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An Illustration

The old wood two-storied house sits on a small hill proceeded by a spacious lawn. Past the pairs of shoes lining the front entrance and beyond the dining area is a tea room that bears few traces of its origins as a study. The floor is covered with tatami¹ mats and sliding doors form a wall separating a narrow corridor leading to a preparation room where scores of small tea utensils are prepared, cleaned, and stored. On the wall a calligraphy scroll hangs over flowers arranged sparsely in a vase. However, the room is empty of other objects except for one corner where steam escapes from an old iron tea kettle on a portable brazier attended by a ceramic water jar, lacquered tea caddy, bamboo whisk, small folded cloth, and a few other utensils orderly arranged. A middle-aged Japanese woman in kimono, hair pulled back, sits on her knees in front of the kettle and prepares tea. Sitting diagonally to her, the teacher, in her 70s and also wearing kimono, punctuates the student's flow of movements with verbal instructions of what comes next. "Left, right, left," she says in Japanese as the student handles the tea bowl. "No, the knuckle of your thumb shouldn't bend. It should be flat like this," and she illustrates with her hand. Two other students, both in casual clothes, sit as "guests" who will drink the tea the "host" is preparing. When the bowl of tea is whisked to a frothy green, the first guest sets aside the round sweet made of pounded rice and beans to slide forward on his knees and retrieve the bowl of tea. Three other students sit in the back of the room, outside the performance space, observing the procedure and chatting. While

¹ Please refer to Appendix A for a brief definition of this and other Japanese terms repeatedly employed throughout the text.

the guest drinks the tea, a younger woman in the back asks about the scroll. The teacher explains the meaning and as she proceeds to discuss the day's flower arrangement another student arrives. She sits on her knees and greets the teacher formally by bowing, and apologizing for running late. The teacher, delighted to see her (busy with work, she has missed the last few weekly lessons), compliments her colorful kimono and asks how her mother is doing. The lesson proceeds with each of the students taking turns as guest or host, preparing tea in different ways depending on the types of utensils chosen. Three hours later, when all have finished, cleaned up, and chatted a bit as they gather their belongings and slip on their shoes, the students file out of the house and return to their cars to drive back home—not to the suburbs of Tokyo (although similar a scene might have occurred in Japan), but to their respective Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Introduction

“Ethnic practices” have interested generations of migration scholars who have fruitfully employed them as indicators of degrees of assimilation (Alba 1990), evidence of persisting ethnicities (Gordon 1964), and sites for the on-going negotiation of ethnic identities (Conzen et al.1992). Although it is generally acknowledged that “ethnic practices” are potentially variable—affected by or resulting from migration processes—less has been written specifying *how* this works, i.e. What processes guide and what trends can we expect when such practices are recreated by migrants? As a tractable

starting point for research in this area, a comparison of “tea ceremony”² in Japan and the US will be used to pull out testable hypotheses to guide further elaborations of the dynamics shaping and forming migrant “ethnic practices.”

It is widely accepted in the US migration literature that ethnicity is continually re-created in a process of immigrant adjustment to American society (Alba 1990; Alba and Nee 1997; Gans 1994; Waters 1999; Yancey et al. 1976). Much of what constitutes “ethnic cultures” arises out of a constantly evolving interaction between their location and cultural heritage (Yancey et al. 1976). Recent migrants sort out elements of their culture in light of the new context of the receiving area (Alba 1985). This occurs in a dialectical process with a mainstream (Glazer and Moynihan 1970), other groups (Waters 1999; Zhou 1997), and within the group (Conzen et al. 1992) and continues through the second and subsequent generations.

This line of research has significantly moved beyond everyday notions of ethnicity as singular, static, and ahistorical towards more productive analytic definitions recognizing ethnicity as historical, processual, and context-dependent. Nevertheless, frequently (ethnic) culture is treated as a part of the baggage migrants bring along and not explored as a dynamic process. This tendency has been compounded in recent years as researchers have focused so keenly on boundaries at the expense of content that they have

² I use this term here in quotation marks as an inadequate but commonly understood approximate translation of what is also known as *chadō*, *sadō*, or *chanoyū*. In their everyday interactions, practitioners in Japan and the US usually say “*ocha*” (tea) or “tea” since the context is generally sufficient to distinguish the practice from the common beverage. For the sake of readability, I use quotation marks as a distancing device only in its first appearance.

paid little attention to the particular dynamics of “ethnic culture” production in international migration.³ For Alba and Nee (2002: 14), who see ethnicity as a distinction “typically embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups that give an ethnic boundary concrete significance,” cultural content is a set feature given from the outset. In a similarly unproblematized version, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) view ethnic culture as something immigrants bring to the receiving country and attempt to “maintain” or “preserve,” particularly through the second generation. Likewise, Waters (1999) takes the cultural content of telescopic ethnic identities as granted and instead focuses on the level at which boundaries are drawn in particular contexts. All of these authors in their studies of ethnicity regard “cultural content” as a given and reveal change to occur mainly (although not solely) as a potential decline in salience or a loss with the second generation.

But rather than uncritically assuming *that* practices are “ethnic,” analysts should direct attention towards explicating the dynamics of practices being made “ethnic.” The non-reflexive reification of a “core ethnic culture” (Gordon 1964) by researchers uncritically reproduces what ought to be explained: namely, the processes behind and the ways in which reification of “ethnicity” or “ethnic culture” occurs in the everyday (Brubaker 2002; Eriksen 2002). One way to side-step such unintentional hypostatization and focus on ethnic variability is by concentrating on specific practices rather than “ethnic groups” in framing the research. This is not to say that “Japanese” or “American”

³ Cornell’s (1996) work on how the relationship between the content of ethnic identity and the surrounding circumstances affects group formation is an important exception to this trend.

or other such categories are irrelevant, completely avoidable, or analytically useless, but that they should be analyzed as social accomplishments rather than a priori givens. Furthermore, when examining issues of “ethnic culture” production in the migration context it is necessary to avoid truncating the relevant field of inquiry and include the sending region. Only by moving beyond the parochial horizons of the receiving country does a grasp of the *transformations* involved in constituting “ethnic culture” become possible.

Tea ceremony provides an interesting site for probing the issues presented here because it is highly structured and formalized, thereby narrowing the field of variation in its reconstruction. As so many aspects are held constant, it provides an ideal lens for focusing on the details of change. Moreover, tea is generally claimed to be an “archetypical Japanese” practice (but with different meanings and implications, as I will elaborate) in contemporary Japan and the US, which facilitates comparative analysis of practical constructions of “Japanese” and their implications. These processes are thrown in relief against a universalist philosophy that constitutes tea as a “Way” (or “Path” in a Buddhist sense)⁴ and organizes the practice around ideals such as respect, hospitality, harmony, peace, and gratitude regarded as common to all of humanity (Sen 1979). Its central leaders promote the Way of Tea as a practice open to anyone and as a way of life rejecting social divisions of race, ethnicity, and nation (e.g. Sen 2002). The tension emerging between the particularistic and universalist faces of tea in both Japan and the

⁴ The Japanese term for “tea ceremony” consists of two characters, the first meaning “tea” and the second meaning “path, way, road.”

US affords an interesting site for exploring how it becomes defined as an “ethnic” or “national” practice.⁵

Background of Tea

The current “accepted” history appearing in Japanese schoolbooks and espoused by tea practitioners is that tea ceremony was founded at the end of the sixteenth century in Japan by Sen Rikyū, who combined elements of both art and Zen Buddhism with tea preparation and its related tasks.⁶ Today, the highly formalized procedures surrounding the preparation of tea, its philosophical elements, the setting in which it is performed, and the basic types of utensils used are regarded as preserved from that time and passed down through an *iemoto* system (i.e. a hierarchy of teachers crowned by a master who is a descendent of the founder), common in many “traditional arts” in Japan. Although tea ceremony was for most of its existence almost exclusively the realm of men, from the late nineteenth century women began to participate in large numbers as tea was included in

⁵ Many authors recognize a good deal of fuzzy overlap between “ethnicity,” “nation,” and other cognates (Eriksen 2002, Jenkins 1997, Berreman, 1972) Although a distinction is not critical for the argument presented here, I will for the most part use “national” to characterize particular notions of Japaneseness enacted in Japan since the Meiji period as this mode of identity is generally formed in relationship to national others or with regards to a privileged relationship to the state. And I will use “ethnic” to refer to particular notions of Japaneseness established in the US as ethnically-defined others become the relevant site for drawing boundaries. Occasionally, however, I will also use ethnicity as a more general concept that includes both “national” and “multiethnic” variants among others.

⁶ More detailed historical accounts can be found in Varley and Kumakura (1989) and Sen (1998).

many school curriculums as a part of etiquette training. Now, among the 2,600,000 self-reported students of tea in Japan, over 90% of practitioners are women (Kato 2001).

Yet tea ceremony has remained understudied as a social practice. The overwhelming majority of research on the subject in Japan and abroad is limited in focus to its historical development, philosophy, or aesthetic traditions (a partial list includes Kagotani 1985; Kumakura et al 1999; Sadler 1962; Sen 1980; Sen 1998; Suzuki 2000; Varley and Kumakura 1989).⁷ Only a recent few have looked at current practices of tea in Japan or elsewhere (e.g. Kato 2001; Kumakura and Tanaka 1999; B. Mori 1996; Varley 2000).⁸ In the US, research on tea ceremony has frequently defined its subject as a ritual process, analyzing mainly the standard four-hour gathering (*chaji*) (J. Anderson 1991; Kondo 1985).⁹ As its ideal form, the *chaji* may be the most striking aspect of tea ceremony, but singling out solely this facet prevents analysis of most what it is tea practitioners actually do as tea practitioners: tea lessons, public demonstrations,

⁷ This may be an effect of sexism in Japanese academia to a certain extent. Areas of tea ceremony in which men have been the main figures are favored over the more “trite” aspects in which women have played significant roles.

⁸ For a review of the Japanese literature, see Kato (2001).

⁹ This limitation may be partially due to the connotations attached to the English rendering of *chadō* or *sadō* (“tea path” or “the way of tea”) into “tea ceremony.” When I am asked by everyday tea practitioners in Japan what the English word for *chadō* is, they are usually surprised by my answer and question the use of “ceremony” to describe what it is they do. (However, in an interesting feedback loop, highly ranked tea masters and scholars of tea in Japan have recently begun to use the Anglicism *seremoni* when giving explications, a frame that may gradually become broadly accepted by everyday practitioners.)

organizational meetings, semi-annual large tea gatherings, field-trips, and so forth. As situations in which people interact *qua* tea practitioners, these are important sites of production of the practice of tea and need to be taken into account if one is to examine what it is that *doing* tea ceremony is about.

In much of the literature, tea ceremony is axiomatically regarded as a “Japanese” practice. Some previous work, such as Kato (2001), analyzes this perception but does not explore its import outside of Japan. In this paper I first briefly examine how tea is seen as quintessentially Japanese in Japan via its construction a “cultural synthesis” (*sōgō bunka*). Then I look at the shifts in the implications of tea as a “Japanese” practice when recreated in the US. Finally, I draw out two somewhat counterintuitive propositions predicting outcomes for the re-creation of ethnicized practices (or, the re-invention of invented traditions) in migration that may provide a starting point for further research in this area.

Methodology

To examine the “Japanese” career of tea ceremony, I will compare the practice of tea in Japan and the US, here examined through the lens of Los Angeles, the primary area of Japanese settlement on the US mainland.¹⁰ Conclusions are drawn from an analysis of

¹⁰ It is important to note that, as with other forms of “traditional Japanese culture” such as flower arrangement, or Noh theater, tea ceremony is divided into schools. The vast majority of tea practitioners belong to one of three schools (Urasenke, Omotesenke, and Mushanokojisenke) that trace their roots back to the founder Sen Rikyū. Of these three schools, Urasenke has the most members both in Japan and other

data collected from ethnographic observations in both areas supplemented by interviews with tea practitioners on both sides of the Pacific.

The Japan data are drawn from participant observations collected since 1999 of tea lessons and events in the Kansai region (more specifically Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, and Awaji Island), the second largest urban area in Japan.¹¹ I attended weekly tea classes held by a local teacher on Awaji Island from 1999-2001 and a tea class for non-Japanese held at the main headquarters in Kyoto from 2000-1 and in addition observed lessons at six different locations, from high school tea classes to classes taught by part-time teachers with five students to classes of full-time teachers with around 100 students. Furthermore,

countries, claiming over two million adherents (B. Mori 1996). Since these schools are secretive of official counts, even denying access to the Japanese government and UNESCO, exact numbers are impossible to obtain. One set of estimates claims for Urasenke about 70% of tea practitioners in Japan and over 90% of those outside of Japan (B. Mori 1991). Another set of estimates divide the membership in Japan as 60% Urasenke, 20% Omotesenke, and 20% other schools (Kato 2001). Most practitioners today when asked about schools say that the divisions between them concern only superficial differences in the movements and forms of preparing the tea (e.g. whether the tea is made with foam on top or not) and that the same teachings of tea as a “Way” are shared by all schools. This study looks at only practitioners of the Urasenke School, which is both the largest school and since World War II has been a trendsetter in the tea world, developing innovations that other schools have followed (Kato 2001).

¹¹ The practice of tea is very highly structured and within the hierarchical system of teachers, those with high ranks in the far-flung regions of Japan take lessons from the top teachers based out of the main office in Kyoto and will travel to Kyoto themselves for special gatherings and events. Because of this high level of integration, I contend that the world of tea in Japan is interconnected to the extent that whatever regional variations might exist are irrelevant for this study.

I have participated as both attendee and organizer in a wide range of tea activities external to lessons, including formal gatherings (*chaji*), informal gatherings (e.g. playing the game *kagetsu*), public demonstrations during city and temple fairs, demonstrations held for foreign groups, regional tea gatherings, annual memorial services at the main headquarters, meetings of the national tea organization Tankōkai, fieldtrips for tea groups, and holiday parties. These observations are supplemented with data drawn from 1-2 hour semi-structured interviews conducted in Japanese with 13 tea practitioners ranging in age from approximately 25-85 and experience in tea from 4-60 years. Of the ten women and three men I spoke to, all are actively taking lessons, although five are teachers themselves. The sample was constructed through a snowball method based on personal contacts I established while living in Japan and attending tea lessons and through participating in activities of the youth division (*Seinenbu*) of Tankōkai.

In the Urasenke school in Los Angeles there are 30 active tea teachers, 300 dues-paying members of the official organization, and as many as 150 non-members, mainly students of high school and college tea classes or people who have suspended lessons.¹² The Los Angeles data are culled from participant observation of lessons held by a local teacher attended weekly since 2001 as well as more periodic participation as both a host and a guest in public demonstrations, annual gatherings, and Tankōkai events. These data are supplemented by 1-2 hour semi-structured interviews set up through the snowball method with twelve practitioners living in greater Los Angeles: three men and

¹² The next largest school of tea in Los Angeles, Omotesenke, has around six active teachers and less than 150 practitioners in total.

nine women between the ages 20-65 who have been practicing tea for 4-40 years, four of whom are also teachers. Six were born and raised in Japan, three are Americans of Japanese descent, and three are Americans of non-Japanese descent. The interviews were conducted in either English or Japanese, depending on the preference of the interviewee.

The interview data do not directly express the unmediated thoughts, opinions, or experiences of the interviewees. Even before questions of data interpretation can be raised, it should be recognized how the data themselves are constructed in interaction over time between the interviewer and interviewee. There are many ways a person may be classified, but they are not all equally applicable in a given situation. Since some of the topics I was interested in involve subjective notions of ethnicity or nation or race (although I rarely addressed them directly), it is very likely that respondents crafted their answers with respect to their own interpretations of where I fit into these categories. However, in many ways this was an asset rather than a source of error. (Please see Appendix B for a methodological discussion.)

Tea in Japan

Tea ceremony has played many roles throughout its 500 year history, from Buddhist ritual to political tool to etiquette training (see Varley and Kumakura 1989; Kumakura et al 1994; Kagotani 1985). However, the discourse concerning tea with the perhaps greatest currency nowadays describes the practice as *sōgō bunka*, or a “cultural synthesis” of “traditional Japanese culture” (Kato 2001). First advocated in the immediate aftermath of World War II as a form of “cultural nationalism” (Yoshino 1992)

by the academics Hisamatsu Shin'ichi and Tanikawa Tetsuzou, tea as a “cultural synthesis” has been increasingly promoted by the Urasenke *iemoto* Sen XV since the 1950s. Subsequently, the *iemoto* of other schools have adopted this strategy as a way to redefine a valuable position for tea within the social changes associated with the post-war growth of Japan as an “economic animal” (Kato 2001). The *sōgō bunka* conception of tea re-emphasizes its close ties with notions of “Japanese” by casting it as an amalgamation and ultimate expression of “Japanese culture” understood to be in a state of crisis¹³ (see for example Hisamatsu [1947]1987; Sen 1969; Sen 1987; and the collection of interviews in Kumakura 1998).¹⁴ Because tea as *sōgō bunka* encompasses other examples of Japanese art or culture, it attains a measure of primacy that makes it an archetypical example of these terms. Thus, in the words of one informant, “It [tea ceremony] is the epitome of Japanese culture.”¹⁵

¹³ For example, Hisamatsu ([1947]1987: 52) describes, “Tea ceremony is synthetic more than any thing else is. It includes not only art, morality, or philosophy, but also religion. Tea ceremony has established one cultural system by absorbing everything, every aspect of culture. For its artistic elements, there are the tea room as architecture, *roji* [tea garden] as gardening, various utensils and works of art that are used...”

¹⁴ From its early years tea has been considered a synthetic practice. Rikyū emphasized the importance of learning gardening, architecture, food preparation, pottery, and the like, for mastering tea. The *sōgō bunka* discourse resembles earlier constructions, but importantly differs in the way the constituent elements are now recognized as a “preserve” of “threatened” “(national) Japanese traditions”.

¹⁵ An example from popular culture, Mizoguchi Kenji's 1953 film *A Geisha* [*Gion Bayashi*], illustrates the broad penetration of this sort of national self-construction. The scene of a 16-year-old girl's first lesson as a *maiko* [geisha-in-training] takes place at a tea lesson. The image of another student flawlessly preparing tea is juxtaposed with the voice of the teacher instructing the class about who and what they are as geisha.

Tea ceremony in this light can be seen as a site for “cultural objectification” (Handler 1988: 14). In constructing nations or ethnic groups as bounded, distinct “things,” culture can be employed to play the part of the content by which these “things” are uniquely identifiable. However, to objectify certain practices and make them represent “a culture,” a measure of distance is necessary. For tea to be recognizable as a distinctly “Japanese” cultural practice, it needs to be disassociated from the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life. Many interviewees recognized this uncoupling. One informant described the disjuncture from the usual, saying, “I really enjoy lessons. The [passing of] time is different. It’s kind of separate from the everyday. Because you don’t wear kimono normally, if you wear it, the feeling is different. It’s relaxing.” In response to my question, “What were your first impressions when you began tea?” another respondent said, “It is totally different from everyday life—it’s an experience of Japanese culture. And really, along those lines, the movements, gestures, the flow of time were really totally different from everyday life. That was surprising.” Her response illustrates

“As you know, foreigners who come to Japan all enjoy Mt. Fuji and geisha, symbols of the beauty of Japan. And among the geisha, the most beautiful and representative are the *maiko* of Kyoto’s Gion district. Like tea ceremony and *noh* [theater], of which Japan is proud, they are living works of art. Japanese culture is excellent. You should be proud to be such a symbol of the beauty of Japan and should therefore study hard everyday.” This film, made for a Japanese audience still reconstructing life after World War II, portrays a self-conscious construction of beauty and art in Japan embedded within a foreign perspective. Significantly, the only performance of tea ceremony (a skill in which all geisha must be accomplished) in the film establishes the context within which the symbols of Japanese culture are self-consciously explained.

how tea is seen as perceptible experience of Japanese culture precisely because it is not a part of everyday life.

Because tea is constructed as separate cultural object rather than a natural practice, it is generally seen as something difficult to learn. When asked if tea was easy to enter or begin, almost all of the interviewees said it was not. As one woman put it, “I think it’s hard to enter. It’s the opposite. Most people can’t sit on their knees [“*seiza*”], it’s strict, the tea is bitter, lessons cost money. That’s what I often hear.” She went on to describe tea as having become “largely completely separated [from the everyday] and therefore difficult to enter.” Another said, “I think it’s difficult to enter. I mean, of course, now most people sit in chairs, so even just sitting on one’s knees [“*seiza*”]—no one wants to do that.” She then talked about the rising popularity of traditional candy and added, “There are a lot of young people who like sweets made from tofu, Japanese sweets [“*wagashi*”] and the like, but there are not a lot who want to learn tea. So, I think that for Japanese now tea is difficult to enter.” Another explained, “For young people now, I think tea is very ‘far’ for them.” Importantly, many respondents noted a generational difference in the amount of distance.

Since the Japaneseness in tea is objectified, seen as separate from the Japanese, it must be re-internalized through learning. Practitioners encode the wide array of related topics that come under the auspices of tea (interviewees frequently listed combinations of architecture, gardening, cooking, pottery, calligraphy, and Zen phrases) as creating the opportunity for endless studies (*benkyō* or *kenkyū*) (Kato 2001). For example, I asked one woman what she enjoyed about tea and she replied, “There’s no end [to it].

Incrementally, bit by bit, there often arises the feeling I want to ask about something new. I want to try challenges. I'm always thinking that. So, there's no end. And my teacher says [he's] still learning as well, so, 'Wow,' I think, 'This world [of tea] is really about continuous study.' And you meet a lot of people—I don't know how it is in America—but you often hear that [tea is] Japan's *sōgō bunka*. It really is." Because of the perceived lack of knowledge about Japan or Japanese things, some women begin learning tea in anticipation of a trip or extended stay abroad, with the frequent explanation that they want to be able to tell foreigners about Japan. Tea, as the epitome of Japanese culture, is an obvious choice. One informant, who had not lived abroad, described having similar feelings while in Japan. "Foreigners really know much more about Japan [than Japanese]. About the architecture of tea rooms, and the like. So when I see that, I feel I have to study more and more. Sometimes you're asked [about such things], right? If I'm asked [and don't know], I think, "Darn! I have to study." As Japanese, she feels accountable for knowledge of "what is Japanese." Through learning Japan's "cultural synthesis," practitioners are able to gain the national knowledge that "every Japanese should know" (Löfgren 1989).

Especially for younger women, the opportunity to learn about "traditional Japanese culture" seems to be a particular attraction of tea. One twenty-something woman I asked, "Why did you begin tea lessons?" replied, "For me, it was because I was interested in tea and flower arrangement and the like, old Japanese traditional subjects of study. I wanted to learn one of those skills and so I started." Another woman in her early 30s responded to the same question, "I don't really remember, but I was interested in it. I

was interested in Japanese [*“nihonrashi”*] things. The everyday life. For example, in tea and the like, Japanese traditional arts have a way of life that is apart [from life now]. So, because I studied Japanese history [in college], I wanted to experience the things that past Japanese did for fun.” Unsurprisingly, for more recent generations there appears to be a greater perceived distance to “Japanese traditions.”

In general, tea in Japan has come to be regarded as a cultural synthesis of Japanese arts and a quintessential expression of what is “Japanese culture” through an historical development that coalesced in the 1950s and still holds widely today. This example of cultural objectification reveals how tea in Japan is constructed as archetypically Japanese in practice through disassociation from everyday life and re-internalization through endless study.

Tea in the US

Although tea in Japan has historically emerged as a potential expression of what is quintessentially Japanese, in the US the meanings and consequences of tea as “Japanese” are revised in light of the shift to a multiethnic context. Even for the first generation, to be Japanese in the US differs in its implications from being Japanese in Japan. Here I focus my analysis on Los Angeles, which provides one of the most vivid examples of multiethnic America where “feelings of belonging together” (Weber 1922/1968: 42) are heightened by pervasive opportunities to draw contrasts against others based on “ethnic” differences.

Before the 1950s Japanese in Los Angeles occasionally performed tea ceremony, but there is no indication that it was regularly taught or recognized by the schools that control the practice. Officially, 1952 is acknowledged as the beginning—the year Sen XV established a branch office of the Urasenke School in LA. Later that year Susie Matsumoto (Matsumoto Sōsei) opened the first tea training school and has in the intervening time trained many of the tea teachers currently active in southern California (A. Mori 2000).

On the face of it, tea in LA strongly resembles tea in Japan—lessons proceed similarly, equivalent material is taught, tea rooms and utensils are the same. Because the practice of tea is highly structured and tightly controlled by the families heading the various schools and because a large amount of specialized utensils, materials, and knowledge are necessary to establish the setting for tea preparation, organizational and material exigencies reinforce the recreation of a tea world similar to that in Japan. Teachers generally instruct at home in spare rooms or garages converted into tea rooms or, if that is not possible, lay out *tatami* mats to create a space for tea. Also, some teach private classes in the tea rooms of local Buddhist temples. The standard curriculum of ranked *temae* structures the learning. And as in Japan, common activities outside of lessons include formal gatherings (*chaji*), larger public gatherings (*chakai*), and public demonstrations.

The absence of an official directory makes demographic information about members difficult to ascertain. However, based on estimates from officers in the organization checked against my own observations, most (at least 80%-90%) of the

people involved in the tea world are first generation Japanese women. Less than 10% are second- or third-generation Americans of Japanese descent and less than 10% are Americans of non-Japanese descent. Although a few Japanese men are members, about half of the Americans of non-Japanese descent are men.¹⁶ The face of tea in LA seems somewhat younger than in Japan, with a sizable portion of participants falling under the age of fifty.¹⁷ One of the reasons behind this youthful trend is that many of the women who come from Japan to the US do so for education or just after graduation. Half of the Japanese women I interviewed fit into this category.

What is perhaps more interesting, however, is that these women (and many of the Japanese practitioners I spoke with more generally) were not interested at all in learning tea when they were in Japan. Only after coming to the US was their curiosity sparked.

¹⁶ Interestingly, the strong overrepresentation of women among everyday tea practitioners in Japan seems to be replicated by Japanese in the US. (Non-Japanese practitioners in both Japan and the US are much more evenly split along gender lines.) Whether, to what extent, in what ways, and under what conditions tea is seen as necessarily representing *feminine* Japanese culture is an avenue that demands more thorough exploration than possible in this paper. Although there appear to be political or power dimensions present in gendering tea, more mundane demographic and economic trends may also be at work. There was a substantial increase in women teachers after World War II since holding lessons provided needed income to war widows and the subsequent economic boom granted them a growing number of women who could afford to tea studies as a part of marriage training. Needless to say, only men fill all of the top positions in the tea family hierarchies, so they still maintain a prominent place in the tea worlds.

¹⁷ The cut-off age for “young” in both the tea worlds of Japan and LA is much higher than what is usually meant in either society. For example, one can be a member of the youth division of Tankōkai until the age of fifty.

When I asked one woman in her early 30s about the impressions others have when they find out she does tea, she described the surprised reaction of her parents when she first told them. “My parents were really surprised—I’m learning flower arrangement, I’m learning tea—because in Japan I wasn’t interested in that at all. I was always looking towards foreign countries rather than Japan. When they found out I was doing lessons in something about Japanese culture, they were surprised.” Another woman replied to the question, “Why did you decide to begin tea?” with “I was becoming more aware of my Japanese spirit as I lived more years here, and that’s why I wanted to do something close to Japanese culture.” For her, learning tea is a way to express a heightened awareness of being Japanese resulting from migration. Others who had begun lessons in Japan and continued after coming to the US described developing a deeper interest in the practice after moving. For example, one woman, who had learned tea for several years in Japan but without much interest, mentioned becoming more heavily involved after coming to the US. The penetration of the material components of tea into her daily life was even visible in the arrangement of her house where the interview took place. In a corner of the dining room she had set up an ersatz tea space with two *tatami* mats and a kettle and water container underneath a scroll hung on the wall. While we talked, she told of using the space to serve tea to her husband and children when they are stressed, to her children’s friends when they come over, to one daughter’s ballet teacher, and to her own friends. While living in Japan, she had not created a space for tea in her home and at that time her involvement limited to lessons and attending occasional public gathering. Only

after coming to LA did she begin incorporating tea into the flow of her everyday life in a material way.

But a heightened sense of “being Japanese” not only compels Japanese migrants in LA to learn tea; it also, in their view, facilitates learning. As discussed above, tea ceremony in Japan is frequently regarded as distant from the lives of everyday Japanese and hard to adjust to. However, Japanese interviewees in the US more often said they felt tea was relatively easy for them to do precisely because they are Japanese. This “naturalization” of tea is based on an implicit distinction made with respect to other ethnic groups. Contrasting the ease of learning tea to the difficulty of learning Western dance, one person said, “I used to take dance lessons—not tango lessons but social dance. But it took me an extra effort to get into it because somehow I probably felt I’m doing something totally new for me. Something I’ve never done in my life. But tea, it’s a very natural transition. I don’t really feel like ‘I have to do this.’ It’s just a natural transition from my own lifestyle to moving into the world of tea. It doesn’t take me too much effort to get into it. So, maybe that’s why I feel so Japanese, it’s part of me. It’s in me, so to speak.” Another Japanese practitioner described, “Being in the US and exposed to multiple cultures, multiple ethnic groups who you don’t understand, you learn to listen and ask questions. Doing tea, there are lots of elements that don’t need explanation. I feel comfort in it [knowing what to do naturally]. I get it. I understand it because I’m Japanese. But sometimes it works on the other side. I take it for granted. For non-Japanese, they have to place a lot of effort in it.” Here, the naturalization of tea is made based on an explicit ethnic comparison. In the Japanese data, descriptions of tea as

difficult to learn and distant from everyday life predominate. While such attitudes are common in the US sample as well, they are found alongside notions of tea as “natural” for Japanese.¹⁸

Outside of lessons, tea practitioners participate in public demonstrations, large gatherings (*chakai*), and formal gatherings (*chaji*). But unlike in Japan, public demonstrations and larger or less formal gatherings predominate in LA.¹⁹ Public demonstrations are a controversial feature of the tea world of LA. Some practitioners enjoy the opportunity to introduce tea to people unfamiliar with the practice; others decry them as self-centered spectacles completely outside the “spirit of tea.” This ambivalence stems from the potential use of tea demonstrations as a way of displaying a Japanese ethnic identity to a wider public and whether or not this is in accordance with what tea

¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the naturalization of tea on ethnic grounds simultaneously establishes boundaries of entry for non-Japanese. The previous quotation reveals such sentiments by noting the relative effort non-Japanese have to invest in learning.

¹⁹ One reason behind this is a strong demand for tea demonstrations from sources outside the tea world for performances at colleges and other schools, temples, and public events, such as Japan Expo and Nisei Week. Furthermore, hosting a full *chaji* entails a lot of material requirements, including, for example, a fully equipped venue with a garden, waiting area, stone wash basin, etc. and the facilities to serve a highly formalized multi-course meal. In Japan, frequently people rent tea rooms or order out for the elaborate food, but in LA, such arrangements are simply not available.

“ought” to be following its philosophy.²⁰ Here, a tension emerges between the universalistic ideals of tea and its practical accomplishment as ethnically particularistic.

Some practitioners I spoke with, particularly those who are Japanese, mentioned how much they enjoy doing demonstrations for Americans not familiar with tea explicitly as a way to teach about Japanese culture—an attitude very similar to that concerning performances for foreigners in Japan. As one put it, “Doing tea [for non-Japanese] is more rewarding in the sense that I’m introducing something completely new to them and they feel, ‘Ohhh.’ They find something new. Whereas if I’m doing tea just to Japanese people, they already know a lot of it, so I may not enjoy it as much.” Importantly, she naturalizes tea as a Japanese practice that Japanese will be familiar with. (This stands in contrast to many informants in Japan who mentioned how most Japanese are clueless about even the basics of tea—what goes on in the lessons, how tea is drunk, and so forth.) Others, however, have become more jaded by the demonstrations. A second-generation woman described, “Over the years it’s gotten to be such a drag. It’s like going to a convention and setting up a booth.” In a yet stronger rejection of demonstrations as a self-centered ethnic display at odds with the basic universal philosophy of tea, one non-Japanese criticized, “I question giving these demos, because that’s really not tea. There’s nothing tea about it. It really is, ‘Look how pretty we look,’ and it’s not about the utensils but, ‘Look at what beautiful utensils we have,’ and it’s not about the sweets but, ‘Look at what expensive sweets we have,’ and, ‘It’s really humble, but look at my

²⁰ This stands in opposition to Japan interview data. Although demonstrations were not frequently dwelled upon in the conversations, no one expressed a dislike of such public performances.

beautiful, expensive kimono.’ And that’s what demos are. If they continue to do that, then it’s a very, ‘Isn’t that a quaint little hobby they have,’ and will never get beyond that.” He sees the use of tea as a performance of Japanese ethnicity frequently enacted at demonstrations as erecting an ethnically defined boundary that limits the spread of tea by making it seem “foreign” to non-Japanese. He added, “I think giving demonstrations to Americans, it makes them much more, ‘It’s so foreign. It’s just a bowl of tea for god’s sake. You know, pour it and get it over with.’ I think it’s much more stand-offish, unless you like things Japanese and then it might be inviting for them.”

On occasions when an ethnic boundary is drawn around tea as a Japanese practice, this process simultaneously excludes non-Japanese from full or unmitigated acceptance. Terminological choices provide a particularly clear example of how the relevant Other changes in migration. In Japan, the word for non-Japanese used by tea practitioners in tea contexts and the interviews I conducted is “foreigner” (“*gaijin*”).²¹ This term is used far less frequently in Los Angeles and the term *hakujin*, literally “white person”, is used instead. Both of these words are loaded in ways the English translation I have provided cannot do justice. *Gaijin* and its variants are frequently used to connote (white) Westerners rather than non-Japanese in general. *Hakujin* is a term common in Japanese circles in Los Angeles and refers generally to non-Japanese middle America.²² One informant defined it as, “the non-Japanese community with which you wish to deal.”

²¹ Commonly used variants differing in degrees of politeness are *gaikokujin*, *gaikoku no hito*, or *gaikoku no kata*.

²² In Japan, *hakujin* is generally used with reference to race.

The term does not carry the same racial exclusivity the English translation might suggest and can be used to refer non-white non-Japanese Americans by association as well. The most salient difference between the usages of the two terms is that *hakujin* deliberately excludes Japanese-Americans from its possible referents. The dichotomy used in the US is *nihonjin* / *hakujin* (Japanese / “whites”) whereas the dichotomy in Japan is *nihonjin* / *gaijin* (Japanese / “foreigners”). In this way the ethnic “we” employed in the US is drawn more inclusively—deliberately flouting political borders—than the national “we” more frequently employed in Japan.

It is important to note, however, that inclusivity is frequently a matter of degree for Japanese-Americans. Tea is sometimes seen as a way for second- and third-generation Japanese-Americans to learn how to be Japanese.²³ One mother, disturbed by the realization that her daughter, born and raised in the US, was more American than Japanese, began sending her to tea lessons. She told me, “I’m Japanese. I’m somehow connected to Japan. And when I do tea, the feeling that I’m connected to Japan is the strongest. So, in that way, my children—[switching to English] *Japanese-American?* *American-Japanese?*—[switching back to Japanese] I don’t want them to become Japanese-American [*“nikkeijin”*]. [They are] Japanese. If they do tea, they will be Japanese, I think. And another feeling I’ve been having recently is, ‘How are Japanese-Americans and Japanese different?’ So, ‘Why is it not OK to be Japanese-American?’ I

²³ As discussed earlier, tea in Japan is regarded as a site for learning as well. However, this differs from the case of second and third generation Japanese-Americans in that their status as Japanese is in question – an issue that does not even make sense in Japan.

wonder. But before somehow that sort of answer comes out- [I think,] ‘I’m- I’m Japanese and I want my children to be Japanese too.’ So, like me when I do tea and think ‘I’m Japanese,’ I want my children, too, to drink tea, to make tea, and think ‘I’m Japanese.’” She sees tea not only as a means to realize her own Japanese identity but to instill one in her children as well. Through doing tea and physically consuming and internalizing the beverage, she feels they will incorporate a solidly Japanese sense of self—an identity otherwise in question.

The above quote also reveals the way tea is used to establish connections to Japan project it into LA. When confronted with problems or choices, rather than adapting tea to fit the LA context, Japan is more frequently invoked as the source of authenticity and authority. Although simplicity is often held as a virtue in tea, both in Japan and LA most people strive to obtain as many “authentic”²⁴ utensils and elements of the setting as possible. Attempts to recreate the “authentic,” although prevalent in Japan, are especially apparent in LA, where for many the standards are more difficult to obtain (and efforts to do so greater and more obvious) since they rest across the Pacific. For example, one woman I spoke with in her home disparaged her tearoom,²⁵ built in a converted garage, by pointing out the minor ways (the taller than average doors, the different materials used for the walls—all easily invisible to the unaccustomed eye) in which it was “not like in

²⁴ This means using utensils and materials that follow historical models as closely as possible or are made by recognized artists, tea masters, or Buddhist monks.

²⁵ She switched to English to say “I hate it,” making a clear distinction between actual dislike and personal denigration, a common way of expressing politeness in Japan.

Japan.” She compared it to the more authentic tea room of a friend whom she described as having been able to somehow procure all the building materials from Japan. Her definition of what constitutes an “authentic” tea room relied heavily on Japanese standards and seemed relatively closed to American adaptations.

Appeals to Japan are made to support claims of authority over rules of behavior as well. For example, the climate in Japan is the point of reference for determining what kinds of kimono are worn in LA. The types of cloth, cut, and patterns of kimono vary with the seasons and formal rules dictate the range of days when certain combinations are permissible and the days when seasonal switches are made. Some informants in Japan have expressed to me the assumption that tea practitioners in places with a different climate than Japan’s simply wear the type of kimono comfortable. One even quipped that in Los Angeles, because of the mild weather, people must wear summer kimono year-round. In actuality, tea practitioners in Los Angeles strictly uphold and enforce the rules of kimono according to Japan’s seasons. When one informant considered wearing a summer *obi* [belt] two weeks past the change to fall styles, she described “getting a lot of heat from people saying, ‘You’re not really going to wear a *natsu* [summer] *obi* in mid-September are you. Poo-poo on you.” Disregarding the local climate in LA where September is usually the hottest month, decisions about what sort of kimono and patterns of cloth are appropriate are determined with reference to Japan.²⁶

²⁶ In contrast, once while in Japan when I was deciding what kimono to wear for a formal event in mid-September, I was advised by two separate tea teachers to wear a summer *obi* since it was still quite hot out and I would be more comfortable wearing thinner cloth.

Choosing Japan as the principal source of authenticity is not a necessary move. It simultaneously rejects another option hinted at above: adapting the practice of tea to fit its circumstances. Officially, mastery of the rules of tea implies that one is able to innovate in new settings according to their sense rather than their letter (Sen 1979). This may take anywhere from ten to forty or more years of study and depends heavily on the extent to which one personally feels she or he is a master and is accepted by others as such.²⁷ Innovation occurs on a continuum of deviation from the letter of the rules and can range from using an antique pillbox as an incense container to holding a tea gathering in a hot spring. But whether via small digressions or more radical moves, the notion that tea preparation should fit its environment is strong. The practitioners I spoke with in Japan often expressed the assumption that tea ceremony abroad would involve many local innovations. One interviewee even spoke of the possibility of an “American style” and “European style” tea that adhere to the sense of basic traditions. However, innovations in the US (such as designing different sorts of tables on which to prepare tea or holding gatherings around American holiday themes) are limited and tend to be led by non-Japanese or Japanese men. Although Japanese women practitioners may be interested in, support, and participate in such inventions, they usually are not leaders of new developments. As one Japanese woman I spoke with described, “It’s hard because if you’re not living in Japan and you’re not doing things right, you always have to worry about being perceived as someone who don’t do things right. But if you’re in Japan,

²⁷ Perhaps this is why men, because their higher status in tea, tend to be agents of innovation more often than women.

well, they know that she's just having fun. She's just playing. Trying something else. But if you're outside, you're sort of worried about your reputation as a tea teacher. So you have to make sure that you prove yourself.”²⁸ While Japan to a certain extent becomes a resource for creating “real” tea in LA, such ties also constrain possibilities of innovation and adaptation to the LA context.

Frequently the image of Japan recalled in tea situations is idealized and based on notions of what is “traditional Japanese.” Although some interviewees in Japan mentioned the opportunity to wear kimono as a particular highlight of tea, this sentiment more commonly came from informants in LA. Tea ceremony is regarded by some Japanese as the only opportunity to wear kimono in the US, where it might be embarrassing, attract too much attention, or seem odd if one were to wear it outside of tea contexts. This imagined loss is counter to actual practice. Most tea practitioners in Japan wear kimono only when doing tea and frequently change out of it if given the chance

²⁸ Interestingly, for some, Japan is not always seen as the source of “real” tea, especially when understood in a “spiritual” sense. One Japanese interviewee with experiences in tea on both sides of the Pacific described tea in LA as potentially more true to spirit than tea in Japan. “In Japan, really very good things are preserved. Good [tea] utensils are preserved, but here that's impossible. It's just the way it is. On the other hand, what is truly tea is making tea with one's whole heart. Making a delicious bowl of tea for someone else. That's the sort of feeling I want to promote, and I think it's possible to do here. In Japan, that's more difficult.” Another woman described foreigners as having a better grasp of the “essence of tea” than Japanese. “We [Japanese] get satisfied by being there without understanding the core, but non-Japanese, they are so willing to invest the time to reach out and learn about everything. They get to the core. I do respect people like that.”

before traveling home. One kimono teacher I spoke with in Japan said she stopped wearing kimono for everyday occasions because it was now so rare that people stared at her in the streets. In contradistinction to the view in Japan, for some Japanese in LA there is a sense of tea as the only chance they have to wear kimono. As Japanese informant described, “People in Japan don’t feel like wearing kimono a lot because they always feel like, ‘Oh, I’ll do it any day, any time if I want to.’ But here, if you’re given an opportunity to wear kimono, ‘Oh, I’ll wear kimono, otherwise I won’t wear it.’ So you always feel like ‘I have to do it.’” On another occasion I observed during a lesson, upon hearing an acquaintance was going to Japan, the teacher mentioned that the weather ought to be quite cold at the moment. A Japanese student replied saying that the acquaintance will stay warm if she wears kimono. Although it is unlikely that the friend will wear kimono (since they are worn so rarely) or that she will in fact be any warmer than in a coat since the open neck and open sleeves of kimono let in the wind, nevertheless her reply develops an idealized portrait of Japan as a place where people maintain “Japanese traditions” and wear kimono.²⁹ Such notions were expressed in some of the interviews as well. “I think it’s [tea is] sort of like a small miniature of Japanese lifestyle. You don’t have to do a lot of things, but if you just do tea, you can maintain a

²⁹ However, some contrasting voices exist. One interviewee expressed a less idealistic, more reflexive view of the use of kimono in tea. “There is a sense of theater and theatricality in tea which a lot of people don’t understand. Or they’d like to think that this is actually how the world is—but this isn’t how the world is.” Continuing with a quote from a high-ranked tea teacher in Japan, “And so he said, ‘No matter if it’s a kimono, even if you’re Japanese, it’s a costume because you don’t necessarily wear a kimono.’ People don’t conduct their lives like that.”

lot of aspects of Japanese culture as a whole,” mentioned one interviewee. However, here “Japanese lifestyle” does not refer to everyday life in Japan—recall the “distance” from their own lives the informants in Japan used to describe tea discussed earlier—and the language of “maintenance” here does not refer to more generalized cultural practices in Japan—recall the emphasis on tea as way to *learn* to be Japanese described by informants in Japan. Rather, she expresses an idealized image of life in Japan as being similar to tea. Such examples illustrate the way links to a hyper-ethnic version of Japan are invoked and produced in tea interactions in LA.

In sum, in Los Angeles, the meaning, experience, and consequences of tea as “Japanese” are revised in light of the multiethnic context. Through contrasts with other local ethnicities, tea is regarded as a specifically Japanese practice and one natural for Japanese to do. The inclusivity of “Japanese” is loosened to potentially include the second-generation. In addition, connections to Japan are forged through idealized imaginings and invoking Japan as the source of authority and legitimacy—a trend also marked by less innovation.

Discussion

Recapping briefly, tea in Japan since the early twentieth century has become defined as a “cultural synthesis” (*sōgō bunka*) of specifically Japanese traditional arts. This discourse promoted by leading figures in tea is realized through the practices and beliefs of everyday practitioners. Creating tea as Japanese *sōgō bunka* entails cultural objectification establishing a measure of distance and disassociation from everyday

experiences. Practitioners then re-internalize what is deemed quintessentially Japanese through endless study.

The Japan case sets up a point of comparison for examining the transformations surrounding a national invented tradition when translated abroad. Setting aside the specific contexts of tea for a moment and taking a broader view, within the nation-state framework of Japan, relevant Others are not as visible in everyday life. Nationhood is generally taken-for-granted except when thematized (e.g. the instance discussed earlier of the Japanese woman encountering foreigners and feeling responsible for knowing about Japan).³⁰ But for migrants leaving behind the structures supporting this taken-for-grantedness, Japaneseness becomes problematized much more frequently—particularly in a multicultural context such as LA where the ethnic Other is a conspicuous part of everyday life.

Experiencing a heightened awareness as specifically Japanese in contrast to the wider US society in which they live, many migrants to the US embrace this new self-understanding. They recall the association between tea and “Japanese culture” axiomatically accepted in Japan and pursue studies when they may not have otherwise. For them, tea is not a practice brought from Japan but one taken up as a consequence of a developing self-recognition of their own “Japaneseness.”

Along with a heightened ethnic consciousness, a naturalization of “ethnic” practices emerges in migration. Whereas tea in Japan is considered distant from the lives of Japanese people, in LA, tea can be considered by Japanese to be easy for them to learn

³⁰ In Bourdieuan terms, there is a close conjunction between habitus and habitat.

precisely because they are Japanese. Tea is perceived as dovetailing neatly with their ethnicity. The multiethnic context potentially facilitates this process as other ethnicities become a relevant point of comparison.

Through such means tea ceremony becomes a site for accomplishing a particularly “ethnic Japanese” identity in LA. However, such naturalization implies particularization, which can come into tension with the universalist ideals of tea. This is exemplified by the controversial use of demonstrations as ethnic displays regarded as contradictory to the more open philosophy of tea as a Way.

Rather than a site for innovation or adaptation, the tea world of LA is made into an extension of Japan as it is referred to for sources of authority and guidelines of authenticity. With a heightened awareness of tea as particularly Japanese, Japan is used as a resource when decisions have to be made.³¹ Moreover, the number of occasions and

³¹ However, Japan is not *always* a manipulated resource; it can also be an implicit binding factor. The creative process of remembering (and concomitant processes of forgetting or omitting) and establishing shared memories is influential in forging a sense of national collective identity (Bodnar 1992; Löfgren 1989; Weber 1922/68). Tea ceremony can provide a productive site for being Japanese through recalling Japan together. For example, while in the waiting room at a New Year’s tea gathering held at a local temple, the eight elderly Japanese women present along with myself, who were not all closely acquainted (three separate groups of friends were present), began talking together about the difficulty of finding the temple. However, soon the topic of conversation shifted from “driving in LA” to “driving in Japan” and remained on that theme for ten minutes until we were called to enter the tea room. Although seemingly trivial, all of the women had a store of experiences concerning driving in Japan that they were able to draw upon, resuscitate, and share together. Their common background as Japanese facilitated establishing connections between these strangers who were able get to know each other based on shared experiences in

opportunities to make explicit choices multiplies since, as a consequence of migration, situational factors can no longer be taken for granted and the US context adds other possible ways of doing things.³² Frequently practitioners in LA ask, How is it done in Japan? when evaluating choices. As Japan is called upon to legitimate selections among options, there is less adaptation of tea to the surrounding situation in the US. This Japaneseness is reinforced by the propensity of practitioners in LA to construct an idealized, overly traditional image of Japan.

Tea ceremony is a prime example of a Japanese invented tradition.³³ Looking at the case of its re-invention in the US, it is possible to pull out two, somewhat

Japan. Whereas other forms of being “Japanese” are based on ideas of what Japanese *ought* to know, recalling memories is built on what Japanese tend to share (Löfgren 1989).

³² For example, payment for gatherings (*chakai*) in Japan takes the form of *orei*, or a sort of honorary financial contribution made with crisp new notes presented in a special envelope with the giver’s name and occasion written in a brush style. This occurs simply as a given; it’s how things are done. However, in LA where simply handing over a check is also a possibility, people make a conscious decision of what to do based on how things are done in Japan, generally asking explicitly if they don’t know.

³³ Nevertheless, although tea ceremony can be seen as “Japanese” in national or ethnic terms, it is important to recognize that it is not always a site for expressing notions of “Japaneseness.” In fact, the “Way” of tea promotes a universalist philosophy inclusive of all of humanity, irrespective of potential ethnic or national divisions. In many tea situations, this framing is employed as the default rather than the particularist “Japanese” perspectives focused on here. Although ethnic frames are available to tea practitioners, they do not continuously apply them in their interactions. For example, what may appear to be a quintessential Japanese act, namely wearing kimono to a tea event, is frequently both in Japan and the US a taken-for-granted expression of rank or formality rather than a Japanese identity.

counterintuitive, preliminary findings predicting what happens when an archetypical national or ethnic practice is recreated outside the confines of its original territorial bounds. (1) There is a trend towards naturalization based on ethnic grounds. (2) There is a decrease in innovation or adaptation.

The first conclusion is counterintuitive in the case of tea ceremony especially given the universalist philosophy of the practice. In programs to spread tea beyond Japan, the *iemoto* Sen XV strongly emphasized the potential of tea to cross national, ethnic, and racial boundaries—a leitmotif commonly heard in Japan as well.³⁴ Leaving a context where Japaneseness is generally a part of the taken-for-granted social structures, migrants to the US enter an arena where ethnicity emerges as a pervasive feature of their everyday lives. But rather than a heightened sense of the fluidity and arbitrariness, a particular form of ethnic essentialism seems to emerge among participants as they naturalize a practice that in the sending context had been made explicitly non-natural through cultural objectification.

The second finding is also somewhat contrary to expectation. Whereas one might anticipate that tea practitioners in the US would take the opportunity to adapt tea practices to the surrounding circumstances given the new situations encountered and the support of such changes by the principles of tea, there is in fact less innovation,

³⁴ Certainly some practitioners in Japan see tea as rightfully Japanese and Sen XV has been criticized for focusing too much beyond the borders of Japan at the expense of the “roots” of tea. However, such people generally do not regard tea as a *natural* Japanese practice.

particularly among the first generation Japanese women constituting the bulk of practitioners. Because tea becomes strongly marked as “Japanese,” the way things are done in Japan is invoked to adjudicate among choices when decisions must be made. More self-consciously ethnic considerations are taken into account in choosing among options.

Importantly, standard approaches to studying ethnicity in the US literature on migration may have not revealed such trends if applied to the case of tea ceremony. Assumptions of a core Japanese culture brought from Japan and maintained in the US would have blinded analysis of the naturalization and rigidifying processes that occurs in this case. Or, truncating the relevant field of inquiry to only what goes on inside the US would have eliminated the insights of such comparative work in the first place. Neither approach would have enabled a firm grasp of important *transformations* in how tea is accomplished as “Japanese” that occur as relevant contexts shift through international migration. Potentially, the assumptions underlying common approaches to “ethnic culture” have obscured the view of the trends presented here. Researchers who take “ethnic culture” as a given may implicitly reproduce similar naturalization and hardening processes in framing the issue. Due to a high level of isomorphism between the mode of inquiry and the object of inquiry, certain processes of interest vanish from sight. However, the focus on the variability of “ethnic practices” in the case presented here reveals that it is not that Japanese migrants “bring” a resolutely “ethnic” practice to the US that gradually decreases in ethnic salience. Rather, after coming to the US many take up a practice perceived to be ethnic, make it more so, and more fixed.

These propositions, however, are preliminary and their generalizability is yet unclear. Whether or not or the extent to which they hold for similar cases, or for practices that have not become quintessential national representations prior to international migration, or for contexts other than the US or consciously multiethnic nation-states remains to be tested. Additional comparative studies could also help tease apart what is may be due to more general migration processes and what is context-specific. Hopefully, however, these proposals provide fruitful points of departure for future elaborations of the particular dynamics of “ethnic” practices in translation.

Appendix A. Glossary

<i>Chadō (sadō), chanoyu</i> (茶道、茶の湯)	Tea ceremony, The Way of Tea
<i>Chaji</i> (茶事)	A four hour formal tea gathering
<i>Chakai</i> (茶会)	A less formal public tea gathering
<i>Gaijin, gaikokujin, gaikokunokata</i> (外人、外国人、外国の方)	Foreigner(s)
<i>Hakujin</i> (白人)	White(s). Also used in the US to refer to non-Japanese Americans more generally.
<i>Iemoto</i> (家元)	The hereditary head of a particular school of an arts tradition (here, particularly used to refer to tea schools)
<i>Nihonjin</i> (日本人)	Japanese person /people
<i>Seiza</i> (正坐)	Sitting on one's knees with the legs folded beneath the body
<i>Sōgō bunka</i> (総合文化)	Cultural synthesis (generally of Japanese arts)
<i>Tankōkai</i> (淡交会)	The official membership organization of <i>Urasenke</i> tea practitioners
<i>Tatami</i> (畳)	Woven straw mats used as flooring in Japanese-style rooms
<i>Temae</i> (手前、点前)	A structured form of tea preparation used in tea ceremony
<i>Urasenke</i> (裏千家)	The largest school of tea

Appendix B. Methodological Notes

When pertinent, I am classified by others as “white” the vast majority of the time³⁵ and although I am fluent in Japanese, my native language is English. In Japan my status as an American possibly encourages “pat” answers crafted as quick explanations of “Japanese culture” for foreign ears. However, I tried to circumvent possible limitations by relying on contacts and networks set up during my two years of participating in tea ceremony in Japan. At both sites I had previously participated in tea activities with around half of the interviewees, which aided in establishing rapport. On the positive side, sometimes being an outsider as a (foreign) researcher in Japan proved to be a benefit. A few interviewees confessed they felt they could confide certain things—but certainly not everything—they would not normally mention to others because of norms of propriety (*tatema*).

Furthermore, because of my extensive experience in tea,³⁶ I could potentially be treated as an “insider” familiar with the rules of the game as well as controversial issues and I sometimes showed I was already aware of their existence.³⁷ As a result, there may have been less of a tendency to shield the more political, exclusive, and negative aspects of the practice during the interviews. Frequently interviewees turned some of the questions

³⁵ However, this is not always constant. I am sometimes asked in tea ceremony contexts if I am part Japanese even though I can trace my family back only as far as “roots” in Central and Eastern Europe.

³⁶ I have acquired certificates to learn upper-division *temae*.

³⁷ Still, treatment as an “insider” brought along with it the limitations of the age hierarchy in Japan. Being many years younger than some of my informants sometimes made it difficult to direct the interview in certain ways (for example, getting back on track when the conversation wandered), since it would likely have been interpreted as disrespectful and served as a reminder of my status as “foreign.”

back onto me, their curiosity recognizing my status as a “fellow tea practitioner. I found this to be the case in LA also. Some Japanese interviewees made a verbal distinction between me and other Americans, attributing to me a sort of “insider” status because my experiences living in and studying tea in Japan. Still, there are major political divisions in the tea worlds of Japan and LA and it is impossible to completely know to what extent interviewees shielded information from me or systematically neglected certain issues in crafting their answers for a listener potentially regarded as a white American woman researcher. Moreover, it is likely that many of the interviewees in Japan were sensitized by my potential status as a “foreign” audience and subsequently overdetermined responses to be explicit about national or ethnic associations of tea. This need not be necessarily regarded as problematic data contamination, for such behavior is a part of the world as well (Schegloff in Brubaker 2002: note 16). The variety of materials available linking tea to the nation created by Japanese for a Japanese audience suggests that such “national” interpretations are not an unnatural interviewer-effect. Rather, my status as a foreigner could have helped throw into relief distinctions possibly or more tacitly made. But because of the limitations of interviews, I rely as well on my extended experience as an observing participant to provide a more accurate evaluation of what people articulated in our conversations—sifting and substantiating what was said with what I have observed is actually done in practice and filling in some of the gaps not addressed in our brief talks.

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