

## McDonald's in Japan: Changing Manners and Etiquette

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The Golden Arches, a ubiquitous symbol of “late capitalism”<sup>1</sup> and the fragmentation of life in the fast lane in the United States, have found a home in Japan—another society where the apparently unlimited growth propelled by capitalism has given rise to an explosive rate of change in daily life. In this chapter I will re-examine some of the assumptions implicit in current discussions of the globalization process by focusing on the introduction and growth of McDonald's in Japan. In particular, I think we must shift our attention from the obsession with consumer behavior and focus instead on how new commodities become *embedded* in culture. Throughout Asia, for example, fast food is not simply a commodity; it is also a representation of “the West” or “America.” How does McDonald's stand for Americana as perceived by the Japanese? Also, what are the unanticipated effects of a particular commodity, such as the McDonald's hamburger, as it becomes part of Japanese culture? My focus in this chapter, therefore, is not confined to the nature of McDonald's as a particular form of

food, but also with the effects of fast food on Japanese table manners and lifestyles in general.

### *McDonald's in Japan*

McDonald's was introduced in Japan in 1971 by Den Fujita, then a University of Tokyo student. He began with five restaurants and a \$1.3 million investment during an economic boom in Japan. By 1985 the business had grown to such an extent that on New Year's Day a McDonald's near the Tsurugaoka Shrine in Kamakura set what was then a single-day, single-outlet, world sales record of \$47,871.<sup>2</sup> In that same year, McDonald's was ranked number one in total sales among Japan's service companies.<sup>3</sup> By 1986, the chain had expanded to 556 restaurants, amounting to a \$766.5 million empire. Every month that year the Japanese consumed 12,000 tons of American beef and 15,000 tons of Idaho potatoes;<sup>4</sup> in 1991, annual sales rose to \$1.6 billion, with 860 restaurants.<sup>5</sup> By 1994, when the fieldwork for this study was conducted, McDonald's Japan had expanded to 1,048 outlets, with its branch below the Hanshin Department Store in Umeda, Osaka, at the top in terms of sales.<sup>6</sup>

McDonald's has made a practice of targeting locations noted for high real estate value, such as Ginza in Tokyo, where the first outlet opened.<sup>7</sup> Other restaurants are situated near major train stations and often have very little frontage space and limited seating space. The premium in such locations is on convenience, not comfort.

The Japanese menu includes the standard fare one would find in any American McDonald's, but, in an effort to increase sales, Japanese McDonald's restaurants have experimented with different food items such as Chinese fried rice (*MacChao*), cur-

ried rice with chicken or beef, fried egg burger (called *tsukimi-bāgā*, or "moon-viewing burger"), rib burgers, hotdog burgers, shrimp burgers, and chicken-*tatsuta* (a soy-sauce-flavored chicken sandwich).<sup>8</sup> Bacon-lettuce burgers were the featured item during the summer of 1994. So far, the only locally inspired item that has become a permanent feature of the McDonald's menu is the teriyaki burger. (In July 1994, on a flight to Tokyo, I interviewed a man who worked for the Mitsubishi Automobile Company and was returning from a tour of branch offices in the United States; he insisted that food in the Japanese McDonald's was much tastier than its American counterpart. After some discussion it became clear that, to him, McDonald's meant teriyaki burgers and the taste he craved was soy sauce.) Other items served in Japan that are not found in most American outlets include iced coffee, iced oolong tea, hot oolong tea, corn soup, café au lait, and bacon-potato pie.

### *McDonald's as a Snack*

In Japan there is a vast array of foods served with rice that may qualify as "fast foods," although it is not always easy to determine which items fit this classification since Japanese cuisine has two characteristics that make it possible for almost any dish to become a fast food. First, except for soup, Japanese foods are usually served at room temperature. Although rice must be piping hot at the dinner table, it is eaten at room temperature in lunch boxes or in the form of rice balls. Second, the Japanese characteristically serve their "courses" all at once. Therefore, lunch boxes (*bentō*) are a natural extension of meals eaten at the table. *Bentō* are enormously popular and are sold in department stores, supermarkets, and grocery stores, as well as by vendors who sell them from minivans and cars parked in

busy office areas. Prices range from ¥250 to ¥2,500;\* decent-tasting *bentō* average around ¥500.<sup>9</sup> Because of the popularity of *bentō*, some foreign fast food companies have begun selling boxed lunches. For example, in the fall of 1992, Kentucky Fried Chicken started an expensive line of *bentō* lunches, claiming that they contained “the best” rice (*akitakomachi*) and fish.<sup>10</sup> Even railway stations sell their own *ekiben* (station lunches), ranging in price from ¥350 to ¥2,000.<sup>11</sup>

McDonald's has not posed a serious challenge to this lunch market. Despite its phenomenal success, my interviews as well as published magazine articles all testify that McDonald's food is considered a “snack” and not a full meal. Even Den Fujita concedes: “McDonald's has gained ample recognition among Japanese consumers. However, our image is that of a light-meal restaurant for young people. We are not regarded as a place for adults to have dinner.”<sup>12</sup>

A young man from Mino, near Osaka, explained the situation. Any food with bread is not considered “filling,” and so for lunch he and his university friends look for *donburi tei-shoku*—a large bowl of rice topped with various ingredients. He prefers rice burgers (a slice of meat, fish, or vegetable sandwiched between bun-shaped rice patties) to hamburgers. In his opinion, hamburgers are only a snack to be eaten between meals. An article in a popular magazine, entitled “Hamburgers as a Habit and *Gyūdon* [a large bowl of rice with beef and sauce on top] for a Full Stomach,” develops this theme.<sup>13</sup> The author points out that young working men are not lured by the prospect of lunchtime hamburgers. On Sundays, when the same young men take their families out for a light meal, they often end up at McDonald's for lunch.

\*During the period of this research (summer 1994) the exchange rate was US\$1 = ¥103.

In this sense, therefore, McDonald's is competing with only a limited number of traditional fast foods, those made with noodles and other nonrice items. *Udon* (noodles made from wheat flour) are considered the original fast food of Japan, and were enjoyed by city dwellers of Osaka and Edo (Tokyo) some 200 years ago.<sup>14</sup> The second most popular type of noodle are *soba* (buckwheat noodles). The first *soba* shop appeared in the mid-seventeenth century in Edo as a snack place.<sup>15</sup> *Soba* shops boomed in popularity during the Teikyo period (1684–88).<sup>16</sup> In 1860 there were 3,763 *soba* shops in Edo, excluding street vendors.<sup>17</sup> *Rāmen*, made from wheat and originally introduced from China, rank third in popularity among Japanese noodle dishes.<sup>18</sup>

*Udon* and *soba* are not just fast food; they can even be haute cuisine if the noodles, the sauce, the seaweed, and the garnishes are of high quality and served in exquisite containers. At exclusive restaurants, the price can go as high as ¥2,500. *Rāmen*, however, remain low-class, regardless of the quality of noodles or sauce.<sup>19</sup>

Other recently imported foreign foods, such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, are treated more like meals than snacks, perhaps because chicken seems less alien than hamburgers to the Japanese. Pizza is also treated differently from McDonald's standard fare. Japanese pizzas—topped with octopus, squid, corn, and pineapple—are considered a party food for young people. It is also significant that pizza can be shared, a feature conspicuously absent in McDonald's fare. The chain known as Mos Burger, which has become popular in recent years, is McDonald's strongest competitor. Mos Burger serves its own version of burgers—a sloppy-joe-style concoction of meat and chili sauce on a bun. The chain also introduced rice burgers,

which consist of meat, fish, or vegetable sandwiched between bun-shaped wedges of pressed rice. The Mos Burger chain is especially popular among Japanese young people. Outlets are located in busy areas, often near universities, but not, for example, in the fashionable Ginza district of Tokyo.<sup>20</sup>

### *Why Is McDonald's Food Considered a Snack?*

The perception that McDonald's hamburgers are a snack and not a meal is a phenomenon that contributors to this volume discovered not only in Japan but also in Beijing, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Korea. Before we jump to the conclusion that these are identical cross-cultural parallels we must examine the meanings conveyed by meat and bread, the two basic ingredients of McDonald's hamburgers, in Japanese culture as compared to other Asian cultures. The Japanese share the basic rice diet of all East Asian peoples, but have been unique in their abstemious attitude toward meat, at least officially, until quite recently.

Shortly after the introduction of Buddhism (from India via Korea) in the sixth century, the doctrine of mercy for all living beings was translated into a legal prohibition against the consumption of land-dwelling animals. Since then the "official" diet of the Japanese has consisted of fish and vegetables.<sup>21</sup> With the development of an agrarian cosmology that became hegemonic during the early modern period (1603–1868) and extended through the Meiji period (1868–1912), rice and the paddies it grew in became metaphors for Japanese cultural identity, and later, for Japanese national identity.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, Westerners were represented in the Japanese imagination as meat eaters. From a Japanese perspective, meat was *the* distinguishing characteristic of the Western diet, and

thus of "barbarian" cultures. Japanese discourse about "the other" took the following form: *self* is to *other* as *rice* is to *meat*. Certain reformers favored an unabashed imitation of the West and advocated the abandonment of rice agriculture and the adoption of raising animals for meat. They argued that as long as the Japanese continued to eat only rice, fish, and vegetables, their bodies would never become strong enough to compete with meat-eating Westerners.<sup>23</sup> Advocates of this radical view also associated a diet dominated by rice with country bumpkins and uncivilized habits.<sup>24</sup> The Japanese even gave the name "a civilized bowl of rice" (*kaika donburi*; *kaika* = civilized) to a new dish consisting of beef or pork pieces sauteed with onions, added to a sauce made with eggs, and served over a large bowl of rice.<sup>25</sup>

Other Japanese leaders opposed imitating the West and argued for the superiority of the rice diet and the importance of rice agriculture. In 1854 an event was staged for the second visit of Commodore Perry, during which *sumō* wrestlers lifted heavy sacks of rice (*komedawara*) in front of these delegates, one of whom had asked why "the Japanese" were so strong. A wrestler named Hitachiyama replied that the Japanese were indeed physically powerful because they ate rice grown on Japanese soil.<sup>26</sup> Even though the Japanese began to eat meat during the Meiji period, it was never consumed in quantity until after World War Two. A rapid increase in meat consumption occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, especially among younger people. McDonald's thus appeals primarily to this postwar generation.<sup>27</sup>

Bread, by contrast, was introduced at the end of the nineteenth century in Yokohama and has been enormously popular in Japan. Japanese consumers have become as discriminat-

ing about bread as they are about rice.<sup>28</sup> Those who can afford the highest-quality foods buy bread only from well-known bakeries with German or French names. When it was first introduced, however, the hamburger bun itself was entirely new to the Japanese, in shape, taste, and use.

The first Japanese meal to be “invaded” by foreign foods was breakfast, with bread replacing rice. Ronald Dore argues that this takeover began in 1951, when housewives welcomed the idea of having bread for breakfast, which freed them from the necessity of rising early to cook morning rice. Today many urban Japanese would not think of eating rice at breakfast.<sup>29</sup> The popularity of bread is remarkable given that baking is not a traditional method of cooking in Japan (indeed, most Japanese do not own ovens). Furthermore, bread is consumed primarily at breakfast; even sandwiches are not popular.

While most other Japanese meals still include rice, the quantity has gradually declined. This is due to an increase in the consumption of side dishes—meat, fish, vegetables—rather than a substitution of bread for rice.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, an evening meal without rice would be the Japanese equivalent of having sandwiches for dinner in the United States. McDonald’s efforts to incorporate new dishes, such as MacChao (Chinese fried rice) and curried rice, are no doubt due to the realization that “many Japanese just don’t feel satisfied unless they eat rice with their dinner.”<sup>31</sup>

The deciding factor that makes hamburgers a snack in Japanese eyes is therefore the absence of rice. In both Chinese and Japanese cultures, rice stands for food in general and is of enormous symbolic value, in the same way that bread is in the United States (as exemplified by such expressions as “breadwinner” and “bread-and-butter issue”). But Japan differs from

the rest of Asia in that the presence of meat acts as an additional deterrent to considering hamburgers a true meal, especially for older Japanese.

### *Food and Commensality*

One of the most important aspects of food is its role, both in ritual and in daily life, in bringing people together, in giving them a sense of community. By sharing food, and especially by eating the same kinds of food together, people form the bonds of social relationship. In this respect the role of rice in the Japanese diet is paramount. While all other dishes are served individually, cooked rice is delivered to the table in a common container (usually wooden) and ladled out to each diner, usually by the female head of household. The symbolic importance and power of this server is expressed by the wooden spatula, which belongs to her alone.<sup>32</sup> The phrase *onaji kama no meshi o kuu* (to eat from the same pot of rice) succinctly expresses the idea that those who share rice become “we.”

In this respect, McDonald’s hamburgers are the opposite of rice, since they are meant to be eaten individually and are difficult to share. (It is for this reason that pizza, another food that is designed for sharing, is popular as a party food for young people but hamburgers are not.) The physical arrangement of most McDonald’s restaurants further de-emphasizes commensality: The original outlet at Ginza 4-chōme had neither tables nor seats. Although it has moved to larger accommodations at Ginza 8-chōme, it still has only 22 seats. Attached to both side walls are narrow counters, one with seven seats, the other with five. Here clients eat facing the wall—in fact, the counters are so narrow and the wall so close it is difficult not to bump one’s forehead against the wall when eating. In the center is another

narrow counter with ten stools. During my two visits in August 1994, only one young couple sat at the center counter, talking and enjoying each other's company; the remaining customers were alone, eating in silence. The McDonald's at Hankyū Umeda in Osaka is wedged into a small storefront containing a long, narrow counter against the back wall with no seating whatever. Customers in this facility must stand to eat. Most are alone, eating as fast as possible, although a sign states that there is seating upstairs. If not in meaning, then in form, these McDonald's are exact counterparts of the stand-up noodle shops (*tachisoba*) located on the platforms of busy train stations, providing quick meals to people who dash in, slurp down a bowl of noodles, and then run for the train. In fact, adjoining the McDonald's in Osaka is a *tachisoba* shop. McDonald's is also a popular venue for young men who bolt breakfast on their way to work.<sup>33</sup>

Other McDonald's restaurants in Japan provide more eating space for consumers. These are often designed with a relatively small area on the first floor for ordering and service, with seating provided on the second and third floors. Even in these settings, however, there are more stools (facing narrow counters against walls or facing windows) than chairs and tables. During one of my site visits (to the McDonald's in Roppongi, a fashionable Tokyo neighborhood), several young men of high-school age were eating on the second floor. Although they were sitting on stools overlooking the street, they managed to create a sense of commensality in spite of the physical arrangements. Other customers, however, ate alone—including one woman who sat with her back to the room and talked on the phone throughout her entire meal. (Public phones have been installed at many McDonald's restaurants.) In short,

young people may convert McDonald's into a place to enjoy each other's company, but for the majority of adult Japanese, McDonald's is simply fast food, "fuel" for a busy workday.

During an interview with a Japanese sociologist, I was told that McDonald's also caters to high-school and middle-school students, as well as to mothers with small children. He explained that there are no other restaurants where these customers can spend two or three hours together talking.<sup>34</sup> It is also obvious that many elementary-school children treat McDonald's as snack centers where they relax between their regular school and cram school; they, too, sit and talk for long periods. There appear to be few efforts by management to move these students out in favor of other customers.

McDonald's is decidedly not a venue for an upscale clientele. The only men in business suits I observed in Japanese outlets were foreigners. In fact, the aforementioned interviewee who works for Mitsubishi said that it would be awkward for him to enter McDonald's while he is wearing a business suit; if he wants a hamburger at work, he sends an *onnanoko* (office "girl") to get it for him. Similarly, he would not eat in a "stand-up noodle shop" while dressed for work.

One of the most radical changes in Japanese society during the past two decades is the growing economic power of young people, without whom McDonald's could not have made such inroads into the food market. Young people—up to high-school age—once ate exclusively at home; today even children as young as seven or eight frequently eat out. Students now have spending money, acquired from parents, part-time jobs, or both. In the past decade, part-time work for extra money has become commonplace among Japanese youth.<sup>35</sup> Most important, dating—a postwar phenomenon—now begins in mid-

dle school. To give but one example to illustrate the pervasiveness of the youth culture, I noticed a counter selling beepers, called "pocket bells" (*poke beru*), at the Takashimaya department store in Osaka in September 1994. They also transmit short messages, such as the name and telephone number of the caller. To my astonishment, the primary customers for beepers were not doctors or brokers but young people who did not want to miss a telephone call from their friends. Although the purchase of a beeper officially requires parental consent for buyers under the age of 18, beepers are extremely popular among teenagers. The ownership of "pocket bells" symbolizes not only the economic power of Japanese youth today, but also their changing culture. Despite the much-touted "examination hell" that begins in kindergarten, many children are no longer as enslaved to schoolwork as their parents were. A powerful peer-group culture has emerged, and McDonald's success is due, in part, to this new phenomenon.<sup>36</sup>

### *Constructed Americana*

Despite founder Den Fujita's claim that McDonald's was not promoted as an import ("from America"),<sup>37</sup> the company has clearly capitalized on the fact that it is associated with American culture. Fujita did, however, depart from the "suburban approach" that characterizes McDonald's in the United States by locating his first restaurant on Ginza, the most fashionable street in Japan. He placed another outlet in the Mitsukoshi department store, which is not only the oldest but also the most prestigious of all Japanese department stores.<sup>38</sup> The location of these two restaurants helped create an image of McDonald's as a prime example of Americana, as imagined by Japanese people whose understanding of United States culture

is limited. Furthermore, the fact that McDonald's opened in fashionable locations helped convince young people that eating while standing—an act that violates Japanese table manners—is chic. During the summer of 1986, in an extra effort to dramatize McDonald's American identity, Fujita sponsored a visit by the full troupe of the Broadway musical "42nd Street," which played a one-month run in Tokyo.<sup>39</sup>

How do Japanese consumers perceive McDonald's? Some of them identify the restaurant with American culture, or, to be specific, with *Americana as constructed* by the Japanese. A good example of this phenomenon is *McJoy*, a Japanese-language magazine produced by McDonald's for local customers; it publishes cover illustrations sent in by readers.<sup>40</sup> The October 1994 cover depicts a woman with blonde hair, green eyes, star-shaped sunglasses and earrings, and flesh-colored stars on her cheeks. The male artist, Morito Masahiko (a 39-year-old shop owner) attempted to "create the image of an American-type woman with stars and pop [culture]."

It is worth noting here that the mental image most Japanese conjure up when they think of *gaijin* (foreigners) is a person with blonde hair and blue eyes.<sup>41</sup> A popular children's song contains the line "My blue-eyed doll was born in America and came to a port in Japan." This representation, which emerged during the early twentieth century, continues to be *the* dominant image of Westerners, despite the fact that millions of Japanese have come into contact with Westerners of varying physical types. The picture on the cover of *McJoy* thus epitomizes Americana—a cultural image filtered through the lens of popular Japanese consciousness.

*The Catburger Saga*

While both managers and millions of Japanese consumers associate McDonald's with the positive aspects of American culture, there is a negative side as well, as exemplified by *nyan-bā gā-densetsu* (the lore of the catburger). The story, a form of *toshi densetsu* (urban folklore), first emerged in 1973 and spread among female high-school students in Tokyo: several girls allegedly saw the skins of cats being dried behind a McDonald's restaurant.<sup>42</sup> In 1975, another version circulated on Tokyo and Yokohama college campuses; it told of a boy who had wandered into a kitchen at McDonald's where he saw numerous cat heads, the implication being that hamburgers are made from cat meat. The apocryphal story concludes with the boy being bribed with a ¥10,000-note to keep quiet about his discovery.<sup>43</sup> This urban legend circulated among students for a while, but soon died out.

McDonald's is not the only target of this type of urban lore. Earthworms were supposedly seen in Mos Burger's buns. Kentucky Fried Chicken and the local fast food chains, Lotteria and Domdom, have all been similarly targeted. Animals associated with these foods include not only cats and worms but frogs and South American rats. A recent story circulating among Japanese youth claims that there is a factory in Australia which grows earthworms as a food export. In fact almost all *foreign* fast foods have been the victims of these kinds of rumors, including Chinese convenience foods such as dumplings (*gyōza*) and even *rāmen*, which are of Chinese origin but have been thoroughly "domesticated" in Japan. One urban legend has it that the reason *rāmen* taste so good is that the broth is made from crows.<sup>44</sup> The negative aspects of McDonald's association with the United States persist among many Japanese

consumers. A woman in her late twenties, with whom I struck up a conversation on a train from Tokyo to Yokohama in August 1994, said that she rarely eats at McDonald's. She explained that McDonald's was "not nutritious," and one "cannot trust" what the company puts into the hamburgers, as evidenced by their "chemical taste."

Her emphasis on "chemicals" in McDonald's food makes an uncanny parallel to the views fostered by the opponents of foreign rice importation during the early 1990s. Pressured by the United States and the inevitable conclusion of GATT negotiations, the Japanese rice lobby argued that foreign grain was contaminated by insecticides and processing chemicals. Consumer groups became intensely involved in checking foreign rice for such contaminants and demanded that the government investigate the processing methods for all imports.<sup>45</sup> They also opposed the government's plan to mix imported and domestic rice, which would, in their view, adulterate "pure" Japanese rice with "impure," chemically tainted, foreign rice.<sup>46</sup> These campaigns had a wide-ranging effect on Japanese consumers, who were moved to defend domestic rice and local agriculture; many people equated Japanese rice with their self-identity, which is assigned the value of "purity." Rice plants were said to purify Japanese air and water.<sup>47</sup> It is little wonder that McDonald's, the quintessence of foreign food in many eyes, would find itself drawn into these symbolic duels.

*McDonald's and Changes in Table Manners*

So far my discussion of McDonald's in Japan has been confined to its reception and cultural associations. I would now like to consider not just what the food represents, but how it is eaten. When food consumption is a social act, manners are of



paramount importance. Perhaps the most striking element of McDonald's introduction to Japan is that it encouraged the Japanese to eat differently—that is, to change their table manners.

The famous Latin treatise by Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium* (On civility in children), published in 1530, warns: "It is impolite to greet someone who is urinating or defecating. . . . A well-bred person should always avoid exposing without necessity the parts to which nature has attached modesty. If necessity compels this, it should be done with decency and reserve."<sup>48</sup> The civilizing process in Japan took a quite different turn: urination in public places was quite commonly practiced by people from different social classes. In eighteenth-century Kyoto, even women urinated in public quite freely.<sup>49</sup> Prior to the 1964 Olympics, the Japanese government issued a plea to men not to urinate in public and to women not to breastfeed in open settings because "foreigners are coming, and they might think the Japanese are uncivilized." Unlike the Euro-American culture in which male genitals and women's breasts are at all times charged with religious and erotic meanings, the Japanese dissociate the sexual function of these body parts at other times. But with government pressure, breastfeeding in public has virtually disappeared. The male habit of urinating in public has not, although it is less common than it used to be.

Of much more significance to the Japanese concept of *civilité* are table manners, which have proved far more resistant to change. The traditional rules of the game are as follows: One must not touch food with one's hands when eating, and one must not eat while standing. The first rule derives from the notion that hands are, by definition, dirty, even after washing.

Hands touch all sorts of things and thus are always contaminated. Symbolically, hands stand for a liminal space demarcating the clean inside—the body, the self—from the dirty outside.<sup>50</sup> Chopsticks, used since the early Heian period (794–1185),<sup>51</sup> are by definition clean and thus, except for a few culturally identified foods, one must use chopsticks, even when eating soup noodles. Many Japanese find it difficult to eat sandwiches with their bare hands. To accommodate these sensibilities, sandwiches are often served cut into small pieces, with toothpicks for handling.

Conversely, there are culturally prescribed foods that Japanese *must* eat with their hands. For example, *nigirizushi* (vinegared rice balls with raw fish), although usually eaten with chopsticks, are handled with the fingers when they are of especially high quality. *Onigiri* (rice balls), eaten primarily for lunch, are commonly eaten with the hands. Note, however, that when most Japanese use their hands for eating, they cleanse them (culturally speaking) first with *oshibori*, or wet towels. In fact, Japanese food outlets often include *otefuki* (hand-cleaning towelettes) with their packaged products, irrespective of the nature of the food. Concerns about the ritual impurity of hands, especially the left hand, are almost universal.<sup>52</sup> In the United States, too, people who handle food for a living are required to wear rubber gloves. Conrad Kottak points out that the fast food chain he studied in New York City assured customers that "their food was never touched by human hands."<sup>53</sup>

McDonald's impact on the taboo against eating with one's hands has been limited. Most Japanese I observed during the summer of 1994 still ate their hamburgers in the paper wrap-

ping, in such a way that their hands did not directly touch the food. Some people explained this practice as simply a means of keeping ketchup and other liquids from dripping on them, but the effect is still that their hands do not directly touch the food. Furthermore, I did not see a great increase in the use of hands when eating other foods. The first rule of Japanese table etiquette, therefore, seems to have been affected little by the introduction of McDonald's.

The second taboo, thou shalt not eat while standing, has received a direct hit from McDonald's. "Eating while standing," called *tachigui*, has had negative connotations in Japanese culture for centuries. It derives from the notion that one of the main distinctions between humans and animals is that the latter eat while standing. Also, the ban is part of a more general taboo against performing various acts while standing. Kumakura cites a passage from a classic, *Nihonshoki*, dated 720 A.D., in which putting things down, talking to a superior, pouring wine, etc., while standing were considered an extreme breach of etiquette, requiring the offender to commit suicide.<sup>54</sup> During the tea ceremony, in which the most elaborated form of manners is observed, one must kneel even to open a door. The term *tachigui* first appeared in 1898 in the novel *Genmu Shujaku* by Izumi Kyoka (1873–1939), a well-known writer. Nagai Kafu (1879–1959), another famous novelist, characterized Chicago as "the place where people grab food and eat while standing" in his *Amerika Monogatari* (Stories about America), published in 1908.<sup>55</sup> Kafu's observation clearly indicates how the custom of *tachigui* is seen as a marker of foreigners, "the other," in contrast to the Japanese. Proper Japanese table manners include sitting on one's legs on the floor (*seiza*)

and eating at a low table. McDonald's hamburgers and french fries, as well as pizza and Kentucky Fried Chicken, are "finger foods" that require neither plates nor tables. In fact, as noted above, the first McDonald's in Japan had no seats.<sup>56</sup> In short, fast food restaurants, as epitomized by McDonald's, fostered table manners that are the polar opposite of traditional Japanese etiquette.

Other changes in public manners can be traced to the introduction of foreign products. For instance, Coca-Cola and rival soft drinks inspired the cultural sanction against *rappa nomi*, or drinking like one is blowing a trumpet (*rappa*)—imbibing directly from the bottle or can. Like *tachigui*, "trumpeting" was a negatively marked form of public behavior. Today, however, people do occasionally drink directly from the bottle or can, although this behavior is confined to young people in certain contexts, notably in fast food restaurants.

Another change in eating habits stems from the large-scale intrusion of ice cream into the fast food scene. Ice cream consumption was limited in prewar Japan, in part because many Japanese are lactose-intolerant, but also because of the Japanese taboo against cold foods and drinks, even in summer. These disadvantages were compounded by the fact that people must eat ice cream cones by opening their mouths wide and licking with their tongue. Traditional Japanese etiquette calls for the consumption of food in small amounts, opening one's mouth as discreetly as possible. Women especially are expected to cover their mouths with their hands when eating or laughing. Although many women use spoons to eat ice cream, younger people today often consume it like Americans, with their tongues—much to the distress of traditionalists.

All the modifications in table manners mentioned above have been inspired or reinforced by American-style fast food. But these changes did not occur overnight; even before McDonald's, manners had become increasingly informal. What paved the way for this transformation in behavior was the introduction of chairs—a foreign importation that eroded the foundation of traditional etiquette, the practice of sitting on one's legs.<sup>57</sup>

### *Global Versus Local Cultures*

As Daniel Miller points out, "the global" includes "everything from full gospel black churches and Miami brand names to youth music" that originates in Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>58</sup> More often than not, however, the cultural phenomena that are considered global are those that originate in the United States or Western Europe. In the traffic of the global and the local, all societies are not equal.

The academic preoccupation with consumer culture has blinded us to other significant dimensions of the globalization process. Goods are embedded in their culture of origin; their introduction into a different culture is more than a simple importation of commodities. In the case of McDonald's, the local (Japanese) construction of American culture has had a significant impact on how hamburgers are perceived. Despite nationalism, which feeds on various manifestations of anti-Americanism, almost every country in the world looks toward "America" as a model to emulate. But the Americana that is created for this purpose often bears little resemblance to the cultural system(s) prevailing in the United States.

I continue to be amazed by the image of America and Americans held by many of my fellow countrymen and coun-

trywomen. Even intellectuals who are attuned to world affairs believe that the United States is a country where social hierarchies do not exist and individuals can achieve high status simply through the exercise of their own ability. The myth of a classless society, held dear by many Americans as well, is widely accepted in Japan. "America" is seen as an alternative to the hierarchical local society, which is characterized by conformity and the need to exploit personal connections to succeed. Thus the image of America as a social paradise persists in Japan, especially among young people—the segment of the population that frequents McDonald's most often.

From the perspective of the "civilizing process," McDonald's and other transnational food chains have helped to create an entirely new concept of manners. The transformation process was a complex one: manners and fashion began to merge. The new manners appeared first in fast food outlets—away from home—where it was fashionable to behave in new, iconoclastic ways. At home, traditional manners remained paramount and changed at a much slower pace. In the public sphere the "new" forms of etiquette gradually became the norm; the fashionableness of eating fast food wore thin as the restaurants became a routine feature of everyday, working life. The search for fashion—the new, the exciting, and the exotic—moved to other domains of Japanese popular culture. Meanwhile, McDonald's has become curiously "local." Fujita relishes the story of Japanese Boy Scouts who, when traveling abroad, were pleasantly surprised to find a McDonald's in Chicago.<sup>59</sup>

The irony in this story of cultural interchange is that the impact of McDonald's *food* has been minimal. McDonald's remains, in the eyes of most consumers, a "snack"; it has most

assuredly not replaced traditional Japanese dinners or even lunches. And yet, McDonald's and its many rivals and imitators have had a profound impact in the revolution of public manners. This transformation is particularly significant in a society—present-day Japan—that cherishes interpersonal relationships and civil behavior.

## Chapter 5

1. I use Fredric Jameson's term here in a nontechnical way and without all the attendant conceptual properties with which he endows it. Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press).
2. Marc Frons, "Den Fujita: Bringing Big Macs—and now Broadway—to Japan," *Business Week*, Sept. 1986, p. 53.
3. *Business Asia* 25(21): 6–7 (Oct. 1993).
4. Frons, "Den Fujita," p. 53.
5. Nagami Kishi, "Two Decades of Golden Arches in Japan," *Tokyo Business Today* 60(4): 38–40 (1992), p. 39.
6. Atsuo Tanaka, "Taiku auto to ieba hazusenai fāsūtōhudo chein rupo" (The "must" list for takeouts: report on fast food chains), *Hanako West* 46: 45–47 (July 1994), p. 46.
7. Initially at Ginza 4-chōme, Mitsukoshimae, it has now moved near the Ginza 8-chōme, close to the subway station.
8. See *Business Asia*, 1993.
9. *Asahi*, Oct. 26, 1993.
10. Ibid.
11. Paul Noguchi, "Savor Slowly: *Ekiben*—The Fast Food of High-Speed Japan," *Ethnology* 33(4): 317–40 (1994), p. 319.
12. Quoted in Kishi, "Two Decades of Golden Arches in Japan," p. 40.
13. *Jiyū Jikan*, "Shūkan to shite no hanbāgā to manpukukan no gyūdon" (Hamburgers as a habit and *gyūdon* [a large bowl of rice with beef and sauce on top] for a full stomach), *Jiyū Jikan*, May 5, 1994, pp. 32–33.
14. Hisao Nagayama and Akihiko Tokue, "Udon," *Look Japan* (1994): 25.
15. Naomichi Ishige, *Shokutaku no bunkashi* (Cultural history of the dining table) (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1976), p. 223.
16. Saiichi Maruya, *Chūshingura towa nanika* (What is *chūshingura*?) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984), p. 16.
17. Ishige, *Shokutaku no bunkashi*, pp. 223–24.
18. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "The Ambivalent Self of the Contemporary Japanese," *Cultural Anthropology* 5: 196–215 (1990).

19. See *ibid.* for an interpretation of the film *Tampopo*, in which *rāmen* are the focal point.
20. They are not located right in the center of Tokyo, but they are close enough. For instance, there is an outlet at Ebisu and one at Itabashi.
21. Some people continued to eat meat dishes, however, although they "converted" them into flowers by renaming them. Thus the names of flowers were given to animal meats, such as cherry blossoms for horsemeat and peony for wild boar. Harada offers historical records to show that the Japanese ate meat more often than is generally assumed. Nobuo Harada, *Rekishhi no naka no kome to niku: shokumotsu to tennō sabetsu* (Rice and meat in history: food, emperor, and discrimination) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993).
22. See Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993).
23. Tsuneharu Tsukuba, *Beishoku, nikushoku no bunmei* (Civilizations of rice consumption and meat consumption) (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppankai, 1986 [1969]), pp. 109–12.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 113. Some scholars view Tsukuba's work as too deeply embedded in *nihonjinron* (theories about the Japanese), a semi-scholarly, semi-journalistic genre of writings about the Japanese that is often chauvinistic. I use his work as an ethnographic source.
25. *Nihon kokugo daijiten* (Dictionary of the Japanese language), 5, p. 381.
26. Tsukuba, *Beishoku*, pp. 102–9. For details of this section, see Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*.
27. A man in his late forties who is an editorial writer for the *Asahi* newspaper told me during a visit to New York that although he prefers McDonald's, his children prefer Mos Burgers.
28. For details of how the Japanese use bread, see Naomichi Ishige, *Shokuji no bunmeiron* (Eating and culture) (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1982), pp. 22–23.
29. Ronald P. Dore, *City Life in Japan* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1958), p. 60; for details see Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, p. 41.
30. For details see Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, pp. 20–22.
31. Kishi, "Two Decades of Golden Arches in Japan," p. 40.

32. For details see Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, pp. 94–96.
33. In Japan today, most young, unmarried working women continue to live at home with their parents. This practice eliminates their need to breakfast outside their home. Young unmarried men, however, typically live in company dormitories, some of which do not provide breakfast. The ones that do usually offer the traditional Japanese breakfast, although for several decades many urban families have been eating toast, eggs, and salad (often made of shredded cabbage) and coffee or tea for breakfast. For those who prefer a “Western” breakfast, the alternative to eating in the company dorms is McDonald’s or the many coffee shops. Breakfast often comes as a set meal for less than ¥1,000, and includes potato salad, hot dogs, hamburgers, and other items unfamiliar to Westerners as breakfast foods.
34. Dr. Imada is a professor of sociology at Tokyo Kogyo Daigaku.
35. This phenomenon incidentally relates to a more general one—changes in the system of cultural valuations of jobs. Some that used to be ranked as lower-class jobs, such as waiting tables, were never performed, even temporarily, by middle- or upper-class people. There have been many changes of this nature as the class structure has become less rigid and many more middle- and upper-class women have entered the job market.
36. Marian Burros, “Eating Well,” *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1994.
37. Rosemary Safranek, “The McDonald’s Recipe for Japan,” *Intersect* 2(10): 7 (Oct. 1986).
38. Many colleagues and friends told me that companies and individuals chose this store to send gifts from at annual gift-exchange times. Lately it has become customary to choose a store to send out gifts to designated individuals instead of delivering them in person.
39. Frons, “Den Fujita,” p. 53.
40. Both McDonald’s and Mos Burgers circulate these magazines, to which customers submit their essays.
41. My mother’s family imported French food into Yokohama. My father was in the export business, so she came in contact with foreigners of various physical types throughout her life. Yet after I came to the United States, my mother kept writing to warn me against falling in love with a man with blue eyes.

42. Hikaru Saitō, “Nyan-bagā densetsu no nazo” (The puzzle of the catburger lore), *Hanako West* 46: 47 (July 1994).
43. Kumakura Isao, Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan and Kindaichi Hideho, Professor at Kyōrin Univ.; both personal communications, May 1994.
44. Saitō, “Nyan-bagā.”
45. Hiroshi Shimogaito, *Zoku okome to bunka* (Rice and culture, cont.) (Osaka: Zen-Ōsaka Shōhisha Dantai Renrakukai, 1988), pp. 76–78; *Asahi*, Oct. 30, 1993; Nov. 12, 1993.
46. *Asahi*, Nov. 11, 12, 17–19, 1993. For more detailed treatment of this subject, see Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, and “Structure, Event and Historical Metaphor: Rice and Identities in Japanese History,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 30(2): 1–27 (June 1995).
47. Inoue, “Kome no hanashi,” p. 103; and Okabe Saburo. Saburo is Director of the Science and Technology Division of the Liberal Democratic Party and a member of the House of Councilors. Published in the Record of Sangiin Gaimu Iinkai Kaigiroku, No. 5 (during the 118th session of the Diet), p. 7.
48. Quoted in Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994 [1939]), p. 106.
49. Tadashi Inoue and Naomichi Ishige, eds., *Shokuji sahō no shisō* (Concepts behind eating manners) (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1990), p. 97.
50. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan: An Anthropological View* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 28–31.
51. Chopsticks were recovered from the site of the imperial palace for the preceding Nara period (646–794), but not from the surrounding towns (Sahara’s remarks in Inoue and Ishige, eds., *Shokuji*, p. 79).
52. Robert Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960 [1907 & 1909 in French]).
53. Conrad Kottak, “Rituals at McDonald’s,” *Journal of American Culture* 1(2): 370–86 (1978), p. 374.
54. Isao Kumakura, “Zen-kindai no shokuji sahō to ishiki” (Table manners and their concepts before the modern period), in Inoue and Ishige, eds., *Shokuji*, p. 108.

55. *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 13, p. 67.

56. Motoko Murakami, “Gendaijin no shokuji manā-kan” (Thoughts on contemporary eating manners), in Inoue and Ishige, eds. *Shokuji*, p. 133.

57. What is called traditional Japanese etiquette usually refers to the “Ogasawara-ryū” or Ogasawara School, which originated in the early Muromachi period (1392–1603) (*Nihon kokugo daijiten* 3, p. 311); Murakami, “Gendaijin.”

58. Daniel Miller, “The Young and the Restless in Trinidad: A Case of the Local and the Global in Mass Consumption,” in Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch, eds., *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 163–82 (see especially pp. 179–80).

59. Rosemary Safranek, “The McDonald’s Recipe for Japan,” p. 7.

#### Update

1. Joseph Kahn, “China Hopes Economy Plan Will Bridge Income Gap,” *New York Times* (NYT), Oct. 12, 2005, p. A5.

2. “McDonald’s Plans,” *Wall Street Journal.com* (WSJ.Com), May 18, 2000.

3. See, e.g., Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

4. Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: Norton, 2003.

5. See Introduction to this book.

6. Saritha Rai, “An Outsourcing Giant Fights Back,” NYT, Mar. 21, 2004, p. BU1. Benedict Arnold was a patriot turned traitor during the American Revolution.

7. Steve Lohr, “Many New Causes for Old Problem of Jobs Lost Abroad,” NYT, Feb. 15, 2004, p. 25.

8. Lynnley Browning, “Outsourcing Abroad Applies to Tax Returns,” NYT, Feb. 15, 2004, p. BU12.

9. Saritha Rai, “Financial Firms Hasten Their Move to Outsourcing,” NYT, Aug. 18, 2004, p. W1.

10. References can be found in a web search for “McDonald’s protest” or “McDonald’s bombing.” See also David Barboza, “When

Golden Arches Are Too Red, White, and Blue,” NYT, Oct. 14, 2001, pp. BU1, BU11.

11. Tim Weiner, “McTaco vs. Fried Crickets: A Duel in the Oaxaca Sun,” NYT, Aug. 24, 2002, p. A2.

12. Suzanne Daley, “French See a Hero in War on ‘McDomination,’” NYT, Oct. 12, 1999, pp. A1, A4.

13. Dirk Beveridge, “Expensive Beef for McDonald’s: Chain Wins Libel Suit, Loses British PR War,” *Boston Globe*, June 20, 1997, p. A16. See also John Videl, *McLibel: Burger Culture on Trial*. New York: Free Press, 1998.

14. See, e.g., “World Anti-McDonald’s Day Protest Begins,” *AAP.com* (Australia), Oct. 16, 1999.

15. Patricia Ochs, “Trade Fight Has Flavor of France,” *Boston Globe*, Sept. 7, 1999, p. A2.

16. Jay Solomon, “Amid Anti-American Protests, Mr. Bambang Invokes Allah to Sell Big Macs in Indonesia,” *WSJ.Com*, Oct. 26, 2001.

17. Such views are sometimes reinforced by government officials in Europe. Berlin Mayor Eberhard Diepgen embarrassed the American ambassador to Germany, John Kornblum, during a public ceremony marking the opening of the 1,000th McDonald’s restaurant in Germany: “Ah, I see the American ambassador is here,” said the mayor. “Perhaps he should . . . build a McDonald’s restaurant [near Brandenburg Gate in the center of unified Berlin] instead of a United States embassy.” The comment sparked a diplomatic row during a tense time in U.S.-German relations; see Leon Mangasarian, “Hamburgers or Penstripes? U.S. Embassy Row in Berlin Roils Ties,” *Deutsche Press-Agentur*, 3 Nov. 1999, on Lexus-Nexus.com.

18. On food and national identity, see Part 1, “Food and Globalization,” of *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating*, ed. by James L. Watson and Melissa Caldwell. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2005. See also Alison Leitch, “Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Identity,” *Ethnos* 68(4): 437–462, and Gordon Mathews, “Cultural Identity and Consumption in Post-Colonial Hong Kong,” in *Consuming Hong Kong*, ed. by Gordon Mathews and Tai-lok Lui. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press (1999).