



THIS MONTH IN OKINAWA

In Okinawa, the month of February is characterized by *essentially constant* mild temperatures, with daily highs around $63^{\circ}F$ throughout the month, rarely exceeding $66^{\circ}F$ or dropping below $57^{\circ}F$.

The average rainfall during February in Okinawa is around *4.2 inches*, with an average of 13 days precipitation expected. Skies over Okinawa in February are dull with around 69% of the daylight hours being covered in cloud. The shortest day is 10 hrs 55 mins whilst the longest day is 11 hrs 32 mins.

LOCAL EVENTS

LUNAR NEW YEAR: Celebrate the Year of the Dog

DFS T-Galleria, Okinawa
February 15-28, 2018

The T-Galleria in Okinawa will be hosting a number of promotions throughout the store to celebrate the new year:

Traditional Festive Performance

Encounter an amazing traditional street



performance at T Galleria on February 16 and 17.

Interactive Treasure Hunt February 16 to 18

Hidden around the store will be 4 checkpoints of dog illustrations. Collect stamps

by scanning the illustrations with your mobile phone. Collect all the stamps to redeem them for a prize!

Follow the [link](#) for more details!





2018 is the Year of the Dog

Celebrating the Lunar New Year



Just as New Year celebrations finish in the West, folks are gearing up to mark Chinese New Year in the East! February 16, 2018 marks the beginning of the Year of the Dog. Although it did not originate in Japan, the Chinese zodiac, and the 12 animals that represent it, have been embraced by Japanese culture wholeheartedly. During the time of both the New Year on January first and the Lunar Calendar New Year in Japan, you will find the year's zodiac animal on cards, decorations, and more!

Japan is a popular destination for tourists from China, due to its relative proximity and Japan's reputation for high-quality food and shopping. There are also a large number of Chinese migrants and their descendants living in enclaves such as the



Chukagai (Chinatown areas) of Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagasaki, as well as modern settlements in Tokyo's Ikebukuro district.

Chinese Lunar New Year is a celebration that takes place from the first new moon between mid-January and the end of February. It's a festival that honors old traditions and family ancestors, as well as celebrating the coming spring. There are a number of customs, traditions, and superstitions attached to New Year's celebrations that call back to early Chinese legends.

People traditionally clean their homes before the new year to start the the coming year fresh, much like spring cleaning in Western cultures. It's believed to clean out any bad luck from the past year and make room for good luck to come in. Doors and windows are opened during this time as well to bring good fortune into one's home. Once New Year's rolls around, however, be sure to put away the broom, or you may risk sweeping away the good luck of the new year.





2018 is the Year of the Dog



Celebrating in Style

On Chinese New Year's Eve, families gather for a large reunion dinner, where they eat a special meal full of dishes believed to bring good fortune. Dumplings and spring rolls are said to bring wealth, while fish is said to bring prosperity.

Chinese New Year is also a time to eat sweet dumplings and desserts such as sticky rice cakes. After the reunion dinner, family members try to stay up as late as possible on the first day of the new year, a practice called "shou sui". Tradition states that staying awake longer will bless your parents with longevity.

Historically, Japan celebrated New Year's according to the traditional lunar calendar like China. However, during the Meiji Era, the Japanese government moved towards Westernization and adopted the Gregorian calendar with the new year beginning on January 1. Still, the symbolic importance of Chinese zodiac animals continued, with the animals being incorporated into Japanese new year celebrations. And due to the large number of Chinese migrants and their descendants, Chinese New Year festivities are still celebrated in Japan.

Chinese visitors, as well as visitors from any other country, can celebrate the Lunar New

or by eating special *magashi* (Japanese sweets) and Chinese cakes.

Yokohama Chukagai (Chinatown) is one of the best places to enjoy Chinese New Year celebrations in Japan. Festivities include lion and dragon dances, musical performances, acrobatics, a parade featuring traditional clothing, and fireworks. The Kobe Chinatown called "Nankinmachi" also features live performances, tai chi demonstrations, and firecrackers. Stalls selling food and other goods line the streets.

Shinchi Chukagai, established in Nagasaki during the 17th century, is the oldest Chinatown in Japan. The district holds a massive lantern festival to celebrate the lunar new year, with over 15,000 gorgeous Chinese lanterns on display, from small intricate designs to massive lanterns in the shape of Chinese zodiac animals.



Click [here](#) to see mochi being prepared

WORDS OF WISDOM

Chira kaagi yaka chimu gukuru. – Kind hearts are better than fair faces.

Okinawan Proverb





SETSUBUN

Japan's Bean-Throwing Festival

Literally meaning the “seasonal division”, *Setsubun* (節分) is an important Japanese celebration associated with the changing of seasons. Setsubun is traditionally celebrated on the day before the beginning of spring according to the lunar calendar (now fixed to February 3rd as part of the *Haru Matsuri* or Spring Festival).



While it has been marked in many ways across the centuries, nowadays the most common Setsubun ritual is *mamemaki* or bean-throwing, in which people throw roasted soy beans from their homes and temples and shrines throughout the country while shouting, “*Oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi!*” (Demons out, good luck in!).

It is believed this act will ward off evil spirits for the coming

year. Eating the number of soy beans corresponding to your age is considered especially lucky. Some also believe eating one extra will bring even more good fortune.

Often someone will dress up as a demon (usually by way of a mask) to visually represent the ritualistic driving out of bad spirits. This is a job given to many dads across the country who are often pelted with beans by their kids after coming home from the office. Once they have been “driven out”, they re-enter the house, mask off, to enjoy the rest of the evening with their families.

On the evening of Setsubun, it is customary to eat an uncut *makizushi* roll known as *ehomaki* (“lucky direction roll”).

This special sushi roll is made with seven fillings corresponding to the Seven Deities of Good Fortune called *Shichifukujin*.

The ingredients used represent good health, happiness and prosperity, while rolling them up is also said to be lucky.

It is believed that **your dream will come true** if on the evening of 節分 (*setsubun*) you are able to eat the entire sushi roll, facing that year's **lucky direction**, without saying a word.

Click the [link](#) to learn more.



KARATE CORNER



Each month a different karate master from Okinawa will be featured. The one selected for February is....



SOKON MATSUMURA

Okinawa, Japan is the birthplace of karate. This small island is also the birthplace of Sokon Matsumura, Okinawan warrior and founder of karate. *Sokon Matsumura* (1797-1889), also known as *Bushi* (warrior) *Matsumura* and *Shuri Matsumura*, was one of the most renowned and colorful martial artists of his time. He was known as a master *par excellence* of *karate* and *kobujutsu* (weaponry). *Matsumura* was of noble birth and he was as skilled at literature and the Chinese classics as he was at military arts. He is considered the founder of the *Shorin Ryu* school of Okinawan Karate. He organized the *Shuri-Te* style (native Okinawan martial art and prototype of *Shorin Ryu*) into a more refined system of the martial arts. This system, *Matsumura Shorin Ryu* karate has endured to the present day.

Matsumura was born in *Yamagawa* Village, *Shuri*, Okinawa in 1797. There are some contradictions as to *Matsumura's* exact birth date. Some authorities claim 1798 or as late as

1809, but for the purposes of this writing the 1797 date will be accepted as the correct one. In 1810, as a young boy, *Matsumura* began the study of karate under the guidance of *Tode Sakugawa* (1733-1815). *Sakugawa* was an old man at the time and reluctant to teach the young *Matsumura*. However, *Sakugawa* had promised *Sofuku Matsumura*, *Sokon Matsumura's* father, that he would teach the boy. The venerable *Sakugawa* was seventy eight years old at the time. *Matsumura* spent four years studying under *Sakugawa*. Eventually, *Matsumura's* skill as a warrior became widely known throughout Okinawa and even in China. As a young man, *Matsumura* had already garnered a reputation as an expert in the martial arts. Many legendary stories are told about him in Okinawan folklore. In fact, in addition to being a "*dajjo*" or major figure in karate's history, *Bushi Matsumura* is an Okinawan folk hero as well.

Matsumura was recruited into the service of the Royal Okinawan *Sho* family in 1816 and received the title *Shikudon*, a gentry rank. He began his career by serving the 17th King of the *Ryukyu Sho* dynasty, King *Sho Ko*.

In 1818 he married *Yonamine Chiru*, who was a martial arts expert as well. *Matsumura* eventually became the chief martial arts instructor "*Shiban Yaku*" and bodyguard for the Okinawan King *Sho Ko*. He subsequently served in this capacity for two other Okinawan Kings, They were the 18th and 19th Kings of *Ryukyu*, King *Sho Iku* and King *Sho Tai*, respectively.

Bushi Matsumura not only became the chief martial arts instructor but an official of the *Ryukyu* Kingdom. As such, *Matsumura* traveled as an envoy to China and Japan in the service of the Okinawan King. On these sojourns, he sought out other martial artists and trained with them.



SOKON MATSUMURA



Around 1839 he went to China and studied the *Shaolin* style of Chinese boxing and weaponry. Legend has it that he actually trained at the famed “*Shoreiji*” or *Southern Shaolin Temple* at this time. It is not known how long *Matsumura* remained in China but tradition has it that he stayed for some time. In 1832 he went to *Satsuma*, Japan and stayed there for two years.

While in Japan it is believed that he studied the *Jigen Ryu* style of swordsmanship. This is a very aggressive style practiced by the *Satsuma* samurai. His *sensei* in *Jigen Ryu* was a samurai by the name of *Yashichiro Ijuin*. It is perhaps at this time when *Matsumura’s* ideas about *Bushido*, the way of the warrior, and martial ethos were formed.

Is also known that around 1860 *Matsumura* traveled to *Foochow* in *Fukien Province*, China, on a diplomatic mission for the Okinawan King. In the 1860’s he brought back the *Chinese Kenpo* Master *Iwab* and together they taught many Okinawans. He is also thought to have studied with the Chinese warrior *Wai Shin Zan* while in China. After his return from China he organized and refined *Shuri-Te*. His organizational efforts would eventually serve as the basis for the *Shorin Ryu* System of Okinawan Karate. Some authorities credit *Matsumura* with adopting the name “*Shorin Ryu*” while others say *Anko Itosu* (1830-1915), *Matsumura’s* student, is actually responsible for adopting this terminology. *Shorin* is

the Japanese pronunciation of *Shaolin*. Even though this style is a blend of native Okinawan techniques and Chinese *kenpo*, it is named after the famed *Shaolin* Temple of China, renowned for its fighters.

Matsumura is credited with passing on the *kata* or formal exercises known as *Passai Dai* (*Matsumura No Passai*), *Naibanchi*, *Chinto*, *Seisan*, *Gojushibho* (Fifty Four Steps of the Black Tiger) and *Kusanku*. A set of Chinese *kata* known as *Chan’an* in *Matsumura’s* time are said to have been modified by *Matsumura* and were the basis for *Pinan I & II*. These *kata* are the essential forms of all *Shorin Ryu* styles today. He is also said to have brought back the *Hakutsuru* or White Crane system of Chinese boxing back to Okinawa. A unique feature of the *Matsumura Shorin Ryu* style is the teaching of the White Crane or *Hakutsuru kata*, although white crane techniques are woven throughout most of the *kata* of the style and are especially evident in *Gojushibho* and *Kusanku*.

However, the *Hakutsuru kata* is one of those elusive and esoteric *kata* of karate. According to the late *Hoban Soken* (1889-1982), the White Crane style was learned by *Bushi Matsumura* while he was in China. He then brought the style back to Okinawa in the 1860’s. From then on, the system was a secret style only taught to immediate members of the *Matsumura* family. The White Crane style was passed on from *Bushi Matsumura* to *Nabe Matsumura*, his grandson, and then to *Hoban Soken*,

Nabe’s nephew (*Nabe’s* sister’s son). *Hoban Soken* did teach the White Crane to some members of the *Ryu*. These people were not family members but were a chosen few. Keep in mind the concept of a hereditary *Ryu* is a closed social nexus, like a family or a clan. Its membership is restricted to blood relatives, whereas a *Kai* or association is a group that practically anyone can get into, like a bowling league or a “self defense” studio. The family blood lineage of *Matsumura Shorin Ryu* seems to have been broken though and has become what is known as a *Ryu Ha*. It is my understanding that *Hoban Soken’s* grandson now lives in New York City and has no interest in karate. The White Crane system is still in existence and being taught today, but it is rare and still underground.

Bushi Matsumura was tall and thin with deep-set eyes. He was also extremely fast because of his constant practice.

He believed that speed was essential in order to develop power. *Matsumura* was an innovator and he practiced every technique so that it could be performed as fast as possible. Legend has it that he was able to generate enormous power in his techniques even though he was slender and wiry.

The reason for this was that he followed a scientific theory with respect to martial arts i.e., “torque plus speed equals true power”.



SOKON MATSUMURA



The concept of twisting and rotating the hips when delivering a technique is the method he used. *Matsumura* is credited with developing this concept in karate. *Matsumura* simply knew that the basic elements of physics apply to and enhance karate technique. He was known to have superb kicking skills and a great jumping ability. His expression was “as a warrior one must develop the speed of a bird and the power of a tiger”.

Matsumura was given the title “*Bushi*” meaning warrior by the Okinawan King in recognition of his abilities and accomplishments in the martial arts. This was a title reserved only for those possessing the highest martial skill and the samurai qualities of honor and loyalty. This elevated him to full samurai status. In fact, *Matsumura* was the last person ever to be granted this title by the Okinawan king.

After this, *Matsumura* referred to himself as *Bucho*, military leader. He was extremely clever and an excellent military strategist. He accepted challenges from the top martial artists of his time. According to legend he fought many times but was never defeated.

As a teacher, *Matsumura* was without equal. His fame attracted many students and he produced and abundance of skilled martial artists. His most notable students included *Anko Itosu* (1830-1915), *Yasutsune Azato* (1827-1906), *Yabu Kentsu* (1863-1937), *Chomo Hanashiro* (1871-1945) [*Hanagusuku Nagashige* in *Hogan*, the ancient Okinawan

dialect], *Chotoku Kiyun* (1870-1945), *Megantou Tawada*, *Peichin Kiyuna*, *Chinen Yamanne*, *Ishimine* (b.1826), and *Nabe Matsumura* as well as others.

Regarding the martial arts, *Matsumura* states that there are three main areas of understanding. The three areas are *Gukushi No Bugei* (martial arts of intelligence), *Meimoko No Bugei* (martial arts without self-control) and *Budo No Bugei* (true martial way). *Gukushi No Bugei* refers to having a technical knowledge of the martial arts but with no real substance. It is only a superficial understanding with no depth.

He also makes a comment that I think is as relevant today as it was one hundred years ago when he wrote it. *Matsumura* said “a style is only as good as the man who practices”. *Meimoko No Bugei* refers to a person who has a physical understanding of the martial arts and can defeat other men. They are violent and dangerous and have no self control. *Budo No Bugei* refers to the true way of the warrior.

In this true martial way, a person has the physical understanding of the martial arts and is powerful. He has a strong sense of loyalty and would do nothing that is unnatural or contrary to nature. According to *Matsumura*, the true way of the warrior is characterized by seven virtues of *Bu* (military mind). They are as follows:

- Bu* prohibits violence.
- Bu* keeps discipline in soldiers.
- Bu* keeps control among the population.
- Bu* spreads virtue.

- Bu* gives a peaceful heart.
- Bu* helps keep peace between people.
- Bu* makes people or a nation prosperous.

Hohan Soken (1889-1982), who was *Nabe Matsumura*'s nephew, was selected to carry on the teaching of the *Ryu*. He was a highly respected karate master and the third generation successor in the lineage of *Matsumura Shorin Ryu* Karate. He was instrumental in passing on a martial arts legacy from *Bushi Matsumura* and *Nabe Matsumura* to his students. When *Soken* began his training under *Nabe Matsumura* karate practice was still done in secret. All the *kata* and techniques he learned were inherited from *Bushi Matsumura*.

SOKON MATSUMURA:
FOUNDER OF KARATE &
OKINAWAN WARRIOR
by
George W. Alexander

