

**THE KYOTO BRAND:
PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL AND CULINARY HERITAGE**

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Farmers, chefs, government officials, and consumers in Kyoto, Japan have worked to protect their gastronomic heritage and promote the local food industry using place brands that allow them to engage with outside actors and resources, resulting in a comparatively open and inclusive localism. Stakeholders in Kyoto’s agricultural and food sector have sought to minimize the negative impacts of globalization not by trying to close their borders or enact rules that strictly define and demarcate Kyoto’s food culture as separate, pure, and resistant to change but rather by allowing for the development of multiple place brands that can help better position Kyoto’s agriculture and food industry on the global stage. Kyoto’s place brands tend toward inclusiveness and fluidity, enabling overlapping and nested place brands to co-exist and supporting the incorporation of objects, ideas, and people from outside of Kyoto. At scales that vary from neighborhoods to the entire prefecture, these brands draw on Kyoto’s appeal as Japan’s “ancient imperial capital,” a trope that has helped make Kyoto one of Japan’s most powerful place brands according to recent consumer surveys.

This research pays particular attention to place brands for three different products: heirloom vegetables, green tea, and local cuisine. In this dissertation, I analyze data obtained from fieldwork conducted in Kyoto in 2012-3, including semi-structured and informal interviews and participant observation at events centered on Kyoto’s food culture, from farmers’ markets and culinary research meetings to annual events like the prefectural and national agricultural

fairs for tea. I also utilize discourse analysis of government documents, marketing materials, and various media. By demonstrating how people treat place as a brand and analyzing the repercussions this has, this research adds a new dimension to the theoretical literature on place. It also provides an ethnographic case study about boundary maintenance to the literature on branding and place brands. Kyoto's example also holds lessons for local economies seeking to strategically position themselves in the face of new challenges, demonstrating the power of place brands as well as the insight that openness and flexibility can serve to protect and revivify local industry and tradition.

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DEDICATION

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: KYOTO'S FLEXIBLE PLACE BRANDS AND LOCAL GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE

My very first introduction to Kyoto's agricultural and culinary heritage occurred through Kyoto seasonal cooking classes hosted by a local non-profit organization in Kyoto City. Sometimes a class showcased a well-known "traditional Kyoto vegetable" like *kuwai* (arrowroot) or the bright red *kintoki* carrot. Other sessions introduced attendees to a "new" Kyoto vegetable like Kyoto pepper leaves or poorly known vegetables like the coastal town of Miyazu's Higatani burdock root. But whatever the local vegetable of the day happened to be, the focus was always on teaching attendees delicious recipes using Kyoto Prefecture's seasonal produce that they could follow at home.

Though Shiroy Sensei, the cooking teacher whose classes I attended, is a native of nearby Hyogo Prefecture and though some attendees and volunteers, many of them regulars, also hail from outside Kyoto Prefecture, this organization's mission is to help preserve Kyoto's agricultural and culinary heritage. Unlike other many local food movements, then, the "local" here is—at least at first glance—fairly well defined: Kyoto.

Given the clearly delimited focus, one might expect the resulting recipes to be ones that predominantly use ingredients from Kyoto Prefecture and employ cooking techniques and tools that are typical of "traditional" Japanese cuisine. The first time I attended one of Shiroy Sensei's classes, however, she served a fall Kyoto vegetable salad tossed in a dressing made with consommé, Dijon mustard, and *yuzukoshō* (a ubiquitous Japanese condiment, a blend of chili peppers and yuzu citrus zest). Noting my surprise, she

remarked, “Things from foreign countries can also fit perfectly.” She had bought the tablecloths, she added, in Bali and India.

Subsequent cooking classes I attended featured recipes calling for ingredients like bacon, corn, and tomatoes. For a class in the fall of 2013 Shiroi Sensei, who had spent time in the U.S., served a delicious pumpkin pie using fresh local pumpkins.

While the above anecdote illustrates how one teacher and one organization make efforts to protect local food culture and industry while fostering an openness to things, people, and ideas from outside, during the more than 18 months I spent in Kyoto Prefecture I found this tendency to be quite typical. My initial surprise developed into curiosity; I wanted to better understand how actors in Kyoto Prefecture’s agricultural and food industry aimed to revive local heritage and sustain local industry while remaining open to outside influences. In late January 2012 I set out to research this, with an explicit focus on Kyoto vegetables.

When I set foot in Kyoto I sought to know: Why does Kyoto have so many “local” food and agricultural products, from heirloom vegetables to Kyoto habanero soy sauce and sake from the Fushimi district of Kyoto City? What do Kyoto’s local food movements have to do with globalization? How do different actors—Kyoto vegetable farmers, chefs, consumers, local government officials—try to ensure that local heritage, as well as the agricultural sector, remain viable and meaningful even as circumstances change? What makes a Kyoto vegetable a *Kyoto* vegetable? How do boundaries matter?

Over the next few months, it became clearer and clearer to me that a specific phenomenon served to both ground these local food movements and also to give their boundaries a strategic flexibility and porousness. This thing was the Kyoto brand. As the imperial capital of Japan for over a thousand years, Kyoto carries very potent associations. It is widely perceived as

the elegant and mysterious birthplace of Japan's traditional culture and called *nihon no kokoro no fursato*, the hometown of the Japanese heart or mind. This brand power clearly benefits individuals and groups associated with traditional culture—the tourism industry, makers of craft goods like traditional pottery and *kimono*. Stakeholders in the local agricultural and food industry, however, have also taken advantage of the Kyoto brand, finding it particularly useful to revive local agricultural and culinary heritage, from the cultivation of heirloom vegetable varieties to the maintenance of local foodways.

The hesitancy I felt to conduct research and eventually write a dissertation about a phenomenon few anthropologists have written about—a brand—dissipated when it was brought home to me exactly how powerful the notion of the place brand (*chiiki burando*) is in Japan. When I traveled to northeastern Japan on a side project to assess perceptions of food safety and security following the “triple disaster” (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant destabilization) of March 2011, time and again the people I spoke to used the phrase *chiiki burando* to refer to place of origin or provenance even though I did not use this phrase in my questions even once. Another encouraging factor was the clear appeal that Kyoto's “local” foods held beyond Kyoto. Tokyo's most upscale department stores set aside prominent areas of their produce sections for Kyoto vegetables. One can not only find edible products from Kyoto in Tokyo, Paris, Nashville, and Pittsburgh, but one will find them advertized as such, with their origin a selling point. This appeal is why Kyoto has been identified as one of Japan's most powerful place brands in various successive surveys (Brand Research Institute 2010; Nikkei Research 2013).

Putting the Kyoto brand and other related place brands at the heart of my study, I realized that it would be necessary to look at more than Kyoto vegetables. Even if I remained focused on

the local food industry, the Kyoto brand was used to market so many more foods: the classic Uji tea, Kyoto sweets, the tourist mainstay *yatsushashi* sweets, the recently emerged Kyoto pork... In the end, I decided that looking at Kyoto vegetables, Uji tea, and Kyoto cuisine provided diversity and balance. This allowed me to examine a category of produce well known throughout Japan (Kyoto vegetables), a blended non-perishable commodity with strong place based associations (Uji tea), and a set of esteemed cuisines that have received international attention (Kyoto cuisine). To address the topic of those assorted edible items that also deploy the Kyoto brand but are perhaps less Kyotoish, I also examine the “taste of Kyoto,” a notion that resonates in Japan.

This dissertation takes on the following shape: in Chapter 2 I provide context for understanding the chapters that follow. Here, I introduce the concepts of place, brand, and place brand and relate them to Japan. While I do not focus solely on the edible realm in these sections, it remains central. After all, I chose to conduct research on food and agricultural products because place and borders for such items matters so much to contemporary citizens. Next, I describe Kyoto. Anthropologists today understand place as a complicated problem and Kyoto is no exception. In this chapter, I explain how Kyoto is, in fact, multiple; there exist Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto the “ancient imperial city,” and also the Kyoto brand. I attempt to conceptually untangle the four and explain how one can go about attempting to do fieldwork on such elusive places. I also consider methodological approaches for conducting research that has a significant sensorial component, in this case related to being able to “taste” the distinctiveness of Kyoto’s agricultural and food products and pursue the notion of the “taste of Kyoto,” endeavors that requires more than simply a healthy nervous system and functioning taste buds.

Kyoto vegetables are perishable commodities grounded in Kyoto to the extent that they are expected to have been cultivated in Kyoto Prefecture. I take up the question of what makes

an “authentic” Kyoto vegetable in Chapter 3. Multiple brands for Kyoto vegetables exist, including Kyoto Prefecture’s own “Kyō Brand” and Kyoto City’s “Seasonal Vegetable” brand, resulting in an interesting dynamic for probing Kyoto’s boundaries and how they are defined, enacted, and policed for edible products. Chapter 3 contains case studies of two Kyoto vegetable varieties that provide different insight into what a Kyoto vegetable is and how the Kyoto brand can be deployed for different vegetable varieties. Looking at both Kyoto’s bamboo shoots and the Shishigatani squash, we see that while the Kyoto brand’s draw is undeniable, the attraction that local produce holds changes depending on where one comes from as well as where the vegetables were grown, down to the micro-level. For bamboo shoots, this means that true connoisseurs and conspicuous consumers pay more to get the most highly ranked specimens from the micro-place brands of Mozume and Tsukahara. It also means that farmers have largely not opted to sell their shoots through the Kyō Brand for prefectural produce since it would not add a significant premium to their sales. The Shishigatani squash, meanwhile, is a Kyoto vegetable that culinary tourists and conspicuous consumers purchase to get into contact with “traditional” Japan.

Uji tea, one of Kyoto’s most well-known edible place brands, is the focus of Chapter 4. Produced from tea leaves from four different prefectures, and blended in Kyoto, Uji tea differs significantly from Kyoto vegetables. Nevertheless, tea blenders and other actors also depend upon the Kyoto brand—in addition to Kyoto’s Uji brand—to protect local agricultural and gastronomic heritage in ways that enable them to simultaneously bring Kyoto to the world stage. I provide background on Uji tea and particularly green tea production in this chapter, as this is a topic on which the scholarly literature is dated and scarce. The main concerns of this chapter, however, have to do with grasping and more importantly tasting the distinctiveness of Uji tea and

how it differs from other brands of tea as well as tea from other places. Accordingly, my analysis also draws on interviews with tea blenders and consumers about taste, as well as participant observation at agricultural fairs for tea. I pay particular attention to the town of Wazuka, which is both the town that provides the most tea leaves destined for Uji's sencha¹ tea and also a place that is trying to establish its own brand. For this reason, I include a case study of the town and its pursuit of a place brand with flexible borders as a means of revitalizing its local agricultural and food industry.

In Chapter 5, I examine Kyoto cuisines (*Kyō ryōri*). I outline the “big three” cuisines: *shōjin* (vegetarian temple cooking), *obanzai* (Kyoto's domestic foodways), and *kaiseki* (Kyoto's multi-course haute cuisine). Because it has become representative not only of Kyoto cuisine but also of Japanese cuisine more broadly, my analysis concentrates primarily on *kaiseki* cuisine (I also examine this phenomenon). Much of the data for this chapter emerged from interviews with professional chefs and participant observation in the the Japanese Culinary Academy and its Japanese Cuisine Laboratory, a collaborative monthly event between chefs and researchers in Kyoto. When I was asked to give a short presentation about *Kyōryōrirashisa* (Kyoto-cuisine-ishness) for the Laboratory's public presentation in early summer 2014, I had the opportunity to interview these chefs about the very topic of Kyoto cuisine's boundaries and the Kyoto brand. These concerns, and the feedback I received, frame chapter 5. This chapter also considers the question of how Kyoto's *kaiseki* chefs take Kyoto to a global audience, as well as how that Kyoto's cuisines have persisted by adapting to changing conditions.

¹ Sencha is the standard Japanese green tea sold throughout the world. Unlike other kinds of Japanese green tea like *kabusecha*, *gyokuro*, and *matcha*, its tea leaves are not shade-grown. This makes it more bitter and inexpensive.

The subject of Chapter 6 is not a food, dish, or cuisine, but rather the powerful but elusive “taste of Kyoto.” In Chapter 6, I explain how a place can have a taste, what this entails, and what the taste of Kyoto is. I then examine how, in spite of being linked, the taste of Kyoto and the Kyoto brand can clash. Finally, in this chapter I discuss the role of Kyotoites and consumers with discerning palates in determining the authentic “taste of Kyoto.” Here, my analysis focuses primarily on discourse analysis and data obtained via informal interviews with consumers.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, analyzes the implications of the patterns of how stakeholders in Kyoto have turned to the Kyoto brand and other place brands to protect local heritage, strengthen the local food and agricultural economy, and maintain borders of considerable openness. As an ethnographic case study, this dissertation provides an account of how networks of farmers, chefs, local government officials, consumers, and other actors tend to flexible borders and manage place brands for agricultural and food products. In the conclusion, I place Kyoto’s case study in relation to research on other places with place brands or similar phenomena for food products. What seems to be unique about Kyoto is that its place brand is both so extensive, applied as it is to heirloom vegetables, tea blends, cuisines, as well as newly developed items like Kyoto pork and Kyoto candy. There are also theoretical implications: Kyoto demonstrates that place is more than a location, setting, and “sense of place,” as traditionally conceived. Places also exist as brands that can resonate quite strongly for people at great geographical remove. Place brands are mutable and malleable. They can be given concrete shape, as with champagne, a region and also a widely recognized wine with connotations of luxury, class, formality, and celebration. Or they may be more elusive, as with the vague and undefined term “Kyoto vegetable” (*Kyō yasai*). Most importantly, place as brand draws our attention to the phenomenon of place-making and representation. Though often portrayed as natural or inevitable, place

brands are fashioned over time, with political economic consequences that benefit specific groups over others. Finally, Kyoto's accomplishments, challenges, and failures holds specific lessons for local economies facing similar circumstances. First, Kyoto demonstrates that open borders and the incorporation of things from outside can help safeguard local heritage and bolster a local economy. As the vignette that begins this introductory chapter indicates, Kyoto's is a localism that welcomes outside influences that complement valued local traditions. Another lesson is that cultural resources, even those associated with urban heritage, may be useful in differentiating and adding value to agricultural products, often portrayed as the products of rural traditions intimately tied to an unchanging "nature." Thus Kyoto grown vegetables and tea, for instance, benefit from the Kyoto brand and associations with "traditional" Japanese culture. Lastly, economic adaptations are neither easy nor can everything or everyone profit. For this reason, stakeholders desiring positive change must prioritize and develop strategies that envision place brands as possessing specific characteristics and values. This does not consist of the creation of an essentialist core that does not change, but rather the adoption of attitudes and behaviors that encourage the preservation of important objects, relations, and heritage, while incorporating new elements that emerge from outside and within.

2.0 CONTEXT: PLACES, BRANDS, AND KYOTO

This research hones in on how “place” can be used as a medium for articulating identity, maintaining cultural traditions, and generating change. In spite of appearances, place may be a flexible tool and how it is used is not predetermined. The ethnographic account I provide in this dissertation concerns Kyoto, Japan. Kyoto is a city and a prefecture, both of which are situated within officially delimited borders. Yet Kyoto also lies outside of these borders. Indeed, even after I had left Kyoto Prefecture, having concluded my research in the field, Kyoto seemed to lurk everywhere I went. During a few days spent in Yokohama I happened across several stores that sold Uji green tea and desserts flavored with Uji tea. I also visited a store in a suburban neighborhood that only sells products from Kyoto, including stationery, baby clothes, incense, pottery, and food products. A day later in Tokyo, Kyoto vegetables surprised me on the menus of two different restaurants. The *Kamo* eggplant was featured on Kirin City’s special seasonal menu, while the *Manganji* pepper appeared on the blackboard displaying the day’s special at a small independently run Japanese-style bistro. Even upon my return to Pittsburgh, Kyoto followed me. A new tea shop had opened in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood while I was gone and although the menu offered over a hundred varieties of tea from many different places, place of origin was only listed for green tea from one place: Kyoto. Soon after my arrival, my sister received an invitation to attend a special food event in Nashville at which a local chef offered a rare attempt to eat his favorite cuisine: Kyoto *kaiseki*.

During and after fieldwork in Kyoto, several critical questions about Kyoto as an entity and unit of analysis emerged. Why are certain food and agricultural products across the world explicitly linked to Kyoto? How does Kyoto's cachet as the ancient imperial capital of Japan and the home of traditional Japanese culture lend itself to selling eggplant, green tea ice cream, and habanero flavored soy sauce? What Kyoto is served for consumption in Kyoto, Berlin, Pittsburgh, and Okinawa? This chapter aims to 1) introduce the reader to Kyoto, which served as my fieldsite but is in fact multiple places 2) describe the Kyoto brand and brands and 3) explain the methodology for this grappling with the problem of place in a fieldsite that seemed to be more of an amalgam of places with fuzzy borders.

2.1 ANTHROPOLOGY'S COMPLICATED PLACES

2.1.1 Grappling with "Place" and its Borders

The term "place" presents complications. Though we use the word every day without questioning its usefulness, much less its true meaning, it is far from unambiguous. "Place," David Harvey observes, "has to be one of the most multi-layered and multipurpose words in our language" (Harvey 1993: 4).

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, laying the foundation for much of the recent theory on place, stressed that space and place are inextricably interconnected (1977). What is the difference between the two? Space, abstract and undifferentiated, becomes place when it is inscribed with meaning and value, organized, enclosed, known. We experience space when we confront an

uncharted wilderness, when we are lost and trying to find our way, when we navigate our way through a place. A prison cell, an address, a foreign country, a fictional location: these are places. John Agnew identifies three dominant meanings for place: 1) as a location or site, carved out of space and differentiated from other places, in which an object or activity may be situated 2) as a locale or setting for action, like the home, the workplace, or a sports arena 3) the emotional and symbolic dimension that Keith Basso (1996) called “sense of place,” which serves as the basis for identity, group affiliation, and habitus (Agnew 2005).

Places vary in terms of scale: “At one extreme a favorite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the whole earth” (Tuan 1977: 149). Importantly, as meanings are ascribed to space and it is transformed into place and places, these meanings and values become temporarily fixed. In Tuan’s words, “If time is conceived as flow or movement then place is pause” (1977: 198). Place is clearly more than simply space carved out or geographically defined. Places carry meaning, but these are not orderly, rational, assigned or unchanging sets of meaning. Places, and the meaning that shapes them, mutate, but people nevertheless perceive them to be relatively stable repositories of meaning. Places also have contradictions and lacunae, which can be exploited to transform places.

The Big City Food Biography series, which narrates the food history of American cities like New Orleans and New York, demonstrates not just the elusiveness of place but the advantages that thinking about the “big picture” can have. For example, in her volume on San Francisco, Erica Peters begins the first chapter, on the city’s material resources, with the following lines: “San Francisco is famous for its hills and its location on the beautiful San Francisco Bay. But fifteen thousand years ago, the bay was not there—although the hills already were. As the Pleistocene glaciers melted, ocean levels rose and spilled over the foothills of the

Coastal Range. The rising waters created an enormous new bay at the mouth of a great river flowing from the Sierra Nevada Mountains and emptying into the Pacific at the Golden Gate” (Peters 2013: 1). Peters’ subsequent discussion of plate tectonics, soil, marine life, and climate brings the area’s natural history to bear upon its contemporary food culture. Though much abridged, this introduction encourages an understanding of San Francisco as a city with a foodscape forged by forces as diverse as glaciers, earthquakes, missionaries, hippies, and economic and political circumstances that inevitably continues to change. Places, we are reminded, are not stable predetermined entities, though we may often treat them as such.

To say that places exist in time and space does not capture the entire picture either, however. Basso reminds us that the affective, meaning-laden dimension of place is critical:

Its complex affinities are more an expression of community involvement than they are of pure geography, and its social and moral force may reach sacramental proportions when fused with prominent elements of personal and ethnic identity. Requiring neither extended analysis nor rational justification, sense of place rests its case on the unexamined premise that being from *somewhere* is always preferable to being from *nowhere*. All of us, it asserts, are generally better off with a place to call our own. Places, it reminds us, are really very good. (Basso 1996: 148)

Though Basso may be overstating his case when it comes to the goodness of belonging to a place (any place), it is clear that people identify with places, not only as individuals but also as groups. Nevertheless, place can be used to include and exclude at various scales. Mimi Sheller has elaborated how the Caribbean may qualify for belonging in the “West” on purely geographic terms, it is not generally regarded as such but relegated instead to the status of being a place that produces sugar, fruit, and tropical vacations for Western consumption (Sheller 2003). Similarly, portrayals of Ecuador as an “Andean” country valorize the ecosystems, inhabitants, and cultures of the Andes region while overlooking the significant contributions of the Amazonian areas of the country.

Place plays an important role in contemporary human life. Indeed, Harvey and others believe that in the most recent phase of globalization, place-based identities have become more important than ever before.² In the early 1980s, Angus Gillespie documented how the inhabitants of the Pine Barrens of New Jersey—calling themselves Pineys—self-consciously celebrated and promoted their place-based identities. The advent of the internet and the creation of discussion boards and chat rooms provide new means for Pineys, nostalgic former residents, culinary tourists, and other interested parties to connect in relation to the Pine Barrens.

New kinds of places are also emerging that provoke questions about our definition of place and our methodological approaches to understanding it. New technologies and the socialities that have arisen from them are indeed a part of this. One must now consider the existence of places like “virtual” worlds (Boellstorff 2008) and internet chatrooms (Constable 2003), as well as how traditional places are impacted by new spaces like wi-fi networks (Salusi and Palen 2008; Torrens 2008).

If people create places through their experiences, adding meaning and fixing it to space, it seems obvious that places are perceived differently by different individuals and group. “Places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions,” Margaret Critchlow (formerly Rodman) observes (Rodman 1992: 641). For such reasons, “[p]lace is a problem in contemporary anthropological theory” (Ibid. 640). Rodman suggests that anthropologists take up an approach that acknowledges “multilocality.” Her proposed analysis is 1) inclusive and decentered, attending to the perspectives of groups that often go unrepresented 2) comparative and contingent, acknowledging the multitude of actors

² I consciously avoid use of the term “place-bound.” Although identities connected to place may have become more important in contemporary times, I have doubts that such identities are “bound” to a particular place or places. As my research demonstrates, processes of bordering are deeply connected to local identities in the sense that bordering propels local identities and occurs through identity politics.

that enable a place to emerge 3) reflexive, since people use places to articulate and work through their own identities and their contradictions 4) polysemic in that a group of individuals will invariably have different experiences, understandings, and feelings about a place.

I employ an approach in this dissertation that has much in common with Rodman's conception of "multilocality." To her observations, I would also add that acknowledging that places are made, one comes to the realization that even representations of place shape these places and have an impact on future transformations. Yet if places are constantly changing, constantly being refashioned, with different and often conflicting meaning for various groups and individuals, then capturing the entirety of these variations would not be feasible. Our task, I believe, is not to capture and transmit some total vision of meaning but rather to contextualize and critique dominant meanings, underlining the ways that these representations come to persist and be taken for granted, shedding light on the power structures that enable this to occur. In other words, articulating what Kyoto is, means, and tastes like for all of those who come into contact with the city and prefecture and their brand is not only impossible, but it is not my mission here. Rather, I aim to demonstrate that the Kyoto brand is not the inevitable, natural outcome of geopolitical and historic forces, though it is often treated as such. It has been forged by individuals and groups with various interests. This does not make the Kyoto brand trivial; it matters a great deal in that it continues to carry meaning for local, national, and global citizens and has economic, social, and cultural repercussions. Indeed, the Kyoto brand has been used to protect culinary and agricultural heritage and seems to have served this function well.

2.1.2 Globalization and “the local”

Some scholars believe that in addition to being problematic and elusive, place—as a cognitive category for organizing human life—is becoming less and less relevant to contemporary societies every day. Sociologist George Ritzer is well known for having coined the term “McDonaldization,” which has become shorthand for Americanization or Westernization via popular culture and multi-national corporations (Ritzer 1983). Ritzer describes a world in which “nothing” (large corporate banks, call centers, industrialized food) is replacing “something” (community banks, mom and pop stores, local eateries) (Ritzer 2004). Similarly, French anthropologist Marc Augé has argued that globalization has pushed standardization forward to the extent that one can now talk of “non-places,” locales like airports and hotel chains that are identical across the world (Augé 1995). In the introduction to their edited volume on the anthropology of globalization, Jonathan Inda and Renato Rosaldo write vividly of the deracination of culture. “Culture has been seen as something that is rooted in ‘soil,’” they write, but “[g]lobalization has radically pulled culture apart from place. It has visibly dislodged it from particular locales” (Inda and Rosaldo 2002: 11). Arjun Appadurai, meanwhile, has argued that the “landscapes of group identity... around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer highly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous” (Appadurai 1996: 48). He goes on to proclaim that “the very epoch of the nation-state is near its end” (Appadurai 1996: 19-23, *passim*). For this reason, he urges other anthropologists to research the cultural effects of deterritorialization. His notion of deterritorialized “-scapes” like “ideascapes” and “mediascapes” that have been born of globalization’s uneven flows arises from his identification of this problem.

The notion that the importance of place is diminished today extends beyond the realm of culture, however. The current power of multi-national corporations is also said to have risen to the degree that they now regularly infringe upon the territorial integrity and sovereignty of nation-states. In this view of the world, corporations largely have their way because states seek to attract investment, secure high levels of employment, and politicians and bureaucrats may acquiesce to a corporation's wishes in exchange for bribes and favors. An example would be the headline-making acquisitions of land in less-developed economies by wealthier states and multi-national corporations to cultivate crops that are then exported out of the country where they are grown. Critics call these "land grabs" and consider them vile infringements of national sovereignty, pointing out that the countries whose land is purchased experience malnutrition and are often recipients of aid from the World Food Program (see, for example, GRAIN 2008).

This narrative of the weakening and disappearance of place from contemporary life is clearly about power and contemporary forms of capitalism and not simply about the interconnectedness, flows, and institutions that are part of globalization. As noted above, the reach of multi-national corporations is said to compromise state sovereignty and pervade the local. This has everything to do with the circulation of people, goods, ideas, and capital across the world that many people refer to as "globalization" (two useful critical accounts would be Mittelman 2004; Murray 2006). This circulation is often viewed as an indomitable force. As Manuel Castells puts it, "The emergence of a global economy and of global communications systems subdue the local into the global, blurring social meaning and hampering political control, traditionally exercised from localities. Flows seem to overwhelm places" (Castells and Susser 2002: 367). Castells takes this argument a step further, arguing that cities "could be made obsolete in the new technological environment" (Castells and Susser 2002: 367).

Actors with the ability to exercise power at larger scales have been able to usurp the appeal of the local, taking advantage of the lack of an enforced definition for the word “local.” The appeal of so-called “local” food serves as a prime example of this. One can find strawberries in a grocery store that are sold as “local” though they were grown thousands of miles away (Jalonick 2011). In a satirical-seeming but actually serious article on the trends they predicted would be big in 2011, the media corporation Food Channel wrote that the number three trend would be “Local Somewhere,” since “local goes beyond a geographic definition. The new local is really about the independent spirit that causes entrepreneurial people to develop new food products, open new restaurants, and bring new food ideas to life. In other words, local has moved and it didn’t leave a forwarding address” (Food Channel 2010). Such trends have prompted Laura DeLind to write, “What are needed are ways of thinking and feeling about local food in ways that cannot be easily appropriated / disappeared by the reductionalist rationality of the marketplace and that can rebalance and reframe an economic orientation with more ecological and cultural understandings of people in place” (DeLind 2006: 126). The deterritorialization thesis accounts for this, too: not only have places become weaker and less relevant, but the meaning of place has been hollowed out.

There is evidence, however, that it is not that place itself is becoming increasingly unimportant, but rather that its forms and function are undergoing change. In spite of talk of “McDonaldization” and “non-places,” it is clear that diversity persists, even in places assumed to be standardized. McDonald’s restaurants in different places may all start with the same model, but they possess idiosyncratic differences (Watson 2006). In India, McDonald’s vegetarian and chicken menu options dominate, while the Japanese version of the chain offers a Teriyaki burger and a Chicken Tatsuta sandwich. Moreover, in the field analysis reveals that people in different

places, from Moscow (Caldwell 2009) to northeastern Japan (Traphagan and Brown 2002), interpret and use the offerings of McDonald's and other multi-national corporations in a wide variety of ways. It is thus erroneous and problematic to assume that the presence of the fast food chain in many parts of the world entails homogenization.

As for claims that multi-national corporations are usurping the power once held by territorially sovereign states, one should first keep in mind that multi-national corporations have been tremendously influential for a very long time. The East India Company, to give a prominent example, operated across the globe, engaging in politics and maintaining an army of its own. The British government resented the company's political and economic autonomy and in the end subjugated it to increased regulation. In today's world, we are also seeing examples of what Karl Polanyi termed "countermovements," those campaigns to reign in attempts to install so-called "free" markets by explicitly re-embedding markets within society (Polanyi 1975). The notions of "food security" and "food sovereignty" have emerged in opposition to the land acquisitions mentioned earlier. While "food security" refers to a country's ability to feed its citizens, "food sovereignty" is said to be the right that peoples and countries have to food and to determining how they will produce or obtain food in ways that meet their nutritional, ecological, social, economic, and cultural needs. The notion of food sovereignty—flawed as it may be (see Carney 2011)—demonstrates that not only is there opposition to the erosion of the power of place, but that such opposition is often articulated in ways that call upon the importance of place.

There is clearly more to globalization than the spread of multinational corporations from the West and consumption patterns and labor practices associated with them. Michael Herzfeld observes that the local, too, can experience a kind of globalization, as with simplified versions of

villager hunting bags and copies of classical busts in Greek tourist shops; such “globalized forms of local tradition” are sold across the world (2004: 18).

The description of places as incapacitated by global flows is also lacking in explanatory power. The resilience of place-making efforts and territorialization is evident in Theodor Bestor’s research on the tuna trade. He argues that “market and place are not disconnected through the globalization of economic activity, but ... they are re-connected in different ways” and “[m]arkets and urban places continue as the central nodes in the coordination of complex multiple flows of commodities, culture, capital, and people” (Bestor 2001: 78). Political scientists Timberlake and Ma write, “Cities are the places at which the very flows that constitute globalization are grounded and tied to place. These cities form a network that spans the globe, and, in many ways, this global city network constitutes globalization” (Timberlake and Ma 2007: 269). They list three reasons that cities—one type of territorialized place—have featured so prominently in the study of globalization: 1) in territorialized places we can directly observe the material and behavioral manifestations of globalization 2) cities are influential nodes and sites for the processes of globalization 3) hierarchical “systems of cities” exist that are defined by global flows but also constitute globalization itself (Timberlake and Ma 2007: 255).

By studying territorialized places, one may also trace the historical factors that have allowed places and their residents to engage with the processes of globalization in divergent ways. Jeffrey Wasserstrom, for instance, has argued that Shanghai was a cosmopolitan city port in the early 20th century, then disengaged with the global, and has in recent times begun to “re-globalize” (Wasserstrom 2009). At an even more micro-level, Gordon Mathews’ ethnography of the Chungking Mansion in Hong Kong is replete with examples of how populations from very

different backgrounds interact in intriguing ways that do not support the notion that globalization has a homogenizing effect (Mathews 2011).

While this dissertation focuses explicitly on one place (Kyoto) and one time period (the very recent past), its aim is to shed light on the options that places have within the context of globalization and the consequences that specific choices can have. In this section I have argued that places may be interconnected and interdependent, but they are not necessarily homogenizing, nor does globalization entail placelessness. The new technologies, socialities, and political economic realities that are part and parcel of globalization generate the means for reimagining and reshaping territorialized forms of belonging.

That people continue to invest in and care for places—and in innovative ways—should not conjure up utopian visions. After all, a variety of localisms exist and some of them have their seedy sides. Clare Hinrichs identifies two important categories of localism (she uses the term “localization” since her conceptual focus is on movement toward greater regional self-reliance) that serve as useful analytical tools: “defensive localization” and “diversity receptive localization” (Hinrichs 2003). What does defensive localism look like? Anti-immigration activists in Italy have turned to food both to articulate their sense of discomfort and dislocation vis-à-vis globalization and to maintain group borders via foodways, carrying signs like “Yes to polenta, no to couscous!” (McKinley 2010). Another example: following a series of food scandals concerning food from China, many Japanese consumers view food from China as tainted and unsafe, whilst the Japanese companies that imported the food retained their aura of implicit trustworthiness (Rosenberger 2009).

This said, Hinrich’s examination of the “Iowa-grown banquet meal,” a state ritual since the late 1990s, shows that localism—and especially food system localization—can be

consciously inclusive, with permeable boundaries. Hinrichs considers free-range Iowa chicken enchiladas and a vegetable stew made with state-produced okra. On the one hand, she says, these might “represent a dilution of the state’s historical cuisine” or “further erosion of any lingering stable regional food identity.” On the other hand, she finds that “it also signifies a promising opening, where ‘local’ foodstuffs are combined in new ways reflecting the changing diversity of producers and consumers now living in the region. ... these very cross-fertilizations and culinary hybridities would seem to support a more forward-looking localization politics that makes history the springboard to a more diverse future” (Hinrichs 2003: 42). In her case study of Iowan local food movements, what began as defensive localization organized around the notion of limiting one’s consumption to “local” (read: Iowan) foods as much as possible has transformed into a more diversity receptive localism.

Ultimately, then, the “local” and the “global” are not in opposition to each other, regardless of how much they are posited as such in public discourse and scholarly debate. Global connections can even serve to support local traditions and foster a sense of localism (Caldwell and Lozada 2007). Movements to strengthen local autonomy and protect local resources and livelihoods may also welcome ideas, people, things, and capital from outside—not only as a means to an end, but also because diversity can reinvigorate a society and enable it to better adapt to new circumstances. Even movements whose localism is defensive draw on outside resources, however. This is the irony in the sign “Yes to polenta, no to couscous!” Over its long history, polenta itself has changed; once a peasant food made from faro, millet, spelt or other ground-up items, it is now a heritage food most often made from corn, native to the Americas. This reminds us that borders and boundaries differentiate places and peoples—and can matter to

them a great deal—but that people and things regularly cross the unstable, changing borders that separate places.

2.2 BRANDS AND PLACE BRANDS

Although historically, the term “brand” has referred to some kind of non-physical index—e.g. a name or visual symbol—that represented one or more seller’s goods or services as distinct from others (Hanna and Rowley 2008), people today use the term to refer to far more than this. People—as producers, consumers, but also critically as participants in social discourse—treat companies like McDonald’s, Chanel, and Sony as brands in and of themselves. There is also an understanding that people, professions, and places have their own brands, even when they have no name or symbol meant to represent their difference to others. Naomi Klein discusses President Obama’s brand at the beginning of the 2010 edition of *No Logo* (Klein 2010). Cornelius Holtorf, meanwhile, has written a book about archaeology’s brand (Holtorf 2007). The British firm Saffron provides brand consulting to clients ranging from the East Timor Development Agency and West Bengal to London and Lithuania (Saffron Brand Consultants 2013). Pundits even talk about the “brands” of various terrorist groups, even if it is not always clear exactly what they mean by the word “brand.” A recent example is an NBC news article titled “Will ISIS Eclipse Al Qaeda as No. 1 Global Terrorism ‘Brand?’” that discusses the two terrorist organizations, their differences, and ISIS’s increasing number of followers (Windrem 2014).

How is it that West Bengal, President Obama, and even archaeology and ISIS have brands? Over a century ago, the term “brand” primarily referred to the names, logos, and other symbolic devices that differentiated products from one another; Procter & Gamble made Ivory soap, while Lever promoted its Sunlight, Lifebuoy, and Lux (Olins 2004). Branding expert and advisor Wally Olins asserts that in the 1970s, consumers, but also media professionals and marketers, increasingly treated corporations as brands, and that the 1980s brought about new corporate brands representing transformative new ideas (2004: 63-67). With Starbucks, the Body Shop, and Nike, Olins writes, “The brand wasn’t *in* the shop. It *was* the shop. And the brand was also the staff in the shop” (Olins 2004: 67). Now even educational institutions see themselves as having no choice but to determine what their brand is and how they can best ensure that it is a strong and attractive one.³

The way most people use the word “brand” today shows more of a concern with function than with form; the concept of the “brand” now refers to virtually anything that is imbued with affective associations that are consistently perceived by society or specific social groups. This understanding leads anthropologist Grant McCracken to a concise definition of a brand as a “bundle of meanings” that add value (1993). McCracken’s definition may first appear broad and vague, but his insight into brands has impressed corporations like Coca-Cola, Kraft, IBM, and IKEA enough that they have hired him as a consultant.

Place of origin and provenance have played a role in the marketing and selling of goods and services across the world for centuries if not millennia, but the discourse on place branding as such has expanded and accelerated in recent times, with the emergence of journals like

³ When I participated in a focus group for my alma mater, Colby College, in the fall of 2014, one of the questions had to do with the Colby brand and how the college was perceived to be different from other liberal arts colleges in Maine. King’s College London is currently putting together fora for discussing the King’s College London brand.

Journal of Place Management and Development and *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* that investigate the phenomenon directly. Some researchers even identify a new academic discipline for “place branding” (Hanna and Rowley 2008).

Europe, given its history of linking craft food production, tourism, and geographical areas themselves, has been a focus for scholars examining the branding of place. Policy-makers, researchers, and entrepreneurs apply the term “place branding” to a wide variety of endeavors and thus, like the word “brand,” it requires clarification (Hanna and Rowley 2008).

For the purposes of this dissertation, the term “place brand” refers to 1) the “aura” or patterned associations that are linked to particular places—these may unconsciously affect how people perceive individuals, groups, and things from these places and be consciously capitalized upon—and 2) institutions whose names for selling products or services incorporates a place name (usually the place of production). The second definition includes such phenomena as geographical indications (GIs) like Darjeeling tea and Vermont maple syrup, while the first could reference Germany’s reputation for efficiency and quality in engineering products. The first definition also works as an extension to Agnew’s list of meanings for place. In addition to being a location, a setting, and possessing a “sense of place,” place also often becomes a brand in a meaningful and impactful way.

The discursive representation of place brands entails a great many conscious decisions made in the name of marketing and public relations. When it comes to the first kind of place brand I address—institutions that use place names to distinguish, market, and sell their products and services—one of the critical first steps in the creation and use of a place brand is that of naming, deciding upon names for the corporation or organization, and the product or service. For Marcel Danesi, naming is important because “[T]ransforming a simple product, like a lipstick,

into a brand entails ‘semiotizing’ it (that is, giving it sense and meaning) by creating an appropriate name for it” (Danesi 2011: 176). Although he states that an “appropriate” name “matches the unconscious meanings attached to a product” (2011: 175), he argues that a brand is “hardly deductive or rational; it is, rather, based on a poetic sense of the meaning nuances built into words. The whole brand-naming process is essentially a ‘poetic’ or ‘rhetorical act’” (2011: 182). Like Danesi, I believe that naming can be an act with significant impact. However, I would argue that rather than discover “appropriate” names that reflect meanings already attached to a product, what organizations and marketers do is create names and forge meanings in order to make their products distinct and desirable in the eyes of consumers. In other words, meaning is discursively produced, though there are limitations; marketers use tools (including images and words) available to them from prior texts within given contexts and consumers interpret marketing materials and may read them—and use even them in future discourse—against the grain (see, for instance, Cook, et al. 2009).

Marketers, if they are to be effective, must understand their audience so that they can present their object in a favorable light, establishing its distinctiveness, and make it desirable to consumers. Even when naming a product, audience reception must be considered, given that words and images convey meaning but are interpreted within a cultural context that differs from group to group. This is because the purchase and use of goods and services is very much an integrated part of their everyday lives. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood observed that consumption is a social act, never actually conducted in isolation, even when someone eats alone because identity work is imbricated in people’s decisions to buy and use certain things in specified ways. Christian Dior’s Poison, a fragrance for women, is said to have done poorly with Chinese consumers when translated as “Du Yao,” literally “poison,” because it seemed to index a

consumer-wearer who was (or sought to be) seductive and aggressive, but gained popularity when the name was changed to “Nv Ren Xiang,” or “scent of women,” indexing a more conservative and reserved clientele (Wan and Feng 2009).

From Veblen (1994 [1899]) and Bourdieu (1984) we understand that this phenomenon is far from limited to developed economies in the 21st century, though the association of products with identity, lifestyle, and so forth resonates particularly strongly today. Notable recent examples of this are Apple computer’s popular “Mac vs. PC” advertising campaign which contrasted a young, casual, upbeat man who stated, “I’m a Mac” with an older, stiffer man in a suit who claimed to be a PC; Campbell’s soup and its portrayal of idealized family life, accompanied by the slogan “Mmm, mmm, good!”; and the fur industry’s attempt to bypass ethical objections to its products by appealing to consumers in terms of its luxurious, incomparable feel (Skov 2011).

When marketers envision an audience and make choices in how to pitch a product to this audience, they employ rhetorical strategies that index certain group identities, beckoning the attention of some individuals while ignoring others. As Koller observes, brands “affect social identities, in that they provide membership in imagined communities” (2007: 115).

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF SENSORY PERCEPTIONS IN RESEARCH ON BOTH FOOD AND PLACE

Kavaratzis and Ashworth define place branding in terms of “perceptions and images.” They write that “[i]t is generally acknowledged that people encounter places through perception and

images” (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005: 507) and “[p]lace branding centers on people’s perceptions and images and puts them at the heart of orchestrated activities, designed to shape the place and its future” (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005: 507). Place branding, I insist, is about more than just “images.” Explanations that depend primarily on image(s) neglect the multiple, sensual ways that people engage with place, rendering such portrayals of place brands inaccurate and partial.

Places can be characterized not only in terms of what they look like but also how they sound, smell, taste, and feel. In Japan, for instance, distinctive neighborhoods and foreign countries are thought to have their own smells; Tokyo’s Kanda smells like curry, Shinbashi like grilled chicken (Moeran 2005). Japan Railways is experimenting with a system whereby scents would alert Tokyo’s subway riders to their current stop, based on sensory associations and representations such as incense for Sugamo, warm crepes for Harajuku, beer hops for Ebisu (Gleason 2014). The website Sounds of New York attempts captures that city’s essence in terms of those sounds that are thought of as its most defining ones — traffic noises on the Brooklyn Bridge, the bellow of the Staten Island ferry horn, the wail of a police siren, and the sound of conversation in Chinatown, among others.

Ethnographies also offer opportunities to amend the disproportionate attention Western culture has paid to the visual. Research on food, even ethnographies, all too often omits the sensory and material elements of food production, distribution, and consumption.

2.4 PLACE AND BRANDS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN: CONTEXT

Kyoto is the site of my fieldwork, the place whose brands I follow and examine. My research concerns places, branding, and gastronomic heritage in the context of the globalization of food and agriculture. Ultimately, then, my approach is one that maintains a focus on the “local” but investigates how my observations and findings relate to global structures, patterns, and forces. This section, however, addresses a more medium level, in between the “local” and the “global”: the contemporary context in Japan that has proved a fertile environment for the emergence of place brands for food and agricultural products.

2.4.1.1 Place

Much has been written about contemporary Japan as a state and society in peril (Allison 2013; Chapple 2014; Fu 2013; Kitanaka 2012; O'Day 2012; Toivonen 2011). Among the many problems facing Japanese society, those that have garnered the most attention include negative population growth, economic stagnation and recession, the disintegration of the lifetime employment system, culture bound syndromes like *hikikomorishō*, the prevalence of school bullying, high suicide rates, and the set of disasters collectively referred to as 3/11: the Great East Japan Earthquake, devastating tsunami, meltdown and radiation leak at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, and the subsequent distrust of government leaders and scientific experts (including in relation to food safety).

While I do not intend to examine Japan's recent difficulties in any significant detail here, their collective impact on Japanese society is crucial background. These compounded problems pose challenges for traditional forms of affiliation and belonging, particularly to the firm or

workplace and the household or family. In her seminal book on Japanese society, Nakane Chie described Japan as a society in which belonging to a stable group was so important that the first thing men would mention when introducing themselves was the name of the company that employed them (Nakane 1970). Their last name—indexing yet again their membership in a corporation of sorts—would follow this, while their profession and first name would often go unmentioned. The kinds of affiliations that Nakane describes do not come without their inconveniences and difficulties, but they provided the opportunity to find what is known in Japanese as an *ibasho*, a place to belong to. *Ibasho* are not conceived of as physical places so much as affectively defined social environments in which a person feels safe and at ease, supported by strong connections to others (Bamba and Haight 2007; Herleman, et al. 2008). The discourse on the ills of contemporary Japanese society reveals that many groups suffer from the lack of *ibasho* and that this condition of placelessness can afflict any individual (Allison 2009; Bamba and Haight 2007; Herleman, et al. 2008; Kaneko 2006; Oohira 2000; Tsukino 2004).

The dismantlement of the lifetime employment system has pulled the rug from under the feet of many young people—and especially men—entering the workforce. Unlike previous generations, in which masculinity was in large part defined by one’s belonging to a corporate “family,” today’s youths include Freeters (part-time workers), NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), and *hikikomori* who stay shuttered in at home. Each of these groups lacks a place of secure employment. This placelessness and displacement extends to the domestic sphere, with individuals marrying later in life (if at all) and increases in divorce rates (Allison 2010).

Women face a related but different set of circumstances. The image of Freeters and *hikikomori* is primarily male. Their female equivalent may be found in the trope of the “parasite

single,” the woman who shuns both marriage and independence and instead continues to live with her parents, spending whatever income she has on luxury goods rather than any kind of socially sanctioned contribution to her family or society at large. This term has become widely understood if not used, but its derogatory slant has understandably attracted criticism. Women who are gainfully employed are not left off the hook either. In Japanese society, women have been traditionally expected to be “good wives, wise mothers.” While women feel pressure from society and the state to reproduce, in the workplace women must often choose between continuing with their careers or having children and then returning to the workforce part-time or in a non-managerial / supervisory position. As the declining birthrate (below the replacement rate) suggests, many women choose not to become mothers and those who do often have fewer children than their mothers did. Facing uncertainties professionally and domestically, then, many Japanese women lack a secure place that they can call their own.

This sense of displacement and placelessness is an important development in Japanese society. This loss of place, aggravated for those whose livelihoods have suffered with the economic downturn and those whose homes were struck by the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant destabilization of 3/11, is a topic of concern for academics, policy-makers, and the average citizen. In this context, places that carry a great deal of symbolic meaning become all the more appealing. In some cases, they may even serve to reassure consumers, as do familiar landmarks identified through gaps in a disorienting fog.

2.4.1.2 Brands

The role of brands in everyday Japanese life has changed a great deal over the past three and a half decades or so. Following double-digit growth of the mid-50s, 60s, and 70s, in Japan the

1980s were characterized by economic prosperity and newfound leisure time, with many Japanese living lavish and extravagant lifestyles, seeking out name brands that signified one's social status and also served as a means of crafting and performing identities (Harada 1998; McCreery 2000). Japan's extraordinary economic success even led analysts to believe that Japan might overtake the US as the most important economic power. But this decade became known as the "bubble" period, as it was followed by the onset of an economic slump that was labeled the "lost decade," though Japan has yet to recover its economic footing.

Brands are still valued and sought out, but their functions have been somewhat altered. For one thing, if—as discussed above—people sense an incipient dislocation and placelessness whose possible damage scares them, policy makers see branding as a means to accomplish re-territorialization (see Aronczyk 2009). This scenario has played out in Japan as in many other countries. In 2002, journalist Douglas McGray published an article titled "Japan's gross national cool," in which he claimed that Japanese cultural goods like Hello Kitty, Pokémon, Issey Miyake, and sushi have helped transform Japan into a "new kind of superpower" (McGray 2002). Japan's "Gross National Cool," McGray argued, is of more than merely cultural import, as it has transformed Japan's economy, created a "nation-brand" that appeals to citizens around the world, even putting Japan in a better position to operate politically. In 2005, the Japanese national government, capitalizing upon what had occurred without government promotion or direct support, began to pursue Cool Japan as a national brand (Valaskivi 2013). This was interpreted by pundits as a calculated investment in "soft power" at a time when Japan's economic power was diminished, it was constrained from possessing a "normal" military, it was considered to play a comparatively weak role in international politics, and citizens possessed little national pride (Heng 2014; Iwabuchi 2008; Lukacs 2010; Valaskivi 2013). Japan's nation-

branding efforts have been strategic, including consultations with Simon Anholt, an established place-brand scholar who also advises policy-makers (Valaskivi 2013: 486). As Katja Vaskivi observes, the Japanese state has long engaged in nation-making on a global stage (even if the word “branding” was not part of the terminology used at the time). Indeed, as early as 1862 (surprising, given Japan’s official policy of isolationism at the time), Japanese emissaries led by Fukuzawa Yukichi participated in the World Expo in London. In the early World Fairs, Japanese delegations sought to present Japan as a sophisticated, unified, and distinct nation by showcasing elements of “traditional” Japanese culture from sumo wrestling to architectural styles. While Japan’s installation at the 1878 Universal Expo in Paris appears to have been more positively received than that of any other nation (Napier 2007: 27), as Kenji Tierney notes, displays of “traditional” Japanese culture were not always taken to be signs of a refined Asian civilization (Tierney 2007).

The Japanese state’s efforts to engage in “nation branding” may be portrayed as “soft nationalism” focused on building international goodwill and strengthening the domestic economy, but there has been criticism as well. Iwabuchi Koichi, for one, has labeled this “brand nationalism” by which he means “uncritical practical uses of cultural media as resources for the development of political and economic national interests through the branding of national cultures” (Iwabuchi 2010: 90). Iwabuchi acknowledges that active “nation branding” may not be an especially effective means of achieving political or economic ends (see Lukacs 2010). Yet Iwabuchi urges us to take “brand nationalism” seriously for other reasons: “brand nationalism deters our understanding of even processes of cultural globalization: these include the high concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few global companies; intellectual property rights; and the transnational, international, and new international division of cultural labor”

(Iwabuchi 2010: 91). Valaskivi observes that “the very act of perceiving the nation as a brand already changes the social imaginary *of the nation* as such: a country becomes an object of consumption, a brand commodity, a product. As a consequence the nation is imagined as a commodity rather than as a community” (Valaskivi 2013: 499). Iwabuchi identifies further concerns, such as the exclusion of “unprofitable” voices and the white-washing and neglect of issues that clash with the national brand. Such criticism is well worth keeping in mind. It provides a counterpoint and corrective to definitions and descriptions that emerge from within the “field” of place-branding itself. Consider the self-proclaimed guru of nation-branding, Simon Anholt’s statement that “[n]ation brand is national identity made tangible, robust, communicable and above all useful” (Anholt in Aronczyk 2009).

Most obviously, Kyoto’s place brands for agricultural and food products have benefited from the disadvantaging of other areas in the discourse on food safety in post-3/11 Japan. In my travels across Japan, as well as responses to questionnaires and interviews, it became clear that whereas Northeastern Japan and particularly Fukushima Prefecture are associated with disaster, radiation, pollution, and danger (though also strength, struggle, integrity, and resilience), Kyoto Prefecture is seen as safe and trustworthy, even if these are not its primary associations. Consumers concerned about radioactive food but distrustful of the proclamations and recommendations of government officials and scientists turn to place of origin as an index for safety and trustworthiness. As I will explain later, it was in conversations with residents of those parts of Japan’s northeast region who had experienced the disasters of 3/11, that the resonance of the phrase “place brand” for Japanese citizens was brought home to me.

Kyoto Prefecture’s marketing strategies has not focused on pureness, safety, or the pristine nature of its rural areas. Instead, Kyoto has emphasized its rich history, nationally

important traditions linked to urban heritage. This strategy differs from marketing for other place brands for agricultural and food products, which often make appeals based on the supposed pureness, safety, and pristine nature of rural areas, and the value of hardscrabble “family farms” following a pastoral tradition (Gray 2013; Hinrichs 1996).

2.4.1.3 Place brands

Place branding has garnered attention within Japan (Rausch 2008; Seki and Furukawa 2008; Fujita 2006). A variety of phenomena that can be labeled “place branding” exist in Japan, including the registration and use of regional collective trademarks, the popular “roadside stations” (*michi no eki*) that have become destinations for those seeking local produce and craft goods when driving through a particular location, and the “One Village One Product” movement that has inspired numerous strategies to transform idiosyncratic local resources into commodities to spur economic development (Fujita 2006). Notably, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and farmers in other areas of the world are currently attempting to reproduce the positive effects of place branding efforts by adapting Japanese strategies to their own circumstances.

In spite of the seeming novelty of the phrase “place brand” (*chiiki burando*), it is not difficult to look at Japanese history and identify what we might call a place brand. When I discussed this topic with a friend who runs a craft goods store, she said that because “branding is stability,” it has been around for quite some time. She gives the example of Kyoto’s Imamiya shrine, for instance, which is said to have been famous for its Japanese sweets and in particular its *aburimochi* (grilled rice cakes with toasted soybean powder and a white miso sauce) since the Heian era. The shrine itself doesn’t make or sell the sweets—special shops do, and those shops have benefited from the association with the shrine and been eclipsed by it. Indeed, the first two

chapters of this dissertation examine Kyoto vegetables and Uji tea. While the term “Kyoto vegetables” is new, vegetable varieties whose very names link them to a specific place—as with the Shishigatani squash and the *Kujō* scallion—have existed for centuries. The history of Uji tea extends even further back in time.

Place brands, especially in the wider sense of the term, are not always positive. Chernobyl; Ferguson, Missouri; Auschwitz—these places evoke sadness or anger for most people. The same is true of Fukushima. I find it unfortunate that people use “Fukushima” as shorthand for the nuclear power plant destabilization and radiation leak of March 2011 as well as its aftermath. Such labeling flattens Fukushima and other places, reducing them to a specific series of events and circumstances. Because place brands built on sets of associations, if those associations can change, then so too can a place’s overall brand. Perhaps Fukushima’s hope is Hiroshima, a place that decades later has taken a new, productive form without forgetting the tragedy that made it a place associated with devastation, suffering, and pity.

2.5 KYOTO AS FIELDSITE

Anthropologists study in places. Fieldsites remain important to anthropological research, even as places across the world become increasingly interconnected (Candea 2007). This is true for many reasons. For one thing, some places lend themselves more easily toward the study of certain topics.⁴ Any given place also comes with its own idiosyncrasies, requiring both “thick

⁴ It is no surprise, for instance, that exchange is a topic that has been well researched in the Pacific, violence and warfare with groups like the Yanomami, and witchcraft on the African continent.

description” and carefully circumscribed generalizations beyond the fieldsite.⁵ Inasmuch as my project examines the branding of place, place is inescapably at the center of this dissertation

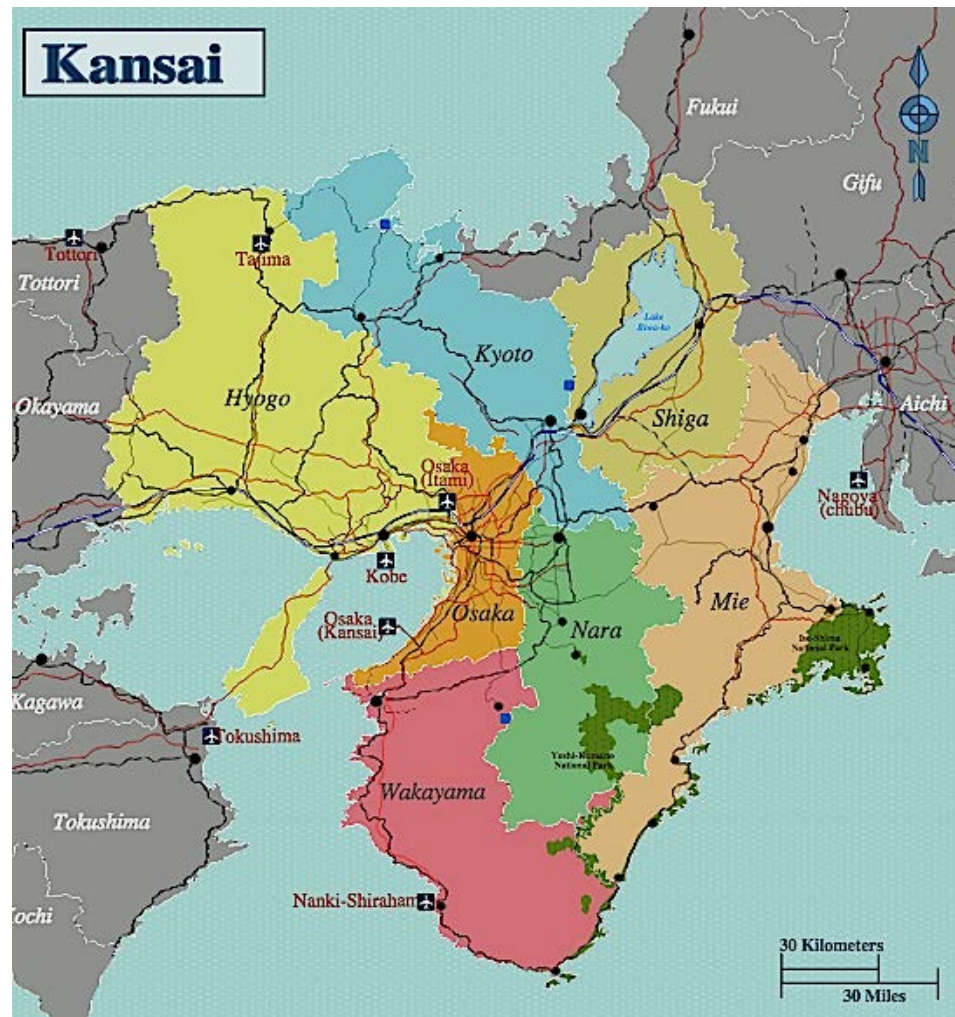


Figure 1. Map of the Kansai region.

Adapted from T. Kambayashi (2011), Wikimedia Commons.

Kyoto is a fieldsite that is particularly mobile and nebulous. Kyoto is a city and a prefecture. In the words of Sen Sōoku, head of the Musahnkoji tea school, “Kyoto’s elusiveness might be its very essence” (Dougill 2005: ix). Located in western Japan, Kyoto Prefecture is

⁵ Similar conditions exist for time, of course.

bordered by Fukui, Shiga, and Mie Prefectures to the east, Osaka and Nara to the south, Hyogo to the west, and the Sea of Japan to the north (Figure 1). As such, it is grouped in the Kansai area and Kinki region. At 4,613 km², Kyoto Prefecture is the 31st largest of Japan's 47 prefectures (Ministry of Agriculture 2011). Its population numbers 2.6 million (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2014). The wholesale and retail, manufacturing, and health care, medicine, and welfare industries employ the largest number of prefectural residents. While Kyoto City only occupies 828 km² of the Prefecture it is home to 1.5 million of its residents (Kyoto City Data Portal 2014; Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2014).

Kyoto stands out as a distinct place in spite of the fact that its geographical and geological features do not lend themselves to any instinctive identification of borders. Unlike Hokkaido, which is identified with an entire island in the Japanese archipelago, the shape of which is familiar to virtually all Japanese citizens, or Okinawa, a series of islands that often appear as a series of small dots far from the Japanese mainland on most hand-drawn maps, Kyoto Prefecture's borders are less distinct. Train passengers will not notice when they leave Kyoto and enter one of the adjacent prefectures. Furthermore, many Japanese people forget that Kyoto Prefecture has a western coastline because they often unconsciously reduce the prefecture to a larger version of Kyoto City. On the other hand, when they talk about Kyoto City's temples, shrines, and UNESCO world heritage sites they overlook the fact that some of the very sites they mention are located outside of Kyoto City. Enryaku-ji, the temple that sits at the top of Mount Hiei, may be visible from Kyoto and grouped together with famous temples like Nanzen-ji, Kenni-ji, and Kiyomizu-dera, but it is actually located in the next prefecture over, Shiga Prefecture.



Figure 2. Kyoto's Iconic Kiyomizu Temple.

The Japan External Trade Organization provides the following industry profile for Kyoto City:

Kyoto ranks among Japan's, and indeed the world's, most historical cities, and the city's spirit of enterprise, its culture and art, and the industrial-academic-public collaboration that have been cultivated over Kyoto's long history have attracted a variety of industries, ranging from traditional to leading-edge technology industries. The manufacturing industry as well as the distribution and information-related industries connected with it function in an organic and serial fashion, transforming and developing Kyoto into one of Japan's top manufacturing cities (Japan External Trade Organization 2013)

As this text indicates, Kyoto City benefits from its rich past. Even Kyoto's cutting-edge technology industry is viewed as intimately connected to the city's cultural heritage. This heritage is very important to the local economy. Tourists are drawn to Kyoto to visit its geisha district, seasonal splendors such as cherry trees in full bloom, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites that include famous temples and shrines spared destruction from World War II.⁶ Intangible

⁶ There are 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in and around Kyoto City. These include 14 temples, 2 shrines, and the Nijō Castle.

cultural heritage has become another selling point, with local festivals—including the UNESCO registered Gion Festival—and local cuisines drawing tourists.

Kyoto—at the time called Heiankyō—became the imperial capital of Japan in 794 after Emperor Kanmu and his court left Nara to curtail the growing power of Buddhist temples, and then Nagaokakyō after a mere decade when a series of omens and problems with flooding followed that move (Brumann 2012: 1-2; Lowe 2000; Stavros 2014: 4). Although the city’s name changed to Kyoto in the eleventh century, the city itself remained the capital of Japan until 1868 (Lowe 2000: x).⁷ Much of what is today thought of as “traditional” Japanese heritage emerged when Kyoto was positioned as the central political, religious, and indeed cultural capital of Japan.⁸ During this time, for instance, Japanese Zen sects were established, martial arts were codified, and what is now considered Japanese cuisine came into being (Rath 2010). Aristocratic families often derived their surnames from places, particularly roads, in the imperial capital; these names persist as family names and place names today, and may be found in classic literary works like *The Tale of Genji* (Stavros 2014).

For the Japanese, Kyoto is a special place, one that is synonymous with traditional Japanese culture. It is called *Nihon no kokoro no furusato*, the home town of the Japanese heart / mind (Brumann 2009).⁹ As Takashi Fujitani explains in *Splendid Monarchy*, Japan’s leaders found in Kyoto’s very visible and known history as the imperial capital for over a thousand years (*sennen no miyako*) a potent symbol for forging a modern Japanese nation after the Meiji Revolution of 1868 (Fujitani 1996). It served as the main setting for the public portions of

⁷ As convention dictates, I will use the name Kyoto to refer to the city throughout time, though this is anachronistic.

⁸ Though “traditionality” is established in the present and culture is a dynamic thing, it is important not to forget that “tradition” may matter a great deal to people (Handler and Linnekin 1984).

⁹ As the Japanese saying goes, if Japan were a human, Tokyo would be the head, Osaka the stomach, and Kyoto the heart (Dougill 2000: x).

imperial accessions and the “most public and spectacular ceremonies” (Fujitani 1996: 65). Kyoto’s position in Japan’s “symbolic and ritual topography” was used to assert the claim of imperial divinity (Fujitani 1996: 103). Hence the construction in 1895 of the Heian shrine and the creation of the *Jidai matsuri* or “period festival,” a festival that celebrates Kyoto’s long imperial history with a parade featuring citizens dressed in costumes from each period—from the Heian to the Meiji. It is no coincidence that in contrast to the sleek Western carriages that had served as imperial conveyances throughout the Meiji era, for the Meiji emperor’s funeral hearse an ox-driven cart made by a Kyoto craftsman was chosen (Fujitani 1996: 150). Kyoto and Tokyo thus served as foils for each other, the former the “ancient” capital and the latter the “modern” capital, a combination that asserted the nation’s distinct ethnic and historical roots and at the same time projecting a vision of Japan as a developed country on par with the European and American powers.¹⁰

Kyoto is one of Japan’s most popular domestic tourist destinations. In 2013 more than 50 million Japanese tourists flocked to Kyoto City, with more than 13 million staying at least one night (Kyoto City Industry and Tourism Bureau 2014). Middle schools and high schools invariably select Kyoto for school trips. Japan Railways puts together and advertizes package trips to Kyoto, particularly during the tourist seasons when people flock to see the autumn foliage or cherry blossoms. Young people in nearby cities like Osaka and Kobe like to use Kyoto as a date spot, with its temples especially popular, while older generations with more money to spend select Kyoto to impress business relations or romantic partners with fancy dinners.

¹⁰ People continue to compare Kyoto and Tokyo. Iwabuchi Koichi, writing of Tokyo’s place in globalization, states that “Tokyo cannot compete with Kyoto’s traditional attractions and heritage industry” (Iwabuchi 2008: 551).

The Asahi Shimbun's series "Kyoto goes Kawaii" exemplifies the contemporary discourse well with articles that tap into—and reinforce—the idea that Kyoto embodies quintessential traditional Japan. The first entry, from August 09, 2013 explains why Kyoto is the focus of the series in the following editor's note:

Kyoto is not just a special destination for Japanese visitors, but is also for foreign tourists as well. With its historic and cultural sites such as temples and shrines, combined with its exquisite cuisine, the ancient city has attracted visitors and tourists alike for a very long time. However, Kyoto's charm does not end there. This series of article [sic] will showcase what we are calling "kawaii" (cute) items locally made in the iconic Japanese city (Murase 2013).

The series introduces readers to shops selling items such as boxwood combs, handmade soaps, and traditional sweets. The historical background of items and stores featured in the series is often emphasized. The first shop introduced by the series offers rubber stamps engraved with humorous twists on the words of famous historical figures and well-known traditional sayings (Murase 2013). Hararyōkaku is a Kyoto store sells spice blends. Given that Kyoto's tradition and history are valorized and stressed in discussions of the city, it is of little surprise that the article on Hararyōkaku focuses on the store's history--founded in 1703 by a descendant of one of the famous 47 Rōnin—and on the passing down of artisanal knowledge from one (male) generation to the next (Numata 2013).

One of my respondents referred to Kyoto as "*the* Japan," while an Okinawan man in his 50s claimed that many Okinawans feel that Kyoto is the "real" capital of Japan, not rigid and serious Tokyo. On their part, many of Kyoto's elderly residents in particular believe that although Tokyo has now served as the political capital of Japan and the home of the imperial family for almost 150 years, the imperial household will undoubtedly eventually return to Kyoto.

As the Asahi Shimbun passage indicates, Kyoto holds meaning for people outside of Japan. Indeed, it has been drawing more and more foreign tourists every year, with well over a

million staying at least one night in the city in 2013 (Kyoto City Industry and Tourism Bureau 2014). It attracts the fourth largest number of international conferences and meetings in all of Japan, far more than other cities of its size, 196 in 2012 and 176 in 2013 (Japan National Tourist Organization 2013). Kyoto's appeal goes beyond simply being a tourist destination: its success in branding itself as the Japanese city of history, culture, and tradition par excellence while still attracting contemporary industry has proven inspirational to other places. There have long been "little Kyotos" scattered throughout Japan, but in the fall of 2014 Prime Minister Abe and India's Prime Minister Modi forged a strategic partnership in which they declared that the Indian pilgrimage city of Varanasi and Kyoto would also forge a relationship. The Indian news media reported that "Kyoto with its mix of ancient tradition and modernity is to be the model for Varanasi" (Pani 2014).

While agriculture does not dominate Kyoto Prefecture's economy, agricultural and food products from Kyoto are well known and well regarded throughout Japan. It is worth understanding Kyoto's agricultural sector in the context of Japanese agricultural trends. Neoliberal economic theory and policies and the emergence of a global agro-food industry have had significant impact on Japanese agriculture. Efficiency, deregulation, privatization, and free trade are key neoliberal tenets. Neoliberal economists and policymakers valorize the large-scale, capital-intensive, specialized farm as "the final and most advanced stage of individual holding in a mixed economy" (Todaro and Smith 2003: 448). Bureaucrats determining national agricultural policies in post-second World War Japan promoted modernization and industrialization in line with these neoliberal ideals in a drive to transform the country into an export-oriented "developed" economy (Nishiyama and Hirata Kimura 2005: 86). In line with neoliberal tenets, in

1956 Japan signed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.

In the past few decades, meanwhile, the national government has pursued Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with many countries, including Chile, China, Australia, and those belonging to the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Although “sensitive” agricultural products have been protected by tariffs—rice by a staggering 778 percent tariff, most notably—the Japanese agricultural sector has felt the impact (Fifield 2014). As a result of these agreements, comparatively inexpensive produce grown abroad has made its way onto supermarket shelves and restaurant menus. By the mid 1960s the economic contribution of agriculture to the national economy had fallen to the point that only 15 percent of the population was engaged in farming, and the sector as a whole contributed only 8 percent to the net domestic product (Pempel 1998: 60). Today, Japan’s agricultural sector consists of less than 4 percent of the nation’s workforce and contributes little more than 1 percent to GDP (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). Furthermore, Japan’s agricultural imports now exceed its agricultural exports by 22 times on a monetary basis, making it the world’s largest net importer of agricultural products (Martini and Kimura 2009: 27). These changes have brought the national self-sufficiency rate from 73 per cent (calculated in calories) in 1965 to about 40 per cent in recent years, lower than any other developed country (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2010: 62-64).

Kyoto Prefecture’s farmers have fewer natural resources to cope with these changes than the average Japanese farmer. In fact, the average farming household in Kyoto owns about half the land the average Japanese farming household does, 93 ares compared to 196 ares¹¹ (MAFF 2011). Moreover, if one looks at dry fields, thereby excluding rice paddies, the average farmer in

¹¹ An are is one hundredth of a hectare.

Kyoto owns less than one-fifth the area (14 ares) the average Japanese farmer does (72 ares) (Ministry of Agriculture 2011). If we exclude Hokkaido Prefecture from the statistics because of its unique economy of scale, we find that the average Japanese farm is one and a half times the size of the average Kyoto farm, with field holdings two and half times larger than Kyoto's (Ministry of Agriculture 2011). This explains why the average Kyoto farmer obtains less income from agriculture than the average Japanese farmer.

Kyoto Prefecture's agricultural industry also faces a demographic problem. In the prefecture, the average farmer is 68 years old and over 40 per cent of farmers lack a clear successor (Kyoto Prefecture Department of Policy Planning 2011, 2010). Moreover, across Japan the abandonment of agricultural land and the conversion of land to non-agricultural activities continue, with losses of tens of thousands of hectares of cultivated land area yearly (Martini and Kimura 2009: 25-6). This is particularly worrisome given the scarcity of arable land in Japan.

Japan's national government's stance toward agriculture continues to consist of seemingly contradictory policies with, on the one hand, the pursuit of free trade agreements, and on the other protectionist policies for rice and other "sensitive" items. The issue of the day is the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, a free trade agreement that could involve as many as eleven other countries including New Zealand, Peru, Vietnam, the US, Mexico, and Canada. Negotiations have been conducted in secret, with neither the media nor the public aware of their details or progress. Were an agreement to be reached, the substance of which is anybody's guess, the results could have tremendous impact. Aurelia George Mulgan notes that "The MAFF [Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries] has made a trial calculation that if Japan were to sign on to the TPP, the value of domestic agricultural production would drop by approximately 4.1 trillion yen (\$5.2 billion), almost half of the total production value, and the food self-

sufficiency rate (calorie-based) would fall from the current 40 per cent to 14 per cent” (Mulgan 2012).

2.6 KYOTO THE BRAND AND KYOTO’S VARIOUS BRANDS

2.6.1 Kyoto as a Brand

The idea of referring to Kyoto as a brand did not come to me naturally. Kyoto, to me, was a prefecture, a city, and a fieldsite. Even when I came to realize that this dissertation would come to focus upon various local branding phenomena, I still didn’t comprehend the extent to which brands (*burando*) and branding (*burandoka*) permeated everyday life for Japanese people. I was enlightened on a trip to Northeast Japan to do research on how the provenance of produce matters to Japanese consumers in the wake of 2011’s nuclear power plant destabilization. It was truly serendipitous. I had missed the last train to Tokyo and was stuck in a city I had never been to. Fortunately, I was able to find an affordable place to stay, but the room stank of cigarettes and the walls were so thin I could hear someone in the next room over snoring and hear the TV on the other side. I decided to stuff my questionnaires in my bag and look for a nearby bar. When I told the bartender there why I was in town, he immediately offered to pass out my questionnaires. All of the bar’s customers filled out my survey and spoke to me afterward. Since most of them lived in the northeast, my questions really hit home. What was most striking was that my questionnaire asked about place of origin / provenance (*sanchi*), but multiple respondents used the word *burando* (the Japanese word for brand, a loanword “borrowed” from English) instead when speaking to me afterward. One woman even referred to the word *burando*

in her written response, even though the word appeared nowhere in my survey. After this incident, I became aware that in fact the word *burando* was used far more often than I had thought and every time someone I spoke to used the word *burando* to refer to the place of production—and the multitude of attributes associated with it—I paid attention.

There is every reason to take my respondents seriously when they use the word “brand” to refer to place (of production). It would be disingenuous, patronizing, as well as unhelpful to characterize this as “misuse.” To argue, meanwhile, that people are simply brainwashed by corporations and marketers via consumer culture, in which everything is ultimately up for sale, is to deny them agency and to focus exclusively on production, overlooking the reception aspect of consumerism, branding, and communication. The individuals I interviewed in that bar, I would argue, possessed a sophisticated if intuitive understanding of brands and of places, one that finds parallels in the scholarly literature on place, development, and tourism that I addressed earlier in this chapter. Recall Grant McCracken’s definition of brand as a “bundle of meanings.” Recall the development of the notion of “nation-branding” and the active pursuit of national brands by many countries, including Japan (Cool Japan).

Thus I reference both the larger Kyoto brand—that set of associations that Kyoto benefits from and cultivates—and the Kyō Brand for vegetables and other institutions for selling Kyoto’s agricultural and food products. It is critical to understand the distinction between the two because Kyoto’s established place brands for foods rely a great deal upon Kyoto’s extensive appeal more generally.

As I will elaborate throughout this dissertation, people in Japan use the term “brand” (*burando*) to refer to Kyoto, to categories of agricultural and food products such as “Kyoto vegetables,” to regionally-based collective trademarks like Uji tea, to trademarks and logos like

the Kyō Brand for prefectural agricultural and fisheries products, and even when talking about specific items like Kyoto's "shrimp potato" (*ebi imo*, actually a taro variety). In referring to Kyoto, people did *not* treat the Kyoto "brand" as a recent development, much less one inextricable from marketing, capitalism, or neoliberal globalization. Rather, they talked about it as an inherent aspect of place, *place as brand*, as it were. This echoes Melissa Aronczyk's findings at a different scale, that of the nation / country. Her respondents expressed the belief that "nations are *already* de facto brands, regularly protecting their assets, attributes, and liabilities to a public at large, whether intentionally or not. Indeed, 'nation branding' is perceived as a rhetorical and functional equivalent to 'national identity'" (Aronczyk 2008: 49). While my respondents demonstrated a critical awareness that "place branding" is a process that requires a degree of boundary maintenance, they used the term "place brand" somewhat differently in that it could be applied to the composite sets of associations with a place, regardless of whether or not any associations were cultivated. This version of the term "brand" thus places greater emphasis on reception and perception than it does on production and marketing. In other words, in Japan place brands may precede conscious place-branding efforts, though it is clear that place brands are not stable, unchanging essences with some kind of primordial cores but are shaped over time by important actors.

Though aspects of place brands resemble "place of origin" labels, geographical indications, the notion of provenance, and "terroir," significant differences exist among these phenomena. Geographical indications are registered trademarks that enable producers and retailers in a place to claim ownership of their name. Overlap exists with place brands, but the latter category includes much more. Place brands include unregistered products marketed based on place of production as well as the more general patterned associations that people identify

with any place. “Place of origin labels, like geographical indications, have a narrower focus than place brands, which might not have labels at all. Here, I think of those farmers from Kyoto who engage in *furiuri*, driving their K-trucks along predetermined routes to sell their produce to customers whose parents and grandparents may have purchased from the farmer’s mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law. The vegetables they keep in baskets and crates in the back of their trucks are grown from seeds that have often been passed down through generations, a characteristic that their regular customers value. Their heirloom vegetables often operate as well known place brands, but are not usually sold with any label whatsoever.

Provenance, meanwhile, differs from place brands in that it lays emphasis on the means one obtains goods. Though place lies at the core of provenance, it does so indirectly through other factors like environmental impacts, labor conditions, and distribution practices. “Provenance,” Ben Coles explains, “is more than a label of origin. Where a food comes from is also mediated by retailers. This could be as simple as a particular supermarket or as complicated as shopping at a range of different places. This type of provenance is located within a range of socially and culturally embedded practices that are not limited to consumption” (Coles 2013: 206). Coles further explains that “... information about provenance is used to evoke place, and place narratives are evoked within a discourse of the otherwise ‘placeless’ foodscape of conventional agri-industrial food. Discursively, provenance provides a framework through which to verify, trace, unveil, or otherwise ‘follow’ the paths that bring food to the table and in the process act as a mechanism to ensure that the foods we eat satisfy our various material, social, cultural, and / or ethical criteria” (2013: 206). Provenance and place brands, then, resemble each other in that both involve the deployment of multiple dimensions of place based associations.

Provenance differs, however, in the weight it gives to the “paths” an item follows. The oft-used “farm to fork” phrase is but one example of this.

In fact, provenance can be seen as fixing such characteristics in place. Hence Peter Jackson’s insight that the “idea of provenance can be criticized for implying a fixed and static relationship between food and place (where only the people in one specific place really know how to produce a particular dish, for example), denying the extent of culinary borrowing and the links between places” (Jackson 2013: 162).

Place brands, significantly, may be the composite associations of a fictional, mythical, or virtual locale. Alternatively, the associations people have with a place might be far removed from the characteristics of the actual place. Jackson notes that “[b]ecause ideas of provenance are so slippery when applied to food and culinary culture, they are readily exploited for commercial gain. This might involve deliberate deception or, more frequently, the invocation of a loose connection between food and place” (Jackson 2013: 162). The British supermarket chain Marks and Spencer’s, for instance, created the name “Oakham chicken” for its “provenance-type imagery” with marketers explaining, “It’s more about an image than it is a place and provenance. I suppose it does sound British, there’s a Britishness to it ... and there’s a provenance feel, a bit like Aberdeen Angus. Because that’s effectively what we’re looking for ... the Aberdeen Angus of the poultry world” (Jackson, et al. 2011: 64-5). Ultimately, then, what Marks and Spencer’s has done is created a place brand. Inasmuch as the place name deployed does not originate with the actual places in which the chickens are hatched, raised, slaughtered, or processed the marketing technique can be said to be deceptive. Yet it is a signifier that communicates specific attributes and qualities to the consumer. It is therefore also deceptive when the consumer’s experience does not match the experience the producer promises. I felt I had been manipulated when I patronized a Tokyo restaurant claiming to serve *Kyō dashi buta shabu*, a pork shabu shabu using Kyoto *dashi*, and found out that the “Kyō” *dashi* had come from Osaka.

When I talk about my research many people ask me why I don't use terroir to explain what I see occurring in Japan. In spite of the way that the concept of terroir has become popular in many parts of the world, it emerged out of a very specific socio-historic European context and does not transfer easily to places that have developed their own ways of talking about place, produce, and distinction. Terroir maps differences in terms of boundaries that amalgamate the geological, climactic, political, and cultural, essentializing differences and portraying them as static. Place brands may similarly draw upon various facets of an area's physical and cultural characteristics, but because they exist as a set of associations or meanings, they depend upon perception. Thus consumers and people engaged in social discourse—in this case, marketers, chefs, bloggers, local trendsetters, gossips, and parents, for example—play an important role in shaping place brands.

Before delving into how this works in Kyoto, I wish to illustrate how these two types of brand converge and diverge using the example of Korean culinary diplomacy. Korean corporate and product brands have gained strength while the Korea brand lags behind in its appeal, prompting a concerned South Korean state to turn to gastrodiploamacy to re-brand itself. Unfortunately, Paul Rockower opines, these efforts feel needlessly awkward and heavy-handed, with popular localized notions of Korean cuisine overlooked or intentionally ignored by a top-down strategy (Rockower 2014). In this case, Korean corporate brands have become successful while the national brand unable to benefit proportionally. The national government, in an attempt to bolster its brand, turns to forced efforts out of synch with pre-existing positive aspects of its brand in places like Los Angeles. In sum, this case (at least from Rockower's perspective) is all about discrepancies between brands: corporate and brands and the national brand, the top-down

version of the gastrodipomatic brand and the localized popular version of Korea’s culinary brand.

In Japan, both kinds of brands are referred to as *burando* and *chiiki burando*. The word *chiiki* is made up of the characters 地 (*chi*, meaning earth, ground, territory) and 域 (*ki*, meaning region, limits). *Chiiki* itself means area, region, and is often used to mean community.¹²

Table 1. Sample list of registered regionally-based collective trademarks.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Product</i>	<i>Designated Place of Origin</i>
Sendai ichigo	Sendai strawberries	Miyagi Prefecture
Awashijira ori	Awashijira textiles	Tokushima Prefecture
Kakeromakebi su	Kakekoromakebi vinegar	Kagoshima Prefecture
Yamagata okitama san derawea-	Delaware grapes from the Okitama region	Yamagata Prefecture
Darjeeling tea	Darjeeling tea	India

Kyoto’s Chamber of Commerce’s has published a handbook titled *Kyoto no toshikaku / burando wo kangaeru* or *Thinking about Kyoto City’s Value / Brand*. This volume explains that Kyoto’s brand draws upon associations with tangible and intangible cultural heritage including Buddhist temples, local foods, and *omotenashi* (hospitality). Individuals may also embody the Kyoto brand. For this reason, the book teaches readers how to properly conduct oneself in Kyoto, as there are appropriate ways of walking, sitting, and greeting others in Kyoto (Kyoto Chamber

¹² I translate *chiiki burando* as “place brand” because the literature examining place branding efforts worldwide is both burgeoning and disparate enough that what I see occurring in Japan can be discussed using this term without causing any definitional problems.

of Commerce and Industry 2006). One of the former officials directing the Kyō Furusato Sanpin Kyōkai once referred to Kyoto as a “national brand”

In Japan, there is no official definition of what counts as a *chiiki burando*. The Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry’s (METI) Japan Patent Office uses the phrase to refer to its system of “regionally based collective trademarks” (*chiiki dantai shōhyō*) as though the two were interchangeable.¹³ “Regionally based collective trademarks” are a form of geographical indication, similar to the American approach in that the system protects the use of designated terms like “traditional Kyoto vegetable” as intellectual property (Giovannucci, et al. 2010).¹⁴ Unlike the way that geographical indications are treated in the United States, however, in Japan a list of legally registered origin products is kept and made public. For Japan’s “regionally based collective trademarks” place of origin becomes the primary characteristic designating certain products as distinct from others. Table 1 shows examples of “regionally based collective trademarks.” As one might guess from looking at this list, many of the products registered as *chiiki dantai shōhyō* are edible items.¹⁵ Another government actor that uses the phrase *chiiki burando* is the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF). It does, so, however, in a slightly different way. Its approach identifies brands that sell and market products differentiated from like products based on where they were harvested and / or processed as *chiiki burando*. Thus the MAFF conceives Kyoto Brand vegetables as a *chiiki burando* even though they have not been inscribed as a “regionally based collective trademark.” The *Shoku to Nourinsuisangyō no Chiiki Burando Kyōgikai* (Food, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Place

¹³ The *chiiki dantai shōhyō* system became law in 2005 and was instituted the following year.

¹⁴ In Europe, geographical indications operate under a separate parallel system to intellectual property and designate a place of origin that results in specific characteristics and quality due to its agro-ecological and cultural resources (see Giovannucci, et al. 2010).

¹⁵ As of 2013, 308 of the 551 registered items are edible products including products as diverse as fresh fruits and vegetables, processed foods, green tea, and alcoholic beverages.

Brand Association) and the Japan Food Industry Association's *Honba no Honmono* (Real Thing from the Real Place) certification program for select products are examples of place branding projects established by producers rather than regulators.

Consulting and research groups such as Nikkei Research and Brand Research Institute regularly assess the *chiiki burando* power of Japanese geographical entities, from cities to prefectures and regions. How do we apply such an understanding of what a brand is to Kyoto? Not only does Kyoto have a rich mytho-history, but its citizens (and outside actors as well) have worked to make Kyoto a cultural city, a taste-making city for centuries (Dougill 2005). Thanks to this, when Japanese people think of Kyoto they think of Buddhist temples, geisha, and tea ceremony. In the "traditional" Japanese arts like the tea ceremony and classical literature, participants look to Kyoto as a key reference point, regardless of what the actual climactic conditions are in the place these practitioners happen to be (Lindström 2007: 222; Surak 2013). Recent surveys by Nikkei Research and Brand Research Institute have found that for several years in a row Kyoto has possessed the second strongest prefectural brand in Japan, the strongest being Hokkaido Prefecture (Brand Research Institute 2010; Nikkei Research 2013). Kyoto City ranks first for municipal brands according to Nikkei's 2013 survey, more than one hundred points ahead of Kobe City, which occupies the number two spot.

Nikkei Research evaluates Japan's place brands on an annual basis. I met with representatives of the Nikkei Research group in May of 2013. They shared with me the results of their latest surveys as well as other insights not immediately evident in the numbers themselves. One of their surveys concerned the ability of a place or product to "make you feel Japan's goodness" (*nihon no yosa ga kanjirareru*). Of the overall top 30 edible products 12 are items

associated with Kyoto that incorporate either Kyoto (京都) or Kyō (京) in their name.¹⁶ Kyoto linked foods, in fact, fill the top five spots. Moreover, Kyoto Prefecture and Kyoto City dominated the lists for prefectures and municipalities that evoke the best of Japan, Kyoto Prefecture with a score of 47 (Nara Prefecture came in second with a score of 29.3) and Kyoto City with 45.4 points (Kamakura City, the former de facto capital of Japan for about a century and a half, captured second place with 36.7 points). In Nikkei's survey on the brand power of agricultural place of origin products, items from Kyoto Prefecture made 6 of the top 10 spots.¹⁷

Perhaps because Kyoto City is able to capitalize much more than Kyoto Prefecture as a whole on the appeal of the “ancient imperial capital,” the Nikkei Research consumer survey that concerns the desirability of goods from different places in Japan rank Kyoto City higher vis-à-vis similar entities than Kyoto Prefecture. Kyoto City comes in first on its list at 74.8 points, ahead of Hakodate City with 69.6, while Kyoto Prefecture holds third place on the prefectural list with 73.2, a full point behind Okinawa and fourteen behind Hokkaido.¹⁸

But Kyoto also appears on people's radars outside of Japan. Millions of tourists flock to Kyoto's sights and into its restaurants. For both foreign and domestic tourists, Kyoto's appeal is derived from its convincing and comprehensive ability to conjure up its connections to history and tradition. An article about Kyoto's Nishiki market in Condé Nast Traveler described the city thus: “[Kyoto] is ... where everything we think of as Japanese—its court culture, its art, its artisanry, and, oh yes, much of its spectacular cuisine—was born or perfected” (Yanagihara

¹⁶ As I will discuss in the last section of this dissertation, *Kyō ryōri*, which occupies the number one spot, is very loosely defined and need not necessarily be made in Kyoto or from ingredients from Kyoto. Therefore, though the cuisine is clearly linked to Kyoto, discussions of provenance for *Kyō ryōri* meals are more complicated.

¹⁷ The fourth strongest product, Tamba black beans are produced in both Kyoto and Hyogo Prefectures.

¹⁸ Both Kyoto City and Prefecture perform well on the list of places Japanese people would like to visit, yet again Kyoto City fills the number one spot with a significant lead, while Kyoto Prefecture barely lags behind Hokkaido.

2012). In fact, Kyoto's identification with Japanese traditional culture and ancient times is treated as a given, with its dynamism and contemporary relevance noteworthy because these attributes seem to clash with the city's brand. Travel + Leisure named Kyoto the Best City in the World for 2014, based on reader surveys, and in a video on its website a representative explained that, "Yes, Kyoto has the cherry blossoms and the gardens, but you'll also find reimagined ryōkans and an emerging style scene that is cutting edge" (Travel + Leisure 2014). In an article about Kyoto on the Travel + Leisure website, the headline reads "Japan's ancient capital has one foot in the 14th century and the other firmly rooted in the 21st" (Gross 2009). Similarly, Monocle, which ranks the city number 9 in its global list of cities with the highest quality of life, declares that "Kyoto is not just a museum piece, it is truly a 21st century city" (Monocle 2014). Coverage of Kyoto by foreign media often begins by deploying the trope of the "ancient city" that nevertheless retains present day influence.

2.6.2 Kyoto's Place Brands

It should not be surprising that people have capitalized upon Kyoto's brand power to create place brands in the narrower sense of the word. Although I have limited the focus of my research to agricultural and food products, in Kyoto many items are marketed and sold under the Kyoto name.

Products have been marketed and sold using a Kyoto brand since at least the 17th century when we see the emergence of *Kyōyaki* ceramic ware and *Kyōgashi* sweets used in the tea ceremony (Rath 2014: 204). Together with local neighborhood brands like textiles from the Nishijin neighborhood (*Nishijin ori*) or pottery from the Kiyomizu neighborhood

(*Kiyomizuyaki*), these are taken to be “traditional craft goods representative of Japan” (Kyoto fu shōkō bu shōkō sōmu shitsu 2007).

Today, Kyoto Prefecture has 60 regionally based collective trademarks registered through the Japan Patent Office, more than any other prefecture.¹⁹ The list in Table 2 demonstrates the diversity of the items from Kyoto that are registered as regionally based collective trademarks. The groups producing these items do not use the Kyoto name arbitrarily, but rather use it as an index for history, tradition, and polysemic locality. Kyō miso and its marketing efforts serve to illustrate this. “Kyō miso” is a collective regional trademark for the nine companies belonging to the Kyoto Prefectural Miso Industry Cooperative Union. In addition to the requisite photos of miso in traditional wooden barrels, its homepage features a photo of a geisha and another of the traditional umbrella she might carry (Kyoto Prefectural Miso Industry Cooperative Union 2008). The page dedicated to explaining *sai kyō miso* (literally, Western Capital miso) references Kyoto’s history of over 12 centuries as a political, cultural, and economic center, glossing over the fact that for extended periods of its history Kyoto was not a resplendent, powerful national capital. In the latter half of the 15th century the Ōnin War, for instance, caused tremendous destruction to Kyoto, with many people fleeing the city. The city didn’t recover until the mid-16th century when Toyotomi Hideyoshi committed to major reconstruction. Kyoto’s miso maker’s cooperative stresses the fact that Kyoto’s white miso in particular represents *sai kyō miso* and it explains that only miso made in Kyoto Prefecture and certified by the union can be called

¹⁹ As of the official list released in 2013, there are currently 551 *chiiki dantai shōhyō* and Hyōgo Prefecture has the second largest number of registered products with 32.

Kyō miso.²⁰ It does not mention that the vast majority of soybeans used to make today’s Kyoto miso come from outside of Japan.

Table 2. Sample list of Kyoto’s regionally based collective trademarks

<i>Name</i>	<i>Product</i>
Kyō no dentō yasai	Kyoto Traditional Vegetables
Kyō butsudān	Kyoto Buddhist Altars
Kitayama Maruta	Kitayama Logs
Kyō Miso	Kyoto Miso
Kyō Tsukemono	Kyoto Pickles
Kyō Tatami	Kyoto Tatami Mats
Manganji Amatō	Manganji Sweet Pepper
Kyō Gashi	Kyoto Sweets
Uji cha	Uji Tea
Yunohana Onsen	Yunohana Hot Spring

Kyoto’s brands go beyond regionally based collective trademarks, however. The website “The Brand Kyoto,” for instance, explains that there are also 14 brand “systems” with distinct trademarks in Kyoto.²¹ I list examples of these brand labels in Table 3.

Branding (*burandoka*) place does not end here. It extends to neighborhoods, as well. One such example is the Kamigamo brand for eggplant and *suguki* pickles. Farmers from the Kamigamo area of Kyoto city have banded together to share seeds, knowledge, and market their

²⁰ The term *saikyō miso*, however, may be used by other producers. Kyoto’s miso makers were denied ownership of the term in court because producers in other areas had been using the term for long enough that changing the rules would damage these producers’ business. Kyoto’s miso producers hope to establish *saikyō miso* as theirs as the rules for geographical indications in Japan change.

²¹ One of those listed, however, is in fact a national government certification system for traditional craft goods.

produce as a group. Given that the Kamigamo eggplant has been named after their neighborhood, this is not surprising. Other vegetable varieties are also named after neighborhoods where they were once commonly grown, though they are now grown elsewhere. This is true of the Shōgoin turnip and the Shishigatani squash, for example. These variety names may have once functioned as place brands of sorts (before the phrase *chiiki burando* came into being), but now they are heirloom variety names that fall into the larger category of Kyoto vegetables or *kyō yasai*.

Table 3. Sample list of Kyoto brand labels and their products.

<i>Label Name</i>	<i>Type of Products</i>	<i>Sample Offering</i>	<i>Scale</i>
Kyō Burando	Produce, seafood, etc.	<i>Kujō</i> Scallions	Prefecture
Kyō no Te Shigoto Kōgeihin ten	Craft goods	Traditional Japanese wigs	City (Kyoto)
Kameoka Chiiki Burando	Assorted products	Habanero soy sauce	City (Kameoka + Kyōtamba)
Kyō no Shun Yasai	Produce	Locally grown broccoli	City (Kyoto)

Japan admittedly has a great many place brands for agricultural and food products, and they are not inconsequential. Rural areas joining the “One Village One Product” (*Isson Ippin*) movement choose one resource epitomizing their locale that they can market as “theirs.” Two famous success stories would be the town of Kamikatsu’s sales of seasonal decorative leaves and Kawasaki’s products made from the kabosu citrus. The “Roadside Station” (*Michi no eki*) program, whereby localities maintain small stores offering local produce and processed foods—some of them hard to find elsewhere—at rest areas off of major roads, has also become popular. Economic researcher Fujita Masahisa explains that both the “One Village One Product” and “Roadside Station” movements have helped Japanese rural areas brand themselves successfully

and bolster the agricultural sectors they rely on for their livelihoods, which is why rural areas in other countries have adapted these movements to their circumstances (Fujita 2006: 5-7).

On Nikkei's list of Japan's strongest place of origin products for food and agriculture, Kyoto's brands fare strongly. The Unuma area of Niigata Prefecture has captured the top spot with Koshihikari rice grown there (with a score of 695 points), but the next five items on the list are all products that Kyoto Prefecture produces, beginning with *Kyō tsukemono* (Kyoto pickles) with 691 points and with Uji tea holding 6th place with 651 points. Kyoto vegetables took 5th place in this survey, with the heirloom variety *Kujō* scallions outperforming the more general category and ranking 3rd.

2.6.3 Methods for investigating Kyoto's brand and its borders

No fieldsite is perfectly delineated (see Candea 2007). The fiction of the isolated or isolatable anthropological fieldsite—also often portrayed as remote—nevertheless persists (Piot 1999; Tsing 2005). Having written research proposals that have received the approval of funding agencies and academic committees, the researcher must confront the gap between the idealized, isolated fieldsite and messy reality. Fortunately, I had spent a prior 18 months in Kyoto while I was pursuing a master's degree in International Relations at Ritsumeikan University, so I was fairly familiar with the place I had selected to be my fieldsite. I had also made pilot field visits to ensure that my intended project was relevant and feasible. By the time I arrived in Kyoto in January 2012 to commence fieldwork, then, I had developed connections with individuals in Kyoto's local food industry—farmers, chefs, government officials, researchers, and others. What I had not anticipated, however, was that in spite of my rapport with relevant individuals and my

affiliations with Kyoto University and the National Museum of Ethnology (colloquially known as Minpaku), there was no easy obvious way to begin certain aspects of my research, in particular the interviews that I wished to conduct with chefs and consumers.

I found an apartment to rent near Kyoto University, which is located in an area of northeastern Kyoto City that is close to a train station and various bus routes. It is also a short bicycle ride away from many of the places I visited within Kyoto City, including farmers' fields, restaurants of all kinds, local government offices, and venues for events celebrating local gastronomic heritage. The drawback to this arrangement was that in living alone in an urban apartment was that I did not begin fieldwork with an immediate set of intimate networks that could help me acclimatize and facilitate the start of my research. This is an especially important consideration given that people from Kyoto have a reputation within Japan as being cold, formal, and distant. It is said that outsiders can never really know what someone from Kyoto is thinking, that they are polite, indirect, and reserved. While this may be a stereotype, I did find it difficult at first to build the necessary connections and gain access to the kinds of people to whom I wished to talk.

Being a foreigner proved to be both an impediment and a boon. On the one hand, I lacked the institutional affiliations and background that function as introductions and the basis for facilitating the formation of new relationships in Japan. My status as a conspicuous foreigner was also an impediment in the sense that many people assumed that I would not be able to grasp the depth of Kyoto's cultural resonance nor be able to appreciate the "taste of Kyoto." Moreover, my conspicuous presence meant that even conducting the observation portion of participant observation meant that I was altering the very circumstances that I wanted to document. This was one of the reasons that I was originally told that I could not observe the national agricultural

fair for tea when it took place in Uji City in August 2013; Japanese reporters and journalists could easily attend without creating distractions, but a foreign anthropologist would clearly call attention to himself and distract the judges simply by being there.

On the other hand, doors opened for me simply because I was very visibly a foreigner and moreover a researcher. It helped a great deal that my project was about local food culture and industry, a topic that is not immediately sensitive or controversial but matters a great deal to many people. Farmers, chefs, government officials, and food researchers often made time to speak to me because they were fascinated by my interest in Kyoto's agricultural and food culture and what they saw as my "zeal for research." Some of the tea blenders I spoke to, for instance, told me about their trade patiently and in great detail, especially when they had ascertained that I was not a retailer. "I knew [you weren't one of them]. You are much more inquisitive," one tea blender remarked before launching into greater detail about local tea. While Japanese researchers may have faced fewer barriers to gaining access, I occasionally benefited from my exoticness. This proved particularly useful when asking people I encountered throughout the course of daily life—on the train, in a store, or in a restaurant—about their feelings and behaviors as consumers. I doubt that they would have been quite as forthcoming or gone into the same amount of detail with another Japanese person.

The fieldsite I discuss in this dissertation is Kyoto. My fieldsite is thus simultaneously a city, a prefecture, and a symbolic place. All of these Kyotos, significantly, are formed and constantly reformed by actors, events, and circumstances very much part of the world. It is also a fieldsite whose artifacts—including those at the heart of my research project—circulate across the globe. Even upon leaving Kyoto, I found Kyoto's place brands for agricultural and food

products in Yokohama, Tokyo, and Pittsburgh. Soon after my departure, a special dinner party featuring products from Kyoto took place at Versailles Palace in France. Among the offerings were Kyoto tea, meat from Kyoto, and Kyoto's heirloom vegetable varieties that had been grown in Versailles' gardens.

Places are made. No place may be truly isolatable, but Kyoto is a place that is built upon connections and networks that extend across the world. This is true of the Kyoto that is the product of the imaginations of artists, travel writers, and tourists. It is also true of Kyoto the city that relies upon income from domestic and international trade and tourism. And it is also true of the Kyoto that looks to the outside world to shape itself. Indeed, Kyoto may be deemed "traditional" and "historical" but what counts as these things (and when they are valued) depends on the audience. This is why actors in Kyoto's tourism and culinary industries interact a great deal with important international players. Though it is understood that judges from the Michelin Guide are not likely to have a developed understanding of Japanese cuisine—much less Kyoto's cuisines—the endorsement of these judges has come to be valued. As a city that serves as a major tourist destination and plays a role in the global cultural imaginary because of its associations with traditional Japanese culture, Kyoto is in a unique position for bringing the local, national, and global together. As Kyoto's Chamber of Commerce puts it, "We want to launch the Kyoto brand, which represents Japan, into the world" (Kyoto fu shōkō bu shōkō sōmu shitsu 2007).

This dissertation is based on fieldwork conducted in Kyoto in 2006-8 and 2012-3. Although the focus of my research during my first stay was different, during that period I learned a lot about Kyoto's food culture and the structure of Kyoto's agricultural economy and I also made connections that proved to be invaluable to my doctoral fieldwork. The research methods I

used in this research include the standard cultural anthropological techniques of interviews and participant observation complemented by discourse analysis.

2.6.3.1 Interviews

A large part of my data comes from semi-structured and informal interviews conducted with farmers, chefs, local government officials, retailers, and consumers. I employed a snowball sampling design for selecting respondents for all of my interviews except those with consumers. This was necessary given the difficulties a researcher faces in gaining elite interview opportunities, in particular. For a foreign researcher who lacks the connections generally necessary to obtain such access, this is especially true.

Of course, given that my research had to do with Kyoto's place brands for food and agricultural products, I hoped to be able to interview individuals who were very influential in the formation of these very place brands and their dissemination. In Japan, gaining access to such interlocutors generally depends on one's own established position within an understood social framework or connections that can provide one with an introduction. As an outsider, this was difficult, but by making do and taking advantage of serendipity, I was eventually able to gain access to the very kinds of interlocutors I had hoped to interview. For instance, a farmer I knew in Pennsylvania introduced me to her uncle, a former bureaucrat in Hiroshima Prefecture, who introduced me in turn to local government employees in the Kansai region (of which Kyoto is a part). Similarly, a friend of mine in Kyoto introduced me to a post-doctoral fellow at Kyoto University, whose mentor was Fushiki Tohru Sensei, a professor involved in research projects with famous Kyoto chefs. After meeting with me, Fushiki Sensei invited me to sit in on a

meeting of the Japanese Culinary Laboratory. This introduction opened the door for subsequent interviews with multiple chefs and scientific researchers, as well as other useful introductions.

The majority of my interviews with Kyoto's farmers were informal, conducted while doing work in their fields or in social situations. A few, particularly for bamboo shoot and tea farmers who have more of an off season than vegetable farmers, were semi-structured sit-down interviews. Farmers in Kyoto are notorious for being simultaneously long-winded (at least today) and difficult to obtain clear answers from. Repeatedly asking the same questions of them proved a good strategy, even if at times they would take this as a sign of memory loss or ineptitude on my part.

In contrast, my interviews with local government officials were on the whole formal, structured interviews conducted within an allotted time frame. These included interviews with people working for Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto City, other municipalities such as the town of Wazuka, and regional branches of national institutions. Some interviews with local officials were conducted in the context of visits to specific places, most importantly the Kyoto Prefectural Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Technology Center in Kameoka City and the Central Wholesale Market for Tea in Jōyō City. In these cases, since I had other opportunities to ask questions of the individuals showing me around, I oriented the interviews around the particulars of the visits themselves rather than a set of predetermined questions.

Consumers also provided me with a great deal of important data. I was amazed at the eagerness with which strangers told me about their knowledge and impressions related to food. It was a great boon to me that food proved a topic that people were willing to talk about. This was true of Kyotoites, tourists, and also of people I interacted with all over Japan, from Aomori Prefecture to Tokyo to Okinawa. Even residents of areas like Fukushima Prefecture, which have

suffered a great deal as a result of the “triple catastrophe” of March 2011 and the *fuhyō higai* (harmful rumors) that ensued, wanted to help me with my project, especially if I could shed light on how place brands can also be used as a form of discrimination.

Eventually, I developed connections that enabled me to get to know and interview chefs from Kyoto. I visited restaurants of all kinds offering local cuisine affordable to a graduate student researcher. Such visits enabled me to informally interview chefs cooking *kaiseki kappō* (the spin-off version of the multi-course *kaiseki* cuisine whereby one may sit at a counter and order a la carte) and *obanzai* (Kyoto’s domestic foodways). I befriended several chefs who generously shared knowledge of Kyoto’s foodways with me. Being invited to participate in the Japanese Cuisine Laboratory at Kyoto University as an observer was a huge break for me. Though I did not feel free to ask many questions during the monthly sessions themselves, these meetings allowed me to meet many young chefs who have their own sets of professional contacts. Most of these were semi-structured interviews about the Kyoto-cuisine-ish-ness and the borders of Kyoto cuisine.

I also conducted interviews with retailers. I visited grocery stores, including upscale department store produce sections, throughout Japan and spoke with managers and other employees about the presence of Kyoto vegetables in these stores. Field visits to wholesale vegetable markets in Kyoto and Tokyo provided the opportunity to contrast how vegetables from Kyoto are viewed in both places.

Researchers also proved an excellent source of data. Employees at Nikkei Research were kind enough to meet with me and explain in considerable detail their research on place brands and share their conclusions about Kyoto’s brand power with me. I also conducted interviews with researchers from local academic institutions, Kyoto Prefectural University and Kyoto University

primarily, who enlightened me on such subjects as soil quality variation in Kyoto City and current consumption trends in Japan.

I use pseudonyms for many of my interlocuters, as I agreed to do when I conducted interviews with them. My interviews with individuals who are very much in the public eye, particularly researchers and chefs who are accustomed to speaking to reporters and other researchers, however, were of a different nature. When referring to these individuals, I use their real names.

2.6.3.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation constitutes another integral component of my research. Place—and space too, though less of a concern for this research—is experienced, polyvalent, sensuous, and constantly in flux. To conduct research on place as an anthropologist requires paying attention to how it is called upon as a meaningful category in everyday life and how boundaries are constructed, maintained, negotiated, compromised, ignored, and dismantled. Participant observation offers the means of gathering data on how place and places impact people’s everyday lives in ways that respondents themselves may not be able to easily articulate the significance of. Certainly, listening to conversations related to Kyoto’s place brands, for instance, revealed a great deal about what people think about place and how it affects their lives.

When an anthropologist conducts research on an aspect of social life that is embodied, as food is, explicitly multi-sensory participant observation becomes important (de St. Maurice 2012a). Actually engaging with the material world that one’s informants do is provides insight into aspects of lived reality that are not easily described in words, especially words that must then be translated into the language of the ethnographic account. The understanding the

anthropologist gains by consciously engaging in multisensory participant observation facilitates the writing of effective “thick description” or sensory ethnography (see Hurdley and Dicks 2011; Mason and Davies 2009; Pink 2011). Since people experience Kyoto’s place brands for agricultural and place products with their senses, and since this constitutes an important part of the Kyoto brand (the “taste of Kyoto,” e.g.), the participant observation dimension of my research methods in particular was used as a means of adding necessary sensorial depth to this ethnography.

It is easier to talk about the importance of sensorially engaged participant observation than it is to devise means of effectively doing it and analyzing such methods. In her introduction to *Etnofoor*’s 2005 issue on the senses, Regina Bendix observed that

[j]ust how ethnographers are to acquire sensory reflexivity and, concomitantly, sensory effectiveness in participant observation has thus far hardly been discussed, nor has there been much experimentation or explication as to how sensory ethnography is to find its way back on the printed page (Bendix 2005: 8)

In the penultimate chapter I take up the notion of the “taste of Kyoto.” This chapter looks at how the discourse about “the taste of Kyoto” intersects and clashes with both the use of the Kyoto brand and the actual flavors one can taste in Kyoto. The chapter is not, in other words, a sensorial search for the “taste of place.” Yet in order to understand how “tasting persons” come to be able to discern the taste of Kyoto, it was necessary for me to engage with Kyoto sensorially. This meant engaging with Kyoto with all of the senses. Like other human sensory experiences, however, tasting does not occur apart from the other senses, one isolatable moment at a time. Tasting is fully embodied and humans taste with more than their taste buds. Recent research has shown, for instance, that what we taste can be influenced by such factors as the

sounds we hear during eating, by the colors of the things we consume (Zampini 2007), and by the manner in which we eat — with our fingers, for instance (Mann 2011).

I conducted participant observation in a variety of locales. To better understand Kyoto's local food culture and the efforts that various actors undertake to make it thrive, I attended events celebrating Kyoto's agricultural and culinary traditions, including farmers markets, agricultural fairs, and more infrequent events such as 2012's first *Kujō* scallion festival and the yearly Shishigatani squash "mass" at Anrakuji temple. I also benefited from my friendship with Japanese chefs, who educated me about the taste of Kyoto's cuisines (*kyō ryōri*) while allowing me to taste it. To get a broader understanding of the role of place in Japanese everyday life and food culture in particular, I visited Japanese places as far apart as Aomori Prefecture and Okinawa Prefecture. As the Japanese prize local specialties and cuisines, it was easy to deploy my sense of taste. Because places are reputed to have distinct tastes, this kind of participant observation meant sampling *kyō ryōri* and ingredients in unlikely places, like a restaurant in Naha, Okinawa, or a tea store in Pittsburgh.

Since eaters can only savor foods that are the result of the (often invisible) labor of farmers, the participant observation aspect of my research were not limited to consumption. My interaction with farmers included planting rice seedlings, harvesting tea leaves, and helping to harvest and gather bamboo shoots. These experiences both directly inform my research and facilitated my interviews with local farmers.

Consumption is much trickier to research in Japan via participant observation given the salience of both the household as the basic social unit and boundaries that set insiders apart from outsiders at varying degrees. This dynamic is even truer of Kyoto, which Japanese people

characterize as particularly reserved and distant. Although I did make friends with people in Kyoto, including people from Kyoto, and was able to talk to them about consumption choices as well as actually eat with them, I also felt it was important to interact with and observe people whom I would not have easily come into contact with as a foreign male anthropologist. Attending events hosted by local non-profit organizations aiming to teach about Kyoto's local food culture provided many opportunities for me to do just this. The members of one group were particularly welcoming, inviting me to their events as a volunteer and giving me insight into Japanese perspectives on contemporary consumption patterns.

It is challenging to rely on the printed word to convey experiences that engage our senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and even sight (Bendix 2005; Howes 2005). Photographs are admittedly visual, but I include them throughout the following chapters hoping that they can at least complement the text, increase this paper's ability to capture ethnographic elements, and stimulate readers' multi-sensory imaginations.

2.6.3.3 **Discourse Analysis**

As Barbara Johnstone notes, scholars from many disciplines use the term "discourse analysis" to talk about their research interests and methods (2008: 1). At its most basic discourse analysis is the systematic study of "actual instances of communicative action" (2008: 2), though researchers use it to study a wide range of phenomena using a variety of different techniques.

Discourse analysis has served as a useful method for those doing research on branding as well as in the burgeoning field of Food Studies. Scholars in Food Studies might examine social discourse as it occurs in cookbooks (Appadurai 1988; Fertel 2013), film (Baron, et al. 2014), or everyday communication practices (Fahy 2012). People interested in branding, meanwhile, have

conducted discourse analysis by looking at brand names (Danesi 2011), the terms scholars use to talk about place branding (Hanna and Rowley 2008), and the ways that provenance taps into a set of values associated with a given place (Iversen and Hem 2008).

The discourse analysis I conduct discourse analysis with a corpus that consists of posters, advertisements, and promotional websites related to the objects I focus on in the following chapters—Kyoto vegetables, Uji tea, and Kyoto cuisine. I also consider marketing and Public Relations artifacts that promote the Kyoto brand more generally. The texts I analyze and provide excerpts of have been chosen for their representativeness, both of the broader discourse and for the particular strategies employed by an organization.

While in the field, I gathered archival materials from newspaper articles to brochures and documents about Kyoto's various place brands for agricultural products. These form the corpus that I examine, as well as government documents pertaining to the local food economy and the reports of marketing consultants and research groups like Nikkei Research. New and traditional media provide examples of the discourse on Kyoto, *chiiki burando*, and globalization that is taking place today.

3.0 KYOTO VEGETABLES: RAW AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

My research on Kyoto's edible brand began with Kyoto vegetables. As a dual degree master's student at American University and Ritsumeikan University, I arrived in Kyoto ready to write my thesis about Kyoto's agricultural sector and its "resistance" to globalization. My academic advisor at Ritsumeikan, Matsuda Masahiko, suggested that it might be more productive for me to focus on the local vegetables known as "Kyoto vegetables" rather than rice, as I had originally intended.

Kyoto vegetables are a loosely defined group of heirloom vegetables with a history of being grown in Kyoto. Their importance goes beyond local food culture; they belong to local culture more broadly. They are integrated into local customs and dialects, as the phrase "junsai na hito" (a *junsai* type person) exemplifies. Junsai, or water shield in English, is a tiny crispy green branch covered in a transparent gelatinous layer. In the Kyoto dialect, the phrase "junsai na hito" or "a *junsai* type person" is used to refer (derogatively) to someone who's slippery and evasive. This is but one example of how the cultural influence of Kyoto vegetables extends beyond the merely gustatory.

The phrase "Kyoto vegetable" makes it clear that these vegetables are explicitly located in space, but their rootedness also makes them part of the calendar of local life. Not only are different varieties available during specific seasons—though the use of greenhouses has altered this somewhat, but customs and ceremonies incorporating these vegetables occur throughout the

year in different parts of Kyoto Prefecture. These range from the centuries old tradition of the mid-summer consumption of the Shishigatani squash believed to cure polio to a fall harvest festival instituted to beckon a bright future for a “new” Kyoto vegetable, Keihoku’s *kodakara imo* (a kind of taro).

Kyoto vegetables may be labeled “local” but in the fall of 2013 they played an integral role in a dinner dedicated to Kyoto’s food culture in an unexpected location: a large dining hall in the palace of Versailles in Paris, France. Their inclusion was not the result of a random whim. Rather, it was a culmination of cultural exchange between Kyoto and Paris that had been preceded by the cultivation of heirloom vegetable varieties from Kyoto in the palace gardens. The French and Japanese chefs collaborating for the dinner used their skills to showcase the Fushimi pepper, Yamashina eggplant, Kamo eggplant, mizuna, mibuna, murasaki zukiin (a kind of edamame), and *Kujō* scallions (JA Kyoto 2013). Vegetables are not often treated with such culinary reverence: Kyoto vegetables seem to occupy a special place.

What makes Kyoto vegetables a unified category distinct from other vegetables? Why do people value these varieties? How, in other words, are the borders drawn around Kyoto vegetables, how are they maintained and made significant? Moreover, where do the gaps, crossings, and blurrings for these borders occur? This chapter unpacks the term “Kyoto vegetable,” using the concepts of place and brand to highlight how farmers, chefs, bureaucrats, and other local actors have worked to make this category resonate with consumers.

Forty years ago, few people in Japan, much less abroad, had heard of Kyoto vegetables. The term itself came into everyday parlance in the 1980s. Today people throughout Japan recognize the term and even think of high quality heirloom vegetable varieties when they think about Kyoto’s food culture. One can now eat spaghetti carbonara with Kyoto’s *Kujō* scallions at

Haneda airport in Tokyo and order a variety of jams online made from Kyoto vegetables including heirloom pepper, eggplant, and squash varieties. When I asked a friend from the Tokyo area why Haneda airport would have of all things pasta with Kyoto vegetables, his immediate response was: “Because they’re a brand.” A different friend’s reaction to the Kyoto vegetable jams was quite similar. She expressed skepticism over the distinctiveness and also the flavor of the jams and said the reason these jams sold was because “Kyoto vegetables are a brand.”



Figure 3. Spaghetti carbonara with *Kujō* scallions at Tokyo's Haneda airport.

Many varieties of Kyoto vegetables are distinct. Take the *ebi imo* or shrimp potato, for example. This is actually a variety of taro (*sato imo* in Japanese), *Colocasia esculenta*, and not a potato. The shape of the shrimp potato, however, makes it different from other kinds of taro. The unusual curved shape is not a trait innate to the variety itself, but the result of traditional farming techniques. In this case, then, farming techniques make the variety unique. A local governmental

official and agricultural researcher explained that the shrimp potato's texture was softer and slimier than other taro varieties.

The term *kyōyasai* or Kyoto vegetable is quite vague and there is disagreement as to what counts as a “Kyoto vegetable.” Those whose definitions are broadest might use the term to refer to any heirloom vegetable with Kyoto origins or associations, even when grown outside of Kyoto, or even for any vegetable variety grown in Kyoto. The Kishū Nōmari company, which sells vegetables via parcel post, lists 133 items as Kyoto vegetables, including traditionally included varieties like the *Kujō* scallions and the *Shōgoin* turnip, but also vegetables I have never seen included in the category elsewhere, such as romaine lettuce and red onions (Kishū Nōmari 2013). The leafy green known primarily as mizuna (*Brassica rapa L. var. Nipponsinica*) is also called *Kyōna*, thereby taking advantage of associations with Kyoto, even when the vegetable itself had been grown in another part of Japan. Outside of Japan, this variety is Kyotoized, with one “well-flavoured” variety called “Kyoto” according to the British Royal Horticultural Society (Royal Horticultural Society 2014). I am told that much of the mizuna grown in Kyoto Prefecture today is cultivated using hydroponics, which not only differs a great deal from “traditional” agricultural techniques but also begs the question of how the production area matters when a crop is not literally rooted in the local soil. Presumably these farmers use municipal water, which may come from a nearby source, though the majority of Kyoto City's tap water is piped in from Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture (City of Kyoto Waterworks Bureau 2005).

Others use the term *kyō yasai* more strictly. Several months into my first round of fieldwork in Kyoto, I brought a friend with me to buy vegetables from a farmer whose small truck made stops in my neighborhood. My friend asked the farmer, Fukuoka-san, if the sweet potatoes for sale were *kyō yasai*. Fukuoka-san told her that they were not, but that the *Kamo*

eggplant and *Takagamine* green pepper were. Then, realizing my friend's confusion, she explained that all of the vegetables were grown in Kyoto City by her husband. For her, vegetables such as the *Kamo* eggplant and *Takagamine* green pepper, whose seeds are often handed down from one generation to the next in Kyoto, are Kyoto vegetables while others, like the sweet potatoes and corn she sells, are “merely” local. Another farmer, Takagi-san, told me about a couple he knows who are tried to cultivate Kyoto vegetables in the United States. His assessment? “If you grow a Kyoto vegetable in California, it's not a Kyoto vegetable any more,” he told me.

The Kyoto in *kyō yasai* is elusive. Consider that Kyoto City's boundaries have also changed over time. In 1888, Kyoto City subsumed villages including Shōgoin, Yoshida, and Shishigatani, for example, areas once reputed for their vegetable production (Rath 2014: 213). Fushimi City, still known for its sake breweries today, joined Kyoto City along with villages including Takeda and Horiuchi in 1931 (Fushimi Ward 2013). Most recently, in 2005 the city expanded with the addition of sparsely populated area of Keihoku (Sōmu bu jichi shinkō ka n.d.).

Because the term *kyōyasai* is used differently by different people, there are those who rely on less commonly used alternatives like *miyako yasai* (“capital vegetables”), and *jiba yasai* (“local vegetables”) to refer to Kyoto's locally grown vegetables, especially heirloom varieties. Neither of these terms has been defined, however. The term “capital vegetables” would likely apply to produce from the current political capital of Tokyo and other former capitals of Japan, like Kamakura and Nara. People might even use it to refer to vegetable varieties associated with all of these capitals. The latter term does not insist on the uniqueness of Kyoto as a place relative to other Japanese places. Even so, the term *jiba* is as opaque as the word “local” (Feagan 2007; Hassanein 2003; Hinrichs 2003). Conceiving of the “local” in terms of a geographical area,

familiarity and knowledge, as well as a process of incorporation and ownership is ultimately subjective.

Of course, identifying distinct vegetable varieties comes with its own problems. Lepidopterist Peter Semetacek says, “Taxonomy is 80% personal opinion and 20% asking the chaps whether they really are different or not” (Semetacek 2014). The problem with vegetables is that it is possible for some different but related varieties, such as different species of *brassica* like broccoli and kale, to cross-pollinate. Identifying heirloom vegetable varieties carries additional difficulties resulting from local or traditional taxonomies. In the case of Kyoto vegetables, there seem to be four acceptable varieties of *mizuna*, though one variety is easier to grow and has become the default variety. *Kujō* scallions, supposedly derived from a scallion variety brought from Naniwa (today’s Osaka) in the 8th century CE, received their name from the area near *Kujō* Street, which developed a reputation for farming them in Kyoto. Thirty years ago there were two identified varieties: thick (*Kujō futo*) and thin (*Kujō hosō*) and farmers who are continuing a family tradition of farming still talk about their scallions as either thick or thin (City of Kyoto 2013).²² Seed companies that saw a demand for this popular vegetable began cross-breeding these with varieties from other places in order to obtain hybrid varieties that are hardier, easier to transport, wilt less easily, and do not develop flower heads. “Only professional chefs and researchers know what the real thing is like and search for it,” a local official told me. When discussing this with a local researcher, she commented that she believes it is critical to take into account traditional knowledge and local customs because if you, as an outside “expert,” narrowly

²² The thick scallion variety, also referred to as the *kurodane* type (black seed type), grows in bunches of deep green that reach approximately one meter in thickness, and have thicker, longer stalks and leaves that make them more cold-resistant. The thin variety is also known as the *asagi* (light yellow seed type) and has light green colored leaves that begin only a short distance from the roots.

define a variety and ignore the flexibility that existed in the past, you essentially end up labeling varieties that farmers have been growing for generations as “inauthentic,” perpetuating problematic hierarchies in scientific knowledge production.

Farmers sell varieties like *mizuna* and *Kujō* scallions through different brands and programs. These brands have different requirements that prompt farmers to grow different kinds of produce in each instance. The Kyō Brand, for example, is prefecture-wide and sends its packaged products across Japan. Thus it demands produce that is as easy to ship as possible. Chefs may use this produce as well, but they tend to also seek out varieties that are closer to the traditional prototypes. When it comes to *mizuna*, for instance, they appreciate the large bunches of crispy greens that used to be put into stews. Such *mizuna* does not find its way into the small dainty Kyō Brand packages customers may buy for salads. As one growing farmer put it, “making the *mizuna* packages small is an additional service.”

At present Kyoto vegetables are considered to be one of Kyoto’s contributions to Japan’s traditional culture. When students participate in school-run trips to Kyoto—and many do—pre-excursion briefings often mention Kyoto vegetables and parents will frequently ask their children to return with vegetables as souvenirs. Some people even go to Kyoto for the very purpose of purchasing fresh local vegetables. A woman from Tokyo I met told me that every so often she will spend about 15,000 yen and two and a half hours to take the bullet train to Kyoto just to buy vegetables, particularly for special occasions like the New Year’s meal.

How recognizable are Kyoto vegetables nationally? The consumers I spoke to across Japan—from the northern Tōhoku region to the Okinawan islands—revealed a surprising degree of awareness of Kyoto vegetables. Almost everyone I asked about Kyoto’s food culture

responded by listing Kyoto vegetables and *kaiseki* cuisine and saying that the food was delicious and light tasting.

In 2014 McDonald's domestic Japanese rival, the gourmet hamburger franchise MOS Burger launched a limited edition "Kyoto vegetable" burger to commemorate the opening of its first MOS Café in Kyoto. Marketing materials for the 980 yen burger touted the ingredients used, the patty itself consisting of umami-rich beef, 18 grains, and local vegetable / vegetable products like the Fushimi pepper, bamboo shoots, Tamba *shimeji* mushrooms, *mibuna* (a local variant of *mizuna* whose leaves have rounded tips), millet gluten, and rolled tofu skin. This marketing strategy is an example of how even when consumers are not entirely clear about what counts as a Kyoto vegetable, they expect it to be a high quality elite food.

Geography has been a critical dimension to the discourse on food safety in relation to the destabilization of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, and place of origin has become an index for food safety for Japanese consumers. Many consumers I spoke with indicated that they will only trust food that is grown in Western and Southern Japan, with Kyoto's brand ideally positioned because of Kyoto Prefecture's geographic location. In one Kyoto restaurant that aims to serve food with as close to 0 Becquerels of radiation as possible, I was told of families that had moved to Kyoto from Northeastern Japan because this would make it easier for the parents to ensure that their children ate food they deem safe. One woman I met based her decision to move to Kyoto from Tokyo largely on perceptions of food safety, even though she is not a parent. She only buys food grown in Kyoto Prefecture and west of it, she told me.

Fukushima Prefecture's brand is sadly set in stark contrast to the Kyoto brand for agricultural products, including vegetables. While Kyoto Prefecture has benefited from a confluence of positive factors, Fukushima's brand suffers from associations with the nuclear

reactor meltdown of 2011. Because of *fuhyō higai*, which might be translated as “damage by rumor” or in this case also “contamination by rumor” (and is referred to as the “fourth disaster” of March 2011), fishermen and farmers from Tohoku have had a more difficult time selling their harvests even when they pass radiation tests and are certified as safe (Kojima 2011). The phrase *fuhyō higai* implicitly blames farmers’ economic and social difficulties on the irrationality of consumers and civil society. I spoke to D-san, who works in the media industry and is very much opposed to the perpetuation of *fuhyō higai* and indeed would like to remedy the problem by promoting Ibaraki Prefecture’s agricultural and fisheries products. Yet he later told me that when it comes to his own son he purchases food from distant parts of the country—“just in case.” And the further from Fukushima Prefecture the better. Trust in science and government lost, citizens and consumers use provenance as an index of safety and in the process the Fukushima brand has become a casualty.

Many of Kyoto’s heirloom vegetable varieties are also said to provide more nutritional benefits than standardized varieties. I am not in a position to evaluate this claim, nor is its veracity particularly important to my research. The claim itself, however, interests me. While I doubt that today’s consumers would pay more to purchase *Kujō* scallions because they have read that they have plenty of calcium, phosphorus, iron, and vitamins A, B1, and C, I wonder if the cumulative effect of spreading such information about local heirloom vegetable varieties might not positively influence consumer purchasing decisions, especially when combined with the geographic association of Kyoto with “safe” food (in contrast to northeastern Japan in particular).

3.1 KYOTO'S VEGETABLE BRANDS

Kyoto Prefectural Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Technology Center in Kameoka City has changed names many times, but its commitment to improve the local agricultural economy while maintaining local agrobiodiversity has stayed the same. One of its duties is to preserve local crop varieties, even when the market for them is nonexistent and the future looks dire. Kyoto's *iwai mai*, a rice variety used to make sake, actually disappeared twice from farmers' fields—once during the second World War, when farmers were discouraged from growing varieties of rice not meant for food, and once more when decades later farmers growing sake rice all switched to the popular varieties much in demand. Over the entire period, however, Kyoto Prefecture ensured that the variety was not lost. *Iwai mai* has recently been accepted into the family of Kyō Brand produce, with local brewers publicizing their use of the heirloom variety. This kind of branding and its appeal may be recent, but it taps into a mission to maintain, if not cherish, local agricultural heritage that is much older.

Following actions by local officials and chefs to revive heirloom vegetables and local food culture, in 1988 the prefectural government officially defined the term “Kyoto traditional vegetables” (Kyō no dentō yasai). In contradistinction to the vague term “Kyoto vegetable” (*kyōyasai*), the applicability of this term was strictly delimited, rooting 37 local heirloom vegetable varieties (including two extinct varieties) and three “sub-traditional” varieties within current prefectural boundaries. Vegetables only met the criteria for selection if they had been grown in the Prefecture—and not just Kyoto City—before the onset of the Meiji Era in 1868. Eric Rath astutely identifies an anachronistic complication; modern day Kyoto Prefecture did not come into being until 1871, when the provinces of Tango, Yamashiro, and part of Tamba were combined (Rath 2014: 212). Another requirement, though implicit, seems to have been the

potential market demand for these heirloom varieties—varieties like the *hatakae wasabi* (“field” wasabi) and Yawata taro were not added to the list in spite of meeting the official criteria (Rath 2014: 215).

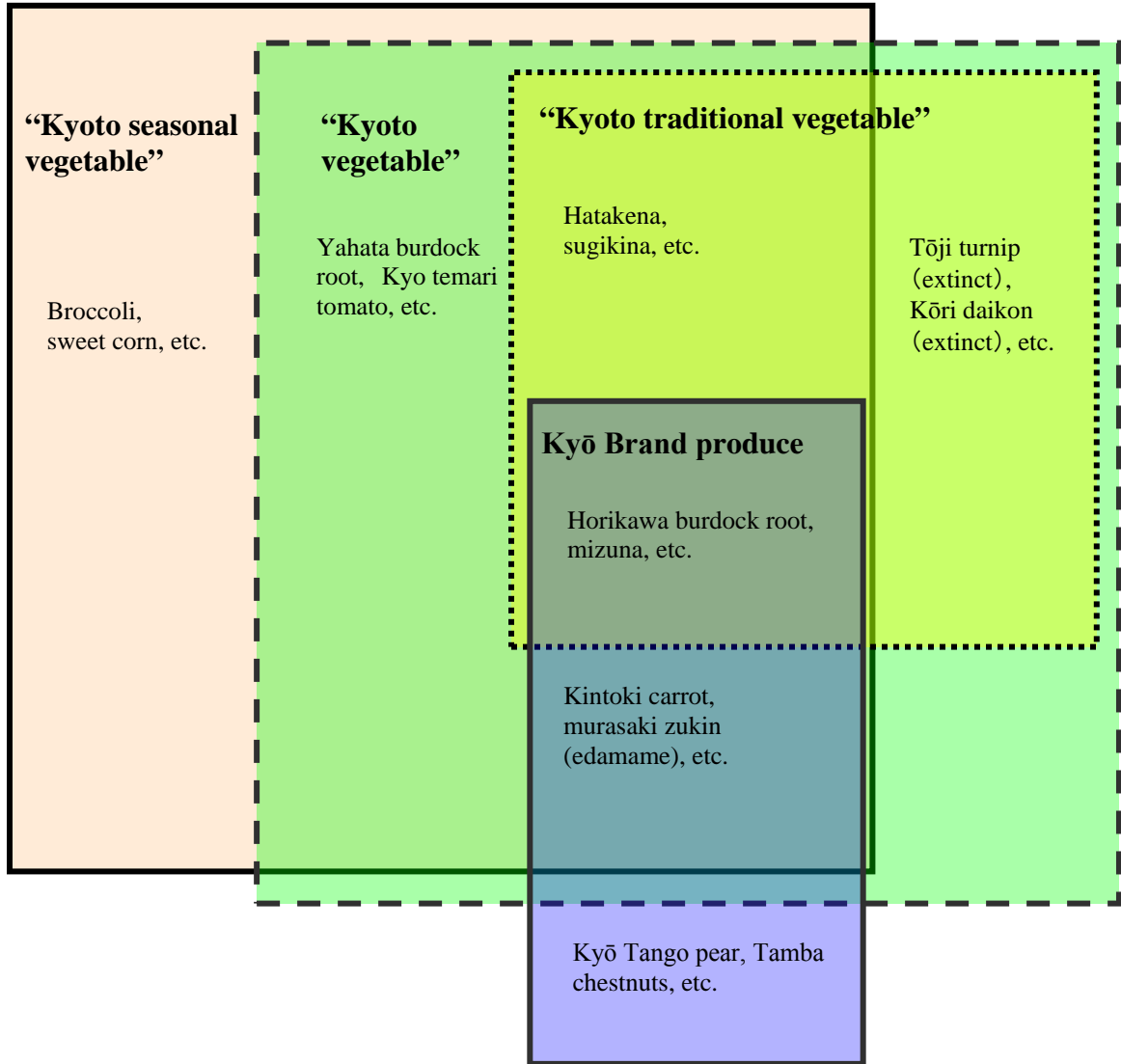


Figure 4. Conceptual map of the major categories and brands for Kyoto vegetables.

Building upon this, a committee that included representatives from the prefectural government, city and town governments, Kyoto Prefectural University, and the Japanese Agricultural Cooperatives decided to create a prefectural brand for vegetables that overlaps with

but differs from the list of “traditional Kyoto vegetables.” The “Kyō” Brand was born in 1989, with exports to Tokyo occurring a year later.

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between the Kyō Brand, the list of “traditional Kyoto vegetables,” as well as Kyoto City’s brand for “seasonal” vegetables. The category of “Kyoto vegetable” portrayed in this chart is based on my understanding of the way most Kyotoites use the term. For this reason, locally grown vegetables like cabbage or spinach are not included, while new varieties that have unique names like the Keihoku *kodakara imo* are.

The Kyō Brand’s efforts to draw upon the appeal of the larger Kyoto brand are illuminating. Significantly, the brand is named “Kyō” (京) rather than “Kyoto” (京都). “Kyō” is an indefinable entity, not a term restricted to Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto City, or any other place. The city just south of Kyoto City now called Nagaokakyō (長岡京), for example, chose to incorporate “kyō” into its new name to capitalize upon the cache of associations that Kyoto has and the area’s history as the capital of Japan for 10 years prior to the transition to Kyoto. The name “Kyō Brand” is a kind of “manufacturer name.” Although consumers might most easily identify brands like CalvinKlein, Ferrari, and Kraft as “manufacturer names,” the Kyō Brand also fits this category because it indexes the work of local farmers—as well as the soil, water, climate, and socio-historic attributes—that are said to be responsible for the existence of Kyoto vegetables. Danesi’s observation that the “manufacturer’s name imbues a product with a sense of tradition, reliability, trust, and artistry” (2011: 178) is an apt description of the hopes of Kyō Brand farmers and administrators. Like other manufacturer-based names, Kyō Brand vegetables are marketed like wines in that they “are perceived to be of a vintage quality, hence they can also be called *heritage names*” (Danesi 2011: 178, italics in original). Products from Kyoto generally fall into the category of heritage names, and this is true of Kyoto vegetables and the packaged

produce that bears the Kyō Brand mark. As local officials told me, the *Tamba kuro daizu* are more than merely Japan's largest black beans; they are Japan's most expensive black beans because their cultivation requires more labor than other varieties. Heritage, however, counts for little in the marketplace if it is not articulated. And indeed, marketing materials for the Kyō Brand mention the history of the vegetable varieties, their prized characteristics, and the culinary and agricultural heritage in which they have been key ingredients. There even exists a yearly exam in which applicants compete to become certified experts on Kyoto vegetables. In 2013, almost 300 individuals signed up to take the exam. Test-takers ranged from local farmers and cooking teachers to Kyotoites with an interest in history and culture. The foreign anthropologist took consolation in the fact that a local farmer who is a well known expert on the vegetables did not pass either.

The Kyō Brand is also a “symbolic name.” English language symbolic brand names incorporate characters such as “@,” “e,” or “X,” as with Nintendo's XBox, Apple's iPad, and the Audi A4. Similarly, Kyō (京) is a character-symbol used by marketers to stimulate nostalgic feelings about a romanticized past. Danesi believes that symbolic brands are not merely a marketing trend. Rather, they “are powerful because they cast a kind of magic spell on the product. ... The newly fashioned symbolic brand name ... seems to work an unconscious magic on modern-day humans” (2011: 184). It is worth noting that (京) has worked its way into local brands for vegetables, processed foods, and craft goods. “Kyō” seems to hold special appeal for manufacturers, marketers, and consumers; of Kyoto Prefecture's 60 regional collective trademarks 41 incorporate “Kyō” in their name rather than “Kyoto” or a smaller geographical area. This is a conscious strategy rather than the use of terms that have been used for centuries. In an e-zine published by the Japan Center for Regional Development, Kyoto's Chamber of

Commerce contributed a piece on the Kyoto brand in which they explain that when the character “京” is added to the terms “cuisine,” “dolls,” and “vegetables” it adorns them like a crown or courtly cap, conjuring up Kyoto’s history and culture (Kyoto fu shōkō bu shōkō sōmu shitsu 2007). Because of these associations—and the price premium that accompanies them, local producers decide to use “京” often.

The character “京” helps render the Kyō Brand accessible to a wide audience of Japanese consumers. To join its target audience and community of consumers, one need not live within Kyoto Prefecture, only possess the requisite sentiments and enact affiliation through appropriate consumption behavior. To this end, the Kyō Brand engages in a bifurcated marketing strategy whereby it markets less aggressively to consumers inside prefectural borders and more aggressively in Tokyo and other large cities, though the majority of its sales occur within Kyoto Prefecture. In fact, because of the degree to which image matters to marketing, outside of Kyoto Prefecture only high-end department stores are encouraged to carry Kyō Brand produce. Exemplifying this strategy of appealing to consumers throughout Japan by emphasizing Kyoto’s “sense of place” is a Kyō Brand poster that features an enlarged photograph of Kyoto vegetables over which is printed a list of “past customers”: historical figures of national importance like Heian poet Ono no Komachi and 19th century politician Sakamoto Ryōma. The text ends with an ellipsis, implying that those who eat Kyoto vegetables today may join this elite list.

The strategy of adding value by branding place has been adopted by actors belonging to smaller scalar units within Kyoto Prefecture as well. Kyoto City has instituted the Kyō Seasonal Vegetable program, Kameoka City sells local food products via the Kameoka Area Brand and the Kyō Tamba Kameoka program, and the coastal city of Kyōtango has created the Tango Good Goods Brand. Kyoto City’s brand, the “Kyō Seasonal Vegetable” brand, supports farmers within

its borders who cultivate traditional varieties such as the *Kamo* eggplant and the *Horikawa* burdock root, standardized varieties such as sweet corn and broccoli, and “new” Kyoto vegetables like the *Kyō temari* tomato and *Kyō rafuran*, a cross between daikon, cabbage, and kohlrabi.

As with the *Kyō Brand*, the *Kyō Seasonal Vegetable Brand* deploys a *Kyō* that stands for today’s Kyoto City but also references the ancient Heian capital. Given that Kyoto City also uses time and seasonality to explain its institutional goals and in its marketing materials, it is possible that the character “京” (the capital “*Kyō*”) is also deployed as a homophone for “today” (今日). This appeal to what is fresh, new, and in season reinforces rather than undermines the brand’s emphasis on Kyoto City’s history and traditionality inasmuch as it matches the image of a taste-making city that constantly reinvents itself, deftly folding the new into the old. Writers of the brand literature further assert the cultural and historical significance of the city when they employ terms such as “*Jōkyō* era” rather than “*Edo* period” that reference the imperial dynasty-based calendar rather than that based on political regimes. This serves to accentuate Kyoto’s past as the imperial seat and a setting for important events in Japanese history.

Materials advertizing the *Kyō Seasonal Vegetable Brand* also reference Kyoto City’s Special Preservation Law, through which it subsidizes the cultivation of specific heirloom vegetable varieties by certain farmers in predetermined areas. By listing the “designated farmers” and their farms’ location, these brochures emphasize Kyoto City’s political authority and cultural capital, as well as its ability to ascribe “designated cultivation area” status and thus authenticity and traditionality. No other city in Kyoto Prefecture does this, nor does the Prefecture itself, largely because most of the prefecture’s heirloom vegetable varieties are strongly linked to neighborhoods within Kyoto City.

In spite of its name, the Seasonal Brand literature does not usually reference an ambiguous Kyō. Rather, its writers often use specific terms and most often “Kyoto City” (京都市) and “within Kyoto City” (京都市内). Such use matches the Seasonal Brand’s goals of providing consumers with vegetables that they know have been locally purveyed, vegetables with, as they say, “a face you can see” (that face being the farmer’s). By limiting participation in the program to farmers located within city limits and by emphasizing this fact repeatedly, Kyoto City demonstrates that it endeavors to support its farmers and procure food whose place of origin is delimited and known.

The Seasonal Brand eagerly recognizes “new Kyoto vegetables” (*shin kyōyasai*). While Kyoto City has adopted several tomato varieties, the edible leaves of a capsicum variety, and even created a new vegetable that is the cross between a daikon, kohlrabi, and cabbage, the *Keihoku kodakara imo* is particularly interesting. A literal translation for the name of this “new” variety of taro would be “Keihoku child treasure potato” and its cultivation area is intentionally limited to the Keihoku area of northern Kyoto (Keihoku could be translated as “north of capital”). The taro variety was named thus for two reasons: one of its traits is that the mother corm (*oya imo* or “parent potato”) produces many cormels (*koimo* or “child potatoes”) and also in hopes that linking this variety to the Keihoku area would help reinvigorate and repopulate it. To express gratitude for the harvest, pray for future success, and promote the variety, Kyoto City organized a harvest festival ceremony at Go’ō shrine near the Imperial Palace (Keihoku kodakara imo saibai kenkyūkai 2014).

Branding has been adopted as a strategy by geographic areas smaller than cities. One successful example of this is the Kamigamo Heirloom Vegetable Research Association, organized by two dozen farming households in Kyoto’s Kamigamo neighborhood. By forming

this organization and branding their neighborhood, they have sold vegetables such as the Kamo eggplant at prices even higher than that for the Kyō Brand. One reason for this is that their claims to authenticity have a historical foundation, given that the Kamo eggplant and *suguki*, a root vegetable that is traditionally pickled, have been grown by these farmers' foreparents for generations on the same land. By applying the technique of place branding to traditional vegetables, these farmers are making their produce value-added and enhancing their ability to compete in a tough economy.

A Kamigamo farmer's website offers a glimpse into the neighborhood's place branding techniques. Accessing Ikeda Tokuji's home page, four photographs flash in quick succession: a northern stretch of the Kamo River and its surrounding hills; the main gate to the Kamigamo Shrine (a World Heritage site, the website later explains); the Myōjin River meandering before the earthen walls of priestly estates in the atmospheric Shakemachi neighborhood; and thousands of purple irises in bloom in the Ōta Marsh. Next, these photographs appear as four parts of a larger square with another image imposed in the middle: that of pickled *suguki* on a traditional lacquer dish, with the caption "the pickles of the ancient capital." The text underneath asserts the value of the Kamigamo area as a production site with a history of cultivating "authentic" vegetables. The text tells us that "Kamigamo, known as the place where many kinds of Kyoto vegetables are grown," possesses an atmosphere of "gentle sunlight and pure air," and is an area "where throughout history which [sic] time has flowed mysteriously" (Ikeda 2011). The text says that Kamigamo's farmers protected the "nostalgic winter flavor of *suguki*, traditional pickles" that one could find on the "tables of the ancient capital."

Like the Kyō Brand, then, the Kamigamo Brand rhetorically deploys the trope of the ancient imperial capital, the hometown of the Japanese heart/mind. This Kamigamo farmer's

website posits its vegetables as authentic, traditional produce because they are produced in the “right” place, the Kamigamo area. The organization’s very name asserts its location. Rather than call itself the “Kyō” Heirloom Vegetable Research Association, the group calls upon a more easily definable locality that it insists is meaningful, even if it does not have the name recognition that Kyoto does. The Kamigamo Brand functions, however, as an insistent manufacturer brand.

I was also surprised to find that people not only referred to the “Kyoto vegetable” category as a *chiiki burando* (place brand), but also did so for specific vegetable varieties, including those whose names do not include place names. Thus while I could intuitively understand how the Kamo eggplant and the Kujō scallion worked as place brands, I was surprised to hear the same of the Kintoki carrot and the *ebi imo* (shrimp potato). Yet these too, I learned, are considered place brands because they are so strongly tied to Kyoto. The Kintoki carrot’s distinctiveness lies in its vivid red color and its sweet taste. While one might assume that it would be used interchangeably with other types of carrots, in the first volume of *The Japanese Culinary Academy’s Japanese Cuisine* a dozen or so recipes specifically call for the Kintoki carrot and a few of them list the carrot as a main ingredient (Japanese Culinary Academy 2015).

The vehicle of the brand has enabled local stakeholders to add the values of localness, authenticity, and safety and security to local produce. This strategy has been effective. The Kyō Brand has proved to be one means farmers can use to surmount challenges to farming in contemporary Japan. *Mizuna*, the leafy green that makes up about half of the brand’s sales, sells for almost twice the price of that from Ibaraki prefecture, which produces 80 per cent of the mizuna available at the Tokyo Central Wholesale Market. The price difference, though not the proportion, appears to be true for brand vegetables and many non-brand vegetables, implying

that branding has benefited Kyoto's vegetable industry in general (Kyoto Prefectural Agricultural Research Institute 2007:21). In recent years, Kyoto's farmers have earned more than the average Japanese farmer for every 10 *ares* of land farmed (Kinki Regional Agricultural Administration Office 2006).²³ The success of the Kyō Brand is seen as one reason Kyoto Prefecture's agricultural sector's annual product has suffered less overall than most prefectures as Japan's borders have been opened to cheap agricultural imports by free trade agreements (Kyō no Furusato Sanpin Kyōkai 2010). Indeed, Kyoto's annual revenue for vegetables increased by 13.6 per cent between 1989 and 2008, while the vast majority of Japanese prefectures — including all of the other prefectures in the Kinki region — experienced decreases (2010: 84). It is particularly important given that vegetable sales make up a much greater percentage of Kyoto's Agricultural Product than they do for the nation as a whole. Kyoto's success has inspired actors in other areas of Japan, like Osaka and Kanagawa prefectures, to exercise the power of place to bolster their agricultural economies.

3.2 KYOTO'S BAMBOO SHOOTS AND NEIGHBORHOOD BRANDS

Takenoko, bamboo shoots (literally, “bamboo child”), are one item on the list of Kyoto traditional vegetables that exemplify the branding of place in very interesting ways. The Nishiyama (Western Mountain) area of Kyoto Prefecture is renowned for the quality of its shoots in particular. Nishiyama's bamboo shoots are characterized as soft in texture, light-colored, and lacking the harsh taste that shoots from other areas supposedly have. One farmer described the

²³ An are is one hundredth of a hectare and is the standard unit for measuring the size of farm holdings in Kyoto.

taste of his high-quality bamboo shoots as savory and sweet, akin to sweet corn or baby corn. In a restaurant I observed customers from other areas of Japan admire the light color and softness of locally harvested bamboo shoots. A farmer I spoke to from nearby Nara Prefecture, meanwhile, marveled at the fact that Kyoto's bamboo shoots are even eaten plain, dipped in soy sauce with wasabi, the way sushi and sashimi are. If there were any harshness present at all, this would not be considered delicious.

The Nishiyama area is said to have soil with high clay content that tends to produce softer *takenoko*. The production areas in Tsukahara and Mozume in particular have developed a reputation for superior bamboo shoots because of their soil. Though the difference is one that I am told can be tasted, it can be most easily perceived visually. That is because if connoisseurs prize light-colored bamboo shoots, Tsukahara and Mozume's are said to have a light lemon color and a light yolk color. Moreover, bamboo fields in these areas produce the elusive *mako* shoots, which are completely white, very sweet, and sell for approximately 4,000 yen a kilo.

Another reason Nishiyama's *takenoko* is said to be superlative has to do with special farming techniques (Takashima 2003:43). In the summer, the bamboo fields—they are usually not referred to as groves by these farmers—are weeded and the tops of the trees cut off so that more of the nutrients in the soil are sent to the shoots. In early fall, fertilizer is applied. When late fall and winter come, straw and dried grass are spread on the fields and more soil is added. This is called *tsuchizukuri* or “soil-making.” Because these methods require much in the way of time and effort, an employee of the wholesale market told me, it can be said that Nishiyama's farmers “grow” bamboo shoots, whereas others who do not engage in such labor simply harvest them.

Harvesting *takenoko* is not easy because they must be dug out of the soil without damaging them but simply looking at the cracks in the soil that indicate their presence does not reveal their size, shape, or the direction they are pointing (one farmer told me he believes each bamboo “baby” faces its “parent”). The farmers take *hori*, hoes with metal picks often as long as the handles themselves (said to be uniquely suited to the Nishiyama style of *takenoko* farming), and feel around a shoot to get a sense of its size, shape, and placement and then dig it up. As one farmer instructed me, “You have to see its spirit. Every single one has a different shape. Use the eyes of your arms.”



Figure 5. A farmer harvesting a bamboo shoot in the town of Mozume.

When *takenoko* season finally reaches Kyoto, special auctions take place at Kyoto’s central wholesale market for morning-harvested bamboo shoots. Watching these auctions, one comes to understand that certain kinds of *takenoko* are valued over others. The ideal box will contain shoots that are light-colored, uniform in size, have not sprouted or broken through the

ground, and were not damaged when they were dug up. Retailers also take into account such factors as shape, provenance (certain areas have developed more valued brand names than others) and the farmer who grew them (retailers may feel that certain farmers produce higher quality *takenoko* than others and in Kyoto the farmer's name is posted on each box before auction).

Where taste is concerned, good bamboo shoots must be eaten fresh. For this reason, farmers visit parcel shipping companies daily during harvest season, sending their shoots to as many as 40 or 50 restaurants a day. Freshly harvested bamboo shoots (*asabori takenoko*) fetch higher prices at auctions. On April 11, 2013 I attended an auction at which the most expensive freshly harvested bamboo shoots went for 26,000 yen or about 243 dollars (given the exchange rate at the time) for a box weighing 4 kilograms (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. The most expensive bamboo shoots for April 11, 2013
at Kyoto's Central Wholesale Market.**

While I understood that the shoots in this particular box could be deemed ideal because they were large, undamaged by the digging process, from light-colored soil, and pale in color with no visible darkness at the tip, I did not understand what set this box apart from similar boxes. I asked a young worker from one of the market's small retailers, but he told me he didn't know. Because the ability to differentiate between good *takenoko* and really high quality *takenoko* is uncommon, it is often left to the more senior workers, even company owners, to bid in these auctions. Junior workers go around gathering the boxes their bosses have successfully purchased. Though the prices that day seemed high enough, I was told that they were higher the year before. One of the reasons, a retailer informed me, is that many of the shoots this year were damaged in the process of being dug up because the farming population is quite old and they are just now getting younger farmers to participate, but they have yet to get a hang of the harvesting process yet; it takes 5-10 years to get it right. A farmer I spoke to had a similar opinion, though he said it takes 10 years. Later that April, some boxes of *takenoko* sold for prices as low as 2,000 yen. The most expensive on the 25th of sold for 25,000 yen which is high for this time in the season, largely because the supply of good shoots was low but there was still a great deal of demand.

Bamboo shoots are incorporated into spring dishes not only in fancy *kaiseki* restaurants such as the one where I first sampled it, but also in restaurants featuring the local domestic cuisine known as *obanzai* and in home-cooked meals such as *takenoko-gohan* ("rice and bamboo shoots"). Bamboo shoots also find their way into dishes like spaghetti *peperoncino* (a sauce with oil, garlic, and chilies).

It is not easy to grow bamboo shoots, especially if one does it using the time and labor-intensive techniques that the Nishiyama farmers do. In recent years, it has become more difficult

to make a good living as a farmer. One reason for this is because bamboo shoots were dependent on the local economy. Most bamboo shoots were purchased by local elites, who would send them to important business partners and contacts outside of Kyoto as *okurimono*, gifts that nourish relationships. *Takenoko* made for excellent *okurimono* because they were considered a local specialty due to their exceptional texture, taste, and color. Again, it is worth noting that an unprocessed agricultural item is made to stand for a place's cultural sophistication and elegance. These bamboo shoots were not simply high quality produce, they were seen as being Kyoto-rashii, very Kyotoish. Large, fresh, good-looking shoots were often sent to impress the receiver. Such superlative shoots tend to be expensive and, given their size, are not the kind that your average homemaker or regular restaurant chef would purchase. One result of local economic hardship following what has been termed Japan's "long decade" of the 1990's—extended as that "decade" has proved to be—has been that many local business executives and company owners no longer purchase *takenoko* to send as gifts the way they used to.

Another reason for local farmers' contemporary problems is that farmers in other parts of Japan have supposedly begun adopting these very techniques in order to be able to sell their produce at higher prices. The farmers I have interviewed continue to engage in farming for multiple reasons. They take pride in their work keeping agricultural traditions alive. Similarly, they see themselves as continuing family traditions and meeting family expectations. When I asked one farmer why he farmed in spite of the difficulties, his response was "I started farming because of the look on my mother's gentle face." Finally, these farmers aim to grow tasty, nutritious produce for themselves and their communities. They eat what they grow and often sell their produce directly to customers in their neighborhood.

It is when the farmers sell the *takenoko* outside of their neighborhood, though, that the Kyoto brand, the Nishiyama brand, and the neighborhood—especially for Mozume and Tsukahara—brands are deployed. One farmer marketing his shoots as “morning harvested bamboo shoots from Kyoto Ōe Tsukahara” told me straight: “The name sells.” A woman whose family farms *takenoko* in Nagaōkakyō, for instance, told me that she secures customers in Tokyo when she attends events there. She makes it a point to look the part of the Kyoto native by dressing in a kimono. When she exchanges business cards with a chef or someone who could become a regular customer, she may send them a gift of high quality, freshly-harvested *takenoko*. Nagaōkakyō may not have the reputation for *takenoko* that Mozume and Tsukahara do for true connoisseurs, but it channels the Kyoto brand, and as the short-lived capital of Japan before Kyoto, it has name recognition of its own.

When people eat *takenoko*, they are not merely consuming a plant product. They are also experiencing time and place. Bamboo shoots are associated with spring and those from the Nishiyama area of Kyoto are particularly prized as being high quality. Though it is possible to purchase processed bamboo shoots year-round or cheaper imported bamboo shoots, people value fresh, seasonal, local products.

A retailer at Kyoto’s central wholesale market opined that Nishiyama’s *takenoko* is not bitter, but neither is it sweet. “It has a deliciousness that cannot be put into words,” he said. Chefs, farmers, and gourmets attribute the distinctiveness of Kyoto’s bamboo shoots to the soil and farmers’ skilled techniques and efforts. Another important attribute might be what Fushiki Tohru of Ryūkoku University and the Japanese Culinary Academy calls the “deliciousness of information.” *Takenoko* are more than simply edible shoots. Consumers who seek out quality shoots taste the seasons, the craftsmanship of farmer and chef, and also Japanese culture. Those

parts of Kyoto that are particularly known for quality *takenoko* production emphasize the historical and cultural importance of the bamboo plant in multitude ways. The bamboo museum in Mukō City, located next to a huge expanse of bamboo fields, displays many objects made from bamboo, such as ornate baskets, delicate fans, and whisks for making *matcha* green tea. It also explains the varieties of bamboo, its biology, and its local history. A large display case in the museum is dedicated to Thomas Edison, whose first successful lightbulb had filaments constructed from bamboo from Yawata-cho in Kyoto.

This brings us to an interesting point. Since 2012 and no *takenoko* has been sold as Kyō brand produce even though they are on the official list of Kyō Brand vegetables. Why is this? I asked a local official, who surmised that Kyoto's *takenoko* already exists as a recognized brand for consumers, making the Kyō Brand somewhat redundant and not worth the efforts required. His rationale makes sense and gives us an indication that even as Kyoto can be made to function as a place brand, it does not work the same way for all produce, meaning that some products—like bamboo shoots—require less effort than others.

3.3 THE SHISHIGATANI SQUASH: A LESS DELICIOUS BUT VALORIZED VARIETY

Once a year, people travel from different parts of Kyoto and even other prefectures to make a special trip to Anraku Temple. When a temple is this crowded it is because the cherry trees are in full blossom, the autumn foliage is at its peak, or a usually inaccessible room is opened up for public viewing. In this case, however, people brave the summer heat, following banners along

narrow streets and alleys to find the temple, not far from the famous Philosopher's Path. Those banners are stamped with the image of the Shishigatani squash. Indeed, in front of the temple on this day are farmers selling heirloom vegetables including the squash and high school students selling sweets made with the local variety. Passing through the temple gates, you approach the main hall, crowded with people listening to a priest explain the history of the squash and its association with Anraku Temple. In front of the Buddhist altar, is a tray full of Kyoto vegetables. But the main stop is not this hall, but the open-air one overlooking the garden. There, people sit, handing their tickets to young people who bring them a cup of cold barley tea and a bowl of the Shishigatani squash. One man, by all appearances in his late 40s or early 50s, came from Shiga Prefecture to attend the event, explaining that the opportunity to eat it is rare and that this is an example of how "Kyoto is so deep."

Like bamboo shoots, the Shishigatani squash often represents Kyoto vegetables. Unlike bamboo shoots, however, I have encountered no connoisseurs who claim that any part of the prefecture is more suited to growing it than any other, though today the city of Ayabe grows most of the variety sold for the Kyō Brand. Also unlike bamboo shoots, it is not particularly prized for its taste. In spite of what American seed websites say, there seems to be a consensus among farmers, retailers, and government officials that the Shishigatani is "Kyoto's not-delicious squash."²⁴ Having heard this remark numerous times, I was intrigued and decided to follow up. When I visited the Nishiki shopping street in Kyoto, where there are several small greengrocer's that display Kyoto vegetables prominently to tourists and other potential customers, the store employees were quite frank. It was most frequently described as bland, watery, and fibrous.

²⁴ American websites describe the squash as being delicious and saying that it can be used for soup, tempura, stews, and the like. Either they have never actually eaten or cooked with the squash themselves or their standards and cooking techniques are different than those of Kyotoites.

“When you open it up, it has this stink, like the huge summer squashes grown for livestock,” one store owner remarked. In spite of owning a store that sells the squash, he has never eaten it at home. He was offered it once when he visited a restaurant he sells produce to, but said even that wasn’t very good.

If this is the case, then, why was the Shishigatani squash one of the first vegetables accepted for the Kyō Brand? Why do so many restaurants use the squash in their displays of local and seasonal produce? Why do grocery stores in Kyoto and at least as far as Sendai, in northeastern Japan, carry this “undelicious” squash? How can some of them get away with selling a specimen for 2800 yen (approximately USD 28 at the time)? What attracts people to Anraku Temple every July to eat it, if not the taste?

Those first vegetable varieties included in the launch of the Kyō Brand were selected either because they were distinctly “Kyotoish” or because they had very promising marketing potential. The Shishigatani squash did not fall into the latter category, as the comments about its taste indicate. Moreover, most people have no idea about how they would go about cooking with the squash; its hard, scaly skin is particularly intimidating. Yet this hard, scaly skin, along with its hourglass shape, makes this variety conspicuous. The story of the squash focuses on this visual dimension: over two hundred years ago, a squash was brought from the Tsugaru area of northeastern Japan to the Shishigatani area of Kyoto City. When its seeds were planted there, it produced a different type of squash, one with a gourd-like shape. Because Shishigatani soil seemed to have literally shaped the squash, it was named after the area.

Because it is so visually arresting, the squash often appears on posters promoting local food and in front of restaurants specializing in local cuisine. It is also why fancy grocery stores outside of Kyoto carry it—it is a noticeable marker that the stores carry Japan’s best produce.

For restaurants and grocery stores, it helps that the squash's thick skin makes it last months as the outside changes from green to brown. So who buys this squash? The rare consumer who knows how to prepare the squash, the elite restaurateur who can make a rare dish with it or use it as a serving vessel, the homemaker who wants to use it as a decoration, and the artist who is inspired by the look of the squash (particularly ones with unusual shapes, not the ones with perfect gourd-like figures). According to a leaflet that farmers growing the squash put out, it is also used as a decoration for the tea ceremony. It is no surprise, then, that a chef friend of mine said he rarely uses it, explaining that it is a “vegetable to display because it has *that* shape.”



Figure 7. Drawing of a Shishigatani squash by local artist Egawa Kazuhiko

A woman working in one of Nishiki market's grocery stores said it wasn't suitable for soup or pie, mentioning that she had just made a delicious cold squash soup, thick and creamy, using a Western squash. The Shishigatani squash, I was told, is best cooked in *nimono* or just

“cooked normally,” meaning cooked in *dashi* stock or with soy sauce, mirin, and cooking sake. A man working in another store told me he has never eaten himself and that “It is very fibery so I am told it is not delicious.” He did say, however, that some people prefer this squash to more conventional varieties and do purchase it. This man’s employer also spoke to me and stated that while Kyoto cuisine may be known for its subtle seasonings, that is not the case when this squash is concerned. To the contrary, cooks try to add flavor to make this squash’s flavor more appealing.

In another store, I was told that there is a difference between the upper portion of the squash and the lower portion. The upper portion, which is watery and has less flavor, can be sliced up into thin vermicelli-like strands and used to accompany sashimi in fancy restaurants. The lower portion, meanwhile, can be cooked like other vegetables are at home—boiled with soy sauce, mirin, and cooking sake. In spite of this, he told me that most of the people who buy the squash in his store are either people from outside of Kyoto who buy it for its rarity factor or artists.

A friend of mine told me that she ate it at home when her grandmother prepared it. But, she said, they only ate it as a custom because of the idea that it prevents disease if you eat it on July 25th. This custom was begun at Anraku Temple in the Shishigatani area of Kyoto City. Soon after the squash had been brought to the Shishigatani area and was being grown there (sometime around 1790 CE), the head priest of Anrakuji Shinkū Ekizui had a dream in which the temple’s Buddhist deity told him that eating the squash in the hot mid-summer days would prevent polio (Anrakuji 2009). Thereafter, the custom of eating the squash on or around the 25th of July took off.



Figure 8. A dish of simmered Shishigatani squash served at Anrakuji Temple.

Today, the Shishigatani squash “mass” involves an exoticizing of the past, with attendees experiencing a nostalgia for a time most of them did not know. This nostalgia is not remorseful, after all, attendees could buy the squash at a local grocery store and cook it at home. But, as a young woman working for the event told me, it is expensive and hard to make. For this event, about twenty cooks from the Shishigatani area take a huge pot and line the bottom with bamboo leaves. They add cut up pieces of squash, water, sugar, mirin, soy sauce, and *dashi* powder and boil it for forty minutes. Honestly speaking, the end product is not likely to become anyone’s favorite dish. But no one eats it because of how it tastes; they consume it as a way of self-consciously experiencing an aspect of traditional food culture that belongs to a different period in Japanese history. It is not, then, so much that people go out of their way to eat the

Shishigatani squash in spite of its undeliciousness, but that the way it clashes with modern notions of palatability makes it an altogether more effective vehicle for accessing the food culture of the past. After all, one won't find Shishigatani squash soup, pie, or ice cream. The cookies high school students have created with the help of a sweets manufacturer are fortunate exception; they taste nothing like the squash itself.

3.4 KYOTO VEGETABLES' BORDERS: STRATEGICALLY SHIFTING

People living in Kyoto Prefecture consider Kyoto vegetables to be local produce. This localness is linked to freshness and cultural heritage in people's minds. In other parts of Japan, and Tokyo in particular, however, Kyoto vegetables have acquired an aura of elegance and mystique. They evoke Japanese tradition in a different sense than they do in Kyoto--they call to mind high culture and refinement. In this way, Kyoto vegetables are not your ordinary heirloom vegetables. Visits to the vegetable displays of various supermarkets and department stores across Japan brought this home for me. Everywhere I went in Japan—from Miyagi Prefecture to Okinawa Prefecture—I found Kyoto vegetables. Most striking was when I visited Morioka, the capital of Iwate, a prefecture that has a large agricultural sector. My survey of grocery stores there revealed one local heirloom variety (in a shopping mall supermarket) and a whole section devoted to Kyoto vegetables (in Morioka's most expensive department store). A cooking teacher told me that in Kobe, where she lives there are three types of vegetables: Kyoto vegetables advertised with signs that look as though they were written with brush and ink, locally grown vegetables, and imported vegetables. While Kyotoites value local heirloom vegetables because they are fresh

local produce and are tied to local customs and incorporated in specific dishes, outside of Kyoto they are treated as special varieties from the past, exotic and of high quality.

Marketing efforts add value to Kyoto vegetables, particularly outside of Kyoto Prefecture. In the summer of 2009 I saw four cartons of sweet peppers at a wholesale vegetable market in Tokyo. Those from Yamagata Prefecture were selling for 600 yen a carton, those from Kumamoto for 800 (about USD 6 and 8, respectively). Meanwhile, a carton of slightly misshapen Kyoto *manganji* peppers cost 1500 yen, and a better-looking carton for 3000 yen (approximately USD 15 and 30, respectively). The store's owner explained that in Japanese cuisine the highest grade vegetables are Kyoto's. "These peppers are totally delicious. The sweetness really comes out. They're not at all like bell peppers," he told me. He attributed the price difference to the strength of the Kyō Brand and its effective advertising.

This value of the Kyoto brand also applies to non-Kyō Brand produce. A Kyoto retailer I spoke to told me that he discovered that vegetables he buys for 100 yen, wraps, packages, and sells for 150 yen to a supermarket in an upscale part of Tokyo are then resold for 600 yen. When I asked him why Tokyo's customers would pay so much more for vegetables from Kyoto he first stated that it was only a certain group of people who sought them out, and then said, "Because they're special, they're a brand, they're rare."

The various brands that exist for Kyoto vegetables share much with geographical indications for other agricultural and food products like Ethiopia's Yirgacheffe coffee beans, Parmesan cheese, and New Mexico chiles. Unlike these examples, however, Kyoto vegetables have yet to be officially inscribed as legally protected geographical indications. Indeed, the term *kyōyasai* remains undefined, unlike the term *kyō no dentō yasai*. In the last chapter of this dissertation, I will also touch upon *terroir*, a concept that has become a popular and persuasive

way to articulate the linkages between places and their products. Arguments for the distinctiveness and authenticity of Kyoto vegetables have much in common with the discourse about terroir, though the movements to promote and protect Kyoto's agricultural heritage do not disallow use of the Kyoto name altogether.

Networks of producers, retailers, government officials, and consumers make Kyoto vegetables more than just vegetables. These vegetables possess an aura of history and heritage. Local actors emphasize the craftsmanship that goes into making these vegetables high-quality ones. Producers and consumers alike use place as an index for the safety or trustworthiness of edible goods in the wake of the radiation leaks that followed the nuclear power plant meltdown of 2011. Finally, for consumers within the prefecture Kyoto vegetables have the additional benefit of being local and even sometimes produce with a "face you can see," setting them apart from bamboo shoots from southern Japan or scallions from China.

In contemporary Japan, it seems, value creation—particularly when it comes to brands—often happens via marketing and PR efforts. Nikkei Research's surveys demonstrate that Kyoto's manganji peppers have achieved a great deal of name recognition. The Kyō Furusato Sanpin Kyōkai proudly sees this as the result of conscious efforts that included advertising, encouraging restaurants to use them, and lending photos to media outlets to facilitate reporting. While there are those, even in Japan, who might dismiss the value created as meaningless, artificial, or inauthentic, it is inarguable that people do attribute value to things that they are socialized into appreciating and in many societies today such socialization includes PR and marketing campaigns. And if many of Kyoto's heirloom vegetables are more nutritious and healthful than conventional varieties (Nakamura, et al. 2008), then such a fact is fairly meaningless if it is not known.



Figure 9. Kyoto vegetable campaign display in a Tokyo department store.

This brings us to an interesting point: Kyoto as a prefecture with a small agricultural sector dedicates a small portion of its budget to advertizing its agricultural products. In this sense, it is outcompeted by other areas of Japan that are able to sponsor events across the country that will gain media coverage and draw local consumers. In the summer of 2014, for example, the head of Kyoto Prefecture’s Furusato Sanpin Kyōkai revealed, Kyoto organized 46 “marchés” in Tokyo department stores. These “marchés” varied from special sections set aside for seasonal produce to events at which women—either professional hawkers or farmers from Kyoto Prefecture—offered samples of dishes made with Kyoto vegetables to consumers. Other prefectures held similar events in up to about 500 different stores, even going to the same stores

twice. As a result of this disparity in the size of PR budgets, prefectures that have followed Kyoto's lead in deploying place brands to sell agricultural products are taking in more market share. Kyoto Prefecture's strategy has been to use Kyoto's "name value" more and to connect its produce to Kyoto's cultural capital. Now that "*Washoku*, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese" has been inscribed as UNESCO intangible world heritage, local government officials are making continued—if not enhanced—efforts to link Kyoto vegetables to Japanese cuisine.

When it comes to Kyoto vegetables, however, the Kyoto brand is not the only articulation of value. Kyoto vegetables may be valorized because of their rarity value (e.g. the Shishigatani squash, the suguki turnip, and the mogi eggplant), because they are said to be more delicious than their competition (e.g. the Manganji sweet pepper, mizuna, *Kujō* scallions), because they provide higher quantities of vitamins and antioxidants than conventional vegetable varieties (e.g. karami daikon, Shishigatani squash, Kamo eggplant), and because for Kyoto residents they are *local* vegetables and in Japan, as elsewhere, "the local" is often equated not only with freshness, deliciousness, nutritiousness, but also with what is good and virtuous (Schneider 2008).

Rarity value presents itself as an obvious feature of varieties like the Shishigatani squash that are not grown in other parts of Japan and, indeed, are most valued because they are rare. Not only would it be difficult to imagine some of these varieties becoming popular, but ubiquity would stifle the exotic appeal of these vegetables.

A friend of mine who grows vegetables uses the term "Kyoto's magic" to explain how provenance from Kyoto can matter so much, changing a product's value. When discussing this, another friend chimed in, saying that a species of tiny fish from Shiga Prefecture known as *moroko* (*Hemigrammocyppris rasborella*) are quite tasty—and cheap. As soon as they are brought to Kyoto, and touched by the Kyoto brand, they become more expensive.

Kyoto vegetables are agricultural products whose added value depends on the association of authenticity with contemporary borders that are more fuzzy and permeable than they might at first seem. When I interviewed prefectural officials, they told me that the impetus to create the *kyō no dentō yasai* category had nothing to do with other prefectures, practically speaking. The idea was to prevent the disappearance of heirloom vegetables from local foodways, which would have all but guaranteed their extinction.



Figure 10. Fushimi peppers from Tokushima Prefecture.

Today there are multiple, overlapping brands for Kyoto vegetables that compete in the supermarket aisle but nevertheless ultimately pursue the same goals of strengthening the local agricultural industry, protecting local food culture and agrobiodiversity. But there are boundaries for Kyoto vegetables and they do have consequences. As already mentioned, a farmer can take seeds for Kyoto vegetables and grow them in a field just outside of Kyoto Prefecture—in Shiga Prefecture or Hyōgo Prefecture, say—but by most accounts he will not be growing Kyoto vegetables. For the most part, varieties are not renamed if they are grown outside of Kyoto,

however. Indeed, one can purchase seeds for mizuna, Shishigatani squash, and other varieties online in the US. The Fushimi peppers in Figure 10 were not grown in Fushimi, but rather in Tokushima Prefecture. Tamba kuro daizu, which hail from the Tamba area shared by Kyoto Prefecture and Hyōgo Prefecture, are only treated as Kyoto vegetables if they are grown on the Kyoto side. More significantly, there are obstacles to the circulation of seeds for certain vegetable varieties. Farmers engaged in seed saving, whether on their own or in a group like the Kamigamo Heirloom Vegetable Research Association do not share seeds with everyone who wants them. By and large, they are proprietary towards their seeds, oftentimes even keeping the location of the fields they use for seed saving a secret. Kyoto Prefecture has gone to great lengths to develop improved varieties for heirloom vegetables like the Manganji pepper. These new varieties are fixed varieties rather than the hybrid F1 varieties most seed companies deal in. Thus once a farmer has the seeds, he can continue to grow them ad infinitum. But Kyoto Prefecture stipulates that only farmers in designated areas can grow these varieties. For the Manganji sweet pepper (Manganji amatō rather than the Manganji tōgarashi which is not an “improved” variety) this area is restricted to the Ninokuni area that produced the original specimens used to develop the better, improved and sweeter variety. This variety has a DNA marker that reveals whether or not the peppers will be spicy before the plant produces seeds.

Interestingly enough, however, one of the local government officials who told me about the development of improved varieties and restrictions imposed on their distribution also revealed that it is more desirable to certify a production area than it is a farmer or a specific variety. Though the latter two might be easier to do, they are less stable. For one thing, production areas have calendars for cultivation that incorporate multiple varieties. Another problem is that only the highest quality vegetables, grade AAA let’s say, are sold under the Kyō

Brand but it is clear that any designated area cannot uniformly produce large quantities of ideal produce, though farmers may naturally push their own vegetables as very very high grade.

Although the Mozume brand for bamboo shoots is the successful offshoot of the Kyoto brand or Nishiyama brand, not every farmer harvesting *takenoko* in Mozume can freely use its brand. Farmers must belong to the local farmers' association in order to package bamboo shoots in boxes that bear the Mozume name and feature its panda and bamboo design. Thus I met a woman whose family cultivates fields in Mozume but sells their shoots via what she called their "independent brand."

I do not wish to overromanticize the success of the branding efforts behind the Kyoto vegetable phenomenon. Not all heirloom varieties are equally marketable or even cost-effective for farmers to grow. I am told that today only five farmers grow *kuwai* (*Sagittaria trifolia* var. *edulis*, known in English as arrowhead) in Kyoto Prefecture and that the vegetable, though distinctive in appearance, is eaten almost exclusively around New Year's. This variety or similar varieties (perhaps different subvarieties) exist in other parts of Japan, and has been included on other prefectures' lists of traditional vegetables.

Kyoto vegetables, an undefined assortment of varieties associated with Kyoto City and Prefecture, have made their way across the globe. Some varieties are grown throughout Japan and even in other developed countries, where consumers identify a certain cachet in heirloom vegetables. Kyoto vegetable seeds are available for purchase on the internet in Europe and North America. In France, Kyoto vegetables are grown at Versailles.

I eventually met the farmer (or perhaps a different farmer) who had tried growing Kyoto vegetables in California. He told me that he had been growing Japanese vegetables, including

Kyoto vegetables, using hydroponics. Unfortunately, he wasn't able to grow Kyoto vegetables successfully there and he has since returned to Kyoto where he works as a middleman, selling vegetables from Kyoto to stores and retailers in the Tokyo area.

People valorize Kyoto vegetables within Kyoto Prefecture because they are local agricultural heritage, and outside of Kyoto Prefecture because they are brand products and a means of experiencing “traditional” Japan. Both groups are considerably open to outside influences. Kyoto's farmers may take great pains to cultivate heirloom vegetable varieties, but this does not prevent them from also growing varieties that might be categorized as standardized, improved, new, or foreign. The farmers I know personally in Kyoto grow everything from corn, broccoli, tomatoes, and shiitake mushrooms to kiwi and strawberries. Kyoto's farmers use traditional techniques to give varieties like the Horikawa burdock root and the shrimp potato their “proper” shape, but they also rely on contemporary farming technology and knowledge—conventional and organic. Several farmers I spoke to use neem oil from India as a natural pesticide. One of these farmers made a point of telling me that he stays current with cutting edge farming techniques, from fish-based fertilizer to pollinator bees for his greenhouses. This desire to constantly try and improve and innovate, all the while maintaining local agricultural heritage is also evident at Kyoto Prefectural Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Technology Center. Researchers at this institution investigate ways of making farming easier for new farmers as well as ways of making locally important varieties taste closer to what consumers want them to taste like.

Those who cook with Kyoto vegetables do not engage in culinary segregation. They are quite willing to mix them with ingredients from other places and cook with them using techniques from outside the Kyoto cuisine repertoire. Kyoto restaurant Azekura takes the

Shōgoin turnip and fills it with savory Parmesan cheese. To cook the Horikawa burdock root, its head chef stuffs it with boar meat, a new technique to be sure. Even those institutions promoting Kyoto vegetables do not shy away from using them in new and interesting ways. Kyoto Prefecture's monthly newsletter, mailed free to all residents, has in featured recipes for cooking local produce that include Kintoki carrot jelly and tuna, spaghetti, and mizuna salad.

As much as producers and cooks adopt and incorporate elements from outside of Kyoto, and as much as one can find Kyoto vegetables across the globe, these are not entirely vegetables without borders. Borders do exist for Kyoto vegetables, albeit fuzzy, overlapping, and contested ones. These allow various groups of local actors—from the smallscale farmers of Kamigamo to prefectural farmers with a larger economy of scale—to benefit from Kyoto's agricultural heritage and the Kyoto brand. If localism can be defensive or diversity inclusive, then I would say that by and large Kyoto's heirloom vegetable movement has tended to be on the diversity inclusive side. Like any localism, it has defined borders that distinguish inside from outside, native from foreign, authentic from inauthentic. Yet the existence of multiple vegetable brand and the admission of things from other places makes Kyoto's localism a looser variety.

4.0 KYOTO TEA, UJI TEA: NON-PERISHABLE PROCESSED AGRICULTURAL GOODS



Figure 11. Map of the larger Uji region.

When I first met tea farmers and tea blenders, I had no real interest in green tea. My research focused on Kyoto vegetables. Besides, I have long preferred coffee, which has its own special

place in Japanese food culture (White 2012). It quickly became clear to me, however, that if I was studying the role that place plays in the branding of agricultural and food items from Kyoto Prefecture, then I would also have to look into green tea.

Uji tea is one of Kyoto Prefecture's most distinct and recognizable brands. The Uji area has been recognized for its green tea for quite some time, particularly its *matcha* or powdered green tea and the drink made from it.²⁵ Why is Uji tea known by this name rather than "Kyoto tea?" Why is it a place brand at all? How does place matter to green tea? In the over 800 years that the Uji area has grown green tea how has this association changed?

This chapter addresses these questions, examining the Kyoto brand and how place and places matter when it comes to tea. Uji tea is a brand Japanese people widely recognize and think of as a top-shelf brand with a long history. Yet at present Kyoto Prefecture only produces 3.5% of Japan's green tea, though it does produce more than half of Japan's *tencha* (the leaves used to make *matcha*) and *gyokuro* (the variety of shade-grown tea leaves often said to be the highest grade for green tea). Its production profile is 47% *sencha*, 34% *tencha*, 11.5% *kabusecha*, 7.5% *gkyokuro* (Kyoto Prefecture 2013). In the following sections I will explain how Kyoto Prefecture's tea industry has changed over time as well as the current set of circumstances it is facing.

This chapter will also explain what Uji tea is and how it differs from Kyoto tea. Kyoto and Uji are different places that overlap considerably. The brand tectonics provide us further insight into how place as brand can matter for food and agricultural products in ways that are

²⁵ In the tea ceremony, *matcha* plays a central role and cannot be substituted by another kind of green tea. Similarly, simply grinding ordinary green tea will not yield *matcha*. To make *matcha*, tea blenders obtain *tencha* from tea farmers and grind it with marble. Like *gyokuro* and *kabuse* tea, *tencha* is shade grown. Farmers often grow special tea varieties to make *tencha*, particularly in Kyoto.

both protective and characterized by a degree of openness. Let us start with the following explanation of Uji tea and Kyoto tea. Uji tea is a registered regionally-based collective trademark used by the Kyoto Tea Cooperative. Uji tea consists of tea leaves from Kyoto, Nara, Shiga, and Mie prefectures that are blended in the Uji area of southern Kyoto Prefecture by a selective group of blenders (what exactly counts as the “Uji area” is somewhat debatable and something we will examine later in this chapter). As we have seen with Kyoto vegetables, definitions and terms for certain kinds of objects change over the time. The same is true of Uji tea and the articulation of Uji vis-à-vis other locales.

4.1 A HISTORY OF JAPANESE GREEN TEA

Uji tea strongly evokes tradition and history, as is evident in the following haiku. For Uejima Onitsura, the tea harvest in Uji is no mere tea harvest but rather a time-honored tradition, an act full of attention to detail that bears upon Japanese aesthetics: *Uji ni kite / byōbu ni nitaru / chatsumi kana* (Coming to Uji / Just like painted screens / The tea harvest) (Ukers 1935a: 486, translation mine). Bashō’s haiku centers on the smell of Uji tea being processed: *yamabuki ya / Uji no hoiro no / niou toki* (Yellow mountain roses / When the ovens at Uji give off / The fragrance of tea leaves) (Shirane 1992: 104). Strikingly, in the original Japanese Bashō doesn’t employ the word “tea” because he doesn’t have to—his audience knows exactly the fragrance he is referring to.

The final chapters of the classical Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji*, which portrays the splendor and sophistication of the Heian court, take place primarily in the Uji area and are

known as “Uji jūjō” or “the 10 Uji chapters.” Uji City has erected a museum dedicated to the novel and a statue in honor of its famous author, Murasaki Shikibu. Given the associations that the Kyoto brand has, linking Uji tea and *The Tale of the Genji* is almost expected. For the fall broadcasting season of 2014, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) will air a one hour drama modeled on the Heian era novel, but set in the present and showcasing Uji tea and cormorant fishing in the Uji River.

Kyoto’s tea blenders and retailers like to emphasize that the history of Japanese green tea is replete with people and events from the Uji area. Take, for instance, the pamphlet *Uji cha daisuki! (I Love Uji Tea!)*, directed at elementary school students and published by the Kyoto Tea Cooperative, which explains that tea was born in China a long time ago and made its way to Japan over one thousand years ago. About 400 years later, the first “real” tea production in Japan started in “Kyoto’s Uji” (Kyoto Tea Cooperative n.d.: 2).

The beverage tea was first invented in China in the middle of the 8th century. The adoption of tea by the Japanese occurred in fits and starts. Though tea may have grown indigenously in Japan, the history of tea in Japan begins in the early 9th century when Emperor Saga, introduced to the beverage at a Buddhist temple whose abbot had visited China, commanded certain areas near Kyoto to cultivate tea for tribute to the court and had tea gardens planted within the capital itself (Commerce 2012; Ishige 2012; Murai 1989). The tea of the times was a fermented brick tea, very different from what is now considered Japanese tea.

Neither tea cultivation nor consumption gained traction until Eisai brought seeds from China and together with fellow monk Myōei Shōnin encouraged consumption practices in the late 12th and early 13th century. The impact of these well-known historical figures is inscribed on places that remain on tourist itineraries of Kyoto, with a stone monument at Kenniji dedicated to

Eisai and one at Kōzanji marking the tea garden first planted there by Myōei with seeds he received from Eisai as the oldest in Japan. Myōei distributed seeds to others outside of his temple, including to five locations in Uji. Yet another stone monument lies in front of the gate to Manpuku Temple in Uji near the remains of a tea garden that Myōei is said to have used to teach local people how to cultivate tea. This tea was made by steaming freshly picked tea leaves, drying them, and grinding them into a powder in a mortar and pestle. Adding hot water and whisking the two together produced the tea beverage still known as *matcha* (Ishige 2012).

In making quality *matcha* today, one must use a stone mill. Informants in the tea industry and outside it explained that stone mills give the miniscule pieces that make up the powder edges. These contribute the *nodogoshi* or “throat feel” that Japanese people look for in beverages. Using metallic machines would result in smaller, rounder particles that would make for a creamier *matcha* that would be less refreshing.

From its inception, green tea was associated with Buddhism for Japanese people. A popular legend about the origin of tea has it that the Buddhist saint Daruma (also known as Bodhidharma in India) fell asleep while meditating and in his disappointment cut off his eyelids, which turned into a plant when they touched the ground. The leaves from this plant, it was discovered, could be used to make a beverage that kept one awake and alert during meditation (Ukers 1935a: 361).

It wasn't until the Muromachi era (mid-14th century to late 16th century C.E.) that green tea began to be more widely cultivated and consumed. The third Muromachi shogun not only encouraged green tea cultivation, but selected tea fields to be “Uji's seven famous gardens” (Commerce 2012). At this time, tea from Toganoo (the location of Kōzanji, where Myōei was abbot) was called *honcha* or “real” tea, with the difference between tea produced elsewhere

evident in the term *hicha*, *hi* signifying “other” or “non” (Murai 1989: 10-11). When the Uji region increased both the amount of green tea it produced and its elevated quality, this tea began to appropriate the term *honcha* (Commerce 2012). The Chinese tea drinking game was adapted, with participants aiming to distinguish between teas from different production region rather than different quality (Murai 1989: 11). Originally, this meant differentiating between tea from Toganoo versus other locales, but gradually this became the contest of “four kinds and 10 cups,” which “called for drinking three cups of each of three kinds of tea and one cup of a fourth kind, known as ‘guest tea’ (evidently because contestants were given only one chance to identify it)” (Murai 1989: 11). In the 14th century, elaborate parties were organized around these tea tasting games (Ishige 2012). The contest eventually evolved into the tasting competition known as *cha kabuki* that tea experts and connoisseurs practice to this day.

The Muromachi era also brought about the invention of *ōi shita saibai*: farmers began to erect scaffolds above their tea plants. Over these they spread reed mats and then scattered straw evenly on top, shading plants. Tea leaves grown in these shaded conditions have less bitterness and astringency and more umami (the fifth basic taste, often glossed as “savory”) than those exposed to direct sunlight (Fuji 2012). Another important cultural milestone achieved during the Muromachi was the completion of the Dojinsai in Kyoto’s Silver Temple (Ginkakuji). This room, the first known room dedicated to the enjoyment of tea, served as the prototype for later tea rooms and tea pavilions.

In the 16th century warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi is said to have made it illegal to sell tea from outside of Uji as Uji tea (Planning and Coordination Division 2012: 2). Hideyoshi, served by the very influential tea master Sen no Rikyū, was well aware of tea’s potential as a diplomatic tool. To commemorate the subjugation of Kyūshū and the building of his Jūrakudai palace in

Kyoto, he hosted the *Kitano no ōchakai* or “the Great Kitano Tea Gathering,” so named because the tea ceremony held in front of Kitano shrine was open to anyone and attended by possibly over 800 people, from expert tea ceremony practitioners to curious Kyotoites (Kyoto shi rekishi shiryōkan 2005; Ukers 1935a: 365).

Sen no Rikyū played the strongest role in shaping what is now the classic tea ceremony. Rikyū, adept at managing political dynamics via the tea ceremony and its surrounding culture, spurred green tea consumption and inspired a restrained aesthetic. He is said to have traveled to Uji to taste freshly harvested tea and host the tea ceremony (Commerce 2012). In Kyoto Prefecture’s Oyamazaki town, one can find the only remaining teahouse built by Sen no Rikyū. Named Taian, it has been called “the North Pole of Japanese aesthetics” (Varley 1998: ix).

João Rodrigues, the Jesuit missionary who penned some of the earliest Western accounts of Japanese culture, wrote that in 16th century Japan drinking tea was not only the chief pastime, but the principal means of welcoming and honoring guests (Rodrigues and Cooper 1973: 250). Rodrigues wrote of Japanese green tea that “the best is grown only at a town called Uji, three leagues from the court of Miyako, whence it is taken to all parts of the kingdom” (Rodrigues and Cooper 1973: 251).

The Tokugawa shogunate valued Uji tea and from 1623 to the first half of the 1700s, organized a spectacular event known as the “Tea journey” whereby a procession of attendants and guards led by a tea master would make their way to Uji carrying huge tea jars which, once filled, were stored in Kyoto until autumn, when the procession would recommence, bringing the precious contents to Edo. Those happening across this spectacle were required to prostrate themselves before the jars (Ukers 1935a: 399).

Until the 18th century leaves and stems were roasted in metal pots. In the Edo period, however, Nagatani Sōen developed the steaming and hand kneading technique that is used in processing Japanese green tea today and that differentiates it from green tea's Chinese roots and also lends it a smooth and balanced flavor profile (Fuji 2012). Soon after, this Uji style of processing green leaves spread throughout the nation (Kyoto Prefecture 2013). Kyoto Prefecture's town of Ujitawara, proud of native son Nagatani and his seminal invention, erected a shrine dedicated to Nagatani and claims for itself the title of "home of Japanese green tea."

Even in the Edo period, Kyoto and Uji remained the vanguard of Japanese green tea production. Local lore has it that Yamamoto Kahei, a tea producer from Uji Ogura, noticed droplets emerge from the steamed tea leaves he was stirring prompting the revelation that this liquid could be drunk. Hereafter shade grown leaves like those used in *matcha* but processed and steeped like *sencha* became known as *gyokuro* (the characters for *gyokuro*, 玉露, translate as "droplets of dew"). The area around Ogura developed this tea, which has now spread to other parts of Japan and most importantly Kyushu, as well.

Until the 1860s, China was virtually the sole supplier of tea to the world market (Hellyer 2014). After the onset of the Meiji era in 1868, green tea was also exported from Japan, even becoming its second largest export (behind silk). Between 70 and 90 percent of green tea exports were destined for the US. For this to happen, many areas of Japan had to increase production. Shizuoka Prefecture, I am told, was not growing a lot of tea until this period. As in other parts of Japan, farmers in Kyoto Prefecture's Yamashiro area expanded their tea fields to meet demand (Kyoto Prefecture 2013). As this happened, however, the quality of Kyoto's tea went down, one farmer told me. This is why the various tea competitions that now take place in throughout the prefecture were developed.

Up until 1974, when the Kyoto Central Wholesale Market for tea was built in Jōyō City, Kyoto Prefecture did not actually have a central marketplace for tea. Middlemen were required to travel from tea blender to tea blender distributing samples of tea and taking bids. Most of the bids came via fax, some of them by phone. In 2001, the tea market became part of the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives Association. Though at one point in time around 180 companies frequented the market, it is now at 140 much bigger than it was when it started with 17.

With the 2005 revision of Japan's Trademark Law and the addition of a system of registering geographical indications, Uji tea was registered as a "regionally-based collective trademark." At the moment there are fourteen such registered trademarks for tea, including Ise tea, Shizuoka tea, and Fukuoka Yame tea (as well as Yame tea).

Today exports of Japanese tea are still relatively low. One reason, I am told is that every country has a different regulatory system for fertilizers and pesticides, including Japan. Some of those used are not registered in other countries, making exports more difficult. Kyoto Prefecture's tea industry is mostly engaged in conventional agriculture. I only met one farmer growing organic tea, and his tea is very, very high end. When I asked a farmer about chemical fertilizers and pesticides, I was told that, "It's all about how you use them. You have to use different chemicals throughout the year so that bugs don't build resistance." The rules, he said, are very strict. This farmer was not concerned about the potential impact of free trade agreements on the tea industry.

This narrative is framed not simply as the history of Uji tea or Kyoto tea. Rather, it is often conceived of as the history of Japanese tea, with Kyoto serving as a metonym and prototype for the rest of Japan, a pattern we also see with Kyoto cuisine. In documents prepared

as part of Kyoto Prefecture’s proposal to have Uji tea recognized by UNESCO, it is not usually Uji tea or Kyoto tea as such that is always designated as the object of consideration, but often “Japanese tea / Uji tea,” in which the two are elided. The borders implicitly conjured up by such phrases are relatively open and serve to assert the prominence of Uji as the forerunner, the ideal, the standard bearer.

4.2 TASTING UJI AND TASTING PLACE

A glance at green tea production in Japan (Table 4) reveals that the kinds of green tea grown in Kyoto Prefecture—sencha, kabusecha, *gyokuro*, and now even *tencha* (the leaves ground into *matcha*)—are also grown in other prefectures. Kyoto does not produce the largest quantities of tea or have the most area dedicated to green tea production. Yet when William Ukers traveled across the world compiling information for his 1935 book *All about Tea*, he writes “But the really characteristic Japanese green tea is manufactured in the Uji District, near the city of Kyoto—the peerless *Gyokuro* tea, which the orthodox tea drinkers of Japan delight in drinking. The best and highest priced teas, come from the old province of Yamashiro, near Kyoto; a large part of its production consisting of ceremonial tea, and special grades for domestic use” (Ukers 1935b).

The discourse on place, difference, and tea includes a geoclimactic component. As a pamphlet about Uji tea prepared for the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention explains “Tea-producing areas in Japan are located in river basins and mountain-ringed regions, both of which have generally a warm climate but experience great differences in temperature between day and night. The regions, through which the Uji River, Kizu River, and other rivers

run, have long been renowned for producing excellent green tea. Thick river fogs and mists hanging over mountainous areas in river basins are considered to help grow high-quality tea” (Commerce 2012: 2). Other documents in Japanese present similar information (Kyoto Tea Cooperative n.d.). I found that farmers from other areas of Japan share this notion of the geological and climactic conditions ideal for growing tea.

Table 4. 2011 Production statistics for Japanese green tea, by prefecture.

	Production area (ha)	Gross production by weight (t)	Sencha by weight (t)	Shade grown tea* by weight (t)
1	18,700 Shizuoka	33,500 Shizuoka	23,900 Shizuoka	1,550 Mie
2	8,670 Kagoshima	23,800 Kagoshima	16,800 Kagoshima	1,190 Kyoto
3	3,180 Mie	7,350 Mie	3,420 Mie	584 Saga
4	1,600 Kumamoto	3,670 Miyazaki	1,610 Miyazaki	507 Fukuoka
5	1,580 Kyoto	2,870 Kyoto	1,610 Fukuoka	490 Aichi
6	1,580 Fukuoka	2,170 Fukuoka	860 Kyoto	426 Nara

Adapted from Kyoto Prefecture Tea Statistics Reference Materials (Data originally from Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Ministerial Exhibition Statistics for 2011).

*This includes kabusecha, *gyokuro*, as well as *tencha*.

Not only is there an idea of what kind of place is preferred for tea production, however. The discourse on place, difference, and tea extends to different kinds of tea and taste. If provenance affects the taste of items such as wine, cheese, and even bamboo shoots in discernible ways, then the same is true for tea. But our vocabulary for describing taste (at least in English and Japanese) seems inadequate and we often resort to analogies and terms borrowed from the other senses. Predictably, explaining the ways that place of origin shapes the taste of tea leaves is imprecise and difficult at best. Yet discerning the differences between teas grown in different areas of Japan is not only possible, it is done. The proper training, practice and perhaps a natural inclination, are prerequisites, as I learned the first time I participated in a *cha kabuki* or tea tasting competition.

On a cold winter evening near the city of Uji, I sat in a second-story room with several dozen young men hoping to earn spots in the national tea tasting competition. This day, the competition consisted of multiple rounds. In the first, participants had to discriminate between the sensory qualities of four unidentified cups of tea passed around one by one and match them when passed around several times again in different order. On this day, the teas we sampled included an Uji *gyokuro* priced at 25,000 yen a kilogram; a 15,000 yen a kilo *gyokuro* from Yame in Kyushu; and cups of sencha from Uji, Shizuoka, and Kagoshima each sold for 6,000 yen a kilo. Participants also had to identify the place of origin for processed *gyokuro* and sencha tea leaves from various parts of Japan; determine whether processed tea leaves they were presented with were from first, second, or third harvests; and even discern the variety of tea plant for dry tea leaves they were presented. Even with the assistance of a novice participant's "cheat sheet" I borrowed, I failed at this competition, scoring far below the group's regular members, who had been training for some time. Their teacher, a kind and dynamic tea blender with his own

small company, has taken first place three times in the national competition and is respected for his discerning palate.

This ability to taste and to taste difference—and perceive it via all one’s senses—is imperative to being a successful tea blender. On one visit to Kyoto’s central wholesale market for tea, I heard several blenders discussing a *gyokuro* from Uji. They found it astringent and one of them proclaimed “Come on! This has got to be a *kabusecha*!” When I asked a farmer from Wazuka why Uji City’s *tencha* is picked by hand but very little of Wazuka’s, he told me it was because Uji’s soil is better suited to making high quality *matcha*. The difference between teas can also be felt, as the *chakabuki* contest demonstrates. When I asked a local official from Wazuka about tea from Suizawa in Mie Prefecture, he acknowledged that their tea is incorporated into Uji tea, even Uji’s *gyokuro*. But, he said, their technique for kneading tea is different and results in tea leaves that are tougher than those processed in the Uji area.

In contrast to other areas of Japan, Kyoto’s farmers continue to grow numerous varieties of tea leaves. As with Kyoto vegetables, some of these have names that directly reference their origin: Uji hikari (Uji light), Uji midori (Uji green), Kyō midori (Kyoto green), Oku no yama (far mountain—the name of the famous tea field where the tea is grown), and so on. A farmer may grow many varieties. This is advantageous because any given variety will have its weaknesses—it may be sensitive to frost or pests, for example—and is ready for harvest at a different time, thereby allowing a farmer to balance spread his risks evenly and also spread out the time he spends harvesting (at least in theory). A farmer from Wazuka town told me he grows at least nine different varieties. Another farmer, Horii Nobuo, discovered an old and unidentified variety in a field his family had been farming for generations. He named it Narino in honor of his granddaughter and won awards for it in prefectural and national competitions. His son Chōtarō

continues to grow this variety today to make award-winning top-shelf *matcha*. By and large, fathers teach their sons how to grow tea, harvest it, and process the leaves. I found two exceptions to this trend during my fieldwork. I met a young woman in Shizuoka Prefecture who is taking over her father's farm with her younger sister in charge of processing the tea leaves. I also met a young farmer from Wazuka who took over the family tea fields at an early age after his father died unexpectedly. He learned how to process tea from friends at a shared processing facility.

Agricultural fairs play an important role for the local tea industry, even if they are neither attended by consumers nor widely publicized. As with agricultural fairs for Kyoto vegetables, those for green tea provide an arena in which expert judges can single out farmers producing the highest quality tea and also give feedback to farmers whose tea was found lacking for one reason or another. Judges point out mistakes made growing or processing tea and scribes record these comments for official files and to help farmers improve. Agricultural fairs for tea occur at the local, prefectural, regional, and national levels. Because most of the farmers who participate in the competitions grow various grades of tea and there is a high degree of competition, submitting a tea to these competitions costs them a significant amount of money. Among the costs that might make it expensive are the laborers who hand pick the best and smallest tea leaves, the use of labor-intensive traditional technology like *yoshizu* reed mats for shading, and renting a small facility to process the tea. I had the opportunity to participate in the picking of tea leaves submitted to the prefectural tea competition. It took over 7 hours for a group of at least 60 of us to harvest 35 kilograms of tea leaves, even after we were told it was all right to pick two leaves

with each bud because it had started to rain. When these tea leaves had been processed, we were left with only 7 to 8 kilos.²⁶

Table 5. Varieties of tea grown in Kyoto.

	Variety
1	Gokō
2	Kamakage
3	Kanayama midori
4	Kyōken 283
5	Kyō midori
6	Narino
7	Oku midori
8	Oku no yama
9	Sa midori
10	Sayama kaori
11	Tenmyō
12	Uji hikari
13	Uji midori
14	Yabukita
15	Yabukita missei
16	Yamato midori
17	Zairai (indigenous / heirloom)

Farmers confessed that they participate in the competitions out of a sense of pride; they find satisfaction in doing what they do well and would like to receive official recognition. If they win, the price for the remainder of their submission would increase dramatically. Teas that make it to the agricultural fair can already be worth ten times more than the ones sold at the central

²⁶ Because of the prohibitive cost of hand picking tea, the farmer I helped told me that he is only able to send one such tea per year to the fairs. The other teas he submits will be harvested using machines.

wholesale market. The prices for the rest of the tea they produce—from different fields or different harvests, however, do not go up. This said, because many if not most of the judges are tea blenders, when tea blenders see a prize-winning farmer's tea at the central wholesale market, they are more likely to check it out and consider making a bid for it. Naturally, this effect only lasts so long, as new competitions take place every year.

One could say that the teas that win at the agricultural fair are not the teas with the most superior qualities so much as they are the teas that have the fewest drawbacks. This is because rather than presenting the judges with teas that have been prepared according to the strictest criteria for making delicious tea, cups of tea are prepared with boiling water meant to bring out the teas' bitterness, astringency, and other undesirable qualities.

Although evaluating tea—whether as a tea blender at an auction or a judge for an agricultural fair—requires sharpened senses, and although flavor is crucial to consumer's choices, in agricultural fairs appearance may be said to be the most critical component. Indeed, external appearance is the first characteristic judged and it is presumed to be indicative of the quality of tea more generally. Thus a tea that receives top marks for appearance is expected to do well in other categories and a tea that does not is not. In fact, the ranking of teas in this first round determines the order in which they will be presented in subsequent rounds. How is appearance judged? Workers lay out trays with dry leaves on them on a row of long folding tables. The teas have all been assigned numbers based on when they were received and these will stay the same through each round. Because these numbers have nothing to do with quality, it is rare for the tea randomly numbered one to actually place as number one after all of the rounds of competition. Judges approach the tables, pick the trays up, look at them at various angles, feel the leaves, and even smell them, many of them jotting down notes. When I asked about why the

smell the leaves to judge the appearance, a judge told me that this helped to confirm the variety, which would determine the standards the judges would apply to a given tray. Apparently, this is most difficult to do for *tencha*. They may send each tray up or down the row, where other judges will compare the tray to the other ones in front of them. Though an individual judge can add or remove a line separating teas into separate groups, he cannot send a tray up or down more than one grouping; consensus is key. Thus when I asked one judge why a specific *tencha* was ranked highly in spite of not having the *sae* or clarity that he had told me was important, he said he wasn't sure, but that other judges had decided that. When there seems to be a consensus, the lead judge will ask if he can call the round over, which he does when the others assent, and then the workers will write down the rankings and then return the teas to their metal containers.

That appearance is given so much weight does not go uncontested. During the national tea fair, Kyoto's most authoritative judge looked at the tea that had been ranked number one in appearance for *gyokuro* and grumbled loudly, "It looks good but it stinks of green. You really call this *gyokuro*?" He continued by stating that in Kyoto the term *gyokuro* is only used for tea that has been shaded for over 20 days. The lead judge for the category, a man from Kyoto's *gyokuro* rival of Fukuoka, smiled bitterly and protested that he thinks the tea does have the taste of shade-grown *gyokuro*, that in the city of Yame they do grow *gyokuro* in the shade long enough, and so forth. The argument developed once again when they were deciding—up until the very last minute of the allotted time—where the line should be drawn separating 20 point and 19 point *gyokuro*. The lead judge argued that if there were too many teas (the proposed 17) in the 20 point category, then farmers would be confused about what the standards are. The Kyoto judges argued that they want to make sure that "real" *gyokuro* is not overlooked. The lead judge reminded them that they were judging appearance at the moment. They reasserted the fact that a

good appearance doesn't make it *gyokuro*—it could be *kabusecha*, for example. Once the argument became even more aggressive, the man overseeing the entire competition rushed over to me and yelled at me saying, “Too close! Too close!” I moved a little further away to a spot where, unfortunately, I couldn't hear what the judges were saying (which was, of course, the point).



Figure 12. Two judges smelling steeped tea leaves at Kyoto Prefecture's agricultural fair for tea.

Everything takes place with a meticulous attention to detail. The judging of the appearance of brewed cups of tea, which I am told is about finding “tea that one can imagine tasting delicious,” is no different. Workers lined up at the row of tables pour from large kettles as their leader counts “Three, two, one, ok!” for every cup. Brewing time is monitored with a stopwatch. The tea that ranks highest for this round is whitish, with very little blue. Such color, I am told, is characteristic of hand-picked *isshin niyō* tea. When the color of the water in which *tencha* leaves are steeped in is evaluated—*matcha* is not a category in these competitions

because the farmer is competing and not the tea blenders or other processors—comments include “This one’s red.”

For many of the categories the teas are split into two different sections. One of the ways the judges maintain a standard is by having a tea from the first section on hand when the second section is being evaluated. When this is done for judging the color of steeped tea, one of the judges goes back and tastes the tea representing the first section, commenting “You’ve seriously got to be a true pro to be able to pick up on the taste of this one.” He reiterates that by using boiling water to steep the tea they are trying to draw out the tea’s weak points. By returning to the tea five minutes after it was steeped, he also tells me, it has cooled down and gone through numerous changes.

For the tasting rounds, the judges use spoons to lift the tea out of each cup, slurp the liquid out of the spoon, slurp it again inside their mouth, and then spit them out into a metal jug they carry with them. They talk frankly to each other as they taste: “No good,” “Wasn’t that one light?” “Harsh!” “Terrible!” “This sucks!” “This one and that one taste the same.” Tea dripping down their chins, they go back and taste the teas again: “Tasty!” “Easy to drink,” “Deep and thick taste,” “This tastes strange... Maybe it’s the variety?” “My tongue feels relieved!” “I hate this one, too” (eliciting a reaction of “Me too”), “Kinda bland.” One judge tastes a tea towards the top of the line where the highest ranked teas are, makes a face, says “Harsh stuff,” and moves it down into the next category. He later turns to the chief judge, gestures to a category and says, “From there on it’s no good.” Then he and another judge move an entire category past another! Over time, the inferior teas gather at the bottom of the row of tables. Progressing down the row, one judge laments, “They’ve gotten grassy-smelling.” Here, too, judges use chalk to write comments on the table: “Thick,” “Too much heat applied.” There is a correlation, they tell me,

between a nice-looking cup of tea and its taste, but when I ask about this, without hesitating one of the judges points out a tea that really doesn't taste as good as it looks.

Judges also evaluate teas based on the fragrance of the leaves after they have been steeped: “This smells good, too,” “You like these ones, don't you?” “Too much heat was applied to this one,” “Subtle,” “Savory,” “This is delicious. Top shelf. Do you get it?” “*Asahi*, right?” “This is my favorite,” “This is a real mistake. This one's got to go to the top,” “*Gokō*, no? The smell's a little off...” and even “This one's pretty fruity—is it *samidori*? Citrusy.”

The judges talk as they judge, sharing information (“This is *gokō*.”), asking questions (“What do you think of this color?” “Do you think this was harvested too early?”), making comments (“But there are stems mixed in with these leaves.”). For the younger, less experienced judges, this serves as training. While they have less authority to make decisions about the teas they are judging, they learn about the importance of certain criteria, the intricacies of the process of judging as a team, and they experience all of this first-hand.

Ties, especially for top teas, are discouraged and the judges make every effort to prevent ties. “After all, the goal is to assign ranks,” one judge explained, “Awards are given out, so taking it seriously... Ties are bad.” At the same time, barring unusual circumstances, there should not be a huge point difference between teas ranked next to each other. At the prefectural competition, I noticed the lead judge walking around comparing the results from the taste and aroma competitions thoroughly, himself tasting and smelling the teas again and asking about the rankings taking place in other categories (because the taste and aroma competitions were occurring simultaneously with different judges assigned to different sets of tables).

To what extent can place be tasted? A local official from Kyōtanabe claimed he could recognize *gyokuro* from the town and might even be able to guess whose tea it was. This was not

bragging; he believes that judges have this ability too. Indeed another judge explained that the kneading techniques differ from place to place for *gyokuro* in perceivable ways. Ujitawara's *gyokuro*, he says, is like *kabuse*. This is not a compliment, though he says it gently. The judges in the prefectural competition thought that in the tasting round for *tencha* they had identified *Narino*, the variety for all intents and purposes cultivated solely by a farmer and blender from Uji.

One of the judges participating in the prefectural competition was a farmer who had submitted eight different teas. He said that he couldn't explain how but he knew which teas were his. I pressed him and he began by saying that each processing facility gives each tea different characteristics. It has an especially important effect on the taste of *tencha*, though the producer's preferences are also a factor, influencing the degree to which leaves are steamed, for example. "The ground also really changes things," he said. Sandy soil provides good drainage, while clay soil makes the leaves darker. If it doesn't rain in the summer, plants don't grow well in sandy soil, so sandy soil also has drawbacks. As a farmer who grows *tencha*, he confessed that he has less of an ability to evaluate *sencha*.

In spite of the developed palates, acquired experiences, and embodied knowledge, judging is ultimately subjective. Additionally, not only does the system favor good-looking teas over good-tasting teas, but the judges have to compare these fine teas when they are brewed in such a way as to bring out the worst in them. This is perhaps most clear in that *tencha* leaves are steeped in boiled water, but at no point are the leaves made into *matcha*, the ultimate destination for the vast majority of *tencha* leaves. The *Narino* variety illustrates this problem well; though it is great in *matcha* and in no way overpowering, I was repeatedly told (but not by the farmer growing it) that the leaves smell like old socks! I was incredulous when I first heard this. After

all, if it smells like socks, then how did it ever get recognized as a superior variety in the national competition? Because Kyoto makes so much *tencha*, with the head judge either from Kyoto or Aichi Prefecture (the other major *tencha* producer), judges have more wiggle room to accommodate a specific variety's idiosyncrasies.

For *tencha*, Kyoto's teas had a distinct advantage in that the judges from Kyoto were frequently relied upon by judges from outside for their knowledge and judgment. For example, at one point one judge explained to another that a submission's fragrance was due to the variety. When I later asked if this was the infamous *Narino*, I was told by others that it was surely the case.

The prefectural competition determines which teas will represent Kyoto in the national competition. In 2013, the year I attended these events, Uji City hosted the national competition, allowing Kyoto Prefecture to send more teas than it would have otherwise. For farmers from Kyoto, this carries special significance. Placing towards the top when the national competition is in Kyoto Prefecture makes them proud. Farmers were eager to make it to the national competition in 2013, resulting in 78 more submissions than the year prior. The national agricultural fair for tea differs from Kyoto's competition in several ways. Naturally, the teas in competition and the judges evaluating them come from all over Japan. The categories of tea are also more numerous, as Kyoto Prefecture does not produce much if any *fukamushi cha* (deep-steamed tea) or *kamaryoku cha* (coiled tea), for example. The prefectural competition has a distinct community feel to it, with the final assessment of the year's tea meant not just as an objective evaluation, but carrying notes of praise, satisfaction, pride, and also concern, sympathy, and advice. The tea blenders and local officials serving as judges in the prefectural competition, after all, rely on the farmers and though they have different roles, they are all part of a network.

The year I attended I heard praise for the high quality of *sencha* mixed with criticisms for some of the lower ranked ones, the *kabuse* was seen as having full, gentle flavors this year; and though they had worried about the quality of the *gyokuro* it seemed delicious.



**Figure 13. A local farmer teaches how to spread straw over reed mats
to make traditional shade grown tea.**

Taste is subjective and shaped by elements outside an individual, whether it is one's immediate surroundings, from the physical setting to the music and lighting, or social phenomena that include elements like preferences for specific combinations of flavors or ingredients. One can also talk about taste as a socially scripted experience whereby an individual can learn to discern the taste that a given variable (e.g. soil type, preparation technique,

seasonality) imparts according to a shared language and understanding. Uji tea, thanks to its history, has developed an assorted variety of tastes. Agricultural and processing techniques, many of them time-intensive and laborious, are associated with unique tastes. Because the Uji area has had a tradition of making old-style shade-grown tea, some locals are reluctant to let the tradition disappear. Given the cost of making tea using reed mats with straw strewn on top and consumers' inability to discern the difference between this tea and other cheaper ones, the custom of *yoshizu* shaded tea cultivation is dwindling. During the same period as I was conducting my fieldwork, the Kyoto Prefectural Library and Archives completed the filming of a video documenting the construction of *yoshizu* mats from the point of harvest the whole way through to the covering of the tea plants with the hand-tied mats covered with straw.

In the last session a farmer instructed us how to place wooden stakes in the ground, tie beams to them, spread the *yoshizu* mats on the wooden structures, and finally toss a layer of straw onto the mats. After his demonstration and our filmed attempts at replicating his work, we reconvened inside a nearby building and participated in a blind taste test of two cups of *gyokuro*: one made using *yoshizu*, the other made using the black plastic *kanreisha* sheets. Although I would like to say that I correctly identified which was which, I have to admit that this was unfortunately not the case. In fact, most of those participating in the activities had difficulty discerning the difference between the two. But perhaps what is more important is that the desire to be able to perceive the difference was unmistakable. Indeed, on the first day of the project, when we had cut down the *yoshizu* reeds with sickles, a teacher from Fukui Prefecture whose hobby was green tea, had confessed that she was not confident in her ability to pick up on the special flavors of a *yoshizu* shaded *gyokuro*, but that she wanted to be able to tell the difference, and that she certainly could imagine it.

4.3 KYOTO'S UJI TEA AND ITS BOUNDARIES

4.3.1 Marketing using the Kyoto brand

As is the case with Kyoto vegetables, contemporary Japanese people perceive Uji tea as a brand—and in those terms. On a page on its website titled “Uji tea is the history of Japanese tea,” the tea retailer Fujiya honten begins with the sentence, “Today Uji tea is obviously known as a / the top place brand for Japanese tea, but its origins date far back to olden times” (Fujiya honten n.d.).

Materials that Kyoto Prefecture has prepared for its proposal to have Uji tea recognized as world heritage argue that Uji tea has been a “top brand since the Muromachi era” (Kyoto Prefecture 2013). What allows them to see in the Uji tea of centuries ago a “top brand?” They list four reasons. First, Uji was original, with a tea drinking culture that encompassed *matcha*, *sencha*, and *gyokuro*, ultimately spreading to other places. It also had a “story” filled with myths and symbols. Loyalty also characterized the Uji tea industry, with the development of a system of rights and privileges and the support of the emperor and shogun. Finally, in the Muromachi era, we see the appearance of counterfeit Uji cha. Thus the prefecture’s sees Uji tea as a “top brand” and the Kyoto and Yamashiro area as the “land that nurtured the inventions and heritage of Japanese tea” (Kyoto Prefecture 2013).

When I visited Mie Prefecture, which grows tea leaves that end up in Uji tea, and I spoke to a local potter about local teapots, he remarked that the reason Kyoto has been able to develop tea “cafés” is “It has the atmosphere, right?” As this quote intimates, not every tea producing region has positive associations, a marketable atmosphere, or a distinct place brand. A local official working for the local tea industry in Mie observed that thirty years ago not only were

producers not used to selling local tea as a brand, but there wasn't consumer awareness, even of the fact that the area produced so much tea. Now, however, they are marketing tea from Mie as *Ise cha*, using the name of the old province that also included parts of Gifu and Aichi prefectures and which is also associated with one of Japan's most important shrines.

Companies use the Kyoto brand to market Uji tea. One of Fukujuen's English language brochures draws connections between its tea and celebrated Kyō-yaki ceramic ware that can be used to make more delicious tea (and available for purchase in its stores). Several of its brochures contain a photo of the exterior of its flagship Kyoto store taken during the Gion festival parade, with a float prominent in the foreground and the building the store occupies in the background. Its products also literally deploy Kyoto as a place brand; many of its teas are named after locations or neighborhoods in Kyoto. The retailer Fujiya honten mentioned earlier also uses predictable images of "traditional" Kyoto to market its teas. The first image that visitors to its homepage will see is not that of the tea leaves it sells but rather a photo of a geisha in the company's store (Fujiya-Chaho n.d.).

Marketing materials for the popular tea blender Ippodo also repeat the standard Kyoto tropes. In addition to this, however, they demonstrate how multiple Kyotos—including the contemporary city that draws tourists, rural areas of the larger prefecture that cultivate tea, the mytho-historic "ancient capital" where many of Japan's traditions were developed—are elided: "Ippodo Tea Co. is a Kyoto-based purveyor of premium Japanese green tea—*matcha*, *gyokuro*, *sencha*, and *bancha*—cultivated in the lush fields of Kyoto" and "The home of the traditional tea ceremony, *cha-no-yu*, Kyoto has a long history dating back 1,200 years. It is here, in the ancient capital of Japan, that Ippodo began dealing in Japanese green tea in the middle of the Edo

period.” What is also striking that the specific places that produce the leaves that are the raw materials for the companies tea are invisible, especially those outside of Kyoto prefecture.

4.3.2 **Kyoto tea and Uji tea: Fragmented and overlapping**

The following section probes the ways that boundaries are constructed and made to matter for Uji tea. Much of it comes from the perspectives of farmers and those sympathetic to their positions. Before proceeding, I wish to stress the importance of blending. Tea blenders purchase varying qualities of “rough” tea leaves (that have been steamed and dried and kneaded by farmers in individual or shared processing facilities) from farmers at advantageous prices, mix them together, and then sell them with a much higher price tag. Of course, tea blenders are doing business and many of them make a good living doing so. Many others cannot. One grandfather I met at the wholesale market for tea in Jōyō town told me he attends the market because he remains a registered blender and has the right to attend, but his shop is no longer open. Like many of the shops in his street, which lack parking spots to attract customers, he said, the corrugated metal door is always down.

More importantly, in the tea industry, tea blenders help to stabilize farmers’ income and meet consumer needs. They do so because they take various grades of tea, some from past years, and blend them together. Because blenders buy many grades of tea, farmers are fairly certain that they can get an appropriate price for their tea even if the quality or quantity is lower than the average year. Frost, lack of rain, flooding, as well as extreme temperatures can all make for a poor harvest. Timing is of utmost importance; farmers concerned about quality must provide their plants with plenty of fertilizer at the right time and harvest the leaves when they are at their

peak. Tea blenders can examine tea leaves and tell whether they were picked before, during, or after their peak. Prices, of course, vary accordingly. It is because of such variables that farmers call tea *kitsunegusa*, “fox’s grass,” as one must be crafty to succeed in growing it. Farmers pay close attention to the market when they decide what kind of tea to make the following year as well as what varieties to plant when their trees are no longer producing enough. Tea blenders, though sometimes maligned, make a farmer’s income more secure.

Farmers who sell to tea blenders, whether they do so directly or via the auctions that take place at the prefectural wholesale market, also do not have to engage in packaging, marketing, distribution, or sales, all of which require investments of time and money. Those farmers who choose to bypass tea blenders and sell their own tea must do all of these things, often traveling across the tea to sell their tea and locate new customers. Such independent farmers have no certainty about when they will receive money for their tea, whereas those who sell to blenders receive payment the month after their tea goes to auction. This is an improvement; before the current system with the central wholesale market took hold, there used to be middlemen and farmers were paid a year after they sold their leaves.

Twenty years ago the legal definition for Uji tea was much looser than it is today. Restrictions requiring that the tea be blended in the Uji area by a registered tea blender were already in play. This was particularly meaningful because the number of registered tea blenders was limited, one of the more closed aspects of local food culture. At this time, however, it was possible to incorporate tea from just about anywhere in Japan in Uji tea. This is because the greater Uji area includes tea production—but notably not blending—areas in Kyoto, Nara, Shiga, and Mie. Consumers, however, complained when they found that sometimes the amount of tea

produced within Kyoto Prefecture was quite low and that tea from other parts of Japan, such as Fukuoka Prefecture, was also often included.

Customers expected Uji tea to be from Uji in every sense. If customers wanted good tea from Fukuoka, they could purchase Yame tea. They wanted the Uji difference to be one that was concrete and transparent rather than ambiguous and abstract. In order to respond to consumer demands and also protect the Uji name, when the Kyoto Tea Cooperative registered *Uji cha* as a collective regional trademark in 2006, they restricted their tea included to that from Kyoto, Shiga, Nara, and Mie Prefectures, with Kyoto Prefecture contributing at least 34%.

This move meant that the term *Uji cha* could only be used to refer to tea from those four prefectures and blended by registered blenders. Strictly speaking, neither unblended tea from Uji City nor tea from elsewhere blended by registered blenders could be called *Uji cha*.

This said, new terms were created to accommodate these kinds of tea, too. An *Ujicha* blend (*Uji cha burendo*), for example is a tea that has at least 50% of Uji tea in it, but also includes tea from other parts of Japan. Morita-san, the tea blender with the very discriminating palate I mentioned early also talks about *Kyoto rashii ocha*, or Kyotoish tea, to designate blends of leaves that may come from various places but nevertheless possess the characteristics of tea from Kyoto. He met a magazine challenge for creating an affordable yet tasty green tea blend by mixing various varieties of sencha leaves from Kagoshima Prefecture. He described the result, priced at 1,000 yen for 100 grams, as a “refined Kyoto-style tea.”

A case study of Kyoto’s green tea industry demonstrates again how places can be brands in the broad sense of the word and can also be used as brands, narrowly speaking, to organize production, marketing, distribution, and sales for specific commodities. Though such brands are

place-based they can be opened up, perhaps even somewhat dislocated, as the Uji tea example shows.

For several years now, Kyoto Prefecture's local officials inspired by moves to inscribe Mount Fuji and *washoku*, "traditional" Japanese cuisine, on UNESCO lists, have been at work developing a proposal to register Uji tea UNESCO world heritage. In their considerations for putting together their application, local officials identified many aspects of local tea culture worthy of international recognition and local pride. Kyoto Prefecture's agricultural fair for tea; the Uji tea agricultural fair; the tea field competition; and a competition for kneading green tea by hand: these are recognized as important institutions to the maintenance of green tea culture for future generations (Kyoto Prefecture 2013). Another element mentioned is the tradition of *Hachijūhachi ya no hi*, or the day of the 88th night (88 days after the onset of the traditional spring), which is traditionally the first day for *shincha* or "new" tea (the year's harvest of first flush tea). The impact of revered historical figures like Myōei and Nagatani Sōen is also articulated. This application acknowledges the different ways that actors in the tea industry have reacted to changing circumstances over time. For instance, it points out some of the different forms that today's tea fields can take: hillside fields harvested using hand held machines, flat fields on which tractorlike harvesters can be used, shaded tea fields harvested by hand, and shaded tea fields harvested using hand held machines. They also point to the invention of shaded tea gardens, sencha steaming techniques, and *gyokuro* tea in various parts of the Uji area. Uji tea's charm they attribute to its 800 year old history as a consumer good, the craftsmanship involved in all aspects of its commodity chain, and its impact on local culture, industry, and

landscape / cityscape. Indeed, it argues that Uji tea and related cultural treasures like *kaiseki* cuisine and pottery are at the heart of Japanese culture.

One fascinating element of this campaign is the notion that recognition of Uji cha's excellence from UNESCO will function as a kind of local PR, boosting both local consumption and the valorization of tradition. In essence, UNESCO is perceived as a brand that can benefit the local tea industry, which seems to be having a more and more difficult time persuading people to brew green tea at home and work. As the project's materials indicate, participating members have put serious thought into trying to answer the question of what is valuable about Uji tea to Japan, the world, and the future. They ask themselves three questions about the future of Uji tea culture: 1) In a hundred years time, will tea fields have disappeared as a result of a decrease in the farming population? 2) With high quality tea selling poorly, will the techniques of reed mat shading and harvesting have disappeared? 3) As the number of people who don't know how to make tea themselves increases, will drinking tea made with a *kyūsu* become intangible cultural heritage? (Kyoto Prefecture 2013)

At one point in the pamphlet on Uji tea directed at children mentioned earlier, a spectacled tea expert addresses two Uji schoolchildren, saying "If you two have grown up in Kyoto, at home you always drink Uji tea" (Kyoto Tea Cooperative n.d.: 2). Confident though this statement may seem, those working in the tea industry know that this is no longer the case. Whereas green tea was once the beverage of choice in Japan, carbonated drinks, coffee, and an increasingly large array of alcoholic drinks have all cut into green tea's share of the beverage market. One sign of the current state of affairs has to do with the *kyūsu*, the tea pot, in which tea was traditionally steeped. Once a household staple, *kyūsu* are becoming harder and harder to find. An elementary school teacher told me that when he went to conduct parent-teacher visits in

Uji City, where he teaches, he was aghast to hear a microwave timer go off a moment before his pupil's mother returned with a warm cup of green tea. Decades earlier it would have been unthinkable for someone from Uji to pour green tea from a plastic bottle into a cup and microwave it for a guest. If this is happening in Uji, he said, it must be more so everywhere.

Far from new, bottled tea has been around for the past three decades. The phenomenon took off first with metal containers and then with bottles made of polyethylene terephthalate (and therefore known as PET bottles). Large beverage manufacturers like Kirin, Suntory, and Coca-Cola all offer their own bottled teas and specialized companies like Itō en have made a name doing so.

Even with PET bottle tea, branding—including place branding—plays a role. Suntory's Iemon deploys the Uji and Kyoto brands to send the message that its teas are high class premium products. Iemon's labels and marketing materials stress its link to the established tea blending company Fukujuen and its location in Kyoto, even going so far as to call Kyoto the “birthplace” of Japanese tea. Though its website touts Fukujuen's careful blending of 2000 different kinds of Japanese green tea leaves, it omits any mention of where the leaves come from. One can only imagine that they are primarily from outside of Kyoto Prefecture. The online menus for the Iemon Salon in Kyoto City similarly leaves out the place of origin for its teas, with the exception of its aged *sencha* from the town of Wazuka.

The Uji in “Uji cha” or Uji tea, then, is polysemic. It refers most obviously to Uji City, the primary location in which Uji cha blending takes place. It also refers to the land around the Uji River where tea leaves are grown. But, as with “Kyoto,” this “Uji” is not always so territorially grounded.

The following examples illustrate the extent of what I mean by the deterritorialization of Uji. In the summer of 2014, when I returned to visit Kyoto, I took a break from research to go to Lake Biwa with a friend. We took a ferry to Chikubu Island to visit Tsukubusuma Shrine. While waiting for the return ferry we decided to buy some shaved ice to beat the heat and right there in between the signs for strawberry and the mysterious “sky blue” flavor was one for “Uji” shaved ice, with a note underneath saying that “Uji kintoki”—which contains the additional topping of adzuki beans and sometimes condensed milk and small balls made of rice flour—was an extra hundred yen (Figure 14). Green tea flavored syrup is often called “Uji” even though it is rarely if ever made from *matcha* powder from Uji and its environs.



Figure 14. A sign for “Uji” shaved ice in Shiga Prefecture.

Another very different example of the deterritorialization of the Uji name would be the city of Kyōtango on the coast of Kyoto Prefecture, an area that was once supported by an active

textile industry supplying kimono manufacturers with fabric. Since the decline in demand for kimonos and the increasing availability of suitable inexpensive fabrics from overseas, towns located on Kyoto's Tango peninsula have faced new economic challenges. The depopulation of rural areas has made strategizing more complicated. One response has been to increase agricultural production. This area has benefited from the creation of the Kyō Brand for prefectural produce. The Tango area has also begun to produce tea for export, something that was not done before the 20th century. Indeed, the area is far removed from the greater Uji area that includes portions of Nara, Mie, and Shiga Prefectures. Unlike Uji City, Yame City, and Shizuoka City, for example, as a place Tango has no associations with tea in the minds of Japanese consumers. If the Tango area were to sell its tea as "Tango cha," then, it would be appealing to consumers as a locally produced item that offers the added value of the local. The tango area's tea producers sell the majority of their tea at the central wholesale market for Kyoto Prefecture's tea producers, where Kyoto Prefecture's tea blenders or registered middlemen purchase it. This tea, not considered as desirable as that from other parts of Kyoto Prefecture, is blended with other leaves to make Ujicha or Ujicha blend teas. Tango's tea farmers do also create their own local tea blends. When I visited the Tango area in the summer of 2011, I found locally produced tea that appropriated the Uji name. The tea was sold not as "Tango cha," but rather as "Kyōtango Uji cha," though this was obviously not in compliance with the official definition for Uji tea. The designation of this tea as "Kyōtango Uji cha" taps into the appeal of local products as well as the brand value of Uji tea. As for the name Kyōtango, it was adopted by the new municipality that was formed when six towns from Kyoto Prefecture merged in 2014. Like the city of Nagaokakyō in southern Kyoto, the decision to include the character for capital in the new name was likely motivated at least in part by the understanding that doing so would

clearly situate the new entities in Kyoto and therefore allow the new locality to capitalize upon the Kyoto brand to attract residents, companies, and for selling services and products. While there are many towns in Japan named Omiya and Yasaka (two of the towns that joined to form Kyōtango), for example, there is only one Kyōtango and anyone encountering the name for the first time could guess where it is located.

In February, well before the first tea of the year has been harvested, Uji City hosts a spring tea festival. This event demonstrates the polysemic nature of Uji tea and reveals the presence of flexible, if at times tense, boundaries. The first 500 individuals admitted to the festival are given a free bowl of *cha jiru* or tea soup, a traditional food from the Yamashiro area of southern Kyoto Prefecture. Entering the second floor hall, a poster of Kyoto Prefecture is immediately visible. This poster divides the prefecture into municipalities, the tea field acreage of each represented by an appropriately sized tea storage jar. The amounts of tea produced by each municipality, as well as the total sales amounts, are listed in a table in the poster's lower left corner.

When one enters this hall, one finds tea blenders and retailers with tables to the right, where they sell loose leaf tea and also a wide variety of sweets. Given that these are made from blended tea, the designation of Uji tea seems appropriate. The majority of the room, however, is dedicated to *unblended* tea. Indeed, the municipalities listed in the poster have set up booths with posters advertising their town and with equipment ready for preparing samples of their most representative products. Thus Uji City offers *matcha*, Wazuka sencha, and Kyōtanabe *gyokuro*. Recall that the term “Uji cha” is officially restricted to describe blended teas. Because the teas served at the spring tea festival are not, in fact, blended teas—in fact, some of them have won

prizes as agricultural products at the prefectural and national levels—they are not Uji teas in the strictest sense. Yet one could not have Uji tea without having separate teas, and especially artisanal teas like these; tea blenders must have good quality tea produced by farmers they can depend on. And so the spring Uji tea festival exists, with booths where one can sample representative teas from various locations in the prefecture, almost every one of these teas the product of individual farming households.

Tea contributes to the identity of these cities and towns. Place making and spatial practices inscribe the landscape and cityscape with tea and the tea, likewise, with place. A hiking map distributed by Minamiyamashiro Village, for instance, suggests that more of the village is occupied by tea fields than anything else, though wild boars and mushrooms also feature prominently. The Development Council Township of Uji Tea (the Japanese name *Uji cha no sato dzukuri kyougikai* or Uji Tea Hometown-making Council seems more interesting) carves out the greater Uji area into five different courses for sight-seeing: the Uji tea historical and cultural course, the cultural landscape and tea field course, the soothing green tea garden and sparkling water course, the tea and path to Nara course, and the *gyokuro* and *tencha* production area course. All of the areas included may contribute to the Uji tea phenomenon, but they do so differently, with their unique characteristics acknowledged.

The town of Kyōtanabe, I have noted, is known for its *gyokuro*. When I visited the Kyoto Prefecture Central Wholesale Market for Tea on May 5, 2012 for its 12th tea auction of the year, the top selling *gyokuro* leaves had been grown in Kyōtanabe. The most expensive *gyokuros* sold at 23,116; 22,500; 22,019; and 21,222 yen per unit. Tea blenders told me that these had a strong, sweet taste full of umami. The sixth-most expensive *gyokuro* leaves at this auction came from Uji tawara, fetching 21,002. The tea blenders attending these auctions must take a lot into

consideration when they place their bids. Ignoring the strategic elements of bidding and customs including high bids meant as gifts to dedicated producers, tea blenders take note of the information displayed with the “rough” leaves: the producer, the production area, the processing facility. They note the color of the tea, the smell of its leaves, and the flavors. The vocabulary for discussing flavors includes phrases like *hi ga haitta* (literally, “the fire has entered,” signifying that an unwanted roasted flavor is present) and *me ga wakai* (literally, “the buds are young,” meaning that one can tell from the flavor that the leaves were harvested too early). Tea blenders keep in mind the desirable properties of each variety of tea leaf. Thus *gokō* should possess a less powerful and more nuanced flavor, in contrast to the flavor-forward *samidori*, for example.

Uji City itself holds strong when it comes to the *tencha* that is used for making *matcha*. In the 12th *tencha* auction of the year, the only hand-picked leaves were from Uji and ranged in price from 12,121 to 45,000. Notably, these teas were auctioned off separately from other *tencha* leaves as “Uji *tencha*.”

4.3.3 The Town of Wazuka’s Brand: Emerging from Uji’s shadow

The town of Wazuka produces the majority of the leaves destined to become what is called “Uji” sencha. In spite of this fact, while the Uji name is one widely recognized all over Japan, Wazuka remains more or less unknown. In recent decades, local residents with connections to the local tea industry—which includes virtually everyone—want the town to emerge from Uji’s shadow and become a recognizable brand in its own right.

Wazuka’s tea production is said to date back to the 16th century (Planning and Coordination Division 2012: 8). Today, tea is central to the town economically and culturally. But the tea produced by Wazuka’s farmers is also integral to Uji tea. To illustrate this, let me use

the example of a visit I made to the Kyoto Prefecture's Central Wholesale Market for tea in Jōyō City for the second green tea auction of 2013 (April 27th). These first auctions of the year are terribly important to tea blenders because there consumer demand is for sencha is highest during the *shincha* ("new tea") season and because they want to release their blends to customers as soon as they can. On this day 57 lots of sencha were auctioned. Only five did not come from Wazuka. Of these, a hand kneaded tea from Minami Yamashiro town sold for 22,000 and four teas from Kamo sold for under 7,000. Wazuka's sencha ranged in price from 4,573 to 23,810. Wazuka obviously provided tea blenders with most of their tea leaves for making Uji sencha. Those blenders who were not able to successfully outbid their colleagues in these first auctions of the year would have to release tea made from leftover stored leaves—not shincha, make Uji cha blends (in which they can incorporate lower amounts from Kyoto Prefecture but will sell at lower prices), wait and buy more aggressively in the next auction (fortunately occurring every day during this season), or try to buy directly from a local farmer. Although the importance of Wazuka's tea leaves to the creation of Uji tea is particularly evident during this season, Uji dominates sales of sencha throughout the year.

When I told friends that I was headed to the town to conduct research their reactions usually consisted of a befuddled "Why?" or an even more confused "Where?" At present, only individuals knowledgeable about Uji tea likely know of Wazuka. This explains why Iemon Salon's web page, which surprisingly identifies its use of aged Wazuka sencha though it lists no place of origin for any of its other teas, it names it "Kyoto Prefecture's Wazuka Town." It seems that though Wazuka is named, customers may not be likely to know where it is.

Wazuka's residents' reasons for wanting to establish a Wazuka brand are fairly straightforward. Most households in the town have connections to the green tea industry in some

way, whether they sell equipment for processing tea leaves, work in the local Chamber of Commerce, or are tea farmers themselves. Decreases in green tea consumption and the threat of increasing depopulation in this town without a train station of its own mean that the town is in danger of becoming a *genkai shūraku*, a hamlet on the verge of disappearing. One resident explained to me that increased visibility for Wazuka might help it retain local businesses like the local dentist, elementary school, and so on, thus also arrest depopulation. This is why concerned local officials and residents have taken to creating and promoting their own place brand.



Figure 15. The town of Wazuka’s *Chagenkyō*.

In 2008 Wazuka succeeded in getting “Wazuka Town’s Uji cha Tea Fields Landscape” (also called “Uji tea country: Wazuka’s Tea Fields”) registered as Kyoto Prefecture’s first Landscape Resource. Both names index the locality of Wazuka and the Uji tea brand, but the

difference is worth nothing. While the latter subsumes Wazuka within Uji as one of many production areas, the former prioritizes the location of Wazuka, rendering Uji tea its product.

Although Wazuka's might seem to be a parochial sort of localism bent on erecting boundaries and protecting them, actors in Wazuka show little sense of superiority about their tea and express no desire to be cut off from the Uji world. To the contrary, they wish to engage with tea farmers, blenders, retailers, and consumers the world over in order to achieve the brand recognition that they see as Wazuka's due.

Take Wazuka's annual Teatopia Festival, called the *Chagenkyō* or the "Birthplace of Tea" Festival in Japanese, a reference to the majestic tea field covered slope in Wazuka of the same name (Figure 15). Getting there from Kyoto City requires an hour or more by train, with at least one transit, and a bus ride from the closest train station. It is clear to anyone in attendance that Wazuka is rural. Yet when one passes through the gate and enters the festival's grounds, it also becomes apparent that in spite of the location and the desire to promote Wazuka and its tea, the festival is surprisingly international with growers and retailers from all over the world occupying the booths that line both sides of the path encircling the grounds. When I attended the festival in 2013, I sampled teas from northeastern Japan, China, Sri Lanka, and Hawai'i. The woman growing tea and processing tea in Hawai'i, in fact, had learned her trade in Wazuka while interning with a local tea company.

I experienced Wazuka's connection-making firsthand when I visited Fukuoka City on the island of Kyūshū to attend the 2013 "National Delicious *Gyokuro* Steeping Competition" and to visit the town of Yame, which is well-known for its tea. A tea farmer from Uji had arranged for an acquaintance of his from Yame (whom it later turns out he only met once—and briefly at that)

also attending the competition to meet me and show me around her hometown. As soon as I met the woman, she excitedly reported that there were others from Kyoto in attendance. Sure enough, when we entered the room in which the competition was taking place I recognized a woman from Uji and another from Wazuka. They and a few more friends had come to Fukuoka Prefecture not only to compete, but also so that they could tour Yame and in particular the Hoshino area the following day.

Several of these women had passed the exam to become official “Japanese tea instructors.” As with the *gyokuro* steeping competition, the *Nihoncha insutorakuta*- system recognizes a rich diversity of tea styles. One of the association’s flyers features drawings for three cups of tea. On the left side is a cup with a handle with reddish tea inside and the label “red tea” (black tea) underneath. In the middle is a handleless round cup of green tea with the label “Japanese tea” underneath. A cup with a lid and saucer, identified as “Oolong tea” sits to the right. In between these drawings are equal signs that reinforce the message in bold black letters below them: “Actually, all three cups are made from the same tea leaves.” The women from Kyoto Prefecture displayed the same respect and curiosity to understand the diversity of tea preparation and consumption styles.

For Hata-san, the woman from Wazuka, in particular, Hoshino was of special interest. She explained that it is “Yame’s Wazuka”: it is a small place geoclimactic suited to green tea production that contributes to a larger brand (Yame) but—unlike Wazuka—has asserted a brand presence that resonates. Wazuka and Yame have, in fact, coordinated visits for government employees from one to the other in the past and have found informational exchange beneficial. The women from Kyoto invited me to join their tour of Yame and I accepted. When we visited fields of *gyokuro* tea that have won six times in the national agricultural fairs, Hata-san turned to

me and remarks that this is what Wazuka needs to do—if the town of Wazuka worked as hard to support farmers sending tea to competitions, it could bring home more prizes that would do much to promote the Wazuka brand. In her estimation, this was why Hoshino has been able to distinguish itself as more than just a part of larger Yame while Wazuka remains subsumed by Uji's shadow.

Of course, Wazuka is not the only place in Kyoto taking note of Yame's success. The town of Kyōtanabe is too, though more because it considers Yame its rival in *gyokuro* competitions. Interestingly enough, the competition between the two places is not simply about who can produce the best quality *gyokuro*, but also about whose variety of *gyokuro* is best. In other words, each place produces an identifiably different *gyokuro* and in recent years the competition has been fierce. A local official from Kyōtanabe explained the differences to me: Yame's tea leaves are thin, greenish blue, and attractive leaves that produce a clear cup of tea, while Tanabe's is a good tasting, cloudy cup, the leaves darker and thicker. A judge at the prefectural competition gave a similar opinion, stating that *gyokuro* from Kyoto Prefecture tends to have more umami, but *gyokuro* from Fukuoka wins when it comes to appearance. Another farmer confirmed this, using the phrase *chikara dzuyoi* (powerful) to describe Kyoto's *gyokuro*. Given that, as I explained earlier, the appearance of the dry tea leaves works as a coefficient for judging the rest of the characteristics, the competition's structure disadvantages Tanabe. The friction and competition came to a front at 2013's national competition, with a lead judge from Yame and a senior judge from Uji arguing over which was the "true" *gyokuro*. Strikingly, they were referencing specific cups of tea on the table before them, teas that were not labeled in terms of provenance. Yet they could clearly tell which was which.

People from Wazuka are working to create a Wazuka brand. By any definition, Wazuka is a place. It has a strong sense of place for those individuals who have lived, worked, or even visited there. Though one cannot say that it does not have a brand—every place, I would argue, can be said to have a brand—this brand is not known by very many people nor does it have particularly strong associations. Interestingly enough, I found that if anything, most of the people from outside of Wazuka who knew about the “Wazuka brand” associated it with the proactiveness of Wazuka’s dedicated residents to create a local brand. While this has clear links to qualities like integrity, loyalty, and passion it has yet to be unambiguously linked to specific kinds of tea that are rendered more appealing because of this association.

4.4 CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THE UJI BRAND

When William Ukers published *All about Tea*, a two-volume tome comprehensively describing the agricultural, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of tea across the world, he could say of tea in Japan: “The entire population—men, women, and children—all drink tea constantly; in fact, the business of the empire is said to be transacted over the teacup” (Ukers 1935a: 431). In spite of the persistence of the characterization of Japan as a tea drinking nation, circumstances have changed significantly.

Consumption has indeed changed. Japanese consumers buy more than 40% less loose leaf green tea than they did 50 years ago. In a related trend, many households no longer own a *kyūsu*, the traditional teapot with a handle on the side (Figure 16). A barber in his 40s I spoke to, for instance, told me he probably had one at home but doesn’t know where it is. His family

prepares cold barley tea in the summer, for which they do not need a *kyūsu*. Many people end up giving the teapots away to second-hand shops, he said. The amount of money consumers spend on green tea hasn't changed much in the past 40 years. The average price for 100 grams of green tea is about the same as it was in 1985, though it did increase in the early to mid 2000s.



Figure 16. Traditional *kyūsu* from Mie Prefecture.

Tea production has also changed over the past half-century. The wholesale market figures for 2013 show an overall drop in the amount of tea auctioned—from 2,045,889 to 908,210 kg (from 4,670,285,106 to 2,773,618,331 yen). It seemed likely, I was told, that farmers were also transitioning from growing *tencha* to *gyokuro* and from *sencha* to *kabusecha*.

An overwhelming number of households growing tea in Kyoto Prefecture are headed by farmers over the age of 60 (534 households out of 888) (Kyoto Prefecture 2013), a worrisome trend given that many of these households lack successors. This does not mean that these farmers will be the last ones to farm their tea fields. Sometimes sons end up quitting their jobs and taking

over, as is the case with a farmer from Wazuka I mentioned earlier. Less frequently, daughters can take over, as with the organic Shizuoka farmer I met. Some younger people may also decide to enter farming, though it is especially hard for more isolated places like Wazuka to attract new residents.

It is not just farmers who are disappearing, but also traditional knowledge and intangible cultural heritage. Kyoto Prefecture is witnessing a decline in understanding of how to knead tea by hand, a skill that local experts told me really gives the tea a distinct taste that is difficult to explain. In 2008 Kyoto Prefecture registered “Hand kneading techniques for Uji tea” as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property (Kyoto Prefecture 2013). Horii Chōtarō, asserting the importance of kneading to the final product reflected that, “It’s limited, the number of people who can make true Uji style tea.”

One of Horii-san’s fields belongs to the group of seven famous tea fields dating back to the Muromachi era. Unfortunately, his is the only one that remains; the others have all been turned into residential areas. He took me to see this field. It is small, with a stone monument marking it and a sign explaining its significance. He told me that up until about 1975 the area was primarily tea fields, vegetable fields, and graves. The cemeteries and the lack of a road helped preserve the area, though now it too is mostly filled with homes. Horii-san said that people didn’t talk about the history before, not even the 7 famous tea fields. Now that they have largely disappeared, it’s a different story.

The Uji brand is obviously a mutable entity that has been useful to Kyoto’s local tea industry in a multitude of ways. Discussions with tea farmers, tea blenders, consumers, and local officials suggest that Uji tea is at a crossroads. Horii-san put it this way: “The Uji brand makes it easier to sell tea, but current trends are not looking good.” He continued by noting “We have to

protect the real thing. But farmers have to make a living too...” Interpreting recent consumption patterns and signals from government and markets and forming a long-term strategy is difficult and risky, even if different strategies may prove viable for certain farmers and blenders.

The Uji brand has allowed farmers and retailers in increasingly difficult circumstances some tools for maneuvering. One of these has been the development of new ways of consuming tea. Whereas in earlier times, tea was made prepared at home or work as a warm beverage shared with family, friends, and business acquaintances, tea consumption has literally changed shapes. The vending machines and convenience stores ubiquitous in contemporary Japanese life sell hot and cold varieties of green tea in plastic bottles. *Matcha* green tea has evolved from being the product of the tea ceremony to the central ingredient in cookies, ice cream, and other sweets.

Among the materials compiled as part of the project to have Uji tea enshrined as UNESCO world heritage is a timeline for Japanese green tea consumption. 1200 years ago, at the beginning of the Heian era, people drank tea that had been boiled. 800 years ago, in the Kamakura era, consumption involved putting tea in hot water and drinking it. 400 years ago, people steeped tea leaves in hot water, then strained and drank the liquid. The document then considers what tea consumption is like today with surprising objectivity, listing the following trends to have potentially durable influence: “Edible tea? PET bottle tea? Health? Etc. etc.” (Kyoto Prefecture 2013).

The gourmet sweets company Malebranche has enjoyed great success with its green tea based snacks *cha no ka* (fruit of tea). Indeed, it has even opened up mini stores dedicated solely to sales of these *langues de chat* cookies. Marketing materials for these cookies as a high quality product feature photos of three men holding in their hands tea leaves in different stages of processing: the fifth generation farmer with a basket of leaves, the tea blender with a plate of

ground leaves, and the chef with a tray of the green *langues de chat*. Photos of a tea field, a woman hand picking tea, and the emblem 「京」 (kyō, meaning capital and referring to Kyoto) being imprinted on a cookie, all serve to emphasize the localness of the product and its Kyotoishness. Predictably, the most prevalent color on these pages is green, a color that Sakamoto has found to be the color that consumers deem most representative of Kyoto's appeal. Yet items purported to have Uji tea in them are not restricted to elite sweets makers—one can even find such products such as green tea flavored KitKats in convenience stores.

Although the changes are pronounced, I do not wish to characterize this as a “break” with tradition. What counts as tradition, after all, is determined in the present, with certain characteristics and their historical continuity deemed more important than others. Thus, although one certainly did not have a proliferation of green tea flavored products available when William Ukers visited Japan to conduct research for his 1935 volume on tea, he tasted what he calls “ceremonial-tea ice cream” that is “flavored with the delicate Uji tea,” which impressed him enough that he includes the recipe (Ukers 1935a: 458). He also mentions the existence of “tealate,” powdered green tea dissolved in cocoa butter and sold in cubes that can be used in baked goods lieu of baking chocolate, imparting a distinct green tea flavor. Though “tealate” itself seems to have been unsuccessful, its invention served as a harbinger of the green tea sweets boom that we witness today.

The tea leaves in bottled tea and tea sweets need not be of superior quality. After all, bottled tea is not fresh, nor are the consumers buying it likely concerned most about taste. Furthermore, sweets manufacturers add sugar and other ingredients to the mix, making the tea powder itself a small portion of product, albeit an important one. I spoke to a tea blender who said that for sweets bitterness is desirable—it makes them *matcha*-like—but that manufacturers

do not care about quality. Unlike tea blenders, who try to get the best tea leaves they can for a reasonable if not advantageous price, manufacturers calculate the amount they can spend on Uji tea and have a blender obtain usable tea for that price or lower. So why buy Uji tea at all, then? “They want the power of the Uji brand,” he told me.

When Starbucks first launched its *matcha* lattes and Haagen-Dazs created its *matcha* ice cream, they purchased tea from Kyoto Prefecture since Kyoto produced more *matcha* than any other part of Japan. They wanted large quantities of inexpensive *matcha*, Haagen-Dazs specifically asking for inferior second flush *tencha*. Aichi Prefecture also produced a small amount of *matcha*, however, and it identified an opening for growth. Its strategy of producing inexpensive *matcha* for the new processed food market proved successful and Starbucks now sources its *matcha* from there. Recently, 7&i convenience stores (formerly 7Eleven) have started carrying Uji cans of *gyokuro*. When the same beverage company, Itōen, launched an Uji *shincha* (“new tea,” indicating the year’s recent spring harvest) drink, tea prices rose. When a company as large as Itōen goes into a town like Ujitawara and purchases the majority of its *gyokuro*, the structure of the tea economy changes. Indeed, one tea blender told me that before it happened, he would have had a very difficult time imagining farmers in Ujitawara making *gyokuro*—“It’s a *sencha* production area.”

Kyoto’s tea farmers may not be able to produce inexpensive *matcha* in the volume that Aichi’s farmers can. But they do have the Uji brand. Some local farmers have taken advantage of this and grow tea leaves appropriate for making sweets and such. There are some distinct advantages to doing so. Demand for lower-grade Kyoto *matcha* is increasing and seems predictable. Farmers who grow tea leaves destined to be incorporated into processed foods can

worry less about the timing for harvest and the size of the leaves, for example, as their product can visibly be of lesser quality since it will be one ingredient among many.

Nowadays, many different grades of *tencha* (*Uji tencha*, *shocha tencha*, *nicha tencha*, *aki tencha* and so forth) are harvested, each with different standards. The only thing these have in common that makes them technically *tencha* is the use of a *tencharō*, the oven in which the leaves are dried. In some parts of Kyoto, inexpensive *tencha* is made without the use of shading techniques—farmers simply roast what are ostensibly *sencha* leaves using a *tencharō*. This is all relatively new. It was only about twenty-five years ago that farmers even started harvesting a second flush for *tencha*. Before that time, there was really no point because the leaves are too astringent to be used to make good *matcha*. Farmers from Uji City, which is renowned for its high quality *matcha*, only harvest the first flush of *tencha* tea leaves.

The disadvantages of this economic transition, however, occur at a larger scale. Much of this comes down to threats posed to the continued existence of traditions, skills, and agrobiological as well as cultural diversity. Farmers who cultivated perhaps eight to a dozen different varieties of tea plants, something that is rare in other areas of Japan, transition to growing one variety when they decide to focus on producing sweets-grade *tencha*. Given that processing facilities for such tea leaves are larger, standardized factories different from those of the past, this requires significant investments. This shift in production also phases out small-scale processing facilities, many of which had idiosyncratic processing styles for which they were well known and which produced tea with the “processing facility’s taste” (*kōba no aji*).

4.5 KYOTO TEA AT A CROSSROADS

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, when I began my field research on Kyoto's edible brand I had no inclination to conduct research on Kyoto's tea industry. I knew that the Uji brand existed, but tea did not interest me much. My "aha" moment came when an invitation was extended to me to participate in Kyoto University's Summer Design School. The Summer Design School is an annual program in which small teams, most of them students attending Kyoto University's MBA program, compete by attempting to successfully design a solution to a particular problem. I was invited because one of the teams had been assigned the task of finding a way to market Japanese green tea abroad, and to French people in particular. As someone with a French background (and not as a food scholar or anthropologist), the team members and advisors thought it might be a good idea to have me on board. While our team was meant to find a marketing game plan for Japanese green tea in general, given the workshop's location in Kyoto, much of the information and opinions shared with us had great relevance to Kyoto's tea industry.

From the beginning, our team was told that Japanese green tea consumption was going down and that Japanese companies should think about new markets and new strategies for selling tea. Over the course of the weeklong workshop, we visited tea blender Fukujūen's flagship Kyoto store, the Lupicia tea store, a Starbucks, and received input from a tea farmer, a tea blender, a local government official, and professors. Team members floated many aspects of Japanese green tea to focus on—health benefits, its potential as a nutraceutical or beauty supplement, relaxing qualities, and the ultimate selection: its classiness. This, we asserted in our presentation, would allow us to distinguish Japanese green tea from other kinds of green tea that might be less expensive. We would invite European women to relax in green-tea infused

footbaths. We would open *cha* salons for savoring green tea in an appropriately sophisticated atmosphere. We would sponsor dinners with pairings in which each course features food cooked with green tea—the dessert a *matcha gâteau opera*—and is accompanied by a green tea chosen by our professional *chamulier*. Our team ended up receiving first place from the judges.

Kyoto's tea industry is increasingly aware of its position vis-à-vis locations at great distances from Uji City. Indeed, actors in Kyoto's tea industry—tea blenders, government officials, farmers, and tea instructors—travel overseas to promote Uji tea and to conduct research. A group also traveled to New York to conduct firsthand research on Starbucks the year that green tea lattes were launched and the company bought all of the prefecture's cheap *tencha* (which it no longer does). A group of blenders, farmers, and local officials visited China and Taiwan to find out more about how tea is grown and processed there. This does not stem from a competitive attitude to outdo farmers from elsewhere in an attempt to gain market share. Rather, local stakeholders, wanting to create relationships with tea producers and consumers across the globe, are eager to learn about other teas and hope there are lessons they can apply to improve their own situation and the position of Uji tea. One afternoon, when I visited a tea farmer in Wazuka, he regretted that he could not share any of his favorite Taiwanese tea, purchased on a recent trip, with me since he had finished it all.

Tea blender Kagata Kōji of Rishōen lives in Uji City, attends seasonal ceremonies related to green tea at shrines and temples, and has strict standards about what he considers to be good Uji tea. When I first spoke to him in the fall of 2012, he calculated a total of 21 Michelin stars accumulated by his customers. Kagata-san also actively promotes Uji tea abroad, pushing the envelope by pairing green tea with French cheese and preparing tea with chilled, naturally carbonated water. At the THÉxpo event in Normandie, France, Kagata-san received comments

such as “The very peculiar taste of Livarot and the intense fragrance of the Hōjicha—this is a good association,” “Sencha brings out the hazelnut aromatic undertones found in Comté,” and “Why not open a tasting room in Paris?”

More domestically oriented innovation also occurs. A younger tea blender says that with stores that specialize in tea going under, “We want to become tea blenders that evolve.” He mentions transitioning to a mail-order system as one option. Given recent trends in nutraceuticals and the like, he sees products like a green tea conditioner for dyed hair as viable products.

With domestic tea consumption decreasing and knowledge of tea culture waning, networks of concerned actors are reaching out using a variety of strategies. As with Kyoto vegetables (and Kyoto cuisine), schools are an important venue for food education, with those who care about the local tea industry and local tea culture trying to instill in young people an understanding and appreciation for Uji tea, its history, and traditional agricultural, processing, and consumption practices. My friends’ daughter, an elementary school student in Kyoto City, showed me a quiz she took in school about Uji tea. She received a perfect score for correctly identifying Kyoto Prefecture’s main production areas, choosing the topography appropriate for tea cultivation, discriminating between fields using different techniques for shading plants, and identifying current trends in the industry. A tea blender I know, whose company was founded over 250 years ago, visits elementary schools more than a half a dozen times a year to teach students about how to make tea using a *kyūsu*. In spite of the fact that this is the Uji area, he says, in talking to students he has found that perhaps only 2-4% of these children’s families use *kyūsu*. He also leads workshops for adults on how to brew tea.

If this moment is seen as a challenging one for Kyoto Prefecture’s tea industry—and as a potential turning point, then one of the elements that is most often identified as a cloud without a

silver lining is the loss of traditional knowledge and skills for making particular kinds of Uji tea. Dependent as it is on a number of relationships with people, plants, and places that are likely to change, once this intangible cultural heritage disappears, it is likely gone forever, whether it is the practice of growing umami rich tea leaves shaded by mats made from locally harvested reeds or a craftsman's unique way of kneading tea by hand in his own processing facility. The continued existence of such traditions depends on a market for these artisans' products and this is not something that is easily established. School visits and curricula are insufficient for keeping these traditions alive.

Another strategy is the preservation of these traditions via the tourism industry and the work of government and non-government organizations. While the reach and efficacy of this approach by itself is debatable, the establishment of programs that recognize the existence of intangible cultural heritage as with "Hand kneading techniques for Uji tea," educate visitors and consumers about it, and offer opportunities to come into contact with it first-hand are important first steps. In 2009 areas designated "Uji's Cultural Landscape" were registered as a National Important Cultural Landscape. Considering the challenges that people whose livelihood depends on the tea industry face today, there is hope that Uji's cultural appeal will stymie further loss where the market for tea leaves has been unsuccessful.

As malleable as the Uji brand is, and as many changes as Kyoto's tea has seen, it seems that the industry will have to open up further along key dimensions if it is to remain significant in coming years. For one thing, the power that tea blenders hold will likely have to shift. If Uji tea is to assert its difference vis-à-vis tea from other areas, it cannot depend on the Kyoto brand or the Uji brand without convincingly communicating this difference. This will require articulations of place-based difference perhaps akin to the notion of terroir, which tea blenders are reluctant to

do because that devolves a degree of power to farmers and farming regions. At the moment, though, Uji tea is essentially a brand and a blend. And with no institution to certify that blended teas sold as Uji tea only use leaves from Mie, Nara, Shiga, and Kyoto (34% or more), Uji tea is arguably more of a brand than a distinctive blend.

The tea industry must also be more diverse, particularly when it comes to gender. When I attended the prefectural fair for tea, only one of the dozen or so judges was a woman and she was a novice with little authority. She told me this was her fourth year as a judge and that last year another woman had also participated. For the national competition, there were two, one being the same young woman judging at the prefectural competition.

The Uji brand may be powerful and of practical benefit to those who can use it for their products, but if it becomes—or is perceived to be—an empty signifier of the value and quality of Kyoto's tea, then its sustainability is questionable. I attended numerous events throughout Kyoto Prefecture during my time in the field at which local officials, tea instructors, and others promoted the Uji brand. At one of these, a local official charged with the formal introduction with which the event began professed his desire to make Kyotoites “fans of Uji tea” and get them to support efforts to have Uji tea acknowledged as world heritage. The Japanese tea instructor leading this event said simply that her goal was to get people to like Uji tea. “What exactly is Uji cha?” I asked the instructor, who in spite of talking about it had never given an explanation or definition. I was surprised that she seemed not to know, as her answer was extremely vague. She said that it is tea from the area around Uji, like Minami Yamashiro town, with a limited percent from outside.

Most people cannot explain if or how Uji tea tastes differently than other teas. People associate it with high quality, tradition, and the Kyoto brand, but they generally do not know

about its taste. This is in contrast with Kyoto vegetables and especially Kyoto cuisine. I attribute this in part to the fact that Uji tea is a blend from different places, but also to the power differential between blenders and farmers, and the lack of discursive emphasis on what makes Uji tea different. Is it also because Uji tea is a blend, unlike the tea leaves that expert judges evaluate at agricultural fairs or those used in chakabuki tea cupping sessions, that what makes Uji tea distinct and different is relatively poorly and unclearly articulated? Blends are meant to have balance and be less distinctive so that blenders may consistently provide consumers with tea that tastes the same no matter the yearly weather conditions or pest problems. While Kyoto vegetables can be judged by their shape and feel—like the Shishigatani squash—or freshness and texture—as with bamboo shoots—this is not the case for green tea (expiration dates can be stamped for a year after harvest and tea blenders sometimes keep tea leaves for use the following year). Perhaps there is also a more limited vocabulary available for describing taste differences between different kinds of green tea, possibly connected to its being a non-perishable luxury good for which such vocabulary did not help one survive. Today, with green tea treated as an object of conspicuous consumption, such a vocabulary may emerge the way it has for other non-perishable luxury goods like wine and coffee.

My statement that Uji tea's brand risks becoming an empty signifier is not a particularly original observation. To some degree, all brands face this danger, particularly in times of change. And tea farmers, blenders, consumers, and government officials are cognizant of this possibility. One blender I spoke with portrayed the Uji brand and the Kyoto brand as a double-edged sword for the local tea industry. "Kyoto has been blessed," he said, "That's what Kyoto's brand power is." In his opinion, however, he felt that many of his colleagues used the Kyoto and Uji brands

promiscuously and without reference to specific differences. For him this is where the danger lies.

Kyoto Prefecture's tea industry is clearly trying to make the most of boundaries that are flexible and porous. The Kyoto brand helps blenders and retailers sell Uji tea. Because more than a third of any given blend of Uji tea is supposed to be produced in Kyoto Prefecture and because it is blended in Kyoto, it lays claim to the aura of Kyoto (and Uji). In an interesting twist, tea growers either outside of the Uji region or those inside the region who choose not to sell their leaves to tea blenders take advantage of the Uji brand for tea to market and sell their own products. Kyoto's tea blenders are able to purchase less expensive tea from Shiga, Nara, and Mie prefectures, which benefits the Kyoto farmers whose tea they buy (otherwise the tea blends would likely be overpriced and there would be little demand for them) as well as consumers. Faced with decreased demand at home, Kyoto's tea industry is considering ways that it can adapt for the domestic market without losing its brand power or too many of its traditions. It is also looking overseas to see if it can attract new customers and even establish new consumption rituals.

Although the term Uji is used by various individuals and groups—individual farmers outside of what is considered the Uji area but still Kyoto Prefecture; by those making shaved ice or parfaits flavored with green tea syrup, etc.—it seems that the boundaries are more rigid than they are for Kyoto vegetables. The restricted number of registered blenders who can make Uji tea is a key point. This is especially ironic because it is the blending process that essentially grounds the brand. Changes in consumption patterns, political economic circumstances, and so on are spurring localities to assert their own brands and creating a need for Uji tea blenders and

retailers to articulate the distinctiveness of their product in ways that are convincing and relevant to consumers across the world.

5.0 KYOTO'S LOCAL CUISINES: PREPARED FOODS AND GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES



Figure 17. The dish *guji no sakuramushi* at a Kyotoo cuisine restaurant in Okinawa.

I have to ask for directions from local residents of Okinawa Prefecture's capital, Naha, before I can locate the restaurant that I have chosen for dinner. It is dinnertime and the heat is beginning to abate. I step into the restaurant not sure what to expect. Kyoto cuisine in Okinawa? That is what the retail grocer selling Kyoto vegetables had told me. But with

everything in Okinawa different—the climate, the water, the crops, the taste preferences—I wasn't sure what to expect. Since arriving in Okinawa I have feasted on dishes like pork belly, goat soup, and stir fried bitter melon and Spam *champuru* (stir fry). As soon as I enter I glance at a small blackboard on which menu items are written in what strikes me as an un-Kyotoish way. Sure enough, I spot Okinawan dishes on the menu, like "island" shallots and a *shabu shabu* with the famous local pork *agu*-. Yet the menu features other items that are distinctly Kyotoish, like the *guji no sakura mushi* (Figure 17), "guji" being what people in and around Kyoto Prefecture call *aka amadai* (red tilefish), and *sakuramushi* (literally "cherry steam") a cooking technique in which fish is covered with a layer of soft mochi rice given the color of cherry blossoms, steamed in cherry leaves, and usually served with preserved cherry blossoms.

I sit at the counter, hoping for the opportunity to talk to the owner-chef, and I order a full course meal. When I explain to him that I'm conducting research on Kyoto cuisine, its borders, and its limitations, he is nonplussed. It turns out that he is from Kyoto and trained to become a chef in a restaurant specializing in the preparation of fresh sashimi located along Kyoto City's famous Kiyamachi Street. He uses different terms to describe the food he prepares: *Kyō ryōri*, the more generic *washoku*, and also *kisetsu ryōri* or "seasonal" cuisine, a phrase that though used throughout Japan, seems all the more potent in the subtropical climes of Okinawa. Indeed, he says that what he tries to do with his restaurant is get his customers to "sense the seasons through food."

The first dish he brings out surprises me: *shirouo no odorī gui*: dancing icefish, which he advises me to down in one gulp as the tiny scaleless fish squirm. These live fish are artifacts of time and place: they are harvested in the rivers of Kyūshū and southern Honshu when they swim in from the ocean to spawn. Other dishes he serves me similarly reference faraway places and a season not present in Okinawa: flounder with white Kyoto miso, spring vegetable tempura featuring many wild greens, and a vegetable and fish dish made with Kyoto's *kintoki* carrot.

In spite of this faithful offering of traditional dishes from Kyoto cuisine, the restaurant's location has made compromises necessary. Even as *dashi*, stock made from *kombu* seaweed and bonito flakes, is the backbone of Kyoto cuisine, the chef uses filtered tap water—hard, he thinks—to cook with. Because it takes two days to ship bamboo shoots to Okinawa from Kyoto, whereas those from Fukuoka Prefecture take one day, he orders them from there instead. Significantly, he tweaks the recipes to suit the palates of his Okinawan customers, who make up about half of his clientele, the remainder being mainlanders transferred to Naha for work. “But,” he notes, “not so much that they don't know the difference.” This difference is key: Kyoto cuisine is known for its light, refreshing taste (as we will explore in greater detail in the next chapter), with cooking techniques meant to enhance the flavors of the ingredients rather than create a dish that obtains its flavor from with sauces, spices, and herbs. Although Okinawans enjoy fattier, more strongly flavored foods, they would nevertheless be disappointed if they went out for Kyoto cuisine and tasted familiar flavor profiles.

Previous chapters have examined raw agricultural products—Kyoto vegetables—and non-perishable processed agricultural goods—green tea. This chapter moves on to address manifestations of food prepared for human consumption and gastronomic experiences—Kyoto cuisines.

As I have explained in earlier chapters, there is more to place brands than legally protected trademarks, though these also fit into the larger category. In Japan the terms *chiiki burando* and even *burando* for short index *sanchi*, literally place of production. So long as people—from producers to consumers—consistently perceive a specific category of goods to be distinct from similar items based on characteristics such as who, where, or how they are made, one can discern the presence of a brand. Kyoto's local cuisines, or *Kyō ryōri*, are indeed perceived as distinct in such a way. In fact, the Wikipedia entry for *Kyō ryōri* in Japanese refers

to them as a culinary brand. Yet there exists no special certification program to ascertain the authenticity of any purported “Kyoto cuisine.” And in fact, collective regional trademark application number 2008-14424 to the Japan Patent Office to register *Kyō ryōri* was rejected. Though consumers all over Japan are familiar with the term *Kyō ryōri*, it was rejected on the basis of not meeting the criteria of widespread recognition because there are already a variety of unaffiliated individuals throughout Japan producing a variety of foods that they label “*Kyō ryōri*” without any certification mechanism in place to evaluate them and that even within Kyoto it is difficult—if not impossible to determine who makes *Kyō ryōri* and who does not (FUJIMarks 2009; Ogawa 2012: 22). Hence *Kyō ryōri* in Naha, Okinawa and the special dinner of “*Kyoto kaiseki*” Chef Kevin Marron of Patrick’s Bistreaux in Nashville, Tennessee put together in the fall of 2013.

Kyō ryōri inhabits an interesting space in Japanese food culture. People in Japan recognize the term so much so that it ranked first in terms of products that “make you feel Japan’s goodness” in a Nikkei Research survey (Nikkei 2013). In spite of this widespread appeal, *Kyō ryōri* remains a somewhat ambiguous term. Nikkei’s ranking of the brand power of regional products puts *Kyō ryōri* at number seven in the category of local cuisines. This makes more sense when one sees that all of the other items in the top ten—from number one *sanuki udon* to Hakata ramen at number five—are specific dishes rather than cuisines. While *Kyō ryōri* holds unquestionable appeal for Japanese consumers, I suspect that what this survey shows is that broad brand appeal whets fewer appetites than specific dishes that are likely to evoke more specific aromas, textures, flavors, and memories.

In this chapter, I examine the role of place in contemporary understandings of Kyoto cuisines. I demonstrate how these cuisines operate as place brands. Moreover, focusing on

kaiseki cuisine in particular, I explain how Kyoto's chefs have turned to the Kyoto brand as a pivot to revitalize local food culture and engage with globalization. The data for my analysis in this section come from informal interviews with residents and visitors to Kyoto, traditional and new media about Kyoto cuisines and Kyoto's chefs, and participant observation in the Japanese Cuisine Laboratory, a monthly gathering of chefs and researchers at Kyoto University created to investigate pre-determined themes relating to food and taste.

5.1 KYOTO'S BIG 3 CUISINES: SHŌJIN, *OBANZAI*, AND *KAISEKI*

Before delving into the role of place and place branding in contemporary Kyoto cuisine, it is necessary to address the question of what exactly Kyoto cuisine is. Let me begin with an episode of the Iron Chef cooking show, a campy and dramatized series in which celebrity chefs would challenge the show's professionals, the victory determined by celebrity judges. The episode known as Bamboo Shoot Battle was the fourteenth episode of the second season and the first time that it featured a chef from Kyoto, Takahashi Munetaka. As the episode begins, an actress serving as a gastronomic judge remarks that she isn't sure what Kyoto cuisine is but that she hopes Chef Takahashi will show her. As the narration and comments from judges and host made clear, the world of Kyoto cuisine is not always open to the media or uninvited guests. Kyoto comes off as isolated, closed off, unchanging. It is ironic that as inaccessible and esoteric as Kyoto cuisine is portrayed to be, Chef Takahashi, whose culinary skills and knowledge are the products of a lineage, is made the "challenger" on a show with comparatively no history. Indeed, Chef Takahashi was chosen to compete by the chairman of the Kyoto Chefs Association and

explains that he decided to become a chef after his grandfather presented him with a cooking knife. Takahashi prepares steamed bamboo shoots, an uzuki stew with bamboo shoots, and bamboo shoot sushi, which are praised for capturing the “purity” and “authenticity” of “true” Kyoto cuisine because the ingredients’ best qualities are enhanced without noticeable artifice or strong flavors. In this pitting of “tradition” and “modernity,” however, it is modernity that wins, with the judges preferring Chef Chen’s incorporation of bamboo shoots into dishes with a Sichuan style sauce, pea soup, and banana dessert.

Kyō ryōri or Kyoto cuisine actually consists of several different cuisines, even if the term is often used as though there either were one unified set of traditions or as though one of the cuisines could represent the collective. Many people as a result seem to have a vague idea of what counts as Kyoto cuisine.

Richard Hosking’s entry for *kyō ryōri* in *A Dictionary of Japanese Food* reads: “Kyoto was not only the capital of Japan for many centuries, but was (and still is) the home of Buddhism. This meant that not only did high-class, elegant cookery such as *cha kaiseki* flourish, but so also did *shōjin ryōri*, the Buddhist vegetarian cuisine. In fact, vegetables, especially pickles are a notable feature of Kyoto’s food culture...” (1996:88). To this, we must add Kyoto’s traditional domestic cookery, called *obanzai*, which has of late become an object of domestic culinary tourism (Ozeki 2008). It is interesting to note that just as stakeholders in Kyoto’s agricultural industry like to remind consumers that Kyoto vegetables have an important place in Kyoto cuisine as a way of asserting their value, Kyoto vegetables also become a distinguishing feature and selling point of Kyoto cuisine. When I was treated to a meal in a Michelin-starred Japanese restaurant in Osaka and inquired about the differences between upscale Kyoto cuisine and upscale Osaka cuisine, one of the answers I received was that “Kyoto vegetables are the

Kyoto brand for Kyō ryōri.” Though the restaurant I visited uses locally grown vegetables, including heirloom vegetables from Osaka, because these are relatively unknown they cannot really be said to sustain the Osaka brand for cuisine in the same way.

But it is not only that Kyoto possesses special ingredients nor that influential cuisines developed there; Kyoto’s chefs also use different tools and techniques than their counterparts in other parts of the country. The *unagisaki* knife for filleting eel, for example, is shaped differently than those used in Tokyo and Osaka (Japanese Culinary Academy 2015: 110). Similarly, traditional methods for cooking bamboo shoots or cutting raw slices of blowfish are different than in other areas.

The first section of this chapter describes the evolution of Kyoto’s cuisines and describes their basic differences, keeping in mind that they are very much intertwined and continue to influence each other, though perhaps less today than in the past.

5.1.1 SHŌJIN: VEGETARIAN TEMPLE CUISINE

With Kyoto functioning as the headquarters of most Buddhist sects in Japan, it is unsurprising that *shōjin ryōri*, the vegetarian cooking that came out of Buddhist temples, has strong links to Kyoto. Rodrigues describes 16th century Kyoto as a well-provisioned place with game, wild birds, fresh river and lake fish, sea fish, and seasonal fruit and vegetables (Rodrigues and Cooper 1973: 121). He also lists taboos against eating domesticated animals such as horse, cow, pig, duck, and hen (Rodrigues and Cooper 1973: 237). While domesticated animal consumption was proclaimed abominable, wild game was eaten and meat could be eaten for medicinal purposes (Cwiertka 2006: 27; Ishige 2012). The promulgation of innumerable decrees prohibiting the

eating of meat indicates, however, that people did not systematically follow the instructions of religious authorities and government officials. Fish and other seafood were considered to belong to a different category and avoided only on official Buddhist holidays or the death days of close relatives, rendering them an important source of protein during the rest of the calendar year (Ishige 2012). Though the consumption of animal products is discouraged in shōjin, I do not wish to portray it as an inflexible “absolutely no meat” cuisine either in theory or practice. Chef Takahashi Takuji insists that the cuisine’s key values are appreciation, frugality, and selflessness. Thus it is not that one cannot eat meat in shōjin, but rather that one should not make it a dietary staple nor consume it—or anything else, for that matter—thoughtlessly. Additionally, one should not forget that monks have always found ways of consuming things they were encouraged to abstain from. There exists, indeed, a secret vocabulary used by monks to refer to everything from alcohol to boar meat stew.



Figure 18. Fucha ryōri course near Manpuku Temple in Uji.

One very far reaching contribution that *shōjin* has made to Japanese food culture is its introduction of the custom of serving hot foods at meals (Ishige 2012). With the spread of *shōjin* cuisine, the use of metal pots for stewing and simmering became more common, also expanding the repertoire of cooking techniques in Japanese cuisine (Japanese Culinary Academy 2015: 68). Kyoto's other cuisines would not be the same without these influential developments.

Fucha ryōri (see Figure 18, above), a specific style of *shōjin* that retains many of its influences from Chinese Buddhist cuisine, illustrates the Kyoto connection well because it is strongly linked to the Obaku sect of Zen Buddhism's Manpuku temple in Kyoto, where tourists and connoisseurs still venture today to experience it. The transformation of vegetarian Buddhist cuisine into a resource for culinary tourism, conspicuous consumption, and everyday citizen's worlds of meaning is particularly striking because its rigid aesthetic dictates that chefs waste nothing, use what is readily available, and concentrate on bringing out the best of each ingredient. When prepared for monks and lay practitioners, cooks place emphasis on these aesthetics rather than on taste, luxury, and such. The idea is to allow individuals to obtain nutrition and focus on spiritual goals. Most restaurants, however, prepare a version aimed at pleasing palates and satisfying customers.

The division of labor in *shōjin* is pronounced, with men doing most of the work in *shōjin* kitchens. The cooks, even for temples, are not necessarily monks, as food preparation can be outsourced. I spoke with the staff of a well-known family run restaurant that prepares food for an important temple in northern Kyoto City. This restaurant, I had been told by a Buddhist priest at a different temple, prepares excellent *shōjin* cuisine. The major reason that women do not spend as much time as men in the restaurant's kitchens, I was told, is that women are expected to marry into outside families (rather than bring a husband in) and that it would not be good for the family

if trade secrets were carried out of the restaurant with them. Mothers and daughters, however, do much of the home cooking, which is not *shōjin* but rather the domestic cookery that is the subject of the next section: *obanzai*. The family that runs the restaurant I visited, after all, is a family and not a religious group. Indeed, after listing to me the various virtues of vegetarian eating in great detail, he admitted that he remains partial to *yakitori*, Japanese grilled chicken.

Shōjin is not solely for the consumption of priests; lay people in many parts of Japan prepare vegetarian Buddhist cuisine for ritual meals, especially funerals and memorial ceremonies. In these instances, too, men (usually neighbors) did the cooking. It should be noted, however, that this practice is become less and less common, with ritual participants now partaking of take-out meals that often include meat.²⁷ For the most part, however, *shōjin* is associated with Buddhist temples, where cooks have developed special recipes to mimic the appearance, taste, and texture of foods containing animal products.

5.1.2 **OBANZAI: KYOTO'S HOME-COOKING**

Another important local cuisine has increased its profile in recent decades: *obanzai ryōri*. *Obanzai* was the cuisine of ordinary people and its dishes reflect ingenuity, humor, and hardship. Professor Ohtani Kimiko, a food researcher at Kyoto Prefectural University, explains that it was shaped by necessity, as the seasons determined what was available and the women of the household had to use what was available before it would rot.

²⁷ L. Keith Brown has witnessed this change as he has returned time and again to Iwate Prefecture to conduct fieldwork over the past 50 years (personal communication, June 2, 2015).



Figure 19. Dishes of the day at a Kyoto obanzai restaurant, summer 2012.

Unlike the male dominated *shōjin* and *kaiseki*, *obanzai* is the realm of mothers and grandmothers. A woman who owned a restaurant popular with celebrities who visited from Tokyo told me that she never relied on recipes because *obanzai* is really a mother's cooking and is the result of a mother's ability to improvise and tweak a dish. As in *shōjin*, in *obanzai*, cooks aim to make the best dish possible with what they have at hand, wasting as little as possible.

Nor does this domestic cuisine have a predetermined course structure. At home, family members will eat miso soup, rice, and three side dishes made from seasonally available ingredients. Insofar as this is a family meal, eaters have individual plates on which they place portions of the side dishes that they take from communal larger bowls. In *obanzai* restaurants, the bowls are very big, but one does not simply take what one wants from them; one has to order. Recently, however, all-you-can-eat buffet-style *obanzai* restaurants have emerged. *Obanzai* was

the everyday cooking of households in the Kyoto area. Traditionally, meat and fresh seafood were relatively rare in *obanzai* cuisine because both were difficult to obtain for ordinary households (Rath 2010: 22). Kyotoites came up with innovative techniques to add variety to their diets. Two local specialties are *sabazushi*, “sushi” made with mackerel preserved by pickling, and *hamo*, the conger pike eel, a fish that could be incorporated more easily after the distinctive *honegiri* (bonecutting) technique was adopted. Though it used to be eaten only on special occasions, *hamo* is now easy to find throughout the year. Seasonality played an important role in local food culture. In winter, root vegetables like turnip and daikon, leafy greens like mizuna and mibuna, and the *Kujō* scallions were mainstays. Spring brought bamboo shoots and mountain vegetables. Cucumbers, peppers, and eggplant were important ingredients in summer dishes. In the fall, rice was harvested and people enjoyed persimmons, chestnuts, and ginko.

Cultural traditions enriched the *obanzai* diet as well, bringing meaning and variety to deceptively simple dishes. People customarily ate *okara*, the pulpy soybean residue leftover from making tofu, on the 30th and 31st days of the month because its pronunciation was so close to that of *otakara*, treasure or wealth. Eating it served as a reminder of those things a household could be grateful for and also as a ritual meant to secure good luck that could begin with the following month. Its other name, *kirazu*, meaning “don’t cut” similarly channels the idea of progression, continuity, and accumulating of good things.

Today people from outside of Kyoto in particular view such traditions nostalgically, exoticizing the past. For instance, when I went to Shimogamo Shrine to eat *nanakusa gayu* (rice porridge with seven special herbs), a customary meal following the end of the New Year’s feasting, I met many people who had deliberately made a point of coming to the shrine just to eat this humble dish. The porridge is supposed to aid with digestion of the heavy festive foods and

bring good health to all who eat it in the New Year. I was most surprised to talk to two women who had come the whole way from Nagoya, several hours away by bus, for the porridge and to see the temple's sacred white horse (who is only brought out for special occasions). Even though *nanakusa gayu* and variations of it exist outside of Kyoto, the tradition of eating this dish on the seventh day of the year allegedly stretches back to the Heian era, which gives it a strong association with Kyoto.

Obanzai may be less well known and less of a tourist draw than *shōjin* and certainly *kaiseki*, but it nevertheless has a degree of “invented tradition” to it. Most of the long-time Kyoto residents I spoke to told me that growing up they simply called the dishes they ate at home *okazu* (side dishes), not *obanzai*. Coinage of the term *obanzai* is attributed to Ōmura Shige-san, who launched her career as a local food writer by penning a column for the Kyoto dispatch of the Asahi Shimbun in 1964-5 called “*Obanzai*.” When she published a book on the subject with Akiyama Jiusanko and Hirayama Chizuru, they informed their readers in the introduction that what they meant by *obanzai* was indeed *okazu*. Interestingly enough, when I asked one chef what he ate when he was growing up, he chuckled and said that as a kid whose family ran a restaurant he had to learn the *mise no aji* (restaurant's taste), so he ate the staff “family meal” (*makanai*). Perish the thought that this might be fancy food; the “family meal” incorporated vegetable peels, and scraps of meat that could not be served to guests. Sometimes you could end up eating curry rice with pieces of chewy gristle in it.

Kyoto's food scholars debate how *obanzai* should be defined, as they did when I attended a meeting of the *Obanzai* Research Group in the summer of 2014. Professor Fujikake, who identified both a problem with the etic categorization of *obanzai* and the importance of having a term to talk about traditional domestic foodways, said that *obanzai* had even become a brand in

its own right, recognizable and with undeniable appeal. The working definition that was proposed was “Culinary styles born of the domestic foodways of Kyotoites, continuing a set of patterns, changing little by little, crossing generations.”

Why is there a need for the word *obanzai*? Hidō Tamaki, suspects that Ōmura Shige-san came up with the phrase because she wanted to protect local food culture. He says that it is important to look at the historical context—Japanese food imports from abroad were increasing, school meals were changing, and consumer eating habits were also undergoing change.²⁸

Okamoto Shunji, a chef in the Gion area who grew up in Kyoto, explained to me that when he was opening his restaurant he wasn’t sure how to describe it. He makes dishes that are meant to accompany alcohol and be eaten in a group, but his dishes are more involved than those in a pub or a bar, but not as fancy as *kaiseki* or its spinoff *kappō*. He describes his restaurant as a “dining bar” that serves *obanzai* with a touch of molecular gastronomy. For him, then, the word *obanzai* serves as an index, particularly for people from out of town, for unpretentious local food. As a friend of mine put it, “You call something *obanzai* and it makes people from Tokyo happy.”

In the early 20th century, as slaughterhouses were built in Kyoto and the Kansai area, people began to eat more meat. Cultural influences spurring meat consumption included the emperor’s decision to eat more meat and the increasingly widespread perception that Western armies were strong because of a diet with a great deal of meat. A chef friend of mine from Kyoto, amused by my surprise, told me “Kyotoites love meat.” His restaurant serves Kyoto *kappō* cuisine, which is an offshoot of *kaiseki* through which customers can experience haute

²⁸ He argues that there are lessons here for those engaged in the current movement to protect Japanese cuisine / *washoku*: you have to figure out what you want to pass onto future generations, how to do it (the role of education), and what to change.

cuisine in a more casual setting with counter seats. Even though his restaurant specializes in seafood, he often buys good cuts of high quality beef for customers who request it. At home, his family is fond of barbeque, fried chicken, and hot pots.

Nowadays, tourists can sample dishes that seventy years ago could have only been found inside people's homes. The counterpoint to this, unfortunately, is that fewer and fewer local residents know about the area's agricultural and culinary traditions. A woman running an *obanzai* restaurant in a part of town frequented by many tourists told me that she sees it as her mission to cook local cuisine for people because it was rarely served in people's homes anymore. If there were a resurgence in *obanzai* cooking at home, she said, she would happily close her restaurant.

At the *Obanzai* Research Group meeting, Professor Ohtani said that she had encountered college students who did not know what to do with dried shiitake, what *kampyō* (rainbow gourd) is, or the difference between *hare* and *ke* foods (special occasion foods versus mundane, unmarked foods). At the same meeting, Sugimoto Setsuko reflected that today local salarymen will think nothing of having what were once considered extravagant dishes like *gyū-don* (rice bowl with thinly sliced, marinated beef on top) or *una-don* (rice bowl with grilled eel) for lunch. A friend of mine works as an investment banker in Tokyo and I can only imagine Sugimoto-san's reaction if she were to hear about the elaborate lunches that my friend's well-remunerated colleagues have delivered to them on a daily basis.

Contemporary consumption patterns in Japan include instant noodles, fast food, and meals from convenience stores. With smaller, older households a move away from time-consuming family meals is not surprising. Contemporary diets have given rise to concerns about rising rates of obesity and overweightness, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other "lifestyle

diseases.” These changes, in turn, have spurred food activism movements like the campaign to revive local vegetable varieties and reinvigorate local food culture. Active in such movements are *obanzai* cooking teachers and *kaiseki* chefs.

5.1.3 **KAISEKI: KYOTO’S “HAUTE” CUISINE**

When Japanese scholars speak of Kyoto cuisines, they often count five of them, including *taikyō* and *honzen*, the banquet styles that preceded *kaiseki* as the “haute” cuisines of Heian-kyō. Taikyō dates back to the 11th century and contrary to what one hears about a tradition of cherishing vegetables, Richard Hosking purports that “vegetables were held in low esteem” (Hosking 2002:104; see also Ishige 2012). Also in stark contrast to what is today considered to be “traditional” Kyoto cuisine, one variation of taikyō involved towering piles of ingredients often “prepared beyond recognition” (Hosking 2002: 105). The next trend for banquet styles was honzen, an elaborated version of the Buddhist monastery meal of the 13th century. Although it may have set a precedent for the pattern of *ichijū sansai*, one soup and three vegetables (rice being taken for granted), that is now considered the basis of the Japanese meal, these meals too functioned as ceremonial feasts and while visually stimulating João Rodrigues tells us they were full of “cold and insipid” food (Hosking 2002: 107). According to Rodrigues, it was around the time of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Oda Nobunaga that *kaiseki* gained momentum, though the term was not used to refer to these meals at the time (Rath 2013; Rodrigues and Cooper 1973). His description of *kaiseki* certainly puts it in a far better light than its predecessors: “well-seasoned hot food which is brought to the table at the proper time, and is substantial and of high quality” (Rodrigues and Cooper 1973: 240). Its emphasis on freshness and seasonality only added to its

appeal. Chefs also take full advantage of the diachronic dimension to *kaiseki*, establishing a rhythm, playing with diversity, building the guest's sense of anticipation, and concluding on a note meant to leave eaters satisfied. Yet *kaiseki*'s roots must not be overromanticized either. As Eric Rath has demonstrated, the celebrated tea master Sen no Rikyū likely did not serve anything similar to what is now considered the “traditional” *kaiseki* meal (Rath 2013). The tea meals he served—not referred to as *kaiseki* at the time—were probably repetitious, unimaginative meals that did not actually celebrate vegetables. In fact, Rikyū and his crowd seem not to have paid significant attention to the meals themselves, nor to the preparation of individual dishes or the pairing of foods.

The term *kaiseki* appears to have become common in the late 19th century (Cwiertka 2006: 110). It should be noted that in the contemporary discourse, two different kinds of *kaiseki* can be distinguished: *cha kaiseki*, the ritual meal that accompanies the tea ceremony, and *en kaiseki*, multicourse banquet meals in which commensality is key. It is the latter that is usually being referred to by the term *kaiseki* today. Interestingly, this cuisine has become representative not only of Kyoto cuisine more broadly, but also of Japanese cuisine. While the subject of this chapter is “Kyoto cuisine,” the dominant focus of the following sections is *kaiseki* cuisine because of its cultural capital and strong association with Kyoto. Indeed, *kaiseki* cuisine is the object of culinary tourism and imitation.

5.2 UNDERSTANDING KYOTO CUISINE

“Why is it that school trips to Kyoto don’t pay attention to lunch?” This was the question that Professor Sugimoto asked at the *Obanzai* Study Group meeting. He used an episode of the anime Lucky Star to show how surprisingly little of a role eating can play on a school trip to Kyoto, particularly where lunch is concerned. His research into what students left on their own for lunch look identified three criteria; they want to eat food that is quick (they have time constraints), cheap (under 1500 yen), and Kyotoish. Unfortunately, these three are difficult to balance and many students apparently end up compromising on the third criteria and eating Kyoto ramen, which often has a thick soup that does not jibe with the Kyoto brand (see next chapter). Professor Ohtani remarked that she has been asked by companies that organize tours for schools if she could find an ideal solution and *udon* noodles had come to mind.

One reason for the above dilemma (apart from the costliness of nice meals in Kyoto) is that in spite of the achievements of *obanzai* and *shōjin*, *Kyō ryōri* is often reduced to the multi-course, fancy *kaiseki* cuisine, with Kyoto’s other cuisines left in its shadows. Surveys by Aiba et al. (2004) found that when most Japanese people come across the phrase *Kyō ryōri* they think of *kaiseki* cuisine, *cha kaiseki* (the ritual meal of the tea ceremony), and Japanese cuisine. Their respondents, like those I interviewed, stated that *Kyō ryōri* embodies Kyoto’s—and Japan’s—traditional culture. This association of Kyoto with traditional Japan may be taken for granted as self-evident, but it is nonetheless a sign that Kyotoites have successfully positioned the city as the gastronomic capital of Japan based on associations with history and heritage.

Rath has observed that the chefs and owners of Kyoto’s established restaurants today conflate Japanese cuisine with Kyoto cuisine, viewing Kyoto cuisine as the “prototype” for *washoku* and the most refined local Japanese cuisine (2010: 21). This is due in no small part to

the widespread belief that the codification of *kaiseki* was a turning point that facilitated the formation of a modern national cuisine (Rath 2013). My experience participating in the Japanese Cuisine Laboratory (affectionately known as the “Labo” by members) corroborates this, with members using the words *kyō ryōri* and *washoku* interchangeably. This is particularly pertinent considering the collaboration of local chefs with scholars, government officials, and others to have *washoku* inscribed as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, efforts which were met with success in December 2013. One reason for this slippage is that Japan’s foodways contain a great deal of diversity: Okinawan goat soup, Shiga Prefecture’s fermented carp sushi, the northern city of Morioka’s cold spicy noodle specialty *reimen*, are a few examples. Within this context, Kyoto, the designated repository of traditional culture, comes to represent “Japanese” cuisine.

Many Japanese people share this tendency toward elision that I believe to be mostly inadvertent. When I attended a talk that Takahashi Takuji gave as part of a series aimed at high school students, one college student in attendance stood up and pointedly asked, “What is a good way for us young people to start learning about *washoku*?” He explained that the cost of eating *washoku* was prohibitive. I found it fascinating that this young man—and others in the audience who asked questions—equated *washoku* with *kaiseki*, therefore proclaiming a lack of knowledge of their own national foodways. This was even more striking given that the successful UNESCO application did not focus on *kaiseki* at all. In fact, the title of the official application was the cumbersome “*Washoku*, the traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, especially for the celebration of the New Year.” The application strategically sidestepped references to specific techniques and foodstuffs that define *washoku*, instead emphasizing multilocality, plurality, and meals shared by families and communities. It refers to activities like the pounding of rice cakes, which I have seen happen in parking lots, garages, and in the street, settings imbued with relaxed

camaraderie and intimacy rather than elegance or splendor. On such occasions it is customary for everyone to take a turn either pounding the rice into *mochi* or folding the pounded rice in between each pounding. Yet this is not what most people think of when they hear the term “*washoku*.” This is in part because it is marked as an ordinary family and community custom but the resulting *mochi* are not the first things one would think of as most representative of Japan’s sophisticated foodways. In the context of orientalizing and self-orientalizing discourses about Japan, what seems most esoteric, exotic, and unique to many people is *kaiseki* (and also marginalized and restricted local foods and cuisines).

Investigating the intricacies at the intersection of *kaiseki* chefs’ valorization of the local and their engagement with people, places, and things abroad was challenging. Participant observation in the Labo was largely observation for me. I was clearly an outsider, a foreigner and a researcher with a very basic understanding of Japanese cuisine. That the Labo’s official members sat at a rectangular table and occasional observers sat at seats more distantly removed, where they could not taste the samples passed around, made my position more tenuous. Given the importance of taste to my research, I was eager to try what the chefs produced in their experiments. When there were enough samples to go around, I made an effort to obtain one every time. When the group decided not to allow observers any longer, I somehow implicitly became a member of the group, though one whose membership remained liminal. In the spring of 2013, however, I was invited to speak at the Labo’s community research presentation. I was assigned a subject: *Kyō ryōri rashisa* Kyoto cuisine-iness. This gave me the opportunity to ask the chefs questions about what was essential to Kyoto cuisine: could Kyoto cuisine be made in Okinawa or Nashville? Could Korean or French chefs make it? What ingredients are essential? Must these ingredients come from Kyoto?

The following sections pursue these questions, keeping *kaiseki* cuisine at the fore as the cuisine that represents Kyoto cuisines more generally in the popular, professional, and scholarly imagination, but also paying attention to Kyoto's other cuisines and the ways they resemble and differ from *kaiseki*.

5.2.1 The restrictions and resources of the ancient imperial capital

The most popular explanation for the development of Kyoto's sophisticated cuisines hones in on the ancient capital city's natural and socio-historical resources as well as geographic and culturally imposed limitations. Nakamura restaurant has been around for almost two centuries. When its current *waka danna* or young chef-owner, Nakamura Motokazu, explained to me the history of his restaurant and *Kyō ryōri*, he stated that because Kyoto was the home of the emperor for over a thousand years a sophisticated, elegant cuisine was established. Other chefs mentioned this, too—not to serve as socio-historical context, but because the presence of nobles and government officials catalyzed the development of Kyoto as a city, including its food culture.

The chefs I spoke to touched upon the existence of other resources mentioned earlier—soft water, *dashi*, Kyoto vegetables, and the like. One chef remarked that today's *Kyō ryōri* and *Nihon ryōri* are possible because of a selection of high-quality vegetables that is unparalleled. One might expect a chef to say this, but the view that the perishable goods on offer in Japanese stores are unparalleled is quite common. Sarah, a much traveled American woman I talked to about Japanese food, told me that after having spent five years in Japan when she walked into a New York grocery store “everything looked like rotten garbage.” While clearly hyperbole,

Sarah's experience speaks to the perception that Japanese produce is markedly fresher and tastier than what is available in other countries. When she lived in Japan, she and her husband would regularly eat out, spending hundreds of dollars a person to enjoy the best of Japanese cuisine.

Thus while people mentioned items like a suitable climate for growing delicious vegetables and the demand for high quality produce from far away, they also brought up Buddhist prohibitions on meat consumption and the capital's distance from the ocean. Because people could not easily obtain fresh seafood and because people did not regularly consume meat, it is said that a cuisine in which vegetables played a central role took hold. Of course, as we have seen, scholarly research indicates that Heiankyō's early cuisines were likely neither delicious by today's standards nor showed a great deal of reverence for vegetables. Nevertheless, this is a narrative I heard time and again when talking to people from all over Japan, people inside and outside the food industry.

Examples of how such circumstances shaped Kyoto cuisine include *hamo*, conger pike eel, a fish that can live out of water for an exceptionally long time. Unlike most salt-water fish, this one could be transported fresh to the city. Since *hamo* is a very bony fish, however, the *hamo no honegiri* (hamo bone-cutting) technique, which requires a special knife, was developed. Mackerel (*saba*), meanwhile, came from the Sea of Japan via the *saba kaidō* or Mackerel Way, pickled in salt to better preserve it. Even with the development of faster transportation methods and refrigerated units for moving perishable goods, these two fish and the traditional techniques for preparing them remain a feature of local foodways.

5.2.2 Aesthetics and Attitudes

In today's Japan, the craftsmanship that goes into a renowned restaurant's *kaiseki* cuisine may not be obvious to a first time customer. Given that *kaiseki* can be exorbitantly expensive, it might seem that it is all about conspicuous consumption and that the Kyoto difference is imaginary. The Kyoto difference is certainly not one that is easily discernable to anyone. One reason for this may be that many of the distinguishing characteristics, at least as I heard chefs discuss them, are philosophical and behavioral in nature rather than material or geographical. Put differently, culinary Kyotoishness entails more than the material legacy of the ancient imperial capital's resources and limitations. Ideas, including aesthetics and attitudes toward food, also matter a great deal.



Figure 20. May kaiseki meal at Kinobu restaurant.

Seasonality is a crucial element in Kyoto cuisine, as chefs of all kinds pointed out to me. It is not simply that dishes and décor change when different ingredients come into season. Rather, it is a matter of expressing seasonality as it is culturally understood. The traditional Japanese calendar, adapted from the traditional Chinese calendar, is divided into twenty-four different periods called *sekki*, each with its unique characteristics, associations, and customs. Most Japanese people, including Kyotoites, and in particular younger generations, do not keep track of the passing of time using the traditional calendar and are only aware of the arrival of days that are especially prominent. *Risshun*, which marks the arrival of spring, is one such day; temples and shrines hold special ceremonies and in their homes families play a game of throwing beans at masked “demons.” The menus for Kyoto cuisine are influenced by these seasons and

annual holidays. When I ate at Kinobu restaurant in early May, for instance, one course that I was served (Figure 20) included a *chimaki*, a glutinous rice dumpling wrapped in a bamboo leaf, a reference to the upcoming Boys' Day celebrated on the 5th of May. A taste of the year's early harvest of edamame and as decoration a bright green maple leaf accompanied the *chimaki*, highlighting the course's seasonal dimension further

In my one-on-one interviews, chef after chef mentioned the importance of the concept of *omotenashi*, one even stating that Parisian chefs would be able to serve Kyō ryōri there if they had mastered *omotenashi*. So what is this valorized *omotenashi*? *Omotenashi* appears deceptively simple when translated as hospitality; it would seem that any place with a reputation for hosts who are welcoming and friendly, whether the American South, New Zealand, or Morocco, already possesses a tremendous amount of *omotenashi*. *Omotenashi*, however, is a kind of hospitality in that hosts anticipate guests' needs and do what is required to ensure that they have a pleasurable experience. This means that a Kyoto chef will prepare a *kaiseki* meal for guests based on his or her estimation of what they are likely to appreciate. Its formality, flexibility, and proactiveness is very different from a disengaged and impersonal "the customer is always right" mentality or from the casual and comfortable "feel at home" atmosphere cultivated by American hosts and hostesses today (Julier 2013). Guests going out for *kaiseki* will find themselves greeted with deep bows and escorted to private dining rooms by a hostess in a fine kimono. The décor of these rooms—the paintings on displays and flowers arranged—are chosen to match the season. If one is lucky, one may have a view of a meticulously sculpted garden. These too are part of *omotenashi*; as one chef put it to me, these surroundings are there to put one in a state of relaxed appreciation for fine things and stimulate discussion because "Unless you are with a very special person, you don't want to just stare across the table into the other person's

eyes for a few hours.” And a *kaiseki* meal may take hours. The hostess will time her delivery of each successive course based on an assessment of her guests’ pace. If guests have dietary restrictions or have trouble sitting on tatami for the length of the meal, then the hosts make the necessary accommodations. Kyoto’s chefs take context into account in other ways, too. First-time customers receive special attention to make them feel more comfortable and regulars are warmly welcomed back as part of an ongoing relationship.



Figure 21. *Kaiseki* aesthetics: *hin* in edamame paste.

Omotenashi is ideally present from the moment a customer is greeted at the door, but the décor and food add another element of Kyoto difference. Inasmuch as a *kaiseki* meal in Kyoto might include celebrated local ingredients and as well as referents to local culture and traditions, a different set of aesthetics can also be observed. Because these gastronomic aesthetics dictate that a chef restrain his (and less frequently her) culinary prowess, using techniques that enhance

the ingredients' best qualities and avoid unnecessary ostentation, these aesthetics are not easily discerned.

Kaiseki chefs, as I learned in the Japanese Cuisine Laboratory, prize the elusive characteristic they call *hin*. I would characterize *hin* as a kind of restrained elegance that appears deceptive simple. Though these chefs appreciate “B-grade gourmet” items like ramen, such foods have intense flavors rich in salt, fat, and sugar and possess little or no *hin*. I first encountered *hin* one Labo meeting when I was presented with two edamame pastes with crab meat (Figure 21, above). The difference was that the first paste consisted of steamed beans, the second of boiled ones. The steamed paste had a creamier, fuller flavor, as though there were mayonnaise or butter in it. I was told that though this first paste might be tastier, the second was better in terms of Kyoto cuisine because it possessed the subtle flavor of the beans, imbuing it with *hin*. Kyō ryōri chefs sometimes even pursue *hin* at the expense of deliciousness. This valorization of *hin* drives Kyoto chefs of all kinds to skim *aku* (scum) from their broths, removing depth of flavor, but refining the dish, making the taste subtler, more elusive. The goal of this approach is to bring out the best qualities of the ingredients at hand rather than simply to produce a “light” or “refreshing” taste as many consumers seem to think (as elaborated in the following chapter). In July of 2013, the Labo discussed *hin* not in terms of subtle refinement but in terms of flavors or tasting experiences that they call *mazu-uma*. *Mazu* or *mazui* means gross or disgusting, while *uma* or *umai* means delicious or tasty. The two are combined here to describe flavors or tasting experiences that are off-putting at first but become pleasurable and even addictive. Not all dishes one would label *mazu uma* also have *hin*, but some do and the Labo members tried to see if they could create *mazu uma* dishes with an air of *hin*. The chefs playfully created dishes like gelatinous balls with sea urchin inside, small appetizers of white sandwich

bread with fermented fish, and the very tasty small river fish *gori* with walnuts. Ultimately, how does one tell whether something has *hin* or not? It is not simply a memorized knowledge of what counts as refined, but rather a practiced, embodied phenomenon. Chef Takahashi Takuji of Kinobu restaurant explained to me that he refrains from eating a lot of red meat because the day after he eats a meal containing meat he finds his palate dulled, lacking sensitivity. Delicious foods that dull the palate lack *hin*.

Refinement is not limited to flavors. Indeed, Ohtani Kimiko believes that in Japanese cuisine efforts are made to stimulate all the senses. *Kaiseki* chefs attempt to do so in ways that benefit an haute cuisine. In the Labo meetings, Kurisu-san of Tankuma kita mise restaurant experimented with fragrance as a means of building a customer's sense of expectation for a course—and one that could lead to pleasant surprises. The successful result of his experiment was a large and fragrant yuzu citrus toasted over the grill with seafood inside. The aroma of the grilled yuzu skin invitingly precedes the placing of the dish in front of the customer, much less the discovery of what is actually inside the fruit. This playfulness extends to the visual as well, with colors, shapes, and combinations that bring to mind associations typical of the season, often with novel variations to whet the appetites of long-time customers who know what to expect.

Kyoto cuisine is replete with references to the seasons, holidays, dates, auspicious symbols, and traditional culture. Some associations can be quite obscure—conger eel rolled into a pattern meant to resemble the whirlpools of the Naruto Strait, for instance (Japanese Culinary Academy 2015: 123). Yet Chef Nakamura Motokazu argues that “*Kyō ryōri* needs no explanation.” For him, in other words, the customer's enjoyable experience matters most and that should not be dependent on information provided by restaurant staff. It would be akin to explaining a joke. Perhaps his opinion comes from his early training in Zen Buddhism, which

famously finds verbal and logical explanation to be insufficient, misleading, and enabling human weakness. At any rate, Nakamura-san then adds a caveat: “But for some dishes, a customer will be moved more if there is an explanation.” Here, he considers the customer’s perspective, and acknowledges that sometimes people want to know what has been prepared for them and why it is presented the way it is.

5.2.3 *Deaimono*: Ingredients that meet in Kyoto and are transformed

Available resources, limitations imposed by geographic and cultural factors, culturally important aesthetics and attitudes to food and its place in society—these shape cuisines. Ingredients and influences from outside a society and reactions to these can transform foodways too. Kyoto’s cuisines follow this rule, as the concept of *deaimono* illustrates. *Deaimono* refers to the culinary alchemy that results when delicious ingredients from different places meet in Kyoto (*deai* suggests meeting by chance as when one runs into an acquaintance unexpectedly, while *mono* means thing). Locals take pride in their ability to combine unexpected ingredients together in pleasing ways. An heirloom variety of taro known as *ebi imo* or “shrimp potato” derived from a taro from Kyushu meets dried cod from Hokkaido in the dish *imobō*. Similarly, locally grown eggplant and herring from northern Japan are cooked together to make *nishin nasu*.

Prominent in the discourse on *deaimono* are the contributions of the locality—from geoclimactic characteristics that change ingredients originally from elsewhere, and the craftsmanship that goes into the preparation itself. The restaurant Hiranoya Honke, which boasts a history of over 300 years of serving *imobō*, asserts that the perfection of the painstaking

method of preparing a dish that allows seemingly mismatched ingredients to complement each other is what makes this dish Kyotoish (Kyō Meibutsu Imobō Hiranoya Honke 2012).

An even better example of how Kyoto is cooked up from ingredients obtained from other locations is the backbone of Kyoto cuisine: *dashi* stock. Cooks combine dried *katsuo* (bonito) from southern Japan with *kombu* kelp from Hokkaido to create this stock which is then used as the base for numerous dishes. Variations exist for making *dashi*: fancy establishments use *katsuo-bushi*, but home-style eateries and domestic cooks might use *niboshi* (dried sardines), while vegetarian *dashi*, as in *shōjin*, relies upon the umami that shiitake mushrooms give off. In Kyoto, the scum that forms at the top is traditionally skimmed off in the process of creating the stock, which lends a subtler flavor than other varieties of soup stocks. *Kaiseki* restaurants make their own *dashi* using the kinds of *katsuo* and *kombu* they prefer and following proportions and techniques particular to their own establishments, making each one different. Kyoto's chefs use local water, often well water or very filtered water that is known for being soft and appropriate for making quality *dashi* (Rath 2010: 24). Because cooks strain the soup stock, one does not find bonito flakes or dried sardines in the clear *sumashi* soup or the miso soup one is served in a *kaiseki* restaurant, though ingredients like *mitsuba* leaves, shiitake mushrooms, small clams, or the tofu skin *yuba* (a local specialty) may be added.

Besides *deaimono*, Kyoto's cuisines have traditionally incorporated ingredients from outside for a long time. The traditional spice blend *shichimi tōgarashi* requires cayenne pepper, introduced in the 16th century by the Portuguese (Ishige 2012). The store Shichimiya, which specializes in this blend, has stood in the vicinity of Kyoto's Kiyomizu Temple for centuries. In the early 20th century, when Japan had opened up its ports and its doors, global foodstuffs like coffee, beer, cookies, and curry powder found their way onto restaurant menus and into home

kitchens (Laudan 2013: 305). Tempura, a dish of which is often included in all Kyoto cuisines, is attributed to a Portuguese influence (Ishige 2012). Other dishes inspired by the Portuguese are *hirōsu*, originally a type of fritter made of a tofu based batter, and *acharazuke*, a pickled dish that may include vegetables such as daikon, turnip, lotus root (Ishige 2012). These ingredients and dishes are altered to fit local foodways but many people remain aware of the foreign influences. Indeed, it was an *obanzai* restaurant owner who clued me in to the origins of *acharazuke*. And one could go back further still in time and reference direct Chinese influences—from green tea to the very idea of a separate Buddhist temple cuisine.

Just as Kyoto’s cooks do not create impervious and immutable boundaries for *obanzai*, they do not draw any kind of line in time to separate the “traditional” from the “modern,” the “local” from the “global.” Rather, they view the essence of *obanzai* as being one of approach and process. Chef Nakamura Bunji reflected that *obanzai* might now be a type of Kyō ryōri but that it used to be much more of a philosophy. A group of Kyoto ladies maintaining a website dedicated to sharing advice on traditional living in Kyoto have an especially surprising recipe in their collection of *obanzai* recipes. The dish: yogurt with raisins soaked in wine (Kyō no machiya kurashi no ishō kaigi 2010). These women readily admit that the ingredients involved are not “traditional” in and of themselves. Why, then, is this recipe posted in the section for *obanzai* cuisine? For these ladies what is traditional is the way of thinking about everyday cooking, combining readily available ingredients in a manner that results in a practical, healthy, and yes, delicious dish (Kyō no machiya kurashi no ishō kaigi n.d.).²⁹ For them, it is perfectly feasible to create a “traditional” and “local” dish from ingredients that are relatively recent additions to the

²⁹ Personal communication with Kinoshita Yuka, webmaster for the Kyō no machiya group.

Japanese diet. Such a flexible approach makes for a dynamic home cooking adaptable to contemporary needs.

Kyoto's *kaiseki* chefs adopt a similar approach. Several of the chefs I interviewed mentioned that the food distribution system is far superior today to what it was 20 years ago. Today it is possible to obtain high-quality fresh ingredients from all over the country, and even abroad. But as with the Kyoto *obanzai* ladies, it is not merely a matter of better produce or a wider array of products to choose from—innovation and experimentation are also part of the process. Chef Shimoguchi Hideki remarked, “Change and play have been a part of Kyō ryōri from the start.” For this reason he believes that “Kyō ryōri is modern. Looking back, it is classic.” From him such a statement is not surprising; at Chikurin he eagerly experiments with the dining experience, bringing out siphon machines to prepare tea for *ochazuke* (rice in tea, the final *kaiseki* course) for customers, for example. But even chefs whose approach is more conservative, like Nakamura Motokazu, whose style has been much influenced by *obanzai*, says, “Tradition includes past changes” and even breaks with the past. He believes that today's chefs must make changes so that their cuisine isn't *furukusai* or stale and out-of-date. He aims to nonchalantly make slight, subtle changes and achieve a delicate balance with customers able to sense change without quite knowing what has changed.

Kyoto's chefs and other Kyoto residents feel proprietary towards *Kyō ryōri*. Given their knowledge, skill, and renown, I can understand their pride and investment in the continuation of Kyoto's culinary heritage. I wanted to understand how this fit with other aspects of their behavior. Most of the chefs in the Japanese Culinary Laboratory are also active in the Japanese Culinary Academy. Chefs in the Academy travel abroad to participate in exchanges with chefs from other cooking traditions, to teach and also to learn, as I will elaborate later in this chapter.

In the Labo, they talk about *Kyō ryōri* and traditional ingredients and dishes, but also experiment with foods that are not found in the standard *Kyō ryōri* pantry. Chefs cooked with Okinawan *goya* (bitter melon), included *foie gras* in a tasting menu, and created a *washoku* version of a spaghetti carbonara. Experiences eating unfamiliar foods provided them with entertaining stories and also opportunities to rethink and recontextualize their use of cooking techniques. For instance, a visit to Moscow prompted one chef to wonder about the advantages of boiling fish in hard water, unusual because the culinary virtues of Kyoto's soft water are touted so often and so strongly.

5.2.4 **Water: Kyoto cuisine's most essential ingredient?**

In spite of the resourceful borrowing that characterizes Kyoto's cuisines, it would be misleading to conceive of Kyoto's foodscape as some sort of dislocated assemblage of things that meet by chance. To be fair, after all, every place in the world has experienced culinary change through interaction with other places, especially in the context of the globalization of food and agriculture (see for instance Laudan 2013). But if there is not required set of ingredients that must be present for a meal to be understood to be Kyoto cuisine, if it is not the person preparing them, nor the place they are prepared that determines their categorization as Kyoto cuisine, then what distinguishes them from other local cuisines and Japanese cuisine more broadly?

Chefs say that there are no definite boundaries for Kyoto cuisine, that it can be made anywhere. Yet they bring their own ingredients—sometimes even all of them—when they go abroad to give demos of Kyoto cuisine. At the very least, they will bring *kombu*, *katsuobushi*, and soft water (though sometimes they will use Volvic, a bottled water that is both relatively

easy to obtain and low on the hardness scale). This last ingredient is not altogether surprising in that water is often singled out as an essential component that cannot be replaced in the production of prepared foods strongly associated with a given place.³⁰ In Kyoto, visit to local sources will reveal a motley crew of water seekers carrying empty jugs to fill: coffee shop owners, cooks at the bottom of their fancy restaurant's totem pole, homemakers, elderly couples. Many favorite springs are at temples. Japan has been blessed with abundant supplies of clean, fresh water and large quantities of high quality water are used in traditional cooking to make soups, stews, and to cook vegetables and fish (which were not eaten raw until fairly recently).

It is rumored that Kyotoites running restaurants in Tokyo transport water from Kyoto to enhance the taste and authenticity of what they serve. Certainly, Kyoto's chefs often wax poetic about the quality of the water they use, regardless of whether they draw water from their own well, visit a public source, or use filtered tap water. That water played a part in the development of Kyoto's foodways is beyond doubt. Not only has Kyoto's soft water (*nansui*) become a trope, but it has led to the creation of particular kinds of products. The most obvious of these is sake. The Fushimi district of Kyoto (formerly its own town) makes sweeter, fruitier sake known as *onna zake* (woman sake), in contrast with Nada City outside of Kobe, which makes drier sake known as *okoto zake* (man sake) due to its use of *miya mizu*, a local source of hard water.³¹ Though some of Kyoto's famous springs (*meisui*) are associated with sake or tea, interestingly enough, none of them are linked to food.

³⁰ Virtually any examination of the *raisons d'être* of a locale's specialties encounters the argument that the local water is key. This is true of Neapolitan Pizza, New York City bagels, and Scotland's scotch, to name but a few examples.

³¹ Here, too we see the power of the brand and the disconnect that can exist between brand perception and reality; *miya mizu* is highly coveted but in limited supply, and not used in the vast majority of sake that Nada produces. Yet given its brand power, Nada's brewers come up with ways of making sake that will satisfy their consumers without having to use this precious and expensive spring water.

Water is considered to contribute a great deal to Kyoto cuisine. This said, Kyoto's water is not necessarily always delicious. I for one did not enjoy the taste of its tap water and a friend from Yokohama had quite disparaging things to say about it. Nor can one assume that it was better in the past. Many local wells dried up or became polluted when the subway system was built in the 1980s. And even going back further in time, a Kyoto chef friend of mine says that people used to be buried in random parts of the city so that the cleanest water was that to the north and the further south you went, the dirtier your water was likely to be.

Matsuda Mafuyu, a local food researcher specialized in traditional approaches to food as medicine, conducted an informal experiment related to Kyoto's water and food with college students, the results of which she presented at the *Obanzai* Research Group meeting in the summer of 2014. Students made tofu using tap water, hard water, and water from famous Kyoto wells and then tasted them. In spite of their confidence that they could identify the tofu made with the famous spring waters and the assumption that this would make the best tasting tofu, the students' preferred tofu was not that made with famous Kyoto water. At the meeting she also conducted another "blind" taste test part in a taste to determine whether attendees could distinguish between different kinds of water, all poured into small plastic cups labeled with the letters A through E. My preferred water was Evian (a hard mineral water), with the soft water from a well known as *Some no ii* a close second. As I had expected, my least favorite water was taken from the tap at Kyoto University. What were the results of the other participants' tastings? Their preferred water was that of *Some no ii*. Kiyomizu Temple's water, the closest to pure water of any of the waters we tasted, came in second place. Kyoto's tap water fared far better in their evaluations than in mine, however. We also tasted *dashi* made with several of the waters. Here, the difference was remarkable. Very few of the attendees expressed a preference for the *dashi*

made using local tap water. In the end, I left the meeting with the impression that, at least when they sit down and taste, Kyoto's residents can discern between water from different sources, even if their preferences are individualized. Inasmuch as water is attributed the power to make a dish taste like Kyoto (the topic of the next chapter), no matter the chemical differences, the ability to taste the difference—and value it—is acquired.

5.3 PROMOTING THE PLACE BRAND

As noted above, the distinctiveness of Kyoto's *kaiseki* and Kyoto cuisines more generally cannot be reduced to geographical boundaries, a set of essential ingredients or techniques, or the people preparing local dishes, but is more elusive, its authenticity evaluated by discerning palates that perceive more flexible, mutable boundaries. This difference could have been articulated without the emphasis on place. Preparation techniques, flavor profiles, even influential cooking masters might all have served to be the primary characteristics that differentiate this style of cuisine from others, as much as the public's acceptance of the Kyoto difference for cuisine makes the term "Kyoto cuisine" appear inevitable and natural. The contemporary place branding of local cuisine, however, is striking because it requires adaptations and the adoption of novel tactics.

A loose but practical definition for a brand, as explained in chapter two, would be as a set of commonly perceived associations. Employing such a definition, the Kyoto brand has probably existed for a long time, undergoing periodic incarnations as internal and external factors changed. In the past century or so, though, there was no need for Kyoto's chefs or others to extol the idiosyncratic virtues of Kyoto's cuisines. Kyoto's cultural capital was broad and powerful enough that it extended to the culinary realm. In more recent times, a number of factors have put

Kyoto's gastronomic position in a more precarious place. Japan experienced decades of economic malaise that have hurt the local food industry. Domestic and international tourism has helped the area tread water economically, but has also challenged the status quo. Whereas in Kyoto a century ago the most esteemed restaurants belonged to an exclusive list that had much to do with their history and their reception by connoisseurs, today the influence of foreign media like the Michelin Guide has brought a different set of standards into play. No matter how superb *komochi ayu* or *shirako* are according to traditional Japanese standards, Western customers who discover they have been served a pregnant fish or a fish's seminal fluid are likely to be squeamish. Moreover, as enthusiastic as some residents and even chefs can be about the awarding of Michelin stars and other international recognitions, these same people doubt the ability of foreign critics to truly understand what the taste of Kyoto consists of (the topic of the following chapter), much less discern it and discriminate between various incarnations of it.

Domestic consumption patterns have also changed. The Japanese household now eats a wider variety of foods, including dishes like fried chicken, pizza, and instant noodles that have gained in global popularity over past decades. The availability of fresh, inexpensive foods has benefited consumers, but dietary changes have also meant increased rates of obesity, diabetes and other diet related medical conditions (Matsushita, et al. 2004; Neville, et al. 2009). Local agricultural and culinary traditions have also been endangered. As discussed in chapter three, several heirloom vegetable varieties have become extinct. Other foodstuffs, unique because of place of origin or production techniques, have also disappeared or become rare. Furthermore, younger residents often lack knowledge about traditional consumption practices like eating *arame* seaweed on days of the month that end in 8. Even Kyotoites, one might say, have less and less of an understanding of what is—or was—special about Kyoto's traditional cuisines.

In the context of such changes, Kyoto's chefs, in a break from the past, do not simply let their craftsmanship speak for itself. They consider themselves to be stores of expertise and information that are threatened with disappearance as Japanese consumption patterns change. Kyoto's chefs articulate the Kyoto difference at the local, national, and international levels.

5.3.1.1 Local actions: Directed educational efforts

At the local level, Kyoto's chefs do a lot of work with local schools. Here, the Japanese Culinary Academy (JCA) is especially relevant. Though it was founded fairly recently (distinguishing it from older local and national associations for chefs), its members are very active. Since 2006, chefs in the JCA have regularly visited elementary schools through a program set up with the Kyoto Board of Education. They tend to focus on schools close to their restaurants, as this both allows them to give back to the community and develop relationships with individuals who could be future customers. In their visits they talk about Kyoto cuisine, demonstrate their craft, and try to help students develop discerning palates. One chef from Kameoka City told me that when she had a classroom taste several different kinds of edamame, not only did they grasp the flavorful difference between the local variety and a more generic variety, but they quickly expressed a newfound local pride, something important to her.

Chefs also visit local universities, similarly prompting students to taste the difference between discrete varieties of vegetables and other foodstuffs. At Kyoto University, the Japanese Culinary Academy even organizes an annual *dashi* tasting event, with samples of different restaurants' stocks available for students to taste and compare.

The annual Japanese Culinary Exposition is open to the public and offers opportunities to listen to local chefs and sample food from their restaurants. This event provides an affordable means for those financially less-well off to taste food from Kyoto's most renowned restaurants and thereby deepen their understanding of local food culture.

5.3.1.2 National actions: Media outreach and professional collaboration

At the national level, chefs reach out through the media. It is difficult to watch regular Japanese TV programming for even a short period of time without coming across some kind of food focused segment or episode, whether it entails a survey of the top ice cream bar varieties of all time, a demonstration of how to creatively deal with leftover ingredients from last night's meal, or an eating competition. Kyoto's chefs are welcomed as experts and celebrities. Yet they do not wish to be mere entertainment; their professionalism and concern is apparent. Takahashi Eichi of Hyōtei restaurant explained to me that he declines interviews if television stations wish to send celebrity comedians to conduct the interviews rather than reporters with a genuine desire to learn about Kyoto cuisine. While I participated in the Labo, a reporter from the national public broadcaster NHK attended meetings and interviewed the chefs, and others from national newspapers and TV stations attended the spring 2013 public presentation. They were welcomed and chefs patiently answered their various questions.

The JCA hosts a Japanese Culinary Arts competition, organized so that talented chefs representing regions from all of Japan—but also open to chefs outside of Japan—test their professional *washoku* cooking skills. The finals for the contest occur in Kyoto, retaining the city's role as a taste-making city.

Some Kyoto chefs, like Murata Yoshihiro, have opened up restaurants outside of Kyoto. These restaurants testify to their belief that Kyoto cuisine can travel without significant damage to its authenticity, and also function as a means of offering Kyoto cuisine to an expanded audience. Chefs also work with their peers outside of the prefecture through national level organizations like the Japanese Culinary Academy. Some of the chefs they work with, especially those from Tokyo, visited the Labo and observed with interest.

5.3.1.3 International efforts: Cross-cultural educational efforts, international institutions

Unlike many other associations for chefs in Japan, for the JCA the dissemination of knowledge of Kyoto's gastronomic traditions has a strong international component as well. An early iteration of the JCA's website proclaimed: "We... aim to give priority to Kyoto as an international city, recognizing its role in the world's culinary culture. As the heartland of Japanese culture it is the city from which Japan's culinary culture is diffused--indeed, from where Japanese culture itself is spread. We will be satisfied if, through the activities of the Academy, people from all parts of the world will gain the chance to enjoy the superb culinary culture--the cuisine--that is our inheritance" (Japanese Culinary Academy 2010).

To this end, chefs invite foreign media to interview them and observe their daily activities, from cooking to outreach. A film crew from the National Geographic channel, working with Murata-san, visited one of the Labo meetings that I attended. Although access to these chefs is neither easy nor available to anyone, an earnest researcher who uses the proper channels is likely to be granted an interview. Even as a non-native graduate student, I was given opportunities to talk to these chefs individually and ask them questions both because the chefs

respect professionalism in other occupations and also because they are eager to assist those who can help propagate interest in “authentic” Japanese cuisine.

Japanese Culinary Academy members frequently represent the organization on trips to places as different as Brazil, Thailand, and the United States. The goal of these visits abroad, one member told me, is to spread the message that traditional cuisine is worth maintaining and to “understand each other” via soup, flavors, and seeing what makes people from different cultures feel satisfied with their meals. There is an emphasis on reexamining cultural roots and food heritage, not just in the context of lifestyle related diseases like diabetes and obesity, but because foodways are such a core component of cultural identity. The organization sent a speaker to an event titled “Brazilian Kyoto Cuisine Introduction Project.” It puts together exhibits and materials for exhibition at international events like the World Expo, organizes international symposia, and maintains a website with an English language version. The Academy sponsors Japanese Culinary Fellowships, through which chefs from abroad learn about Japanese cuisine in professional Kyoto kitchens.

Murata-san, the figurehead for Kyoto’s chefs, has written a book titled (in English) *Umami: The Fifth Taste* with nine other chefs. The contributors include chefs from France, Peru, Japan, the UK, and the US. In the introduction, Murata points out that one can enjoy *umami* in foods from around the world. This statement is not a boring fact, a trite statement, or meant to be nationalistic, given that the discoverer of *umami* as the fifth taste was a Japanese researcher. Rather, it is meant to invite the kind of investigation, experimentation, and collaboration in which Murata and his colleagues engage. Hence Murata mentions that *dashi* is not the only *umami* rich stock, and that it is joined by Russian beet stock, tomato and chicken broth, as well as Chinese *shang tang*.

Kyoto's chefs played a prominent role in putting together the successful application to have Japanese cuisine inscribed on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. The group working on the project had considered making *kaiseki* cuisine the focus of the application. When UNESCO judges rejected an application for Korea's court cuisine because they deemed it overly exclusive, the group decided to work with the broader *washoku*, a very ambiguous Japanese cuisine. The application itself, modeled after an equally awkward French version, was titled "Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, particularly for the New Year." Though the entity selected for inscription was a "national" cuisine that has recognized regional variations, it was understood that the national cuisine had been strongly influenced by the former imperial capital. Indeed, the video promoting *washoku* showcases the Kyoto vegetable *kuwai* as part of the traditional New Year's meal.

Japanese people, who are very much interested in food matters, have taken note of the recent approach that chefs like Murata-san are adopting for *washoku*. Many have reacted with pride and satisfaction that the world is recognizing the value of Japanese cuisine. A friend of mine commented that she thinks Murata-san is right: the time has come for *washoku* to be part of the global foodscape, with foreign chefs wielding *nakiri* knives and making their own *dashi*. Some critical observers worry that in spite of the title of the UNESCO application, elite cuisine is eclipsing those less spectacular domestic and local foodways that are more in danger of disappearing.

5.4 BORDERS, SCALE, AND KYOTO CUISINE

Flexible and mutable as Kyoto's culinary borders may be, they nevertheless exist. To list one of the most obvious categories of foods that does not cross into Kyoto cuisine easily, bread and pastry are antithetical to the *kaiseki* meal. Japanese cuisine is based upon rice as a staple food. Japanese people hold rice and bread in opposition to each other, as staple foods for East and West (Ishige 2012; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). While it is tempting to think that this taxonomic logic may be the cultural means of achieving a biologically optimal end by discouraging the consumption of multiple carbohydrate-rich foods, the combination of which would not lead to a significantly more nutritionally diverse diet, in fact, the taxonomic logic is more complex. Indeed, many Japanese people do not consider a meal complete unless it includes rice—even if they are eating ramen noodles or the savory and filling *okonomiyaki* sometimes translated as “Japanese pancakes.” For this reason, many B-kyū restaurants specializing in specific starchy foods offer sets that include a bowl of rice on their menus. Thus although Kyotoites are said to eat more bread than the average Japanese—I even spoke with the grand-daughter of a geisha who told me that her family ate bread every morning—that bread is not incorporated into what is called Kyoto cuisine.

Some Japanese foods are also considered unfit for Kyoto cuisine. Professor Fushiki Tōru told me, “The line is drawn at ramen and udon—these are not Kyō ryōri.” I have certainly never seen either ramen or udon, which are properly eaten in a series of quick successive slurps, on a restaurant menu serving any kind of Kyoto cuisine. More importantly, however, the aesthetic dimension is entirely contradictory to that most refined and representative of Kyoto cuisines, *kaiseki*, in which subtly flavored foods in sync with the seasons are served to be savored, not devoured. Japanese bloggers “Chef,” “Beckam3,” and “Nishimoto” observe that a chopsticks rest

is essential to a *kaiseki* meal, contributing to a slow pace that differentiates it from meals of curry rice, beef rice bowls, and one dish meals that have contributed to rising rates of adult onset diabetes and diet-related diseases (Sheffu and Nishimoto 2014).

Though noodles may not be considered Kyō ryōri, I demonstrate in the following chapter that they can at times be considered Kyotoish. In spite of the above explanation, Kyoto is categorized as an udon consuming area, set in direct opposition to soba eating areas like Tokyo. Its udon broth characteristically possesses a light taste. Soba have their place in Kyoto, too, with nishin soba (soba with herring) a popular *deaimono*.

How are we to make sense of this situation? I suggest that a structuralist classification system is at work here with an important scalar dimension. At a macro level, *washoku* is set in opposition to foreign cuisines, and in particular “Western” cuisines. As Cwiertka explains, while the term *washoku* is “nowadays saturated with a sense of timeless continuity and authenticity, is a modern invention” (2006: 175). In fact, she explains that the term “began to be used in Japan in reference to native food only in response to the proliferation of the term *yōshoku*, which represented the food of the most powerful ‘other,’” (Cwiertka 2006: 21) the West. This national cuisine was forged in the late 19th century, in line with the national identity being promulgated. While the UNESCO application for registering *washoku* as intangible cultural heritage concerns itself with local domestic foodways diverse enough that the resulting text appears quite vague, most people consider Kyoto cuisine and in particular its form of *kaiseki* to be prototypical *washoku*.

Zooming in further, a map of Japan could be created out of standard tastes and flavor preferences, with Kyoto set squarely in the Kansai region (together with the prefectures of Osaka, Shiga, Hyōgo, Wakayama, Nara, and Mie). As indicated earlier in this chapter, a closer

look would set Kyoto apart from neighboring Osaka, a place with a reputation for prodigious portions, accessible tastes, and street food. Within Kyoto Prefecture, of course, one could discern between the specialties of various towns; coastal Kyoto's famous crabs and red tilefish distinguish it from traditional dishes associated with Kyoto City and also from the tea soup eaten in the Uji area. If one focuses on the area around Kyoto City, one can identify the multiplicity of individual though thoroughly related cuisines we examined in this chapter.

Specific borders obviously become more or less distinct and meaningful depending on the scale at play. The degree of significance that separates *obanzai* and *kaiseki* or Kyoto's cuisines and Osaka's cuisine changes with the scale at play. What is remarkable, however, is that Kyoto's culinary brand seems to have retained its influence at the global level. I attribute this to the efforts of actors in Kyoto's local food economy to continually reinvigorate local food culture through contact with people, foods, and ideas from outside in order to better position the city and prefecture on a global stage.

6.0 THE TASTE OF KYOTO AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS: TASTE OF PLACE MEETS PLACE AS BRAND

The previous three chapters have investigated the use of place as a brand as well as the emergence of legally defined place brands, paying special attention the kinds of borders that give place its very shape and how these borders are maintained or enforced. These two types of place brands are interconnected but take form in divergent ways.

This chapter explores the “taste of Kyoto.” I make explicit efforts in this chapter to focus on the role that taste places in the creation, marketing, and consumption of place brands because the scholarly literature on place brands largely overlooks the multisensory dimensions of place brands. Inasmuch as I do explain what is meant by the “taste of Kyoto” and how it can be enjoyed, I also explore the disconnect between the taste of Kyoto and some “unKyotoish” flavors known to have emerged from Kyoto’s kitchens (most famously, ramen with a “thick” taste).

Kyoto is not the only place in Japan thought of as having a specific taste or set of tastes. A flavor map of Japan would portray northern Japan as salty, supposedly because the long harsh winters encouraged the development of pickling and other preservation techniques to supplement dishes of rice and fresh seafood. The Kantō area, Tokyo and its environs, also tastes relatively salty, though less so, and is often described as having a “thick taste.” The Kansai region, in which Kyoto, Kobe, Nara, and Osaka are located, is seen as having less strongly flavored food. Regardless of whether or not these associations existed before the contemporary regions and

prefectures were established, in the long-running NHK drama *Takeda Shingen* about the 16th century warlord of eastern Japan by the same name there is a scene in which a noblewoman from the imperial capital has married into the powerful Takeda clan and takes her first bite of local cuisine and immediately says, with utter disappointment, “*Karai!*” (salty). In Japan certain neighborhoods and foreign countries are thought of as having their own smells; Tokyo’s Kanda smells like curry, Shinbashi like grilled chicken (Moeran 2005). The Japanese language facilitates the formulation and communication of taste of place because of phrases such as “taste of the old hometown” (*furusato no aji*), “mother’s taste” (*fukuro no aji*), and “restaurant’s taste” (*mise no aji*). L. Keith Brown relates that in the early years of his field research in northeastern Japan in the 1960s, people could discern the differences between each family’s homemade miso paste, something that could also serve as a topic of conversation (personal communication, June 2, 2015).

While the notion of the taste of Kyoto has unquestionable similarities to the notion of terroir, in its current state, there are also significant differences. Most important is that the taste of Kyoto is used as a means of grounding Kyoto—preventing it from being easily usurped by unaffiliated outside actors and used willy-nilly—without the creation and enforcement of regulations. To put it differently, the taste of Kyoto is very much a social and discursive product, and depends on a consistent understanding of what Kyoto is, what it stands for, and how it can be sensually experienced. People also have to care about the “authentic” taste of Kyoto and be willing to seek out and potentially pay more for the “real thing.”

6.1 THE TASTE OF KYOTO

Just as there exists a common general conception of what Kyoto means (with a degree of variation, obviously), there also exists a notion of “taste of Kyoto.” The phrase one encounters in Japanese is *Kyoto no aji*, *aji* meaning “taste” or “flavor.” Because the Japanese nouns do not indicate singular or plural forms, this term could theoretically signify either one pervasive flavor or an assortment of flavors. In Iwasaki Motoko’s 1966 *Kyō no Aji — Meisho to Tabemono* (which could be translated as *Taste(s) of Kyoto — A Famous Place and its Foods*), she writes that the one-thousand year old capital has one-thousand year old flavors as well as modern ones (Iwasaki 1966). Even as she identifies at least two different types of taste in Kyoto—old and new—she categorizes both as Kyoto flavors. My field research reinforces the view that the “taste of Kyoto” is conceived of as a particular type of flavor or set of flavors with the understanding that there is something particularly Kyotoish about it.

To say that there exists a “taste of Kyoto,” then, is to go further than simply saying that there are foods and foodstuffs that are associated with Kyoto. Besides being known for its vegetables, tea, and cuisines such as *kaiseki*, Kyoto’s famous edible products (*meibutsu*) include *tsukemono* (pickles), *yatsushashi* (a type of sweet popular as a tourist souvenir), and *hamo* (conger pike eel). Kyoto is also known for its white miso, which is sweeter than most other varieties because of its higher rice content, and is not preferred by most Japanese outside of the Kansai region. While one could certainly compile a list of those foods most identified with Kyoto or of distinctive flavors that one could taste in Kyoto, these are different from the “taste of Kyoto.”

When asked to identify the taste of Kyoto, most people respond by saying it has a light taste (*usuaji*, or *usukuchi*) and is refreshing, plain, light (*assari*, *sappari*). They set it in

opposition to the Kantō and Tōhoku regions as well as nearby Osaka Prefecture. The former are characterized as thicker and saltier, the latter somewhat so but also associated with sauce (*so-su*) for dipping deep-fried foods or putting on top of fried noodles.

The notion of what Kyoto tastes like is linked to items such as those I discussed in previous chapters. Kyoto vegetables are thought of as delicious, and though they are not thought of as “light” in flavor, most Japanese people perceive Kyoto cuisine (and particularly *kaiseki* cuisine) to be lightly flavored because of its use of high-quality delicious ingredients, including Kyoto vegetables.³² Though Kyoto vegetables and Kyoto cuisines are valued and perceived to be delicious on the whole, quite a few respondents (particularly those from places where salt and sauce are used in greater quantities) admitted that they thought Kyoto cuisine was rather bland.

Rather than say it has a “light” taste, Kyoto chefs and local food experts will instead say that Kyoto cuisine is meant to bring out the best qualities of each ingredient. They will also insist that although Kyoto cuisine does not rely on heavy amounts of spices or condiments, it is not necessarily always “light” in flavor. When people think of Uji tea, meanwhile, they think of high-quality green tea that contains *umami* balanced with a pleasing amount of bitterness. Uji tea is not characterized as astringent. Nor is it a roasted tea.

What Kyoto vegetables, Uji tea, and Kyoto cuisine have in common is that they are artisanal craft foods. This is particularly true outside of Kyoto.³³ They are not the kinds of affordable convenience foods that the average person can easily incorporate into their diet and lifestyle. Instead, they are luxury goods that are self-consciously—and often very

³² Food researchers say that local heirloom vegetable varieties used to be more flavorful in the past, but that they have become milder as farmers sought to meet consumer demand for varieties with less distinct flavors.

³³ Inside Kyoto Prefecture Kyoto vegetables can be inexpensive and are purchased because they are fresh and local and engrained in local foodways. The Uji tea that people in Kyoto drink may include the more affordable and less esteemed *bancha* (in fact, this is what many farmers drink). And for Kyotoites, Kyoto cuisine (*Kyōryōri*) includes their own domestic foodways.

conspicuously—savored. They are signs of distinction. While craft foods do not all taste the same, by virtue of being a different class of food aimed at a specific group of consumers when sold outside of Kyoto Prefecture, they are consumed in a very different manner.

When people incorporate foods that are said to taste of Kyoto into their lives and their bodies, they do so as part of a larger social body. As even my ramen encounter illustrates, the very concept of Kyoto contributes a great deal to the perception that, broadly speaking, Kyoto and its products are delicious. Ideas may also taste better than the foodstuffs they are represented by. Farmers and agricultural experts may confess that particular vegetable varieties—like the Shishigatani squash—are not as tasty as standard cultivars, but they believe that these varieties are worth growing and consuming because they are rare and are part of local agricultural and culinary heritage. These varieties are infrequently consumed and the Shishigatani squash, as we saw in Chapter 2, has become a material symbol of Kyoto’s age-old aura of mystique, a brand product, and a means for culinary tourists to access an exoticized “traditional” Japan. Rather than diminish the overall deliciousness of local food culture, such tastes and the foodstuffs and dishes they in which can be found contribute to its distinctiveness.

6.2 THE KYOTO BRAND MEETS THE TASTE OF KYOTO

How taste can be made to matter to place and brand has been a reoccurring theme throughout this ethnographic analysis. In this section, I examine this topic more closely by analyzing the fault lines that exist where the “taste of Kyoto” meets the Kyoto brand.

Let us briefly summarize what we have learned about the Kyoto brand thus far. Kyoto is consistently viewed as a repository for Japanese history, the wellspring of much of Japanese culture, and also as a kind of metonym for “traditional” Japan. People within and outside of Kyoto have reinforced and shaped these perceptions so that they are now often taken for granted. People making and selling food and agricultural products—as well as regulators, food activists, chefs, and others—have deployed the Kyoto brand and ancillary place brands like the Uji brand as a means of promoting and protecting local agricultural and culinary heritage and ensuring the livelihoods for those who work in the local food industry. These various stakeholders may have similar concerns and motivations, but the places and entities they support are not identical. Their understandings of Kyoto and its more specific meanings even differ when examined more closely.



Figure 22. A bowl of “Kyotoish” ramen.

The notion that Kyoto tastes light and refreshing applies to far more than classical vegetable dishes and tea. I was first confronted by this when I spoke to a ramen restaurant owner who strove to make *Kyoto rashii* (“Kyotoish”) ramen. What did he mean by “Kyotoish” ramen? Light, subtle, refreshing, and garnished with *mizuna*. This chef explained that when he had first moved to Kyoto from Shizuoka Prefecture, he had expected Kyoto’s ramen shops to serve such lightly flavored ramen, in line with the city’s reputation. As he worked in ramen restaurants and ate in restaurants throughout the city, however, he found that most places catered to the large college population and served soy sauce and *tonkotsu* (pork stock) flavored ramen, which have a “thick” taste. The best example of this is perhaps the popular ramen chain Tenka ippin, which originated in Kyoto City and is famous for its soup, heavy, thick, greasy, and salty, very much unlike the supposed “taste of Kyoto.” It was this mismatch between perceptions of Kyoto and the actual flavor of most the ramen in the city that inspired him to make ramen that seemed more Kyotoish. He is not alone. Another ramen chef I spoke to told me that in summer he endeavors to make cold noodles that also taste of Kyoto; he adds wasabi and a little rice, making the dish reminiscent of *ochazuke* (the hot rice dish served at the conclusion of fancy *kaiseki* meals and that is also supposedly a Kyoto hostess’s indirect way of telling her guests that it is time for them to depart).

In the national discourse on culinary heritage, therefore, the “taste of Kyoto” usually refers to dishes and cuisines characterized as “high culture.” Indeed, when I tell people in Japan that I found ramen that was supposed to be “Kyotoish” or possess the taste of Kyoto, they react with skepticism or surprise. For most people, ramen is almost inherently un-Kyotoish. To be honest, I think that the challenge and novelty of making convincingly Kyotoish ramen is part of the appeal for ramen chefs. Kyotoites’ domestic foodways have also been exoticized and appeal

to people from outside of the prefecture as the foreign “taste of Kyoto.” As noted in the previous chapter, people from Kyoto refer to local cooking as “*obanzai*” when they wish to call upon the Kyoto difference for people from Tokyo and other areas. In other words, discussions of the “taste of Kyoto” are very much dependent upon the contexts of class and insider / outsider status. There are, as my ramen anecdotes indicate, however, dishes that challenge this schema for deciding what is really, truly Kyotoish. In this regard, it is similar to the yogurt with raisins soaked in wine dish I mentioned in the previous chapter.



Figure 23. Poster for Kyoto meat.



Figure 24. Poster for Suntory The Premium Malts beer.

The Kyoto brand, flexible as it is, is used to market goods at least seemingly at odds with what is typically thought of as Kyotoish, if not with historical fact and cultural values. As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, I have discovered Kyoto-related foods outside of Japan. In Nashville, a chef from a local barbecue restaurant cooked an exclusive meal billed as his favorite “Kyoto *kaiseki*” cuisine. Pittsburgh’s Teppanyaki Kyoto restaurant’s name seems tongue-in-cheek in that its menu (and teppanyaki fare in general) leans towards Osaka’s tasty street food rather than Kyoto cuisine. In Japan, meanwhile, I found the Kyoto name used to sell standard carrot varieties in Okinawa, ketchup in Yokohama, and Osaka-made *dashi* in Tokyo. But even in Kyoto can one find items whose Kyotoishness is asserted in spite of characteristics that would have one question such claims. Hence Kyoto pork³⁴, Kyoto waffles, and coffee with the taste of Kyoto!

As one might predict, advertising for such products deploys the standard tropes that we have seen when looking at marketing materials for Kyoto vegetables and Uji tea. National brand Suntory has promoted its high-end beer The Premium Malts with posters proclaiming—in the Kyoto dialect spoken by geisha—“Deliciousness created in Kyoto” (*Kyoto de kosaeta oishisa dosu*) (Figure 24). A poster for Kyoto meat portrays not the product advertised but a geisha and the caption “The taste of tradition and culture: Kyoto meat” (Figure 23).

Another example would be a “Kyoto style” obento (lunch box) advertized against the background of a temple pagoda. The advertisement might not have caught my eye had it not prominently featured a picture of a grilled beef obento, something that is not in accord with

³⁴ For Kyoto Pork the word pork is intentionally written in hiragana, the script used for native Japanese words, rather than the usual katakana, the script used for foreign and newly coined words—I was corrected by a civil servant promoting the program when I incorrectly used the usual ポーク instead of the designated ぽーく. This is meant to give it a more Kyotish air, making it more “Japanese” and “traditional,” even if pork consumption has no significant historical basis in Kyoto (unlike the Okinawan islands, for example).

Buddhist dietetics, is not what most people associate with Kyoto, and is not typical “Kyoto cuisine” either. Similarly, a restaurant review I read raved about Kyoto’s local home cooking and its excellent seafood. This characterization is problematic because Kyoto City is far from the coast and its homestyle meals (*obanzai*) have not traditionally been heavy on seafood. I do not doubt that the reviewer ate good seafood in Kyoto, but that the good seafood had to be called “authentic” *obanzai* to be worthy of an English language review is what I find problematic and interesting.

A cynical person—and there are plenty in Kyoto!—would ask if anything goes, if the “Kyoto magic” to use my friend’s turn-of-phrase could be used to sell anything. While the Kyoto name is indeed available to almost anyone who wishes to use it, this does not mean that anything will be a retail success simply because of its name and deployment of the “right” tropes. This is because authenticity matters and people—especially Kyotoites—are taught to discern it, as I elaborate in the following section.

In the previous section, I demonstrated that though there is overlap, a gap exists between items that possess the “taste of Kyoto” and products that are marketed using the Kyoto brand but are not perceived as being particularly “Kyotoish” in and of themselves. Here, the concept of authenticity becomes important. While it is wise to treat authenticity as a discursive product, as opposed to an inherent essence, authenticity matters a great deal and should not be dismissed as illusory and trivial (de St. Maurice 2012b). Indeed, its persistence in discourse about topics such as race in African American literature (Eversley 2004), representation and sound in popular music (Barker and Taylor 2007), and the identities and life choices of contemporary American women (Brenner and Letich 2003), attests to its social value. The term authenticity also appears frequently in discourse about food, likely because food choices often have much to do with

conspicuous consumption, ethical and religious prohibitions or obligations, and health and safety concerns, along with other phenomena. When I attended the Food, Feeding, and Eating in and Out of Asia conference at the University of Copenhagen in the summer of 2015, the topic of authenticity was discussed so frequently that it became somewhat of a joke. Granted, authenticity is not always important, and certainly not for everyone. Clearly, many people worry about having enough food or enough food that is healthy and safe and cannot afford to care if their food is “really” local or “really” comes from any given place. Yet even these people may have preferences for food that is genuinely organic or halal or from a certain region they deem to be safe. In spite of all of this, however, it is also evident that authenticity does not always increase the desirability of a product, either. An appetite for authenticity in a specific context is a socially cultivated phenomenon.

If authenticity does matter, and if it is a discursive product, then can one actually experience the taste of place? My field research suggests that one can, indeed, taste a place, though one must first have acquired the requisite knowledge of what a particular place tastes like. I explain this in the following section. Before proceeding, however, I wish to emphasize the disconnect that can exist between the Kyoto brand and the everyday sensually lived experiences of Kyoto. The Kyoto brand, associated with elegance, mystique, and a deliciousness that can be traced back millennia, is imagined and discursively created, as is the trope of Kyoto, Japan’s traditional taste-making city. Perhaps the best indicator of this is that in spite of how contemporary Kyoto is linked to a splendid vision of the refined Heian court, it is highly likely that today’s Japanese gourmets would find little to praise about Heian era foodways. Japanese historian Higuchi Kiyoyuki argues that Heian food did not taste good, nor was food perceived as something to be enjoyed (Watanabe forthcoming). As Takeshi Watanabe points out, literature

from the Heian period provides scant evidence of food and what we do know about Heian foodways would strike many of today's Japanese as strange and lacking: Heian banquets featured cold food piled onto plain dishes and the Emperor ate with silver chopsticks and a spoon while seated in a chair at a table (Watanabe forthcoming). Historian Wayne Farris has demonstrated that Heian era Japan, including the imperial capital, experienced famines and starvation (Farris 2007), an element not captured in popular conceptions of the period. The romanticized fantasy of Heian period Japan, as Watanabe aptly points out, extends beyond food. The Heian period may have been influential for the development of Japanese cultural forms that are revered today, but it was also a time characterized by localized conflicts and rebellions, the rise of a warrior class, rising inequality, and an increase in religiosity. While many people—Japanese and foreigner—may associate Kyoto with Japanese history and traditional culture, when they do so they usually gloss over the darker episodes in Kyoto's past. To be sure, Kyoto has been imagined and portrayed as the traditional city par excellence for a long time, and the Meiji oligarchs in particular found that the city played a useful foil to Tokyo's modernity. Today this act of imagining the city to be the delicious descendent of the ancient imperial capital is taken to a global audience also eager for a taste. One should not forget that in imagining such foodscapes, the less than savory aspects of the everyday foodways of marginalized groups are usually overlooked, while their appealing customs are often coopted by groups with greater cultural, social, and economic capital.

6.3 ARBITRATING AUTHENTICITY VIA ENLIGHTENED PALATES

In order to taste a place, as opposed to simply a food or a flavor, one must possess the requisite knowledge of what makes a place unique. In Japan, this involves knowing that the *Kamo* eggplant hails from Kyoto, *mizu* eggplant from Osaka, and *senryō* eggplant from all over Japan. We have already examined three different types of edible items from Kyoto, their Kyotoishness, and their borders.

Though any “taste of place” has to do with the connections between a specific place and ingredients, flavors, dishes, and cuisines, it extends well beyond all of these elements. It also involves the sort of emplacement that comes with the seasons. As I explained in the previous chapter, when partaking of Kyoto cuisines, the season is at hand to be tasted. Each vegetable or fish has a season that is subdivided into its beginning, peak, and end. The first taste of a season—known as *hashiri*—is welcomed like a friend that has not been recently seen. In early March, around *ohinamatsuri* (the Doll Festival or Girls’ Day), I had the good fortune to partake of a fancy *kaiseki* meal with a group of researchers from the National Museum of Ethnology. The moment we were served a bowl of *takenoko* (bamboo shoots) with *wakame* (a kind of seaweed), and grilled *hiragai* (a kind of shellfish) in a clear broth, garnished with leaves from the *sansho* pepper plant, a woman sitting across from me exclaimed joyfully, “Wow! Spring is here!” Those around us dutifully expressed their pleasure that the dish was a sign that spring was on its way. Later, each foodstuff is appreciated when it reaches its peak (*shun*). When *takenoko* reaches its peak the central wholesale market in Kyoto holds auctions for local bamboo shoots that have been dug up that very morning. They do not bother to do so at the beginning of the season when the bamboo shoots are said to be less good. Finally, the last taste of the season—*nagori*—is savored, to be remembered until the following year.

A person needs to have acquired an awareness of what the taste of Kyoto is—beyond a list of foods and when they are in season—in order to be able to experience it. What does Uji tea taste like? What is so special about Kamo eggplant? How can one tell if what one is eating is “real” Kyō ryōri? Not everyone has this knowledge, nor does this knowledge come as one package. On one visit to a Kyoto restaurant I met two customers from different parts of Japan who, while equally impressed by local bamboo shoots, had different reasons: the man from Hokkaido admired their white color, whereas the man from Shizuoka was especially impressed by their tenderness. In order to appreciate local bamboo shoots, one must first know that bamboo shoots are not only edible but what is desirable in terms of color, shape, texture, and flavor, as well as what areas of Kyoto are reputed to produce the best bamboo.

To develop an awareness of the significance and the distinctiveness of what one is eating also requires understanding the cultural associations involved. For instance, the foods one eats for Girls’ Day—and not only in high-class Japanese restaurants, but for many families at home—include shellfish and cloudy-white *nigorizake*. These are said to represent both female and male, genitalia on the one hand and semen on the other. On June 30th, meanwhile, people eat a layered sweet known as *minazuki*. The top layer is made of sweet adzuki beans. Though one might assume that the adzuki are the sweet’s *raison d’être*, the plain looking bottom layer, made of rice powder, holds significant meaning. An opaque white, this layer is meant to look like ice so that it can cool and revive one’s spirit on a hot summer day, even for those people who could not afford ice when it was more expensive. Today when people attend the annual *Nagoshi no harae* ceremonies at temples and shrines to purify themselves halfway through the calendar year, they often eat *minazuki* afterward.

How is one made into a “tasting person?” Today’s young people learn about local food culture via schools, popular media, tourism, and events sponsored by local organizations. The curriculum of schools in Kyoto Prefecture now includes lessons about local food culture, with visits from farmers, researchers, and chefs like those whose activities I discussed in the previous chapter. Food is all over Japanese television. The long-running *Kuishinbo! Banzai* has showcased local specialties from all over the country for decades. Food also appears very frequently on shows that are not explicitly about food. *Kenminsho*, a show that presents the unique heritage, resources, and people of different areas of Japan, usually includes a food component. The *Uwasa no Tokyo Magajin* contains a segment in which young women are presented with a variety of ingredients and asked to prepare a standard Japanese dish like *ika daikon* (squid and daikon). The results—like a squid somehow stuffed with a large daikon that protrudes more and more during the cooking process—are entertaining and followed by a professional cooking demonstration. There exist many manga about food, from preparation to consumption; a list might begin with the classic *Oishinbō* (now translated into English), *Kukkingu Papa* (Cooking Papa), *Gin no saji* (Silver spoon), *Kinō nani tabeta?* (What did you eat yesterday?), and the supernatural action filled *Toriko*. On the internet, meanwhile, one can find a variety of information about food culture and traditions, including recipes posted by Japanese grandmothers eager to share their knowledge about cuisines like *obanzai*. Local organizations sponsor events meant to educate citizens about local food culture. Many of these target parents, specifically mothers who, it is hoped, may then share their knowledge with their children. In my experience, such events often include an edible component that renders their message of valuing culinary traditions all the more appealing.

If the taste of Kyoto is one that can only be discerned by enlightened palates, it is natural that not all individuals or groups will be able to enjoy it equally. *Kaiseki* cuisine, Kyoto's most expensive, provides us with clear examples of this. One chef explained to me that certain details can only be appreciated by those who have a deep understanding of Japanese arts. For instance, there is a dish in which a grated daikon is dyed purple with peeled eggplant skins. Though someone like me might take this to be a novel innovation and whimsical or random, it is in fact a reference to the color of a Heian era kimono that individuals especially well versed in Japanese history and culture will comprehend. For such customers, his restaurant will serve each course using special plates and bowls, each with their own history, some even with their own names. If a customer requests the most famous and expensive tableware the restaurant has, the bill will be quite impressive. Those who have the knowledge to grasp and appreciate this aspect of the taste of Kyoto are those who are most able to afford it.

Though wealth and class are tied to one's ability to experience various manifestations of the taste of Kyoto, alone they are insufficient. First-time customers require introductions to get past the entryway of some local restaurants, for instance. As I have insisted throughout this dissertation, in Kyoto, history and continuity are valued. Whether the subject is vegetables, recipes, or entire cuisines, words and phrases such as "heritage," "inheritance," and "passed down through generations" are often used to index Kyotoishness. A "true" Kyotoite is said to be one whose family has lived in Kyoto for at least three generations (and the longer the history, the "purer" the Kyotoite). Such a person, whatever their financial status or class background, has a certain authority to participate in the discourse on Kyotoishness because they have been raised in the proper cultural environment and experienced Kyoto first-hand for a sufficient period of time.

There are people, however, for whom the taste of Kyoto holds little appeal, especially those from nearby Osaka City. Osakans have a reputation for spending a lot of money eating out and drinking but are notoriously stingy. In Osaka it is common to come across signs advertising the cheapest beer and even sushi, something one hardly finds in Kyoto. Invariably, when I asked Osakans how they felt about food from Kyoto, they would thumb their noses and tell me it was expensive and pretentious. A food researcher who lives in Osaka laughed when I told him this. He explained that Osakans might feel this is the case, but it doesn't stop them from traveling to Kyoto when they want to enjoy a fancy meal. A woman in her late 30s told me Kyoto cuisine was a lot like Kyoto people—superficial and pretentious, while a man in his early 20s voiced the opinion that Kyotoites were too snobby about their food. It is not surprising that those who hail from Osaka, Japan's street food capital and in general a place of "coarser" tastes, were critical in this way. Their foodways—for which they have become famous for in their own right—are set in stark contrast to Kyoto's.

Similarly, when a man exited a coffeeshop after telling me that Kyoto vegetables were too expensive and Kyoto's food culture wasn't all that special, the coffeeshop owner explained that the customer was Korean-Japanese and that the "light" taste of Kyoto didn't suit him. She linked her customer's preference for fare with a "thicker" flavor to his Korean ethnic identity. Although he himself did not articulate it along these lines, such a perspective echoes other criticism I have heard about Kyoto food, much of it framed explicitly in terms of social inclusion and exclusion, accessibility, and inter and intra-group interaction. With Kyoto serving as "the Japan" (to use a friend's phrase), and many Koreans experiencing discrimination in Japan and treated as second-class citizens, it is not surprising to hear a Korean-Japanese find those supposedly most Japanese of tastes not quite to his liking.

Of course, I was an outsider myself. Conducting research on Kyoto's food culture, I was alternately told I was more Japanese than most Japanese or that it would be a veritable challenge for me as a foreigner to be truly able to grasp the "essence" of Kyoto's cuisines. Many of those I spoke to, in particular chefs and farmers, went to great lengths to answer my questions and teach me about local food culture. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, many famous chefs take on foreign interns. Restaurants all over the city welcome foreign guests and make it a point to be attentive to their needs. Though the boundaries around Kyoto are blurred and porous, it is clear that there are degrees of belonging.

Keeping this in mind, those people who have become discerning tasters play an important role when it comes to the "taste of Kyoto." Chefs told me that neighborhood customers, un beholden to their celebrity, respectfully speak up when something does not seem authentic to them and complain when they are disappointed with the food they are served. And chefs value feedback from customers with discerning palates. Many Kyotoites and others who congregate in Kyoto are capable of determining what is authentic because they are socialized to do so. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this socialization. The chefs I spoke to who had grown up in Kyoto explained that their upbringing had endowed them with an ability to taste subtle differences in flavor as well as an understanding of local culinary traditions. Chef Nakamura Motokazu, for instance, spoke about growing up in a household that ate *obanzai*. Though he maintains a distinction between *obanzai* and *kaiseki*, the two are intimately related for him and *obanzai* dishes inspire his *kaiseki* creations. Consumers also possess discriminating palates. On one occasion, a friend of mine dined in a well-known *kaiseki* restaurant and picked up the plate or vessel every time a new course was brought out so she could carefully examine it and judge its value. When a course was set in front of her in local *Kiyomizu yaki* ware, she observed that the

quality of this local pottery style was decreasing, but was thankful that the restaurant was supporting local artisans. I found such multisensory engagement with cuisine—from plate decorations to serving dishes and sake cups (see, for instance, Weiss 2010)—to be quite common. Like other Kyotoites I know, this friend is just as critical of the food and tea she is served. When, in the fall of 2013, scandals about widespread food fraud in hotel restaurants broke, my friend paid attention. She told me of one restaurant where the staff were replacing one small fish with another much smaller fish, something she viewed as a sign of incompetence, akin to mistaking sardines for anchovies. To her, it was equally unbelievable that customers had not brought this error to the attention of the restaurant’s management.

For reasons such as these, when I asked Chef Shimoguchi Hideki of Chikurin what makes something *Kyō ryōri* he told me “If people from Kyoto go [to a restaurant that claims to be *Kyō ryōri*] and say it’s delicious, then it’s *Kyō ryōri*.” This echoes Chef Nakamura Bunji’s comment that the goal of the chef is to make meals that not only gain the approval of customers but prompt them to tell the chefs the food they ate was delicious. This is not to say that authenticity and tradition are the only or even the most desirable traits for food. As Yamazaki Hanae, a food researcher and professor at Ryūkoku University who is active in efforts to preserve culinary heritage, “Just because it’s authentic doesn’t mean it tastes good.” Yet it is clear that the ultimate arbiters of authenticity are customers and that, moreover, they do not judge arbitrarily, but do so based on the discernment they have learned over time.

Let us not forget that in spite of its reputation as a place that embodies “traditional” Japan, Kyoto is a dynamic place with flexible, porous borders. Kyotoites love new things. Using their aforementioned discernment, Kyotoites incorporate things they find good, tasty, and fitting into their traditions. In chapter three, I mentioned how people cook with Kyoto vegetables in

innovative ways, making fall vegetable salads with fusion-style dressings, for example. Uji tea, meanwhile, is now found in KitKats and PET bottles and prepared with effervescent mineral water. Chefs making Kyoto's *kaiseki* cuisine might prepare courses that include mangos, beef, and ice cream. These examples are all from the production end, but it is society more broadly that will decide whether a particular item is or is not authentically Kyotoish.

7.0 KYOTO'S FLEXIBLE PLACE BRANDS FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS: CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I have shown how the flexibility of Kyoto's place brands has allowed for the development of a localism that protects gastronomic heritage and promotes the local agricultural and food industry by engaging with outside resources and actors rather than rejecting or resisting their influence.

This research makes contributions along several different dimensions. It adds to the literature on place by attending to how place functions as a brand. It also offers an ethnographic case study of a system of flexible and overlapping place brands, expanding our understanding of the variety of strategies for implementing geographical indications and place brands, particularly for food and agricultural products. More practically, local economies seeking to safeguard cultural traditions and bolster local industry can learn from Kyoto's example. Specific lessons include the power of place branding, the insight that inclusivity and openness do not necessarily lead to loss and debilitation, and the role that pre-existing cultural resources and associations can play in minimizing the negative impacts of globalization.

7.1 PLACE AS BRAND: THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

To Agnew's list of the various forms that place can take—as a location, setting, a sense of place—I add place as brand. Because place as brand overlaps with place's other incarnations, it is a distinct but not separate phenomenon. Place brands, particularly those for origin products, obviously index a location. Much of the action of creating and sustaining a place brand may take place in the realm of place as setting (though it is important not to overlook the role that actors from *other* places can play in forging a place's brand). And the “sense of place” that Basso identified is integral to a place brand because that very “sense” is one means—and perhaps the original means—that a place is infused with meaning. Without such meaning, such associations, there is neither place nor brand.

Place as brand, however, covers some territory that the other forms place takes do not. Place brands can come to be legally defined entities (like the Kyō Brand, for example) or geographical indication linked to a location-setting and taking advantage of a sense of place. They can also be simultaneously more elusive and more concrete, taking different shapes. Take champagne: though I expect few people to be able to identify the specific location or scale of Champagne, it is commonly understood that champagne is a sparkling white wine that carries connotations of class, luxury, and celebration. As a testament to the draw and reach of Kyoto, people in Japan—producers, government officials, and consumers—identify Kyoto in vegetables, tea, and cuisine. But place as brand does not mean that the object at hand always becomes subsumed by the power of the Kyoto brand. Sometimes the processes of place branding can enhance the status of a particular item such that it develops its own, in some ways independent, reputation. For this reason even a vegetable like the “shrimp potato” can be deemed a place brand, as indeed an interlocutor referred to it.

As brands places have meaning for individuals and groups in locations considerable distances away. Kyoto can mean a great deal to individuals far removed from the physical location because Kyoto is equated with tradition, history, refinement, and a self-orientalized version of Japanese-ness. This differs considerably from the Fukushima brand's reception of late. People from the prefecture may have warm feelings toward their hometowns and outsiders may admire the strength and resilience of people from Fukushima Prefecture, but the brand has taken on a negative quality in recent years as it has come to be linked with disaster, contamination, and risk, and the prefecture and its current and former residents have suffered for it.

Tuan asserts that “[p]lace is pause” (1977: 149) in that it provides people with a sense of stability amidst uncertainty and change. This extends to the function of place as brand. In the face of cultural loss and social adjustment, it is reassuring to Japanese people that the cultural capital of Japan persists. For those outside of Japan's northeast, labeling Fukushima Prefecture, or even the entire Tōhoku region as unsafe and contaminated (their produce treated as such even when tests indicate otherwise) can reduce anxiety by securing notions of radioactivity and risk within geopolitical boundaries that can be policed by the careful consumer. Of course, places change constantly and the fashioning and deployment of place brands differs over time too. Nevertheless, in the context of the larger regional or global shifts to which societies adapt, places are invested with meaning that is taken to be relatively stable.

As is abundantly clear in this research, a place brand or geographical indication for specific products is not simply there to be discovered. Rather, places have pre-existing attributes that may be cultivated into a coherent and consistent set of associations. Regardless of whether such associations exist or not, geographical indications and place brands—including those for agricultural and food products—are shaped by specific actors and networks. Champagne has

been crafted as an elite product that is the culmination of centuries of smallscale vinicultural craftsmanship and terroir. Fiji Water, on the other hand, is a product marketed as pure and pristine, its source an untouched exotic paradise. One could certainly imagine a different, less positive set of associations for the Fiji brand, but the Fiji Water company benefits from the widespread recognition of Fiji as a tropical island country and a lack of awareness of its ethnic tension and repressive government. Likewise, marketing efforts for Darjeeling tea portray it as the product of natural “gardens” hand-picked by young women in traditional Nepali garb, omitting references to industrial tea plantations with problematic labor practices inherited from colonialism (Besky 2008; Besky 2014).

Naming and place-name selection is also highly important. Pink rock salt mined in the Salt Range of Pakistan is not sold as Pakistani salt nor as Salt Range salt but as Himalayan salt, deploying verbal and visual imagery referencing the sacred mountains as well as the health and medicinal properties attributed to consumable items from the Himalayas. Similarly, as comedian Maz Jobrani points out, many people from Iran identify themselves as Persian because like the cat and the rug, this term has positive associations. “Iranian,” meanwhile, calls to mind geopolitical issues, among them the possibility of nuclear weapon development and regional political instability.

If a place brand, in the loosest sense of the term, is a set of associations that people consistently identify with a place, then it tends to privilege the standard, the uniform over the diverse, the fragmented. Any place brand benefits particular individuals over others. The successful branding of Kyoto as the birthplace of Japan’s traditional culture and a continued source of sophisticated high quality artisanal craft goods serves the interests of the tourist industry, as well as makers of craft goods. Another effect, however, is that rural areas of Kyoto

Prefecture disappear when in the popular imagination Kyoto Prefecture and Kyoto City become collapsed, as they especially do in the discourse on Kyō ryōri when Kyoto City's *kaiseki* cuisine becomes representative not only of Kyoto cuisines as a whole, but the cuisine of the entire nation. In a symposium I attended at Kyoto Prefectural University in the fall of 2014, an audience member expressed deep concerns about this trend, asking if Kyoto's identity and brand as *sennen no miyako*, the "capital for a thousand years," matched the experiences of people in rural areas. University Vice President Tanaka Kazuhiro, explained that the University's new center for the study of Japanese foodways had as its motto "Kyoto has its rural areas, rural areas have their capital." This slogan not only plays off of the character kyō's dual meanings as both Kyoto and capital, but puts a twist on the aphorism "Kyoto / the capital has its rural areas," which is often taken as meaning that even the bustling capital contains seemingly rural, undeveloped areas (Daijirin 2008). Such an approach deliberately includes neglected rural areas in the scope of analysis, though how it can showcase the variety of their contributions to food culture remains to be seen.

This last point is a reminder that, as Critchlow (formerly Rodman) writes, instead of being "inert containers," places are "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions" (1992: 641). The existence of multiple overlapping and even nested place brands for Kyoto vegetables and Wazuka's residents' efforts to forge a strong brand for their town demonstrate this.

Acknowledging that place manifests itself as a brand, as well as a location, setting, and "sense of place" is thus important because it recognizes the meaning that places hold for people in other places, the ways that perceptions and manifestations of place can be more elusive or

more concrete than its location, and the role of representation in place-making. As we have seen, these, in turn, have significant implications.

7.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS: MULTISENSORY ACCOUNTS OF FLEXIBLE PLACE BRANDS

If one of the main contributions of anthropologists to social science has been that of ethnographic fieldwork characterized by holism and “thick” description, accounts of the groups and phenomena being studied on the whole have not attended to the multisensory nature of human experiences, diverse as they may be (Hurdley and Dicks 2011: 284). This is not altogether surprising given that modern Western societies privilege the visual and aural and associate them with knowledge, often overlooking the importance of the other senses to so much of human life. Multisensory fieldwork and sensual ethnography are, as a result, challenging, particularly when the end result is a written text, albeit one that may be supplemented with photographs.

Participant observation is key to multisensory fieldwork. Through observation, one can perceive how interlocuters interact with the world using their senses, although this does not give us access to their perceptions or thoughts. By actively participating, one can better—though never fully—understand their experiences. Such an approach is useful not only when one is researching a topic related to a specific sense, as in chapter 6 on the “taste of Kyoto,” but is critical to research that describes the bodily experiences of a group of people. For instance, in his research on migrant farm laborers in Washington State, Seth Holmes worked in the fields

picking strawberries and lived on the farm like the laborers themselves and he relates to his readers the physical and physiological toll of these work and living conditions (Holmes 2013). Without attentive multisensory participant observation, Holmes' ethnography would possess less of the compelling, though disconcerting, depth it does.

Multisensory participant observation was a crucial component of my research. Unlike projects like the one that Seth Holmes took on, my "target" and my field were rather broad. Kyoto is a city, a prefecture, and historical place, and a brand with a very wide geographic reach. Even limiting my research to Kyoto's food and agricultural industry and gastronomic heritage meant including a diverse range of items including heirloom vegetables, tea blends with a considerable history, dishes associated with Kyoto cuisine, and foods that have only recently been marketed using the Kyoto brand. In this context, my participant observation entailed a variety of activities, such as attending the monthly meetings of the Japanese Culinary Laboratory, planting tea seedlings, harvesting bamboo shoots, and acting as a volunteer in cooking classes held by the Kyoto Food Culture Club. To conduct this research effectively meant paying conscious attention to the sensory dimension in everyday life, particularly in relation to the Kyoto brand in its various manifestations. But it also necessitated interrogating producers and consumers in particular about how they experienced Kyoto's food culture and the terms that they used to interpret it. This is, for example, how I was taught about the concept *hin* and its role in distinguishing Kyoto cuisine from other local cuisines.

This multisensory ethnography adds to the existing research on places and brands, as well as that on place brands, a field that relies primarily on the visual dimension and "images and perceptions" of place brands (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). In demonstrating that places, brands, and place brands, are experienced by the human sensorium—and are therefore not

limited to one or two of the senses—and that places can be associated with particular kinds of sensory experiences (in Kyoto’s case, a “light” or “refreshing” taste), I hope that this dissertation paves the way for further research on the senses, place, and branding.

This dissertation also provides an ethnographic case study of place branding that expands our understanding of the strategies that stakeholders in local economies may use to set up place brands for food and agricultural products, protect gastronomic heritage, and ensure that the livelihoods of local farmers and food industry stakeholders do not suffer catastrophically as neoliberal policies and trade agreements are implemented. In many ways, my research here serves as a more extended analysis of the kind that Hinrichs offers in her article “The Practice and Politics of Food System Localization” (2003). There, Hinrichs examines trends in Iowa’s local food movements, from CSAs to the “Iowa banquet meal,” identifying tendencies toward what she calls “defensive localism” as well as “diversity-receptive localism.”

It seems that the European system of geographical indications, and in particular those built around the French notion of “terroir” and the various legal and economic frameworks that developed from it, have become the “classic” examples of place brands for edible products (see, for example, Barham 2003; Trubek 2008). My answer to the question of why I do not use the term “terroir”—I have been asked several times by people hearing about my research—is that “terroir” is rooted in specific cultural, historic, and political economic circumstances that I do not believe translate easily to Kyoto. Using the notion of terroir elides the very differences that have produced these very disparate approaches to place brands for food and agricultural products.

The boundaries of the “Champagne region” were delimited to create an official system linking place, taste, quality, and brand (Trubek 2008: 26). Kyoto’s history is different. Though it is clear that Kyoto City’s boundaries have shifted a great deal over time, and Kyoto Prefecture is

a relatively new addition to Japan's geopolitical maps, these have shaped food culture and notions of taste and taste of place in discernible ways. For one thing, the category of "Kyoto vegetable" itself relies upon an understanding of Kyoto Prefecture as a relatively homogenous unit that has inherited valuable agricultural and culinary traditions from the ancient imperial capital of Heian-kyō and its surrounding areas. In Kyoto, then, geographic and political units and boundaries already in existence were adopted to manage and protect traditions that had actually preceded them (though both have admittedly changed).

Another difference is that the Kyoto brand writ large and the multitude of place brands more narrowly defined extend to so many different products. There are items that Kyoto has an established history of producing—like Uji tea, varieties of heirloom vegetables like the Shishigatani squash, dishes like eggplant *dengaku* (made with a miso glaze), and more recent foods that have already become part of the foodscape like the *yatsunashi* sweets tourists buy as souvenirs. Newer, the producers of less established offerings, including Kyoto pork, the Kyoto Habanero Village line of products, and local Kyoto chicken, are also trying to add to the list of products grounded in Kyoto's foodscape.

While the emplacement of food and place-branding can be attempts at restoring the knowability and trustworthiness of food for consumers, the use of place-based associations of difference to render foods distinct and identifiably so also has a seedy side. For one thing, there is the tendency for different place-based groups to claim a food as unambiguously theirs and only genuinely theirs. The argument over whose pisco is more authentic, Peru's or Chile's (assuming, obviously, that the oldest tradition is the most authentic), is but one example. More aggressive forms of defensive localism occur when rigid boundaries are set up to exclude foods and people who are "othered," as in the Italian town of Lucca, where the opening of new

“ethnic” and fast food restaurants was banned by a law meant to protect local culinary heritage. Reading about such trends, I cannot help but think of Japan’s isolationist state, termed the *sakoku*, that lasted for roughly two centuries (the early 17th to mid 19th).

Elements of a more defensive, parochial localism also exist in Kyoto, as we see when improved varieties of Kyoto vegetables are limited to specific areas or with the restricted number of Uji tea blenders. On the whole, however, Kyoto’s local food and agricultural industry maintains borders that are flexible to protect their heritage and livelihoods via local place brands. What is significant is that actors can deploy the Kyoto brand and other place brands differently based on their relation with Kyoto City and Prefecture (or lack thereof). Farmers growing the Kamo eggplant could sell it as a generic or unmarked Kamo eggplant (still debatably a “Kyoto vegetable”), as a Kyō Brand vegetable, a vegetable sold through Kyoto City’s Kyoto Seasonal Vegetable program, or with the label that growers from the Kamigamo neighborhood have created for themselves. This approach has not been characterized by the acrimony and fighting that are evident in other places. In the Italian Alps, for example, conflicts have erupted over who can use the name “Bitto cheese,” with different groups of cheese-makers and the towns they live and work in seemingly pitted against each other (Grasseni 2014).

In New Mexico, meanwhile, farmers in Hatch and Chimayó, the New Mexico Chile Association, and the growers of “chile nativo” landrace varieties, are in disagreement over boundaries, geographical indications, and regulations. The New Mexico Chile Association and its allies have been successful in passing legislation making it illegal to advertise or sell a chile as New Mexico chile or with the name of a location or geographical feature in New Mexico unless the chile peppers were grown in New Mexico, the farm registered with the Department of Agriculture, and every sale of such a chile tracked. This legislation is flexible in that it does not

limit the use of place names so long as the growers are within the state of New Mexico and the farmers and retailers follow the registration and verification procedures, meaning that any chile grower in New Mexico could legally claim that theirs is a Hatch or Chimayó chile. To protect their own brands, growers in the Hatch Valley and the community of Chimayó have sought trademark protection for their geographical indications. Nonindustry farmers of “chile nativo” varieties, who often sell multiple heirloom varieties named after local towns at farmers’ markets, find the new requirements burdensome and an obstacle to their livelihood (Save NM Seeds Coalition 2015). From their perspective, industry and the state are interfering with traditional agricultural practices and foodways and further threatening them through their support of genetically modified varieties of chiles. These activists have campaigned for laws exempting and protecting “traditional” smallscale farmers but bills introduced into the legislature to accomplish this have stalled.

Why is Kyoto’s local food industry less litigious, less characterized by politics and quarrels? One notable factor is that Kyoto’s agricultural and food sector is not export-oriented. It is likely that because Kyoto’s producers are not competing—amongst themselves and with others outside prefectural borders—for market share of a global commodity, there is less incentive for conflict. Furthermore, because Kyoto’s agricultural and food products are primarily produced for and consumed within Japan—and often Kyoto, it is easier for producers to co-exist with comparatively little tension. The genesis of a system of flexible, overlapping, and even nested place brands has been successful to some degree because those producers who are deemed to be the most authentic, though perhaps not well positioned to compete for extensive market share, benefit from publicity as well as the ability to market their products as more authentic according to specific socially important criteria (de St. Maurice 2012b).

The ethnographic case study presented here should not be interpreted as either “the” new model (replacing terroir, for example) nor as a permanent success. Kyoto’s farmers, chefs, local government officials, and local food activists have been adept at managing change, but it is clear that circumstances continue to change. If they have chosen a relatively unregulated and flexible system of place brands to help them address pressing concerns, then this system is one that will continue to evolve. Local actors may even determine that they need a more rigorously defined set of regulations and boundaries, in spite of the positive effects that the current “system” has had thus far.

7.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

What lessons are there for other local economies seeking to better situate themselves globally? First, and most obviously, inclusiveness and openness do not necessarily lead to loss and decline, whether economic or cultural, and can even prove to be assets. Second, cultural resources can be useful for branding, even for products seemingly out of synch with a locality’s existing associations. Lastly, places change, culture changes, making the challenge for places one of prioritizing in order to better manage change.

The first lesson that I have pinpointed is that having flexible borders and allowing for overlapping, “fuzzy,” and nested place brands can be advantageous to a local economy seeking to better position itself in the midst of changing circumstances. While the structures that support the global food system and trade regime that exist now are riddled with very serious problems, as Giovannucci, Barham, and Pirog note, “Trade itself is not the problem” (Giovannucci, et al. 2010: 97). As they also note, the very changes that have led to the “delocalization” of agriculture

also provide “opportunities to recover a viable local food economy” (Giovannucci, et al. 2010: 97). Here, they refer specifically to geographical indications as a means of securing the local. Kyoto’s place brands are evidence that even within the current system some economies can indeed turn to place to protect their agricultural and food sector.

How have Kyoto’s farmers, chefs, consumers, and government officials benefited from the Kyoto brand and its flexible borders? They have, for the time being, been able to ensure the continued existence of agricultural and gastronomic traditions that are meaningful and contain biological and cultural diversity that once lost cannot be revived. There has been an increase in demand for products from Kyoto that sell for higher prices as craft goods, heirloom vegetables and high-grade *matcha* being two examples. New markets and avenues have emerged for products that could have seen their heyday, like the *Shishigatani* squash or Kyoto’s domestic *obanzai* cuisine. Local agricultural and culinary heritage has been successfully connected with tourism, a mutually beneficial trend for both industries. Consumers also have more options than they would otherwise have. They can purchase local and heirloom vegetables should they want to, for example. This gives them greater agency.

The second lesson that Kyoto’s case study holds is less obvious: cultural resources can serve as the materials for forging a strong place brand and this may be used to strengthen industries or market products and services that may not intuitively seem like they match the brand at all. While many food and agricultural products connected to place brands are marketed with references to unpolluted pastoral landscapes, natural and pure (see, for example, Che 2006; Hinrichs 1996), Kyoto’s example demonstrates that history and culture, even if they are urban, can help bring together and differentiate—brand, in other words—agricultural and culinary traditions.

The charm of the Kyoto brand may seem one of a kind, a special case that cannot serve as a model for other places. Even in Japan, many of the people with whom I talked treated Kyoto's brand power as a given, the natural result of over a thousand years of history replete with pivotal events of national significance, famous personages, esteemed traditions, and a cityscape that bears witness to this past. Contrary to their perception, the Kyoto brand is a constructed phenomenon. Kyoto's resonance and appeal are the result of efforts of individuals and groups to equate Kyoto with tradition, history, and culture in the national consciousness.

For some perspective, consider the fact that though Kyoto City, referred to as the "ancient capital," served as the capital of Japan for much longer than any other city, it is certainly not the oldest known capital of Japan. Today's Nara Prefecture contains both Nara City, which served as the imperial capital when it was known as Heijō-kyō, and Asuka, the capital that preceded it. Both capitals oversaw cultural, political, and religious changes that have made today's Japan possible. I suspect that Nara Prefecture could have taken advantage of history, tradition, and culture in branding itself. It may yet be able to do so, but would have to distinguish itself from Kyoto, which may be a more recent capital, but has successfully marshaled its resources to make itself *the* "ancient capital" in popular consciousness. Far from making Kyoto unique, this puts Kyoto in line with other places and cities that have come to stand for "history" and even particular historical periods. Athens, a fellow member of the League of Historical Cities, is one such place; its classical roots and history have been emphasized, while its recent past and the contributions of Albanians have been ignored if not erased.

The third lesson that Kyoto's case study holds for other local economies concerns managing change by choosing what to protect and how. In other words, certain objects and practices must be prioritized over others. Times change and loss will inevitably occur. Indeed, in

spite of the successes I have discussed, the picture in Kyoto is not entirely rosy and certainly not for everyone. There have been challenges, drawbacks, and casualties. With the outcome of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement unpredictable but possibly traumatic, a lack of successors for family farms, and increased competition from other Japanese prefectures now selling heirloom vegetables as craft foods, the farming sector faces an uncertain future. Though the Uji brand still means quality and refinement, demand for sencha is down and transition to cheap *tencha* challenges the sustainability of the brand itself. The most rural areas of Kyoto Prefecture have been hard hit by depopulation and like the town of Wazuka are having difficulties distinguishing themselves from places like Kyoto City and Uji City. In taking *kyō ryōri* to the global stage as the prototype for *washoku* via a scalar collapse, the diversity of Kyoto's—and Japan's—culinary traditions are likely to get glossed over to present a more coherent and appealing narrative.

There will without doubt be future losses that can be attributed to flexible or open borders and change. Consider the *Obon yōhin no seri*, an annual auction that takes place in August just before Obon, the national holiday when families unite to welcome their ancestors' spirits. Obon is celebrated throughout Japan and other markets also have auctions, but this is one in which all the items are local (in this case from Kyoto and neighboring prefectures) and they are sold by item rather than in packages that have already been put together. Retailers bid for boxes of Japanese lanterns, green persimmons, and tiny gourds. Local stores will buy these items, which customers will usually buy in packages to set before a Buddhist altar to welcome their ancestors home for the holiday.

I could hear the voices of the bidders as I walked down the narrow alleys dividing the retailers' stands in the Kyoto Wholesale Vegetable Market one day in the summer of 2013. The

setup was the same as I remembered from the year before. Yet when I reached the auction I was taken aback: the auction's steady rhythm had been interrupted. The auctioneer confirmed prices with the bidders, apologized, and then resumed the auction only to stop again. And again. Finally, he yelled at the bidders, asking them to get serious and bid higher. Time and again, when no higher bid seemed forthcoming, he yelled, turned to a man nearby, asked if he could move on, apologized to the bidders and proceeded to initiate the bidding for the next item. I had observed many auctions in this marketplace but I had never witnessed such a touch and go auction. An older auctioneer explained to me that they were trying to get reasonable prices for farmers. The way the auction went this year, he said, next year farmers won't be growing these fruits and vegetables because it isn't worth their time and effort. When I later spoke to a woman who works in the market and her mother, they explained that there isn't much demand because the tradition of presenting fruits and vegetables for the ancestors is disappearing. Many households don't have a Buddhist altar for their ancestors anymore. The custom used to be that the produce was laid out for the ancestors at the altar (in a prescribed manner) and then once Obon was over, it was set adrift in the river. Nowadays, of course, there are rules against dumping in rivers. To remedy this, Kyoto City designated areas where produce from Obon can be disposed of rather than go into the household garbage, but naturally, you have people who throw their domestic garbage away there too, rendering the sustainability of this option questionable. And people who do keep the custom may now choose the cheapest, most generic packages for the ancestors rather than the more expensive and visually attractive local ones (Figure 25).

The Obon no seri memory stays with me because, like a piece of salvage ethnography, I felt I was witnessing something whose cultural life was nearing its end. As much as people talk

about Kyoto as a repository for Japanese culture and history, it is clear that not every tradition, not every vegetable variety survives.



Figure 25. A retailer at Kyoto’s Central Wholesale Market wrapping a sample of his store’s Obon offerings for display

It seems hopeful, however, that if traditions do not last—and they cannot all be preserved—it is not that “tradition” itself is shunned and “modernity” embraced, supporting a false and destructive dichotomy that seems to have been in play for decades at the very least. Rather it is that at least for Kyotoites, a flexible and evolving set of traditions is nurtured. The boundaries that are used to manage and ground culinary heritage are flexible and “fuzzy,” allowing for strategic adaptations to changing circumstances. The Kyoto brand has helped them accomplish this.

Place brands, when consistently and coherently articulated can thus safeguard and strengthen local traditions and industry while encouraging the acceptance and appreciation of relationships with the outside world. Kyoto Prefecture and stakeholders in its agriculture and food industry share a localism that is welcoming and diversity-receptive on the whole.

The significance of Kyoto's food culture must be seen within the context of Japan's ongoing debates about what it means to be Japanese in a globalizing world. In contemporary Japan food is a particularly potent vehicle for articulating and rearticulating identity. The drop in the national self-sufficiency rate for food to about 40 percent has caused widespread concern about the risks that come with Japan's integration into the global economy, from worries about unsafe imported foodstuffs and the vulnerability that may come from reliance upon food exporting countries to fears of cultural loss, loss of control, and social dislocation. When Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko expressed his desire for Japan to enter into the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) farmers protested in Tokyo. The uncertainty of the content and outcome of the secretive TPP negotiations continues to perturb groups in Japan.

In this context, people seeking food that comforts them, that they can trust, and that provides them with a sense of grounded belonging may turn to the Kyoto brand. Doing so does not mean that foodstuffs and cuisines from other places are all shunned, although some tend to be (like produce from China and Fukushima Prefecture). What it means is that in addition to appreciating spaghetti carbonara, Beaujolais Nouveau, guacamole, Blue Mountain coffee, tom yung goong, and hamburgers, a special space has been set aside for foods that embody the Kyoto brand.

In Tokyo's upscale department stores, the women giving out samples of dishes containing Kyoto vegetables call out that they are offering "the taste of Kyoto" because Kyoto's

image resonates strongly with consumers in Tokyo. It is possible to taste Kyoto because there is a common understanding of what Kyoto stands for conceptually, even if there is in fact a multiplicity of Kyotos—the contemporary city and prefecture, the ancient imperial city of Heian-kyō, and uncountable manifestations through time for different individuals and groups.

But the concept of the “true” taste of Kyoto matters to Kyotoites in another way as well. The notion offers them the means of cherishing a heritage that is evolving, with apparent continuities and discontinuities. This kind of flexibility enables them, without extensive regulations, to support local businesses in the agricultural and food economy and sustain a variety of gastronomic traditions. If the taste of Kyoto no longer existed as a coherent and compelling concept, then I imagine that a greater number of Kyoto’s agricultural and food traditions, perhaps eating *minazuki* at the end of June or the cultivation of vegetable varieties like the Takagamine pepper, would have gone the way of the *kōri daikon* and the Tōji turnip: extinct.

The excitement and emphatic assertion of traditionality and continuity are tied to anxieties about change, dislocation, and identity. In Marilyn Ivy’s words, “As culture industries seek to reassure Japanese that everything is in place and all is not lost, the concomitant understanding arises (sometimes obscurely) that such reassurance would not be necessary if loss, indeed, were not at stake” (Ivy 1995: 10). Traditional food culture—beginning with the basics, one chef wryly observed—is taught in schools because children do not learn very much about it at home. TV shows and manga celebrate local specialties because many of them are no longer well known and now seem rather exotic. This fits into the wider context of a Japan in flux, anxious about its roots. Though it would likely not reassure the anxious, no place is fixed, stable, immutable. In Massey’s words, “places change, they go on without you. ... A nostalgia which denies that is certainly in need of reworking” (Massey 2005: 124). No visit to Kyoto can be

identical to any other. The same is true of eating Kyoto, even if labels do not indicate the year as they do for wine.

It is also possible that a defensive kind of localism would have set in. Thus far this threat has been mitigated because people in Kyoto—including those outside the local food industry—are committed to protecting local heritage and livelihoods via flexible borders. They do not need extensive regulations to ensure that agricultural and gastronomic traditions and industry remain viable. Articulated consistently, coherently, and compellingly, the Kyoto brand and the “taste of Kyoto” are made to matter and Kyoto’s consumers informally sort the authentic from the inauthentic even as these categories change. Local residents of all kinds, in other words, determine to a great degree the continued existence of a meaningful, mouth-watering, and grounded Kyoto brand.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE AND THEORETICAL TERMS

Aburimochi

Grilled rice cakes with toasted soybean powder and a white miso sauce. Kyoto's Imamiya Shrine has been historically associated with *aburimochi*, which a nearby store makes.

Brand

A set of characteristics and ideas consistently associated with a particular product, person, corporation, or place that distinguish it from others. More narrowly, a legally protected trademark or distinguishing symbol used to represent the distinctiveness of a product or corporation.

Daikon

Commonly glossed as “Japanese radish,” there are many varieties of *Raphanus sativus* var. *longipinnatus* in Japan. The most common standardized variety is the Aokubi daikon, which is long, thick, and white. Kyoto's heirloom varieties include the *karami* (“spicy” or “sharp”), the plump *Shōgoin*, and the extinct *kōri* varieties.

Deaimono

A term used in Kyoto cuisine to refer to ingredients that make for a superior combination. These may be seasonal ingredients that are available at the same time or items from different places that meet in Kyoto. Examples would be matsutake mushrooms and the pike conger eel or yellowtail and *daikon*.

Edamame

Soybeans. While *edamame* are processed into foods like tofu and soymilk that are common in East Asia and have now become popular in the West, in Kyoto the soft, fresh skin known as *yuba* that results from the process of tofu making is a local specialty. A variety of *edamame* known as *murasaki zukiin* is included in the Kyō Brand. These soybeans are usually boiled, salted, and eaten as a snack, often to accompany beer.

Geographical Indication (GI)

A place name for a specific product that is registered and legally protected. Common examples include Darjeeling tea, Champagne sparkling wine, and Parmigiano Reggiano cheese. Japan's system of regionally-based collective trademarks functions as a national system for GIs. Uji tea, "traditional Kyoto vegetables," and the Manganji *amatō* sweet pepper are examples of agricultural products from Kyoto that have been registered as GIs.

Gyokuro

Shade-grown for at least 20 days, this tea is often said to be the highest grade of Japanese green tea. High in umami. The literal translation would be "droplets of dew." First produced in Uji Ogura and its surroundings, with the town of Kyōtanabe becoming renowned for its *gyokuro*, Kyushu's Fukuoka Prefecture has recently established a solid reputation for growing this tea.

Kabuse-cha

A tea that is steeped and consumed like ordinary green tea (*sencha*), but that has been shade-grown for some period of time, giving it more umami and making it more expensive.

Kaiseki ryōri

There are two types of *kaiseki* cuisine, one associated with the tea ceremony and the other a more recently developed banquet style cuisine. This latter type, considered to be Japan's "haute" cuisine, is a multi-course affair. Given *kaiseki*'s origins in Kyoto, it is also referred to as "Kyoto cuisine."

Kujō negi

An heirloom variety of scallion or leek (*Allium fistulosum*) that was traditionally grown near the street in Kyoto called *Kujō*. This variety is known for its prominent green leaves, which are tender and used in Kyoto's cuisines. While there used to be two subvarieties—thick and thin—most of the *Kujō negi* available in markets today are "improved" varieties that have been cross-bred with sturdier standardized varieties that produce blooms less quickly.

Kyōryōri

Literally, "Kyoto cuisine" or "Kyoto cuisines." Today, the main Kyoto cuisines are *shōjin*, *kaiseki*, and *obanzai*. In the past, the *honzen* and *taikyō* banquet cuisines were also prominently associated with Kyoto. In spite of the diversity of cuisines that can be considered Kyoto cuisines, the term *Kyō ryōri* is often used as a synonym for Kyoto's *kaiseki* cuisine.

Kyūsū

Traditional Japanese teapot for steeping green tea. Flatter than a Western teapot, it has a lid and a side handle.

Matcha

Powdered green tea made from *tencha* leaves, and also the hot drink made from this powder. *Matcha* is the green tea consumed in the tea ceremony, carefully whisked into a thick, frothy concoction by the host or hostess.

Miso

A paste made of fermented soybeans and rice that is used to make the *miso* soup that is an integral part of the traditional Japanese meal (along with rice and three side dishes). *Miso* varieties differ in taste and color depending on the amount of rice added and the duration of fermentation. Kyoto is well-known for its *saikyō miso*, which is white and sweet. This is an ingredient that people outside of the Kansai area often do not prefer.

Mizuna

Brassica rapa var. nipponsinica is the Kyoto vegetable that has had the greatest contemporary success. Once sold in large bunches of sturdy leaves that could be added to hot pots and simmered dishes, it is now packaged in dainty packages of tender leaves that people often use in salads. A closely related Kyoto vegetable is *mibuna*, which is said to have gained rounded leaves when cultivated near Kyoto's Mibu temple.

Narino

A variety of green tea that is only cultivated by one or two farmers in Kyoto Prefecture. In spite of a smell that has been described as similar to that of "old socks," it supposedly makes for a tasty *matcha* ingredient.

Obanzai ryōri

Kyoto's home-cooking. The name *obanzai* is relatively new (about a half-century old) and used both self-consciously and for the benefit of people from outside of Kyoto. Kyoto's

home-cooking traditions include specific combinations of ingredients (see *deaimono*), the consumption of particular dishes on prescribed days, and wordplay. As with other Kyoto cuisines, the use of different knives and equipment, as well as lightly-colored soy sauce and weaker flavoring agents, are characteristic.

Place

A geographic location, setting for action, “sense of place,” and a brand that carries meaning for outsiders.

Place brand

A set of associations consistently linked to a particular place. Also the formal and informal institutions whose names for selling products or services incorporates a place (usually the place of production).

Provenance

The means of obtaining goods, with particular emphasis on place—possibly place of origin, place of production, or place of sale / distribution—as a means of meeting material, social, cultural, and ethical / political demands (See Coles 2013).

Sencha

Everyday Japanese green tea. Unlike black teas, Japanese green tea does not undergo fermentation (or more properly oxidization). Unlike more expensive types of green tea, *sencha* is not shade grown, giving it a taste profile with less umami and more bitterness and astringency.

Shōjin ryōri

The cuisine that emerged from Buddhist temples, involving the use of vegetarian cooking techniques that include the use of shiitake mushrooms for making stock or the substitution of gluten and soybean products for meat.

Tencha

Shade-grown green tea destined to be processed into the powder known as *matcha*. Kyoto Prefecture dominates.

Terroir

A French notion attributing differences in the taste and quality of food products to the geological, climactic, political, and cultural particularities of a given area. Often officially designated and regulated via a system organized by the state.

Washoku

Japanese cuisine. In December 2013, UNESCO officially inscribed *washoku* on its list of intangible cultural heritage. A great diversity of culinary traditions exists in Japan, but *washoku* is conceived of in opposition to *yōshoku* or “Western” cuisine. While the UNESCO application emphasized local, community, and household traditions, people often reduce *washoku* to elite cuisine, and particularly Kyoto-style *kaiseki*.

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