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Brief Sketches about Japan

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THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN

BRIEF SKETCHES ABOUT

JAPAN

On April 28, 1952, the Treaty of Peace with Japan, signed at San Francisco on September 2, 1951, came into effect. Japan was recognized, once again, as a full and sovereign member in the family of free nations of the world. Since the fateful days in August, 1945, when Japan accepted unconditional surrender and foreign occupation for the first time in its long history, the nation has undergone thorough reforms in the political, economic and social fields under Allied occupation policies. The United States acted as the propelling force behind these reforms. Some of these changes, being very comprehensive and in many ways foreign to the traditional Japanese way of life, are not yet completely understood by the individual.

However, the Japan of today is no longer the Japan of yesterday. Thus, these short glimpses of this island nation serve to introduce Japan anew.

The Land

The Japanese nation consists primarily of the four islands of Hokkaidō, Honshū, Shikoku and Kyūshū, covering an area of 147,690 square miles. Hokkaidō, the northernmost and least populated island, is slightly smaller than the state of Indiana. Here reside the remnants of the Japanese aborigine, the Ainu people, now wards of the state. Honshū, the main island and the location of the six major cities of Tōkyō, Osaka, Kyōto, Nagoya, Yokohama and Kōbe, is about the size of Minnesota. The two southernmost islands, Shikoku and Kyūshū, are about equal to New Jersey and Massachusetts combined.

The Japanese countryside is world famous for its natural beauty and constitutes a major tourist attraction. However, while the magnificent mountain peaks, hot springs, and short but rapid rivers are wonderful to view, they limit considerably the available living space. With only approximately 25% of the total land area being non-mountainous, and only 16% of this area capable of being cultivated, the land must support a population of nearly 85,000,000. Within an area almost equal to the size of California lives a population nearly three-fifths that of the United States. In other words, the population density of Japan is 572 persons per square mile, or in terms of cultivated land, 3,670 persons per square

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mile. This compares with a density of 52.4 in the United States. The decreasing death rate, achieved through the greater application of preventive medicine under the occupation, now gives Japan a rate of natural increase of 17.4 per cent. Japan is clearly no exception to that pressing problem of Asia -- overpopulation.

Generally speaking, the climate of Japan is similar to that of the middle east coast of the United States. Hokkaidō, reaching northward to the 45 degree parallel, is similar to the northern New England area, while in the islands stretching south to Kyushū at the 30 degree parallel, climatic conditions follow those found from the middle Atlantic States to Georgia. The severity of the weather, however, is less because of the tempering influence of the Japan Current which flows northward from the Equator, along offshore Japan and into the north central Pacific. The average temperature of Japan in August, the hottest month, is 82 degrees F., while the coldest period, January, averages 38 degrees F.

The soil is lacking in adequate fertility. However, the deficiency is compensated by abundant rainfall and a lengthy growing season. Combined with intensive farming, which utilizes every available inch of soil, and a never-ending labor, the Japanese farmer has succeeded in producing the greatest maximum of food possible. Still, Japan is capable of supplying only 75% of its food requirements.

#### Government

In the field of political organization, the emphasis has now been redirected. Formerly, government service considered the will of the Emperor before anything else, even the welfare of the people. Today, however, service is for the people and therefore subject to their collective will.

The national government is similar to that of Great Britain in that it is a constitutional monarchy. The Emperor, according to the Constitution of 1946, is to be "the symbol of the State and the unity of the people" and is therefore the titular head of the nation. The Prime Minister, who must be a member of the Diet, the legislative organ, and is chosen from among that body's membership, is the actual head of the government, conducting the affairs of state through his Cabinet. All Ministers of the Cabinet, representing the majority party in the Diet, are appointed by the Prime Minister and must at all times be civilians. The Cabinet, which holds the executive power of the Government, is collectively responsible to the Diet and must resign en masse whenever the Diet passes a resolution of no-confidence.

In the executive branch, there are thirteen Cabinet posts. These are: Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance, Education, Welfare, Agriculture and Forestry, International Trade and Industry, Transportation, Postal Administration, Labor, Construction and the Economic Counsel Board. A Liaison office, composed of the various ministries, has been established to assist in the administration of the Executive Agreement signed under the Mutual Security Treaty between Japan and the United States.

A National Personnel Commission was created under the National Public Service Law of October 21, 1947, giving greater emphasis to the protection and

dignity of the individual in government service. Previously subject to appointment and dismissal in the name of the Emperor, today civil and public employees are unified under one central commission responsible for the whole administrative structure of public service.

The body that corresponds to the Congress of the United States is the Diet, the highest legislative body of the state representing the sovereign will of the people. This is a bi-cameral body composed of the House of Representatives (Shugiin) and the House of Councillors (Sangiin).

The House of Representatives is the Lower House; its 466 members are chosen from 117 election districts into which all of Japan has been divided. The term of office is four years, with a minimum age of 25 years required for candidacy. This body is superior to the House of Councillors in four respects: final adoption of the budget, designation of the Prime Minister, conclusion of treaties, and by a second vote of approval passes laws which the upper house has rejected. The body may be dissolved either by the action of the Prime Minister or following the en masse resignation of the Cabinet after a no-confidence resolution by the Diet. A general election must be held within 40 days following dissolution.

The upper house has 250 members with a term of office of six years; the election of half of the members occurs every three years. Half of the House of Councillors is elected in a manner similar to the lower house from 150 local districts; the remainder are chosen as members-at-large, i.e. they are elected by the voters of the entire country. The age requirement for candidacy to the upper house is 30 years.

The amended Election Law of December 17, 1945, which established the age requirement for voting at 20 years, extended the franchise to women for the first time. From the beginning, women played a large role in national politics, 39 having been elected to the House of Representatives in 1946. In the last election of April, 1953, the electorate returned 9 women to the Lower House.

The laws of Japan are executed by the Courts of Justice as recognized by the Constitution and as organized by the Court Organization Law of April 16, 1947. The Constitution states that "the whole judicial power is vested in a Supreme Court and in such inferior courts as are established by law." The Chief Justice is appointed by the Emperor as designated by the Cabinet, with the remainder being appointed by the Cabinet. These appointments, however, are subject to review by the people at the time of a general election.

Other courts are inferior courts, high courts, district courts, summary courts, and family courts. This last type of court was established to mediate and adjudicate all domestic disputes which are not required by law to be referred to the ordinary courts. This necessity arose from the new emphasis being placed upon the individual's rights within the family, whereas formerly the family took precedence over its members.

In the field of local administration, the country is divided into 46 prefectures, which are similar to the individual states in the United States. These 46 prefectures are composed of the following: one To which is Tokyo-to; one Dō which is Hokkaidō; two Fu which are Kyoto-fu and Osaka-fu; the remaining 42 areas are known as Ken. Each of these areas is a self-governing unit presided over

by a prefectural assembly of 30 or more members elected by popular vote. The cities are governed by individual municipal governments as are the towns and villages on a smaller scale. The entire organization of local administration is based upon the Anglo-American system of complete local autonomy.

Japan follows the party system and at present there are four major political parties. These are the Liberal Party (Jiyūtō); the Progressive Party (Kaishintō); the Right-wing Socialist Party (Shakaitō-Uha) and the Left-wing Socialist Party (Shakaitō-Saha). The Communist Party has undergone severe setbacks and in the present Diet holds only one seat in each House. The Farmer--Labor Party (Nōrō-tō) is the leading minor party.

### Economy

While the Japanese people are still predominantly agricultural (approximately 50 percent of the total population is agrarian), Japan, as a country, is important industrially. Although the industrial plant suffered great damage during the war from air attack as well as deterioration through lack of use and repair, great strides have been taken to revitalize the major industries. The most interesting aspect of industrial Japan is that raw material resources within Japan are so scarce that many people once scoffed at her plans for industrialization. However, a large manpower resource together with the industrious and energetic character of the people quickly overcame the lack of materials at home. Today, these two factors are again working to return Japan to her former high industrial level.

Industrial Japan is probably most famous in the minds of many for her excellent textile products. In the prewar years, Japan was one of the leading exporters of textiles. Cotton, wool and rayon yarns were the items produced in largest quantity in the prewar years, although silk yarn and silk products were most famous in the United States. The post-war years have seen a slow recovery in all these fields of production, although pre-war levels have not yet been reached. The greatest obstacle to full recovery is the loss of foreign markets, where synthetic materials such as nylon have been successfully developed.

In the field of major industrial products, Japan has been and still is the most important producer in the Far Eastern region. Japan is the only iron and steel manufacturing country east of the Suez Canal, with the exception of India. For this reason, Japan, while endowed with very meager raw material resources, is the major buyer of heavy coking coal, superior iron ore and manganese ore from the less industrially advanced regions of Southeast Asia and China. At present, however, iron and steel production is still restricted due to the unsettled political situation in Asia and the resultant fall in demand for finished products as well as in the supply of raw materials.

The machinery industry in Japan does not classify that country among leading producers, but it contributed to placing Japan third in world production of ocean-going ships in the prewar period. The merchant marine plays an extremely vital role in the total economy of Japan. One of the most important sources of foreign currency income in the prewar period was the "invisible income" earned from the world-wide transportation activities of the Japanese merchant fleet. Today, Japanese ships, identified by the word "Maru", are once again crossing the

seas and the industry is gradually increasing production, although the costs of shipbuilding are higher than prior to the war. Japan is also capable of producing textile machinery, automobiles, electrical equipment, and the many other items necessary to an industrial economy.

Agriculture and fishing are the two most important activities carried on by the people. Agricultural production is hampered by many difficulties, especially by the lack of terrain suitable for cultivation. The total acreage of agricultural land in use in 1949 represented only one-seventh of the total land area of Japan; these are located along the seashore and river valleys, the interior areas being mostly mountainous. Agricultural technology is still somewhat behind the Western world, the chief characteristics of Japanese agriculture being intensive cultivation, great use of fertilizers and little use of machinery, and tiny individual farms resulting from endless division of the lands by succeeding generations.

The important agricultural products are rice, wheat, barley, white and sweet potato, soy-beans, tea, tobacco and mulberry leaves, the all-important food for the silk-worm. Tangerines (familarly known as Mandarin oranges) and persimmons, well known in the United States, are the fruits grown in the largest quantity in Japan; but apples, Japanese pears, peaches and strawberries of excellent quality are also produced.

Since Japan has a small land area for agricultural production and is completely surrounded by ocean, fishing is a most important industry, providing a large portion of the food supply. The population of the coastal areas either engage directly in fishing or use this activity as an important subsidiary to other occupations. In view of the fact that fishing is so vital to the food supply, Japan is fortunate that the surrounding waters abound with all kinds of seafood: in the warm coastal waters are found sardine, bonito, mackerel, tuna, whale, etc.; the cold current zones contain herring, salmon, sea trout, cod, sea-otter, fur-seal, etc.

The war drastically curtailed Japan's fishing activities and even in the postwar years, the industry has faced strict limitations in respect to fishing areas. Although these areas have been gradually extended and the total catch increased, the industry as a whole still is faced with shortages of ships and various equipment as well as organizational difficulties.

Like any industrialized island nation, Japan must trade extensively with other states in order to obtain the raw materials which it lacks. Since the war and the consequent loss of its overseas possessions, Japan must develop an even larger trade than before. In 1950, textile fibers were the largest export, followed by metal products; as for imports, raw materials for textile products were the largest item, with foods, oils, and fats in second place in volume. However, Japan still maintains an import surplus, a large part of which originates in the United States and its possessions. The important seaports through which this vital trade passes are Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe and Shimizu.

#### Education

The educational system of Japan was drastically altered by the promulgation of the Fundamental Law of Education in March, 1947. The reorganization of the



content, structure, and administration of the Japanese educational system, from the university to the primary level, was called for in order to permit a liberalization of education and a more equitable distribution of educational benefits.

The emphasis in the direction of teaching has been changed. Previously, the student concentrated upon the acquisition of intellectual knowledge primarily by means of memorization from state-compiled textbooks. Today, the new instruction aims at developing the student's ability and his capacity to learn and to understand. The principle of co-education, especially on the higher school and university level, entrance to which was almost unattainable for women in prewar days, has been firmly introduced in law and practice. The most important new principle is that the educational system shall be administered by the will of the people for the benefit of their children and themselves. Today, it is the local legislators who determine the rules of education and not, as before, an all-powerful central executive.

Under the School Education Law of April, 1947, passed pursuant to the Fundamental Law of Education, the system was reorganised into the traditional twelve-year pattern similar to the system employed in the United States. There are the usual divisions of 6, 3, 3, 4 year periods familiar to all American Students (known as the Roku-San-Sei (6-3 system) in Japanese). These divisions are as follows: primary school 6 years; lower secondary school, 3 years; upper secondary school, 3 years; and the university, 4 years. As of April, 1949, 99.5% of the total number of school-age children were enrolled in the various educational institutions.

During the six years of primary education, the subjects covered are in the fields of Japanese language, social studies, arithmetic, science, music, drawing, manual training, vocational training, athletics, and similar type courses. Upon completion of this level, all students must attend the three years of compulsory education in the lower secondary schools. The courses at this level include a foreign language, usually English, history, geography, Chinese classics, and like American students, Japanese children must study their own history, language and literature. This lower secondary education is designed to give the student a broad general education in line with mental and physical development. (It is to be noted that Japan has one of the highest literacy rates in the world, around 95% at this level of education.)

The upper secondary schools have two purposes: (1) to give a general education of a higher level to those students who wish to continue their education in the universities; and (2) to give a practical education to those students who wish to take up employment immediately after being graduated. For this latter purpose, there are the technological, agricultural, commercial and merchant marine schools.

The university degree may be received after at least four years of study and the successful completion of the prescribed examinations. Prior to the war, a student could then begin his advanced study for a doctor's degree, since in Japan there was no equivalent degree to the intermediate one of master's as in the United States. Under the new Education Law, however, the master's degree has been instituted. There are twelve subjects in which advanced degrees have been awarded up to the present: literature, law, medicine, science, engineering, pharmacology, forestry, agriculture, veterinary science, economics, commercial science, and politics.

The school year commences on April 1st and continues through the year to March 31st. There is a summer vacation in August, a winter vacation of one week during the New Year holiday, and a spring vacation in the last two weeks of March.

With the passage of Law No. 170, on July 15, 1948, the administration of the educational system was decentralized. This law created Education Commissions in each prefecture and in the five major cities with other local public entities being granted the power to establish such bodies. These Commissions are composed of seven members for the prefectures and five for the cities, each person having a four year term. One of the members is appointed by the local assembly, the other being elected by the local populace. The national government, through the Ministry of Education, exercises only a supervisory control over the educational system, whereas formerly the Ministry was all-powerful. During the occupation, Parent-Teacher Associations on the American pattern were introduced on the local level.

### Religion

The conditional guarantee of religious freedom contained in the Meiji Constitution of 1889 has been expanded to an absolute guarantee under the Constitution of 1947. Article 20 states that "Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all."

During the war, religious organizations were under the close control and supervision of the Ministry of Education. In order to exercise complete control, the Government had required all religious bodies to become members of the "Great Japan Wartime Religious Patriotic Association"; under this organization, only three religions were recognized: Shinto, Buddhist, and the Church of Christ in Japan, this latter group being a united body of most of the Christian Churches. Non-members of the Association were placed under the control of the local police and not the Ministry of Education.

Following the termination of the war and the abolition of government control of religion, the Religious League was established on a private basis with the Shinto, Buddhist and Christian Bureaus as cooperating federations. When the Shrine Association of the Shinto faith was organized, it also joined the League. The Religious League has among its primary purposes the promotion of religious culture, peace and international good-will, the stimulation of religious interest, and research and publication of religious literature. Support is received from gifts and grants from the cooperating federations.

Buddhism, originating in India before the beginning of the Christian era, has its modern stronghold in Japan where it has an estimated membership of 43,000,000. It is not possible to define Buddhist philosophy clearly because of the great differences within the faith. These differences are manifested by the existence of six major subdivisions, or "sects": Nara, Tendai, Shingon, Amida, Zen and Nichiren. These "sects" are themselves further subdivided.

The Amida Sect is the most influential Buddhist group in Japan. The strength and appeal of this group comes from the simplicity of its doctrine of

salvation through the power of Buddha Amida, a personification of the principle of infinite benevolence. Zen Buddhism, second largest sect of Japanese Buddhism, has as its central tenet the acquisition of truth through flashes of intuitive knowledge received only by proper meditation and mental discipline.

All these sects face great problems of financial and philosophical re-adjustment since the war. Today, there is a tendency to emphasize preaching and active worship rather than the meditative aspects of prewar Buddhism.

Shinto, to the foreigner, is probably the least understood. The two present-day groups of the Shinto faith are known as Shrine Shinto and Sectarian Shinto. The well-known State Shinto, now banned, might be described as the manifestation of the strong national spirit, actively and vigorously exploited by the government for political purposes.

The Shinto faith is the indigenous religion of Japan, based in ancient times upon nature worship with the belief that all things animate and inanimate have souls and spirits. The word "kami" was applied to all things believed to have had spiritual superiority. Unfortunately, this word has been translated as "god" in the English language, giving rise to a great misinterpretation. To the Japanese Shintoist, "kami" does not imply an object of worship, as does "god" in the Western world; rather it implies an object of reverence to which one attributes superiority.

Present-day Shrine Shinto is the left-over of the religious organization founded in 1868, although shrine worship extends back into early Japanese history. Prior to and during the war, the government took over most of the Shinto shrines, placed them under the authority of the Home Ministry, replaced the priesthood with government-appointed officials as priests, and proceeded to unify Shrine Shinto into a nationalistic body. With the elimination of state support for any religious order, Shrine Shinto, while still formally in existence, has lost much of its previous vigor.

Sectarian Shinto, as the name implies, refers to all the various groups of the Shinto faith apart from the Shrine Association. The major point of difference is that in sect Shinto religious services and elaborate rituals are conducted, these being absent from the Shrine worship. The doctrines are based upon various ancient traditions and contain strong nationalistic tendencies, although not on a reactionary level.

The Protestant Churches of the Christian faith in Japan were forcibly unified by government decree into the Church of Christ in Japan. By 1944, together with the Roman Catholic Church, they had become members of the Japan wartime Patriotic Religions Association. This wartime unity, however, did not continue after surrender. Although the Church of Christ continues to exist as an organization of the Protestant churches in Japan, the Episcopalian Church, the Holiness Church, the Lutheran Church, the Nazarine Church and some Baptist churches have either withdrawn from the Church of Christ or revived themselves after having been suppressed and now exist as completely independent bodies.

However, for the first time, the four major Christian groups in Japan, i.e. the Catholic, Episcopal, and Orthodox Churches (the latter being at one time closely connected with the Russian Church), together with the Church of Christ, are

cooperating on matters of mutual interest as members of the Christian Federation, which represents the Christian faith in the Religious League.

### Clothing

Today more and more Japanese are developing the habit of wearing Western-styled suits and clothes in their everyday activities and even during their leisure hours. This is especially true in the cities and large industrial areas where the impact of Western civilization has been the strongest. There are young women who have seldom worn the traditional dress of Japan, the Kimono. However, Japanese-style clothes are still ideal for the Japanese home and even for the daily chores when one lives outside the confines of city life.

There are seven major items to the Japanese costume: the juban, which is the undergarment worn next to the body; the kimono, the outer garment; the obi, or sash, used to hold the kimono in place; the haori, which is a kind of half-coat worn as an extra outer cover in the fall and spring as well as on ceremonial occasions; the hakama, or ceremonial trousers, which is not generally used for every day life, but only on special occasions such as weddings, funerals; the tabi, or socks; and the geta (wooden clogs) or zori (sandals).

The kimono is probably the best known item of Japanese clothing to the westerner. This is a loose-fitting garment with long-flowing sleeves and is folded over in the front, left side uppermost, so as to be double-breasted. (Please note that it is considered very unlucky to wear the right side uppermost, as this is the way corpses are dressed when being laid out for burial.) It reaches down to the ankles and generally is worn unlined in the summer, lined in the spring and autumn, and thinly padded in the winter. There are many styles and qualities of kimono, the most elaborate ones being made of expensive fabrics such as silk.

The obi is an absolutely necessary item to complete the perfection of the Kimono. The obi for women, which is much more elaborate and ornate than those worn by men, is a long broad stiff sash, about four and one-half yards long and at least twelve inches in width. When worn, it is wound around the waist twice and carefully tied in the back in an elaborate bow.

The haori may perhaps be called the traditional coat of Japan. This, too, is a long-sleeved garment which may be used for informal everyday purposes. Those worn on ceremonial or similar occasions have the wearer's family crest dyed or embroidered on the sleeves and back and are generally made of silk.

The yukata is another loose-fitting garment made of cotton, which is easily washable, worn on summer evenings when one is taking a stroll or relaxing at home on warm nights. The traditional designs for the yukata are dyed into the material in blue which, with the white background, produces a cool effect. The designs are usually simple subjects such as willows, flowers, swallows, waterfalls, etc.

The happi, sometimes called the "happy coat" by foreigners, is a short jacket-like garment worn by workmen to designate their trade and employer. It is an unlined jacket usually of dark blue cotton and with marks or insignia of the particular trade or employer dyed into the material.

Rice, fish, and vegetables are the principal Japanese foodstuffs. These preparations are served in numerous styles of dishes varying in color, shape, and design. To the Japanese, the arrangement and color scheme in serving are of equal importance with the flavor of the food itself in the enjoyment of the meal. The traditional eating utensils are the chopsticks; these may be made of ivory or ebony for the better quality items, or of bamboo or cryptomeria wood for the cheaper style. Cryptomeria is used for its straight grain and clean looking appearance. One of the new fads since the occupation began has been plastic chopsticks! The two pieces are held in one hand and operated like a pair of tweezers.

Of the many Japanese preparations, sukiyaki is probably the most well-liked and well-known to Americans. Its principal ingredient is usually sliced beef placed in a shallow pan together with onions and other vegetables. These are cooked with a sauce made of sweet sake, soy, and sugar, and the entire process is prepared in full view of the diners since the aroma prior to eating adds to the pleasure of the meal.

Another preparation which is very popular among Westerners is tempura. This is made of fish or vegetables dipped in batter and fried in a good vegetable oil. Shrimp prepared in this manner are especially tasteful.

For refreshment the Japanese drink green tea in large quantities, although black tea and coffee are becoming generally popular. Sake, the famous Japanese rice wine, is considered the national beverage.

Tōfu and udon are other preparations of general popularity. Tōfu is a cake made from soya beans which have been softened in water, boiled, mashed, and solidified after straining. Udon is the Japanese equivalent of spaghetti, but made of wheat flour.

The New Year's period of celebration is a very festive time of year in Japan and there are two dishes which are prepared especially for that season: zōni and toso. Zōni is a soup containing mochi, a kind of rice dumpling, vegetables, and occasionally chicken or other meats. Toso is a sweet wine spiced with certain herbs of medicinal value.

#### Customs

Japan has its share of festivals, holidays, and long lived customs like every people. To the Westerner, these activities may seem quaint and colorful, which they are. Yet, these fulfill a proper function for the unity and purpose-iveness of Japanese society.

The children of Japan receive special attention at two festivals held each year. The "Doll Festival for Girls" is celebrated on March 3rd. At this time, the young daughters throughout Japan display their collection of dolls representing various medieval Emperors and Empresses as well as other important

court officials. The daughters exchange visits with each other and share the delicacies placed on the shelves for the dolls.

On May 5th every year, the "Boy's Festival" is held. The toys then displayed represent popular heroes of history and legend, and also included are models of ancient armor and various military insignia. A large cloth or paper streamer in the shape of a carp is hung in front of the house suggesting that the son be as strong as this fish which valiantly struggles upstream through countless waterfalls.

The kami-shibai is a popular amusement for the children who live in the countryside. While the main purpose of the kami-shibai is to sell candy and sweets to the children, the means used to attract the youngsters is the miniature portable theater. The showman gathers a group of children around his little stage and, while showing pictures one by one in a small frame, tells an exciting story.

Until recently, the method of stating one's age in Japan differed greatly from the system used in the United States. On New Year's Day there was a nationwide celebration of everyone's birthday and a person's age was figured from that day. For example, a child was considered one year old at the time of his birth and became two years of age at the New Year regardless of the fact that he may have been born only a few days previously. This has been changed after the war and now the method in Japan is the same as that used in this country except in the countryside where the old custom still persists.

On the seventh day following the birth of a son, a celebration is held at which a name is given the child. In the case of a daughter, the ceremony takes place on the thirty-third day. After 120 days, the ceremony of okui-zome, or the "First-Eating" takes place. On a tiny table are placed a rice-bowl, a tea-cup, chopsticks, etc., and the mother, holding the infant, sits at the table and has the baby go through the form of eating from the rice bowl.

Another important custom is the giving of gifts. While all peoples enjoy gift-giving, to the Japanese it is an art and is bounded with many traditional practices. There are the "Gifts of Soba", for example. When a house is first occupied, the newly arrived family presents a Gift of Soba to the neighbors on each side and to the three neighbors across the street, making a total of five gifts, this being a lucky number. These presents usually consist of buckwheat macaroni. The word "soba", meaning buckwheat macaroni, has the same pronunciation as the word meaning "nearby"; thus friendly intercourse is sought with one's neighbors with the presentation of a "Gift of Soba".

Another example is the giving of fruits, mushrooms, or similar seasonal presents to a friend or neighbor. A maid servant brings the gift on a lacquered tray covered with a fukusa, a silken cloth. Custom and courtesy require that when the tray is handed back a sheet of special writing paper, folded in a particular manner, must be placed on the tray. The omission of this paper would indicate that the recipient did not care to receive further gifts from that particular person. Of such is made the etiquette of Japan.

Washington, D.C.

May 1953

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On the seventh day following the birth of a son, a celebration is held at which a name is given the child. In the case of a daughter, the ceremony takes place on the thirty-third day. After 120 days, the ceremony of omi-gumi, or the "First-Eating," takes place. On a tiny table are placed a rice-bowl, a tea-cup, chopsticks, etc., and the mother, holding the infant, sits at the table and has the baby go through the form of eating from the rice bowl.

Another important custom is the giving of gifts. While all peoples enjoy gift-giving, to the Japanese it is an art and is bounded with many traditional practices. There are the "Gifts of Soba", for example. When a house is first occupied, the newly arrived family presents a gift of Soba to the neighbors on each side and to the three neighbors across the street, making a total of five gifts, this being a lucky number. These presents usually consist of buckwheat macaroni. The word "soba", meaning buckwheat macaroni, has the same pronunciation as the word meaning "neighbory"; thus friendly intercourse is sought with one's neighbors with the presentation of a "Gift of Soba".

Another example is the giving of gifts, mushrooms, or similar seasonal presents to a friend or neighbor. A maid-servant brings the gift on a lacquered tray covered with a fukusa, a saken cloth. Custom and courtesy require that when the tray is handed back a sheet of special writing paper, folded in a particular manner, must be placed on the tray. The omission of this paper would indicate that the recipient did not care to receive further gifts from that particular person. Of such is made the etiquette of Japan.

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