

# awa life

**Indigo Blue  
Exhibition 2020**

June 2020

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**TOPIA**

## Awa Life is a Monthly Publication of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

The rainy season, starting in June, is usually the time to stay at home, and is often when people find ways to enjoy their time without going out too much. Fortunately (or unfortunately), we have already been finding ways to enjoy our time at home for a few months now, so that shouldn't be too difficult a task to undertake. In this month's issue, we still have no events to report, but to make your time at home a bit more enjoyable, the Prefectural Puppet Theater and Museum has uploaded a series of videos of Awa Ningyo Joruri (阿波人形浄瑠璃) performances on their website. Check out page 8 for further details and the chance to experience Tokushima's traditional culture from your sofa.

For all of those who like writing, please feel free to submit an article to us at any point in time about basically anything. There are a few limitations though, such as you can't write about religion, politics, commercial activities or businesses or anything that we deem inappropriate. But, other than that, we would be more than happy to receive articles about anything and everything including but not limited to concerts, lectures, other events, culture, sports, community group information or anything cool that's happening in your local community.

We highly appreciate all of your articles and we love reading them. So if that writing bug of yours is buzzing about, grab a pen or a computer and write and send away! Please send all submissions to our email:

**[awalife@gmail.com](mailto:awalife@gmail.com)**

Your editors,  
Sydney and Nico

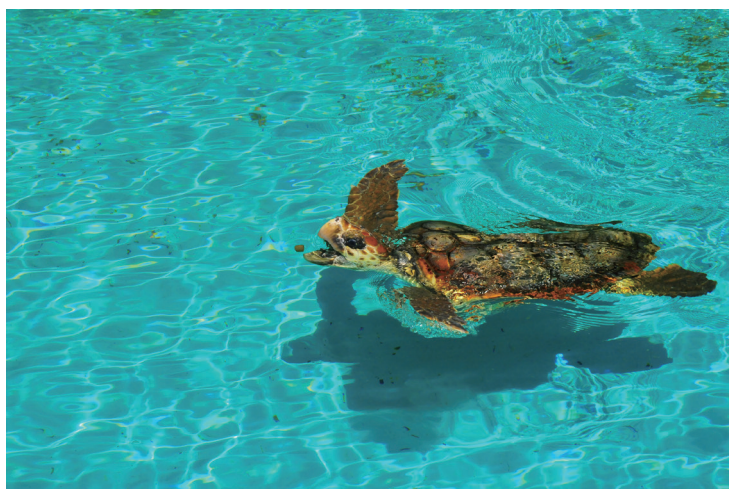
### **Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA)**

1-61 Terashima Honcho Nishi, Tokushima City 770-0831 JAPAN, Clement Plaza 6F

Tel: 088-656-3303 Fax: 088-652-0616

<http://www.topia.ne.jp/>

*Download a PDF file of awa life or view the online version by going to TOPIA's website!*



*Editors:*

Sydney Bartig and Nico Bohnsack

*Contributors This Month:*

Anne-Marie Marker, Atsushi Abe, Kayo Miyoshi, Junko Kimura, Lance Kita, Yoko Aoki, Kenji Sato, and Qing Liu



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*Tokushima's Favourite Colour on Display - Indigo Blue Exhibition 2020*

By: Anne-Marie Marker

In kindergarten, one of the most important topics between kids is their favourite colour. When I was a child I really liked blue, but I felt I couldn't say it as it was already my older sister's favourite colour. So, I chose red, but honestly it never did feel right to me. Actually, if asked, most people, not just my sister and I, choose blue, and so does Tokushima.

If you come to Tokushima, you will immediately notice the city's obsession with blue. Not just any blue, but indigo or "Japan Blue". The indigo industry actually played a leading role in the development of Tokushima as a wealthy region. One might think that the plant indigo dye is made from can be grown anywhere in Japan, but because of the frequent overflowing of the Yoshino River, which brings fertile soils, it grows extraordinarily well in Tokushima. As the feudal lords noticed this some hundred years ago, they promoted the industry. In flourishing times, there were over 2,000 people working as indigo farmers or merchants.

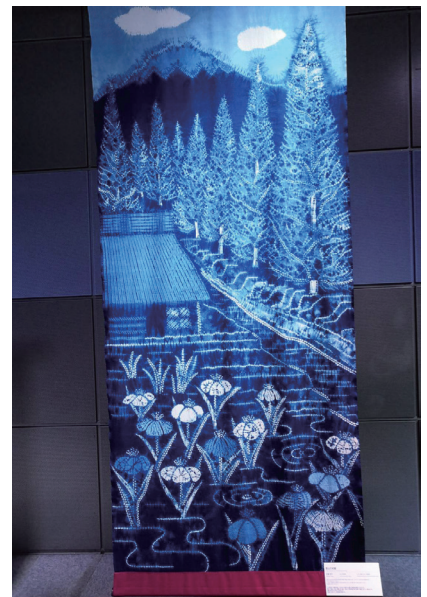
In addition to its economic value, the indigo industry can also be understood as a catalyst for cultural development. As many rich merchants and farmers also supported the puppet theatre (Ningyo Joruri) and Tokushima's iconic dance (Awa Odori), we can enjoy these cultural treasures even today. Although there are only 5 indigo farmers left, it is

still considered an important cultural asset in Tokushima even now. This is why there is a special exhibition held every year in the city.

At this year's exhibition held in January, visitors could dive into an ocean of indigo

blue objects created by artists and dyers from Japan, the US, the UK and Kyrgyzstan. While impressive installation-like works with an illusionist touch removed us visitors to artistic spheres, many objects closely linked to everyday life could also be seen at the exhibition. Dyed kimonos, little pouches, fabric wall decorations, cosmetics and various pieces of interior design showed the extraordinarily wide range of objects which are colored or produced with this natural dye.

Despite the phrase "feeling blue" expressing slightly negative feelings of sadness, the colour blue mostly sparks feelings of relaxation and



comfort. This had an immediate effect on us visitors browsing through these deep blue objects. As seemingly everyone is looking for some relaxation these days, it is no surprise that indigo blue can be found everywhere.



So, it is not surprising at all, that the colour blue has found many fans among western artists as well. The French artist Yves Klein is possibly the artist who stands the most for blue. Born as the son of two artists in France, Klein

forged a reputation for himself in Judo, which led him to study Japanese and move to Japan for some years to work on his performance. Although he achieved the 4th dan from the kôdôkan as the first European judoka ever, the Judo school he wanted to establish in France faced some troubles and he became a technical trainer for the Spanish national team for a while. However, Klein eventually turned to art.

His monotone blue canvases are inspired by the deep, vibrant blue of the French Mediterranean coastal skies. There has been no proven relation of Klein's works to Awa indigo found so far, which might seem a little disappointing after I dropped the fun fact about his connection to Japan.

However, the French artist must have had his own vision of the colour, as he invented his own shade of blue called "International Klein Blue", which is slightly lighter and brighter than Japanese indigo. To sum up this little excursus



on European art history, it might have different shades, but the colour blue can be considered to represent a shared value of many different cultures.

So, Awa indigo was definitely not a random choice to connect Japan with the whole world facing the global mega event of the Olympic and Paralympic Games happening in Tokyo 2021. Being chosen as an official colour of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games' logos, indigo not only represents the host country's traditions, but also meets the tastes of the whole world. With the postponement of the Games, Awa indigo's time to shine has been prolonged, as the logos will be displayed for one year longer now.

Connecting Japan to the world, Tokushima's indigo is still of high cultural value, and I am looking forward to showing my sister around this region that represents *both* of our favourite colours, blue, when she visits me in Tokushima next year.

### **\*Seeking Your Photographs!\***

We know that the current pandemic has been a difficult time for many people. However, with all the time spent at home, it has also been a chance for people to get crafty, or develop new skills. Here at Awa Life, we would like to provide a bit of positive energy to everyone's lives.

As such, we would like to ask all of our readers for pictures of masks that they have made, or pictures of other interesting things they have accomplished during this pandemic, so that we can feature them in an upcoming Awa Life.

We look forward to everyone's submissions!

Please send your submissions to: [awalife@gmail.com](mailto:awalife@gmail.com)



## TOPIA Staff Introductions

### Atsushi Abe

Hello everyone. My name is Atsushi Abe, and as of April I have been appointed as the new executive director at TOPIA. Up until now, I've worked as a prefectural staff member at a variety of divisions such as medical care, education, environment, information, planning, general affairs, etc. I've worked in a variety of fields, but among these, solving environmental issues has become one of my life's work.

Environmental issues are also international issues. Climate change, plastic pollution in the oceans, and biodiversity issues are all issues that have no border. I think it is absolutely necessary for this world's countries to come together and figure out how best to solve these issues.

My hobbies include drawing and mountain

climbing. I utilize a variety of materials to paint abstract art. I also often go mountain climbing. There are many mountains in Tokushima that you can enjoy climbing with friends.



I tend to go abroad once every two years, and most of my trips have been to Germany or

Austria. My goal of these trips is always to learn more about contemporary art, classical music, mountain climbing, environmental issues, etc.

I look forward to working with everyone at TOPIA in the pursuit of creating a multicultural society.

### Kayo Miyoshi

Nice to meet you. I'm Kayo Miyoshi. This April, I started working at TOPIA as a work experience trainee. Due to the increase in globalization in recent years, I have had many chances to meet foreigners here in Tokushima. There are approximately 6,500 foreigners from about 80 different countries living here. I have wondered what countries they are from, and how they are enjoying their AWA LIVES in Tokushima. From my experience teaching English to junior high school students, I feel that students are ill-prepared to engage in meaningful, international exchange with their neighbors from overseas.

In 2020, Japan expected to welcome Olympic participants and Paralympic participants from all over the world. However, what was supposed to be a memorable experience was postponed due

to COVID-19. As the world grapples with this unfamiliar virus, I hope that people can reach out and help each other, regardless of nationality.

By the time I have finished my year of training at TOPIA, the world should have beaten this virus, and international exchange efforts should be flourishing. I hope to deepen my international understanding and achieve the necessary skills to help our students learn more by accepting diversity. I will do my best and would love to have a great experience with you all. Thank you.



### \*NOTICE\*

For information concerning the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), please refer to TOPIA's website. <https://www.topia.ne.jp/english/> (You may also contact TOPIA by phone: 088-656-3312/3313)

Foreign residents who have an address as of April 27th, 2020 are eligible to receive the Special Cash Payment (¥100,000) from their respective municipality (short-stay visitors and illegal residents excluded). Please contact your respective municipality for further details, such as submission deadlines. Please take a look at the video below for more information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdfNRInpHAK>

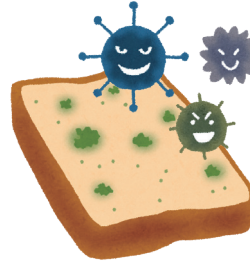


## Japanese Culture and Reading Corner: 梅雨



By: Junko Kimura

日本には「梅雨」という雨が 多く降る 時期があります。梅雨の時期は 春から夏にかわる 6月から7月ごろです。梅雨が 始まることを「梅雨入り」と言い、梅雨が 終わることを「梅雨明け」と言います。梅雨入りが 早いのは 沖縄県で、遅いのは 青森県、秋田県や岩手県です。北海道には 梅雨が ありません。梅雨の時期は 曇りや 雨の日が 多くなります。気温が 高く、湿気が 多いです。食べ物に カビが 生えたり、早く 腐ったりします。みなさん、気をつけてください。梅雨は ジメジメして 嫌ですが、紫陽花などの 綺麗な花が 咲きます。また、お米や 野菜を 作るために 必要な水を 運んでくれます。雨の日は 読書をしたり、夏の計画を 立てたりすると いいですね。



## Vocabulary List

梅雨 rainy season  
時期 time, period  
気温 temperature  
湿気 humidity

カビ mold  
生える to grow  
腐る to rot  
ジメジメ humid

紫陽花 hydrangea  
咲く to bloom  
運ぶ to carry  
計画を立てる to make plans

## Gairaigo Galore



ラッコ (sea otter)

By: Nico Bohnsack

A loanword is a word adopted from another language and, as a consequence, is often associated with other countries or regions. Many loanwords in the Japanese language originated from languages of faraway countries which developed close relations to Japan at a certain point. Interestingly, there are actually loanwords stemming from the Japanese archipelago itself. Some might wonder how that is possible since Japanese is the language used in Japan. However, the spread of the Japanese language didn't always cover the whole of today's Japanese archipelago. Other languages, belonging to certain regions, existed and still exist today. These are mainly the Ryukyuan languages native to the area of today's Okinawa prefecture and parts of Kagoshima prefecture (the former Ryukyu Kingdom), and the Ainu language, the language of the Ainu people. The Ainu people are the native people of Ezo (today's Hokkaido), parts of Eastern Russia and also parts of Northern Honshu. While the Ryukyuan languages belong to the Japonic language family, the Ainu language is a language isolate.

Following longtime influence from the Japanese, Ezo became an official part of Japan in 1869 under the name "Hokkaido". While there are still a considerable number of people of Ainu descent nowadays, speakers of the Ainu language remain few in number. The language is considered as highly endangered, though some words have found their way into the Japanese language. ラッコ, meaning sea otter, is one of these words. トナカイ, the Japanese word for "reindeer" is another example, along with other names of animals endemic to northern regions. Place names in Hokkaido, such as "Sapporo", also often have Ainu language origins.



## Awa Shoku: Eat Local in Tough Times

By: Lance Kita

By now, everyone has been affected in some way by the global pandemic, even on a local level. As of writing this article (May 11), Japan is under a nationwide state of emergency, and people are being asked to avoid unnecessary travel and socializing, especially in close contact with large groups in enclosed spaces. This has led to a sharp drop in eating out, especially group parties at izakaya 居酒屋 (dining pubs focusing on both drinks and food) and smaller establishments with tight seating. So, what can we do to support eateries while staying safe and maintaining social distancing?

1) Get Take-Out. Make an effort to order take-out from your favorite places, who may be staying open because rent payments are not stopping. Yes, you need to call ahead and menus may be limited, but getting takeaway will go a long way to keep restaurants alive, since enclosed spaces and crowded counters encourage the spread of infection.

2) Choose Local. Convenience stores, fast-food chains and franchises have more staying power, but once family-run or locally-owned eateries fold, there is no coming back. Smaller places also tend to buy local ingredients, supporting farmers close to home.

3) Buy Lunch. If you have the financial leeway, think about grabbing a freshly-made box lunch from an eatery near your office once or twice a week instead of a homemade bento.

4) Make Family Dinner Fun! On the way home, order an otsumami おつまみ (appetizer) or odoburu オードブル (h'ors d'oeuvre) platter from an izakaya in your neighborhood. Just cook rice and you have an instant party meal for your

family.

5) Weekend Picnic To Go. If you have a car, drive around and collect meals, snacks, and desserts from your favorite local cafes and take them to the park, riverside, seaside, or just park your car at a scenic spot and picnic inside your vehicle.

Local businesses tend to buy local produce, meat, and seafood, so the ripple from restaurant closures is causing major headaches for farmers, fishermen, and ranchers. If you are cooking at home a lot, here are some things to consider when shopping:

1) Try to buy local fruits, vegetables, and meats. Tokushima is a major supplier of these products to the Kansai region, where major cities are also shut down by this pandemic. There is a surplus

of food, so you can find cheap deals at your local supermarket, farmer's market, or roadside stand.

2) Drink milk. School closures in April means school lunch milk is overabundant. Be sure your children drink milk daily for one meal, and think of adding more dairy to your diet.

3) Consume more fish. With izakaya closed, fishermen have no places to sell fresh fish for sashimi. Look for good deals on whole fish, and get your supermarket to gut and fillet them.

4) Flowers for the table. Many opening ceremonies were pared down, and there are less

businesses in need of arrangements in their shops, so get a bouquet of seasonal blossoms and keep the floral farmers going.

The world situation may seem uncontrollable, but we can make small choices locally to keep our communities active and productive. Stay safe, maintain social distancing, but take out often and buy local when possible.



Stay safe, and support local restaurants with take-out orders.

## Phrases related to impressions/feelings

This month, let's study phrases relating to impressions/feelings.

① Let's practice adjectives. \*They are used together with です.

- |                    |                                  |                               |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. いい / よくない (+です) | 2. おいしい / おいしくない                 | 3. たかい / やすい                  |
| 4. いそがしい / ひま      | 5. きれい / きれいじゃない                 | 6. しんせつ / ふしんせつ               |
| 7. にぎやか / しずか      | 8. むずかしい / やさしい                  | 9. おもしろい / おもしろくない            |
| 1. Good / Not Good | 2. Delicious / Disgusting        | 3. Expensive / Cheap          |
| 4. Busy / Not Busy | 5. Pretty, Clean / Ugly, Unclean | 6. Friendly / Unfriendly      |
| 7. Lively / Quiet  | 8. Difficult / Easy              | 9. Interesting, Uninteresting |

② A 「にほんのくたべもの」は どうですか。」

B 「おいしいです。」

A What do you think of Japanese food?

B It's delicious.



\* 「～は どうですか」 is used to ask someone's impression/feeling about something.

◆ Insert the following words into the < > and construct your own response for B.

1. せいかつ (Life) 2. まち (Town) 3. ひと (People) 4. スーパー (Supermarkets)

A 「にほんのく > は どうですか」

B 「 > です。」

③ Let's try using the conjunctions そして and でも.

A 「しごと は どうですか。」

B 「いそがしいです。そして むずかしいです」

A How is work?

B It's busy and difficult.



A 「にほんごの べんきょう は どうですか。」

B 「むずかしいです。でも おもしろいです。」

A How is studying Japanese?

B It's difficult, but interesting.



④ Here's our final practice for today.

Q. みんなのへやは どうですか。How would you describe your room?

A. \_\_\_\_\_

### Information About Free Study Materials

Let's study Japanese with videos available for your smartphone or computer! (Free)

#### NHK WORLD:

<https://www.nhk.or.jp/lesson/>

#### The Japan Foundation:

<https://www.erin.ne.jp/jp/>

#### Sapoto 21 (Service of the Agency for Cultural Affairs):

<http://support21.or.jp/ouractivities/learning-program/top-page/seikatsubamen-kiritoudouga/>

**Nihongo Bank:** Every Wed. from 19:00-19:30 (Excluding Holidays), Free Until the End of July, Apply below:

<https://www.career-bank.co.jp/form/nihongo/form2.html>

Example Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qdl5CeMO3Es&feature=youtu.be>





## Enjoy Ningyo Joruri at Home

By: Kenji Sato, Director of the Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jurobe Yashiki  
(Puppet Theater and Museum)

Tokushima is a land with a mild climate that is blessed with water and rich soil. The Yoshino River is known as one of the 3 great rivers in Japan that often overflows its banks. Flooding occurs every year during the typhoon season. However, in return, the river brings rich soil from the mountains that naturally fertilizes the fields. Since the early days of the Edo Period, this soil has been used to cultivate persicaria tinctoria, which is used to produce indigo dye. This opened up a path to sell these indigo goods and gain economic power. However, this isn't the only thing grown in the Yoshino River area. Even today, Naruto kintoki (a type of sweet potatoes), lotus root, etc. are grown, and the Yoshino River area stands as one of the representative agricultural areas of Tokushima. The river is also a great fishing spot for suji-aonori, shirasu unagi, etc.

Thanks to the blessings of the Yoshino River, the towns of Tokushima expanded, and traditional arts such as Ningyo Joruri and the Awa Odori flourished. Even today, Tokushima has the greatest number of Ningyo Joruri groups that are practicing, and puppet makers receive many requests from both within and outside of Tokushima to repair or create new puppets. Additionally, over 80 Nouse Butai (農村舞台), outdoor stages made for Ningyo Joruri, remain on the grounds of various shrines located in the prefecture. Many people gather to enjoy performances for spring and autumn festivals.

Ningyo Joruri is performed with accompaniment of the futozao shamisen. A narrator called a tayu (太夫) recites a type of Japanese music called 'joruri' that is used to tell a story, and the puppets are used to match the story. 3 people operate 1 puppet, an unparalleled art. The 3 puppeteers, the narrator, and the shamisen performers must come together as one in order to make the performance a success. Everyone works together so that the narrator's story, the shamisen player's music, and the puppeteer's movements come together as one, and the emotions of the characters in the play are properly portrayed. This is the art of Ningyo Joruri.

People from all over the world have been working to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding 'The 3 Cs' (closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact settings), practicing handwashing, refraining from unnecessary trips or outings, etc. Everyone's cooperation is of the utmost importance.

We are not currently in a situation where we are able to welcome everyone to come and see our performances, however, we have posted a variety of videos on the Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jurobe Yashiki (Puppet Theater and Museum) website. (You can find these videos by clicking the # おうちで人形浄瑠璃 link.) These videos include explanations about Ningyo Joruri's history and background, as well as performances and commentaries. We hope that this can serve as a good opportunity for many people to learn about the wonders of Ningyo Joruri from the safety of their own homes. Additionally, this has been a chance for us to really delve into the wonders of Ningyo Joruri, as well as allow us to recharge and think of new ideas.

Once this virus has disappeared, we look forward to being able to welcome many people to come visit our theater, and allow for them to enjoy an even better Ningyo Joruri experience. From the bottom of our hearts, we pray that this world becomes a place where people share a bond of mutual trust, and everyone can work together.

# おうちで人形浄瑠璃  
<http://joruri.info/jurobe/>



## Interview with Dong Tian Ye - Cameraman to Wuhan PT.1

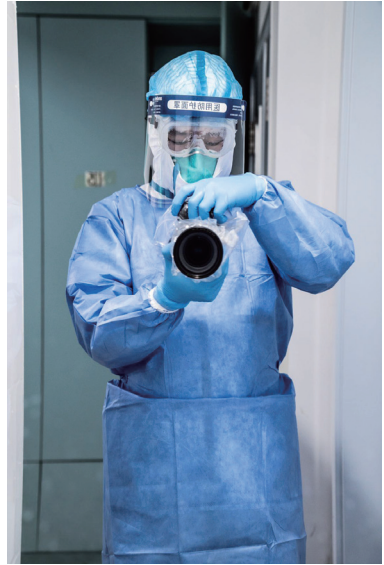
Interview By: Qing Liu

On January 24th, 2020 (Chinese New Year's Eve) at 5:30 PM, Dong Tian Ye, cameraman for the Jiefang Daily, received a phone call. Alongside 4 other journalists, he soon found himself heading towards Wuhan along with Shanghai's first "Medical Support Team to Wuhan". Through his photography, in the midst of this unique battle, he served as a witness and documenter of this epidemic. On March 22nd, along with the 3rd "Shanghai Medical Support Team to Wuhan", he returned to Shanghai. He is currently in quarantine, and I interviewed him over the phone inquiring about his 58 days spent in Wuhan.

On the plane bound for Wuhan, he sat next to the deputy chief doctor of the respiratory division from a Shanghai hospital. An uneasiness stirred in both of their hearts. There was still little information on this new disease, and doctors had zero experience dealing with it. However, everyone knew one thing with certainty: 'no matter the situation, we must go'. They were filled with a sense of duty to do so.

The first week that they arrived in Wuhan, the epidemic was at a critical state, and as it was Chinese New Year, there was a lack of manpower. Specialists indicated that ideally, including the time to put on protective gear, work hours should be no longer than 4 hours. However, at that time, once they entered the hospital rooms, medical staff tended to work 8 to 12 hours. The protective gear is very thick, so at first it would be very hot and sweaty, but the sweat would then sink into their undergarments and become very cold. Additionally, the N95 medical masks were very constricting and made it difficult to breathe.

With 2 cameras in hand, Dong Tian Ye entered the hospital rooms and began photographing. Through his camera lens, he captured these difficult moments to serve as proof for reports and newspaper documentaries.



The Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital was a 7~8 minute walk from the hotel that Dong Tian Ye and the medical team were staying at. Every day he visited 3 hospitals, the Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital, the Dong Xi Hu Module Hospital, and the Leishenshan Hospital, to take photographs. Going back and forth between the 3 areas Wuhan is separated into, he captured photographs of a war ground where no weapons were to be seen. This was Dong Tian Ye's first encounter with Wuhan. While traveling from one hospital to the next, he would find himself sighing – there were absolutely no other people about. Being the sole person traveling among these forests of huge buildings, and crossing these enormous bridges, he felt a sort of pressure, as if he had wandered into some kind of surrealistic world.

\*\*\*\*\*

Look forward to Part. 2 of this interview in the July Awa Life issue!

### Counselling Service at TOPIA・トピアの相談窓口

TOPIA provides consultation on everyday life, education, labor, medical institutions, and disaster prevention; and information on sightseeing spots to overseas residents and visitors. When necessary, we will refer you to the appropriate organization that can assist with your needs. Counselling is available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese. Please note that although every effort will be made, we may not be able to deal with all cases.

Everyday, 10:00 - 18:00 (closed during the New Year's holidays)

Tel: 088-656-3312 or 088-656-3313 (allows for three-way conversations with an interpreter)