In both Japan and Thailand, wet rice agriculture holds an important role. Rice is a staple food, cultural symbol, and resource for governance. Although not a native crop, rice is estimated to have entered Japan around the Yayoi period (300 B.C. - 300 A.D.) and the first millennium A.D. in Thailand - rice has become the dominant staple food in both cultures. In addition, rice is considered to be crucial to the understanding of mankind (e.g., self-food, kinship, and nation). Rice has also been historically used to build social, economic, and national powers. The symbolism and mythology of rice played a crucial role in using rice as an agent to building nations, even though conflict has arisen as a consequence, particularly with the increasing integration to the world economy and national pressure to change the idealization of rice to adapt to the changing political and consumer interests.

### Building the Nation-State Through Rice

**Cultural Nationalism**

#### Factors

- Rice as a symbol of status
- Rice as a symbol of authority
- Rice as a symbol of cultural identity

#### Effects in Japan

- Increase in rice production
- Increase in rice consumption
- Increase in rice exports

#### Effects in Thailand

- Decrease in rice production
- Decrease in rice consumption
- Decrease in rice exports

**National Politics**

#### Factors

- Economic vs. political power
- Political vs. economic power
- Political stability

#### Effects in Japan

- Preservation of rice culture
- Preservation of rice traditions
- Preservation of rice heritage

#### Effects in Thailand

- Commercialization of rice
- Commercialization of rice farming
- Commercialization of rice industry

### Global Integration & International Pressure

**Factors**

- Rice trade
- Rice export
- Rice import

**Effects in Japan**

- Rice trade surplus
- Rice trade deficit
- Rice trade balance

**Effects in Thailand**

- Rice trade surplus
- Rice trade deficit
- Rice trade balance

### Conclusion

Rice in Japan and Thailand, then, function similarly on many levels. These are primarily broad: rice possessing a soul, rice being a female deity, rice being central to rituals, and rice entering into relationships with society. In addition, these usages of symbols of rice and mythology have been a crucial motif of a sense of supremacy of civilized cultures. Both nations have undergone similar reforms to adapt to the changing internal and external politics, shifting away from the idealized rice. When we examine these in more detail, however, we notice many nuances that make each culture's view of rice distinct. Three primary differences are apparent. First, rice has the same soul as man in Thailand, but that is not the case in Japan. Second, rice is viewed as a mother by the Thai and has a deeper reciprocal relationship with them than the Japanese rice goddess has with the Japanese people. In Thailand, the conflict of rice to rule and authority is more noticeable that Japan, even though both nations share a mixture of communalism and social hierarchy. Third, national identity is drawn from rice by the Japanese but not by the Thai. In Japan, rice was considered to be a symbol of the emperor, which served as a source of cultural nationalism. From these comparisons, then, we discover that although wet rice agriculture spread throughout Asia, and though these cultures share many similarities in terms of the centrality of rice and their basic beliefs about the grain, their beliefs are quite unique to each people.

### References


### Table 1

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Rice as Deity</th>
<th>Rice as Symbol of Authority</th>
<th>Rice as Symbol of Japanese Identity</th>
<th>Rice as Symbol of Japanese Culture</th>
<th>Rice as Symbol of Japanese Tradition</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
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### Image 1

The Rice Mother, Maé Phsop (Hamilton 20)

### Image 2

Maé Phsop upon bed of new rice in the ritual that calls her soul (Hamilton 70)

### Image 3

Offering of mōchū at the New Year to the bodhisattva Jātā (Hamilton 288)

### Image 4

Shennandoah Britten and Alisha Brock

### Image 5

Taiyōmē Hiyōhō as the conquest of Japan, he successfully used rice for taxation and nation-building http://newsimage.niue.blogspot.com/2012 _12_01_archive.html

### Image 6

Rice in Relationship with Man

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
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### Image 7

Hiroshige’s ukiyoe: an example of the aesthetic beauty of Japanese rice paddies (Hamilton 44)

### Table 1

<table>
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<th>Type of Rice/Function</th>
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### Image 8

Row of rice fields with rice plants close up

### Image 9

Row of rice fields with rice plants close up

### Image 10

Row of rice fields with rice plants close up