

Food Culture and Traditional Performing Arts in Japan

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Abstract Food and cuisine in Japan as well as in Italy – and certainly not only in France – are culture. The importance of food is naturally vital and is therefore the foundation of the rites, in which offerings to the deities also take place. In Japan, gods are presented offerings of rice, foods from the seas and the mountains, drinks (*sake*), as well as flowers, in rituals. At the same time the performing arts (poetry, music and dance) are also important in the rituals, dedicated to the divinities and to the audience on the occasion of rites and festivals. The paper will discuss food and drink, which are the basis of civilisation and nutrition in Japan, in connection with traditional theatres: from *nō*, to *kyōgen*.

Keywords Japan. Food culture. Performing arts. *Nō*. Kabuki. *Kyōgen*.

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1 Rites, Foods and the Performing Arts

Food and cuisine in Japan, as well as in Italy – and certainly not only in France – are culture. Food and cuisine are manifestations of a culture with a long and great tradition that arises from the cultivation and harvesting of fields and rice paddies, from fishing, hunting, breeding or other means, from the acquisition of ingredients, from

its preparation (cooking) and presentation to reach the table and finally, with its consumption.

The importance of food is naturally vital and is therefore the foundation of rites, in which offerings (today called *shinsen* 神饌 in Shintō shrines or *mike* 御饌) to the deities also take place.

The culture of food, as well as the performing arts, are at the roots of civilisation, in Japan as in Italy. In Japan, gods are afforded offerings of rice (or other cereals), foods from the sea and the mountains, drinks (*sake*), as well as flowers, in rituals with differences according to the traditions of each sanctuary and geographical areas: that is basically alcohol (*sake*), rice cakes (*omochi*), sea fish, river fish, wild birds, water birds, seafood, vegetables, sweets, salt and water.

At the same time the performing arts such as poetry, music and dance are also important in the rituals, which are dedicated to the divinities and to the entire audience on the occasion of rites and festivals. The rituals, with offerings, and the arts (song, music, dance) have the function of recalling the divinity and its protection and energy, to propitiate the harvest and prosperity, to thank and entertain the deities and communicate with them, to magnetise their energy, therefore to represent the divinities and myths to the public and thus propitiate abundance, long life and fortune for the whole community. Even in the next phase of development of real complex forms of spectacle and theatre, the religious and vital value for the community of these scenic actions/performing arts is preserved and perpetuated.

In this paper, I will therefore discuss food and drink, which are the basis of civilisation and nutrition in Japan, in connection with traditional theatres: from *nō* with sacred dances and banquets of poetry, music and dance that characterise some pieces of the repertoire; to *kyōgen*, which represents the relationship, often playful and humorous, between man and food - in particular *sake* but also tea, which are of such importance and also reflect aesthetics in medieval times; to the puppet theatre (*ningyōjōruri bunraku*) and *kabuki*, in which in the premodern period, many of the foods, dishes and habits that are still practiced today are codified and from which new fashions and systems of consumption in the culture of food are also launched.

2 Water and Sake

Among the offerings to the deities in the rituals of the sanctuaries, an important place is assigned to rice and *sake* 酒. Just like bread and wine are the radical components of the Italian table and culture, both individual and collective, with both religious and secular meanings.

In the sacred ceremonial dances of *Okina* 翁 (the dance is a Shintō ritual of longevity that celebrates peace and prosperity and abundant harvest in the country), which are the basis of the performing arts

of *sarugaku* and the prerogative of the actors of the *nō*, the character of Senzai (a young man) emphasises and implores the abundance of waters of the waterfalls that in fact allow the cultivation of rice.

The water, that comes down from the mountains, and also the waterfalls, is a vital principle and its purity and abundance is a guarantee of plant life, in particular of the rice seedlings (*ine* 稲).

Needless to say, the purity and lightness of water, not only in the cultivation of rice, but in its preparation as a cooking dish, as well as in the preparation of *sake* or tea, is a basic requirement.

As Italian cuisine, Japanese cuisine places emphasis on the quality of the ingredients which, due to simplicity, is crucial.

As in the preparation of tea (*sencha* 煎茶 or *maccha* 抹茶 or other), which is made using only light/soft water (*nansui* 軟水), so for the *sake*, the production process uses only rice, *kōji* and water, whose quality is guaranteed, with that of rice, resulting in a superfine product with respect to perfume, fragrance and taste.

Sake (made with rice, water and *kōji* 麴), in addition to being an indispensable element in rituals, is also the absolute protagonist not only of rites but also of banquets, parties, symposia etc., together with poetry, singing, music and dance.

In this form, that is, in banquets or parties, it makes its appearance in the repertory of the *nō* theatre.¹ *Sake*, music and dance are preliminary ingredients for a pleasant and warm meeting between people and between lovers, as happens in *Senju* 千手.

In the *nō* drama *Senju*, Taira no Shigehira (1158-1185), the youngest child of Kiyomori, a Taira clan's chief commander, fought in the battle of Genpei but became a prisoner of war in the battle of Ichinotani. Shigehira is escorted to Kamakura and he is entrusted to the mansion of (Kanonosuke) Munemochi, a vassal of Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147-1199). Shigehira meets Yoritomo who was delighted and dispatched a beautiful maid, Senju no mae, to comfort him. Senju tells Yoritomo that Shigehira wants to become a monk, but Yoritomo does not agree to pardon him and Shigehira waits for the unknown day of execution. In the rain, Munemochi visited Shigehira with *sake*. Senju no mae also visits Shigehira with a *biwa* and a *koto*. Shigehira seems reluctant, but with the guidance of Munemochi, he faces Senju and the banquet begins. Senju pours *sake* to Shigehira, composes lines of poetry and tries to bring out his heart. Senju dances, Shigehira also plays the *biwa*, and Senju plays the *koto*, and the night continues. That morning, Shigehira is sent to the capital, and the two wet their sleeves and bid farewell: it was the last farewell between a young man who is going to die and a girl/dancer who spends an evening with him with music, dance and *sake*.

¹ For the plots of the plays here mentioned see Ruperti 2016a, 1-200.

In the *nō* drama *Kantan* 邯鄲 a young man, Rosei (*shite*), who visits Kantan/Handan Village in China, borrows a mysterious pillow from the hostess of the inn (*ai*). It is a pillow that allows you to realise the path you should take. Rosei immediately uses this to take a nap. After a while, Rosei is awakened by a man (*waki*) who calls himself a messenger, and is told that he will ascend to the throne, and is taken to the royal palace where the ministers (*waki tsure*) are lined up. Rosei, in the time of a dream, spends his days of glory holding a big banquet, with the dance of a child and with the sake of immortality and longevity, and does his best to enjoy himself, but in the meantime, people disappear. When Rosei wakes up, he is in the original inn and he realises that all the events so far were dreams, in which he perceived the essence of the things in the world.

Sake can also be a metaphor or instrument of the coveted *sake* of immortality and longevity, a long life elixir symbolised by the dewy liquor of chrysanthemums, flowers that express the wish for long life, as we can see in *Makura jidō* 枕慈童 (*Jidō* of the Headset) / *Kiku jidō* 菊慈童 (*Jidō* of the Chrysanthemum).

During the reign of Wei's Emperor, in China, a group of messengers are dispatched to search for the source of the sacred water that sprang up from the foot of Mt. Rekken (Li xian). The messenger finds a hermitage in the mountains. An eccentric boy appears from the hermitage. When the messenger asks for his name, the boy tells him that he served the King Mu of Zhou. *Jidō*, a child of great beauty, said that when he copied the two verses (of quatrains) from the pillow given to him by King Mu onto chrysanthemum leaves, the dew that arose became an immortal spirit water, and he was 700 years old because he continued to drink it. And he danced with the pleasure of joy.

Drinking *sake*, or a substitute for it, together is also a toast of good luck and good wishes for future hope, as is in *Shunkan* 俊寛 (*Shunkan*, *nō* play).

In the heyday of the Heian period the monk Shunkan (1143-1179) was accused of being complicit in a conspiracy to try to overthrow the Taira clan and, together with Fujiwara no Naritsune and Taira no Yasuyori, was exiled to Kikaigashima (Island of demons) in Satsuma. Thereafter, a temporary amnesty was held in the capital to pray for the safe delivery of Tokuko, Taira no Kiyomori's daughter who became consort of the Emperor Takakura. Naritsune and Yasuyori, who were religious, were praying and making a pilgrimage to the island, as if it were the sacred places in Kumano: Shunkan welcomes the two returning from the island tour, naming the water of Tanigawa as chrysanthemum liquor and holding a feast nostalgic for the capital Kyoto.

Kiyomori's messenger arrives directly and brings good news for forgiveness. However, the letter of pardon did not have Shunkan's name. Shunkan sinks into the abyss of surprise and despair, and

everyone around him has no words of comfort. Eventually, the boat leaves the island with the two pardoned and Shunkan clings to the boat, but is ruthlessly abandoned and crouches in the waves on the shore in despair.

Equally, drinking *sake* together is like a form of recognition of the other, a manifestation of esteem and sharing that brings rivals or enemies closer together, a pact between men of honour who respect each other as in the ending of *Ataka* 安宅 (*Ataka, nō* play). It is a famous episode from the life of Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-1189): the hero with his faithful Benkei and vassals tries to reach the north of Japan. Thanks to Benkei, pretending to be *yamabushi*, they manage to overcome the barrier manned by Togashi. Once over the barrier, the group moves away and rests with a party/toast: Benkei was rude to his lord, but Yoshitsune praised him for his wits and wept with his vassals, mourning his misfortune. Then Togashi appears and brings out *sake* in a way of apologising for the previous disrespect. In the banquet Benkei dances and the fugitives quickly resume their flight towards the North.

Sake is also a drink that melts memories and in which melancholy and sadness can be nullified and an instrument by which to overcome modesty and reluctance to confide one's pains to guests, as in *Tokusa* (*Tokusa, nō* play), an old father who would like to find his missing son.

But *sake* is also an instrument of seduction and perdition, as it clouds the senses and leads to the loss of the supernatural powers of the ascetic/hermit in *Ikkaku Sennin* 一角仙人 (The horned hermit). The hermit Ikkaku (*shite*), who lives in the mountains of Varanasi, once fought for power with the dragon gods and sealed the dragon gods in a cave. Since then it has stopped raining on the land, and the sovereign dispatches the first beautiful woman in the country, Senda *bunin*, to the hermit to free the dragon gods.

Senda *bunin*, who pretends to be a lost traveller, meets the hermit. The hermit, who is fascinated by her beauty, drinks forbidden *sake*. The woman dances and seduces the hermit: when the hermit falls asleep with drunkenness, the freed dragon gods (*kokata*) appear. The awakened hermit is surprised and challenges them to recommence the battle to contain. However, he, who had since lost his magical power, is finally defeated.

Through *sake* and pleasant banquets, deceptions occur in the dimension of the seduction and of the dream that in reality hides terrible demons as in *Momijigari* 紅葉狩 (The Maple Viewing).

A noble woman, with her female attendants, is celebrating the beauty of the red maples in the Mt. Togakushi, with a banquet, when a knight, Taira no Koremochi, who was in the middle of a deer hunt, passes by. Koremochi tries to avoid the road, but joins the party, being invited by the women who notice it. After being advised to drink by the noble woman with her maids, Koremochi gets drunk and falls asleep. The ladies in the meantime disappear/vanish.

During his sleep, the god Takeuchi, Hachiman Daibosatsu's messenger, rushes to his rescue and warns: the woman who entwined Koremochi was the demon god of Mt. Togakushi. The god Takeuchi appears in Koremochi's dream and gives him a sword from the Hachiman Daibosatsu. In front of Koremochi who wakes from the dream, a demon appears and assails him. Koremochi bravely confronts him and, after a fierce battle, he brilliantly defeats the demon with the sword.


But *sake* is also an auspicious drink, an object of limitless passion and amusement from men, fantastic animals and demons. In *Shōjō* 猩々 (*Shōjō, nō* play) a mysterious creature enters the scene: he is a liquor-loving fairy, who lives in the water; *Shōjō's* spirit (*shite*) appears from the water and dances innocently while being drunk and floating.

And banquets with *sake* can be accompanied or replaced by terrible libations of blood and death by demons hidden in the mountains who kidnap young women to make them their victims, as in *Ōeyama* 大江山 (The Demon of Ōeyama).

However, the meaning and value of the invincible pleasure associated with wine/*sake* is celebrated in a comic sense in *kyōgen*, a humorous theatrical genre that is traditionally combined with *nō*.

In *Oba ga sake* 伯母ヶ酒 (Aunt's Sake) the aunt who runs a liquor store is a stingy person and has never served alcohol to her nephew. One day, the nephew visits his aunt's house to try *sake*, but she refuses to let him taste it. The nephew suddenly comes up with a good idea, and kindly suggests his aunt to be careful because a terrifying demon might appear on his way home. The nephew, then, pretends to go home, returns wearing a demon's face, and cautiously enters the brewery and drinks alcohol to his heart's content. However, at the end he is unmasked and runs away.

The servant Tarō *kaja* (or his companion Jirō *kaja*), for example, cannot resist the temptation of *sake* and he is the protagonist of many episodes in which, due to his passion for *sake*, he causes trouble.

In *Bōshibari* 棒縛 (Tied to a Stick) the liquor-loving Tarō and Jirō, two servants, sneak into the brewery and steal *sake* every time their lord is away. **Knowing this, the lord tricks them into going out, tying one of their arms to a stick and the other to their back.** Still, they sneak into the brewery with their tied up bodies, take out  and start drinking: the wisdom of the two, who cooperate in order to drink alcohol, overcomes the difficult situation. **The lord returns home to the place where the banquet was held while being tied up, and creates a fuss.**

In *Hi no sake* 樋の酒 the lord tells the servant Tarō to take turns at the rice brewery and Jirō to take turns without leaving the *sake* brewery, but the two hang a gutter between the rice brewery and the brewery to pour *sake* and start a banquet. The lord returns home at the climax of the banquet, finds them and drives them out. Also in *Chidori* 千鳥 Tarō *kaja* goes to a liquor store, where payment was de-

layed, at the order of his lord. As the *sake* shop manager is reluctant, after telling various stories, he kidnaps the liquor barrel and escapes.

3 Tea Culture

Another drink that entered Japan thanks to Buddhist monks has extreme medicinal and magical importance: that is tea (*cha* 茶).

The *kyōgen Tsūen* 通円, even if in parodic form, testifies to the great success and popularity enjoyed and continuing to be enjoyed by the great tea gatherings that characterised the medieval era, giving life to a very refined aesthetic culture around the consumption of tea, the environments, the rooms, the tools, the contexts, the gardens, and the ingredients.

It goes without saying that tea culture in Japan has a very long tradition and quite particular developments that still testify to its enormous importance today (Tollini 2014).

The *kyōgen Tsūen* represents the story of a monk and tea master named Tsūen who prepares tea for visitors during the Ujibashi memorial service: when 300 practitioners from the capital arrive, Tsūen struggles to **drink tea one after another without leaving one**, but at last the tea bowl and other tools to prepare tea **break down**, and finally he lays a fan under the edge of Byōdō'in Temple and dies after singing a poem of death. In fact, *kyōgen Tsūen* is a parody (with exaggeration typical of the *kyōgen*) of the *nō* drama *Yorimasa*, therefore it is completely in *nō*-style, **such as with** musical accompaniment and chanting. But the piece also testifies, in its comic hyperbole (a case of death from overwork, *karōshi* 過労死 *ante litteram*), to the importance that tea culture, and the encounters of individuals with tea, will gradually acquire in the history of Japan.

The culture of tea in Japan in its history has seen the unfolding of an extreme range of possible spaces in which to serve and enjoy tea with other participants, which culminates in *wabicha* in small and intimate rooms that are accessed through gardens or delicate external views, and **where the rarefied aesthetics of many ways of artistic improvement are concentrated inside**: the arrangement of flowers, calligraphy, ceramics, lacquers, metals, bamboo or wood, simple and refined materials with which the environments and tools are built, collected dimensions in which participants can find peace, silence, freeing the mind from worries and a human encounter between equals.

Around tea, as around food, sociability of people is concentrated in the name of human encounter and peace.

4 Foods and Other Delicacies

Food is also a precious subject for humour and comedy, in particular natural and non-natural products, and ingredients that are objects of desire for the greedy people, such as fruits (*kaki*) or sweets.

The *kyōgen Kaki Yamabushi* 柿山伏 (The Persimmon Friar) begins with a scene where a *yamabushi* (Japanese mountain ascetic hermit) finishes his training and returns to his hometown. The *yamabushi* feels thirsty along the way, and when he looks up, he notices that there is a wonderful persimmon tree filled with fruits. He tries to drop them from under the tree, but it doesn't work out so he climbs the tree and eats a persimmon. Thus, the *yamabushi* has stolen the persimmons from the plant and is discovered by the farmer. The skit then develops unpredictably.

It is a funny depiction of humans trying to cover up their sins or faults, and is a satire of *yamabushi*, **an authoritative one/as a pseudo-religious authority**.

In *Busu* 附子 (The Delicious Poison) the lord orders the servants *Tarō kaja* (*shite*) and *Jirō kaja* to stay away, and goes out with caution because there is a deadly poison called *busu* (*torikabuto*, aconite). The servants have no choice but to worry about *busu*. Unable to resist they try to lick the poison and discover that it is sugar *satō* 砂糖, *mizuame* 水飴 (starch syrup or water candy, malt syrup). The two eat it all and, as an excuse, they damage the hanging scroll and bowl that are treasured by the owner. He then reports to his lord, who has returned home, that he took to *sumō* wrestling while he was away and broke important items, so he ate the *busu* to apologise through death, but he still did not die. The lord gets angry and drives them away.

In fact, it was during the Edo period that industrial sugar production became widespread in Japan. Before that, in Japan, sugar was a valuable item that relied on imports. *Kyōgen* reflects the values of Muromachi period, therefore, it is reasonable that the Lord did not want to show the valuable sugar to the servants **so much as to lie** that it was poisonous, and that the *Tarō kaja* ate it all.

5 Tea and Poetry: Banquet Culture

It was in the Edo period (1603-1868) that the foundations of Japanese cuisine, that many of us recognise today, **were formed**: the combination of three meals a day and staple food, side dish, and *miso* soup **was** made in that period. In Osaka, in particular, where raw materials and ingredients **are gathered** from all over the country, there **are** many tradesmen, wholesalers, restaurants (*ryōtei* 料亭) and caterers (*shidashiya* 仕出し屋) established. Furthermore, with the introduction of sugar-making technology, ordinary people **could** easily en-

joy sweetness, and it is also during this period when banquet dishes that continue to the present day were born.

In the Edo period, the number of tradesmen who built their fortunes increased, and the hobbies of *haikai* (in modern times *haiku*) spread among the tradesmen who gained social status. At first, people who enjoyed *haikai* gathered and held a party where a little sake was served and from this the custom of poetry encounters/meeting spread among the common people. The *haikai* party started as sake dinking occasion, then it has transformed into a social place where you can drink and eat.

These meeting places, or poetry gatherings could be held outdoors or indoor, in 'cooking *chaya*' that is a restaurant similar to those of today: initially known as the place where the tea ceremony was held, with the arrival of the *haikai* boom, *haikai* parties began to be held in cooking *chaya*. From around the middle of the Edo period, 'tea *kaiseki*' (*cha kaiseki* 茶懐石) and '*haiseki ryōri*' (俳席料理) were collectively called '*kaiseki (ryōri)*' 会席料理 and this became a well-established name for fine cuisine. Nowadays, the dishes served at the tea ceremony and the fine banquet dishes served at the sake table often belong to the category of *kaiseki*. Also *miso* soup (*misoshiru*) had been eaten since the Muromachi period with the advent of *kaiseki* cuisine, but it was during the Edo period that it became a popular soup among the common people.

6 The World of Public Theatres and the Culture of Consumption

The Edo period is known as an era when the culture and art of the common people flourished, and this laid the foundation for traditional performing arts such as *ningyō jōruri* (puppet drama), and *kabuki*.

In the Edo period, in an era of lasting peace, the country developed the economy, services, consumption and even entertainment.

Among the entertainments for the common people of the town were *kabuki* theatre, *ningyō jōruri*, *kōgyō sumō*, *ukiyo-e*, and book rentals (*kashihon'ya*). This was thanks in part to the increasing urban development, in particular in Kyoto, the capital, in Osaka, the city of merchants and commerce, and in Edo, home of the *shōgun* and the military aristocracy.

Among the entertainment, the *kabuki* play tour was the greatest for the people of Edo, regardless of their status as ordinary people or samurai. Around the theatres and playhouses, there were a lot of shops for the audience, such as a teahouse/restaurant (*shibai chaya* 芝居茶屋), a purse shop (*kinchakuya*), a confectionery shop (*kashiya* 菓子屋), a tobacco shop, etc.

At that time, since the stage used natural light from the 'light window', play started at six dawns (around 6 a.m.) and ended at seven and a half (around 5 p.m.), so it took a whole day to see the play.

In the *kabuki* theatre, which is called a large theatre/playhouse 大芝居, wealthy people from the time, such as merchants, officials, maids or palace waiters, and middle-ranking tradesmen, frequently attended. For these clientele, through the teahouses, special seats (*sajiki seki* 棧敷席) were reserved and arranged in theatre with services and meals.

The theatre teahouses (*shibai chaya*) of the Edo period were located in the vicinity of the playhouse, where guests came to eat and drink before going to the theatre, and at the same time they could reserve a place at the play and be guided and entertained with food and drink such as sweets, *sake* and meals.

It is in this special context, where the most diverse audience can enjoy the shows during a day, that *makunouchi bentō* are born.

7 Maku No Uchi Bentō

Still today 'Makunouchi *bentō*' 幕の内弁当 is a meal consisting of small rice balls consumed in the *kabuki* play intermission (*makuai* 幕間). In the past it was delivered from the theatre teahouse and caterer's delivery service to guests and customers directly in the theatre boxes. But sweets such as *manjū* 饅頭 (buns) and *yōkan* 羊羹, *sushi*, tea, and *sake* were also pleasures enjoyed whilst watching the play.

Makunouchi lunch box today are a *jūbako* (18 cm square box) with 'bale-shaped rice ball' and several types of side dishes (*okazu*): 10 slightly baked rice balls (*nigirimeshi*), side dishes such as omelet (*tamagoyaki*) and *kamaboko*, simmered konjac and grilled *tōfu*, *saitoimo* (colocasia esculenta) and *kanpyō* (*lagenaria siceraria*), but also grilled fish, fried food (*agemono*), simmered food (*nimono*), pickles (*tsukemono*), *tsukudani*, etc.

During the show, Makunouchi *bentō* was served at lunch, and *sushi oribako* (assortment of *sushi*) and long-established sweets were served in the afternoon. The wealthiest guests often returned to the teahouse during the intermission to drink, eat and relax. After the performance, some spectators would often return to the second floor of the teahouse, take a snack or hold a banquet and invite their favourite actors and *geisha*.

It is said that it was sold as a Makunouchi lunch in the latter half of the Edo period. It has a deep connection with *kabuki* as a '*bentō* that was born with the development of play culture', although there are various theories on the origins of the name.² In any case, it seems

² The break time (intermission) between plays is called 'Makunouchi' and it is said that 'Makunouchi *bentō*' was born from that name.

certain that the Makunouchi *bentō* lunch was connected to the entertainment of the common people in Edo such as the playhouse and *sumō* teahouse. With the development of railways, Makunouchi *bentō* became the current style as the prototype of *ekiben* 駅弁, a specific type of *bentō* boxed meals, sold on trains and at train stations in Japan. A Makunouchi lunch was often chosen for special occasions such as travel and theatre.

8 *Sukerokuzushi* 助六寿司

Among the *kabuki* repertory there is a very famous drama, still performed today, that takes place in the pleasure district of Edo, the (Shin) Yoshiwara: *Sukeroku yukari no Edozakura* 助六由縁江戸桜 (Sukeroku: Flower of Edo).³

The main character, Soga no Gorō, named himself Hanakawado Sukeroku, and goes to Yoshiwara as a guest to search for Genji's treasure sword Tomokiramaru. There, he meets Yoshiwara's *oiran*, the courtesan Agemaki 揚巻 and the two become lovers. Eventually Sukeroku finds Tomokiramaru, which had been stolen by the evil Hige no Ikyū, and leaves Yoshiwara.

Inspired by this drama, with its protagonists, Sukeroku and his beloved courtesan Agemaki, a *sushi* lunch box was created to eat on the occasion of this show, to be served during the performance, and, thus, *Sukerokuzushi* was born. Taking the name of Sukeroku, it is a set of fried *Inarizushi* and rolled scroll *makimono* 巻き=巻物. In fact, in the composition of the lunch box the *makimono* recalls the figure of Sukeroku, and the *Inarizushi* suggests his lover, Agemaki. In the drama Sukeroku enters the scene with a purple headband wrapped around his head, as depicted in the seaweed rolls. As the name of Sukeroku's lover is Agemaki (a name that may recall fried rolls), the *Inarizushi*, made with fried *tōfu*, was linked to her image. This means that *Sukerokuzushi* is a kind of *mitate*.

9 *Mitate* 見立て

Mitate is a technique widely used in the fields of literature such as *waka* and *haikai* poetry, *gesaku* literature, in the fields of performing arts such as *kabuki*, and in gardening and paintings, in which many layers of meaning are layered atop one another, often to humorous

³ This drama was premiered in 1811 but it is a variation of *Hanayakata aigo no sakura*, first staged in 1713 at Edo's Ichimuraza starring Ichikawa Danjūrō II.

effect. It is a technique by which references to historical or fictional events or personages, or ideas, are embedded into images.

Mitate means to see something, to resemble others; a way of expression which gives freshness and the element of surprise, and thus it gives people an intriguing experience (Tollini 2017, 31-2).

For example, just as rain can be *mitate* for tears, pink clouds a metaphor for cherry blossom petals, *makimono* can be *mitate* for Sukeroku, *Inarizushi* for Agemaki. The *norimaki* are supposed to represent the character of Sukeroku who, on his entrance on the scene, wrapped a purple headband (*hachimaki*) (Edo *murasaki*) on his head. While the character of Agemaki is represented through the *Inarizushi*, that is sushi wrapped in *aburage* (a sort of fried *tōfu*).

Going into further detail, we could say that in the case of Sukeroku, the purple band is depicted by the *nori*, the seaweed that surrounds the *norimaki*, and so it is a *mitate* that captures the visual aspect of Sukeroku; a representation of the character focused on a visual trait.

In the case of Agemaki, the *mitate* is inspired by the name (and word) Agemaki itself, that is, it gives the image of a *age maki*, i.e. fried roll. So, to depict Agemaki, *Inarizushi* was chosen, which is *sushi* wrapped in a sort of fried *tōfu*.

Mitate is a metaphorical, often playful or ironic connection made in popular Edo-period art and literature that linked the contemporary with the historical (either the recent or distant past), and also combined the vulgar with the refined (*zoku* and *ga*). This device is an imaginative technique that is frequently used in Japanese cuisine, both for the shape of individual dishes (e.g. sweets, desserts etc.) and for the general presentation of courses or tables set, often with an explicit reference to the seasons, the most typical being natural landscape and images linked to a season.

The ability to invent links and allusions between images is entrusted to the creator, with a flexible mind and an aesthetic sensibility, the capacity of inferring the hidden meaning of *mitate* ultimately depends on the reader and his sensibility.

10 Holidays and Seasons

The drama *Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Sakura* 助六由縁江戸桜 (Sukeroku: Flower of Edo) is also famous among the best known of *kabuki* for the gorgeousness of the costumes, inspired by the showy aesthetics of the pleasure district of Yoshiwara. In particular the *uchikake*, which is worn by Agemaki, Yoshiwara *oiran*, are decorated with flowers of the four seasons of Japan and patterns of festivals wishing for no illness. This *uchikake* is based on the motif of the first festival of the year, which is the last day of the New Year (January 7): using the New Year decorations of *tachibana*, *yuzuriha* (*daphniphyllum macropodum*), and

the spiny lobster on the *kadomatsu*.

When Agemaki takes off this black *uchikake*, a bright scarlet *uchikake* appears: a pattern with the motif of designs and decorations of the fabrics that recall the Hinamatsuri (Doll's Festival) or Momo no sekku (Peach blossom season) on March 3.

These costumes and decorations therefore recall some of the auspicious ceremonies called *gosekku* 五節句, the five annual ceremonies that were traditionally held at the Japanese imperial court, adapted from Chinese practices and celebrated in Japan since the Nara period. These festivities were accompanied by flowers, drinks and foods **appropriate to the season and above all auspicious**.

Gosekku are related to seasonal grasses and trees, but the purpose was to get rid of evil by eating seasonal plants: seven herbs rice porridge (*nanakusagayu* 七草粥) on the January 7 of New Year, peach blossom liquor (*tōkashu* 桃花酒) or white liquor (*shirozake* 白酒) on March 3, *shōbu* 菖蒲 (acorus calamus) and *chimaki* or *kashiwa mochi* 柏餅 in May 5, *sakuge* さくげ (作毛) or *sōmen* 素麵 noodles at Tanabata 七夕, chrysanthemum liquor (*kikuzake* 菊酒) on September 9.

Japan, which is a long archipelago stretching from North to South, has four distinct seasons, a variety of rich nature, and a food culture that was born there and has been nurtured **in close relationship with them**. The use of ingredients in Japanese cuisine is linked to seasonality but also to the auspicious value that is particularly strong in the case of festivities: the most emblematic case is the New Year with dishes (*osechi ryōri* 御節料理) that have an ancient propitious value of good wishes for health, long life and abundance: shrimp (*ebi* = longevity), sea bream (*tai* 鯛 medetai = congratulations), herring roe (*kazunoko* = descendants prosperity), sweet chestnut paste (*kurikinton* = gold and money), black beans (*kuromame* = wishing for a healthy, strong and healthy life) etc., are all essential ingredients in New Year's cuisine.

However, for example, the atmosphere of the autumn festivity is also evoked in a drama, originally conceived for puppet theatre *Futatsu chōchō kuruwa nikki* 双蝶々曲輪日記 (A diary of two butterflies in the pleasure quarters, 1749), in particular the scene "Hikimado" 引窓 (The sliding window).

At the house of Nan Yohee in the Yawata village, which is close to Iwashimizu Hachimangu in Kyoto, Ohaya, the bride of Yohee, and Okō, his mother, are preparing for the "moon viewing" with the offering of *tsukimi dango* 月見団子 (plain rice dumplings), beans and chestnuts and the *susuki* (miscanthus herbs), dedicated to the moon in autumn. A sliding window as a skylight, which is opened and closed by pulling a rope/string from the inside, allows the light of the moon to penetrate and illuminate the room.

But in this situation of serenity a dramatic knot arises: the *sumō* wrestler (*sekitori*) Nuregami, who has killed a person unintentional-

ly, sneaks up to see his mother Okō. But the mother, who has remarried, had a son-in-law, Nan Yohee. Mother and son rejoice in the unexpected reunion but Yohee, who is a deputy officer, was in charge of capturing Nuregami, his older half-brother. The mother is sandwiched between a real child and a child-in-law and the sons, who think about each other's position, struggle between their duties towards the law and feelings towards family members or affection of the human world.

In this case, iconic food not only evokes the image of autumn, but is also deeply involved in the story development and is indispensable for the play.

One of the original meanings of moon viewing was related to the farming harvest festival: the traditional method of offering is to place the table in a spot where you can see the moon well, and pour 13-15 dumplings on a platter, together with sweet potatoes, green soybeans, chestnuts and other vegetables that are harvested in the fall, along with autumn grass, to celebrate the moon. With the device of *mitate*, *tsukimi dango* are made with processed glutinous rice powder (*jōshinko* 上新粉) and are shaped like *mochizuki* (full moon) and miscanthus (*susuki*) and are said to be *yorishiro* (objects capable of attracting spirits called *kami*) where the gods descend.

Also in the *kabuki* play *Tsuyu kosode mukashi hachijō* 梅雨小袖昔八丈 (commonly known by the title *Kamiyui Shinza*, *Shinza the Barber* 1873), **there is the entry on the scene of a *katsuo* (skipjack) seller, a fish that when it arrived in Edo at the beginning of summer was very valuable.** This scene allows us to perceive the atmosphere of the season, and the fashions of the time in which the plot is placed, and then this delicacy goes on to play a role in the dramatic development.

11 *Kabuki* and *Soba*. Representation of Eating on Stage

Around Genroku era (1688-1704), the staple food of the common people of Edo was not brown (unpolished) rice (*genmai* 玄米), but white rice (*hakumai* 白米) as it is today.

The cuisine of the common people has become richer, and there are shops and stalls that come to sell various foods that are still familiar today, such as *chameshi*, *tempura*, *sushi*, *Inarizushi*, seaweed rolls (*norimaki*), *udon*, *amazake*, sweet potatoes (*satsumaimo*), dumplings (*dango*), *tokoroten*, etc.

Later, not only peddlers (*gyōshō* 行商) and food stalls (*yatai* 屋台), but also restaurants that serve meals such as *tendon* and *unadon* appeared, and it seems that the food business in the town of Edo was very varied and rich.

Among the foods that show a link with *kabuki* there is certainly *soba* (buckwheat).

Soba has a very ancient history in Japan but it is in the Edo period that they begin to be prepared, cooked and consumed **in a form similar to today**, i.e. as *sobakiri* (buckwheat noodles). In the early Edo period, **being noodles prepared with one hundred percent pure *soba* flour, the noodles broke easily and therefore were mostly steamed and thus served to the consumer on the *seiro* and at this stage the *tsuyu* was with *miso***. Then the *nihachi soba* 二八蕎麦 were born, which are cheaper but more resistant and which **were prepared boiled in water**: *nihachi soba* are buckwheat noodles made with a ratio of *udon* flour and buckwheat flour of 2:8 (it is also said that *nihachi soba* refers to cheap *soba*, that sell at a price of 16 *mon* per cup). The *nihachi soba* were so popular in Edo that they surpassed the *udon* (thick noodles made from wheat flour) that had come from Kamigata (Kyoto and Osaka area).

There is an almost mythical link (because it is not confirmed by historical documents) between the revenge of the Akō *rōshi* represented by the famous drama *Kanadehon chūshingura* 仮名手本忠臣蔵 (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, 1748) and *soba*. In chronicles or historical reconstructions of much later than the Genroku incident, which was the subject of the drama, there is a story about gathering of the 47 *rōnin* on the second floor of a *soba* restaurant before the assault to carry out revenge.

But there is also a famous *kabuki* scene “Yuki no yūbe iriya no azemichi” 『雪暮夜入谷 畦道』 (The Snowy Road Through the Rice Fields of Iriya), in the drama *Kumo ni magou Ueno no hatsuhana* 天衣紛上野初花 (The First Flowers of Ueno, 1881) which is set in a *soba* shop.

This is one of the most impressive scenes in a very winter-like landscape: under the snow, Naojirō (Naozamura), a character who must leave Edo because he is pursued by justice, struggles forward and, out of hunger and cold, slips into a *soba* shop where he warms up, orders a cup of *soba*, while having a drink of hot *sake*. After a conversation between Naojirō and the *soba* shop owner, Naojirō sips *soba* in style. At this *soba* shop, from the small talk of the customer he happens to hear, Naojirō learns about the whereabouts of his lover, courtesan Michitose, whom he has not seen for a long time, and he discovers that she is ill. Naojirō is concerned with his beloved Michitose and wants to see her at a glance before leaving Edo, **regardless of whether he is a wanted person, hunted by pursuers**. In this way the *soba* shop scene is also a dramatic moment that directs the emotion of the stylish Edokko Naojirō and determines a turning point in the development of the play.

12 Cooking and Preparing Food and Puppet Theatre

An important and consistent part of the *kabuki* repertoire was originally conceived and performed for puppet theatre which had a remarkable artistic development in Osaka.

Masterpieces such as those mentioned above, *Kanadehon chūshingura* or *Futatsu chōchō kuruwa nikki* etc., are first staged at the Takemotoza theatre in Osaka and then transposed into the actors' theatre, *kabuki*, in Osaka, Kyoto or Edo.

The charm of the puppet theatre, which attracted illustrious playwrights such as Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), is further enriched with the appearance of puppets operated by three puppeteers who achieve a delicacy and minutiae in their movements of particular attractiveness.

We can see scenes in which the puppets play musical instruments, or dance, smoke with a pipe or cook, and these scenes have a great impact on the audience.

In fact, in Japanese cuisine the mastery of the cook is not only in cooking the ingredients (boiling, simmering, stewing, roasting, stir frying, frying etc.), but also just cutting, on the cutting board, vegetables, fish or other; it is a moment of fundamental dexterity and if a puppet performs it, the gestures are even more appealing and impressive.

In the scene “Nozakimura” 野崎村 of the drama *Shinpan Utazaimon* 新版歌祭文 (A New Ballad of Osome and Hisamatsu, 1780) the protagonist Omitsu, happy to be able to marry Hisamatsu, is preparing for the wedding ceremony: her father, Kyūsaku, informs her that his brother-in-law, Hisamatsu, is back and that she must have the wedding today. Omitsu is confused by this sudden decision, but she cannot hide her joy, and so she prepares to eat by cutting vegetables whilst gazing in the mirror.

But when Osome, a wealthy merchant daughter who in reality loves Hisamatsu, although he is only an apprentice, arrives at the village, the drama of Omitsu occurs: Omitsu, for the happiness of the two, to prevent the two lovers from dying together, decides to become a Buddhist nun.

Shōtūsushi Asagao nikki 生写朝顔話 (Diary of Asagao, copy from life, 1832), which is still performed both in puppet theatre and in *kabuki*, is the love story between the girl Miyuki and Miyagi Asojirō depicted by a thousand vicissitudes in which the two lovers, in a firefly hunt, cross each other, barely touch each other but **do not meet again**. After leaving the house, Miyuki, who has gone blind, becomes a musician, itinerant entertainer, and performs playing *shamisen* and *koto* and singing the “Asagao song” that Miyagi once wrote. But, among the many vicissitudes there is the humorous scene in which a funny physician, Hagi no Yūsen, prepares tea (“Shimadajuku Laugh-

ing Medicine”). Yūsen’s handling of the tea ceremony is not only accurate, but also contains strangely nervous movements to represent the eccentric character of Yūsen.

Furthermore, speaking of cooking and meals, the so-called scene of *Mamataki* 飯炊き (rice cooking) by the nurse Masaoka at the “Goten no dan” in *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* 伽羅先代萩 (Precious incense, Lespedezae of Sendai, 1777, 1785), is also deeply exciting. Masaoka cooks rice in a teapot/kettle (*chagama* 茶釜 / *furo hagama* 風炉羽釜) in the room, using tea utensils, for the son of his lord, the *daimyō* of Sendai, Tsurukiyo (Tsuruchiyo in *kabuki* version), and her own son, Senmatsu, who are hungry. Faced with the attempts of other evil ladies and conspirators to kill by poisoning the little lord, she is forced to watch, helpless and tortured, the killing of her own son in place of Tsurukiyo.

It is therefore a long scene of waiting and apparent calm with the preparation of the rice, but at the same time of great tension, and it ends with great tragedy. **When Masaoka cooks rice, first, Senmatsu, who is also the poison taster of the Little Lord Tsurukiyo, tastes the water to check if the water is poisonous before the care preparation can begin.** Masaoka does not leave the meal preparation to anyone to protect the children from being poisoned, and makes everything himself, sitting silently and cooking the rice with tea utensils. The movement of the doll is very fine and slow, while the three Masaoka’s puppeteers are breathing together and manipulating these series of soft movements, they show dexterity and artistic skill. It is a surprisingly long scene during which natural acting and expression of emotions are required.

13 Travel and Regional Cuisine (*Kyōdo Ryōri* 郷土料理)

In another masterpiece among puppet theatre dramas, *Yoshitsune senbonzakura* 義経千本桜 (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Tree, 1747), there is a scene titled “Sushiya no dan”, during the third act of the play.

In search of Taira no Koremori (1159-1184), who was involved in the Genpei war and went missing, his wife and son arrive at a *sushi* restaurant called “Tsurube sushi Yasukes”. There, Koremori, who was hidden from the owner of the *sushi* restaurant, Yazaemon, was working under the name of Yasuke.

The stage is at the foot of Mt. Yoshino, a *sushi* restaurant in Shimoichi village, in the region of Yamato, the area of the ancient capital of Nara, far from the sea. There are many ‘*sushi* tubs’ that play an important role in the drama at the storefront.

In fact, these *sushi* were made by alternately stacking salted fish and rice and fermenting it in a tub and the *sushi* tub is a must-have item for that purpose. This is the original form of *sushi*, as ‘pressed

sushi (*oshizushi*) common in the Kamigata, while ‘Grip sushi’ (*nigirizushi*) were the mainstream in Edo and *nigirizushi* appeared in the late Edo period during the Bunka-Bunsei period (1818-1830).

The existing Tsurube sushi Yasuke is a restaurant said to have been in business for 800 years, so it must have been a popular restaurant by the time this play was written. **The owner who calls himself ‘Yasuke’ for generations is also said to be the 49th generation.**

Both in puppet theatre and *kabuki*, as well as in the more ancient *nō* and *kyōgen*, the stories are set in localities and areas of the country that have particular characteristics and local colour, which is also seen in the foods that manifest in the plays.

In fact, Japan, like Italy, has an extraordinary variety of different ingredients, from sea and land, from mountains, lakes or rivers, and vegetables that give life to rich and varied local cuisines.

Japan has presented and obtained the recognition of “Japanese traditional food culture” 「和食:日本人の伝統的な食文化」 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Initially, it was supposed to apply for the registration of “a distinctive and unique Japanese cuisine with a tradition centered on *kaiseki* cuisine”, but instead applied for “Japanese food” (*washoku* 和食) which is considered to be a broad concept including *kaiseki* cuisine: a food culture that is conscious of Japanese-style eating habits such as respect for nature, relevance to Japanese culture such as annual events, and nutritional balance.

In fact, many studies argue that there is a distinction between Japanese and Kyoto cuisine (Kyō ryōri 京料理). The characteristics of agriculture in the Kyoto city area are the background of the development of the particular form of Kyoto cuisine.

In fact, just as in Italian cuisine, although there are characteristics that have become uniform on a national level, both historically and locally there remain differences and peculiarities at the local level which constitute its richness. Therefore, as well as in Italian cuisine, in Japanese cuisine there are many variations of which that of Kyoto, special and refined in the form of *kaiseki* etc., is one among many varieties. This is just one example of the many regional cuisines (*kyōdo ryōri* 郷土料理) based upon national, state or local regions, made by local products and foods that suit the climate.

Regional cuisines vary according to food availability and trade, varying climates, cooking traditions and practices, and cultural differences and regional food preparation traditions, customs and ingredients often combine to create dishes unique to a particular region.

The variety of regional or local cuisines starts from the climate, the atmosphere, the environment, the special ingredients, the processes, from quality and accuracy of agricultural products and foods with protected designation of origin and ultimately from the culture that flourished in those places and of which the people who live there are proud witnesses.

Italy excels precisely in this field with a desire for quality, variety and respect for biodiversity. There is a focus less on quantity, and instead more towards quality and proximity to the ideal characteristics of flavours, aromas and moods suited to the places and unique. We have 545 varieties of (grape) vines, while in France about twenty prevail, we have over 180 varieties of table grapes, over 500 olive cultivars, and over 600 varieties of cheeses, not to mention the varieties of vegetables from tomatoes to peppers, aubergines, lettuces and radicchio, legumes, fruits etc. with a very high number of quality accuracy of agricultural products and foods certification of food origin and protected designation of origin (IGP, DOC, DOP, DOPG), etc., as no other country in the European Union.

Thus, it is so, with respect for nature and biodiversity, that our cultures of food and cuisine, in Japan as in Italy, will continue to be appreciated by us and by others in the world. A world we want to preserve.

Today as in the past.



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