



Talk

Discuss the story you listened to.

Japanese Children's Day – Kodomo no hi in the past and now

May 5 in Japan is celebrated as Children's Day, or Kodomo no hi. It has a long tradition in Japan. Initially, Boys' Day, was celebrated on this day, whereas girls celebrated their day on March 3. In 1948, Boys' Day was officially changed to Children's Day and it was established as a national holiday – it is also a day off from work.

A characteristic element of the celebration of Kodomo no hi is **koinobori**, i.e., huge multi-colored streamers in the shape of a carp. They start to appear in Japan a few weeks before the holiday. They are not just a decorations – their history is exceptionally interesting.

According to the old Japanese Shinto religion, it was believed that a newborn child should be entrusted to the care of the gods. So they were invoked with the help of a bamboo stick placed in front of the house. Over time, parents, wishing to draw the attention of the gods to their child and ensure good luck for it, placed not sticks, but gigantic bamboo masts reaching up as high as 20 meters. Later, colorful fabrics were hung from them, which in turn evolved into banners in the shape of carp.

The history of the carp is as long as the history of the bamboo masts. According to a Chinese legend, a carp that very much wanted to swim up the Yellow River had to jump over a waterfall to achieve this goal. He tried very hard, but could not cope. Observing the carp, the gods decided to have mercy on him. So they changed him into a strong dragon, who not only climbed up the waterfall, but also flew to heaven. Since that time, the carp has become a symbol of strength, courage and the ability to overcome obstacles.

The Japanese believe that the fluttering carp banners and prayers can make their children grow healthy and able to cope with adversity – like the legendary carp.



Source: [flickr](#)

Currently, koinobori have a tubular shape, and are usually made of paper or fabric. Parents together with children hang whole families of carp on long masts: at the very top is the fukinagashi streamer (this is a flag composed of multi-colored ribbons, often bearing the family coat of arms), then the black daddy-carp, the red (pink or orange) mummy carp, and little multi-colored carp, whose number depends on the number of children in the given house.



Source: [flickr](#)



Listening

Read a Japanese short story linked to Children's Day aloud to the students.

tradition - a belief or behavior passed down within a group or society with symbolic meaning or special significance with origins in the past

holiday - a day set aside by custom or by law which is intended to allow individuals to celebrate or commemorate an event or tradition of cultural or religious significance

Source: www.en.wikipedia.org

decoration:

1. something that adorns, enriches, or beautifies
2. the act or process of decorating

Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/decoration>