

EAST ASIAN WEDDING TRADITION

囍 LESSON TWO 囍 PLANNING THE WEDDING

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The first step in planning the traditional wedding is the selection of favorable dates. Some East Asian families may refer to the lunar calendar or almanac for “good” days. The others may ask a monk of the Buddhist temple or a fortune teller of the Taoist (Daoist) school to select a suitable date based on the couple’s birth dates and times. The wedding date is announced via invitations about a month prior, and invitations are distributed to friends and relatives about one or two weeks before the wedding day.

After the selection of a favorable date, wedding details such as types and quantities of betrothal gifts, reciprocal gifts, the bride price, and the number of tables at the wedding reception, which are provided by the groom’s parents for the bride’s parents’ guests, is arranged.

Up to three months before the wedding day, the groom will deliver the betrothal gifts to the bride’s family. The betrothal is an important part of the East Asian wedding tradition. During this exchange, the groom’s family presents the bride’s family with betrothal gifts to symbolize prosperity and good luck. The Japanese betrothal ceremony, called the *yuino*, is an exchange of symbolic gifts between the groom’s and bride’s families. Food items include wine, cigarettes, tea, and jewelry for the bride, including gold earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings.

Moreover, the bride’s family receives the bride price (pinjin) in red envelopes. The amount varies from region to region. In Southern China, the bride price is much higher than in Northern China. In Japan, the bride price, about US\$5,000, is tucked in a special envelope called a *shugibukuro*, which has gold and silver strings that are impossible to unknot, symbolizing the marriage bond. The other gifts in Japan are given in ornate rice-paper envelopes.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Who can decide the wedding date?
2. When do the East Asian families send out their wedding invitations?
3. Why the betrothal gifts are important?
4. What is included in a Japanese betrothal exchange?

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