Reconsidering Japaneseness and Authenticity: The Cultural Globalization of the Japanese Tea Ceremony in the New York Metropolitan Area

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Abstract

"Few practices are simultaneously as exotic and representative, esoteric and quotidian, instrumental and sensual, political and cultural as the Japanese tea ceremony" (Surak, 2013, p. 1). Surak's statement represents a broader recognition of the Japanese tea ceremony (hereafter the JTC) as the embodiment of the quintessence of Japanese culture, not only internationally but also domestically. This embodiment of culture exists despite, as well as because of, the fact that most Japanese people themselves lack deep knowledge and experience of the JTC. However, in today's era of cultural globalization, a variety of cultural products and practices are now experienced worldwide, and the JTC is no exception. Based on thirteen years of ethnographic research, the present study examines the landscape of cultural globalization with a focus on this quintessentially Japanese cultural practice in the New York metropolitan area. The study analyzes the two primary, and frequently conflicting, dimensions of the JTC's propagation in the area, namely, reconstruction and deconstruction of Japaneseness. In so doing, the study critically examines how (in)authenticity is valued within the JTC community and how this valuation can be interpreted in the larger context of cultural globalization. The study concludes that, as the JTC is at a point of increasing globalization as a cultural practice, the continued expansion of the JTC is contingent on how the community assesses (in)authenticity within the practice. The study, therefore, comments not only on (in)authenticity within this singular context but suggests the significance and imperatives of redefining the notion of cultural authenticity in modernity.

Keywords: Japanese tea ceremony, New York, cultural globalization, authenticity, Appadurai's scapes

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Introduction

In today's globalized world, cultural boundaries are increasingly fluid, allowing traditional practices to cross borders and take on new meanings. This paper presents an ethnographic study of the Japanese Tea Ceremony (hereafter the JTC) as practiced in the New York Metropolitan Area (hereafter the NYMA), a cosmopolitan setting shaped by diverse cultural influences. In this context, the JTC offers a lens to explore how tradition is maintained, adapted, and reinterpreted globally.

Drawing on Arjun Appadurai's (1996) theory of global cultural flows, particularly his five "scapes," the study analyzes how global influences shape local practices. The JTC is explored not only as a traditional form but also as a practice integrated into everyday cultural negotiation.

While often seen as a symbol of Japanese culture, the JTC in the NYMA raises questions about authenticity and the reconstruction of Japaneseness. Building on the analysis of five "scapes" of the JTC in the NYMA, this paper further examines two forms of cultural authenticity and explores how the JTC navigates the tension between tradition and modernity in a global context.

Ultimately, the paper shows how the JTC is adapted and recontextualized in the NYMA, with processes of transformation and hybridity emerging through cross-cultural interaction in a globalized setting.

Overview of the Fieldwork

This study is based on thirteen years of longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork on the JTC in the NYMA. I practiced the JTC for twenty-three years, first in Japan for ten years and then in New York for thirteen. This experience allowed me to act as a participant observer and examine both continuities and local adaptations in its practice at NYMA. Since 2012, my fieldwork has included a range of participant-observation activities such as attending, organizing, teaching, and demonstrating at tea lessons, workshops, festivals, and public events. I also taught the JTC for eight years at institutions like the Nippon Club in Manhattan, allowing sustained engagement with diverse students and practitioners.

In addition to observation, I conducted twenty formal and informal interviews with Japanese and non-Japanese practitioners, instructors, students, and cultural mediators.The interviews were sometimes recorded and sometimes not, and they varied between formal and informal. They were supported by detailed field notes, video recordings, and photographic documentation focused on the interactional dynamics of the JTC practice in various settings.

Conceptualizing Cultural Globalization –Scapes of the Japanese Tea Ceremony in the New York Metropolitan Area

Understanding the JTC in the NYMA requires a framework that explains how cultural practices move and transform globally. This section draws on Appadurai's (1996) theory of global cultural flows from *Modernity at Large* to analyze how the JTC is transmitted, adapted, and reinterpreted in this specific context.

Appadurai identifies five overlapping "scapes"—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes, to describe the complex, uneven global movement of people, media, technology, capital, and ideas. This framework helps explain how the JTC travels beyond Japan and evolves in new settings like the NYMA.

Cultural globalization, according to Appadurai, is not a linear replication of traditions but involves local adaptation and reinterpretation. The JTC, practiced in settings ranging from private homes to cultural institutions, is reshaped by local conditions such as space limitations and audience diversity. These adaptations reflect a negotiation between maintaining tradition and responding to new contexts.

This study applies Appadurai's theory to explore how the JTC is redefined in the NYMA through the interplay of so-called Japanese traditions and the local environment. The following subsections analyze each "scape," drawing on fieldwork—including interviews and observations followed up with detailed note-taking—to illustrate how global flows shape the local practice of the JTC.

Ethnoscape: Mobility of People and Language

The ethnoscape of the JTC in the NYMA comprises a diverse community of an estimated 200–300 members. Central to this community are the Omote-senke and Ura-senke schools, which maintain regional branches and certified instructors, preserving ties to Japan (Creighton, 1997). Instruction is typically led by licensed Japanese tea masters, many of whom are permanent U.S. residents and serve as cultural and linguistic gatekeepers.

The community includes Japanese sojourners, long-term immigrants, and a growing number of non-Japanese participants, who often teach in intercultural settings (Inoue, 2003). Non-Japanese involvement is increasing, and this brings varying levels of cultural and linguistic fluency. Japanese remains essential in naming tools and concepts, while English is commonly used in instruction, especially publicly. As Surak (2013) notes, bilingual teaching increases accessibility but can lead to simplified content.

Overall, the community remains largely centered around Japanese members and the Japanese language, although the presence of non-Japanese participants and the use of English continue to grow within this bilingual environment.

Ideoscape: Values of Preservation, Adaptation, and Wellness

The ideoscape includes not only efforts to preserve the traditional forms of the JTC but also a range of discourses related to adaptation and reinterpretation. In some instances, this results in a partial transformation of established practices. Such shifts do not always arise from deliberate strategies. Rather, they often emerge in response to various social, linguistic, and cultural conditions. In the multicultural and institutionally diverse context of the NYMA, the meanings of the JTC are negotiated continuously. Practitioners engage with different value systems, including those related to mindfulness, wellness, and cross-cultural learning. These ideological frameworks shape how the JTC is practiced and understood today in the NYMA.

Discourse of Preservation

Among the JTC practitioners in the NYMA, there is a strong emphasis on preserving traditional forms and values. This is reflected in the careful transmission of procedures, utensils, and lesson formats modeled after Japanese practice, as well as in frequent references to lineage-based legitimacy.

For many, authenticity is defined by adherence to original teachings, with Japanese instructors often seen as custodians of tradition. A clear example is found on the Omotesenke Domonkai USA Eastern Region website, where the organization, which represents the American branch of the Omotesenke school, frames its mission around maintaining the tradition as practiced in Japan. The following is an excerpt from their homepage:

> Omotesenke, being the main family line that carries on the tradition of Rikyu's chanoyu, authentically preserves that tradition and seeks to pass down to the future generations the beauty and spirit of Japan through constant pursuit of chanoyu that reflects the zeitgeist of the time.

This statement reflects a preservation-oriented ethos. At the same time, it shows an awareness that tradition must respond to historical and cultural change.

Discourse of Cultural Adaptation

Deconstruction of Hierarchy and Formality. One area where the notion of adaptation is most clearly articulated is in the modification of pedagogical hierarchy and formality. In contrast to the rigid hierarchical structures often found in tea schools in Japan, many practitioners in the NYMA espouse a more flexible and dialogic approach.This aligns more closely with American expectations of mutual respect and open communication in educational settings. Such shifts in pedagogical style reflect what Surak (2013) describes as the "internationalization" of the tea ceremony, where forms are selectively adjusted to fit local cultural norms without entirely abandoning traditional frameworks.

Ed, a non-Japanese practitioner with over forty years of experience, commented on this point:

> One very I find negative aspect of Japanese teaching method is when the teacher talks down to the students. That is, it's a very difficult way to get a message across, generally speaking. Hierarchy is OK. But it's how it's conveyed.

This remark highlights a central concern in adaptation discourse. Hierarchy itself is not necessarily rejected, but the manner in which it is expressed is questioned, especially when it appears authoritarian or dismissive. The roles of teacher and student are maintained, but the expected demeanor and communicative style may differ.

In practice, many instructors in New York, both Japanese and non-Japanese, adjust their teaching style, often becoming more conversational and explanatory. For example, in group lessons, teachers may provide contextual explanations, encourage questions, or acknowledge alternative ways of understanding practice. Rather than undermining the core structure of the JTC, these changes might be seen as reflecting a localized shift in how authority is expressed and received.

The Imperative for Americanization. As the JTC takes root in the United States, questions inevitably arise about how formal roles and hierarchical conventions translate across cultural boundaries. One notable area of tension concerns the role of the first guest, or *shokyaku*. James, who has studied the JTC for over ten years, reflects on the difficulty of maintaining such roles in the U.S., stating, "That's almost impossible to maintain in the United States. Because the whole concept of the 1st guest as being senior. It just, it just doesn't make any sense. And the fact that only a 1st guest can speak." His comment highlights a key issue in Americanization, where formal elements like the exclusive speaking rights of the *shokyaku* can conflict with American values of equality and open participation. As Ito (2017) notes, this role may also create pressure and confusion for non-Japanese participants, potentially limiting accessibility in intercultural settings.

Ideologies of Japanese Language Use and Meaning

Japanese Language as a Common Ground. Some practitioners view Japanese positively, describing it as a shared cultural point of reference that fosters unity. Victoria, a non-Japanese practitioner with five years of experience, compares its role to that of Latin in European intellectual history:

> I personally think it's important because I have found it as a way to connect with the host, to connect with each other. In a way, I think of how, throughout Europe especially, Latin was used, right? … It's a common ground to have the Japanese. So, I personally like it.

This perspective highlights how Japanese is not simply a communicative tool but also functions as a form of symbolic capital. As Bourdieu (1991) notes, language carries symbolic power that goes beyond mere communication, acting as a marker of social position and cultural legitimacy. In the context of the JTC, the deliberate use of Japanese serves as a cultural anchor, creating a common ground that fosters unity and mutual respect even among non-native speakers.

Michael, a long-time practitioner, expresses a similar view, emphasizing the communal and emotional aspects of using Japanese. He states, "For example, when we come together … we're all Japanese speakers. In that context, speaking in Japanese adds a little something for us as a cultural element that we enjoy." Here, Japanese contributes to the ambiance of the gathering. It becomes a cultural marker, deepening the shared experience. Even when participants are fluent, Japanese plays a role beyond communication, it enhances the ritual and aesthetic atmosphere of the gatherings.

These perspectives suggest that Japanese can act as a medium of shared identity and respect. Its performative or symbolic use adds meaning precisely because it is limited and deliberate. In this way, language becomes a cultural anchor within the diverse environment of the NYMA.

Japanese Language as an Obstacle. At the same time, not all practitioners view Japanese use in a positive light. In the multilingual and multicultural context of the NYMA, some express concern that Japanese may function as a barrier rather than a bridge—a point that will be explored further in Section 4. These critiques reflect a different ideology, one that values clarity, access, and participation over symbolic authenticity. Ed, an experienced practitioner, describes how language can affect inclusion. He states, "if a person is not a

Japanese speaker, then the use of Japanese would serve to exclude that person from the flow." This concern aligns with broader sociolinguistic insights on language and exclusion. Ishihara (2005) argues that in multilingual settings, the unmediated use of a dominant language often creates barriers for non-native speakers, thereby limiting their full participation and fostering exclusion rather than inclusion.

Another practitioner, Kevin, who has practiced the JTC for over five years, highlights the necessity of adapting language use for broader accessibility:

> (For the JTC to be globalized) we definitely have to change the language, to use the language of the place where it's being conducted… Like carry out the ceremony all in English… If you only use Japanese, you can throw a Japanese word around, which is fine, but then you have to explain it, because the whole purpose is communication.

Kevin's perspective corresponds to Ishihara's observation, reflecting a discourse on the necessity of linguistic accessibility through explanation and translation in diverse cultural contexts.

Discourse of Mindfulness and Wellness: Strategic and Personal Approaches

In the NYMA, the JTC is increasingly linked to mindfulness, wellness, and self-care. For instance, at a Nippon Club event titled "Business and Tea Ceremony," tea master Yoshitsugu Nagano discussed integrating tea practice into professional well-being, reframing the JTC for modern work life. Wilson (2014) similarly shows how Buddhist mindfulness adapts within American wellness culture; likewise, the JTC functions as a cultural practice supporting mindfulness and emotional balance.

Some participants describe drinking matcha as a tool for self-regulation. Sally, one of the guests at a private tea gathering I hosted, said, "I drink matcha every morning now. I stopped drinking coffee. Matcha doesn't give me too much of a jolt like coffee does." Alex, who participated in a tea ceremony event at a college, noted, "I was stressed out, and I felt healed during the ceremony." These reflections highlight not only tea's calming effects but also the JTC's reinterpretation as a wellness practice associated with mental health and sustainable living. These examples show how mindfulness and wellness discourses, both personal and institutional, expand the JTC's accessibility and contemporary relevance in the NYMA.

Financescape: Cultural Capital and Commodification

While the ideoscape focuses on the values, beliefs, and symbolic meanings associated with the JTC, a full understanding of its practice in the NYMA also requires attention to its economic dimensions. The JTC does not circulate solely as a form of cultural expression or aesthetic practice; it is also embedded in systems of financial exchange, commodification, and market-based valuation. As Philippczyck (2018) notes in his study of tea ceremony practices in Europe, the globalization of traditional cultural forms often leads to a dual structure in which authenticity and commercial viability must be negotiated. His findings show how the JTC is simultaneously preserved as a symbol of cultural heritage and adapted to meet the expectations of broader consumer markets. This insight is particularly relevant in the NYMA, where tea-related activities are shaped by both cultural and economic logics. Examining this financial layer reveals how the JTC, even when practiced with deep respect

for tradition, is situated within broader flows of capital that influence its transmission, presention, and perceived value.

In Appadurai's (1996) framework, the financescape refers to the movement of money, capital, and economic practices across global and local contexts. In the case of the JTC in the NYMA, this scape encompasses two contrasting economic dimensions. On one side, the JTC continues to function as a form of cultural capital, often sustained within relatively affluent and exclusive communities. It is supported through private instruction, personal patronage, and membership-based institutions, where access is typically limited by both cost and social networks. On the other side, matcha, which can be said the most recognizable element of the JTC culture, has been widely commercialized. It circulates in popular consumer markets through cafes, wellness branding, and retail products. This version of tea culture is accessible to a broad public but is largely disconnected from the formal structures and values of the JTC.

This section examines these two divergent aspects of the financescape: (1) the JTC as a culturally prestigious practice embedded in upper-middle-class or elite networks, and (2) the commodification of matcha as an everyday consumer good in mainstream markets.

Cultural Capital of the Japanese Tea Ceremony

In the NYMA, the JTC's cultural capital is often expressed through individual patronage, including curated tea rooms, high-end utensils imported from Japan, and private gatherings. These settings preserve the tradition's artistic integrity but also make the practice accessible mainly to those with financial and social resources.

Two overlapping discourses arise: one emphasizes the JTC's aesthetic and cultural value as a refined Japanese tradition with deep history and philosophy; the other signals elite cultural status. Patrons use exclusive events and rare utensils to position themselves as culturally sophisticated. As Bourdieu (1984) notes, cultural consumption like this serves not only appreciation but also social distinction.

Commodification of Matcha-Drinking Culture

On the other hand, the commodification of matcha-drinking culture in the NYMA reflects the underlying logic of cultural globalization, which is marked by accessibility, hybridization, and casual simplification. Unlike the formal structure of the JTC, these commercial expressions translate tea culture into approachable, lifestyle-friendly formats that emphasize ease and familiarity**.** For example, matcha cafes featuring cozy interiors, seasonal menus, and quick service, similar to Western coffee chains, have become increasingly prevalent. These spaces do not seek to replicate traditional tea settings; rather, they offer casual environments where patrons can incorporate matcha lattes or sweets into their everyday routines. Similarly, online matcha-making kits and pop-up tasting events offer casual opportunities for those unfamiliar with the JTC to experience matcha in relaxed, low-pressure contexts.

This trend does not signify a rejection of Japanese tradition but rather a reconfiguration that corresponds to global cultural flows. Such developments reflect Robertson's (1995) concept of glocalization, where global cultural elements are adapted and reinterpreted within local contexts. Although these commercialized practices may diverge from the formal structure of the JTC, they illustrate an alternative mode through which Japanese tea culture is circulated, adapted, and appreciated in a globalized setting.

Mediascape: Tradition and Urban Life

Media representations of the JTC in the NYMA are varied, spanning formal ceremonies to everyday matcha experiences. For example, the kenchashiki (offering tea ceremony) held in March 2025 by the Omotesenke head at a New York cathedral was covered by NHK and Nikkei, and its coverage emphasized peace and respect, showcasing the JTC as a symbol of ceremonial diplomacy.

Alongside such high-profile events, practitioners affiliated with schools like Omotesenke and Ueda Soko promote seasonal *chakai* (tea gatherings) through social media. Keiko Kitazawa of Murasaki Tea offers Omotesenke-style classes in Manhattan, while the Omotesenke Domonkai Eastern Region USA organizes public ceremonies at venues such as Place 229, blending traditional and modern elements. Digital posts showcase utensils, kimono, and sweets, presenting the JTC as both a preserved tradition and a living urban practice.

The article *"From Zen to Zoom: The Digital Revival of Japanese Tea Ceremonies"* (2024) highlights how digital tools like Zoom and Instagram became vital during the pandemic, expanding reach and preserving tea techniques through virtual reality and online archives. Casual lifestyle portrayals also flourished, such as the *"GREEN TEA Room"* pop-up on the High Line, which linked matcha to stress relief and wellness and was widely promoted through social media.

Together, these media portrayals show the JTC's range, from a dignified cultural symbol to a trendy urban beverage, reflecting its flexible role in the NYMA.

Technoscape: Mediated Practice and Transnational Access

Though traditionally requiring in-person interaction, the JTC in the NYMA has embraced technology, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic as mentioned above. Online tea classes and virtual lectures expanded access; I also personally taught and attended such sessions connecting with both local and Japanese instructors.

At public events, visual media like screens show historical context or close-ups of movements, enhancing understanding. Platforms like Zoom facilitate international exchange, connecting the NYMA practitioners with Japanese teachers. These technological integrations complement rather than replace tradition, showing an adaptive technoscape that broadens participation without losing core values.

Overall, the five scapes reveal that the JTC in the NYMA is a dynamic practice shaped by global mobility, evolving values, economy media, and technology. It is neither a static preservation of tradition nor a complete reinvention, but rather a complex interplay of adaptation and continuity. This ongoing negotiation raises critical questions about what defines "authenticity" in a globalized world, who decides it, and how cultural meaning shifts when practices move beyond their origins. The next section will explore these issues in relation to modernity.

(In)Authenticity and Moderniy of the Japanese Tea Ceremony in Cultural Globolization

Among multiple interviews conducted, this section is particularly informed by an interview with tea master Yoshitsugu Nagano, founder of Chanoyu Week NYC, to discuss two key issues: the ambiguity of tradition and the contested meaning of "Japaneseness." I chose to highlight Nagano's perspective because, through initiatives like Chanoyu Week, he actively explores new possibilities for the JTC, and is, in my view, a leading figure in its contemporary development in the NYMA.

"Japaneseness" becomes central when considering authenticity and modernity in global contexts. It is expressed through community makeup, language, and visual aesthetics, and is sometimes deliberately reframed or downplayed. Nagano views this not as a loss, but as a chance to rethink cultural boundaries, opening new possibilities for the JTC in the NYMA.

Obscurity of Tradition—Example of *Seiza*

Nagano notes that so-called tradition in the JTC is inherently ambiguous, a condition stemming not only from its relocation abroad but from its own historical development within Japan. As such an instance, he discusses the concept of a *seiza*, the formal kneeling posture often associated with traditional Japanese etiquette, as follows:

> For example, the term *seiza* itself was actually coined by the Meiji government. And it wasn't until the Taisho era that the average person in Japan, upon hearing *seiza*, would picture that specific sitting posture. So it's only been about a hundred years, really.

Here, Nagano points out that *seiza*, the sitting posture commonly seen as emblematic of Japanese tradition, was only standardized around a century ago. This historical insight challenges the assumption that such a posture has always been an integral part of Japanese cultural practices like the JTC.

He further reflects:

> If you consider that the tea ceremony has a history of around 650 years, going back to the Muromachi period, and for 80% of that time people weren't using the *seiza* posture, then... it really makes you wonder: what do we truly mean when we say something is 'authentic'?

Based on these remarks, Nagano highlights the ambiguity surrounding the concept of "tradition" in tea culture. The formal kneeling posture known as *seiza*, which is commonly perceived as quintessentially Japanese, was only standardized roughly 100 years ago. Given that the JTC itself spans approximately 650 years, with most of that history predating the widespread adoption of *seiza*, this example problematizes fixed notions of authenticity within the tradition.

Diminishment of Japaneseness

Community Composition

Following his reflection on the constructed nature of tradition, Nagano highlights how the composition of the JTC community shapes its cultural meaning in the NYMA. He expresses a conscious intention to avoid the overrepresentation of Japanese nationals in his gatherings and lessons, stating, "Something I'm really conscious of at my practice sessions is making sure that Japanese people don't make up the majority. I don't mean in every single class, but more in terms of the overall group composition." This underscores his engagement with inclusion and representation. Drawing on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, which explains how dominant in-groups can marginalize others, Nagano's approach challenges exclusionary boundaries. By disrupting a Japan-centric model, he creates space for non-Japanese practitioners, challenging and redefining "authenticity" of the JTC in a global context.

Choice of Language

In addition to community composition, linguistic choices also play a critical role in shaping how inclusive or exclusive the JTC practice becomes, particularly in a multicultural setting like the NYMA. Nagano is highly intentional about how language mediates access to the JTC community. He says, "That's why, for example, I never use Japanese on Facebook or Instagram. I've made it a rule not to post in Japanese anymore. That way, it's easier for people who don't speak Japanese to feel welcome and join in." By avoiding the use of Japanese on social media, Nagano seeks to make his events and classes more accessible to non-Japanese speakers, thereby lowering the linguistic threshold for participation. His deliberate language choice functions as a form of cultural outreach, extending the space of the JTC beyond those with prior familiarity with Japanese language or cultural codes. Nagano's approach reframes language not as a marker of authenticity, but as a potential barrier to be consciously dismantled in the interest of inclusivity.

This perspective aligns with findings by Sugiarto and Arif (2024), who examine how English-language practices on social media platforms reflect and shape cultural identities in globalized contexts. They argue that language choices in digital spaces do more than communicate. That is, they actively construct cultural inclusion or exclusion, influenced by cultural contexts and platform dynamics. Thus, Nagano's deliberate avoidance of Japanese in online communication exemplifies a strategic effort to make the JTC practice more accessible and inclusive.

Visual Images

Just as language choice functions as a gatekeeping mechanism, so too do visual representations, especially in digital contexts such as social media. Nagano is acutely aware of how imagery shapes perceptions of who belongs in the JTC community and actively uses visual strategies to broaden its appeal, as shown in an excerpt from his interview below:

> Also, on Instagram, I make a point of posting not just overly traditional content, but mixing it up a bit, and I try to appear in the posts myself as much as possible. That's because when I show up, it tends to lower the perceived age range of the group. And since I'm male, it gives off the impression that it's okay for men to join too.

He further elaborates:

> Of course, if the goal were to present 'the classic tea ceremony' image, then I think it'd be better to show a female student in a kimono doing something elegant. But instead, I choose to do things like posting in English, avoiding overly 'Japanese' aesthetics, and showing myself in the content. That's the kind of approach I'm taking.

Nagano, who is himself a man in his 30s, consciously uses his own image to counter conventional associations of the JTC with older, female practitioners. By appearing in his posts, he aims to visually signal that the practice is not limited by age or gender, thereby making the space feel more accessible to younger people and men. His choice to use English and to avoid stereotypically "Japanese" imagery further distances his representation of the JTC from its conventional, museum-like aesthetics.

Rather than reproducing stereotypical images of kimono-clad women engaged in graceful gestures, or visual tropes often associated with the "authentic" JTC, Nagano adopts a more casual and contemporary aesthetic. This approach resonates with research by Deolalikar (2022), who examines how visual narratives in advertising have historically shaped perceptions of tea culture and its associated gender norms, particularly through the depiction of women. Deolalikar's study highlights how visual representation is not neutral but actively constructs cultural meanings and expectations, often reinforcing gendered associations. Nagano's conscious disruption of these traditional visual tropes reflects a broader strategy to reposition the JTC as something open, modern, and socially accessible.

By frequently appearing in his own posts, using English captions, and avoiding overtly "traditional" visuals, Nagano attempts to reposition the JTC as a practice that invites a more diverse range of participants, particularly younger individuals and men. These visual strategies reflect his intention to challenge normative images of Japaneseness and make the JTC resonate more broadly with participants in the NYMA.

Concluding Remarks

This study has examined how the Japanese Tea Ceremony (JTC) in the New York Metropolitan Area is not a static cultural artifact, but a dynamic practice shaped by global flows. Using Appadurai's (1996) theory of cultural globalization, particularly his "scapes" framework, I have shown how the JTC is influenced by ethnoscapes (people), ideoscapes (ideas), financescapes (resources), mediascapes (media and information), and technoscapes (technology). These flows reshape rather than dilute the JTC, transforming its meanings and forms of participation.

For example, examining the case of Yoshitsugu Nagano reveals how authenticity in the JTC is constructed through interaction with local dynamics in the NYMA, which leads to a further consideration of cultural globalization in a broader context. Rather than relying on continuity with a fixed past, authenticity in the NYMA emerges as relational and processual, negotiated through language, representation, and community makeup. Nagano's strategic choices, including his avoidance of Japanese on social media, his emphasis on self-representation, and his embrace of diversity, challenge essentialist notions of "Japaneseness" and contribute to reframing the JTC for broader public engagement.

In light of the foregoing, it could be argued that the form of authenticity emerging in the NYMA reflects broader patterns of cultural negotiation beyond this region alone. This perspective challenges the idea that cultural legitimacy is secured solely by tradition, emphasizing instead that authenticity is contingent, socially constructed, and continuously negotiated. Such a view aligns with DeSoucey's (2016) concept of "rationalized authenticity," which balances tradition with contemporary relevance in global contexts, and Philippczyck's (2018) notion of authenticity as performative, shaped by both local and global expectations.

Within this framework, authenticity in the NYMA manifests through acts of inclusion and reinterpretation. Practitioners of the JTC embody various discourses that negotiate tradition within diverse and global contexts, contextualized by modernity. In other words, the authenticity and inauthenticity of so-called traditional culture are not fixed but continuously redefined for both practitioners and audiences. This flexible, negotiated approach reimagines tradition for the 21st century, raising broader questions about how global flows reshape cultural legitimacy and how contemporary individuals engage with evolving practices.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

I used ChatGPT to assist with the following tasks for this paper: proofreading and editing, searching for helpful resources, and having interactive discussions on particular points.

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