




New Year in Japan

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- A large, modern building with a curved roof and a large, illuminated Christmas tree in the foreground, set against a blue sky. The building has a prominent, illuminated Christmas tree in the foreground. The scene is set at night, with the building's lights and the tree's lights illuminating the scene. The sky is a deep blue, and the overall atmosphere is festive and modern.
- New Year in Japan has the status of a public holiday, celebrated annually on January 1 according to the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Japan in 1873, five years after the Meiji Restoration, so the first day of January is the date of the official New Year in modern Japan.



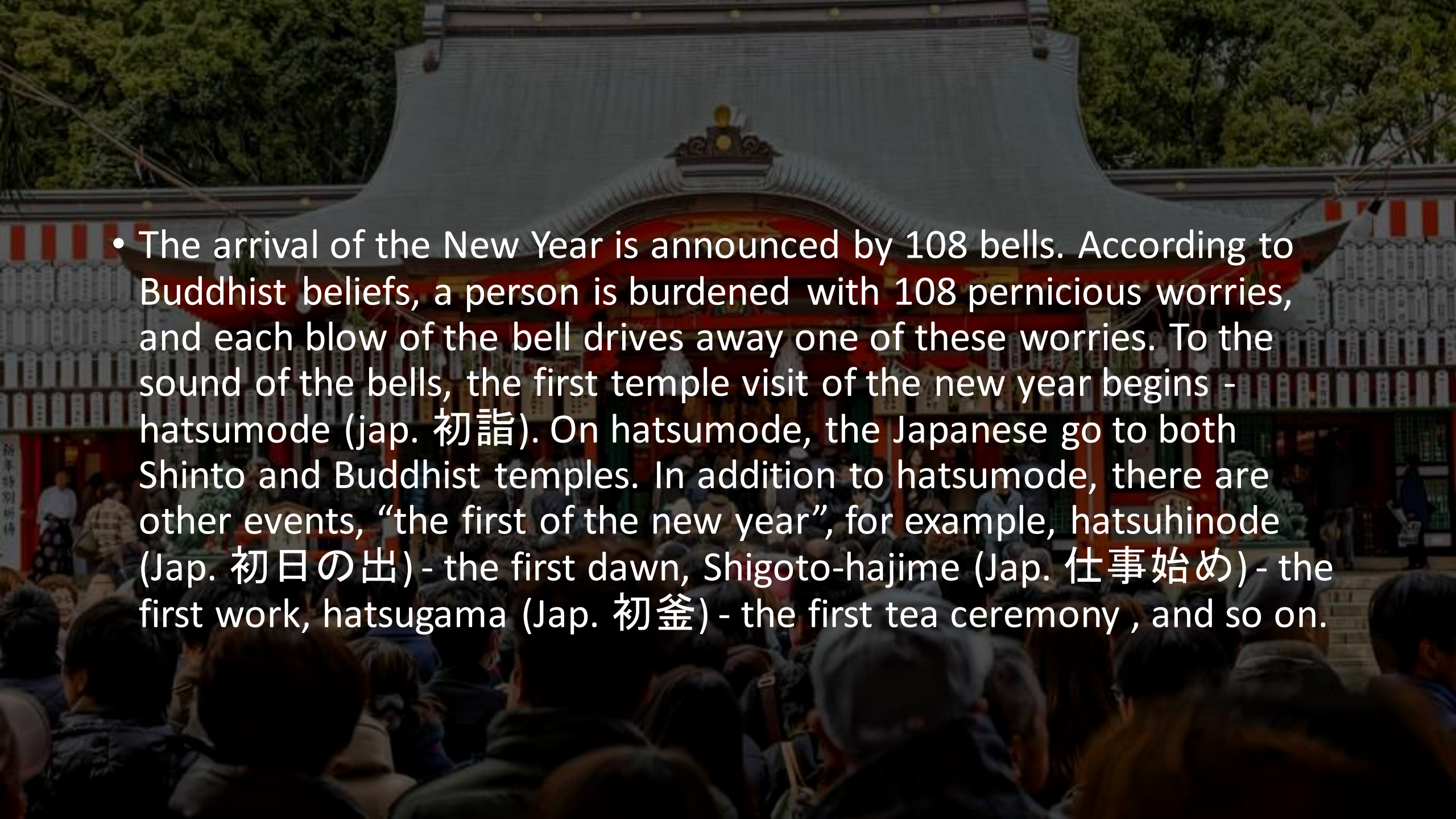
- The date of the Traditional Japanese New Year was based on the Chinese lunar calendar and was located at the beginning of spring, just like in China and other East Asian countries.



- New Year is the most important holiday in the calendar rituals of the Japanese. Many games, rituals and ceremonies are associated with it. The New Year holidays in Japan account for the largest number of vacations. Usually, holidays stretch from December 29 to January 3, and almost all state and commercial institutions of the country do not work.

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- At the end of December, on the eve of the New Year, the Japanese clean up their homes, buy gifts for friends and relatives, send New Year's greeting cards (Jap. 年賀状 nengajo :), prepare festive dishes, put kadomatsu pine decorations (Jap. 門松) at the entrance to the house , literally “pine at the entrance”), which symbolically protect the house from evil forces. On New Year's holidays, many Japanese go to their native places, visit temples, where they pray and ask for well-being for themselves and their loved ones. On the occasion of such an event, girls and women wear haregi (jap. 晴れ着) - colorful insulated kimonos.



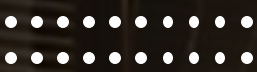
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- A large crowd of people is gathered in front of a traditional Japanese shrine building. The building features a prominent, dark, curved roof with ornate details. The scene is set outdoors, with trees visible in the background. The text is overlaid on the image, providing information about the New Year's traditions in Japan.
- The arrival of the New Year is announced by 108 bells. According to Buddhist beliefs, a person is burdened with 108 pernicious worries, and each blow of the bell drives away one of these worries. To the sound of the bells, the first temple visit of the new year begins - hatsumode (jap. 初詣). On hatsumode, the Japanese go to both Shinto and Buddhist temples. In addition to hatsumode, there are other events, “the first of the new year”, for example, hatsuhinode (Jap. 初日の出) - the first dawn, Shigoto-hajime (Jap. 仕事始め) - the first work, hatsugama (Jap. 初釜) - the first tea ceremony , and so on.



- Traditional dishes that the Japanese eat on New Year's Eve are called osechi-ryori (御節料理 or お節料理), or simply osechi. It usually consists of boiled seaweed (昆布 kombu), fish cake (蒲鉾 kamaboko), sweet potato chestnut puree (栗きんとん kurikinton), boiled burdock root (金平牛蒡 kimpira gobo), and sweet black soybeans (jap. 黒豆 kuromame). Many of these foods are sweet, sour, or dried, so they can be stored without refrigeration. There are many different varieties of osechi, and it happens that dishes that are consumed in one region may not be consumed (or even banned) in another. Today, sashimi and sushi, as well as non-Japanese food, are often consumed at the feast.



- It is hard to imagine a Japanese New Year's table without mochi (餅) - a dessert made from glutinous rice varieties (餅米 mochigome). Mochi for the New Year is a wish for prosperity, wealth and a good harvest next year. Since ancient times, round mochi have been associated with round mirrors, the obligatory attributes of the goddess Amaterasu.




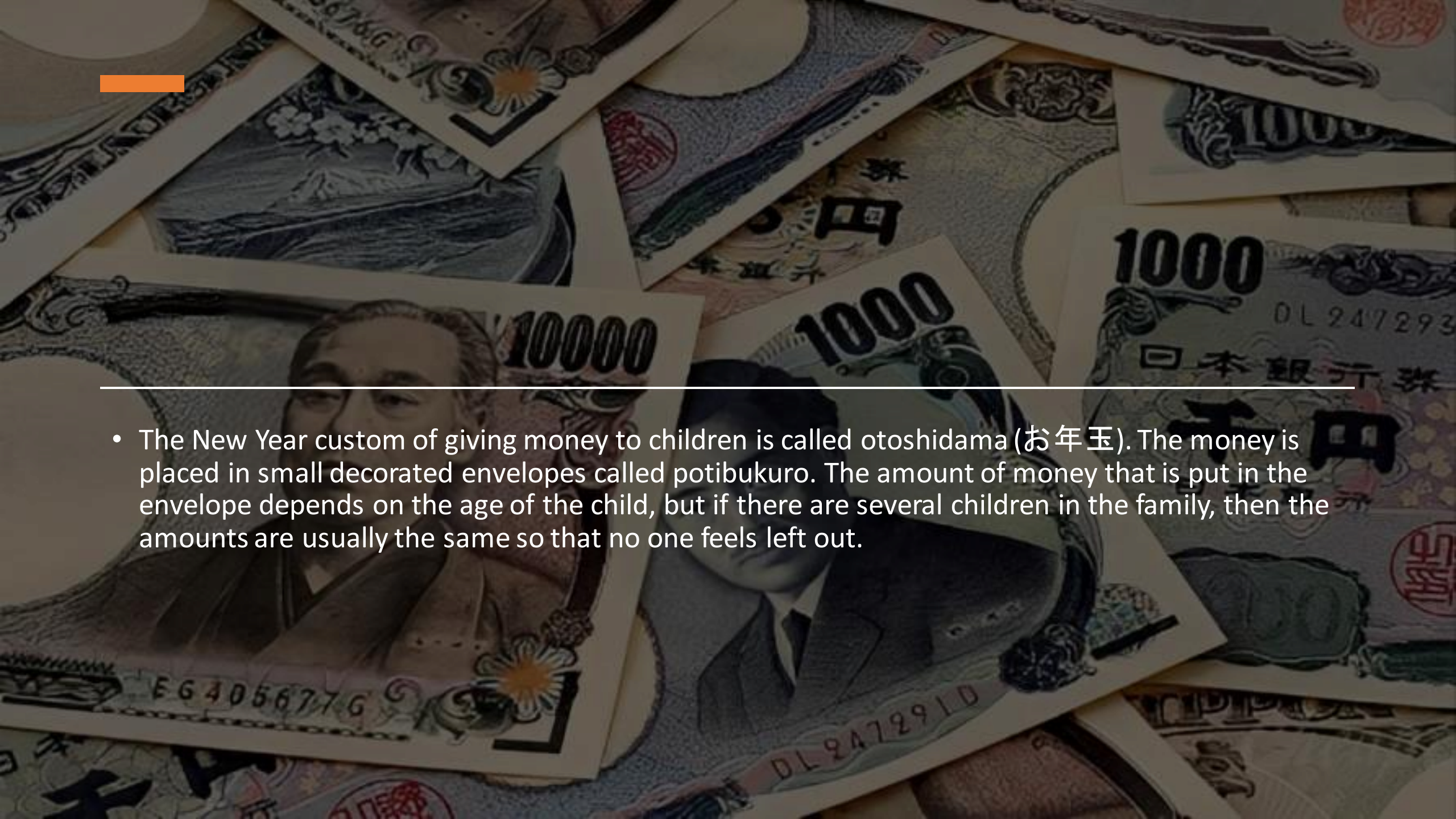
- There is a custom to decorate the dwelling with bamboo or willow branches with mochi hanging on them in the form of fish, fruits, flowers, etc. etc. These decorations are called mochibana (jap. 餅花), they are painted in different colors and placed in a conspicuous place or hung from the ceiling at the entrance. This is done so that the deity of the New Year "entering" the house - toshigami (jap. 年神) - remembers his "duty" to take care of the owners in the new year. After the end of the holidays, the mochibana is eaten, and, according to tradition, each family member must eat as much as he or she is that year.



- Another type of festive mochi is kagami mochi (鏡餅 in Japanese, lit. "mirror rice cakes") - in a simple form, they are two mochi connected to each other, with a Japanese orange (Japanese 橙 daidai) attached on top.



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- On New Year's Eve it is customary to play traditional New Year's games. For example, hanetsuki is a shuttlecock game, sugoroku is a board game of dice with moving chips, utagaruta is New Year's cards with hyakunin isshu verses, flying kites and spinning tops. Temple shops sell various New Year's talismans and souvenirs: hamaimi - arrows with white plumage and a blunt point, protecting the house from evil and troubles; kumade - a rake made of bamboo, similar to a "bear's paw", with which, according to legend, you can "rake" happiness; takarabune - boats of the Seven Gods of Fortune, filled with rice and other treasures

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- The New Year custom of giving money to children is called otoshidama (お年玉). The money is placed in small decorated envelopes called potibukuro. The amount of money that is put in the envelope depends on the age of the child, but if there are several children in the family, then the amounts are usually the same so that no one feels left out.

- During the first days of the New Year, shops sell sealed bags or boxes with contents unknown to the buyer, called fukubukuro.

