

博士論文（要約）

The Authenticity of Celebrity Chef Nobu: Performance, Taste, and Texts

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Conclusion

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Overview

My Ph. D. thesis concerns the globalization of Japanese food culture and its popularity in the United States of America as well as the rest of the world. My study is grounded in interdisciplinary research mainly across food studies, American Studies, and cultural geography. The thesis argues that the sense of authenticity in the currently globalizing Japanese food culture has been constructed primarily within a network of spaces and linkages established between large world cities, with those cities acting as nodes. In the network space, authenticity emerges from the practice of recognized or accredited specialists, and is not only based on a particular place of origin but also based on complex and diverse relationships within the network. This agent-based authenticity, as it might be called, offers a new and useful way to understand the ever-changing phenomenon of Japanese food popularity.

This practice-based conception of authenticity, in turn, dictates the focus and particular emphases of this dissertation. It is of course impossible to survey or, in any meaningful sense, to “know” how all the cuisine that is denoted as “Japanese” is created throughout the global community, therefore this thesis focuses on several key case studies.

Thus, although a brief (and necessarily incomplete) overview of Japanese cuisine in the United States is given in the opening chapter, this study focuses on contemporary events in Japanese food culture because I believe the culinary culture has greatly changed in the last few decades because of the popularity of Japanese food.

Here the issue of authenticity in Japanese food culture is explored through several case studies that I examine in the main chapters. These studies include one of the most prominent Japanese chefs, Nobuyuki Matsuhisa (known as Nobu). A more general picture of Japanese cuisine, as conceived outside its land of origin, is gained in other parts of the thesis by an exploration of other restaurant and food retailers not only in the United States but also in other parts of the world.

In order to contour the contemporary popularity of Japanese food and restaurants driven by celebrity chefs such as Nobu, my thesis takes a three-fold approach: after an overview of the basic key points needed to understand Nobu’s restaurant business, I first look at geographical practices and performances with food conducted within the space of particular restaurants. Second, I focus on the sense of taste. I explore the significance of the role of the sense of taste, especially *umami*, the fifth basic taste, in determining whether Japanese food can be considered authentic or not. Third, I explore cookbooks in terms of the way in which they create culinary spaces within and beyond the texts, which provides a different spatiality of food practices. Combining these three aspects of the practices of Japanese food culture, I conclude by proposing the validity of the geographical approach in creating a better understanding of the contemporary global popularity of Nobu’s cuisine, focusing on the issues relating to the performative and practical experience of authenticity.

This thesis borrows from the findings and practices of diverse fields of enquiry and research. Much of it adopts the approach of on-the-spot, fieldwork ethnography. Data was collected through observation at the sites where agent-based authenticity is practiced. This data, however, is framed and informed by insights from other disciplines, such as of American Studies, history, anthropology, sociology, and particular of cultural geography.

There are many reasons why I adopt a cultural geography approach as the framework for my dissertation. What is most significant and helpful in thinking in terms of cultural geography is that this discipline enables us to think carefully about and deal with spatial concepts which tend to be taken for granted in other fields: concepts such as place, space and time, boundaries and nations, the concept of being transnational, and cities and locations. Focusing on these geographical concepts allows for a more accurate examination of what is taking place in the Japanese food phenomena that are globalizing. This thesis draws on, and attempts to expand in several respects, the growing field of food geographies. For this work, a geographical approach is particularly relevant because it draws particular attention to spatial dimensions of food cultures.

In order to conduct my research, I draw on two kinds of primary sources. First, my ethnographic practices consisted of conducting participant observations at about a hundred restaurants that could be considered Japanese in a number of cities, New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, London, Tokyo, and so forth, under a wide range of conditions and circumstances. I interviewed more than fifty chefs and floor staff, as well as entrepreneurs who work in the Japanese food industry. Furthermore, I obtained information of restaurants and food products from homepages and newspaper articles and online reviews in publications and popular sites. Secondly, I investigated several cookbooks as my primary textual sources. I have mainly focused on scrutinizing Japanese cookbooks written by Nobu and other celebrity chefs and professional writers published in the last decade or so. Many of the books that I analyzed contain illustrations and photographs in addition to the texts of recipes and anecdotes.

As a primary case study for my dissertation, I chose a Japanese chef, Nobuyuki Matsuhisa, and his restaurant business. His Nobu restaurants provide an example of the creativity of world cities and the network that is based upon world cities, which has to be analyzed in terms of subjectivity, feelings, and bodies, and these were my main concerns while working closely with Chef Nobu. Referring to geographical frameworks, I look at the cultural aspects of Nobu's networked food phenomenon since within his culinary networks, Nobu himself, staff, clientele, food items, shared values and information interact in a complex way, all contributing to making the space of restaurants and networks.

Through the Nobu phenomenon, I illustrate how Japanese food culture has been

accepted by American society since the 1960s, when it first started to be recognized and offered to American palates. I also pay special attention to the issue of sense of taste. The 1970s is a feasible and significant era in which to analyze the transition of the acceptance of the Japanese food culture in the United States, because it was a turning point when Americans became more health conscious and began to pay more attention to ethnic cuisines, including Japanese food. Therefore, in order to elucidate general attitudes to Japanese food popularity in contemporary America I analyze Chef Nobu Matsuhisa's acceptance among American diners. Finally I articulate Nobu's construction of agent-based authenticity.

Structure

My thesis includes this introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 1 is intended to provide literature reviews setting up an appropriate base for my later discussion of detailed case studies. It focuses on a literature review of food studies, in particular paying attention to works that have been conducted within the field of American Studies dealing with North American food customs and eating habits. Besides the literature review of former studies, I introduce anecdotes from my interviewees, including those who have been eating Japanese food since the 1960s and the chefs whom I had a chance to interview, to establish a sense of historical understanding about the acceptance of Japanese food culture by Americans. I also refer to the concept of authenticity, which is a fundamental aspect to my case studies. Based on the discussions in Chapter 1, I propose a new way of comprehending the authenticity of globalizing food events such as those connected to Nobu.

Chapter 2 provides the fundamental background of Nobu's culinary networks, often described as Nobu's culinary "empire". This chapter sets up the primary foundation for my detailed analyses with various specific perspectives in the ensuing chapters 3 to 5. I introduce general information about Nobu himself, as well as Nobu restaurant outlets and the global expansion of his business focusing on how the management uses his culinary networks that have been established with large cities as the nodes. The next three chapters are intertwined and complementary to one another. The particular order of the chapters might not be so essential, but what is important is the analysis of Nobu's case in detail from three different but interacting aspects using geographical insights on place and space: performance, taste, and texts. Those three elements serve together to maintain the embodied cultural activities of enjoying Japanese food today. I hope to show how crucial those three elements are in order to understand the original sense of authenticity in Nobu's case, which I claim is agent-based authenticity.

Chapter 3 looks at Nobu's ways of managing his business as performance in his network spaces. Firstly, I analyze his physical activities and daily practices as a chef. In addition, I analyze the interior and exterior designs of his restaurants. The data was

collected by conducting field research in twelve Nobu branches in eight locations around the world. I explore how Nobu's agent-based authenticity is practiced and performed to maintain his business through his body and his restaurant spaces.

In chapter 4, I move on to discussing the issue of taste conceived of in terms of the embodied experience of food. Starting from the concept of the fifth basic taste, umami, with a historical review of the discovery of the taste of umami, I articulate how important a role the sense of umami plays in the recent promotions of Japanese food culture by celebrity chefs such as Nobu, within agent-based gastronomical network communities when they emphasize the authenticity of Japanese cuisine as a whole. I look at particular food products infused by umami elements such as *dashi* stock, *miso* paste, and so forth as well as scrutinizing chefs' culinary network spaces.

Chapter 5 deals with texts in cookbooks. Here I engage with the imaginative spaces that the author perceives in the process of producing cookbooks, as well as those that are summoned to take place when readers read and cook with cookbooks. Exploring several cookbooks published by Nobu, I attempt to illustrate how the sense of agent-based authenticity is presented through the way in which culinary network spaces emerge as text events involving both chefs and readers within and beyond texts which readers encounter during their act of reading.

In the Conclusion, I pull the three key concepts together with an emphasis on arguing for the validity of the perspective of agent-based authenticity, while articulating the significance of Nobu's case, viewed from a geographical perspective, as a phenomenon which helps us to understand the popularity of Japanese food culture in the United States as well as all over the world.