay, the author of *Communion: A Culinary Journey Through Vietnam*, lived in Vietnam during the 1990s teaching English. Nearly a decade later, she returned with her sister to document stories of the cuisine and the Vietnamese people in the different regions around Vietnam. She had many Vietnamese friends who shared their experiences with famine in the 1980s. "...Famine and its poor relation, the food shortage, are the ache of hunger every day, without relief. It is eating not enough spongy rice and taro, and being sickly all the time, and hearing your mother cry quietly at night when she thinks you are asleep" (68). One of her friends told her that she should have a younger sister, but she died as an infant because, "She had to drink rice milk, and there just wasn't enough protein" (102). With all of the food shortages

the Vietnamese people were losing faith in their government. The government realized that drastic policy changes needed to be made to stimulate the economy and boost the people's faith in their leadership.

Doi Moi: Transitional Period of Economic Reform

In 1986, Doi Moi, a plan for reform was implemented. Doi Moi transitioned Vietnam's economy from a centrally planned system to a market oriented system. One of the major changes was that the government shifted more control to workers, especially in the agricultural sectors. Previously, the government had owned all land rights and farmers were pressured to work on farm cooperations. The North had tried to convert peasant farmers into collectives, starting in 1959, but this had failed when the farmers still received low prices for their crop (Fay, 69). After Doi Moi, the land still belonged to the government, but farmers were able to receive land use rights (Hoai Trong Nguyen).

Foreign trade, which had been closed before Doi Moi, was opened and stimulated the Vietnamese economy and agricultural sectors immensely. Vietnam went from not having enough food to feed all of its citizens to becoming the second largest rice exporter in the world. In 2011, Vietnam exported six million tons of rice and the number is expected to grow in future years (Dr. Duong Van Ni). Currently, economic growth in Vietnam is projected to be around 6%. The poverty rate has shrunk from 90% to 11% and people's yearly income is \$1,100 . In 2007, Vietnam joined the WTO, further solidifying its presence in foreign trade markets around the world (Hoi Trong Nguyen).

The Influx of Tourism in Vietnam

Besides Vietnamese government policy changes, the agreements that were made between the United States and Vietnam in the 1990's also influenced the country's economy and

encouraged the birth of Vietnam's tourist industry. For around twenty years after the American War, Vietnam and the United States had no trade relations. In 1994, President Clinton, lifted the trade embargo allowing exchange of commercial materials for the first time in nearly two decades between the two countries (Mr. Brian Newbort). With softening U.S. and world relations, Vietnam was beginning to shed its war image and replace it with a new tourist image of beaches, friendly people, and exotic cuisine.

One year before the U.S. embargo was lifted, in 1993, Hue was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Hue's citadel and seven royal tombs were classified by UNESCO under cultural criteria IV - "to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape with illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history" (Criteria for Selection). Foreigners now had a specific reason to visit Vietnam and Hue, tourism. Tours around the citadel and tombs were created and people in Hue realized they could also capitalized on the cuisine of the emperors.

Methodology:

Research Design

This research was conducted in Hue during November 2012. This research focuses on two case studies of two restaurants in Hue City and complementary interviews with chefs, a historian, university students, and a tourism agency. Data was collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires.

Justification

As globalization and tourism impact Hue, the food that was once reserved for the royal family is finding a place among two groups: tourists and Vietnamese during special ceremonies, specifically wedding reception parties. There is little research that deals specifically with

studying how the royal cuisine has been commercialized for use by tourist and the Vietnamese people. Also, the young generation never had to experience the hardships of the previous generation. There is little research studying how and if this young generation will continue preserving the culinary traditions of a city that is becoming increasingly globalized and tourist-oriented.

This research project's data collection, analysis, and the compilation of all the data was done across a one-month time frame. Since there was limited time, the scope of the research was focused on two restaurants in Hue; one, which specialized in the overall dining experience of a tourist in Hue and the second, in wedding reception parties for Vietnamese couples. Studying two restaurants allowed for in-depth interviews and adequate time for participatory observations at both locations. It also allowed for a comparison study between how the royal cuisine was commercialized to tourists and the Vietnamese people.

Sample

The sample includes chefs and managers from Ancient Hue Restaurant and Duy Tan Hotel Restaurant both located in Hue. All chefs and managers that were interviewed were recruited based on their time schedule and voluntariness. Initial contact was made through my advisors, Thanh Duong and Nhu Huy and a student volunteer, Hien Vo. After obtaining oral consent, I interviewed and engaged with the chefs through participatory observations (see Appendix A). The sample also includes thirty-five Hue university students, the majority who were from the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism (note the term "faculty" refers to a department, not those employed by the university). Student volunteers helped to make the initial connections to other university students. After learning about my research intentions and giving their oral consent, seventeen were interviewed and eighteen filled out questionnaires.

Data Collection

Research took place during the day at the Duy Tan Hotel Restaurant Kitchen and Ancient Hue Restaurant and Gallery. Student interviews were conducted in public places during the afternoons and evenings. The interview with the travel agency took place at the agency's Hue location. Research was also collected at the homes of Nhu Huy and Mr. Long. At any point in the research study, participants were able to disengage themselves from the study. Interviews were recorded by hand. To document participant observations, field notes were written and with the agreement of the participants photos and videos were taken.

Interviews were conducted in-person and when necessary, translators were used to facilitate interviews. Data was confidential and participants were given the option to have their names changed to preserve their anonymity. The researcher maintained an open, public relationship with the participants and thoroughly explain the goal of the research project before engaging in data collection.

Research Findings:

Case Study I: Ancient Hue Restaurant and Gallery

Restaurant Layout

Walking through the open gates of Ancient Hue Restaurant, one immediately sees a mosaic wall that is at least ten feet tall and thirty feet wide. The mosaic wall may seem like just a decorated wall, but it represents one of Hue's architectural traditions. According to Vietnamese tradition, the wall functions as a screen to prevent bad spirits from entering a home. During the 1800s, the Vietnamese believed anyone who entered into traditional Vietnamese houses had to enter through the side doors, never directly through the front entrance (Hien Vo). Off to the left and the right are two paths with stairs that lead to the main restaurant garden plaza.

The plaza is an open space with stepping stones, bonsai trees, and outdoor tables and chairs. Wrapping around the right side of the plaza is a stream with large goldfish and a wooden bridge to cross over to a dining room. To the left of the plaza is a traditional Vietnamese wooden garden house. There is a wooden screen blocking the main entrance (functioning like the large mosaic wall to keep out the bad spirits) and the inside is furnished with wooden tables, traditional Vietnamese artwork, a Buddhist altar, and a modern video projector used to show a film about Hue's history to tour groups.

To the right of the traditional house is a small traditional thatched Vietnamese house and outdoor kitchen containing small clay pots perched over a few pieces of charcoal. Tucked away in the left corner of the plaza lies the industrial kitchen, a stark contrast to the outdoor kitchen. The modern kitchen has tile floors, shiny counters, metal pots, gas stoves, refrigerators, freezers, and a variety of stainless utensils. The rest of the property surrounding the garden plaza is where the restaurant buildings are located. There are three dining rooms built from dark wood in the same style as the traditional house and adorned with carvings and artwork.

Commercialization of the Royal Cuisine for Tourists

Construction on Ancient Hue Restaurant and Gallery began in 2005. In 2007, the restaurant opened its doors for business. Madame Thuy, who is the general manager, was born and raised in Hue. She had many jobs after graduating from Hue University, but became manager when her brother in law decided to build Ancient Hue Restaurant. The restaurant was built to highlight the royal cuisine. Along with featuring the royal cuisine, the owner of Ancient Hue also wanted a place to preserve and display traditional Hue art and architecture, which is why the wooden houses were constructed. According to Madame Thuy, most of the people who come to Ancient Hue are tour groups and business groups. Madame Thuy said that customers

are expecting to experience food in the traditional royal style at a reasonable price. With the recent economic crisis, she has had to work with the chefs to tweak the menu to feature ingredients that are less expensive while still preserving the overall image of the royal cuisine. Chefs at Ancient Hue use modern cooking techniques, like gas stoves, and a variety of ingredients to prepare their version of the royal cuisine for customers. They also incorporate traditional aspects of the royal cuisine such as decorative carvings to preserve the food's royal appearance.

Tuyet - Ancient Hue Carver

It is 11:00 a.m. and two chefs are busy in the kitchen slicing squares of pale yellow homemade bean curd, which is on today's menu. One woman is sitting alone at a metal table off to the side of the kitchen, surrounded by an assortment of small knives and root vegetables. Below the table is a bowl filled with three orange goldfish, carved from a pumpkin, that look like they are swimming. This woman is the carver. Tuyet is one of two chefs at Ancient Hue that specializes in carving decorations to adorn the plates of guests. Three years ago, when she was 21 years old, Tuyet learned how to carve from another chef at Ancient Hue Restaurant. She occasionally still uses reference books like, *The Complete Practical Book of Fruit Art Carving*, which gives instructions on how to carve different fruits, but mostly does everything from memory. Each dish has a specific plating element and the name of the dish often corresponds with the decoration attached, like phoenix salad. The majority of tour groups and customers order from pre-set menus so the chefs and carvers know exactly what to prepare for the day. Many of the dishes feature the same basic decorations, like flowers carved from carrots, so they can be reused on dishes later in the day. The decorations are meant to be viewed, not eaten, and are almost all disposed of the same day they are created.

In front of Tuyet is a white turnip carved in the shape of the head of a bird. The beak is crafted from an orange carrot and black peppercorns adorn the eyes. Tuyet works quickly, switching tools to carve feathers down the phoenix's neck. Each day she works eight-hour shifts, carving the entire time. In one day she usually makes twenty small and two big carvings. The large carvings, like the phoenix, can take around one and a half hours. She uses white turnips, carrots, melons, green papayas, pumpkins, tomatoes, and cucumbers to carve animals like dragons, crabs, fish, shrimp, and swans. She also carves flowers and famous architecture from Hue like bridges, pagodas, and dragon boats.

At the end of each customer's meal, Tuyet goes to the guests' table with a carrot, turnip, and some small knives. She starts by carving the carrot while the guests try to guess what it will be. In a matter of seconds an orange prawn appears. She then demonstrates how to make a rose out of the turnip to the delight of the customers who "ooo" and "ahhhh", taking out their cameras to record the food art.

Tham - Ancient Hue Head Chef

Tham was twelve years old when she became interested in cooking. She learned how to prepare some Hue traditional recipes, like bun bo Hue (beef noodle soup) from her mother. Tham was born in Hue, but completed a three-year cooking course in Hanoi after finishing high school. Now at age 47, she has worked for a total of 27 years in the restaurant industry. When I interviewed her, she was in her third month at Ancient Hue Restaurant.

As head chef, she decides what will be on the menu and how it is plated. In the past, the menu was more dependent upon the season since chefs had to grow their own ingredients. She remarked that with the presence of supermarkets and outdoor markets it is much more convenient to purchase out-of-season ingredients. Also, it is easier to buy imported ingredients,

like alcohol and cheese. She said tourism has made the royal cuisine more famous, though it is not exactly the same as it was during the time of the Nguyen Dynasty, which can be attributed to the variety of ingredients that were not available during the emperors' reign. Recently available products such as chicken powder and MSG enhance and add a different flavor to the royal cuisine dishes that could not have been achieved before.

To plate each dish, she considers the meaning of each dish and how to symbolize the stories on the plate. The phoenix and dragon represent the queen and king respectively and are a typical garnish used to distinguish the royal cuisine from common food.

Huong - Ancient Hue Assistant Chef

Huong sits at a small table outside the kitchen peeling a large bowl of shallots. She has worked for 12 years in the culinary field after her initial career as a photographer. She did not go to university, but learned all her cooking knowledge from working in restaurants. Cooking at Ancient Hue, Huong remarked that the menu is catered to tourists. The chefs use of ingredients distinguishes the tourist food from the dishes cooked for local Hue people. Even though the chefs are preparing royal cuisine the food is still cooked with less chili and spice at the restaurant than what they would cook if they were home. When cooking, Huong looks at recipes for the list of ingredients, but estimates and tastes the dish to decide on the correct proportions.

Inside the Dining Room

The entire experience that customers have at Ancient Hue is meant to transport them back to the time of the Nguyen Dynasty, with modern conveniences to make customers more comfortable. The waitresses wear red and gold ao dai's, the traditional Vietnamese dress, which symbolize the colors of the royal family. Each dining room is adorned with plush upholstered chairs and hand crafted wooden tables. The air conditioner is on high as easy listening music

plays in the background. Each customer who orders from the fixed menu is presented with a paper menu, outlining the order of the dishes written in Vietnamese and English. In the large a la carte menu, the menu prices are written in U.S. dollars, catering to tourists. The restaurant also accepts payment by U.S. dollars, Vietnamese dong, and the Euro.

The fixed menu lists seven dishes: three appetizers, one main dish, two side dishes, and a dessert. On November 21, the menu included vegetable soup, deep fried bean curd, rice paper rolls with grilled pork, royal stewed red snapper in ginger sauce, sauteed bok choy with oyster sauce, steamed rice, and sweet taro mousse with coconut ice cream. The fried bean curd was plated with a carving of a vase of flowers, the rice paper rolls had a carrot flower, and the red snapper was served with a fish carved from pumpkin on a piece of ginger. The waitresses cleared the plates after each course and swiftly replaced them with the next dish.

None of the dishes were very spicy or over seasoned. Instead, each of the ingredients were balanced so that they complemented and enhanced the flavor of the entire dish. The fried bean curd had a crispy breading surrounding the silky smooth filling. It was paired with a tangy dipping sauce to offset the mellow flavor of the bean curd. The ginger sauce added a peppery, sweet taste to the red snapper. The bok choy added a contrasting crisp texture to that of the soft fish and the fresh flavor prevented the ginger sauce from overwhelming the dish. For dessert, the taro mousse had a texture similar to pudding. The taro mousse was bitter, but the scoop of cold coconut ice cream on top added just the right amount of sweetness to balance the dessert's flavors. During the meal, the front of house manager came around to make sure everything was going smoothly and at the end Tuyet came to demonstrate her carving skills.

Case Study II: Duy Tan Hotel Restaurant:

Commercialization of Royal Cuisine for Hue Residents

The Duy Tan Hotel was built for tourists, but also caters to Vietnamese couples. It is a popular place for Vietnamese couples to host their wedding receptions because the dishes feature the royal cuisine and there are elaborate performances at the reception. The royal cuisine has made a reappearance in the last twenty years at Vietnamese wedding receptions in Hue. Though it is no longer forbidden for commoners to eat the royal cuisine, the amount of time and selection of ingredients needed to prepare the royal cuisine has made it a popular cuisine reserved for special occasions. As an intern at the restaurant, I was able to observe the preparation, cooking, and plating that went into each meal. During my two week internship I was able to observe six wedding receptions while I worked from 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. The first two days of my internship, there were no weddings so I was able to observe and figure out the layout of the kitchen.

The Duy Tan Restaurant kitchen is located at the back of the hotel, between two reception halls. There are prep tables along the side of the outer walls, as well as at least six spaced out in the room. There are seven large gas burners in the middle of the kitchen, giant metal pots underneath the tables, and freezers in one of the corners. One pantry is devoted to perishable foods such as fresh vegetables, herbs, and fruit, while the other contains non-perishable items like canned food and packaged ingredients. One entire wall of the pantry is devoted to fish sauce, soy sauce, bags of MSG, and hot sauce. Perched on top of the hood fan above the burners there is a Buddhist shrine with incense, flowers, fruit, and a picture of Buddha. There are also giant steamers and rice cookers scattered around the kitchen, but no actual ovens.

The only two ovens are in a separate room and I only saw them used once the entire time I was there.

Each day around forty chefs work in the kitchen, either during the morning or afternoon shift. Chefs on the morning shift arrive as early as 5:30 a.m. then leave at 1:30 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. At the busiest time during the day when the food is being served there can be more than twenty chefs in the kitchen along with ten waiters and waitresses taking the food out to the guests.

Every morning, the restaurant receives around ten food deliveries. Plastic bags filled with herbs, cut up meat, whole fish, eels, vegetables, and fruits are laid out onto a prep table, weighed, and sorted into the appropriate locations. On wedding reception days, one man would come with a hundred live fish and kill, gut, and scale them off to the side of the kitchen before a chef would take over and either fry or steam them. Days when there were weddings, the kitchen was filled with steaming pots and hundreds of plates. Each chef had their own task either cutting vegetables, frying meat, or plating the meal. Typically, each wedding has about six dishes consisting of soup, salad, fish, two meat dishes such as lemongrass pork ribs, boiled chicken, or beef with kimchi, and a dessert like yogurt or flan.

Plating

When plating the food, the chefs first lay out a vegetable decoration on each dish. The aesthetic appeal of each dish is very important; appearance, taste, and texture are all taken into account. Garnishes and vegetable carving decorations are meant to mimic the royal cuisine of the Nguyen Dynasty. Cucumbers, tomatoes, and pumpkins are popular foods that the chefs use for carving. Chefs spend hours carving dragons out of pumpkin, flowers out of carrots, turnips, cucumbers, and tomatoes. To plate one of the main meat dishes, strips of green cucumbers are arranged to make a diamond shape on the white dishes and bright red tomato halves are placed at

each of the four corners. One side of the plate is filled with kimchi speckled with red chili and the other is filled with beef. The entire dish is garnished with fresh herbs and a flower carved from a carrot. Another popular wedding dish is lemongrass pork ribs. The plate is outlined with cucumbers and the ribs are placed around a flower made from a curled red tomato skin.

All of the dishes have some form of fresh vegetable on the plate such as carrots, lettuce, or tomatoes. Most of the dishes are garnished with a variety of fresh herbs including mint, parsley, and basil. The final dishes are filled with vibrant colors, a variety of textures, and a balance of flavors. The seafood salad is a good example of a dish that represents each design aesthetic. The base of the salad is made from shredded banana flowers, bean sprouts, carrots, radishes, and cucumbers. A dressing made from fish sauce, sugar, lime, crunchy peanuts, chopped red chili, fried and crispy shallots, and ginger is poured over the top. Fresh green herbs and whole peeled pink shrimps are arranged around the plate's edge. Finally, a bright red chili, in the shape of a flower, is added as a garnish on the side. Also, from the amount of chili used in this dish it is very noticeable that the chefs are cooking for Vietnamese people and not for tourists.

Wedding Reception - Impact of Globalization

At the reception, the clothing is a mix of Western and Vietnamese. Typically, at the actual wedding the bride and groom will wear traditional Vietnamese outfits, but their reception clothing is very westernized. The bride wears a white wedding gown and the groom wears a suit. At Duy Tan Hotel, the waiters and waitresses dress up in traditional Vietnamese garb colored red and gold, mimicking the colors and dress of the royal family. The waitresses' ao dai's have embroidered phoenix's representing the symbol of the queen. The waitstaff does a traditional Vietnamese dance performance as the bride and groom walk on an elevated platform

through the crowd to the main stage. After the ten minute performance, the waitstaff quickly change back into their serving outfits, purple ao dai's for the women, and black pants with white shirts for the men, and take out the dishes to the guests.

Wedding receptions use to be a completely family run social function. The bride's family would prepare a large meal the day after the wedding and invite all of their friends, relatives, and co-workers to their home for the entire day to feast and celebrate their daughter's marriage. The whole family would pitch in cooking and cleaning the home to prepare for the celebration. In the past ten to twenty years it has become more common for Hue residents to have their receptions at hotels that last a fixed amount of time, usually two to three hours (Ngo Hong Khanh).

Discussion:

A Look to the Future

From my case studies, it is clear that tourism and globalization has increased the availability of the royal cuisine in Hue for tourists and for Vietnamese people. Along with a resurgence in the traditional cuisine, tourism and globalization has also influenced variety of foreign cuisines available in Hue. Before 1993, Hue's restaurants mainly sold Vietnamese food. Since Hue became a tourist destination, Japanese, Italian, French, and American restaurants have sprung up around the city. The current generation of university students in Hue live in a much different food environment than their parents. To discover how culinary traditions are being preserved in the current generation I interviewed a historian, university students, and chefs to gain their perspectives.

Before conducting research in Hue, I interviewed Dr. Vo The Long, a historian in Hanoi. We discussed his family and how eating habits have changed from generation to generation.

When he was growing up with five other siblings he said everyone was expected to help prepare meals with his mother. They had to cook and clean up for every meal. “Now, children are in school so they eat at school. Formally, all four generations would eat together. They would follow the oldest person since the oldest use to have the right to make decisions.” For Vietnamese families, it is still common for all generations to live together: grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren. The oldest grandparents would give input on what they wanted to eat and the rest of the family would usually just follow along. I asked if his grandchildren show any interest in cooking and eating traditional Vietnamese food and he shook his head. “That’s a big problem. Children do not want to eat like their mother and father. My grandchildren say, “No, no I can’t eat like this.” He paused and added, “Maybe if their peers ate traditional Vietnamese food then they would too.” He continued to say that children in Vietnam want to follow Western style. Birthday parties, which were originally celebrated in the West, are now common in Vietnam. At birthday parties, he thought most kids choose to eat American food, like burgers or pizza. Dr. Vo The Long seemed very nostalgic for the cuisine traditions of his childhood. His perspective of the young generation in Vietnam made me initially think that Vietnamese culinary traditions are going to be hard to preserve in a country where globalization is affecting all aspects the people’s lives. In Hue, I spoke with a tourism company, university students, and Chef Huy about the future of Hue traditional cuisine.

Ngo Hong Khang, the Chief Representative of the tourist company, Trail of Indochina, emphasized that before the UNESCO certification, Hue had few to no tourists. The Hue people had jobs mostly in the education or agriculture sectors. Since 1993, the city has shifted its focus to accommodate and entertain tourists from around the world. Each month, he welcomes around two hundred tour groups to Hue. Though tourists are visiting Hue, Ngo Hong Khang’s goal is to

have tourists stay longer and spend more money in the city. Typically, tourists stay for one or two nights. He expressed his desire for tourists to really understand the city and the people rather than just seeing the major sites like the citadel and ancient tombs. One of the excursions his travel agency plans is a trip to a local outdoor market. The tourists are introduced to the local and foreign ingredients that are sold at the market by a tour guide. They have the opportunity to talk with the market vendors and sample the different foods. Tourists can also participate in cooking classes to learn how to recreate traditional Hue dishes. Each of these tour programs, needs to have a knowledgeable tour guide who can speak multiple languages, interact with all different types of people, and teach foreigners about the culture of Hue.

With the influx of tourism in Hue, there was a demand for tour guides. Hue University added a department called the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism (HAT) to prepare students to work in tourist industry. The introduction on HAT's website reads, "With the ultimate goal of nurturing the best human resources to lead and guide Vietnam rapidly expanding hospitality and tourism industry, the HAT faculty attaches particular importance to excellence in the classroom and practical training, innovative research and international cooperative agreements" (Hospitality and Tourism). All of the students that I contacted went to Hue University and over twenty of them were students at HAT. They were training to become tour guides, tour company managers, and hotel managers, and chefs.

I attended an English club class and held a group interview with seventeen students from Hue University to learn about their food consumption patterns. All of them said that their mother cooked the meals in their family and that they sometimes helped her cook. I asked what their favorite food was to eat. Some of their responses included BBQ pork with noodles, hot pot, pizza, beef noodle soup, and hamburgers. When I asked what their favorite food was to cook,

they answered with all Vietnamese or Asian dishes like hot pot, steamed rice, fried rice, and banana leaf tapioca pancakes. Thirteen of the students said that they always eat all of their meals at home. Since they all attend the same university, the students have a similar daily schedule. They said their families usually eat breakfast at different times because they start work at different hours, but have lunch and dinner together as a family. I asked if their mother's pay attention to decoration and they said they do not have time to carve decorations for typical meals. However, they do focus on the color of the dish and make sure to incorporate a lot of different ingredients to get a variety of colors and balance of flavors.

Each student said that their mothers go to the outdoor food markets daily to buy ingredients for the day's meals. They prefer the local market rather than the supermarket because the food is fresh. Most of the vegetables and fruits are imported from southern Vietnam, like from the city of Dalat, and the meat comes from the local countryside. One student mentioned that it is becoming harder to distinguish the origin of products. She said that her family tries to avoid produce that comes from China. The other students nodded and said that their families try to boycott products from China because they believe they are filled with chemicals and unsafe for consumption. This distrustful sentiment was repeated to me by almost every person that I interviewed about buying food at outdoor markets. With greater access to ingredients, people in Hue have to show greater caution when purchasing products for consumption.

Though they said they eat mostly at home, university students in Hue still have a wider variety of cuisine options than their parents. On my questionnaire, I asked students "Do you have more access to foreign ingredients or food products than your parents or grandparents had when they were in their twenties?" Out of the 18 written surveys, only one person answered "no"

to this question. One answer was, “With globalization I have a lot of chances to access many kinds of food products than my parents or grandparents”. Another student answered, “Yes, hot dog, sandwich, hamburger, pizza, spaghetti”, which reflects the influence of American foods. During my English club group interview, the students pointed out that Hue has the Korean fast food restaurant Loteria and the American chain KFC. The students also mentioned that younger children prefer to eat fast food rather than traditional Vietnamese dishes, more so than their generation, which coordinated with what the historian Dr. Vo The Long had said.

Another question that I asked both to the English Club students and on the questionnaire was, “If you have children, do you think it is important to teach them any culinary skills, specifically any dishes from Hue?” Every student answered yes. Some of the questionnaire responses were, “That is so necessary because I am Vietnamese. Food in each local area express a typical culture. My children will be taught specifically any dishes from Hue.” “Yes I do. Teaching them some culinary skills is one of the best ways to maintain the traditional cultural values.” “Yes! Very important! Because Hue cuisine is a part of culture, the life of the people.” From these responses, I concluded that maintaining the traditional Hue cuisine is an important duty that university students feel like they have to transfer to the next generation to preserve their culture and cultural identity.

Conclusion

During November, I spent time with my research advisor, Ms. Huy, an influential culinary figure in Hue. Ms. Huy use to be a teacher, but then decided to come back to Hue and pursue a career in cooking. She has trained in France and is an honor member of the French National Academy of Cuisine. Currently, she has three full-time jobs: teaching culinary school

students, cooking, and writing books and poems. Ms. Huy also is a judge for important cooking competitions.

While conducting my ISP, Ms. Huy told me to go to her house one Sunday morning to be filmed by VTV (a Vietnamese television station) for a documentary about her culinary legacy. The film crew, consisting of two camera men and one woman, who conducted the interviews. First, they filmed Ms. Huy and I walking through the outdoor market near her house. She talked about the products, describing where they came from and what they could be used to make. We bought some ingredients like carrots, green figs, and ground pork and walked back to her house to prepare two dishes: warm fig salad and spring rolls.

Around this time, some of her culinary students, who were all in their early to mid twenties, started arriving. The students helped us chop the vegetables and prepare the dishes. Once the fig dish was assembled and garnished with a bright red flower-shaped chili we started to make spring rolls. In the background, her students were carving some flower decorations to adorn the plates. The TV crew filmed the cooking demonstration and asked me a few questions about Hue cuisine and Ms. Huy. After filming more interviews they left and Ms. Huy, her students, and I were able to enjoy the food we had prepared.

When Ms. Huy shared her culinary knowledge with me, a foreigner, and with her Vietnamese students she demonstrated how Hue traditions have been maintained by being passed from generation to generation and culture to culture. Ms. Huy respects the traditional Hue style while encouraging her students to come up with their own dishes. She teaches students how to cook royal cuisine and local Hue dishes, but also emphasizes that they need to know how to cook creatively. The students are able to mix old and new cooking methods, ingredients, and cooking technologies to create fusion dishes that reflect their unique culinary backgrounds. It was clear

that her students looked up to her and regarded Ms. Huy as a culinary god. One of the students told me that Ms. Huy was their idol and that they really enjoyed learning from her because she taught them the basics, but encouraged culinary experimentation. Ms. Huy is bridging Western and Eastern styles, old and new cooking styles, and young and old generations through her food.

Through tourism and globalization, Hue city has dramatically changed into a tourist town. Tourism has helped to reintroduce royal cuisine into the lives of foreign visitors as well as the Hue people. The royal cuisine is considered traditional, but aspects of the dishes have changed since the Nguyen Dynasty because chefs have greater access to ingredients, modern cooking technology, and new cooking ingredients. The younger generations that reside in Hue have many more cuisine options than their parents and grandparents, but even though Hue is a very globalized city, current attitudes of university students reflects the belief that Hue cuisine is an integral part of their culture and their identity as Hue residents. As time goes on, the cooking methods and ingredients used to cook traditional Hue dishes will likely change, but the chefs' presentation style and attention to flavor, texture, and design will likely continue to reflect aspects of the royal cuisine.

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Co Tham. Head Chef at Ancient Hue Restaurant. Translated by Hien Vo. 21 November 2012.

Madame Thuy. Manager of Ancient Hue Restaurant. 21 November 2012.

Tram. Student Volunteer. Hue, Vietnam. 20 November 2012.

Dr. Vu The Long. Historian. Hanoi, Vietnam. 7 November 2012.

Appendix A:

Questions used in a questionnaire with restaurant chefs and managers are as follows:

- 1 Name (optional):
- 2 Gender:
- 3 Age:
- 4 Where did you grow up? How long have you lived in Hue?
- 5 When were you born? Are you married? Do you have children?
- 6 Did you go to university? If yes, what is the name of your university and your major?
- 7 What type of culinary education did you receive?
- 8 How old were you when you became interested in cooking?
- 9 How long have you worked in the culinary field?
- 10 Did you have any previous occupations?
- 11 Did any of your relatives or close family acquaintances cook well? If yes, were you influenced by their cooking style?
- 12 What types of meals did you grow up eating? Do you still make these same dishes today?
- 13 What is your job title and what is your daily job routine?
- 14 What dishes reflect Hue culinary style in terms of flavor and presentation?
- 15 Is the food you cook similar to the food served to the emperors when Hue was the royal city?
- 16 Are traditional dishes in Hue the same as they were when you were a child?
- 17 What is your favorite dish to prepare and why?
- 18 Do you use recipes when you cook?
- 19 How do you know how the food should be plated?
- 20 Who comes up with the wedding menus?
- 21 Are there ingredients that are easier to access at the local market now than they were when you were growing up? If yes, which ones?
- 22 Do you change the ingredients in dishes depending if a tourist is ordering versus when a native Hue person is ordering?
- 23 Do you import any ingredients?
- 24 How often do you add new dishes to your restaurant menu?

Appendix B:

Questions in a questionnaire for students attending university in Hue:

- 1 Gender:
- 2 Age:
- 3 Where did you grow up? If you did not grow up in Hue, how is the food in your hometown different from food in Hue?
- 4 Do you currently live with your family?
- 5 Did you go to university? If yes, what is the name of your university and your major?
- 6 What types of food do you usually eat?
- 7 Did your parents or grandparents grow up eating different food?
- 8 Who did the cooking in your family? How did they learn? Do you ever help?
- 9 How many times per week do you eat outside of your home? Where do you go to eat outside of your home?
- 10 When you think of traditional dishes of Hue, what comes to mind?
- 11 What are popular restaurants for tourists in Hue? Why?
- 12 What makes Hue food different from the food in other regions of Vietnam?
- 13 Do you have any friends or know of anyone who is in the restaurant business? What made them decide on that career path?
- 14 Why do you want to take cooking classes from Ms. Huy? How often do you take cooking classes?
- 15 What job do you want to have?
- 16 Do you have more access to foreign ingredients or food products than your parents or grandparents had when they were in their twenties? If yes, which ones?
- 17 If you have children, do you think it is important to teach them any culinary skills, specifically any dishes from Hue?
- 18 As tourism increases, do you see any changes in Hue food?

**Appendix C:
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Appendix D:
Pictures of food plating styles for wedding receptions from the Duy Tan Restaurant

