

# CHANGES IN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE TRADITIONAL FOOD MANAGEMENT IN THE JAPANESE RESTAURANTS IN MEDAN

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## ABSTRACT

*What it means by 'Traditional' is something which has been transmitted from generation to generation or some generations. What it means by traditional food in this research is food which is in accordance with the Japanese philosophical, cultural, and environmental concepts; it has become a custom transmitted from generation to generation. It was found, however, that the philosophical, cultural, and environmental concept on Japanese food in Medan was different for consumers even though its names were still the same. These changes can be seen from the way it is eaten, eating environment, and the food ingredients or structure. This research used the theory of cultural change proposed by Ienaga Saburo, a change which is caused by the context of time, place, philosophical change between the users and the creators of culture. The research gathered the field data from four Japanese restaurants in Medan and conducted interviews with the Japanese who had visited these Japanese restaurants in Medan.*

**Keywords:** Traditional Food, Change, Eating Environment

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Watsuji Tetsuro (1961) explains the correlation between geography and culture. Watsuji divides the world into 3 (three) geographical areas – the people who live in the desert (sabaku teki ningen), the people who live in savanna and steppe (bokuchiku shakai teki ningen), and the people who live in monsoon (monsoon shakai tekiningen). As time passes, the people's way of thinking becomes mixed.

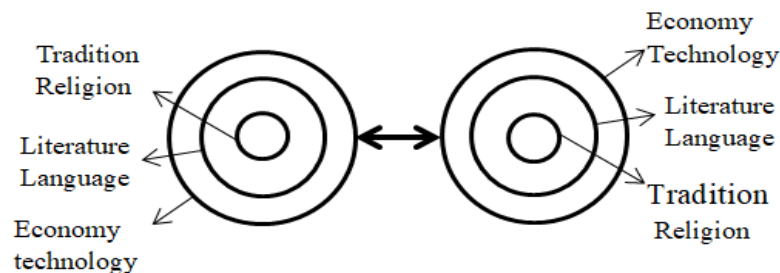
A culture is not static; it always changes or dynamic. These changes are caused by current development or by the influence of other cultures (Robert Sibarani et al., 2018 b:3-4; Robert Sibarani, et al., 2020) 227. Ienaga Saburo (1999) points out that in a culture there is no law of water which says that a developed culture will influence a more primitive culture; it can be reversed (Izwar et al., 2020:829).

Concerning cultural development, Ienaga Saburo (1999) points out that a culture is the way of life of a nation; in a wider sense, a culture differentiates a natural thing. A fish is a natural thing, but if that fish is made to be sashimi; that is, Japanese culture. Therefore, Japanese culture is how the Japanese process a natural thing to be used for fulfilling their lives.

In his research on culture (ibid, 1999), Ienaga points out that there are three things which should be heeded: the context of time and place where the culture is created, the realization of that

culture, and the people who use that culture. The creator of a certain culture is not always the user of the culture (Haholongan Marbun et al., 2018) (278-279). It is not uncommon that the creator of a certain culture is different from the user of the culture. For example, karate and ikebana are a culture created by the Japanese, but their users are spread widely throughout the world. Almost all people throughout the world know *karate* and *ikebana*. In this case, what it is called by *bunka denpa* (go international culture) like this will cause various problems of acculturation.

In the theory of cultural layer (Ienaga, 1999), we know that the deepest layer is abstract or blurred or semiotic, and the most outer layer is a concrete and can be touched such as technology or economy. Therefore, if two cultures contact/interact to each other, the first thing which contacts is the concrete part which characterizes technology or economy (Robert Sibarani, 2018a: 3; Robert Sibarani, 2020) (2).



**FIGURE 1**  
**CHARACTERIZES TECHNOLOGY**

Therefore, when the Indonesian people know Japanese culture, the first thing which attracts them is something physical and concrete such Japanese technology or Japanese economy.

If we ask the students who study Japanese literature s the University of Sumatera Utara why they select the Japanese Study Program, most of them answer that they know Japan from its technology or economy or something which is concrete of that culture.

Today, not only are industrial products such as machines made in Japan found in Indonesia, but also Japanese comics, foods, and sport have been already known in Indonesia. In Medan Japanese culture has been very popular in the recent millennium era. In the late 2000s, Japanese restaurants mushroomed in Medan. The question is how far the Japanese food which has mushroomed in Medan can adapt to the Indonesian food, especially the typical food of Medan.

When Japanese traditional food came to Indonesia, especially to Medan, it should be valued by the inside element or traditional, cultural, and philosophical characteristics of the Indonesian people. After that, the substitution of the ingredients or the devices for making the food should be done, and thus the food will bring about changes in its shape and in materials.

However, it has to be remembered that Medan has heterogeneous people; therefore, it is possible to map a specific type of restaurants for a specific people so that it is necessary make a classification of Japanese restaurants as the research object.

The parts which have changed are eating environment, dishes, eating technique, and food ingredients by looking for substitution since there is the difference between Japanese geography and Indonesian geography so that what has been prepared by Japanese culture is different from what has been prepared by Indonesian culture. This research was focused on the Japanese traditional food in Medan. The traditional element had concrete and semiotic elements of Japanese

food. The concrete one is, for example, the ingredients which had been prepared in Japan, and the semiotic one was that was in accordance with Japanese philosophy.

The research objects were Sushi, Onirigi, Ramen, and Japanese Street Food. The reasons why this research was focused on these kinds of food was because the four types of food had their traditional elements so that the difference from the Indonesian food was clearly seen after it is made in Medan.

## **PROBLEMS**

Indonesia and Japan are two Asian countries which, geographically, are located in the Monsoon area. In Watsuji Tetsuro's theory, it can be said that the two countries have almost the same food stuffs. The Japanese have food structure which comes from the sea and mountainous area so that they various kinds of food. The same is true to Indonesia as it has the source of food from the sea and the mountain as well as varied ethnicities.

Recently, there have grown Japanese food restaurants in Medan which indicates that Japanese food culture is becoming popular in Medan.

Harada (2005) points out that the staple food in Japanese rice (49.8%) compared with the other food while most of the Indonesian people eat rice. Therefore, Japanese food is not too 'foreign' for the Indonesian, and vice versa.

The differences lie on the philosophical factors on the choice of food, the way to eat it, and the process of cooking it.

In choosing food ingredients, the Indonesian will avoid any types of food containing pork, the food should be well-done, and eating it politely without the sound of smacking the lips and tongue, while in the taste structure, the food should be oily, sweet, and hot.

Meanwhile, Japanese traditional food contains pork, not well-done or even uncooked, eaten with *moriagari* (sounding), and the favorite taste is *ashari aji* (hard and dry taste). The Indonesian people favor hot, oily, sweet, and salty food or the food which has clear taste. From these differences in traditional eating and tradition food, the researcher would attempt to search for the changes in Japanese traditional food in the Japanese restaurants in Medan.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research used descriptive qualitative method which was aimed to find out the changing model of the characteristics of Japanese traditional food in the Japanese restaurants in Medan. The research objects were limited to only 4 (four) types of Japanese traditional food – sushi, onigiri, tempura, and ramen. The variables were groups of people, restaurant ethnic customers, and the time/when.

Traditional characteristic changes in each food would be found such as the changes in food ingredients, the way to eat it, and eating environment. There were some possibilities:

1. The changes in the ingredients were possibly because the ingredients were difficult to be brought from Japan and they could not be found in Indonesia so that the cooks had to find the ingredients in Indonesia which resembled the original ones.
2. The change in ingredients because they are probably forbidden to be eaten in Indonesia so that the substitute had to be found;
3. The ingredients were similar but they were still brought from Japan because their texture was different; for example, rice;

4. The difference in eating environment;
5. The difference in dishes,

So that various kinds of change and the factors which caused the changes in each of them had to be found.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **History/Time**

Before the Europeans came to Japan in the 16th century, the Japanese did not consume meat and milk because Buddhism, followed by most of the Japanese, taught its followers that all creatures that lived on land were part of reincarnation. Therefore, the Japanese used to consume only vegetables and the food which came from the sea. They began to consume meat and the food which came from animals when the Europeans, especially the Portuguese and the Spanish, came to Japan in the 16th century (Dananjaya, 1997) (256).

Japanese food has been popular throughout the world and also in various towns in Indonesia. The result of the research done by Jetro (2013) in which he surveyed foreign food outside Japan with the questions: what is favorite food? 83% of the respondents answered, Japanese food because it was delicious (88%) and it was healthful (53%).

Wibisono (2017) points out that in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta in 2008, Japanese restaurants were still few. The oldest Japanese restaurant was *Restoran Kikugawa* which was established at Chikini, Jakarta, in 1968. It was called “the first generation Japanese restaurant in Indonesia.” It was followed by the establishment of *Restoran Furusato* at the Hotel Sari Fan Fasifik in 1970-1980s which was called “the second generation Japanese restaurant.” Since 1987 its name has been changed to *Restoran Kayaki*. So far, Japanese restaurants are considered as restaurants for executive class or high class people. The third generation of Japanese restaurants was in the period of 1980-1990 by the establishment of *Restoran Hoka-Hoka Bento* which had various types of customers and had 350 branches. The fourth generation of Japanese restaurants was identified by the establishment of fast food Japanese restaurants in the period of 2000-2006. Papper Lunch was established in 2006 and Yoshinoya in 2010.

The fifth generation of Japanese restaurants appeared in 2010s. Japanese food counters have been established in various towns in Indonesia. Today, we can easily find Japanese food counters or food stalls at the airports and on the roadside such as warung takoyaki, warung soba, warungramen, and so on. Today, there are 27 Japanese restaurants in Medan which specially sell Japanese food; besides that, small Indonesian restaurants also sell Japanese food such as Onigiri, Takoyaki, and Ramen.

### **Japanese Food Restaurants in Medan**

Now we can easily find Japanese restaurants in Medan. Some of them sell specific Japanese food and some others sell Japanese food and other foreign food. Some specific Japanese food is sold in stores or stalls even though some restaurants have opened their branch restaurants.

Japanese food restaurants:

1. Selling specific Japanese food
2. Selling Japanese food and other foreign food
3. Selling Japanese food and other local food.
4. Street food/food sold at the foodstalls by the roadside

There are 27 Japanese restaurants in Medan (See Appendix II)

In the questionnaires distributed in July, 2019 to 102 students of the Japanese Literature Department of USU, it was found that

1. 98 of them (95.1%) had eaten Japanese food;
2. 71.6% of them favored Sushi, 83% of them favored ramen/soba, 47% of them favored Onigiri and 49% of them favored tempura;
3. They chose Japanese food because it was delicious (46%), just wanted to try (39.2%), And healthful (8.8%) (See the questionnaire below).

Questionnaire in July 2019.

Questions:

1. Your gender (M/F)?
2. Did you ever eat Japanese food?. A. Yes b. No
3. Wich food did you ever eat?: a. Sushi b. Onigiri c. Ramen/Soba d. Tempura e. dll
4. Do you feel like eating anymore? a. No b. Yes I feel
5. What is your reason eated in Japanese restaurant? a. wish to test Japanese food, b. Looks delicious, c. Looks healthy foods, d. Invited
6. Are you going to restarent? a. Alone b. With Colleague, c with family
7. What do you think about Japanese food? A. not match to Indonesian tongue b. Maching to Indonesian tounge.

The answer of questionnaire:

It seems that the American people and the European people favor Sushi while in Indonesia people favor ramen/soba (for the other favorite dishes, see Appendix III).

It can be concluded why they favor Japanese food is that because it is delicious or it is in accordance with the Indonesian taste. They probably donot think much about whether it is healthful or not. The second majority of the respondents only want to taste it since it is a 'foreign' food so that it is different from the result of the questionnaires distributed to the American and the European who connect taste and health.

From the above questions, we can conclude that:

1. There are more women who become the customers of Japanese food;
2. 95.11% of the students have consumed Japanese food;
3. Ramen noodle or Soba are the most favorite;
4. Most of the respondents say that they go to Japanese restaurats because Japanese food is delicious;
5. 61.8% of the respondents say that Japanese food is matched with the Indonesian taqste;
6. 94.11% of therespondents say that they want to try Japanese food agaiin and again;
7. 75.5% of the respondents say that go to the Japanese restaurans with friends.

Note: The result of the questionnaire in the United State, people prefer Sushi to Soba.

## Japanese Traditional Ingredients and Indonesian Ingredients

### Sushi (寿司)

Sushi is Japanese traditional food although it originally came from China. It is made of Japanese rice which is cooked just right (not mushy and not dry), wrapped up with uncooked fish, shrimps, etc. It has many types and specialties in Japan (Mouristen 2009).

Sushi (寿司) comes from the letters (鮓) means marinated or fermented fish, but now sushi uses vinegar so that it is no need to be fermented which can take a long time.

### Ingredients of Sushi,

In Medan Sushi is a kind of Japanese food sold in Japanese restaurants for high class food (高級レストラン) since it has to be made with carefulness and it needs fresh uncooked ingredients. Therefore, it costs a lot of money and needs high-skilled cooks to make it. No wonder if it is expensive and not sold in “low class” restaurants.

From the researcher’s observation in Shusi tei, it was found that the kinds of this food which are sold are sako zushi, maguro zushi, ebi zushi, tai zushi, tako zushi, tobiko zushi, hokkagai zushi, unagii zushi, saba zushi, tamago zushi, inari zushi, hotate zushi, toro zushi, uni zushi, and ikura zushi (See Appendix II).

Restoran So Joy also sells onigiri such as sushi one, sushi up, and branaga sushi. Sushi is made of rice mixed with sticky rice so that it can be rolled and rice texture can be sticky. It contains vegetables such as cucumber, carrot, and chicken. Therefore, the food has the sushi shape but all its ingredients come from Indonesia (See Picture in Appendix II).

| No | Name of Restaurants                                   | Rice            | Fish/ topping | Spices               | Serving        | Others                         |
|----|---|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Sushitei<br>Jl Imambonjol                             | Japanese rice   | Japanese      | Japanese+Indonesian  | Japanese model | Most customers are the Chinese |
| 2  | Ramen SoJoy Jl.<br>Setiabudi No 55C                   | Indonesian rice | Indonesian    | Chili/Indonesian     | Indonesian     | Most customers are students    |
| 3  | Soho Capital Jl.<br>Putri hijau Capital building Lt 2 | Japanese rice   | Indonesian    | Japanese+Indonesian  | Japanese       | The Chinese + the Natives      |
| 4  | Raku Japanese Restaurant JL. Ra kartini no 30         | Indonesian rice | Indonesian    | Japanese/ Indonesian | Japanese       | Mixed customers                |
| 5  | Renjiro Fushion Jl H Misbah Block CC No 12-13         | Japanese rice   | Indonesian    | Japanese/ Indonesian | Japanese       | Mixed customersd               |
| 6  | Raku Japanese restaurant. Jl Kartini No 30            | Indonesian rice | Indonesian    | Japanese/ Indonesian | Japanese       | Mixed customers                |

From the Table above, it can be known that of the six restaurants taken randomly

1. Two of them (30%) use Japanese rice as the raw ingredient
2. One of them (15%) uses Japanese fish/topping.
3. Four of them (60%) serve food by imitating Japanese model.

## Ramen

Ramen is commonly sold in Japanese restaurants in Medan. It is also Japanese food which originally came from China. In Medan, ramen is usually mixed with ground chili of red chili. Restoran So Joy serves it with green chili. The cooks of this restaurant make it by using wheat flour.

Some types of ramen are shoyu ramen, tonkatsu ramen, shio ramen, miso ramen, Tsukemen ramen and instan ramen.

In Restoran So Joy, ramen is sold with the name, instant panci, oniku ramen, midori ramen, bulgogi ramen, and keju ramen, but its specific characteristic is mie ramen made of wheat flour and kanji (liquid substance obtained from cooking rice, starch).

It is different from Sushi tei, there are so many types of ramen; for example, kare ramen, miso ramen, shoyu ramen, tempura ramen, niku ramen, tsukimi ramen, kitsune ramen, grilled chicken ramen, beef katsu ramen, and many others which are similar to the food made in Japan.

| No | Restaurants                                       | Noodle/ Men      | Other Ingredients       | Spices                  | Others                         |
|----|---|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1  | Hakata Ikkosha Jl. Taruma Negara No 80-82         | Japanese noodle  | Using pork              | Japanese                | Most customers are the Chinese |
| 2  | Renjiro Fushion Jl. Haji Misbah Block CC No 12-13 | Japanese noodle  | Japanese and Indonesian | Japanese and Indonesian | Most customers are the Chinese |
| 3  | Warung Ramen So Joy Jl. Setia Budi No 55 C        | Self-made noodle | Using chili, sauce      | All Indonesian          | Most customers are students    |
| 4  | Sushitei Jl Teuku Daud no 6/12                    | Japanese noodle  | Using bean sprouts      | Japanese and Indonesian | Mixed customers                |
| 5  | Yagami Ramen House Plaza Medan Fair               | Self-made noodle | Using Tomyam sauce      |                         |                                |
| 6  | Rumah Ramen dan Burger Sukamaju                   | Self-made noodle | Using fried (meat)      | Japanese and Indonesian | Mixed customers                |

From the Table above, it is known that of the six restaurants taken randomly,

1. Three of them (50%) use Japanese noodle as the raw ingredients;
2. One of them (15%) uses other ingredients like Japanese ones, using pork;
3. One of them (15%) uses Japanese spices.

## Onigiri (御握)

Onigiri is Japanese food which is made from rice; it is usually wrapped up with nori. Some of it is in the shape of triangle and some of it is in the shape of round.

Recently, it is sold in combini, but we can also find it in a restaurant. Some types of onigiri are chikin raisu, yaki onigiri, ebi chiri, umechiri men, ebikatsu, takana, teriyaisooseji, ebi mayonezu. Kare katsu, shio karubi, shi chikin mayonesu, sake onigiri, etc. There are so many types of onigiri.

From the observation at Restoran So Joy, on Jalan Setia Budi, Medan, it was found that onigiri was sold in various types: onigiri one, onigiri naruto, onigiri tuna/chicken, onigiri rice, and so on. However, the ingredients were made of rice, usually mixed with sticky rice so that the rice texture can be sticky. It contains cucumber, carrot, and meat/chicken nugget. Therefore, the shape is like sushi but all of the ingredients come from Indonesia (See Picture in Appendix II).

### Onigiri is Sold as Street Food: Therefore, we will Explain about Japanese Street Food in Medan.

#### Japanese Street food / ハンカガイ食物

Japanese food such as takoyaki, onigiri, and konomiyaki is also sold by the streets or terminals. Tako yaki (food which is made of cuttlefish mixed with ground potatoes pounded and burned on the dough), seems to match with the Indonesian tongues. Meanwhile, Onigiri is fistful rice in the form of triangle; it is usually wrapped with onigiri and konomiyaki (vegetables and noodle mixed with eggs and flour, cooked on the tray like one who makes martabak).

This Onigiri is made like what is made in Japan with its plastic wrapper and given its serial number and the direction to open the wrapper and eat it. The difference lies on its rice which does not come from Japan; it is the mixture of rice and sticky rice with abon (a dish of fried meat, reduced to fibers) or vegetables in it. In Japan, onigiri is usually not mixed with abon; it uses salmon or mayonnaise while Takoyaki has many differences with the original ones in Japan, especially the food dish which is made of plastic and sauce is put on it although In Japan it is rarely put with sauce, especially chili sauce.

| No | Names of Places                                  | Types of Food            | Ingredients  | Food Additives  | Others   |
|----|--|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1  | Saung Bandung                                    | Takoyaki                 | Cuttlefish   | Indonesian  | Cuttlefish substitutes<br>Octopus              |
| 2  | K3MART<br>Setiabudi                              | Onigiri                  | Japanese rice is substituted with rice and sticky rice | Onogiri taken from instant package ( <i>tae Kae noi Crspy</i> ) | Package looks like Japanese one (See: Picture) |
| 3  | Tokio Street<br>Jalan Gagak Hitam<br>(Ring Road) | Takoyaki and Okonomiyaki | Octopus  | Mayonaise and other Indonesian spices                           | Using Tako/<br>Octopus                         |
|    | Tabe-tabe Benri                                  | Takoyaki,                | Cuttlefish   | Indonesian  | Providing sauce, hot                           |



|   |                            |                          |            |            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|--|
| 4 | Jl. Pembangunan/USU Campus | Okonomiyaki, Karage      |            |            | spicy sauce and chili.                   |
| 5 | Tako Hero Plaza Medan Fair | Takoyaki and Okonomiyaki | Cuttlefish | Indonesian | Spices are matched with Indonesia taste  |
| 6 | Tako Ekspres Sunplaza      | Takoyaki and Okonomiyaki | Cuttlefish | Indonesian | Spices sre matched with Indonesian taste |

From the six street food above, it can be concluded that

1. Raw ingredients are different from the Japanese ones. In Japan, the ingredients of Takoyaki are tako (octopus), but in Medan some stalls change the octopus with cuttlefish although the name is still Takoyaki.
2. Food additives such as seaweeds or spices can be bought from dry or instant food in supermarkets;
3. The more we move to the suburban area, the more we find Indonesian elements although the names of the food are the same as the Japanese food.

## Tempura

Tempura is Japanese food which has long been known in Japan. According to its history, it was food which was brought by the Portuguese to Japan in the 16th century, before the era of Tokugawa. At that time, the Portuguese and the Spanish came to Japan (Siregar, 2019:4). Before that time, the Japanese did not know fried food. Today, tempura consists of fried fish, lobsters, or vegetables, using flour. It is usually consumed with soba noodle and rice. In the Picture below, we see Tempura is arranged neatly since Japanese food is nice to be seen. In Medan, tempura can be found in big restaurants in downtown but also in the suburban areas. In the suburban area it is usually made of fried bananas although its name is still tempura.

| No | Names of Restaurants                             | Basic Ingredients                        | Flour                       | Content/Spices            | Others |
|----|--|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------|
| 1  | So Joy Joi Jl. Setia budi No 55 C                | fish, vegetables, bananas from Indonesia | Flour produced in Indonesia | Indonesian sauce, chili   |        |
| 2  | Renjiro Fushion. Jl. H. Misbah Block CC No 12-13 | Indonesian basic Ingredients             | Japanese                    | Mixed Indonesian-Japanese |        |
| 3  | Marugame Udon Sunplaza                           | Indonesian                               | Japanese Flour              | Mixed Japanese-           |        |

|   |   |                       |                |                           |  |
|---|---|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|--|
|   |   |                       |                | Indonesian                |  |
| 4 | Zenbu, Central point                      | Indonesian            | Japanese Flour | Mixed Indonesian-Japanese |  |
| 5 | Sushitei Teuku daud no 6/12               | Indonesian (optional) | Japanese Flour | Mixed Indonesian-Japanese |  |
| 6 | Hakata Ikkosha Jl. Trauma Negara No 80-82 | Indonesian            | Japanese Flour | Mixed Indonesian-Japanese |  |

From the six restaurants above. we can see that

1. For the basic ingredients of Tempura, all restaurants take the basic ingredients from Indonesia;
2. For flour, 5 restaurants buy flour from Japan whereas for spices, all of them take spices from Indonesia;
3. One restaurant serves cuttlefish and chili sauce.

## CONCLUSION

The phenomenon that Japanese food goes international is beyond any doubt. It is accepted enthusiastically throughout the world, not only in Indonesia but also in the United States and European countries where it is a favorite dish, especially sushi while in Indonesia it is ramen.

There are some differences in choosing Japanese food between Indonesia and the United States and European countries. For the American and the European it is because Japanese food is delicious and healthful, while for the Indonesian it is delicious and wanting to try it since they do not think about whether it is healthful or not.

In Medan, the specific North Sumatera is identified by the food sold at the food stalls by the roadside such as the use of local chili, rice, and vegetables. In the Japanese restaurants downtown the Japanese characteristics are still clear such the arrangement and ingredients which resemble Japan. However, the price is much higher at the urban area than that at the suburban area.

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