

Omamori

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Omamori in Japan

Portfolio

In this portfolio you will find the origins and usage of Omamori in Japan. The different designs of Omamori and their function within Japanese culture. Also traditional and non-traditional omamori. And how omamori had changed through time.

Omamori in Japan are mainly distributed by Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines throughout Japan. As amulets, these objects are meant to be carried by a person at all times in which they wish to receive the benefits that an omamori is said to offer. In modern times, in addition to being a religious object, these amulets have become accessories for cell-phones, bags, purses, and automobiles. Said to protect people from accidents, disease, loneliness, failure, computer viruses, among many other things, these objects are one of the few material aspects of religion that are a component of everyday life in contemporary Japan.



Various omamori from different shrines

The meaning of Omamori



Meaning of omamori:

The word mamori means protection, while omamori is the respectful way of the word, to protect. Omamori were initially made of paper, wood, metal, and plastic. They are often placed inside a fabric pouch, and cost between \$5 and \$15 U.S. dollars. The modern omamori are small objects frequently kept inside a decorated bag. Tradition states that they have bunshin, or spiritual appendages, in a Shinto context. These amulets supposedly bring good fortune and prevent misfortune. Omamori are available at Shinto shrines and most Buddhist for sale, regardless of buyers' religious beliefs.

Types of omamori



Success omamori

According to Mendes, the examination of omamori holds great implications for furthering our understanding of Japanese society, as well as for the interaction of religion with a modernizing and globalizing world.(152). Omamori offer people a way to combat, express and bear their concerns, and help them overcome what cannot be prevented or cured. These objects are a commodity altered in both form, the morphology and design of an omamori, and function, the supernatural benefits an omamori offers its possessor, by the concerns of the Japanese public.

happiness, traffic safety, romance, safe childbirth, avoidance of evil, good fortune, education, good health, and prosperity. There are also some unusual ones such as: digital security, safety from bears and pet safety.

Production



Omamori in a form of a fox this omamori is meant to “open” one’s luck and drive away evil.

Production:

According to Magnier, Industrialization and technological advancement have altered omamori’s form as well. Originally produced by lay women,⁴³ omamori are now almost entirely produced by large secular manufacturing companies that specialize in the production of religious objects. ⁴⁴ The switch to secularized manufacturing is due to both the ease of long distance travel, and an accompanying increase in demand for these objects. The high demand for omamori has made it impossible for temples and shrines to continue using their laity for omamori production.

Types of omamori



Types of omamori

There are two main types of omamori. The first are talismans, which are rectangular and the most popular kind of omamori. These gain their power from words written on paper or wood. The words could be the name of the shrine, or a section from a sutra, or some other powerful words. The wood or paper is then sealed inside a cloth bag. It is said, never open the cloth to see what is inside! It is disrespectful and the omamori will lose its power.

Types of omamori



second type are the morphic omamori. This means they are made in the shape of something. The traditional forms are the bottle gourd, the bell, and the mallet. Of these, the bottle gourd may be the oldest, appearing in many ancient folk tales as a symbol of health, vitality, and immortality. Each has ceremonial links to objects used in Shinto practices. Some shrines have very famous orphic omamori, such as the fox omamori at Inari shrines. Another common kind of morphic omamori are zodiac animals.

forms:



bring you luck and look pretty nice
hanging up on a wall

forms:

omamori took on very simple forms — a small piece of wood, or paper with a prayer or the name of a deity written on it. The only apparent concerns for aesthetics were in the quality of wood and paper used to create the omamori, likely done to avoid having the amulet's potency questioned due to poor craftsmanship. Omamori needed be little more than objects which brought about desired effects. If a person was being haunted or came down with an illness, that person bought an omamori to alleviate their problem, carried it with them, and kept it hidden until it served its purpose. Today's omamori have changed a great deal. In addition to carrying religious power, omamori have now become objects of personal adornment.

Omamori in history



These are meant to help you achieve happiness in life.

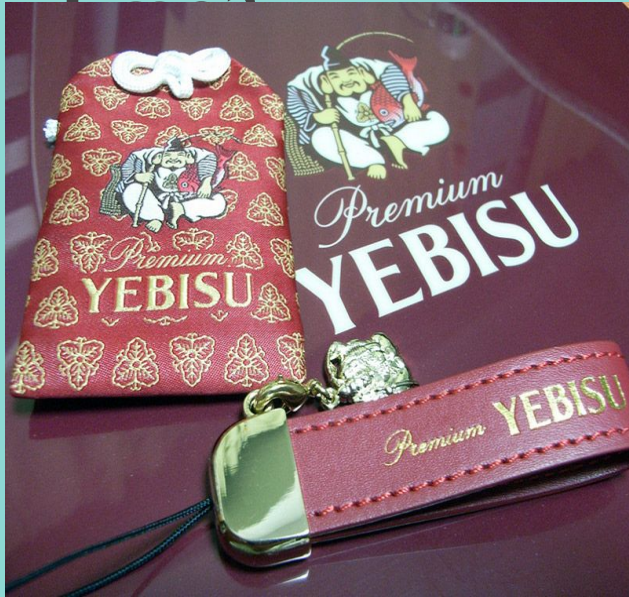


Originally to protect travellers, these are now very popular type of omamori. They provide protection for drivers and vehicles.

Omamori in history

According to Swanger, changed appear to be a constant characteristic of religious phenomenon thought japan history (239). Before in 1950 most omamori were made out of paper of wood, only a few were made of metal. Today in modern days plastic has become a common material for their construction. Moreover, they can be bumper stickers, bicycle reflectors or even credit cards Changing are presently occurring in a variety of ways. The traffic safety omamori was seldom found twenty years ago and in regions such as kyushu it was not use even as ten years ago. Today is the most commun omamori in japan. As is so popular you can find it anywhere in japan. Recently traffic safety stickers have become popular. The omamori are not considered only objects. They have a meaning and special power, but when people are not familiar with the world of Shinto they may not understand the uses of these talismans. "The omamori is better understood if it is thought of as a token of nominal presence and assistance, which requires the complete and sincere effort of the person possessing it. It will not automatically guarantee success in examination or safety in driving or prosperity in business. Without intelligent energy and care, the individual cannot avoid failure or achieve success

how they have changed over



As I mentioned before In the past, making omamori was a duty of the laywomen of the parish or Miko, the shrine maidens. These days most omamori are made in factories, they are still blessed by priests. However, some shrines continue to make their own omamori on site, such as Koganji Temple in Tokyo and the Grand Shrine at Ise. One of the first major change made to modern omamori was the addition of a cloth pouch. It is a long standing belief in Japan, especially within Shintoism, that deities inhabit hollow and dark places, hollow trees, mountains, and the inside of stones for example. Since an omamori carries the essence of a deity, it was believed that for that essence to remain in the charm, the individual would have to keep it in a dark place, hidden from light. Once the aspect of the amulet inhabited by the deity's essence was constantly enclosed in a dark place, the cloth pouch, it was no longer necessary to keep the omamori hidden.

As time went by, it seems that the importance of omamori connection to being hidden diminished. Within a generation of the standardization of pouch use, new omamori were being produced which clearly possessed no consistently hidden aspect. Temples and shrines started making telephone card omamori, which one would have been expected to regularly remove from one's wallet. It seems as though the elimination of the conscious act of hiding omamori allowed people to forget that this had been a significant aspect of their use. As this was no longer important, new omamori made their way onto the scene that had not been possible in the past

Modern omamori



omamori use as an accessory in the last thirty years is the development of bumper sticker and adhesive omamori for cars, and keitai-strap omamori for cell phones, electronics and their cases. Lacking the need to have a hidden aspect, these omamori soon gained a variability and popularity that has persisted now a days.

Though their origins lie far back in Japan's folk traditions, omamori are very much a part of modern Japanese culture. There's even an omamori vending machine at Zenkoji Temple, Nagano. You can also find many omamori with cute characters on them. Some of these aren't sold at shrines or temples, but just regular souvenir shops. Some Shinto and Buddhist organisations disapprove of this dilution of omamori. Others happily sell character omamori.

how they have changed over time?

Color & variation

Color variation is also a highly used means of making omamori appealing. There are many religious institutions that offer the same talisman in a variety of colors, and an array of other charms that can complete the color rainbow. The purchasing of omamori today can be dictated solely by their attractiveness to a patron or tourist, and in various cases are purchased as souvenirs and even collected. The reality is that, today, omamori are an accessory, and, as such, they must help accentuate the image an individual wishes to project.



Tradition & non-tradition omamori

The public aspect of omamori is extremely significant in the reserved social atmosphere of Japan. Showing one's true nature, or the ties one has to religion is a very revealing act, something that is not taken lightly. Taking this into consideration, omamori can be thought of as coming in two basic forms, traditional those which are plainly religious in nature from their appearance; and non-traditional omamori which take the form of an animal, character, or object, which are only verifiably religious upon closer inspection. The use of a traditional omamori makes it clear to those around an individual that they are using a religious object. Non-traditional omamori, however, are far more discrete. These omamori tend to look identical to cell phone charms that can be bought at shopping centers and souvenir shops which carry no religious ties. Often the only way to know if a non-traditional omamori is in fact an omamori is if one looks at the small silver or gold tag attached to the strap which carries the name of the temple or shrine where it was purchased. The discretion, and often exaggerated cuteness or coolness of these charms in particular, makes them the ideal talisman for someone who wishes to use an omamori.

As part of cute culture, the popular Hello Kitty character is one of the only non religious figures to permeate omamori. In fact, in 2010, there was one shrine in Tokyo in which more than half of the types of omamori sold there featured Hello Kitty. Hello Kitty is undeniably one of the most powerful marketing characters of Japan's post-war generation. Representing a billion dollar a year industry, she successfully crosses the age gap, appealing to children as being cool, adolescents as being cute, and adults as being nostalgic.



conclusion



Omamori are a patron driven commodity. They have changed form and purpose over time with the society in which they exist. With a reduction in attesting to belief in supernatural powers, omamori are said to be used as symbolic gifts offered to show people your concern and consideration for their plights. With a rise in popularity of cute and accessorizing objects, omamori's forms have changed to fill this desire. With the adoption of new technologies, and thus new stressors, omamori have also adopted new functions such as the driving safety and the protection of electronic data. The ability of omamori to adapt in these ways is a significant reason why a tradition tied to ideas that might be considered magical has not only persisted into, but flourished in modern times.



Citations

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