

Rice ITALY & JAPAN

AN ONLINE WORKSHOP

Rice is an important element of food culture in Italy and Japan, where it plays a primary role in terms of production, gastronomic tradition, and artistic representation. Following the "farm to table" approach, the contributions to this workshop will touch upon rice cultivation and production chains shared by the two countries despite differences in cultivation and harvesting techniques. Rice will provide inspiration to explore the implications of technological innovation for production systems and sustainability, as well as environmental impact. The influence that rice exerts on economic and social contexts—in production, distribution, and consumption—will also be considered. From this perspective, the workshop will focus on production methods, organoleptic characteristics, and food safety, but will also deal with the profound link between tradition and innovation that distinguishes the sector. The range of contributions will embrace agricultural science and economy, as well as several other branches of knowledge, including the humanities, in keeping with the multidisciplinary tradition of ISEAS workshops.

**MAY 27th
2022**

**16:00–19:30 JST
(9:00–12:30 CET)**



ITALIAN SCHOOL OF
EAST ASIAN STUDIES

Under the Patronage of



Ambasciata d'Italia
Tokyo

Rice ITALY & JAPAN AN ONLINE WORKSHOP

16:00-16:20

OPENING ADDRESS

Gianluigi Benedetti Ambassador of Italy in Japan
Giorgio Amitrano Università di Napoli l'Orientale

GREETINGS

Silvana De Maio Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, Tokyo
Silvio Vita Kyoto University of Foreign Studies
Italian School of East Asian Studies

16:20-16:50

Alessandra Marti (Università degli Studi di Milano La Statale)
From Kernel to Pasta: The Many Ways to Process Rice in Mediterranean Countries

16:50-17:20

Tasuku Katō (Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology)
Japanese Paddy Field Development: History, Environmental Constrains, and the Current Situation

17:20-17:50

Gian Attilio Sacchi (Università degli Studi di Milano La Statale)
Sustainability, Security, and Safety of Rice Production from the Perspective of Climate Change

17:50-18:20

Marianna Ferrara (Sapienza Università di Roma)
Edible Encounters: Rice and Fish in Early Modern Italian Travel Writing about "the Orient"

18:20-18:50

Corrado Molteni (Università degli Studi di Milano La Statale)
Economics and Politics of Rice in Japan

18:50-19:20

Junko Kimura (Hosei University, Tokyo)
Brand Management of Rice in Japan

19:20-19:30

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Antonella Baldi (Università degli Studi di Milano La Statale)

*5-10 minutes of discussion time will follow each presentation

Abstracts and further details downloadable from
<https://iseas-kyoto.org/eventi/workshops>

Zoom meeting link
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88574363891> or access from here



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ISMEO Associazione Internazionale
di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l'Oriente

From Kernel to Pasta: The Many Ways to Process Rice in Mediterranean Countries



Although rice is the staple food of Asia, it also plays a key role in the diet of the Mediterranean area. The availability of thousands of varieties—differences in size and texture of the grain, bioactive and aromatic compounds, protein and starch and, consequently, cooking styles—has made it possible to satisfy tastes and nutritional needs specific to each population. Alongside traditional consumption, in recent decades rice has been increasingly sought after as an ingredient in various foods, including gluten-free products (pasta, bread, and other bakery products) and other products that are now widespread in Mediterranean countries, such as couscous, breakfast cereals, extruded products, and baby foods. This presentation will provide an overview of the most common ways of using rice—as grain or as an ingredient in various forms—in the Mediterranean diet. The role of the main biopolymers present in rice (i.e., starch and proteins), as well as processing conditions, will be addressed in relation to the quality of the final product.

Alessandra Marti

is an Associate Professor in Food Science and Technology in the Department of Food, Environmental and Nutritional Sciences (DeFENS), Università degli Studi di Milano La Statale. Her research focuses on grain science and technology and on the study of the functionality of cereals, pseudo-cereals, and pulses with the purpose of developing new ingredients and formulation for the food industry, in particular: (1) developing grain-based products with enhanced quality traits; (2) technological valorization of underutilized grains; (3) investigating the effect of (bio-)technological processes on the functional properties of cereals, pseudo-cereals, and pulses and related products; and (4) understanding the role of macromolecules in determining the structure and quality of ingredients and/or products from grains. Further information can be found at <https://www.unimi.it/en/ugov/person/alessandra-marti>

Japanese Paddy Field Development: History, Environmental Constraints, and the Current Situation



Japanese paddy fields have been developed for around two thousand years. In the initial stages, they were thought to have been developed in wetlands by scattering the seeds. Later, small terraced rice paddies were developed that were fed by spring water from the mountains. This rice production system seems to have worked stably and helped the population to grow. Furthermore, with the development of civil engineering technology, large-scale irrigated rice paddies were developed along rivers and alluvial plains in the modern period. In recent years, paddy field agriculture has aimed to reduce labor through mechanization. Japanese landscapes that include rice paddies have become established regionally, nurturing local history and culture, while at the same time serving as major sources of food production and ecosystem services.

Tasuku Katō

is a Professor at Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (TUAT). After graduating from the University of Tokyo in 1998, he worked as an Assistant Professor at Ibaraki University before moving to TUAT in 2011. His academic research focuses on irrigation and drainage engineering and environmental science, particularly on nutrients, water quality control, and watershed management of paddy fields.

Sustainability, Security, and Safety of Rice Production from the Perspective of Climate Change



Gian Attilio Sacchi

is a Professor of Agricultural Chemistry at the Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Università degli Studi di Milano. Since 1987 his research has focused on the molecular, biochemical, and physiological aspects of mineral nutrition and responses to abiotic stresses in plants. As scientific group leader in the framework of several European and Italian research programs, in recent years he has devoted himself to studies related to the biology, agronomy, and environmental sustainability of rice (his main publications on these issues can be found at <https://www.unimi.it/en/ugov/person/gianattilio-sacchi>). He is a reviewer for a number of international scientific journals and an evaluator for several national and international projects.

Italy is the major rice-growing country in Europe, producing about 1.5 Mt yearly of japonica rice (about 0.9 Mt of milled rice), accounting for more than 50 percent of the total EU rice production. The main critical issues currently jeopardizing the sustainability of Italian rice systems, particularly with the expected climate change, are the need for large amounts of freshwater, low efficiency in the use of increasingly expensive N- and P- fertilizers, the loss of organic matter in paddy soils, greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., CH₄ and N₂O) during periods of flooding, and susceptibility of used germplasm to abiotic (excessive thermal excursions, drought, soil salinity) and biotic (weeds, pathogens, microorganisms, root-parasitic nematodes) stresses. Due to the presence of health-promoting metabolites and inorganic elements in rice bran, the consumption of brown grain rice has been encouraged, expanding the market of this commodity. Consequently, particular attention must be paid to conditions that promote the accumulation of bioactive compounds into the bran and at the same time limit undesired elements (i.e., Cd and As) that constitute a hazard to consumers. An overview of some genetic, agronomic, and technologically innovative solutions for the above mentioned issues will be discussed.

Edible Encounters: Rice and Fish in Early Modern Italian Travel Writing about "the Orient"



Marianna Ferrara

is a tenure-track Researcher in the History of Religions at the Sapienza Università di Roma. Her research focuses on South Asian religions, the intellectual history of religions between India and Europe, and religious contacts in the early modern world, especially as reflected in missionary sources and travel writing. She has published on myth, ritual, and symbolic representations in Vedic texts and their reuse in new media, focusing on gender narratives from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and female authorship of Indian graphic novels featuring epic characters. Her most recent book is *Il rito inquieto. Storia dello yajña nell'India antica* (SEF, 2018). For the publisher Einaudi, she recently supervised the Italian translation (2021) of *Wilhelm Halbfass' book Karma und Wiedergeburt im indischen Denken* (or. ed. 2000).

This presentation explores early modern writings by Italian travelers who first wrote about Asian countries, peoples, and costumes during their travels from Spain or Portugal to India, China, and Japan. In these accounts, food and diet are often at the center of lengthy descriptions of "the Orient" as a means to stress differences and similarities between Italians and other people. Looking at the role that food plays in these encounters with Asian people, I will suggest that in these writings, special attention is paid to fish and rice as ingredients that better express wealth or poverty, taste or distaste, and degree of similarity and/or difference between the Italian culinary tradition and those of Asian regions. Although these views are influenced by a strong ethnocentric stance, the way they speculate about food is a useful term of reference to explore whether and how narratives about Asia changed when commercial relations gradually spread to other sectors. Such an approach is also fruitful if we compare these writings with missionary accounts by Jesuits (not only Italian but also Spanish and Portuguese) who experienced food cultures intensely when adapting to different climates, soils, environments, and farming and fishing methods in India, China, and Japan.

Economics and Politics of Rice in Japan



Rice is not only the staple food of Japan and a powerful symbol of the country's cultural identity, but for centuries it has also been the source of economic and political power. In the postwar period, notwithstanding the constant and conspicuous decline in production, consumption, and employment, rice farmers received, and still receive, a great deal of public support, while their organizations have played a major role in the political arena as key supporters of the LDP, the party that has dominated Japanese politics since its foundation in 1955. However, recent changes in Japan's trade policies with the signing of regional and bilateral economic agreements represent a major challenge for the future of the sector. Focusing on postwar developments, from the land reforms of 1946 to recent policy reforms, I will discuss the main issues and the future perspectives of rice production in Japan.

Corrado Molteni

is a Professor of Japanese Studies at the Università degli Studi di Milano La Statale. He obtained his PhD in regional social studies at Hitotsubashi University in 1986. Since returning to Italy his research has focused on Japan's economic and social structures. He was President of Aistugia, the Italian Association of Japanese Studies, until September 2017. From 2007 to 2017, he was seconded at the Embassy of Italy in Tokyo as cultural attaché.

Brand Management of Rice in Japan



In Japan, rice has been a source of nutrition, a measure of power known as *kokudaka*, and a culture builder. This presentation focuses on saké rice rather than edible rice. It explains the relationship between rice and saké as an important part of Japanese culture. Hyogo Prefecture has successfully branded rice and saké since the Edo period through strict control and management. Hyogo developed Yamada Nishiki, the king of saké rice in the Showa period. Even in the Edo period, Harima and Settsu provinces in present-day Hyogo were blessed with nature and technology that allowed them to produce high-quality saké that could not be found in other regions, and saké was transported to Edo (present-day Tokyo) by Tarukaisen ships and enjoyed by the people of Edo as *kudari* saké. Both the agricultural product of rice and the processed product of saké are unrivaled in other regions, contributing to the formation of Hyogo's identity.

Junko Kimura

is Professor of Marketing in the Faculty of Business Administration, Hosei University. She was a Visiting Professor at the University of Ca'Foscari, Venice from 2012 to 2014. She holds a PhD in Commerce from Kobe University. Her research focuses on Territorio, agri-food marketing, SDGs, and geographical indications (GI). She is in consultation with the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Japan for the registration of GI applicants, and is a National Tax Council Member at the National Tax Agency, Ministry of Finance, for alcohol and liquor GIs. Her book *Territorio Strategy* was published in Italy in March 2022.