

Cultural Project: Japan

Overview of the culture:

Japanese culture is a set of values that puts importance on social harmony and hard work. Up until the 10th century, Japanese culture was similar to Chinese culture, but the rise of the samurai in the Heian Period and the isolation during the Edo Period changed the rules of society. Overall, the culture was influenced by the local Shinto religion, Buddhism, Confucianism and the limited natural resources.

Religion:

Japanese religion also has an influence on common Japanese values. The values of purity and cleanliness come from Shintoism while perfectionism and minimalism come from zen Buddhism.

Shintoism is Japan's own religion where some natural objects are considered sacred but not necessarily worshiped as gods. Buddhism proposes that everyone can become a Buddha (the enlightened human) if he/she leaves worldly desires and lives a simple life. Japanese people traditionally go to both Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines; so they are both Shintoist and Buddhist.

Religion: Healthcare

Blood transfusions are accepted since the products come from living people, abortion is also widely accepted, but there is a more negative attitude toward organ donation due to the religious interpretations surrounding brain death since it's seen as an impure death; however despite this negativity, transplant surgeries are still performed.

Healing beliefs and practices:

"*Gaman* — it is to endure, accept the pain, don't complain."

The older generation feels that having *Gaman* shows maturity and strength. *Gaman* helps Japanese people put up with internal, organic pain, so they don't bother others with their complaints. But seeking pain relief for something like a sore shoulder is okay, and that's where the other cultural principle comes into play: risk aversion. If they do seek pain relief, they'll look for the product that has minimal side effects.

Healing beliefs and practices: Labor, delivery, and the postpartum period

For labor and delivery, childbirth is considered a natural event and is usually drug-free and midwife assisted. Women in labor are encouraged to eat, as it is believed that food will provide the strength and energy needed for effective pushing. Women are also encouraged not to cry during labor. In Japanese culture, the Cesarean section is viewed as a great hardship to a woman, but it is considered very important to do what the doctor says. Fathers are not usually present during labor.

In the postpartum period, in Japan, women stay at their maternal home for up to eight weeks after the baby is born. There a postpartum woman can rest, recuperate, and learn how to take care of the infant. Infants are usually cared for by the mother of a postpartum woman. In Japan, showering or washing hair is prohibited until seven days after birth (including in hospitals). Breastfeeding outside the home, even in mothers' care rooms, is still considered embarrassing and shameful, so very few women feed their infants outside the home.

Family life:

Family (*kazoku*) is a foundational part of Japanese society. An individual's identity, reputation, obligations and responsibilities are deeply connected to their family. With the rapid aging of the population, elderly children often care for their elderly parents. Household units today tend to be two-generational, containing the husband and wife with their children. Both the husband and wife are usually engaged in the paid workforce, though this changes once a couple starts having children. The wife usually assumes the responsibility of tending to the children, domestic labor, managing the family budget, and maintaining social relations.

Communication:

Male Japanese speakers use sentence finals such as *ze*, *yo*, and *na* that express abruptness and forcefulness. Female Japanese speakers, on the other hand, use *wa*, *no*, and *kashira* sentence finals implying a softening, hesitance, and lack of assertiveness. Other than that, there are no restrictions with talking to strangers when it comes to gender norms. Nonverbal communication: Minimal physical contact is preferred. People tend to avoid touching others unless it is unavoidable, like in a crowded public place. Indirect eye contact is the norm as direct eye contact may be interpreted as intimidating. Indirect eye contact is particularly common when speaking to an elder or someone higher ranking to demonstrate respect. Usually, people will look at another part of someone's face, such as their chin.

Diet:

Japanese women may be concerned with gaining weight during their pregnancy and postpartum period. They may restrict their diets and subsequently, may be unable to produce enough milk to feed their infant.

References

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