

# A New Year's Celebration of the Asian Culture

The New Years' celebration is indeed one of the biggest event of the year for many Asian countries. Let us introduce the ways in which different Asian cultures celebrate this grand opening of a brand new year.

Ai Ogawa, Sophomore

## A Japanese and A Hmong New Year

For the Japanese, the celebration starts with cleaning up. On New Year's Eve, families join their forces to clean their houses. They check every hidden corner possible, making sure that there is no single dust left to be wiped. This is not a normal cleaning day, but a "major" cleaning day of the year where they clean up the dirt left from that year. It is the mind-set of "welcoming" the new year by not leaving the mess from the past year.

When the clock hits twelve, bells located at temples rings throughout the town a number of times, depending on the year. For example, the year 2000 had 2000 times of ringing bells. Anyone can participate in hitting this bell. The bell is normally a gigantic one, which requires a lot of manpower to hit it with a wooden log. This loud, yet calm sound of the bell often makes the townspeople look back to the past year and recollect memories.

The New Year's celebration is a three-day long celebration for the Japanese, in which the first day you celebrate with your family and the rest you celebrate with your relatives. Families eat *osechi*, a special New Years' cooking prepared by the mother usually a few days prior. It takes an enormous amount of preparation to make this *osechi*, in which various kinds of dishes are all nicely packed into a three-story Bento box.

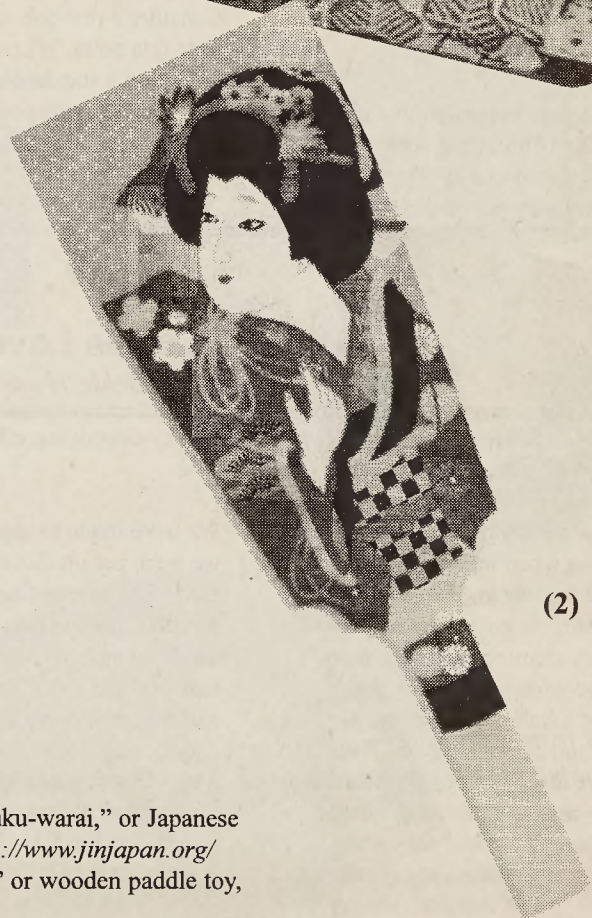
The best part for the kids is to receive New Year's money not only from the parents, but almost all the adults that happen to meet them. This is the highlight of the celebration for the kids.

Visiting the temples to make New Year's wishes is also the traditional side of the celebration. On these visits, people often wear traditional gowns such as Kimonos for the women and Hakamas for the men. It is nice to see many people with these gowns walking on the street, for this is the only occasion people actually wear them. We could say that New year's is one of the rare occasions where the Japanese people follow these step-by-step traditions, which never change year to year.

Some traditional New Year's games include: 1) The "fuku-warai," or Japanese version of pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey, provided by <http://www.jinjapan.org/kidsweb/virtual/fukuwarai/what-is.html>; 2) A "hagoita," or wooden paddle toy, provided by <http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/toys.html>



(1)



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