

Preface

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For the fifth collection in the *Florientalia East Asian Studies Series*, we chose the title *Food issues* 食事. *Interdisciplinary Studies on Food in Modern and Contemporary East Asia* to celebrate how food represents a central topic in our society and a focal theme in literature and art of all times. We asked the scholars to think over about Food from multiple perspectives, from the representation of food and drink consumption in literature and art to its implications with spirituality and politics. We believe that the essays of the scholars hosted in this volume might enrich the field of Chinese and Japanese studies through the paths they trace with their research.

This volume gathers essays by eleven essays interested in different research areas within the field of East Asian studies. The essays— organized in a Japanese section and a Chinese section— cover a wide range of topics ranging from literature, religion, Media production, linguistic and lexicon analyses, investigations on the relation between food and cultural identity.

The Japanese section contains essays dealing with spirituality, modern and contemporary literature, and politics. The opening article by Chiara Ghidini explores some aspects of the relation between Buddhism and *washoku*, the traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese. More specifically, Ghidini's research focuses on *shōjin ryōri*, the Buddhist devotional cuisine or “temple food”. The second essay is by Sasaki Yūki and aims to examine the way Food is depicted in *Kabe* (1951), the first collection of works by the modern Japanese writer Abe Kōbō. In this essay, Sasaki looks at Food as one of the indicators to support the worldbuilding and the actions of the characters in the entire work. The third contribution is by Yamada Natsuki and explores the representation of Food in the world of *manga*.

In particular, Yamada analyses Tezuka Osamu's famous work *Ashita no Jō* (1968) and uses Food as a filter for a psychological analysis of the characters. The fourth essay is by Yamasaki Makiko and deals with the representation of Food in some of Murakami Haruki's works. More specifically, Yamasaki will examine juxtapositions of Food and Sex from Murakami's earliest works to the recent ones, such as *Onna no inai otokotatchi* (2014) and *Kishidanchōgoroshi* (2017). The fifth essay is by Francesco Eugenio Barbieri and aims at analyzing the representation of Food and Eating in seminal works by Japanese author Tawada Yōko. In particular, Barbieri will analyze the connection between Food and metamorphosis and the representation and the metaphor of food in Tawada's works. Finally, the essay by Felice Farina deals with contemporary history and politics. In particular, Farina will explore the political construction of *washoku* by analyzing Japan's recent strategy of gastronationalism and gastrodiplomacy.

The essays included in the Chinese section investigate Food issues from multiple perspectives: literature, lexicography, media, and cultural identity. The first essay by Mario De Grandis and Filippo Costantini takes into consideration two fictional works by the "Tibetan" author Alai both entitled "Yü 鱼" ("The Fish"). In these two stories, Alai addresses the food taboo related to fish present in some areas of Tibet displaying two approaches that are not only different but in some way diametrically opposite. Thanks to a careful close reading of the works, and supported by a solid anthropological scholarship related to the fish taboo, De Grandis and Costantini demonstrate how the "fish-taboo issue" is instrumental to the author to undermine the stereotyped image of Tibet and, on the contrary, "aims at subverting essentializing portrays of Tibet".

In the second essay, Serena De Marchi explores Food issues in terms of hunger and imprisonment as depicted in the works of three contemporary Chinese writers. Hunger is one of the great protagonists of China's recent history, especially in the period of the so-called Great Famine (1958–1952). Starting from a brief historical reconstruction of the causes and 'numbers' of this "national starvation", the scholar examines the deprivation of food in labor camps experienced and/or narrated (as in the case of Yang Xianhui's *Chronicles of Jiabian-gou*) by the authors, its implications on the lives and bodies of the prisoners, and its influence on the Chinese prison camp literature.

The third article reconstructs the difficult but also creative stages of the compilation of the *Dizionario dei vini e dei vitigni d'Italia* (*Dictionary of Italian wines and grape varieties. Italian-Chinese*). The authors—Chiara Bertulesi, Emma Lupano, Bettina Mottura, Natalia Riva, Zhou Yunqi—illustrate here the strategies adopted in the compilation of the work, with special regard to the necessary work of cultural and linguistic mediation such work requires. Not only does this essay help to better understand the translation processes and sociolinguistic negotiation that the authors adopted in compiling the work, but it also enhances the high value that such a lexicographical work can be as a tool for wider dissemination and a better understanding of the Italian culture in China, in particular the Italian culture of wine.

In “The dining table revolution in China”, the fourth essay of the Chinese section, Elena Morandi focuses on Chinese food practices and especially that of sharing food, which is a fundamental element of the Food culture in China but has been dramatically transformed by the advent of COVID-19. Through the reading of some important Chinese magazines and newspapers, Morandi gives an interesting account of the public concern that arose from the virus which involved government authorities, celebrities, tycoons, and academicians around this brand new “table revolution”.

In the essay which concludes this volume, Cristiana Turini approaches the question of cultural identity in multiethnic China through Food as a means of constructing identity and establishing meaningful relations not only within a community but also with “spirits, gods, and demons”. The scholar takes as her case study the value that customs and traditions relating to food and its preparation have in the religious beliefs and practices of Naxi people living in the Lijiang area.

We are grateful to all the contributors and the referees who participated in the volume and helped us with ideas and suggestions, creating a fruitful climate of academic collaboration and exchange.

