In the 16th century, the Portuguese often came to Japan for trading purposes. Their influence can be seen in Japanese culture and cuisine. The playing cards that the Portuguese brought to Japan gradually developed into the *hanafuda*. The pictures on the cards represent natural scenes and *kachofugetsu*, an appreciation or reverence for the four seasons. Therefore, it can be said that this game reflects the Japanese people's love and sense of nature.

I. The Cards Composition

A *hanafuda* deck consists of 48 different cards. There are 12 suits within it and 4 per suit. Each suit represents a different month of the year as well as the particular flower at bloom during that time of year. Each card is illustrated with the flowers for that suit and may, as well, include other things like objects, animals, or humans.

A crane with pine trees
--20 points

A tanka paper with pine trees
--5 points

Pine trees
--1 point

Fig. 1 Each primary suit represents a particular month. January-pine, February-plum blossoms, March-cherry blossoms, April-wisteria, May-iris, June-peonies, July-clover, August-pampas grass, September-chrysanthemum, October-maple leaf, November-willow, December-Paulownia.

Figures 2 The rankings of the cards: The month of January suit is shown above. Each of the four cards within the suit is designated a point value: 20, 10, 5, and 1 depending on the secondary suit pattern: animal, bird, insect, tanka poem written on paper, etc.

II. How to play *hanafuda*

*Hanafuda* games include a variety of variations such as “hachi-hachi”, “hana-awase”, “oichikabu”, and “koikoi”.

Basically, the players pick the same month suit and check the card points. The person who has the highest total points is the winner. But there is more to acquiring points than this. Extra points can be received from the deki-yaku cards, or wild cards. Hanafuda is similar to western poker, and it is often played for money. Like poker, it takes good judgment, expert tactics, and a lot of luck.

花札は日本の代表的なカルタで、16世紀にポルトガル人が伝えた西洋カルタを改良して作られた。それぞれの札に四季の花鳥風月があしらわれており、まさに自然を愛する日本人の感覚から生み出されたものだといえる。

I. 1月から12月まで各4枚ずつで1組48枚である。

図1 各月を象徴する絵柄。1月-松、2月-梅、3月-桜、4月-藤、5月-菖蒲、6月-牡丹、7月-萩、8月-薄、9月-菊、10月-楓、11月-柳、12月-桐

図2 カードの得点（1月の例）。同組の4枚の中には第二の絵柄（動物、鳥、虫、短冊など）により20点、10点、5点、1点と点数が決まっている。

（上から）松と鶴・・・20点、松と短冊・・・5点、松のみ・・・1点

II. 遊び方

「八八」「花合わせ」「おいちかぶ」「こいこい」などのゲームがある。

基本的には同じ組のカードを集めその点数で勝敗を決めるが、さらに、特別にトランプのボーカーに似た「でき役」の得点が加わる。判断力と駆け引き、運が要求されるゲームといえる。

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