

# การสร้างสรรคร์รสชาติที่เป็นหนึ่งเดียว: การโหยหาอดีตและนวัตกรรมสร้างสรรค์ ในสีกิซิมะมนะ โตเกียว

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาเกี่ยวกับ “มนะ” อาหารกระทะร้อนรสชาติจัดจ้านที่มีชื่อเสียงในฐานะ “อาหารชนชั้น B-class” ของเขตสีกิซิมะเมืองโตเกียว โดยศึกษาจากเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้องและการสัมภาษณ์ คุณคาซุฮิโตะ คาคาโอกะ ตัวแทนสมาคมส่งเสริมมนะในสีกิซิมะ ในประเด็นเกี่ยวกับนวัตกรรมสร้างสรรค์ “มนะ” ของชุมชน เกี่ยวกับการใช้ประโยชน์ และมูลค่าของรสชาติ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า จากประวัติศาสตร์ชุมชนและจิตสำนึกของการเป็น “ชุมชนคนแปลกหน้า” ที่เกิดจากการรวมตัวของคนต่างพื้นที่ ทำให้ชุมชนมีความยืดหยุ่นที่จะยอมรับรสชาติจากทั้งภายในและภายนอกชุมชน นำมาผสมผสานจนกลายเป็นรสชาติเฉพาะตัวของสีกิซิมะ

## คำ

## สำคัญ

อาหารชนชั้น B-class , อาหารท้องถิ่น, สีกิซิมะ มนะ, ชุมชนท้องถิ่น , โตเกียว

# The Taste of Unity: Nostalgia and Innovation in Tokyo's Tsukishima Monja

## Abstract

This paper examines monja, a savory Japanese pancake, which is a popular “B-class gourmet” cuisine of Tokyo’s Tsukishima district. Drawing from the literature on monja and an interview with Kazuhide Kataoka of the Tsukishima Monja Promotion Society Cooperative Association, the study focuses on the innovation of monja, its usage, and the value of its taste in the community. It found that the communal history and consciousness of a “strangers’ community” has enabled the flexible acceptance of tastes from both inside and outside the community, integrating them as the unique taste of Tsukishima.

## Key words

B-class gourmet, Local cuisine, Tsukishima monja,  
Local community, Tokyo

## 1. Introduction

Savory Japanese pancakes are popular as *okonomiyaki* in the Kansai region and as *monja* or *monja-yaki* in the Kanto region (see Figure 1). The Tsukishima district of Tokyo is particularly known for its *monja*, representing the cuisine of Tokyo's Shitamachi, or historic downtown district. In 2016, more than 60 restaurants were selling *monja* along a main street in Tsukishima called Monja Street or Nishi-Naka Street (see Figure 2). The street attracts many tourists.



Figure 1: Monja in the Tsukishima Kaisen Monja Kei restaurant.

Sydney Mintz (1996), a cultural anthropologist of food, pointed out that food is a “cultural product” (p. 5), as it is a product structured historically and symbolically by society, including manufacturers and consumers. She described national and regional cuisine as follows:

What makes a cuisine is not a set of recipes aggregated in a book, or a series of particular foods associated with a particular setting, but something more. I think a cuisine requires a population that eats that cuisine with sufficient frequency to consider themselves experts on it. They all believe,



Figure 2 : Monja Street in Tsukishima.

and care that they believe, that they know what it consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste. In short, a genuine cuisine has common social roots; it is the food of a community—albeit often a very large community. (Mintz, 1996, p. 96)

She extended the idea of “food of a community” to the concept of local cuisine, which is characterized by:

a set of raw foods; particular cooking and processing techniques; integration within local culture—a social group or community whose members cook known dishes regularly and seasonally; and consumers from the same region who know the cuisine and feel competent to discuss it. Even the lexicon is affected when chefs and eaters belong to the same culture, many of them competent enough to trade places as chefs and eaters. (Mintz, 2006, p. 6)

Mintz (2006) focused on the interrelationship and mutual translocation between “chefs” and “eaters” in the same community to create a specific cuisine. She also claimed that local cuisines have largely been eliminated across the globe, owing to rapidly diminishing local communities, as well as improved transportation and preservation technologies that have overcome the constraints

of time and place. Modernization allows us to eat the same cuisine anywhere in the world (Mintz, 2006, p. 6). Concurrently, attempts to re-evaluate local cuisines have emerged as a counter movement against the globalization of cuisine. Thus, local cuisine is not bound or produced by geographical constraints, but embedded with symbolic value as the food of a community (Mintz, 2006, p. 6).

The popularity of monja as a symbol of Tsukishima differs somewhat from Mintz's (2006) theory of local cuisine as being formed by members in the same and stable community. Rather, it problematizes the formation and conservation of local cuisine in an unstable modern world. Tsukishima's monja restaurants have developed many new recipes to suit the taste of tourists, who are their main customers. This study examines the characteristics of Tsukishima monja by means of a literature review and an interview conducted with a local restaurant owner and Public Relations Manager of the Tsukishima Monja Promotion Society Cooperative Association (TMPSCA). It focuses on the concept of "taste" and examines its usage and value in the Tsukishima community.

First, this paper reviews the history of the Tsukishima monja boom, with its increasing number of outside customers, in light of the re-evaluation of local cuisine by the mass media. Second, it focuses on the unique characteristic of Tsukishima as a "strangers' community" on the frontiers of Tokyo, with its openness toward visitors since the Meiji era. Third, it discusses the rules and consciousness of "taste" among collaborating monja restaurants. The paper concludes that Tsukishima monja restaurants do not create an authority of taste but flexibly accept the new tastes and expectations of

their customers from outside the community (including overseas). The "innovated monja" phenomenon has arisen from a communal consciousness, shared by members of the Tsukishima community, of openness and acceptance with regard to new things.

## 2. B-Class Local Gourmet and Media Influence

On July 7, 2016, we interviewed Kazuhide Kataoka, a representative of the TMPSCA. The friendly 49 year old invited us to the second floor of his Tsukishima Kaisen Monja Kei restaurant. He was born in Tsukishima and both his father and grandfather were fish middlemen in Tsukiji fish market (see Figure 3). Kataoka, however, entered the monja restaurant business in 1993, following the Tsukishima monja boom. He is now one of the most knowledgeable informants of Tsukishima and is responsible for TMPSCA's public relations.

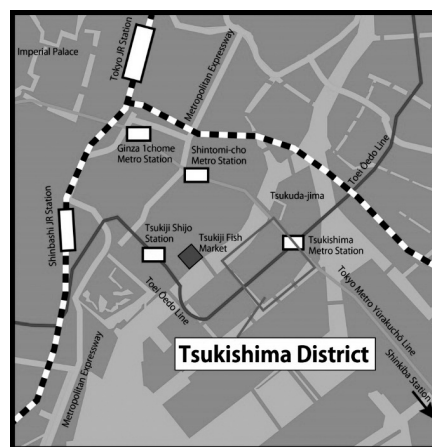


Figure 3 : Tsukishima district and surrounding areas. (This map depicts the Metropolitan Expressway, the JR line, and the Tokyo Metro Yūrakuchō and Toei Ōedo lines only.)

Kataoka recalled the initial rise in popularity of monja:

The monja boom started when I was a high school student, maybe around the mid-1980s. The boom was ignited by a TV program. I thought the gourmet TV program was really extreme... After this program was broadcast, people who had never known about monja started to come to Tsukishima. At the same time, the Yūrakuchō line [a subway line] extended to Tsukishima and Shin-kiba. Before this, the terminal station was Shintomi-chō station. Construction of the extension from Shintomi-chō to Tsukishima was completed around 1987. Since the underground line had not extended to this district until then, we had only been able to use the bus. Anyway, Tsukishima monja gradually became famous. Following the increasing popularity of monja, I opened my restaurant in 1993. At that time, there were over 20, maybe close to 30, monja restaurants.

Kataoka's memory of the monja boom is consistent with Japan's B-class local cuisine boom, which is thought to have started with the re-evaluation of local food in the 1970s. According to Cwiertka (2006), in response to the increase in family and fast-food restaurants in the early 1970s, consumers raised their awareness of food safety and environmental issues, and criticized the uniform industrial mass production of food.<sup>1</sup> Correspondingly, the popularity of local cuisines or *furusato no aji* (taste of one's hometown) rose in urban areas (Cwiertka, 2006, pp.165–169).

In the 1980s, popular “commoners’ foods” began to be re-evaluated as the local cuisine of Tokyo, driven by guidebooks such as the *B-Class Gourmet* series by Shinzō Satomi,<sup>2</sup> chief editor of *Kurima* magazine (Iikubo, 2011, p. 81) (see Figure 4).<sup>3</sup> Satomi defined “A-class cuisine” as haute cuisine, and “B-class gourmet local cuisine” as foods that “preserve the taste and tradition of Tokyo by A-class techniques at B-class prices” (as cited in Bungeishunjū, 1986, p.1). These popular guidebooks led to the re-evaluation of common foods with only a short history, such as *karē raisu* (curry rice), *katsu-don*, and *rāmen*, as Tokyo's local cuisine. Tsukishima monja was also introduced in TV programs and the number of monja restaurants in Tsukishima grew. The value of B-class local cuisine was thus produced and reproduced by the mass media.

Local governments also started to explore and re-evaluate local cuisines for local development.



Figure 4 : Cover page of *Sūpāgaido Tōkyō bīkyū gurume* [Super guidebook : Tokyo's B-class gourmet cuisine] (Bungeishunjū, 1986).

<sup>1</sup> Kenrō Hayami (2011) explains that the slow food movement began with Piedmont farmers' resistance to the opening of a McDonald's in Rome in 1986, leading to the worldwide “re-localization of food” (*fūdo no sai-fūdoka*, フードの再風土化). He also noted its affinity to the food localism movement in Japan (Hayami, 2011, pp. 91–94).

<sup>2</sup> Satomi's real name was Atsushi Naitō (1937–2002). He was a journalist who later became a professor in the Department of Tourism, Faculty of Literature, Gifu Women's University.

<sup>3</sup> Satomi defined Tokyo's B-class gourmet cuisine as “five great bowl dishes and three great rice dishes” (*godaidon sandairaisu*), namely, *ten-don*, *una-don*, *katsu-don*, *oyako-don*, *gyū-don*, *karē raisu*, *omu-raisu*, and *hayashi-raisu* (as cited in Bungeishunjū, 1986, p. 4). He later added *rāmen* (Iikubo, 2011, p. 81), but his first book did not mention monja.

They also developed new products like “local ramen” (*gotōchi rāmen*) for tourism development, such as Kitakata Ramen. This use of B-class local gourmet cuisine and tourism development has been promoted by both the government and private sectors. Magazines, TV programs, and newspapers also happily report on new local movements with support from local businesses. This localism trend developed into a nationwide network of local cuisine promoters during the late 2000s. In 2006, a festival that promoted B-class local gourmet cuisine, “B-1 Grand Prix: Celebration of Town Revitalization with Your Local Gourmet Food!” (B-1 グランプリ:ご当地グルメでまちおこしの祭典!), was held for the first time at Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture. It gradually grew, reaching more than 600,000 visitors in 2012. B-class local gourmet cuisine thus gained a high degree of public recognition. At this festival, Tsukishima monja also featured as a B-class local gourmet cuisine.

### 3. Tsukishima Monja and the Communal Consciousness of a “Strangers’ Community”

The interrelationship between local cuisines and localism has been developed by the mass media, connecting Tsukishima monja to Shitamachi nostalgia. TV food shows usually introduce monja with images of the folk elegance of the Shitamachi and pictures of Tsukuda-jima, a well-preserved neighboring community of the Edo era that was little damaged by air raids during World War II. Tourism magazines and websites also use nostalgic images to appeal to tourists.

The nostalgic narrative of a small and closed Shitamachi community that created monja is echoed in the academic literature. In *Monjayaki no shakaishi* (The sociology of monjayaki), Naoko Takeda (2009), a Waseda University sociologist, interviewed female owners of monja restaurants and described Tsukishima as a closed and tight local community that is tied to the collective memory of monja:

For Tsukishima residents, monja has a significance beyond “food.” It carries an attachment to a certain local place, a so-called local attachment. It is a medium to represent a local identity and a local cultural resource. (Takeda, 2009, p. 17)

Takeda (2009) mentioned that the people of Tsukishima remember monja from their childhood and are happy to talk about it. However, this does not explain the connection between their nostalgic attachment and the creativity of monja today. There are colorful menus in front of and inside monja restaurants, which have been innovated to suit the tastes of outside customers. Takeda (2009) referred to them as “innovated monja,” but did not include them in her theoretical framework. However, such innovations should not be ignored because most monja dishes today have been innovated for outsiders who are now the majority of customers and do not share a collective memory of monja. This does not fit the above definition of monja as “a medium to represent local identity and a local cultural resource.”

In his interview, Kataoka clearly expressed their flexible stance on monja as a product created through interaction between chefs and inside/outside customers:

Many large condominiums have been built [recently]. It is not the Tsukishima I used to know anymore.... Native residents have gradually moved away from Tsukishima.... In brief, even if we maintain the traditional monja for old residents, the number of people who like that taste is decreasing. More customers come from the outside instead. [So] it is meaningless.... Well, I think it is fine as long as customers find monja tasty.... I think we can keep the traditional style on the menu, but at the same time we can change the flavors freely. We serve traditional monja to customers if they want it, but I also think that one attraction of monja is that we can enjoy these changing flavors.

Kataoka's comment shows that those who mainly decide the taste of monja are not the original residents but visitors. His simple and flexible attitude is similar to that of jazz improvisation, whereby music is played with whatever is available at the time and place following the inclinations of both the players and listeners. This improvisational behavior of monja restaurants, which show innovation and flexibility in including outside customers, highlights the need to reexamine the characteristics of the Tsukishima community.

In a collection of essays on his life in a traditional apartment in Tsukishima,<sup>4</sup> Inuhiko Yomota (2007), a noted professor of film studies, proposed that Tsukishima is an artificial and flexible community of strangers, created by "the Meiji policy of 'Rich Country, Strong Army' and civil desires for advancement in life" (p. 297). He explained that the nostalgia of Shitamachi

in Tsukishima lies in both the recent monja food tourism and Tsukishima's old townscape.

According to what Yomota (2007) called *Tsukishima Ishiki* (consciousness of Tsukishima), Tsukishima is not a traditional tight Shitamachi community like that of Tsukuda-jima, but a loosely structured and flexible community formed by immigrants, who "each had unavoidable reasons for escaping their homeland to come to this landfill site" (p. 292). This history gave rise to a tacit consent not to interfere in their neighbors' lives; meanwhile, the proximity between workplace and residence promoted a sense of fraternity. There are two contradictory elements in this consciousness: an attachment to the land and community, as "everyone feels an intense sense of living in Tsukishima and is happy to mention it," and a flexible "strangers' community," which "accepts uncountable expectations, despair, dreams, disappointments, and embraces the lives of people" (Yomota, 2007, p. 293). These elements function to accept newcomers, new ideas, and morphologic transformation in the community, as noted by Kataoka:

The owners are mainly original residents or those who once lived in Tsukishima. But the stationery shop changed to a monja restaurant. The fish shop also changed to a monja restaurant. Our original occupations are different. My family also changed from being shrimp sellers to a monja restaurant.... the beauty parlor also became a monja restaurant. Others who once lived in Tsukishima have rented out their residences or spaces in the shopping arcade.

<sup>4</sup> The essays were first published as *Tsukishima monogatari* (Tsukishima story) in 1999. This paper cites the 2007 reprint.



While there are monja restaurant pioneers in Tsukishima, there is no established authority. Other businesses that have become monja restaurants are accepted by the community.

#### 4. The Alliance of Monja Restaurants on the Battlefield of Taste

There is no dominant restaurant authority in the communal consciousness of Tsukishima. Kataoka's flexible words, "it is fine as long as customers find monja tasty," highlight that the significant rule for Tsukishima monja is taste. He also remarked that "if it is not tasty, the restaurant will soon be bankrupt." There is free competition among the restaurants to invent new flavors to attract customers. The most important critics are customers outside their community. This model supposes that outside customers have the ability to evaluate monja and can choose restaurants that have the skills and flavors to satisfy them.

In fact, it is hard to evaluate the best taste of monja because it is mainly dependent on the free selection of ingredients in various combinations and self-seasoning at the table by customers, even though each restaurant has its own secret recipes for the fish stock in its "base" and the *agedama* (bits of fried tempura batter). Therefore, taste possesses an inviolable sacredness for monja restaurants as an indefinable source of their prosperity in Tsukishima, leading to the dogmatic principle that outside customers choose the best restaurant, the one that makes tacit efforts to create the most appealing taste.

This communal rule of taste among monja restaurants is heavily influenced by the development of the food industry and the B-class gourmet boom in the 1980s, as

mentioned above. At that time, the booming Japanese economy created various restaurants and succeeded in popularizing eating out (*gaishoku*) as a new form of leisure in Japan. In the *gaishoku* boom, some restaurants attained a traditional authority in the competitive market with their cooking techniques, good entrepreneurship, and backbreaking efforts to create recipes. Their success stories were reported by the media such as in TV food programs, magazines, and newspapers, as well as in "gourmet manga."

Gourmet manga have greatly influenced the development of the culture and profession of B-class gourmet cuisine, especially in its creation of "tasting competitions" among chefs, thought to have started around the 1970s when the popularity of gourmet manga and anime among adults gradually increased. The tasting competition first appeared in *Cake, Cake, Cake* (*Kēki, kēki, kēki*) (1970) by Moto Hagio, a famous girls' manga writer, and *Assaulting Ramen* (*Totsugeki rāmen*) (1970) by Mikiya Mochizuki. The motif can also be seen in the *Chef Ajihei* (*Hōchōnin Ajihei*) series by Gyūtarō from 1973 to 1977. Another work that clarified the motif and influenced Japanese society in the form of manga, anime, and film for adults is *Oishinbo* (1980) by Tetsu Kariya (Brau, 2010). This story depicts the competition between Shirō Yamaoka, a journalist, and his father Yūzan Kayama, modeled after the famed artist and gastronome Rosanjin Kitaōji (1883-1959). This highly informative work on food connected popular culture to the gastronomic tradition of Japan. Following its success, various gourmet manga featuring tasting competitions appeared one after another.



These manga also affected TV programs. Kundō Koyama (1964-), a famous writer, brought the idea of the tasting competition into the TV variety show *Iron Chef (Ryōri no tetsujin)* (1993–1999) as a duel between a guest challenger chef and one of the show’s resident “Iron chefs” who are famous professional chefs (Koyama 2015). It was very popular in Japan and broadcast worldwide.

These manga and TV programs show the meritocracy of the food industry of Japan, which defied authority and tradition. After the broadcast of these programs, even male customers and children who usually do not have interest or knowledge of gourmet cuisine, also started to seek gourmet food in reality (Hatanaka, 2016). Responding to the phenomenon, restaurants also provided special menu items with the name *kyūkyoku* (ultimate taste),<sup>5</sup> which was extracted from manga and TV shows. “Taste” became the measure of value among chefs. An image was created of individual and unique chefs dueling in the kitchen as samurai or gunmen on a battlefield. Within this new professional consciousness, monja restaurants increased in Tsukishima.

When taste competitions are practiced in real life, one could assume it would be hard for monja restaurants to cooperate because of their growing competition. However, based on the idea of the president of Marushin Shokuhin Co. Ltd, a large food processing company, the restaurants established the TMPSCA in 1997, which aims to promote the development of Tsukishima by mutual cooperation among its monja restaurants.

TMPSCA is well aware of the communal consciousness and competitive situation among the restaurants. Kataoka explained that its policy is not to touch on anything relating to the taste of each restaurant, but to seek common benefits through collective action. The first collaboration was reducing the disposal costs of kitchen waste through a collective contract with a waste service company when business-related waste started to be charged in Tokyo. Other collaborations include producing new products, or “souvenir monja”; bulk purchasing of detergents and cabbages (a main ingredient); advertising Tsukishima monja and accepting group tours for the benefits of all members. However, TMPSCA cannot collectively purchase *agedama*, which are thought to affect taste.

Taste is a sacred, untouchable value in the Tsukishima restaurant community. Like the popular Japanese saying, “customers are gods,” they think that a restaurant’s prosperity should depend on the customers’ free will. Anybody who challenges this communal value is regarded as violating the unity of the community. Kataoka was critical of restaurant ranking websites, as they risk harming the unity of the monja community by bringing the authority of taste into Tsukishima and subjecting them to the control of the website companies.

Because it is unfavorable for member restaurants to be ranked, we asked a ranking company to take our restaurants off their ranking system, but they did not comply with our request. They said that this ranking was the result of users’ opinions. Even though they control what users are doing, they just ignored their responsibility.

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<sup>5</sup> The word *kyūkyoku* was coined by Tetsu Kariya in *Oishinbo* (1980) and was awarded “the most memorable buzzwords prize” by Jiyukokuminsha publishing house in 1986. It is widely acknowledged that this work and the word initiated the gourmet boom across Japan in the 1980s.

So, I said “Ok, then delete my restaurant’s page from your website,” but they did nothing. They do not even clarify the standard or rules of their point system. It is totally suspicious.

TMPSCA members collectively maintain the peace by not advertising on this ranking website, which protects the core principle of unity in the monja restaurant community. Attempts to install the authority of taste challenge the community’s sacred core principle of customers’ free choice based on their taste. Rather, TMPSCA helps individual restaurants to advertise in other ways such as creating a map of member restaurants without mentioning their tastes (see Figure 5). TMPSCA aims to increase the total number of customers accessing the Tsukishima district, while maintaining the freedom of competition among restaurants based on their own efforts and professional skills. The unity of Tsukishima monja restaurants is thus maintained by means of respect to taste.

## 5. Flexibility, Nostalgia, and Innovation of Monja

Finally, the relationship between monja restaurants and customers is reconsidered here in light of the consciousness of a “community of strangers.” As seen above, monja restaurants in Tsukishima maintain free competition under the order of taste, which enables flexibility and innovation of monja while respecting the wishes or desires of customers. Nostalgia is one dream of postmodern society amid increasing consumerism. Beyond the practical value of nutrition, customers seek to consume symbolic meanings relating to locality and popular history in monja as a local cuisine. Kataoka pointed

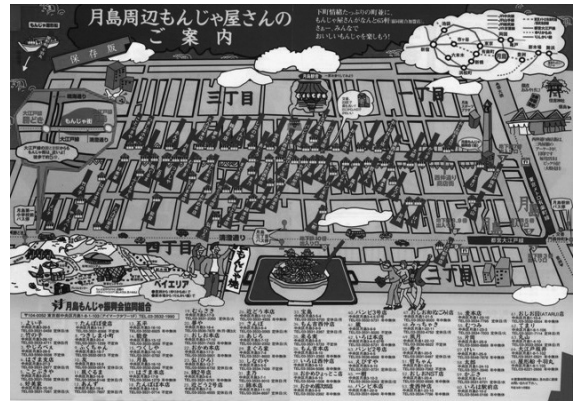


Figure 5 : Map of monja restaurants in Tsukishima.  
(Image reproduced from TMPSCA, 2016.)

out that school trips to Tokyo, which were once motivated by a desire to see modernity, have recently started to seek to consume local cuisines during their stay, especially in Tsukishima:

School trips. This is a huge business opportunity for us. Tour companies now face many requests from school teachers and students that they want to eat delicious local Tokyo specialties. Certainly, Tokyo has many tasty foods and I agree that they are wonderful attractions. There are foods that give us a sense of Edo [old Tokyo] such as *sushi*, *tempura*, and *unagi*, but we can eat them everywhere, even in rural towns, can't we? ... However, monja is different, it is very hard to find outside Tokyo.

Increasing interest in Shitamachi nostalgia and local cuisine has become a motivation to visit Tsukishima. For customers seeking nostalgia, Tsukishima monja restaurants are inventing the tradition of Shitamachi. They have installed plain wood exteriors, *noren* (shop curtains), and *chōchin* lanterns to create a sense of Edo tradition, even though Tsukishima is an artificial landfilled area created in the late Meiji era (see Figure 6).



Figure 6: Exterior of a monja restaurant in Tsukishima.



Figure 7 : *Mentaiko mochi monja* (spicy cod roe and rice cake monja).

The flexibility of monja restaurants also accepts innovations in taste as long as the result is tasty. In fact, the monja that customers now enjoy is not the traditional simple one, but mainly newly created monja according to the taste of outside customers, which Kataoka sees as the freedom of transformation:

One characteristic monja is *mentaiko mochi monja* [monja with spicy cod roe and rice cake; see Figure 7] or *mentaiko monja*. Everyone loves to eat it. I also think it is delicious. They started selling *mentaiko monja* when I was a child. [Back then] I couldn't imagine such a thing. It was surprising to even see monja with corn. Originally, monja had sliced pork and dried squid, sometimes with an addition of yakisoba [fried noodle]. The curry flavor was a surprise, making me wonder "how does it taste?" Even when I started selling miso flavor myself, I was thinking, "it's impossible," in those days [laughing]. But I now think it's fine.

While appealing to Shitamachi nostalgia, monja restaurants are providing flavors to fit the expectation of outside customers. Kataoka considers this flexibility and improvisation of monja as an original built-in feature:

The best feature of monja is, I think, trying various flavors. Well, you can make one monja and share it with friends. Then you can order another and fry it. This is a continuous cycle until you feel full. So you can change the taste every time.... The first monja is ordinary monja; the second is *mentaiko monja*; the third is curry; the fourth is kimchi. This way of eating is possible in monja. You can enjoy various flavors with friends in one meal.... Ok, not only monja, let's try *okonomiyaki*, the next fried *udon* or *takoyaki*. Customers can choose how to enjoy it themselves according to their tastes. I think this is their decision. We can cater to both old regular customers and new customers visiting as tourists. All customers are welcome.

It is meaningful that Tsukishima people chose monja, which adapts to the tastes of newcomers, as their community symbol. This flexibility is consistent with the social history of their community, which has flexibly changed its townscape over the years, embracing the desires and hopes of its immigrants. Monja is indeed a symbol of the Tsukishima community.

The Tsukishima community and monja are also open to the growing internationalization of Tokyo. According to a survey conducted by the Tokyo metropolitan government in 2016, “enjoying Japanese cuisines” is the most popular activity for overseas tourists who visited Tokyo.<sup>6</sup> Overseas tourists are interested in this unfamiliar Tokyo food. Kataoka thinks that while there are not many overseas customers yet, the flexibility of Tsukishima can be a strong drawcard:

If we have the seasonings, we can make any flavor. Of course, whether it is tasty or not is another matter. But we can adjust the flavors not only for Japanese customers but for overseas ones, too. I hope overseas customers also find their own favorite flavor.

One restaurant, Koboreya, is even developing a monja menu for the increasing number of Thai tourists. According to their website, Koboreya (2017) is promoting the development of new monja recipes and multi-lingual menus for international customers. Kataoka believes monja has the potential to adapt to globalization, as he explained from his overseas travel experiences to places like Thailand:

Thai green curry paste probably makes a tasty monja, I can assure you. Well..., how do you call it? I saw deep-fried pork skin in Chiang Mai. It is a crispy one. Because it is similar to *agedama*, it is definitely tasty with monja.

Even though Tsukishima monja is a food that represents their local community, they do not worry about changing the flavors for new customers from overseas; rather, they welcome it. The behavior of the Tsukishima monja community is based on the flexibility of the food and of the community. Under the communal consciousness of a “stranger’s community,” they create unity between monja chefs and customers based on the acceptance of both tradition and innovation for monja as long as it is tasty. Thus, customers old and new, from within and outside the community, even from overseas, can contribute to the continued transformation of Tsukishima monja.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper focused on monja as a B-class local cuisine of the Tsukishima district in Tokyo and examined how a new Tsukishima taste has been developed through interaction between monja restaurant owners and their customers from both within and outside the community. Yomota’s (2007) communal consciousness of a “stranger’s community” was utilized to understand the flexibility of both monja and the Tsukishima community. The influence of the mass media was also discussed, namely, its popularization of B-class gourmet cuisine since the 1980s. Through

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<sup>6</sup> The Tokyo metropolitan government conducted a questionnaire survey of 15,018 overseas tourists in Narita and Haneda airports from April 2015 to March 2016. In this survey, 87.6 percent of overseas visitors who visited Tokyo (13,067 valid samples) answered that one of their objectives in visiting Tokyo was to enjoy Japanese cuisine. This was the most popular answer to this question.

TV programs, films, manga, and magazines, the communal consciousness of taste and customers' choices developed to involve outside customers in the innovation of monja.

Monja is not only food; it has also become a symbol with two intertwined trends in the Tsukishima community: one is the tie between the locality of the Tsukishima community with mass-media-induced nostalgia; the other is the communal consciousness of a “strangers' community” that transforms the tradition and representation of community by involving newcomers and their new ideas. Tsukishima has been open to various outsiders since the Meiji era, and it continues to form a strong but flexible community.

Like this community formation, monja reflects the flexible innovation of taste to suit its customers, while also retaining the communal consciousness to accept the

continued transformation of Tsukishima's monja.

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