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INSTITUTE**

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On 24th May, 2016, the fourth symposium held by Japanese Civilization Institute took place at Japan University of Economics in Shibuya, Tokyo. Attending the symposium were Mr. Hiroshi Sakurai, president of Asahi Shuzo Co., a brewery that produces Japanese sake Dassai, which is also popular among people outside Japan, Mr. Tsuneyasu Takeda, adjunct lecturer at Kogakkan University and Mr. Katsuhiko Kitamoto, former appraiser of National Research Institute of Brewing (NRIB), and now research professor of Nihon Pharmaceutical University and professor emeritus at Tokyo University. Chilled Dassai was offered to attendees prior to the opening of the event, and amid a comfortable atmosphere, Mr. Kitamoto presented his lecture entitled, "Japanese sake and my life with koji mold." Then, Naoki Inose, director of Japan Civilization Institute, who also served as MC, unfolded the discussion centering around the theme, "Why Japanese sake tastes good—Japanese cuisine leads the world." The discussion revolved around various topics including *Kojiki* (Japan's oldest historical record) and how Japanese sake came to be known to the world. The following is an extract from the event.

A Report on our 4th Symposium A special lecture

Japanese sake and my life with koji mold



By **Katsuhiko Kitamoto**
(Research Professor of Nihon Pharmaceutical University)

Photo by Asahi Shuzo Co.

I would like to talk about koji mold today. I'm sure everyone knows a lot about Japanese sake, but there are few who know about koji mold. What makes Japanese food different from, say French food and Chinese food is "*umami* (pleasant savory taste)". Lying at the base of umami are seasonings like "*miso*" (soybean paste), soy sauce and *mirin* (sweet sake). What they have in common is *koji*, or *koji-kin* (koji mold). In other

words, the key ingredient of umami in Japanese food is koji mold.

I have long been studying just koji mold. For 20 years, I worked at the Institute of Brewing in Takinogawa, Kita Ward. During that time, I also worked at the Regional Taxation Bureau of Fukuoka and Sendai and served as appraiser of sake. In 1995, I became professor emeritus at Tokyo University and have made a transition to studying basic biological

Greetings

Kimiko Tsuzuki,
Chairperson of
Japanese Civilization Institute

Our country is a country of "*mizuho*" (Land of Abundant Rice). Japanese sake—produced from "*inaho*" (ear of rice)—also plays an important role in Shinto rituals, and has developed to this day. Japanese food has been recorded on the list of the World's Intangible Cultural Heritage, and for Japanese Civilization Institute, the act of discussing Japanese sake is the act of contemplating the culture backed by tradition and a very long history. This Newsletter summarizes our 4th Symposium revolving around Japanese sake. I hope you enjoy it.

issues ever since. My days at the Institute of Brewing, was spent on studying sake yeast and koji mold—two microbes essential for sake making. I have also participated in the development (breeding) of sake yeast, which outcome can be seen in Kyokai Sake Yeast No. 1901—a High Ethyl Caproate Productivity that produces no Urea—distributed two years ago by the Institute of Brewing.



Koji is essential for sake production

It goes without saying, that koji is essential for sake production. When you scratch some koji mold and put it above some nutrient agar, then look at it through a microscope, you see thin thread-like cells connected to each other like bean sprouts. These are the seed malt of koji and we also call them “*moyashi*” (bean sprouts). Recently, Japanese food is seen by the world as a healthy cuisine. Studies show how koji mold itself that is included in Japanese food has functions of health, and is slowly being developed.

Excuse me for my long introduction. Let us return to our theme and talk about how Japanese sake is made. When you look at the text books of sake production, you see the famous phrase; “*Ichī: koji, ni: moto, san: zukiin*” (first koji, then the yeast starter, then fermentation). In other words, koji is the most important component in sake production.

The main ingredient of sake is rice. Rice is polished, washed, soaked in water and steamed to make

steamed rice. 20% of this is then used for making koji, while 80% is used for preparing seed mash and “*moromi*” (mash). The seed mash is the starter. For example, when 1000 kg needs to be prepared, 7% or 70 kg of rice is cultivated in a clean culture as starter. The starter takes two weeks to complete. Then, it is used to prepare moromi three times. By the time moromi is completed, 18% of sake is produced in the course of a month. It is then compressed and filtered and clear sake is produced.

Liquor produced by fermentation using only fermentation skills include, wine, beer and Japanese sake. Amongst them, Japanese sake takes the most complex route of brewing production, called the multiple parallel fermentation process. Wine undergoes a singular fermentation process, in which the yeast simply ferments the various saccharides, like glucose and fructose fruit sugar included in the ingredient of wine—grapes. Beer, on the other hand, converts barley starch into sugar. Using malt, sweet juice (wort) is produced from amylase contained in malt. It undergoes a preliminary saccharification step of

converting starch into glucose, which is then filtered. The transparent fluid is then fermented with beer yeast. The process of fermentation and saccharification is different. It is known as a singular fermentation process.

Japanese sake is made from one of the world's most complex fermentation methods

In contrary, Japanese sake is more complex. Glucose of rice is produced from fermentation mash that remains in the tank. It undergoes a multiple parallel fermentation process, in which glucose is fermented to alcohol as soon as sake fermentation begins. While alcohol percentage is about 5% for beer, 10% for wine, an extremely high alcohol percentage of 20% is produced with Japanese sake due to the skilled fermentation technique. Two types of rice are used, “*sakamai*” (sake rice) and rice used for food. Sakamai is rice exclusively used for producing sake. The rice we normally eat is about 22g for a thousand grains. *Yamada Nishiki* sake rice is slightly bigger, about 26.6g for the same amount.

When you look closely, you see a milky white colored part in the center of the grain, which is referred to as “*shinpaku*.” Shinpaku causes reproduction of koji mold resulting in producing a fine mold. Amongst the many sakamai, Yamada Nishiki is the most famous, and is used often to make “*ginjo-shu*” (sake made from highly polished rice using special technique). Ginjo-shu labled “Yamada Nishiki 35%” is made of white rice polished to 35%, after being shaved 65% from the outside with a rice-polishing machine when it was brown rice. A large amount of “*nuka*” (rice bran) is extracted at this stage, which

is used to make rice crackers and cosmetics. Dassai's company produces rice flour bread from ginjo-shu in collaboration with Kobeya Baking Co., which is said to be delicious with the glutinous texture it provides.

The reason why the rice is polished is because the taste turns stale. The rice we regularly eat is white rice that is shaved 10% from brown rice. Brown rice is rich in nutrition be it minerals, protein or fat, but that part acts negatively for sake flavor, so it is shaved off. Generally, an average of about 30% of Japanese sake is shaved off from the brown rice, but ginjo-shu—that's become popular today—shaves about a half. There is an indication standard for ginjo-shu that more than 40% needs to be shaved. The more it's polished the more the starch gets purified, resulting in fine sake. From experience, it is proved that protein and fat lessens, and the fragrance of ginjo-shu is extracted and its taste becomes more delicate when this is done.

By the way, "*daiginjo-shu*" (super premium ginjo made from highly-polished rice) shaves off more than 50%. Koji's saccharification power is strong and its ability to break up protein is low. There is koji exclusively used for ginjo, that uses koji mold with refreshing taste. Preparation is thoroughly planned—for

example, moromi is fermented for a long period at a low temperature—so that ginjo with fruity fragrance and delicate taste is produced.

Koji's usage ranges from medicine to detergent

There are various types of koji mold. You can get them for about 100 yen at grocery stores, but those packed in paulownia wood used exclusively for making ginjo, cost about 10,000 yen. When you open it there's seed malt, and amongst them are those that have plenty of green koji mold spores attached to them. These bean sprout-like spores are sprinkled on steamed rice for two days and turned into white koji, which is used for preparation.

Koji mold is a lead player in Japanese food that is used in Japanese sake, "*mirin*" (sweet sake), soy sauce, "*miso*" (soybean paste) and "*amazake*" (sweet mild sake). As a matter of fact, it is used in purposes other than food from quite a long time ago. For example, it is used in Taka-Diastase, a medicine for digestion, which is also mentioned in Natsume Soseki's novel, "*Wagahai-wa Neko-dearu*" (I am a cat). Professor Jokichi Takamine invented it over 100 years ago and is

now used as an anti-indigestion tablet. Meanwhile, there's an exogenous enzyme substance called lipase that removes oil stains in detergents, which is made up of genetically engineered molds that are made by using koji mold. This is now used worldwide.

Also, although there are very few reports on this, it's known that koji mold has functions for enhancing health and beauty. I would like to spread this information to the Japanese people, so I launched a project called "Amazake Project" at Nihon Pharmaceutical University. Amazake is considered effective for atopic dermatitis and hay fever too. But it's not known and valued amongst the overall Japanese people so there's a huge gap. Yogurt, on the hand, is extremely popular today, and there's a lot of study on lactic bacillus but for koji mold there's only about 1/1000th amount of research done, which is a disappointment. So, we now have a goal for amazake to be produced and consumed by about 10% or more of yogurt by 2025. I truly believe that there are similar or even greater possibilities for amazake compared to yogurt, so I would like to contribute the rest of my life to koji mold and to study and spread it so that more people will get to know about it.

Katsuhiko Kitamoto

Born in 1950 in Kangagawa Prefecture. After graduating from the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Agriculture, he became a researcher at National Research Institute of Brewing. He served as appraiser at Fukuoka Regional Taxation Bureau and Sendai Regional Taxation Bureau, as well as chief scientist at National Research Institute of Brewing. From 1996, he was a professor at Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Presently, he is professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo and research professor at Nihon Pharmaceutical University. He has received multiple awards including JSBBA Award for Senior Scientists.

Why Japanese sake tastes good?

Japanese cuisine leads the world

Hiroshi
Sakurai

vs.

Katsuhiko
Kitamoto

vs.

Tsuneyasu
Takeda

Moderator

Naoki Inose

Japanese sake—the transition that made it taste good

Inose: Dassai was given out for tasting to the attendees here at the venue. How was it? Dassai has layers of tastes, ranging from pungent taste, sweet taste to an astringent taste.

Takeda: It's Junmai Ginjoshu with taste and a flamboyant fragrance.

Sakurai: Before Dassai, people fussed over refreshing, slender sake with fragrance but no taste. But as social conditions began to change, people began to look for taste in sake. Sake's tastes have changed over time.

Inose: Maybe people began to drink differently since the Koshinokanbai became popular. Today, good sake is drunk directly from the bottle as “*rei-shu*,” but back then, drinking sake out of a bottle without warming it up was referred to as “*hiyazake*” and was somewhat looked down upon. The Japanese system for grading sake—from “*tokkyu*” (special class), “*ikkyu*” (first class) and “*nikyu*” (second class) was abolished when the

Liquor Tax Law was revised in 1985, and instead a standard indication system of labeling sake as Dai-ginjo, Ginjo and Junmai-shu was incorporated. Sake, with a ratio indicating the quantity of polished rice obtained from brown rice which is below 70%, is established as “*hon-jozo*” (authentically brewed sake). Meanwhile, sake with a ratio below 60%—another words, sake which rice is shaved 40%—is referred to as ginjo, and rice that is shaved 50% Dai-ginjo. In old times, there was low quality sake in which alcohol for brewing was even mixed. It could be said that the Liquor Tax Law put a stop to sake lowering its quality.

Kitamoto: The grading system was a system in which the brewers reported their own sake. In contrary, the standard indication system is operated with definite guidelines, which I think contributes to improving the quality of sake.

However, adding alcohol for brewing to sake, doesn't necessarily degrade the quality of sake. Maybe Mr. Inose is referring to “*sanbai-zojo-seishu* (*sanzo*)” (three-time increased sake), sake in which alcohol for brewing is added



Hiroshi Sakurai (president of Asahi Shuzo Co.)

twice the amount of moromi. Those types of sake are almost never seen today. That said, a small amount of alcohol for brewing is included in hon-jozo. Hon-jozo a sake from old times which methods descend from “*hashira-jochu*” (literally, “shochu spirit as a supporting pillar”) of the Edo Period in which rice shochu was added to raise the alcohol percentage to prevent “*hiochi*” (putrefaction of sake by bacteria called “*hiochikin*”). Its style is the same as Cutty Sark blended whiskey.

Inose: I see. A traditional way of brewing alcohol is utilized. But the way Dassai shaves off its rice until it reaches 23% seems a bit of a waste,

but I guess that happens when you thoroughly look for fine tastes.

Sakurai: Theoretically, with Daiginjo you only have to shave 50% off the outside of the rice, but because rice is a product of nature it's hard to determine where the center of the rice is. Even if you shave 50%, there's a possibility of leaving behind saccharose and protein that you want to remove. Yamada Nishiki is a type of rice that is not easily broken even when it is polished well, and from this is made "*Dassai, migaki, sonosaki-e*" (Dassai, polish, ahead of there), a sake that is shaven over 23%.

Inose: There are various procedures to making sake, but it seems its ultimate taste appears to correspond to the severe percentage of how much it is shaven off, right?

Sakurai: It's not the only factor that's necessary, but the more you polish the rice the tastier the sake becomes. In the beginning, the producer's endeavor was just competing to produce the most polished Japanese sake. Some brewery experts said there was no meaning in polishing rice after a certain point. However, when sake was actually made, it turned out that the more they polished the rice, the tastier it became and the more it matched with food.

Kitamoto: A few decades ago, computer controlled rice-polishing machines were invented and rice was automatically polished be it 35% or 50%. Up until then, "*toji*" (people who had special skills for rice milling) had to continuously pound rice for about 30 days to make polished rice of 50%. Physically, it was only possible to prepare a small amount of about 700 kg of rice and that was it. The fine taste of Dassai today greatly derives from computer controlled rice-polishing machines.

Sakurai: In addition to technical innovation, I think it's the Japanese people who started searching for good taste in sake that changed sake as a whole.

Japanese sake advancing into overseas markets —its tradition and technical innovation

Inose: With the outside culture entering Japan, comparisons were made, and expectations for Japanese food and sake to become tastier became high. At the end of 2013, Japanese food was added to the list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage. Maybe from now onwards, measures to compare Japanese sake with wine, for example, need to be made.

Sakurai: As a brewer, we need to aim for an "absolute taste" that can win over the battle amongst various industries. No matter how much we say, "This is Japanese traditional culture," it won't help much overseas. It was difficult for me to take this in, but for example, an authority of French cuisine Robuchon said "I fell in love, immediately" when he tasted Dassai.

Inose: Dassai is exported to how many countries?

Sakurai: We say 20 countries officially to the press, but if we include embassies, to which we send one or two cases, we'd say over 100 countries.

Takeda: About two years ago, when I went into a restaurant in Paris, I found Japanese sake there. I thought times have changed, and I tried to order one but was surprised at the price. A shot of sake cost 500 Euro—about 70,000 yen at the time. It's not a price for the bottle. In Japan it's probably a type of sake that costs a few thousand yen for "*isho-bin*" (a bottle of about 1.8 lit.). I asked them how they priced their sake, then they said it didn't matter how much they paid for the sake, its taste was worth the price. In the future, if rich Westerners realized the appeal of Japanese sake and its international price continuously rose—so that one bottle cost a few hundred thousand yen like

Romanne-conti—maybe a lot of Japanese people won't be able to drink sake like they used to (laughing). I'm happy that people outside Japan are getting to realize the appeal of Japanese sake, but on the other hand, the amount of sake that sake brewers can produce is fixed, so you can't suddenly double or triple the amount.

Inose: How much is Dassai when it is drunk overseas?

Sakurai: About twice the price in America and four times the price in Europe. You said that the purchase price was irrelevant, but French restaurants normally charge three times the purchase price. Simply calculated, Dassai is sold 12 times the price of Dassai sold in Japan.

Takeda: In other words, Japanese sake has the value to be traded at a price similar to that of Romanne-conti. However, although there's good sake being made and there's a popularity for Japanese sake, consumption of sake in Japan is decreasing a few percent every year.

Sakurai: The baby boom generation who were considered fans of Japanese sake went over to "*shoch*" (liquor distilled from sweet potatoes, rice, buckwheat, etc.) and never came back. Sake is not selling well even in Akita, Niigata and Shimane Prefectures, where per capita consumption of sake is high. On the other hand, there's a very small increase in Tokyo. I think the younger generation is beginning to discover Japanese sake.

Takeda: I think this whole notion of, "anyway, let's start with drinking beer" is what's getting in the way. If 10% of drinking a toast is done with sake, maybe we can put a stop to a small percentage of decline every year, of drinking sake. Let's keep sake in mind and start drinking it. How about doing away with "anyway, let's start with drinking beer" everyone? (laughing)

Inose: It's true. Since when did people start drinking with this notion of "anyway, let's start with drinking beer"? On the other hand, recently Dassai can be drunk at a normal iza-



Katsuhiko Kitamoto (research professor of Nihon Pharmaceutical University)

kaya (bara tavern).

Sakurai: I think it rash that brewers price their sake with scarcity value, making brands out of “rare quality sake.” I want to expand the opportunity for Dassai so it can be enjoyed by a wide range of people. It should compete in the market simply with its tastiness, so that people may choose it again. There’s no need for the Japanese sake industry to copy Hermes.

Inose: If one brewer of Yamaguchi Prefecture became a national brand, normally it wouldn’t be able to catch up on the amount it needs to produce. But Asahi Shuzo built a mass production system so that fine products can reach a wide range of people. It created a system that allowed quality products to be supplied not only in exclusive shops but also in izakaya. Every industry is suffering from successor issues and aging of craftsmen. Toji is of no exception but at Asahi Shuzo, we have young people working. Also, we have a system in which breweries can work all throughout the year, allowing us not only to prepare sake in the winter—which is the tradition—but also in the summer.

The average age of employees working at Asahi Shuzo is 26.9. Not so long ago, there was a link between farming villages and breweries, where employees could work in the rice fields in the summer and work as tojo in the winter when work became sparse. But the tojo system collapsed with the farming villages when the

Japanese economy developed. Just protecting tradition and avoiding the entering of newcomers only weakens the industry. In order to maintain the Japanese sake industry, we need to teach young people how to make sake. Also, today our lives no longer centers round rice farming. If we use Japan’s air conditioning skills, we can easily cool and store rice as we please, so making sake all throughout the year is a reasonable choice we should make. By pursuing technology and elevating quality, we’re trying to break down the barrier and make our way into the world.

For Dassai, what used to be done by toji’s intuition and experience—for example measuring the water amount required for the rice, the fermenting process, and deciding on the growth process of koji—is now accomplished by accurate calculation of digital devices. We measure the extent of fermentation digitally everyday but humans control the extremely delicate temperature change that can sometimes be as small as 0.1 degree. For that part we never depend on machines. For example, sashimi tastes better when cut by humans not machines. Humans always do these types of delicate operations better than machines.

Sake making was a Shinto ritual according to Kojiki

Inose: Mr. Kitamoto, in the first place, appraisers fall under the jurisdiction of the National Tax Agency, right? Recently, due to the influence of cheap, malt-free beer-like alcoholic beverages, liquor tax has lessened to 1.4 trillion yen, while cigarettes’ tax is 2.2 trillion yen due to the rise in retail price. They both are a big source of tax revenue—close to 1% of consumption tax.

Kitamoto: In Germany there’s brewery tax, but in Japan there’s only liquor tax not brewery tax. The revision of liquor tax in 1985 was revolutionary. But, because it’s liquor tax,

they’re only concerned in how they can charge tax, rather than how they can make quality sake. The Japanese sake industry has raised their quality only because brewers across the nation—like Asahi Shozo—have continued striving to make good sake.

Inose: In 2015, the rules have become strict and only sake produced from Japanese rice is allowed to be labeled as Japanese sake.

Kitamoto: I think this can be understood as the very first concept that’s close to brewery tax. A lot of Japanese sake is made outside of Japan too. Amongst them is Korea, which has the largest factory. After 2015, sake made there is labeled “*seishu*” (sake made of rice and koji) when they enter Japan.

Inose: This principle, I think, links with the idea of protecting domestic sake producers. Quality Japanese sake cannot be made without increasing the number of farmers who produce “*sakamai*” (rice that’s suitable for making sake).

Sakurai: Yamada Nishiki is quality rice that’s often referred to as “King of Sakamai.” No matter how much we come up with a new policy, if it’s within an existing realm, we’re only going to shut out newcomers. We need to think about increasing production or we’re not going to make progress. Asahi Shuzo gets criticized for buying up too much Yamada Nishiki, but I really think they should stop saying that and think of a way to increase production. Japan’s agriculture is losing 80 thousand tons of rice production every year. We only need to put a stop to that. Yamada Nishiki is very expensive compared to regular rice and in Hyogo Prefecture, three recommended Agricultural Cooperatives are the ones that have control. But, there are inevitable needs for Yamada Nishiki, so I once asked other Agricultural Cooperatives to make Yamada Nishiki. But that afternoon, I received a phone call from the director of National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations, warning me to stop asking people to pro-



Tsuneyasu Takeda (writer)

duce rice according to my opinions.

Inose: Agricultural Cooperatives' crop regulations are, in other words, the nation's regulations. From now until 2020, more foreigners are going to be coming in and it's a good chance for Japanese culture to become better known, so we should do without obstructions and regulations and think about indirect aids and the country's tourism policies.

Sakurai: Although we have these struggles, we now have Niigata and Tochigi Prefectures making Yamada Nishiki. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries' estimation, 626,000 "hyo" (straw rice bag which used as unit of rice)—37,000 tons—of Yamada Nishiki was made last year. Until recently it was just over 300,000 hyo, so it's nearly doubled. Japan produces just below 8 million tons of rice overall, so Yamada Nishiki covers just over 0.5 %.

Inose: I think this idea of getting rid of abandoned rice fields that are not longer cultivated, and producing expensive Yamada Nishiki is very positive.

Sakurai: Then farmers will make more profit and issues of successors will be solved.

Inose: By the way, I hear Mr. Takeda is producing sake too.

Takeda: Yes. I started producing sake as a part of my study group revolving around "*Kojiki*." It's not for sale, but it's called Junmai Ginjoshu "*Kokubu Misogi*." Japan is a country of rice farming, but most people today have

never experienced rice planting let alone sake production. By actually experiencing sake production—from scattering seed rice and planting the rice, to harvesting it to make organic sakamai, which is then prepared, squeezed and bottled with help from a brewery—I thought maybe I could experience something that's very Japanese. *Kojiki* is Japan's oldest historical document. It means, the root of everything is written in it. The document, describes sake production as a Shinto ritual.

In 2016, we had the Iseshima Summit, but every autumn at Ise-jingu Shrine, "*Kanname-sai*," which celebrates good harvest of the five grains that year and abundant crop the following year, takes place. Rice is "the root of our lives." *Kanname-sai* is a meaningful festival that prays to the Gods that Japanese people live long the following year. If something that makes the Gods angry should happen, there won't be good harvest the following year. Rice and sake presented before the altar should be fine rice, so the Shinto priests make sake from scratch by planting the seeds. Four types of sake are offered—"shiroki," "kuroki," "sumi-zake" and "rei-shu"—which are all brewed at the shrine except sumi-zake. Moreover, rei-shu is produced with rice grown by the Shinto priest. Sake is this much important. No festival can exist without it.

Inose: Mr. Kitamoto, wine is produced by fermenting it once. Compared to that, the procedure that Japanese sake undergoes—from growing koji, yeast starter to preparing moromi—is very complex.

Kitamoto: Wine production undergoes a simple procedure which means its ingredients—grapes—and its quality, directly influences the wine. Meanwhile, Japanese sake indeed needs added techniques. That's why when I was at the National Research Institute of Brewing, I didn't just stick to producing sake out of Yamada Nishiki. Technically speaking, I considered a way to produce good enough



Naoki Inose (writer, director of Japanese Civilization Institute)

sake with Nippon-bare. Scientifically, there is hardly any difference between Nippon-bare and Yamada Nishiki regarding its composition. But, sake produced from Yamada Nishiki tastes better when drank after a few decades. It seemed clear that just because there's only a slight difference in its scientific makeup, it doesn't mean there's no difference in its end results.

Inose: In a research using genetic analysis, it became clear that koji mold used for Japanese sake is originally Japanese.

Kitamoto: Yes. In a genetic information derived from genomic analysis, Japanese koji is very different to mold used for making Shokoshu in China, which has a long history.

In old times, there was "*kuchikami-sake*" in which young women chewed the rice, so that amylase inside the saliva converted starch into sugar, to make sake for Shinto rituals. But this was inefficient, as they couldn't make large amounts. Before long, they discovered mold as an ingredient to convert starch into sugar. The roots of koji mold lies here, but until ten years ago, it was thought that the mold entered Japan from China with other Chinese culture.

When kanji entered Japan, Yamato language (original language of Japan) remained as "*kun-yomi*." The reason why words like "茶" has only "*on-yomi*" pronunciation; "cha," is said to be because Japan didn't have tea before kanji entered Japan. The kanji "麴" is read as "*kyoku*" and

“*kiku*” in China, but in Japan it’s read as “*kun-yomi*” pronunciation; “*koji*.” This proves that a mold called *koji* existed in Japan before *kanji* entered the country.

This is a hypothesis, but Japan already had a good *koji* culture of its own, so it didn’t need to adopt *koji* mold of China. Japanese mold tamed its wildness well, and from the Kamakura Period, even “*koji-ya*” (*koji* shops specializing in the *koji* mold) appeared. To the contrary, the Chinese weren’t as systematic and they couldn’t domesticate their mold. In those days, people had the obligation to pay tax for sake, but if the *koji* seed is bad so is the sake. Naturally, areas that had good *koji-ya* flourished.

Koji culture and dashi culture—the future of Japanese food culture

Inose: Adding to the four tastes; “*amami*” (sweetness), “*sanmi*” (sourness), “*shioaji*” (saltiness), “*nigami*” (bitterness), the fifth taste “*umami*” (savory taste) was discovered in the 20th Century. This *umami* was also discovered by the Japanese people.

Kitamoto: Western food contains fats like milk and butter but Japanese food doesn’t. *Koji* culture like *shoyu*, *mirin*, *miso*, Japanese sake, and “*dashi*” (broth) culture such as “*katsuo*” (bonito) and “*konbu*” (seaweed) plays the role of adding flavor to the simply seasoned cuisine.

Inose: Under these conditions of Japanese food culture, can Japanese sake step into the global market? Can Japanese sake reach a standard to be chosen and served at restaurants worldwide along with wine?

Sakurai: I think there’s a great possibility. But now, exports of French wine is 800 billion yen, while it’s only 14 billion yen for Japanese sake. It’s like experiencing a different culture, so it won’t be easy at first. We must continue failing and striving in order to promote Japanese sake into a bev-

erage that can succeed in the global market. I think we’re at the turning point of whether the Japanese sake industry can regenerate or not.

Inose: I see a bright future for Japanese sake. Young people are starting to make sake with Mr. Takeda in collaboration with breweries. Also, the brand *Dassai* has quickly become widely known. With the Tokyo Olympics coming up in 2020, I think Japanese sake—and Japanese food, which is listed as UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage—will be regarded more and rated high by foreign countries. Japanese people need to take more pride in their culture.

Kitamoto: Foreigners need to be notified more on the evidence that Japanese is healthy food. I hope that *koji* is studied more and the healthiness of Japanese food becomes more obvious so that Japanese sake and food becomes more widespread in the world.

Sakurai: We want to promote *Dassai* to the world with a simple concept, like that of an old woman who pulls a “*daikon*” (Chinese radish) out of her backyard plot and hands it over saying, “it’s good, so try it.” Forget marketing. Just try it, it’s good. We want to make something that suits these words.

Takeda: Wine has what’s called a “fruitful year.” Another words, if the

grapes aren’t good that year, the producers have to give up. In contrary, Japanese sake has no fruitful year or “off year.” Sake craftsmen say they put an extra effort in the sake making when they have bad rice. Good rice is rice with which you have control. But that doesn’t mean you can’t produce good sake out of bad rice. It’s nerve-racking, but it’s particularly exciting when sake produced by hand is completed. I think the essence of Japanese craftsmanship lies here.

Inose: That Osaka’s soy sauce is “*usukuchi*” (light) is because kelp from Reibun and Rishiiri Islands of Hokkaido Prefecture was brought in by “*kitamae-bune*” (cargo ships that sailed the Japanese seas during the Edo period). Meanwhile, Edo (Tokyo of today) consumes “*katsuo-dashi*” (bonito broth), which is why soy sauce of the district is “*koi-kuchi*” (dark). Depending on the district, the taste of food is different, which is why Japanese food isn’t just one type. Diverse cultures are blooming in a tradition. I hope Japanese people rediscover the appeal of “*wa*” (Japanese things) and confidently transmit it to the world so that more foreigners get to taste Japanese sake and food.

(reprinted from “*Shukan Dokusho-jin*”, 1st July, 2016, No. 3146)



Chilled Dassai was offered to attendees.



The panelists

Hiroshi Sakurai (president of Asahi Shuzo Co.)

Born in 1950, in Shuto-machi (former Iwakuni-shi). After graduating Matsuyama University of Commerce (Matsuyama University today) in 1973, he trained at Nishinomiya Shuzo (Nihonsakari today) before joining his family business, Asahi Shuzo in 1976. But he argued with his father, the family predecessor, regarding the way they should run and manage the brewery, so he left. In 1979, he established a stone wholesale business Sakurai Shoji. When his father passed away in 1984, he returned home and reorganized the company's management centering on Junmai-daiginjo Dassai. Dassai has developed into a brand representing Japan and is now sold overseas.

Tsuneyasu Takeda (writer)

Born in 1975, as a member of the Takeda family—an old Imperial Family. He is the great-great-grandchild of the Meiji Emperor. Graduated from Keio University, Faculty of Law, Department of Law. Specialized in Study of Constitutional Law and Historical Science. He received the 15th Yamamoto Shichihei Award for his book, "Katararenakatta Kozokutachi no Shinjitsu" (Untold Truth of Imperial Family Members, Shogakukan). Other books he published include, "Nihon wa naze Sekai de Ichiban Ninki ga Aru no ka" (Why Japan is the most popular country in the world?) and "Gendaigo Kojiki" (Modern language Kojiki). He has presented the "Takeda Study Group" in 17 locations nationwide and gives more than 200 lectures a year.

Naoki Inose (writer)

Born in 1946. In 1986, he received Souichi Ooya Nonfiction Award for his book "Mikado-no Shozo (Portrait of Emperor)." In 1996, he received Bungeishunju Readers' Award for his book "Nipponkoku no Kenkyu (A Report on Japan)." From then on, he actively worked toward abolishing and privatizing government-affiliated corporations. In June 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi appointed Inose as member of the Promotion Committee for the Privatization of the Four Highway-Related Public Corporations. He included the story of the battle in his books, "Doro no Kenryoku (Authority of the Road, Bunshunbunko)" and "Doro no Ketchaku (Settlement of the Road, Bunshunbunko)." In October, 2006, Inose served as Research Professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and in June, 2007, he served as Vice Governor of Tokyo. He served as Tokyo governor from December 2012 to December 2013.

From a long time ago, Japan has responded flexibly and consistently to the pressure and change of the outside world and persisting and making progress along the way. With the U.K. leaving the European Union, and with the U.S. presidential election coming up in November this year, we take this as a good opportunity to think about the effect these events might have on Japan, and to discuss from various angles, as to which way Japan should pave its way from here onwards.

► Panel discussion:

“Globalization and modern state”

The path that Japan should follow, taking into consideration the U.K. leaving the European Union and the upcoming U.S. presidential election

Kent Gilbert:

U.S. California lawyer,
TV personality



Ruri Miura:

Political scientist, Policy Alternatives
Research Institute of the Univ. of Tokyo



Ken Kotani:

Professor at College of Risk
Management, Nihon University



MC :

Naoki Inose

Writer and director of
Japanese Civilization Institute



Date: 24th August 2016, 7 p.m.-9 p.m. (doors
scheduled to open at 6:30 p.m.)

Venue: Japan University of Economics, Tokyo
Shibuya Campus Hall (the hall seats
approximately 100 people)

Address: 25-17, Sakuragaoka-cho, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

How to attend: apply through the site below:

<http://www.japancivilization.org/>

Contact: Japan Civilization Institute
03-5456-8082

Address: 24-5 Sakuragaoka-cho, Shibuya-ku,
Tokyo 150-0031



Traditional Crafts Online Shopping Site

<https://shops.japancivilization.org> (Worldwide)

<http://japancivil.shop9.makeshop.jp> (Japanese)

Message from the Director

In addition to our quarterly symposiums, Japanese Civilization Institute has started introducing and selling traditional crafts of Japan. Although it is said that there is approximately 1,200 types of traditional crafts in Japan, due to the change in Japanese peoples' tastes—which have come to value functional things—its production is declining. As part of our activities, we hope to discover valuable traditional crafts spread across the nation, enjoy Japanese craftsmanship and its beauty inherited over the centuries, and develop it with you.



Tsumami Kanzashi
- crepe -



Edo-Kiriko
- Cut Glass- Lid and Cup



Japanese Bamboo
Basket Tokyotrad



Nishijin Pocket Square



M.Okegawa Samurai Armor

Contact

Japanese Civilization Institute

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