

Culinary traditions as a challenge to the UNESCO's conception of heritage: a critical comparison between the Gastronomic Meal of the French and Washoku

Camille Lé

MA Asian Studies, specialization in Critical Heritage Studies

Leiden University

Supervisor: Dr. Katarzyna Cwiertka

June 27th 2019

Table of contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1 – Food as an intangible cultural heritage	5
The complexity of culinary heritages	5
France and Japan : two divergent conceptions of intangible cultural heritage.....	9
Chapter 2 – The registration process: building up a narrative about national culinary practices	12
The representation of the GMF and Washoku on the UNESCO’s materials	12
The GMF and Washoku : two invented traditions.....	16
Chapter 3 – The use of the inscription by political and economic actors	18
The GMF : an unclear strategy regarding the use of the UNESCO label.....	18
Washoku : a powerful tool as part of a nation-branding strategy	21
Chapter 4: The contrasts in the discourse of the media about the registration	23
Methodology.....	23
In France, some positive opinions as well as skeptical reactions	25
In Japan, a global praise and support.....	30
Similarities and differences	39
Conclusion	39
References	42

Introduction

“You are what you eat”: not only this well-known proverb can be interpreted literally, implying that one’s health is affected by his diet; these words also reflect the importance of food in the definition of individual and collective identities. Food indeed is “extremely affective: its taste on our individual tongues often incites strong emotions, while the communal, commensal experience of such sensations binds people together, not only through space but time as well” (Giovine and Brulotte 2014, 1). Because food plays an essential role in defining identities, expressions such as “food heritage” or “culinary heritage” are well established in common language; there are even museums dedicated to food all around the world, from the Cup Noodle museum in Yokohama (Japan) and the Kimchi museum in Seoul (South Korea) to the Gelato museum in Bologna (Italy) and the Dutch Cheese museum in Alkmaar (The Netherlands). Hence, it is commonly accepted that food is part of heritage. Heritage is itself a complex notion that covers a wide range of realities; for the purpose of this introduction, I will use this rather broad definition: heritage “encompasses a nation’s relationship to history and history-making, but also refers increasingly to the ways in which a broad range of other constituencies are involved in the production of the past in the present” (Harrison 2013, 5). From the perspective of heritage, food not only consists in tangible raw materials but also in intangible savoir-faire, skills, techniques and traditions that find their origins in the past; in this view, the door is opened to political interpretations of what culinary heritage is or should be. Indeed, in the past decade, the heritage aspect of food began to change following the adoption by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) of the Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. Considered as a counterpart of the World Heritage Convention of 1972 that protects material cultural monuments and natural sites, the 2003 Convention applies to intangible cultural heritage, defined as followed in the first article: “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and

human creativity”. If the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity aims at allowing more value to immaterial cultural practices to balance the World Heritage Convention, as well as are giving a voice to the communities that keep those practices alive, according to Kōichirō Matsuura, former director general of the UNESCO from 1999 to 2009, (Cameron 2015, 327), the credibility of the whole system, however, can be questioned due to the politicization of the inscriptions. Food in particular, although it is not explicitly mentioned as being part of intangible cultural heritage, has the potential to play an essential role in the economy – whether through foreign trade or tourism – as well as in politics because of its strong and quite universal affective value which makes it an ideal tool for nation-building and identity claims.

As of 2019, 45 elements related to food preparation are inscribed on the list, representing almost 10% of the 508 intangible cultural heritage practices which are now registered¹. As the anthropologist and expert with the French wine industry Marion Demossier has pointed out, this “food heritage fever forms part of an attempt to respond to societal concerns and insecurity attached to modern consumptions but also [...] underlines issues of economic development” (Demossier 2016, 89) : in that sense, it is relevant to research food from the perspective of Critical Heritage Studies, as it would reveal how an element that is seemingly trivial can actually tell a lot about political orders, economic issues and social changes. Hence, this thesis explores those issues by comparing the inscription of two national culinary traditions on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage: the “Gastronomic Meal of the French” (in French, “le repas gastronomique des Français”; hereinafter, “GMF”), which was one of the first food-related elements inscribed, and “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year” (in Japanese, “*Washoku; nihonjin no dentōtekina shokubunka – shōgatsu wo rei toshite –*”; hereinafter, “Washoku²”). My research will focus on the period 2006-2018. Indeed, on the one hand, France ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in 2006 and started considering about its application the same year; the GMF was then inscribed in 2010. On the other hand, Japan held the first Investigative Commission for the Nomination of Japanese Food Culture on the List of World Intangible Cultural Heritage in July 2011 and

¹ On the UNESCO’s website, it is possible to browse the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage and use filters in order to find specific elements. When typing the word “food” in the search bar, 14 elements are registered under “food”, 39 under “food customs”, 45 under “food preparation” and 2 under “food processing”. [https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?term\[\]=vocabulary_thesaurus-1675](https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?term[]=vocabulary_thesaurus-1675)

² I chose to adopt the format used in the UNESCO’s decision (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/8.COM/8.17>) which spells Washoku with a capital W in order to emphasize the element inscribed.

got Washoku inscribed in 2013. It seems like there are few or no studies in English focusing on this specific analogy between Japan and France; yet, this comparative approach could be significant for the following reasons: the GMF was the first culinary practice to be inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010, alongside with the “Traditional Mexican cuisine - ancestral, ongoing community culture, the Michoacán paradigm”, and the Mediterranean diet, paving the way for the registration in 2013 of Washoku and other specific dishes and culinary practices such as the Turkish coffee culture or the Korean *kimchi* making (*kimjang*). The Mediterranean diet is not relevant for this case study as it has a transnational character; the application was carried out initially by communities from four different countries (three other communities are added later by the UNESCO to this element). As for the Mexican cuisine, the application was led by the Mexican State but comprises of a precise paradigm: the culinary traditions as practiced and transmitted in the Michoacán state. It also refers to a variety of particular ingredients and products, such as corn, avocados and beans. The GMF and Washoku, on the other hand, are two comprehensive national culinary traditions that were most importantly registered as social practices. In this regard, the common ground shared by France and Japan will allow to emphasize their differences even more, in order to understand what the registration on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage implied for both countries.

Using the Gastronomic Meal of the French and Washoku as case studies, this thesis argues that the inscription of national culinary practices on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage forms a serious challenge to UNESCO’s legitimacy and its prescriptive framework.

My evidence is based on various sources that I analyzed following different methodologies: first of all, I used secondary sources about food heritage and legislations on intangible cultural heritage in France and Japan to sketch the context of this thesis. Furthermore, I examined the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as well as the definitions of the GMF and Washoku and visual materials displayed on the UNESCO’s website. I put those materials into perspective with websites and documents issued by national governments and other actors involved in the inscription by using discourse analysis. Finally, newspapers reveal how the inscription was received: I conducted a comparative analysis using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to assess the reactions that followed the registration, and see whether they express public support, national pride, skepticism or criticism. Newspapers analysis has been already used in

a similar research and is pertinent for my study as there exists a “significant association between the newspaper article content and social consciousness” (Omori 2018, 433).

This thesis consists of four chapters. In chapter 1, I will provide a theoretical framework on the notion of intangible cultural heritage by showing how and if food fits into this scheme, before explaining how this concept is grasped differently in both countries, which might explain the divergent paths that were taken after the inscription. Secondly, I will assess the similarities and differences in both registration processes by studying the UNESCO’s visual materials; I will show that France and Japan followed comparable paths when they shaped their application. In chapter 3, I will analyze the strategies put in place by various actors in France and Japan, and compare what use was made of the UNESCO label. Finally, I will compare the discourse that the French and Japanese media had on the registration through a newspaper analysis.

Chapter 1 – Food as an intangible cultural heritage

The complexity of culinary heritages

First of all, the notion of food heritage has to be defined. Taken separately, food and heritage are both complex notions: on the one hand, “food has always incorporated both the organic and the cultural, entailing biological as well as symbolic properties” (Demossier 2016, 90). Eating is both a natural and cultural phenomenon; in that sense, “cuisines are a mix of tangible “e.g. ingredients and cooking accoutrements” and intangible (e.g. tastes, smells recipes, and eating traditions)” (Timothy and Ron 2013, 99). On the other hand, heritage, as I have mentioned in the introduction, is also a moving concept; put simply, heritage can be defined as a link between the past and the present and a marker of individual and collective identity. Food heritage therefore is a changing object, which can be defined in many different ways. Indeed, culinary practices and cuisines are by nature evolving especially under the effect of globalization. Still, more and more attempts to make food an object of cultural heritage leads to the appropriation of food for a variety of purposes; this process can be referred to as the heritagization of food. Discourses on what is “authentic” food are a result of this phenomenon. For instance, Timothy and Ron (2013), have shown how foodways, defined

as “culinary smells, sights, sounds, and eating practices of a people of region, as well as culinary routes, sites and landscapes” (Timothy and Ron 2013, 99) play a major role in marketing a place, playing with the notion of authenticity: in this view, the tourist should aim at tasting the “real” authentic food consumed by the locals in order to get the best experience as possible. Bessi re (2013) has also analyzed the notion of “gastrotourism” and the extent to which strategies based on the valorization of gastronomic heritage actually contribute to regional development.

These examples help to understand why the valorization of food heritage is important for branding a place and attracting tourists. However, little research whether in heritage studies or in broader fields has been done about the specific issues at stake when nation-states decide to inscribe their culinary practices on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Within the existing literature, the cases of France and Japan are the most widely discussed; I will introduce them in the next chapter dedicated to the registration process, as the studies dedicated to these two countries highlight how their culinary practices were artificially constructed in similar ways. Hence, in this chapter, I will only explain other case studies that touch upon general issues arising when food elements are inscribed on the UNESCO’s list. Before introducing these seminal works, I shall provide some elements of context about the 2003 Convention of the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is a response to increasing criticisms from indigenous communities and scholars about the Eurocentric perspective of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, deeply influenced by Western countries’ views on what is deemed to be preserved; in this case, material monuments. As shown by Laurajane Smith (2006), this Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) led to the excessive representation of European heritage on the World Heritage List, implying that heritage carrying an “Outstanding Value” consists mostly in monumental and tangible buildings. To counteract this effect, the 2003 Convention aims at setting a bottom-up framework that would give more voice to communities and allow non-Western countries to valorize their own cultural heritage. However, two paradoxes are inherent to this Convention: first, the vagueness of the definition of intangible cultural heritage (cf. introduction) seems to contradict its purpose of protecting local cultures against globalization; secondly, it aims at freezing objects into categories even though the nature of intangible heritage lies in its constant evolution (Alivizatou 2012). In fact, the 2003 Convention, far from creating equality between countries, comforts the UNESCO as the main institution that performs heritage, which is “identified and assessed against predefined criteria” (Smith and Akagawa 2009,

4).When taking a look at the Convention, fitting food into this scheme cannot be taken for granted as it is not explicitly mentioned. The second article indeed identifies five groups: “a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;(b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship”. Food could actually fall into three of these categories as shown by Cang (2009): it can be understood as a social practice and an essential element to festive events; because cooking consists into transforming elements found in nature into a cultural dish, it may also be a practice concerning nature and the universe; finally, it also comprises of skills and techniques and therefore could be qualified as craftsmanship. In fact, the vagueness of the definition of intangible cultural heritage above is a problem in itself as it seems that “any cultural practice or expression known to humankind” (Cang 2009, 115), as long as it is being “transmitted from generation to generation and recreated by communities”, could in fact be registered under this label.

This unclear framework has various consequences: first, it consolidates the power of the UNESCO on deciding what food elements are heritage or not. The listing “does transform and inscribe how these cuisines are conceptualized, commoditized, and marketed” and “acts as a ritual, linking together foodways into a single cuisine across divides of ethnicity, class, gender and public / private eating” (Sammells 2014, 154): in other words the performative act of the recognition roots cuisines that were already internationally renowned, such as the French and Mexican ones, into the local. For these cuisines to be recognized as intangible heritage, “the “traditional” needs to be demonstrated, documented, and highlighted” (2014, 155): in this view, considering food as an intangible cultural heritage led to various attempts to inscribe cuisines on the List and most often manipulations when building up the application file. Peru, for instance, after overcoming a severe economic crisis and a period of political violence, saw its economy thrive again and globalization modify its consumption trends. In this context, gastronomy was “an instrument of choice to face the challenge of re-inventing itself within a world of nations” (Matta 2016, 342). Even before the first foodways were inscribed on the UNESCO’s list in 2010, Peru was already preparing its application by involving public and private actors, and declared its gastronomy Cultural Heritage of the Nation. It turns out, however, that the cultural was manipulated for the benefit of a much more market-oriented approach: indeed, the element to be inscribed itself appeared more like an addition of regional cuisines than an actual national gastronomy; besides, the safeguarding

measures were deemed to benefit mostly the food industry, notably represented by popular chefs who carried out the application (Matta 2016, 249). This first example tells two things: first, countries are aware of the power of the UNESCO label and its potential benefits; secondly, that the UNESCO on the other hand sets rules and imposes its vision of heritage by refusing applications that are obviously too focused on trade benefits. I will show later, however, that this does not prevent countries whose application was successful, in that case France and Japan, to make questionable uses of the inscription. Other studies show that the registration of culinary practices can also be subject to transnational tensions: here lies a paradox between the nature of food, which goes beyond the borders of modern nation-states, and the fact that applications to the UNESCO List of World Heritage or Intangible Cultural Heritage always have to be carried out by these nation-states. From this paradox results a harsh competition between nations to claim ownership on culinary heritage. Turkey, for instance, registered *keşkek*, a ritual meal made of meat and crushed wheat, without consulting Armenia and qualified it as “Turkish heritage”; nevertheless, *keşkek* can also be found in Armenia under the name *harissa*. Many observers in Armenia qualified the Turkish action as a “theft” and claimed that the dish was of Armenian origins, hence contesting the authenticity of the Turkish *keşkek* (Aykan 2016, 803). As a response to the Turkish assault on *keşkek*, Armenia decided to promote *tolma*, or *dolma*, which is also a transnational dish commonly eaten in the region, and appropriated the dish by even creating a *tolma* festival in Yerevan (Aykan 2016, 804). This not only offended Turkey but also Azerbaijan, which in turn claimed ownership on the origins of *tolma* – and other dishes found in both Armenian and Azerbaijani cuisines – and built an application file to the UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in order to register *dolma* as part of Azerbaijan’s culinary heritage (2016, 805). These two case studies demonstrate the strong emotional value attached to food, as it is a powerful tool for identity-making: saying “this dish was created by us, within our borders” is equivalent to “we are different from the others”. In this view, “the listing of a cultural element on behalf of a country does not mean that the UNESCO has “recognized or “confirmed” this element as nation heritage; it only means that the element’s cultural bearers reside within this country’s borders” (2016, 808). Hence, in the inscription of food on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage lie political issues related to regional and international balances of power.

France and Japan: two divergent conceptions of intangible cultural heritage

Dealing with food heritage implies to understand first how countries deal with the notion of intangibility applied to heritage. Thus, it is necessary to take a closer look at not only preexisting legal frameworks and the divergent relationships of the state to heritage management in a broad sense, but also the way the UNESCO's policies are being implemented and “translated” (Bortolotto 2016) in each country. Here, providing background information about intangible cultural heritage legislation in Japan and France will allow to understand, to a certain extent, the differences in the registration processes of Washoku and the GMF and the way the inscription was received.

As I have explained in the previous section, the creation of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage can be understood as a reaction to the Authorized Heritage Discourse originating in Western Europe and carried out by the UNESCO, focused on the preservation and transmission of material monuments and giving them an Outstanding Value. At the time when the World Heritage Convention was implemented in 1972, Japanese conservation experts were already uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the principles and limits of the Convention (Zeyne and Logan 2016, 413; Akagawa 2016, 73). Indeed, Japan was one of the first countries in the world to create a whole legislation aiming at protecting its cultural heritage: as early as during the Meiji era (1868-1912), a series of imperial decrees and laws orders “the preservation of shrines and temples, sites, monuments and national treasures” (Cang 2007, 47). It is during that same period that Japan tried to raise awareness on the importance of its cultural heritage as part of the formation of its national identity (Akagawa 2016, 70). In fact, at a time when Japan was opening to the world and being increasingly under the influence of the West, using heritage was an essential way to differentiate itself. In 1950, after the material destructions caused by the Second World War, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties introduced for the first time some provisions to protect intangible and folk cultural properties. This long lasting inclusion of crafts skills into its national heritage made Japan a leader of the recognition of intangible practices on an international scale. The Nara Conference on Authenticity, hosted by Japan in 1994, is usually seen as a turning point in the history of the making of intangible heritage (Zeynep and Logan 2016, 413; Akagawa 2016, 69). Through the Japan Funds-in-Trust for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Japan also gave a major financial contribution to organize meetings and conferences during which the 2003 Convention was

being prepared. The influence of Japan on the World Heritage system took another step forward when Kōichirō Matsuura became Director General of UNESCO in 1999. Based on his own background, Matsuura was a key protagonist in the preparation of the 2003 Convention, making the recognition of intangible heritage a priority of his mandate. This brief overview of the historically close relationship that Japan has with the so-called intangible heritage allows to question the notion of intangibility itself and the binary system in which the 2003 Convention tends to confine our perception of heritage. It also reflects a more global and philosophical approach of the past and nature: in Europe, the authenticity of the material, in other words the tangibility of the monument prevails over the skills that are necessary to build that monument. In most Asian countries and in Japan specifically, it is the crafts and skills being transmitted from generation to generation that overcome the visible aspect of the monument (Akagawa 2016, 73). Therefore, the distinction between tangible and intangible, nature and culture, is not as strongly marked as in Western countries: rather, those precious craftsman skills that Japan has been presenting as an essential marker of its identity and uniqueness are being embodied in the crafts and their function (2016, 77).

France, on the other hand, has a quite different model of heritage management, which finds its roots in the ideology inherited from the French Revolution of 1789. At that time, heritage became a central matter for the bourgeoisie which and came to power after overthrowing the monarchy and had to build a nation on new foundations. In that perspective, the state appointed professionals to “inventory the cultural heritage in the different regions and to reinforce the new central nation-state’s eminent hold, with a special emphasis on monuments and the fine arts” (Fournier 2013, 328). These heritage elements which once belonged to the nobility and the clergy were thus appropriated by the nation-state which had the power to define which monuments were deemed to be preserved, giving them the status of common goods, or *res publica*, therefore directly linking them to the very idea of the first French Republic (1792 – 1804) (2013, 328) up until the current Fifth Republic (1958-). The listing “established on the basis of scientific criteria by highly specialized professionals is made available to the largest possible number of people, intended as a public that has to be educated and sensitized in order to develop “heritage awareness”” (Bortolotto 2016, 275). In this context, national museums, for instance the Musée Central des Arts de la République (Central Museum of the Arts of the Republic), later known as the Musée du Louvre, had the role to make cultural heritage accessible to the masses, in a perspective of cultural democratization. Following the Revolution, France adopted an administrative model dividing

the territory into several regions and prefectures; nonetheless, those small administrative divisions are governed by a representative of the French state. This very centralist approach reflects the French nationalist ideology: the unity of the nation prevails on everything else and overcomes any regional or local particularities. As a consequence, “emphasizing cultural diversity instead of national unity is often considered as a threat by the national French elites” (Fournier 2013, 329). Furthermore, as “the indivisibility of the Republic is opposed to the recognition of collective rights for groups, community is more often associated with an ethnocentric degeneration” (Bortolotto 2016, 269); in French language, the word *communautarisme* entails a negative meaning, describing the intentional withdrawal of a certain community from the uniting nation, therefore endangering the republican ideal of social cohesion. In the field of heritage, this has one major consequence: priority is given to material monuments illustrating the narrative of nation-building over regional folklore. The first real attempt to counteract this dominant view on heritage is the creation of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires (Museum of Folk Arts and Traditions) in 1937, featuring objects representing the traditional rural way of life in France. Throughout the years, ethnological heritage gets more and more recognition, until the creation in 1980 of the “Mission Ethnologie” (Ethnology Department), a committee which is part of the Ministry of Culture’s Direction of Architecture and Heritage and is “tasked with the identification and study of vernacular languages, systems of representation and folk beliefs and knowledge related to the environment” (Adell 2013, 178). Because these categories can also be found in the 2003 Convention, the Mission Ethnologie later became in charge of all files related to intangible heritage. However, the ratification of the Convention caused a lot of confusion as France as it was questioning the dominant views on heritage and no one had real expertise on the topic (Adell 2013, 177; Bortolotto 2016, 65; Csérge 2016, 182). It is in this context that France had to shape the application of the GMF to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Thus, French and Japan have two fundamentally different approaches to heritage: while on the one hand the notion of intangibility is appropriated by the Japanese conservation system which valorizes crafts more than the material site, France on the other hand has established a long-lasting hierarchy between tangible monuments and ethnological heritage, the former being associated with the national narrative whereas the latter relates to regional folklore practices. Moreover, in Japan, the national government relies on local governments and actors in the task of identifying traditions (Cang 2007, 50) while the French state, in a top-bottom approach, appoints professionals in charge of inventorying ethnological heritage.

Despite those philosophical and practical differences, however, the state remains in both cases preponderant in defining what heritage represents the nation. This is visible through the application process of both the GMF and Washoku.

Chapter 2 - The registration process: building up a narrative about national culinary practices

The representation of the GMF and Washoku on the UNESCO's materials

I will point out in this chapter that due to their different understandings of intangibility and materiality of heritage, there exist a few variations between the French and Japanese files; however, both applications are very similar in several ways, notably because both concepts are artificially constructed. To begin with, I have analyzed the elements used by both states to represent their national culinary practices on the UNESCO's website dedicated to intangible cultural heritage. Several types of materials can be seen on those official pages: first, the definition of the element; then, a video provided by the institution that led the application – the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries (MAFF) in the case of Japan; the Mission Française du Patrimoine et des Cultures Alimentaires (French Mission of Culinary Heritage and Cultures; hereinafter, MFPCA) in the case of France –; finally, a series of pictures that come to illustrate the definition. Discourse analysis is the most relevant methodology to interpret those materials from various natures: intertextuality is a key entry point as it is “the way that the meanings of any one discursive image of text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts” (Rose 2007, 142). How do those images “construct accounts of the social world” (2007, 146)? What effect do they have on the audience? Here, the images and videos provided are not only aiming at illustrating the text and showing that Washoku and the GMF are living practices, but also reflect the way both have been constructed for the purposes of the registration.

If we take a closer look to the definition of the Gastronomic Meal of the French³, four aspects are being underlined: the GMF is a social practice that brings people together; it is being transmitted from generation to generation, and the products are carefully selected

³ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/gastronomic-meal-of-the-french-00437?RL=00437>

according to the blessings of nature. The rest of the definition depicts the act of eating as an art which is specifically French; eating a gastronomic meal has to follow a precise set of rules that need to be carefully taught and learned, as only people who “possess deep knowledge of the tradition and preserve its memory” can be called “gastronomes”. The video features in the first half various events during which the French gather and share a gastronomic meal, before showing what the French eat and cook; they go to the market to buy groceries and meat, and local stores for cheese, bread and wine. Back home, all members of the family cook together and exchange good cooking practices. The second half of the video is more dedicated to the GMF as a social and “highly ritualized affair” that follows rules such as the pairing of food and wine, the arrangement of the cutlery and the sequential course meal. On the other hand, the pictures – provided by private individuals and not by any official public institution – mostly show people gathering around a table. Two pictures in black and white dating from 1890 and 1920 respectively, seemingly aim at proving that this gastronomic meal is a tradition deeply rooted in the past.

I have applied the same methodology to Washoku⁴ that shares three main traits with the GMF: it is a social practice that brings people together, especially at home; it consists in skills and knowledge that have been transmitted from generation to generation and it is closely linked to nature. Finally, this culinary practice is particularly important in the context of New Year’s celebrations – an aspect which is even more emphasized in the name of the element itself: “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year “–, as well as in the video: more than half of it is dedicated to the way the Japanese welcome the new year. Two pictures represent this ritual as well: one shows a young boy pounding a rice cake, surrounded by members of the family from different generations in a Japanese traditional interior; another family is featured in the second picture, showing five people sharing *osechi ryōri*, the traditional colorful dishes enjoyed in a lacquer ware box. Another set of photographs showcases the freshness and variety of Japanese cooking: two pictures represent seafood and vegetables at some market, while another one depicts the *ichijū sansai* pattern, or “one soup, three dishes” that is said to be the core of Japanese traditional cuisine. Finally, the remaining pictures let the audience understand how Washoku is part of daily life, how it brings people together and how it is transmitted from older to younger generations: various groups are depicted such as students in a primary or

⁴ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869>

junior high school having lunch in the classroom, one family around a table joining their hands together before starting to eat, probably saying “*itadakimasu*” (literally: “I humbly receive”: this expression is pronounced before enjoying a meal), a group of men enjoying *nabe*, or Japanese hot pot, and children learning how to cook with ladies watching over them. The video underlines the same aspects as the pictures and emphasizes in particular the way Washoku “strengthens social ties” and connects to the richness of nature; furthermore, it adds some new aspects to the definition: Washoku is a healthy culinary practice with a “lower calorie intake”, and contributes to the confirmation of Japanese identity. All those elements obviously meet the requirements of the UNESCO, according to which the application and protection of intangible cultural heritage, in a bottom-up approach, should originate from the community: this is visible through the numerous images of families, groups of students of colleagues. Furthermore, this single webpage in fact aims at conveying a certain image of Japan through its culinary practices: by underlining the virtues of Washoku and all the traditional rituals that are attached to it, the uniqueness and appeal of Japan are being emphasized.

When comparing those two pages, that both convey a specific discourse about France and Japan, one finds similarities that can be explained by the necessity to fit into the UNESCO’s framework. As food is not a clear category in the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding for Intangible Cultural Heritage, both states had to find a way to inscribe their gastronomies on the list by primarily defining them as social practices. Moreover, the absence of reference to any specific dish in the definition of the GMF, but only “fish and / or meat with vegetables, cheese and dessert” is quite surprising from the common opinion’s perspective as France is often seen as being a paradise for gourmets, full of various delicacies. Likewise, the definition of Washoku vaguely mentions “rice, fish, vegetables and edible wild plants”; though unlike France, it raises a more specific ritual and the food which characterizes it: the pounding of the rice cakes taking place during the traditional celebrations for New Year. Besides, the pictures provided by the MAFF feature a variety of natural products and cooked dishes as I have underlined above. This is a striking difference with the GMF: out of ten pictures, none of them shows actual dishes; there is even a picture of a table on which only cutlery is arranged, but no one has gathered around it yet. Judging from those photographs and the definitions, the French authorities focused clearly on the intangible aspect of the meal, which does not consist in material products but in a social gathering. The reasons of this bias are thoroughly explained by Julia Csergo, a French historian specializing in food heritage and

scientific responsible of France's application to the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage (Csergo 2016, 209-232). In the first place, France intended to inscribe its "gastronomie" on the list: however, this word conveys two different meanings: one which refers to the haute cuisine performed by famous chefs and reserved to a wealthy elite; another which comprises of traditional products, savoir faire and skills that are carried out by professionals from the fields of agriculture and craftsmanship for instance. As the former approach could not match the UNESCO requirements because of its elitist aspect, the scientific committee in charge of the application decided to focus on the rituals around the gastronomic meal, whose excellence comes from the work of all those professionals who produce "good products" from the *terroir* (home produce) (Csergo 2016, 209-232). Thus the application was initially executed by professionals such as farmers, fishermen or sommeliers, besides the national community. This first version did not get the approval of the Secretary of UNESCO which examined the application file; the reason given was that the elements mentioned "did not fit into the framework of cultural heritage". As a consequence, the scientific committee had to remove all mention to the communities of professionals, and therefore to any material products (Csergo 2016, 221), which explains why the GMF is understood only as a rather abstract social practice.

Thus, this visual study reveals that both applications were similar in many ways, but also different understandings of materiality of heritage: on the one hand in France, a strict separation between the tangible and the intangible that leads to an extreme interpretation of the Convention erasing any mention to the tangible; on the other hand in Japan, an approach of the Convention that took France as a model, as I will explain in the next section, but still included material gastronomic elements in the application's materials, which reflects a clear strategy to valorize Japanese food products. The documents provided for the registration process also show that, in order to match the UNESCO's criteria, the states came up with "invented traditions", defined by Eric Hobsbawm (1983, 1) as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past". These invented traditions are particularly important to understand phenomena related to the nation (1983, 13): in this case, France and Japan, by rooting their culinary practices into the past and underlining their uniqueness, label their image as nation-states on an international level.

The GMF and Washoku: two invented traditions

Thus, both GMF and Washoku are in fact artificial constructs, or invented traditions; this has been confirmed by the literature that has been written about the French and the Japanese cases. Several works in French about the GMF put into light this particular aspect: for instance, the GMF has been described for example as a “new cultural object” (Naulin 2014). From the “French gastronomy”, understood as a wide range of various practices related to food consuming, recipes, dishes made by professional chefs, France came up with a specific definition of the GMF, understood as a social practice. However, initially, inscribing the element did not lead to a reflection about what exactly should be inscribed; rather, the director of the Institut Européen de l’Histoire et des Cultures Alimentaires (IEHCA, European Institute of Food History and Heritage), Francis Chevrier, used the opportunity of the inscription to obtain the recognition of food as a cultural object and get more funds for his research (Naulin 2014, 12-13). The project was then appropriated by the state: the anthropologist Jean-Louis Tornatore has underlined the essential role that the state still plays in defining what is considered to be intangible cultural heritage despite the role which is theoretically given to the communities by the 2003 Convention (Tornatore 2012, 8). In fact, in the case of France, it is even the head of state himself, i.e. the then President of the French Republic Nicolas Sarkozy, who brought his personal support to the application of the “French gastronomy” to the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage by pronouncing the now well known and widely criticized sentence: “we have the best gastronomy in the world” (Tornatore 2012, 13). This (French) view on heritage was pointed out for reflecting a feeling of arrogance that lies into an elitist view on the excellence of French haute cuisine (Naulin 2014, 17); therefore, it could obviously not meet the requirements designed by the UNESCO which promotes cultural diversity and for which no hierarchy could possibly exist between countries. Another problem of the French application was the potential economic benefit it could bring to the catering industry and the Michelin starred-chefs, as I have explained above: this is why all mention to material products has been removed from the definition of the GMF. Thus, the invented tradition of the GMF has been created by going through two different stages: first, by defining what it is not, i.e. neither the “best gastronomy in the world” nor an economic object; then, it was associated with the French community and every day celebrations which makes it neither “the result of a purely scientific definition not the reflect of a prior social consensus” (Naulin 2014, 24). On this matter, a whole book explaining the inscription behind the scenes has been published by Julia Csergo, scientific responsible of the French application.

Because a compromise between all actors involved in the inscription had to be reached – the MFPCA, the State, the UNESCO –, she chose to base the definition of the element on surveys showing the commitment of the French people to the importance of eating well, and sociological works proving that rituals related to cooking and eating have been practiced in France since the 17th century, going along the “process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past” as described by Hobsbawm (1983, 4). The adjective “gastronomic” has been added to give satisfaction to political actors who wanted the French gastronomy to be inscribed on the list (Csergo 2016, 209-210); this tweak has been qualified by Csergo herself as an “invention” (2016, 211).

Japan more or less followed the same path, though Washoku was already an existing concept whose meaning has been modified until it met certain purposes, while the expression “repas gastronomique des Français” has been completely made up and is not used in common French language. Many studies demonstrate the way Japan has been using its food as a way of defining its national identity and strengthening its soft power (Assmann 2017; Bestor 2018; Cwiertka 2018). In that perspective, the inscription on the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage was a key step in the process of gaining international recognition of the uniqueness of Japanese food culture; the case of Washoku is particularly interesting as it is not considered initially as a cultural object (as well as the GMF): before any decision was made to inscribe Japanese food culture on the List, Washoku was not registered on the national inventory of cultural properties, although it is one of the requirements prior to the application (Cwiertka and Yasuhara forthcoming, 106). In fact, the context of the inscription itself is essential to understand the motivations of the Japanese state that led the authorities to even bypass the national heritage framework provided by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties: not only was the country facing a declining food self-sufficiency ratio (Cwiertka 2018, 98) but also the negative impact that the earthquake and the nuclear accident that affected East Japan in 2011 had on Japanese foods abroad (Kumakura 2015). In order to get the UNESCO recognition, Japan, the same way as France, went through the process of inventing its own culinary traditions: this process has been discussed in detail in two studies showing that initially, Japan was intending to inscribe *kaiseki*, i.e. a multi course Japanese dinner now associated with Japanese sophisticated haute cuisine prepared by professional chefs (Cang 2018, Cwiertka and Yasuhara forthcoming). Based on the minutes of the preliminary meetings during which the application file was shaped by the Japanese authorities, Cang (2018) shows that France was considered as a model during the process: indeed, ignoring the

cases of Mexico and the Mediterranean Diet, only the French file was translated into Japanese language, becoming therefore the only reference; furthermore, a delegation was sent to Paris in order to get some advice from the French authorities on what would be the best way to inscribe Japanese gastronomy on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Cang 2018, 497). The French gave three recommendations to the delegation: first of all, its social aspect and importance for the whole Japanese people have to be emphasized; then, Japan should be careful with the temptation to inscribe an element which could be seen as too elitist – as the French case has shown –; finally, the inscription should not serve any trade-related purposes. Based on these recommendations, the Japanese shaped the application of *kaiseki* so it could match the UNESCO criteria, by emphasizing the fact that *kaiseki* incorporates regional characteristics and stating that it consists mostly in the food “mothers would make when welcoming guests into the home” (Cang 2018, 500-501). The final name of the element that was to be inscribed was “Distinctive Japanese cuisine with traditional features centered on *kaiseki*”. However, some unexpected event occurred and forced the committee in charge of the application file to change the element: the rejection of the proposal of South Korea to inscribe the “Royal cuisine of the Joseon Dynasty” which was deemed by UNESCO to be too restrictive, and lacking of a social function (Cang 2018, 501-502; Cwiertka and Yasuhara forthcoming, 110-112). The word “Washoku” was chosen as a replacement; even if the application file had to emphasize the way it is a social practice important for the Japanese, and transmitted from generation to generation, its literal translation, “Japanese food”, was deemed convenient as it could comprise of (m)any other aspects; I will explain the impact of such conception in the next two chapters.

Chapter 3 – The use of the inscription by political and economic actors

The GMF: an unclear strategy regarding the use of the UNESCO label

On the one hand, the French confusion between “gastronomy” understood as a meal reserved to the elites, and “gastronomic meal”, which is the social practice that was given recognition by the UNESCO, and on the other hand the duality between haute culture and popular culture led to a series of problems in France. The first one occurred only three months after the inscription, when the French Secretary of State in charge of foreign trade Pierre

Lellouche launched the campaign “So French, So Good”. According to an official communiqué from the government, this initiative aims at “exporting the French gastronomy” by “promoting the French agribusiness”, in other words, food products that are processed in France. The economic goal of the campaign is clearly stated in the first paragraph (Archives of the French government 2011): the plan should help France regain market shares in the agribusiness sector; however, at the end of the same communiqué, it is said that the campaign is a “continuity of the inscription of the GMF on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage”. In fact, all promotional materials reflect a misunderstanding of the element inscribed: on the logo, below the slogan “So French So Good” is inscribed “Gastronomie Française Patrimoine de l’Humanité” (French gastronomy heritage of humanity”); furthermore, the communiqué states that this logo may be used by restaurants and food businesses to “mark their belonging to the French quality network”. The promotional video also is a good illustration of the misuse of the UNESCO label: starting with a superposition of wine, bread, processed meats and various desserts, the voice over says that the inscription is “the recognition of French excellence and savoir-faire in the fields of gastronomy, agribusiness and table ware. It is an honor for the 250 000 French people who work every day in these sectors, from small businesses to big companies, from farmers to suppliers, from chefs to small craftsmen...”. This video is a striking contrast with the materials provided for the application of the GMF that I have described above, that define the element as a social and popular ritual; therefore the French delegation of the UNESCO had to call the government to order as France promised to not make use commercial uses of the registration (Csergo 2016, 243); as a result, the campaign was stopped.

The inscription on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage was also used, and is still used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to a lesser extent. In 2015, the first Goût de France – Good France operation is launched “following the inscription of the GMF on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage”: this is explicitly mentioned on several French embassies’ websites. This global event consists in the organization of gastronomic meals in over 150 French embassies and consulates all around the world: here, however, the expression “gastronomic meal” must be understood in its most elitist sense. Indeed, the campaign is supported by the three Michelin starred chef Alain Ducasse and the launching event was a dinner with French ambassadors organized in Versailles castle, a place that reminds of the splendors of the French monarchy. In 2019, the menus proposed by the participating chefs, that reach prices as high as 120 euros, would not be affordable by most people from the

“French community”. Moreover, it is the word “gastronomie” and not the expression “Gastronomic Meal of the French” which is most of the time emphasized. The subtitle to the main event’s title “Goût de France / Good France” is “Celebrate the spring of French gastronomy”; on the first page, in a communiqué from Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the introduction states: “The Goût De / Good France operation gathers on all five continents chefs from all backgrounds to celebrate the vitality and the creativity of French gastronomy. Gastronomy is a pillar of our heritage and an amazing tool to promote French territories, *terroirs* and products”. It is only on page 12 of the document that the GMF is being mentioned: “A third of all tourists visiting France declare that they visit the country for its gastronomy, which contributes to the country’s international influence. The richness and the uniqueness of our cuisine, the diversity of our *terroirs*, but also the registration of the “Gastronomic Meal of the French” on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage are assets that allow France to remain of the top tourist destinations” (Goût de France, press kit). Thus, although the UNESCO label is being mentioned, it is far from being essential to the Goût de France operation; it seems like the French government has become very cautious about the way it may be used. Another recent development shows how any reference to the UNESCO recognition has been avoided: in 2011, the first Fête de la gastronomie, a popular event consisting in informative events about French food products and culinary habits was launched. This matched perfectly with one of the educative measures announced in the application file and therefore was patronized by the UNESCO; however, the event was merged in 2018 with Goût de France to become one single entity. In the communiqué announcing the fusion of both events, the UNESCO label is not even mentioned; likewise, when navigating on the main page dedicated to the event, one can hardly find any mention to the GMF. Only in the tab “presentation” there is a reminder about the registration. More than protecting a social practice, it seems like the event is more about promoting the “excellence” of French gastronomy, which poses a contradiction with the UNESCO’s philosophy. This would explain why almost no mention to the label is being done.

As for the safeguarding measures that were put in place within the country’s borders, the most emblematic project is the network of Cités de la gastronomie that was initiated by the MFPCA. The application file does suggest that “the State will engage in reflection [...] to examine the conditions for the establishment of a cultural facility of national and international scope that will contribute to raising the public’s awareness of the history, functions and values

of the element”⁵; in fact the project of building a facility dedicated to gastronomy traces back before the inscription: in 1985, an official report already suggests the creation of such infrastructure (Csergo 2016, 273). The fact that it is so vaguely mentioned in the application file reflects the lack of involvement of the French state from the very beginning: from the financial aspect to the management of public works and the nomination of the board, the whole project is actually controlled by the MFPCA which produced a specification of the project using the UNESCO label, but without mentioning the assistance of the French government (Csergo 2016, 276). Due to this lack of support and the political changeovers that happened between 2010 and 2014, the official announcement about the creation of a network – and not a single infrastructure as initially planned – of Cités de la gastronomie⁶ was made only in 2013. This example shows how the UNESCO label can be appropriated by an association to build a cultural facility that fulfills its interests and over which it has control; this also questions the relationships between the different actors involved in the registration and the UNESCO label: in the end, who should get the right to use it, and to what purposes?

Overall, it seems like there is no clear strategy put in place following the inscription due to the lack of coordination between various protagonists, namely the state, the different ministries (Culture, Economy and Foreign Affairs), the MPFCA and actors from the private sector. There were some attempts to use the UNESCO label to promote the broader concept of “gastronomie” but the inscription itself has not become an essential part of the government communication strategy. Rather, it seems like the socially inclusive concept of the GMF that was made up a decade ago was put aside to enable the promotion of a conception of gastronomy that remains elitist in its essence. The situation in Japan is quite different, as I will explain in the next section.

Washoku: a powerful tool as part of a nation-branding strategy

The branding of Washoku traces back before the UNESCO inscription, and has been extensively studied by Cwiertka and Yasuhara (2016). The post-war context played a major role in the raising awareness about culinary habits: under the influence of the United States,

⁵ UNESCO, Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Fifth Session, November 2010, Nomination file n°00437.

⁶ The four cities that were chosen are namely: Paris-Rungis, Lyon, Dijon and Tours. Each Cité aims at covering different aspects of gastronomy: Paris-Rungis will inform about issues regarding the supply of urban centers, Lyon focuses on the aspects of health and nutrition, Dijon about viticulture and Tours will be a center of research about gastronomy in the field of human and social sciences.

the eating habits of the Japanese changed drastically; for instance, bread replaced rice in the lunch served at school. Besides, the food self sufficiency on a calorie base dropped from 79% in the 1960s to 40% nowadays, which made Japan more dependent on importations and raised some issues surrounding food security (Cwiertka and Yasuhara 2016, 124). In this context, the branding of Japanese food operated on two levels: on the international scale and within the country. On the one hand, after a working group in charge of thinking about the branding of Japanese food was created by the government in 2004, this strategy finds its concretization in the launch of the “Washoku: Try Japan’s Good Food” campaign, that started in October 2006 and went on for five years: throughout various events taking place in Japanese embassies, Japan introduced its food products to the world (2016, 116-119). On the other hand, food education (*shokuiku*) became a central pillar to enhance consumption, at the beginning of the 2000s, with the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries (MAFF): the Japanese-style dietary life (*nihongata shoku seikatsu*) is presented as being healthy, well-balanced, putting the rice at the center of meal, emphasizing the richness of the various regions and so on (2016, 125). The spread of *shokuiku* that started in the early 2000s was then legally enacted by the Basic Law on Food Education in 2005. However, in the first case, the word Washoku is not precisely defined, even if it is used in the name of the “Try Japan’s Good Food” campaign (2016, 120); in the case of *shokuiku*, the concept of Washoku does not appear in the materials at all; rather, the words *dentō ryōri* (traditional cooking) or *kyōdo ryōri* (home cooking) are used in order to promote a more traditional kind of diet, as opposed to the Westernization of culinary habits that is operating in Japan. Only after the inscription, the word “Washoku” started being used in official documents promoting food education (2016, 128). This proves that the branding process reached a new step when Japan decided to apply for the UNESCO label. Washoku, recognized as an intangible cultural heritage on an international scale, is now an essential part of the Cool Japan strategy alongside with Japanese pop culture such as *anime* and fashion. This strategy is carried out by a powerful bureaucracy; for instance, the Organization to Promote Japanese Restaurants Abroad (*Nihonshoku Resutoran Kaigai Fukyū Suishin Kikō*; JRO) is in charge of investigating the number of Japanese restaurants abroad and organizing events worldwide to introduce Japanese products (Assmann 2017, 120). Thus, because the very notion of Washoku has been modified and manipulated, it has been described not only as an invented tradition, but even as a “myth” (Kohsaka 2017; Cwiertka 2018). In fact, if we refer strictly to the most simple definition of the myth given by an encyclopedia – “a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially

associated with religious belief⁷ – it is quite relevant to describe the way Washoku has been given a meaning and then used by the government. A series of booklets published by the government is even entirely dedicated to the “essence” of Washoku: among the topics covered are *wagashi* (Japanese sweets) and tea, the healthiness of Washoku, the historical roots of Washoku, the Japanese hospitality (*omotenashi*) and many more. Therefore, by creating a new definition of Washoku, emphasizing some aspects more than others in order to get the UNESCO recognition and then twisting the concept for all kinds of political and economic purposes, Japan creates its own narrative, and brands itself as a unique nation.

To summarize, in both countries one can observe various uses of the inscription; however, France and Japan took different paths. On the one hand, the definition of the GMF, by its restrictiveness, forced the French state to promote its gastronomy without putting too much light on the inscription; furthermore, there exists a lack of coordination between the various protagonists involved in the inscription. On the other hand, food education and the branding of food as part of a strong governmental strategy for nation-branding trace back long before 2013 in Japan; in this regards, the inscription just came to reinforce an already existing policy enhancing soft power and domestic consumption. The next chapter, dedicated to the analysis of public opinion on the inscription, will confirm these differences.

Chapter 4 – The contrasts in the discourse of the media about the inscription

Methodology

I made an analysis of national newspapers in order to critically assess the way the inscription was received in both France and Japan. Having a rather broad political perspective is necessary; for Japan, I based my research on the archives of the *Asahi Shimbun* (liberal, centre-left) and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (conservative, centre-right); for the case of France, I considered all national titles but found more results in *Le Monde* (centre-left), *Le Figaro* (liberal, right) *La Croix* (Christian democrat) and *Libération* (centre-left). I restricted the scope of my research in several ways: first of all, I chose to study national newspapers in

7 Buxton, Richard G. A., Kees W. Bolle and Jonathan Z. Smith. 1999. “Myth”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/myth>. Accessed May 22, 2019.

order to have a global vision of the matter; then, I examined articles that were published between a month prior to the inscription (October 2010 for the GMF, November 2013 for Washoku) and the end of year 2018; finally, the keywords I used in the databases were “repas gastronomique des Français” and “UNESCO” on the one hand, and “Washoku” and “UNESCO” on the other hand, as I am focusing on the praise, criticisms, or opinions about the registration. My approach is both quantitative and qualitative: besides identifying a certain number of topics and sorting out the articles in different categories reflecting the main opinion trends, I have also put into perspective the discourse of the UNESCO on heritage-making based on the content of the articles.

The reason why I am examining more French newspapers titles lies in the quantitative bias that has to be taken into account in this study. Indeed, the situation of printed newspapers is fairly different: in both countries, the newspapers sales are falling but Japan remains one of the top countries in the world in terms of sold copies per day – over 40 million per day (Sawa 2017) – making the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Asahi Shimbun* the most widely distributed newspapers all over the country (about 10 million copies for the former and 8 million for the latter, for a population of 126 million people⁸). French national newspapers, on the other hand, are comparatively much less distributed: for a population of 66 million people, *Le Figaro* sells 309 000 copies daily, *Le Monde* 288 000, *La Croix* 87 000 and *Libération* 67 000⁹. Widening the scope of the research to more than two titles was therefore necessary to retrieve enough data and make the comparison possible. Two other biases exist in this study: first, comparing the discourse made by newspapers from countries that are very distinctive in terms of culture and social customs raises the fact that criticism may be expressed in different ways. Secondly, the questionable independence of the Japanese media has been highlighted by many observers: for instance, the Tokyo bureau chief of the *New York Times* has pointed out that “the Japanese press’s symbiotic relationship with the government is institutionalized in the so-called press clubs, monopolistic arrangements that give reporters from the big national newspapers and broadcasters privileged access to officials, whose perspectives they end up sharing” (Fickler 2016). In this view, it is important to keep in mind that the differences observed between France and Japan may be due to cultural divergences and the dubious independence of journalists, especially in Japan.

⁸ Data report 2018, *Yomiuri Shimbun*: https://adv.yomiuri.co.jp/m-data/english/download/yomiuri_MD2018.pdf

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/784974/paid-circulation-volume-national-dailies-by-publication-france/>

Besides these contextual biases, this approach might have a few gaps: first, I did not take into consideration the opinions stated in the local media; moreover, I chose as key words the element inscribed associated with “UNESCO” instead of other expressions such as “intangible cultural heritage” for instance; as a consequence, the results might not cover all the articles that were published on this matter. Finally, the reader should be aware of the fact that newspapers cover only a few aspects of a given topic, especially because they belong to certain political trends and cannot reflect in an extensive way the opinion of the population on that topic; for further study, it could be interesting to collect more data or study other types of media, for example TV programs or social media. Nonetheless, my approach allows to narrow down the scope of the research and the amount of articles to analyze, besides keeping a global yet meaningful approach of the issue by comparing the various topics related to the inscription of the GMF and Washoku on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In France, some positive opinions as well as skeptical reactions

To analyze the French case, I made use of the newspapers database Europresse, through which I accessed archives from national titles only – 12 in total –. Using the filters mentioned above, the research tool restricted the results to 101 articles. Out of these 101 articles, 46 simply mention the GMF without making it the main topic or stating any opinion about the inscription. The remaining 55 articles can be divided roughly into the following categories: articles explaining the inscription process and the safeguarding measures that France has to commit to, the ones emphasizing various positive aspects of the inscription, and finally articles underlining the contradictions or problems lying in the UNESCO listing¹⁰.

Explanation		Positive aspects	
Historical social practice	7	Commemorating events	3
ICH	1	Tourism	1
Gastronomy as a cultural object	1	Exports	3
Lack of coordination	3	Promotion of books	5
Safeguarding measures	10	Praise	10
TOTAL	22	TOTAL	22

¹⁰ Some articles may obviously fall into several categories; to keep the analysis as clear as possible, I tried to identify only one major theme or message per article.

Criticism / confusion about...	
... the UNESCO system	3
... the lack of materiality	3
... the elitist perspective	2
... the industrialization of food	3
TOTAL	11

Fig. 1: Overview of the distribution of the articles published in French national newspapers according to their main theme

First of all, a series of 23 articles aims at explaining the context of the inscription, the history of the element inscribed and the safeguarding measures that followed the registration. Starting from a broad point of view, an interview of the ethnologist Chiara Bortolotto helps understand the notion of intangible cultural heritage which puts the notion of transmission at the center of its philosophy (Roussel 2011). She also underlines the difference between France and Japan: while the former did recognize the existence of the “ethnological heritage” before the introduction of the 2003 Convention, it was considered from a scientific perspective rather than a cultural object. The latter, on the other hand, already included the notion of immateriality of heritage in its legislation since 1950s and exported its model on an international scale (cf. chapter 2). Then seven articles explain why the GMF is a social practice and what are its historical roots. Voice is given in particular to the two main protagonists of the registration: Francis Chevrier, founder and director of the Institut Européen de l’Histoire et des Cultures de l’Alimentation (IEHCA, European Institute of Food History and Culture) and Jean-Robert Pitte, president of the MPFCA who both published books about French gastronomy – which are being promoted in 5 articles elsewhere –. According to the former, the skeptical reactions that followed the inscription can be explained by a “very French confusion” between cultural democratization, which consists in giving the masses access to what is deemed by the elites to be high culture, and cultural democracy, which he defines as the recognition of certain cultural expressions that are popular but should not be considered as old fashioned. From that perspective, the inscription is not about fossilizing culinary practices and putting “the *cassoulet* [a traditional stew from the South of France made of beans and meat] in the museum” (Malagardis 2011) but about raising culinary

arts to the status of cultural object. Jean-Robert Pitte, in an opinion piece published in *Le Figaro* on January 25, 2013, adds that the inscription was necessary in order to make the French realize the importance and the social meaning of their meal. In a context of deteriorating eating habits, the gastronomic meal, prepared with seasonal and local products, has the ability to bring the French together and improve “their health, their family and social life, their joy of life, besides fostering their international prestige” (Pitte 2013). Finally, 13 articles are dedicated in particular to the safeguarding measures that have to be put in place following the registration. Seven of them describe the creation of the network of the Cités de la gastronomie and two are dedicated to the Fête de la Gastronomie. It is important to note that among those 13 articles, 4 of them underline the difficulties that had to be faced regarding the enforcement of the safeguarding measures. The lack of coordination and cooperation between the different protagonists involved in the inscription (cf. chapter 3) is one example: in an article from *Aujourd’hui en France* (January 15, 2011) culinary associations organizing educative events about gastronomy criticize the Fête de la Gastronomie, describing it as an initiative of the government that overlaps with already existing events and that has been organized without even consulting the MFPCA (Chantry 2011). By the same token, François Chevrier, in an interview to *La Croix* (December 10, 2011), expresses his disappointment towards the disinterest of the government despite its engagement for implementing safeguarding measures. Related to that topic, an article ironically entitled “Is France also going to lose the AAAAA of its gastronomy?” published on *Le Monde* on December 5, 2011, describes the lack of commitment from the French state, putting itself under the threat of losing the UNESCO label (Ribaut 2011).

The second category comprises of 22 positive articles, representing more than a third of the relevant articles for this research. Within this broad category, various themes can be identified. First, the celebration of the inscription in itself and the international recognition of gastronomy as a cultural object: the most representative voice in this category is the article from *Le Monde* published on July 16, 2013, which explains the growing popularity of cooking. The meal is described as a “French specificity” and a “sacred moment” that was inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the UNESCO; before that, “culinary arts and gastronomy have never gained such recognition” (Abellard 2013). Several interviews of politicians and famous chefs, interestingly, reflect some misconceptions about the meaning of the GMF. For instance, even though the GMF is supposed to concern “the community of the French” and avoid any mention to the French elitist haute cuisine, a voice is given to the

tripled Michelin starred chefs Alain Ducasse and Yannick Alléno in an interview to *L'Express* (Gaudry 2014) and *Le Point* (Danancher 2013) respectively; they both assert that the “French model” of gastronomy should be preserved. Reflecting another misconception about the GMF, in an interview to *Valeurs actuelles* on November 25, 2010 right after the inscription, the then Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fishing Bruno Le Maire, besides praising the GMF as a French “art de vivre”, asserts that the listing is “a recognition of the excellence of our [French] products and the quality of the work provided every day by our [French] farmers and agribusiness industries” (Villemur 2010), prefiguring the “So French So Good” campaign that would be launched a few months later. The last positive aspect being underlined in this category is the concrete benefits that the registration can bring to the country. This is shown for instance in various titles: “Tourism and gastronomy: a tempting alliance” (*Aujourd'hui en France*, April 4, 2011), “France relies on its gastronomy overseas” (*Le Figaro*, December 23, 2012) and “The campaign of the French gastronomy” (*Libération*, February 2, 2011). All show that the UNESCO label could be used for economic purposes, helping to enhance tourist frequentation or boosting exports of French products abroad.

Thus, the registration of the GMF did provoke a lot of enthusiastic reactions, obviously among the various actors that led the inscription and whose opinion has been relayed in the news but also among journalists themselves. However, some articles come to bring some nuances to the way the very notion of the GMF was understood and how the inscription was received. To begin with, two articles from *Libération* published respectively on November 11, 2010 and December 23, 2010, illustrate well the problems related to the listing of intangible cultural heritage enforced by the UNESCO. The former article gives a voice to an expert committee of the UNESCO that is worried about the heritage inflation – also mocked elsewhere in an article of *Le Figaro* published on November 11, 2010, entitled: “The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage is growing up. Absurd inflation or reflect of the genius of humankind?” (Bietry-Rivierre 2010) – resulting from the benefits that countries saw in inscribing their cultural practices on the UNESCO’s list. Not only are there trade interests at stake but also nationalist purposes; therefore, the inscription process became hard to control. The overrepresentation of Asia to the detriment of Africa is also a major concern. Finally, the author underlines that France “had to perform contortions to create the GMF” (Noce 2010), thus questioning the legitimacy of the element itself. The latter article from *Libération* criticizes the “opacity” of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (Launet 2010) and the paradox raised by the nation-states that have always tried to deny regional identities but

that use local particularities to get international recognition and be in the light. The article concludes that the “planet has other priorities” than inscribing the French cuisine on the UNESCO’s list. Furthermore, three other articles, two from *Libération* and one from *La Croix*, discuss the notion of intangibility of heritage and why it does not apply to food: all three consider that the meal is before all about enjoying material products, calling into question the legitimacy and even the use of the inscription (Assouly 2010, Genthialon and Mallaval 2010, Rémond 2015). What is criticized here is this idealized and invented version of the GMF only seen as a social practice, therefore depriving the element from its materiality. Skepticism about the inscription is also expressed from another perspective in three articles from *Valeurs Actuelles*, *Le Point* and *L’Express* (Brunet 2016, Labbé and Recasens 2010, Wisman 2010): they question the meaning of the inscription in the context of the growing industrialization of food and the deteriorating eating habits of the French. Here, what is being emphasized is the contradiction between the will to preserve an idealized social model and the economic reality; in other words, what is the use of preserving an intangible practice when the quality of the tangible products and the diets are already worsening? Finally, two articles touch upon the problem of the definition of the GMF and how it clashes with the concept of gastronomy. An article from *Le Monde* published on April 23, 2015, reports the debate surrounding the renovation of the prestigious Hôtel de la Marine located on Place de la Concorde in Paris; the MFPCA sent its application file to the former president of the French Republic Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, head of the commission in charge of examining the applications, but he did not consider this project. However, it was later validated by the then French President François Hollande in an official communiqué announcing that the “French gastronomy (sic.) which was inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage will be presented to foreign tourists and French people”. The reaction of Mr. Giscard d’Estaing was the following: “To imagine in this place so full of history a market displaying food products is shocking. This is an offense to France’s dignity. People do not come to Paris, in this place, to eat sausages!” (Gené 2015). Nonetheless, it is expected that the Hôtel will host the project and reopen again in 2020. These tensions reflect the confusion that is still going on about the element: first of all, the very concept of the GMF, because of its abstraction cannot be used as such; it has been replaced by the word “gastronomy”. Secondly, the association of “sausages” and “gastronomy” makes the latter a trivial object, which is not deemed to be considered as part of the cultural field. In this regards, Julia Csergo, in a long interview conducted by *L’Humanité* and published on January 13, 2017, expresses her regrets: according to her, the prevalent conception of gastronomy is by far too elitist and gastronomy should be recognized

as a cultural good in order to implement efficient policies that protect craftsmen and local businesses.

To summarize, the registration of the GMF did raise some warm reactions that reflect national pride and support; however, newspapers also gave a voice to more skeptical opinions about the meaning of the inscription or the content of the element inscribed itself. I will explain now in what ways the registration was received differently in Japan.

In Japan, a global praise and support

In the case of Japan, newspapers analysis is an approach that has already been used as a method to assess the growing importance of Washoku in Japanese society and politics, and how it has been used by the government as a brand. Cwiertka and Yasuhara (2016) have shown that the valorization of the concept in the media started long before the 2013 inscription. In fact, the number of articles mentioning Washoku started to increase in the 1990s already; it was however used in a broad sense to describe Japanese foods in general. It is in 2005, in an article from the *Asahi Shimbun* that the words “Washoku” and “brand” are used together. This coincides with the creation, a year earlier, of a working group appointed by the government to think about the branding of Japanese food (Cwiertka and Yasuhara 2016, 112 – 114; cf. also chapter 3). Another study from Omori (2018) compares the change that operated in the public discourse of three major newspapers, namely the *Asahi Shimbun*, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Mainichi Shimbun* between two different periods: after the Basic Law on Food Education (*shokuiku kihonhō*) was passed in 2005 and after the UNESCO registration in 2013. By using keywords to identify some topic trends, she observed an increase of 32.9% in the number of articles dedicated to Japanese food from 2000 to 2016; moreover, the number of articles published in 2013 has the highest growth rate on a year-on-year basis (Omori 2018, 436), especially when compared with the period that followed the enactment of the Basic Law on Food Education. The keywords that appear the most often during the observed period (2000-2016) are “taste”, “heart” and “rice” which is presented as an essential component of Japanese spirit and identity (2018, 440); finally, the words “world” and “abroad” are more frequently used during the post-UNESCO period than before, suggesting the spread of the concept on a global scale. She concludes that “newspaper discourses created and shared a representation of Japanese food that could be proudly presented to the “world”” (2018, 440).

Thus, I hope that my research will bring new insights to the studies that have already been done on this specific topic. Using the same methodology as for the GMF, I analyzed the databases of the two most important national newspapers in Japan in terms of the number of copies distributed daily: the *Asahi Shimbun* and the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. By typing “Washoku” and “UNESCO” in the keywords search bar and restricting the results to articles that were published from November 2013 to the end of year 2018, I got 385 results for the former¹¹ and 447 for the latter. I examined all articles and did not take into account the following: the ones introducing Washoku as an example in the context of other inscriptions of Japanese intangible heritage elements on the UNESCO’s list (for example the celebration of the registration of *washi*, the craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper, or the will to push forward the application of *haiku*, a short form of poetry); the ones mentioning Washoku but not making it the main topic of the article or not stating any opinion about the registration; finally, the short announcements that only have an informative purpose. The remaining 231 articles for the *Asahi Shimbun* and 196 articles for the *Yomiuri Shimbun* can be classified into the categories below, according to their main theme or message.

	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	TOTAL
Explanation of the element / inscription	15	12	27
Benefits of the inscription	63	82	145
Education / transmission	38	38	76
Material elements	65	32	97
Uniqueness /qualities	20	13	30
Events / books / films	27	19	49
Criticisms	3	0	3
TOTAL	231	196	427

Fig. 2: Overview of the number of articles per category identified in the Asahi Shimbun and the Yomiuri Shimbun

¹¹ For the *Asahi Shimbun*, the results automatically include references to “*nihon shoku*” and “*nihon ryōri*”. This is in itself an interesting fact as the latter is supposed to refer to the Japanese food enjoyed in restaurants while Washoku as defined by the UNESCO is the meal cooked as home (Cwiertka 2018, 91).

First of all, 15 articles from the *Asahi Shimbun* and 12 from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* explain the registration process and Washoku itself, which had to be conceptualized as a social practice in order to get international recognition. We find in this category for instance interviews from the scholars that were involved in the application, namely Isao Kumakura, professor at the National Museum of Ethnology and specialist in the tea ceremony, and Ayako Ehara, specialist in food history. The latter underlines in an article published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on April 4, 2018, the importance of seasons for Japanese food culture but also the incorporation of foreign influences. She also asserts an interesting point: following the registration, the Japanese Food Culture National Commission (*Nihon shoku bunka kokumin kaigi*) took the responsibility of collecting information to prevent acts that go against the purpose of the registration such as excessive commercial use; this enters into contradiction with what I will explain in the next section dedicated to the benefits of the inscription.

Explanation			
	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	TOTAL
Registration process	5	2	7
Explanation of Washoku: history, social practice	5		5
Interviews of scholars involved in the registration process	2	4	6
References to France		6	6
Explanation of what ICH is	3		3
TOTAL	15	12	27

Fig. 3: Distribution of the articles explaining the inscription process or the element inscribed

Another topic that deserves attention in this category is a series of articles presenting the similarities with France that can be observed from several perspectives: for example, an article from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* published on May 6, 2014, reports a visit of the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to France and the words he had to describe French cuisine: “Japanese food emphasizes seasonal ingredients, and the respect of tradition is also an element found in French cooking” (Mitsui 2014). Elsewhere, in an interview published on December 22, 2016, the French chef Alain Ducasse is also given a voice. He underlines that both French and

Japanese gastronomies were inscribed on the UNESCO's list, and both countries have in common their "love for eating and strong commitment to food" (Uehara 2016). There exist other mentions to the French model such as an interview published in the *Asahi Shimbun* on December 15, 2013, of Riki Fusa, owner of the restaurant Minyoshi in Kyōto and director of the Japanese Cooking Academy. He explains that prior to the inscription of Washoku, there were two meal patterns inscribed on the List on Intangible Cultural Heritage: the French one that emphasizes the ritual of the meal and the Mexican one which is based on traditional and specific dishes that have been eaten for thousand years. Japan followed the French pattern in order to enhance Japanese food as a whole (cf. chapter 2) so it could include the foods produced in the Tōhōku region that has been heavily affected by the Fukushima disaster (Terasaki 2013).

The second category comprises of articles describing the concrete benefits of the registration: I have found 63 articles that can fall into this group in the *Asahi Shimbun* and 82 from the *Yomiuri Shimbun*: put together, they represent a third of the total number of articles (145 out of 427) I analyzed. The most striking trend that I observed is the way the registration is associated with the boost of exports and more generally the business opportunities that are opened following the inscription. Various products are mentioned in this context; the exports of sake in particular are said to benefit from the inscription. As an example to illustrate this trend is an article from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* published on February 10, 2015, whose title explicitly juxtaposes Washoku and the increase of exports: "The boom of Washoku: 600 billion yen worth of exportations. Beef, rice and agricultural and fisheries products exports have reached a top level for the 2nd year in a row" (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2015). In the article itself, it is said that the registration has contributed to the expansion of Japanese food abroad, and that the government is targeting 1 trillion yens worth of exports by year 2020. The way Washoku and trade objectives are put together clearly reflects some conflicts with the UNESCO's views on intangible heritage. Elsewhere, the UNESCO label is also expected to bring more foreign tourists to Japan: this is mentioned in 10 articles from the *Asahi Shimbun* and 8 from the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Alongside with the successful application to the organization of the Olympic Games in 2020, putting Washoku on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage aims at enhancing exports and tourism, and is part of the "Cool Japan" strategy put in place by the government. Related to that topic, in an article published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on August 20, 2014 reporting a sake festival in the surroundings of Tokyo, it is said that Washoku has been registered on the UNESCO's list and that the

government is promoting the “Cool Japan” strategy in order to spread Japanese foods abroad (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2014). Finally, the registration of Washoku also has the function of bringing attention from abroad, and regaining some pride and confidence after the Fukushima disaster. This is described for instance in an article from the *Asahi Shimbun* dated from December 5, 2013: although Washoku was not previously registered on the List of Important Intangible Cultural Properties, it was chosen by the government for the purpose of restoring the image of the country (Fujii 2013), proving again that Washoku was given a special status among all other cultural goods.

Benefits of the registration			
	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	TOTAL
Exports / business	33	28	61
Popularity / exports of sake	8	22	30
More Japanese restaurants abroad	3	3	6
Tourism	10	8	18
Registration part of a governmental strategy	4	6	10
Foreigners allowed to cook in Japanese restaurants => influence	2	7	9
Attention from abroad / increase pride	1	5	6
Attention from the Japanese		3	3
Post Fukushima effect	2		2
TOTAL	63	82	145

Fig. 4: Distribution of articles describing the benefits of the registration

Besides, the importance of transmission and education are emphasized in a series of 36 articles from the *Asahi Shimbun* and 38 from the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. On the one hand, some papers describe measures that were put in place to safeguard Washoku and promote its transmission to younger generations. For instance, following the inscription, a collective reflection started about *kyūshoku*, the school lunch. A special day – *Washoku suishin no nichi* – dedicated to the presentation of the benefits of Washoku to children in primary schools was also enacted. On the other hand, there are also articles in this category that give a voice to

various actors who are worrying about the decline of the “traditional “Japanese diet; in that context of sense of loss, the registration comes as an essential, but not sufficient way to protect Washoku. One of the most representative voices in this regard is Yoshihiro Murata, owner of the three Michelin stars restaurant Kikunoi in Kyōto. Murata played an active role in the recognition of Washoku as an intangible cultural heritage. In an opinion paper published by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on April 3, 2018, he explains that Japanese cuisine has been registered on the UNESCO’s list not because it is delicious, but because it is progressively disappearing; therefore, there should be more awareness among the Japanese about the need of protecting it (Murata 2018).

Education / transmission			
	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	TOTAL
School lunch (<i>kyūshoku</i>)	8	5	13
Importance of education	8	15	23
<i>Washoku suishin no nichi</i>	9	6	15
Creation of a higher education institution	2		2
Cooking classes	1		1
Sense of loss	10	12	22
TOTAL	38	38	76

Fig. 5: Distribution of articles describing the importance of education and transmission

The fourth category that I identified includes 34 articles from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and 65 from the *Asahi Shimbun* that closely link Washoku to a particular type of food: the expressions that are used for instance are “[name of the element] wo fukumu Washoku” (“Washoku, which comprises of...”) or “*Washoku no kihon*” (“the core of Washoku”). The most recurring element is *umami*, and therefore *katsuo bushi*, or bonito flakes, and *dashi*, the fish stock made of *katsuo bushi* and *konbu*, and where the *umami* flavor comes from: 23 articles from the *Asahi Shimbun* and 17 from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* praise Washoku whose essence lies into *umami*. Besides, a wide range of elements is also said to contribute fully to the uniqueness of Washoku: from soy based products such as *shoyū* and *miso*, *wagashi* (Japanese sweets) and tea, to rice based products such as *mochi* (glutinous rice cake) or sake,

and fermented foods, vegetables and *wagyū* (Japanese beef). Not only foods are part of Washoku, but also traditional vessels and knives. Thus, even though the definition given by the UNESCO does not point out any particular type of foods, apart from “fish, vegetables and edible wild plants”¹² and the rice cake that the Japanese pound as part of New Year celebrations, it seems like there was a different understanding of the definition among Japanese newspapers. Besides, despite the definition gives central importance to the New Year rituals (cf. chapter 2), these are barely mentioned in both newspapers I analyzed.

Material elements			
	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	TOTAL
<i>Katsuo / dashi / umami</i>	23	17	40
Sake / alcohol	7	1	8
Fish / sushi	4	3	7
Soy (<i>miso, shoyū</i>)	8	3	11
Vegetables, fruit	5		5
Vessels and knives	4	2	6
<i>Wagashi</i>	2	1	3
Tea / <i>matcha</i>	1	1	2
Rice	4		4
Fermented foods	4	2	6
<i>Wasabi</i>	1		1
<i>Kanazawa ryōri</i>	1		1
<i>Ramen</i>	1		1
<i>Wagyū</i>		2	2
TOTAL	65	32	97

Fig. 6: Distribution of articles referencing a specific type of food or material element

¹² The complete application file, that can be downloaded on the UNESCO’s website (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/Washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869>), does mention *dashi* and its *umami* flavor, as well as fermented seasonings, cooking utensils and special table ware; however, the main definition puts the social aspect of Washoku at its core.

The two last major categories consists in articles that emphasize the uniqueness of Washoku and its qualities: the “traditional diet of the Japanese” is depicted as healthy, closely related to nature and seasons, characterized by the *ichijū sansai* (one soup, three dishes) pattern and strict manners such as the use of chopsticks; furthermore, a series of articles give some information about various events or materials such as books or films that aim at celebrating the registration or presenting the “charms of Washoku” (*Washoku no miryoku*). Those events take place abroad (such as the Universal Exposition in Milano, Italy) or within the country’s borders, such as the Washoku World Challenge or the Washoku Asahi Forum, showing that the concept spread globally.

Uniqueness / qualities			
	<i>Asahi</i>	<i>Yomiuri</i>	TOTAL
Specificity compared to others	1		1
Healthiness	3	2	5
Manners	2	3	5
<i>Ichijū sansai</i>	4	2	6
Nature and seasons	5	2	7
Zen		1	1
Registration seems natural	1		1
Present the benefits of Washoku to the world during the Olympics	2		2
<i>Kaiseki</i>	1		1
Whales are part of Washoku (according to a student)	1		1
TOTAL	20	10	30

Fig 7: Distribution of articles presenting the uniqueness and qualities of Washoku

Finally, out of a total of 426 articles, I have found only 3 articles in the *Asahi Shimbun* that have an approach of the topic which does not fall into the categories previously mentioned. The tone of those articles is overall less positive than the other articles that I have analyzed but we would not go so far as to say that they express criticism. The first article, published on December 16, 2013, raises some issues concerning the system of intangible

cultural heritage and the increasing number of applications; however the articles concludes by pointing out the fact that Japan, being the second country after China in the List on Intangible Cultural Heritage in terms of the number of inscribed elements, has to leave room for countries whose cultural practices have not been registered yet, making the examination of Japanese applications more difficult in the coming years (Fujii and Inada 2013). However, rather than questioning the system itself, it seems like the authors are more worried about the fact that the inscription of Japanese elements on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage will have to face a decline because of the constraints resulting from this heritage inflation. The two other articles underline some contradictions related to the inscription but unlike the critical assessment of the GMF found in French newspapers, none of them calls into question the content of Washoku and how it was built up to fulfill the registration goal. In an opinion paper published on February 21, 2014, Daisuke Fujii, owner of a restaurant in Utsunomiya in Tochigi prefecture, mentions his feeling of discomfort (*iwakan*) towards the registration. According to him, *umami*, which is said to be one of the main features of Japanese food culture, is slowly disappearing as eating habits are evolving towards the consumption of meat and junk food since a young age. Moreover, it seems like the specificities of each region are being ignored in order to produce and sell standardized processed foods, for the sole purpose of profit¹³. He concludes by stating that for a “gourmet” culture to emerge, Japan should valorize the techniques and agricultural products of its various regions (Fujii 2014). The last article dated from October 15, 2014, from Toshikazu Saito, professor at the Sapporo Medical University, also underlines a discrepancy lying in the inscription. Despite his pride about the registration of Washoku, he points out the decline of the home made meal and the noise (“*nani ka to sawagashii*”) that resulted from the registration; it was not the meal cooked at home that was being emphasized by magazines and newspapers, but rather the Michelin starred restaurants. For commoners, it is not the high class meal (“*takane no hana no Washoku*”) that has been registered as intangible cultural heritage, but the flavors of home (“*katei no aji*”) (Saito 2014).

¹³ The standardization of diets and the sense of loss of traditions have also been pointed out in articles that belong to the previous category dedicated to the importance of transmission; however the main difference here is that the author explicitly points out his feeling of discomfort towards the inscription.

Similarities / differences

From this comparative analysis, several observations can be made. First of all, even if one has to be careful with numbers, as Japan is one of the countries in the world where newspapers are the most widely sold and read, still, a lot more articles were published in Japan, which shows a greater interest and enthusiasm about the topic. Another main difference is the abundance of references to material foods in Japanese newspapers, whereas the French ones rarely mention any kind of specific products. Finally, criticisms are quasi non-existent in Japanese press; if they are, they do not question the concept of Washoku itself but rather express regrets about the decline of traditional dietary habits. In France, on the other hand, although there were manifold positive opinions, one can also find a significant number of skeptical reactions in national newspapers – and probably also in regional publications –. The most remarkable negative response comes from Julia Csérge herself, who was first in line in the creation and registration of the GMF, as the scientific responsible from the application of France to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Not only did she express her disappointment towards the outcomes of the inscription in an interview, but she also published a book unveiling the mechanisms and manipulations related to the registration.

Conclusion

By comparing the cases of the Gastronomic Meal of the French and the Japanese Washoku, this thesis aimed at identifying the challenges to the UNESCO's views on heritage raised by the inscription of national culinary traditions on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. I have shown that the 2003 Convention constitutes a global framework which all nation-states, regardless of not only their national specificities but also the differences that exist within their borders, have to deal with the same way. As a result, despite preexisting divergent understandings of intangible heritage, both France and Japan invented their own culinary traditions by emphasizing their social dimension in order to fit into the framework given by the UNESCO. The consequences of the inscription however can vary: on the one hand, France, because it was unfamiliar with the notion of intangible heritage, and also because it was the pioneer in the recognition of culinary practices on the List of Intangible

Cultural Heritage, had to struggle with the element to inscribe and an essential distinction between “French gastronomy” and “gastronomic meal”. This led part of the public opinion to express some reluctance regarding the legitimacy of the element inscribed and the UNESCO’s scheme. Japan, on the other hand, has been leading a nation-branding strategy based on its food for a long time and the status of Washoku, far from being contested, is in fact praised from all sides. Although the UNESCO aims at promoting cultural diversity and is willing to avoid any trade-related use of the inscription, the cases of France and Japan also reveal the discrepancy between a normative and idealized vision of intangible heritage, detached from any materialistic views, and the measures that aim at preserving it. Food in fact is a material element: in that sense, how to make a difference between measures that promote the safeguarding of the element and initiatives that make a commercial use of the inscription? In other words, does the separation between economic and cultural make sense in the case of food heritage? All those issues rely on an essential paradox summarized by Theodore Bestor (2018) in these terms: “in the mission of promoting cultural heritage and preserving diversity as a global effort, UNESCO both promotes national cultural brands and depends on reifying national definitions of culture” (Bestor 2018, 129).

From these observations, two main theoretical conclusions about the meaning of the UNESCO’s inscription can be drawn: first of all, “heritage-making is always political”; it is a “cultural performance in which the meaning of the past for the present is continually recreated and reinterpreted to address the political and social needs and problems of the present” (Smith 2017, 15-16). Food is a universal matter: everyone can have an opinion about it and relates one’s identity to a particular type of dish. Food is also a cross cultural field, which can be studied from the anthropological, economic or historical perspective; for these reasons, food becomes an object closely related to economic issues, identity-making and balances of power. The heritage-making process is political on two different scales: from the nation-states’ perspective, as they decide on what elements are deemed to be preserved and apply for the prestigious UNESCO label, but also on an international level as the recognition of food as part of intangible cultural heritage also confirms the position of power of the UNESCO. If the states invent their own traditions, in the end, it is the UNESCO, from its authoritative and universalistic perspective, that decides what elements get to be on its list. As an institution defining the intrinsic value of elements of heritage, the UNESCO, despite its claim to enhance cultural diversity, creates in fact hierarchies and relations of power besides paving the way to all kinds of manipulations from the nation-states. Finally, the inscription of culinary practices

and of food elements in general, is also an opportunity to rethink this dualism between tangible and intangible. In fact, “the very act of recognition of some performative act as a form of heritage renders it, in some real sense, tangible” (Herzfeld 2012, 48); in this regard, the conceptualization of food as an intangible heritage has to be questioned, as its recognition as heritage has very tangible political consequences.

References

- **Academic sources**

Adell, Nicolas. 2013. "The French Journeymen Tradition: Convergence between French Heritage Traditions and UNESCO's 2003 Convention". In *Heritage Regimes and the State*, edited by Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann, 177-194. Göttingen : Universitätsverlag Göttingen.

Akagawa, Natsuko. "Intangible Heritage and Embodiment: Japan's Influence on Global Heritage Discourse". In *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, edited by William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith and Ulrich Kockel, 69-86. John Wiley & Sons.

Assmann, Stephanie. 2017. "Global Recognition and Domestic Containment: Culinary soft power in Japan". In *Feeding Japan : the cultural and political issues of dependency and risk*, edited by Andreas Niehaus and Tine Walravens, 113-139. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Aygen, Zeynep, and William Logan. "Heritage in the "Asian Century": Responding to Geopolitical Change". In *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, edited by William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith and Ulrich Kockel, 410-442. John Wiley & Sons.

Aykan, Bahar. 2016. "The politics of intangible heritage and food fights in Western Asia". *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22:10, 799-810.

Bessière, Jacinthe. 2013. "Heritagisation, a challenge for tourism promotion and regional development: an example of food heritage". *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 8:4, 275-291.

Bestor, Theodore C. 2018. "Washoku, Far and Near: UNESCO, gastrodiplomacy and the Cultural Politics of Traditional Japanese Cuisine". In *Devouring Japan: Global perspectives on Japanese culinary identity*, edited by Nancy Stalker, 99-132. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bortolotto, Chiara. 2013. "The French Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Domesticating a Global Paradigm into French Heritage Regime. In *Heritage Regimes and the State*, edited by Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann, 265-282. Göttingen : Universitätsverlag Göttingen.

Bortolotto, Chiara. 2016. "L'Unesco comme arène de traduction: La fabrique globale du patrimoine immatériel". *Gradhiva* 18, 52-73.

Cameron, Christina. 2016. "UNESCO and Cultural Heritage: Unexpected Consequences". In *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, edited by William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith and Ulrich Kockel, 322-336. John Wiley & Sons.

Cang, Voltaire Garces. 2007. "Defining Intangible Cultural Heritage and its stakeholders: the case of Japan". *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 2, 46-55.

Cang, Voltaire Garces. 2009. "Food as heritage: Prospects and Perils". *Multicultural Relations* 6, 111-123.

Cang, Voltaire Garces. 2018. "Japan's Washoku as Intangible Heritage: The Role of National Food Traditions in UNESCO's Cultural Heritage Scheme". *International Journal of Cultural Property* 25, 491-513.

Csergo, Julia. 2016. *La gastronomie est-elle une marchandise culturelle comme une autre? La gastronomie française à l'UNESCO : histoire et enjeux*. Chartres : Menu Fretin.

Cwiercka, Katarzyna J. and Yasuhara, Miho 安原美帆. 2016. *Himerareta Washokushi 秘められた和食史*[The Hidden History of Washoku]. Tōkyō : Shinseisha.

Cwiercka, Katarzyna J. 2018. "Washoku, heritage and national identity". In *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese History*, edited by Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 89-106. New York: Routledge.

Cwiercka, Katarzyna J. 2018. "Serving the Nation: the Myth of Washoku". In *Consuming Life in Post-Bubble Japan: a Transdisciplinary perspective*, edited by Katarzyna J. Cwiercka and Ewa Machokta, 89-106. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Cwiercka, Katarzyna J. with Yasuhara, Miho. Forthcoming. *Branding Japanese Food: From Meibutsu to Washoku*. Hawaii University Press.

Demossier, Marion. 2016. "The Politics of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Land of Food and Wine". In *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, edited by William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith and Ulrich Kockel, 87-100. John Wiley & Sons.

Di Giovine, Michael A. and Ronda. L. Brulotte. 2014. "Food and Foodways as Cultural Heritage". In *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, edited by Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael A. Di Giovine, 1-27. Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate.

Fournier, Laurent-Sébastien. "Intangible Cultural Heritage in France: from State Culture to Local Development". In *Heritage Regimes and the State*, edited by Regina F. Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann, 327-340. Göttingen : Universitätsverlag Göttingen.

Harrison, Rodney. 2013. *Heritage. Critical Approaches*. London: Routledge.

Herzfeld, Michael. 2012. "Intangible Delicacies: Production and Embarrassment in International Settings". *Ethnologies* 36: 1, 47-62.

Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terrence Ranger. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kohsaka, Ryo. 2017. "The myth of Washoku: a twisted discourse on the "uniqueness" of national food heritages". *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 4: 2, 66-71.

Kumakura, Isao 熊倉功夫 and Ehara, Ayako 江原絢子. 2015. *Washoku to wa nani ka 和食とは何か* [What is Washoku?]. Kyōto: Shibunkaku Shuppan.

Man Kong, Lum and Marc de Ferrière le Vayer. 2016. "At the Intersection of Urban Foodways, Communication and Intangible Cultural Heritage". In *Urban Foodways and Communication, Ethnographic studies in Intangible Cultural Food Heritages around the World*, edited by Casey Man Kong Lum and Marc de Ferrière Le Vayer, 39-53. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Matta, Raul. 2016. "Food incursions into global heritage: Peruvian cuisine's slippery road to UNESCO". *Social Anthropology* 24, 338-352.

Naulin, Sidonie. 2012. "Le repas gastronomique des Français: genèse d'un nouvel objet culturel". *Sciences de la société* no. 87, 8-25.

Omori, Isami. 2018. "Impact of UNESCO Heritage Status on Japanese Food Discourse in Major Japanese Newspapers. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 5 :11, 433-441.

Rose, Gillian. 2007. *Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: SAGE.

Sammells, Claire A. 2014. "Haute Traditional Cuisines: How UNESCO's List of Intangible Heritage Links the Cosmopolitan to the Local". In *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, edited by Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael A. Di Giovine, 141-148. Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate.

Smith, Laurajane. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.

Smith, Laurajane, and Natsuko Akagawa. 2009. *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. London, New York: Routledge.

Smith, Laurajane. 2017. “Heritage, Identity and Power”. In *Citizens, Civil Society and Heritage-Making in Asia*, edited by Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, Hui Yew-Foong and Philippe Peycam, 15-39. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Tornatore, Jean-Louis. 2012. “Retour d’anthropologie: le repas gastronomique des Français. Eléments d’ethnographie d’une distinction patrimoniale”. *ethnographies.org*, 24 (July), 1-30.

- **Newspapers articles in Japanese**

Fujii, Daisuke 藤井大介. Chiiki taisetsu ni shite koso nihon shoku 地域大切にしてこそ日本食 [The importance of regionality in Japanese food]. *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, February 21, 2014 p.28.

Fujii, Yuji 藤井裕介 and Inada, Shinji 稲田信司. Towareru mukei bunka isan 問われる無形文化遺産 [Questioning intangible cultural heritage]. *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo Evening Edition, December 16, 2013, p.9.

Fujii, Yūsuke. 藤井裕介 「和食」登録決定. ユネスコ無形文化遺産、国内22件目 [The registration of Washoku. 22 national elements inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage]. *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, December 2013, 5, p.39.

Saitō, Toshikazu 齋藤利和. Ushinawarete iku [kazoku no shokutaku] 失われていく「家族の食卓」 [The loss of the family dining table]. *Asahi Shimbun*, Hokkaido Morning Edition, October 15, 2014, p.34.

Mitsui, Mina 三井美奈. Washoku gaikō : hoshi ikutsu? 和食外交 星いくつ [Washoku diplomacy : how many stars ?]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, May 2014, 6, p.4.

Murata, Yoshihiro 村田吉弘. Wa wo shokusu. Kiwameru (1) shunkashūtō umami kyōen. [和を食す] 極める (1) 春夏秋冬 うまみ競演 [[Eating the wa.] Mastering all four seasons – The *umami* contest] *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, April 2018, 3, p.21.

Terasaki, Shoko 寺崎省子. Washoku bunka no keihatsu susumetai minokichi shachō Fusa Riki san 和食文化の啓発進めたい 美濃吉社長・佐竹力総さん [“I want to push forward the development of Japanese food culture” Riki Fusa, President of the Minokichi]. *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, December 2013, 15, p. 31.

Uehara, Miwa 上原三和. Hitori hitori ga Washoku no jouhō hatsugen wo. Furansu ryōri shefu Alain Ducasse 一人一人が和食の情報発信を フランス料理シェフ アラン・デュカスさん [The spread of information about Washoku: the French chef Alain Ducasse]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, December 2016, 22, p.19.

Yomiuri Shimbun. Wa wo shokusu. Dentō to ibunka yūgō shokuzai ya shūkan ukeire yutaka ni 和を食す 伝統と異文化 融合 食材や習慣受け入れ 豊かに [Eating the wa. Japanese tradition and multicultural fusion. Integrating the richness of ingredients and eating habits]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, April 2018, 4, p.16.

Yomiuri Shimbun. Washoku būmu. Yusshutsu 6000 oku en, gyūniku, kome kōchō, nourinsuisanbutsu 2 nen renzoku saikou gaku 和食ブーム 輸出6000億円 牛肉、コメ好調 農林水産物 2年連続最高額 [The boom of Washoku: 600 billion yen worth of exportations. Beef, rice and agricultural and fisheries products exports have reached a top level for the 2nd year in a row]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Tokyo Evening Edition, February 2015, 10, p. 12.

Yomiuri Shimbun. Daikokutama jinja de kikizake zenkoku 148 shurui tonai mo 9 sha 大国魂 神社で利き酒 全国148種類 都内も9社 [Sake festival at the Daikokutama shrine. 148 kinds of sake produced in the whole country, including 9 from the city] *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Tokyo Morning Edition, August 2014, 20, p.31.

- **Newspapers articles in French**

Abellard, Alain. 2013. “On passe à table?”. *Le Monde*, July 16, 2013, p.18.

Assouly, Olivier. 2015. “Partager n’est pas manger”. *Libération*. August 10, 2015, p.18.

Bietry-Rivierre, Eric. 2010. “Quand l’UNESCO classe à tour de bras – La liste du patrimoine immatériel grossit. Inflation absurde ou marque du génie de l’homme ?” ? *Le Figaro*. November 11, 2010, p.23.

Brunet, Eric. 2016. “Pizzas, McDo et Unesco”. *Valeurs actuelles*. March 10, 2016, p.23.

Chantry, Claire. 2011. “La gastronomie n’est pas à la fête”. *Aujourd’hui en France*. January 15, 2011, p.11.

Danancher, Thibaut. 2013. “Yannick Alléno: “La cuisine française est sur le grill”. *Le Point*. February 21, 2013, p.72-75.

Gaudry, François-Régis. 2014. “Alain Ducasse: “Il faut protéger notre modèle culturel!””. *L’Express*. March 12, 2014, p.50.

Gené, JP. 2015. “L’hôtel de la Marine aiguise les appétits”. *Le Monde*. April 23, 2015, p.19.

Genthialon Anne-Claire, and Catherine Mallaval. 2010. “Le coq vainc à l’UNESCO”. *Libération*, November 17, 2010, p. 23.

Labbé, Christophe, and Olivia Recasens. 2010. "La révolution du goût". *Le Point*. December 9, 2010, p. 84-91.

Launet, Edouard. 2010. "Pour tout le folklore du monde", *Libération*. December 23, 2010, p. 30.

Malagardis, Maria. 2011. "Le cassoulet à l'UNESCO". *Libération*, July 2, 2011, p.16.

Masson, Paule. 2017. "'La France promeut une vision réductrice et élitiste de la gastronomie', Julia Csergo". *L'Humanité*. January 13, 2017.

Mereuze, Didier. 2011. "Le sens du goût n'est pas inné, il se forme". *La Croix*. December 10, 2011.

Mereuse, Didier. 2014. "Une gastronomie au plus haut niveau". *La Croix*. December 11, 2014, p.30-31.

Noce, Vincent. 2010. "L'UNESCO, un gâteau pris d'assaut". *Libération*. November 11, 2010, p 22.

Pitte, Jean-Robert. 2013. "La gastronomie, notre patrimoine culturel". *Le Figaro*. January 25, 2013, p.15.

Rémond, Alain. 2010. "A la table de l'UNESCO". *La Croix*. November 18, 2010, p.28

Ribaut, Jean-Claude. 2011. "La France va-t-elle aussi perdre le AAAAA de sa gastronomie?". *Le Monde*. December 5, 2011, p.2.

Roussel, Frédérique. 2011. "L'intérêt n'est pas la conservation mais la transmission". *Libération*. September 16, 2011, p.28.

Villemur, Michèle. 2010. "Transmettre notre culture du goût". *Valeurs actuelles*. November 25, 2010, p.94.

Wisman, Ariel. 2010. "Entrée, plat, dessert". *L'Express*. December 1, 2010, p.129.

- **Websites and audiovisual materials**

Archives du gouvernement Français. 2011. "Campagne "So French so Good: encourager la gastronomie française à s'exporter". February 18, 2011. http://archives.gouvernement.fr/fillon_version2/gouvernement/campagne-so-french-so-good-encourager-la-gastronomie-francaise-a-s-exporter.html

Fackler, Martin. 2016. "The Silencing of Japan's Free Press". *Foreign Policy*, May 27, 2016. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/27/the-silencing-of-japans-free-press-shinzo-abe-media/>

Goût de France (press kit) No date.

<https://assets.france.fr/int/GoodFrance/20182019/GoodFranceDP2019.pdf>

Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances (communiqué). "La Fête de la Gastronomie devient Goût de France". No date. <https://www.economie.gouv.fr/fete-gastronomie/fete-gastronomie-devient-gout-france>.

Sawa, Yasuomi. 2017. "Japan". In *Digital News Report 2017*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 120-121.

https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf

"So French, so Good". *Dailymotion*. Video File. February 22, 2011.

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xh5me4>