

# FOREIGN CULTURE

## Contribution of *Wagashi* Philosophy to the Realization of Responsible Consumption and Production Goals

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**Abstract.** Having a respect for nature has become one of the philosophies value adopted by the most of Japanese society. One of the implementation can be found in *wagashi*, a traditional Japanese sweets that usually brings a representation of nature based on its appearance and the raw materials it is made of. Utilizing raw materials that exist in the environment, this is seen as embodiment of balanced consumption and production efforts. Since most of the raw materials used in *wagashi* are natural resources which do depend on the season, this study explains how the philosophical practice of *wagashi* can encourage the responsible consumption and production goals of SDGs. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. The results of this study indicate that Japanese traditional culinary culture can have a big role in encouraging the realization of one of the SDGs values.

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## 1 Introduction

Japan is one of the countries in the world that culinary culture is influenced by belief that develop in the society. One of which is *Shinto*. An ancient belief in Japan that known to worship *Kami* (神) as the symbolisms of the almighty. The Japanese believe that *Kami* is a spirits that can be found in particular place or natural forces like wind, rivers, and mountain

[1]. This is one of the backgrounds of the good deeds of *Shinto*, to have a respect for nature that implemented on a daily of Japanese society. One form of representation can be found in the culinary aspect, in this case *wagashi*.

*Wagashi*, is the Japanese term for traditional Japanese cakes and sweets. These traditional cake dishes usually have an appearance, taste, to raw materials it is made of that reflects the characteristics of each season in Japan; *Haru* (春)、*natsu* (夏)、*aki* (秋)、and *fuyu* (冬) as a representations of this *Shinto* philosophy value for the nature [2]. The Japanese believe that every ongoing season they go through, there will be always the existence of natural resources which they understand by “*What they really need from nature*”. For the example when autumn season last from September until November, this season is essential for the growth of one of the main autumn *wagashi*'s ingredients, chestnut [3]. From this explanation, every season has a big role in the production of Japan's natural resources and the people always try to use it properly as a basic ingredient for their food for each seasons as a form of respect what has been given by nature.

The author sees this as an interesting matter if this philosophy value is linked to SDGs point number 12. “Responsible Consumption and Production Goals” by managing natural resources efficiently [4].

This research uses Cultural Ecology Theory by Julian Steward which can be understood that adaptation of humans to the environment intended to meet the needs based on the culture of society and this research is using a qualitative descriptive method and the data in this research using a relevant literature and books as secondary data sources.

## 2 Result and Discussion

As the implementation of *Shinto* philosophy to have a respect for nature, Japanese always adopt things they really need in every season. One of the implementation can be found in every main ingredients of *wagashi* for each season. The Japanese always adjusting the basic ingredients of *wagashi* in each season according to their needs [5]. They consider this very helpful for them in processing natural resources efficiently. In 1568

during the Azuchi Momoyama period, for the first time there was an emphasis on cooking themes that depended on the ongoing seasons in Japan. This was coined by a tea banquet expert named Sen no Rikyu who is called *chakaseki ryouri*. According to Sen no Rikyu, everything (humans) must be as cold as possible in summer and must be as warm as possible when winter arrives as a form of natural balances [6].

## **2.1 Wagashi For Each Seasons in Japan**

### **2.1.1 Spring**

In this season, the surrounding environment in Japan is usually filled with situations where flowers with various beautiful colours will bloom. *Wagashi* in this season has a variety of colours and shape variants compared to *wagashi* in other seasons. In this season, there are lots of *wagashi* which are made from rice flour and made by *ねりきり* a Japanese traditional dough forming method. For example, there are *dangos*.



**Fig. 1.** *Dango* (Source: Frema, 2022) (Accessed: July, 23 2023)

### **2.1.2 Summer**

The *wagashi* that are available this season are usually of the *namagashi* type. It is one type of *wagashi* with the highest water content. One of the *wagashi* raw materials that is characteristic of summer in Japan is *kanten*. One type of processed Japanese traditional jelly. The texture of the *kanten* tends to be light and fresh and the filling is usually accompanied by fresh or Japanese summer fruits.



**Fig. 2.** *Kanten* (Source: Karinasaki, 2015) (Accessed: July, 23 2023)

### 2.1.3 Autumn

One of the natural resources that is characteristic of spring is chestnut or *kuri* types of nuts. The popularity of *kuri* as a representation of the symbol of autumn is contained in one of its *wagashi* called *Kuri Kinton*. It is processed chestnuts that are mashed, steamed, and combined with powdered sugar.



**Fig. 3.** *Kuri Kinton* (Source: Promo\_link, 2019) (Accessed: July, 23 2023)

### 2.1.4 Winter

In winter, Japanese people tend to look for foods that can certainly warm their bodies. One of the popular *wagashi*'s ingredients in this season is of *azuki* beans. An example is *Shiruko*. The dish is boiled and ground sweet *azuki* bean porridge served in a bowl with *mochi* [7]



**Fig. 4.** *Shiruko* (Source: masa44, 2022) (Accessed: July, 23 2023)

## 2.2 *Wagashi* Contribution to The Realization of Responsible Consumption and Production Goals by Managing Natural Resources Efficiently

From the fact that Japanese prioritize the efficiency of processing natural resources in *wagashi* in each season, this is considered to be a factor that contribute to the realization of responsible consumption and production. The existence of several main ingredients to each season proves that the implementation of the *Shinto* philosophy in *wagashi* places great emphasis on efficiency in processing natural resources [8]. This teaches the Japanese to always maximize the resources in their environment such as the use of rice flour in spring, *kanten* in summer, *kuri* in autumn, and *azuki* beans in winter as the main ingredients to make

*wagashi*.

This was agreed upon by one of the *wagashi* shop owners in Kyoto named Kiyoaki Maegawa in an interview with Insider Business. As a *wagashi* maker he is more focused on innovating to make new products with ingredients that already exist in each season [9]. On the other hand, the tendency of Japanese people to always display food according to the season also makes the implementation of this philosophy very strong.

The concept of “*Mottanai!*” that exists in Japanese society in their food is also one of the driving factors for the implementation of this philosophy. *Mottanai* can be translated as “what a waste” or “don’t be wasteful”. Is a concept for Japanese people not to waste food which is the result of nature’s gift to humans [10]. This concept strongly encourages Japanese people to make the most of natural resources as efficiently as possible in this context this concept is implemented in *wagashi*.

### 3 Conclusion

Based on the research, it can be concluded that efforts to embody the philosophy of having a respect for nature in *wagashi* can be one of the driving factors to support the efficiency of processing natural resources to the realization of SDGs point number 12: “Responsible Consumption and Production” Goals. This is supported by the habit of the Japanese to always use materials that already exist in the environment every season to make *wagashi* and the encouragement to apply depictions of nature to food in the *wagashi* philosophy also motivates the Japanese to always strive for efficient production and consumption of their natural resources. This *wagashi* philosophy also supports a concept of *mottanai!*. is the advice not to waste food and maximize what nature has given as best as possible.

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