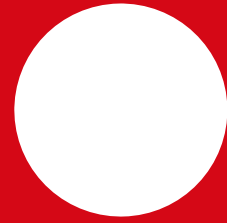


JAPANESE SYMBOLS

Presented by Vika and Lina



OFFICIAL SYMBOLS

National symbols of Japan are the symbols that are used in Japan to represent what is unique about the nation, reflecting different aspects of its cultural life and history.

Flag

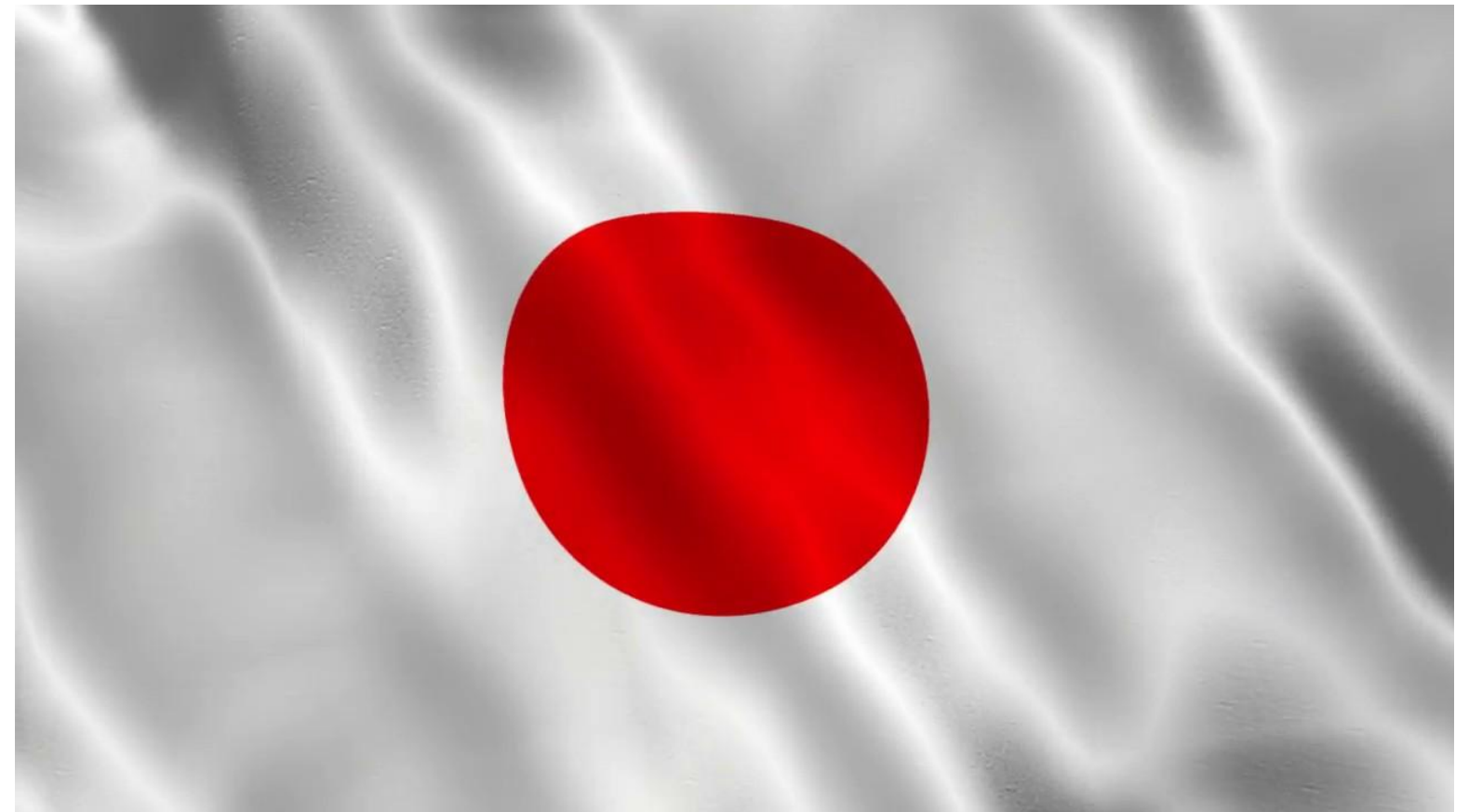
Coat of arms

National anthem

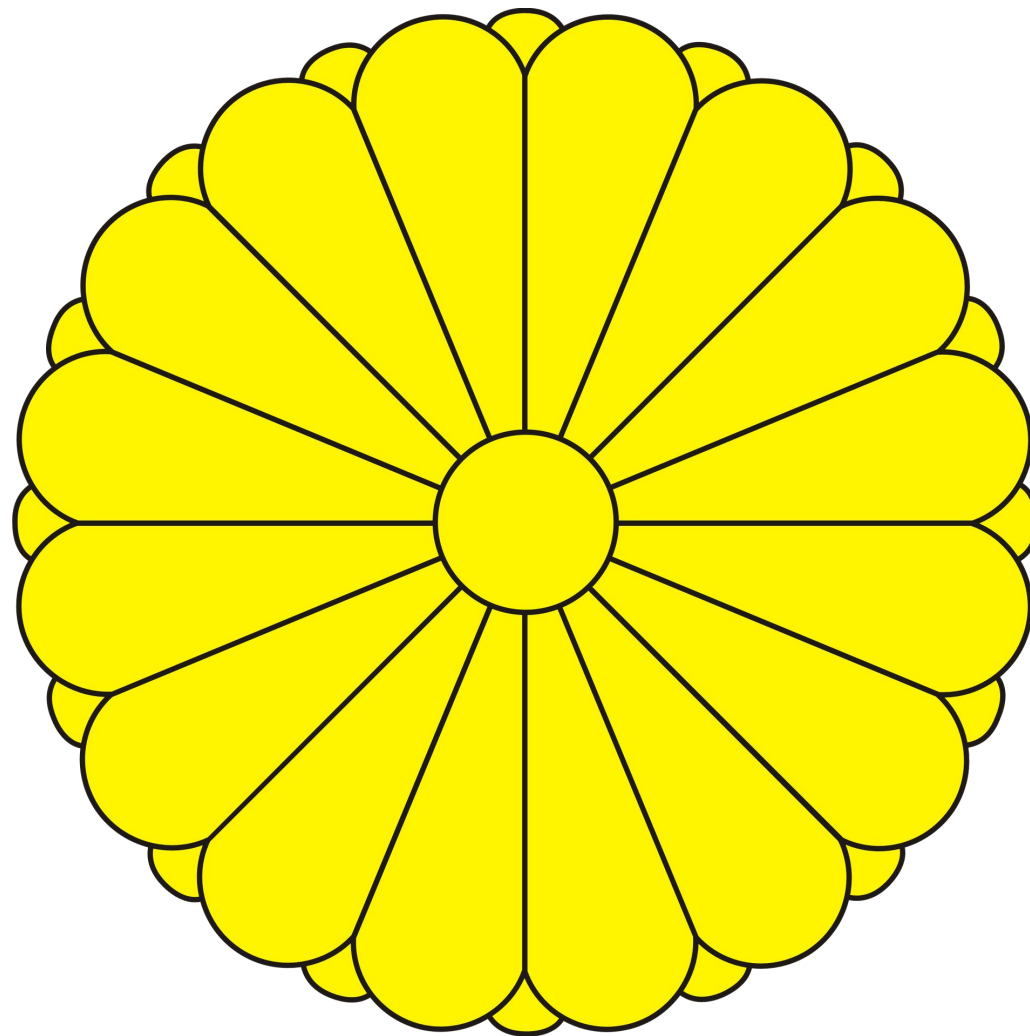


Flag and Coat of arms

The national flag of Japan is a rectangular white banner bearing a crimson-red circle at its center. This flag is officially called the Nisshōki ('flag of sun'), but is more commonly known in Japan as the Hinomaru ('circle of the sun'). It embodies the country's sobriquet: the Land of the Rising Sun.



Flag and Coat of arms

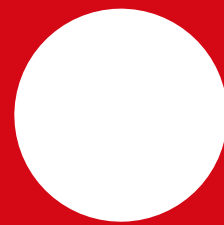


The Imperial Seal of Japan or National Seal of Japan, also called the Chrysanthemum Seal, Chrysanthemum Flower Seal, is one of the national seals and a crest used by the Emperor of Japan and members of the Imperial Family. It is a contrast to the Paulownia Seal used by the Japanese government.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Lyric

May thy peaceful reign last long!
May it last for thousands of years,
Until this tiny stone
Will grow into a massive rock
And the moss will cover it all deep
and thick.



"Kimigayo" is the national anthem of Japan. The lyrics of "Kimigayo" are probably the oldest among the world's national anthems, and with a length of 32 characters, they are also the world's shortest. The lyrics are from a waka poem written by an unnamed author in the Heian period (794-1185), and the current melody was chosen in 1880, replacing an unpopular melody composed by John William Fenton eleven years earlier. Its length of 11 measures is currently among the world's shortest. While the title "Kimigayo" is usually translated as "His Imperial Majesty's Reign", no official translation of the title or lyrics has been established in law.





Geisha - a woman of art

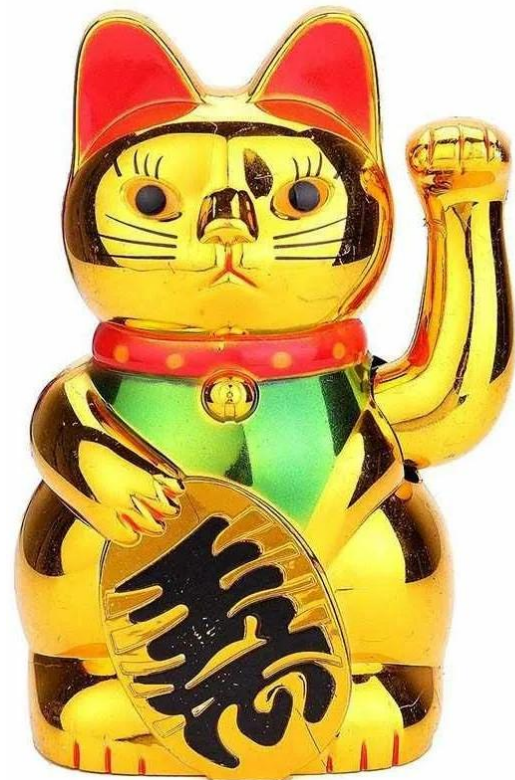
Geisha, in Japanese this word denotes a woman with artistic skills. She wears a sumptuous kimono, strong makeup, and a lush hairstyle every day and the most common additions to her costume are a fan or an umbrella. To become a geisha, a woman must first complete education in a special school. At such a school, they learn various dance techniques and crafts and they are also taught about culture and important ceremonies. All the decorative layers worn by a geisha are meant to separate her from the surrounding reality itself. Through this, the woman of art becomes not only a living symbol of artistry but also a symbol of mystery, wisdom and hidden beauty.

SAMURAI - A JAPANESE KNIGHT

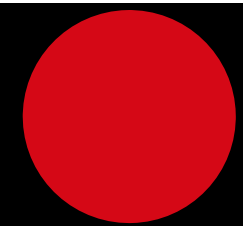
The Samurai were ancient Japanese warriors who were completely devoted to their ruler. They were guided by honour and the unwritten bushidō (the warrior's path) code. They gained recognition through valour and enlightenment. They never parted with their main weapon - the katana, which symbolised their constant readiness to fight and in itself was the very soul of the samurai. These Japanese warriors are a symbol of courage, loyalty and persistence.



Maneki-neko cat figurines



The Japanese are strongly attached to their traditions, culture, customs, but also superstitions. This is why in Japan one can encounter images of cats almost everywhere. Why cats? Because, according to the Japanese, they bring good luck and prosperity. Citizens of the Land of the Rising Sun are especially fond of maneki-neko. It is a figurine of a bobtail cat with a raised paw. This type of figurine is often placed at entrances to restaurants or sanctuaries, where it “welcomes” the visitors, and is also sold in the form of various tourist souvenirs. When visiting Japan, it is a good idea to acquire one of these figurines to see first-hand if the feline luck actually exists.



ORIGAMI - THE ART OF FOLDING PAPER

Similarly to the previously mentioned bonsai tree, Origami originated in China. However, once again, this art form became very popular in Japan and it is there that it started to truly flourish. Therefore, origami is strongly associated with the Land of the Cherry Blossoms. These amazing paper figurines, often arranged in an extraordinary manner, are one of Japan's signature symbols. When assembling such paper shapes, one should never use scissors, glue or additional decorations. This is the actual phenomenon behind origami art - it is all about creating works of art using only one's hands, paper and creativity. Special origami museums can also be found throughout Japan.





HOLY MOUNT FUJI

Fuji is one of the most iconic symbols of Japan. It is not only a mountain but an active volcano as well. It is also the highest peak in the country (3766 m ASL). The fact that it is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List serves as a confirmation of its beauty.

During the peak of the tourist season, reaching the summit requires visitors to stand in extremely long queues, but the marvellous view after climbing up there is well worth the hassle. To the Japanese themselves, Fuji is a sacred mountain and every citizen of the Land of the Rising Sun should visit it at least once in their life. Whoever manages to climb to the very top may call himself a great man.

There are many interesting customs and superstitions in Japanese culture. Most of them are very positive and concern good luck in people's lives. Thanks to this, it is undoubtedly easier for the Japanese to overcome various challenges and problems, as they believe that they deserve happiness.

QUESTIONS

- 1. What is an official name of the flag?**
- 2. What is the meaning of "Hinomaru"?**
- 3. What does "katana" symbolize?**
- 4. Why is the cat symbol important?**
- 5. Where was an origami invented?**