



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

TEACHING TUESDAY

HAGOITA

Hagoita (羽子板 「はごいた」) are long, rectangular wooden paddles used to play the New Year game *hanetsuki* (羽根突き, 羽子突き). Similar to badminton, except without a net, *hanetsuki* can be played by one person attempting to keep the shuttlecock aloft as long as possible, or by two people batting it back and forth. Although the game itself is not played often anymore, the *hagoita* paddles remain a popular New Year ornament.

Dating back to the 17th century, *hagoita* are usually painted with lacquer, and then decorated with large, three-dimensional motifs of auspicious New Year symbols, or with complex silk and washi paper dolls. Traditionally, the image is of an elegant Kabuki actor, but recently celebrities, TV personalities, athletes, and even anime characters have become popular motifs. These decorative *hagoita* are considered good-luck charms, which you can use to “hit” away the bad luck.

The most popular place to buy *hagoita* is at the *Hagoita-Ichi* (Battle-dore Fair) at Senso-ji temple in Asakusa, Tokyo. This annual fair takes over the last 15 days of the year, and is filled with 50 open-air stalls selling *hagoita*, shuttlecocks, kites and other New Year decorations. The fair began back in the Edo period, but continues to be a popular end-of-the-year tradition even today. When a *hagoita* is sold, sellers and buyers clap their hands rhythmically in harmony to celebrate. Other shrines, like Furukawa Fudō, also host similar fairs.