

Hattatsu Mairi

One of the blessings sought by visitors to Sumiyoshi Taisha is success in business. The deities honored at four of Sumiyoshi Taisha's subsidiary shrines are believed to be bringers of prosperity, and you can earn their favor by performing the Hattatsu Mairi ritual.

The Hattatsu Mairi involves visiting the four shrines on the first dragon day of the month, as determined by the 12-day week of the ancient Chinese calendar. The practice comes from a kind of sacred wordplay: *hattatsu*, which means "first dragon," is a homophone of the Japanese word for "growth, development." Devotees make an offering and pray at each shrine in turn: Tanekashi-sha, Nankun-sha, Asazawa-sha, and Ōtoshi-sha. The last two shrines are located just outside the Sumiyoshi Taisha grounds. On Hattatsu Mairi days, vendors set up food and souvenir stalls, creating a festive atmosphere.

An "upgraded" version of the rite is the Minori Mairi. Hattatsu Mairi visitors can buy a rice seed at Tanekashi-sha, exchange it for a stalk of rice grains at Nankun-sha, and then, at Ōtoshi-sha, trade the stalk for a small bag of rice grown in Sumiyoshi Taisha's sacred paddy. The practice is a reference to the saying *ichiryū manbai*, meaning "a seed grows ten thousand-fold"—that is, a small investment now yields large returns in the future.

If you perform the Hattatsu Mairi every month for four years—48 consecutive months—it is said that the prosperity attained will last a lifetime. This belief is based on another sacred pun: in Japanese, "48 dragons" sounds like "develop from start to finish" (*shijū hattatsu*).