

# The Redefinition of *Washoku* as National Cuisine: Food Politics and National Identity in Japan

Isami Omori

**Abstract**—This study investigates the process of nominating Japanese cuisine (*washoku*) for inscription on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. It discusses the process by which *washoku* was redefined and restructured as the Japanese national cuisine and the role of globalization in that process. First, research literature regarding the birth and evolution of *washoku* is reviewed. Second, how *washoku* emerged as the leading national cuisine and was redefined between 2011 and 2012 in discussions in Japanese governmental committees is explained. Third, a content analysis of articles from Japanese newspapers is employed. The role of the print news media was examined by an evaluation of newspaper article content during the crucial period when the decision regarding inscription was being made. The results suggest that *washoku* has been socially reconstructed to fit the modern global context by newspaper articles focusing on the meaning of *washoku* for the clarification of Japanese national identity.

**Index Terms**—Japanese cuisine, UNESCO, identity, national cuisine.

## I. THE BIRTH OF WASHOKU

'Japanese dietary culture cannot be considered if foreign factors are excluded [1]'. This statement confirms previous studies. As long ago as the legacy of the rice that came from the Asian continent during the Jomon period (ca. 13000 BCE to 300 BCE), Japanese dietary culture was influenced from the outside. Japanese dietary culture historically has been receptive to exotic foods and cuisine that are then changed through fusion with traditional cuisine [2]–[4]. Consequently, the precise boundaries of Japanese cuisine have always been ambiguous and imprecise. Even the Japanese staple, rice, when considered historically, did not become important to the Japanese people until the middle of the Modern Era (which began ca. 1500 CE). Some studies have suggested that rice became popular because it was a by-product of food rationing during World War II; other studies indicate an even later date, with its dietary prominence beginning in the 1960s [5], [6].

The formation of a Japanese national cuisine began with the political leadership of the Meiji era (8 September 1868 through 30 July 1912), when the necessity for the formation of a modern Japanese nation-state became urgent. The formation of the modern nation-state began with the appearance of the Other from the West, westernization became a national policy, and 'as a part of foreign policy, consumption of authentic Western cuisine was attempted [7]'. Western cuisine

gradually infiltrated Japanese cuisine. It may have initially been in the public sphere or certain people may have introduced it. It may have reached the people through mass media in formal education, magazines, or the military. However, it was diffused, modern Western cuisine was transformed from Western to Japanese cuisine, and it gradually continued to spread across the country.

Along with the advent of Western cuisine, the word *washoku* appeared during the Meiji era (1868-1912) [2]. *Washoku* is defined 'Japanese-style foods or Japanese cuisine as the autonym to *Yoshoku*(western-style foods)' from Kojien, Japanese-language dictionary. Japanese *washoku*, or the cuisine of the Japanese people, appeared in opposition or resistance to the Other (Western cuisine). All Japanese cuisine was labelled *washoku* based on fundamental differences from Western cuisine.

Similar to Wilk's [8] observations about Belize, to affirm the sense of Us, a mighty Other from outside of the Japanese nation-state was used for contrast, which eliminated the variation present in the traditional sense of Us. In this way, the cuisine of the new, modern Japanese nation-state became *washoku* and the Other was identified as all cuisine that differed from it, labelled Western cuisine. Simultaneously, a link was formed between *washoku* and the meat-eating aspect of Chinese cuisine, which was integrated into the Japanese national cuisine [2].

The formation of the Japanese national cuisine took place from the Meiji period to the Taisho period (30 July 1912 to 25 December 1926). The purpose of its formation was to join the Western countries, which can be traced back to the formation of Japan's identity as a modern nation-state. In the process of individuals' adoption of the nation-state's aim of attaining a modern Japanese image by incorporating Western cuisine, *washoku*, which transcends regional diversity, was born.

During the increasingly imperialistic tendencies of the early Showa period (1926–1989), Chinese cuisine and Korean cuisine entered the culture of the imperialistic nation of Japan. However, there also was an interest in increasing a distinctive Japanese-like cuisine. The Sen no Rikyu (the legendary 16th century tea master) approach to the tea ceremony provided a symbol of authentic Japanese cuisine because of its *kaiseki* (multi-course) cooking and, during this period, the tea ceremony underwent a revival through the efforts of Kitaoji Rosanjin and Yuki Teiichi [2]. Because of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, the modern Japanese nation-state was noticed and became popular in Western countries and there was an interest in Japanese things. Japan was now able to confront the West to achieve spatial extension and temporal continuity. This new relationship with the West was reflected in the cuisine of that time. Specifically,

Manuscript received June 10, 2017; revised December 13, 2017. This work received funding from JSPS Grants-in-Aid 26330391.

I. Omori is with Mukogawa Women's University, Nishinomiya, Japan (e-mail: omori\_i@mukogawa-u.ac.jp).

because of the relational change from trying to catch up with the Western Other to being equal to the West, the sense of Us that was expressed and the identity of Us were transformed.

After its defeat in World War II, Japan sought a clean break from pre-war Japan and aimed to become a democracy. During the period of the Allied occupation of Japan, the 'iron triangle' policy-making process resulted in economic growth for the regime. It was also a time of democratization for Japanese cuisine. With the emergence of the middle class and its economic influences, food was freed up and made plentiful, and food options greatly increased. During the early post-war period, America was representative of Western democracies and it was necessary for Japan to distance itself from its pre-war identity. Substitutes for rice, such as bread, were introduced, and the Westernization of dietary habits and cuisine proceeded at an accelerated pace.

In this way, regarding Japanese food as a national cuisine, the existence of the Other that defines the sense of Japanese Us, is a necessary part of the argument. The identity of the Other changes in response to historical, social, and political conditions; for instance, even if the Other were the West, its nature would change in response to other changes. For the nation-state, the Other has a political purpose and the abstract existence of the Other reveals aspects of the everyday lives of citizens, resulting in a sense of Us that eventually embodies the national cuisine. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the citizens can share in that sense of their shared identity and, like the relationship to Western food in the Meiji and Taisho periods, even if only a few people actually eat it, it becomes the national cuisine. Ishige [3] pointed out with respect to other nation-states that, within a country, there is standardization of interspersed regional cuisine, even in Japan.

## II. GLOBALIZATION AND WASHOKU

In response to globalization, the Japanese nation-state has attempted to redefine the national cuisine that use the image of local food in the project of 'Nihon-syoku-bunka wo UNESCO mukei-bunkaisan ni (Japanese dietary culture on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage)'. The effort to inscribe Japanese cuisine on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage occurred between 2011 and 2013. The proposal for nomination by an advisory committee of 'academic experts, chefs, food industry businesses, and numerous experts that shape the various sectors of Japanese cuisine [9]'; the efforts of the Committee of Cultural Council for World Cultural Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs; and the deliberations leading up to the proposal to register with UNESCO, was a series of political projects.

In 2009, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries held a meeting of experts who announced that,

Incorporating foreign food and culture has also shaped Japanese cuisine, blessed with rich and fresh food throughout the four seasons, including both Japanese aesthetics and seasonal senses. Japanese cuisine has been cultivated into an excellent asset throughout the long history of Japan [10].

Until recently, the Japanese government identified the

Other as the entire world except for Japan and, in that contrast, Japanese cuisine was mostly referred to as a collection of abstract images reminiscent of Japan. This Japanese cuisine was ultimately replaced by a single aspect of Japanese national cuisine (*washoku*), a change that occurred during the process of nominating Japanese cuisine to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.

At the 19 August 2011 Commission for Inscription of Japanese Dietary Culture as an Intangible World Heritage, there was a 'proposal description for UNESCO intangible cultural heritage (draft) [11]'. The nomination drafted the designation, 'with Kaiseki (multi-course) cooking at its center, Japanese cuisine with traditional, unique features', related to 'all Japanese people', and that it is 'Japanese cuisine practiced in all regions of the country'. There was a strong awareness that Japanese cuisine is uniquely Japanese, identified as such by referencing the cuisines of non-Japanese nations as the Other. In addition, the banquet-style kaiseki (multi-course) cooking typically found in restaurants was the focus and *washoku*, defined as 'Japanese home cooking', was an aspect of that cuisine. The provided materials stated that 'Japanese home cooking (*washoku*) had been widely handed down throughout the entire nation', 'Japanese cuisine' or *washoku* was practiced by 'all Japanese people', and that national inheritance should, as a theme, involve concerted efforts to include 'all regions of the country'.

The term 'Japanese cuisine' was replaced by the word '*washoku*' at the (8th) Council of Cultural Property Special Subcommittee on Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Conventions held on 24 January 2012 in the document entitled Proposal for a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (draft) [12]. The nomination was entitled '*Washoku*, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese', although it was subsequently changed to emphasize community diversity, as follows,

Essentially, the communities of concern to the proposed elements, from Hokkaido in the north to Okinawa in the south, consist of all Japanese people living in Japan. In these lands, a variety of communities, groups, and individuals have been included.

Another document [13] stated that '*washoku* as the diversity of extant pronounced customs of various regions', showing that the term '*washoku*' was selected to replace the term 'Japanese cuisine' to represent connection to regional cuisines. The word '*washoku*' was chosen to create a sense of regional variation because, 'in the first place, the 'wa' in '*washoku*' carries both the meanings of Japan and harmony, and *washoku* is highly reminiscent of the Japanese cultural identity, while suggesting the intention to rebuild'. The goal was to solidify a Japanese identity with a *washoku* that embraced regional characteristics.

This change to the language of the nomination occurred in October 2011 and it was issued in the 2012 cycle on the recommendation of the subsidiary body. South Korea had applied to UNESCO to register its royal court cuisine, although further inquiry was needed to clarify terminology such as 'participation of a wide range of communities'. In contrast, Turkey emphasized its regional unity in its application for keşkek (a dish of mutton or chicken and coarsely ground meat). It was validated in November of 2011

and reported at the Commission for Inscription of Japanese Dietary Culture as an Intangible World Heritage (4th meeting) in which the use of the word 'washoku' was proposed. According to the Commission's meeting minutes [14], although defining the word 'washoku', it was acknowledged that there may be some unease among the participants, but that, 'whether it is Japanese cuisine to foreigners, or whether it is *washoku*, it would after all still be Japanese cuisine. It is good to decide the language that can be used and become familiar around the world'.

Rather than taking an academic approach to the subject, *washoku* was considered as a word that describes a distinctly Japanese cuisine of Us, which is more likely to be accepted by the multinational Other of UNESCO. UNESCO has always defined intangible cultural heritage as community-based within a nation and not national. UNESCO proposes community-based culture as a useful approach for 'maintaining the diversity of cultures, as the process of globalization advances [15]'. Hoping that UNESCO's emphasis on communities would prompt it to take notice, the new meaning of *washoku* was proposed to inject and emphasize the idea of localness in the national cuisine and it was born out of the paradoxical process of restructuring. The national cuisine was re-envisioned as *washoku* to respond to a tendency toward worldwide localization caused by globalization.

In September of 2012, the review of the 2013 cycle of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity determined that Japanese 'washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese', was a top priority project for review. The name that was finalized by UNESCO in December 2013 was 'washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year'. The nomination form on the UNESCO website [16] describes *washoku* as advocating regional diversity, working closely together with communities as leaders, and as Japan ensuring support for the retention of that diversity. The emphasis is on locales, or regions, and *washoku* as a social practice that focuses on ties with regional festivals and rituals.

As described above, in the circumstances involved with the nomination and inscription of *washoku* as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, relativization is the consequence of globalization, wherein time and place are increasingly fixed, and attempts are being made to restructure the spatial qualities of the sense of Us. In other words, in the nation-state's attempts to reaffirm a sense of Us with clear boundaries between Us and the Other, we may consider the rise of the local. Because of the incorporation of the Other, which is the West, through modern Western cuisine, *washoku* emerged as a concept that unifies domestic diversity. In the context of globalization, where it is difficult to identify the Other, recognition of the existence of domestic diversity and the launching of the image of local cuisine allows for a restructuring that asserts the boundaries of the imagined community.

### III. THE MANUFACTURED IMAGE OF WASHOKU AS A NATIONAL CUISINE IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

This section examines the relevant discourse in Japanese newspaper articles related to nomination recommendations for inscribing *washoku* to the list of intangible cultural

heritage through a UNESCO subsidiary body and UNESCO's decision to name it. This section also discusses the corresponding inscription process wherein national media sought to create a new image of *washoku*. Inscribing *washoku* on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list (that is aimed at maintaining the diversity of community-based cultural qualities) is an affirmation of national *washoku* uniqueness and hopes of rising prosperity. Thus, a change to the meaning of intangible cultural heritage is occurring along with a restructuring of the traditions associated with it.

Newspapers in Japan are a medium with a high household penetration rate. The Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun, and Mainichi newspapers have a combined household penetration rate in excess of 35% [17]. Therefore, there is significant association between the content of newspaper articles and social consciousness trend in Japan [18]. Using paid search engines, the contents of these three newspapers were examined for one year starting the day after the recommendation of registration on the intangible cultural heritage list (from 23 October 2013 through 22 October 2014). This search found 186 articles that included the word 'washoku' in the title and the name 'UNESCO' in the article text. There were 58 articles (31%) total over a 10-day period. These articles appeared during the first five days after the registration recommendation (from 23 October through 27 October 2013) and during the first five days after the registration decision (from 5 December through 9 December 2013). However, the contents of most of the articles published after these periods were about other topics of economic and social interest, such as exports of agricultural products, food fraud, or information about publications and events. These articles secondarily concerned the 'registration of *washoku* on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage' and articles specifically relating to the registration of *washoku* on the intangible cultural heritage list were rarely observed.

In this study, we examined 58 articles that were published in three newspapers during the first five days after the day of registration recommendation (23 October through 27 October 2013) and the first five days after the registration decision (5 December through 9 December 2013) for a total of 10 days. The goal was to analyze the contents of editorials about the registration of *washoku* on the intangible cultural heritage list.

Six criteria were used to classify the contents: (1) novelty, (2) humanity, (3) sociality, (4) regionality, (5) recordability, and (6) internationality. These criteria have been proposed as news values in newspaper editorials in Japan by Shinbun-seirihensyu-kenkyukai [19], which is sponsored by the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association.

Regarding UNESCO's intangible cultural list, we expected novelty and internationality would be found in all of the articles examined in the analysis. Therefore, five categories were created based on the criteria of humanity, sociality, regionality, and recordability. The five categories into which the articles were sorted were: (1) the joy of *washoku* officials (humanity), (2) environmental concerns regarding *washoku* (sociality), (3) history prior to inscription (recordability), (4) activities at a regional level (regionality), and (5) other content that was relevant but did not fit any of the other categories.

Many of the articles had content that fit more than one

category. Category 5 consisted of articles that provided the bare facts about the nomination and the outcome and articles about related events and announcements of related television programming that did not fit into any of the other categories. The 58 selected articles were classified into one of these five categories and the numbers of frequently occurring words in the 58 articles were counted. Table 1 shows the distribution of the 58 articles in the five categories and Table 2 shows the numbers of times that the chosen keywords appeared in the 58 articles.

More than 72% of the 58 articles, with titles such as 'Observing the Power of *Washoku*, the Joy of *Washoku* Officials [20]' and '*Washoku*'s World Appeal, Officials Expect Intangible Heritage Inscription [21]', had content concerning the joy and pride of '*washoku* being recognized by the world at large'. The words 'world' and 'Japan' appeared in all of the articles classified into this category. Because these are Japanese newspapers reporting Japanese news to Japanese citizens, the term 'we' refers to 'Japan' in contrast to 'the Other', 'non-Japanese', or 'the world', and the contents suggest that Japanese dietary culture is *washoku*, which Japanese people are happy to have recognized by the non-Japanese world.

Additionally, the officials that are mentioned in these articles are mostly chefs, culinary school officials, and members of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries' commission that were working towards the *washoku* inscription. For example, the article with the title, 'The Power of *Washoku* Recognized, the Joy of *Washoku* Officials [20]', stated that people involved in restaurant cuisine were lobbying the government for inscription, introducing food education activities in the country, and engaging in international public relations. A long-established Japanese restaurateur commented that '*washoku* is low fat and low-calorie. The techniques used by chefs using fresh ingredients in their food management are also exceptional. That such skill is finally being recognized truly makes me happy'. The article continues with quotations, such as one by the head of a culinary training school, which stated, 'we support chefs in pursuing the potential of Japanese dietary culture'. Thus, Category 1 (the joy of *washoku* officials) does not seem to be community-based *washoku* that is customarily focused on regions and families; it is *washoku* in the sense of the nation-based cuisine led by expert chefs overjoyed that their high standards have resulted in worldwide recognition. The frequent appearances of vernacular terms, such as 'global intangible cultural heritage', 'global *washoku*,' and 'pride' in Category 1 suggest that the discourse of Japanese *washoku* is recognized worldwide, arouses national pride, and is being spread nationwide by newspapers.

During the inscription decision period in December of 2013, an article with the title, '*Washoku*: UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, Evaluation of Unique Culture [22]', discussed that chefs must 'bear responsibility for the World Heritage result' in a way that the 'responsibility' of the sense of Us began to emerge. The 'responsibility' for safeguarding '*washoku*'s cultivation as a world famous tradition [23]' is inherited. This discourse emphasizes Category 2 (environmental concerns regarding *washoku*) with a great deal of discussion about the decline of Japan's food

self-sufficiency ratio and the nation's drift away from *washoku*. In a review of the 'Westernization of dietary habits [24]' and a question posed by the comment, 'There is a desire to see a comeback from the so-called tapering off of *washoku*. Is the continued, proper recognition of Japanese tradition no longer important to our future? [25]', there are many efforts to introduce school courses. In Category 2, the setting for Category 3 emerges from stated reasons why We, the collective Us, must return to tradition. What results from these discourses is that *washoku* becomes a point of contradistinction to Western cuisine and that it is the duty of Us to protect the *washoku* tradition from erosion by the West. Thus, if the Japanese people need to protect their inherited *washoku*, then they, as a people, must define it.

Six of the eight articles that clarify *washoku*'s definition or that give an explanation of *washoku* include, in part or in whole, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries' press release, explaining that,

[I]t (1) honours the flavour of a number of fresh and diverse ingredients, (2) is a healthy diet with excellent nutritional balance, (3) expresses natural beauty and the transience of the seasons, and (4) has a close relationship with annual events such as the New Year [26].

Another way that *washoku* was described emphasized the culinary aspect of the Ichijyu-sansai (one soup and three side dishes) aspect, stating 'with rice as the basis, "one soup and three sides" has excellent nutritional balance [27]'. The 'one soup and three sides' style 'started at the end of the Heian period and spread into general use during the Edo period [28]', which has often been cited to highlight the traditional aspect of *washoku*. In addition, we found eight articles that discuss *washoku*'s image in the context of 'things that are being lost,' without a specific definition of *washoku*.

The fourth category is characterized by a focus on regions in the articles. Twelve regions that were mentioned in 32 articles in the activities at a regional level category and the expectations categories. The majority of them (17) concerned efforts in Kyoto. Because no other region appeared in more than two articles, there may be actual bias that gives Kyoto significantly more attention. As was mentioned in the discussion about the first category, the bias is caused by the tendency to regard cooks in gastronomy restaurants as leaders of *washoku*, which was in a series of articles relating to registration on the intangible cultural heritage list. It is also reasonable because 16 of these 17 articles that focused on Kyoto were about the efforts of a group of cooks in gastronomy restaurants. In other words, *washoku*, which should be linked to all regions, was focused on in one region, Kyoto, in the editorials. In addition, the words 'world' and 'Japan' appeared in the 16 articles, most of which were in comments that the cooks contributed to the articles. These efforts by cooks in Kyoto who made statements about the 'world' and 'Japan' have been diffused in a regional effort for *washoku*.

The most frequently occurring word in the 58 articles after 'Japan' and 'world' was 'tradition'. In many of the articles, *washoku* was axiomatically expanded to 'ancient tradition [29]' or 'inherited from ancestors [28]' without academic support. Even researchers' comments, such as, '*washoku* is excellent cuisine that has endured for hundreds of years [28]'

and ‘we can boast to the world of the spirit imbued in *washoku* culture [30]’, offer no historical factual support. Among the many articles that mention ‘tradition’, pride and concern are expressed about ‘our dietary culture’, and about ‘passing on this rich dietary culture to the next generation [30]’ or ‘inheriting’ it. The importance of this opportunity for inscription as an intangible cultural heritage is considered in the discourse as an opportunity for *washoku* to attain recognition and that aspect of the importance of inscription is a theme in all 58 articles.

Examples of the proactive building or rebuilding of tradition was found in articles that mentioned television programmes that indirectly stated a description of *washoku*. An article entitled, ‘Television Programme: “*Washoku*, the thousand-year mystery flavour’; Approaching Japan’s unique umami flavour from both historical and scientific sides – Broadcast on NHK on the 15th’ began with ‘[I]nscribed as an intangible cultural heritage, *washoku*’s carefully balanced flavour is the special Japan umami taste found in things like soy sauce and sake [31]’. In the article, the term *washoku* is traced back to the liquor ferment used to produce some seasonings (namely, soy sauce or sake) and is linked to a 1000-year period. Moreover, part of the evidence provided by the science and history of umami is in the Japanese-specific nature of *washoku*. As a result, a new *washoku* emerges with a unique tradition and originality created for it.

The newspaper discourse implies that the preservation of the diverse, community-based culture that took the opportunity to be inscribed as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage has led to a process in which *washoku* became the new image of Japanese national cuisine. Through the nationwide scope of mass media, discourse regarding the new *washoku* spread throughout Japan and, in that discourse, various elements of the actual situation became disjointed, tradition and originality/uniqueness were tagged and edited by contrast with the world as the Other, and the image of traditional *washoku* experienced a regeneration. That manifestation of *Washoku*, as an aspect of identity that the Japanese people should be proud of in the world of the Other, was present in the discourse. The unity of cuisine and the nation-state stimulated the national identity, causing the boundaries of the nation-state to sharpen, clarify, and focus on a new dietary practice that nurtures the Japanese people’s sense of national identity.

TABLE I: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE CONTENT ABOUT WASHOKU INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE RECOMMENDATION OR INSCRIPTION, 23–27 OCTOBER 2013 AND 5–9 DECEMBER 2013<sup>a</sup> (N = 58<sup>b</sup>)

Article Content Categories	Number of Relevant Articles
1. The joy of <i>washoku</i> officials	42
2. Environmental concerns regarding <i>washoku</i>	19
3. History prior to inscription	22
4. Activities at a regional level	32
5. Other content	1
Total	116

<sup>a</sup> Sources: *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Mainichi* newspapers

<sup>b</sup> Totals of relevant articles exceeds total number of articles in the sample because some articles are listed in more than one category.

TABLE II: NUMBER OF TIMES KEYWORDS REGARDING WASHOKU INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE RECOMMENDATION OR INSCRIPTION APPEARED IN 58 NEWSPAPER ARTICLES FROM 23–27 OCTOBER 2013 AND 5–9 DECEMBER 2013A

Keyword	Number of Appearances	Keyword	Number of Appearances
Japan	53	Expectation	22
World	49	Region	17
Tradition	34	One soup and three side dishes	13
Cook/chef/restaurant owner	32	Global intangible heritage	11
Japanese person	31	Citizens	8
Joy	31	We/us/our	8
Japanese cuisine	31	Grandmother/mother	6
Foreign/overseas/non-domestic	30	Community	5
Family/household	29		
Inherit/pass down	24	TOTAL	434

<sup>a</sup> Sources: *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Mainichi* newspapers

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that the sharing of the imagined taste that is national cuisine entered Japanese national consciousness when the Other’s (the West’s) cuisine highlighted Japanese cultural boundaries. That event awakened the sense of the Japanese Us. Because the national cuisine was identified and understood in contrast to the non-Japanese Other, homogeneity was emphasised rather than internal diversity and there was a trend toward national standardization. However, the local was stimulated by globalization and, in the context of the contrast with the multi-dimensional Other, clarification of the framework of the nation-state, and the concept of a national homogeneous cuisine, the local was shaken.

The national government and mass media took a series of steps regarding *washoku* that reaffirmed that the imagined communities were identical with the nation-state in the process of redefining the national cuisine. This approach to maintaining Japanese national identity included ‘a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past’, in which the ‘inventing traditions [32]’ was carried out politically through food. Thus, the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage nomination project was more political than it was cultural or academic and Japan is not unique in this regard. The French nation-state sought to redefine its cuisine during the nomination process and new definitions of identification and purification were evident [33]. In addition to this, the every Japanese national-scape newspaper was accepted redefined *washoku* as national cuisine with pleasure, furthermore, they had actively invented the tradition of *washoku* as ‘our taste’ throughout their discourses.

Japanese national cuisine has been referred to the multinational sphere of UNESCO as the Other. In this process, *washoku* has acquired the value of imagined locality in

Japan's national theatre, where national cuisine 'food production, processing, preparation, and consumption-related skills, knowledge, and practices involved in the traditional social practice' have been redefined. To understand the discourse in the newspaper articles examined in this study, it was suggested that *washoku* is a concept that exists in opposition to Western cuisine in Japan and it has little in the way of 'comprehensive social conventions'. However, through the translocation of *washoku* from the regional to the multinational stage, the word '*washoku*' was disconnected from its opposition to Western cuisine and it, thus, becomes possible to create a new context for tradition.

In the process of globalization, where movement and interaction occur at an accelerated pace in a variety of dimensions, the translocation of food transcends space-time. In this process, it is not important whether definition, practice, image, or reality come first because people reference various de-territorialized nodes where food practices are nonlinearly built into something irreversible.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] I. Kumakura, *Nihon-ryori Bunka-shi: Kaiseki wo Chushin ni*, Kyoto: Jimbun Shoin, 2002, p. 250.
- [2] N. Harada, *Washoku to Nihon-bunka:Nihon-ryori no Syakaishi*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2005.
- [3] N. Ishige, *Ishige Naomichi Syoku no Bunka wo Kataru*, Tokyo: Domesu Publishers, 2009.
- [4] I. Kumakura, *Nihon-ryori Bunka-shi: Kaiseki wo Chushin ni*, Kyoto: Jimbun Shoin, 2002.
- [5] P. Francks, "Consuming rice: Food, 'traditional' products, and the history of consumption in Japan," *Japan Forum*, vol. 19, pp.147-168, Jun 2007.
- [6] E. Ohnuki, *Rice as self: Japanese Identities Thorough Time*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995.
- [7] N. Harada, *Washoku to Nihon-bunka:Nihon-ryori no Syakaishi*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2005, p.250.
- [8] R. Wilk, "'Real belizean food': Building local identity in the transnational caribbean," *American Anthropologist*, vol. 101, pp. 244-255, June 1999.
- [9] The Mistry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries(MAFF). *Nihon Shokubunka no Sekai Mukei Isan Touroku Ni Muketa Kentoukai*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.maff.go.jp/j/study/syoku\\_vision/kentoukai.html](http://www.maff.go.jp/j/study/syoku_vision/kentoukai.html)
- [10] The Mistry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries(MAFF). *Teigen: Nihonsyoku restaurant suisyou keikaku*, [Online]. Available: [http://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/sanki/easia/e\\_sesaku/japanese\\_food/kaigi/03/pdf/proposal.pdf](http://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/sanki/easia/e_sesaku/japanese_food/kaigi/03/pdf/proposal.pdf)
- [11] The Mistry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries(MAFF), *UNESCO Sekai Mukei ISAN heno Kisaiteiansyo(an)*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.maff.go.jp/j/keikaku/syokubunka/meeting/2/pdf/teiansho.pdf>
- [12] The Agency for Cultural Affairs of Agriculture. *Mukei Bunkaisan no Daihyouteki na Ichiranhyo Heno Kisai Nituiteno Teiansyo(an)*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/bunkazai/hogojoya/ku/08/pdf/shiryo\\_8\\_2.pdf](http://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/bunkazai/hogojoya/ku/08/pdf/shiryo_8_2.pdf)
- [13] The Agency for Cultural Affairs of Agriculture. *Nihonsyoku Bunka no Mukei Bunkaisan Kisai Teiansyo(an) no Gairyaku*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/bunkazai/hogojoya/ku/08/pdf/shiryo\\_8\\_1.pdf](http://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/bunkazai/hogojoya/ku/08/pdf/shiryo_8_1.pdf)
- [14] The Mistry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries(MAFF). *Nihon Shokubunka no Sekai Mukei Isan Touroku Ni Muketa Kentoukai*. [Online]. Available: [http://www.maff.go.jp/j/study/syoku\\_vision/kentoukai.html](http://www.maff.go.jp/j/study/syoku_vision/kentoukai.html)
- [15] UNESCO. *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?* [Online]. Available:<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002>
- [16] UNESCO. *Intagible Heritage*. [Online]. Available: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869>
- [17] *Shinbun Hakousya Report, Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations*, 2014.
- [18] K. Higuchi, "Contemporary national newspapers and social consciousness: Efficiency and limitations of newspaper content analysis," *Kodo Keiryogaku*, vol.74, pp.1-12, July 2011.
- [19] Shinbun-hensyuseiri-kenkyukai, *Shinhen Shinbun-seiri no Kenkyu*, Tokyo: The Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association, 1994.
- [20] Y. Shimbun, Osaka Morning Edition, dated October 23, 2013.
- [21] Y. Shimbun, Tokyo Morning Edition, dated October 23, 2013.
- [22] M. Shimbun, Tokyo Morning Edition, dated December 5, 2013.
- [23] M. Shimbun, Tokyo Morning Edition, dated December 6, 2013
- [24] A. Shimbun, Tokyo Morning Edition, dated December 5, 2013.
- [25] M. Shimbun, Osaka Morning Edition, dated December 6, 2013.
- [26] The Agency for Cultural Affairs of Agriculture(MAFF). *Washoku; Nihonjin no Dentoteki na Syokubunka no Teian' no Gaiyou*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.maff.go.jp/j/press/kanbo/kihyo02/pdf/131205-03.pdf>
- [27] M. Shimbun, Osaka Evening Edition, dated December 5, 2013.
- [28] Y. Shimbun, Tokyo Morning Edition, dated October 24, 2013.
- [29] M. Shimbun, Chubu Evening Edition, dated December 5, 2013.
- [30] Y. Shimbun, Osaka Morning Edition, dated October 24, 2013.
- [31] M. Shimbun, Tokyo Evening Edition, dated December 5, 2013.
- [32] E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, Ed. Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 1992, p.13.
- [33] J. Tornatore, "Anthropology's Payback: 'The gastronomic meal of the French'," *Heritage Regimes and the State*, RGättingen: Universit äsverlag G ättingen, 2013, pp.341-364.



**Isami Omori** was born in 1996, Osaka, Japan. She obtained a PhD from Nara Women's University. She is associate professor of media sociology at Mukogawa Women's University, School of Human Environmental Sciences. She works at the intersection between food studies and media studies. Her research papers include "The Dynamics of Global Receptiveness of Japanese Foods." Her current research projects focus on Japanese foods on media.

Dr. Omori is director of nonprofit organization Japanese Culinary Academy.