SHOUGATSU:
The Japanese Observance of the New Year in Lawrence

Senior Honors Thesis

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May 4, 1999

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ABSTRACT

This honors paper explores the activities Japanese as foreign students at the University o Kansas do for the New Year when they are in the United States. I hypothesized that Japanese students would make an effort to observe the New Year in a Japanese fashion while in Lawrence.

This honors paper necessarily includes an ethnographic account of New Year's observances in Japan. This account concentrates on Shougatsu in an urban setting as discussed by Ishii (1997). Shougatsu no longer holds the religious meaning it once did for urban Japanese. Rather, it has become a part of a consumption society as outlined by Clammer (1997) and Moeran (1996). In this way, people do not observe Shougatsu as much as they consume it as a cultural symbol. Its consumption serves two important functions. First, consuming Shougatsu serves as a social mediator. Second, it also helps to shape an individual's identity.

I conducted in depth interviews with Japanese students at the university. In addition t this, I held impromptu conversations with several of my informants throughout the writing o this honors paper. My informants were friends, ac quaintances, and individuals contacted through a snowball sampling method.

My interviews revealed that Japanese students in Lawrence generally do nothing for the New Year. Students pointed to two main reasons for this. First, the resources needed to celebrate the New Year in a Japanese fashion are missing in Lawrence. Second, all students pointed to the fact that there is no 'Shougatsu atmosphere' present in the United States. More importantly, because Japanese students in the United States do not consume Shougatsu, it cannot serve the functions stated above.

The interviews also revealed a clear gender division regarding the types of activities men and women participated in while in Japan. This division also exists in what aspects of the New Year students felt nostalgic over when in the United States. Women clearly were most interested in, and involved with, activities that are more ‘traditional’ and center around the home, while men were more concerned with social interactions with friends and resting. Women made a greater effort to recreate Shougatsu in the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Felix Moos for taking me under his wing for this project.

I wish to thank all those who took time to be interviewed and educate me in the way s of *Shougatsu*. Your help is the core of this project.

I wish to thank Professor Elaine Gerbert for her help and guidance during the writing o this paper.

I would also like to thank Yamamoto Kuniko for her efforts in helping me to contac more Japanese students through the Japanese Student Association.

I would also like to thank my roommate, Greg Thayer, for putting up with having articles, note cards, and other material scattered about the apartment during the writing of this paper.

Finally, I wish to thank all of my friends that gave me support and encouragement throughout the writing of this paper.

DOUMO ARIGATOU GOZAIMASU!!!

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1995 winter break at the University of Kansas, I went to Japan to visit a Japanese friend. Winter break lasted from mid-December through mid-January, and because o this, I had an opportunity to experience the Japanese New Year. During this time, there was a certain feeling or atmosphere of excitement present. There was a definite feeling of s omething important taking place, from the *kadomatsu* in doorways, and *kagami-mochi* in the home, to the people gathering at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, special meals, people visiting friends and relatives, and the audible *joya-no-kane* that filled the Tokyo night with the toll of bells. The holiday was more enthusiastic than the usual American celebration to welcome a New Year.

A search on the Internet brought up a number of web sites talking about the New Year and re-enforced this impression. The Embassy of Japan's Spotlight page on Shougatsu (http://www.embjapan.dk/spotlight/default.htm) calls it the "most important of all annua celebrations". A number of other pages maintained by indiv duals, and a number of elementary school classes, explain the traditional activities of the New Year.

With this in mind, I wanted to find out what Japanese students at the University o Kansas do during the New Year when they are in the United States. I set out with several assumptions. The first was that the Japanese students would have internalized the importance o Shougatsu. That is, they would have strong feelings associated with Shougatsu which would make doing activities related to the holiday important. Second, because of its importance, Japanese students would do activities related to Shougatsu, even if the 'accouterments' were difficult, or impossible, to obtain. Students would make a conscious effort to bring a little piece

of Japanese culture to themselves; something that may have been lacking in their day to day lives in the United States. Third, a student's reasons for coming to the United States would determine the degree to which they participate in Shougatsu activities. Fourth, taking part in activities related to Shougatsu would remind students of their cultural identity.

This led me to hypothesize that Japanese students in the United States would seek ou ways to participate in the activities they did in Japan.

To either prove or di prove this hypothesis, I conducted half-hour to one-hour formal interviews, carried out informal conversations and distributed an e-mail survey to Japanese students at the university. I also collected existing research on Shougatsu, Japanese students studying abroad and related topics. The current honors paper contains four chapters. Chapter 1 is an ethnographic account of Shougatsu based on existing literature. Chapter 2 is a review of some aspects of Japanese culture and society that are relevant to he observance of Shougatsu and the attitudes of the students who observe it. Chapter 3 will detail the results of the interviews I conducted. Chapter 4 will discuss what these results mean and provide a conclusion, as well as a discussion for future rese arch. The appendix includes the outline used in the formal interviews and the e-mail survey. It also includes a Japanese-English glossary of the elements of the New Year discussed in this honors paper.

CHAPTER ONE:

SHOUGATSU

This chapter is an ethnographic presentation of Shougatsu. In order to understand the differences seen in Shougatsu observances in the United States and in Japan, it is important firs to establish a base to make such a comparison. A large body of literature exists (Caillet (1998), Gunsaulus (1928), McFarland (1987), Mochinaga-Brandon (1994), Ono (1962), Tanaka (1990), Yanagita (1970), and more), which discusses the New Year or some aspect of the New Year in more elaborate detail.

WHAT IS SHOUGATSU?

Shougatsu means 'the first onth.' Its observance is one of the Five Sacred Festival (*gosekku*) adopted from China, (Casal 1967: 2). The Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan states that "Shougatsu refers to the first month of the year as well as the period of the New Year's holidays," (1983, 5: 372). It is officially recognized as a *nenchuu-gyouji* (annual events observed on a national scale) for the first three days of the New Year (*Sanganichi*). However, the activities associated with the New Year may last up to two weeks in some locati ons. number of rituals that have their origin in agricultural annual rites mark its observance. For urban dwellers, these rituals no longer hold the meaning they once did.

To conjure a feeling for what this holiday is, Nelson calls upon a merger of "the anticipation of Christmas, the feasting of Thanksgiving, and the benign glow of the first day of the New Year," (1996: 204). He goes on to say that it is a time when people want to rid

themselves of past mistakes and evil influences. Hagen states tha New Year observances are "very meaningful in Japanese culture and set the tone for social relationships throughout the coming year," (1997: 21). Nakamaki tells us that "during this period, government and other public agencies, private companies, factories, banks, stores and all other organizations which serve to sustain the daily functioning of Japan's high level of civilization take time off, and Japan's enormous workforce is temporarily liberated from the workplace," (1984: 88). Mochinaga-Brandon characterizes it as a seasonal rite which is also a major social event, a time for family reunions and sel -introspection, and for a "lively and active, fas -moving, fun-filled, bursting-with-energy festival," (1996: 42). Nelson points out of the younger generations that "…while many people find the holiday noteworthy only because of a few days' school holiday, the monetary gifts they receive from relatives, and a license to eat as man *omochi* rice cakes as they want, they are largely bored by the go-slow pace of the actual holiday beginning on the first, and the constant drone of cultural and singing shows on television for the adult viewing audience," (1996: 205). Ishii points out that though the means of observance may be differen for different people, the fact remains that the New Year remains one of the most importan annual holidays celebrated by a *majority* of the Japanese (1997). These images are not in any way contradictory as long as one views Japanese society as complex and diverse rather than a homogeneous collective.

Two observances of Shougatsu exist in Japan. This is due to the existence of multiple calendar systems[1]. The first observance is *Oo*shougatsu (literally the 'big New Year'). It is officially observed on January 1 through January 3 o the Gregorian Calendar. Activities sometimes last from one to two weeks depending on location. At this time businesses and government offices close. Traditionally, Ooshougatsu activities centered on welcoming the

toshigami[2]. Most Japanese observe Shougatsu in some form at this time. Urban dwellers mos often observe this form

The second i *Ko*shougatsu (literally the 'little New Year'). Japanese observe it on the first full moon of the first month of the year. This places the date of its observance around January 15 on the Gregorian Calendar. This is primarily observed in rural, and/or agricultural communities. Nevertheless, even in these locations, Koshougatsu seems to be taking on secondary importance compared with its 'bigger' counter-part (Enbutsu 1994: 88).

This paper will discuss only Ooshougatsu in an urban setting because none of m informants participated in Koshougatsu activities. Most of my informants were raised in urban areas. While their practices were far different from Koshougatsu observances, they displayed many of the characteristics of urban practices that Ishii (1994) discusses.

WHAT DO PEOPLE DO FOR SHOUGATSU?

There are a number of sources, both in academic and non-academic circles, which describe what the Japanese do during Shougatsu. The activities in which people participate var not only from region to region, but from individual to individual

Most activities have their origins in Buddhist and Shinto practice and are associated with rites of transition and agricultural rites. Social activities fill the days leading up to the end of the year. "Businessmen … rush to settle accounts and deliver good-will gifts to important clients, while housewives, innkeepers, and restaurant chefs … converge on street markets and stores for the … products used in the staggering array of New Year's dishes they will create," (Nelson 1996: 205). People make an effort to finish all their business before the beginning of the year, in

order to make a clean start. All of these activities are a means of starting the New Year fresh, socially, economically and psychologically.

Bounenkai are held at work and social institutions. These 'forgetting the year parties' are a time when people forget or forgive problems and tensions from the past year in the hopes of starting anew for the coming year. However, in much the same way New Year's resolutions begin to crumble as time moves on in the United States so too does forgetting what went before. This belief may have its origins in agrarian folk belie fs and is very much in the spirit of exorcising 'demons' before the start of the New Year, (Nelson 1996: 204-205).

Christmas, and the gatherings and gift giving associated with Christmas, has become a part of the year-end activities in Japan. In much the same way the religious content of Christmas has been replaced with secular content (centering on consumption) for Americans, the Japanese Christmas is observed without its religious meaning for most Japanese. Christmas is a secular holiday, the focus of which is on gift giving. The growing popularity of Christmas in the year - end activities is due to two elements. First, as Creighton (1992) points out, the department stores in Japan market and package Christmas for its consumer value, and help to create the desire to observe the holiday. Second, the secular activities involved with Christmas match well wit those observed for Shougatsu, and so the Japanese have adopted Christmas with relative ease.

The giving of *Oseibo*, year end gifts offered to assist the transition into the New Year, is another activity that takes place in the days just before the New Year. They are given as a token of gratitude to people who have obliged the giver in some way.

Nengajou are New Year's greeting cards (typically post cards) sent to friends, relatives, and acquaintances (both business and personal). They are similar to American Christmas cards. The December 30, 1998 issue of Asahi Newspaper on-line English edition at asahi.com, reported

that 4.24 billion nengajou were sold in 1998. They have been a long-standing part of Japanese New Year's observance. People can purchase nengajou at any store that sells greeting cards. People also purchase them at the post office. The cards purchased at the post office are numbered for a special lottery held every New Year. If they are not already decorated (and the post office nengajou are not), the sender can do so. Typical images include the family and the sign of the coming year (1999 is the year of the rabbit). In the Edo Perio d, this sort of decoration grew quite elaborate, rising to an art form. This is known as *surimono*, (see Gunsaulus 1923). The post office holds nengajou until January 1, and delivers the *en masse*.

Both oseibo and nengajou are means of refreshing social c ontacts. Not only are they used in personal relationships (friends, and relatives) but people use them in professional relationships as well (business contacts, employers and employees, clientele, *sensei*, and the like). Of course, the social function of oseibo or nengajou depends on the relationship the sender holds with the receiver. If an individual sends these items to a friend or acquaintance, they function to express that friendship. When an individual sends these items to people with whom they share a *tsukiai*[3] relationship, the function is different. In this case, sending nengajou and oseibo is either done out of a sense of *giri* (obligation), or to benefit the sender in some way by placing them in favor with the receiver.

Originally an act of pur fying the home for the arrival of the toshigami, *oosouji* (year-end cleaning) still remains an activity carried out in the days before the end of the year. Usually the wife in a household carries out a complete cleaning in much the same vein as spring clea ning in the United States. Shrines and temples sell special straw brooms for this job, but a person is much more likely to use the vacuum cleaner. Traditionally, this cleaning was the precursor for displaying *okazari* in the home.

Okazari are the decorations of the New Year. Traditionally, they were devices used to welcome and entertain the toshigami. Today, Japanese are most likely to display these decorations out of custom and for their aesthetic value in contributing to the overall feeling of the New Year.

Supermarkets, department stores, shrines, temples and stalls set up for the New Year a special markets all sells okazari. Such decorations are not only displayed in homes, but also in businesses and shops, on cars, and just about anywhere else. They include *kagami-mochi*[4], *kadomatsu*[5], and *shimenaw* [6], all associated with preparing for the arrival, and the entertaining, of the toshigami. They are “cheerful, often humorous folk-toys and good luck objects … their lively images – seven lucky gods[7], treasure ships, 12 zodiac animals, the good -luck ca [8], money-collecting rakes, *Daruma* dolls[9] and gold coins – assure the presence of good fortune,” (Mochinaga-Brandon 1994: 38).

Generally, women carry out the preparation of ‘special’ foods before the New Year. *O*m*ochi* (a chewy rice ‘paste’) is made by pounding cooked rice into a paste like substance. This process is *mochi-tsuki*. Traditionally, the family or neighborhood cooperates in the making o omochi. Today people are more likely to buy it at the supermarket. It is used in foods and as a part of kagami-mochi okazari.

The preparation of *Osechi-ryouri* (or simply *osechi*, a word that implies a festive meal in honor of a deity, (Casal 1967: 26)) takes place before the New Year arrives. However, it can also be bought, pre -made, at supermarkets, an option taken by more and more urban dwellers. The consumption of osechi-ryouri is on the decline. At least one author (Ueda 1994: 33) points out that because stores are remaining open during the Shougatsu holiday, some people have

switched to eating regular meals, or are going out. The nuclearization of families has also led to a decrease in the preparation of osech -ryouri in favor of a less elaborate meal.

Osechi is meant to keep for several days. People eat it during Sanganichi. Served i *juubako* (a multi-tiered lacquer box), it includes a variety of foods each associated with a specia meaning[10]. Though *osechi* can differ by region, the ingredients are essentially fixed and include some grilled, broiled and vinegared dishes.

Oomisoka (New Year's Eve) is the deadline for wiping the slate clean. At this time,

> the commemoration of the passing of the old year interweaves social, secular, and religious customs. It is an evening when family groups eat a special me al together and may visit a local shrine to give thanks for the good events of the past year, (Reader 1994: 119).

On Oomisoka, people ea *Toshi-koshi soba* (literally 'year crossing noodles'). These are buckwheat noodles. They symbolize long life and goo d fortune because of their long shape.

At 8:00 PM, NHK's *Kouhaku Uta Gassen* begins. Literally, *Red and White Song Battle*, this is a live stage show that pits singers in a competition between the Red Team (the girls) and the White Team (the guys). A pane composed of 11 popular personalities decides the winning team. This program has remained on the air for nearly 50 years, and has become a tradition in itself, viewed by about 50% of Japan. The general feeling of this show is one of excitement, entertainment, and above all fun. Performances are punctuated with tongue and cheek humor and short skits. Current popular personalities (usually the singers themselves) perform these. Lavish costumes and dazzling stage effects that surround the performers add o the excitement o the show.

The song battle ends at about 11:45 PM, just in time for people to make their way to a nearby temple to bid farewell to the old year and welcome the new year at a local shrine. For

those who stay home, NHK broadcast *Yuku Toshi, Kuru Toshi*. This show broadcasts live shots of temples and shrines (and in the 1998 show, also a Catholic Church), from all over Japan as they welcome the New Year.

Buddhist rituals mark the end of the year and set the signal for the crowds to visit Shinto Shrines. One such Buddhist ritual is the *joya-no-kane*. In this ritual, monks begin to toll the temple bell one hundred and eight times at the strike of midnight. Each toll represents one of the one hundred and eight sins of humanity

After visiting a Buddhist temple to say good-bye to the old year, many go to Shinto shrines to welcome the coming year. This year's-first shrine visit is called *hatsumode*. It was once, and for some people still is, a time to wear *kimono*. At shrines and more recently at temples as well, visitors can have their fortunes told for the coming year through a divination oracle (*omikuji*). *Engi-mono* (good luck charms) can also be purchased, and include such things as *hamaya* (evil destroying arrows), *daruma* dolls, and more. However, people rarely take these items seriously. They are purchased for fun.

Venders set up stalls at temples and shrines (either nearby or inside the compound). People can buy various foods and snacks at these stalls. Temples and shrines provide a s piced *sake* called *otoso* either free or for a modest charge.

Shrines hol *kagura* (sacred dances) at this time as well. With its origins in Japan's 'Middle Ages,' kagura depict events in Shinto mythology, (see Ono 1991). Typical of the New Year kagura is the Lion Dance. Not only shrines perform these dances. Department stores w hire performers to entertain customers during the huge sales these stores hold after Sanganichi.

Aside from hatsmode, there are many 'firsts', or *hatsu*'s, that take place dur ng Shougatsu. These include *hatsuyume* (first dream), *hatsuhinode* (viewing the first sunrise), *kakizome* (first calligraphy), *and hatsugama* (first tea ceremony). What is important in these observances is that they are the first of their kind for the New Year, and as such help to set the stage for the rest of the year.

New Year's day is called *Gantan*. The first three days of the New Year are known collectively as Sanganichi. As mentioned before, businesses, shops, and government offices close at this time. For these three days, families ea *osechi-ryouri* and *ozouni* (a soup with omochi in it) using specially prepared chopsticks (usually bought at a store), relax, greet people for the New Year, and go to temples and shrines. The sure quantity of food insures that people will tire of eating osech -ryouri by the end of Shougatsu in much the same way Americans tire of turkey in the days after Thanksgiving. People sometimes eat another meal called *nanakusa*[11] (literally seven grasses) on the seventh of the mont .

The tradition of greeting people was not a general custom before the Meiji Period (Yanagita 1970: 45). However, it is now a fixed tradition. Greetings are marked with the phrase *akemashite omedetou gozaimasu* (Happy New Year!!!). The first two days are usually reserved for visiting relatives and friends. People may reserve the third day for visiting business contacts, acquaintances and the like. Of course, this will vary from person to person.

Children often receive *otoshidama* (New Year monetary gifts given to children and subordinates) from their relatives. This gift has its origins as a tithe to the *kami*, (Casal 1967: 21). Children typically receive large amounts of money from these gifts, at times collecting the equivalent of a few hundred U.S. dollars. Once the children become adults, however, the gifts

are no longer given, and it is their turn to begin giving money to the next generation of children (a fact often lamented).

Some people play traditional games during Shougatsu. These include, among others, *tako-age* (kite flying), *koma-mawashi* (literally "top spinning"), *hanetsuki* (making a paper doll), *hyakunin-isshu* (a card game similar to go-fish), and *hagoita* (battledore).

Traditionally, people burn the previous year's Engi -mono, the equipment used in traditional games and okazari at temples and shrines. This is a religious custom of purification. The function of these items is to assure that the coming year will be a good one. After they have served this function, they are polluted and must be discarded according to ritual practices. This usually means burning. Today, however, most people do not have the time to do this, or they simply forget.

Other activities include going to Meiji Shrine, and seeing the Emperor during one of his appearances at the palace. Of course, what people do will depend on personal taste, and what is available for entertainment. With many businesses closed for the holiday, there really is no much else to do in an urban center except temple and shrine visits, visit ing friends and relatives, relaxing, and eating and drinking at home. Accordingly, all of these now make up the core o Shougatsu activities.

Once Sanganichi has ended, stores generally have sales that attract many shoppers. These sales are another attraction of the New Year for the urban dweller, and give young people a chance to spend their otoshidama. The shopping at New Year's has become as much a part o Shougatsu as the shopping after Thanksgiving in the United States.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Religious beliefs have shifted and continue to shift in Japan. These changes involve shifts in social meaning, and actual manner in observance. It is clear that if Shougatsu was once "but a crop festival; the beginning of a new life," (Casal 1967: 8), its current urban form is completely different, the result of a continuing process of change. This does not mean, however, that the holiday holds no meaning or function for its observers.

In his summary of studies on annual event observances, Ishii (1997) points out that there remains a high rate of participation in year-end and New Year activities, *Obon*, and *Setsubon*. His own study shows that 93.8% of university students participate in New Year activities, while 82.2% participate in Christmas (N=225). When asked to list the three most important events o the year, an "overwhelming majority" of the same sample population listed New Years and Christmas, along with other holidays that center on spending time with friends, as most important.

Ishii also cites a survey by Jiji Tsuushinsha (December 1989, N=1468) which asked people ages 20 and older what significance they gave to Shougatsu observances. Relaxation a home was the top response (41.0%). Meeting with friends and relatives, as well as greeting guests and cleaning ranked the next highest (19.8% and 15.5% respectively). The remaining responses include some form of vacation or travel.

Turning to food, Ishii points to a Mainichi Shimbun survey in December of 1989 (N=2,235) in which 74% of those surveyed responded that they either frequently or occasionally prepare foods associated with traditional holidays. The top reasons for not preparing such food

was too much trouble to make (30%); cheaper to buy already prepared (29%); family doesn't ea them (29%).

In footnote (26), Ishii also calls attention to the fact that a number of women showed an active concern for the observance of annual events. This is due to a woman's domestic gender role as discussed in Chapter 2.

Ishii provides three conclusions. The first is that many of those holidays described in folklore studies are missing from urban observances. Second, though some of the annual events observed today by young people are traditional, the manner in which they are observed differs from traditional accounts. He suggests that the people born since the 60's must have little exposure and experience in traditional observances. Instead, the emphasis of these observances is on spending time with friends and family. Finally, he observes that a substantial nu mber of new annual events are 'Western' imports.

The manner in which urbanites observe Shougatsu and the meanings attached to that observance has changed. Images displayed by the mass media and the expectations of friends and family drive people to think and feel in a Shougatsu 'mind set', (Nakamaki 1984: 88). This drives them to participate in activities associated with the New Year. This participation creates a Shougatsu atmosphere, and shapes an individual's behavior and actions.

The transformation i manner and meaning of Shougatsu raises many questions. What has the New Year become? Why do people still observe the New Year? Is there a common social mechanism in place that still motivates people to observe the New Year outside of its original function? To answer these questions, we must examine certain aspects of Japanese society.

NOTES

1 Three calendars have existed in Japan. These are an agrarian calendar, a lunar -solar calendar adopted from the Chinese (Old Civil Calendar), and the Gregorian solar calendar (Caillet 1998: 15). The existence of these three systems has had an effect on the annual cycle o festivals and celebrations, and an impact on ritual events.

The agrarian calendar, as summarized by Webb (1983: 230) was a solar calendar in use by farmers to plan the cycle of planting and harvest. It measured the period of a year between the occurrence of successive winter solstices. Japanese at this time did not consider the winter as the beginning of the year, but rather the middle of it (KEJ 1983: vol. 2; 230).

Empress Suiko adopted the Old Civil Calendar from Tang China in 604 CE. Used primarily b the court, it existed alongside the agrarian calendar. This calendar divided the year into four seasons (spring, summer, winter, autumn). The equinoxes and solstices were used to mark the middle of each season (as opposed to the beginning of each season as in Europe). The New Year fell on the second new moon after the Winter Solstice, which places it some time in late Januar to mid-February on the Gregorian calendar. It marked the new moon as the first of each month and the full moon as the fifteenth of each month. It used elements from the agrarian calendar. When needed, an intercalary month was added.

The Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1873, during the Meiji Restoration. It is used today in Japan. The adoption of this third calendar had the effect of pushing the official New Year back approximately one month, to January 1. It is at this time that the governmen officially observes the New Year as a national holiday. It is at this time that most Japanese observe the New Year. However, remnants of the old calendar system persist, especially in ritua events, (Caillet 1998).

The existence of these calendars has made it possible to ob serve the New Year twice in the same month. Such a distinction did not take root until the middle of the Edo period, however, when the practices of the court began to diffuse throughout the Japan, (Enbutsu 1994: 85). The introduction of the Gregorian calendar confused things further.

2 Numerous sources refer to the changing meaning o *toshigami*. A modern transliteration would be *year-deity*

(*toshi* = year, *kami* = deity (with some qualifications)). However, an older meaning of the word *toshi* is rice, thus giving the transliteration *rice-deity*. Worship in the form of offerings to this *kami* insured a good crop, as well as protection against any misfortune. As the shift in meaning of *toshi* from rice to year took place, it seems that the agricultural aspec of the *toshigami* was lost, while the idea of protection against misfortune has remained.

3 Atsumi (1980) draws a distinction between *tsukiai*, friendships and kin-relationships. *Tsukiai* refers to non-kin relationships which may or may not be enjoyed by hose involved, and are cultivated and maintained out of a sense o *giri* (obligation), of social necessity, or self interest, (Atsumi 1980: 69). Nearly all work-related relationships fall into this category. *Tsukiai* relationships never overlap with friendships. People seek and maintain friendships for pleasure

and because they enjoy the other person. Kin-relationships are distinct from these; they do, however, share many of the same characteristics, and may resemble friendships, (Atsumi 1980: 70). Genealogical distance does not regulate these relations but socio-economic characteristics, an element of stratification, do.

4 *Kagami-mochi* literally means mirror-mochi and derives its name from its round shape. It is descended from an Imperial court ritua offering called *hagatame* (literally "teeth strengthening") which asked the *kami* for a long life and good health. Good, strong teeth implied such a state, (Mochinaga-Brandon 1994: 27). Casal also reports that at one time the eating of mochi was thought t add one year to the consumer's life, (Casal 1967: 14). It is comprised of two flattened balls of mochi, a smaller atop a larger. People often use ferns, seaweed, a *daidai* (type of orange), small lobster and dried persimmons, and place the entire okazar on a raised "tray" called a *sambou*. Traditionally, this was then displayed in the family *tokonoma* (alcove). After the New Year is over, people consume the mochi of kaga -mochi in a food called *kagami-biraki*. Casal traces this to *samurai* practices, (1967: 15).

5 The display of *kadomatsu* was so prevalent that January 1 through January 7 is known collectively as *matsu no uchi* (literally "within the pine"). Though it has gone through many changes over the years, the kadomatsu's key element is the *sakaki* (a type of pine). The pine has a long-standing importance in New Year activities. In general Shinto belief, Kami enter this world through the pine, and so the sakaki is included in many rituals.

The kadomatsu in its present form does not go back further than the 17th century, (Casal 1967: 7), and was not universal until the modern era, (Mochinaga-Brandon 1994: 65). The typical kadomatsu consists of three stalks of fresh bamboo, cut at sharp angles inserted in a base of pine branches. The bamboo wards off demons, while the pine welcomes the toshigami

6 *Shimenaw* is a sacred straw rope, from which hangs paper cut in the symbolic shape o lightening. They are used in general Shinto practices to mark off a sacred place where ka dwell.

7 The *Shichifukujin* (Seven Lucky Gods of Good Fortune) travel in their *takarabune* (treasure boat). They are a symbol of fortune and prosperity. They are: *Ebisu* (god of prosperity in business); *Daikokuten* (god of prosperity, and associated with the kitchen); *Bishmonten* (god of prosperity; protector of the righteous); *Benzaiten* (*Benten*) is the only female (goddess of literature, the arts and sciences, longevity, prosperity, virtue, and happiness); *Fukurokuju* (god of wisdom, happiness, longevity, and prosperity); *Jurojin* (god of happiness, prosperity, and longevity); *Hotei* (god of prosperity and happiness).

8 *Maneki-neko* is the good-luck cat. She is usually portrayed as a white cat with one paw lifted in the air to beckon good fortune. One most often sees her standing outside of *pachinko* parlors, wishing luck for the players who enter. She can be bought in all different sizes.

9 *Daruma* is the Japanese translation of the nam *Bodhidharma*. This man was the founder of *Zen* Buddhism. In the accounts of his life, Daruma spent 9 years in meditation. His arms and legs became atrophied from disuse during this time. He is therefore a symbol of persistence. The *Daruma*-tumbler doll has its origins as a folk toy. Today, it is mainly a symbol of luck, and a granter of wishes. The dolls are bought with the eyes left blank. The purchaser paints one of the eyes and makes a wish for the coming year. If the wish comes true, the person paints the other eye. At the end of the year, the doll is burned (along with other good luck it ems from the past year), and another one is purchased. If the wish was granted, the purchaser buys a larger *Daruma*. For a complete look a *Daruma,* see McFarland (1987).

10 The following is a list of some of the common ingredients in osechi along with t eir traditional meanings.

Datemaki	A rolled omelet that is associated with learning.
Kamaboko	Fish paste loaf that represents sunrise.
Kazunoko	Hearing Roe that represents the importance of children.
Kobumaki	Rolled seaweed that represents happiness.
Kurikinton	A sweet confection meaning victory and fortune.
Kuromame	Black sweet beans which represent earnest work.
Namasu	Vinegared raw meat representing celebration.
Nimono	Various simmered vegetables each with their own meanings.
Tai	Sea bream which suggests auspiciousness.
Tazukuri	Sardines that represent a good harvest.

11 The herbs of *Nanakusa* are water-drop wart, shepherd's purse, radish, celery, deadnettle, turnip, and rock-cress.

CHAPTER TWO:

JAPANESE SOCIETY AND JAPANESE STUDENTS

This chapter examines Japanese society and presents previous research of Japanese students studying abroad.

CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE SOCIETY

In order to understand the results of my interviews, and the material covered in Chapter 1, it is important to set an understanding of certain characteristics of Japanese society. Such characteristics may not hold true for all individuals, but do represent a trend in Japan. More importantly, what follows is not meant to add to the volumes written on the uniquely unique characteristics of Japan. In fact, most of what follows are also present in any industrialized nation.

FOOD

Food habits (what people eat, and how they eat it) stay relatively ingrained and resistan to change, (de Garine 1972: 147) and preserve their ethnic features the longest, (Arutiunov 1986: 112). The persistence of eating osech -ryouri and toshi-koshi soba during Shougatsu demonstrates this. Though a person is just as likely to buy these foods at a department store as t make them at home, their basic elements remain constant. More importantly, the foods eaten on Shougatsu have become a consistent and integral part of the observance, in much the same way turkey is indispensable to Thanksgiving.

Food consumption not only shapes the individual self but is also an expression of it. Food habits closely link an individual to their society, even when away from it, (de Garine 1972: 153). The activities surrounding the consumption of food is generally centered on the family where it "concerns physica and emotional needs, is a site of domestic conflict and [is] a key aspect of family formation," (Warde 1997: 180).

Food consumption is also a source of psychological comfort for those individuals who are in a foreign culture. As Fieldhouse writes "immigrants use familiar foods as a means o feeling secure and not losing their identity in a foreign land," (1986: 207). Given this, eating traditional food should be one aspect of Shougatsu that Japanese students in the United States are likely to want to do. It is also makes eating 'special foods' an activity students are most likely to miss.

Rice is a staple food in Japan, and makes up the essential ingredient of any 'proper meal' in East Asia, (Ashkenazi 1987: 341). As Mitsukuni (1989: 17) writes, however, rice was considered a luxury until recently. Rice became a primary offering to kami in many Shinto rituals because of its worth. The ritual offering of food to the gods to assure a good harvest or to show reverence is a common practice in rural agricu tural communities that lie outside the rea of urban societies, (de Garine 1972: 151-152). Remember that Shougatsu itself was once an agricultural festival to welcome the toshigami. The kaga -mochi is one of the main element offered to this kami. Sake is another important Shinto offering, and that too is made from rice.

URBANIZATION

Japanese society has gone through, and continues to go through, the process of urbanization. This has turned Japan into an urban society, (Fukutake 1982: 104). The 'urban

life' is characterized by "…those aspects of ordinary life – relations with family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors; the effects of class divisions on consumption patterns; the role of educational institutions in the lives of the young – that give form and meaning to the lives of city dwellers," (Bestor 1989: 1).

Urban centers are nothing new in Japan. They have been present since the fifteenth century in the form of the capital cities of Nara, Kyoto, Kamakura and Edo (modern Tokyo). The rise of castle towns during the Muromachi Period (1336-1573) laid the groundwork for the emergence of an urban culture. An increase in trade took place in the Edo Period (1600 -1867). This gave rise to a politically weak, but economically powerful chonin class that was responsible for a flourishing urban culture at that time.

The Meiji (1868-1911), Taisho (1912-1925), and Showa (1926-1989) Periods saw the development of industrialized urban life. In the time since the Second World War, enormous changes have taken place. These range from a cultural re-orientation in the immediate post war years, to the accelerated economic growth of the 60s, middle-class affluence of the 80s, and the economic down turn of the 90s.

Through all of this, several changes in the social structure of urban dwellers have taken place. One such change is the tendency towards nuclearization of families, (Fukutake 1982: 125). This has had an effect on family infrastructure. It has also effected consumption patterns.

Changes in ritual have also occurred. Since the Edo Period, the ideological content and social functions of rituals and festivals have altered while their observance remains, (Arutiunov 1986: 112). These rituals and festivals are becoming more and more secular. Moreover, there has been a gradual abandonment of local and regional variations in cultural practices to be replaced with a nationwide 'standard' that rose both out of the process of industrialization and

pre-existing cultural elements, (Arutiunov 1986: 113). This process is similar to the process tha occurred in 'Western' societies.

This process is at work on Shougatsu. The rise of urban culture diminished the importance of the ritual offerings made to the toshigami. Urbanites had concerns other than the rice harvest. This means that while the observance remained in the urban setting, its meaning and manner of observance changed.

CONSUMPTION

The establishment of an urban culture set the groundwork for the rise of a consumption society. Today, Japan has the third largest national consumer market in the world, (Moeran 1996: 17-18). For this honors paper, I will use a theory of consumption that is well laid out in Clammer (1997) tempered by Moeran (1996). Though Clammer equates consumption practices in Japan to unique Japanese characteristics, such a connection is not justified. Moeran clearly demonstrates this in his discussion on a Japanese advertising agency. Outside of this shortcoming, much of Clammer's discussion is very useful

For Clammer, consumption is

> an essential part of a constellation which links interest in the body, the nature of selfhood and the emergence of late (or post) modern society to older concerns with materia culture, the organization of the everyday life world, the presentation of the self and the micro-economics of households, whether comprised of families or of individuals, (Clammer 1997: 1).

Consumption is not just an economic behavior. Consumption must be "placed in the context of [a] … social, ritual, religious, histori al and even deep psychological process," (Clammer 1997: 8). It has a deep link with popular culture at every level of society, (Clammer 1997: 44). It is an active process in which social categories are constantly being shaped and reshaped, (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 68).

Consumption serves many functions, but two have a direct impact on this honors paper. First, consumption is a means of identity formation. Consumption practices are a mixture of the shifting desires and needs of consumers, innovations of the market, and the market's relation t larger social forces, (Clammer 1997: 11). Consumers possess individual needs and desires, and the market caters to these. At the same time, the market creates new desires and needs. At tha point, the consumer makes a conscious decision regarding what to consume. This decision is based on individual taste that is shaped through a person's social interactions and through the market. Therefore, an individual uses consumption to say something about themselves, (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 68, Clammer 1997: 61), thus establishing their identity.

The market is fragmented into specific niches that cater to an individual's needs, (Moeran 1996: 103). Consumption within these niches provides a common activity around which individuals with similar tastes can gather. The time spent consuming is also used for socializing, and to re-enforce group identity based on common consumption practices. This makes consumption a communal activity and acts as a group formation devi ce. This is second function of consumption that is important for this honors paper.

In addition to this, Bestor writes

> the media and mass marketing organizations such as department stores play a major role as arbiters of taste. They not only shape popul r demand for new fashions, imported goods, and high technology gadgetry, but also promote cultural activities. Departmen

> stores, newspapers, railroad companies, and travel agencies all actively sponsor cultural events not just for their publicity or publ ic service values but also as products to be consumed or appreciated, (1989: 21).

In fact, the consumer expects the market to take on this socio-cultural role, (Moeran 1996: 104), and act as culture brokers. These culture brokers create and market items hat hold value as cultural symbols (Japanese, American, etc) which target groups then consume for that value. These items may include such things as tourist spots, material objects, and events (vis-à-vis Shougatsu) that are consumed because they hold cul ural value for consumers, (see Creight 1992, Douglas and Isherwood 1979, Martinez 1990).

The patterns of consumption are interrelated with social status (class), and gender. The degree to which one can participate in a consumption society is dependent on access to economic resources, which positively correlates to class. Sugimoto (1997: 36-37) outlines a Marxian model of class, and quotes percentages from Hashimoto (1990). The Capitalist Class (6.3% o the population as of 1985) consists of corporate executives and managers with high income, and high educational credentials. The Working Class (37.2%) consists of skilled and unskilled laborers as well as temporary and part-time workers. The Middle Class is composed of two main groups. The Old Middle Class is composed of farmers (6.6%) and self-employed individuals (17.9%). The New Middle Class (32.0%) is comprised mainly of the white-collar workers employed by the private sector. Clammer based his study largely on the new middle class, as I have done as a matter of events in the present honors paper.

Consumption is mainly a 'female preserve', (Clammer 1997: 70). This holds true for two reasons. First, though women have limited access to political power, and very much occupy a marginal position in relation to that political power, they also have a degree of freedom that is not enjoyed by men. Their very marginality gives them an opportunity to pursue personal

interests, (Ueda 1996: 64). Generally remaining at home until married, employed single wome n have large, readily disposable incomes, the freedom to move from job to job, take time off, travel and enjoy themselves. They have the resources to consume.

The second reason for labeling consumption a 'female preserve' is that once married, women are expected to manage domestic matters, (see Jolivet 1997). These married women have control of household spending and as such do most if not all of the consuming for the household. This situation is part of a division of labor ethic which holds that men wor k and women take care of the home. Pursuit of a lifestyle outside of these roles is met with institutional and social sanctions. It is important to keep in mind that the younger generation of women is contesting this ethic.

I will apply Clammer's idea o a sociology of consumption to Shougatsu observances. I believe Shougatsu remains a part of Japanese urban culture as a consumable cultural symbol that people consume largely for enjoyment. This then has an impact on the importance Japanese attach to observing Shougatsu when they are outside of Japan.

Shougatsu is a holiday, and as such marks a time for relaxation and leisure. The activities described in Chapter 1 show this. Because the observance of Shougatsu is a national holiday and involves the participation of an individual's friends, relatives, and tsukiai relationships (see Chapter 1), Shougatsu mediates social interaction, (one of the two functions of consumption). A person chooses what activities to observe, and with whom to observe them. Those choices help to shape an individual's identity as they express personal preferences, (another function of consumption). Department stores, makeshift stalls at markets and other locations, temples and shrines sell various 'traditional' trinkets and foods. They represent Shougatsu as a quintessential aspect of Japanese culture, an aspect that people can purchase and enjoy, vis-à-vis osech -ryouri,

engi-mono and even the temples and shrines themselves. They thus act as culture brokers who market Shougatsu as a consumable cultural symbol.

This consumption and the activities associated with it set the stage for a Shougatsu atmosphere discussed in Chapter 1. My informants also made frequent reference to this atmosphere. This further feeds into an individual's desire to observe the New Year.

Given this, the observance of Shougatsu in an urban setting is an act of consumption.

POPULAR CULTURE IN URBAN JAPAN

There are three types of popular culture present in urban Japan. The degree to which an single individual embodies each type depends on class and gender. Contemporary popular culture is seen as a continuation of the popular urban culture that appeared in the eighteenth century, (Kato 1989: 312) under the chonin class. Sugimoto (1997: 220-242) divides popular culture into three sub groups: mass culture; folk culture; alternative culture. Mass culture and folk culture hold the most importance for this honors paper.

Mass culture is constantly produced and reproduced in urban society and is characterized by atomized individuals who consume mass produced materials and information through the mass media as self expression, (Sugimoto 1997: 243). It embodies such elements as manga, pachinko, the love industries, and the mass media (music, newspapers, and television).

Folk culture is comprised of individuals who use marginal forms of art to express themselves. They do not use mass culture as a means for self-expression, (Sugimoto 1997: 243). These marginal arts are part of the 'traditional' arts, which are more commonly thought of as personal hobbies and pastimes or as ways to self-improvement, (Bestor 1989: 13).

The change in the manner in which urban Japanese observe the New Year represents a shift of Shougatsu observances from folk culture to mass culture. These observances are now a product of the mass media and mass entertainment. The consumption practices that comprise them, and the functions this consumption serve, confirm this. The wide spread viewing o Shougatsu television specials is another piece of evidence to point to this mass culture nature.

All of this not only affects the ways in which Japanese observe the New Year in Japan; it affects the ways in which Japanese students in Lawrence observe it while in the United States. With the observance of Shougatsu set as an act of consumption, the ability, and willingness of an individual to observe Shougatsu will be dependent on the availability of resources. Without resources, an individual's desire to observe the New Year is diminished.

JAPANESE STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

When looking at the ways in which Japanese students observe the New Year while the are in the United States two elements are important to consider in addition to those discussed above. The first of these elements is the reasons behind a student's decision to study in the United States. The second is the problems these students face while they are studying in the United States.

The decision to go to an institution of higher learning is determined in large part by class and gender, (Sugimoto 1997: 107-135). The reasons an individual elects to study abroad vary b gender and the student's level, (Hashimoto 1997, Tanno 1995). In general, students perceive study abroad as: an opportunity to see the world; an opportunity for professional development an opportunity for personal development; advantageous to gain a degree from an American

institution; a way of getting away from the home environment; the result of peer, relative, and/or social pressures.

Ueda (1996) conducted a study that explored the reasons why Japanese graduate students were studying in the United States. For these graduates, attending a university in the United States was more a matter of chance than of selection. "What these respondents wanted to obtain happened to be in the United States, and as a matter of course, they pursued what they wanted," (Ueda 1996: 43). She attributes this to boarderless consciousness (an insignificant awareness o national boarders) which allows an individual to fulfill their own needs regardless of those boarders. She also attributes this to dissatisfaction with some aspect of Japanese society.

If an individual is coming to the United States to avoid some aspect of Japanese society, they may be less willing to participate in Shougatsu observances. If an individual came to the United States by chance, they may be more willing to participate in Shougatsu activities.

Another motivating factor in the decision to participate in Shougatsu may be the problems students' experience once they begin their studies in the United States. The bigges problem for the students in Hashimoto's study of undergraduate students was that the

> were neither aware of nor prepared for the changes they had to face in the new environment. Their main objective for coming to the United States was to receive college degrees; however, in order to succeed unexpected learning on mental and spiritual levels was involved, (Hashimoto 1997: 104).

She later writes that a student's "…personal and academic success positively correlates to [their] ability to take control and manage their social and academic lives," (1997: 113).

On the level of mental learning, students found it difficult to keep up with their homework assignments, a daily task that left little time for socializing and practicing English to improve their fluency, (Hashimoto 1997: 95).

On a spiritual level, learning meant students had to adjust to becoming independent. They also had to cope with homesickness and loneliness. This was compounded by the fact tha students felt they could not tell their peers about such emotions.

Graduate students have the added concern of age, (Tanno 1995). For men, studying abroad means time away from Japan and a delay in entering the employment market. This means that their peers will have already gone through several promotions.

The degree to which these problems are experienced will determine the degree to which an individual will be willing to, or able to, consume Shougatsu in the United States. The more problems a student fac es, the least likely they will be to observe the New Year.

CHAPTER THREE:

CURRENT PAPER

I set out to discover what Japanese students attending the University of Kansas do for Shougatsu while they were in the United States. I wanted to learn the meaning which students attached to Shougatsu, the reasons for doing the things they did, and the importance Shougatsu held for them. Finally, I wanted to know if differences existed between the ways in which Japanese observed the New Year in the United States and in Japan, and the reasons for those differences.

I set out to either prove or disprove the hypothesis that Japanese students would do the same activities in the United States that they did in Japan.

Several assumptions initially guided my research. The first was that the importance o Shougatsu would be internalized. That is, students would have strong feelings associated with Shougatsu which would make doing activities related to the holiday important. Second, because of its importance, Japanese students would do activities related to Shougatsu, even if the 'accouterments' were difficult, or impossible, to obtain. Third, a student's reasons for coming to the United States are a determining factor in a student's decision to participate in Shougatsu observances. Fourth, by taking part in activities related to Shougatsu, students would be reminded of their cultural identity. They would make a conscious effort to bring a little piece o Japanese culture to themselves; something that may have been lacking in their day to day lives i the United States. Fifth, this 'reminder' would be a positive thing and students would seek it out.

METHOD

I conducted half-hour to hour-long formal interviews with Japanese students in English. When the students had trouble expressing ideas in English, I encouraged them to speak in Japanese, which they did. A copy of the basic interview outline is in Appendix 1. The interviews were recorded to be analyzed later for content. I also recorded my informants' basic responses on individual interview sheets that I later sorted for analysis. I also held informal, impromptu chats with my informants, both in person and via e-mail[1] throughout the project.

THE SAMPLE POPULATION

The International Student Register for the Fall 1998 semester states that of 1410 international students, 105 were Japanese. This figure includes both undergraduate and graduate students. The Japanese population was the third largest foreign student population at KU.

My initial informants were Japanese friends and acquaintances that I had made during the course of my study at the university. Access to information about the Japanese studen population at the Unviersity of Kansas (name and contact information) was restricted, making it difficult to find other informants. I therefore used a snowball sampling technique in order to find more students willing to participate in interviews. I also contacted the Japanese Student Association via e-mail and posted a request for interviews on that associa ion's list server. Through these steps, I was able to conduct interviews with 11 students (6 men, 5 women), approximately 10.5% of the Japanese student population. All students were in graduat programs of some kind save one. Based on parent occupation, all my informants fall into the new middle class.

Table 1 shows the age of my informants at the time of the interview, when they firs arrived in the United States, and the number of years they have spent in the United States. I should be noted that in some cases, the total time spent in the United States may be separated b periods of time spent in Japan. This was due to students who had studied in an exchange program in high school or as undergraduates in universities, returned to Japan, and then returned once again to the United States to continue their studies.

Table 1: Age and number of years in the United States.

Category	**Average**			**Minimum**		**Maximum**	
	All	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Age at time o interview	28.5	26.2	30.5	24	25	30	37
Age of first arrival in U.S.	23.1	21.6	24.3	20	20	23	32
Number of years in the U.S.	5	3.8	6.2	2	5	7	10

Four students claimed a religious affiliation of some kind. One student affiliated himself with Shinto beliefs. Two students affiliated themselves with Christian beliefs. One studen affiliated herself with Buddhist beliefs. In both the Shinto and Buddhist case, their affiliations

were claimed as a result of a close affiliation of a relative and not from a personal preference for that belief. In the case of one student's claim to affiliation with Christianity, it was due to her parent's beliefs rather than to her own.

Four of the six women interviewed were married. All of these women were married to American men. Of the men interviewed, only one was married, and his spouse was an American.

All of the students cited a desire to study as the primary reason for coming to the United States. Two students expressed a sense of boarderless consciousness in their decision to come to the United States. Several students saw their experience in the United States as both a personal and professional benefit. These results match well with earlier studies cited in Chapter 2.

PROBLEMS AND DRAWBACKS

The biggest problem in conducting this research was finding people willing to take part in interviews. Snowball sampling yielded poor results. When asked if my informants had an Japanese friends with whom I could conduct an interview, most responded that they didn't know anyone. They told me that they either did not have much time to make friends, or thought that their friends would not have time to participate in the interview.

The fact that I conducted the interviews in English may have been both a benefit and a drawback. Some students were worried that the interviews would be conducted in Japanese and stated a preference to use English. At the same time, however, some students had a difficulty in fully expressing themselves in English. Though I gave the option to use Japanese when they felt

a need to, and some students did, I still have a feeling that the students I interviewed were unable to fully express their ideas.

Another point to note is that most of the students I interviewed have been in the U.S. for a long time. They had problems remembering aspects o f Shougatsu in general. Failure to menti some aspect thus may be due to memory loss rather than the result of some general trend in Japan. This plays havoc on the results of my interviews. Students who have been in the United States for only a short t ime may have had a clearer recollection of their own activities as well as what people around them did on Shougatsu.

RESULTS

What follows is a summary of my interviews. I will follow the same basic outline in this discussion as I followed for the interviews themselves.

MOST JAPANESE STUDENTS IN JAPAN

The questions in this section dealt with my informants' opinions about what other students did for Shougatsu in Japan.

The idea of what constitutes traditional activities showed little variation. Activities named by more than half of my informants as traditional were: visits to the friends and relatives; hatsumode; oosouji; eating tosh -koshi soba, ozouni, omochi and osechi -ryouri and drinking otoso; otoshidama; the mailing and receiving of nengajou; watching Kouhaku Uta Gassen. Due to the constant reference to these activities, I will call them the *core traditional activities*.

Outside of these, there were a number of activities that were named by less than half o my informants as traditional These included various games, okazari (including the kaga -

mochi and kadomatsu), and the hatsu's discussed in Chapter 1. The lack of mention of these activities may be due more to difficulties in recall, as well as a decrease in their importance. Due to their infrequent reference, I will call these *peripheral traditional activities*.

The responses to the question "What do most students do for Shougatsu?" showed some variation from those activities mentioned as traditional. The answers also varied along gender lines. My informants felt that most students do the following: visit friends and relatives; hatsumode; eat and drink traditional foods (see core traditional activities); otoshidama; give and receive nengajou; shop; watch television specials (particularly Kouhaku Uta Gassen); go to amusement parks. I will call this collection of activities *core activities*.

My informants felt that most students valued being with friends over visiting relatives when they were in Japan. One informant, whom I shall call Yumiko, said, "I think families spend less time together. So, girls might spend more time with their boyfriends than with their family." woman whom I shall call Sachiko expressed the same idea.

> Traditionally, the whole family should get together on New Year's Eve, but these days the younger generation just go out. Disneyland is a very popular place. But on New Years Day I think they all go home so that they can get otoshidama. So they are usually at home, and there is nothing open anyway.

Sachiko notes quite clearly that most students spend time with friends on Omisoka, while the spend Sanganichi with the family and relatives. This time with relatives, however, is not necessarily done out of desire to be with them. This is nothing special, however, for the same sort of thing happens in the United States.

Though people may be doing things such as hatsumode and purchasing omikuji, there was a feeling that most students did not do these things in a traditional sense. That is the activities were not done for any religious or spiritual beliefs. They were done purely for fun, or

they were done because there isn't much else to do. As a woman whom I shall call Harumi told me:

> I think it's pretty much conventional. There used to be some kind of practical value added to what is done for New Year's Eve, but we've achieved so much from the time that they formulated the system of the celebration. See, society has changed, I don' think there is any necessity for us to keep doing it except to sort of keep the tradition going.

Some students felt that it was not cost effective to participate in some of the peripheral activities. This was because much of the equipment used in traditional games, eng -mono, and other items can be expensive. Moreover, the purchaser of these items is supposed to burn the at a temple or shrine either after Sanganichi or at Omisoka of the following New Year (See Chapter 1). At least two students mentioned that they did not want to waste their money in this way.

Sanganichi as a t ree days vacation from work is no longer so universally observed. Many of my informants talked about their parents, and themselves, having to work on the second or third day of Sanganichi. Yumiko told me that, "When I was a kid I used to see all of my relatives on New Year's Day. But not these days because a lot of people have to work."

My informants felt that men generally relax and drink sake while the women are concerned more with food and social interactions.

MOST JAPANESE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

My informants felt that most Japanese students celebrated the New Year in an American fashion, did nothing for the New Year, or did not take note of the New Year at all when the were in the United States. One man thought that the more 'traditionally minded' students would make a definite effort to observe the New Year in a Japanese fashion, but most students did

nothing. My informants also believed that students called their relatives during Shougatsu. Finally, some believed that students would take advantage of the extended time off by traveling, either returning to Japan, or going somewhere else. There was no variation in these perceptions along gender of the informants.

As an explanation for this lack of interest, Harumi said

> Food is hard to get here. There's no shrine to go to. There are no families. So, [the Japanese students] are missing the elements that constitute the traditional way of celebrating the Japanese New Year. It's hard to really get into the mood of doing it. You are pretty much isolated here [too]. If you are living in a Japanese community in Los Angeles or San Francisco, people may do it a different way than we do here. Which means more authentic and traditional. And there is more stuff available like Japanese food or even Japanese shrine. They can pretty much duplicate pretty much what they do in Japan, I assume.

She went on to say that that if she lived in such a community she would probably be more excited about the New Year.

This idea was reflected by other students as well. It is clear that the atmosphere or feeling of the season is an important part of the New Year's observance, as is in any major celebration. With this feeling missing, the desire to celebrate the New Year in a Japanese way is also missing.

YOU IN JAPAN

For many of the students, the core activities mentioned above made up their Shougatsu while they were in Japan, with peripheral activities varying for each individual. Only the studen whose parents were Christian did not participate in Hat sumode at least once. Hatsumode as observed by my informants had no religious meaning attached to it. For them, hatsumode was simply a way to spend time with friends, or a way to pass time in an otherwise boring holiday,

(boring in the sense that going o shrines and temples is the only activity possible outside o staying home). Every student ate and drank special foods to some extent.

The most important activity was spending time with friends. This was especially true for the men. The women, in addition to this, stressed the importance of spending time with the family. Otoshidama was remembered with the most joy, and most informants talked happily about receiving the monetary gift

The all my informants associated Shougatsu with a feeling of renew and rebirth. It was also seen as a chance to improve oneself for the coming year. In addition to this there was also a sense of happiness. All of these emotions, however, are linked to friends and family and are influenced very little, if at all, by activities outside of these circles. As a woman whom I sha call Miwa told me

> New Year's is just one of those days that you get up and it happens to be January first. We don't go to shrine to cleanse ourselves to be ready for the New Year. We just do tha for the feeling that we are with all our family. Doing it together is such a nice feeling, and it's that that I've gotten accustomed to over my more than twenty years growing up in Japan.

YOU IN THE UNITED STATES

While in the United States, students did very little for Shougatsu. This was due mainly to the absence of a Shougatsu atmosphere in the United States. Perhaps Harumi says it best when she speaks of the New Year in the United States.

> I get a little bit nostalgic, missing the special events for New Years like shrine going stuff, and it's just boring. There is nothing special about New Year's Day here, excep maybe watching football or something, right? So, you know, I just miss the eventfulness of the New Year's Day in Japan. It's boring here. I don't care so much about the decorations, but there is just nothing here. There's nothing in the newspaper, no special mail, so it's the same as just a regular day.

To this, Sachiko would add that

> (O)shougatsu is a Japanese thing, definitely. W have so many things going on. Even if I don't do them, I still get to see the traditional things. It is easy to see the kimono, and other things. And by seeing those things I can feel that I am being renewed and that it's a special day. But here, there isn't much here. You don't do much here so I don't feel like it's a special day. Even just staying home and watching TV in Japan, because all the TV programs are different from usual, you can feel that it's a special time.

Some students reported they sometimes did not notice the New Year had arrived. When they did notice, however, they called home. Remembering that it was the New Year also caused feelings of loneliness and nostalgia in some of the students, especially those who had no family or were living by themselves.

One bit of Shougatsu that seems to make its way to the United States i *Kouhaku Uta Gassen*. In chatting with some of my informants after the winter break, I found that many had received tapes of the song battle from relatives.

Given the above, one must ask why students do not attempt to create a Shougatsu atmosphere. Most, especially those who were single, said that they made no attempts because the needed materials, like foods, were difficult or impossible to obtain in Lawrence. Thes e comments echoed the reasons given for why Japanese students in general do not do anything for Shougatsu when they are in the United States.

For those Japanese who were married and thus had families in the U.S., their stories are a little different. For some of these students (particularly the women), celebrating the New Year has or will become an exercise in teaching their children Japanese traditional culture. Haru who very plainly does not do anything now said that, "It's too much trouble to celebra te New Year in a Japanese way here. I have a son who is three years old, and when he grows up I think I will try to do something for him because I think it's important for him to know what is traditionally done." In this way, the added importance of teaching her son about Japanese

traditional culture is a motivator to make a stronger effort to observe Shougatsu. It should be noted that Harumi returned to Japan for the winter break and told me that she had made an effor to do traditional activities. In the process, she experienced a revival of sorts and now has a greater appreciation for Shougatsu. One question remains, however: will this new appreciation be a strong enough motivator for her to make efforts to bring the Japanese New Year to her hom in America

For other students, a synthesis of the Japanese and American New Year's has taken place. Miwa told me about her adaptation to her situation.

> I have a Japanese friend who has an American fiancé. So they were American and Japanese, and we are Japanese and my husband is American. These two Americans knew Japanese custom too. They lived in Japan for a few years. So we were saying, okay let's do the count down (to midnight) and then go home and eat noodles just like the Japanese do. In our own way, we understand how our own New Year's should be. We kind o modified it, and it's good for me.

In Miwa's comments we see the importance she places on spending time with friends and family over the 'accouterments' of the New Year, something echoed in a l my interviews. The blending of the two traditions has created a new set of activities. These activities preserve the feelings Miwa associated with Shougatsu when she was growing up in Japan.

Now that I have carried out a review of Shougatsu, some aspects of Japanese culture, and the results of my interviews, the following chapter will synthesize the data and provide some conclusions.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The following presents a discussion of the data gathered and puts forth a conclusion that ties everything together. This chapter also presents possible directions for future study.

DISCUSSION

The nature of Shougatsu has changed for urban dwellers. The responses my informants gave during their interviews clearly show Shougatsu is no longer a holiday to welcome the toshigami. Its observance did no involve the religious undertones that originally gave rise to the festival. Previous research on the New Year's observances corroborates this. Few of my informants mentioned the d splay of okazari. Hatsumode was a way to pass time, or simply a place to meet friends and enjoy oneself.

In general, Shougatsu is a time for leisure, relaxation, visiting friends and family, and eating special foods. Therefore, most Japanese students in an urban setting consume Shougatsu for fun and fun alone. People participate in Shougatsu activities because there is little else a person can do during the holiday. With more stores remaining open during Sanganichi, fewer people are participating in core and peripheral traditional activities. The participation of core activities is also on the decline. This includes consuming osech -ryouri.

All of my informants perceived a definite gender division regarding what Japanese do for Shougatsu. They felt women placed an emphasis on the core and peripheral activities while men

placed an emphasis specifically on relaxation and social interactions with friends. This division was apparent by their own accounts of the activities in which they participated as we l.

In Japan, there exists a gender role division. A woman's role centers on the home, and the consumption practices associated with the home. This led Clammer to posit tha consumption is a 'female preserve'. As stated in Chapter 2, all activities of Sh ougatsu are acts o consumption. Women therefore place more emphasis on these activities than do men.

These findings match well with past research on Shougatsu observances in urban Japan. As stated in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, urbanization and the consequent rise of consumpti have worked to remove the religious undertones from annual events like Shougatsu. Culture brokers sell aspects of Shougatsu as cultural symbols. The marketing of these symbols put people in a mood to do Shougatsu activities, and thus consume them. Consuming these cultural symbols calls up a sense of a Shougatsu season and creates the Shougatsu atmosphere of which my informants spoke. This season and atmosphere resemble the Christmas season and atmosphere that exists in the United States.

Peopl *do* go to shrines and temples, and people *do* buy traditional items, omikuji and hamaya for instance. However, their importance lies not in their efficacy as good-luck charms. What is important is that the individual participates in heir consumption with friends and family. In this way, Shougatsu observances mediate social interaction. They also act to (re)shape both individual identity and a sense of group belonging. However, the observance of Shougatsu is not the only act that serves these functions. Consumption in general acts in this way. Because o this, Shougatsu does not stand out as having particularly deep significance.

My informants reported that Japanese students in the United States are doing nothing for the New Year. They reported the same of themselves. The reasons they cited were a lack of a Shougatsu atmosphere, and a lack of resources to recreate Shougatsu.

Shougatsu is not a cultural symbol in the United States, nor do Americans (in general) consume it. The Shougatsu atmosphere is missing. Shougatsu loses the feeling of something special happening for Japanese students in the United States. Therefore, students lose the desire to observe the New Year in a Japanese way. Moreover, because Shougatsu activities ho d no special significance, they are more easily abandoned. The nostalgia that Japanese students feel is part of a general homesickness.

A student's decision, and desire, to consume Shougatsu in the U.S. positively correlates with the degree to which the consumed Shougatsu in Japan. A student's reasons for coming to the United States did not have an effect on their decision, and desire, to consume Shougatsu. Women participate in the activities that comprise the consumption of Shougatsu more often than men do. They also make a greater effort to do the same in the United States.

My informants felt that some students may make an effort to recreate the special foods o Shougatsu while in Lawrence. Mainly my female informants held this perception. These women felt that some Japanese may attempt to make a pseudo-osechi-ryouri or toshi-koshi soba. As mentioned in Chapter 2, food habits are aspects of culture which are the most resistant to change. Consuming the foods of one's home culture can provide psychological comfort to individuals away from that culture. The added association with Shougatsu, and the fact tha people eat these foods only once a year, gives the traditional foods of Shougatsu nostalgia. This nostalgia provides a stronger motivator to make an effort to recreate Shougatsu than the nostalgia felt for other activities.

The lack of observance of other activities may be due more to the fact that they center on interactions with friends and families. The people who paid the least attention to the New Year when they were in the U.S. were single. Being away from family, and the friends these students grew up with, created feelings of homesickness and loneliness that would rather not be recalled. Married students were more likely to make an effort to recreate Shougatsu because they had a family in the United States with whom to observe the New Year. They did this mainly through food consumption.

Some may say that lack of Shougatsu observance was do to acculturation. I do not believe this is the case. Though my male informants expressed a feeling of loss of Japanese identity (due to acculturation), the fact that they did not observe the New Year in Japan makes me believe that they have not lost any desire to observe Shougatsu. Rather, they are expressing a concern in their ability to fit back into their social roles once they have returned to Japan.

The fact that most of my female informants were married to Americans and still wished to participate in Shougatsu activities means that their acculturation had no effect on thei decision to observe Shougatsu. If anything, it increased their desire to observe it. Acculturation did effect the way in which they observed Shougatsu, however. My female informants greeted their American acculturation with mixed feelings. Women still occupy a marginal position in Japan. This marginality provides a degree of freedom to unmarried women that men, who are still defined by a strict gender role of work, do not have. This would imply that single women not only have a broader definition of what behavior is allowed, but may also be more willing to accept acculturation. This can be seen in the fact that more women than men were married and intended to stay in the United States. This can also be seen in the fact that the women made a greater effort to work with their American acculturation and produce new cultural practices than

the men. In at least one case, a student combined both American and Japanese traditions to produce a New Year's observance that worked well for her.

It is hard to say which idea takes primacy: the readiness to adapt to new situations or the need to adapt to a new situation now that my married informants are to remain in the United States. The former is voluntary while the latter is done ou t of necessity. The former is an expression of a desire to remain in, and fit into, American society, while the latter is an expression of the inevitability of staying in the United States and giving up part of their Japanese culture.

The above can be su marized as follows. While in the United States, single men have the least desire to participate in Shougatsu activities. Married men have a slightly increased desire to participate than single men do. Single women have a greater desire than men (overa) do. Married women are the most likely to participate in Shougatsu activities. This is especially true if their husbands know something of Shougatsu.

CONCLUSION

Given the results of my interviews and the material from previous literature on various subjects related to this honors paper, I draw several conclusions.

(1) For urban Japanese, the nature of Shougatsu has moved from the realm of religion centered on religious rites and rituals to the realm of mass culture centered on consumption. Consequently, Shougatsu is now a cultural symbol that people consume for fun. This consumption is carried out through the core and peripheral activities discussed in Chapter 3. This creates the Shougatsu atmosphere of which my informants spoke.

(2) In urban Japan, the consumption of Shougatsu serves two functions. The first is as a medium for social interaction. The second is as a means by which an individual (re)constructs the self (personal identity). These functions motivate, and give value to, the con sumption of Shougatsu in Japan. That is Shougatsu has cultural currency in Japan. Other acts of consumption serve this same purpose, however, therefore Shougatsu has no deep significance.

(3) A woman's social role centers on the home. This involves, amo ng other things, managing the finances and having control over household consumption practices. In this way, consumption is mainly 'a female preserve.' Because of this, women are more concerned with the consumption of Shougatsu (through participating in core and peripheral activities) than men are.

(4) Shougatsu is not a cultural symbol in Lawrence. Shougatsu cannot serve the functions outlined in (2), so it has no cultural currency in Lawrence. In addition, its lack of significance makes abandoning the consumption of Shougatsu easier when away from Japan.

(5) Homesickness (and in some cases loneliness) combines with (4) to diminish the student's desire to observe the New Year in a Japanese way while staying in Lawrence. These two elements do not completely remove this desire, however.

(6) Two elements associated with the consumption of Shougatsu do remain. The first element is a desire to be with friends and family. The second element is a desire to consume the special foods associated with Shougatsu. Both of these elements serve the functions stated in (2). Both exist outside of any specific event, however, and are more a result of a genera nostalgia and a desire for home. Special events such as Shougatsu magnify the importance o these elements.

(7) Shougatsu partially regains its status as cultural symbol for those students who know people who are willing to observe the New Year in a Japanese fashion (and thus participate in its consumption). Shougatsu in the U.S. can then serves the functions ou tlined in (2) and regains part of its cultural currency. This is mainly true of the consumption of food alone. This is truer of married women.

(8) Once Japanese students return to Japan, Shougatsu regains its cultural currency. In some instances, it ma take on greater importance as a cultural symbol.

(9) Given the above, my original hypothesis must not be considered false, but rather false by degree.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The most important step for further research is a larger sample popu ation which draws from all of the classes discussed in Chapter 2. This would provide a clearer picture of an division by gender and class in observances and meanings of Shougatsu.

It is clear that most research on Japanese culture has centered on the new middle class. This honors paper is guilty of the same. An effort should be made to look more closely at the working class. This may be hard because a working class family may not have the resources needed to send their children to college.

If any future studies should seek to examine the degree of acculturation in Japanese students studying in Lawrence I would discourage using Shougatsu observance, or lack of its observance, as a measure for such acculturation. Too many other variables factor into a student's decision. A researcher should look elsewhere.

NOTES

1 After the 1998-1999 winter break I mailed an electronic follow up survey via e-mail to my informants. This survey was meant to clarify some points on a more systematic basis. Of the original 11 respondents, two replied to this second survey

In addition to this follow up survey, I created a complete electronic survey using portions of the follow up survey and questions from the interview. This was forwarded through the Japanese Student Association's list server. Of the 76 students that subscribe to that list server (approximately 72.4% of the total Japanese student population), I received two responses.

Most of the problems typically associated with mail surveys as discussed in Dillman (1991) were evident in my survey. In addition to these problems, however, I feel there are additional problems with e-mail surveys in general. First, unlike 'snail' mail, some people check their e-mail at irregular intervals. This means that response time c an be sporadic. Second, since the University of Kansas uses a text only format system, formatting an e -mail survey was not possible. In fact, the text only format made the survey appear longer than it actually was. Finally, it has been pointed out tha Japanese, in general, prefer face to face interaction as opposed to phone or mail interviews. This cultural preference also worked against the e -mail survey.

I recommend using a non-text only system for future e-mail studies. The researcher can more thoroughly control the format of the survey, add graphics, tighten font spacing, etc. Ultimately, however, the best thing to do is conduct face to face interviews.

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ABBREVIATIONS

JIN	Japan Information Network
KEJ	Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan
STULA	Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities
UJ	Understanding Japan Series

APPENDIX ONE:

INTERVIEW OUTLINE

BACKGROUND:

Gender:____________________________ Occupation:___________________________

Raised in what city:____

Siblings:____

Socio-Economic (of family):________________________ Now (if different):________________

Religious beliefs:____

Number of years in the US:_________________ Age first arrived:_______________________

Marital Status:____________________________ Japanese mate?:_______________________

What are you studying:____

Reasons for coming to the US:____

OPINIONS: **(when in Japan)**

What activities do you consider to be traditional ways of celebrating the New Year

the days **befor** Oshougatsu

the day of Oshougatsu

the days **following** Oshougatsu

What activities do most Japanese do for:

What foods do most Japanese eat?

What sorts of emotions do most Japanese associate with the holiday?

(when in the US)

What things do most Japanese do for Oshougatsu

What foods do most Japanese eat?

What sorts of emotions do most people associate with the holiday?

ACTIVITIES: (when in Japan)

What activities do you do for Oshougatsu? Ozouni, nengajou, oseibo, otoshidama, etc.

What sorts of foods do you usually eat for the holiday?

Who do you typically spend the holiday with?

What sorts of emotions do you associate with the holiday? Why

(when in the US)

Do you do the same things in the US as you do in Japan? Why/why not?

Who do you typically spend the holiday with?

What sorts of emotions do you usually associate with the holiday when in the US? Why?

If you had the choice, where would you rather spend the holiday? Why?

FUTURE PLANS:

Do you plan to stay in the US or go back to Japan? Why?

APPENDIX TWO:

EMAIL SURVEY

BACKGROUND:

What is your age and gender?

What is your occupation (if you are working as well as going to school)?

Are you an undergraduate student, or graduate student? What are you studying?

Do you have any spiritual or religious beliefs

What was the socio-economic background of your family up to the time you entered college?

What city and prefecture were you raised in

Why did you choose to come to the U.S. (instead of a different country) to study?

How many years have you been in the United States. How old were you when you fi rst arrived

Are you married? If so, what nationality is your spouse?

How often do you return to Japan during the year

How many New Years have you spent in the United States

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Please describe what you did during the winter break? If you stayed in the U.S., please describe your typical day. If you returned to Japan, what did you do there? Also, please describe your feelings and thoughts in regard to what you did or did not do.

The following is a chart which lists foods, events, and activities that were described as a part of the New Year. The name of each item is listed along the left of the page. At the top are columns that ask you to rate the items in different categories. The categories are as follows:

TRAD (traditional): Please rate items on a scale of 1 o 10 in regard to how traditional you feel this item is. A rating of 1 means that you feel it is NOT traditional a all. A rating of 10 means you feel that the item is very traditional.

IMPORT (importance): Please rate each item on a scale of 1 to 10 in regard to how important you feel the item is in making your ideal New Year. This should take into account how much you like the item, and how much the item contributes to the overall feeling or atmosphere of the New Year. Remember, this is YOUR feelin g about the item, not everyone else's. A rating of 1 would mean it is NOT important at all, a rating of 10 means that you fee the item is needed.

IN JPN (in Japan): Please give your best guess as to how many college students in Japan participate in the item listed. I realize that this may be hard, but please do your best. Please give your estimate as a per cent..

YOU IN JPN (you in Japan): Please give your best guess as to how often you have participated in the item in the years you have been in J apan. I mean that, if you were to look at every New Year you have seen in Japan, how often have you participated in the ite listed. Please give your estimate as a per cent.

YOU IN US: Please give your best guess as to how often you have participated in the item in the years you have been in the U.S. I mean that, if you were to look at every New Year you have spent in the United States, how often have you participated in the item listed. Please give your estimate as a per cent.

ACTIVITIES

Where it applies, please tell me where you go to do these activities? For each activity you participate in, please tell me with whom you do the activity.

ITEM	**Trad**	**Import**	**In Jpn**	**YOU in Jpn**	**YOU in US**
Amusement parks/					

Disneyland

Drinking

Eating

Joya-no-kane

Have you ever ringed the bell? Who usually rings it?

Kakizome

Kimono wearing

Hatsuhinode

Hatsugama

Hatsumode

Hatsuyume

NHK's *Kouhaku Uta Gassen*

Osouji

Who usually does this? Why? When is this done?

Relaxing

What do you do to relax

Shopping

Visiting friends

Visiting relatives

Which relatives do you visit? For how long do you visit? What do you do during the visit?

Watching TV

"DECORATIONS"

For the following, please include any special meanings these objects may have. When do people display these items? Where do people get the items? Where are the items displayed

	Trad	**Import**	**In Jpn**	**YOU in Jpn**	**YOU in US**
ITEM					
Kagami-mochi					
Kagami-biraki					
Shimekazuri					
Kadomatsu					

Shimenaw

FOODS

For the following, please tell me about any special meanings these foods might have. When are these foods eaten (please give a specific date, or range of dates)? For each food, please tell me any ingredients that you can remember.

ITEM	Trad	Import	In Jpn	YOU in Jpn	YOU in US
Osechi Ryori					
Ozouni					
Nanakusa-biraki					
Toshikoshi-soba					

GAMES AND PLAY

For the following, please tell me how to play each game. Where do people usually get these games? Are they bought, or are they made by the people who play them? Who usually plays these games?

ITEM	Trad	Import	In Jpn	YOU in Jpn	YOU in US
Tako-age					
Koma-mawashi					
Hanetsuki					
Karuta-tori					
Hyakunin-isshu					

MISCELANY

For the following, please tell me where someone might buy, or from whom someone migh receive the item.

ITEM	Trad	Import	In Jpn	YOU in Jpn	YOU in US
Daruma Doll					
Ema					
Hamaya					

Nengajou

Omikuji

Other *Engi-mono*

Aside from those listed, are there other eng -mono? What are they

Oseibo

Otoshidama

If there is something that is not on this survey, please tell me about it.

If you have any comments, please tell me.

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Thank you for your participation. I hope you have a good semester