

Foreign Customs

A Banquet in Japan

IF YOU take a boat in Manila and go to Japan, in eight days you will be there. Japan is a beautiful country, and the Japanese people are very industrious. Many of their customs and habits are different from ours. Let us go to a Japanese banquet and watch their quaint way of taking their meals.

Food is served on a low table where the members of the family and the visitors squat and cross their legs. This part of their custom reminds one of our own old-fashioned way of eating. Some of our poor families to this day regularly take their meals at *dutangs*. *Dulang* is the Tagalog name for the low dinner table.

In Japan the dining room, as any other room in the house, is perfectly clean and orderly because the wooden shoes the people wear are removed before entering the house. The room has very simple decorations. It is almost bare of color except for the bright-petaled flowers on pots at the low windows. Doors and windows slide open and shut. Besides another small table at the corner, the only piece of furniture in the room is the dining tables. Things have no importance in a Japanese room: the people are everything.

The typical banquet in that neighbor country of ours takes place in a simple but impressive manner. Two girls in bright silk kimonos enter the room. Their dresses are beautifully decorated with figures. They carry trays on which little cups of green tea and pieces of green candy are placed.

After the tea the same girls bring in hot napkins. These pieces of cloth serve to clean the visitors' faces. Then follows the third course, the pea salad. The girls prepare the main dish, the *skiaki*, on a little gas stove in the middle of the table. The dish consists of a big piece of fat, green onions, beans, sugar, soya-bean sauce, and finally pieces of meat. These bits of meat are mixed with raw eggs in saucers. Instead of spoons and forks, the Japanese, like the Chinese, use chopsticks throughout the entire meal.

Conversation begins to be interesting. The educated Japanese loves to talk about music, art, history, and literature. They are very polite and patient.

At the end of the dinner a *geisha* arrives. A *geisha* is a Japanese singing and dancing girl. She is accompanied by another woman with a *shu mi-sen* or lute. The woman with the lute sits down cross-legged and begins to play on her instrument. The *geisha* dances, or rather skips, in her white cotton socks in front of the people in the room. All the men clap their hands to beat measure with her dancing. Then, one of them invites the *geisha* to dance a one-step with him.

After a round of dancing, the *geisha* and her companion with the lute sit with the guests and drink *sake*, the favorite wine of Japan. The *sake* is served steaming hot. The party ends in a quiet way, and the guests, happy and entertained, depart for home.

The Sampaguita

By Dr. Maria Pastrana-Castrance



THE sampaguita is the national flower of the Philippines. I am sure you know how it looks like. It is white and small and very fragrant. At night when the flowers bloom, they give a cool sweet odor. New flowers blossom all the year. They come out most abundantly, however, in the dry months of April and May.

The buds of this flower are usually made into rosaries and necklaces. This is done by passing abaca fibers through the buds, llang-ilang flowers and roses are tied at the end of the necklaces. Young women are fond of wearing these garlands around their necks.

The sampaguita plant is a slender, vine-like shrub. It is about two meters tall. It grows best when it is allowed to lean and climb on fences. The leaves are oval. They are somewhat pointed at the ends. They are arranged in pairs which are opposite to each other on the stem.

It is said that the sampaguita is a native of India. The Hindus call this flower *balphul*. It is named *sampaga* in Pampango, *manol* in Visayan, and *sampaguita* or *kampupot* in Tagalog. In naming this flower *kampupot*, the Tagalogs are misled. The real *kampupot* is another flower belonging to the same family as the sampaguita.

Some people think that the name sampaguita was taken from *sampaga*. *Sampaga* is defined by a Tagalog dictionary as a kind of flower similar to jasmine. Another book says that it is another name for flower.

The old folks in the Tagalog region
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SAMPAGUITA . . .

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gions believe that the name sampaguita was taken from *sampa-kita*, which means love's vow. It is said that in a small barrio a young man and a beautiful maiden loved each other. Both were poor.

One day the young man died. The beautiful maiden became very sad. She had no money to buy roses or other expensive flowers for her loved one. As she walked along the fields, she saw tiny, white flowers growing near bamboo fences. She gathered a cluster of these flowers and scattered them all over the tomb of the young man. Those flowers were sampaguitas. But in those days the people had no name for them. So they called these pretty blossoms sampaguitas in memory of the great love between the man and the woman.

Do you know the best way to plant sampaguitas? In this country the seeds of sampaguitas do not mature and can not be used for planting. Instead of seeds, stems are used to grow new plants. First of all, cut a healthy green stem whose buds are ready to sprout. Use a sharp knife in the cutting so that the tiny cells at the end of the stem will not be crushed and closed. Water from the ground passes through these tiny cells into the plant. Plants, like animals, need water as well as food in order to live.

Before planting the stem, remove the old leaves from it. Let the young leaves and the buds remain.

Plant the stem in a box. Place it in the shade until new leaves begin to come out and new roots are developed. Give it enough water.

After you have removed the young plant from the box, transplant it in a moderately rich soil. Be sure to watch it every day, especially during the dry season. Flowers will appear in a month or two. If you want to have many, many flowers, remove now and then old leaves and old stems from the plant.

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SAMPAGUITA . . .

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Being our national flower, the sampaguita must be cultivated widely in our gardens and in our public parks. It represents the beautiful in our country. Our poets often speak of our young maidens as the sampaguitas in this garden of the East.

ARE YOU COLLECTING . . .

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Aside from the profits, stamp collecting is enjoyable. Is it not a pleasure to know that the colored squares of paper that you keep come from strange and distant countries?

You will even be interested to increase your knowledge of geography. You would want to be acquainted with the countries and their people who used or still use the stamps in your collection.

Do you know how to begin the hobby of stamp-collecting? You may start with the postage stamps of our country. You need a stamp album in which to keep them. A good stamp album can be bought from any large store selling school supplies, toys, and stationery. The same store may have foreign stamps for sale.

You can get foreign stamps free by writing to boys and girls in other countries. When your friends from far away send you copies from their collection, they expect you to send yours too.

One thing to remember when you start this hobby is never to paste down your stamps. Stamp mounts can be bought from any stamp dealer. These gummed strips of paper are used to hinge down the stamps to the album like the lid of a desk. Thus, when you want to remove the stamps and transfer them to another album, you can easily do so without destroying them.