



Thursday, 17 July 2025, 18.30–20.00 (JST) and online

## Fermenting for the future: *tsukemono* as a practice of *awai*

Aya H. Kimura, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Yasuhiro Kobayashi, Ecological Memes

Disturbance in microbiome both at human and ecosystemic levels is resulting in serious health and environmental crises. Science and Technology Studies is beginning to analyze how fermented foods and fermentation are becoming a part of the commodified wellness market and a space of critical reflection on modern antibiotic relations. Using the case of *tsukemono* or Japanese pickles, the modern antibiotic turn and its contemporary probiotic modulation will be analyzed using both historical and ethnographic data. In doing so, this DIJ Forum will emplace microbiopolitics (Paxson 2013) in a specific historical and cultural context of contemporary Japan. Microbes and fermentation are tools for added values for well-capitalized food companies. But they can also constitute a practice of *awai* or in-betweenness that propels embodied and co-constitutive relations with nonhumans, as demonstrated through the example of *nukadoko* (fermentation bed for a specific type of *tsukemono*) care. The case of *tsukemono* offers insights into the challenges of the Anthropocene and its impacts on microbiome that take stock of existing linguistic and cultural heritage.

**Aya H. KIMURA** is a Professor of Sociology and a Senior Sustainability Advisor for the College of Social Sciences and the Director for the Center for Sustainability Across Curriculum at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa. Her books include *Radiation Brain Moms and Citizen Scientists: The Gender Politics of Food Contamination after Fukushima* (Duke University Press), *Hidden Hunger: Gender and Politics of Smarter Foods* (Cornell University Press). Her forthcoming book *Fermenting for the Future: Japanese Pickles and Microbial Foodways* (University of California Press) will be out in Spring 2026.

**Yasuhiro KOBAYASHI** is a founder of Ecological Memes, a cross-disciplinary collective of regenerators in Japan. After engaging in creating a mission-driven community for social entrepreneurs at Impact HUB Tokyo, he has supported new business creation, purpose design, leadership cultivation and organizational transformation for companies across industries towards a co-thriving future. He also runs a community farm of regenerative agriculture in the urban area of Tokyo. Specialized in co-creative facilitation, art of hosting, vision design, and authentic leadership approach that integrates inner and outer systems, he creates regenerative flow and conditions for emergence and catalyze transformation at individual, organizational and eco-systemic level.

The event will be held in English, admission is free. The presentations will be followed by a Q&A session and a small reception. To participate onsite, please register via email to [forum@dijtokyo.org](mailto:forum@dijtokyo.org). To participate online, please register via our [website](#). This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event.

**Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien – German Institute for Japanese Studies**

Jochi Kioizaka Bld. 2F, 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094

Tel: 03 3222 5198, Fax: 03 3222 5420