

Now it's time for the presentation by IIN Working Group on Cultures.

Today's theme is Otsukimi, Moon Viewing.

We hope that you will be able to reconfirm the value  
and aesthetic sense of Japanese through our presentation today.

Let us start it from holy pictures!



**Moon Viewing**

**おつきみ  
Otsukimi**

**Harvest moon  
on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

# Kagura

Have you ever heard of the word “Kagura” ?

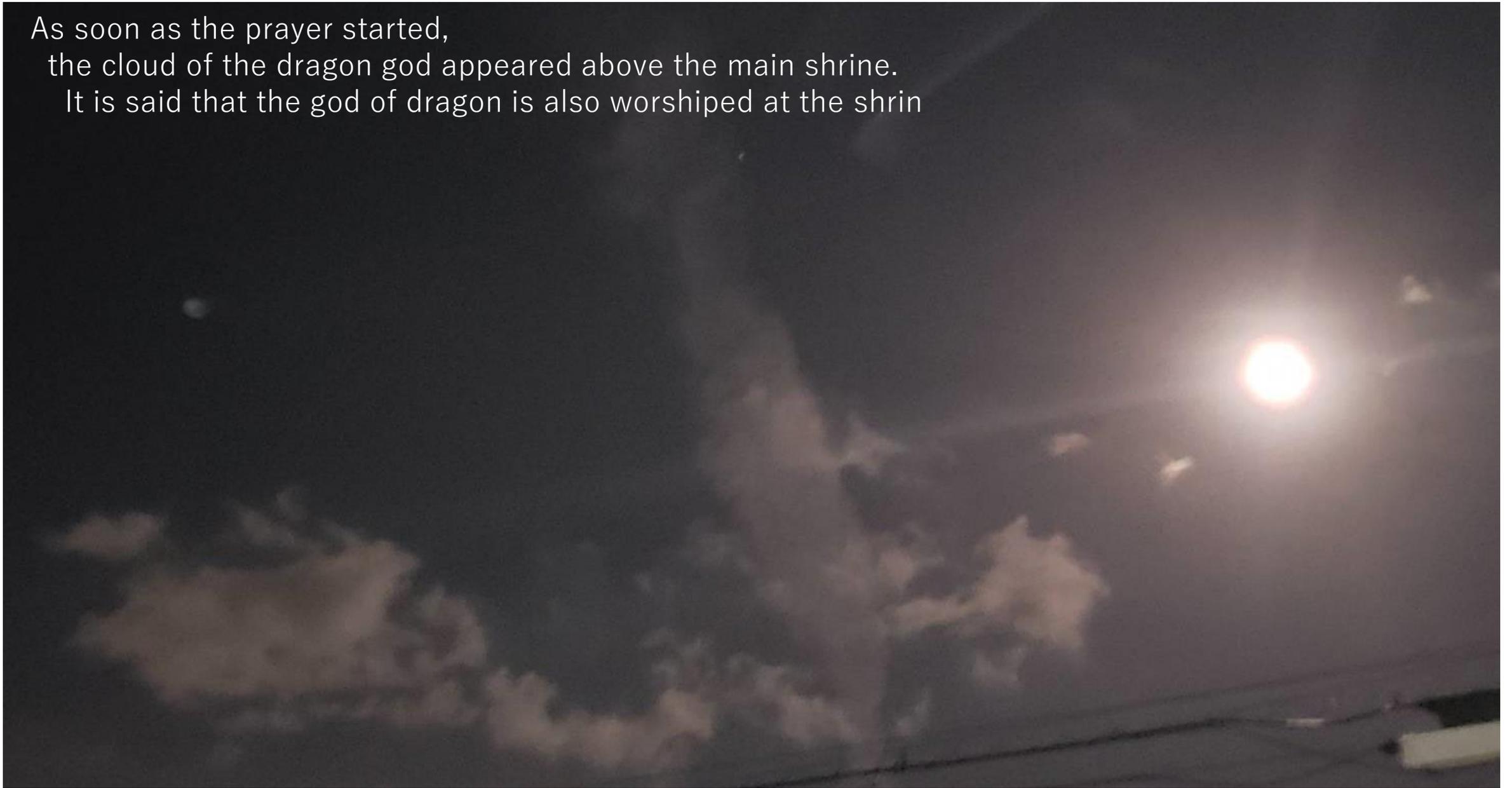
It means a performance of music and dance of ancient Shintoism.



All the worshippers at the Shirayama-hime Shrine  
in Ishikawa Prefecture wished for a clear night sky  
so that they could enjoy the full moon as the Mid-Autumn Moon, for the first time in eight years.

Under the beautiful moon,  
a special mid-autumn prayer was held this year  
to pray for the disappearance of Covid-19 and for world peace.

As soon as the prayer started,  
the cloud of the dragon god appeared above the main shrine.  
It is said that the god of dragon is also worshiped at the shrin





After that,  
the Shinto music and dance was performed by the shrine maidens.  
People forgot the uneasiness against Covit-19 and became calm and relaxed.

A beautiful full moon appeared just above the main shrine when the last dance was over, and the shrine was surrounded by fantasy and silence.

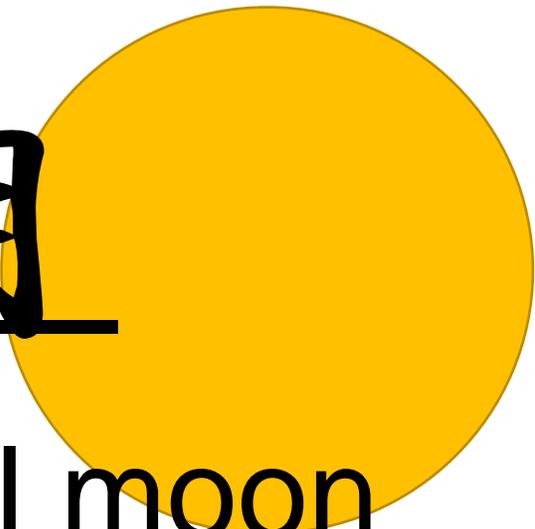


At the end, People prayed silently in the candlelight and moonlight.



The mid-autumn prayer ended.  
It was an unexpected and precious time for people there,  
and people were grateful for the moon viewing.

# 中秋の名月



mid-autumn beautiful moon

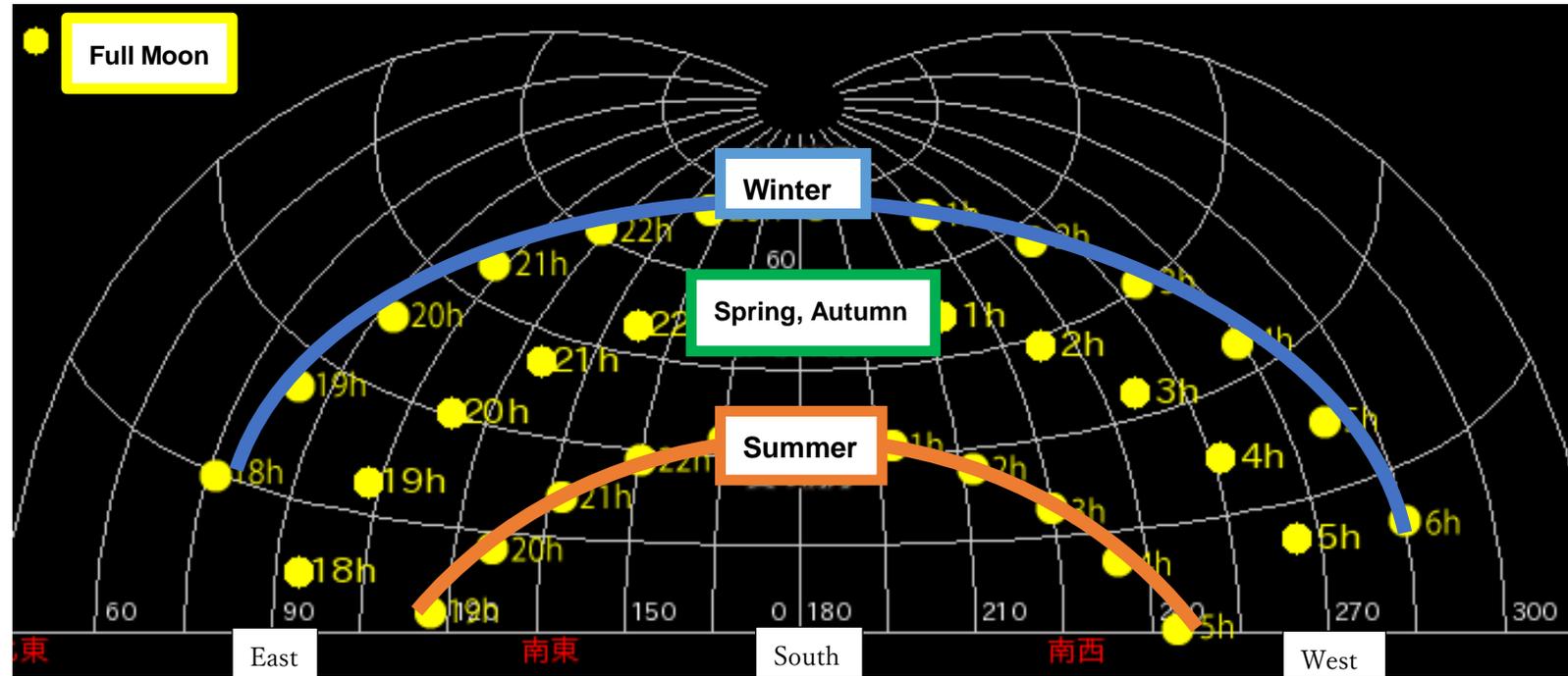
= **Harvest Moon**

mid-autumn: 8/15 on the lunar calendar

9/21 on the solar calendar in 2021

**Why is mid-autumn the best to view the full moon?**

# Moon altitude



**Winter** : The moon altitude is high. When the angle is large at midnight, the eaves are obstacles to view the full moon from indoors. It is cold.

**Summer**: The altitude is low. The full moon rises later and it disappears earlier in the light season. It is hot.

In spring and autumn, people can enjoy viewing the full moon from indoors for longer periods of time at comfortable temperatures.

The night sky in spring is hazy, but the night sky in autumn is clear.

**Therefore, mid-autumn is the best to view the full moon.**

# Waiting for moonrise

the 15th night 満月  
Full moon



the 16th night 十六夜月  
Izayoi no tsuki



Izayoi = hesitating

the 17th night 立待ち月  
Tachimachi zuki



I Tachimachi = wait with standing

The 19th night 寝待月  
Ne machi zuki



I Ne machi = wait with lying

the 18th night 居待ち月  
I machi zuki



I machi = wait with sitting

Japanese people have loved moon-viewing very much. They also have enjoyed even the waiting time with their expectations.



# History of Otsukimi

We have a special day for the moon viewing event,

*Otsukimi* or *Jyuugoya*,

the 15<sup>th</sup> night of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month, in September or October today, when we enjoy the moon with these decorations.

Now I'll tell you about the history of *Otsukimi*.

We Japanese think the moon sacred and have adored the beautiful moon from 13,000 years before, *Jomon*-period.

Some say people adored the moon as God and pray for the moon their happiness and peace of their ancestors' mind.

It is said this was brought into Japan from China **in the 9<sup>th</sup> century**, *Heiann*-period, by *kentousi*, or Japanese envoy to the Tang Dynasty.



At that time, *Otsukimi* was enjoyed only by aristocrats. They appreciated the moon with feasting, drinking sake, making poems, listening to the elegant music, and watching graceful dances.

They sometimes adored the moon on boat  
and entertained themselves by the moon up in the sky  
and the reflection on the surface of water or sake.



Today, some temples and shrines hold the special *Otsukimi* events  
just like *Heiann*-period.

**These pictures are of *Daikakuji*-temple.**

They hold the Moon Viewing Festival for three days.

This is the Orchestral Festival of *Shimogamo-shrine*.



On the stage with fire and Japanese pampas grass, some dances are performed solemnly along with instrumental music.



**In the 14<sup>th</sup> century,**  
*Muromachi*-period, *Otsukimi* had become simple one.  
This picture depicts *Otsukimi*-gathering held by Emperor *Godaigo*.



In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, *Edo*-period, this had spread into the ordinary people.

Fall is the harvest season of rice, taro and many other crops.



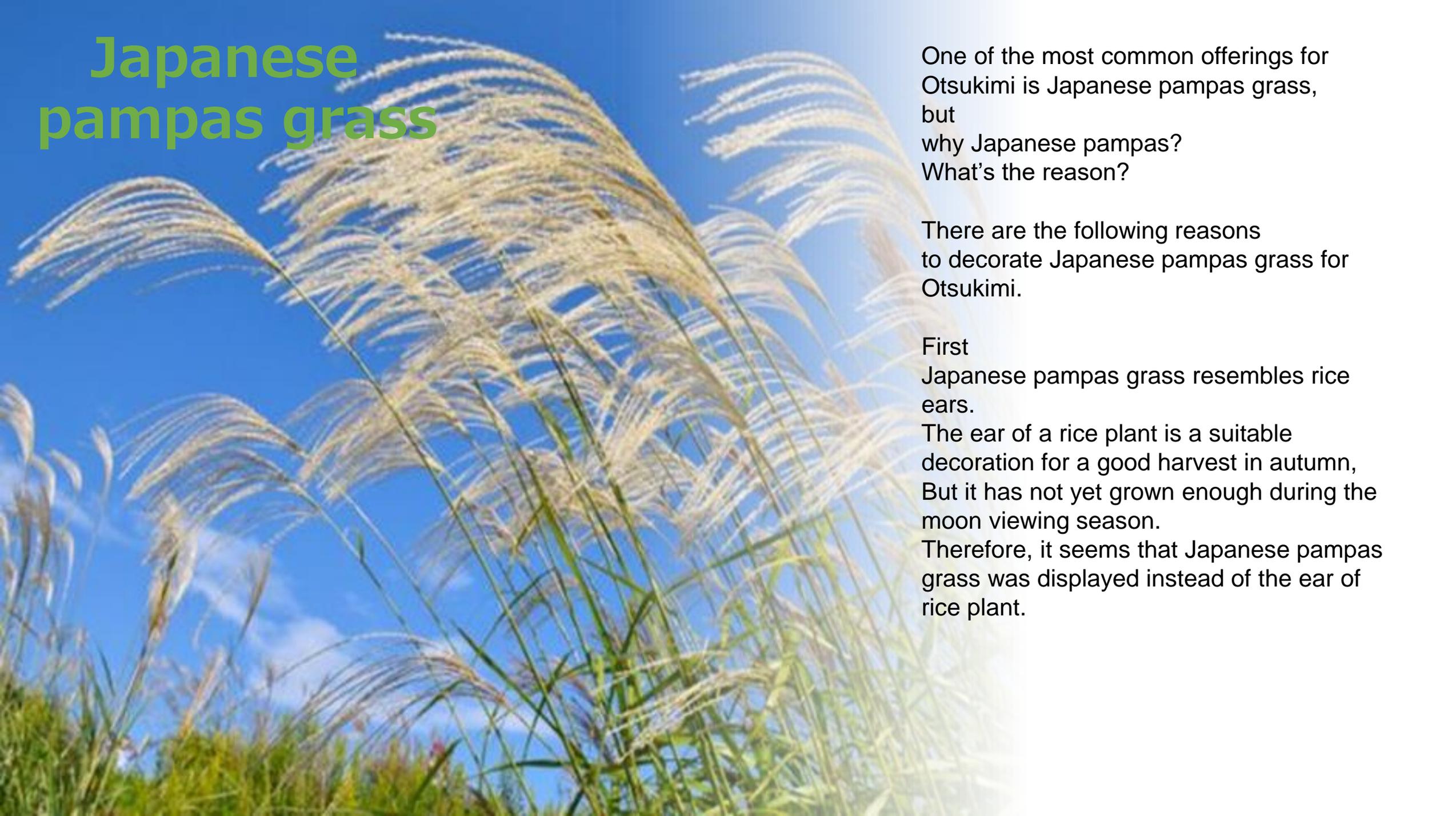
In late *Edo*-period, *Otukimi* was connected with agriculture and people began to decorate some offerings like today to thank and pray for rich harvest. So *Juugoya* is also called *Taro Beautiful Moon*.



The style of Otsukimi has been changing, but Japanese people think the moon precious the same as the old days and our love for the moon will never change.

On the day of the moon viewing, people would decorate some items like dango (Japanese sweet dumplings), Susuki (Japanese pampas grass) and autumn harvest things like chestnuts, green soybeans, sweet potatoes and so on.

In Japan, traditionally susuki-no-ho (ears of Japanese pampas grass) are used to decorate engawa verandas or rooms where the moon is clearly visible, and tsukimi dangos (moon-viewing dumplings) and seasonal products are offered to the moon.



# Japanese pampas grass

One of the most common offerings for Otsukimi is Japanese pampas grass, but why Japanese pampas? What's the reason?

There are the following reasons to decorate Japanese pampas grass for Otsukimi.

First

Japanese pampas grass resembles rice ears.

The ear of a rice plant is a suitable decoration for a good harvest in autumn, But it has not yet grown enough during the moon viewing season.

Therefore, it seems that Japanese pampas grass was displayed instead of the ear of rice plant.

In addition, it was believed that the hollow inside of the Japanese pampas stalk would become a dwelling place for the gods.

Moreover the sharp cut of the Japanese pampas used for Otsukimi is meant to protect the harvest from evil spirits and disasters, and to wish for a good harvest for the next year.

Japanese pampas grass was also thought to have a role as a good fortune charm.



**Decorated Japanese pampas grass**



**Cross section and Cut edge of Japanese Pampas grass**



# Seven Autumn Flowers



Fringed Pink



Japanese Bell Flower



Kudzu Vine



Yellow Patrinia



Boneset



Japanese Pampas Grass



Bush Clover

Japanese pampas grass is one of the seven plants of autumn, but you can decorate the other seven plants with Japanese pampas grass on Otsukimi.

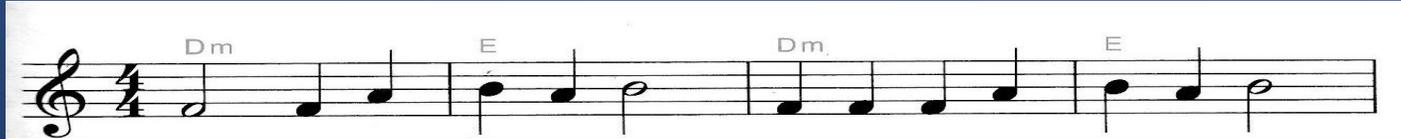
【Seven autumnal flowers; Bush clover, Japanese pampas grass, Fringed pink. Golden lace, Thoroughwort, Kuzu vine and Balloon Flower,】

# How to decorate offerings for Otsukimi



In Japan the left side is the place of honor in many ceremonies. Depending on the area, there is the custom of protecting the rice fields and houses from disasters. People stand the Japanese pampas grass that was displayed on the moon viewing in the garden or rice fields or hang them on the house eaves without throwing away for good luck.

# Usagi



Usagi Usagi Nanimite haneru



Jyu-goya Otsukisama mite ha ~ ~ ne ru

In Japan, it is said  
a rabbit is living on the Moon  
and pounding rice cake.  
Why is a rabbit living on the moon?  
I checked the origin of the story.



# Jataka medallion

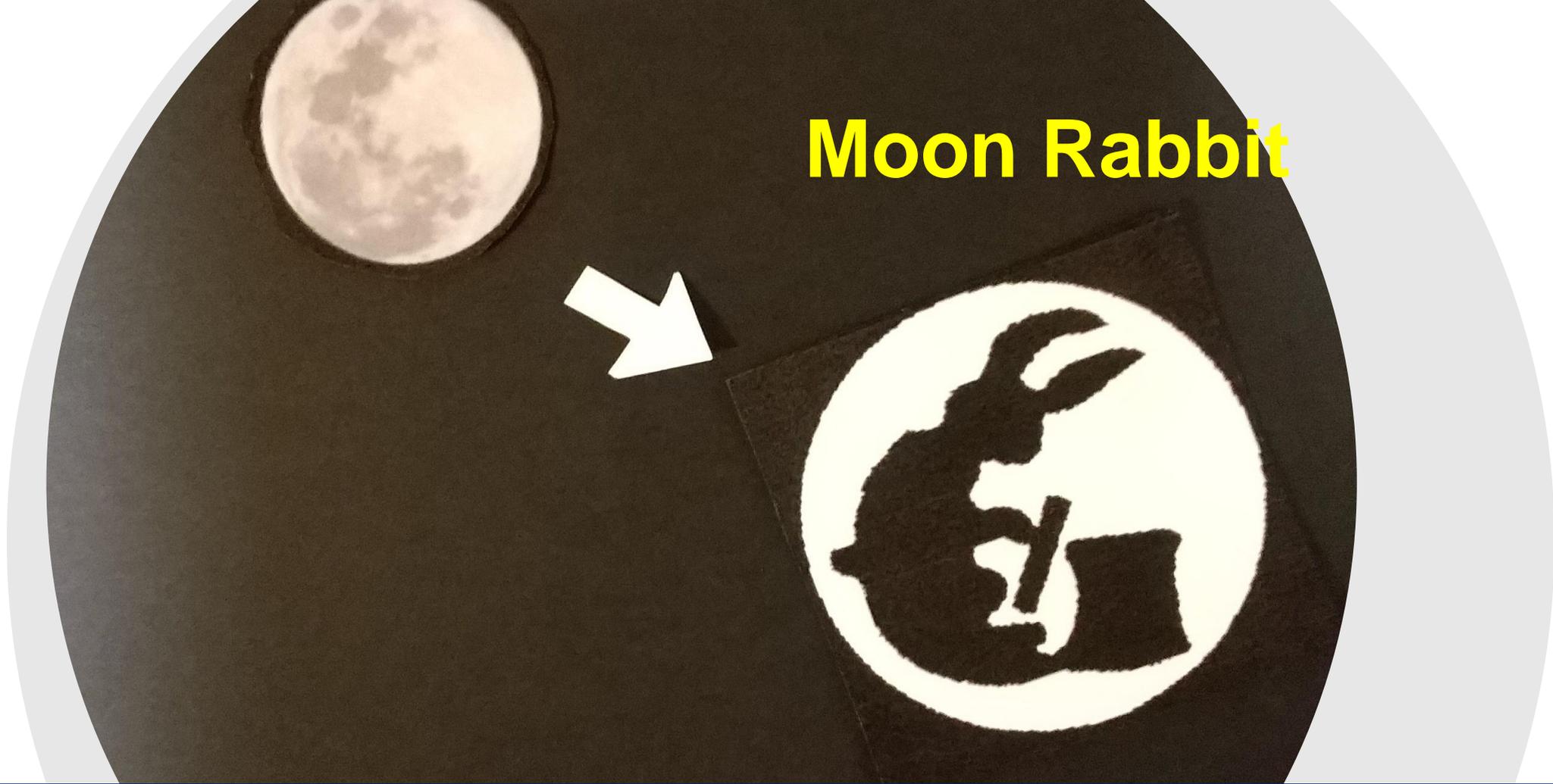


It was from India's Buddhism 'Jataka' myth.  
Long ago,  
a fox, a monkey and a rabbit were living in India.  
They wanted to be followers of Bodhisattva.  
One day they met an old man.  
He said "I'm tired and hungry".

The monkey collected nuts for him.  
The fox caught fish.  
But the rabbit couldn't find anything.  
One day he asked the monkey and fox to make fire.  
When fire was prepared, the rabbit jumped into the fire  
saying, "Eat me".

The old man was Buddhist guardian deity Taishakuten.  
He felt pity and revived the rabbit on the Moon.

# Moon Rabbit



Then why the rabbit pounding rice cake?

In China they said Moon rabbit was making medicine for eternal youth.

In Japan Otsukimi is a ceremony of thanking for rich grain harvests.

Moon rabbit is pounding rice cake for the old man.

Full moon is Mochizuki in Japanese and mochi means rice cake.

By such reasons Moon rabbit is pounding rice cake on the full moon in Japan.

# Tsukimi Dango



Tsukimi literally means `Viewing Moon` and Dango is a dumpling.

We view the moon decorate season fruits and Tsukimi dango  
By the window with a view of the moon.

The origin of Tsukimi for the Japanese Who are farming people is to liken the moon to a deity and pray for rich harvest.

Dumplings offered to the moon. Round white sweet rice dumplings symbolize the full moon.

Tsukimi dango (dumplings) are usually piled up in a Pyramid-shaped pile.



In the Kanto district,  
the east of Japan,  
the dumplings are round and white.

In the Kansai district,  
the west of Japan,  
offered also Taro.

It is also called `Potato moon` because people offer Taro.  
The image of Taro`s shape –long and narrow – symbolize prosperity of descendents.  
Wagashi, Japanese – style confection refers to traditional Japanese confectionery.  
They reflect festivity and beautiful Japanese four seasons.  
They can be colored and sculpted into variety of shapes.

After the offerings,  
it is believed eating the Tsukimi dango will bring good luck and fortune.  
Activities like moon viewing in the fall or cherry blossom viewing in spring are examples representing a  
nature – loving Japanese sense of beauty.

Otsukimi Dorobo



Have you ever heard of the word *Otsukimi Dorobo* – it says Moon-viewing thief?

On the night known as the Fifteenth Night of the Moon, a custom called Moon-viewing thief is practiced in many parts of Japan.

In the olden days in the rural areas, there was the custom that children were allowed to steal offerings from farmer's fields such as taro and persimmons secretly only on the night of Harvest Moon when the moonlight was extremely bright.



Moon Viewing Thief

# offerings



We are  
Otsukimi Dorobo!!

# taro field



taro



"Otsukimi Dorobo desu" 🎵 "Otsukimi kudasai" 🎵 Welcome! 🍡



Nowadays, children say "*Otsukimi Dorobo desu*" or "*Otsukimi, kudasai*" – "I am a Moon-viewing thief, trick or treat, trick or treat, give me something good to eat" and visit house to house to receive sweets. It is sometimes called the Japanese version of Halloween.

It is said to be a relic of the wisdom of the past to share the bounty of nature, the harvest of autumn, with everyone, and not to keep it to oneself.

The custom of the *Otsukimi Dorobo* seems to be a way of honoring not only the ancestral spirits of one's own family but also the spirits of ancestors in a broader sense.

A large, round hay bale sits in the foreground of a golden field. The background shows a dark, starry night sky with a full moon in the upper right corner. The field is filled with golden wheat or grain, and a line of trees is visible in the distance under a twilight sky.

That is the end of our presentation on ***Otsukimi***.

We hope you enjoyed it and

that you will remember today's story when you see the harvest moon.

Thank you for your attention!

by IIN Working Group on Cultures