Nation-Work: A Praxeology of Making and Maintaining Nations

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Abstract

This article bridges the literatures on nationalist projects and everyday nationhood by elucidating a repertoire of actions shared by both. Analysis of such "nation-work" contributes to the cognitive turn in ethnicity and nationalism research by showing how ethnonational categorization operates. Examining variation in this domain shows that though nationalism may project an image of a homogeneous "we", internal heterogeneity is crucial for refining the experience and performance of membership in the nation.

Keywords: Nationalism; Ethnicity; Culture; Categorization; Japan.

THE CENTRALITY OF culture in the nation-building projects of nationalist movements has long served as a focal point of analytic attention. Recently this strand of research has been complemented by a growing interest in what might be termed "nation-maintenance", which continues to re-create nationhood in a quieter and more routine fashion after the nation-state is firmly established. Though both the elites who construct a nation from above and the masses who enact it from below give the nation concrete expression through material representations and distinctive characteristics, little work has attempted to bridge these largely independent literatures. To flesh out the modalities of action shared in both the projects of creating a nation and the processes of sustaining it thereafter – what I term *nation-work* – I examine the case of the tea ceremony in Japan. The centuries-long association of this practice with the heights of political power has been, in contemporary times, decanted to potent effect into what might otherwise appear as one of the anodyne poetics of everyday life. Tracing the techniques shared by both the pyrotechnics of "heroic" nationalism and the banal reproduction of "post-heroic" nationhood

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in the tea ceremony clarifies the manner in which nation-work operates at both levels.

Nationalism and nationhood

Two kinds of literature have explored the genesis and effects of nations. An early stream focused on the rise and spread of nationalism as a political mobilizing ideology and movement, aiming to create or expand a nation-state. Here debate concerned the origins of such nationalism – whether it is a purely modern phenomenon, going back no further than the era of the American and French Revolutions (Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990, Breuilly 1994) or has much older and more perennial roots (Smith 1986). Yet uniting this body of writing is a macro-historical focus on elite-driven processes of nation-building or destroying, and the nation's resonance with the masses. Such studies have shown the way that available myths, symbols, customs, memories, or beliefs both bind members of an ethnic community together, and distinguish them from others (Cerulo 1995, Smith 2009). Nationalists then work over this raw material into representative cultures that establish the identity and uniqueness of the nation as the legitimate grounds of its political sovereignty. With invented traditions, national holidays, and representative emblems of the country, states seek to both evoke a national identity and secure the loyalty of the newly minted citizens. Meanwhile supporting institutions – museums, exhibitions, pageants, statuary, and the like – reinforce the supposed natural congruence of its cultural and political borders (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). During the originating phase of nation-formation, modern school systems and military conscription are critical, both for attenuating regional, class, religious, and other differences, and forging a collective identity so potent that those who come to share it willingly give their lives for it in battle (Weber 1976).

Over the past two decades, these studies have been accompanied by a growing body of meso- and micro-analytic work focusing on the productions and expressions of nationhood, or "nationness", in everyday situations – cases where no overt ideological mobilization or political pedagogy is at stake. Moving away from elite projects that rallied nationalist passion for the ends of state, this line of analysis has investigated the forms in which the nation is experienced or enacted in the commonplace routines of ordinary lives (Billig 1995, Fox and

Miller-Idriss 2008, Fox 2006, Foster 2002). Studies of seemingly inconsequential facets of day-to-day existence have explored the internally-shared, nationally-bounded ways of seeing, thinking, and doing things that can form an unconscious doxa of the community (Edensor 2002, Loefgren 1989, Lind-Laursen 1993). Entrenching the nation in quotidian existence are the often unnoticed yet pervasive "forgotten reminders" – the faded flags at the post office or the symbols on money folded in a wallet – that embed the nation in everyday life. Similary the proliferation of first person plurals in the press can point through a "national deixis" back to the homeland, which not only serves as their referent but is reproduced and reinvigorated by them (Billig 1995). Like other identities, national belonging too has also become commodified and even routine consumption of music, media, and other products define and affirm unspoken national sensibilities (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Foster 2002).

Though they should in principle be complementary, these two strands of research have evolved independently of each other: studies of nationalism train their eye on major historical developments, and studies of nationness fix a more ethnographic gaze on contemporary practices. Only occasionally has the division surfaced in open debate (*e.g.* Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008, Smith 2008), and even then, the most sophisticated attempts to bridge the two mainly present evidence of a disjuncture, without moving toward integration. Brubaker *et al*. (2006), for example, proceed from a disconnection between the domains, and define their task as explaining why nationalist calls to arms have not resonated with the populace in recent years. Yet both levels are concerned with the subjective practices and agencies that give objective reality to the nation (see Handler 1988).

Whether in service of a nationalist ideology or enacting a mundane form of collective existence, the social labor of objectifying the abstract concept "nation" may be termed *nation-work*. This postulation allows the two fields to be unified in a single framework, but as a concept it must first be fleshed out itself. Politically, the legitimacy of the nation-state is typically based on claims to the ethno-cultural uniqueness of a territorially delimited group of people. A range of practices, objects, events, or figures will conventionally be identified as markers of this culture (Smith 1986, 2009). Scholars have long noted that the elements in question may be arbitrarily chosen, but they have less often looked at the different ways these cultural features may relate to the whole. Here, at least two general types can be distinguished: definition and embodiment. Definition concerns the linguistic acts of designating characteristics that identify

a nation, while embodiment pertains to the physical enactment of the nation in everyday life.[1] Since language is an embodied capacity and what is corporeal relies on linguistic interpretation to move beyond tacit understanding, the difference between them is not hard and fast, yet it serves to distinguish between principally expository and principally performative ways of concretizing nations. While the former can be precisely enunciated and qualified, the latter are less open to questioning or challenge, as they operate through the body and are therefore less clearly articulated.[2]

Definition sets out the characteristics that identify the nation. Whether elaborate or elliptical, these are always selective, highlighting some features while ignoring others. Comparisons with external others may serve to specify what is unique to "us," yet such definitions do not necessarily stand in a neutral relationship to members of the nation itself: they may contribute to the production of what they seem to designate. To describe can be to prescribe. Authorized definitions create standards to which the world is expected to conform, and the beholden may be obliged to comply with their specifications (Bourdieu 1991, pp. 127-136). Debates and disagreement may result, but national imaginings are enlivened even as they are contested (Verdery 1991). The importance that early studies of nationalism placed on the intelligentsia recognized the potency of these articulations. Yet once they are taken for granted, even small talk can perpetuate national understandings (see Ries 1997). Though some definitions are all-encompassing, others select cultural elements that are inflected by class or gender as typecasts of the whole, thereby, intertwining national assertions with non-national categories.

Nation-work is particularly compelling in pedagogical situations, where definition appears as explanation. Here, the content of the nation is not so much illuminated as motivated, in the form of new information for the edification of those instructed. This varies both with the level of knowledge assumed among its recipients, and their responsibility for it, which is conditioned by their imputed relationship

[1] For prior work analyzing the linguistic construction of nations, see Wodak *et al*. (2000) Verdery (1991), and Calhoun (1997), and for studies of physical enactments of national belonging in everyday life see Cerulo (1995), Presner (2007), Jerolmack (2007), and Edensor (2002).

[2] Indeed, as Connerton (1989, pp. 102-103) describes, bodily practices are often acquired in a way that hampers scrutiny. For a discussion of how practice theories have formulated the differences and commonalities of embodiment and language, see Rouse (2006, pp. 511-523).

to the nation. Not simply Americans, but men in particular, may be expected to know more about baseball than their French counterparts. While schools are a primary locus of pedagogical nation-work, as the state crafts the young into good members of the community (Weber 1978, pp. 303-338, Gellner 1983, pp. 27-29), it is not limited to this venue. Definition and its variations operate across a range of sites that includes advertisements, films, political debates, tourist brochures, and even banal conversation. Differences and commonalities in descriptions and characterizations of nationhood can by tracked by examining what the definitions select, and how this material is organized and presented across time and space. Attention to the various clusters of categorical distinctions and differentiations can reveal how descriptions are used to establish who "we" are versus who "they" are, how these definitions are inflected by class or gender, or how they are generated through comparison with inadequate or exemplary members.

While the work of defining a nation is expository, that of embodiment is performative. In inheres in the enactment of recognizably national movements, postures, and forms of interaction. As such, it remains distinct from what some might consider the unconscious dispositions of a "national habitus" – a modal way of doing things (*cf.* Loefgren 1989, pp. 15-17, Edensor 2002) – for it is fundamentally a performative representation. Though such enactments may occur alongside definitions of the nation, they are, in the first instance, dependent on them to set out the national significances. Here too the nation is objectified, and for this, embodiment requires a measure of distance from the consummately mundane to identify the enactment as physical encapsulations of a national essence. Still embodiment is a performative capacity, and thus acquisition typically involves an investment of time and effort. Because this type of nation-work operates in and through the corpus, intersections with other embodied social categories, such as gender and class, are common.

In pedagogical contexts, embodiment takes the form of cultivation, where people become better members of the nation, often by mimicking a practice, or sensibility, previously defined as national. Here, heterogeneity within serves as a spur, for it is precisely because all members of the community do not equally possess the characteristics indicative of national culture that refinement of these becomes necessary. Through such learning, Danes, for example, can become "more Danish" or transformed into "better Danes." Drawing on what is selected through definition, cultivation aims to reshape people in the

image of what is exemplary of national membership.[3] Embodiment and cultivation can be found beyond schools, at sites including cultural performances, theatrical displays, but most importantly in more subtle expressions in everyday life. Once the crucible of schools is left behind, these bodily practices through which nationhood is enacted become one of the most powerful forms of nation-work.

Nation and categorization

The nation-work approach builds on the recent "cognitive shift" in studies of nation, race, and ethnicity, conceptualizing these phenomena as matters of categorization and classification rather than as substances or traits (Brubaker *et al*. 2004, Brubaker 2009). Early studies of ethnicity regarded identity, culture, and community as neatly coterminous: ethnic culture was coherent, ethnic communities were bounded, and ethnic groups could be clearly identified by their unique culture. Though these "Herderian" assumptions still inform many commonsense understandings of not only ethnic groups but also nations, analysts over the past forty years have embraced constructivist views of ethnicity as a fundamentally relational process of boundary negotiation (Wimmer 2009). Barth's introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) provided the most substantial push dislodging static notions of ethnicity, replacing them with the interactional, processual, situational, and relational formulations. Proposing that ethnicity emerges in the process of constituting groups through negotiating boundaries between them, he argued that ethnicity should be understood as fundamentally transactional and rooted in the ways such self- and other-ascription canalizes social life.

Since Barth, it has become a truism that ethnicity springs from we-they distinctions drawn in contrast between a collective self and a dominant other or multiple others to create a social distance between "us"' and "them". But a danger lies in too keen a focus on the action at

[3] At the limit, not only members but non-members of the nation can perform cultivation-work. In cases that exhibit a high degree of social closure (examples include contemporary Japan), out-group members' successful performance of cultivation-work can deflate the perceived distance between members of separate national categories while simultaneously reaffirming a constitutive difference separating them, as when foreigners learning tea ceremony are praised as "more Japanese than the Japanese". Though non-Japanese may become "better than Japanese", they can never be "better Japanese".

the boundaries, which can lead to a neglect of the variegations that they enclose and their impact on ethnicity formation. The underlying assumption that a simplistic boundary-approach courts is that all members within a division are functionally interchangeable: they can be transposed with each other without altering the ethnicity construction under investigation. Though other differences may be apparent, they are treated as irrelevant to the boundary relationships of immediate analytical interest. But the image of homogeneity that ethnicity projects may, in fact, be constituted in part through internal heterogeneity. This possibility is illustrated, though not isolated, in Espiritu's (1994) evocative study of a Filipino community in the United States, in which she shows how the moral distinctiveness of the group is claimed vis-à-vis Americans through branding promiscuous Filipina teenagers as "more Americanized" or "more Westernized" than others. Labeling these "bad girls" helps constitute an image of internal homogeneity within the ethnic community. Marx (1996, p. 18; p. 20) describes a similar process in Brazil where intra-group distinctions among races have been downplayed when consolidating resistance against dominant groups.

Thus not only differences across ethnic boundaries, but differentiations within them may be critical to group formation. For membership in a given group may be a matter of degree or qualified in particular ways, as several theorists have noted (Weber 1978, pp. 390-391, Eriksen 2002, pp. 66-67, Brubaker *et al*. 2006, pp. 230-231). But the implications of this promising line of inquiry remain underdeveloped. This lacuna may have resulted in part from the paucity of English terms that can readily be honed into analytic tools for examining degrees or intensities of ethnic – and *a fortiori*, for our purposes, national – membership. Religion and gender suffer no such problems, where intensities and qualification are captured by *religiosity*, *femininity*, and *masculinity*. Yet there are no equivalent lay terms such as *nationalosity* or *ethninity* to convey relative degrees of membership in ethnic or national categories. Moments of nation-building may bring such gradations of membership to the fore, as peasants are transformed into Frenchmen, or Italians are made. But though observable, these differentiations have received little sustained study.

Applying such reflections to nation-work, however, suggests that it may involve three operations. The first is simply *distinction* – that is, the identification of the traits that distinguish one nation from other nations, as in the classic we – they contrasts studied by Barth. The second is *specification*. Membership in a given social category is not

always direct, but may be mediated by other categories, as a substantial literature on intersectionality shows. Typically, the central principles of social categorization – race / ethnicity, gender, and class – are not found in isolation, but construct one another (Collins 1990, 1998, Glenn 1999, McCall 2006, Davis 2008). Historically, as is well known, nation-formation conditioned the relationship between the individual and the state by gender (Yuval-Davis 1997, Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, McClintock 1995, Duara 1998) – men could serve the state as soldiers, often gaining the franchise in return, from which women, who could serve the state as mothers, were excluded. What is national may also be specified through class categories. Invented national traditions were, as Hobsbawm (1983b) has shown, often originally practices of the upper classes that filtered downwards. The middle classes could also supply nation-defining characteristics, as with German *Bildung* and *Kultur* (Elias 2000, pp. 11-30). In other cases, practices originating among the lower classes could become national symbols, like the Cuban rumba (Daniel 1995) or the Argentinian tango (Savigliano 1995), though these might need their origins to be obscured to acquire this status.

Nation-work may also, however, involve a third kind of categorization – *differentiation*. Who *we* are may be established not only vis-à-vis *them*, but also other members of *us*. A person may be a particularly good or bad member, a typical or strange member, an exemplary or phony member, of the national community. Here contrast is made against neither an external other, nor even an internal other (*cf*. Gal 1991). Indeed, there is no "other" in such cases – the comparison is made against fellows precisely as fellows, for it is shared membership that enables the differentiation. Like specification, it responds to the question *what kind of* a member one is, but in this case the answer is formulated in terms not of intersections with other categories, but of degree: *how good a member?* Evaluative judgments of what constitutes a good member are crafted against a standard ideal – patriotism measured by the gauge of a war hero who has risked or sacrificed his life for the country, a *real* American showing up those who are, in a pointed adjective, *un*-American. But if in such cases what makes a good compatriot is clear enough, conflict over these judgments may also occur (Verdery 1991).

Distinction, specification, and differentiation are not simply alternative modalities of ethnonational categorization, but constitutive of the broader category itself. An individual may be Scottish by being decisively not English; a woman may be a good citizen through

procreation; a Canadian may prove her colors by striving to be a good Canadian. Capturing we-they distinctions made across national boundaries, specifications of non-national categories mediating national identities, and differentiations internal to the national community can sharpen analysis of just how nations are evoked and enacted. Nation-work, operating as it does by definition/explanation and embodiment/cultivation typically involves these further gradations.

Applying nation-work: the Japanese tea ceremony

The Japanese tea ceremony provides a particularly compelling site for elucidating the operations of nation-work. In its five-century career, the ritual has traveled a path through the heights of political power, where it was a mainstay of aristocrats, merchants, warriors, and industrialists, before descending to and disseminating through the masses, today living on as a hobby of housewives. Tea activities in the past were dominated by formal gatherings – four-hour affairs in which a host serves a handful of guests a multi-course meal, in addition to several bowls of tea, all consumed from well-chosen and often costly dishes and other objects of art. But since the twentieth century these have become eclipsed by lessons, attended regularly by acolytes striving to master the vast corpus of tea making-procedures and their detailed regulation of bodily comportment. Though learning whether one should enter a room on the right or left foot or how to align one's finger tips at an aesthetically pleasing angle when holding a tea bowl may seem too abstruse to garner much interest today, Japan nonetheless counts over two million tea practitioners, ninety percent of whom are women (Shakai Keizai Seisansei Honbu 2006).

These numbers, however, do not capture the tea ceremony's great cultural significance. For though the proportion of Japanese regularly engaging in the practice is small, almost all recognize it as a constitutive element of traditional Japanese culture and possess some notion of what it involves. Such commonsensical "thin" knowledge is hard to avoid, as secondary school textbooks invariably weave the origins of the practice into the national histories they relate. Intrigued students may join the tea ceremony club, which stands beside the baseball team and art classes on the standard menu of extracurricular activities. Even those with no interest are exposed to the ritual when the club is mustered for performances at annual "Culture Day"

celebrations – a stock school festival where members, usually donning summer kimonos, stage formal tea performances for their peers and parents as they wander from exhibit to exhibit. What is learned or experienced at schools is reinforced on trips to places such as the Tokyo National Museum, which maintains an entire room dedicated to the tea ceremony, "one of the world renowned cultures of Japan". Curious novices traveling to Kyoto for *taiken tsuuarizumu* [experience tourism] may sample the beverage at two-dozen locations or participate in a ceremonial preparation at a half dozen more – temples, hotels, and restaurants where traditionally-designed tea rooms, with their tatami mat floors and raised alcoves (increasingly uncommon in everyday life), create an all-inclusive atmosphere of the rarified. But one does not even have to leave home to learn about tea – turning on the television is enough to expose one to the practice. Famous tea masters of the past appear in historical dramas, while shows set in the contemporary world sometimes use the hobby to accentuate the contrast between the traditional and modern. Even if they have never participated in a tea ceremony, everyone on the archipelago knows that it is Japanese.

But there is more to these national inflections than just the image. As a practice that is formally taught and learned, the tea ceremony favors articulation and explanation of what otherwise might be taken for granted – including national associations. Yet this by no means exhausts it as a medium for nation-work. For it is a richly multifaceted practice – one that physically transforms the participants, requires a large number of material components, and rests on an extremely elaborate written philosophy. Because it is so widely understood as archetypically Japanese, it provides an exceptional variety of angles for exploring how this Japaneseness is produced.

The tea ceremony offers a strategic research site for a second reason. The country where the practice holds sway appears – on the surface – to be an unusual example of a strongly bounded monoethnic community (Fearon 2003).[4] Because the ideological habits and beliefs that reproduce national understandings are embedded in everyday routines in this relatively stable society, it might be thought that nationality need not be constantly indicated or explicitly reinforced. Yet in a surprising number of instances when the nation could be taken-for-granted or merely implied, it is not, and uncovering the uses

[4] On the variegated construction and post-imperial reconstruction of this ideology, see Oguma (2002).

of such explicit markings can tell us something about the procedures of nation-work at large. For while contrasts with other nations always contribute to the construction of nationality – whether multi-ethnic or otherwise – a monoethnic case draws out the ways in which intra-national differentiations may also contribute to its production and reproduction. Indeed, in Japan what is often at stake is not *whether* someone is Japanese, a question that nearly always allows for a clear and automatic yes-or-no answer, but *what kind of* Japanese that person is.

Data collection

The following analysis is based on several years of archival and ethnographic research. The bulk of the fieldwork was carried out between August 2006 and February 2008, supplemented by materials gathered on earlier and shorter trips during the summers of 2002, 2003, and 2005. To ensure exposure to regional differences, I chose three locations for the ethnographic and interview work – Tokyo, Kyoto, and Awaji Island, representing the country's metropolitan center, its traditional capital, and its rural hinterland. I attended weekly tea lessons at four sites, combining participant observation with recorded informal group discussions, and occasional videotaping.[5] In addition, I conducted interviews with a snowball sample of over one hundred tea practitioners, including housewives, hair stylists, students, policemen, office workers, monks, geisha, and the simply rich and leisured, in addition to the heads of tea schools and others formally employed in the tea ceremony industry and

[5] My own training in the tea ceremony – a decade of lessons leading to a teaching certification – helped in deciphering the often specialized talk that occurs in tea settings as practitioners converse about utensils, artists, tea masters, and other topics outside the domain of the ordinary. But, more importantly, it enabled me to see how people act within, or manipulate, the strictures and structures of the tea. I learned how to distinguish between a compliment and a back-handed compliment, and identify when a mistake has been made but purposefully ignored. But no matter how much tea expertise I accrued, I was still a white Westerner in Japan carrying out fieldwork. Though I made a point of not initiating questions about Japaneseness, my very presence primed its relevance. To the extent that I have taken into account how these identifications affect the data produced and collected, they have provided resources rather than hindrances. But to understand how the tea ceremony is made Japanese not only for foreign but also local audiences, I draw also on instances in which my involvement was peripheral or non-existent. In tea demonstrations by Japanese for Japanese, and in materials written in Japanese for Japanese, explicit references to Japaneseness are common, providing rich material for studying the relationship between tea practice and national identity.

related sectors, such as tea producers, sweet makers, and museum curators. I collected historical material in Kyoto at the Chadô Research Center, and in Tokyo at the National Diet Library, the Textbook Library, and the Tokyo Women's Christian University Library.

Nation-building through tea

While the tea ceremony today is often seen as emblematically Japanese, this connotation is a relatively recent development, absent at its inception over five hundred years ago. The monks who introduced the beverage from China around a millennium ago incorporated it into meditative practices, preparing the drink with the rituals of regard used for all foodstuffs. By the fifteenth century, aristocrats were hosting lavish parties around tea consumption and the display of exotic artifacts from the continent. On their tails, successful merchants combined both strands, preparing tea according to an increasingly elaborate set of rules with a few choice rarities from abroad in combination with more readily accessible local utensils. During this time, the warlords Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), who brought ever-larger tracts of land under their control in the great territorial consolidation of the late sixteenth century, hungrily took up the practice with two distinct rewards. Not only did this aesthetic pursuit of their aristocratic forebears lend an aura of cultural legitimacy to their new claim to power, but this ritualized form of merchant sociability also facilitated connections with the urban commercial establishments and their supply of arms and staples. Indeed, status mattered little in the tea room of the late sixteenth century, where deals were often brokered between warriors, merchants, monks, and aristocrats.[6]

Thus the tea ceremony, in its early years, moderated the rawness of social division, power politics, and military conflict, intertwining aesthetic pleasures and spiritual precepts in a striking new form. The originating association of the practice with the first unifiers of the country, at the summit of rule, stamped it with a political prestige it would never thereafter lose. But the relative openness and fluidity of tea gatherings in the Momoyama upheavals (1573-1603) soon

[6] On the early history of the tea ceremony, see Berry (1997), Bodart (1977), Kumakura (1990), Pitelka (2003), and Varley and Kumakura (1989).

rigidified, during the Tokugawa peace (1603-1868), into a vehicle for the self-cultivation of the warrior class in a caste-divided society, in which mastery of its protocols of comportment was conceived as training in social responsibility, respect for hierarchy and skills of governance (Tanimura 2001). Below samurai level, merchants continued their own practice of tea, and amid growing urban prosperity, even well-off women of commoner status started to acquire rudiments of tea knowledge, as an introduction to gracious bearing (Corbett 2009). But the social function of tea remained essentially that of sustaining class distinctions, namely crafting better members of a closed elite, rather than better incumbents of a generalizing and widely embracing national identity.

With the overthrow of the Shogunate in 1868, the foundations of the neo-feudal order over which it had presided were swept away – the domains of the daimyo abolished, the samurai de-classed, industry and citizenry introduced. The ensuing turmoil altered the position of tea in three fateful ways. Its prestige as an accoutrement of power and wealth migrated from warriors to the captains of industry. The new industrialists – Mitsui director Masuda Takashi, shipbuilding magnate Kawasaki Shôzô, Tobu railroad founder Nezu Kaichirô, silk baron Hara Tomitarô, and Mitsukoshi department store director Takahashi Yoshio – collected utensils and prepared the beverage in styles deliberately recalling the daimyo tea of the Tokugawa period, or even the gala displays reminiscent of lordly shows in the Momoyama epoch. The activities of these magnates ensured that tea remained wedded to the pinnacle of political power, protecting it against the reputational demotion that might otherwise have befallen it, as at mass levels training in it changed gender, as discussed below. By adopting the cultured practices of prior rulers, the new businessmen aesthetes could hope to temper their image as ravenous economic animals, and appropriate legitimizing links to past elites. As Masuda Takashi put it, "Tea is one of the leisure arts I enjoy… Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and other heroes were impressed with this art and came to find it deeply rewarding. Since the Genki and Tenshô Eras [1570-1575], all great men have had a taste for tea" (Guth 1993, p. 94).

But the Meiji years brought a second major change to the field of tea, as the archipelago was transformed into a modern nation-state. While references to "Nihon" were occasionally made prior to the Restoration, the meaning of the term was neither consistent nor consistently applied to the present-day country or a centralized political authority, let alone a unified people. Expressions like *kokoku* – "imperial

land" – were more frequent, and the political system consisted of relatively autonomous domains, capped by the Shogunate, in which the largest social unit was usually that of the "domainal people" or the "village people". While the scholars of the Native Learning movement had begun to articulate ideas of cultural distinctiveness, and even formulate notions of the people as agents of government, these stopped short of conceptualizing the people as constituting a nation (see Doak 2007).

The political crisis that followed the arrival of Commodore Perry's squadron off Yokohama in 1853 abruptly altered the terms of earlier discourse, as the archipelago's elites confronted the danger of foreign incursions and possible occupation. The contestation and competition that defined subsequent state- and nation-building processes centered on many of the axes structuring modern nationalism: questions of territorial integrity, popular representation, cultural uniqueness, and political organization. Over the following decades, notions of Japaneseness were recrafted to fit a national model, envisaged through the lens of a particular set of familial metaphors. In the imaginary of the family-state (*kazoku kokka*), the country was headed by the newly emancipated emperor, and the populace incorporated through position-specific roles defined in relation to the familial head (Gluck 1985). While the Tokugawa regime was content with merely the docile compliance of commoners, the new Meiji rulers sought to transform the population of the archipelago into a self-aware national community.

Perhaps the most effective means of retooling a populace into national subjects is through state-run mass education, and the Meiji regime adopted a modern education system comparatively early and successfully. The 1872 Fundamental Code of Education made four years of schooling compulsory for boys and girls. By 1878 over half of all boys and about a quarter of all girls made regular trips to the schoolhouse, and by 1910 almost all girls attended instruction (Mackie 2003, p. 25, Nolte and Hastings 1991, p. 157). Morality was given a preeminent place in this nationalizing endeavor, encapsulated in an 1881 Ministry of Education directive to elementary school teachers to teach "loyalty to the Imperial House, love of country, filial piety toward parents, respect for superiors, faith in friends, charity toward inferiors, and respect for oneself constitute the Great Path of human morality" (Jansen 2000, p. 406). Ideological debates towards the close of the 1880s centered on the role of morality in cultivating a "sense of the nation", leading to the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890, which reinforced the connections between the school system, the

state, and the national family, in a moralizing Confucian register (Gluck 1985, pp. 102-156).

To this end, girls' education was reformulated to inculcate a new domestic ideal of femininity that would form middle- and upper-class women into "good wives and wise mothers",[7] repackaging the once desirable graces of the Tokugawa era into common fare in women's etiquette and home economics textbooks (Nolte and Hastings 1991, Koyama 1991). The principal concern of these texts was the preservation of a Japanese essence in the face of a threatening Westernization – a task accomplished first by defining the characteristics of that Japaneseness.[8] Introductions to the manuals commonly offered descriptions of Japan as a "country of proper manners" (Wantanabe 1892, introduction) that had recently become almost overwhelmed by an "influx of western things" (Kondo 1893, p. 1) or "things from abroad that are unlike those in this country" (Wantanabe 1892, introduction). Invoking the long history of Japan, the texts encourage readers to take pride in its customs, which were often feminized. "We should be proud of the qualities of our country's women and of the ways of our people in the past" (Kondo 1893, p. 2). Thus it was up to girls' education "to keep our country's particular manners from dying out" (Tsuboya 1891, p. 1). Such injunctions formed part of the broad contemporary concern with "conservation of the national essence" (*kokusui hozon*), which defined what was Japanese in contrast to external others (see Pyle 1969, pp. 52-75).

The etiquette and home economics manuals – sporadically in the 1890s, regularly in the early twentieth century – lauded tea for its nationalizing effects. The ceremony was variously depicted as an ancient elite pastime, a method of social exchange, a form of manners, or a spiritual endeavor, whose benefits included the cultivation of

[7] Mori Arinori (1847-1889), the first Minister of Education, explained that the purpose of this policy was "to nurture a disposition and train talents for the task of rearing children and of managing a household", and declared that "the basis of national wealth is education and the foundation of education is female education. The encouragement or discouragement of female education, we must remember, has a bearing on national tranquility or its absence" (translation in Mackie 2003, p. 25). Women, as household managers, carried a great responsibility to the state, for it was their duty, in the words of Education Minister Kabayama Sukenori, not only to "nourish a warm and chaste character and the most beautiful and elevated temperament" but – and this was to be a crucial rider – to "furnish the knowledge of arts and crafts necessary for middle- to upper-class life" (translation in Czarnecki (2005, p. 51).

[8] These arguments are based on a sample of thirty instructional books published between 1890 and 1919 (ten textbooks per decade) drawn from the Meiji and Taisho era collections in the National Diet Library. While the process by which books enter into the library's collection is unclear, there is no indication of a selection bias that would affect arguments concerning gender and national framings.

morals, good conduct, ties of friendship, and aesthetic sensibility, and training in the practice bore on the central duties of a good wife and wise mother. One text explained that "learning tea manners is useful for learning how to handle things in the kitchen" (Joshi Saihô Kôtô Gakkô 1910, pp. 172-173); another that what was learned in the tea room should then be "applied naturally in everyday life" (Teikoku Fujin Gakkai 1905, pp. 216-217); a third that "if you learn the tea ceremony, you will, when drinking tea at home, naturally take [the cup] with two hands instead of one. You will always reply to an invitation. You will always see people off at the door" (Kobayashi 1911, p. 102). Though not always explicitly marked as such, the proposed benefits of tea training could readily be understood as distinctively national. The version of Confucian ethics frequently invoked was enshrined in the Imperial Rescript on Education as the basis of national pedagogy. Aesthetic sensibilities putatively acquired through tea – such as the poetic elegance of *fûga* or *fûryû* – were concurrently serving organizational axes in the formation of a distinctively Japanese literary canon (Mostow 2001, pp. 106-107). Even the practices of everyday good behavior, such as holding a teacup with two hands, were set in visual juxtaposition with Western customs, such as holding a teacup with one hand, discussed in other sections of etiquette books – implicit distinctions with cultural others establishing the Japaneseness of these qualities.

By this time the focus of cultivation had shifted towards creating not simply Japanese defined vis-à-vis external others, but *good* Japanese, differentiated from their peers by their refinement of national or nation-serving qualities. For these were not private virtues. By instructing girls in how to make tea, the manuals also taught them how to construct a good household, the foundational unit of the nation. Under the Meiji dispensation, the object of the tea cultivation – the range of what practitioners were purportedly turned into – shifted, in effect, from the refinement of elites to the production of good imperial subjects by fostering national morality and manners. By anchoring tea in the relationship between the individual and the state, this formulation held great sway. Proper ethical orientation was an essential part of national membership, and for women, training in the practice – crafting their bodies into state-sanctioned ideals – was a means to that end.

But the tea ceremony was disseminated not only as a means to cultivate Japaneseness in a loosely defined sense. Decisive for the future of the practice as a national symbol was an additional trend of the period: the development of a fully articulated ideology of tea by

intellectuals, defining it as the inmost core of Japan – an all but complete synthesis of the arts and ethics of the nation. Okakura Kakuzô's *The Book of Tea* (1906) – based on a set of lectures delivered in New York – set down the patterns this discourse would assume as the author explained the culture of this new rival to the Great Powers through the lens of the tea ceremony. As the book's opening pages set forth, "Our home and habits, costume and cuisine, porcelain, lacquer, painting – our very literature – all have been subject to ["Teaism's"] influence. No student of Japanese culture could ever ignore its presence" (Okakura 1989: 30). For Okakura, it was not Japanese culture that generated tea, but tea that generated Japanese culture. In contrast to the West, Okakura declaimed, Japan revered the relative and not the absolute, and celebrated the spiritual over the material. Nature, on the archipelago, was respected rather than wantonly wasted as it was by Europeans. Western architecture, its symmetry yielding simply "useless reiteration", was "devoid of originality, [and] so replete with the repetitions of obsolete styles", while Western homes were filled with "bric-a-brac" in a "confusion of color and form". In contrast, the vaunted Japanese aesthetic – encapsulated in the practice of tea – was marked by emptiness, asymmetry, simplicity, and the ephemeral. These distinctions drawn against Europe and North America provided the fulcrum for elaborating the exacting aesthetic sense that, for Okakura, defined the core of Japanese culture.

Felicitously published in English at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, the book was a raging success in the United States and Europe, where it was quickly translated into half a dozen languages. And its first appearance in Japanese – only in 1929 – met an equally warm reception during a time of growing interest in native Japanese arts. In the intensifying nationalist mobilization of the 1930s, an avalanche of publications amplified these themes, replaying at home the distinctions initially generated for Western audiences. One writer visibly influenced by Okakura's portrayal of the tea ceremony as a supremely Japanese art was Yanagi Sôetsu, the central figure behind the influential Mingei movement that celebrated the native crafts of his homeland, and critic of the Japanese occupation of Korea.[9] Part of the intellectual milieu of the growing urban middle class, he took aim at the decadence of the sukisha and their domination of cultural fields by championing Japanese and Korean "simple folkware". To pinpoint

[9] Although his given name was Muneyoshi, Yanagi is generally known by the alternative reading of the characters, Sôetsu. On Yanagi see Brandt (2007) and Kikuchi (2004).

the profundity of humble ceramics for daily use, he mobilized the great tea masters of the past and their eye for the beauty in everyday life to legitimate his aesthetic choices. Yanagi began his 1935 essay *Chadô o Omou*, published in the leading arts journal *Kôgei*, by announcing, "Cultivation of our incomparable Japanese beauty can be developed through many years of training in the tea ceremony" (Yanagi 2000, p. 130). Simultaneously claiming that a peculiarly Japanese vision could transform a Korean tea bowl into a Japanese thing – a position in line with the imperialist notion of Japan as the first among equals in Asia – and that the forms of beauty unique to an ethnic group can only be understood by that group, he pronounced the aesthetic sense informing the tea ceremony to be not only distinctively, but exclusively Japanese (see Tanaka 2007, pp. 292-315). But unlike Okakura's Western-oriented efforts, Yanagi's text aimed to elucidate the essence of Japanese culture to a Japanese audience, among whom the explicit contrasts with the West could be taken for granted, and who innately possessed the sensibilities that could be refined into a connoisseur's eye.

Meanwhile, spurred by an interest in the scientific study of Japanese culture, several scholars and tea aficionados began the *Chadô Zenshû* series in the early 1930s. This encyclopedic set of writings on the tea ceremony considered the practice an element of Japanese culture that should be understood through historical research and carefully recorded utensil measurements. But its contributors also had no hesitation in treating tea as an expression of the national essence, its twelfth volume in 1935 projecting tea as nothing less than the "apex of Japanese culture", (Kumakura 1980, p. 27) concentrating the essence of the Japanese, evinced in a respect for others and a distinctively Japanese taste. The collection elaborated the sense of beauty that defined the nation through an aesthetic sensibility condensed in the tea ceremony (see Tanaka 2007, pp. 6-7; pp. 471-476). Connecting the ceremony both to a national populace and its heroic leaders of the past, two prominent intellectuals, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi and Tanikawa Tetsuzô, offered in individual chapters populist depictions of tea as historically a cross-class practice. Not only had tea practice been a motivating force in the decisiveness of former great leaders, it was also one in which anyone could participate on an equal footing. In another contribution to the volume, Takamatsu Sadaichi described tea gatherings as a synthesis of the arts, in which the host was a creator who could express his individuality by producing a masterpiece. But wary of reducing the complexity of the ceremony to European

categories, Takamatsu argued that Western art separated beauty from practical use, whereas the tea ceremony in Japan did not. Tea for Takamatsu was simultaneously high art and an everyday practice expressive of the nation, defined in contradistinction to the West by the refined aesthetic sensitivity that permeated society.

Taken as a whole, these scholarly texts were less concerned with the material act of making tea than with the cultural and aesthetic meanings embodied in it. By theorizing and formalizing an inherent connection between the tea ceremony and Japaneseness, the intellectuals offered reasons *why* tea was essentially Japanese – reasons far more elaborate than anything that could be found in school manuals or etiquette books. Indeed, they presented the practice as integral to the national culture in a way that set it apart from Korea or China, where tea never became a representative national art during the period of nation-state formation. Whereas tea instruction for women was largely instrumental – it was a means to producing a positive national end – the elite ideologies that defined it as a banner of national being, treated tea as an end in itself. If women doing tea had a responsibility for sustaining the national culture, men doing tea were alone equipped to identify and certify what that national culture was, whether as capitalist connoisseurs of historic or religious objects, or as philosophers or antiquaries of the country's whole cultural legacy.

This gendered division of labor facilitated the production and reproduction of tea as Japanese. A minimal but not insignificant amount of commonsense knowledge is necessary for a symbol to communicate meaning effectively, even if its interpretation is not always unitary. Often, indeed, polyvalence is a condition of durable influence (Sewell 1992). Women's tea was central to the dissemination of a shared base that could be taken for granted. But feminization of the practice stood in tension with the image that elite businessmen projected of tea, and both capitalists and intellectuals tended to advance their conceptions of tea as a Japanese art or tradition in part by taking a distance from women's everyday tea practice (Surak 2011). Yet both sides of this latently antagonistic balance contributed to a national canonization of the tea ceremony: a commonsense association carrying feminine overtones proliferated through textbooks and the school system, while a set of complex masculine discourses formalized and heightened the same essentializing connection in a more overtly political register. Through these productive tensions, tea became both a medium for imagining the nation – a tool for definition/explanation – and a means to becoming national – a resource

for embodiment/cultivation. The distinctions with the West that structured many of the initial elaborations of what was Japanese, were then set as the goals of what national members should become – the moral valences of differentiation. By the mid-twentieth century, the symbolism of the ceremony assigned tea to the core meaning of Japaneseness, while the edification of the practice promised to make of those who performed it better Japanese.

Nation-maintenance through tea

If the tea ceremony has become charged with national associations during the rough course of modern history, how are these relevant in contemporary society? How do people invoke and evoke the accreted Japaneseness in their interactions? In asking these questions, it must be stressed that not everything that goes on within tea rooms is about the nation (see Eriksen 2002; Brubaker *et al*. 2006). Many practitioners attend lessons for the chance to socialize with friends, get out of the house, or relax after work. Tea is not always made with the solemnity of a formal gathering, but sometimes rather carelessly whipped up as practitioners chat about recent life events or ask for advice – the conversations sometimes spilling over into a coffee or a meal after class. Nonetheless, adherents may at times call on the Japanese inflections carried by the practice, and move such national associations from background to foreground, transforming them into an interactional resource.

For practitioners, tea demonstrations offer valuable public outreach opportunities and occasions to apply their knowledge of the practice. At these spectacles practitioners typically explain the ceremony to an audience of novices, who witness a formal tea preparation and taste a bowl of whipped *matcha* tea. The accompanying explanations can shade into injunctions for cultivation, particularly when the tea ceremony is staged as an archetypal expression of Japanese culture for which the audience, as Japanese, is also responsible. Demonstrations for children offer particularly rich opportunities for observing how the practice can be used to cultivate participants for this purpose.

At a tea gathering in 2007, the members of a baton club at an elementary school in Tokyo were assembled at a tea room by their coach, Mrs. Maegawa, who had been holding such occasions since 2004. The principal and two teachers from the elementary school

joined the demonstration and sat as the main guests, followed by a neat line of eleven girls, ranging in age from seven to twelve, each done-up smartly in dresses or skirts. Before the event began, I asked Mrs. Maegawa why she had decided to host these gatherings, and she replied:

> I want them to learn things they will use later. It's almost New Year's now, and so soon they will visit shrines. Here they can learn how to wash their hands properly beforehand – they wouldn't know how to do it otherwise.[10] Here they can learn "Japanese traditional manners" [*said in English*]. You know, these days bullying is becoming such a big problem. People don't really think about others any longer, and so I want to teach the children that. If we have that as a foundation, then bullying will end. Do you know *Edo shigusa*?[11] People in the Edo Period carried umbrellas, and when they passed each other in the street, they shifted them so others could pass smoothly. It was a basic, unwritten rule – everyone's shared understanding. But now most people don't know those sorts of things, which is why I want to teach them to the children. And then when they become mothers, they will teach their own children, who will pass it on as well.

Mrs. Maegawa's reasoning presents tea as a means to cultivating proper comportment and interpersonal understanding, both here logged as a part of the traditional manners in need of revival and transmission – duties presented as distinctively feminine. She calls forth national valences both directly – these reinforced by a switch to English that embeds a distinction between self and other into the expressive form itself – and indirectly, by reference to "people", an indexical expression implicitly identified with the nation in this context (see Billig 1995).

Extending these justifications further, a handout distributed to the girls a few days before the demonstration described the tea performance as "offering something that will be useful not only when you go to other tea ceremonies, but also when you invite important guests over to your house" – domestic skills recalling the use of tea in the etiquette training of "good wives and wise mothers" a century before. Dwelling on the details of the extensive behind-the-scenes preparations of a formal tea ceremony, the handout enjoined the girls not to wear difficult-to-remove shoes as part of the "important thoughtfulness of guests", thereby encouraging consideration for others. The pamphlet concluded by presenting the injunctions as part of the traditions and customs of Japan, which the girls, as good nationals and good mothers, are to transmit to future generations: "I would be very

[10] The ritual hand cleansing before entering a shrine is similar to the ritual hand cleansing before entering a tea room.

[11] *Edo Shigusa* are "Edo Period manners" that have been revived in recent years through an Edo etiquette book boom.

happy if you all think about the importance of Japan's wonderful traditions and customs through this tea ceremony and use it as a beginning for passing these on".

During the demonstration, Mrs. Maegawa and her husband explained the symbolic significances of the utensils used and how to drink the tea, while the girls sat quietly for the most part, with only a few, unused to kneeling for long periods, occasionally fidgeting. Later, one of the teachers praised the physical discipline required for such stoic fortitude. "There are so few chances for kids to practice self-restraint and patience these days. Everything is so easy for them. But it's good to practice putting up with things sometimes." Even after the tea preparation concluded, the cultivation of proper comportment continued as one girl asked Mrs. Maegawa about the correct way to open sliding doors, and three others eagerly practiced bowing, emulating the model of grace on display during the demonstration.

The event ended with the children taken to enjoy some drinks and snacks in an adjacent room, where, as is common at such parties in Japan, the principal of the school offered a few closing words:

> When I was a child I really liked Japanese things, and so I joined the tea ceremony club in high school, where I learned just how deep Japanese culture is. It was 1964 when I first began learning tea – the year of the Tokyo Olympics. I went to a high school near here, and at the school's Culture Festival we put on a tea performance outside, under a broad umbrella, everyone in kimonos. And now, when you think about what you will become [when you grow up], I hope that you will learn more about your own country. Our school is 135 years old, and when it was founded there was tea. [Toyotomi] Hideyoshi did tea as well – during his time there was tea. It has been around for ages – this part of ancient Japanese culture. In just one bowl of tea, you can think about a lot of things.

Claiming the tea ceremony as a thread connecting members of the school and the foundational figures of the past, the principal reinforced a historical understanding of Japanese identity, continuous through time, in which tea plays a crucial role. He not only directly marked the national associations, but also evoked them through distinctions with external others, these elicited by the Tokyo Olympics – the first major international splash-out following World War II – and by the other countries implied in the reference to "your own". The definitions here are minimal, and the specific qualities of Japaneseness are hardly elaborated, but even such epigrammatic expressions perpetuate a tight coupling of the practice and the essence of the nation.

Mrs. Maegawa wrapped up the occasion, touched to the point of tears:

> Your teachers have a very important message for each one of you, and I hope you pay attention to what they say. And, when you become adults, I hope you pass that on as well. [*She starts to cry.*] When you become mothers, please become wonderful mothers and create a bright world for us. [*She apologizes.*] My tears are just an expression of my feeling of gratitude.

Afterward Mrs. Maegawa explained that she had been overcome with emotion when she saw that a girl who frequently acted up was sitting properly and listening to her teachers for the first time – the embodiment of a successful lesson in how to become a good Japanese person had moved her greatly. Yet, as an exercise in cultivating the children, the demonstration was designed to mold the girls as not just Japanese, but a specific type of Japanese. In a contemporary reworking of the "good wives and wise mothers" creed, they were to both improve household management and become future disseminators of Japanese culture to their own children. Though national specificity was, on occasion, located through the external contrasts of distinction, the overarching purpose of the day invoked a differentiation between the "good Japanese" the girls could become and those who did not – or not yet – possess the requisite national characteristics.

A pair of demonstrations at a Tokyo junior high school in 2007 offers a somewhat contrasting agenda. As a part of the Ministry of Education's Ibashozukuri Program,[12] four female volunteers, headed by the 60-year old Mrs. Suzuki, presented a two-hour demonstration of the tea ceremony to a class of eighth graders. The students' homeroom teachers had decided to split the pupils into gender-segregated groups, as they explained, to prevent the boys from dominating matters and give the girls a greater chance to participate. Thus a demonstration was held for 46 boys the first week, and a second for 40 girls the following week. The volunteers erected an ersatz tea space in the front of a science classroom by spreading plastic judo tatami mats and hanging a scroll from a movie screen. The first hour of the demonstration involved watching a five-minute video by the most prominent tea master in Japan, which was then followed by a live demonstration of tea making, and the opportunity for everyone to sample the beverage.

A homeroom teacher launched the event with a brief introduction. For the boys, the overview was terse: "Today, we welcome guest teachers and will get to know the tea ceremony, the spirit of

[12] This government scheme, run from 2004 to 2007, was introduced at a national level to integrate children into their communities by inviting local adults to give short lectures or demonstrations of their specialized knowledge or abilities. If a local volunteer stepped forward, tea demonstrations were included as a part of the program.

Japaneseness". The girls, in contrast, were presented with far greater goals: "You know the term 'Japanese woman' [*nihon no josei*], and your teacher mentioned that you will be learning about proper manners today, as well as Japanese culture. It's just a short time we have for Japanese culture and its long history, but I would like you to get a taste of it". Going beyond the simple connection between the tea ceremony and a generic Japanese spirit offered to the boys, the presentation for the girls portrayed tea as an element of a specifically Japanese femininity and proper manners, as well as the long history of Japanese culture. Though perhaps not foremost in the teacher's mind, these introductions laid the groundwork for a difference that would later emerge in what the students were expected to experience through the demonstration – spiritual elements or Japanese culture and proper feminine manners.

Next, the pupils watched a video in which the former "grand master" (*iemoto*) of the largest tea organization told them:

> Tea is a composite cultural experience of Japan. I would like you all to understand that first and foremost. We live in a time of international exchange, of internationalization. Yet in this era, the Japanese – the people of Japan – don't know a thing about traditional culture. I think that's quite embarrassing. Yet now foreigners are studying [Japanese traditional culture] very hard. Bearing that in mind, you should know that, although it's just a bowl of tea, with that bowl you can get in touch with Japaneseness. The spirit of thinking about others is deeply aroused. It's about thinking of others. When you make tea, you come to see that. I hope you learn that.

Invoking a distinction with ethnic others to bring home the importance of knowing things Japanese, and a differentiation with "embarrassing" Japanese who fail to live up to this expectation, the video primed two topics: that tea imparts knowledge of Japanese culture, and that tea is thinking about others. The latter, defined as a Japanese spiritual orientation, is presented as critical for Japan's position in an internationalizing world. These topics, however, were not immediately integrated into the performance that followed, which focused largely on the mechanics of tea-making. After the video, tea was prepared while Mrs. Suzuki explained the practice, covering topics such as thin tea and thick tea, and the meaning of the words on the scroll. There was no difference in the presentation to boys and girls until the time to drink the tea approached. At that point, Mrs. Suzuki told the girls of a friend who had taken up tea after a trip to Canada.

> She was asked by a lot of people about various Japanese things, and when she started to answer, she found she couldn't. Someone said to her, "What? Why doesn't a Japanese know about the tea ceremony?" After that she began to study

> it. In the future, you'll probably have the chance to go abroad. When you do, people will think that every Japanese knows about their own culture, about Japanese things. Therefore, if you can say, "Ah, I've done tea before", I think it would be wonderful.

Framing the girls as future emissaries of Japanese culture, Mrs. Suzuki proffered their experience of the tea ceremony as a means of cultivating the abilities to fulfill this role. As in the grand master's speech, the move was dual: accountability for Japanese things to national others grounded the necessity for self-improvement – and cultivation that would differentiate them from less-worthy members. When talking to the boys, on the other hand, Mrs. Suzuki simply mentioned that more foreigners are interested in Japanese culture than the Japanese themselves, without projecting upon them the duties of cultural ambassadorship.

But they too would become the target of cultivation efforts. When bowls of tea were brought out for the boys to taste, they began to get rowdy. Against the jostling and teasing, Mrs. Suzuki raised her voice and began to scold them.

> Why are manners important? Is all of your talking a part of manners? [*The boys begin to quiet down.*] Good manners mean putting yourself in the position of others. If you can't do that, then you don't have any manners. Understand? I want you all to learn that tea contains that sort of spirit. In the previous video the grand master said so, didn't he? You are going against the Japanese spirit. You are going against manners. Do you understand?

Claiming thoughtful consideration of others as a hallmark of both the spirit of tea and the spirit of Japan, Mrs. Suzuki railed the boys for their deficient conduct, differentiating them from those true to the "Japanese spirit". They were not merely bad members of the school, but bad members of the nation.

For the girls, the problem addressed was not classroom but bodily discipline. Though no boy was shown how to bow correctly, the girls were not only guided step-by-step in how to bow with formality and grace, but also instructed in how to walk in a kimono. Mrs. Suzuki asked for a volunteer from the class to come up to the front of the room, and a girl in a sweatshirt emulated her movements while she pointed out to the others what to look for to distinguish a good bow from a bad one. Afterward, she showed them how to walk in a kimono, with their toes forward or pointed slightly inward. Taking a few steps forward, her body swaying side to side and her feet splayed outwards at a ninety-degree angle, Mrs. Suzuki demonstrated what not to do to the girl's giggles. "It doesn't look good at all. In a kimono, your feet

should be straight or if anything pointed a bit inward." Walking with smaller, more controlled leg movements, her upper torso hardly moving, she demonstrated again. "So now, if you keep that in mind, when you wear a cotton kimono this summer, the boys will think you're really cute." As in the boys' session, she employed the tea ceremony and its elements to normalize behavior or correct failings, but with the girls, specification (a feminine Japanese way of walking) and differentiation (contrast with ungainly women) were both at play in the attempt to cultivate a particularly Japanese ideal of feminine movement and manners.[13]

Written texts on the tea ceremony provide yet another venue where national inflections may be directly articulated. Since 1978, the largest national tea ceremony association, Tankôkai, has held an essay competition for the members of tea ceremony clubs at secondary schools and colleges, in which students describe why they began tea ceremony lessons and what they have learned from them. While there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the submissions, they inevitably are guided by an understanding of Tankôkai's educational programs, which concentrate on the promotion of Japanese culture through the tea ceremony. Thus caution should be applied in reading these as a testament of the continuous tangible experience of Japaneseness for tea ceremony participants. Yet because the essay contest favors such national expressions, the writings supply copious material for examining the general mechanics of how Japaneseness is presented, experienced, and naturalized through the practice. Out of over 600 submissions in 2002, ten grand prize and twenty first-place winners were published in that year's *Collected Essays of School Tea Ceremony Club Experiences* [*Gakkô Chadô Taiken Ronbunshû*], examined here.

Most of the essays report what the pupils had gained through the practice of tea, with personal transformations the predominant leitmotif. In these descriptions of how a better self is cultivated, Japaneseness is consistently established through differentiation. Yamane Mayuko, a student at Kyoto Women's College, explained that before studying tea, she was only dimly aware of seasons, registering little more than whether it was hot or cold or if the flowers were blooming. But by attending tea lessons, she began to shift from an unrefined, geographically

[13] The specifically Japanese framing of this pedagogical goal was introduced at the beginning of the class in the homeroom teacher's introduction: "You know the term 'Japanese woman' [*nihon no josei*], and your teacher mentioned that you will be learning about proper manners today. And also Japanese culture".

unspecific seasonal awareness to a sensitivity grounded in a distinctively Japanese climate. In the tea room, she started "to appreciate, feel – and want to feel more – Japan's beautiful seasons" through the "cherry blossoms in spring, the scent of new green leaves, the light in summer, the autumn trees preparing for winter, the snow dancing on the ground with suspense" (Yamane 2002, pp. 2-3). She describes how this appreciation for nature has followed her out of the tea room and into everyday life – an experience shared by Wada Sakiko, a senior in high school. Wada recounted how she first noticed the artificial flowers on permanent display at the entrance to her home only after joining the tea club. "Seasonless artificial flowers ignore Japanese seasons, and I realized that to have them in a Japanese-style hall was out of place." Training in tea alerted her to jarring disruptions in what should have been a harmonious coordination of Japanese elements. Taking the flowers used in the tea class home afterward, she began arranging them in the entrance at home to create an atmosphere in which "the spirit could be soothed" (Wada 2002, pp. 15-17). Orthography underscores the Japanese inflections of her awakening, as she elects to write "soothe" [*nagomu,* なごむ, 和む] not with the phonetic *hiragana* script commonly used to transcribe the word, but with the character *wa* (和), which conveys a sense of both "harmony" and "Japaneseness". In cultivating a heightened "Japanese" awareness of seasonality, differentiation appears through a refinement that separates not the author from others who are less Japanese, but the author from her pre-tea, implicitly less Japanese self.

Fundamentally, Japanese membership across all of these cases is never thrown into doubt – national identity is treated as an internal essence, even if one that needs to be recovered. As Ogawa Maiko described it, the tea ceremony "provides a place where a Japanese identity can be confirmed". In everyday life, she explained, "people are anonymous and unconcerned. They generally feel anxious about people they don't know. But the tea ceremony relaxes these anxieties. When I enter the tea room, I think, 'Of course I am Japanese'. Through the tea preparation and the accompanying manners, the tea ceremony enables the Japanese heart to be seen" (Ogawa 2002, pp. 20-21). She stresses that "the tea ceremony has been one path through which I have been able to become aware that I am Japanese" – a latent identity ("of course" she was Japanese) coaxed out by the practice. Suzuki Mami described a similar realization. After encountering the tea ceremony, she "became aware of the importance of learning about the culture of [her] country, which has been passed down over time", encouraging her to take on the civilizing mission to spread this knowledge among her

peers. "Because I was born Japanese, I want to maintain the importance of the culture that has been transmitted from the past. To do that, it is necessary to feel closer to the tea ceremony and know the spirit of Japaneseness. If other students can try tea, they can also get to know the spirit of Japaneseness" (Suzuki 2002, pp. 59-60).

Some cases, however, require a concerted rehabilitation. Lamenting the decline of a Japanese sense of self, a high school senior in Gifu declared, "Many people are now very disorderly, and an increasing number don't respect others", but "the thing that the Japanese are supposed to hold as important – a concern for others – can be revived through tea" (Yanagita 2002, p. 40). Ueda Riko also confessed that "an open spirit has been lost in contemporary Japanese society, and I, unfortunately, had lost it too". But seeing the flowers in the tea room, reading the powerful message of the scroll, and hearing the sound of the tea being whisked, she felt the depth of the tea ceremony and a purification of her spirit. Though, she admits, "I had forgotten the obvious fact that I am Japanese". Yet through contact with "Japanese ancient culture" she could reclaim "the free spirit that contemporary Japanese are lacking" and discover "the joyful pride of being Japanese" (Ueda 2002, pp. 41-43).

If cultivating Japaneseness relies on making a differentiation between better or worse members (or selves), the explanations of it in the texts hinge more frequently on distinctions drawn across national boundaries. Indeed, such borders can supply a spur to action: pupils commonly state that they took up tea in anticipation of moments of being held accountable for explaining Japanese culture in their encounters with foreigners. Yanagita Eriko joined a tea club because "the world has become international, and exchange with foreign countries has increased, so when I tell foreigners about Japan, I want to know about at least one item of Japanese traditional culture" (Yanagita 2002, pp. 39-41). Ogawa Maiko encountered such a situation herself. Only after having spent several years abroad did she become interested in "Japanese culture" because when asked about her home country, she often did not know how to respond. Wanting to learn about something "unique to Japan", she took up the tea ceremony "to be able to explain Japanese culture with confidence" (Ogawa 2002, p. 21).

Even if aimed at domestic readers, explanations still frequently invoke foreign contrasts. Noguchi Aya, for example, reported a debate at her school on the differences between Japanese and Western cultures. One of the participants audaciously claimed that "Japanese culture, after all, is only form. Inside the tea ceremony there is

nothing at the core". Noguchi could not agree, but was unable to rebut the charge at the time. Only later did clarification come, through distinction. On a trip to Canada, she introduced the tea ceremony to her host-mother, who began making *matcha* tea every day by just mixing it in her mug without further ado. Noguchi noted that she wasn't doing "the tea ceremony I had shown her, but simply an odd form of drinking 'green tea'" (Noguchi 2002, pp. 5-7). The experience enabled her to distill what was essential to the spirit of tea: that everything has rules, and if people can embody those rules, they enter the spiritual path. For her, the contrast with foreign crudity clarified the meaning of the Japanese sense of exquisite form.

Students also portrayed the tea ceremony as a concentrate of universal values capable of overcoming national boundaries, but claims of this kind were typically couched in a distinctively Japanese style. One pupil, who had provided a tea demonstration to a foreigner interested in Japanese history, felt responsible for representing Japan through her performance. Happily, the foreigner had told her that "while the tea is bitter, it communicates the beautiful Japanese heart", and that samurai and monks in the past had probably shared the same feeling. Although conversation between the two was in a halting combination of pidgin Japanese and pidgin English, the author proclaims that through tea they were able to communicate heart-to-heart (Yamane 2002, pp. 2-3). Yet if the tea ceremony is held up as a means of lowering national boundaries and recognizing a common humanity, the terms of the encounter remain Japanese. The stock phrase in tea circles, that "tea is heart-to-heart communication", promotes the practice as a means for understanding others without words – a highly valued skill in Japanese society, but one that reduces communication to only a minimal emotional expression. Such empathy does not lend itself to detail or clarification, let alone disagreement, yielding little more than pleasantries. Indeed, the practice may be so charged with national valences in such situations that any attempt to overcome them may fall flat.

For the tea ceremony, the national inflections the practice accumulated at the turn of the twentieth century come to life through the actions and interactions of its carriers. In the everyday activities of the hobby, practitioners invoke Japaneseness not only to explain the broader cultural significance of what they are doing, but also to inculcate in others, as they themselves have come to embody, the higher justifications of the practice used to weather the difficult transition from the premodern to the modern eras – proper behavior, thinking of others, and,

for some, the qualities of good wives and wise mothers. The national associations that vaulted the tea ceremony to the apex of Japanese traditional culture, as the synthesis of everything at its base, have not lost their resonance as nation-building shifted to nation-maintenance. Indeed, they pulse through the actions of the practitioners as they not only invoke national grounds for explaining what they do, but more quietly enact national associations in their tea practice.

Conclusion: the sociology of nationalism

The sociology of nationalism has rarely moved with much fluency between nation-building projects and nation-maintaining processes – a stiffness tacitly criticized in Smith's (2008, p. 571) appeal for a framework bringing together historical and ethnographic approaches. Even the most sophisticated attempt to unite the two – Brubaker *et al*.'s (2006) investigation of nationalist politics and everyday life in a Transylvanian town – reveals more disconnection than integration between the levels. Yet a striking similarity in the pragmatics of nationalist projects and everyday nationness, spanning macro and micro fields alike, can be seen in nation-work. The characteristics of the nation are defined by distinctions drawn between the self and non-national others – traits that often carry a specifically classed or gendered inflection – and these qualities are cultivated in a process that differentiates members into greater and lesser incumbents.

Yet if the typical forms and modalities of nation-work are similar across contexts, their relative weight is not. Most originating nation-work defines the nation into existence by linguistic instruction designed to create nationally conscious subjects. This is a process in which ideology transforms dispersed scraps of myth, memory, and custom into fully-fledged national traditions, in which appeals to a (largely legendary) past delimit who "we" are through implicit or explicit distinctions between "us" and "them". As a rule, the subjects interpellated by the ideology are initially unaware of the glorious history they will henceforward share, and remain reliant upon its definitions and explanations for the "awakening" of their national consciousness.

Its embodiment and cultivation normally arrive half a step behind definition and explanation, for these forms of nation-work require a prior signifying apparatus that constitutes them as national. Once established, however, they cannot be taken for granted, for when they take hold as

lived performances – at their most powerful, somatic transformations – they can be far more potent than verbal utterances. As Billig (1995) describes, to retain resonance among a populace, the nation must be quietly embedded in quotidian life – the "we" in the newspaper, the colors at the post office, the way of washing up dishes. Patterning ordinary life, even as they differentiate some members into better incumbents than others, they remain central to the everyday maintenance of the nation, long after the pyrotechnics of nationalism have faded.

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Résumé

L'article construit un pont entre les analyses du nationalisme comme projet politique et celles du vécu comme national en scrutant de près les actions qui participent des deux formes. Cette analyse du "travail du national" concourt au tournant cognitif dans les recherches sur ethnicité et nationalisme en montrant comment opère la catégorisation ethno-nationale. Alors que le nationalisme peut avoir comme projet l'image d'un "Nous" homogène, l'hétérogénéité interne se révèle cruciale dans l'expérience d'appartenance nationale et le courant de création qui va avec.

Mots clés: Nationalisme ; Ethnicité ; Culture ; Catégorisation; Japon.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag stellt eine Verbindung zwischen Untersuchungen über den Nationalismus und jenen über nationale Identität her, wobei er den Handlungen, die beide Aspekte einbeziehen, ein besonderes Augenmerk schenkt. Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalen ist dem kognitiven Wandel in Forschungsarbeiten über Ethnizität und Nationalismus verpflichtet, wobei sie erläutert, wie die ethnonationale Kategorisierung agiert. Während der Nationalismus sich das Bild eines homogenen Wirs zum Ziel setzen kann, erweist sich die Heterogenität als entscheidend für das Entstehen und Empfinden einer nationalen Zugehörigkeit.

Schlagwörter: Nationalismus; Ethnizität; Kultur; Kategorisierung; Japan.