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## CHAPTER 9



# THE REMAKING OF A NATIONAL CUISINE: THE FOOD EDUCATION CAMPAIGN IN JAPAN<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION: JAPANESE CUISINE ABROAD AND AT HOME

### *Washoku* as UNESCO Heritage: Japanese Food Abroad

On December 5, 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) acknowledged *washoku*, which can be translated as "Japanese cuisine," as an intangible cultural world heritage. In particular Japan's elaborate New Year's cuisine (*o-sechi ryōri*) received the status of a cultural world heritage. In accordance with the Japanese government's efforts to convey the image of a globally recognized national cuisine characterized by elegance and tradition, *washoku* has joined the list of intangible cultural world heritage assets next to the French gastronomic meal, Mexican cuisine, and a number of specific culinary dishes such as Korean pickles (*kimchi*) and gingerbread from Northern Croatia (Robinson 2014). One intent of applying for world heritage status for *washoku* was to shift global attention away from the potential dangers associated with radiation and food safety after the nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011, and elevate the image of Japanese cuisine by associating it with elaborate cuisine, refined ingredients, and cleanliness.



This chapter describes how a nationalist food education initiative termed *shokuiku* is developing in a transnational context in which the Japanese state, by applying the concept of *washoku*, tries to gain recognition for a kind of “pristine and traditional” Japanese cuisine globally, while it simultaneously tries to contain the realities of Japanese culinary globalization on the ground. In practice, the focus on “tradition” in Japanese food education actually contains within it a neoliberal culinary politics that places responsibility for good eating on the individual rather than on the state, society, or community.

### Diversifications of Eating Habits in Postwar Japan

In contrast to the refined and sophisticated *washoku*-style cuisine propagated abroad by the Japanese government, Japan's domestic culinary scene reveals quite a different picture. Since the postwar period, diversifications of eating habits among Japanese citizens have occurred. In particular, three changes are noteworthy.

Firstly, the consumption of rice, Japan's major staple food, has decreased significantly. In 1960, 48.3 percent of the daily diet of a Japanese adult consisted of rice; this figure changed to 30.1 percent in 1980. In 2004, rice amounted to only 23.4 percent of the daily diet of a Japanese adult. In the same period, the intake of meat increased from a mere 3.7 percent in 1960 to 12 percent in 1980 and is currently at a level of 15.4 percent of the share of a person's daily diet. In the same time period, the consumption of oil and fat rose from 4.6 percent in 1960 to 14.2 percent in 2004 (MAFF 2008; Suematsu 2008, 44–46).

Secondly, Japanese people now tend to eat more premade foods and frozen foods. Convenience stores are a rapidly expanding source of food for consumers in Japan. The four big convenience-store retailers that dominate the Japanese food retail market are 7-Eleven, Lawson, Family Mart, and Circle K Sunkus (Japan Food & Drink Report 2010, 58). In 2004, a total number of 42,738 convenience stores operated throughout the country, with yearly sales of 692 trillion yen (*Shokuseikatsu Dē ta Sōgō Tōkei Nenpō* 2009, 25).

Thirdly, eating has partially shifted from family meals to dining outside in family restaurants and fast-food restaurants. Today, single people tend to cook less, eat out more, and replace meals with frequent snacking. According to a five-thousand-person survey by the Japan Finance Corporation (*Nihon seisaku kinyū kinkō kokumin seikatsu jigyō honbu seikatsu eisei yūshi-bu* 2013, 5), 40.2 percent of respondents dined out for dinner one to three times per month. Another

21.8 percent dined in restaurants one to three times per week, and 8.4 percent dined outside the home four times or more per week. Of those who ate out less often, 7.6 percent dined outside the home only four to five times within six months, and 14.5 percent had dinner in restaurants one to three times within half a year. Only 7.4 percent stated that they almost never had dinner outside their homes. On average, the amount spent on dinner in a restaurant per person was 1,994 yen. In 2009, popular places to dine out were family restaurants followed by sushi restaurants and ramen eateries (*Shokuseikatsu Dē ta Sōgō Tōkei Nenpō* 2009, 146). Family restaurants and convenience stores are actually conduits for the massive dietary globalization with regard to both food imports and culinary innovations in Japan.

### THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW ON FOOD EDUCATION (*SHOKUIKU*)

#### Enactment and Purpose

Governmental efforts seek to counter the consumption of fast foods and eating out in order to improve the eating habits of Japanese citizens. This is reflected in the Fundamental Law on Food Education (*shokuiku kihon-hō*), which was enacted in 2005 during the Koizumi Administration under the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has defined the basic concepts of the Fundamental Law on Food Education. A few of these are as follows:

*Shokuiku* should have the purpose of promoting people's health in body and in mind, as well as enriching human lives.

Especially parents, educators and day care providers should actively promote *shokuiku* among children.

Awareness and appreciation of traditional Japanese food culture as well as food supply/demand situations should be promoted, and opportunities of interaction between food producers and consumers should be created, in order to revitalize rural farming and fishing regions, and to boost food self-sufficiency in Japan. (MAFF, n.d.)

#### What Is Food Education (*Shokuiku*)?

The above objectives of food education in Japan remain vague in tone and require a closer examination of the meaning and implications of *shokuiku*. The term *shokuiku* consists of the Chinese characters for



*shoku* (which, depending on its usage, can mean to eat, food, or diet) and *iku* (meaning to educate, to nurture, or to cultivate). The term *shokuiku* can roughly be translated into English as *food education* or as *food and nutrition education*. Historically, the term *shokuiku* dates back to the year 1896, when the nutrition expert Ishizuka Sagen discussed *shokuiku* in his work *Chemical Theory of Diet for Longevity* as part of a fourfold education consisting of intellectual education (*chiiku*), moral education (*saiiku*),<sup>2</sup> and physical education (*taiiku*).

Food education, or *shokuiku*, can be understood as part of a global movement toward nutritional governance, often described as “nutrition policy.” Nutrition policy is defined as a coherent framework for the control of food production, processing, distribution, and retailing in order to encourage the consumption of nutritious food by the population (Barlösus 2011, 245). Governmental nutrition policy programs address three dimensions. Firstly, they ensure food security: a guaranteed minimum of available food. Secondly, state intervention programs seek to improve food safety, meaning the quality of available food. Thirdly, they target individual nutritional habits.

Another term for nutritional governance is *food literacy*, which is defined as the ability to craft one’s daily eating habits in a self-reliant, responsible, and joyful manner (Barlösus 2011, 289; see also Müller, Groeneveld, and Büning-Fesel 2007). Yet another term is *nutritional prevention*, which underlines the relationship between unhealthy eating habits and lifestyle-related illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Nutritional prevention enables human beings to design their nutritional habits while considering lifestyle-related illnesses that may arise in the future, to practice self-discipline and to maintain a long-term perspective on their lives and nutritional habits.

### The Food Education Campaign as a Case of Culinary Neoliberalism

Previous scholarly contributions have addressed the Fundamental Law on Food Education from a gender perspective and have investigated the nationalistic overtones of this law (Kimura 2011; Kojima 2011). This chapter’s approach comes from a slightly different angle. It examines how the food education campaign effectively establishes bodily norms and helps to internalize and reinforce a standardized national cuisine through various modes of implementation. Food education in school lunch programs, visual elements like the *Food Guide Spinning Top*, regular health surveys, and medical checkups help to internalize normalized ideals with regard to physical appearance, body

weight, and familial conviviality. These ideals are internalized through continuous and subtle reminders in various institutions such as kindergartens, schools, universities, and companies.

Michel Foucault’s ideas of creating mechanisms of self-surveillance through regular monitoring can be applied to the Japanese food education campaign. In his work “Discipline and Punish,” published in 1977, Foucault argued that brutal corporal punishment shifted toward more subtle mechanisms of punishment. The objective was to educate the delinquent and to help him internalize the appropriate rules of conduct. Individuals are supposed to survey themselves so that surveillance from outside forces is no longer necessary (Hope 2013, 36). The ultimate objective is to create a society in which punishment becomes obsolete since its individuals have been trained to monitor and educate themselves. Japan’s food education campaign consists of governmental monitoring and the creation of an educational environment that helps to establish internalized mechanisms of self-surveillance. Individuals who have established internal mechanisms are able to monitor their own nutrition and adhere to nutritional standards that the government has outlined for them.

In a similar vein, sociologist Eva Barlösius (2011) points out the moral dimension of nutritional habits. Following the argument of Anthony Giddens, in modern contemporary societies, a shift has occurred from collectively morally binding obligations toward a moral consciousness. This consciousness rests on self-reflexivity and conscious decisions of the individual, in particular with regard to physical appearance, nutritional habits, body weight, physical fitness, and sexuality (Barlösius 2011, 274). Food choices rest upon individual eating patterns that reflect responsible behavior and a degree of food literacy. Food choices prevent the occurrence of lifestyle-related illnesses such as obesity and diabetes. Sensible eating behavior reflects conscientiousness and a commitment to accept responsibility in other areas of life. In short, increasing individualization has created new moral responsibilities such as the obligation to be healthy and to maintain appropriate food behavior patterns. Japan’s food education policies can thus be seen as part of a global pattern of culinary neoliberalism, or policies that put the responsibilities for nutrition and dietary health on the individual, while leaving food distribution largely up to market forces.

In a slightly different approach, Kimura (2011) has examined the *strategy of responsabilization*, which has become an integral part of the current food education campaign in Japan. Kimura has defined the term *responsibilization* as a process where the government demands that individuals and communities take responsibility for social life



and their own risks, and makes them accountable for risk management and rational choices (Kimura 2011, 205). As stated earlier, state nutrition policy programs address the following three dimensions: (1) the available quantity of food, (2) the quality of food, and finally (3) the behavioral aspect of individual eating habits. In the context of the Japanese food education campaign, the causes for nutrition-related problems such as being obese are seen as exclusively behavioral, and thus responsibility has shifted to the individual. Busy work schedules, a limited availability of fresh food products in metropolitan areas, a decline of agriculture and food self-sufficiency, and growing uncertainties about the quality of available food products caused by previous food scandals and the nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011, are not portrayed as considerable causes of food-related problems. Instead, the roots of all nutrition-related problems—and the responsibility to solve these problems—lie in the private sphere of the individual. In accordance with this principle of individual responsibility, nutrition-related problems can only be solved on an individual basis and through a return to familial conviviality and the consumption of domestic food products. This type of neoliberal culinary politics, while advocating “tradition,” actually is a state-led effort to discipline future consumers.

### *Washoku—The Basis of Shokuiku*

The globalization of an elaborate *washoku* cuisine stands in contrast to actual eating habits of Japanese citizens. This discrepancy demands a more refined definition of what *washoku*, Japanese cuisine, actually is and what it might be. In accordance with the aim of this volume, “cuisine” is defined as referring explicitly to the discursive elaboration of food in cookbooks and in writing and talking about food.

In a 2013 survey conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries entitled “The Reality of Our Country’s Food Life and the Advancement of *Shokuiku*” (*Waga kuni no shokuseikatsu no genjō to shokuiku no suishin ni tsuite*), the Japanese-style dietary life (*Nihon-gata shoku seikatsu*) is defined as follows:

Japanese style dietary life is based on rice in accordance with the Japanese climate and consists of a variety of side dishes such as seafood, meat, and vegetables. Not only is [Japanese style dietary life] superior with regards to [its] nutritional balance, but its characteristic is that it consists of agricultural products that have been harvested throughout Japan. (MAFF 2013, 16)

Based on the definition of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, *washoku* consists of the following three characteristics: (1) Rice is a component of every meal. The importance of rice is reflected in the usage of the term *gohan*, which has two meanings. The term *gohan* as opposed to the term *meshi* is honorific and means *cooked rice*. In addition, the term *gohan* can also mean *meal*. (2) The presentation of a meal is based on the composition of one soup and three side dishes (*ichijū sansai*) served with rice and pickles. (3) Japanese cuisine has been based on a tripod of components of Western, Chinese, and Japanese elements (Cwiertka 2006, 173).

In practice, the globalization of Japanese eating habits is nothing new. A “Western” meal is also accompanied by rice, soup, and three side dishes. For instance, meatballs—a popular food in Japan—are arranged in the same way as a Japanese meal. However, some definitions of *washoku* attempt to establish a more exclusive definition of “Japanese” cuisine. Sociologist Aya Hirata Kimura has pointed out that the “Japanese style dietary life” (JSDL) (*Nihon-gata shoku seikatsu*), which is the basis of the food education campaign, implies the absence of Western foods. She argues that a Japanese-style dietary life entails a “construction of ‘Japanese food’ as an antidote to foreign elements” (Kimura 2011, 214) and states that “JSDL is better defined by what it is not—it is not a ‘Western’ diet” (Kimura 2011, 213–14). Hence, the food education campaign can only be understood as a defensive reaction to the realities of dietary globalization in Japan.

### *Objectives of Food Education (Shokuiku)*

Based on the three pillars of *washoku*, the principle objective of food education is to teach its recipients about the production and distribution of food products and methods of food preparation. In short, the objective of food education is to teach culinary competence and enable its recipients to make informed food choices on a daily basis.

The transfer of culinary competence within the framework of the food education campaign is conducted according to three principles. Firstly, culinary competence follows the basic composition and visual presentation of meals in *washoku* cuisine. Every meal is presented on the basis of *ichijū sansai*; that is, as consisting of rice, soup, three side dishes, and pickles.

The second principle addresses the ideal of familial conviviality. As mentioned earlier, eating has partially shifted from family meals to dining outside in family restaurants and fast-food restaurants. The food education campaign counters this tendency and encourages



families to eat their meals together, preferably at home. However, a 2013 survey conducted among 1,603 persons by the Cabinet Office, entitled "Current Situation and Tasks of Policies for Advancing Food Education" (*Shokuiku suishin shisaku no genjō to kadai*) and published in the *Food Education White Book* (*Shokuiku hakusho*), reveals that 59 percent of the respondents (945 persons) eat breakfast with their families almost every day, or at least four to five times per week (Cabinet Office 2013, 4). Seventy percent of all respondents (1,122 persons) indicated that they have dinner together with their families (Cabinet Office 2013, 5). Considering these results, at this point, a collapse of the familial community seems unlikely, yet the food education campaign seeks to strengthen the family, which is perceived as the primary location of teaching food preparation methods, appropriate meal times, and table manners.<sup>3</sup>

The family is also the location for communication, in particular during meal times. In linking food and familial conviviality, the food education campaign reinforces the postwar ideal of the nuclear family with the mother as the primary caregiver. In doing so, the ideal of the nuclear family reinforces the division of gender roles. As Kimura (2011) states, "The Japanese government's *shokuiku* campaign captures the normalized model of the family with a highly gendered division of labor where [*sic*] women bearing the bulk of household chores including cooking and childrearing. By constructing food not only as a means of nutrition, but also as a way to affect discipline and proper manners for children and to channel 'food culture' for the future generation Japanese, *shokuiku* further expands the burdens placed on women" (Kimura 2011, 220).

Conflicting expectations further complicate the enforcement of the *shokuiku* campaign. Mothers are expected to remain the primary agent of transferring culinary competence and culinary skills to the younger generation. However, in reinforcing the significant role of the mother as the primary caregiver in families, the Japanese government is sending conflicting messages. Demographic transformations such as the decline of births and increasing number of older people have led to a greater policy emphasis on gender equality in the workplace.<sup>4</sup> In light of a population decline, the Japanese government has recognized the need to integrate women more effectively in the workforce. At the same time, women still are expected to accept exclusive responsibility of ensuring culinary competence within families.

Thirdly, food education is closely tied to the consumption of local food products. Governmental organizations such as the organization Food Action Nippon, which was founded by the Ministry

of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in 2008 with the objective to promote the consumption of local agricultural products and to reinvigorate the significance of rice as Japan's major staple food, equate Japanese food products with health and locality as opposed to imported products, which are associated with potentially unsafe food. In contrast to imported foods, the origins of local food products are well known, and the faces of the food producers are visible to food consumers. Even after the nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011, local food products are portrayed as safe foods in the context of the food education campaign. One example for this is the campaign Supporting through Eating (*Tabete ōen shiyō*), which encourages the purchase and consumption of foods from the disaster-affected areas (Food Action Nippon 2014).

### Ministerial Collaboration in Reinforcing *Shokuiku*

As we have seen, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries ties food education to the consumption of local products that are depicted as safe foods as opposed to transnational food products. However, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is not the only ministry that promotes food education. One of the characteristics of the *shokuiku* campaign is the close collaboration between several governmental organizations. Including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, four ministries work closely together. The allocation of funding to ministries for food education activities is not a new phenomenon. But the fact that *shokuiku* is being addressed by all ministries has added a new dimension: "What is new, however, is the emphasis on the notion of *shokuiku* itself and how the government uses the term as an overarching concept across ministries" (Kimura 2011, 211).

Firstly, the Cabinet Office and its committee on food safety survey the eating habits of Japanese citizens and the safety of food products on a regular basis. This includes the monitoring of radiation levels in food products since the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi on March 11, 2011.

Secondly, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) seeks to implement the *shokuiku* campaign in school lunch programs and through visual elements such as the Food Guide Spinning Top, an inverted pyramid-shaped food diagram.

Thirdly, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) conducts health surveys such as the *Survey on Health and Nutrition of the Japanese Population* (*Kokumin kenkō eiyo chōsa*) on a



yearly basis. This survey collects various data such as on alcohol and tobacco consumption, breakfast habits, and weight control. In monitoring the eating habits of Japanese citizens, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) links the food education campaign to the metabolic syndrome and the occurrence of lifestyle-related illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, coronary heart diseases, and high cholesterol.

## METHODS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SHOKUIKU

### Surveillance and Documentation of Nutritional Habits

Cultural anthropologist Brian McVeigh has written about “hard” and “soft” nationalisms in Japan and has argued that nationalism is “implicated in the mundane practices of everyday life, and like other hegemonic ideologies, it garners its strength from its invisibility” (McVeigh 2001). Food education targets the everyday practice of eating, but it derives its power from subtle reminders of the adequate national cuisine while prioritizing health issues. Health issues are conveyed as the primary purpose of the food education campaign. However, a powerful state policy framework emphasizes the significance of domestic foodstuffs versus transnational food products as a means to achieve the utmost nutritional balance.

Food education in nutrition governance documents individual eating habits. As stated earlier, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) monitors the eating habits of its citizens through a regular survey entitled *Survey on Health and Nutrition of the Japanese Population* (*Kokumin kenkō eiyo chōsa*). This survey collects data on alcohol and tobacco consumption, the habit of skipping breakfast, weight control, dining out, sleeping habits, and the consumption of local food products. This survey has revealed a number of alarming concerns. A lack of culinary competence has led to the development of unbalanced eating habits such as skipping meals and frequent snacking. For instance, the habit of skipping breakfast concerns 12.8 percent of all male respondents and 9 percent of all female respondents. As a consequence of such unbalanced and irregular eating patterns, individuals develop lifestyle-related illnesses, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and coronary heart diseases (MHLW 2012). In this context, the metabolic syndrome (*metabo*) has also gained significance. The metabolic syndrome is defined as being obese in connection with at least two other risk factors such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol (Kasch 2013, 12).

Weight control is another important aspect of the health survey. According to the results of the 2012 health survey, 29.1 percent of all male respondents struggle with obesity, which is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or larger. According to this definition of the BMI, 19.4 percent of all female respondents are obese. 11.4 percent of women struggle with the opposite problem of being underweight, and 4.2 percent of their male counterparts exhibit a tendency toward being underweight, which is defined as having a BMI of 18.5 or less (MHLW 2012).

Definitions of overweight and obesity vary in the global context. The body mass index (BMI, in  $\text{kg}/\text{m}^2$ ) is an internationally recognized measuring device for the assessment of weight categories, but various definitions apply to the transition between overweight and obesity. Kuczmarski and Flegal (2000) have defined the category of overweight as follows: “Overweight is generally defined as weight that exceeds the threshold of a criterion standard or reference value. Reference values are generally based on observed population distributions of measured weight, whereas criterion standards are based on the relation of weight to morbidity or mortality outcomes” (Kuczmarski and Flegal 2000). They argue that overweight can be assessed through using two approaches. The first approach is to use weight standards that vary by height, whereas the second approach is to construct a weight-for-height index such as the BMI, which is currently the most commonly used weight-for-height index worldwide (Kuczmarski and Flegal 2000).

According to the definition of obesity by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1997, a BMI of 30 or larger indicates obesity (Harvard School of Public Health). A BMI between 30 and 34.9 indicates first-class obesity, a BMI between 35 and 39.9 defines second-class obesity, and a BMI of 40 or larger defines third-class obesity (Harvard School of Public Health). In contrast to the definition of the WHO, the Japan Dietetic Association (JDA) (*Nihon Eiyo shikai*) does not list the category of overweight (*kataijū*), which would correspond with a BMI between 25 and 30. Instead, three categories exist according to the definition of the JDA: The first weight category is underweight, which is defined as having a BMI of 18.5 or smaller. The second category is normal weight, which is defined as having a BMI between 18.5 and 24.9, and finally there is the third category of obesity (in Japanese: *himan*), which is defined as having a BMI of 25 or larger (Japan Dietetic Association 2013). This rigid definition of the BMI explains the high number of men and women in Japan who struggle with obesity. The opposite problem of being underweight is defined



as having a BMI of 18.5 or less; this applies internationally and also to the Japanese case.

### Visual Representation of the Shokuiku Campaign: The Food Guide Spinning Top

In reaction to the above findings, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has initiated a number of campaigns. One example is the Wake-Up Meal (*Mezamashi Gohan*) campaign, which aims to encourage young people to prepare and eat a nutritious breakfast. The Wake-Up Meal campaign features a young and attractive female singer in commercial videos and advertisements who takes the time to prepare a Japanese breakfast despite a busy work schedule (MAFF 2013, 18).

Another and perhaps the most well-known visual element of the food education campaign in Japan is the Food Guide Spinning Top, an inverted pyramid-shaped diagram, which was jointly introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2005 and features nutritional components ranging from rice and wheat products to side dishes such as vegetables, eggs, fruits, and milk products (MAFF 2013, 14). In order to maintain weight control, food diagrams, such as the Japanese Spinning Top or the Food Pyramid are useful but ideological tools of food education campaigns and address two dimensions of nutrition: (1) the hierarchical order of foods that are depicted in terms of their nutritional value and (2) the quantity of foods to be eaten (Barlösius 2011, 290–95).

The Food Guide Spinning Top addresses both dimensions. One striking characteristic of the Food Guide Spinning Top is the emphasis on foods that are rich in carbohydrates, such as rice and wheat products. These foods are depicted on the upper side of the spinning top and portrayed as being particularly nutritious and to be eaten daily and in large quantities. This reflects the emphasis on rice as Japan's major staple food. Due the decline of rice consumption in the daily diet of a Japanese adult, rice is being reintroduced as a staple food. A second significant characteristic is the presentation of composed meals as opposed to ingredients. This food guide displays a combination of staple foods and standard dishes available in eateries and food stores in Japan. There are different food guides according to age group—for young Japanese, the middle-aged, and the elderly—that address the various nutritional needs of each age group.<sup>5</sup> The Food Guide Spinning Top for young adults addresses women in particular, who

tend to be extremely slender. In addition, there are local variations of this food pyramid such as the Kagoshima Food Guide Spinning Top, which features local dishes.<sup>6</sup>

In 2012, the Distribution System Research Center conducted the Survey on Food Life and Experiences of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (*Shokuseikatsu oyobi nōrin gyogyō taiken ni kansuru chōsa*). The survey measured awareness of the Food Guide Spinning Top and the degree of adherence to its guidelines. Of the four thousand participants, 61 percent of the respondents were either familiar with the guide to some degree or were knowledgeable about it and its content (Distribution System Research Center 2012). It further revealed that 60 percent of the respondents followed the nutritional suggestions put forward in the guide.

### Knowledge About Shokuiku

Initial familiarity with the term *shokuiku* was low. The results of the *Awareness Survey Regarding Food and Nutrition Education (Shokuiku ni kansuru ishiki chōsa)*,<sup>7</sup> conducted by the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office since 2005 on a yearly basis, confirm this. Immediately after the enactment of the Fundamental Law of Food Education in 2005, out of 1,626 respondents, 47.4 percent (770 persons) replied that they had never heard of the term *shokuiku*, nor did they know the meaning of this term (*kotoba mo imi mo shiranakatta*).

However, the results of the survey have changed gradually over the years. Two years later in 2007, the results of the same survey showed that out of 1,831 respondents, 34.8 percent (637 persons) had not heard of the term *shokuiku* and its meaning. According to the results of the most recent survey conducted in 2012 (published in 2013), out of 1,771 respondents, only 23.4 percent (414 persons) replied that had not heard of the term *shokuiku*, nor did they know its meaning. Thirty-three percent (584 persons) replied that they had heard of the term *shokuiku* but did not know its meaning (*kotoba ha shitte ita ga, imi ha shiranakatta*), whereas 43.6 percent (772 persons) replied that they possessed knowledge of the term *shokuiku* and its meaning (*kotoba mo imi shitte ita*). In addition, seventy-six percent of those surveyed replied that they were particularly interested in the sensitive topic of food safety (*shokuhin no anzen sei ni kansuru koto*), while sixty-nine percent confirmed that they were interested in maintaining dietary habits that helped to sustain their health and prevent lifestyle-related diseases (*seikatsu shūkan-byō yobō ya kenkō zokuri no tame no shokuseikatsu*) (Prime Minister's Cabinet Office 2014).



### The Implementation of *Shokuiku* in the School Lunch Program

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) is responsible for the implementation of *shokuiku* in the school lunch program. A Diet and Nutrition Teacher System was introduced in 2007 in order to implement food education in schools more effectively (Tokudome and Yamamoto 2012, 127). School lunch programs have a long history in Japan. The earliest traces of such programs date back to the year 1889, when monks in Yamagata prefecture began to distribute food to children from poor families (Tanaka and Miyoshi 2012, 155). Temporarily suspended during World War II due to food shortages, the school lunch program was reactivated in 1947 during the Occupation period with the help of the Licensed Agency for Relief in Asia (LARA). At that time, bread and milk products were part of the food aid program initiated by the United States. These staple foods were part of school lunches for the following two decades and made a significant impact on the eating habits of future generations, who would rely on a breakfast consisting of toast, coffee, and milk in contrast to the Japanese breakfast of rice, fish, and miso soup (Cwiertka 2006, 157).

The School Lunch Act of 1954 became an integral part of the curriculum for compulsory school education in 1956. In accordance with the four educational principles of moral education, physical education, intellectual education, and dietary education, dietary education in schools fosters an understanding of a balanced diet and of the nutritional value of food products. One of the purposes of the food and nutrition program at schools is to inspire a sense of conviviality when students eat lunch together and a sense of gratitude toward nature and the producers of food. It wasn't until 1976 that rice was reinstated as the main staple food of Japanese school lunches; it is currently served three times per week in most schools (Tanaka and Miyoshi 2012, 155–56). The emphasis on rice as an integral part of school lunches counters the declining consumption of rice in the adult population since the 1960s.

The School Lunch Act was revised in 2008 with the aim to promote *shokuiku* in accordance with the guidelines of the Fundamental Law of Food Education, which was enacted three years prior to the revision of the School Lunch Act. According to data collected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), nationwide 31,419 schools (94.1 percent of all schools in Japan) participated in the school lunch program in 2014 (MEXT 2014). MEXT increased the number of nutrition educators from merely 34 teachers

in 2005 to 3,853 teachers who are based in schools all over the country as of April 2011 (Tanaka and Miyoshi 2012, 156). According to data accumulated by MEXT, in 2014, 4,355 nutrition educators taught nutrition in Japanese schools (MEXT 2014). Tanaka and Miyoshi present the principles of the revised School Lunch Act as follows:

There are four main goals: 1) develop a proper understanding of diets and healthy eating habits in daily life; 2) enrich school life and nurture sociability; 3) aim at rationalization of diets, nutritional improvement and health promotion; and 4) enhance a sound understanding on food production, distribution and consumption. (Tanaka and Miyoshi 2012, 156)

### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *SHOKUIKU* IN FOOD FAIRS: STRENGTHENING LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS

*Shokuiku* is not only practiced in schools with the objective of teaching children proper nutritional habits. As stated earlier, one goal of the *shokuiku* campaign is to emphasize the relationship between food and locality. Using the motto "*Anzen, anshin*," (Sternsdorff 2014) which can roughly be translated as "safety and peace of mind," local foods are portrayed as safe, with well-known origins of production. Surprisingly, this emphasis on locality persists even after the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi. Government initiatives and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) collaborate with the ministries involved in the *shokuiku* campaign, prefectural governments, local farmers, and food producers to promote local food products. For example, the NGO Food Action Nippon was founded in October 2008 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and became part of the *shokuiku* campaign in its efforts to revive local agriculture, improve dietary habits of the population, and help ensure the quality of food (Food Action Nippon website). In April 2009, Food Action Nippon co-hosted a two-day food fair in Yokohama with the prefectural government. The event name, *Taberu Taisetsu—Tsukuru Taisetsu*, can roughly be translated as "Vital Eating, Vital Growing" (Assmann 2010). The food fair focused on the relationship between the production and the consumption of food. This was highlighted by the presence of local food producers and distributors, who presented their food products to the public. Rice received particular attention at this event. For example, visitors were able to experience firsthand the traditional pounding of rice into rice cakes (*mochi*) eaten during the New Year holiday. In



another corner, children received small portions of rice that could be taken home in a small measuring cup. Visitors of the food fair mainly consisted of families with small children. They attended short lectures about basic ingredients and the preparation of simple dishes such as omelets and rice served with curry. Through such efforts, consumers are supposed to learn to “see the face of producers” (*seisansha no kao ga mieru*). Furthermore, Food Action Nippon organizes “Earth Day Markets” in suburban neighborhoods to give local producers an opportunity to sell their products directly to consumers.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has linked its food education policy to an effort to increase Japan’s low food self-sufficiency, which currently hovers around 40 percent (MAFF n.d.). This means that Japan imports 60 percent of its foodstuffs, mainly from China, the United States, Canada, and Australia. One objective of the *shokuiku* campaign is to lessen this dependency on food imports by raising awareness of local foods. In attempting to achieve an upswing of the food self-sufficiency rate, Food Action Nippon acts as a mediator between the government and consumers, who are supposed to learn more about food production and reconnect with local producers in their immediate neighborhoods. Building on relationships with farmers, food distributors, tourism enterprises, NGOs, and prefectural governments, Food Action Nippon ambitiously seeks to raise the food self-sufficiency rate to 45 percent by the year 2015.

### *Shokuiku*—The Remaking of a National Cuisine

The Japanese government has reacted to the increase of people who are either overweight or obese through a food education campaign, which advocates a return to a Japanese diet and counters the globalization of foodways. This culinary nationalism cannot be understood without reference to the everyday realities of dietary globalization. Rigid definitions of what constitutes being overweight or obese persist and enforce the “responsibilization” and constant self-monitoring of the individual. What is represented as a return to “tradition” is in fact a neoliberal culinary politics of individual responsibility and discipline, which we can also observe in other industrial countries around the world.

Food education impacts school lunch programs, education at food fairs, health surveys, and medical examinations. The objective of the campaign is to internalize nutritional guidelines in the Japanese population. This is reflected in the surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office that show an increasing awareness of *shokuiku*, its meanings, and its objectives.

The major difficulty of the *shokuiku* campaign is the neglect of problematic conditions of the Japanese food market. It remains doubtful whether shifting the responsibility onto the individual will solve current food-related problems in Japan. Persisting challenges such as the decline of agriculture in Japan, the dependency on food imports, and the lack of time and resources to implement the ideals of the food education campaign are all obstacles to the *shokuiku* campaign’s success. Similarly, the potential long-term consequences of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis have not been fully investigated as of 2015 but are instead being downplayed in favor of a nationalistic campaign that ignores the repercussions of radiation on food. Concerns about food safety indicate that the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi might have led to a renewed interest in the food education campaign, particularly in relation to food safety. However, the food education campaign does not explicitly address these concerns.

In its current form, the *shokuiku* campaign is primarily a tool to reinstate a national cuisine and maintain control of Japanese citizens’ diet through a system of “self-responsibilization.” The aim of the *shokuiku* campaign is to improve the eating habits of individuals. In the future, the Japanese government would need to consider multifaceted reasons to explain the increase in the number of people who suffer from overweight and other lifestyle-related illnesses. The current food education campaign is mainly aimed at consumers, but future campaigns could include more policies focused on food producers, including promoting more nutritious dining options or alternative forms of agriculture such as greenhouse agriculture.

### NOTES

1. This research was made possible by a grant from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Sciences, Grant No. 22402040, “Sociological Research into Culinary Soft Power and Culinary Contact Zones.”
2. The use of the term *saiiku*, which is translated as *moral education*, is peculiar to Ishizuka Sagen. The use of the term *tokuiku*, which is also translated as *moral education*, is more common.
3. In this context, Barlösius (2011) investigates three functions of the familial community. The first function of sharing a meal is to exercise control over physical needs. Adequate table manners and appropriate amounts of food are part of the familial community. In adhering to these rules of communal eating, conviviality leads to controlled eating. Eating disorders such as overeating and binge eating occur when solitary eating takes place and social control mechanisms such as the familial community are not in place. The second function of the familial community is the sharing of



tasks for preparing food. The third function of the convivial meal is to overcome the naturalism of eating, which is a basic and primitive need, through the elaboration of table manners. Placing the natural need of eating in the context of a community meal civilizes the basic human need to eat (Barlösius 2011, 175–82).

4. 2011 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (*danjo koyōkikai kintō-hō*) (EEOL). After Japan ratified the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 (Mae 2008, 219), the EEOL became Japan's major legal framework for implementing gender equality in private companies. A second framework is the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society (*danjo kyōdō sankaku shakai kihon-hō*), enacted in 1999, which is a guideline for creating a society to which both men and women participate on an equal basis.
5. For Food Guide Spinning Tops for various age groups, see [http://www.maff.go.jp/j/balance\\_guide/b\\_sizai/kaisetsuyo.html#jireisyu](http://www.maff.go.jp/j/balance_guide/b_sizai/kaisetsuyo.html#jireisyu), accessed on April 15, 2014.
6. For the Food Guide Spinning Top of Kyushu, see the following website: <http://www.maff.go.jp/kyusyu/syohianzen/hiroba/balanceguide/balanceguide.html#02>, accessed on April 15, 2014.
7. The Japanese name of this survey changed. In 2005, the survey was called "*Shokuiku ni kansuru tokubetsu yoron chōsa*" [Special Survey of Public Opinion regarding Food and Nutrition Education]. In 2007, the name was changed to "*Shokuiku ni kansuru ishiki chōsa*" [Awareness Survey regarding Food and Nutrition Education].

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