

An Essay on Japanese Seasonal Events with Haiku

March: Spring, spring, spring!

日本の季節行事と俳句 三月－春動く

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要旨: 三月は春らしい春である。暖かくなり、春の日ざしになる。彼岸（春分のある週）を過ぎると、もう寒さを感じることはなくなる。彼岸には先祖の墓参りをし、牡丹餅を食べる。三月の主要な行事は、三日の桃の節句に行われる雛祭である。古代中国で桃が邪気を払うと考えられてことに起源がある。ここに、日本で人形が身代わりとなって子供を守ると考えられていたことが結びついた。雛祭には、結婚にかかわる迷信もあるが、娘の成長を祝って、特別な食事が用意される。雛あられ、白酒、菱餅、蛤のお吸い物、ちらし寿司などである。三月には、卒業式があり、就職を控えた大学生は卒業旅行に出かけ、最後の春休みを楽しむ。進学、就職など、四月からの新生活の準備を整えて、引越す人も多い。三月には、「春動く」という季語が似つかわしい。

Key words: warmer, spring sunlight, the vernal equinox, the Doll Festival for girls, a graduation ceremony, a pre-graduation trip, a moving, enter employment, go for further schooling

暖か 春の日 春分 雛祭 卒業式 卒業旅行 引越 就職 進学

Spring really comes in March. It gets warmer and we can enjoy the mild spring sunlight. So, it is said that insects emerge from hibernation underground around the 6th of this month. The day is called 'kei-chitsu'. Japanese people believe that the vernal equinox around the 21st of this month is the last day when they will feel cold. 'Higan' is a weeklong period around this time. The day falls on the middle day of the seven days. During the term, some Japanese people pay respect to their ancestors and visit their graves. At this time, they eat 'bota-mochi' (a rice cake dumpling covered with bean paste). The word 'bota' means 'botan' (a peony).

The main event of March is 'hina-matsuri' (the Doll Festival for girls) held on the 3rd. The festival is also called the Peach Festival because peach blossoms are in bloom. In ancient China, people believed that peach protected them from evil. In Japan,

parents expect hina dolls to ward off evil, which means illness by being a substitute for their daughters. Hina dolls are displayed for one month until March 3 and put away by March 4. The reason for clearing them away is the superstition that daughters will wait too long and miss the opportunity to get married if the dolls are still displayed after the Festival day.

On the Festival day people enjoy a special meal of chirashi sushi, hamaguri soup and hina arare. Chirashi sushi is mixed sushi rice covered with special ingredients, the ingredients are chopped and sprinkled over vinegared rice. Hamaguri is a common orient clam and necessary for the soup because the clamshell can never be paired because of their unique shape. This is a metaphor which reflects parents' desire for faithful daughters. Hina arare is a kind of small sized roasted rice cake, light-colored and lightly coated with sugar, salt and soy sauce. Hishi mochi and shiro-zake (sake) are offered to the dolls as part of spring celebrations.

Quite a lot of Japanese people move in this month for going on to or graduating universities, personnel changes, entering employment, transferring, and so on. They feel busy preparing for their new lives from April. During this busy time, university students about to graduate make a pre-graduation trip. They enjoy their last spring vacation before starting their work lives. The other students and pupils also enjoy their spring vacation travelling somewhere. So, trains are more crowded in this season.

March is the month of change. People prepare for their new lives beginning in the next fiscal year. They look forward to new places to live, study and work and new people to work or play with. There is a seasonal word which perfectly fits this situation. That is 'haru ugoku', which literally means spring is moving. The word means activated spring. People become very active after their stillness in winter. Spring is the season for regrowth and renewal.

March in Haiku: Travelling in Europe and Daily Life in Japan

三月の俳句―旅のヨーロッパ、日常の日本

Sangatsu no haiku: Tabi no yōroppa, nichijō no nihon

A spring afternoon

The smell of sweet potatoes

Waiting in the hospital

病院に焼薯匂ふ春の午後

Byōin ni yakiimo niou haru no gogo

Forgot to take
Cold medicine before eating meals
My second cold this spring

食前薬飲み忘れまた春の風邪
Shokuzen-yaku nomi-wasure mata haru no kaze

The Danube in spring
A drake sailing like a knight
After his duck

ドナウ春雌鴨のあとに雄鴨ゆく
Donau haru mendori no ato ni ondori yuku

Reclaimed fields
Fertile soil like in spring
Spread out below

干拓の耕地眼下に春の土
Kantaku no kōchi ganka ni haru no tsuchi

A castle on a hill
Surrounded by townscape
Spring breezes and sunshine

王城を囲む町並み風光る
Ōjō wo kakomu machi-nami kaze hikaru

A spring noon
Watching to trace a canal below
From the airplane window

春真昼運河の軌跡なぞり見る
Haru-mahiru unga no kiseki nazori miru

Spring's fertile soil
Every wheat field with
Its own grass color

麦畑にそれぞれの色春の土
Mugi-hata ni sorezore no tsuchi haru no tuchi

The Lombardia plain
Flames of burning dead grass trail
Long and narrow fields

細長くロンバルディアの畦焼く火
Hoso-nagaku ronbarudia no aze yaku hi

A gentle and mild spring lights
Six thousand streets and boulevards
In central Paris

春灯パリに街路は六千と
Haru tomoshi pari ni gairo wa rokusen-to

A McDonald's in Paris
Lycéenne on a school excursion
Noisy and noisier

遠足のリセエヌ騒ぐマクドナルド
Ensoku no rise'en'nu sawagu makudonarudo

A thin Parisian
Tapping his heels compulsively
Catching a spring cold

パリジャンの貧乏ゆすり春の風邪
Parijan no binbō yusuri haru no kaze

On the Czech plain spread
Along the Austrian-Czech border
Lingering snow

国境の先は平原雪残る
Kokkyo no saki wa heigen yuki nokoru

Still digging a big hole
On Maria Theresia street
A dry and dusty spring

女帝の名戴く道掘る春の塵
Jotei no na itadaku michi horu haru no chiri

Early summerlike spring
The university's library
Once the Queen's weapons store

図書館は女帝の武器庫春暑し
Toshokan wa jotei no bukiko haru-atsuishi

Still cold in spring
A cock loves crowing like a king
In the dead of night

子の刻に鳴く雄鶏や春寒し
Ne no koku ni naku ondori-ya haru samushi

A Spring dream
Put yesterday's memories
In order

春の夢昨日の記憶を整理する
Haru no yume kinō no kioku wo seiri suru

The nuns in Turin
Ignoring a red light
Spring cold lingers

赤信号尼僧が渡るトリノ余寒
Aka-shingō nisō ga wataru torino yokan

Swiftly and smoothly
Marking research papers over
On a snowy Doll's Day

さらさらと採点終へて雛の雪
Sarasara-to saiten oete hina no yuki