

Temari is an ancient cultural folk art of Japan - it's name is derived from two Japanese words - te and mari. Te means Hand and Mari means ball.

The Japan Temari Association provides the history of Temari as originating from Kemari (a football/kickball type game), originally coming from China during the Asuka Period (538 to 710). The balls were made of leather - two pieces sewn together with seam in the middle to hold the stuffing inside - horse hair or pine needles was believed to be the stuffing. This leather ball game was for men to kick high in the air - similar to what we would call "Hacky Sack" today.

It was played in a court about 10 feet square - four, six, or eight players stood in a circle and the ball was kicked high but not far with the inside of the foot and kept from hitting the ground. About seventy different types of kicks were noted and the outcome of the game was less important than the etiquette of the playing.

Eventually the ball became a childrens' tossing ball to occupy them when they were confined inside when the feudal warlords would be ravaging the countryside. The balls sometimes were wrapped so tightly that they would bounce. The balls were made with discarded clothing or whatever household items were not needed. Once rubber was introduced to Japan the cloth balls were replaced.

During the Edo Period (1603 to 1867) the women in the Royal Court created brightly colored decorated balls using silk threads (sometimes from old kimonos) or any discarded household items - clothing, tatami mats.

Once cotton became available - decorating the 'mari' was available to everyone.

Temari was a means for a betrothed young lady to work on while she traveled to her new home and husband to be. The balls also were a source of a special gift to friends and family. Mothers made them for their children. When they woke up on New Years morning (the mothers put them on the pillow so it was the first thing the child would see) these balls were stitched with colorful threads and usually had messages woven in with the hopes for the child's future.