

Qixi Festival

qī xī jié
七夕节



Qixi Festival (literally "The Night of Sevens"), also known as Magpie Festival, falls on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month on the Chinese calendar; thus its name. It is sometimes called Chinese Valentine's Day since late 1990s.

秋夕

唐-杜牧

银烛秋光冷画屏，
轻罗小扇扑流萤。
天阶夜色凉如水，
坐看牵牛织女星。

The story of the cowherd and the weaver girl

A young man, hence **Niulang** (literally "[the] cowherd"牛郎), came across a beautiful girl--**Zhinü** (literally "[the] weaver girl"织女), the seventh daughter of the Goddess, who had just escaped from boring heaven to look for fun. The naughty princess soon fell in love with Niulang, and they got married without the knowledge of the Goddess. Zhinü proved to be a wonderful wife, and Niulang to be a good husband. They lived happily and had two children. But the Goddess found out that Zhinü, a fairy girl, had married a mere mortal, when she was furious and ordered Zhinü to return to heaven. On Earth, Niulang was very upset that his wife had disappeared. Suddenly, his ox began to talk, telling him that if he killed it and put on its hide, he would be able to go up to Heaven to find his wife. Crying bitterly, he killed the ox, put on the skin, and carried his two beloved children off to Heaven to find Zhinü. The Goddess discovered this and was very angry. Taking out her hairpin, the Goddess scratched a wide river in the sky to separate the two lovers forever, thus forming the Milky Way between Altair and Vega.

Zhinü must sit forever on one side of the river, sadly weaving on her loom, while Niulang watches her from afar while taking care of their two children.

But once a year all the magpies in the world would take pity on them and fly up into heaven to form a bridge ("the bridge of magpies") so the lovers may be together for a single night, which is the seventh night of the seventh moon.

Traditions

Qi xi originated from Han Dynasty. It came from people's worship of stars. On Qi Xi, a festoon is placed in the yard and the single or newly married women in the household make an offering to Niulang and Zhinü consisting of fruit, flowers, tea, and facial powder (makeup). After finishing the offering, half of the facial powder is thrown on the roof and the other half divided among the young women of the household. It is believed that by doing this, the women are bound in beauty with Zhinü.

Another tradition is for young girls to throw a sewing needle into a bowl full of water on the night of Qi Xi as a test of embroidery skills. If the needle floats on top of the water instead of sinking, it proves the girl is a skilled embroideries. Single women also pray for finding a good husband in the future. And the newly married women pray to be pregnant quickly in the future.

People say that on this day it will rain, because of the tears of Zhinü and Niulang flowing down from the heavens. Others say that if you stand under grapevines on this night, you would even hear them talking.

qiūxī

秋夕

táng dùmù

唐 杜牧

yínzhú 银烛	qiū 秋	guāng 光	lěng 冷	huàpíng 画屏	。
Silvery light	Autumn	Candlelight	Cold	Folding screen decorated by paintings	.
Her candle-light is silvery on her chilled bright screen.					
qīngluó 轻罗	xiǎoshàn 小扇	pū 扑	liúyíng 流萤		。
silk	little fan	Chase away	firefly		.
the silky fan gently chases away the fireflies.					
tiānjiē 天阶	yèsè 夜色	liáng 凉	rúshuǐ 如水		。
The sidesteps of heavenly palace	Dim light of night	cold	Like water		.
She lies watching the stars of the heavenly palace in the moonlight, cold like water.					



zuò 坐	kàn 看	qiānniú 牵牛	zhīnǚxīng 织女星	。
Sit	Watch	Altair (α Aql)	Vega (α Lyr)	.
And two stars parted by the River of Heaven.				