

awa life

**Interview with
Suzanne Kamata**

**2020 Japanese
Buzzwords**

January 2021
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**Awa Shoku: Kampai the
New Year with Sake**

**Gairaigo Galore:
バッテラ**



TOPIA

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

あけましておめでとうございます！ Happy New Year, everyone!

Welcome to the year of the ox. We hope you had a relaxing end of the year and hopefully also a few days of vacation. From January we will enter the coldest time of the year in Tokushima, but it probably won't be too cold to enjoy some time outside. How about going strawberry picking (いちご狩り), for example? The strawberry season in Tokushima usually starts in January, and most of the strawberry farms will be open then. These little red treasures will certainly warm your heart even on cold days.

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:

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Sydney and Nico

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Interview with Suzanne Kamata

Interview By: Qing Liu, Nico Bohnsack, & Sydney Bartig

This month we had the opportunity to meet with Suzanne Kamata, a teacher and writer living here in Tokushima. We asked her about her novels, her life, and her thoughts on Japanese society.

Could you tell us a little about yourself?

I was born in Grand Haven, Michigan, and I came to Japan in 1988 on the JET Programme where I worked as an ALT in Naruto. My base school was Naruto Senior High School, but I visited many schools such as those in Kamiyama. In my second year



I met my then-to-be husband, and that was a trigger for me wanting to stay in Japan. After the JET Programme I worked in Matsushige for about 12 years teaching English at elementary schools, and during this time I got married. I eventually gave birth to twins who were born prematurely, so I had to quit working for a while in order to take care of them. During that time, I put a lot of effort into writing and wrote my first novel. I also entered the All Nippon

Airways/Wingspan Fiction Contest, and twice I won plane tickets to go abroad which allowed me to visit Australia and America. I also wrote for newspapers and newsletters such as the Japan Times and even Awa Life. I was fortunate enough to get a job working part-time at Naruto University of Education, worked for 3 years at Tokushima

University, and am now back at Naruto University of Education working as an associate professor.

What themes do your novels typically focus on? What are your interests?

I would say the main themes of my novels are intercultural and cross-cultural meetings,

especially between American and Japanese culture. A lot of the characters I write about are foreigners living in Japan or Japanese people in other countries. There are many people who write about Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima, but there aren't many people who write about Tokushima in English. I'd like to introduce Tokushima to the world.

My children are bi-racial so I also write about “half” characters, and my daughter has cerebral palsy so I write about characters with disabilities as well. One of my books is about traveling with my daughter. I wanted to write to show people that barriers still exist, but I wanted to do so in a way that was accessible, fun to read, and not preachy.

What made you decide to travel the world with your daughter?

When my daughter was 10 years old, she said that she wanted to go to Paris. However, I had to find some way to get the money for the trip. There was a grant for artists with children, so I decided to apply for it with the intent of traveling to Paris with my daughter and writing a book based on our travels. I ended up receiving the grant and we were able to visit Paris.

How were your experiences with certain countries? Were there any countries that you would say could be a role model for support for people with a disability? What were some bad examples? How is the situation in Japan?

Everywhere had places that were accessible and inaccessible, and they were different in their own ways. For example, in Europe there are many old buildings that people don’t want to change or add elevators to. The metro in Paris also was not 100% wheelchair accessible.

In America, due to the Americans with Disabilities Act, people have this expectation that they will be able to get into and out of buildings easily. Even small stores tend to have a ramp. However, I haven’t actually lived in America with my daughter, so I can really only comment on our travels.

In Japan, there are issues such as the genkan (entryway) being difficult for wheelchairs. The cities in general tend to be more accessible, but there are still many places that are inaccessible. However, due to the Paralympics there is a growing consciousness and changes are slowly happening.

In Japan, not many people want to go abroad since they have a comfortable life in Japan. What would you tell those people? What can you learn from going abroad?

From going abroad, one learns to open their mind. You can make new friends, find new opportunities, and maybe even fall in love. You travel to have new experiences and to learn new things.

Many of your books are about being a foreigner in Japan. How do you feel about being here as a foreigner right now?

I’ve been here for over 30 years and I never expected nor wanted to become Japanese. I’m comfortable being different, and I don’t expect anyone will ever accept me as Japanese. However, I do feel like I am always in-between, because even when I go back to America, I feel like I don’t really fit in there either. I guess you could say I’m a citizen of the world.

What do you think are some pressing, social issues in Japan, especially related to foreign residents?

One thing, at least for me and my family, is the issue of passports. My children have two passports, and according to the Japanese law they will have to choose just one. I wish they would be allowed to keep both and have dual citizenship. I think that would be good for Japan too, because there would be more people living between cultures and more people would want to stay in Japan. Currently, many people give up their citizenship and move to America.

I also wish there were more opportunities for men and women. This is an issue in other countries too, but there is still a gap between men and women in the workplace. When I worked at Tokushima University, I was the only woman in the department.

What do you think about Japanese schools and the Japanese education system?

Interview with Suzanne Kamata

There is the issue of conformity in Japan where everyone is supposed to be the same, so there is not a lot of tolerance for differences or chances for creativity. Americans tend to value creativity, and in school they spend a lot of time doing creative writing, reading books, etc. Those who graduate from college especially tend to be good writers. However, my son never really wrote much in school nor did he read a lot of books. When they read something in Japanese schools they just tend to read an excerpt, while in American schools they read the entire book.

It's also very test based in Japan. There is only one correct answer, but in America, students spend a lot of time discussing things. They learn to ask questions and realize that there are many possibilities.



In my case, I also felt that the teachers didn't respect my opinion because I was a foreigner. When it came to my daughter, I pushed for her to be able to learn English. I was told to wait until she was in junior high school, but when she entered junior high school, I was told that life skills were more important than English. The teachers also didn't want me to speak English with her because she is deaf and they thought it would be difficult for her. It definitely made me sad not being able to speak English with her.

What do you enjoy about your life in Japan and Tokushima?

I really like my current job and I am happy teaching. I get to teach a lot of foreign students in the graduate program, so even though I am in Shikoku, I have a connection with the world. I also

love the nature of Tokushima, it's very beautiful. The changing of the seasons is great with the sakura in the spring and momiji in the fall. It's also a very peaceful place to live and the people are all very friendly.

What are your future plans? Are there any places you would like to go? What books are you planning to write?

I'd like to go to Scandinavia. I've heard that it's very liberal and a good place for people with disabilities, so I want to see for myself if that is true. I've also never been there and it just seems like an interesting place.

As far as books go, my books are all published in America, and in America there is this new kind of mindset that if you publish a certain book, you can only do so if you are a part of that group. What I mean is that, because I am not Japanese but I write about Japanese characters, or because I am not disabled but I write about disabled characters, that kind of writing isn't as accepted right now. I want to write more about Japan, but I feel like American publishers are not as open to those kinds of stories right now, so currently I'm working on a historical novel about a spy that is set during WW2. It has no connections to Japan.

In general, I want to continue teaching at the university level and travel with my daughter and family. One of my big dreams is to have one of my books made into a Netflix series or something similar. It would also be great to see one of them translated into Japanese.

Japanese Culture and Reading Corner: 成人の日

成人式

By: Junko Kimura

みなさんの国では何歳から成人ですか。日本では現在、20歳から成人です。しかし、2022年4月1日からは18歳から成人となります。1月の第2月曜日が「成人の日」という祝日です。新成人を祝う式为「成人式」と言い、徳島県では地域の公民館や体育館等で開催されます。成人式は、住民票がある地域でお祝いをし、小学校や中学校の時の同級生に会える場合があります。昔の話に花が咲き、当時を思い出し、とても懐かしくなります。女の方は振り袖やスーツを着、男の方はスーツや袴を着ます。日本では選挙権は18歳からあります。また、2022年からは成人になる年齢も18歳になりますが、たばこを吸ったり、お酒を飲んだりできるのは、これからは20歳からです。みなさんの国では成人になったときにどのようなお祝いをしますか。



Vocabulary List

成人	Adult	公民館	Community Center	当時	Those Days
現在	Currently	体育館	Gym	懐かしい	Nostalgic
祝日	National Holiday	開催	Hold/Host	振り袖	Long-sleeved Kimono
祝う	Celebrate	住民票	Certificate of Residence	袴	Hakama
式	Ceremony	同級生	Classmate	選挙権	Right to Vote
地域	Area	話に花が咲く	To Reminisce		

Gairaigo Galore



バツテラ (bateira)

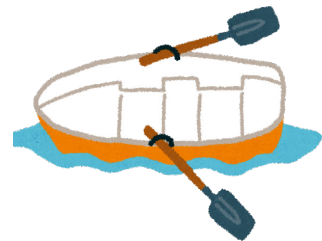
By: Nico Bohnsack

One famous kind of sushi in Japan, especially in the Kansai region, is バツテラ, a type of so-called oshizushi (pressed sushi). バツテラ are pieces of mackerel on top of vinegared rice and are widely available at supermarkets in Tokushima. I often buy this kind of sushi since the taste reminds me of a fish cuisine we eat in Northern Germany, but more than once I wondered why it is actually called バツテラ while always connecting the name with some sort of ship. Indeed, the Japanese expression seems to stem from the word bateira which is Portuguese and means “boat”.



Since Japan came into contact with Portugal in the 16th century, many Portuguese words found their way into the Japanese language, including bateira or バツ

テラ. However, the word was first used with its original meaning (boat) which only changed in the year of 1893. It is said that a sushi restaurant in Osaka actually invented this style of sushi and gave it the name バツテラ since its shape looked similar to that of a boat. At first, spotted sardines were used, but because the price of spotted sardines increased rapidly they were replaced with mackerel in the end. If you haven't eaten one of these delicious “boats” I can definitely recommend you try it when you visit the supermarket next time.



Awa Shoku: Kampai the New Year with Sake

By: Lance Kita

Happy New Year!! On the first morning of the new year (during my homestay in college, it was just after midnight), a sip of a special spiced sake (otoso お屠蘇) is drunk by every member of the family to wipe away the ills of the old year and promote long life. Since ancient times, sake (nihonshu 日本酒) has been used in ceremonies at Shinto shrines, making it the spirit of the spirit of Japan.

Sake is quite simple and pure at its core: rice, water, and koji-kin 麹菌 (a fungus that drives the fermentation). All three are mixed together to form a mash called moromi 醪 and traditionally poured into sacks and fermented in a large wooden vat. After the fermentation process is finished, the sacks are pressed and the sake is processed and bottled.

The rice is usually polished to remove the outer part of the grain, since the center of the grain is mainly starch and produces a cleaner tasting

sake. The more you polish off, the higher the grade (Honjozo 本醸造, ginjo 吟醸, and daiginjo 大吟醸 from low to high). Lower grade doesn't necessarily mean lower quality, as the minerals and fats in the outer layers can give an interesting complexity of flavor. Sometimes, additional alcohol is added to the sake. If you want sake that only has the alcohol that came from the natural fermentation process, look for the word junmai 純米 next to the grades mentioned before.

One of the beauties of sake is that it can be drunk at a wide range of temperatures. In the winter, ask for atsukan 熱燗, and the sake will come hot in a slender bottle (tokkuri 徳利) for you to pour into tiny cups (choko 猪口) and sip. You can also choose room temperature (jo-on 常温) or chilled (reishu 冷酒), which often is good for higher

grade sake because the aromas and flavors can be better savored. One traditional cup is the masu 升, a wooden box that imparts the fragrance of cedar or cypress to the sake. Some restaurants will place a glass in the box and pour the sake in the glass until it overflows, a sign of generosity and hospitality.

Sake can also be eaten. Clams and other shellfish can be steamed in sake (like the French mussels in wine). Try adding a couple of tablespoons to your hotpot broth to enhance the flavors of the vegetables. There are even saka-manju 酒饅頭, bean paste cakes flavored with sake! The leftover dregs after the sake is pressed in the sacks is called sakekasu 酒粕, and makes a great soup (use half miso and half sakekasu) with salmon, chicken, mushrooms, or dark greens. If you want

it at a restaurant, ask for kasujiru 粕汁 (may be a seasonal dish).

Winter is the traditional season for sake, as the cold weather is necessary for consistent, stable fermentation temperatures.

Often, breweries will hang a large ball made of fresh cedar leaves out in front. As the leaves brown, it symbolizes the maturing of the sake, and once it's entirely brown the sake is ready to drink. In Tokushima, sake breweries are clustered in Naruto City and in Miyoshi City, and some have retail corners in their historical buildings. Visit these breweries this winter. Some of them will even have special tasting and sales of the new sake (shinshu 新酒) in late winter and early spring, with rare variations like unpasteurized (namazake 生酒) or fresh pressed (shiboritate 搾りたて).

So here's a toast to 2021, and the hope for a clearer and crisper year with a better finish than 2020!! Kampai!



No matter the temperature, container, or cup... sake is a great way to ring in the new year!

め うえ ひと つか けい ご
目上の人に使いたい敬語

Keigo Phrases to Use With Your Superiors

め うえ ひと

目上の人 refers to people who are older than you, your boss/senpai at work, your teachers at school, or other people who you are indebted to. We use keigo to show respect to these people. If you can properly use keigo, you can convey to that person that you value them. It's difficult to get it right at first, but don't you want to be able to use keigo phrases naturally?

Phrases You Often Use



Keigo

「はい、分かりました。/ OK です。」 → 「かしこまりました。」 「承知しました。」

「こんにちは」 → 「お疲れさまです。いつもお世話になります。」

「すみません。」 → 「おそ います。」

「ごめんなさい。」 → 「申し訳 ざいせん。」

「いってらっしゃい。」 → 「いってらっしゃいませ。」

「ご一緒します!」 → 「お供 します。」

「行きます。」 → 「うかがいます。/ お邪魔 します。」

「どうですか。」 → 「いかがなさいますか。」

「ご苦労様。」 → 「お疲れさまでした。」

「忙しいので行くことができません。」 → 「申し訳 ざいせん。予定 が入 っておりまして…」

「水をください。」 → 「お水 を 願 います。」

「質問いいですか?」 → 「質問 してもよろしいでしょうか?」

「ありがとう。」 → 「本当に 助 かりました。おかげさまで、…」

「分かりません。」 → 「教えて いただけ ませんか。」

「頑張ります。」 → 「努力 いた します。/ お任せ ください。」

「知らない。」 → 「存 じ ません。」



When You Give a Present

「気持ちばかりですが…」

When You Receive a Present

「お気遣いいただきありがとうございます。」

遠慮なく頂戴致します。」



2020 Japanese Buzzwords

By: Qing Liu

As we enter a new year, the buzzwords of the previous year always become a hot topic. The words expected to be crowned top buzzwords for 2020 include:

- Words that were born or gained popularity due to the coronavirus pandemic such as “^{あたらしい}新しい生活^{せいかつ}様式” (new lifestyle/new normal), “^{みつ}3密” (the 3 C’s), “^{うーばーいーつ}ウーバーイーツ” (uber eats), etc.
- New words that were born from popular movies, Korean dramas, and games such as “^{きめつ}鬼滅^{やいば}の刃” (Kimetsu no Yaiba – Demon Slayer), “^{あい}愛^ふの不^じ時^{ちやく}着” (Crash Landing on You), “^{あつ}あつ森” (Animal Crossing: New Horizons), etc.
- Societal issues that captured the attention of people worldwide such as “^{かつどう}BLM運動” (Black Lives Matter Movement), “^こAI超え” (AI surpassing humans), etc.

You have probably heard some of these words before. In order for everyone to have a deeper understanding of these words, I'd like to explain the meaning of some of these buzzwords.

ソーシャルディスタンス (Social Distancing)

This word has been used a lot recently in regards to the novel coronavirus, and it means to keep a safe distance from other people. Even those who don't have any symptoms may have the virus. Without knowing, you could be the reason that a cluster forms. The word social distancing has been a popular word used to prevent not only yourself, but other people, from getting infected.

^{ざいたく きんむ}在宅勤務 (WFH) (Work From Home), ^{モバイルワーク}モバイルワーク (Mobile Work), ^{リモートワーク}リモートワーク (Telecommuting)

A variety of words have been used to express people working from home rather than at the traditional office setting. This work-style gained popularity as a method to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus and to make it so people can more easily avoid the three Cs (closed spaces, crowded places, & close-contact settings).



^{あつまれ}あつまれどうぶつの森 / ^{あつ森}あつ森 (Animal Crossing: New Horizons)

A Switch game released on March 20th, 2020 by Nintendo. The story revolves around you living on a deserted island alongside animal villagers. You can use the resources you gather on the island to make new items, and you can also play the game together with 4 other people at the same time.

^{きめつ やいば}鬼滅の刃 (Kimetsu no Yaiba – Demon Slayer)

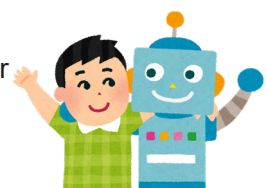
The movie is currently airing in theaters and has seen an explosive boom in popularity. Set in the Taisho era, this Japanese-style story features a protagonist fighting against demons (鬼) that killed his family as he searches for a way to turn his demon-turned, younger sister back into a human.

^{かつどう}BLM運動 (Black Lives Matter Movement)

A movement that seeks to end racial discrimination, the Black Lives Matter movement was created in the wake of police brutality against African Americans in the United States.

^こAI超え (AI Surpassing Humans)

There has been talk of AI in the future surpassing humans and doing work in their place.



Events & Memoranda

Awa Ningyo Joruri Performance 阿波人形浄瑠璃芝居公演

Come and enjoy Awa Ningyo Joruri performances,
a local treasure, at Yume Hall.

Performing Group (Za) : Nakamuraen Tayu Za

When: January 31st (Sun)

Doors Open: 12:30

Performance Starts: 13:00

Where: Anan Bunka Kaikan Yume Hall

Fee: 200 Yen for Adults, Free for High School
Students & Younger

Info: Anan Culture Promotion Division
Anan Bunka Kaikan

Tel: 0884-22-1798

0884-21-0808

郷土の誇り「阿波人形浄瑠璃」の舞台をホールで
お楽しみください。

座：中村園太夫座

日時：1月31日（日）

12:30 開場 13:00 開演

場所：夢ホール・阿南市文化会館

料金：200 円小中高生無料

問い合わせ：阿南市文化振興課
阿南市文化会館

Tel: 0884-22-1798

0884-21-0808



Mochi Strength Competition at Taisanji Temple 大山寺の力餅

This event is held on the 3rd Sunday of January
at Taisanji Temple as the first event of the new
year.

*This year, due to coronavirus prevention
measures, the competition will be cancelled. The
mochi offering will be presented by 1 female and
1 male representative.

When: January 17th (Sun.)

Where: Taisanji Temple Shrine Grounds

Info: Taisanji Temple

Tel: 088-694-5525

URL: http://taisANJI.jp/?page_id=10

正月の初会式の行事として毎年1月第3日曜日に
大山寺境内で行われます。

※今年はコロナ対策のため大会は中止、奉納力餅
として男女の代表が1名ずつ実施します。

日時：1月17日（日）

場所：大山寺境内

問い合わせ：大山寺

Tel: 088-694-5525

URL: http://taisANJI.jp/?page_id=10

Counselling Service at TOPIA・トピアの相談窓口

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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)