

“Laughter Brings Happiness”



The year is fast drawing to a close. What sort of a year was 2021 for all of you? New Year's Day is a very important day of the year for Japanese people, with many unique customs that have been passed down through the generations since ancient times. In this month's *Living In Miyazaki*, we will introduce some traditional fun things that people in Japan do over New Year's.

Hanetsuki

This is a game in which a black ball made from *Mukuroji* (Indian Soapberry) seeds with feathers attached is hit using rectangular racquets called *hagoita*.



There are various different designs of *hagoita*, such as *oshie*, a particularly extravagant style featuring three-dimensional decorations like kimono-clad women, flowers and birds, often also used as a decoration around the home.

Tako-age



A traditional pastime in which a *tako* (kite) made from paper or cloth stretched over a frame, is attached to a string and flown high into the air using the power of the wind. There are many different shapes and styles of *tako*, such as rectangular, hexagonal, or even kites shaped like Edo period footmen.

Komamawashi

This traditional game involves spinning a *koma* (top) around its centre. There are various types, such as *bēgoma* (traditional conical tops), *temawashi koma* (tops which are spun by hand), *nage koma* (spinning tops which are thrown), and there are various games that can be played with them, such as trying to knock an opponent's top out of a ring by bashing them together, or competing over technique.



Fukuwarai

In this traditional New Year's game, a blindfolded player tries to place the eyes, mouth, nose and other face parts on a drawn outline – the fun lies in how amusing and strange the face usually ends up!



There is a traditional Japanese proverb: 笑う門には福来る – *Warau kado ni wa fuku kitaru* – often translated as “Laughter brings happiness.” It means that good fortune will naturally come to a house where people are happy and laughing. We hope that 2022 will be a year full of smiles and laughter for everyone!

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding this column, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation (MIF):

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