

まるごと 日本のことばと文化

中級 2(B1)

スクリプト・テキストの翻訳

(英語)

Translation of Listening Script

and Text in the Textbook

(English)

ver. 20200325

Topic 1 What kind of person are they?

PART 1 I'm going to get married

①

Haruna: Erm, I know this is out of the blue, but I'm going to get married.

Andy: Wow!

Yusuke: Really? Congratulations!

Emi: Congratulations! Is he Japanese?

Haruna: No, someone from here. We've been seeing each other since university, but, well, we're both the right age, so we thought it might be a good time to tie the knot.

Listener: What's tie the knot?

Haruna: Oh, we thought we should get officially married.

Listener: Congratulations! So what's he like?

Haruna: Let me see, how do you say, he's got a bit of a childish side to him. He's a bit untidy and slovenly.

Listener: Really? For example?

Haruna: He doesn't tidy his room much, and he wears the same clothes for a week on average. But, how do you say, when I'm with him, I feel totally at ease.

Listener: Right.

Haruna: Oh, he's good at cooking as well, and at home he sometimes makes food like the sort of thing you get in a restaurant.

Andy: Really? Great!

②

Andy: Both my wife and I are hopeless at cooking, so we do almost nothing but eat out.

Yusuke: Andy, your wife is Japanese, isn't she?

Andy: Yes. But she likes cleaning. If my room's a bit messy, she tells me to tidy up straight away.

Listener: Is that so?

Haruna: She sounds tough.

Andy: Yes, she doesn't hold back, and she can be strong-willed and a bit scary, but, I suppose, she's cheerful and energetic, so that's probably good.

Yusuke: Hmm.

Haruna: Right, right.

Andy: And our tastes and interests are quite similar.

Listener: For example?

Andy: For example, even when we eat out together, neither of us is interested in fancy, romantic restaurants. Instead, we both like places that are dirty but serve good and cheap food. That kind of thing is similar.

Listener: I see what you mean.

③

Yusuke: Right, it's really important those kinds of values are similar.

Listener: What are values?

Yusuke: Oh, ways of thinking.

Listener: I see.

Yusuke: It's like when you're with this person, you don't have to worry about anything like food or interests.

Listener: Right.

Yusuke: In my case, right, I've lived with my partner for more than 20 years, so the feeling when we're together is kind of like we're family members, or like we're each just there in the same way as air is.

Andy: Really?

Yusuke: I suppose we've both got easy-going personalities, so, how do you say, it's OK even when our tastes don't match.

Listener: For example?

Yusuke: For example, when we go to the cinema together, if we both want to watch different films, we say, "OK, see you later," and watch the films we each like.

Yusuke: That kind of laid back attitude avoids stress, doesn't it.

Listener: Yeah.

④

- Emi: I see. I'm jealous. Everyone seems so happy.
- Haruna: What?
- Yusuke: What's the matter?
- Emi: Things haven't been going well with my husband recently.
- Andy: What happened?
- Emi: He changed jobs recently, and his new job seems to be causing him a lot of stress, so he's been really short-tempered.
- Listener: For example?
- Emi: If I come home a little late after a meal with friends, he says, "You're late," and gets in a bad mood. But when he comes home late drunk, he says something like, "I was socialising with colleagues so it can't be helped."
- Haruna: Really?
- Emi: He's always been a pretty meticulous person, but with a slightly highly-strung side to him, and he gets irritated by things that he doesn't like.
- Listener: Is that so.
- Emi: But I suppose he's a good person at heart.

PART 2 He's strict but he always does his best for his students

- Jane: Hiroko, there's something I'd like to ask you.
- Hiroko: What is it?
- Jane: Do you know Professor Iizuka well?
- Hiroko: Yes, I've taken a few of his lectures, so I know him. Why?
- Jane: I'm going to be in the 3rd year next year, and my Japanese teacher is going to change from Professor Okumura to Professor Iizuka. I heard that Professor Iizuka might be a bit scary or difficult.
- Hiroko: Right, to be sure he's totally different from Professor Okumura.
- Jane: Yeah, if you had to describe her, you'd say Professor Okumura was more like a helpful older student than a teacher. She's really easy to talk to and always seems to be laughing.
- Hiroko: That's true. She's a similar age to us and really easy to get on with. By comparison Professor Iizuka seems a bit difficult to talk to.
- Jane: And I heard he's really strict. Like if you miss the deadline for a report, he definitely won't take it in, or he locks the door when the lesson has started, so you can't get into the classroom if you come later than him.
- Hiroko: Wow.
- Jane: Apparently there are quite a lot of people who cry because they can't get credits from Professor Iizuka.
- Hiroko: Professor Iizuka has definitely got that strict side to him. But it might be because he's working really hard to help students. I took Professor Iizuka's lecture last term, and when I handed in my report, he read it very carefully and wrote really detailed comments. At the time I was pretty impressed.
- Jane: Really, is that right?
- Hiroko: And I heard that when students' grades or attendance go down, he gets worried and says something straight away. Apparently there are people who get individual tuition as well.
- Jane: Is that so? He's strict but he always does his best for his students.
- Hiroko: I suppose there's a lot of different sides to him.
- Jane: Yes, and there are a lot of different teachers.

PART 3 She's a really interesting person

- Watanabe: Belinda, do you know Rena? She's going to join our team next week.
- Belinda: Yeah, I know her well. I've worked with her before.
- Watanabe: What's she like?
- Belinda: Mmm, in a word, she's interesting. Her ideas are really unique, and the tours she thinks of are always really popular. She makes really interesting plans that other people can't think of.
- Watanabe: Really?
- Belinda: She's really cheerful, her Japanese is great, and a lot of customers request her.
- Watanabe: Is that right?
- Belinda: But she's got a bit of a stubborn, difficult side to her.
- Watanabe: Difficult?
- Belinda: Erm, when we were planning a tour in August, it just happened that her plan wasn't chosen. When that happened, she seemed to suddenly lose her motivation.
- Watanabe: I see.
- Belinda: I said to her, "Even though it's someone else's plan, let's work together on it," but, well, at first she wouldn't understand and it was a bit hard.
- Watanabe: That kind of thing happened?
- Belinda: I suppose in the end her motivation came back. Anyway, she's got lots of ideas, she's fun to talk to, and I like her a lot.
- Watanabe: I see. I'm looking forward to working with her.

PART 4 Communicating through calligraphy

Lives in Melbourne

Calligraphy teacher Yuka Hayashi: “Communicating through calligraphy.”

Profile: Yuka Hayashi

Born in Nagano Prefecture. Started calligraphy in the first year of elementary school, and got certified as a calligraphy instructor. Accompanied husband when he transferred overseas, now in her sixth year in Melbourne. Opened a calligraphy school in her own flat to introduce the appeal of calligraphy.

Opening a calligraphy school from experience studying overseas

Yuka first thought of opening a calligraphy school as a result of her experience studying overseas for a short time in the US when she was a high school student. Yuka, who had learned calligraphy when she was a child, took her calligraphy equipment with her overseas and got her host family to write Japanese characters with the brushes. They were really delighted and thought it was an amazing art form and this made a big impression on Yuka at the time.

“I was really happy that calligraphy could be accepted this much overseas. So when my husband’s transfer was decided and I started thinking what I should do in Australia, calligraphy came to mind.”

Calligraphy school had a chaotic start

Yuka had done calligraphy for a long time and she was certified as a calligraphy instructor, but it was the first time she had taught calligraphy formally.

And the students were foreigners. Around the time when she had just opened the school, she was at a loss with the students who would talk boisterously while drawing, and students who would sometimes come to class, and sometimes would not come to class depending on how they felt.

“At the beginning I thought I wanted to get across the things that seem like the spirit of calligraphy such as self-discipline and concentration, but it just didn’t go well. But the people here draw much freer and bolder characters than Japanese people. I decided to focus on that by removing the difficult elements, setting up a dynamic where people draw without hesitating, and giving the message that calligraphy was for people to express their own feelings.”

Communication through calligraphy

After four years there are now a lot of different students, such as Japanese people who come to revisit Japanese culture and Australians who are interested in Japanese culture and art. Yuka said she has recently started being asked to cater for school visits from local elementary and junior high schools.

“They get really excited from drawing just one character. Lots of different questions come up, and conversation about Japan grows from that. Calligraphy becomes a tool for communication.”

I could sense Yuka’s warm, kind personality from the sight of her proudly introducing her students’ work lined up in a row in her house. She is enthusiastic that there are still a lot of things she can do with calligraphy. I am looking forward to the work she does in the future.

PART 5 An e-mail introducing a friend

Introducing a friend

Hi Tomomi, It’s been a while. How are things going?

I’m writing today because there’s someone I’d like to introduce to you. He’s an old classmate of mine from the Japanese language department at university called Tony. He loves Japanese anime and music, and when I met him the other day he said he was interested in finding Japanese friends.

He’s a web designer. He’s friendly and easy to talk to and he’s always saying funny things and making people laugh, so he’s good fun ^{[[1]]}to be with. He doesn’t just like anime and music but he likes cycling, camping and the outdoors as well, just like you, so I think you’ll get on well.

If it’s OK, would you like to go out for dinner or something as a threesome next time we get the chance?

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Laura

Topic 2 Climbing Mount Fuji

PART 1 There's no mountain that beats Mount Fuji

Listener: I'm going to Japan in my summer holiday, and I was thinking I'd like to climb Mount Fuji when I'm there...

Listener: Kinoshita-san, your hobby's mountain climbing, isn't it? Have you ever climbed Mount Fuji?

①

Kinoshita: Of course. I think I've climbed it four times in total.

Listener: Four times! That's amazing.

Kinoshita: Mount Fuji is a single peak mountain, which means there are no other mountains around it. That's why when the weather's fine the view from Mount Fuji is so amazing. To the south is the Izu Peninsula and the sea, and to the north are the mountains of the Japan Alps. I've climbed a lot of different mountains, but when it comes to the view, I don't think there's any mountain that beats Mount Fuji.

Listener: Sorry, what does that mean?

Kinoshita: It means there's no mountain better than Mount Fuji, because the view from Mount Fuji is the best.

Listener: Really? Is it that amazing?

Kinoshita: Yeah, and to give you one piece of advice, if you climb with a tour, you'll go to the shrine on the crater at the summit as your final destination. But Mount Fuji's real summit is a place called Kengamine about 30 minutes climb from there. If you climb Mount Fuji, it's a bit of a waste not to climb to Japan's highest point of 3,776 metres.

Listener: Right.

Kinoshita: So if you climb Mount Fuji, make sure you go as far as Kengamine.

Listener: OK.

②

Tamura: Mount Fuji? I climbed it with friends when I was a student. But all I remember is being really tired.

Listener: Really?

Tamura: It was really crowded. We started climbing in late afternoon and stayed in the mountain lodge at the eighth station midway up the mountain, but the mountain lodge was full, and about four people were probably sleeping in the space for one person. I couldn't even roll over in bed.

Listener: Erm, what does "Roll over in bed" mean?

Tamura: Oh, because people were sleeping right next to me on my left and on my right, I couldn't change the position of my body.

Listener: Right, was it that crowded?

Tamura: The next day we got up early and set off for the summit, but the path was crowded so we couldn't make much progress.

Listener: Oh no.

Tamura: The weather wasn't very good either, and the summit was completely white from the fog. It was extremely cold and hard. There was a guy in a t-shirt and shorts and he almost died at the summit.

Listener: Was it that cold?

Tamura: But it might have been different if the weather had been good.

Kinoshita: That's really unlucky.

Tamura: But, I suppose we got a sense of achievement.

③

Anita: I climbed Mount Fuji as well when I went to Japan a long time ago. I like the fact that when you climb mountains in Japan there are lots of things to enjoy after climbing the mountain.

Listener: For example?

Anita: For example, hot springs. After coming down the mountain you can get into a hot spring at the foot of the mountain straight away.

Listener: Really?

Anita: There are quite a few hot springs at the base of Mount Fuji too, and when you soak and relax in the hot water, all the tiredness from climbing vanishes, and, ah, it's paradise.

Listener: Erm, what does "paradise" mean?

Anita: It means it's like being in heaven and it feels really good.

Anita: And you can see the mountain you've just climbed from the outside bath.

Listener: Wow.
 Anita: As well as that, I'd recommend the Yamanashi speciality, hoto.
 Listener: Hoto?
 Anita: It's thick wheat noodles boiled in miso, and it's really good when you're tired. If you climb Mount Fuji, you definitely have to try a hot spring and hoto.
 Listener: I will.

④

Kato: I've never climbed Mount Fuji, but when I was at university, tennis club training camps were at nearby Lake Kawaguchiko, so I know my way around the area quite well.
 Listener: Really?
 Kato: It's probably better to look at Mount Fuji from the bottom.
 Listener: From the bottom?
 Kato: The view of Mount Fuji is just like the view in ukiyo-e.
 Listener: Erm, what does that mean?
 Kato: Ukiyo-e are old Japanese paintings. Because Mount Fuji is so beautiful, it's often been painted in ukiyo-e.
 Kato: I'd recommend looking at Mount Fuji from a place called Koyodai.
 Listener: Koyodai?
 Kato: Koyodai is a viewing platform near Lake Kawaguchiko. It's on top of a mountain, so the road isn't very good, but at least you can go there by car and get there easily, and the view of Mount Fuji is really amazing.
 Listener: Great.
 Kato: Mount Fuji looks so big that from left to right all you can see in your field of vision is the mountain and the sea of trees spread out underneath it.
 Listener: Really?
 Kato: It's quite impressive, so I'd recommend it.

PART 2 I'd really like to see the sunrise

- Yamazaki: So what kind of schedule are we going to go for when we climb Mount Fuji? I heard climbing it in one day isn't impossible.
- Kim: The course time is about 10 hours for the climb and the descent together, I see. OK, if it's that much, shall we climb it in one day? If we do that, we can do lots of fun things the next day.
- Park: But... someone I know did that before and they said they were so tired they almost died. Shall we stay in the mountain lodge?
- Yamazaki: If we stay in the mountain lodge a popular way to do things is to start climbing early afternoon, sleep in the mountain lodge at the eighth station, get up in the middle of the night and start climbing, and then watch the sun rise at the summit. Shall we do that?
- Park: Sounds good.
- Kim: OK, shall we go for that plan? I'd really like to see the sunrise.
- Yamazaki: OK, so we're definitely doing the course where we stay in the mountain lodge. I'll make a booking later.
- Park: Oh, and let's definitely go to Kengamine as well. If we climb Mount Fuji, we can't very well not go to Japan's highest point, can we?
- Kim: Of course not. We have to go.
- Yamazaki: That's right. If we're making all the effort to climb it. So if we go with that plan, maybe we can get down the mountain in the morning, so what shall we do after that?
- Kim: How about renting a car and driving around the sightseeing areas at the foot of the mountain? And I want to get in a hot spring straight after getting down the mountain.
- Park: Great.
- Yamazaki: OK, Let's rent a car, get in a hot spring, and drive around the sightseeing areas. Erm, the last bus to Shinjuku leaves Lake Kawaguchiko after eight, so I suppose we've got half a day to enjoy ourselves.
- Kim: Hmm, there are lots of places we want to go to, aren't there? We want to relax in the hot spring, eat hoto, go to sightseeing spots like the wind caves and the ice caves, and go to observatories like Koyodai. It's a waste going home straight away, so shall we stay for one more night?
- Park: I agree. If we stay, we can take our time and enjoy ourselves more. I heard there's an amusement park nearby with lots of thrill rides. What do you think? Let's go.
- Kim&
- Yamazaki: What?

PART 3 Everyone should be able to have a good time

- Wira: Sasaki-san, are you going somewhere?
- Sasaki: Yes, I'm thinking of going to Taman Negara, what do you think?
- Wira: Oh, Taman Negara? If you haven't been, it's worth going once. Erm, and it's one of the oldest jungles in the world.
- Sasaki: Is that right?
- Wira: If you like nature, I think it's a great place. There's the view from the boat on the way to the jungle, and a canopy walk on a rope bridge above the tall trees, so everyone should be able to have a good time.
- Sasaki: Really?
- Wira: Listening to the bird song, and looking at the rare plants, erm, you feel that you are in the wilds of nature.
- Sasaki: Sounds great.
- Wira: But if you want to see animals living in the jungle like tigers and elephants, I suppose it's probably best not to expect too much. They don't always appear.
- Sasaki: Right?
- Wira: To see animals, you need to go out with a guide at night, erm, and wait patiently inside a lodge in the jungle.
- Sasaki: I see.
- Wira: But there's no electricity and there are lots of insects, so it might be a bit hard for people not used to it.
- Sasaki: Right? But that kind of experience sounds really interesting as well.

PART 4 Fuji Five Lakes are great in any season

Great in any season: Special feature - Fuji Five Lakes sightseeing spots

Enjoy the wilds of nature

Koyodai: The place to see Mount Fuji

Famous Mount Fuji viewpoint. There is a 360 degree panorama view from the 1164m viewing platform at the rest house. Your body and your mind are sure to feel refreshed when you breathe in the fresh air while gazing at Mount Fuji. True to its name, Koyodai, you can see a sea of trees that have turned a beautiful red colour in autumn. There is a course that takes about twenty five minutes from the bus stop at the foot of the mountain to the viewing platform. In the summer there are a lot of people that hike. You can go to the viewing platform by car too, but the road is narrow, so you have to be careful driving.

Fujiten Resort: Enjoy sport with a view of Mount Fuji

Authentic ski resort with a view of Mount Fuji. OK for beginners to experts with a relaxing family course, and a downhill course with a gradient of up to 32 degrees. Skiwear rental is available. In the spring and summer when there is no snow, you can ski and snowboard on the summer ski runs, as well as enjoy other outdoor pursuits such as mountain biking. Barbecues are also possible on the second floor of the centre house with views of Mount Fuji (reservations required).

Yamanakako Hananomiyako Flower Park: Highland flower fields with a view of Mount Fuji

Park that boasts an area of 300,000 square metres. In these fields, flowers of each season come into bloom with Mount Fuji in the background: tulips in spring, sunflowers in summer, and cosmos in autumn. Check out which flowers are in bloom before you visit. In the heated green houses (entrance fee required) you can see rare tropical plants and a range of flowers all year round. There are not just flowers to enjoy, but in summer children can also enjoy playing with play equipment in the water. In winter the illuminations are beautiful.

Narusawa Ice Cave: Experience a cool, mysterious world

Cave created by a volcanic eruption. After passing through the lava tunnel, and descending 21 metres underground, you can see the icicles. The glistening white icicles create the illusion of a forest. You can see the icicles almost all year round, but the time when they are at their largest is not winter as you'd expect, but between spring and summer. Because the inside of the cave is maintained at a temperature of 0-3 degrees throughout the year, there was once a time when it was used in place of a refrigerator. Even in summer you need a coat. Because it is slippery, it is recommended you wear shoes that are easy to walk in.

PART 5 A place I recommend is ...

Please let me know any places you recommend!

Hi ~

How are you?

I've been busy with work recently, but otherwise I'm well.

This summer holiday I'm going to ●●.

I've been looking up a lot of different things in a guidebook but there are too many interesting looking places, so I'm at a bit of a loss as to where to go.

Could you please let me know any places you recommend?

I'll be in touch again once my schedule is decided.

Best wishes

Topic 3 Healthy living

PART 1 Walking would probably be best

Listener: Recently, I haven't been getting enough exercise... I'm thinking of taking up some exercise, do you have anything you'd recommend?

①

Hirano: Exercise? If that's what you want to do, going to a gym is the usual thing, isn't it? I'm a member of the gym in front of the station, so I'll introduce you if you want to join.

Listener: What kind of exercise can you do?

Hirano: Well, you can do weight training, run on running machines... oh, and recently I've sometimes been doing studio programmes as well, and they're pretty interesting.

Listener: Studio programmes? For example?

Hirano: The programme I like is called "Body Combat", where you move your body to music while doing kick boxing and karate moves. It's a lot of fun.

Listener: Really?

Hirano: Unlike normal aerobics it really fires you up, so one hour flies by without you noticing. And when you finish you're covered in sweat, and you feel like you've done a lot of exercise.

Listener: Wow, that sounds really interesting.

Hirano: As well as that, there are things like Zumba...

Listener: Zumba?

Hirano: Erm, it's like dancing. And there's yoga and lots of other things, so how about coming to have a look one time?

②

Shimizu: But if you haven't done much exercise before, walking would probably be best to start with, wouldn't it?

Listener: What? Walking?

Shimizu: Yeah, walking probably doesn't feel much like exercise, but it's actually really good for you. And you don't have to be good at sports, so anyone can do it.

Listener: I suppose that's true.

Shimizu: It's aerobic exercise as well.

Listener: What kind of exercise is aerobic?

Shimizu: Oh, things like running, and the kind of exercise that slowly burns fat.

Listener: Right.

Shimizu: Walking's different from running because the risk of injury is low and walking outside is good for getting rid of stress. On the days when I go walking in a nearby park in the morning I feel really refreshed.

Listener: Really? Sounds like it feels good.

Shimizu: Walking on your own is good too, but if you walk at the same time on the same course regularly, it's good because you can make friends.

③

Onishi: On a similar note, did you know that radio calisthenics is a lot more effective than you'd think?

Listener: Radio calisthenics? I've never heard of it...

Onishi: It's exercises done in time to piano music on the radio, and all Japanese people learn it at school I think. When I was at elementary school, in the summer we gathered in the park every morning and had to do it.

Hirano: Me too. Me too.

Shimizu: That brings back memories.

Onishi: But, actually it involves lots of different movements, so people say it's good for giving your whole body a workout.

Listener: Really?

Onishi: It includes elements of stretching too, so your body becomes flexible, and it's even effective for constipation apparently.

Min: Is that really true?

Onishi: There are two versions of radio calisthenics, but even if you do both, it takes just six and a half minutes, so it's easy to keep doing every day.

Listener: Wow, that sounds great.

Onishi: I do it at home while watching it on YouTube.

④

- Min: If you're interested in exercise you can do at home, I bought an abdominal roller the other day online.
- Hirano: Ah, I know that.
- Listener: What is it?
- Min: Erm, a wheel about this big with handles attached to both sides, erm, you get down on all fours, hold the handles in both hands, stretch your body while rolling the wheel, and then bend your body again and roll your body back to its original position.
- Listener: Right.
- Min: It looks easy, but actually it's very effective for the abdominals.
- Listener: Abdominals?
- Onishi: Your stomach muscles.
- Min: And just rolling backwards and forwards a few times has a big effect. The first time I did it, I could only do it about three times, but the next day, my stomach muscles were really sore. I thought I was going to die of the pain just from laughing.
- Listener: That's pretty amazing.
- Min: Recently I've got much more used to it. It doesn't take up any space either, so you can do it at home, and it's really easy. It's really good.

PART 2 What kind of diet are you on?

- Saule: What? Madoka, is that all you're having for lunch? What's the matter?
- Madoka: Oh, yeah, actually I'm on a bit of a diet at the moment.
- Saule: Diet? Why?
- Madoka: Well, it's summer soon, and everyone'll be wearing summer clothes, won't they? That's why I thought I'd try and lose a bit of weight now.
- Saule: Really? What kind of diet are you on?
- Madoka: Erm, I'm skipping breakfast and only having an apple for lunch. And then for dinner just having a bit of salad, things like that.
- Saule: What? That's not very good. Especially not eating breakfast. You'll make yourself sick, not healthy.
- Madoka: What? Really?
- Saule: And only having vegetables and fruit isn't good for you either. You have to eat properly. Bread, rice, things like that, "something-drates".
- Madoka: Carbohydrates?
- Saule: That's right, carbohydrates. And eggs, milk, things like that, protein.
- Madoka: But if I eat those kinds of things, it won't be a diet, will it?
- Saule: The important thing is to gradually reduce calories while thinking about nutritional balance. And are you doing exercise?
- Madoka: No, not really.
- Saule: You have to do exercise too. Swimming, walking "aer-what-do-you-call-it" exercise.
- Madoka: Aerobic exercise? Yeah, I'm thinking I really have to do some exercise, but I don't have time and I haven't got any chances to start doing it.
- Saule: But you're not overweight at all, Madoka, so you don't need to be on a diet, do you? Why are there so many Japanese girls who want to lose weight? I think it's healthier and looks better here if you aren't too skinny.
- Madoka: Really? Actually it's been three days since I started my diet and I'm starving... I can't think properly either, so I think I've reached my limit. Right, I'm going to buy some bread.

PART 3 It gets rid of the cause of the illness

- Kamola: Okamoto-san, what are you doing?
- Okamoto: It's a bamboo stepper. If you step on the bamboo like this, your blood flow improves and you can get rid of the tiredness in your feet.
- Kamola: Really? It's the first time I've seen it. Did you bring it here?
- Okamoto: That's right. Do you know any good health cures, Kamola-san?
- Kamola: Let me think, in Uzbekistan we have a health cure that involves bathing in smoke.
- Okamoto: Smoke?
- Kamola: A grass called "isiriq" is used, erm, which is a medicinal herb that grows in the desert. You burn it after drying it and then bathe in the smoke.
- Okamoto: Is that right?
- Kamola: Erm, the smoke is really good for your health. It prevents colds, and when you get sick, if you breathe in the smoke, it gets rid of the cause of the illness.
- Okamoto: Wow, it's the first time I've heard of it.
- Kamola: Actually, I don't like the smell, so I don't do it very much, but, erm, my husband's mother often burns isiriq in the house in winter. Often when I take my children there, she covers them in smoke so that they don't become sick.
- Okamoto: Really?
- Kamola: And isiriq isn't just used when you're sick, erm... it's also used to protect you from bad luck.
- Okamoto: Is that right?
- Kamola: When my husband bought a new car, to prevent him from having an accident his mother put isiriq in a small bag and hung it in the car.
- Okamoto: Right.
- Kamola: Recently there are a lot of people who don't do this kind of old tradition.
- Okamoto: Wow, it's really interesting.

PART 4 I wonder if it really works

Does Genkiniru work?

- 1: Recently I'm always tired and when I told a friend I wasn't feeling 100%, I was recommended a health supplement made by a certain research institute called Genkiniru. I was told it's good for you, but it seems you have to place a substantial order and keep taking it. I wonder if this kind of thing really works. It's quite expensive, so I don't know what to do.
- 2: It might make you feel a bit better. But I think a lot of it will be psychological.
- 3: I know Genkiniru! After trying it, I got much better! I definitely recommend it!
- 4: The manufacturer just joined us ;-)! !
- 5: It's a bit like pyramid sales. It's a system where if you buy that product, your friend will get some money. Before, an acquaintance of mine was doing it and they were pestering me to buy really expensive products.
- 6: I've taken it before, but it didn't work at all. What a waste of money.
- 7: It's a bad habit of Japanese people to immediately jump at the chance to buy something when they hear it's good for their health. It's unbelievable, when a TV programme says that natto is good for you, the next day natto disappears from the supermarket.
- 8: Talking of health supplement booms, kochakinoko was really popular, wasn't it. I was made to drink that mysterious beverage by my mother... .
- 9: I've just spotted someone born in Showa!
- 10: Talking of pyramid sales, there are certainly a lot of those kinds of suspicious health supplements. People with cancer and other serious illnesses have their weakness taken advantage of and are told they will get better if they buy expensive products.
- 11: First and foremost, relying on health supplements is a mistake. If you're going to take that kind of thing, at least eat good food.
- 12: If you look at the ingredients, I think you'll understand that at the end of the day they're simply vitamin supplements. You can't say they don't have any effect, but there might be a real reason why you don't feel well, so I recommend going to see the doctor once.
- 13: After going for a health check I was diagnosed with diabetes, so I'm going to give it a miss.

PART 5 Health cures from around the world

What different health cures are there around the world?

noname#178609

The other day there was a programme on TV introducing health cures from around the world. There were lots of unique health cures like eating raw garlic to keep colds away, so it was really interesting. Please let me know all the different health cures you know from around the world.

Answers

silkroad:

In my country, Uzbekistan, we have a health cure that uses medicinal herbs. The herb is called isiriq, which grows abundantly in the desert... Read more

kenkootaku:

The other day I saw on the internet a health cure where you lie on top of the snow after a sauna. Finnish people love saunas and after warming their bodies... Read more

Topic 4 If you're going to see a play

PART 1 Kabuki's great

Kelly : I'm thinking of going to see kabuki on my next trip to Japan. What do you think about kabuki?

①

Kitamura : Kabuki's great, you should definitely go. I've been loads of times, but there are so many different ways to enjoy it. The costumes and make up and things like that are really beautiful to look at, and the stage mechanism is really interesting too.

Kelly : What's the stage mechanism?

Kitamura : In kabuki the stage is made in a way so that it turns around, and a stage that was the outside of a building turns around and immediately changes into the inside of the building.

Kelly : Wow, that's amazing.

Kitamura : And the music is good too. Lots of different Japanese instruments are used, and the sound of the wind, waves and even snow are represented by taiko drums.

Kelly : Really? Even the sound of snow!

Kitamura : And the actors' performances consist of really unique movements, so it's very interesting. In Kabuki men play women, but it's amazing because they're unnervingly feminine.

Kelly : Right.

Kitamura : There's lots of information on the internet now, so I think you'll enjoy it twice or three times as much if you check the story and points of interest before you go.

②

Noguchi : Kabuki? I've been to see it once, but it wasn't really my thing. Anyway, it was really long.

Kelly : Long?

Noguchi : It was probably about four hours in total. And the one I went to see didn't have much acting or movement, but was nothing but talk the whole way through, so I got really sleepy.

Kitamura : Right, so it depends on the play you see.

Noguchi : And the actors use Edo era Japanese, so I didn't understand well what they were saying. I borrowed an audio guide, but I still couldn't understand. I suppose the dancing was beautiful though.

Kelly : Really?

Noguchi : That reminds me, there's a new type of kabuki called super kabuki that's different to traditional kabuki, and has lots of movement and showy performances apparently.

Kelly : Right.

Noguchi : The Japanese is supposed to be easy to understand too, so that might be better for you.

③

Sugimoto : Right, super kabuki might be easy to understand for you. But there are lots of good things apart from kabuki in Japan. For example, do you know takarazuka?

Kelly : Takurazaka? No.

Sugimoto : In kabuki all the actors are male and the female roles are played by men, but takarazuka is the opposite, all the actors are female and all the male roles are played by females.

Kelly : Wow.

Sugimoto : And the men that the females play are really cool and good looking, so if you go and see it once, you'll definitely become a fan straight away.

Kelly : Is that right?

Sugimoto : And the story is dramatic, so you won't get bored, and there's spectacular and beautiful singing and dancing too.

Kelly : Really?

Sugimoto : I think it's a performing art that Japan can be proud of as well.

Kelly : I see.

Sugimoto : I think it's just as good as kabuki. Let me know if you want to get a ticket and I'll give you a hand.

④

Takagi : That's a big jump from kabuki to takarazuka. If that's OK, wouldn't you rather see some comedy?

Kelly : Comedy?

Takagi : You're going to Kansai too on your trip, aren't you? Kansai's famous for comedy.

Kelly: Right.
Takagi: The thing I recommend is Shinkigeki.
Kelly: Shinkigeki?
Takagi: I suppose it's a play centered on jokes. If you go to the theatres in Osaka's Nanba district, it's on every day. It's really good fun.
Kelly: I see.
Takagi: The plot's always a little melodramatic, so there's plenty of laughter and tears,
Kelly: Oh, OK...
Takagi: If you can understand the funny man and straight man culture, you'll be an expert on Japanese culture. I really want you to go and see it.
Kitamura: Just a minute, weren't we talking about kabuki?

PART 2 I think you'll enjoy it

- Imai: Katarina, is it true you like classical music?
 Katharina: Yes. Why do you ask?
 Imai: Actually, while I'm in Germany I'd like to see some real opera.
 Katharina: Oh, great.
 Imai: So I was hoping you'd be able to tell me lots of things about opera.
 Katharina: Go ahead, ask me anything.
 Imai: Erm, how do you buy opera tickets? Is it best to buy them from the ticket office in the theatre?
 Katharina: How to buy tickets? If you buy them at the theatre it's quick and easy, but you can buy them online as well. You can even choose your seats.
 Imai: Really? But I don't know the names of the operas very well
 Katharina: You can find out the names of the operas too if you look at the website. Shall we have a look now? (sound of keyboard) Erm, the first half of this month is "Carmen" and the second half is Wagner's "The Valkyrie".
 Imai: Ah, I know "Carmen". It's famous, isn't it? But seeing as I've gone to all the trouble of coming to Germany, it's probably better if I see a German opera.
 Katharina: You're probably right. There's nothing quite like seeing that sort of thing in the local area. "The Valkyrie" is very long, but the music is really dramatic and I think it's very good. The story's a little complicated though, so it might be good to do some preparation beforehand.
 Imai: Is that so? So if I book a ticket on the internet, can I pick it up at the theatre ticket office?
 Katharina: You can do that, but instead of picking up a paper ticket, if you print out a bar code at home and take it with you, you can use that as a ticket.
 Imai: Really? That's convenient. Oh, and, when you go to the opera, does everyone have to dress smartly?
 Katharina: Dress smartly? That's right, but I suppose it depends on the area, there are places where everyone wears a dress and formal clothes, but Cologne has a slightly more casual feel to it. Some young people look a bit scruffy. But, I suppose, because it's a special occasion, if you go wearing a tie at least, you'll fit into the surroundings, and I think you'll enjoy it.
 Imai: I see. Thank you very much. Right, I have to buy a tie.

PART 3 You can see it at theatres in the city

- Nam: This Friday evening after work I'll take you to see water puppetry.
 Ono: Water puppetry?
 Nam: Yes, it's a puppet show that takes place on top of water.
 Ono: Wow, on top of water.
 Nam: The small puppets wear beautiful costumes and dance, and turtles and dragons come out of the water.
 Ono: Really?
 Nam: Actually, there are people behind the stage controlling the puppets, who are submerged in the water up to their waists.
 Ono: Great.
 Nam: It started in rural areas in north Vietnam more than 1000 years ago, and, erm, originally it was meant to pray for a good harvest apparently. In the past you could only see it at festivals in the countryside, but now there are theatres in the city and you can see it there.
 Ono: Is that right?
 Nam: Erm, ...the stories are based on Vietnamese folk tales and life in the countryside, and they're, how do you say, ...simple and easy to understand. In one hour there are more than ten short stories, so there's a lot of variety and you don't get bored... . And there isn't much speaking, so I think you can enjoy it even if you don't understand Vietnamese.
 Ono: I see.
 Nam: It's good fun just to watch the movement of the puppets while listening to the musical instruments.
 Ono: Really? I'm looking forward to that.

PART 4 It's a very tough world

Girl in the second grade of junior high school wanting to join takarazuka!

sochan27221 wrote:

I'm a girl in the second grade of junior high school wanting to join takarazuka!

The other day when I went to see takarazuka for the first time, the actor playing the main male part was so cool, I really want to become like that.

Could I become a takarazuka performer?

I've never studied ballet or singing or anything like that, but can I still become a takarazuka performer?

Thank you for any help!

Best answers

y2etmkcs2 wrote:

Only graduates of Takarazuka Music School can become takarazienne (takarazuka performers). The entrance exam for Takarazuka Music School is in March every year, and the only application requirements are that you have graduated junior high school and are aged between 15 and 18. The admission rate is less than 5% though, and it's so difficult to get in, there's a saying that, "East is Tokyo University and west is Takarazuka Music School." It's impossible to pass unless you've done ballet and singing at a specialist prep school.

And then only people who've taken tough lessons for two years and graduated from Takarazuka Music School can stand on the takarazuka stage.

The actress playing the main male role is called the top star. It's really hard to become the top star. There are five troupes in takarazuka, which each give a regular performance, and there's only one top star in each troupe. Normally with plays or musicals, the play or musical is decided first of all, and then the actors are chosen to suit that play or musical. But takarazuka is different. The play or musical to be performed is chosen to suit the top star, and is performed so that the top star can shine. It could be said that the attraction of takarazuka is the attraction of the top star.

But it's difficult for women to play men, and it takes most top stars more than ten years from starting Takarazuka Music School to becoming a top star. Top stars are people blessed with talent and good looks who were focused on a future dream from an early age, and finally after working hard for a long time could become one.

Takarazienne walk a long long path, and finally shine on the stage. And there really are very few people who can become a top star. It's a very tough world.

No one knows whether or not you can become a top star. If you really want to become one, this is not a time to be asking questions in a place like this.

PART 5 Come and join us!

Would you like to go to a water puppetry show?

Would you like to go to a water puppetry show with members of the intermediate Japanese class at the Japanese Culture Centre? Enjoy traditional Vietnamese culture!

Day and time: Saturday December 1st, 5pm to 5:50pm

Cost: 120,000 don (for ticket)

✂afterwards we will be going to a nearby restaurant for food and drinks

Water puppetry is a traditional Vietnamese form of puppetry that uses the surface of water as its stage and features small puppets that dance in time to the music. The story is easy to understand and the movements are interesting, so you can enjoy it even just by looking. If you're interested, we'll explain the story to you. Please invite your friends and family and come and join us!

If you're interested in joining us or you have any questions, please get in touch at the mail address below!
contact details: ●●●@gmail.com

Topic 5 Familiar news

PART 1 He was arrested

①

Newsreader: A rare monkey has been found in a park in Osaka.

Child: Erm, it was sitting on the top of that tree. It was very cute.

Housewife: It was a really beautiful colour. When I first saw it, I thought it was a rare monkey or something. Oh, has it been caught... ?

Newsreader: A report has just come in that the golden monkey seen in a park in Osaka's Izumisano on the 22nd has been caught by Osaka police.

Newsreader: The monkey is a type of monkey known as a golden snub-nosed monkey, also called a golden monkey. According to an expert at Osaka zoo, the golden snub-nosed monkey is a type of cercopithecidae that inhabits China and Tibet and is currently designated as an endangered species. It is against the law to import or keep these monkeys as a pet, so Osaka police think it might have been smuggled through illegal channels, and kept as a pet, before escaping.

②

Newsreader: Before dawn today a robber burst into a convenience store in Shinjuku ward, but he was arrested by a policeman who rushed to the scene of the crime. At around 3am today a man wearing a mask burst into a convenience store in Yotsuya-sanchome, Shinjuku ward, Tokyo. He pointed an object resembling a knife at a male member of staff at the cash register, demanded he "Hand over the money," and stole 47,000 yen in cash from the cash register.

Newsreader: Then when the man was trying to escape, he was surprised by a Halloween figure of a ghost decorating the side of the shop entrance, and fell over and hit his back. While the man was stunned, he was detained by a policeman who had rushed to the scene of the crime after the member of staff had reported the crime, and was arrested on the spot on suspicion of attempted robbery. The charged, Kazuhiro Yamashita, a jobless 48-year-old from Shinjuku ward, confessed to all charges, and is reported to have said, "I didn't expect there would be a ghost there. I was frightened out of my skin."

③

Newsreader: We've received a postcard from Shinshu about the autumn leaves. In Karasawa, Matsumoto City in the Northern Alps they are welcoming the peak period for autumn colours. This year's autumn colours are one week earlier than usual and now is the peak. The vivid colours of the red sorbus commixta, the yellow of the Erman's birch, and the green of the Japanese stone pine blend together to create a beautiful tapestry.

Newsreader: Large groups of climbers visit the mountain Hotaka-dake, in the bosom of the Northern Alps at an altitude of 2,300m and about six hours walk from Kamikochi, to enjoy the burning autumn colours. It is also the peak season for climbers. In the camp site something other than the natural autumn colours is blossoming, a colourful variety of tents. It is expected that the autumn colours can be seen for the whole of this month.

④

Newsreader: Today in Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture the Aozora International Marathon took place. The runners started together from the prefectural government offices just after 9am, and ran the 42.195 km course. This year applications exceed the quota by eight times, and, including city runners chosen by lottery and guest runners, 24,000 people took part.

Runner 1: I'm a bit nervous because it's my first time. But I'm definitely going to complete the race.

Runner 2: I came from China. I'm looking forward to running with Japanese people.

Runner 3: Yes, I came dressed as Anpanman today.

Newsreader: Among the runners, attracting a lot of attention are runners dressed as anime characters and animals. And about 2,000 international runners from 33 countries and regions are taking part in the race. Also attracting a lot of attention are the foreign language volunteers wearing hats with the names of each country's language written on them.

PART 2 Apparently there was a fire

- Nakai: Good morning. Sorry I'm late.
 Takasu: Good morning. What happened? Was the road busy?
 Nakai: Yes. There was a huge traffic jam.
 Olena: Right, it was in the news. South Bridge was... closed to traffic.
 Nakai: Closed to traffic?
 Olena: Yes, it was closed to traffic. Apparently there was a fire.
 Takasu: Right, I saw it too.
 Nakai: Really? I didn't know.
 Olena: There's a factory under the bridge, isn't there? There was a fire in that factory. Because the wind was so strong, the fire got bigger and it spread to the bridge apparently.
 Nakai: Wow. Is that right?
 Olena: According to the news, the factory was completely burnt down, and it seems more than ten people were injured. I saw it on TV. The bridge was completely black and covered in foam from the fire engines.
 Takasu: It was quite a big fire.
 Nakai: Alright, so because of that the traffic jam was so big.
 Olena: That must have been annoying, but lucky you weren't there when the fire happened.
 Takasu: But if the fire was so big, it must take a while to fix the bridge, mustn't it?
 Olena: Yes. They said it would take more than half a year to completely fix it. Quite a difficult construction job.
 Nakai: Are you serious? Half a year? Please say you're joking. Oh no. Is this situation going to continue for half a year more.
 Olena: No, apparently, first of all they're going to fix the bridge temporarily, so that at least cars can go over it. They're expecting to reopen it to traffic in about three weeks.
 Nakai: But even still it's going to take three weeks.
 Olena: I think three weeks to fix it is fast.
 Takasu: Hmm, the only thing you can do might be to leave your house as early as possible. I won't say too much if you're a little late, so just keep an eye on the situation and take care on your way to work.
 Nakai: Oh no. What a nuisance.

PART 3 I saw it on the website of my local council ...

- Jake: Did you hear? Apparently you'll have to pay money to throw out rubbish soon.
 mother 1: What? Really?
 Jake: I saw it on the local council website. From next year it seems the way rubbish is thrown out will change.
 mother 2: Change?
 Jake: The burnable rubbish you throw out from your home will have to be put in special rubbish bags apparently.
 mother 1: What?
 Jake: You can buy the rubbish bags in shops and supermarkets, but it seems the price is different depending on the size. And if you don't put your rubbish in those bags, they won't come and collect your rubbish apparently.
 mother 1: Is that right?
 Jake: Since a while ago, recyclable rubbish like paper and pet bottles has had to be separated from burnable rubbish before you threw it out.
 mother 2: That's right.
 mother 1: Yes.
 Jake: But there are a lot of people who don't separate their rubbish before throwing it out because it's troublesome... So it's written that to encourage more recycling, they've decided to charge money for burnable rubbish you throw out.
 mother 1: Really?
 Jake: Erm, it seems that the details will be sent in a pamphlet from the council. I suppose it's troublesome, but rubbish has to be separated.
 mother 2: I agree.

PART 4 A new app for foreign tourists is generating interest

Sharing the latest discoveries about Japan! A new app for frequent foreign tourists, “NippoNavigation”, is generating a lot of interest.

An app for foreign tourists to Japan, “NippoNavigation”, is generating a lot of interest. The app aims to increase the different ways foreign tourists can enjoy travel in Japan by helping them to learn more about Japan, and supplies information about secret spots that are difficult for foreign tourists to visit, discount coupons for shopping, and articles on Japan.

Famous sightseeing spots, traditional culture, Japanese food, and shopping are the usual things that interest foreign tourists to Japan. But the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan is increasing more and more, including frequent visitors who have been to Japan two or three times, and the needs of these tourists to understand Japan better, to see a variety of different sides to Japan, and to experience contemporary Japanese culture have become clear recently. In order to meet the needs of these foreign tourists, the usual information, such as famous sightseeing spots and traditional culture has been deemed to be insufficient by itself. “NippoNavigation” is for foreign tourists who are not satisfied with the same Japanese trip that they have already had, to help them discover a new side of Japan.

In terms of sightseeing information, of course there is information about famous sightseeing spots, but there is also information about less well-known places, such as the type of restaurants and bars and events that only local people know about. Places and attractions that are popular with foreigners, like owl cafes and ninja experiences are also introduced. For people keen on shopping there are also coupons that offer discounts at popular electrical shops, chemists, and other shops. There is a wealth of articles about Japan as well. The aim is to meet a range of needs that guide books have not covered up to now.

People that have actually used the app have given favourable reviews, such as, “We were able to have a different trip to the ones we’ve had before,” and, “Our image of Japan has changed,” and the app has also received requests, such as, “I’d like to see the everyday life of normal Japanese people,” and, “I’d like there to be a greater variety of coupons.”

The app is available in English, Chinese and Korean. It has also been decided to make it available in Thailand and Indonesia, where tourists have been increasing recently, so it will be available in about five languages. The areas the app covers at the moment are only the 23 wards of Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, but there is a plan to increase the number of areas in the future.

PART 5 Sharing news

I found a really interesting app. It’s supposed to make trips to Japan more interesting!

Don’t you think that people who’ve been to Japan before want to try going somewhere like an izakaya that Japanese people might go to, rather than just kabuki or sushi? Apparently you can get information about those kinds of good, not widely-known spots with this app.

I’ve been to Japan before as well, but if I have a chance to go again, I want to use this app and try a slightly different holiday.

Everyone be sure to check it out!

Topic 6 I want this!

PART 1 I can't live without this

Yoko: Wow, you can cut an apple like that with that. That's amazing.

Monica: Oh, this? It's an apple cutter. It's good, isn't it?

Listener: Don't you have them in Japan?

Yoko: No, it's the first time I've seen one.

①

Monica: It seems people don't use them much in Japan. When I was studying in Japan and wanted to eat an apple, I looked everywhere for this apple cutter, but they didn't sell them anywhere. When I told Japanese people I knew about it, they told me a kitchen knife would do.

Tomoko: I think so too.

Monica: But if you use this, it's easy. You don't get your hands dirty, and it's safe, so even children can use it, can't they? I'm quite clumsy, and not very good with knives, so I find it really useful.

Yoko: I see.

Monica: In the end I couldn't find one in Japan, so I got my mother to send me one from home.

Listener: Wow. You went to all that effort?

Monica: Yes. In those days almost no one knew that this kind of utensil existed.

Yoko: I know.

Monica: Now you can buy them even in Japan in 100 yen shops apparently.

Manami: Really? But I don't know anyone that uses them.

②

Yoko: But conversely, there are quite a lot of things they have in Japan that they don't have here.

Listener: For example?

Yoko: For example, The other day when I went back to Japan, I bought this.

Listener: Wow. What's that?

Yoko: It's an anti-static key holder.

Manami: Oh, I know it.

Listener: What? What kind of key holder?

Yoko: Anti static. Erm, during cold, dry days in winter, you sometimes get painful shocks when you touch things like car doors or doors at home, don't you? They prevent that from happening.

Listener: Really? How?

Yoko: When you touch this front part against a door knob, this lamp lights up from the static electricity. This removes the static electricity, so after that, even if you touch the door, you don't get a shock.

Listener: Wow.

Monica: Great.

Yoko: Winter here is even drier than Japan, so I really hated getting electric shocks when I touched doors.

Manami: I know what you mean.

Yoko: But when I use this, they disappear, so it's become much easier. I tried looking all over the place for one here, but it seems they don't sell them.

③

Manami: To be sure there are a lot of different Japanese things I can't live without. I like things I'm used to using, like medicine, shampoo and hand cream, so I buy them in Japan and bring them with me.

Listener: Really? Is that not a lot of trouble?

Tomoko: I'm the same. Especially with things like medicine.

Manami: Yes, me too. I can't use any cold medicine except Kakkonto.

Listener: Kakkonto? Why's that?

Manami: Erm, because it's traditional Chinese medicine, it's gentle on your body, and there are very few side effects. It's especially effective when you're first coming down with a cold.

Listener: Coming down with?

Manami: Yes, when your body's a bit tired, your head's sore, and you think you've caught a cold. If you take some Kakkonto, I'm sure you'll get better by the next day.

Yoko: Isn't that just psychological?

Manami: Right, it might be, but there are actually quite a lot of Japanese people living overseas who go out of their way to buy Kakkonto and bring it from Japan.

Listener: Wow. Is that right?

④

Tomoko: I have a big problem with sizes. For example shoes. There are no shoes in my size at all here. My shoe size is 22.5cm, but it seems there are almost no people with that size here. I'm always being told to look for children's shoes.

Listener: Wow.

Manami: I have the same problem.

Tomoko: I can't very well wear children's shoes now. And then there's tooth brushes.

Yoko: Oh, I know.

Manami: They're big, aren't they?

Tomoko: Yes, the tooth brushes here have got massive heads. I think small, compact heads are much easier to brush with.

Monica: Really?

Tomoko: Yes, that's why so many people buy them in Japan and bring them here, or get them sent over by friends.

Listener: Is that right?

Tomoko: When I go back to Japan, it sometimes seems like the first thing I always do is buy a tooth brush, and then buy some shoes. [laughing]

PART 2 I love takoyaki

- Aki: ... OK, see you next month.
 Pamela: Yes, looking forward to it.
 Aki: Oh, that's right. If there's anything at all I can get you while I'm in Japan, let me know.
 Pamela: That's OK. Don't worry about it.
 Aki: I don't mind. After all I'm staying at your place for a week, so it's the least I can do.
 Pamela: Are you sure? OK... there's something I really want at the moment... I wonder if I should ask you.
 Aki: What is it? Tell me, tell me.
 Pamela: Well, would you be able to buy me a takoyaki pan?
 Aki: What? A takoyaki pan? You want one of those?
 Pamela: Yes, please. I love takoyaki. There's octopus, and you can buy sauce, tuna flakes and things like that at the Japanese supermarket here. But of course they don't sell takoyaki pans here.
 Aki: Really?
 Pamela: I saw a lot of different ones on the internet, and it seems they can make not just takoyaki, but ajillo, donuts and a lot of other things as well.
 Aki: Right, I see. But there are lots of different types of takoyaki pans, aren't there?
 Pamela: Yes. Can I have one that can cook 20 takoyakis at once... and, there are gas and electric ones, but can I have an electric one, please?
 Aki: Electric? OK. But can you use Japanese things here?
 Pamela: Yes. The voltage is different, but it's OK because I've got a voltage transformer. Oh, and, erm, if they have one, would it be OK if you bought a takoyaki pick as well?
 Aki: Takoyaki pick? What's that?
 Pamela: Erm, it's a skewer you use when making takoyaki instead of a bamboo skewer. Because it's made out of a soft substance it doesn't damage the metal plates.
 Aki: I see. Right, I'll have a look. But takoyaki pans aren't really big and heavy, are they?
 Pamela: Probably about 1 kg. I'm not so sure about the size. If it's really big, I'm sorry.
 Aki: OK.

PART 3 They're unique, so I think people will like them

- Ikezu: I want to bring back some souvenirs from Egypt. What would be good?
 Said: Hmm, souvenirs? There are lots of different things, but let me think, how about "papyrus bookmarks" or something like that?
 Ikezu: Bookmarks?
 Said: They have pictures of ancient Egyptian pharaohs, hieroglyphs... what's it called in Japanese... "shokei moji" and things like that drawn on them, and they're cheap and not bulky, so you can give one to everyone.
 Ikezu: That sounds good.
 Said: Apart from that, if you want really Egyptian stuff, let me see, bottles of perfume are popular as well.
 Ikezu: Bottles of perfume?
 Said: The colour of the glass is beautiful, and the design is in the style of the Arabian knights, so apparently Japanese people buy them as small ornaments.
 Ikezu: Is that right?
 Said: And if you want something practical, personally I recommend Egyptian cotton towels. They absorb water well, and, erm, they're soft, and if you use them once you can't go back to your old towels.
 Ikezu: Really?
 Said: There's lots of food as well, so how about chocolate with dates in it? They're unique, so I think people will like them. Lots of people buy them as souvenirs for colleagues.
 Ikezu: Is that right?
 Said: If you go to the bazaar, there are lots of different souvenirs, so if you like, I'll take you there.
 Ikezu: Yes, please. That'd be great.

PART 4 It got good reviews, so ...

Electric takoyaki pan 24-hole detachable plate high powered 1200W!! ‹‹made in Japan››

Product description

Price: 5,400 yen (including tax and postage)

Size: 36cm wide x 24 cm deep x 7.5 cm high

Weight: 1.55 kg

Cord length: 1.2 m

- high powered 1200W! High temperature, so you can make delicious takoyaki
- non-stick plate made of fluorine resin
- with convenient temperature adjust function! easy to use even for beginners
- plate detachable, so possible to wash the whole machine
- can be given as a present! wrapping available for this item

Reviews by people who bought this item Average rating: 4.35

★★★★☆ Crispy and creamy takoyaki!

This was the first time I'd made takoyaki, and I could easily make delicious takoyaki that was crispy on the outside and creamy on the inside! And they cooked straight away because of the high temperature metal plate, so it seems perfect for a takoyaki party. The batter didn't stick to the plate, so cleaning was very easy © (circle within a circle-equivalent to silver star awarded for good school work in some western countries). The one weak point is that because of the high-temperature metal plate, it consumes a lot of electricity. It tripped my breaker at home. You can't use any other electrical equipment while making takoyaki... . Apart from that, I'm extremely satisfied!

★★★☆☆ Disappointing

Because it got good reviews, I was expecting it to be good, but... . It's great that the plate is removable, but it rattles terribly. While cooking, the plate tilted to one side, and I nearly burnt myself. It's too dangerous to allow children to cook with it. And it doesn't cook evenly. The places where the temperature is high are burnt while the places where the temperature is low are undercooked. As I expected, gas is probably better than electric. Overall I really don't think it's worth paying 5,000 yen for it.

★★★★☆ Good as a present

I bought it as a present for a foreign friend. I asked to have it wrapped and it was wrapped beautifully, so I was very impressed! My friend was very pleased with it as well, so that's great. On top of that, the price was very reasonable. The item arrived very quickly too. I would give it 5 stars, but I haven't used it myself, so -1.

★★★★☆ Even Kansai mother-in-law was satisfied

I wasn't sure whether to get this one or a cheaper one, but I'm pleased I chose this one. I could make delicious takoyaki that even my Kansai mother-in-law was satisfied with. There's a function for adjusting the temperature, which is convenient because you can set the temperature to "high" when you want to cook, and "warm" when you are eating. It's good that you can remove the plate and wash it as well! But the electric cord is maybe a little short. When you cook at the table you need an extension cord. I bought takoyaki picks made of nylon at the same time as I bought the machine. I recommend them because they don't damage the plate.

PART5 I'd like to return it**Return Request**

Whom it may concern:

I bought the DVD "The Basics of Japanese Cooking" from your website on 24 September (order number 972516), and it arrived yesterday.

According to the description on the website, the condition of the DVD was "second hand but same as new", but the DVD that arrived was scratched and would not play.

I would like to return the item. Could you please let me know how to proceed.
Very best wishes (person's name)

Topic 7 My favourite film

PART 1 It leaves a lasting impression on you

Listener: The Japanese film festival starts next week, doesn't it? There are a lot of films, so I'm at a bit of a loss. Which films do you recommend?

①

Yamamoto: Let me see, in this year's lineup, you definitely don't want to miss the Kurosawa films. "Sanshiro Sugata" and "Ran" are both good, but if I had to choose one, I'd choose "Ikiru".

Listener: Right, what kind of film is it?

Yamamoto: It's a very understated film.

Listener: Understated?

Yamamoto: It's different from Kurosawa's other films because there's no action like sword fights or martial arts, and the story isn't that exciting. But bit by bit this film leaves a lasting impression on you.

Listener: In what way?

Yamamoto: The main character is a very normal man working in a town hall, but one day he finds out that he's got cancer and can only live for a short time, so he thinks about what he'd like to do, and what kind of mark he'd like to make with the rest of his life.

Listener: Really?

Yamamoto: The performance by Takashi Shimura, who plays the main role, is absolutely fantastic. The famous scene on the swing moved me to tears.

Listener: Is that right?

Yamamoto: It's an old film, but it's a really good film.

Listener: Great, I want to see it.

②

Maruyama: Oh, *Ikiru*, that's a good film. But among these films, there are some quite new ones that are good too.

Listener: Which ones?

Maruyama: For example, *Hula Girls*.

Listener: Right.

Maeda: Oh, that.

Maruyama: It's the same type of film as *Sumo Do Sumo Don't*, *Waterboys*, and films like that, about *supokon*...

Listener: *Supokon*?

Maruyama: Erm, fighting spirit in sport. It's a very invigorating film.

Listener: Invigorating?

Maruyama: Erm, it has the type of storyline where at first someone can't do something, but with hard work they finally succeed.

Listener: I see.

Maruyama: Even when you know the film has that typical storyline, I'm sure it'll keep you on the edge of your seat, and seeing people try their best always inspires you, doesn't it?

Listener: Yeah.

Maruyama: *Hula Girls* is a story about hula dancers being trained at a hot spring resort in a rural area.

Listener: What? Hula dancing in Japan?

Maruyama: Yes. It's based on a true story, so that might make it all the more full of meaning. The ending is really moving and refreshing, so I can recommend it to anyone.

Listener: This sounds good as well.

③

Maeda: My recommendation might be a little surprising, but it's *Crayon Shinchan*.

Listener: *Shinchan*?

Maeda: *Crayon Shinchan* has got the image that it's meant for kids, hasn't it?

Listener: Is that not right?

Maeda: The film versions are completely different. Especially "*Crayon Shin-chan: The Storm Called: The Battle of the Warring States*", which is showing at this year's film festival, is supposed to be a masterpiece, and the best of the *Crayon Shinchan* series.

Listener: Wow, really? Is it...

Maeda: It's a quality film, and worth seeing even for an adult.
Listener: Really? In what way?
Maeda: It's a story about Shinnchan and his family travelling back in time to the Warring States era, and Shinnchan's story gets tangled up with a drama involving a samurai and a princess from the warring period. The story's deep and, in short, it'll make you cry.
Listener: Really?
Maeda: And the direction is really fancy. Actually, before, I borrowed the DVD and watched it with my child, but in the end it was me, the parent, who cried their eyes out.
Listener: Wow, is it that moving?
Maeda: Yes, so you should definitely watch it without any preconceptions.

④

Miyazaki: Anime is good too, but among these films, I'd definitely go for Godzilla.
Maeda: What? Godzilla? That's the monster story, isn't it?
Miyazaki: Yes. Actually, Godzilla has become a series, and there are lots of different films, but the first film from 1954 is on a completely different level from the others.
Listener: What do you mean on a different level?
Miyazaki: Erm, rather than being just a piece of entertainment, it's got a strong message, for example, it gives a kind of warning against war, nuclear tests, and things like that.
Listener: Wow.
Miyazaki: The camerawork is amazing as well, it was made entirely using special effects in an era when things like computer graphics didn't exist at all, and it's got much more impact than computer graphics.
Listener: Is that right?
Miyazaki: And in the first 20 minutes, you don't see Gozilla at all, so the tension builds up, and the scene when Godzilla finally appears gives you such a fright, you nearly have a heart attack. You should definitely see it.
Listener: Wow.

PART 2 The individual performances were good

- Thongkhanh: “Kamome Shokudo” was pretty good.
- Azusa: Really? What was good about it?
- Thongkhanh: For some reason the overall atmosphere was very nice. And the actors individual performances were good. Especially Moita.. Motai... Masako, was it? She had a lot of presence.
- Azusa: Yes, the performances were good... but for me it was maybe a little bit boring. Or rather, didn't you feel there was almost no story? There were no exciting bits either.
- Thongkhanh: I suppose so... but that might be good. I don't know why, but I ended up in a good mood at the end of the film. And the views of Finland were great. It was just like looking at a picture.
- Azusa: Yeah, the cinematography was OK. But the story didn't have a climax, and there wasn't any kind of deep theme to make you think about, was there? It was just a usual day in a restaurant, and that wasn't enough for me.
- Thongkhanh: Really? But I think exciting scenes might not have been included intentionally. There was no crying, suspense, excitement, or things like that, but there was a depiction of the relationships... interactions between lots of different people. It gave me a warm feeling, so when I watched it, I felt really relaxed.
- Azusa: I suppose so. To be honest, I imagined it would be a “drama about the ups and down of the life of a Japanese person doing their best overseas” type of story, but it was quite different to what I expected.
- Thongkhanh: Right, I see.
- Azusa: Oh, there were lots of interesting scenes, weren't there? Like when Sachie and Midori first met.
- Thongkhanh: Oh, the scene when the two of them were singing the anime song in the book shop? That was funny.
- Azusa: Yes. And at the end, didn't you think, “What? Is that it?”
- Thongkhanh: Yes, that's what I thought. But I thought that might have been because I'd been so absorbed in the world of the film, that time felt shorter than it actually was.
- Azusa: You might be right.
- Thongkhanh: I get the feeling it's a film I'll want to watch again not just once, but many times.

PART 3 That's what's called an enduring masterpiece

- Aoki: Lane, have you seen any films recently?
- Lane: I saw “Roman Holiday” at home at the weekend. It's the sort of film you can watch again and again, isn't it?
- Aoki: Oh, I like it too. It's great, isn't it?
- Lane: Whichever way you look at it, Audrey Hepburn is beautiful. Erm, when she was a princess, she was very elegant, and when she was a normal lady, she was really charming.
- Aoki: I think so too.
- Lane: The newspaper journalist Gregory Peck was good too, wasn't he? And the story was like a fairytale, but very dramatic, wasn't it?
- Aoki: I know.
- Lane: Everything was squeezed into only one day's holiday in Rome, like the two characters' meeting, their adventures, their falling in love and their breaking up, so it was really exciting to watch.
- Aoki: That's right.
- Lane: And it was really enjoyable looking at the city of Rome in the film. With the ancient remains, churches, and things like that... it was just like you were walking around Rome with them.
- Aoki: Yes, exactly. Do you have a favourite scene or anything like that?
- Lane: Yes, as you might expect my favourite scene is the one when they go their separate ways.
- Aoki: Yes.
- Lane: Two people eyes meeting without saying anything. Tears in the eyes of a laughing princess. The two characters' feelings really come across, and it gives you a lump in your throat. That kind of thing is what's called an enduring masterpiece.
- Aoki: I might watch it again as well.

PART 4 As I expected, it was a great film

Hula Girls

Film story • Commentary

In 1965, the era when coal was changing to oil, the Joban Hawaiian centre was established to rescue the crisis in a small mining town in Fukushima prefecture. It's a moving drama based on a true story that portrays the strenuous efforts of the people trying to make the centre's all-important hula dance show a success.

The performance of the main character, Yasuko Matsuyuki, and Yu Aoi and the other hula girls is magnificent. The hula dance... continue reading

A story that everyone will be moved by!

As I expected, it was a great film! It's a story with a familiar storyline, where at first the young country girls thought they couldn't do it, and then frantically did their best as each of them took hold of the situation, and finally developed into professional dancers. There were lots of good scenes, and anyway it makes you cry. Personally, I cried my eyes out at the scene where the hula girls tried to stop their teacher from going home to Tokyo while crying and showing their feelings through hula.

The cast were great too! Yu Aoi's smile is lovely, and she's really genuine, so the role of someone doing their best is perfect for her. The dance in the final scene is wonderful. Yasuko Matsuyuki, who plays the hula teacher lived up to her reputation, and her performance was wonderful. Apart from that, the supporting actors were just the character as well. I thought it would have been great if hula girls other than Kimiko, played by Yu Aoi, got a little more of the spotlight.

A story that you see everywhere?

A film lacking in quality that I wasn't satisfied with.

Ordinary girls work hard at a dance that they've never done before, and finally pull off a success. And deepen ties with their teacher and friends. Parents who were opposed at first, and who then understand after seeing their children working hard. It was based on a true story apparently, and that point was very moving.

But it felt like it was nothing but a series of stories that I'd seen before somewhere... . And the dance practice scenes were not shot particularly well, and the girls seemed to get better straight away.

I don't think it showed how hard the girls had practised, so even in the final hula dance scene I couldn't really empathise with the characters.

Persuasive power unique to true stories

In the era when people think hula dancing is embarrassing, coal miners' daughters who dance hula.

Before the closing of the coal mine, the people who oppose the building of the Hawaiian centre try to protect coal mining even though they are aware that it is no longer the era of coal.

The eternal story of conflict between people trying to accept something new and people not being able to accept something new.

Even the miners who at first opposed the establishment of the Hawaiian centre are so moved by the smiling faces and the hard work of the hula girls, that they start trying to understand them. From this you can sense the change to a new era. What left the biggest impression of that was the scene when Kimiko's mother, who completely opposed the hula girls, starts cooperating with the Hawaiian centre, saying, "I used to think that work was doing your job with gritted teeth even when it was really tough. But it's OK to have a job where you make people happy and have a smile on your face." I think this scene carries extra weight because it's a true story.

I was forced to consider anew, the era in which we live and the new ground that has been broken by all kinds of people.

Topic 8 Forms of transport in my town

PART 1 The train's late again

Listener : Ah, the train's late again. They said it'd be 20 minutes late.

Shinji : Again?

Kota : There's nothing we can do.

①

Naoko : You really can't rely on the trains in this country. It's rare for them to run on time.

Sarina : To be sure.

Listener : Ah.

Naoko : And it's not just that. For example, sometimes when you get on the train, the destination suddenly changes, doesn't it?

Shinji : Yes, it does happen.

Naoko : The other day, at a station halfway through the journey, suddenly, "This train will now terminate at this station. Could I ask all passengers to alight here," and without warning I was made to get off the train and wait more than 30 minutes on the cold platform for the next train. I thought, "Give me a break, please."

Sarina : That's bad luck.

Naoko : And there are a lot of strikes here too! The other day the train wasn't running for the whole day. That day's schedule was completely cancelled.

Listener : Don't you have strikes in Japan?

Naoko : Rarely. They have so many strikes here, you want to say, "They just had a strike the other day. What? You're having another one?"

Kota : That's right.

②

Sarina : Yes, that's certainly true. It's completely different from Japan, isn't it? I think the idea itself that public transport has to run on time mightn't really exist here.

Naoko : Is that so?

Listener : That may be right.

Sarina : Conversely, when I went to Japan I was really surprised.

Naoko : Really? What about?

Sarina : I mean in Japan, even though a train is only 3 minutes late there's a constant apology over the public address system, "We sincerely apologise for the delay to the train." It's amazing.

Listener : Really?

Naoko : Yes, that probably happens.

Sarina : Last year, when I went to Japan, it was just as a typhoon had arrived, but the next day when I got on the train, they were apologising over the PA system, "We must apologize that there were irregularities in the train times yesterday due to the typhoon." There was a typhoon! When they go that far in a case like that, doesn't it feel a bit strange?

Naoko : Now that you say it, you might be right... .

③

Shinji : Ah, compared to that, both public transport and passengers are much more easy going here. Even when the train is 5 or 10 minutes late, people don't mind it. To be sure, I get the feeling that people don't really think that the train being late is a bad thing.

Sarina : That's right.

Listener : Oh, I know what you mean.

Shinji : The other day, erm, after getting on the bus, the bus driver got off at a bus stop midway through the journey, and disappeared. Then, after about 10 minutes he hadn't come back... . When I was wondering what had happened, he came back carrying a sandwich. [laughing] Maybe he'd been buying his lunch at a shop around there. I was really surprised.

Kota : Amazing.

Listener : Wow, that kind of thing doesn't happen in Japan.

Shinji : Not when people are working. But when I said, "Can you believe that?" to the person next to me, he said, "It's better than an accident caused by a hungry driver." I don't know what to say... .

④

- Kota: That's really easy going, isn't it? But, conversely, there are times when I think here is better as well. When I go back to Japan and get on the train, especially when it's busy, station staff and passengers are stressed out and they haven't got time to spare. It's really tiring.
- Naoko: I suppose so.
- Listener: Is that right?
- Kota: For example, in Japan there are people who give you cold stares if you take a pram on the train with you.
- Naoko: Ah.
- Listener: What? Are prams not allowed?
- Kota: They're not not allowed, but there are people who don't like them. And prams are dangerous when it's crowded.
- Kota: But that kind of thing doesn't happen here. Prams are OK of course, and you can even take bicycles onto the train as they are. [laughing]
- Naoko: That's right.
- Listener: What? You can't take bicycles on the train in Japan?
- Kota: If you fold them and put them in bags.
- Kota: And here, for example, when it looks like you're not going to make the train on time, if you wave your arm and shout, "Wait," in a loud voice on the platform, they'll usually wait, won't they? Recently when I did that in Japan, they didn't wait for me at all, so I was really sad.

PART 2 It's not running today

- Erin: Excuse me, do you need any help?
- Mrs.Hasegawa: Yes... Oh, do you speak Japanese?
- Erin: Yes, but I'm not very good at it. What can I help you with?
- Mr.Hasegawa: Actually, I was going to change trains at the next station Green Park, but without warning everyone was made to get off the train, so... did something happen?
- Erin: Oh, the driver announced something about this train terminating at Victoria. If you're going to Green Park, you should get on the next train that comes. But you might have to wait a while... .
- Mr.Hasegawa: That's strange. I intentionally checked the destination before getting on the train.
- Erin: Oh, often on the London underground the destination will suddenly change, and you'll be made to get off the train midway through your journey. Trains aren't as punctual as ones in Japan.
- Mrs.Hasegawa: Is that so? But isn't that inconvenient for everyone?
- Erin: Of course it's inconvenient, but everyone's already given up. They don't expect trains to run on time.
- Mr.Hasegawa: Anyway, we'd like to go to this station called Russell Square, so should we go to Green Park, and change onto this navy blue line here?
- Erin: Ah, this weekend there are construction works on the Piccadilly Line, so I don't think it's running. Wait a minute. I'll check now... Oh, as I thought, it's not running today. Where about in Russell Square are you going?
- Mr.Hasegawa: Erm, this hotel.
- Erin: I see, if it's around there, stay on the Victoria line and go to Oxford Circus... change on to the Central line there... are you with me?
- Mr.Hasegawa: Yes.
- Erin: After that, get off at Holborne, and I think it's about 15 minutes walk from there.
- Mrs.Hasegawa: It's a bit far, isn't it? And I'm not sure I understand how to get there. What shall we do?
- Mr.Hasegawa: If that's all we can do, it can't be helped.
- Erin: Well, if it was me, I'd go by taxi from here. You can rely on London taxis as much as Japanese trains.

PART 3 You can easily buy a ticket from the machine in the station

- Wada: Hey Natasha, I'd like to take the metro, but... I don't understand Russian well yet, so I'm a bit worried... Would you mind telling me how to use it?
- Natasha: The metro? It's easy. Let me see, the Moscow metro has got lots of lines, so first you need to check the lines in your guidebook.
- Wada: OK.
- Natasha: You can get tickets at the ticket office, but you can easily buy a ticket from the machine in the station as well.
- Wada: Is that right?
- Natasha: There's one ticket you can use to get on the metro, bus and tram, and each trip is the same price irrespective of distance.
- Wada: Wow, that's easy to understand, isn't it?
- Natasha: If you live in Moscow for a while, carrying a Troika card is convenient. You can easily charge it and the fares are a bit cheaper.
- Wada: Is that right?
- Natasha: The colour of the train platform is different depending on the train line, so you should look at the colour when searching for a train line. But the escalators to the platforms are really long and deep, so you might start worrying they're never going to end.
- Wada: Really?
- Natasha: Once you're on the train, the driver will announce the names of the stations that the train stops at, so you just need to listen carefully for the names of the stations.
- Wada: I think I've got it... .
- Natasha: And the Moscow metro hasn't got a timetable, but the trains come one after another, so you don't have to worry. The inside of the stations is beautiful like a palace, so seeing that is really enjoyable.
- Wada: Thank you. But I wonder if I'll be OK... .

PART 4 What do you think of Japanese trains?

We asked foreigners living in Japan.

What do you think of Japanese trains?

Even though they're usual for Japanese people, there are a lot of things that are surprising for people from overseas!

One of these things is Japanese trains. We asked foreign people living in Tokyo what they thought.

At any rate Japanese trains are punctual and amazing! They arrive exactly on time, and they arrive exactly at the right position. (India/male/40s)

For Japanese people, it goes without saying, but that punctuality really is amazing. One person seemed surprised by the response when the train was late, saying, "There was even an apology from the driver when the train was late by just 3 minutes!" On the other hand, there was also someone who said, "Japanese trains are too punctual and it makes me feel uncomfortable." There were also some people who sympathise with the train companies saying, "It's a very stressful job," and, "Are the drivers paid enough?"

I definitely don't want to get on the train during rush hour. At home it doesn't get this crowded.

(France/female/30s)

During rush hour even Japanese people let out a sigh without thinking... Foreigners are sick of rush hour as well, saying, "It's like being squashed in a can, it's unpleasant, I can't move, and I really don't want to get on a train during rush hour," and, "It's unbelievable that the station staff do such a thing as pushing people onto the train." There were lots of different responses depending on country, including opinions expressing concern about Japanese people's health, such as, "Rush hour looks bad for people's health and bad for people's minds," contrasting with people who said, "Trains in my country are just as crowded," and, "It's crowded for sure, but Japan is better because people don't ride on the roof of the train."

Orderliness even when it's crowded! Lining up for trains is typically Japanese!! (China/male/ 50s)

Nobody teaches them, but before they know it, Japanese people have learned how to line up for the train. It seems there are lots of foreigners who are impressed by the manners of Japanese people who line up properly before getting on the train and respect the order people queue in, saying, "Nobody pushes in", and "People getting off the train are given priority." There are also people who are surprised at the way people move in groups, saying, "People lining up to get on the train during morning rush hour is just like a game."

Why does everyone sleep on the train? It must be because they're tired from working too hard.

(Australia/female/30s)

I don't know if they're tired from work, but there are certainly a lot of people sleeping on the train early in the morning and late at night. There are people who mention the high level of safety in Japan, saying, "I really can't believe people feel secure enough to be able to sleep on the train. If it were my country, they'd definitely get their bag stolen," and people who think it's disagreeable, saying, "It annoys me hearing the person next to me snoring," and, "I can't believe people do such a thing as sleeping in a public place." There are also lots of different things people didn't understand about Japanese people on trains, such as, "Everyone is playing with their smartphones," and, "Nobody speaks."

PART 5 I had a bit of trouble

Spain trip second day

I went out to the suburbs today.

On my way home I had a bit of trouble and couldn't buy a tram ticket.

I tried to buy a ticket from the machine in the station, but I didn't have any change. I had a 20 Euro note and a 50 Euro note, but it seems you can't use such big notes in the ticket machine. I thought I would try to get some change, but it was an unmanned station. And there wasn't... continue reading

Topic 9 The age of ninja and sumurai

PART 1 She's the most well-known person from Japanese history

Listener: Oh, this is a Nobunaga's Ambition calendar, isn't it?
 Takeda: Yes, you know it well.
 Listener: It's because I play lots of different Japanese video games.
 Imagawa: Really?
 Asai: Yes.
 Simazu: I never expected that!
 Listener: But why is Oda Nobunaga so popular with Japanese people?

①

Takeda: Well, he has the image of being someone who tried lots of new things to advance the progress of Japan, so that's probably why he's popular.
 Listener: Right.
 Shimazu: That might be why.
 Takeda: Rather than conforming to the old way of thinking, he introduced things that he thought were good one after another. Among Sengoku period generals he was very advanced and innovative.
 Listener: Innovative?
 Takeda: Erm, it means new.
 Listener: Really? For example?
 Takeda: For example, he used guns in battles, and things like that, and it's said that he didn't hesitate to get people with ability to work under him without regard for position or age.
 Listener: You mean hiring people based on merit?
 Takeda: Yes, but finally, he was betrayed by one of his subordinates, and he committed suicide.
 Listener: That's very dramatic, isn't it?
 Takeda: Yes, that kind of dramatic aspect of Nobunaga's life is probably what makes it easy to make into video games and dramas.

②

Imagawa: Talking of dramas, I saw on the internet or somewhere that the most popular main character in historic dramas on tv is Minamoto no Yoshitsune.
 Asai: Really? Is that right?
 Shimazu: Yoshitsune? I knew that.
 Listener: Who's Yoshitsune?
 Imagawa: Yoshitsune is Minamoto no Yoritomo's younger brother... Do you know Yoritomo?
 Listener: No.
 Imagawa: The person who started the Kamakura shogunate.
 Listener: Shogunate?
 Imagawa: Oh, it's kind of something like a new government. Erm, Yoshitsune was someone from a much older era than Nobunaga. I think about the 1100s.
 Listener: You mean the 12th century?
 Imagawa: Yes. When he was a child he was taken away from his family, and raised by himself. But after he grew up, he fought in battles alongside his older brother, Yoritomo. He was really active in military affairs of the day.
 Listener: Really?
 Imagawa: But after forming the Kamakura shogunate, there was conflict between the brothers, erm... and Yoshitsune, even though he was still a young man in his thirties, was killed by his brother.
 Listener: That's terrible, isn't it?
 Imagawa: Yes, but he then acquired the image of a tragic hero.
 Listener: Is that so?
 Imagawa: And the image of a cool young man because handsome young actors almost always play Yoshitsune in dramas.
 Shimazu: To be sure, that's probably true.

③

Shimazu: But I was thinking it might be interesting to take a person from an even older era and make a drama about them.
 Asai: For example?
 Shimazu: For example, someone like Shotoku Taishi...
 Imagawa: Shotoku Taishi? Would that kind of person make a good drama?

Shimazu: Hmm, it might be difficult.
 Listener: Excuse me, what kind of person was Shotoku Taishi?
 Shimazu: Oh, Shotoku Taishi... when was he from again?
 Takeda: From around the 7th century, wasn't it?
 Shimazu: Yes, around then. There's a place called Horyuji in Nara, isn't there? The oldest temple made of wood in the world.
 Listener: I've been there!
 Shimazu: Yes, he built that. I suppose he was a politician. He was so clever that there's a story he once listened to 10 people at the same time and answered all their questions perfectly.
 Listener: 10 people?
 Shimazu: He's famous for making laws, spreading Buddhism, and putting his efforts into relations with China, so he really did lots of different things.
 Imagawa: Recently there's been a lot of discussion about him.
 Takeda: I suppose, but a drama seems difficult.
 Shimazu: What? Really?
 Asai: They've made manga about him.
 Shimazu: That's right.

④

Asai: If we're talking about older eras, what about someone like Himiko?
 Shimazu: Himiko!
 Imagawa: That's too old!
 Asai: Yes, but it's old enough to be romantic, and it'd be really interesting because you could make up lots of different stories for the bits you don't know, couldn't you?
 Imagawa: You might be right.
 Listener: Erm, you say old, but roughly what era were they from?
 Asai: The Yayoi era, which is about 200 AD. She was from around then.
 Listener: That's really old, isn't it?
 Asai: She always comes up first in Japanese history textbooks.
 Shimazu: Yes, all Japanese people probably know her.
 Asai: In a way, she's the most well-known person from Japanese history.
 Listener: Uh, what did she do?
 Asai: She was queen of a country called Yamatai-koku. She ruled the country using fortune telling apparently.
 Listener: Wow.
 Asai: Himiko and the country of Yamatai-koku are mentioned in Chinese history books too, but no one knows any details about her, and she's full of mystery.
 Listener: Is that right?
 Asai: But that means she's got a mysterious image, doesn't it? It's a mystery where Yamatai-koku was in Japan as well, so that kind of thing gives you a sense of the romance of history, doesn't it?
 Imagawa: I suppose it's got romance, but a drama might be difficult.

PART 2 See? Ninjas must exist

- Liam: Oh, Naruto. You've got the entire collection. Do you like Naruto, Ms Sakurai?
- Sakurai: Yes, at first I bought it to see what kind of manga it was, and I got hooked.
- Liam: Naruto's great, isn't it? If I go to study in Japan, I'm thinking of going to a ninja school and learning ninja skills from a real ninja.
- Emily: What? Ninja's can't exist in Japan today, can they?
- Liam: They exist. A little while ago the Japan Foundation ran a ninja event. And there are lots of ninja schools in the US, aren't there?
- Emily: What? Ms Sakurai, do ninjas still exist? Is it true?
- Sakurai: Yes, it certainly seems there are people teaching ninja skills in ninja schools even now, but they're quite different to the kind of ninja that people imagine.
- Alex: Rather than talking about ninja skills, it's better to think of ninja as more of a type of martial art, like judo or aikido.
- Liam: But in the past there were ninjas like Naruto in Japan, weren't there?
- Emily: That was from the world of fiction as well.
- Sakurai: No, it wasn't a complete lie. During the samurai era there were really people known as ninja, because it's a known fact that they worked as spies.
- Emily: Wow. But there weren't those kind of ninjas that wore black clothes, jumped up and climbed on top of roofs, made themselves disappear, and walked on water, were there?
- Sakurai: I guess not. That kind of thing was fiction created in later times.
- Liam: But the equipment and weapons that ninja used are actually still left, aren't they? Throwing stars, water-walking shoes, and things like that.
- Alex: I'm sure even today there are places like ninja villages in Mie and Shiga prefectures, and I heard buildings that ninja actually lived in still remain.
- Liam: Talking of which, my friend said he'd been to a ninja village in Japan, and there were all kinds of trick mechanisms inside the buildings, and it was really interesting.
- Emily: That was a theme park that was made later, wasn't it?
- Sakurai: Certainly, there are very few of the real thing remaining from the Edo period, and most are entertainment facilities made with the theme of the kind of ninja that foreigners imagine.
- Alex: So in the end, romance and exotic ideas about ninjas are more important than historical truth, aren't they? Because they have this secretive side, they're very appealing, aren't they?
- Sakurai: I suppose so, but because ninjas were originally spies, even if there were ninjas today, they would definitely be secretive. That means they might really exist even today.
- Liam: See? Ninjas must exist.

PART 3 The end of the 12th century heralded the golden age

- Sok: Yoshikawa-san, that's Angkor Wat.
- Yoshikawa: Wow, When was it built?
- Sok: In the 12th century.
- Yoshikawa: What kind of era was it around that time?
- Sok: It was the era of the Khmer kingdom. The Khmer kingdom was the nation of the Khmer people, which lasted approximately from the 9th century to the 15th century. It's also called the Angkor dynasty. Around the end of the 12th century heralded the golden age of the Khmer kingdom.
- Yoshikawa: I see.
- Sok: At the time, kings from many different countries would visit the capital to pay their respects.
- Yoshikawa: I see.
- Sok: In the Khmer kingdom, they believed in... their belief was Hinduism, and apparently the kings would build new capital cities and temples to show off their power. Angkor Wat is one of those, and around here there are a great many remains like these.
- Yoshikawa: Is that so?
- Sok: Erm, Angkor Wat was built during the era of a king called Suryavarman II. It took as long as 30 years to build apparently.
- Yoshikawa: That long?
- Sok: Huge numbers of people from nearby villages and prisoners captured during wars were brought together and made to work here.
- Yoshikawa: Wow.
- Sok: If you go in, I think you'll be able to understand how great the king's power was.
- Yoshikawa: Really? I want to see it as soon as possible.

PART 4 Memorable famous words by Sengoku period commanders

Memorable famous words by Sengoku period military commanders

Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin

In rankings of Sengoku period military commanders, Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin's names almost always come up. In dramas and novels they are portrayed as rivals, and the Kawanakashima war that they fought over 5 battles across 12 years is very well known.

I'd like to introduce the memorable famous words that they left behind, so you can find out exactly what kind of commanders they were.

Takeda Shingen

“Winning a battle 50% is best, 70% is OK and 100% is the worst”

When you win a battle, winning 50% is best, 70% is OK and 100% isn't good.

Shingen Takeda was known as a skillful warrior, and feared as “the Koshu Tiger”. His thinking about the way to win battles is shown in these words.

About victory and defeat, Shingen thought winning 50% was good because it would act as future encouragement, 70% was dangerous because it would lead to complacency, and 100% was not good because if the enemy was completely defeated, this would lead to contempt for the victors. In other words, if you've got a low regard for the enemy and think you are OK, you will lose next time. Shingen, who was never unprepared, had a fiercely strong desire to improve himself.

Uesugi Kenshin

“It is not my intention to look to attack people when they are down on their luck.”

It's not my wish to attack and defeat an enemy when they are weakened.

When Shingen died, many people around Kenshin said that he should take it as an opportunity to attack Takeda. These are the words that Kenshin was quoted as saying at the time.

When he heard that his rival Shingen had died, I believe it is normal for him to think it was a chance, and put out an army, but Kenshin wouldn't attack just because an enemy was weak. There's a saying, “Send salt to the enemy,” and this also came about from Kenshin's actions. Shingen's region, Kai, didn't have a sea, so couldn't obtain salt. Because of that, when surrounding regions would stop the supply of salt, it was said to be a real problem, and it is said that when Kenshin heard that, he sent salt from his region, Echigo. Kenshin, in the Sengoku era when anything would go, was a military commander who would fight fair and square.

The wise words of well-known military commanders that lived in a world torn with war. Even today I think there are things that apply to business or sport. Even though the era is different, what's important for people is probably something that doesn't change.

PART 5 Introducing a saying by a famous historical figure

A famous saying by Uesugi Kenshin

When I went to Joetsu city in Niigata for work, it was right in the middle of the Kenshin Festival. It's a festival for the Senkoku era military commander Uesugi Kenshin. There were a lot of people there, so I was very surprised.

I like Uesugi Kenshin's words, “It is not my intention to look to attack people when they are down on their luck.” It means, “It's not my wish to attack and defeat an enemy when they are weakened.” Apparently these are the words that Kenshin said to counter what his subordinates said when Kenshin's biggest rival, Takeda Shingen, died: “Shingen is dead, so now's your chance,” and, “If you do it now, you can easily defeat Takeda.”

To be able to say something like that during the Senkoku era, known as the age of “Win by any means,” is really cool. In sport and in anything else, with an opponent you really want to beat, you want to compete when you are both at full strength.

What are your favourite famous words?

翻訳

Andrew Drought