

The Imagined Globe : Japan' s Postcolonial Mentality in Nissin Cup Noodles

メタデータ	言語: en 出版者: 武蔵野大学グローバルスタディーズ研究所 公開日: 2024-03-21 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): Globalization, Nationalism, Food, Banality, Consumption 作成者: Yamamoto, Takayuki メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://mu.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/2000186

The Imagined Globe

Japan's Postcolonial Mentality in Nissin Cup Noodles

想像の世界 日清カップヌードルにおける日本のポストコロニアル
メンタリティ

Takayuki Yamamoto

Keywords: Globalization, Nationalism, Food, Banality, Consumption

1. Introduction

National attachment is generated not only by top-down political nationalist projects but also by unofficial constant remembrance of nations in daily life. In this context, food is one of the major intermediaries passing national identity to the masses in a significantly successful way since it is so essential to the human body that the act of eating itself automatically becomes a practice of establishing national identities. The relationship between food and nationalism often becomes visible when international organizations take up “national foods” in the context of health care, developing an eating habit, or preserving particular cultures. For instance, in 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added *Washoku*, the traditional Japanese cuisine, to their list of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the global recognition of *Washoku* brought a patriotic euphoria to Japan. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in a statement that “we would like to continue passing on Japanese food culture to the generations to come ... and would also like to work harder to let people overseas appreciate the benefits of *Washoku* (Japanese Cuisine Wins Cultural Heritage Status, 2013).” The Japanese Government values this UNESCO recognition largely because the food discourse in Japan has been filled with negative concerns about the influence of radiation on domestic food production since the day the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant exploded due to the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. Additionally, mass media enthusiastically reported how foreign countries highly evaluate *Washoku*, stressing the significance of Japan as a country with a great tradition.

It seems that this type of Japanese food nationalism is to some extent tied up with the recent rightward tilt of Japan. In 1999, Japan formally established its national flag (*Hinomaru*) and anthem (*Kimigayo*), passing the Act on National Flag and Anthem Law. The act was introduced to reinforce the

reunification of the Japanese citizens and their attachment to Japan, because, under the circumstances of globalization and the neoliberal structural reform led by the former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, the rapid industrial developments in East Asian countries and their nationalisms were menaces to Japanese multinational corporations. The contrast between the pre-1990 “Japan-as-No.1” bubble economy and the post-1991 protracted mess in the Japanese economy is so intense that it accelerated unrest not only in the area of the economy but also in historical awareness and identity politics¹⁾. As Elgenius (2011) suggests, with the idea of modern nationalism and mass politics, national symbols were systematized and their utilization as a form of the performing of nationhood contributes to visualizing commonality and membership. In this sense, food is a symbolic implication of something “national”.

Compared to political nationalism, food nationalism seems to be more implicit yet generates and enhances one’s solid national sentiment. What is interesting about Japanese food nationalism is its “twisted” nationalism built into what is marketed to the world as a Japanese product. That is, with the development of the international market in the postwar period, Japan found itself in the complex situation of having to develop products that would be accepted in the world market, while simultaneously having to internalize Japanese uniqueness. How can food nationalism be described in such a complex situation? And will it change as the shape of the market changes? This paper considers these issues by looking at one of the most globally consumed Japanese food products, Nissin Cup Noodles. Invented in 1958 by Nissin Foods Group, instant noodles have long been popular in both Japan and some other countries. In fact, Nissin’s leading product Cup Noodles today is so firmly established as a representative of Japanese inventions that the Cup Noodles Museum was established in 2011 to celebrate the centenary of the founder of Nissin Momofuku Ando’s birth. What emerges from the analysis of Cup Noodles is Japan’s postcolonial mentality manifested in its sensory perceptions and advertising.

2. Banality, Consumption, and Food Nationalism

In this paper, while there are a variety of discussions on nationalism, I have deemed it best to start by referring to Michael Billig’s concept of Banal Nationalism (1995), which is the first and foremost systematic approach to understanding the everyday establishment and reproduction of national identity. Unlike the predominant theorizations of nationalism that see it as a political demand for a sovereign nation-state, hence nationalism as a temporary mood under the conditions of crisis in the West, he contends it is “the ideological habits that enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced (1995: 6)” and the utilization of national symbols in supplies and daily necessities transforms space into a national one. That is, an international consciousness presupposes the existence of foreign communities as “them” and the national community as “us”, and we internalize our national identity by being exposed to repetitive remembrances of nationhood through different types of mediums. He stresses the significance of small words such as “we” and “here” in the process of reproductions of national sentiments, and politicians and newspapers are highlighted as major actors demonstrating the usage of these words as they distinguish

national and foreign news enhancing the imagination of “we” as people in a “homeland” (Billig, 1995). Today, the Internet and social networking services are new platforms for banal nationalism to be diffused on. While some scholars have questioned Billig’s account, arguing that he fails to explain the complexity of identity such as multiple citizenships (Skey, 2009) or other non-national categories (Brubaker, 2006), banal nationalism sheds a light on everyday practices of nationalism which have long been ignored in the mainstream discussions of nationalism.

Reproduction of national attachment is also considered in the context of consumption. Studying different forms of nationalism in Asia, Kosaku Yoshino (1999), for example, challenges conventional “top-down” theories of nationalism, insisting that more attention should be paid to the bottom-up consuming culture that generates national attachments. His argument corresponds with Billig’s emphasis on the everyday reproduction of nationalism in that nationalism is not only fueled by state-led elitist nationalist projects but also by Japanese enterprises, which he conceptualizes as Japanese cultural nationalism. With a Hobsbawmian approach, he recognizes two flows of nationalism in Japan, that are primary and secondary nationalism. Japan’s primary nationalism refers to the invention of the myth that Shintoism is the Japanese national religion and the familism-based tradition of the emperor, and this was done by Meiji elites to establish and enhance Japanese national identity and solidarity after the overthrow of the Tokugawa regime in 1868. On the other hand, the secondary one is called cultural nationalism, and it “has developed in close association with the *Nihonjinron* (discourses on the distinctiveness of Japanese society and culture)”. *Nihonjinron* is a concept that has been developed by a range of professionals, including intellectuals, critics, journalists, diplomats, and business leaders. This concept has been featured in various articles and essays, as well as popular books and magazines. Its popularity peaked in the 1970s, but it remained relevant in the 80s and 90s (Yoshino, 2019). According to Yoshino (1994), employees of companies that produced *Nihonjinron* were its primary consumers. In his research, he found that Japanese economic success and identity were the main topics of discussion. Additionally, he noted that the consumers of *Nihonjinron* were not necessarily looking to reinforce stereotypes, but rather to satisfy their interest in cross-cultural communication (Yoshino, 1994, p. 388). Japanese companies originally started to promote *Nihonjinron* by publishing handbooks for cross-cultural communication for those interested in learning more about how to explain Japanese behavior in English and this played an important role in popularizing the ideology.

Now, I would like to consider how food can be a vehicle for this cultural nationalism. The issue of food is often dealt with in both political and social science literature, and commentators have studied its role in a variety of economic and cultural contexts. Among them, Ichijo & Ranta (2016) provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between food and national identity from different viewpoints. In this first part, they explore how national identity is created through everyday food consumption. Using the concept of banal nationalism, they introduce a case study of Japanese-style pasta recipes on a popular food-focused social networking service in Japan. This highlights how individuals establish and maintain their

national identity by using particular seasonings such as soy sauce and miso-paste to distinguish them from "foreign" counterparts, thus identifying them as distinctly Japanese. Another case study of Arab-Palestinians in Israel shows how group participation in food practices is essential in defining the nation. It emphasizes that while food culture is closely linked to the nation's symbolization, it also serves as a means of disputing the predominant perception of the nation. Israel, being a nation-state with diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, relies heavily on food for collective performance and confrontation with national identity. Additionally, Ichijo & Ranta examine how the food industry contributes to the construction and reproduction of national identities by looking at the British contract catering industry and the Scottish whiskey industry as empirical models for their analysis.

Ichijo & Ranta (2016) describe how so-called national food is taken up as a means of *gastrodiplomacy* drawing on an example of the "Global Thai" promotion in 2002 that aimed to spread Thai food in the hope of attracting more people from all over the world to visit Thailand and to establish deeper diplomatic relations with other countries. They also refer to the emulations of Thailand's gastrodiplomacy including Malaysia and Taiwan that appeared subsequently. Nationalism and national identity in the contemporary global society also face the normative aspect, and Ichijo & Ranta explain how Japan, South Korea, and France confronted the criticisms against their food cultures – whaling and eating whale meat in Japan; dogs meant for eating in South Korean and foie gras production and consumption in France – and how they reformulated their national identities. Additionally, contrary to the expectation that global politics and international organizations encourage global free trade and universalize food culture hence surpassing national food culture, they actually contribute to energizing nationalism and national identity. Examples include UNESCO's recognition of *Washoku* as an intangible cultural heritage. This is because international organizations need to protect local communities and consumers, promote free trade, and secure intellectual property rights, which in effect helps bolster nationalist claims and "in pursuit of a universal value (free trade) and the protection of particular and local (GI as IP)², international organizations support the nation-state domestically, in its pursuit of cultural nationalism, and globally, by supporting national claims of food ownership (2016: 163)." Other scholars such as Michaela DeSoucey (2010) also emphasize the role of globalization, introducing another conceptual term *gastronationalism* which "connects food's social and cultural attributes to politics by making the material, commercial, and institutional processes that shape foods the very objects of investigation (2010: 75)."

In this connection, how do we understand Japan's culinary traditions and food nationalism? In UNESCO's definition, *Washoku* is described as:

[*Washoku* is] a social practice based on a set of skills, knowledge, practice, and traditions related to the production, processing, preparation, and consumption of food. It is associated with an essential spirit of respect for nature that is closely related to the

sustainable use of natural resources. The basic knowledge and social and cultural characteristics associated with *Washoku* are typically seen during New Year celebrations. The Japanese make various preparations to welcome the deities of the incoming year, pounding rice cakes and preparing special meals and beautifully decorated dishes using fresh ingredients, each of which has a symbolic meaning. These dishes are served on special tableware and shared by family members or collectively among communities. The practice favors the consumption of various natural, locally sourced ingredients such as rice, fish, vegetables, and edible wild plants. The basic knowledge and skills related to *Washoku*, such as the proper seasoning of home cooking, are passed down in the home at shared mealtimes. Grassroots groups, schoolteachers, and cooking instructors also play a role in transmitting knowledge and skills by means of formal and non-formal education or through practice (Intangible Cultural Heritage, n.d.).

Here, UNESCO stresses the continuity and particularity of *Washoku* as a Japanese tradition, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF) promotes *Washoku* on its webpage in the same way, elaborating on the history, locality, nutritious benefits, and cultural practices of *Washoku*³). However, it does not necessarily mean that the majority of Japanese citizens perceive *Washoku* as “food nationally favored” (FNF). As UNESCO's definition stresses, it is often concerned with special occasions and in fact, some of them are, unlike FNFs, relatively not accessible to the majority of Japanese people because of their high cost⁴). MAFF would differentiate FNF from *Washoku*⁵) and recognize that curry and Chinese-style noodles (ramen) are the two main FNFs among those including sushi, Japanese noodles, and miso soup (MAFF, n. d.). Ichijo & Ranta recognize this uncertainty about *Japaneseness*, indicating that “some [Japanese] recipes use Chinese or Korean ingredients such as *zha cai* (Chinese pickled mustard plant), chicken soup stock, which is widely associated with Chinese cuisine, and *kimchi* (Korean pickles usually made with chili) but are still presented as Japanese. [...] These food items are now part of the everyday diet of contemporary Japanese although their “foreign” origin is widely acknowledged. In this sense, these items share a similar position with curry and ramen; they are both “foreign” in their origin but fully assimilated into Japanese food culture, and possibly they are on their way to becoming “Japanese” (2016: 32)”. In fact, this is the justification for focusing on Japanese-style *pasta* recipes as the scope of their research.

Their research looks at Japanese home-cooked dishes, but how do major companies manage the “culinary dilemma” that Japan has to face? How do any of them utilize visual symbols in their food products aiming at provoking national sentiments among consumers? In this context, it is safe to say one of the most popular FNFs in Japan is ramen, and instant noodles are the most easily consumable form of ramen in Japan. Since its introduction into the market in 1958, the instant noodles industry has been

developing all over the world and today more than five billion servings are produced in Japan (Instant Ramen Navi, n.d.). Therefore, this paper looks at Cup Noodle's package designs and its early advertisement, considering some points of discussion emerging from the analysis.

3. World Wars and Nissin

It is inevitable to refer to the two World Wars when trying to understand the emergence of Japanese instant noodles. These were characterized by the unprecedented nature of total warfare, which highlights the influence of industrialization on international conflict and its battleground expanding itself into locations other than national borders and frontlines; bombers' targets shifted to the economic infrastructures, resource mining sites, and cities far from the actual hostilities. In this new form of warfare, citizens were not only conscripted into the militaries but also forced to take part in the wars in all aspects of warfare as the subjects of production. In the First World War, Japan had never been involved in such an environment of total war because it was only a local and partial participant in the battleground of New Guinea which was formally a German colony. However, in the Second World War Japan experienced a total war for the first time, being aware that the battle with the U.S. was likely to bring devastating results since they were superior to Japan in all aspects, including oil resources, self-sufficiency in supplies, and productivity, not only military prowess.

Among these aspects, Japan was most significantly overmatched in terms of productivity. While Japan faced a slowdown in its productivity and became deeply impoverished being thrust into the loss of the war, the US overwhelmed Japan with an unrivaled quantity of materials. Japan in the prewar time was rapidly developing its scientific research and product technology to make up for the gap with the Western great powers, and in fact when it came to the quality of armaments Japanese weapons did not fall behind but rather overtook the US. For instance, the Japanese fighter aircraft Mitsubishi A6M, also known as "Zero", is known for its capability of a long cruising distance that outstripped its American counterparts (Hayamizu, 2011). However, in the Second World War, it was not technology that made the difference between winning and losing, but productivity, as mass production of the American heavy bomber, the Boeing B-29 Superfortress, and the damage caused by their bombing in mainland Japan, have shown⁶). It was after the war that Japan understood the ideology of mass production and introduced it into Japanese industries.

The very first instant noodles were invented by Momofuku Ando, the founder of Nissin Foods Group, and mass manufacturing was introduced to Japan with the noodles named Chicken Ramen. Seeing lines of people waiting for Chinese noodles in the postwar black markets in Osaka, Ando got the idea of creating noodles as industrial products that are affordable for anyone suffering from starvation. As mentioned, the concept of mass manufacturing was imported to Japan from the US, and one of the major

figures in this process was the American physicist and statistician Edwards Deming who assisted the US Department of Army with his model of standardization of military supplies production. He was sent to Japan to introduce American ways of manufacturing and quality control. Remarkably, not only in food production but in many fields of business in postwar Japan the impact of Deming is noticeable. For instance, the formerly military-associated Japanese firms such as Nikon, Canon, and Mitsubishi shifted their stance to more mass-consumption-based management after Deming came to Japan⁷⁾. The companies established after the war also followed the idea of mass production and management, creating Sony's iconic transistor radios and Honda's motorcycles.

Although Chicken Ramen was cheap and easy enough for ordinary people to cook themselves, and became an extraordinary hit product, it was still designed for domestic consumers. Ando was developing another type of instant noodles that aimed to attract foreigners, and this instant product was Cup Noodles. He thought that, unlike in Japanese homes, there would not be bowls particularly designed for noodles in overseas countries, hence developing noodles preliminarily packaged in plastic cups with disposable forks. Since Ando's aim was not to attract Japanese consumers and he did not expect it to be a hit in Japan, Cup Noodles was also designed for eating *outside*, which was regarded as bad manners in Japan at that time. Against his expectation, however, it became popular as the mass media reported the police officers laying siege to members of the United Red Army held within the mountain lodge Asama Sanso eating Cup Noodles under the very severe cold weather conditions. This Asama Sanso Incident, which occurred on 19th February 1972, about 5 months after Cup Noodles was officially released. It helped Nissin to succeed in making effective promotions for Cup Noodles on the newly created pedestrian precincts, eventually leading to an alternative eating style being assimilated into Japanese life. With the liberalization of controls of capital movement started in 1969, Japan in the early 1970s witnessed the emergence of branches of Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's. By 1973, 14 companies other than Nissin had entered the instant noodles soup business and the number of brands reached 27, but Nissin Cup Noodles represents the most successful product among them, and it was flexible enough to correspond to changes in the market demands over the years. Giving strong incentives to develop other types of instant food products such as cup coffees, the product has been popular among a variety of people, and today it is sold in more than 80 countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe (Instant Ramen Navi, n.d.).

Nissin Cup Noodles is, additionally, well known for its unique TV commercials. The current CEO, Koki Ando, the son of the founder Momofuku Ando, clarifies three main purposes of television advertisement; firstly, to notify the release of new products; secondly, to recall older products to viewers, and finally to spread Nissin's business philosophy and product policy (Ando, 2009: 211). Nissin has been making diligent efforts in promoting effective marketing, adopting distinctive visual, musical, and verbal expressions based on Nissin's approach that places importance on originality. There have been many series of Cup Noodles TV commercials in the past 40 years, but the most famous and highly-evaluated version

among them is the series named “Hungry?”, which was broadcast on TV from 1992 to 1995. In that period there was a significant increase in the number of fast-food franchise chain restaurants in Japan, and Nissin was competing in the fierce race not only in the instant noodles industry but also in the food industry in general. The plot of the commercials stresses how people in the primitive era used to get their food at the risk of their lives and appreciates the presence of Cup Noodles in a notably comical manner, and the “Hungry?” series became highly popular for its simple and cheerful humor in Europe, Hong Kong, and Brazil. Similarly, the Synthetoceras and Moa series won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival in 1993. The “No Border” series is also a well well-known Nissin commercial series. It portrays children living under conditions of social unrest, sweeping away national boundaries through eating Cup Noodles, emphasizing the universality of hunger and the necessity of world peace. In this series, the aim is more focused on spreading the founder’s conviction that “peace will come to the world when people have enough to eat (Welcome to Nissin Foods!, n.d.).” This is also set as a basic philosophy of the Ando Foundation that was established by Nissin in 1983. Among many Nissin products, Cup Noodles is a product intentionally developed as an entry for overseas markets and has become extremely successful. With this background information, the following section considers how Cup Noodles’ package design stresses the imagined connection between a particular taste and a nation-state.

4. Banality of Nationalism in Cup Noodles

4.1 Taste of the Nation

Taste often becomes a strong marker for a particular nation-state, and it is also manifested in the product design of regular Cup Noodles. Although there have been minor changes in its design over time, the composition has been substantially the same. The unique red logo is designed on a white background marked with a broken pen in gold, and this vivid contrast of red and white easily invokes recall of the rising-sun flag of Japan. The designer, Takeshi Otaka, who was also the art director of Japan Expo ‘70, intentionally created the design that the general Japanese public would find “familiar”, and in fact, the color composition ratio of a regular Cup Noodles is the same as that of the Japanese national flag (Ando, 2009). Although these gold broken lines were added following Ando’s idea that they are reminiscent of the border pattern designs in Western tableware, it can be argued from the hermeneutical perspective that these gold patterns could also function as suggesting the Japanese imperial chrysanthemum crest. Nissin has established a brain science study group that investigates the complexity of human perceptions of taste, smell, and texture as well as memorizing and recalling mechanisms to understand how certain products become good selling ones, and this utilization of national symbols suggests that the product plays a role of subliminal reproduction of Japanese national sentiment.

However, it is important to note that the package does not exist separately but rather is interrelated with the flavor and smells, creating the whole image of Cup Noodle. Here, it is suggestive that, along with many other instant noodles, Cup Noodles sets soy sauce as its regular flavor. Ichijo & Ranta’s (2016) argument was

that particular seasonings such as soy sauce and miso paste characterize Japaneseness in terms of flavor, and when it comes to the creation of regularity of flavor the distinction between “us” and “them” becomes clearer. By setting soy sauce flavor as the regular, “normal” flavor with the above mentioned subliminally nationalistic package, Cup Noodles succeeds in establishing the normalcy of Japaneseness in its internationally promoted product.

The correlation between flavor and nation is also seen in Cup Noodles Chili Tomato, which features Italy in its package. Today Cup Noodles have more than 10 flavors in total⁸⁾ including some more flavors featuring other “national food” such as mie goreng from Indonesia, tom yum from Thailand, and laksa from Singapore, and national symbols are even more recognizably introduced in these packages. The existence of these “other” flavors, in turn, underlines the normalcy of the soy sauce Cup Noodles in a relative sense, building up more consistent images of “Japanese flavor”.

It is worth noting that Koki Ando, in his autobiography, accounts for the spread of instant noodles all over the world stressing that food companies in each country elaborated reproductions of “the taste of mother’s home cooking (Ando, 2009: 229).” According to Ando, if we take Nissin’s products sold in China for instance, the spice mix called “five-spice powder” composed of star anise, Sichuan pepper, Chinese cinnamon, fennel seeds, and cloves is essential in a Chinese market and Chinese consumers would never appreciate the taste without the spice mix. Another example is South Korea’s best-selling instant noodles Shin Ramyun by Nong Shim Ltd, with the main ingredients including red peppers to produce the familiar flavor of spicy Kimchi for the majority of Koreans. In a similar vein, the best-selling Cup Noodles flavor in Thailand is tom yum featuring the sour taste of lemongrass. These examples highlight the significance of imagined motherhood and taste in their food production.

The scholars of nationalism, both modernists and ethno-symbolists, recognize that the presence of gendered nationhood and its considerably effective nationalistic demonstration (Smith, 1996; Anderson 1983), and Lauenstein et al. (2015) go further to conclude that a nation is not an imagined community as Benedict Anderson argues but rather “imagined family” because:

[Firstly,] families provide a structure for social relations. Secondly, families come with social roles and responsibilities, which are clearly ordered along gendered lines of production and reproduction. Thirdly, a family – unlike a sovereign state or a national, cultural education – is much more likely to come with positive emotional connotations. Lastly, family ties are predominantly understood as biological ties of blood relatedness; therefore, drawing on the family as a metaphor reifies social relations as biologically determined. (2015: 311-312)

Taking the nation not only as a political unit but also as a familial community, the imagined taste of the mother's home cooking also has a profound meaning in terms of engendering national attachment. As the feminist critics note in their analysis of the relationship between nationalism and gender, "women are seen as "responsible" for conceiving and giving birth to the next generation of nationals and securing their upbringing... They, in particular, are punished and ostracised if they engage with ethnic – or worse, enemy – "others". A strong nation rests in a strong family, including a strong and dedicated national wife and mother (Laurenstein et al., 2015, p. 313)." Utilizing seasonings that remind consumers of the taste of "mother's dishes" is the means of transforming food into an instrument for projecting nationhood onto it and strengthening national boundaries of tastes.

This relationship between nationhood and taste cannot easily be understood as culinary nationalism, which often advocates its cultural authenticity. When it comes to the discussion of food authenticity, the discourse has distinctively developed in the context of global politics. Globalization plays an important role in the practice of nationalism, and it is inevitable to refer to the intensification of globalization in the world today when someone tries to understand contemporary nationalism. Although globalization indeed brings many challenges to states at different levels such as economy and political decision-making, it does not mean that globalization surpasses nations creating an alternative cosmopolitan supranational identity. On the contrary, it remains a basis of human identity for many people because global interaction stresses the distinction between "we" and "others", hence encouraging people to preserve national individuality. Generally speaking, as commentators of social science have highlighted, social instabilities such as unemployment and a slump in national sovereignty caused by global economic and political reshaping generate an atmosphere in which many feel their security and identity are under threat, and nationalism consequently becomes a weapon to fight against these social unrests (Özkirimli, 2005: 133; Scholte, 2000: 163-4; Holton, 1988: 156-7).

Although international organizations emphasize the standardization of food culture and international free trade highlighting their presence in global politics, "international organizations need to protect local communities and consumers, promote free trade, and secure intellectual property rights, which in effect helps bolster nationalist claims (Ichijo & Ranta, 2015: 163)". It was Japanese chefs worrying about the extinction of Japanese "traditional" food culture who requested the application for UNESCO recognition of the intangible cultural heritage. In a similar vein, the French promotion of the gastronomic meal of the French in 2010 was based on the background that some French citizens are deeply concerned about a cultural extinction of French food tradition because of the recent social and demographic changes under the influence of globalization.

It has been argued that in recent years Japanese nationalism has increasingly become visible, often manifested as an insistence on Japanese economic and political superiority to other countries, and it

aims to enhance the sense of national attachment of Japanese citizens. The Act on National Flag and Anthem, for example, imposed the singing of *Kimigayo* onto teachers at schools, and those who dissented from the act received reprimands, pay cuts, or suspension. In 2012, “the Supreme Court has dismissed two suits from 375 teachers and educational professionals requesting a ban on the enforced singing of the *Kimigayo* in schools (*Japan Today*, 2012, February 10).” Japan’s *Washoku* promotion can be understood in this context and in its performance the Japanese cultural distinctiveness is highlighted in global politics, supported by both top-down and bottom-up actors.

Although in overseas countries ramen is recognized as Japanese cuisine⁹⁾, Cup Noodles is not involved in the discourse of national food authenticity, and this is probably because ramen is characterized by its existence as a “platform”. Kushner (2015) opens up the possibility of considering ramen as “platform food”:

Why has ramen perhaps taken over as the archetypal example of Japanese food even though it is considered insufficiently Japanese to be listed as such in the UNESCO application? ... We should note that the entire ramen boom, which took off in the early 1990s, intersects with the precise downturn of the Japanese economy and the rise of what has been labeled as Japan’s “lost decades.” In short, the international ramen explosion that is now happening has less to do with government promotion and the limited success of establishing *Washoku* as a world cuisine and more to do, perhaps, with the fact that, like the sandwich, ramen is a “platform food” that can easily be adapted to local tastes (Kushner, 2015).

Needless to say, Cup Noodles should be differentiated from so-called ramen since Kushner here does not talk about instant noodles but the increase in the number of ramen restaurants in the world. Still, Cup Noodles shares a significant point Kushner makes, which is the flexibility in tastes. This flexibility, although it might sound counterintuitive, is an important aspect of nationalism in the age of globalization. Nissin calls its worldwide promotion of Cup Noodles glocalization strategy in which the brand introduces the local flavor of “mother’s home cooking” in the process of its globalization, and the company has been consciously committed to this strategy since the liberation of capital movement in the 1970s. By 2010, Nissin had developed 25 factories in 10 overseas countries and recruited local people, and manufactured and sold its products locally. However, this glocalization strategy also highlights the relativity in countries, which results in stressing Japan’s particularity. This “dilemma of glocalization” is also seen in McDonald’s globalization strategy. Although it offers its original burgers in each branch in the world, the menu also involves burgers emphasizing local tastes (Crawford et al., 2015). Japan’s Teriyaki Burger featuring soy sauce as a main seasoning as well as a burger using locally sourced cheeses in its recipes in France are examples of this glocalization of McDonald’s. Crawford et al. argue that:

McDonald's realized early that it wasn't just selling burgers, it was selling the McDonald's experience through glocalization, its ability to brand globally, but think locally. McDonald's is a global brand... But the company is also local, with its franchising to local entrepreneurs, locally sourcing food, and targeting specific local consumer market demands (2015: 11).

Nissin's glocalization strategy corresponds with McDonald's global marketing, and regular Cup Noodles become a representation of Japan in its design and flavor as a result of Nissin's involvement in the global market.

4.2 The Imagined Globe and Japan's Postcolonial Mentality

Embodying a particular taste in a product as a representation of a particular nation-state does not seem to be exclusionist as nationalism is often imagined, but does Nissin's glocalization strategy exemplify "ideal" uses of nationalism that evaluate each national culinary tradition equally? In this connection, *Nisshin Shokuhin no 50-nenshi: 1958-2008* (Nissin Foods Co., Ltd. Company History Compilation Project, 2007), the country's official history book of Nissin Foods Group that comprehensively records the changes in Nissin TV commercials from 1958 to 2008 is a useful resource. Since its introduction in 1971, Cup Noodles produced 35 different versions of TV commercials by 2008. Significantly enough, in more than half of these TV commercials, Nissin uses actors and actresses from outside Japan and presents the images of Cup Noodles consumed by "foreigners", sometimes featuring celebrities such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and James Brown. For instance, there are Italians, Brazilians, Norwegians, and New Zealanders eating Cup Noodles in the commercials created in the 70s and 80s, and all of them have a thematic consistency emphasizing that the product is loved by "people from all over the world." This imagery of Cup Noodles as a global-minded product is also significant in the "No Border" series broadcast from 2004 to 2005. The series is set in Middle Eastern and Eastern European countries¹⁰⁾ and portrays child soldiers under severe circumstances overcoming the national boundaries eating Cup Noodles, which thematically celebrates the sameness of every human being, underlining hunger as an issue that we all should cooperatively cope with. In the final version of the series, which features space food instant noodles jointly developed by Nissin and Japan Aerospace eXploration Agency (JAXA) and the Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi eating it in the space station, we see a whole picture of the earth from space filmed from the space station, highlighting a substantial image of "the planet Earth".

Unlike the visual designs of Cup Noodles, these TV commercials seem not to stress the national uniqueness in their themes and plots. What is controversial, however, is that in these commercials no East Asian countries and people are described, paradoxically revealing the stereotypical perception of "the

world” based on the Japanese, or at least Nissin’s post-colonial mentality. As Edward Said’s canonical publication *Orientalism* (1979) critically argues, the term is associated with an Occidental patronizing interpretation of “the East” as the sphere of primitive cultures, hence inferior to the rational West, and Japan is the country to which such an Orientalist glances are directed (Said, 1979). However, according to Stephan Tanaka (1993), there is “Japanese Orientalism”. Tanaka argues:

What was not discussed in *Orientalism* is the dependence of the possessor, the subject, on its object. Japan, having defined itself in terms of the object, soon became captive to its discourse. Its understanding of itself was fixed in the past, as oriental... But as the world changed – especially Asia – Japan faced a dilemma. Its understanding could change, but only at the risk of opening up questions of its past; or it could continue to search for objective truth, as it defined it, and gradually be further separated from its object. (1993: 22)

For instance, in the pre-modern era the most important “other” for Japan was China, and Japan used to perceive the world based on Sinocentrism¹¹⁾ (Pollack, 1986). This recognition, however, drastically changed in the process of Japan’s modernization as the Western powers became so influential that Japan was no longer able to ignore them. Japan began to prioritize the civilization of its society and people as modernization progressed. As a result, Japanese nativist scholars started using *Shina* to separate Japan from barbarian China, creating the discourse of Japanese Orientalism. In short, just as the Western world created the dichotomy between the West and the East, Japan drew the line between Japan and other Asian countries¹²⁾. Although the last version of the “No Border” series might be an exception, the majority of Cup Noodles TV commercials exemplify the attitude of Japanese Orientalism. In this sense, despite their message for world peace, they ironically expose their limited perception of the world, which excludes East Asian countries from their imaginary globe.

5. Conclusion

Cup Noodles is equipped with a variety of national imageries and symbolisms, as the motif of the Japanese national flag is intentionally applied to the design of regular Cup Noodles to generate a sense of familiarity for Japanese consumers. The flavor is another indication of nationality, and Cup Noodles successfully manifests itself as a Japanese product by setting soy sauce flavor as its regular taste. The liberation of the capital movement and Nissin’s corresponding global marketing strategy necessitated this. Cup Noodles’ glocalization strategy involves local tastes and appreciates the diversity of flavors, but in return, it also stresses the regularity of soy-sauce flavor Cup Noodles. As for its TV commercials, since the product was particularly designed for Nissin’s global development and overseas marketing, there are no clear representations of Japan in their contents, and they rather feature and celebrate the joy of eating as a universal happiness. That being said, eliminating East Asia from their imaginary globe, these commercials

ironically reveal the existence of Japanese Orientalism that attempts to disconnect Japan from the region. It is, however, important to point out that the subtle nationalism practiced in Cup Noodles is not associated with Japanese food nationalism, which is entailed as a reaction to the recent intensification of economic globalization. That is, although actual purchases of Cup Noodles as well as seeing its advertisements can be a form of consumption of nationalism, it does not simply project Japan as a unique, beautiful country of healthy diet as the typical Japanese food nationalism often envisions. Therefore, it is rather associated with banal nationalism mediated by food consumption.

Remarkably, the past few decades have witnessed a boom in “Gotouchi Gourmet” [Local Cuisine], and a human inquisitive mind for food is now involved in leisure industries such as tourism¹³⁾ (Kushner, 2015). Many provincial cities promote their local cuisines and, not surprisingly, ramen has been a platform for them as well. That is, ramen could also be an agency carrying out the intensification of national particularities and regional and local distinctions. This leaves another question; if agencies of nationalism could also work as localization, does national attachment still surpass local identity? Further research could usefully focus on how “banal localism” is contested and related to national attachment. Also, this paper does not elaborate on the correlation between the emergence of the discourse of “mother’s home cooking” and the idealization of “housewife”, meaning that there still is fertile ground for feminist criticisms to approach food nationalism.

Overall, the sense of national membership can be generated through alleged global strategy, and the era of nation-states does not simply end straightforwardly. It seems even true that globalization is a key phenomenon that entails nationalism. An intensification of cross-national economic and cultural interactions certainly has a considerable effect on the nation-state system, but national identities are reimagined constantly and multilayered in different ways. The banality of nationalism manifested in Nissin Cup Noodles is one archetype of how nationalism survives through food in the era of globalization, although it is disguised in a cosmopolitan costume.

¹⁾ One example is the foundation of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform in 1996, which omits descriptions of Pre-1945 Imperial Japan war crimes from the current history textbook in Japan.

²⁾ Ichijo & Ranta here elaborate on how geographical indications (GIs) are promoted and categorized as intellectual property (IP) by the European Union and WTO to liberate the free trade regime. (For more details, see Ichijo & Ranta, 2016).

³⁾ More specifically, MAFF introduces four elements that determine *Japaneseness* of food: various fresh ingredients and using their natural tastes; well-balanced and healthy diets; emphasis on the beauty of nature in the presentation, and connecting to annual events. It is important to note that with this definition a Japanese-style pasta is not defined as *Washoku* even though its *Japaneseness* can be seen in the seasonings used for it.

- ⁴⁾ For instance, the survey shows that the majority of Japanese citizens eat sushi only once a month (*MyEL My Voice Enquete Library*, n.d.).
- ⁵⁾ To be more precise, MAFF “*kokuminshoku*” from “*Washoku*”, and direct translations of each word are “national food” and “Japanese cuisine”. However, since *kokuminshoku* means foods or dishes favored by the masses regardless of age and gender, and to avoid phraseological confusion, I translate it as “food nationally favored”.
- ⁶⁾ Hayamizu points out that this difference in the focus regarding strategies between Japan and the US comes from the difference in the conception of manufacturing. According to him, while the US production facilities were characterized by a mechanized and manualized program in which an inexpert could be involved in the process of the manufacture because of its simplicity, Japanese production of weapons was the opposite, marked by an emphasis on the expert craftsmanship, which eventually resulted in a seriously inefficient weapon-making process. Behind the American conception of mass manufacture, there was the introduction of the Model T by Ford in the late 1900s and the associated ideology of Fordism (Hayamizu, 2009).
- ⁷⁾ Nikon and Canon today are well known for specializing in optics and imaging products, but they were originally founded as manufacturers of optical weapons for the Imperial Japanese Navy. Similarly, Mitsubishi used to be an aircraft factory and is now a conglomerate company.
- ⁸⁾ Some product lines such as Cup Noodles Pasta Style and Cup Noodles Rich are excluded. This paper only focuses on the main product line.
- ⁹⁾ For instance, according to Barak Kushner, “In Taiwan, a country with its long noodle traditions, ramen is often expressly sold as *rishi* or in the “Japanese style,” to set it apart from native competitors.” (See also Kushner, 2015).
- ¹⁰⁾ Koki Ando confirms that the “No Border” series was planned to appeal to the multitude for world peace considering the severe situations in the Middle East since the Iraq War broke out (Ando, 2009).
- ¹¹⁾ Although there had long been nationalistic sentiments in pre-modern Japan, the nationalism claiming Japan’s cultural distinctiveness emerged only after the backlash of nativism against Chinese Learning (Kangaku) in the 18th century. (For more details, see Askew, 2004).
- ¹²⁾ Satoshi Shirai argues that post-World-War Japan has been representing itself in two ways; to political elites, the representation of Japan is as the defeated nation, while to the mass citizens, it spreads the mythical discourse in which “the end of the war” is stressed instead of “the defeat of the war”, and this contradictory political framework has been sustained by the overwhelmingly strong position of Japan in terms of the economics in East Asia (Shirai, 2013).
- ¹³⁾ According to Kushner, this is because of two factors: “the increasing homogenization of the Japanese hinterland and the need for regions beyond the megacities to compete for revenue. While the overall population of Japan is decreasing, the percentage of those living in the three major cities—Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka—continues to rise. This geography of change in Japan was further accelerated by the *Heisei daigappei*, a series of administrative mergers in the Heisei era (1989–), which saw the number of municipalities reduced from 3,232 in 1999 to 1,730 in 2010” (Kushner, 2015).

References

- Anderson, B. R. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Ando, H. (2009). *Kappunūdorū o buttsubuse!— Sōgyō-sha o gekido sa seta nidaime shachō no māketingu ryūgi* [Destroy Cup Noodles! - The marketing style of the second president that infuriated the founder]. Chuokoron-Shinsha
- Askew, R. K. (2004). The cultural paradox of modern Japan: Japan and its three others. *New Zealand Asian Studies Society (NZASIA)*, 6(1), 130-149. Retrieved July 26, 2016, from http://www.nzasia.org.nz/downloads/NZJAS-June04/6_1_7.pdf
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.:Sage.
- Crawford, A., Humphries, S. A., & Geddy, M. M. (2015). McDonald's: A case study in glocalization. *Journal of Global Business Issues*, 9(1).
- DeSoucey, M. (2010). Gastronationalism: Food traditions and authenticity politics in the European Union. *American Sociological Review*, 75(3), 432-455. doi:10.1177/0003122410372226
- Elgenius, G. (2011). *Symbols of Nations and Nationalism: Celebrating Nationhood*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hayamizu, K. (2009). *Rāmen to aikoku* [Ramen and Patriotism]. Kodansha.
- Holton, R. J. (1998). *Globalization and the nation-state*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press.
- Ichijo, A., & Ranta, R. (2016). *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*. Springer.
- Instant Ramen Navi Ippan Shadan Hojin Nihon Sokuseki Shokuhin Kogyo Kyokai*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2016, from http://www.instantramen.or.jp/history/cup_noodles.html
- UNESCO: Intangible Cultural Heritage*. (n.d.). Safeguarding our living heritage. Retrieved August 5, 2016, from <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/Washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869>
- Japan Today*. (2012, February 10). Supreme Court rules making teachers sing 'Kimigayo' is constitutional. Retrieved August 05, 2016, from <http://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/supreme-court-rules-making-teachers-sing-kimigayo-is-constitutional>
- Japanese Cuisine Wins Cultural Heritage Status. (2013, December 5). *The Japan Times*. Retrieved August 05, 2016, from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/05/national/japanese-cuisine-added-to-unesco-intangible-heritage-list/#.V2QPjeYrKR>
- Kushner, B. (2015, July 17). Ramen vs. “Washoku”: The Changing Face of Japanese Cuisine. Retrieved July 27, 2016, from <http://www.nippon.com/en/features/c02203/>
- Lauenstein, O., Murer, J. S., Boos, M., & Reicher, S. (2015). “Oh motherland I pledge to thee ...”: A study into nationalism, gender and the representation of an imagined family within national anthems. *Nations and Nationalism*, 21(2), 309-329. doi:10.1111/nana.12123
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. (n.d.). *Nihonjin no mikaku to shikō* [Japanese tastes and preferences]. Retrieved August 5, 2016, from <http://www.maff.go.jp/j/keikaku/syokubunka/culture/mikaku.html>
- The Momofuku Ando Instant Ramen Museum. (n.d.). Retrieved August 05, 2016, from <http://www.instantramen->

museum.jp/en/

- Nissin Foods Co., Ltd. Company History Compilation Project. (2007). Nisshinshokuhin 50-nen-shi: 1958 - 2008' [50 Year History of Nissin Foods: 1958-2008]. Nissin Foods.
- MyEL My Voice Enquete Library* (n.d.). Osushi ni kansuru ankēto chōsa. Retrieved October 05, 2023, from https://myel.myvoice.jp/products/detail.php?product_id=27903
- Özkirimli, U. (2005). *Contemporary debates on nationalism: A critical engagement*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pollack, D. (1986). *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan's Synthesis of China from the Eighth through the Eighteenth Centuries*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Scholte, J. A. (2000). *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Shirai, S. (2013). *Eizoku haisen-ron: Sengonihon no kakushin* [Perpetual Defeat Theory: The Core of Postwar Japan]. Ota Shuppan.
- Skey, M. (2009). The national in everyday life: A critical engagement with Michael Billig's thesis of Banal Nationalism. *The Sociological Review*, 57(2), 331-346. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954x.2009.01832.x
- Smith, A. D. (1996). *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tanaka, S. (1993). *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Welcome to Nissin Foods! (n.d.). Retrieved August 05, 2016, from <http://www.nissinfoods.de/1/company/>
- Yoshino, K. (1994). Ethnicity and Nationalism in Consumer Society. *Japanese Sociological Review Shakaigaku Hyoron, JSR*, 44(4), 384-399. doi:10.4057/jsr.44.384
- Yoshino, K. (2019). Rethinking theories of nationalism: Japan's nationalism in a marketplace perspective 1. In *Consuming Ethnicity and Nationalism* (pp. 8-28). Routledge.

Assistant Professor, Department of Global Communication, Faculty of Global Studies,
Musashino University