

Qixi Festival

The **Qixi Festival**, also known as the **Qiqiao Festival**, is a Chinese festival celebrating the annual meeting of the cowherd and weaver girl in mythology.^{[2][3][4][5]} It falls on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month on the Chinese calendar.^{[2][3][4][5]}

The festival originated from the romantic legend of two lovers, Zhinü and Niulang,^{[3][5]} who were the weaver girl and the cowherd, respectively. The tale of *The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl* has been celebrated in the Qixi Festival since the Han dynasty.^[6] The earliest-known reference to this famous myth dates back to over 2600 years ago, which was told in a poem from the *Classic of Poetry*.^[7] The Qixi festival inspired the Tanabata festival in Japan and Chilseok festival in Korea.

The festival has variously been called the *Double Seventh Festival*,^[5] the *Chinese Valentine's Day*,^[8] the *Night of Sevens*,^{[3][9]} or the *Magpie Festival*.

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Mythology

The general tale is a love story between Zhinü (the weaver girl, symbolizing Vega) and Niulang (the cowherd, symbolizing Altair).^[3] Their love was not allowed, thus they were banished to opposite sides of the Silver River (symbolizing the Milky Way).^{[3][10]} Once a year, on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month, a flock of magpies would form a bridge to reunite the lovers for one day.^[3] There are many variations of the story.^[3]

Traditions

During the Han dynasty, the practices were conducted in accordance to formal ceremonial state rituals.^[2] Over time, the festival activities also included customs that the common people partook.^[2]

Qixi Festival



Also called Qiqiao Festival

Observed by Chinese

Date 7th day of 7th month on the Chinese lunar calendar

2018 date 17 August^[1]

2019 date 7 August^[1]

2020 date 25 August^[1]

Related to Tanabata (Japan), Chilseok (Korea)

Qixi

Chinese 七夕^[2]

Literal meaning "Evening of Sevens"

Transcriptions

Standard Mandarin

Hanyu Pinyin qīxī

Gwoyeu Romatzyh chishi

Wade–Giles ch'ī¹-hsi¹

IPA [t͡ɕʰi.ɕí]

Wu

Suzhounese tshih zih

Yue: Cantonese

Yale Romanization chāt-jihk

Jyutping cat¹-zik⁶

Southern Min

Tâi-lô tshit-siàh

Qiqiao

Chinese 乞巧^[2]

Literal "Beseeching Skills"

Girls take part in worshipping the celestials (拜仙) during rituals.^[4] They go to the local temple to pray to Zhinü for wisdom.^[5] Paper items are usually burned as offerings.^[11] Girls may recite traditional prayers for dexterity in needlework,^{[5][12]} which symbolize the traditional talents of a good spouse.^[5] Divination could take place to determine possible dexterity in needlework.^[11] They make wishes for marrying someone who would be a good and loving husband.^[3] During the festival, girls make a display of their domestic skills.^[3] Traditionally, there would be contests amongst those who attempted to be the best in threading needles under low-light conditions like the glow of an ember or a half moon.^[11] Today, girls sometimes gather toiletries in honor of the seven maidens.^[11]

meaning	
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	qǐqiǎo
Wu	
Suzhounese	chih chiaie

The festival also held an importance for newlywed couples.^[4] Traditionally, they would worship the celestial couple for the last time and bid farewell to them (辭仙).^[4] The celebration stood symbol for a happy marriage and showed that the married woman was treasured by her new family.^[4]

On this day, the Chinese gaze to the sky to look for Vega and Altair shining in the Milky Way, while a third star forms a symbolic bridge between the two stars.^[6] It was said that if it rains on this day that it was caused by a river sweeping away the magpie bridge or that the rain is the tears of the separated couple.^[13] Based on the legend of a flock of magpies forming a bridge to reunite the couple, a pair of magpies came to symbolize conjugal happiness and faithfulness.^[14]

Gallery



Ladies on the 'Night of Sevens' Pleading for Skills by Ding Guanpeng, 1748

Other

Interactive Google doodles have been launched since the 2009 Qixi Festival to mark the occasion.^[15] The latest was launched for the 2019 Qixi Festival.^[16]

See also

- Qixi Tribute
- Seven Sisters' Fruit

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7. Schomp 2009, 89.
8. Welch 2008, 228.
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