



Japanese cuisine and the Japanisation of Europe

Research conducted into both the diffusion of Japanese cuisine and the process of Japanisation, within the context of "Europe", has been extremely limited. Both areas were combined in order to contribute to an up and coming field of research, with implications for our better understanding of globalisation.

By Lee Milligan

"During the last decade, Japanese cuisine has become rooted in Europe" (Cwiertka, 2005: 1).

The overall aim of this paper will be to investigate how Japanese cuisine becomes diffused within Europe. The conclusions and information gained from this research will be utilised to contribute to an up and coming field of research, with implications for our better understanding of globalisation. The research, undertaken in the spring and summer of 2005, was concentrated around restaurants and takeaways in three European cities: Aarhus in Denmark, Liverpool in Great Britain and Athens in Greece. In reference to the above quotation, the main area researched was that of diffusion, and how within the cases studied, Japanese cuisine becomes a part of European culinary life. Subsequently this added further to the limited research which has already been undertaken in the field of "Japanisation", described by Burt Edstrom, one of the few authors to write on the topic, as "a process by which Japanese elements are transposed to, and assimilated by, other countries or cultures" (Edstrom, 1994: 36). The overriding motivation to undertake this investigation was the call for further information to be gathered from authors who have studied Japanese cuisine, Japanisation or both. Despite the above quoted claims of the only author to have written extensively on the topic, Katarzyna Cwiertka, there appears to be very little written specifically on the subject of Japanese cuisine in Europe. She herself notes "the category of 'Japanese cuisine' remains largely underrepresented" and that her 2005 article "represents one of the first attempts to place the Japanese food boom under scrutiny" (Cwiertka, 2005: 4). In the field of Japanisation, world-renowned Japanese specialists such as Harumi Befu have strongly emphasised the significance of the theory. Indeed, he goes so far as to note how, "analysing Japan's experience can make a real contribution to building globalisation theory and thereby challenge the hegemonic role claimed by Western Globalisation theorists" (Befu, 2003: 4). At the same time however, he observes the "need to post-pone theorizing about globalisation until we have sufficient data" (Befu, 2001: 4). Overall, in a subject observed to be of great academic significance, a lack of research provided a seemingly wonderful opportunity to both test present notions supported by limited evidence and present the possibility of postulating tentative new

theories within the confines of the three cities and the research locations within them.

Japanisation – A challenge to the West

Research undertaken with regards to the diffusion of Japanese cuisine has the potential to add to the limited research and evidence available on the process of Japanisation and subsequently the current debates upon globalisation. As noted earlier in the introduction, Japanisation refers to the diffusion of Japanese elements within other cultures or societies. As one such element, personally recommended by Harumi Befu as a valuable area of investigation, the study of Japanese cuisine could therefore be placed within this wider context, thus adding to the value of the research undertaken. The process of Japanisation, its definition and history will be highlighted below in order to provide deeper context to the investigation.

Elger and Smith provide a more specific definition than those already mentioned when they observe, "Japanisation denotes the spread of Japanese culture in the most comprehensive sense - *karaoke*, *sushi*, drama, *anime*, *manga*, Japanese management style and industrial products - throughout the world, much as one uses terms like Americanisation or Westernisation" (Befu, 2003:9). This does not however necessarily involve an associated love of Japan or all things Japanese. Every author promoting the concept of Japanisation puts forward one distinct notion; that once properly recognized, it should be clearly acknowledged as a new and powerful phenomenon within the sphere of globalisation. Also that the process of Japanisation challenges the majority of current theories upon globalisation, which they believe have a clear and unwarranted bias in favour of Western and often more specifically American hegemony. Brian Moeran is scathing in his criticism of those ignoring the influence of Japan within discussions on globalisation. He observes how "with a handful of notable exceptions, most theoretically inclined anthropologists", specifically Mike Featherstone, "have ignored the example of Japan"; also that there should be a "shift in focus from West to East, from America's apparent twilight to Japan's rising sun", where we should, "re-orient our thoughts and theories" (Moeran, 2000: 27). As one of the elements within this diffusion process, the study of the diffusion of Japanese cuisine within Europe could add some important information and evidence to the strong claims promoted by the likes of Moeran.



The Japanisation of Europe

Undoubtedly, the main concentration of written material relating to Japanisation in Europe and the rest of the world concerns the economic Japanisation of Europe, which began in the 1970's and involved the adaptation of Japanese economic models in an attempt to improve industrial production in many European countries. The turning point with regards to cultural awareness came in the late 1980's when Japanese companies started to invest and buy out European and American assets. The likes of *Sony* and *Matsushita* started to buy out Hollywood film studios. This then led to the spread of Japanese *anime* such as *Akira*, the production of English language books on *anime* and resultant computer games etc. Japan's economic advancement outside Asia had therefore led to the realization that Japan also had a cultural influence, although it took the actual procurement of foreign companies for this realization to become explicit.

The spread of Japanese cultural products increased throughout the 1990s. This led to claims, mainly from within Japan, that Japanese cultural products were successfully spreading all over the world within the concept of Japanisation. In 1997 *Denim* magazine published the headline, "Who says Japan only imports superior foreign culture and commodities and has nothing original which has a universal appeal? Now Japanese customs, products and systems are conquering the world" (Iwabuchi, 2002: 30). Many of these products, such as the "Sony Walkman" were observed to be "culturally odourless". Due mainly to their wariness of the Second World War's impact in Asia, many Japanese companies have often intentionally removed, or at least dramatically reduced, any association between their products and Japan. The negative impact of the War is therefore neutralized. This has been done through such approaches as adopting non-Japanese names like *Sony* or *Panasonic* and has led to the paradoxical situation where some of the main cultural forms of Japanisation are often not identified in the receiver countries as being Japanese in origin. During the 1990s the spread of Japanese cultural elements beyond the Asian region started to become acknowledged by scholars.

Japanese Cuisine – Prior Research

As noted above, one of the "elements" within the Japanisation process is Japanese cuisine and its spread throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Although seemingly of a limited nature, the research already undertaken did provide some valuable indicators for the nature of the diffusion of Japanese cuisine within Europe and opened the possibilities of a resultant comparative perspective. Firstly, the significance of its spread can be highlighted by Cwiertka, who notes "a growing number of people in Europe actually consume these dishes on a regular basis", thus making them "major genres in European dining" (Cwiertka, 2005: 1). One of the dominant authors on the topic of Japanisation, Harumi Befu, refers to a series of graduations, with regards to restaurants in the diffusion process. The

first of these graduations occurred with the initial introduction of Japanese cuisine, predominantly in the late 1970's and early 1980's, and coincided with Japan's economic expansion. Described by Cwiertka as "For the Japanese by the Japanese", Japanese restaurants at this time were introduced to provide a "home away from home" for the expanding Japanese population in Europe and thus aimed to create an "atmosphere of nostalgic exoticism" (Cwiertka, 2005: 4-13). In restaurants containing such items as *bonsai* trees and paper sliding doors (*shoji*), Japanese staff wore Japanese style clothing such as *kimonos* and spoke to Japanese customers exclusively in Japanese. Therefore in the initial stages of diffusion, Japanese cuisine was presented as "authentic" and "exotic", with an appeal mainly to Japanese clientele. Cwiertka believes such restaurants are very rare today.

Subsequently, "Europeans" apparently started to be introduced far more to Japanese cuisine and have a greater input into the nature of its diffusion. The next stage occurred with the introduction of *teppanyaki*, involving beef and vegetables being cooked on an iron griddle by chefs directly in front of customers. Interestingly, this cuisine first became popular in the USA, before being spread to the Netherlands and other parts of Europe after tourists returned from holiday there and spread its reputation. Its appeal apparently lay in its proximity to the Dutch preference for meat and potatoes, and the entertainment factor provided by chefs who put on displays of knife juggling whilst cooking in front of customers. However, the greatest diffusion of Japanese cuisine apparently took place in the 1990's, starting with the "London sushi boom" (Cwiertka, 2005: 16). Importantly, this was again influenced from the USA where *sushi* had transformed from being "an almost unpalatable ethnic speciality to haute cuisine of the most rarefied sort" (Bestor, 2000: 3). The reasons for its increase in popularity were apparently its associated healthiness and the fact that it was "creolised", *creolisation* being the process by which foreign elements are altered and adapted to better suit local tastes, traditions and requirements. In this context "California rolls" with names such as the "IBM Roll" became popular in the USA, with the use of locally popular ingredients such as hot peppers. When it first arrived in London, eating *sushi* was observed to be a sophisticated, expensive and exotic experience, undertaken in an exclusive manner by wealthy individuals within locations designed to imitate traditional *sushi* restaurants in Japan. Japanese cuisine had therefore started to diffuse to "Europeans", although only within limited geographical and socio-economic confines.

In 1997 however, the whole concept of *sushi* apparently changed with the opening of two hip and trendy locations, called *Itsu* and the more successful *Yo!Sushi*. In these types of restaurants Befu notes "thoroughgoing creolisation is the winning strategy" (Befu, 2003: 6). This can be perhaps summed up by a famous quotation from *Yo!Sushi's* brainchild Simon Woodroffe who notes



“the way I see our relationship with Japan is, first of all, I don't think we're a Japanese restaurant; we're a Western restaurant that just happens to serve Japanese food” (Crocket, 2000: 2). The first major innovation was the lack of Japanese character in the design of such establishments, with the likes of a glass, pine and brushed steel interiors, and techno-pop background music. All aimed at a young and trendy audience with chefs, waiters and waitresses being local people dressed in local attire. The second was the food served, a mix of “traditional” Japanese and creolised “Euro-sushi”, with fifty percent of the meals being hot in order to conquer the fear of raw fish. Indeed, rather than look towards Japanese standards, such establishments tried to live up to those set in the USA, with such options as California rolls and local British creations such as the *Yo!Roll*. Interestingly Woodroffe observed that the customers have such little knowledge of Japan and Japanese cuisine anyway, that this mattered very little.

The next stage was a move to “continental Europe”, with British standards apparently imitated everywhere, including the sending over of British chefs to train local staff, equipment, and even finances. The diffusion process from the USA, to London and finally onto Europe is seen as very strong by Cwiertka. In the true nature of creolisation, however, she does also note that each country then goes to make its own adaptations, due to specific ecological, cultural and economic circumstances within each. The final phase in the diffusion of Japanese cuisine has, according to Cwiertka been reached by the British *Wagamma* noodle company. Their company website illustrates their whole approach by noting, “Wagamma is not supposed to be an authentic Japanese noodle bar” and “we believe that to be a good student is not to reproduce the same recipe as one's teacher, but to adapt reflecting the essence of our time and making it better by making it for ourselves and in our own way” (Cwiertka, 2005: 20). This clearly emphasises the move away from “traditional Japanese cuisine” and the movement towards almost total creolisation, value and convenience, thus widening the customer base. Cwiertka notes that all of the different connotations of Japanese cuisine presented above are not necessarily in direct competition, but “co-exist, each finding its particular niche in the ever diversifying dining market” (Cwiertka, 2005: 23).

A clear lack of available material

One final, important point must be made with regards to the lack of written material relating specifically to both the Japanisation process the diffusion of Japanese cuisine within Europe. The majority of material available either relates to Japanisation within Asia, or more specifically East and South East Asia. In Europe itself, it is mainly directed towards the economic references noted earlier. It must however be observed that within specific areas of Japanese cultural diffusion within Europe, a certain amount of material is available. Harumi Befu has undoubtedly been the major contributor to the subject in Europe and the rest of the world in

general, which can be observed by the number of references related to him in the section above. Even in 2001 however, he observed the “need to postpone theorizing about globalisation until we have sufficient data” (Befu, 2001: 4). Katarzyna J. Cwiertka is in reality the only author to have undertaken any form of detailed empirical research on the topic of Japanese cuisine. She clearly acknowledges that her studies tentative generalisations are made only from material collected on the Netherlands and Great Britain, which significantly “offer a valuable basis for a more comprehensive work on the subject” (Cwiertka, 2005: 4). Other points can also be highlighted to support this need for further investigation. Much of the research she has undertaken is limited, not only to those two countries, but also to their capital cities. It is also based upon a restricted number of establishments, many of which were originally studied in her earlier article of 2000. Only restaurants are described, with no detailed research on takeaways. Her work is also not placed in the context of Japanisation. The other main authors on the topic provide even less detailed, European based information. Befu and Bestor provide generalizations, mainly highlighting American based examples.

Scope was therefore provided for original and valuable research, all of which could at least add to the material on graduations within restaurants highlighted earlier. This paper aims to provide further empirical data, within the context of Japanese cuisine, highlighted by many scholars on the subject as vital in order to overturn the top-down assumptions of supposed armchair speculators, producing grand globalisation theories with a perceived lack of actual empirical material.

Generalisations

Various generalisations have been noted regarding Japanisation and the diffusion of Japanese cuisine within Europe, all of which were taken into account during the investigation process in order to provide investigational structure and comparative perspective:

The views expressed by Iwabuchi highlight one very important factor within the process in Europe, that of *creolisation*. Some cultural products arrive as *mukokuseki*, something or someone lacking any nationality. In other cases however they are deliberately creolised by companies introducing them or by locals, in order to best fit into their own personal environments and cultures. Befu observes that, “whilst some amount of creolisation is inevitable in any situation, retention of as much “authentic” Japanese culture as possible may be the strategy for success in one niche, while thoroughgoing creolisation may be required in another” (Befu, 2003: 6). He also notes that in different places the creolisation process can occur in different ways, adapting to differing local requirements and interpretations. Therefore creolisation seemingly plays a major role in the Japanisation of Europe, as was observed earlier in the diffusion of cuisine.



Importantly Bestor observes how *sushi* has not lost its “Japanese cultural property”, unlike the likes of *Sony*. He notes that, “Globalisation doesn’t necessarily homogenize cultural differences, nor erase the salience of cultural labels” (Befu, 2001:6). This points towards the fact that even if *sushi* and Japanese cuisine in general is creolised, it has not been and will probably not be to the extent that its Japanese identity is lost.

Befu notes that Japanese cultural elements have often been successfully introduced into Europe as they capture a *niche* in the market. *Manga*, *anime*, *karaoke*, *sushi*, *soy* sauce and *tofu* are examples. A niche he describes as “an unfulfilled demand which is met with a new product”. He notes that the risk factor is great with such “unconventional imports” and that the rate of failure is high. (Befu, 2003: 14). He also suggests that Japanese cuisine continually fills a niche in the market, adding a unique element, which is eventually copied by local producers. He also points to the fact that Japanese individuals find it easy to gain employment throughout the world in Japanese restaurants due simply to their nationality, even without any specific experience in the field. Befu also observes this phenomenon, noting it as Japanese national’s exploitation of “cultural capital” (Befu, 2001: 9).

In a similar vein, he points towards the *names* of the majority of Japanese restaurants as being of *Japanese origin* and therefore being of significance in giving positive valuation to that origin. A further factor observed by Befu involves *indirect-Japanisation*, where Japanese products are diffused and invariably creolized into one region. It is then that region which acts as the middleman, diffusing the element onto other regions. This was something highlighted earlier by Cwiertka in relation to cuisine.

Finally, Cwiertka contends that the “*Japanese food boom* in Europe appears to have *passed the climax of the late 1990’s*” (Cwiertka, 2005: 2). Her evidence for this in 2005 is the closing down of a number of Japanese restaurants and the fact that Japanese food is not the hot topic that it once was. She does however observe that Japanese cuisine is now an established culinary mode within Europe and will remain so in the future.

City Choice

As stated earlier, the three cities chosen were Aarhus in Denmark, Liverpool in Great Britain and Athens in Greece. Although theoretically any city within “Europe” could have been chosen, each was selected as it fulfilled a certain number of criteria. Each city contained relatively few Japanese citizens, which gave the opportunity to see how far Japanese cuisine had spread with limited influence from a significant local Japanese community. Each city portrayed itself as being cultural centres within “Europe” and its individual nation and advertised itself as having a wide selection of cuisines from around the world. Finally, each city had a different population ranking within their own nations, Ath-

ens as a capital, Aarhus as a second city and Liverpool as Britain’s fourth largest city.



Outside “Soya” in Aarhus. Located in a busy street. A very simple design. Japanese writing on the outside. Advertised as a “Japanese restaurant”.

It was decided to concentrate the research upon restaurants for various reasons. Firstly this was one area personally suggested by Cwiertka as being of potential value. Such a restriction also enabled a comparative angle to be adopted against the limited research previously undertaken. Finally the investigation inevitably had to be undertaken within the context of limited time and budget. Five locations were investigated within the three cities. Contact with each was made in one of two ways. Firstly, utilising “gatekeepers”: known individuals with close connections to appropriate research sites (Merkens, 2004: 166). Secondly, e-mails were sent to all sites deemed appropriate within each city. The resultant five research sites were: *Soya* Japanese/Chinese restaurant (See Picture 1) and a *sushi* takeaway and in Aarhus; a branch of *Yo! Sushi* and an independently owned *sushi* restaurant called *Square Sushi* in Athens; and finally a *teppanyaki* restaurant in Liverpool called *Sapporo*. The research sites were deemed to give a reasonably high level of representativeness, from which generalisations could be made utilising the methodological approach highlighted below.

Methodology

With regards to restaurants and takeaways the overall methodological approach adopted was that of “triangulation”. This process can best be summed up by Uwe Flick who describes it as the “observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points, most often realized by applying different methodological approaches”, with each approach given equal value (Flick, 2004: 178). The advantages of such an approach being the increase in theoretical generalisability, a broader and deeper understanding of the research topic, a thicker description of the subject investigated, and finally the addition of trustworthiness and validity. Within this context, five different methodological approaches were combined within the five research sites: *semi-structured interviews* with ten individuals occupying a variety of positions, including owners, managers, Japanese and local employees; *participant observation* within each location, observing the interior, exterior, staff and cuisine;



the collection of any *documents* deemed relevant, including menus and marketing leaflets; the research of relevant *websites*; and finally *photographs* were taken of both the interior and exterior of each research site.

The overall aim was to both compare findings from the previously highlighted research and to also be open to the possibility of tentatively postulating new theories.

Japanese cuisine in Europe

Niche

In the initial decision to produce and sell Japanese cuisine, Befu's concept of a *niche*, "an unfulfilled demand which is met with a new product" was at the forefront (Befu, 2003: 14). In four out of the five case studies this was emphasised as one of the most important factors in this initial decision. In Athens, the owner of *Square Sushi* commented how after a search, he "found out that *sushi* is the thing that we don't have", whilst the franchise manager at *Yo! Sushi* talked of there being "room for somebody". Both then searched throughout other countries in order to see how best to fill this demand. In Liverpool, the restaurants website gave a clear indication of how proud they were to fill the niche there, by proclaiming themselves "Liverpool's only destination for Japanese food". Finally, the owner of *Soya* in Aarhus chose to introduce more varied Japanese cuisine as "the only Japanese food in Aarhus was *sushi*" and he wanted to introduce "other types of Japanese food". Clearly therefore, the desire to fulfil a niche with unconventional and fresh products was a huge motivational factor in the decision to sell Japanese cuisine. There were also some signs within internet searches that the desire to fill such niches had in some cases met with failure, with some restaurants having to close after only a few years in business. The reasons for such failures could not be found, although it would be an interesting topic to pursue in the future.

Indirect Japanisation

The influence of *indirect Japanisation* was also something to consider with regards to influences upon the decision to open restaurants and their concepts - especially with reference to Cwiertka's notion that Japanese cuisine was first creolized in the USA, before undergoing a similar process in Britain and finally transferring to continental Europe. Influence from the USA was certainly a factor within four of the five restaurants. A simple look at the menus revealed this. As an example, *Square Sushi* in Athens sold "California Maki", "Special California Maki", "Dynamite California Maki", "Alaskan Roll", "Boston Roll". The owners of both locations in Athens both pointed to the fact that they had also been influenced by locations in Great Britain and particularly London. In the case of *Yo! Sushi* the owner even stated that he chose the menu from those made available by the British Head office, thus seemingly justifying Cwiertka's argument. However there were factors which put this theory into question. The Chinese owner of *Soya* was seemingly directly influenced by his six months spent in Japan, learning how to cook "au-

thentic Japanese cuisine". Paradoxically, *Sapporo* in Liverpool received its greatest influence not from the USA or other British cities, but from Cyprus where its mother branch was located. The menu was designed by a Thai head chef, who had learnt all his skills whilst working in a famous Japanese restaurant in Thailand. The influences upon the takeaway in Aarhus would appear to have been partly from Canada. This evidence put into doubt Cwiertka's notions on indirect Japanisation and the channels through which it takes place. It showed that other channels do exist, apart from the USA-Britain-Continental Europe route, some of them more indirect than others, as with the Thai chef.

Other influences were also highlighted in the decision to open such restaurants. Certainly the first was the financial gains associated with the production and sale of Japanese cuisine. One owner in Athens commented that Japanese cuisine offered the opportunity "for a businessman to get some excitement and some profits". Linked to this was the idea that Japanese cuisine was "trendy" in Europe. Both owners in Athens looked for trends in food and realised that Japanese cuisine had been successful elsewhere. Another was the experience of living or spending time in other countries, where Japanese cuisine was part of the local culinary choice. The manager in Liverpool pointed towards "younger people coming here and people from the cities where they want to try different things" as influential in the decision to locate in the city. Similarly, an owner in Athens observed the "appeal" of the "healthiness" and "pureness" of Japanese cuisine to "every modern citizen of this capital". Therefore many other reasons and factors were cited.

The Menu – Creolisation?

One important issue appeared to be missing from all debates on creolisation in relation to Japanese cuisine, "What is Japanese cuisine? How can it be defined?" These were questions which emerged through two mediums. The first was in a book by Michael Ashkenazi where he writes about the "spirit of innovation and renewal in Japanese cuisine" in Japan, a spirit which "is constantly being re-affirmed" (Ashkenazi, 2000: 222). This re-affirmation comes either through new restaurants which serve traditional dishes with "modernity" in mind or the creation of new "traditional" dishes. The constant changes will seemingly always make it extremely difficult to accurately describe "Japanese cuisine". Another issue arose during the interview with a *sushi* chef in Aarhus. Around two thirds of the way through an interview she turned around and said simply "Which type of sushi shop are you talking about?" She then went on to describe four levels of *sushi* establishments in Japan, from very up market establishments serving specifically traditional sushi, to lower level *Izakaya's* that are more likely to adapt to the modern desires of Japan's youth and are therefore less "traditional". Many authors refer to Japanese cuisine as though it has a set, one-dimensional style, served in establishments of a similar design. This was seemingly



not the case, and makes *any* comparisons between “Japanese cuisine” produced in Europe and that sold in Japan open to question.

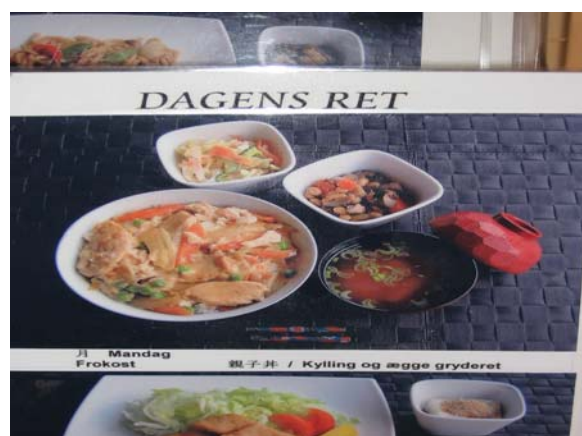
In order to attempt to overcome this problem, with seemingly no precedents to turn to, a five-pronged approach was utilised when attempting to identify “culinary authenticity” and any creolisation which may have occurred in the research sites. Firstly, approximately 20 menus were sent from associates in Japan, along with a copy of the “Hot Pepper” magazine for April 2005. This contained advertisements for hundreds of eating establishments in Tokyo, and its website was also consulted. Secondly, Richard Hosking’s *A dictionary of Japanese food: ingredients and culture* was utilised as a further comparative tool (Hosking 1996). Thirdly, six texts on the subject were used in a similar fashion. Fourthly, was personal knowledge, gained from two years living in Japan and living with a Japanese chef. Finally, a group of five Japanese associates in Denmark were asked to verify any conclusions reached. The overall aim was to overcome a very challenging problem, in trying to define the term *authentic*, a definition of which will seemingly always prove to be problematic. Through the process above, the aim was to try and postulate *authenticity* in this case as a mixture between perceptions of those individuals with first hand knowledge of Japanese restaurants in Japan and the knowledge of those who have written upon the subject. Overall therefore, although a difficult problem and one which could probably not be fully solved, an attempt was made to overcome it by using a unique form of *triangulation* i.e. the combination of different methods.

Utilising the *triangulation* method highlighted above, it became clear that within the menu for every research location, the amount of “authentic Japanese cuisine” was certainly at a reduced level. In each of the locations a minimum of 46 % of the menu was deemed not to be “authentically Japanese”, with 61% of the dishes in one location being “un-authentic”. Such statistics were backed by many of the interviewees. Indeed at the takeaway in Aarhus a Japanese chef commented that if Japanese people came in “they would find it strange”. Befu’s argument that “some amount of creolisation is inevitable in any situation” was however not something completely proven with regards to Japanese cuisine (Befu, 2003: 6). Undoubtedly, many of the non-Japanese dishes were produced as a result of indirect-Japanisation, as was highlighted earlier. With regards to creolisation, only three of the sites provided evidence to support Befu’s claims. At *Soya* a Japanese chef commented that “European people like more characteristic tastes, so I put more sugar or salt on the meal so they can taste” and that “I try to make food as similar/close as possible”, “but I can’t find the same things as we can buy in Japan”. In Liverpool the creation of the “Liverpool Roll” indicated a level of creolisation, which was supported by a waitress’s comment that “obviously you have to Westernize it so that Western people can accept it easily”. The manager also noted the introduction of

garlic mayonnaise and barbeque sauce with the *teppanyaki* as something provided to suit local tastes and commented that locals needed potatoes with the *teppanyaki* because if not, “people would leave thinking ‘I’m not full’”. *Square Sushi* in Athens used “innovation” to “comprehend sushi better”, with a continuous number of Japanese dishes adapted “more to Greek tastes”.

At the two remaining research sites however, evidence of creolisation was not so forthcoming. When asked if the menu at *Yo! Sushi* had been adapted in any way to local tastes, the manager responded “No. Not at all, we haven’t adapted the menu to Greek tastes”. Although he did note, “I sat down with my chefs and chose recipes (from the mother company) which are more friendly to the Greek consumer”. Therefore indirect-Japanisation had taken place with the culinary desires of locals strongly in mind, but not specifically localized creolisation. Perhaps this form of selective decision-making could be poetically termed *indirect-creolisation*? At the takeaway in Aarhus any form of creolisation was also hard to establish. Overall both sites did not provide a great deal of explicit evidence to support Befu’s claim.

A part of Befu’s argument that seemed to be justified in those places where creolisation had occurred was that, “retention of as much “authentic” Japanese culture as possible may be the strategy for success in one niche, while thoroughgoing creolisation may be required in another” (Befu, 2003: 6). Two research sites stood out as extremes. The strategy of *Soya* was to creolise as little as possible with its Japanese menu (See Picture 2). At the other extreme, the manager of *Square Sushi* had the clear goal of creolising Japanese cuisine. This desire was revealed in an advertising leaflet, which noted, “Recycling is exhausting! New ideas can truly revitalise”.



A photograph of the day’s menu to help customers; written in Danish and Japanese.

This was a philosophy very similar to that of the British *Wagamma* noodle company. The manager even went so far as to say “maybe one day it could be totally Greek sushi”. Another argument which appeared to be justified in some cases was that of Befu and Cwiertka which put forward the notion “there are differences in the way



Japanese cuisine is recreated in different parts of the continent" due to the different ecological, cultural and economic circumstances (Cwiertka, 2000: 19). In Liverpool, a Thai head chef noted how he looked at the lifestyles of local people before designing the menu to suit their tastes. In Athens, one manager was proud to present "fried sushi" as "something that we did to adjust to our culture, our taste". Therefore their claims would appear to be justified in some respects.

Numerous reasons emerged as to why most of the menus displayed such high percentages of "non-authentic" dishes - also why localized creolisation had occurred and the newly named *indirect-creolisation*. One of the largest factors, and one which has been little emphasized before, was the fear of trying Japanese cuisine and in particular the fear of raw fish, something expressed in many of the interviews. Indeed, in the takeaway in Aarhus there was a menu specifically designed to exclude raw fish. There was also the limited availability of "authentic" ingredients. The appeal to local tastes and customs were noted with the structuring of meals to include starters, a main course and desserts, something not generally undertaken in Japan. As noted with *Square Sushi*, the desire to innovate on behalf of the producer was another factor. Finally there was the desire to adapt to local culinary trends. As an example, in the takeaway there was a vegetarian menu, again something rarely found in Japan. Therefore many reasons were cited as to why the menus at the research sites in many ways differed from those to be found in Japan.

The Design

What emerged with the design of the establishments was a clear set of graduations. The first of these was those with hardly any signs of being Japanese. The only indication in *Yo!Sushi* was a conveyor belt running through the middle of the establishment. Indeed, the manager used "Greek architects, everything is Greek", with consideration to the company concept and colour (See Picture 3). Therefore almost complete creolisation had apparently taken place, as was the case with the company's London establishments studied by Cwiertka. Similarly, at the takeaway in Aarhus the only sign of it being Japanese was a small waving welcoming cat. Two of the establishments showed more desire to present Japanese elements. The restaurant in Liverpool had items including Japanese dolls, a large urn, and a water pump. However, one interesting aspect was identified: the creolisation of Japanese elements to a more "Western" and "contemporary" style. *Sapporo* displayed "contemporary" paintings with *Kanji* written down the side and twisted bamboo shoots in "fashionable" glass vases. The research site with the most Japanese elements, ironically *Square Sushi* in Athens, had Japanese items which had all been given a "contemporary twist", fitting in with the colour scheme of the restaurant. Therefore the owners requirement for a "trendy place" was blended with the ideas of the designer who liked "Japanese things". This meant that even those places which wanted to keep Japanese ele-

ments, often did not do so in their original form and therefore creolized them to fit in with the "trendy" styles of their establishments. Overall large elements of creolisation were noted, with Cwiertka's notion that the "Japanese for the Japanese" style being "rare" holding true in the cases studied.



The exterior of Yo! Sushi in Athens reveals a very modern design, following the company formula from the London head office.

The Employees

One of the main factors to highlight with employees was their mixed knowledge of Japanese cuisine, with more of a lean towards a lack of knowledge. Out of the ten people interviewed, only four had any previous experience of working with Japanese cuisine. Out of those four, one had only been an assistant chef, another had only worked in Japan for six months, a waitress for two years and the Thai head chef had never worked in Japan. The remaining evidence pointed towards a real lack of knowledge. At the extreme, one owner actually looked for employees without previous experience so that they could be "taught our system and our recipes".



Manager Katie O'Sullivan standing inside Sapporo, wearing her black business style attire. Japanese samurai dolls can be seen in the background. Knives and forks can be seen on the "modern" designed tables.

The lack of knowledge and experience could have been a factor in the lack of "authenticity" observed in the establishment's menus. Befu's observations with regards to *Yo! Sushi* that "the chefs, waiters and waitresses are local people dressed in local attire" proved to be only fully applicable to this particular chain of restaurants. In all the case studies the attire was of a very



“modern” café style in black (See Picture 4). This indicated a strong degree of creolisation towards local tastes. However, six out of the ten interviewed were not locals, as was the case with many of the employees in the other four locations. Overall, the extremes of Befu’s observations had certainly not been reached in four of the cases studied. One area highlighted by Bestor and Befu which was of relevance was the fact that Japanese individuals used their *cultural capital* to gain employment due mainly to their nationality without specific experience. This occurred in three of the locations. At the takeaway, both Japanese ladies believed their nationality had been a factor in their employment despite their lack of experience. Indeed, their Danish colleague observed, “If I went to a place I didn’t know and saw Japanese staff, I would think it was more reliable in some way”. Indications were made that having Japanese staff in some ways added a sense of quality and authenticity.

Identity – Odourless?

Bestor and Befu’s observation that *sushi* specifically had not lost its “Japanese cultural property” appeared to be applicable to all of the research sites studied. At each of the locations there were numerous “identifying markers” which indicated the positive valuation expressing associations with Japan gave. The first was predicted by Befu, in that the names of four of the locations were “easily perceived to be Japanese” (Befu, 2003: 15). Notably *Yo! Sushi* still kept the positive association with *sushi* in its name, despite the previously highlighted claims not to be Japanese restaurants. The positive association with having Japanese staff was also noted earlier. Another important sign, and one apparently not before mentioned, was that at every location Japanese words, generally written in English, were used in abundance to indicate dish names or ingredients. Indeed, each site had at least 11. Interestingly, *Square Sushi*, the site with the highest propensity towards the creolisation of its menu, had the most Japanese words on its menu. These could easily have been changed and been given local names or descriptions. The Japanese elements used in the design of most establishments highlighted earlier added another layer. Websites were also very revealing, the three location’s websites containing numerous “Japanese” elements such as writing and pictures of Japanese individuals. Overall, these markers pointed to the fact that Japanese cuisine could not generally be linked with the likes of the large electrical companies in attempting to take an “odourless” route into Europe.

The Customers

One point strongly emphasised by all of the interviewees and in other parts of the research was the clear lack of knowledge of many customers in relation to “Japanese cuisine”. At *Soya* in Aarhus this was strongly expressed by the fact that the owner chose to sell Chinese cuisine alongside Japanese because he “couldn’t open a restaurant with only food people didn’t know about”. At the takeaway in Aarhus a Japanese chef noted “They

often don’t even know what type of fish they are eating”. Such a lack of knowledge supported Woodroffe’s claim that customers have such little knowledge of Japanese cuisine and Japan that it didn’t matter what was presented as Japanese. It could explain why such large percentages of the dishes on the menus were “unauthentic”. Additionally, it became fairly clear that to many customers *sushi* was Japanese cuisine. The knowledge of any other type of Japanese cuisine seemed limited at best. In Liverpool the manager commented upon the fact that, “Quite a lot of people ring up asking if it is all raw fish”. Therefore, when commenting upon “Japanese cuisine”, it became clear that to many individuals this would have a very limited scope.



The very simple design of the exterior can be observed, showing no indications of being Japanese. The location in a newly renovated, expensive location can also be observed.

Omnivorousness

In four of the sites Warde and Martens’s theory relating to “omnivorousness”, which refers to valuing “variety for its own sake, equating knowledge and experience of the widest possible range of alternatives with cultural sophistication” in terms of eating out, was sited as seemingly one of the most important of the factors in the decision to purchase Japanese cuisine (Warde & Martens, 2000: 77). They indicate that it is in ethnic restaurants that this phenomenon is most prominent and that it is those in the upper levels of the middle classes who possess the highest propensity towards it. The two establishments in Greece displayed the most characteristics relating to this theory: locating in wealthy areas and attracting wealthy, well-travelled customers; describing their establishments as being “trendy” or being in “trendy” areas where people would be more inclined to try the latest “in” cuisine; describing their cuisine as “healthy”; in keeping with the “nutritionally approved orthodoxy of the day”; finally noting entertainment as a part of the cuisine’s appeal. One of the managers also pointed to the fact that many of his customers didn’t really enjoy the taste of *sushi*. All factors which pointed towards an element of “omnivorousness” in their customer’s choice of Japanese cuisine. More customer based research would make such a proposal more concrete.



Distinctive Metropolitan Mode

Warde and Martens notion of a “distinctive metropolitan mode”, with the spread of ethnic cuisine out from the capital city to the provincial cities was another aspect which seemed to be justified in the research (Warde, 2000: 89). A search for establishments on the “The World Sushi” site gave a numerical indication of this theory (www.sushi.infogate.de). In Greece 81.8% of the locations cited were located in Athens, in Denmark 96% were in Copenhagen, and in Britain 79.9% were in London. Athens as a capital city, certainly seemed to add justification to this claim. This was clearly where the majority of establishments were concentrated. Indeed only two other locations could be cited outside Athens, in the second city Thessaloniki and on the holiday island of Mykonos. Although highly sceptical about moving there, both restaurant managers in Athens saw the logical and natural next step as an expansion to the second city from the capital. Evidence also existed in Aarhus and Liverpool. In Denmark the figures supported this theory. An article in “Politiken” noted on June 10th 2005 that “over 30 sushi-bars and restaurants exist in Copenhagen at the moment” compared to the four locations in Aarhus ([Http://politiken.dk/visartikel.asp?TemplateID=697&PageID=382338](http://politiken.dk/visartikel.asp?TemplateID=697&PageID=382338)). Liverpool had one establishment which was established in November 2003, compared to the 107 found on the website search in London. What also added to this notion was the fact that in both cities it was clearly emphasised in interviews that Japanese cuisine had some time before it became established. All such factors supported Warde and Martens theory, something that they felt intertwined with omnivorousness.

The Future

The question of the future of Japanese cuisine within Europe was one asked with the comment of Cwiertka very much in mind when she notes the end of the “boom” period after the 1990’s. There was indeed evidence to support this theory, most notably in Athens. Both managers pointed to the fact that they believed no more Japanese cuisine outlets could be opened, not just in Athens, but in the whole of Greece as the capacity for Japanese cuisine had been reached. They noted that there were only a limited number of people wealthy and well travelled enough, with enough desire to eat Japanese cuisine. Overall, however, the comments made about the future expansion of Japanese cuisine were of a positive nature. In terms of the success of each location, there was little doubt on behalf of those interviewed that business was generally going well. The interviewees also generally saw the future diffusion of Japanese cuisine to be positive. Despite the negativity in Athens, there were some indications towards the possibility of expansion in the future, with one manager noting that the dispersion of Japanese cuisine to those with a “lower annual income” would be “something my children are going to see”. According to the interviews undertaken, the situation seemed a lot brighter in Aarhus and Liverpool. In Liverpool, the manager noted, “it

will become more widespread, more accessible”, “especially with the healthy lifestyle”. In Aarhus there was a similar perspective. One Danish employee believed that Japanese cuisine “needs time to develop and reach Danish people”. Overall, in the three cities covered there appeared to be little sign of a “boom” period. However, the expansion of Japanese cuisine did not appear to have abated, rather it seemed to be taking a more gradual path as locals overcame fears and the strength of their attachments to local cuisines.

Japanese cuisine retains its identity

Overall, the research undertaken helped to confirm some previously stated theories, placed into question others and put forward some tentative new notions with regards to the way Japanese cuisine is diffused within Europe. Firstly, as was previously suggested, that a niche in the market is often captured. Following this, the level of authenticity of the cuisine is then often very low. This is, in many cases within this study, due in some degree to indirect-Japanisation, although not always via the USA-Britain-Continental European route suggested by Cwiertka. Similarly, although creolisation does often occur, this is not always localized as suggested by Befu. The new notion of *indirect-creolisation* appeared to be another way in which inauthentic dishes were introduced, with the selection of dishes from a previously creolized list. Many factors seemingly influence this low level of authenticity, with the fear of raw fish being very high amongst them. The design of restaurants is seemingly not authentic and varies greatly. A new aspect observed was the “modern twist” given to traditionally Japanese elements. The staff of Japanese establishments often seemingly lack knowledge of Japanese cuisine and tend to be a mix of locals and foreigners. The cases studied also highlight that Japanese staff members often use their “cultural capital” to gain employment, as suggested by Befu. Much evidence pointed towards the fact that customers often lack knowledge and that omnivorousness often plays a part in their choice of Japanese cuisine. In support of this theory, not previously applied to a study of Japanese cuisine, a metropolitan mode appears to exist with diffusion from the capital city to the provincial cities.

With reference to Japanisation it became apparent that Japanese cuisine is not generally diffused in an odourless manner, but instead retains its identity in a positive way, thus supporting Befu’s notion. The future of Japanese cuisine in Europe appeared to be positive, although with expansion at a more gradual rate than in the boom period of the 1990’s. Above all, the research underlined the point noted in the introduction, that further research is still needed within the subject area, notably with customers. This was the case with many of the new findings and in particular omnivorousness. Indeed, if one conclusion can be drawn, it is that no set pattern emerged between any of the sites. It appeared that the numerous factors highlighted above and in the general analysis section as elements in the diffusion process, combined in different ways and to different



degrees in each of the sites. Therefore, although a series of factors can be identified as to how the diffusion process occurs, they will seemingly not diffuse in the same way in any two locations, whether they be cities, restaurants or takeaways. Only additional research could further solidify or question many of the arguments put forward, which have hopefully at least added information and points of discussion to a relatively untouched, interesting and dynamic subject area. All of the above information could, within the confines of Japanese cuisine and the cases studied, be utilised to add further to the limited research undertaken within theories on Japanisation. Although not answering the question of how far and to what extent Japanese elements have dispersed, the way in which they spread could provide indicators for some of the ways in which other Japanese elements have become diffused, and the ways in which they may do so in the future within Europe and beyond. Consequently the paper has hopefully achieved its overall goal of answering the call for further detailed research and possibly gone beyond, by promoting the call for additional research to be undertaken.

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