

0. Five seasonal festivals celebrated in Japan

1) New Year's Festival	(1–10 January)	正月
2) Girls' Festival	(3 March)	上巳
3) Boys' Festival	(5 May)	端午
4) Star Festival	(7 July)	七夕
5) Chrysanthemum Festival	(9 September)	重陽

1. New Year's Festival

Shōgatsu is the first month of the year, or historically the first month of the lunar calendar. The word *shōgatsu*, however, more often means the first week (or the first 10 days) of the new year, rather than the month itself. The customs prevailing during this festive season originated in religious observances performed by the ancients, who prayed at the year's beginning for the favour of their ancestral deities and for an abundant crop for the year. However, the religious implication has been lost, and people now follow the time-honoured customs simply in celebration of the New Year. New Year decorations made up of pine-tree branches (*kadomatsu*) are put up at the gates, and a *shimenawa* (sacred rice-straw festoon) is hung above the front door. The *kadomatsu* symbolises a tree provided for the descent of the 'gods', and is left in place during the period referred to as *matsu-no-uchi* (usually the first seven days of January). Round 'mirror-shaped' *kagami-mochi* rice cakes are offered on the *kamidana* (household altar) or placed in the *tokonoma* alcove of the main room. People watch the *hatsu-hi-no-de* (first sunrise of the new year), as watching it is considered auspicious. *Osechi* (see § 1.1 below), *toso* (spiced sake, which is said to promote longevity) and *zōni* (*mochi* rice cakes boiled with vegetable in soup stock or broth) are what characterise the breakfast of New Year's Day.

五節句

正月

正月とは一年の初めの月（歴史的には太陰暦で最初の月）ですが、特に1月の初めの1週間又は10日間を指す事が普通です。この祝祭時に行なわれる習慣は、年始に当たって祖霊の庇護や豊作を祈った古代人の宗教行事に由来するものです。しかし、今日では宗教的意味合いはなくなって、ただ新年を祝う意味で古来の習慣が守られています。松の枝で作った門松を門の所に立て、藁で作った注連縄を玄関に飾ります。門松は神の光臨する為の樹木をたてるという意味があり、松の内の間はそのまま飾っておきます。丸い鏡のような形の鏡餅を神棚や床の間にそなえます。初日の出を見る事は縁起が良いと言われます。元日の朝食にはおせちや屠蘇（屠蘇は寿命を延ばすといわれている。）、雑煮

Some people start the year with new resolutions, since New Year's Day is, as the proverb says, the day to make one's plans for the year. People enjoy reading their *nenga-jō* (New Year's cards), often delivered in a batch on this day, and see how friends and relatives are getting along. Many people pay the year's first visit to temples and shrines (*hatsu-mōde*). Some famous shrines are so thickly thronged with the multitude—with men and women, the young and the aged, the pious and the indifferent—that the police are needed to handle the crowds. Small children are given *otoshidama* (good-luck gifts, often some money) and enjoy playing traditional *shōgatsu* games, such as *tako-age* (kite-flying), *koma-mawashi* (top-spinning), *hane-tsuki* (badminton-like sport), and *karuta-tori* (kind of card game). Younger children usually enjoy *iroha-karuta* (Japanese syllabary cards), whereas older may take more interest in playing *hyakunin-issu* (cards of 100 famous *tanka* poems). Some people practice their calligraphy on the second day, in the belief that practicing on this day will make their handwriting better. This practice is called *kakizome*. The dream one have on the second night of the new year is called *hatsu-yume*, and has quite an importance, as it tells the fortune of the whole year. Mt. Fuji, a hawk, or an aubergine appearing in the dream is considered lucky. On 7 January, some people eat *nanakusa-gayu* (rice porridge with *nanakusa*, see § 1.2 below), which is believed to be capable of preventing and curing every known disease. *Kagami-biraki* (cutting and eating the *kagami-mochi* rice cakes offered on the family altar) ends the whole *shōgatsu* custom. On 11 January, those *kagami-mochi* are cut or broken to pieces, toasted, put into heated *shiruko* (sweet red-bean soup), and then eaten by the whole family.

が出ます。「一年の計は元旦にあり」と年頭の決意を立てて新年を迎える人もいます。この日に束になって配達される年賀状を見て友人や親族の消息を知るのも大変楽しいものです。多くの人々は初詣に出かけます。有名な神社は信心深い人もそうでない人も含めて老若男女で非常に混雑し、交通整理の警官が動員される程です。子供はお年玉を貰い、凧揚げ・こま廻し・羽根突き・かるた取りなど伝統的な正月遊びを楽しみます。年少者はイロハかるたをしますが、少し大きくなると百人一首に興味を示します。2日に書初めをすると字が上手になると信じられています。2日の夜に見る初夢はその人の1年を占うとされる大切な夢です。富士山、鷹、茄子を見るのが良いとされます。7日には七草粥を食べますが、これは万病を防ぎ治す効果があるといわれます。11日の鏡開きで一連の正月行事は終わりです。鏡餅を細かく切ったり割ったりして焼き、お汁粉にして家族皆で食べます。

1.1. Osechi

Osechi is special New Year's food eaten during the first three days of the season. During the last few days of the old year, Japanese women spend busy times preparing these dishes. Typical foods are *kuro-mame* (black beans), *kobumaki* (rolled seaweed), *tsukudani* (preserved fish boiled in soy sauce), and *datemaki* (sweet rolled omelettes). *Daikon* radishes, carrots, spinach, and other vegetables are also cooked and served. In olden times, people preserved these foods for their meals during the first few days of the year, as all shops used to be closed on these days. Today, *osechi* is simply a tool for celebrating the new year, and consists of a wide variety of foods. *Kinton* (mashed sweet potatoes or sweetened chestnuts) enhance the dishes. To add colour, red and white *kamaboko* (boiled fish paste) is sliced and served as a garnish. Delicious *kazu-no-ko* (herring roe) and lobsters are also served as main dishes. The *kazu-no-ko* resemble the prosperity of the descendants. These foods, simply cooked, are put in a *jubako*, square tiers of boxes made of porcelain or lacquer ware.

1.2. Nanakusa

Kayu (rice porridge) containing seven kinds of spring herbs are served on 7 January. The seven herbs are: *seri* (Japanese parsley, or dropwort), *nazuna* (shepherd's purse), *gogyō* (cottonweed), *hakobera* (chickweed), *hotoke-no-za* (*Lamium amplexicaule*, English name unknown), *suzuna* (turnip), and *suzushiro* (*daikon* radish). In strict sense, this seventh day of the first month is one of the five seasonal festivals and is called the day of *Jinjitsu* or *Nanakusa-no-Sekku*; however, the whole *shōgatsu* event is nowadays customarily considered to be the seasonal festivity.

おせち

おせち料理は正月三が日に食べる料理です。年の暮れには、女性はおせちを作るのに大忙しです。代表的な料理は黒豆、昆布巻、小魚の佃煮、伊達巻などです。大根、人参、ほうれん草その他の野菜も料理されます。昔は三が日に開いている店がなかったので、これらの料理を保存食としました。今日ではそのような事はなくなり、品数も豊富です。薩摩芋や栗の金団も料理を豪華にします。彩の為に紅白の蒲鉾も添えられます。数の子や海老も食卓に上り、数の子は子孫繁栄の象徴です。これらの料理は瀬戸物や漆塗りの重箱に盛られます。

七種／七草

1月7日には七草の入った粥を食べます。七草とは、芹・薺・御形(母子草)・繁蓼・仏座(田平子)・菘(蕪)・蘿蔔(大根)です。厳密に言えば、この七種の節句(人日)が五節句の一つですが、現在では正月行事全般を「節句」のように考える事も多いようです。

2. Girls' Festival

This day is called *Hina-matsuri*, and is the girls' festival celebrated on 3 March. It is a seasonal festival called *Jōshi*, or *Momo-no-Sekku*, featuring peach blossoms. A group of beautifully dressed dolls are displayed on the *hina-dan* (tiers of shelves) in the homes of the family that has a young girl. The dolls represent members of the ancient imperial court. The *dairi-bina* (Emperor and Empress) are displaced on the uppermost shelf, and their two eminent lords (*udaijin* and *sadaijin*), *san'nin-kanjo* (three ladies), *gonin-bayashi* (five musicians), and three servants are arrayed below them. Even small representations of furniture and foods are displaced on the lower shelves. *Hina-matsuri* dates from medieval times, but the custom of displacing dolls in this fashion started in the 18th century. Whereas originally the hand-made paper dolls were thrown into the rivers along with offerings on 3 March, today the commercially made and expensive dolls are stored away for the next year. Floating the paper dolls down the river was thought to wash sickness and ill-fortune away. They are now often passed down from generation to generation. A sweet drink called *shirozake*, brewed from rice gruel mixed with fermented rice, and diamond-shaped *hishi-mochi* rice cakes are prepared as well as special dishes on this girls' day. *Kusamochi* (rice-flour cakes flavoured with *yomogi* mugwort leaves) is another indispensable sweet for the Girls' Festival. In olden tradition, *kyokusui-no-en* (also called *kyokusui-no-utage*) was held on this date at the imperial palace gardens. This event, originally from China, is a 'banquet' in which the participants take seats here and there beside a diminutive stream snaking or zigzagging through the gardens. A *sakazuki* (*sake* cup) was floated down the watercourse, and the participants had to recite a new piece of *tanka* poem before it passes before their

上巳

雛祭は女兒のための祭りで、3月3日です。桃の花が主要な飾りとなる節句で、桃の節句とも呼ばれます。女兒のいる家庭では美しい着物を着た人形を雛壇に並べます。人形は昔の宮廷人を模しています。最上段に内裏雛、その下には順に、右大臣と左大臣、三人官女、五人囃、3人の召使が並びます。更に下には家具や食物まであります。雛祭は中世に遡りますが、このように人形を飾る習慣は18世紀からです。元来は手作りの紙人形を供物と共に川に流したものです。紙人形が病気や不運から守ってくれると思われていました。今日では高価な人形なので、翌年のためにしまっておき、代々受け継がれたりします。雛祭の日には特別な料理の他に白酒や菱餅を戴きます。草餅も雛祭に欠かせないお菓子です。古来、宮廷ではこの日に曲水の宴が催されました。中国から伝わった行事で、庭園の中を流してある曲がりくねった小川の畔の所々に参会者が座り、上流から流される盃が自分の前を通過しないうちに短歌を作ります。現在の雛祭

eyes. The *hina-matsuri* celebrated in the present day is considered to have originated from this banquet, combined with various folk beliefs over a period of many centuries.

3. Boys' Festival

Called *Kodomo-no-Hi*, or Children's Day, it falls on 5 May, and is one of the most popularly celebrated national holidays. Although it is called Children's Day, it is actually celebrated as the Boy's Festival. As a seasonal festival, it is called *Tango-no-Sekku* (Beginning-of-Summer Festival), because 5 May marks the beginning of summer on the lunar calendar. To drive away bad spirits and celebrate the future of their sons, families hoist colourful *koinobori* (cloth-made carp-shaped streamers) from balconies and tall bamboo flagpoles, and indoors display *gogatsu-ningyō*, literally 'May doll', or Japanese warrior's armour, helmet, and sword on layered ledges. Children take *shōbu-yu* (bath with a bunch of floating iris leaves); thus, the festival is also called *Shōbu-no-Sekku*. Iris leaves are also placed under the eaves to fend off evil. They eat *kashiwa-mochi* (rice cakes wrapped in oak leaves) and *chimaki* (dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves). Carps, *musha-ningyō* armaments, irises, oak, and bamboo all symbolise strength. Parents prepare these decorations and food with the earnest wish that their boys may grow up to be healthy and robust.

4. Star Festival

Called *Tanabata* in Japan, this event originated in an old Chinese star festival, which was introduced to this country in the eighth century. It celebrates the annual rendezvous of the herdsman Kengyū (Altair) and the weaver Orihime (Vega), symbolised as a couple of lovers, in the Milky Way on the night of 7 July. The festival

は曲水の宴と民間信仰が長い時間を経て結びついたものと考えられています。

端午

子供の日は5月5日に当たり、最も盛んに行なわれる祭日の一つです。子供の日とは呼ばれるものの、男児のお祭りです。この日は旧暦によれば夏の始まりであり、端午の節句と呼ばれます。悪霊を追い払い、子供の未来を祝福するために、戸外には鮮やかな鯉幟を高く掲げ、室内には五月人形を飾ります。子供は菖蒲湯に入り、柏餅や粽を食べます。子供の日には菖蒲の節句とも言います。菖蒲は邪気を祓うため軒にも差します。鯉、武者人形、菖蒲、柏、笹などは全て力強さを象徴しています。両親は、子供の健康や成長を願ってこれらの飾りや食べ物を用意するのです。

七夕

七夕は中国の星祭に起こり、日本へは8世紀に伝わりました。恋人同士に見立てた牽牛と織姫が年に一度7月7日に天の川で再会するのを祝ったお祭りです。

was named later after a Japanese mythological goddess who was very good at weaving. In the imperial court, the *Kikkōden* star festival was celebrated at the palace gardens. *Mushiro* (straw matting) was spread on the ground so that the *kikkōdana* (shelf, or rather, table special for this occasion), on which vegetables and fruits of the season were offered to the stars, could be put out. Coloured threads were displayed around the offerings. *Koto* harps were played, and *kō* incense were burned throughout the night. The later-feudal times saw the event popularised nationwide. It became customary on this evening to decorate branches of a cut bamboo with coloured threads and *tanzaku* (strips of paper) on which poems, proverbs, or one's wish have been written (see § 4.1 below for the colours of the threads and paper slips). The decorated bamboo is fastened to the doorway or under the eaves of houses. It is believed that if you cleanse your *suzuri* (ink stone in which *sumi* ink is prepared) with pure water the evening before, and wrote poems or proverbs on strips of coloured paper to offer to the stars, you will acquire good penmanship skills. Praying to the two stars is said to make your wish come true. Offering coloured threads is believed to make you a good weaver and seamstress. The bamboo and its decorations are to be thrown into a river or the sea after the festival. 7 July on the lunar calendar falls on a season when the whole spectacle of stars can be seen very beautifully; however, since it falls on a rainy season on the current solar calendar, the stars cannot be seen clearly. The *Tanabata* festivals in Sendai (Miyagi) and Hiratsuka (Kanagawa) are well known and they attract many spectators every year.

4.1. Five colours of threads and *tanzaku* strips

The five colours originate from the traditional Chinese philosophy, in which all natural phenomena can

七夕という名前は、神話に出てくる機織の女神に因んでいます。宮中では宮殿の庭で乞巧奠の星祭が行われました。庭に蓆を敷いて乞巧棚を作り、そこに季節の野菜や果物を供えます。色糸が飾られ、箏の演奏があり、終夜香が焚かれました。近世になると一般にも広がり、笹飾りの習慣も生まれました。詩や諺、願い事を書いた短冊や色糸を笹に飾り、家の戸口に縛り付けます。前夜にいつも使っている硯を清めて詩や諺を書き、星に供えると字が上手になるといいます。2つの星に願い事をするとうとも言われます。色糸を供えるのは機織や裁縫が上達すると信じられているからです。七夕飾りは節句が終わると川や海に流す習慣になっています。旧暦の7月7日は星が綺麗に見える時節ですが、新暦では雨の時期と重なり、あまり晴れてくれないものです。仙台や平塚の七夕祭りは有名で、毎年多くの観光客で賑わいます。

五色

糸や短冊の5色は五行説によるものです。全ての自

be classified into the Five Elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. It is said that the universe is regulated by the law of cyclic alternation of the five natural elements. Azure (or green), vermilion, yellow, white, and black (or dark indigo colour) each corresponds to the five elements respectively.

5. Chrysanthemum Festival

Kiku-no-Sekku, or the Chrysanthemum Festival is nowadays not popularly celebrated. At the chrysanthemum festivals held on 9 September across the country, dolls made of fresh chrysanthemum in a wide range of colours used to be displayed. Bunches of chrysanthemum flowers and leaves were shaped into life-size dolls and clothes and then elegantly arranged to portray famous characters in history, folk stories, and TV dramas. The number 9 is considered to be a very lucky number, and as the day of this festival is a day with a double-9, it is also called *Chōyō*, or ‘Double-Lucky’ Festival. It was a customary in olden times to decorate the houses with chrysanthemum flowers to scare away evil spirits in hope of a long life. *Kiku-zake* (sake with floating chrysanthemum petals) was served at the imperial chrysanthemum-viewing banquet.

然現象は木火土金水の5つの要素に分類され、これらの要素が順々に交代する法則によって宇宙が支配されているとされます。緑紅黄白黒がそれぞれの要素に対応しています。

重陽

菊の節句はあまり盛んに祝わなくなりました。9月9日に各地で開かれた菊祭では菊人形が展示されたものです。菊の花や葉であてやかな等身大の人形や衣装を作ります。多くは歴史上の人物や民話やドラマの主人公をかたどったものです。9という数はめでたい数とされ、これが重なるので重陽とも呼ばれる節句です。昔は邪気を払い、長寿を願って、菊の花で家を飾りました。宮中の菊の宴では菊の花弁を浮べた菊酒が供されていました。

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Version 1.0 (30 April 1997)

Version 2.0 (6 May 2001)

Version 3.0 (27 September 2005)

Version 4.0 (20 June 2008)

Version 4.1 (25 June 2008)

Version 4.2 (14 June 2011)

Version 4.3 (20 March 2013)

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