

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA
NO. 26

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA

Editor-in-Chief

MARIA ROMAN SŁAWIŃSKI

Subject Editor

JERZY ZDANOWSKI

Board of Advisory Editors

NGUYEN QUANG THUAN

KENNETH OLENIK

ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI

JOLANTA SIERAKOWSKA-DYNDO

BOGDAN SKŁADANEK

LEE MING-HUEI

ZHANG HAIPENG



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA
NO. 26

ASKON Publishers
Warsaw 2013

Secretary
Olga Barbasiewicz

English Text Consultant
James Todd

© Copyright by Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2013

Printed in Poland

This edition prepared, set and published by

Wydawnictwo Naukowe ASKON Sp. z o.o.
Stawki 3/1, 00–193 Warszawa
tel./fax: (+48) 22 635 99 37
www.askon.waw.pl
askon@askon.waw.pl

PL ISSN 0860–6102
ISBN 978–83–7452–071–3

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus

Contents

ARTICLES

- MARIO T A L A M O, *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige*: Popular Work, or Fruit of a Well-Planned Commercial Strategy? An Inquiry from a Sociological Perspective 7
- TOMASZ O L E J N I C Z A K, Japanese Management: 50 Years of Evolution of the Concept 23
- PAWEŁ P A S I E R B I A K, The Technological Leadership of the Japanese Economy? 43
- IOAN T R I F U, Prefectural Governors and Populism in Japan (1990s–2010s) 61
- ILDIKÓ F A R K A S, The Japanese Nation Building in European Comparison 85
- LARISA Z A B R O V S K A I A, The Character of Japan-China Relations since the Earthquake of 2011 107
- TINE W A L R A V E N S, Japan Facing a Rising China: Food Safety as a Framework for Japanese Identity Formation 115
- MARTA L U T Y - M I C H A L A K, Demographic Ageing in Japan 135
- FRAUKE K E M P K A, ‘Sorry, we’re homogeneous.’ The Baffling Appeal of Homogeneity Concepts among Supporters of Immigrants Examples from Japan and Germany 147
- OLGA B A R B A S I E W I C Z, The Impact of Confucianism on Modern Japanese Women’s Life 159
- BEATA K O W A L C Z Y K, The Japanese Way of Becoming an Artist and Its Religious’ Connotations. A Case Study of Teshigawara Saburō 173
- NICOLAS L E V I, Confucianism in South Korea and Japan: Similarities and Differences 185
- DAVID A D E B A H R, Japan’s Security Policy in the 21st Century – New Implication’s for an Old Strategy ? 195

ESSAY

- KIE K A W A D A, Japanese Cooking through Media 213

BOOK REVIEW

Brigitte Steger, Angelika Koch (eds.), *Manga Girl Seeks Herbivore
Boy. Studying Japanese Gender at Cambridge*
– rev. Olga Barbasiewicz..... 217

REPORT

OLGA BARBASIEWICZ, *Researching Japan in the Social Sciences
and Humanities: Conference Report* 221

Notes on Contributors 224

TINE WALRAVENS

Japan Facing a Rising China: Food Safety as a Framework for Japanese Identity Formation

Abstract

As a flag of national identity, food provides a promising referential framework through which a sense of belonging is communicated, negotiated and challenged. In this article, I focus on the nexus between food safety and identity, and more particularly on the question of how food safety incidents regarding imported Chinese goods have affected the formation of Japanese national identity. Japanese government agencies long claimed that Japan's regulatory system and import measures guarantee the safest food in the world. On the public as well as the elite level, discourse about food scandals (especially when directed against a clear 'Other') thus represent a very promising and fruitful source for defining changing national identities.

1. Introduction

In October 2012, an article entitled “‘Food terrorism’ a new concern in China-Japan rift” was published on the internet journal *Japan Today*.¹ The article was written in the context of the then ongoing Sino-Japanese dispute, which had escalated since the Japanese nationalization of three of the five Senkaku Islands (Diaoyutai in Chinese). In the light of the 2008 Poisoned *gyōza* incident (餃子事件、ギョーザ事件, *Gyōzajiken*), in which deliberately poisoned Chinese dumplings entered the Japanese food chain, the Japanese public feared a similar incident would occur again. The act of intentional contamination was coined ‘food terrorism’ (食品テロ, *shokuhintero*), a term that ideologized mere concerns about the health-related properties and the safety of foods² by linking these with more power-laden and politicized bilateral relations and even identity politics. In Japan, food-related incidents, particularly concerning imported Chinese foods, have received widespread

¹ “‘Food Terrorism’ a New Concern in China-Japan Rift”, *Japan Today*, October 8, 2012, <http://www.japantoday.com/category/kuchikomi/view/food-terrorism-a-new-concern-in-growing-china-japan-rift> (accessed 6.06.2013).

² It is important to distinguish between food safety (食品の安全, *shokuhin no anzen*) and food security (食料安全保障, *shokuryō anzen hoshō*). In the Japanese context, the first one refers to whether or not food is safe to eat, the second is a reference to food supply and availability. A third term often used is self-sufficiency (食料自給率, *shokuryō jikyūritsu*), which refers to the ratio of domestically consumed food that is supplied by domestic production.

attention in the media, and this can be expected to have a great impact on the public's consumption habits, and is thus also of interest for industry and government agencies concerned. Polls carried out by Gallup International and the Nihon Research Center six months after the *gyōza* incident showed that 90% of Japanese respondents questioned said they were concerned about the safety of foods coming from China.³

This article sets out to explore how different agents within Japanese society react to incidents involving Chinese food, and the inevitable impact on Japanese national identity, which forms itself to a significant degree by differentiation from China. I will identify the political and economic interests behind the reactions of several players involved within Japanese society. By linking China-related food scandals and questions of Japanese national identity, I will also shed light on Japanese consumers' distrust of Chinese foodstuffs.⁴ The findings presented in this paper are the preliminary results of my research into Japanese food safety issues, and offer potential for further research in the so far under-examined approach to food in Japan.⁵

2. Identity formation: Self and Other

The positioning of 'Self' versus 'Other' can be seen as a key element determining narrative structures in the traditional histories of nations.⁶ A state's collective identities are constructed in a complex and dynamic process by depicting the 'Self' as differing from the 'Other'.⁷ Campbell called the construction of identities through practices of 'othering' that generates differences 'radical interdependence' of our political identities.⁸ Furthermore, national identity construction is not limited to one exclusive image of the 'Self', neither to

³ Nihon Research Center, Gallup International, “『旅行、食の安全性、環境問題等』 についての日中比較論調査” [*Ryokō, shoku no anzensei, kankyōmondai' nitsuite no Nicchuuhi-kakuronchōsa*, Comparative study between China and Japan concerning tourism, food safety and environmental problems], p. 8. Available at <http://www.nrc.co.jp/report/pdf/090105.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁴ As this is not a comparative study, I have limited myself to incidents involving Chinese food and have chosen not to deal with Japan's domestic food problems regarding radiation since the Triple Disaster of March 11, 2011. I will also not comment on scandals involving food imports from the US or other countries.

⁵ Further research could focus on literatures and popular conceptions regarding food safety issues involving Chinese food products elsewhere in East Asia. In South Korea for example, meat and dairy products sourced from China are held in such suspicion as to support an industry in importing products from elsewhere (particularly Australia and New Zealand) that is then deliberately marketed as 'safe', which could be interpreted as a popular euphemism for 'non-Chinese'.

⁶ See Prasenjit Duara, 'Historical Narratives and Trans-nationalism in East Asia', 2008, p. 105; in *Contested Views of a Common Past. Revisions of History in Contemporary East Asia*, Steffie Richter (ed.), Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 2008, pp. 99–117.

⁷ The Self/Other approach was developed within social theory, but is also increasingly used in International relation (IR) theory. See Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: 'The East' in European Identity Formation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 2. Thomas Diez, 'Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2004, p. 321, Iver B. Neumann, 'Self and Other in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1996, pp. 139–174.

⁸ See David Campbell, *Politics without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics and the Narratives of the Gulf War*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993, p. 95.

one exclusive ‘Other’, but is characterized by a high level of intersubjectivity through social interaction with multiple ‘Others’, which results in various, changing and even overlapping self-identities.⁹ Depending on the context and the particular ‘Other’ one is dealing with, a specific ‘Self’ will manifest itself. There might be ‘Others’ that one wants to positively identify with, while there are ‘Others’ one likes to differentiate from. This implies that the definition of the ‘Other’ is highly dependent on the identity of the ‘Self’ and not known *a priori*. In this article, identity is seen as embedded in social relations and as contextual, relational and susceptible to change. The given context in this paper is the negotiation between two social groups, which is often power-laden when concerning two nation states or entire populations.

In the case of Japan, China has been a very significant Other in the historical process of forming state identity.¹⁰ The first nascent Japanese cultural and national consciousness in the 18th century emphasized precisely “that which made the Japanese irreducibly Japanese, meaning the same, and thereby different from the (Chinese) Other”.¹¹ The emergence of ‘national studies’ (*kokugaku*, 国学)¹² during the 18th and 19th centuries was precisely aimed at challenging Chinese neo-Confucianism and demonstrating the superiority of Japanese over Chinese culture, by comparing a ‘civilized’ Japan with an ‘uncivilized China’.¹³ At this early stage of Japanese national identity formation, the nation’s cultural consciousness was clearly formed by juxtaposition with China, precisely as China was for Japan the significant reference point in time. It is fair to state that the modern Japanese ‘Self’ was born from the encounter with the Chinese.

Even now, as Northeast Asia is changing, China’s rise and seemingly assertive pursuit of regional interests unsettle the neighboring states, no least Japan. Growing uneasiness about the implications is reflected in the current discourse, which is often characterized by Sinophobia, the ‘China Threat’ thesis and the perceived image of an increasingly aggressive China.¹⁴

⁹ See Shogo Suzuki, ‘The Importance of ‘Othering’ in China’s National Identity: Sino-Japanese Relations as a Stage of Identity Conflicts’, *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2007, pp. 24–25.

¹⁰ For an overview of the significant reference group according to time period, see *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia, Representation and Identity*, Harumi Befu (ed.), Institute of East Asian Studies, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p. 125.

¹¹ Harumi Befu (ed.), *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia, Representation and Identity*, Institute of East Asian Studies, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 82–84; taken from Harry D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, p.409.

¹² *Kokugaku*, 国学, or ‘national study’ is a school of Japanese philology and philosophy that originated during the Tokugawa period as a response to Sinocentric neo-Confucian theories that dominated the intellectual scene at the time. *Kokugaku* scholars tried to refocus Japanese scholarship away from the study of Chinese, Confucian, and Buddhist texts in favor of research into the early Japanese classics and *shintō*. It became very popular in the 19th century with important scholars such as Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843). See Haga Noboru, Matsumoto Sannosuke (eds.), *Nihon shisōtaikei* (日本思想体系, Series on Japanese thought), Vol. 51, *Kokugaku undo no shisō* (国学運動の思想, *The thoughts of the Kokugaku movement*), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971.

¹³ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self. Japanese Identities through Time*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 102–104.

3. Food and food safety in Japan

In the discourse of Self and Other, food has served as a powerful vehicle for the Japanese to think about themselves in relation to other peoples. As in many cultures, food as a flag of national identity provides a promising referential framework through which a sense of belonging is communicated. Bearing symbols of the nation, food is used to articulate identity and identification, and – like language – it can mean inclusion and exclusion, national pride or xenophobia. It is powerful not only as a concept, but also psychologically, when used to juxtapose ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Rice, the ‘staple’ of the Japanese diet, is used as such to set Japan apart from the bread-eating Europeans, or from other Asians by juxtaposing the ‘superior’ Japanese-grown rice (内地米, *naichimai*) against ‘inferior’ foreign rice (外米, *gaimai*).¹⁵

As a commodity, food plays a significant role in national ‘imagined communities’.¹⁶ Once national consciousness is imagined, it is constantly reinforced through a unified ‘national culture’ constructed by the state and dispersed via education and bureaucracy.¹⁷ However, as many scholars such as Hobsbawm (in general) and Cwiertka (for Japan in particular) have already pointed out, there is no such thing as a ‘national cuisine’. The concept of alleged culinary traditions is a construction in itself, rendering pre-existing food customs into a national symbol, a flag of identity for the nation.¹⁸ The invented discourse of Japanese national cuisine of rice, fish and vegetable side dishes is presented as pure, healthy and unique, allegedly due to the growing process in Japanese soil. According to Ohnuki-Tierney, this notion of ‘purity’ has always been integral to the concept of the Japanese Self, even long before the rise of nationalism.¹⁹ Yet, as will be shown below, this concept in practice is easily politicized as a negative nationalism, when aimed against an external Other, which is defined as ‘impure’.

Despite the fact that rice culture was adopted from China, Japanese nativist *kokugaku* scholars of the 19th century such as Hirata Atsutane (平田篤胤, 1776–1843) tried to establish the sources of a pristine and distinct Japanese identity in agrarian ideology and rice agriculture. As such, the presumed Japanese uniqueness was said to be built on agriculture,

¹⁴ Linus Hagström, Björn Jerdén, ‘Understanding Fluctuations in Sino-Japanese Relations: To Politicize or to De-politicize the China Issue in the Japanese Diet’, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4, 2010, p. 720. Chung Jae Ho, ‘East Asia Responds to the Rise of China: Patterns and Variations’, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4, 2009, p. 663. Björn Jerdén, Linus Hagström, ‘Rethinking Japan’s China Policy: Japan as an Accommodator in the Rise of China, 1978–2011’, *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2012, pp. 215–250.

¹⁵ Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, pp. 103–104.

¹⁶ One of the ground-breaking ideas in the scholarship of nationalism was the concept of a nation as an ‘imagined community’, which proposed that any community larger than a group of people who all know each other is imagined. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and Brooklyn: Verso, 1983.

¹⁷ See Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine. Food, Power and National Identity*, London: Reaktion Books, 2006, p. 177.

¹⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 1–14. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, pp. 175–180.

¹⁹ Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, p. 131.

which was actually introduced from the continent. However, it was argued that Chinese rice was inferior compared to ‘divine’ Japanese rice.²⁰ The same accounts for many other foodstuffs that are considered truly Japanese, such as *ramen*, tea and *gyōza*, which have all been imported from China, but which during a process of acculturation came to be seen as Japanese in origin.²¹

It is a well-documented fact that Japan is highly dependent on food imports (60%) for its food security, with one of the lowest self-sufficiency rates among major industrialized countries.²² Most of the ingredients for the so-called traditional pure and authentic Japanese cuisine have to be imported. Whereas in 1965 the self-sufficiency rate was still 73%, in recent years barely 40% of necessary food supplies have been provided by domestic production.²³

On the other hand, Japanese government agencies long claimed that the Japanese regulatory system and import measures guarantee the safest food in the world.²⁴ The Japanese system towards Chinese imports consists of food being tested upon entering (10% to 15% of the imports are checked), providing exclusive licenses for Chinese companies exporting to Japan, and screening Chinese producers even before produce is shipped to Japan. As Kakita Tatsuya (垣田達哉), a much-published expert on food safety in Japan, stated in 2007: “Japan is five years ahead of the rest of the world in dealing with quality problems from China. The world can learn from Japan”.²⁵ The nation takes pride in the strictness of its system, and as such has even been cited by the Energy and Commerce Committee of the US as a model for American importers.

“Can food be imported from China safely? The Japanese, Hong Kong, and FSIS (Food Safety and Inspection Service) models all are safer than our current system for the import of the 80 percent of the American food supply regulated by FDA

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 87–88. This did not merely concern food and the consumption thereof, but Atsutane also stated that ‘other peoples’ admired the Japanese because of their good table manners. Ibid, p. 104 (from Harry D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1988, pp. 211–212). See Tahara Tsuguo, Saeki Arika, Haga Noboru, Eds., *Nihon shisōtaikei* [日本思想体系, Series on Japanese thought], Vol. 50, Hirata Atsutane, Ban Tomoyuki, Ōkuni Takamasa [平田篤胤 伴信友 大國隆正, Hirata Atsutane, Ban Tomoyuki, Ōkuni Takamasa], Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973.

²¹ Other non-food examples of Japanese ‘copying practice’ are the introduction of the Chinese writing system to the Japanese language, city planning and metallurgy. See Rupert Cox (ed.), *The Culture of Copying in Japan: Critical and Historical Perspectives*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

²² Imported Foods Inspection Services Home Page, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Government of Japan, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/topics/importedfoods/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

²³ MAFF, ‘Food and Dietary Habits’, <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/pdf/09ep3.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013).

²⁴ Theo H. Jonker, Hiroshi Ito, Hiroji Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards in Japan. Compliance of Suppliers from Developing Countries., Agriculture and Rural Development Discussion Paper*, Washington: Agriculture and Rural Development Department, The World Bank, 2004, p. 1.

²⁵ ‘Safe Food for Japan’, *The New York Times*, October 11, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/business/worldbusiness/11safety.html?_r=0 (accessed 6.06.2013). Tatsuya Kakita, *Anatamotabeteru Chuugokusan* [The Chinese produce that you too are eating], Tokyo: Riyonsha, 2007.

(Food and Drugs Administration). No one we met with suggested that either the Hong Kong or FSIS system was practical. (...)The Japanese system of regulating Chinese food imports does appear to offer better control than that currently used by FDA".²⁶

China, as a major food supplying country to Japan (second after the US), also seems to show great determination to meet the strengthened Japanese official sanitation and private company standards. As a report by the World Bank in 2004 shows, China enjoyed high esteem from Japanese importers for its efforts to tackle the problem of pesticide residues.²⁷ Nevertheless, that same report from the World Bank also states that "most Japanese believe that domestic food is safer than imported food, (...) Chinese products are believed to be least safe." Despite the fact that the quotes below were taken from articles published right after the *gyōza* incident became public, they do show that Chinese imported foods are not much valued in general.

"In various parts of China [incidents of] large-scale food poisoning caused by residual agricultural chemicals and other substances have happened one after another. We have to question whether China as a whole plays fast and loose with food safety." (Yomiuri Shimbun, February 1, 2008).²⁸

Chinese vegetables are notorious for containing residual chemicals used in the process of cultivation and have posed serious health concerns to Japanese consumers. (The Japan Times, January 31, 2008).²⁹

Chinese importers, for their part, complain that Japanese buyers do not pay enough for optional extra food safety and quality measures.³⁰

Looking at JETRO statistics for the fiscal years (FY) 2009 and 2010, we see that the US remains the major importer, with 25.1% or one quarter of the food imports to Japan, while the PRC accounts for 13.1%.³¹ Of a total of 1376 violations in FY2010, the US accounted for 152 cases, 11% of the total, while the PRC accounts for 322 cases or 23.4%, almost one quarter of the total amount of violations.³² China thus ranks second

²⁶ Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, US Committee on Energy and Commerce, 'Staff Trip Report. Food from China: Can we import safely?', October 4, 2007, pp. 9–10, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=480415> (accessed 6.06.2013).

²⁷ Jonker, Ito, Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards...*, p. 4.

²⁸ 'Poisoned Dumplings Incident Reveals Fragility of Sino-Japanese Relations', *World Socialist Web Site*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2008/03/dump-m03.html> (accessed 6.06.2013).

²⁹ '10 Sick after Eating Tainted Gyoza from China', *The Japan Times*, January 31, 2008, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2008/01/31/national/10-sick-after-eating-tainted-gyoza-from-china/#.UXQ1HnDRtUQ> (accessed 6.06.2013).

³⁰ Jonker, Ito, Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards...*, p. 4.

³¹ JETRO, Japan External Trade Organization, 'Japanese Trade and Investment Statistics', http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/statistics/data/0809_import.pdf (accessed 6.06.2013).

³² MAFF, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 'Statistics of Imported Foods Monitoring for FY 2010', <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/topics/importedfoods/10/dl/10-08.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013).

as a food importer for Japan, but still accounts for most of the violations on food safety.³³

Food safety concerns among Japanese consumers evolved in the 1960s and 70s, but developed out of an earlier sensitivity about food supply.³⁴ One factor contributing to this attitude shift was the widely reported spate of food poisoning cases, such as the 1955 Morinaga arsenic milk contamination³⁵ and the Kanemi rice oil case of 1968.³⁶ Both cases had a direct effect on the Food Safety Law, and on public perceptions concerning the food industry. Additionally, awareness among the public rose that pollution incidents could have a direct impact on human health through their effects on food safety.³⁷ The Minamata poisoning affair of 1953 in Kumamoto province is probably the most famous of a number of pollution incidents that affected public health as locally harvested foods proved to be contaminated. Another consideration among consumers was the increasing dependence on imports and its consequences for food security and safety. These developments made the public realize the importance of food safety, and the country's dependence on imports for food security. One measure the government took as a reaction to consumer protests was the revision of the Food Safety Law in 1957. The shift in attitude also resulted in the emergence of many local grassroots consumer cooperative movements, such as the *Nihon no Denōshokuwo Kangaeru Kai* (日本の伝統食を考える会, The Movement for Thinking

³³ Nevertheless, a brief look at the Japanese government's figures on violations against the Food Safety Law by country reveals that Chinese products (not including Taiwan) are not necessarily more problematic than, for example, American or Thai imports. On the contrary: Vietnamese, Taiwanese and Ecuadorian imported foodstuffs seem more likely not to conform to the Japanese regulations than Chinese imports. For FY 2010, 0.05% of all Chinese imported goods were found to be in violation of the food safety regulations; for the US goods this figure was 0.07%, and for Vietnam 0.29% of its total number of food imports. Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Government of Japan, 'Statistics of Imported Foods Monitoring for FY 2010'. Available at <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/topics/importedfoods/10/dl/10-08.pdf>, accessed 22.08.2013. The MHLW mentions the amount of violations by country compared to the total amount of violations. I argue that this does not give us a clear view of the size of the problem, and therefore I suggest calculating the amount of violations relative to the total amount of declarations per country. This gives us a completely different view of the matter. At first sight, China's 322 violations seem large compared to Vietnam's 128 violations, or the 152 violations by the US. Nevertheless, putting this against the total amount of declarations – for China 607,994, Vietnam 43,924 and the US 214,590, this casts the matter in a different light.

³⁴ For the difference between food safety and food security, I refer back to footnote 2.

³⁵ In 1955 in the western areas of Japan, some 12,000 newborn babies suffered from poisoning and another 130 died after consuming milk contaminated with arsenic from the Morinaga Milk Company. This event was particularly notable for the large number of people from the same age group who fell victim to the poison. See Jun Ui, *Industrial Pollution in Japan*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1992.

³⁶ In 1968, rice oil from the Kanemi depot in Fukuoka was found to be contaminated with PCBs. The estimated amount of victims was around 15,000 persons, but only 1081 cases were officially recognized as poisoning. See Jun Ui, *Industrial Pollution in Japan*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 1992.

³⁷ Raymond A. Jr. Jussaume, Shūji Hisano, Yoshimitsu Taniguchi, 'Food Safety in Modern Japan', *Contemporary Japan, Journal of the German Institute for Japanese Studies*, Vol. 12, Munich, iudicium Verlag, p. 218, 2000.

about the Traditional Japanese Diet), which originated in 1981 in Osaka.³⁸ In 1969 Takeuchi Naokazu (竹内直一) founded the Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ) or *Nihon Shōhisha Renmei*, one of the country's most prominent consumer organizations that promotes domestic produce and culinary traditions.³⁹ Initiated to protest against the food industry and governmental institutions and their policies, these consumer movements later organized themselves in order to create alternative systems of food supply.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of a series of food-related incidents in Japan, food safety has gained increasing importance in the discourse of social movements and civil society.

4. 'The last citadel' – national identity under threat by the Other

By using the phrase 'the last citadel', a metaphor for self-identity under threat, I refer to Ohnuki-Tierney, who applies this term to the Japanese equation of self-sufficiency with an exclusive reliance on domestic rice.⁴¹ Based on my preliminary findings concerning the role of food within Japanese national identity, I argue that this idea can be opened up from merely rice to the whole of Japanese domestic produce. Additionally, I will also argue that the anti-China feeling among the public within the context of the current issues related to food and food safety can be readily used to invoke a revived sense of national identity expressed through the 'food' framework.

Since the Snow Brand Milk scandal in 2000, Japan has been plagued by several food safety incidents and scandals, ranging from mad cow disease or tainted rice, through mislabeled food products to high pesticide residues on vegetables.⁴² The recent flow of scandals involving both domestic and foreign companies is threatening to damage the government's propagation of food safety, and by extension the image of Japan as "a country of culinary wonders, squeaky-clean factories and impeccable sanitation"⁴³ which has become an important element in Japanese national identity. Threatening invasions of what Dena Attar calls 'filthy foreign food'⁴⁴ are seen as dangerous to the whole fabric of national identity, and as such a nation's diet can have a key role to play in nationalistic sentiments; especially since the

³⁸ *Nihon no Dentōshokuwo Kangaeru Kai* [日本の伝統食を考える会, The Movement for Thinking about the Traditional Japanese Diet], <http://blog.dentousyoku.org/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

³⁹ Patricia L. Maclachlan, 'Global Trends vs. Local Traditions. Genetically Modified Foods and Contemporary Consumerism in the United States, Japan and Britain', in *The Ambivalent Consumer*, Sheldon Garon, Patricia L. Maclachlan, P.L. (eds.), London: Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 250–251. *Nihon Shōhisha Renmei* [日本消費者連盟, Consumers Union of Japan, CUJ], <http://www.nishoren.org/en/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁴⁰ Jussaume, Hisano, Taniguchi, 'Food Safety in Modern Japan', pp. 218–219.

⁴¹ Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, pp. 136, 8.

⁴² For an incomplete list of domestic food scandals, see Aiko Kojima, 'Responsibility or Right to Eat Well?: Food Education (Shokuiku) Campaign in Japan', *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2011, p. 63. For food-related incidents in Japan involving foreign firms as well, I refer to Jonker, Ito, Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards...*, pp. 6–7.

⁴³ The expression is taken from 'Scandals Shatter Japan's Food Safety Myth', *Chicago Tribune News*, 26 October 2007, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2007-10-26/news/0710260606_1_illness-or-food-poisoning-food-safety-labeling (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁴⁴ Dena Attar, 'Filthy Foreign Food', *Camerawork*, No. 31, 1985, pp. 13–14 cited in Ian Cook, Philip Cragg, 'The World on a Plate. Culinary Culture, Displacement and Geographical Knowledges', *Journal of Material Culture*, 1996, Vol. 1 (2), pp. 131–153.

nation is also an organizational unit, and the regulating bodies have their own interest in what the nation is eating. The reaction to food-related issues with China, both among the public and within the regulating segments of society, reflects a revived sense of national identity precisely because – as I will argue – the Other, China, is involved in these scandals. A survey conducted by the Cabinet Office in September and October 2012 reveals that 80.6% of the Japanese respondents do not have friendly feelings towards China.⁴⁵ Anti-Chinese feeling among the Japanese public is readily exploited in these cases, resulting in new spurts of (food) nationalism and adding to the never-ending Sino-Japanese tensions.

In the following, I will analyze as an example the so-called ‘Poisoned *gyōza* incident’ of 2008 to illustrate the reactions of the agents involved.

The 2008 poisoned *gyōza* incident and its diplomatic aftermath

In January 2008, ten Japanese people fell severely ill and some other 500 people reportedly complained of severe pains after consuming pork dumplings that were produced in China. After investigation, the dumplings turned out to have been tainted with a highly poisonous insecticide, at levels up to 400 times higher than allowed by Japanese health standards, arousing assumptions that it was not merely cultivation residue but that the pesticide must have been introduced during the production or distribution process. Since the investigators found a suspicious hole in one of the packages, the Japanese prefectural police treated the case as attempted murder, and started investigations. Jointly-run investigations by the Japanese and Chinese governments found no trace of the particular deadly pesticide in the factory. The company was therefore cleared of responsibility.⁴⁶ The issue was then officially treated as a deliberate poisoning, and gave way to yet another episode of Sino-Japanese diplomatic quarrels, and food safety rose high on the agenda of many national, bilateral and multilateral summits in the years to come. In a national opinion poll conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, food safety showed up as the third highest priority for the Fukuda cabinet (Liberal Democratic Party, LDP) according to the interviewees.⁴⁷ On a bilateral level, Chinese President Hu Jintao’s visit to Japan in May 2008 was concluded with a joint agreement which singled out energy, environment, and food and product safety as areas of enhanced cooperation.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ ‘Record 81% of Japanese feel no friendship towards China, government survey shows’, *The Japan Times*, November 25, 2012, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2012/11/25/national/record-81-of-japanese-feel-no-friendship-toward-china-government-survey-shows/#.Uc2WpeDRtUQ> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁴⁶ MHLW, *Chūgoku sanreitō gyōzagagenin to utagawareru kenkōhigajirei no hassei nitsuite* [中国産冷凍ギョウザが原因と疑われる健康被害事例の発生について, Concerning the occurrence of cases of health issues caused by frozen dumplings produced in China], <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2008/01/h0130-1.html> (accessed 6.06.2013). James J. Przystup, ‘Japan–China Relations: All about Gyoza: Almost all of the Time’, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 10 (1), April 2008. (Available at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0801qjapan_china.pdf, accessed 6.06.2013).

⁴⁷ Yomiuri Shimbun April 2008 Opinion Poll, available at <http://mansfieldfdn.org/program/research-education-and-communication/asian-opinion-poll-database/listofpolls/2008-polls/yomiuri-shimbun-april-2008-opinion-polls-08-07/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁴⁸ James J. Przystup, ‘Japan–China Relations. Progress in Building a Strategic Relationship’, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 10 (2), July 2008, p. 5. (Available at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0802qjapan_china.pdf, accessed 6.06.2013).

The fact that the visit was postponed from April to May was allegedly attributed to the strain in relations. The Japanese investigators focused very strongly on the fact that the particular pesticide was banned in Japan, and that the sample of the pesticide taken from the suspect dumplings was of such poor quality that it could not possibly have been produced in Japan. These assertions only served to reinforce Japanese feelings of superiority towards their neighbor mainland China.⁴⁹ Mutual accusations about the country of contamination were uttered, and public opinion polls revealed a substantial downturn in affinity towards each other. The crisis also led to Nissin Food Products withdrawing from a planned merger with the Chinese unit of Japan Tobacco Inc. Japanese officials blamed China for the poisoned foods; their Chinese counterparts did the same to Japan. The rumor even spread that the dumplings could have been deliberately poisoned precisely in order to create friction between both countries.⁵⁰ Wei Chuazhong (魏传忠), deputy minister of the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) in China, reportedly told a Japanese fact-finding mission in China: “A small group who do not wish development of Sino-Japanese friendship may have taken extreme measures”.⁵¹ The fact that such suspicions immediately dominated the discourse is indicative of a very strong pre-existing mutual distrust.

In July 2008, Chinese consumer complaints also arose about the same food products. The Japanese government was informed, but respected the Chinese demand for non-disclosure in light of the ongoing investigations into the matter, which led to domestic accusations of inaction. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) lambasted the then Fukuda administration (LDP) for its weakness towards China and for putting China’s request above Japanese citizens’ concerns about food safety.⁵² In August 2008, the Chinese government finally disclosed that the dumplings had likely been contaminated in China. Only in 2010 was a Chinese employee at the Tianyang Food factory, where the tainted dumplings had been produced, arrested for poisoning the *gyōza* that had sickened a dozen people. Lu Yueting, (吕月庭) a temporary worker at the factory, disgruntled about the unfair working conditions and the fact that his wife was not given a bonus when she took maternity leave, allegedly injected the *gyōza* with a pesticide at the end of 2007.⁵³

⁴⁹ ‘Tainted Dumplings from China Upset Relations with Japan. The Incident Triggers Food-safety Alarm Among Japanese Consumers’, *U.S. News*, March 20, 2008, <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2008/03/20/tainted-dumplings-from-china-upset-relations-with-japan> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵⁰ ‘Poisoned Dumplings Incident Reveals...’. ‘Japan Tobacco and Nissin Food Drop Plan to Merge Frozen Food Businesses’, *New York Times*, June 2, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/06/business/worldbusiness/06iht-food.2.9792147.html> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵¹ ‘Activists May Have Poisoned Chinese Dumplings: Media’, *Reuters*, February 6, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/02/06/us-japan-china-food-idUST20827420080206> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵² James J. Przystup, ‘Japan–China Relations. The Gyōza Caper: Part II’, *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 10 (3), October 2008, pp. 2–3. (Available at http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0803qjapan_china.pdf, accessed 6.06.2013.)

⁵³ James J. Przystup, ‘Japan–China Relations: Troubled Waters to Calm Seas?’, *Comparative Connections*, July 2010, p. 4. Available at http://csis.org/files/publication/1002qjapan_china.pdf (accessed 6.06.2013).

The incident became a national obsession in Japan, and thousands of Japanese visited doctors and hospitals with supposed symptoms.⁵⁴ Restaurants, schools and the Japanese public in general avoided consuming Chinese imported foods. Skylark Co, which owns more than 4000 restaurants in Japan, suspended the use of products processed in China, although none of them came from the Tianyang Food company.⁵⁵ Health officials reportedly started touring schools to warn the children that Chinese produce is dangerous and that they should ensure their parents were not buying food from China.⁵⁶

Nakano Kōichi (中野晃一) from Sophia University calls the *gyōza* incident a very symbolic and significant event for the Japanese people, as it showed how ‘contaminated’ by China Japan has already become. “Japan is heavily reliant on China for food, goods, workforce, and market, but the reliance may turn out to be ‘poisonous’”, he said.⁵⁷

Reaction from consumers and civil society

During the last 15 years, the number of food safety incidents on a domestic (e.g. Snow Brand Milk Products Co., 2000) as well as on an international level (e.g. the US beef ban over BSE, 2003) in Japan has risen. The higher number of incidents certainly reflects stricter controls of imported foods, so while the actual percentage of ‘contaminated’ food might not have been increasing, the perception that food imports from China are increasingly ‘contaminated’ is growing. Japan had a series of scares involving pesticides on Chinese products, starting with contaminated spinach in 2002. Despite the recent series of scandals, a continued increase in Japanese food imports from China was noted. However, we need to place this increased import within the context of the Triple Disaster of March 11 and Japan’s consequent problems with food self-sufficiency.⁵⁸ Despite the decreasing amount of violations by Chinese importers, China still accounts for the highest number of individual cases, with 34.6% of all violations during FY 2006, and 23.4% of all violations during FY 2010.⁵⁹ As for Chinese imported foods, the disturbance to the Japanese national consciousness lies not only in the fact that Chinese national cuisine is entering Japan, but also that imported foodstuffs are increasingly used in the production of Japanese national

⁵⁴ ‘Tainted dumplings from China upset relations with Japan. The incident triggers food-safety alarm among Japanese consumers.’, *U.S. News*, March 20, 2008, <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2008/03/20/tainted-dumplings-from-china-upset-relations-with-japan> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵⁵ ‘Japan, China Head off a Dumpling War’, *Time*, February 7, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1710742,00.html#ixzz2W6KNjuUW> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵⁶ ‘Gyoza Scare Offers Insight into Japan’s Culture of Eating’, *Japan Today*, April 13, 2008, <http://www.japantoday.com/category/opinions/view/gyoza-scare-offers-insight-into-japans-culture-of-eating> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵⁷ ‘Hu’s Dumpling Diplomacy’, *Policy Innovations*, May 13, 2008, <http://www.policyinnovations.org/ideas/commentary/data/000054> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵⁸ JETRO, ‘JETRO Survey: Analysis of Japan–China Trade in 2012 and Outlook for 2013’, February 19, 2013, <http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/news/releases/20130219452-news> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁵⁹ Also see footnote 33. MHLW, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau, ‘Statistics of Imported Foods Monitoring for FY 2010’, p. 3. MHLW, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau, ‘Statistics of Imported Foods Monitoring for FY 2006’, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/topics/importedfoods/dl/6.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013), p. 3.

cuisine. The share of Chinese (and other countries') foodstuffs leaking through the net of strict Japanese regulations calls the Japanese long-term pride in the construction of a secure food safety control system into question. The failing of Japan's supposedly unbeatable system represents a threat to an identity that relies on the 'purity' of its food, especially when coming from that significant Other, China.

Despite the fact that the recent food scandals have also involved well-established domestic Japanese food companies, and despite many problems with radiation contamination of crops since the March 11 Triple Disaster, Japanese consumers still tend to equate food safety with the consumption of domestic products. "Most Japanese still subscribe to the belief that homegrown food is safe", Nakano Kōichi states, "whereas foreign imports are dubious if not downright dangerous".⁶⁰ Food items that come from China are even worse since they are not only suspicious but also indispensable for Japanese food security. According to a World Bank Report of 2004 (before the Triple Disaster of 2011), domestic food is considered safer than imported food, and Chinese imports are believed to be least safe.⁶¹ Moreover, while a focus on adulterated food or on the failing system would have been expected, the discourse on Chinese food-related scandals tends to be very emotional and reflects a strong focus on China as a country.⁶²

The food-related incidents and scandals of recent years have badly affected the Japanese consumer's trust in regulatory authorities and food safety. It can be argued that the public's understanding of food scandals and the consequent health risks has been constructed within a specific social and historical context through social interactions. The media has an undeniable role in heightening public anxiety, but Japanese consumption behavior should not be underestimated. As John Clammer states in his sociological study of Japanese consumption, the *buumu* concept is a very important factor in understanding consumer culture in Japan, as consumption activities have a strong group preference. Trends are followed, firstly because practically speaking it is very difficult *not* to follow them; and secondly because following a trend is, as Clammer states, "one of the most powerful mechanisms of social integration, especially in a culture which does not much value those who stand out".⁶³ One result of the Chinese food scares is a boost to Japanese citizens' movements (国民運動, *kokuminundō*) addressing

⁶⁰ 'Hu's Dumpling Diplomacy', *Policy Innovations*, May 13, 2008.

⁶¹ Jonker, Ito, Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards...*, p. 26. Stephanie Assmann, 'Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan: The Role of Two Citizen Movements in the Rediscovery of Local Foodways', in *Globalization, Food and Social Identities in the Asia Pacific Region*, James Farrer (ed.), Tokyo: Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture, 2010, p. 6. Available at http://icc.fla.sophia.ac.jp/global%20food%20papers/pdf/2_2_ASSMANN.pdf (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁶² As comparison we can refer to the 2001 BSE scandal in Japan. At the time, the government reacted by banning American beef imports. Despite the fact that in 2006, when imports resumed again, 80% of the Japanese public was said to still be wary of American beef, the handling of this issue was really focused on the food issue itself. Shortly after the resumption of US beef imports, in December 2007, MAFF launched a campaign advertising Japanese beef, *wagyuu*, for its delicious taste and its guaranteed safety (<http://www.maff.go.jp/e/export/wagyu/intro.html>, accessed 6.06.2013).

⁶³ John Clammer, 'Contemporary Urban Japan. A Sociology of Consumption', in Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, 2006, pp. 165–166.

the country's low self-sufficiency rate and food safety issues, which are always very closely linked to patriotic propaganda and national identity.⁶⁴ An example of this development is the above-mentioned Consumers Union of Japan (CUJ, 日本消費者連盟, *Nihon Shōhisha Renmei*, founded in 1969)⁶⁵, one of the most prominent Japanese consumer organizations, which promotes a return to 'traditional' Japanese eating habits and the consumption of locally produced goods, in line with a general trend in Japan to return to a perceived idea of a 'pure' past. Many of these citizens' movements suggest a return to Japanese-style basics as the solution to Japan's food-related problems, upholding Japanese culinary traditions and eating domestically produced foods, in order to decrease the dependence on potentially unsafe imports.⁶⁶

Media coverage

In any case, food makes for good copy in Japan, and as such it warrants close media attention. Apart from economic interest, cultural concerns and food-related scandals, food has also been at the center of intense political conflicts since postwar times, from international stand-offs over Japanese agricultural protectionism to the rice demonstrations by starving citizens immediately after the war, from the radiation controversy after the March 11 Triple Disaster to the recent demonstrations against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Moreover, the Japanese media monitor every scandal with painstaking detail and focus on the wrongdoers, rather than moving on to an analysis of the underlying problems, a failing system, or potential solutions.⁶⁷

As mentioned above, the sensational media coverage of the Tainted *gyōza* incident, even before China had investigated the matter, created a real scare in Japan that spread far beyond frozen dumplings alone. The consumption of frozen food in general, and Chinese imported foodstuffs in particular, dropped.⁶⁸ Even though investigations into the *gyōza* incident showed it to be a 'mere' criminal case, rather than a food safety scandal, the media coverage and the impact on the Japanese public was remarkable. At that time, it was not proven that the act was

⁶⁴ Assmann, 'Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan...', pp. 4, 10.

⁶⁵ Consumers Union of Japan, <http://nishoren.net> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁶⁶ Maclachlan, 'Global Trends vs. Local Traditions', in *The Ambivalent Consumer*, pp. 250–251.

⁶⁷ Jochen Legewie, Junji Nishiata, Andreas Seidler, *Japan's Media: Inside and Outside Powerbrokers*, Tokyo, CNC Japan, March 2010, pp. 12–13. Available at http://www.cnc-communications.com/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/2010_03_Japans_Media_Booklet_2nd_Ed_JL.pdf (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁶⁸ According to the Rules of Origin in Japanese law, products should be labeled 'Produced in China' [中国産・中国製, *Chūgokusan*, *Chūgokusei*] when they are 'wholly obtained or produced goods', processed or prepared in China. Yet the law does not require indicating the country of origin of each of the ingredients. As such, many Chinese imported vegetables are still used in foodstuffs, processed in Japan, without being mentioned on the label. This, and Japan's increased dependency on food imports since the Triple Disaster, could be factors in explaining the contradictory figures of increased imports versus reported consumption decrease of Chinese foodstuffs. Japan Customs, Rules of Origin, <http://www.customs.go.jp/english/origin/index.html> (accessed 6.06.2013). 'Consumers shun frozen food amid 'gyoza' poisonings', *The Japan Times*, February 5, 2008, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2008/02/05/national/consumers-shun-frozen-food-amid-gyoza-poisonings/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

not directed against Japanese consumers. The fact that it was a deliberate act by the employee was highly stressed by the media, and a new term arose among the Japanese public as well as in the security field: fear of food terrorism.⁶⁹ Particularly within the context of heightened Sino-Japanese frictions concerning the Senkaku Islands around September 2012, concerns have surfaced that the incident with the poisoned *gyōza* will be repeated.

Another example of sensationalized media attention, on an incident not even concerning imported Chinese food but with a very high impact on Japanese national identity discourse, was the Chinese cardboard bun hoax in 2007. Even before the tainted *gyōza* scandal, this incident combined two subjects Japanese media love: food and Chinese scruples. In July 2007, an allegedly undercover Chinese video went viral, as it reported about a street vendor in Dalian (大连) selling pork buns (*baozi* in Chinese, 包子) stuffed with soaked cardboard. The Chinese government soon announced that a journalist looking for a good story staged the video. The report prompted China's health authorities to investigate vendors selling pork buns in Dalian, but none was found to use cardboard. Yet many Japanese and Chinese still believed the story to be real and not staged. The incident seemingly even stirred up the 'traditional' Japanese China hatred (中国嫌悪, *Chūgokuken'o*, or 嫌中, *kenchū*). An article in AERA, a weekly magazine published by the left-liberal *Asahi Shimbun*, entitled 「中国嫌い」の本心 発端は「毒食品」だった (“‘*Chūgokukirai*’ no honshin. *Hottan ha 'dokushokuhin' datta*” “The true feelings behind ‘China-hate’. It started with ‘poisoned foods’”) clearly linked the outburst of China hatred with the recent food poisoning cases, disregarding the Chinese government’s announcement that no cardboard had been found during their investigation.

Many times before, (China and Japan) have been at each others’ throat. They could not rule out feelings of hate. However, only this time disgust, which has been sealed with rationality, is belching out like magma. And the cause for this is poisoned food.⁷⁰

According to this article, the Chinese public’s reason for its disbelief is related to a general distrust of the government, whereas the Japanese public’s opinion is more related to the suspicion that Chinese people in general cannot be trusted. Polls show that, even though the incident was actually unrelated to anything happening in Japan, consumer behavior was highly influenced, 74% of respondents replying that they had stopped or were now buying less Chinese food than they used to since the cardboard bun incident.⁷¹ Moreover, many renowned Japanese newspapers such as the Japan Times never refuted the Cardboard Bun incident as a staged affair.

⁶⁹ ‘Food terrorism’ a new concern in China-Japan rift’, *Japan Today*, October 8, 2012, <http://www.japantoday.com/category/kuchikomi/view/food-terrorism-a-new-concern-in-growing-china-japan-rift> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁷⁰ “これまで何度も、いがみ合ってきた。嫌いという感情が捨てきれなかった。だが、理性で封印してきた嫌悪感が、今回ばかりはマグマのように噴き出している。原因は毒食品だ。[‘*Kore made nandomo, igamiattekita. Kirai to iukanjougasutekirenakatta. Da ga, risei de fūin shite kitaken'okanga, konkaibakari ha maguma no yōnifukidashiteiru. Gen'in ha dokushokuhin da*] In ‘*Chūgokukirai*’ no honshin. *Hottan ha 'dokushokuhin' datta.*」 「中国嫌い」の本心。発端は「毒食品」だった。The true feelings behind ‘China-hate’. The origin was ‘poisoned foods’, *Asahi Shimbun Weekly AERA*, September 10, 2007, pp. 16–21.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The discourse concerning these food scares reminds us of what Ulrich Beck calls ‘risk society’: our highly educated information society which is increasingly defined in terms of heightened ‘risks’ and where the individual becomes the primary agent in defining meaning and identity in society.⁷² In this case, the choice is left to the individual consumer whether or not to buy Chinese products, but the food choice is constrained by limited or biased information provided by the government, media and industry.⁷³ Following Alison Leitch, a sociologist working on food and food politics, we can also link real or imagined anxiety over these risks to other widespread fears concerning the rapidity and acceleration of social and economic change.⁷⁴

Bureaucracy and political parties

During and after the poisoned *gyōza* incident, the then Fukuda administration (LDP, 2006–07) worked hard to improve the strained bilateral ties with China after the Koizumi administration (LDP, 2001–2006), but they received severe disapproval for these intentions, from within their own party as well as from the opposition. The resentment towards China, which had until then been somehow more repressed, but had been fueled by years of China-bashing in Japan, anti-Japanese protests in China, and a list of unresolved and controversial issues, was then being exploited by hardliners striving for a tougher policy against China. The *gyōza* scandal dented China’s image, and as such had the potential to curb the government’s plans to improve bilateral relations. Getting the public to panic would also focus attention on the country’s dependence on imported food, particularly from China.⁷⁵ Import dependence and low self-sufficiency is the cause of much unease among many Sinophobic politicians in Japan.⁷⁶ In general, Japanese negative media coverage on China plays into the hands of rightist or nationalist politicians, or for those aiming at protectionist measures in agricultural policy. Extremists in the government gladly welcome burgeoning anti-Chinese feeling, as it fits with their constructed image of a weak Japan, which these politicians strategically exploit to push for tougher measures against China.⁷⁷

⁷² See Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London, Sage, 1986 (1992). Simon Cottle, ‘Ulrich Beck, ‘Risk Society’ and the Media. A Catastrophic View?’, *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 5–32.

⁷³ See Sally Macintyre, Jacqui Reilly, et al., ‘Food Choice, Food Scares, and Health: The Role of the Media’, in *The Nation’s Diet: The Social Science of Food Choice*, Anne Murcott (ed.), London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998, p. 232.

⁷⁴ See Alison Leitch, ‘Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity’, p. 384, in *Food and Culture, a Reader*, Carole M. Counihan, Penny Van Esterik (eds.), pp. 381–399.

⁷⁵ ‘Striving hard for food safety’, *Xinhuanet news*, June 3, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-06/03/c_13330898.htm (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁷⁶ This might be one factor in the LDP government’s failure to continue essential discussions with China concerning a long-awaited bilateral framework agreement on food safety cooperation. Only at the end of 2009 was a trilateral memorandum on food safety cooperation signed by Japan, Korea and China. Government of China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘China-Japan-ROK Cooperation (1999–2012), 2012, p. 7. Available at http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2012-05/10/content_2133893_7.htm (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁷⁷ Linus Hagström, ‘China–Japan Tensions over Senkaku Purchase an Orchestrated Affair’, *East Asia Forum*, September 17, 2012, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/09/17/china-japan-tensions-over-senkaku-purchase-an-orchestrated-affair/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

A nation's diet can play a key role in nationalistic sentiments; especially since the 'nation' as an organizational unit has its own interest in what the nation is eating. Many of the above-mentioned problems, such as food-related illnesses or the nation's food self-sufficiency rate, are mentioned in the introduction to the Basic Law on *Shokuiku* ('food education').

At the same time, living in a fluctuating socio-economic environment, people tend to overlook the importance of *shoku*. Dietary life of the nation is suffering from problems such as unbalanced nutrition, irregular eating habits, an increase in obesity and lifestyle-related diseases, and an obsession with the 'thin-ideal'. New problems are also emerging, such as the issue of food safety and an overdependence on foreign food. Within this deluge of information, people need to learn their own foodways in order to improve their dietary life and to ensure food safety. Furthermore, Japanese foodways are in danger of disappearing. It is the foodways of local varieties, of rich gustation, and of cultural heritage, which have been cultivated on our fertile lands and sea.⁷⁸

The first page of the brochure, written in English, 'What is Shokuiku?', distributed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF) following the enactment of the Basic Law on Shokuiku, clearly shows the alleged Japanese traditional cuisine of rice, *miso*, fish and vegetable side dishes.⁷⁹ The fear of Chinese imported foods has given the Japanese government exactly the impetus needed for their national movement promoting the consumption of locally produced goods and a healthy lifestyle, such as Delicious Nippon or Oishii Japan.⁸⁰ Right after the *gyōza* incident, former Foreign Minister Tarō Asō suggested, somewhat jokingly, that the Japanese should thank China, noting that the scare over foreign foodstuffs had added value to local agricultural products.⁸¹ However, Japanese agriculture might be at a crossroads. On the one hand, MAFF has been trying hard to fight against the declining food self-sufficiency rate by promoting the consumption of locally produced goods. On the other hand, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) is promoting further trade liberalization.⁸²

Recent steps towards strengthened public control have done little to alleviate fears of quality problems with Chinese foodstuffs. Despite measures by the government, such as

⁷⁸ Cited from Kojima Aiko, 'Responsibility or Right to Eat Well?: Food Education (Shokuiku) Campaign in Japan'. *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2011, p. 50, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjeaa/journal111/Japan1.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013). For the original text, see <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmldata/H17/H17HO063.html> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁷⁹ MAFF, 'What is 'Shokuiku' (Food Education)?', <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/pdf/shokuiku.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁸⁰ For an incomplete list of the current governmental campaigns, see the homepage of MAFF, under 'Japanese Food Promotion', <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁸¹ 'Japan, China Head off a Dumpling War', *Time*, February 7, 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1710742,00.html#ixzz2W6KNjuUW> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁸² Jonker, Ito, Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards...*, pp. 7–8. Despite the fact that PM Abe (LDP) added the promotion and structural reform of agriculture in the 'third arrow' of his (widely criticized) economic growth strategy, a possible Japanese participation in the Trans-Pacific Free Trade Partnership might have a devastating effect on rural communities and Japan's agricultural industry.

the establishment of a Food Safety Commission in 2003⁸³, stricter import restrictions and traceability measures, these steps to strengthen public control have not assuaged the consumer's distrust and pessimism with Chinese foodstuffs. Apart from a comprehensive legal framework, which supposedly guarantees food safety in Japan, the government has also invested in trust, transparency and visibility at the local level. Even at the grassroots level, the government is taking an active role in changing the population's culinary customs, in order to enhance the country's self-sufficiency rate and guarantee food safety and security. Imported foods that had been long regarded as somewhat superior have gradually been losing their appeal, and have given way to pride in domestic produce and local specialties. At the same time, domestically produced foods have become increasingly associated with high quality, safety and perfection of form.

Food Action Nippon (フードアクションニッポン), a state campaign initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), has the objective of developing into a 'citizens' movement' within the Japanese population, encouraging the public to start 'eating local' (豊かな国産物を食べ、..., *yutaka na kokusan mono wotabe*, ..., by eating rich local produce,...).⁸⁴ This campaign regularly uses associations with national identity, as the simple choice for 'Nippon' instead of 'Nihon' in their name already shows. Another example is a video called 'Ensuring the Future of Food', released by MAFF in 2009, offering a simple solution to Japan's alarmingly low self-sufficiency rate, a wide range of health problems (e.g. overweight), social issues (e.g. an ageing farming population) and the disappearance of Japan's so-called traditional cuisine in daily life: Eat Japanese. This video makes the obvious visual contrast between the portrayal of those people eating meat and oil as being obese and unhealthy, and the image of healthy and slim people eating the Japanese 'traditional' diet of fish, rice and vegetables. Furthermore, Japan's low self-sufficiency rate is directly linked to the change in the Japanese people's diet.⁸⁵ It is suggested that obesity and food-related illnesses are un-Japanese, and are even causing damage to the overall social welfare of the nation. By that, one could argue that the consumption of non-domestic foodstuffs is depicted as unpatriotic. The Japanese insistence on and celebration of domestic products is part of the process of redefining the endangered Self-identity, a return to the nostalgic concept of *furusato* (故郷 'native place'), which is reconfirmed by media, advertisement and domestic tourism.⁸⁶ This (re)discovery and active promotion of local foods is symptomatic of the search for a national identity in a changing context, faced with a threatening Other.⁸⁷

⁸³ Food Safety Commission of Japan, <http://www.fsc.go.jp> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁸⁴ Food Action Nippon, <http://syokuryo.jp/index.html> (accessed 6.06.2013). *Nihon no shokuryōjikyūritsumondai* '日本の食料自給率問題とは, The problem of the Japanese food self-sufficiency rate], <http://syokuryo.jp/fan/japanese-problem.html> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁸⁵ MAFF, *Ensuring the Future of Food*, 2008, <http://www.maff.go.jp/e/grv2422/> (accessed 6.06.2013). It is interesting to note that at 2:11 the Japanese voice reads 「次に、中国なども経済発展...」 [“*Tsugini, Chūgokunadomokeizaihatten...*”, Next, the development of (countries) like China...] while the English subtitles do not mention China, but only read ‘Next, there is rapid economic growth in developing countries...’ without mentioning China.

⁸⁶ Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, pp. 167–168. For *Furusato*, see Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing. Modernity. Phantasm. Japan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 102–104.

⁸⁷ Assmann, ‘Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan’, pp. 1, 10.

Industry

The industry has reacted to the so-called ‘string of poison food’ by diversifying through their adherence to standards, and by adjusting their company and market strategies. The sensitivity of the consumers to food safety has made food-handling companies increasingly keen to achieve food safety. It also offers opportunities to manufacturers, as they try to distinguish their products from their competitors by meeting their own company-specific quality standards or by providing traceability information. Japanese supermarkets, or for example the organic hamburger chain Mos Burger, present placards in their outlet shops which clearly indicate the origin of the vegetables used on a specific day, often accompanied by a picture of the local farmer with his produce. Yet, like any other economic sector, the food industry focuses on profit growth, cost reduction, production efficiency and competitiveness. Despite the fact that Japanese consumers in general spend approximately one-fifth of their total expenditures on food⁸⁸ and tend to be willing to pay more for certified quality food, or organic or biological produce, the market system prevails in the end: Japan demands cheap food and China sells it.⁸⁹ A survey by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* conducted in April 2008, shortly after the *gyōza* incident, showed that 62.6% of Japanese interviewed would still buy domestic produce if the price increased, and 25% would not change their consumption behavior even if the price increased significantly.⁹⁰ In principle, then, Japanese consumers prefer to buy domestically produced foods, but the lower prices of imported food products make them attractive.⁹¹ Hence the JETRO statistics for FY 2010 and FY 2012 (i.e. both before and after the Triple Disaster of March 2011) still reveal a continued increase in imported food from China.⁹²

5. Conclusion

In the aftermath of a series of food-related incidents and scandals, the attitude of Japanese consumers, media, government officials and the industry has undergone a significant change in recent years. Japanese governmental agencies had long claimed that the Japanese regulatory system and import measures guaranteed impeccable food safety for the Japanese people. This reputation has now been damaged, and has undermined public trust in the regulatory authorities and the safety of food being sold and consumed in Japan. Food safety as such has become an important issue for the

⁸⁸ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, ‘Focus on Prices and Spending. Consumer Expenditure Survey’, Vol. 2, Nr. 16, March 2012. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/archive/how-do-us-expenditures-compare-with-those-of-other-countries-pdf.pdf> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁸⁹ On a positive note, China, as the second supplying country to Japan after the US, also shows great determination to meet the more rigorous Japanese official sanitation and private company standards. As a report by the World Bank in 2004 shows, China was actually enjoying high esteem from Japanese importers for its efforts to tackle the problem of pesticide residues. Also, the *gyōza* incident itself revealed mutual respect: Japan allowed Chinese investigators into the country, and China swiftly investigated the complaints.

⁹⁰ *Yomiuri Shimbun* April 2008 opinion poll, available at <http://mansfieldfdn.org/program/research-education-and-communication/asian-opinion-poll-database/listofpolls/2008-polls/yomiuri-shimbun-april-2008-opinion-polls-08-07/> (accessed 6.06.2013).

⁹¹ Jonker, Ito, Fujishima, *Food Safety and Quality Standards...*, p. 8.

⁹² JETRO, ‘JETRO Survey: Analysis of Japan–China Trade...’.

public and in media, as well as a decisive factor in governmental policy-making and commercial and industrial strategies.

Although the two examples I have elaborated above are not even real food scandals – one was a criminal act, the other a contested food scandal within China – they are still perceived as food scandals, and hence as a threat to Japanese national identity. The discourse of a ‘pure’ Japan being ‘contaminated’ by China is maintained by the regulating bodies, reinforced and encouraged by the media, and used by political extremists and government officials. Within the context of a ‘rising’ or ‘reemerging China’, this anxiety over real or imagined food risks among the public can be indicative of other fears of social and economic change.

Food as a flag of national identity – the ‘pure’ Japanese food versus the ‘impure’ and ‘adulterated’ Chinese food – has as such been politicized to revive a sense of Japanese national and cultural consciousness. Food, so inherently connected with Japanese identity, has proved to be a very powerful tool to construct the idea of a ‘pure’ Japanese ‘us’ that is placed against a ‘contaminated’ Chinese ‘them’.

Notes on Contributors

DAVID A D E B A H R, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich

OLGA B A R B A S I E W I C Z, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

ILDIKÓ F A R K A S, Eastern Cultures Institute (Japanese Department) of the Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Budapest

KIE K A W A D A, Independent Researcher from Japan

FRAUKE K E M P K A, Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg

BEATA K O W A L C Z Y K, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw

NICOLAS L E V I, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

MARTA L U T Y - M I C H A L A K, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

TOMASZ O L E J N I C Z A K, Kozłowski University in Warsaw

PAWEŁ P A S I E R B I A K, Faculty of Economics, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

MARIO T A L A M O, University of Naples „the Oriental”

IOAN T R I F U, Lyons Institute of East Asian Studies

TINE W A L R A V E N S, Ghent University

LARISA Z A B R O V S K A I A, Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the People of the Far East, FEB RAS, Vladivostok