

## Hattatsu Mairi

Many people in Osaka visit Sumiyoshi Taisha to pray for success in business. The monthly ritual is called the Hattatsu Mairi and is believed to be particularly effective in bringing financial rewards to those who perform it.

The Hattatsu Mairi dates to the seventeenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, when Osaka became a bustling merchant city. In addition to the four main shrines honoring the primary gods at Sumiyoshi Taisha, the shrine grounds contain subsidiary shrines (*massha*) dedicated to a range of deities. In the eighteenth century, Osaka merchants began visiting three of these *massha* on the first “dragon day” of each month, as determined by the 12-day week of the ancient Chinese calendar. The practice was inspired by wordplay: *hattatsu* means “first dragon,” but when written with different characters it means “develop” or “grow.” The three subsidiary shrines are dedicated to agricultural deities, but the merchants broadened the metaphor of planting and reaping to apply to business in general.

## Monthly Rituals

Today, the Hattatsu Mairi includes four *massha*, as the small Asazawa-sha shrine was added in the early 1900s. On the “first dragon” day of each month (published on the Sumiyoshi Taisha website), practitioners pray and make offerings at each shrine in turn: Tanekashi-sha, Nankun-sha, Asazawa-sha, and Ōtoshi-sha. The last two are located just outside the main Sumiyoshi Taisha grounds. Vendors set up food and souvenir stalls on Hattatsu Mairi days, creating a festive atmosphere.

A more involved version of the rite is the Minori Mairi. Visitors performing the Hattatsu Mairi can buy a rice seed at Tanekashi-sha, exchange it for a bundle of rice stalks at Nankun-sha, and trade the stalks at Ōtoshi-sha for a small bag of rice grown in Sumiyoshi Taisha’s sacred paddy field. The practice is a reference to the saying *ichiryū manbai*, “a seed grows ten thousand-fold.” To obtain the blessing, adherents are to cook and eat the rice on an *ichiryū manbai* day (these are also posted on the website).

Performing the Hattatsu Mairi every month for four years—48 consecutive months—is said to bring lifelong prosperity. This belief is based on another sacred pun: in Japanese, *shijū hattatsu*, or “forty-eight dragons,” sounds the same as “grow and develop from start to finish.”