

Hamamoto, T. (2003). *Europe no Matsuritachi [Festivals of Europe]*, Tokyo: Akashi-shoten.

Kawai, S. (2010). *Shakespeare Handbook*, Tokyo: Sanseido.

Shakespeare, W. (1983). *Shakespeare zenshu [Complete works of Shakespeare]*, v. 12, translated by Y. Odashima, Tokyo: Hakusui-sha

**Kuri Miyamoto**

*Saitama University*

## **MIDSUMMER CELEBRATION IN JAPAN COMPARED TO EUROPE**

In this paper I will discuss Midsummer celebration in Japan and its features compared with those of Europe. First, I will show two examples of Japanese Midsummer celebrations. Reflecting those examples, I will make a comparison between Japan and Europe. Finally, I will conclude my research referring to the contents the former presenters had delivered.

### **What is Midsummer Celebration in Japan Like?**

First of all, there are only a few midsummer celebrations in Japan and they are very localized. Yet, midsummer celebrations at *Hutami Okitama shrine* in Mie prefecture can be said the most well-known celebration of Midsummer. Since ancient times, people worshipped *Hi-no-Okami*[the Sun God] rising from the middle of *Meoto-iwa*, a couple of two huge rocks symbolizing a husband and a wife. During this celebration participants bathe themselves in the sea and purify their bodies.

The second example is *Nagoshi-no-Oharae* [Major Purification Ritual of Summer] which is celebrated at Shinto shrines in many parts of Japan. To speak strictly, this ritual

does not necessarily mean Midsummer celebration because it does not have any meaning connected to Sun worship. According to the Association of Shinto Shrines, the purpose of this celebration is to purify and exorcize impurities of human mind and body. But it is clear that this celebration has something to do with the summer season.

### **Why is Midsummer Celebration rare and localized in Japan?**

One could ask why there is no national, nationwide Midsummer celebration in Japan and even localized ones are only a few. Generally, Midsummer comes in late June and Midsummer celebrations in Europe are held in the end of June and the beginning of July. However, in Japan, the season falls on the rainy season, or *Tsuyu* or *Baiu* ["Plum Tree rain"] in Japanese. Thus, it is difficult for Japanese to feel the blessing of the sun around Midsummer.

Another possible factor is the location of Japan which is an archipelago extending from the north to the south to the east of the Asian continent. In Midsummer the difference of daytime occurs up to one and a half hours between the northern Island of Hokkaido, the most north part of Japan, and Okinawa, the most southern prefecture. It is possible to assume that this difference of daytime is one reason why Japan has no national Midsummer celebration since they accept it very differently depending where they live.

To sum up our presentation, in the first part Oi has described Midsummer celebrations in Ukraine called Ivan Kupala. In Ivan Kupala, people do special things such as burning a fire and jumping over it, love fortune-telling, and making flower crowns. Moreover, these activities are not only seen in Ukraine, but also around Europe. Kamei has shown that European Midsummer celebrations have a lot in common with each other. Finally, as a comparison of European countries I referred to Midsummer celebrations

in Japan. My point is that Japan has no nationwide Midsummer celebration because of to its climate and geographical features.

### **References**

Ipros. (n.d.) "The length of daytime in the summer solstice. Which is longer, Sapporo or Naha?" [in Japanese]. <https://www.ipros.jp/monosiri/science/91>

Hutami Okitama Shrine. (n.d.) "*Special rituals*" [in Japanese]. <https://futamiokitamajinja.or.jp/event/special/>

Association of Shinto Shrines. (n.d.) "About Ooharae Rituals" [in Japanese].

[https://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/omatsuri/jinja\\_no\\_omatsuri/ooharae](https://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/omatsuri/jinja_no_omatsuri/ooharae)

\* For further understanding of Shinto or religious values of Japan, here is a recommended website: <https://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/>