

# Revival Attempt of Incense Ceremony in the Modern Ages

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## Abstract

This article examines the revival attempt of incense ceremony in the modern age in order to clarify why the attempt was unsuccessful through analysis of books, documents, and articles on incense ceremony published since the middle of Meiji period onward. While visual elements that compose of incense ceremony were criticized for being against national characteristics (*kokuminsei*), the empirical knowledge on invisible elements was emphasized as olfactory “science” trying to connect the past to modernity. Although the writerly knowledge on the classics was essential for incense ceremony, it became invalid due to the national literature “invented” under the uprising of nationalism and national print-language in the modern age. The invisible element of incense ceremony became completely “invisible” in the modern ages. On the contrary, smell itself could finally obtain novel meaning as a means of relaxation or healing because of aromatherapy, which was newly introduced to Japan from Western countries in the post-war period. “Traditional” incense ceremony was, in this regard, positioned as Japanese fragrance culture in the universal fragrance culture.

**Keywords:** : traditional culture, incense ceremony, nationalism, invented tradition

## 1. Introduction: Tea and Incense, Visible and Invisible Tradition

Japanese cultural activities, which are now regarded as tradition, were once abandoned, or declined in the beginning of the modern age. Even among “traditional” cultural activities, there are differences in the degree of recognition today. Assuming that the revival attempt of such traditional cultural activities from the decline leads to the current

situation, this article examines how a cultural activity has survived until today despite the lack of recognition.

Incense ceremony (*kōdō*) is a way to appreciate smell of fragrant wood (aloeswood or sandalwood), which includes ceremonial procedure, designated body movements, hierarchical evaluation system of fragrant wood similar to tea ceremony (*sadō*) that includes such a procedure, body movements, and an evaluation system of tea utensils. Although both incense ceremony and tea ceremony are now considered to be Japanese traditional culture, the former failed to obtain broad recognition as a national tradition while the latter successfully re-invented itself in the modern age. This article examines the revival attempt of incense ceremony in the modern age in order to clarify why the attempt was unsuccessful through analysis of books, documents, and articles on incense ceremony published since the middle of Meiji period onward.

How tea ceremony was “re-invented” as national tradition has been discussed by scholars such as Kumakura Isao and Tanaka Hidetaka (e.g. Kumakura 1980, Tanaka 2007, Yoda 2003). They employed the concepts of “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm 1983), and “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983) in order to analyze how tea ceremony revived from the decline in the beginning of Meiji period (1868–1912). The reinvention of tea ceremony as national tradition in the modern ages can be explained in two words: visibility and art.

A tea ceremony is mainly composed of visual elements: tea utensils, room decorations such as hanging scrolls which sometimes zen-related phrases are written on in calligraphy, and seasonal flowers in a vase that compose of a theme of the tea ceremony. These major components are always recorded in words or visually by drawings. Possession of such utensils and tea-related room decorations created a certain hierarchy among tea participants and the actual visual information on those were limited to people who owned them or had opportunity to see them before their very eyes at a tea ceremony. The revival of tea ceremony was a process of reinvention from exclusive high culture to national tradition depending heavily on such visual aspects. Intellectuals who considered tea ceremony as a subject of study tried to revive it referring to it as a “national tradition” (*kokusui*). Along with the rising nationalism since the late nineteenth century, tea ceremony became a symbol of Japanese tradition to be proud of. As the notion “tea

ceremony as art” and consequently “tea utensils as works of art” spread through printed medium with immutable visual information (such as photographs), tea ceremony could re-place itself in the modern context. After the Second World War, famous tea utensils, which had been privately owned by business executives, were finally stored in museums as works of art. Everybody can have access to famous tea utensils as works of art that represent the national tradition visually. Tea ceremony could convey its reinvented value to the nation and even to abroad through the visual aspects that tea ceremony fundamentally had.

On the contrary, an incense ceremony is composed of both visible and invisible elements. What composes of a theme of an incense ceremony is, however, not the visual element but rather the invisible element: smell. Founders of incense ceremony tried to record the invisible information on smell and classify fragrant woods that emit various types of smell. In order to verbalize and record smell, they borrowed imagery world of literature: particularly of *tanka* poetry under the canonized text of *Kokinshū*, which is the first imperial anthology of poetry in Japan completed in 905. They connected smell and literary images to classify, interpret, and record the invisible smell. Therefore, participants of incense ceremony had to be able to manipulate words and images based on the *Kokinshū* canon as poets to record and interpret the invisible element. Incense ceremony is not about a mere olfactory art but also about an imagery world composed of smell together with “writerly”<sup>1</sup> knowledge on the classics.

Previous studies on incense ceremony have mainly focused on the origin and the development of incense ceremony from the medieval time to the pre-modern ages. In this article, I would like to focus on what aspects of incense ceremony have been emphasized in order to connect “the past” to modernity since the middle of Meiji period, comparing it with the revival attempt of tea ceremony mentioned above. Reviewing opinions and comments on incense ceremony, the article argues that, unlike tea ceremony, incense ceremony could not become a national material of modern Japan due to its invisibility in

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1. Shirane explains writerly canon as “a set of authoritative texts whose initial function was, throughout the most of the pre-modern period, to teach prose or poetry composition, a key social and literary practice.” Also, readerly canon as “a set of authoritative texts that initially were to be read for purposes of moral, religious, social, or political education” (Shirane 2000: 221).

the pre-war period. After the Second World War, however, the invisible element of incense ceremony could obtain novel meaning as a means of relaxation or healing being repositioned as “Japanese” fragrance culture among “universal” fragrance culture.

## 2. Before the Second World War

### 2.1 Revival Attempt as Olfactory Art

The knowledge on the classics was essential to participate in incense ceremony in the pre-modern ages. Such an aspect, however, was not taken into consideration in the modern age. But it does not mean that there was no revival attempt of incense ceremony. While tea ceremony could transfer its visible element (e.g. tea utensils) into the modern context of art, the subject of such a transference in incense ceremony was its invisible element: knowledge of smell and the embodiment of it.

There were mainly two discourses on incense ceremony in the Meiji and Taishō (1912–1926) periods: incense ceremony as lofty “play” for women and as olfactory art. As with tea ceremony, incense ceremony was largely ignored until the middle of Meiji period, when books on incense ceremony began to appear. These were mostly books for women’s education taking over the role of *ōraimono* (textbook for primary education) for women in the Edo period (1603–1867). The books introduce incense ceremony quite briefly such as its history, a list of great named fragrant woods (*meikō*),<sup>2</sup> simple manners and rules, and the rules of a couple of incense games. This basic knowledge was no different from those written in *ōraimono* for women (Jinbo 2003: 111–123). Because these books were written for women, incense ceremony was defined as a lofty “play” (*asobi*) suitable for ladies (e.g., Tsyboya 1891; Sunaga 1893a, 1893b). It is quite contrastive to tea ceremony whose participants had actively revitalized it by asserting it is

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2. *Meikō* has two different meanings: (1) fragrant wood individually named, regardless of its quality; (2) named fragrant woods of best quality or having famous origin selected by authorities of schools by the pre-modern ages.

not a mere “play” since the early Meiji period.<sup>3</sup> Mizuhara Suikō, who contributed an article to Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper about her suggestion on the refinement of incense ceremony, mentioned that incense ceremony is more lofty, elegant, and literary activity than tea ceremony (Mizuhara 1903, October 25). She was eager to revive incense ceremony and advocated the need for the refinement of gorgeous and expensive utensils to more simple ones. Yet, she regarded incense ceremony as “play” in her book (Mizuhara 1906: 226).

This notion of lofty play for women lasted throughout the Meiji and Taishō periods. There was, however, another discourse on incense ceremony. Kubota Beisen (1852–1906), who was a Japanese-style painter and a professor of Ishikawa Prefectural Technical High School (Ishikawa Kenritsu Kōgei Gakkō), defined incense ceremony as a way to appreciate “olfactory beauty” (*shūkan no bi*). He explained beauty sensed by the five senses in his book, and referred to incense ceremony in a chapter on olfactory beauty. His understanding of beauty is that beauty is what pleases human’s five senses. Thus, he considered that when smell of fragrant woods pleases ones olfaction, the one senses olfactory beauty. In his regard, incense ceremony is the way to appreciate beauty with olfaction (Kubota 1905).

Unlike tea ceremony, there was no reference to it as “tradition” yet. As if following tea ceremony, the word began to be used for describing incense ceremony, particularly by scholars of tea ceremony in the beginning of Shōwa period (1926–1989). Incense ceremony was often referred to together with tea ceremony because the scholars considered both were created by a same circle of people in the same period of time. Sugimoto Fumitarō, who had published many books on tearoom, teahouse, and Japanese-style garden, published *Kōdō* (Incense Ceremony) in 1929. He clearly mentioned in the preface that “our traditional/national incense ceremony” (*waga kokusui kōdō*) (Sugimoto 1929: 2). Considering perfumery from Western countries and Japanese

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3. The eleventh head of Ura Senke school of tea ceremony, Gengensai (1810–1877) immediately refuted against a Kyoto prefecture ordinance that designates tea ceremony and other cultural activities as “play” (*yūgei*), imposes taxes on people including tea masters who earned money from teaching or performing their profession (Kumakura 1980: 116).

mixed incense (*takimono*)<sup>4</sup> as “artificial,” he claimed that concentrating on “natural” fragrant woods represents a national characteristic of Japan: Japanese people’s love for nature (Sugimoto 1929: 5–7). He analyzed the reasons of the decline of incense ceremony and inferred that its “childish gesture,” by which he refers to the ceremonial procedure and designated body movements (*temae*) and the knowledge of the classics required must be the reasons in addition to the lack of fragrant woods and gorgeous utensils. He criticized all visible elements of incense ceremony and also the reliance on the classics to visualize the invisible elements. He concluded that incense ceremony declined because of its “aristocratic decadence,” which is against the national characteristic of Japan (*kokuminsei*) (Sugimoto 1929: 10–11). He regarded “*tanpaku shōsha*” (simple and elegant) as the first characteristic of the nation. Haga Yaichi, who was the leading person of Japanese literature, concerned on editing national textbook for school education, already used the phrase in his book *Kokuminsei Jūron* (Ten Lectures on National Characteristics) (1908) after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Sugimoto considered that because of this national characteristic that suits the basic concept of tea ceremony, tea ceremony could obtain wide recognition and popularity.

What he focused on and praised in the book was the olfactory art of incense ceremony that included distinguishing and classifying smells by nose. “Incense ceremony is just about olfactory art. It does not require any special technique” (Sugimoto 1929: 394). He focused on *rikkoku-gomi*<sup>5</sup> classification of fragrant woods and praised the original invention of incense ceremony as if it was science preceding modern science.

The greatest achievement of incense ceremony must be the discovery of *rikkoku gomi*

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4. *Takimono* is small ball-shaped incense, which is a mixture of several aromatic materials such as aloeswood, clove, and musk, bounded by honey or plum meat. It is called *nerikō* nowadays and often used in tea ceremony to conceal an odor of charcoal to put an iron kettle on.

5. *Rikkoku-gomi* consists of two different classifications used in incense ceremony. *Rikkoku* (six countries) refers to the six category of fragrant woods classified by the characteristics of smell. The term is probably derived from six countries that produce fragrant woods. *Gomi* (five tastes) refers to the five elements of smell that are used to classify fragrant woods. The elements of smell are expressed in five tastes: sweet, sour, bitter, hot/spicy, and salty.

classification of fragrant woods, which people of producing country (of fragrant woods) have never thought of, and also, the establishment of incense ceremony itself that enabled such a discovery. I believe it is not too much to say that the discovery and establishment should have worldwide value and be vitally important. Without today's advanced scientific knowledge, Japanese people just smelled and smelled using their olfaction to come to know that all fragrant woods can be classified with *rikkoku gomi* as a consequence of long efforts. (Sugimoto 1929: 397)

He paid attention to incense games, although not to their literary aspects, but as a training of one's olfaction.

Incense games of similar composition should be reduced. There are too many. ...Also, games having themes after poetry on love affair are immoral and should not be recommended. (Sugimoto 1929: 403)

His opinion on incense ceremony that it preceded modern science about olfaction shows his attempt to connect the past to the modernity. The book was reprinted four times before the Second World War and the logic was taken over by other scholars and even participants of incense ceremony.

Isshiki Rikyō, who was a student of Oie School of incense ceremony, published *Kōsho* (A Book of Incense) in 1943 during the Second World War. Though he regarded incense ceremony as a means of spiritual training (Isshiki 1943: 8), he suggested utilizing it for the sake of modern science. "I hope for the book to contribute to the development of science considering olfaction" (Isshiki 1943: 9). He clearly mentioned that learning incense ceremony would develop one's olfaction.

I hope the development of olfaction through incense ceremony will contribute to knowledge on smell, and also to the development of scientific knowledge on smell such as analysis on aroma chemicals and its combination and synthesis. (Isshiki 1943: 91)

The Second World War induced more extreme opinions on incense ceremony as a means of the development of one's olfaction. Mutō Yashū, who was a major and also a painter of military art, contributed an article titled "A New Light to Incense Ceremony in the Current [war-time] Situation" (Mutō 1943). While he praises a spiritual aspect such as meditation and concentration through incense ceremony, he put stress on the development of olfaction and utilizing it to distinguish poisonous gases for survival in a battle.

The revival attempt of incense ceremony concentrated on the knowledge to distinguish smells. It is, however, an empirical knowledge which participants obtain through experiences and cannot be explained or instructed by words. The means of visualizing invisible elements was totally out of focus in the pre-war period.

## **2.2. Collapse of *Kokinshū* Canon and the Transformation of Curriculum on the Classics**

Looking at the literary world and the curriculum on the classics in the pre-war period, there were two dramatic changes affected by nationalism. One is the invention of national literature, and the other is the role of the classical texts.

The invented national literature caused the collapse of the *Kokinshū* canon that had reigned for about 700 years since the medieval time. Instead of *Kokinshū*, which was considered to be the ideal of *tanka* composing, *Man'yōshū* (Ten Thousand Leaves), which is the first anthology of poetry in Japan, became a national anthology of poetry. Poets and scholars such as Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902), Yosano Tekkan (1873–1935), and Toyama Masakazu (1848–1900), tried to reject the conservatism in *tanka* poetry based on *Kokinshū* and asserted that *Man'yōshū* is superior to *Kokinshū* for its "expression and the naturalness of its diction as opposed to the artificial language of the *Kokinshū*" (Shinada 2000: 34).

Moreover, there was a need of national poetry as Shinada points out:

(T)he establishment of a modern national poetry was more a matter of the nation or state than a literary matter. Inspired by their reading of European literary histories, these leaders [in the Meiji state who advocated the superiority of *Man'yōshū*] were

convinced that literature was “the flower of a people” [*kokumin no hana*] and that a nation-state that did not possess a resplendent and unique literature of its own could not be counted among the civilized countries of the world. (Shinada 2000: 35)

Because the knowledge on *tanka* having *Kokinshū* as a canon had been exclusive among aristocrats, it was not suitable for the unity of Japanese people as a whole. Instead, Meiji period intellectuals and literati perceived *Man'yōshū* “as the reflection of a golden age in which their forebears wept and laughed together in song” (Shinada 2000: 36–37). *Man'yōshū* was characterized as a national anthology of poems by “from emperor to commoners” (Shinada 2000: 38). *Kokinshū* canon, which incense ceremony relied on to visualize invisible elements, collapsed and could not become a national tradition for Japanese.

The *Kokinshū* canon used to be writerly canon for composing *waka* poetry. Not only *Kokinshū* but also other classical literature such as *The Tale of Genji* was considered to be a source of the subject matter of *tanka* and composing of it. However, the role of the classics changed from a writerly one to a readerly one in the modern ages (Shirane 2000: 221). At first Meiji intellectuals tried to create new style of writing based on classical *tanka* texts though, this was gradually taken over by *genbun itchi* (unification of the spoken and written languages) style (Shirane 2000: 239).

As the literary style was gradually displaced by the *genbun itchi* style and classical Japanese lost its practical function as a writing model, classical texts took on other functions, which were increasingly ethical and ideological. (Shirane 2000: 240)

The classics were considered to be a source of national ideology as wartime nationalism grew such as loyalty (*chūsei*) and military valor (*yūbu*) (Shirane 2000: 241). Thus, as the criticism by Sugimoto Fumitarō on the relationship between the classics under the *Kokinshū* canon and incense ceremony to be “aristocratic decadence” shows, “writerly” *Kokinshū* canon could not fit into the “readerly” and national ideological curriculum of the pre-war period. The writerly knowledge on the classics lost its rigid authority and function to visualize the invisible elements of incense ceremony.

### 3. After the Second World War

#### 3.1 Denial of Incense Ceremony as a Mere Olfactory Art

In contrast to the main focus on the invisible aspects of incense ceremony in the pre-war period, scholars and participants of incense ceremony after the Second World War started to pay attention to its relationship with literature advocating incense ceremony are not merely an olfactory art. Sanjōnishi Kin'osa, who was a professor at Jissen Women's University and also the head of Oie School of incense ceremony, published *Kōen Gayū* (Play Elegant at Incense Ceremony) in 1955, which explains five categories of fragrant woods and basic manners and rules of incense ceremony. In the preface, he mentions:

Speaking of incense ceremony, it has been propagated as an olfactory competition to distinguish smell. Therefore timid people hesitate to participate. But is this propaganda believable? (Sanjōnishi 1955: 1–2)

His comment reflects the major discourse on incense ceremony as an olfactory art in the pre-war period. Although he mainly focused on smell and characteristics of fragrant woods in the book, he was trying to advocate another meaning of incense ceremony. Two years later, he contributed a short article on incense ceremony to the first issue of *Jissen Bungaku*.<sup>6</sup> He referred to the relationship between incense game and the classics in the article (Sanjōnishi 1957). Comparing contemporary literature and the classics, he mentioned, it is easier to have empathy reading contemporary ones because “its theme and background are directly related to our daily life” (Sanjōnishi 1957: 7).

Unfortunately, we do not have a direct connection to the classics [as we have it to the contemporary ones]. ... We only admire the style of writing even if a garden of Heian palatial architecture [*Shinden*] is beautifully described in the classics. ... We look at a

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6. *Jissen Bungaku* is a journal of literature studies published by the faculty of humanities at Jissen Women's University.

picture or drawings to enjoy the description with a particular [visual] image. (Sanjōnishi 1957: 8)

He emphasized the images applied to each category of fragrant woods and defined incense ceremony as an opportunity to enjoy the image composed of smell and the classics. He declared that incense ceremony is not merely about olfaction but “getting closer to the quintessence of the classics, which we sense through the medium of smell” (Sanjōnishi 1957: 10). For the first time since the Meiji period, the classics came into the limelight as essential for incense ceremony.

### **3.2 The Return of the Heian Texts and the Reduction of the Classics in the Curriculum**

Until and during the Second World War, curriculum on the classics was constructed mainly for ethical and ideological purpose. The postwar period brought a change in the national ideological curriculum. Under the control of the Allied Occupation forces, the curriculum was “demilitarized” and changed into more peaceful one (Shirane 2000: 241).

The result was the disappearance of over half of the wartime curriculum, including almost all *gunki monogatari* (military chronicles), Shinto-related histories, and numerous Edo period *gabun* essays on valorous soldiers and great men. (Shirane 2000: 242)

Instead, Heian literature returned to the curriculum after largely eliminated from textbooks during the war. The function of the Heian literature was, however, totally different from that in the pre-modern ages.

The rise of Heian texts ... shows the general historical shift in the function of the *wagaku* (Japanese studies) canon, from a predominantly writerly curriculum in the premodern period, ... to a half-readerly and half writerly curriculum in the Meiji period, and then to an almost totally readerly school curriculum in the postwar period, in

which classical texts were meant to be read, not imitated. (Shirane 2000: 247–248)

In addition, from 1960s, literature scholars started to re-evaluate *Kokinshū*, which had been ignored being hidden behind the “national anthology of poetry,” reviewing the nationalistic over-praising of *Man'yōshū* (Fujiwara 2004). However, *Kokinshū* was could not regain its position as a writerly canon as already mentioned due to the transition of the function of the *wagaku* canon.

Poems from *Kokinshū*, a couple of chapters of *The Tale of Genji*, and other Heian texts were, indeed, included in school textbooks after the war. The basic concept of the curriculum was, however, “liberation from the classics,” which was used to advocate the wartime national ideology (Udou 2002: 163). Therefore, the absolute quantity of the classical texts in elementary and junior high school curriculum dramatically decreased (Udou 2002: 164, Fukagawa 1974). Despite the return of the Heian texts, the embodiment of the writerly knowledge on the classics has become much more unfamiliar pursuit to the general public who are educated in the post-war period.

### **3.3 Incense Ceremony as Leisure Activity and Aromatherapy: Connection to the General Public**

From the middle of Meiji period to the Second World War, most advocates of incense ceremony were from Oie School such as Isshiki Rikyō. They did not popularize incense ceremony, but rather, strengthened an image of incense ceremony as an exclusive high culture. The revival attempt of incense ceremony in the post-war period had two different backgrounds: “leisure boom” (*reijā būmu*) since the 1960s and “aroma boom” (*aroma būmu*) since around the 1980s.

Nishiyama Matsunosuke, who is notable for his study on *iemoto* system, described Oie School of incense ceremony:

Highly cultured ladies still have aristocratic accomplishment of pure and elegant play

of sensation, incense ceremony.<sup>7</sup> Participants must know dynastic style literature such as “*Genji*” (*The Tale of Genji*) and “*Ise*” (*The Tale of Ise*), and poetry from *Kokin* or *Shin Kokin*, be able to make *tanka* immediately, write beautifully when commissioned a role of *shippitsu* as a recorder of a game. These are the least basic education for enjoying incense ceremony. (Nishiyama 1956: 191–192)

The description explains the least requirements to participate incense ceremony. Incense ceremony remained to be an “elegant play” for “highly cultured” people even after the war. The notion of “play” was eventually connected to leisure activity, which became quite popular in the 1960s due to the Japanese post-war economic growth. In fact, Okamoto Yoshihiko introduced incense ceremony in an article titled “A Suggestion for Leisurely Saturday Afternoon” that appeared in a women’s magazine (Okamoto 1963). While Okamoto called incense ceremony as “quite leisurely (*nonbiri shita*) elegant play,” also commented, “young women [who have a job] must be looking for more effective and purposeful leisure activity [for their life]” (Okamoto 1963: 91). Incense ceremony still remained to be “play.”

Even though incense ceremony participants had claimed spiritual aspect of incense ceremony (e.g. Sugimoto 1929: 401, Tsuduki 1936: 1), incense ceremony itself had long been regarded as “play.” What gave another meaning to incense ceremony was from abroad: aromatherapy. A pioneer book on aromatherapy, *The Art of Aromatherapy* (1977) by Robert Tisserand was translated to Japanese in 1985.<sup>8</sup> Since then, incense ceremony has become a “fragrance culture of Japan.” For example, two years later, a mook (a Japanese-English word combining magazine and book)<sup>9</sup> *Kaori no Sekai* (The World of Fragrance) (1987) was published. The mook dealt with incense ceremony as a main

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7. Nishiyama used the word “*bunkō*” citing the title of a painting by Itō Shinsui. It literary means, “Listen to incense.” In incense ceremony, participants do not say, “smell incense” but “listen to incense,” which is derived from the Chinese language for smelling.

8. The book was published by Fragrance Journal Ltd. (Information available: <http://www.fragrance-j.co.jp/outline.html> [Accessed 11 January 2015])

9. Mook is “irregularly published, sold for a long period of time, single themed book treated as magazine.” (available: <http://www.nihon-zassi.co.jp/02books.html> [Accessed 2 January 2015])

subject introducing both Oie School and Shino School with essays by the heads of both schools. It included numerous pictures of gorgeous lacquered utensils and incense-related drawings such as a scene from *The Tale of Genji*, and *Monkō* by Itō Shinsui. The book treated incense ceremony neither as olfactory competition nor merely as play, but as a kind of fragrance culture of Japan introducing it together with various essays on “fragrance” such as wine, herbs, spices, perfume, and aromatherapy. Incense ceremony was then treated as a part of universal fragrance culture, moreover, as Japanese aromatherapy. *Aromatopia*, a journal of aromatherapy that started in 1992, focused on incense ceremony and the sedative effect of smell of fragrant woods as a medical treatment in its preface (1999).

It will lead to establishment of a unique Japanese aromatherapy if incense ceremony, which has its long history and tradition as same as tea ceremony and flower arrangement, revives as a medical treatment. We hope the Japanese aromatherapy to spread all over the world. (Aromatopia 1999)

The invisible elements of incense ceremony have become a means of relaxation and a part of aromatherapy without a medium of the classics. Smell itself could be placed into the modern context by aromatherapy, which was newly introduced concept from Western countries. Incense ceremony has become a leisure activity and a fragrance culture of Japan in the post-war period.

#### **4. Conclusion: Traditional Culture Beyond Tradition**

The notion of national tradition attached to tea ceremony spread through printed medium with immutable visual information. The “visible” tradition has become an ambassador of Japanese culture. In contrast, incense ceremony could not convey both visible and invisible elements and meanings connoted based on the classics to the nation due to national ideological use of “traditional” culture. While visual elements of incense ceremony was criticized for being against “national characteristics” (*kokuminsei*) of Japan,

invisible elements and embodiment of the empirical knowledge on it became a focus of the revival attempt in the post-war period. Nevertheless, the classics, which made such invisible elements “visible,” gradually lost its function as a writerly canon in the modern ages. Incense ceremony was unable to dissipate its exclusivity after the adoption of *genbun itchi* style in writing. The sceneries created by smell became more secluded to those who could still write and imagine in the world of the classics. Therefore incense ceremony could not become a national tradition of the modern Japan in the pre-war period.

The definition of tradition had been constructed together with the development of the modern nation-state. In the 1980s, an external view through aromatherapy finally separated smell and the classics. Smell has obtained an independent meaning as a means of relaxation and healing for people of today. Nevertheless, the novel position incense ceremony acquired was “Japanese” fragrance culture within “universal” fragrance culture. My subject of study in the future is to seek a new potential of traditional culture beyond the definition of tradition as a cultural resource that can be used not only by “Japanese” as a nation of the modern nation-state.

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