

Japanese food, culture, and the tanabata festival

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Soba Incident by Duncan Dixon Moving to a new country and meeting a new culture always has the potential for incidents that are embarrassing at the time, but humorous later. The following incident happened to me several weeks after I arrived in Japan. I was in Odawara around noon and I decided I wanted to have some ebi soba. I found a restaurant display that looked good and, because I could not speak Japanese, carefully copied down the characters under the display, on a piece of paper. I went into the restaurant and gave the paper to the waitress.

She read it, gave a nod, and pointed me to a seat at a table in the middle of the restaurant. A lacquer box topped with soba soon appeared. It came with a bowl of broth leaving me with the problem of what to do with the broth. I knew I had to get the noodles and broth together somehow. I debated with myself for a few minutes, do I pick up the noodles and dip them, or pour the broth over the noodles? I finally came up with what seemed a suitable solution -- pour half the broth over the noodles.

I did this and watched to my dismay as the sauce ran out of the bottom of the noodles, across the table, and began dripping onto the floor. The other customers looked at me with thinly disguised amusement and I began to wish I had ordered something simple like katsu-don. About this time the waitress appeared and looked at me and the mess I had made. She disappeared into the kitchen and came back with a fork. By now I was completely embarrassed. I ate quickly and discovered the reason for my problem -- the bamboo mat so cleverly hidden under the soba.

I paid my bill and fled. To this day one thing puzzles me; I never did get the shrimp that were supposed to be on top of the soba. My First Tanabata by <https://assignbuster.com/japanese-food-culture-and-the-tanabata-festival/>

Duncan Dixon * Read the two versions of my paragraph about Tanabata. * Which is for readers unfamiliar with Japan and which is for readers who know Japan? Version 1 Every July when the Tanabata festival arrives, I remember my first Tanabata. Tanabata is the Star Festival, traditionally celebrated in Japan July 7. In some cities people hang elaborate decorations from bamboo poles.

To the poles they also attach papers on which they have written their wishes. Some friends told me that Tanabata in Hiratsuka was worth seeing so I took the bus downtown. I had been living in Japan for about nine months and didn't speak much Japanese yet. The downtown area was packed and I was constantly bumping into people. As I was making my way through the crowd, my hand brushed the shoulder of a young girl about three years old who was walking with her mother. Without looking up at me, the girl reached up and took my hand. Immediately, I was in a quandry.

If she looks up and sees whose hand she has, she'll panic and start crying, but if I pull away quickly, she may also look up and panic. If her mother sees I have her by the hand, how can I explain what has happened? I'll be arrested for attempted kidnapping. All these thoughts rushed into my head as I walked along. Finally, after a few more metres, I was able to release my hand from the grasp of my escort and melt away into the crowd, undiscovered. Even today, the thought of what might have happened, makes me shiver. Version 2 Every July when the Tanabata festival arrives, I remember my first Tanabata.

It was the year I was almost involved in an international incident. Some friends told me that Tanabata in Hiratsuka was worth seeing so I took the <https://assignbuster.com/japanese-food-culture-and-the-tanabata-festival/>

bus downtown. I had been living in Hatano, Kanagawa for about nine months and didn't speak much Japanese yet. The downtown area was packed and I was constantly bumping into people. As I was making my way through the crowd, my hand brushed the shoulder of a young girl about three years old who was walking with her mother. Without looking up at me, the girl reached up and took my hand.

Immediately, I was in a quandry. If she looks up and sees whose hand she has, she'll panic and start crying, but if I pull away quickly, she may also look up and panic. If her mother sees I have her by the hand, how can I explain what has happened? I'll be arrested for attempted kidnapping. All these thoughts rushed into my head as I walked along. Finally, after a few more metres, I was able to release my hand from the grasp of my escort and melt away into the crowd, undiscovered. Even today, the thought of what might have happened, makes me shiver.