

Chōyō no Sekku (Chrysanthemum Festival)

Chōyō on the ninth day of the ninth month of the lunisolar calendar, when nine (the largest of the yang numbers) appears one after another, is a lesser-known word and the least familiar of the five seasonal festivals.

During the Heian period (794-1185), the court held Chrysanthemum Banquets, in which aristocrats hung oleaster bags with chrysanthemum flowers and oleaster branches on the wall to ward off evil spirits, and recited waka poems while drinking sake with chrysanthemum petals floating on it. Moreover, women of aristocrats who sought health and beauty liked to use chrysanthemum-scented cotton clothes (made by covering chrysanthemum flowers with cotton clothes and leaving them overnight), which got moist with the morning dew, to wipe their bodies in the morning of Chōyō.

Chrysanthemums initially came to Japan as medicine. It is considered that the famous legend of Kikujido (Chrysanthemum Pageboy) of ancient China was also introduced to Japan at that time and the legend which Japanese people liked very much spread fast. Later, the Kanze school of Noh created the play entitled Kikujido, and the Konparu, Hōshō, Kongo, and Kita schools created the play entitled Makurajido. These have been performed beautifully on the Noh stage.

Chōyō no Sekku, also known as the Chrysanthemum Festival, is an elegant and beautiful event decorated with chrysanthemums, in which adults play the main role.

