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The Palate of Power: Americans, Food and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War

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Abstract: In 1898, Spain ceded political control of the Philippine Islands to the United States. Although armed resistance by Filipinos did not officially end until 1902, the U.S began conducting a study of the Islands in 1900 to determine whether they were ready for democratic self-rule and eventually determined that they were not. Food played an important role in Americans' evaluation of the Philippines' modernity and readiness for independence. This article examines the ways in which food was part of what Paul Kramer calls 'fiesta politics,' the displays of civilization that both Filipinos and Americans put on for each other as part of this evaluation process.

Keywords: Philippines, America, canned foods, mangoes, imperialism, fiesta politics, tableware

In 1900, American Edith Moses gave a "Filipina Lunch party" at her home in Manila. The luncheon featured neither dishes nor dining customs native to the Philippines, yet Moses considered it a great success. Edith Moses was the wife of Bernard Moses, a member of the Civil Commission appointed by president William McKinley to determine what kind of government the Philippines should have in the aftermath of its acquisition by the United States (Bureau of Insular Affairs 1904, 5). Bernard and Edith Moses were stationed in Manila and it was Edith's role to exchange acts of hospitality with the Filipinos of the upper classes both in Manila and in communities in other parts of the

Islands. She was a lively participant and chronicler of what historian Paul Kramer called "fiesta politics," publishing the account of her time in the Philippines only a few years after she returned to the U.S. Kramer uses the term fiesta politics to refer to the performances, both private and public such as parades and banquets that Americans and Filipinos participated in together and that enabled Filipinos to demonstrate their readiness for independence to American visitors and those same visitors to appear to receive and evaluate this claim seriously (Kramer 2006, 259).

For the most part, as we will see, Americans in the Philippines made it clear in their writings that they did not consider Filipinos ready for independence, but they do appear to have placed great importance on *seeming* to consider the possibility. Most histories of America's involvement in the Philippines recognize that some anti-imperialists in the U.S. argue that the Philippines had a right to be treated as a nation among nations. Other Americans objected to the nation's involvement with the Philippines on racist grounds that it was a bad idea to bring more people of color into the family of the US. Kramer, however, draws our attention to those less-noted Americans who were engaged in fiesta politics and sought a middle way between complete Filipino independence and colonial subjugation (Kramer 2006, 213-328).

Edith Moses performed her unpaid cultural work as an essential adjunct to her husbands' work. Bernard Moses, a professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, was in the Philippines to study the situation and make recommendations. An implicit part of this work was to establish America's right to determine the future of the Philippines. This project was accomplished through the performance of American mores for a Filipino audience as well as through the witnessing of Filipino demonstrations of

readiness. When Moses displayed her nation's civilization the audience was supposed to understand the superiority of American culture and to translate this understanding into respect for and trust in American management of the Islands. Fiestas were, Paul Kramer explains, "rituals above all meant to efface the uninvited character of the U.S. presence in the Philippines" (Kramer 2006, 188).

Unstudied until now, food played an essential role in fiestas—the parties and public gatherings that Filipinos and Americans attended together—and thus in fiesta politics. Preparation, service, and consumption of food in the crucial few years when Filipino independence was still considered an open question reflected each side's deepest anxieties and convictions on the most important topic of the time. This article considers the roles food played in these politics, as recalled in writings by Americans who were in the Philippines in the immediate post-war period.

The time period covered by this essay is necessarily brief—the first sixteen years of American occupation from 1900 to 1916—because the period in which fiesta politics were practiced was brief. By 1913, organized armed resistance to American authority had been put down, closing off whatever remote possibility had still existed that Filipinos might fight their way to independence. In 1916, the Jones Act codified the state of limbo in which the Islands had existed since 1900 and established Filipino autonomy under American rule for an indefinite period.

Because the time period covered is limited, the sources are also limited in quantity. Americans did not come to the Philippines in the large numbers that India experienced from English men and women over the long course of British control in that region. The characters and strategies of the two empires were very different. Of the

relatively small number of Americans who did come to the Philippines in this watershed era most were involved in the military, the civilian government, or came as teachers while an even smaller number wrote for the public about their experiences. Many of those sources are referred to here. That almost all who wrote did write about food supports the argument that food mattered in the complicated situation of American occupation. How Americans wrote about food expressed ideas about their own nation and the imperial project that many did not make explicit. There is as yet no scholarly work on this subject but it seems clear that the languages of food service and consumption have a lot to tell us about American ideas of empire in this period.

Edith Moses frequently commented, as did other American travelers in the Philippines, on the importance of accepting Filipino hospitality. In their writings about the situation, Americans portrayed Filipinos as people who took hospitality seriously and who would be offended if offered food was not consumed. Moses referred to it as "[t]he terrible bugbear of hurting a Filipino's feelings by not eating all the deadly dishes pressed upon one" (Moses 1908, 171). Repeatedly, she placed the politics of the situation above her own physical discomfort rather than upset her hosts. In one case that was typical of her experiences in the Philippines, she and her American companions, who had just eaten before arriving for a visit to a Filipino family, were faced with an unexpected dinner. Rather than explaining the situation, they "were compelled to [sit]… and pretend to eat" (Moses 1908, 28). Moses set aside appetite for the sake of politics.

The language of food service, including the language of table settings, often has much to tell us about the meanings imbued in meals and meal-centered events. Moses' own Filipina lunch party, another political event, featured a centerpiece and doilies that

Moses had bought on a visit to Hong Kong, nearly seven hundred miles away. Design historian Regina Lee Blasczcyk identifies the turn of the century as a time when Americans were particularly caught up in domestic decoration. As "Americans became differentiated into several strata and so too did furnishings, dress, and manners evolve into badges that demarcated territories and interests" (Blaszczyk 1994, 128).

Moses noted "the arrangement was new and interesting to the Filipinos," signaling what seems to have been the goal of the luncheon, an event at which Filipinas were to be educated as well as honored. It is interesting to conjecture why Moses featured the handcrafts of Hong Kong, rather than the Philippines, or, for that matter, America. Perhaps Moses choice was meant to position her own status as someone not bound to the Philippines, nor narrowly jingoistic, but rather "of the world," with knowledge of great civilizations (Moses 1908, 81).

For the Filipina guests, Moses reported, "bouillon served in bowls was also a novelty, and they admired our little entrée forks" (Moses 1908 , 81). She also served a "jelly" composed of three layers, including wine, chocolate, and blanc mange as well as apricot water ice with cake and coffee. Moses thought it worthwhile to record not only that her local guests were impressed with her entrée forks but also that one guest was so impressed with the coffee spoons that she said she would write to a relative in America and have some spoons sent at once. The exchange is interesting from a contemporary perspective as an oblique conversation about civilization. Moses seems to have felt superior to her guests because of the seemingly arcane detail that "[c]offee is served with teaspoons in Filipino houses," but the young Filipino woman with a relative abroad could also feel important because despite what Moses considered her remote status, she had the

power to summon the trappings of the great metropolis. Her family had colonized the United States in its own small way. The guests response probably pleased Moses as it indicated a penchant for American culture, but she might also have been slightly disturbed by the response. If American ways could simply be ordered in the mail, rather than tutored over a long period under U.S. administrative control then Bernard Moses' mission in the Philippines would have been unnecessary. The guest's attempt to assert her civilized status is typical of fiesta politics, which operated on this very small scale as much as in parades and banquets.

Moses' lunch served to introduce her guests to the manners of upper middle class American women, the small sector of society with time for social luncheons at home. To eat like an American lady, as reflected in the menus of department store tea rooms of this time, was to eat food that, according to the customs of the time, was sweet and light and elaborately presented in a manner that required special equipment and a cosmopolitan aesthetic. A 1906 menu from the Wannamaker Department Store's Tea Room in Philadelphia, for example, featured croquettes, salads, eggs, and many pastries, cakes, and ice cream dishes but none of the chops or roasted meats that would feature in restaurants catering to men (Wannamaker Menu, 1906). Moses offered her guests the taste of America, in both the aesthetic and the physiological senses of the word. It was a set of behaviors that could only be performed by those with disposable income, time, and a kitchen staff trained in the arts of American cooking.

Edith Moses had been given her own taste of America by two Filipinas in a notable event preceding her luncheon. While staying with an American doctor in the town of Apalit, to the north of Manila, she visited the kitchen with her host's wife to look

at the many gifts that local people had given to the doctor in tribute to his work. Two Filipinas entered the kitchen and offered the American women a gift wrapped in banana leaves. As Moses recalled, “They spoke no word, knowing it was useless, but squatted down on the floor fixing us with their eyes and awaited results” (Moses 1908, 60). From this position, the Filipinas watched as the leaves were opened to reveal three ears of corn, boiled and still warm. A kitchen servant acted as translator to explain that the doctor’s wife had told the local women that Americans ate green corn and had urged them to adopt this habit (Moses 1908, 60). She was certainly not alone in offering this advice. The 1906 *Manual for Filipino Teachers* discussed later in this essay and written by an American, designated both “making corn bread” and “roasting ears of corn” as “girls’ work” where the teacher would provide training despite the fact that neither dish was part of Filipino foodways at the time (Theobald 1907, 121).

It had apparently seemed implausible to the local women that Americans actually ate this grain. Introduced first by the Spanish, corn was grown as food for livestock, rather than for human consumption in the Philippines. So we can imagine that it was partly as tribute and partly as experiment that the two women of Apalit presented the doctor’s wife and her friends with the gift to see what they would do. Or, as Moses wrote: “So these simple creatures had gathered three young ears and boiled them and were now patiently waiting to see the Senoras eat them.” Moses described the doctor’s wife as “an ideal pioneer in this country” because she feared above all to give offense to the local population. In this spirit, “she said solemnly ‘Girls, we must eat them.’ She meant the ears of corn, but from her tone one might have thought she meant the two women” (Moses 1908, 60). Moses’ comment about eating the two Filipina guests was of course

intended just as humor but it resonates with and subverts one of the basic terms of the western discourse of civilization in which the cannibal generally represented the apotheosis of savagery (Moses 1908, 81).

“Falling in with the absurd situation,” the American women “began to gnaw the tough little kernels,” finding the corn, “like cow fodder.” Moses came up with a way out of the situation that did not involve finishing her meal: “I suggested, in order not to hurt their feelings, we dismiss them with a gift.” The kitchen servant, a man identified as Ambrosio, gave the guests “some leftovers” and they departed. What they made of the encounter is not recorded (Moses 1908, 60).

Comparing the Filipina lunch party to the gift of green corn, tells us much about Moses’ position in the Philippines as a representative of American power and her use of food in that role. The luncheon shows her at her most predictably jingoistic, attempting to change, through material example, the ways of Filipina life. Her jingoism is, importantly, clothed in generosity and good manners. She asserts her cultural power but simultaneously educates the tastes of her guests, offering to elevate them (gradually) to her level. The Filipinas she invited to her lunch were of the class that Americans needed to influence, the economic elite. The second encounter reveals a more delicate, more empathetic approach, which emerges strongly in many of the other stories that form her account of her time in the Philippines. Although she clearly found the doctor’s wife to be oversensitive, Moses did accept the necessity of treating the native women with respect, although the performance was brief. Again and again her memoir records events in which she followed the rule of accepting all hospitality, no matter how much or how recently she had already eaten. To simply reject a gift such as the corn was unthinkable. As Paul

Kramer notes, in fiesta politics, “hospitality was . . . politically open-ended” because although “Americans could dominate through sheer force if they chose,” they could not control definitions of hospitality and “were forced to recognize and adapt to Filipino customs” (Kramer 2006, 272).

For Edith Moses, practitioner of this politics, each gift had to be acknowledged, and, since many of these gifts were culinary, often consumed. The fact that her patience with this approach ran out before she had consumed even one ear of corn is evidence that she may have placed low value on the good opinion of the women who brought the gift. Their value to the imperial project was not great, but it was not completely worthless. They still had to be appeased (though in the most convenient way possible) if American power were to have a firm base of support in the Philippines and to seem to its emissaries to be legitimate.

The food of the colonized had to be eaten by the colonizer, not as a show of force, nor as a tribute to a unique culture, but as a sign of goodwill. According to pro-imperialist arguments, Americans had not come to stamp out Filipino culture, only to improve it. The peculiarity in the case of the boiled corn, however, is that the food was not native cuisine but instead American food and yet to the Americans it was inedible. The colonial project itself was under scrutiny in this encounter, as the Filipinas seemed to challenge the civilizing advice that the American doctor’s wife had dispensed. ‘If corn is such good food,’ they seemed to say, ‘let’s see you eat it.’

In the context of the kitchen in Apalit, we can also consider the corn alongside democracy, which, while considered good enough for white Americans, was considered by American imperialists to be too advanced for Filipinos. The moral of the corn story

from Moses' perspective seems to be that even when Filipinos receive the blessings of western culture, they do not know what to do with them.

This is an often-repeated refrain in American writing about the Philippines. Filipinos were portrayed as having good potential but needed training. This attitude was crucial to the pro-Imperialist argument. Americans could justify their presence in the Philippines as not contrary to their own core values of democracy only if their empire was based on altruism, rather than greed. For example, an American teacher in the Philippines, William Freer, wrote that although Filipinos had "some desirable" traits, they were not yet fully civilized. Freer opened his *Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher* with a quotation from Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden," and articulated the hope that his account of his experiences would result "in a stronger conviction of the unwisdom of granting, at this time, any greater degree of self-government than the Filipinos already possess" (Freer 1906, vii). Freer spoke often in his memoir of meals taken with Filipinos, with fellow Americans, and alone; a constant theme of his writing about food in the Philippines was how incompatible it was with civilization. This argument was echoed in other American discussions of native foodways, as we have seen in the story of the green corn. It is also reflected in the two anecdotes about mangoes that follow here.

Mango Politics

Although mangoes had been brought to the Philippines by European explorers as part of the first wave of the Columbian Exchange, by 1900 they were treated in American texts about the Philippines as native fruits, inextricable from local foodways. In his guide for

Filipino teachers, Harry Couch Theobald took up the topic of mangoes. He advised teachers of English composition to present students with a sort of mango catechism: "Who likes ripe mangos? In what month are the mangos ripe? How do we know when they are ripe? What kind of flesh has the mango? Is the mango seed small? What color is the mango seed? Is the mango tree large or small? What kind of flowers has the mango?" Theobald next supplied the answers. To the first question "Who likes ripe mangos?" the answer is, "Everybody likes ripe mangos" (Theobald 1907, 118).

In 1906 this was a somewhat strange statement for an American man to assert so boldly. It was not until two years later that the U.S. Department of Agriculture would include mangos in a bulletin titled "[P]romising [N]ew [F]ruits" and they did not catch on in mainstream American foodways until the late twentieth century (Taylor 1908, 314). Mangoes were frequently mentioned and praised by American travelers in the Philippines in this era, but references to the fruit typically included warnings that this was an acquired taste. Nineteenth century American cookbooks did include recipes for mangoes, but these recipes do not actually refer to the tropical fruit directly. A "mango," probably through the context of the British Empire was a term for a chutney, and so one finds recipes for peach mangoes, apricot mangoes, but no mango mangoes.

So how did Theobald know that everybody likes ripe mangoes? Theobald was principal of the Provincial High School in Batangas at the time his book was published, so he had had chances to observe both Filipinos and Americans enjoying mangoes. More importantly, however, he was not writing to an American audience. Theobald's book was written to train Filipino teachers of Filipino students. Theobald encouraged

Filipino teachers to connect to students through their own culture, but in the process he, an American, defined for them what that culture was.

In order to teach Filipino culture, the teacher needed first to educate himself in the real conditions of Filipino food. Theobald wrote: “To prepare himself to talk to his pupils about food, the teacher should notice the foods that are sold in the market.” Theobald listed several likely sights at the market, including “putrid” fish and “moldy rice,” before asserting that the observer “will also see much that is good for sale.” The very first item in the section assumed unpleasant by contrast is “green mangoes bought, and eaten raw with a little salt.” That the teacher/observer will *see* rather than participate in a green mango transaction assumes that the educated man is disconnected from his native food culture. Theobald later advised teachers to tell their students that eating unripe fruit would make them sick. Mangoes were good, Theobald’s manual argues, but Filipinos didn’t know how to eat them. “Everybody likes *ripe* mangoes,” after all, and Theobald placed much emphasis on knowing when the mango was ripe. In this case, Theobald seems to defy the norms of fiesta politics by assuming American authority over the discourse of mangoes, although to write about mangoes at all partially accepted the legitimacy of Filipino foodways.

By teaching new ways of looking at mangoes to the educated class who would themselves become teachers of the less privileged, Theobald’s manual attempted to set a cultural transformation in motion. In his introduction he noted that Filipino teachers “realize that work like theirs, which is so far-reaching in its effects on the lives of individuals and on the welfare of the whole country must be done well.” Despite “the best of intentions, the utmost earnestness of purpose” however, the Filipino teacher cannot

overcome his context without help. He has not, Theobald notes, had access to “the theories and methods of modern educators,” and thus “he realizes that many of his mistakes might be avoided, yet he has no way open to him except to experiment.” Theobald would save him the trouble by providing already-tested truths and methods, including the proper method for consuming mangoes (Theobald 1907, iii).

Edith Moses also wrote about what she perceived as Filipino misuse of mangoes. On one trip to San Fernando, she wrote, “we ate the first mangoes of the season. They were delicious after our diet of tinned fruit at Baguio.” As she praised the first mangoes of the season, she referred several times to connections between raw fruit and a contemporary cholera epidemic in Manila, but assured her readers that she could trust the mangoes she had eaten because she was outside of the city. At that time, American officials believed cholera was spread through consumption of contaminated food. The Philippine Commission’s report to the U.S. Congress, for example, mentioned that during one epidemic, “the sale of fruits, vegetables, and foods likely to carry cholera was prohibited and a rigid inspection established over markets.” (*Reports of the Philippine Commission* 1904, 329) She regretted that many mangoes in the area of San Fernando were going to waste because the cholera epidemic had caused officials to ban the sale of mangoes in Manila. Moses explained why: “The natives, eat [mango fruit] in such large quantities that they predispose themselves to cholera” (Moses 1908, 306). For Theobald and Moses, the perceived misuse of mangoes can be seen to stand in for lack of cultural maturity. Theobald dismissed the taste for unripe mangoes as stemming from ignorance, while Moses suggested a childlike lack of control in eating foods that can make you sick.

Canned Foods and Empire

However many Americans, like Theobald and Moses, wanted to exercise unilateral definition of the terms of civilization. Filipinos also engaged Americans in this discourse through the medium of food. The incident of the boiled corn in the kitchen in Apalit is one example of such a circumstance. In that case American women were not allowed to simply proclaim corn edible, instead the visiting village women insisted that they live up to their prescriptions for others and eat it.

Moses's reference to the canned fruit she had eaten in place of more-dangerous-seeming fresh fruit in Baguio offers another point of entry into the conversation that Americans suddenly and uncomfortably found themselves a part. Americans in the Philippines hired local cooks for their households. They tried to train these local workers to cook in the American style and were helped in this endeavor by the relatively steady availability of actual American food shipped in cans and by cold storage across the ocean.

The presence of American foodstuffs in the colonial setting made the American experience quite different from that of British settlers in the early days of the colonization of India. As Cecilia Leong-Salobir argues, an Anglo-Indian cuisine developed "through the dependence of British colonists on indigenous domestic servants for food preparation," and that "embraced indigenous ingredients and practices" (Leong-Salobir 2011, 1) Filipinos, of course, also had access to imported canned food, but it was only available to the elite. Those who could buy canned food seem to have used it in ways that were unique to their own culture. As Paul Kramer noted, "One of the features of fiesta politics most commonly observed by Americans was Filipino's employment of

identifiable “American” imagery. This was often recognized as “assimilation:” how else could one measure the progress of assimilation than by the appearance of “Americanisms” among Filippinos?” As Kramer suggests, however, the use of American products could well have had alternate meanings for Philippinos: “Such adoption gave Filipinos possession of this imagery, enabling them to rework it along unforeseen lines” (Kramer 2006, 274-275).

Moses commented frequently on what she saw as the failures of Filipinos to perform American foodways correctly, particularly when it involved that most modern of items, such as the tin can. Americans in the Philippines imported butter and milk in cans because they generally disliked native dairy products. On a visit to the Island of Negros, for example, Moses was served custard made with water buffalo milk. Writing after the fact, she recalled, “I shiver to think of it, but it was the best they had”(Moses 1908, 118). Alice Byram Condict, an American doctor who published an account of her life in the Philippines in 1902 reported, “The greatest privation in the food line is the lack of fresh milk for there seems to be no sure way of obtaining the pure article from a native milkman and his bamboo jug … At present the milk and butter used by Americans comes by cold storage vessels from Australia” (Condict 1902, 25). Cold storage—the long distance shipping of chilled fresh foodstuffs—became possible in the 1870s and served as a way to supply not only Americans in the Philippines with their native foodstuffs but, more notably, British officials and businessmen in India with English foods (Friedberg 2009, 80)

Although elite Filipinos had adopted the American custom of serving canned dairy products, they preferred to serve them in the can rather than transferring them to

other dishes. Edith Moses wrote, “At the most elegant Filipino dinners the butter is always floating about in a tin.” In her household, however, she had broken the kitchen staff of what she termed “a native custom” announcing with pride, “My boys have learned to make butter balls, and pour the tinned cream into the milk jug” (Moses 1908, 25). In one case, however, the lesson did not translate to another foodstuff and her cook served cranberry sauce, an American import, in the can in which it had made the long journey to the Philippines. A sympathetic friend noted, “Never mind that, one can see that it has just been opened, so we shall not be poisoned” (Moses 1908, 25). The comment reflects an awareness of the power relationships within American households in the Philippines, in which Americans claimed superiority while resentment potentially still smoldered.

Beyond reflection on this particular can of cranberry sauce, an intensely American foodstuff (associated as it was with a national holiday and featuring a berry native to North America and little used outside of the U.S.), the appearance of the can on the colonial table has many meanings. In the early years of American occupation of the Philippines, almost all of the Filipinos whom Edith Moses met appear to have been trying to convince her that they individually, and by implication their nation collectively, were ready for self-government. In the hands of Filipinos, the can of butter could signal participation in global markets, just as, according to Ty Matejowsky cans of SPAM are still regarded in Filipino culture as marks of cosmopolitanism and serve as a standard gift given by those who have travelled to the U.S. to relatives and friends who have stayed home (Matejowsky 2007, 23-41). Canned food was more expensive than local foods, after all, they were only available to the well-to-do and therefore could indicate a

connoisseurship. It came to the Philippines from the U.S. but also from Australia, where British businessmen had established cold storage companies, and from Japan. The person who offered the can didn't just have the disposable income to purchase imported food, but also knew something about world commodities and tastes.

Because independence was so important to the Filipino elites that Moses encountered, we can assume that the can served as a prop in the performance of civilization and, by extension, readiness for independence. As the same can passed, however, into the hands of Americans like Edith Moses, its meaning reversed and the can became an awkward sign of unfitness.

By presenting the can itself as elegant, Filipinos reinterpreted American class symbols, reflecting back at Americans an alternate reality to the structure of meaning that they relied on to establish their own social superiority in the global context. Although Americans abroad came to identify their cuisine inextricably with that which could be imported in cans, the container itself was understood as a disposable trace of the industrial processes by which food became available. To be reminded that this was not "the real thing" fresh from a local dairy was apparently distasteful.

Helen Taft, wife of colonial governor and eventual U.S. President William Taft, confessed that although Americans in the Philippines had "manfully striven to make ourselves believe that we liked canned milk and condensed cream just as much as" fresh and that they were "fond of declaring that we couldn't tell the difference." In reality, Taft admitted, "we could. And in our secret hearts we all welcomed as the most delectable treat an occasional gift" of fresh milk from an American who had imported a cow (Taft 1917, 257). Somewhat less graceful in privation, Moses referred to the Philippines as

"this land of tinned lobster," to express her frustration with the materials available to her for the performance of her civilizing mission (Moses 1908, 156).

In a memoir of her journey through the Philippines, American writer Florence Kimball Russell recalled another example of the use of canned foods as status markers that enabled Filipinos to assert their own definition of civilized practices. Visiting the home of a local "presidente," the equivalent of a mayor, his "senora," offered the foreign guests "the greatest delicacies her larder afforded," including "peaches and pears canned in Japan," which she served "with proud humility" and "right from the tin." Although the cans came from Japan rather than America or Europe, they appear to have had the same high status meaning for the president's wife that American goods did for other Filipinos. If they had not, she probably would not have offered them to the American visitor (Russell 1907, 76-77). These cans also served to remind Russell that the Philippines were not a remote backwater. The people of the Philippines were, instead, active partners in a modern trade system, acquiring the standard consumer goods of the industrializing world. If Americans had designs on controlling the market in modernity in the Philippines, they already had competition.

It would have been a natural conclusion for Filipinos to assume that canned foods were what Americans liked to eat best because so many Americans in the Philippines ate so much of their food imported in cans and seemed to esteem this cuisine more highly than they did local foodstuffs. Americans seemed to imbue canned food with more than just culinary superiority. During cholera epidemics in Manila, Americans restricted themselves to eating only canned goods, allowing their Filipino observers to see that they credited cans with almost magical properties of safety and purity.

Reflecting this understanding of American foodways, one of Moses' Filipino hosts on a visit to San Tomas offered the party a can of sweet corn opened and dusted with confectioners' sugar. Moses recalled both her own barely concealed "amusement" at the offering and that "I was able to recover in time to help myself liberally" (Moses 1908, 317). She did not seem to reflect that this liberality would certainly confirm her Filipino host's belief that this was how Americans liked their corn and that this was how food was served in the U.S., too. In fact it suited the American imperial project for ordinary Filipinos to remain uncorrected. Those who served corn from a can, with sugar on it, certainly required American guidance. That she concealed her amusement is important because it marks Moses as a participant in the conventions of fiesta politics where Americans and Filipinos shared cultural space as equals. She might laugh privately—as she did by publishing her reflections—for an American audience, but she would never mock or embarrass her hosts to their faces.

When Moses left Manila and took an extended tour of the islands, roughing it in the mountains for many weeks, her memoir shows that she took great delight in eating American food from cans, but also that for Moses the cans represented a temporary escape from civilization rather than the achievement of that difficult property. Noting that she ate her canned beans, bacon, and coffee while "[n]ear us are crouched two bronze-skinned Igorrotes, who are eating rice and dainty pieces of dog" she declared, "We are having a glorious time. I am ready to give up civilization" (Moses 1908, 239). Here she equated her own temporary savagism with what for Americans of the time was the most potent image of the Filipino, the dog eater. As Paul Kramer reveals, most Americans gained their first knowledge about the Philippines through the "Igorot Village" exhibit at

the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. There, ignorant American observers fed their "relentless hunger for sensation" with regular displays of "Igorot 'nudity' and scripted dog-eating." As Kramer argues, Americans wanted to see Filipinos as uncivilized both because it amused them and because it empowered their own sense of civilization (Kramer 2006, 266).

Later in her journey, Moses delighted that an outbreak of cholera allowed her party to refuse Filipino hospitality and to eat from imported cans, specifically "tinned beans and brown bread with a relish" (referring to her appetite rather than to a condiment) (Moses 1908, 233). Rejecting the performance that Filipinos offered as civilized foodways, Moses retreated to a dining practice that was below her class status in America where eating from cans was not associated with the middle and upper classes. Indeed, the late nineteenth century was an era of intensified interest in table settings as mass production made accessible to the middle class the kinds of single-purpose china and flatware such as fish knives that had once only been part of elite dining culture (Young 2010, 142). Eating from her can, however, Moses was only becoming "uncivilized" in a civilized way; her food still came from America.

When Americans in the Philippines dined from cans together, they would have shared an understanding that they were eating in a certain idiom—the camp or frontier experience. A cartoon popular at the turn of the century in the U.S., for example, depicted "Happy Hooligan," a hobo, with a can kept ready on his head, serving as both hat and cooking pan (Opper, 1907).

As American Mary Fee, wrote, life in the Philippines forced Americans into a specific culinary aesthetic: "The housekeeper's task is no easy one, and the lack of fresh

beef, ice, fresh butter, and milk wears hard on a dainty appetite. The Philippines are no place for women or men who cannot thrive and be happy on plain food" (Fee 1912, 246) But when Filipinos served food in cans to American guests, they disrupted the American claim to control the language of civilization.

Like the young woman at Moses' Filipina Lunch Party who planned to order her own coffee spoons from America, Filipinos asserted a voice in the global experience of imperialism. Americans seem to have been in some ways more comfortable with dog-eating Igarot people, who lived up to expectations of the savage, than they were with cosmopolitan Filipinos who, practicing fiesta politics, offered their own interpretations of the terms of civilization, sugaring sweet corn, using cans as serving dishes, and eating mangoes green and with salt. Setting their own terms, they established Filipino cultural power, suggestive of Filipino political power.

As Rafeal Vicente argued in his study of the role of American women in the Philippines, "American officials portrayed colonization as a humane and progressive act of moral reform and social uplift" (Vicente 1995, 641). For Americans to eat locally, rather than importing cans and teaching local cooks American foodways, might undermine this by suggesting that the Philippines had something to offer America, whereas the exchange was supposed to take place in only one direction. Edith Moses, William Freer, and other Americans in the Philippines ate and sometimes enjoyed Filipino food in the Philippines, but they never identified this food as the material of civilization. By looking closely not just at what Americans ate in the Philippines but also at what they thought about their food, we can see that food, whether green corn, imported tinned beans, or unripe mangoes, had meaning in the moment that stretched beyond the

act of sustenance. Because fiesta politics as Paul Kramer defines the term went beyond diplomatic discussions in official offices, elements of Filipino and U.S. culture were intertwined with political expressions and strategies. Food, as part of these cultures, entered the arena of power negotiation in a way unique to this colonial situation.

When Edith Moses ate beans from a can, she tasted them but she also placed them in a discourse of civilization and savagism. When Theobald taught his catechism of the mango, he meant to make the act of consumption an opportunity for social progress. What tasted good and what tasted bad were determined not by the palate alone, but by power dynamics in the region. When we observe the potency of meanings within even this small sample of words about food, we should be encouraged to look in other colonial settings for related discourses.

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