

The December 2023 Issue

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Holiday Cards Around the World

Bonus: Example Cards



Spreading Good Cheer!

I have always been bad at writing thank-you notes but then I worked in a cute **greeting card** store in my last year of college. This made me remember how beautiful and fun sending letters and cards in the **mail** can be! Japan has a long and wonderful history with paper **crafts**, doesn't it? After all, just look at *origami* (折り紙)! I think Japanese **seasonal** cards and greeting cards are some of the most **creative** and **detailed** in the world. But when do people in different countries often send cards in the mail? **Holidays**, of course!

There are many **global** holidays from the months of November to February. For example: Diwali, American Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, New Year's, and Lunar New Year! Valentine's Day on February 14th is famous for cards called **valentines**, but they are different than holiday cards. We will look at a few of these **celebrations** later. These times are fall and winter for most places but not all. In the **Southern Hemisphere**, it is spring and summer!

Paper in the Post

In the U.S.A. people have **roots** from all over the world, so to be thoughtful to everyone, people often say 'Happy Holidays!'. They could also say 'Season's Greetings!'. That is what many people write on their holiday cards nowadays to be **respectful** because not everyone celebrates Christmas. However, if people want to **honor** their own **religion** or culture and send Christmas cards or Hanukkah cards, etc., of course they can! They can buy cards with beautiful art or print their own with a nice family **portrait**. Some people make their own art. Most cards are **folded** in half with art on the front and the message on the inside. An **envelope** goes on the outside. In English, cards NEVER open on the right side. We do NOT write up-and-down like you can in Japanese.





Many countries all over the world make special **postage stamps** for different holidays. I especially love the ones for Christmas because the art is **charming** and **nostalgic**. You need a postage stamp to send a card in the mail in every country.



But what about New Year's cards called *nengajou* (年賀状) in Japan? In **East Asia**, New Year's is an important holiday to visit family. (Whereas, in the **West**, usually Christmas is for family and New Year's is for friends.) So, because people can't visit everyone, it is important to send *nengajou* to family, friends, **colleagues**, and **clients**. However, you should NOT send one to someone who had a family member die in the last year!

Nengajou are **postcard** style, so not folded. Usually, the message and the art are together on one side and only the **address** is on the other side. Some people **choose** a design at the **post office** and buy many cards there. Some people print their own card with family pictures or **digital** art. However, if you use official cards from the post office, you might win a **prize** with the **lottery** numbers on them!



I think *nengajou* are **unique**! They often have art of the animal of the new year in the **Chinese Zodiac**. However, it is very important that they come on the first few days of the new year, meaning January 1st -3rd. NOT the **Lunar New Year** usually **associated** with the Chinese Zodiac. In fact, early in the morning on January 1st on TV, you can see postal workers riding off on **motorbikes** to **deliver** the *nengajou*. I was surprised the **timing** was so strict because in the U.S., we usually send one card for the entire holiday season from Thanksgiving to New Year's. Although, I **suppose** the card usually must come before Christmas on December 25th or it is too late. Many *nengajou* use the Japanese year system based on the **emperor** too! 2024 will be Year 6 of the Reiwa Era under Emperor Naruhito of Japan.



E-mail on the Internet

Do you know 'snail mail?' **Snails** are animals that are very slow. So, some people call the postal system 'snail mail' because it is slow and **old-fashioned**. Then, what is new and fast? E-mail! But in 2024, e-mail is now old compared to **social media** messages, right? **Anyway**, if people want to send a holiday card through e-mail, it is called an e-card. The 'e' means '**electronic**'! There are fun websites to design your own **virtual** card, sometimes with moving animations.

Sending e-cards is **cheaper** and faster than using regular mail. It is better for the **environment** because we can save paper. However, many people enjoy the **history** of paper cards and postage stamps. They are happy to hold the cards in their hands. Which do YOU like more?



Holiday Roundup!



American Thanksgiving (感謝祭) Turkey Day



Thanksgiving is a holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November every year in the United States. This year, it was on Thursday, November 23rd, 2023. It is a day for “**giving thanks**,” or being **grateful** for what you have. It is a sad day for **Native Americans** because of the **dark** history after the ‘first Thanksgiving’ meal in 1621. So, it is important to honor **indigenous** people on this day.

Nowadays, it is the busiest travel time in the U.S. because people go home for a weekend of food and family. Americans eat more food on Thanksgiving than any other day of the year. The most famous & popular foods are roast **turkey** and **pumpkin pie**. On Thanksgiving morning, there is a famous parade in front of Macy’s Department Store in **New York City** with **Broadway** performers, marching bands, singers, giant **balloons**, and more. It is the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade! This year there was a Luffy balloon, because the *One Piece* **live-action** was so popular! Thanksgiving is the start of the American ‘holiday season’ which goes until New Year’s.



Hanukkah (ハヌカ) Jewish Festival of Lights

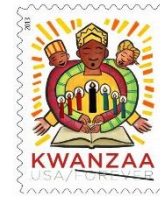


Hanukkah is an eight-day **Jewish** (ユダヤ系) holiday. The days change a little every year, but this year is from **December 7th to 15th, 2023**. Many Hanukkah words are in **Hebrew** because that is the special language in **Judaism**. Every night of Hanukkah, families light one **candle** on the special candle holder called the *menorah*. On the last night, all eight candles are lit together with the special ninth middle candle. It represents **light** during the dark winter. **Oil** was important in the original Hanukkah story so today many special Hanukkah foods are made with oil. ‘*Latkes*’ are a type of potato pancake. ‘*Sufganiyot*’ are jelly doughnut balls.

There are many special **prayers** and songs that families say together. They also **exchange** gifts at night and play games. “*Hanukkah gelt*,” or chocolate coins in gold wrapping are given to children. A *dreidel* is a spinning top with Hebrew letters on it. It is a fun game to help children learn.



Kwanzaa (クワンザ) Festival of the First Fruits



Kwanzaa is a weeklong celebration of **Black/ African American** culture from December 6th to January 1st every year. It ends with giving gifts and eating a big meal together. It was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966 in **California** in the U.S.A. Many Kwanzaa words are in the East African language of **Swahili**.

Each of the seven days focuses on a special **principle** and has a candle. The candle holder is called the *kinara*. There is one **black**, three **red**, and three **green** candles which represent the people, the **struggle**, and the future. People often wear colorful African clothing like **kente** cloth, **kaftans**, and **dashiki** and decorate with African art. They also eat fruits and other African dishes, sing, dance, and give **homemade gifts**. Kwanzaa has **spread** beyond the U.S. and is now celebrated in many countries by people with African **heritage**. Black people have a **painful** history of **slavery** in the U.S. and still fight **discrimination** all over the world.



Lunar New Year (旧正月) Spring Festival



Lunar New Year is the biggest holiday in China and celebrates a new year in the traditional Chinese **calendar**. It is called the **Spring Festival** in Chinese and is one to two weeks long. The festival is in January or February every year. This new year will begin on February 10, 2024. **Versions** of this festival are celebrated in many countries with Chinese **traditions** or people with Chinese roots. For example, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, the United States, and France.

The Chinese calendar has a cycle of twelve years, and twelve animals called the **Chinese Zodiac**. The order is: **rat/mouse, ox/cow, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat/ram/sheep, monkey, rooster/bird, dog, and pig/boar**. This system is still popular all over Asia, like in Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam.

In China, people travel home to be with their families and eat a **reunion** dinner together on Lunar New Year's Eve. Children receive little red envelopes of money. Many people wear **red** because it is the **lucky** color. People clean their house and hang red paper decorations. Chinese restaurants all over the world often have special parties with **lion dances** and **martial arts** performances to share their culture. Many **Chinatowns** have fun **parades** too!

XOXO,
Sheila



Example: RIFLE PAPER CO.

The Keika Chronicle Christmas Cards 5



