

STONE LANTERN

Gate Pine

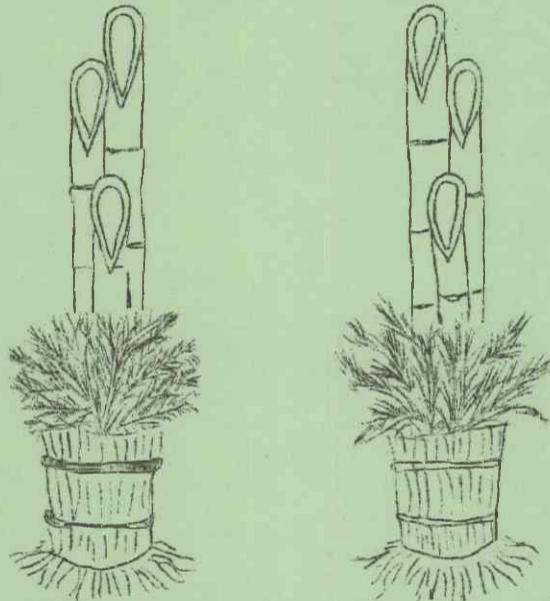
The gate pine or kadomatsu seen outside homes, business houses, restaurants, etc., is the general form of New Year decoration, with the male form of pine at one side and the female at the other.

The more elaborate form is the "Shochikubai," combining the pine - sho, symbolical of strength, endurance, and longevity; bamboo - chiku, virtue and the plum - bai, sincerity and endurance.

However, various types of branches were used for the purpose besides those mentioned, including holly, fir and etc. In ancient times it was believed that these branches placed outside the home provided a perch for the gods to alight upon and thus bring good fortune.

Likewise, the straw rope, shimenawa, with tufts of straw, cut white paper, hung over the doors of between gate posts at the New Year, were said to symbolize the straw rope hung before the cave in which the Sun Goddess had taken refuge to prevent her re-entering after she had been enticed outside.

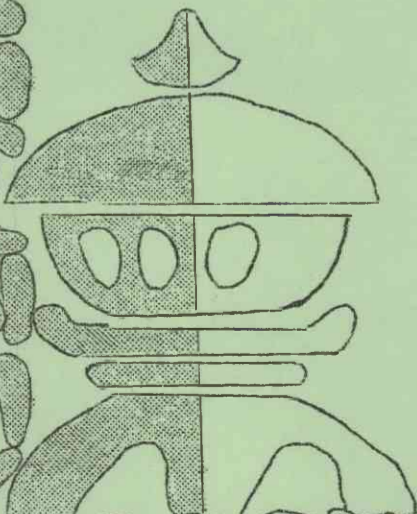
Incidentally, shimenawa are made of green rice-straw, from plants specially grown for the purpose and cut, of course, before



rice ears can form. At one time a farmer could pay his rent on the proceeds of the sale of shimenawa. Today such income is said to barely cover household expenses for the year-end festivities.

Nowadays, with apartment house living, and the complete change which has come over the New Year festivities, most houses are content with a small pine branch, a piece of plaited straw to represent the shimenawa, plaited left-handed, the pure direction, fastened with white paper, emblematic of good fortune or a gift.

Above the door is placed a bitter orange standing for continuity of the family, a piece of seaweed for good fortune or happiness, fastened with a straw decoration.



ORIENTAL ANTIQUES
&
CONTEMPORARY GIFTS

HOURS: 10:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.
7:30 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.

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