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TEACHING TUESDAY

HARI KUYOU

FEBRUARY 14, 2017

Hari Kuyou (針供養) is a uniquely Japanese tradition, and is known as the Festival of Broken Needles. Celebrated on February 8 in the Kanto region, and December 8 in the Kyoto and Kansai regions, the festival serves a memorial for all needles and pins broken in service during the year.

The tradition of Hari Kuyou evolves out of the old believe that tools and utensils that are used roughly could become monsters and attack people 100 years later. Thus, people were always careful not to be wasteful or throw away tools thoughtlessly, lest it come back to harm them later. To prevent this, ceremonies like the Hari Kuyou were created to show thanks for service of the tool before it broke.

The Hari Kuyou festival involves taking broken or damaged sewing needles, sticking them in tofu or konnyaku, and then offering it at a Shinto shrine. Sticking the needles into a soft substance is said to be a way of showing appreciation to the needles that broke being stuck into something hard.