



JAPAN INFORMATION
AND CULTURE CENTER
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

TEACHING TUESDAY

NESTING DOLLS

Russian matryoshka nesting dolls are well-known for their colourful fun, but did you know they were most likely inspired by a doll imported from Japan? It is believed that the Russian nesting dolls were modelled after a figurine of one of the seven Japanese gods of luck – the deity of scholarship and wisdom named Fukuruma.

The first nesting boxes were dated back to China in 1000 AD, and soon after brought to Japan. Japan already had a tradition of similar dolls in the daruma and kokeshi dolls, so the tradition of nesting these dolls quickly took off. The Japanese also created a new type of nesting doll, the Fukuruma dolls, which featured the shape of Fukurokuju, the Japanese god of happiness and longevity and one of the Seven Lucky Gods from Japanese mythology. It was this doll that was said to have been brought to Russia. Some daruma and kokeshi dolls were also converted into the nesting variety.

Nesting dolls are said to have made their way to Russia in the early 1890s, where they took on a life of their own and became a significant part of Russian culture. But you can still find the Japanese nesting dolls in certain daruma and kokeshi dolls, which are widely available!