

rich and get married with a girl he loved. However, he ended up being unhappy. As is well known, devils appear in many Ukrainian folktales. In “St. John’s Eve” and many Ukrainian folktales, the devil is a troublesome existence. Therefore, driving away the evil spirits or devils were believed as an important event on Ivan Kupala.

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MIDSUMMER CELEBRATIONS IN EUROPE

I would like to talk about Midsummer Celebration in Western and Northern European countries.

As is well known, St. John’s day, June 24, is traditionally celebrated as the birthday of St. John who was a prophet known as John the Baptist. He is regarded as a predecessor of Jesus Christ. Before Christianity people celebrated Midsummer among Celts, Germanic people and Slavs. As Christianity spread among them, they made this celebration into the feast of John the Baptist as his birthday was believed to be six months earlier than Jesus’s. This is how John the Baptist and Midsummer have been merged. William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* has a plot connected with St. John’s Day. In this comedy, on Midsummer Night, confusion is caused between two human couples and one fairy couple triggered by a magic love potion. In Midsummer night, people let themselves loose which can lead to a situation which was sometimes referred to as “Midsummer night madness”. Shakespeare’s comedy has two elements strongly related to Midsummer’s folk customs. The first one is love. It is believed that on a midsummer night young couples went to forests to give each other a corolla as a sign of their love. In Shakespeare’s comedy, the plot unfolds within a forest and love plays a main role in it. The second element is fairies. People believed that fairies, demons and evil spirits moved around

and fooled people. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has a lot of fairies and fairy magic. The picture below shows the main couple of the comedy, Titania and Oberon. Shakespeare made the most of such old folk beliefs and rituals.

Now I would like to show some examples of this celebration in two specific countries. First, Zederhaus, an Austrian village which is famous for a parade with decorated poles parade called Prangstangen. They decorate wooden poles which are 6 to 8 meters tall with flowers. For decoration they need about sixty thousand flowers and three hundred hours to prepare. These poles are carried by unmarried young men who symbolize the prosperity of descendants. Through this parade, people wish a huge harvest and prosperity for their village.

The second example is Dalarna region in Sweden. In Dalarna, you can see the typical Swedish Midsummer Celebration. In Sweden they celebrate Midsummer on Saturday between June 20 and 26. The celebration starts on Friday. One of the main events is standing up poles called Mjsteng. They are the same as Maypoles held in Germanic countries. In other countries, the ceremonies are held in March, but in Nordic countries they are held in June because March is still cold and they cannot get greens and flowers for decoration. As they finish erecting the poles, they dance around them and sing together wearing corolla and folk costumes. As Hideya Oi writes, Sun worship has an important meaning in this event. In this season daylight hours are very long, about 20 hours a day. Therefore, holding the celebration for the Sun on Midsummer's day is important for Swedish people/in Sweden.

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MIDSUMMER CELEBRATION IN JAPAN COMPARED TO EUROPE

In this paper I will discuss Midsummer celebration in Japan and its features compared with those of Europe. First, I will show two examples of Japanese Midsummer celebrations. Reflecting those examples, I will make a comparison between Japan and Europe. Finally, I will conclude my research referring to the contents the former presenters had delivered.

What is Midsummer Celebration in Japan Like?

First of all, there are only a few midsummer celebrations in Japan and they are very localized. Yet, midsummer celebrations at *Hutami Okitama shrine* in Mie prefecture can be said the most well-known celebration of Midsummer. Since ancient times, people worshipped *Hi-no-Okami*[the Sun God] rising from the middle of *Meoto-iwa*, a couple of two huge rocks symbolizing a husband and a wife. During this celebration participants bathe themselves in the sea and purify their bodies.

The second example is *Nagoshi-no-Oharae* [Major Purification Ritual of Summer] which is celebrated at Shinto shrines in many parts of Japan. To speak strictly, this ritual