

The Legend of the Beckoning Cat, Maneki-neko

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Beckoning or Welcoming Cats (Maneki-neko) originated in Japan. They are most often white figurines with a raised paw seen frequently in store windows and shops dispensing good luck to customers and passersby. One of the popular legends about their origin is shown here. (Read left to right).



Stamp enlarged 100%

In the 17th century (Edo period), a poor monk lived in a temple in Setagaya, Tokyo, Japan with his pet bobtail cat.



One day a samurai walking by the temple was caught in a sudden storm. He took shelter under a tree.

Postcard reduced by 45%

The temple's cat was sitting out front and raised a paw to beckon the samurai to take shelter inside.



Postal Cards reduced 20%: left: Echo Card (Advertising); right: Lottery Card, pictorial postmark.

As the samurai moved toward the temple, the place where he had stood was struck by lightning.



Right paw raised for good luck. Left paw raised for good fortune.



Stamps from a souvenir sheet



The samurai was so grateful to the beckoning cat for saving his life, he became a patron of the temple.

Edo era coin 1668-1683
Enlarged 50%



Making Maneki-neko figurines became a cottage industry in Setagaya.

Booklet cover,
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