

Hyotan

No.147

May, 2004

Edited by Hyotan Editors Club

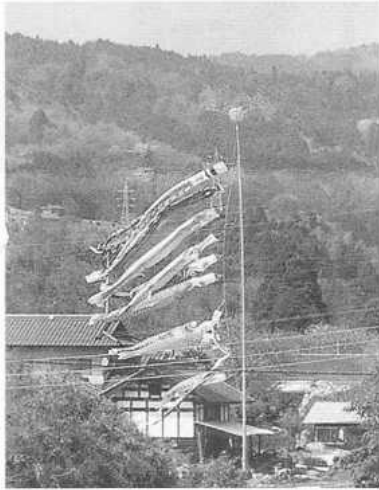
Publisher: Hitachi International Committee

Phone: 0294-22-3111 ex534 Fax: 0294-24-5302

E-mail: kokubun@ray.hidecnet.ne.jp

Tango no Sekku (端午の節句)

The 5th of May is Kodomo-no-hi(こどもの日) /Children's Day, one of several Japanese National Holidays.



This holiday was enacted in 1948 as a celebration of the happiness of children while also expressing gratitude to mothers. Traditionally, we also celebrate Hina-matsuri (ひな祭り) /the Girls' Festival on March 3rd and Tango-no Sekku (端午の節句) /the Boys' Festival on

May 5th respectively. During this season, you will see carp streamers fluttering in the wind and the ornaments such as armors and helmets decorated at the alcove of houses. At this point we would like to introduce you to the meaning and origins of Tango-no Sekku (端午の節句) and how it is celebrated in the present day.

The Meaning of Sekku

"Sekku" originally meant the ends of a season and so it became a holiday to mark the changes of seasons. It can be inferred that there used to be more "Sekku", but the five remaining ones had been established as important ones as far back as is known. They are Jinjitsu (Jan. 7), Joshi (March 3), Tango (May 5), Shichiseki (June 7), and Choyo (Sep. 9). These holiday names originated from the Chinese calendar. May 5 was considered to be the beginning of summer or of the rainy season, so "Tango no Sekku" was observed on that day.

The Origin of Tango no Sekku

The custom of "Sekku" was introduced to Japan along with other elements of Chinese culture during the Nara Period (710-794), and then five Sekku began to be celebrated in the Imperial court. They celebrated by decorating the palace with "calamus" irises as good luck talismans, or by serving out mugwort (a kind of medicinal herbs) to

the court families and to subjects. They also performed a ceremony to eradicate the demons which were thought to bring misfortunes. Riders on the horsebacks shot at unseen demons with arrows. This holiday was enthusiastically observed through out the Nara Period and later the Heian Period (794-1192).

Ornaments of Tango no Sekku

During the Kamakura Period (1192-1333), Samurai family controlled Japan. The Japanese word "shobu" means to honor military power or bravery. And the "calamus" iris decorations that were used as talismans of good luck during the "Tango no Sekku" ceremony are also called "shobu". So "Tango no Sekku" was changed to "Shobu no Sekku" (a day for honoring power and bravery) by the Samurai. Armors and helmets, which were used for protection in battle, began to be displayed as celebratory decorations.

In the Edo Period (1600-1868), the Tokugawa shogun settled May 5th as one of the important Sekku. Whenever a boy baby was born to the shogun, banners and flags were flown at the front entrance of the palace to celebrate the event. This custom soon spread among the general public. People were proud to act in the same way as the shogun and designed "koinobori", carp streamers. But why carp? Because it was traditionally thought that the carp was very vigorous, as related in a well-known Chinese legend. This legend recounted that a carp swam its way up a rapid stream and furthermore jumped up a waterfall and then turning into a dragon ascended into heaven. Perhaps, parents lay the responsibility for their sons' success in life despite adversities on these carp streamers.

Tango no Sekku today

These days, carp streamers are rarely seen in urban areas because of the limited area available for their display. To make up for this, local government bodies or other public organizations put on "Koinobori Festival" or similar related events in cooperation with the tourist industry. They fly hundreds of carp streamers across a river or in an open space, and hold various events relating to Tango no Sekku. Not so far from Hitachi, you can see about a thousand carp streamers flying beside the "Ryujinkyō" bridge in

Suifu Village from April 24th until May 9th.

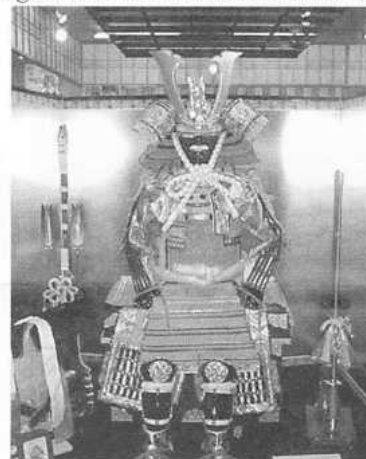


There are outside ornaments Koinobori(鯉のぼり)/carp streamers, Noboribata (のぼり) /rise flag and inside ornaments Yoroi(鎧) /armor, Kabuto(兜) /helmet for the decoration of the Tango-no-Sekku. Grandparents or parents purchase them to celebrate the birth of a newborn baby boy.

What are the dolls like?

Various dolls are lined up in the doll store. Each of them reminds us of a lord of a samurai, brave and beautiful. The one with full items is shown in the picture. The armor and the helmet are on the center, dressed to a doll, the bow and the arrows are on the left hand side of the doll, and the sword is on the right. Some of them even can be worn by a child. On the other hand, the helmet inside a transparent case may be the simplest type of display. The recommended way of showing a doll is to take a doll out of a case or box and decorate, because it is considered good for boys to go

outside. The price of the doll varies from several thousand to fifteen million yen, depending on the size, the number of items, and the name of an artist. In many cases, a family and relatives dine together for a boy's festival. However in Hitachi, many people's family members live in different prefectures, so it is getting difficult relatives get together, and to keep their tradition even though each of them has their way to celebrate. Many young parents live in apartments which have little space for a large gorgeous doll. It is often said they put the doll in the closet and never let it out. In spite of this, parents would prepare dishes to please children, or take their children out for a recreation on the holiday.



The manager of Togetsu a doll shop in Hitachi said: "The doll does not belong to a child individually like a birthday or Xmas present. It is for celebrating the birth of a baby boy and praying for his healthy growth together with his family. This is the meaning of the Tango-no-Sek-ku".

A Spectator's Account of the 4th Hitachi Sakura Road Race

The Road Race was kicked off with an opening ceremony at 8:30 a.m. on April 11th (Sun.) at the Civic Center. There were 6,627 participants 3 to 82 years old in the race, male /female, young /old, even children. They came from all over Japan from Fukuoka to Hokkaido. There were overseas participants from Canada and Kenya. The "Sakura"(cherry blossom) was in full bloom throughout Hitachi, and the weather was also very fine indeed for April.

The course itself ran partially through the main shopping area of Hitachi. Also the competitors were able to enjoy the beautiful cherry tree lined Heiwa Street as they headed on to the coastal route of Kaigan Street. They also enjoyed dressing up in their favorite running costumes. The race was divided up into 31 categories like "Men under 39" or "High School Girls" etc. Whoever finished the whole course got a certificate recording their category and final position within that category. Many people were thus able to have confirmation of their times. One feature of this race is that it takes place late in the marathon road race

season. So it is a last chance for participants to try themselves out, and for this reason is becoming more and more popular every year. The organizers of the event and its supporters were firstly anxious about causing traffic congestion, so cautionary boards saying "Don't use this road during the race" were set up on poles in strategic places along the course of the race a month before the event itself. Thanks to everyone's cooperation, in the end there were no accidents or injuries.



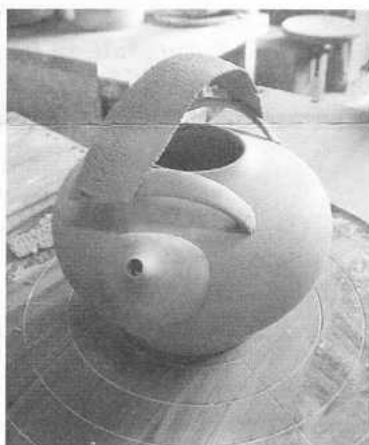
Sarah Power from Montreal, Canada, who ran in the 10 km race, gave her impressions of the race in the following way: "I received such a lot of warm hearted encouragement from the spectators. I also enjoyed the wonderful cheery tree lined "Heiwa Street" part of the course and

the coastal landscape very much. But there were many steep slopes and ascents were particularly hard on me. However, I want to run this course again next year."

»»»» READER'S CORNER »»»»

The Dance of the Teapot

Pottery is about the moment: a still shot, if you will, of thought, feeling, and movement. We see things in various forms and de-



grees of harmony and each plays a particular role in life. Pottery mimics our experiences and visions of what role or roles harmony will play.

Among the major influences for my pottery are music and travel.

For one, clay, in its raw, wet form shares a similar sensuality to that of music. Each clay particle a note suspended in harmony with the next. My earliest education was with music. My father, a professional percussionist taught me the rhythms and harmonies of sound through various genres in music ranging from modern sound experimentation to regimented orchestral movements. From this, I gained an interest in the violin which took me through university. However, I became frustrated with the duration at which sound could be appreciated. That is, sound is appreciated as it is heard. The moment sound ceases to be played it exists in our memory only. Although it may seem selfish, I found this short duration to be frustrating in that I wanted to have a greater period of physical contact with what I was producing.

Through early childhood travels to Europe and the eastern United States, I learned of a different harmony that exists not only auditory but visually. The structure of a cobblestone road, the flying buttresses of a cathedral, a gently woven sand dune all illustrated to me that these structures helped to form an idea of what it is that we seek in harmony. On the eastern coast of Cape Cod Massachusetts, I was fascinated with the ripples in the sand left by water and wind. I found that this later

Reid Flock (From Canada)

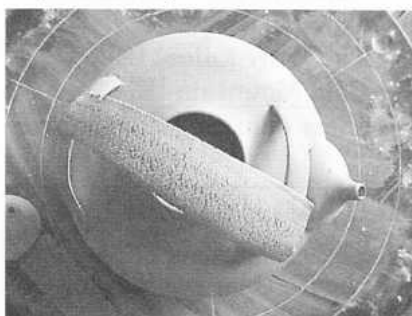
transferred to my work as a young ceramist in Canada.

More recent travels in Japan have yet again shaped my interpretation of harmony. In living within Japan I have spent my time learning about the cultural richness it has to offer. From Kabuki theatre to hiking throughout Tochigi I have gained a new appreciation with regards to balance. This along with my previous experiences has come out in my more recent work.

With Kabuki every movement of the actors is beautifully accented with the striking sounds of the musicians and vocalists. This presents an interesting perspective for the viewer as one is focused upon the highlights of human form, expression, and voice. Along with elaborate costuming and the subtle strength of the shamisen and the voice the total experience is overwhelmingly delicate.

With this I have likened the relationship between the Kabuki actors and the musicians to that of the marriage between a teapot and its handle. While the main body of a teapot may be appreciated entirely on its own, just as one might appreciate the actors alone, the handle encourages the viewer to pickup on what is being seen and perhaps what is to be experienced. The shamisen player will connote a particular harmony or disharmony to convey a particular mood or feeling. This of course pulls the audience into the atmosphere of the play. I have found that the handle of a teapot shares a similar quality to that of the shamisen player. I wish to play with this idea.

Additionally, in Japan things are presented differently to that of North America.



A tea bowl is appreciated as its own entity. A kabuki actor will perform on a near bare stage to express a particular feeling.

This minimal harmony presents an interesting theatre for the foreign eye. We are forced to focus on the single object and appreciate it as it is. Whereas in Canada we are often presented things in such a fashion that it overloads our senses. Galleries have exhibited works of different aesthetic values together to present a collection of things. While in Japan, the exhibition of things is

often presented with the individual object as the primary interest giving the viewer a moment to reflect between each viewing.

I have found that these recent experiences have raised questions about harmony in design. What is it that draws the audience to pick up on what is happening? This is a question that I will always carry with me. I look forward to more.

»»»» INFORMATION »»»»

EVENTS in HITACHI

The Hitachi International Street Performances Festival

More than 30 groups of street performers will entertain you with various kinds of performances!!

When & where: 1) May 8(Sat.) 12:00 at Hitachi (Hitachi Ginza Mall, My Mall and Patio Mall, in front of Hitachi Civic Center. 2) May 9(Sun.) 12:00 at Taga (in front of Taga Station and Yokappe Street)

Contents: Animation, Clowns, Juggling, Acrobats, Magic, Art market, Face painting and special dishes are also available! **Enquiries:** Hitachi Civic Center (Phone 0294-24-7711)

Kirara no Sato Spring Festival

When & where: May 22-23, 10:00 at The Oku-hitachi Kirara no Sato Leisure Center. **Contents:** Lucky dip of rainbow trout and other attractions. Eat and some refreshments are available.

Enquiries: Oku-hitachi Kirara no Sato (Phone 0294-24-2424)

JAPANESE LANGUAGE CLASSES

NAME	LOCATION	DATE & TIME	Fee	Contact
Sakura	Shichokaku Center etc	Saturday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	Ms. Reiko Tsuru Tel (0294) 53-4558 reiko_tip@yahoo.com
	Kyoiku Plaza	Thursday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	
Sakura (Kanji)		Friday 10:00-11:30	¥1,000/semester	
Anzu	Shichokaku Center	Tuesday 19:00-20:30	¥300/month & ¥1,500 (text)	Ms. Kyoko Kamada Tel/Fax (0294) 33-3399
	Kyoiku Plaza	Friday 13:00-16:00	¥300/month & ¥1,500 (text)	

Movies in May

Theater	Day	Titles (Original Titles)
Cinefesta 1&2 Tel:21-7472	-	Mei Tantei Konan [J]
	-	Kill Bill Vol. 2 [E]
	-	The Lord of the Rings [J]
Hitachi Central Tel:21-1386	-7	Kureyon Shin-chan [J]
	8-	Sekai no Chushin de Ai wo Sakebu [J]
Aigakan 1&2 Tel:23-2323	-	Casshern [J]
	8-	School of Rock [E]
	-28	The Haunted Mansion [E]
	29-	Shimozuma Monogatari [J]
Theater Isejin Tel:22-1761	-21	Ocean of Fire (Hidalgo)[E]
	22-	Troy [E]
	22-	The Lady-killers [E]
	-	Cold Mountain [E]

[E]: English with Japanese subtitle [J]: Japanese

Emergency Doctors on Duty

Hitachi uses a system called "TOBAN-I". The doctors in the city take turns standing by for emergency patients from 9:00 to 16:00 on Sundays and national holidays. The system includes surgeons, physicians, pediatricians and dentists.

Be sure to bring your money and health insurance card

Surgeons

May	Hospital Name	Address	Tel
2	Hitachi-kita Clinic	Kawajiri-cho	43-6555
3	Inoue Iin	Taga-cho	33-1253
4	Imura Geka Iin	Omika-cho	52-2191
5	Owada Geka Iin	Okubo-cho	33-2357
9	Kawasaki Ichu/komonka Iin	Sakuragawa-cho	36-0320
16	Koizumi Iin	Wakaba-cho	22-5960
23	Hitachi Kosei Iin	Ayukawa-cho	34-1241
30	Hitachi Seikeigeka Iin	Kashima-cho	21-0063

Physicians, Pediatricians and Dentists

Seven days a week: Hitachi Medical Center

(Address: 5-1-1 Higashitaga-cho Tel: 34-2105

Fax:34-3718 E-mail: webmaster@hitachi-medical.or.jp)

Editor's Note Thank you for reading the Hyotan. If you'd like to inquire about anything, please send us a letter, fax or e-mail. Any subject is welcomed. We are looking forward to receiving your letters

Have you visited HYOTAN Home Page?

<http://www.city.hitachi.ibaraki.jp/upload/english/index.htm>

You can read HYOTAN with color photograph anytime, anywhere in the world!