

awa life

June 2021

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TOPIA

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

As we enter June, so too begins the rainy season. While those who don't much care for the rain may think of this season as a bit depressing, there are actually some things that you can only enjoy now! For example, did you know that June and July are also when the hydrangeas come into bloom? There are many places in Tokushima where you can enjoy these lovely blue, pink, and purple flowers. Check out our "Tokushima Hydrangea Map 2021" in the Events Section for a list of places to visit!

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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Aesthetics, Amid Rotting Wood and Rusting Metal

By: Isreal Lutes

“When we gaze into the darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam, around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, though we know perfectly well it is mere shadow, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquility holds sway.” - Tanizaki Jun'ichiro

Thoreau once said, in contrast to creating particular artworks, “it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look.” While creating particular artworks introduces new, beautiful, and curious objects into the world, by molding our mindsets we may transform the world itself by changing how we come to see it. It is like philosophers to overplay theory and downplay practice, but there may be something to this idea.

One of the most fascinating works I have read

during my time in Japan is Tanizaki Jun'ichiro's essay, “In Praise of Shadows.” “In Praise of Shadows” is an aesthetic essay published in



the early 1930s. The tone of the essay is both elegiac and pleading. In the face of modernity bringing newness and light and vibrant color, Tanizaki writes in praise of age and shadow, the muted and mysterious. Throughout the essay, he writes movingly of the simple, the ordinary, the traditional Japan that

was vanishing even while he wrote in hope that something of it would remain.

While it is often problematic to play “the West” against Japan as if either were static and homogenous, it is sometimes insightful. When it comes to art, the influences of Platonic ideas, Christian hopes for heaven, and humanistic/scientific optimism in the West seem to have played a powerful role in Western aesthetics. Stereotypically, Western art has aimed at

grandeur, clarity, light, and permanence.

In contrast, Japan has two traditions that stress very different themes. In the native Shinto tradition, we can see an appreciation for the unadorned, the temporary, and the natural. Take, for example, Ise Shrine, one of the holiest sites in the Shinto tradition. This site, in contrast to many of the world's grand churches, mosques, and temples, is made of unadorned wood, is relatively moderate in size, and is torn down and rebuilt every twenty years.

The other tradition is Zen Buddhism, which is not unique to Japan but which has powerfully permeated the Japanese culture, especially in respect to the arts. Indeed, several of Japan's aesthetic traditions were begun by Zen monks, such as tea ceremony. Zen stresses the present moment, contingency, the impermanence of all things, and practice.

Through aesthetics, there are three main approaches to reality. It can imitate reality. It can augment reality. And, finally, it can transform our vision of reality. Obviously, I am no expert on aesthetics, but I believe that the best aspects aim to aestheticize the everyday reality. Through tea ceremony, a simple act of drinking is transformed into an event of solemnity and grace. It does not aim at grandeur, permanence, or ornateness. Through ikebana, a Buddhist emphasis on impermanence is turned into an art form. "It is a beauty that embraces time, . . . that is manifest out of the impermanency . . ." writes Nishitani Keiji of ikebana.

Since coming to Japan, I have discovered a much

deeper appreciation of rust, rot, grime, and decay. I have come to appreciate everyday entropy. I enjoy driving into the mountains and exploring the abandoned buildings dispersed along disused roads. The Japanese concept of wabi sabi (侘 び 寂 び) might be described as something along

the lines of "the aesthetic appreciation of everyday entropy." Wabisabi is characterized by a sense of loneliness, decline, and chill. It is close to the aesthetic equivalent of autumn.

Another concept that has filtered into my consciousness is the concept of yuugen (幽 玄), often translated, "mysterious profundity."

It is, in a sense, all that you don't see, but the absence of which leads to a feeling of awe and curiosity. It is the feeling that ink wash paintings attempt to provoke through the large blank portions of canvas left untouched. In everyday life, I feel that this concept captures and informs my own experience, for example, of seeing the mountains around my city enveloped in mist and mystery. At these times, "The limitless vista created in imagination far surpasses anything one can see more clearly." ¹

The Japanese aesthetic tradition is incredibly rich, and, I feel, it has an intimacy with everyday life. For me, the insight of Japanese aesthetics is not that beauty and art is removed or rare. For me, the concepts of wabisabi and yuugen, among others, open my often drooping eyes to the wonder of all the things around me: steam floating, twirling from a tea cup, or shadows gathering in quiet corners.



1. Nancy G. Hume

Interview with Weijie Jiang

By: Qing Liu, Kayo Miyoshi, Nico Bohnsack

We had the chance to interview Weijie Jiang, a Singaporean who is working in Dubai.

[Since you work in Dubai, why are you studying Japanese here at TOPIA in Tokushima?]

While working for a company in Singapore, his boss talked to him about working in Dubai. As a reserved person, he thought that he wanted to challenge himself in a foreign country and ended up deciding to work at an oil company in Dubai. There are many people in Dubai who believe the stereotype that all Asian people are shy. However, the Weijie Jiang here at TOPIA is very cheerful and sociable. While in Dubai, he met his wife, a Tokushima-born woman who works for an airline company. He thought it “was best to get married by the time he was 30”, so the two decided to get married. He didn’t really know much about Japan, but Japanese manga are apparently quite popular in Singapore. In fact, he’s been told that he’s similar to the character Giant from Doraemon.

[Please tell us about Dubai.]

There are some diligent people in Dubai, but the majority of people are very relaxed. From November to April the temperature is about 18 degrees making it very comfortable and a great time to visit. Schools and companies operate from Sunday to Thursday with Friday being the day to visit the mosque and Saturday being a day for rest. School and working hours are from 8 to 4. Many people in Dubai are followers of Islam, however, he is not. You can get alcohol at restaurants and hotels that have received permission to serve it, but it’s very expensive.

[What is your impression of Japan?]

He has been sightseeing in many places in Japan, including Tokyo, Kanagawa, Nara, Osaka, Kyoto, etc. He noticed that each place had its own unique differences, and each were very interesting. Among those, Tokushima’s charm is its nature. The beautiful mountains and rivers of Iya and Kamiyama, Kaifu’s sea, the quietness... he also really loves Tokushima Ramen. Blessed with nature, he was surprised at the quality of the fresh vegetables and meat of Tokushima. While

studying at the Japanese classes offered at TOPIA, he remembers first learning the words “おじいちゃん、おばあちゃん、and にこにこ”, and starting to use them left an impression on him. The reason for this is that people in Dubai who にこにこ (smile) are seen as suspicious.



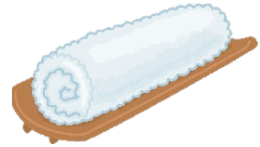
However, what he had to say next may be essential for Tokushima’s future. “Tokushima is full of wonderful things such as rich nature and industries. However, it’s a shame that one can’t make the most out of this. The land is so expensive. I also wish they would explain the tax system to foreigners in a way that’s easy to understand.”

Finally, we asked him about his plans for the future. He plans to continue working in Dubai, however, he would like to visit Tokushima once a year for several months. Until his children enter elementary school, he would like to reduce his work and do what he can so that they have many experiences. Both Singapore and Dubai are international cities so it’s possible to enjoy foods and cultural elements from a wide array of countries. It seems that the nature of Tokushima has gripped his heart. However, he also noted that because of how time goes by slowly in Tokushima, he would lose sight of the outside world if he stayed here for too long. When returning to Dubai from Tokushima, he noted it would take at least a week to return to his usual work pace. Finally, he noted how he “hopes that corona gets under control so that he and his family can see more of Japan”.

Japanese Culture and Reading Corner: おしぼり

By: Junko Kimura

日本のレストランや カフェに 行ったとき、何か 気がついたことは ありませんか。多くのレストランなどでは、お客さんが 席についたら、お水と 手を拭くタオルを 出します。そのタオルを「おしぼり」といいます。おしぼりには 布のおしぼりと 紙のおしぼりが あります。夏は冷たいのを、冬は温かいのを 出すお店が あります。日本は 平安時代に、公家が 家に招待した お客さんのために、濡れた布を出していたことが おしぼりの始まりだそうです。室町時代になると、宿屋が 旅人のために 水を入れた桶と 木綿の手ぬぐいを 用意するようになりしました。旅人は 手ぬぐいを 桶の水に つけてしぼり、汚れた手や 足を 拭き取ったそうです。この時の「しぼる」という行為が「おしぼり」の語源になったと 言われています。今では、ほかの国でも おしぼりを 出すところがあります。あなたの国は どうですか。



Vocabulary List

せき 席につく Take a Seat

ふ 拭く Wipe

へいあん じ だい 平安時代 Heian Period (794-1185)

く け 公家 Nobility

しょうたい 招待した Invited

ぬ 濡れた Wet

むろまち じ だい 室町時代 Muromachi Period (1336-1573)

やど や 宿屋 Inn

たびびと 旅人 Traveler

て 手ぬぐい Hand Towel

おけ 桶 Pail

ふ 拭き取る Wipe Off

しぼる 絞る Wring

ごげん 語源 Word

Origin

Gairaigo Galore



ベッドタウン (commuter town)

By: Sydney Bartig

This month I would like to introduce another interesting wasei-eigo (Japanese-made English) word. When you hear the word ベッドタウン (bed town), what's the first thing that comes to your mind? Although the English translation of this word is a bit different, you may have been able to guess that it's a commuter town (sometimes referred to as a bedroom community, dormitory town, etc. depending on the area).

These areas are primarily residential with many of the people living there commuting somewhere else for work, hence the name "commuter" town in English. Especially in Japan, it's not uncommon for people to take the train and commute to work each day. There are also people who work in Tokyo, but rather than living in Tokyo as well, they live in a neighboring prefecture.

Some examples of ベッドタウン in Japan include Tachikawa City, Mitaka City, and Higashikurume City of Tokyo. There are also many other examples that can be found in Tokyo, Chiba Prefecture, Saitama Prefecture, Kanagawa Prefecture, Osaka, and Hokkaido. For those thinking about working in one of these larger prefectures in the future, perhaps you may want to consider living in a ベッドタウン!



Awa Shoku: Sweet Music to My Ears...of Corn

By: Lance Kita

June is the season for golden ears of corn, and in Tokushima that means sweet corn スイートコーン. Most of the locally grown crop comes from the middle of the prefecture in Awa City, Yoshinogawa City, and Myozai County (Ishii and Kamiyama Towns). Stop by the farmer's markets and roadside stations in those areas and you'll be greeted with rows of corn still in their husks with playful names like Kankan Musume 甘々娘 and Gold Rush ゴールドラッシュ.

The Japanese word for corn is tomorokoshi (トウモロコシ、玉蜀黍) which probably derived from the words "tou 唐" (referring

to something Chinese) and "morokoshi もろこし" (sor-ghum). Interestingly, it is called "namba なんば" in Awa dialect, a shortened version of Namban-kibi 南蛮黍, one of the oldest names for this vegetable in Japan. Namban refers to something imported from Portugal, and it's said that corn was first brought through Nagasaki by Portuguese traders in the late 1500s.

But the sweet corn at the farmer's markets isn't your grandmother's "namba." These specially-bred varieties are 18% sugar on average, making them as sweet as many fruits! I've eaten them raw off the cob, and the kernels were crisp, juicy, and sweet without the starchy mouthfeel you get from regular varieties. Imagine opening your cooler box and crunching down on chilled cobs of raw sweet corn on a humid rainy weekend afternoon. Of course, you can still steam or grill the cobs in the husks, but who wants a steamy or roasted kitchen on a summer day? I like to pop them unhusked into the microwave for 2-3 minutes per cob (don't overdo it with sweet corn). Sweet corn is so good, you won't need any salt or butter.

Corn is ubiquitous in the modern Japanese diet.

Every pizza and Hokkaido ramen seems to be topped with it, and there are salads made only of corn kernels. Corn potage is the standard soup for many Western-style set meals. There are even vacuum sealed packs of corn on the cob at your local supermarket, with a longer shelf life and the convenience of having a cob on hand whenever you feel the urge for a snack (or need a quick side veggie for a weekday hamburger steak dinner).



Eaten raw or fried, sweet corn's natural flavor comes through.

But there are recipes that shift corn (especially fresh sweet corn) into the center spotlight. If you slice down the length of the cob and keep the kernels together, the pieces

can be fried as tempura with a sprinkling of salt to garnish. It also makes a great kakiage かき揚げ, which is a tempura made by mixing thinly sliced veggies in a thin tempura batter and frying them as a crisp, flat cake. Try a combination of corn and edamame, both of which don't need to be sliced.

One easy recipe is a seasoned rice (takikomi-gohan 炊き込みご飯). Add 2 cups of washed rice and water to your rice cooker along with a pat of butter and a pinch of salt. Cut the kernels off one cob and add them (along with the cob) on top of the rice. Then cook as usual. When it's done, take out the cob, add a splash of soy sauce, and mix everything together. The left-over corn takikomi-gohan makes fantastic rice balls, which get even better grilled with butter or olive oil.

Time to rediscover commonplace corn... grab fresh ears from a farmer's market and try them raw, order some corn tempura from your local izakaya, or do some cooking with ears from your supermarket. Make locally-grown Tokushima sweet corn your "namba"-one summer vegetable!

[って] の^{つか} ^{かた} 使い方

This month I will continue my explanation on how to use [って].



3. 主題 (topic) [は] → [って]

● 名詞 + [は] → 名詞 + [って]

● 文 (普通形) + [の] [は] → 文 (普通形) + [の] [って]

* 林^{はやし}さん [は] 日本^に語^{ほん}の先生^{ごせんせい}ですか。
→ 林^{はやし}さん [って] 日本^に語^{ほん}の先生^{ごせんせい}ですか。

* 春^{はる}の天気^{てんき} [は] 変^かわりやすいですから、傘^{かさ}をもってい^いったほうがいいですよ。
→ 春^{はる}の天気^{てんき} [って] 変^かわりやすいですから、傘^{かさ}をもってい^いったほうがいいですよ。

* 漢字^{かんじ}をおぼえる [の] [は] むずかしいです。
→ 漢字^{かんじ}をおぼえる [の] [って] むずかしいです。

4. 定義 (definition) [とは] [というのは] → [って] [っていうのは]

「A [とは (というのは)] B のことです」 → 「A [て (っていうのは)] B のことです」

「A [とは (というのは)] B という意味^{いみ}です」
→ 「A [って (っていうのは)] B という意味^{いみ}です」

* 独身^{どくしん} [とは]、結婚^{けっこん}していない人のことです。
→ 独身^{どくしん} [って]、結婚^{けっこん}していない人のことです。

* 猫舌^{ねこじた} [とは]、熱^{あつ}いもの^{あつ}が食^たべられないという意味^{いみ}です。
→ 猫舌^{ねこじた} [って]、熱^{あつ}いもの^{あつ}が食^たべられないという意味^{いみ}です。
(例文: 私は猫舌^{ねこじた}なので、熱^{あつ}いお茶^{ちや}が飲^のめません。)



Practice: Try changing the following sentences so that they use [って] or [っていうのは].

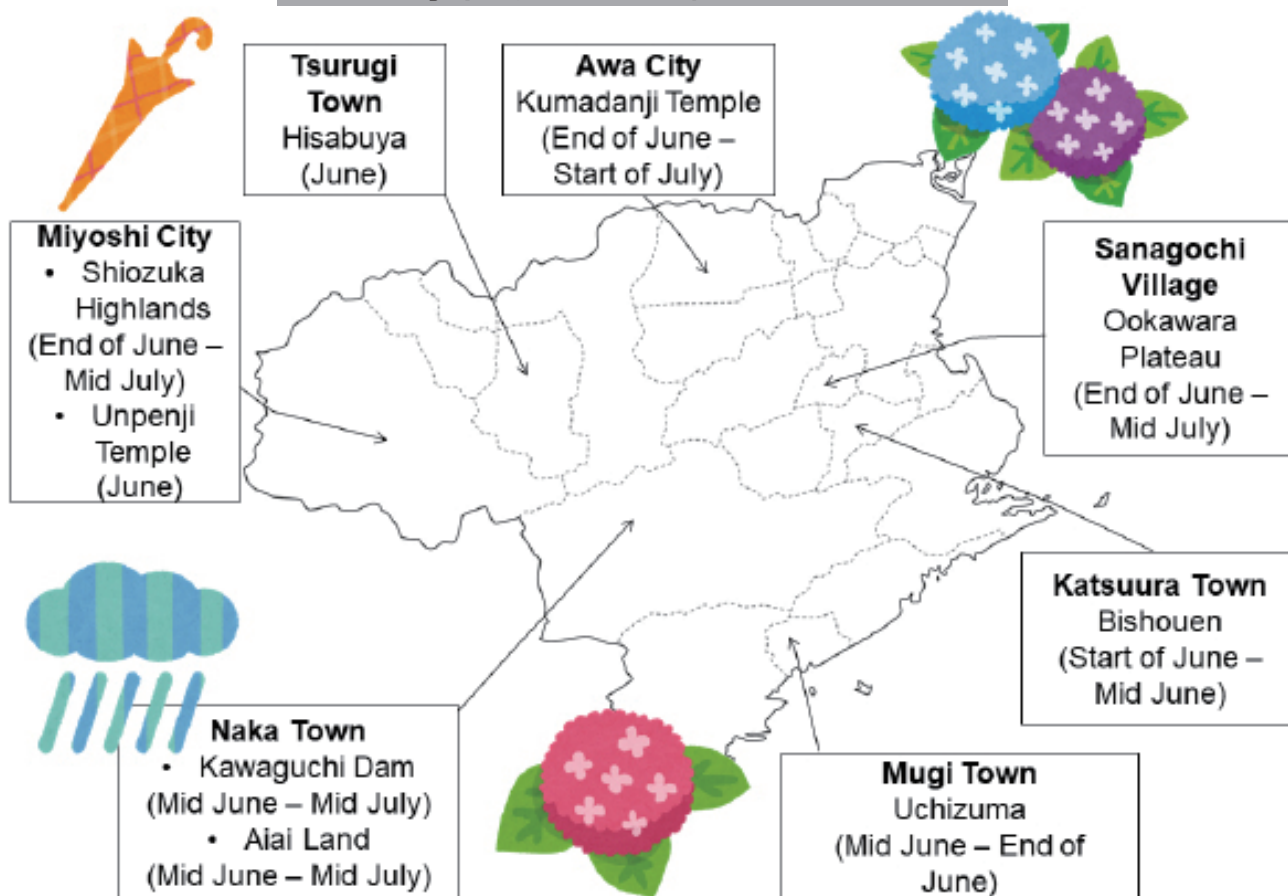
- ① TOPIA は、どこにある^あるんです^すか。
- ② 甘^{あま}いものを食^たべ過ぎ^するのは 体^{からだ}に良^よくないです。
- ③ カラコンとは (というのは)、カラコン^{きそく}タクトレンズ^{まも}のこと^いです。
- ④ コンプライアンスとは (というのは)、規則^{きそく}を守^{まも}るという^い意味^みです。

Answers

- ① TOPIA って、どこにある^あるんです^すか。
- ② 甘^{あま}いものを食^たべ過ぎ^するのって、体^{からだ}に良^よくないです。
- ③ カラコンって (っていうのは)、カラコン^{きそく}タクトレンズ^{まも}のこと^いです。
- ④ コンプライアンスって (っていうのは)、規則^{きそく}を守^{まも}るという^い意味^みです。

Events & Memoranda

Tokushima Hydrangea Map 2021 徳島県あじさい案内図 2021



A Healing Journey: Beautiful South Tokushima

By: Qing Liu

After heading down from Tairyuji Temple, we checked in at the seaside guesthouse “Sabi”, which is located in Mugi Town. Sabi is a three-story, ochre colored building located on the beach. The walls were a clean white, and a small reception desk was located near the entrance. There was an aquarium in the waiting room to the left that was filled with vivid tropical fish swimming about. To the right was a stairway leading to the guest rooms. Our dinner was an exquisite Japanese meal primarily featuring locally caught fish.

With nowhere to go in the evening, I fell right to sleep. When I woke up it was 3 AM. I opened the curtains and was greeted with a pure black sky and stars that seemed to expand endlessly. It seemed like if I stretched my hand out I would be

able to touch them, and I was overwhelmed with emotion. The sky was filled with both small and large shining stars, and they danced above the clouds. The ocean was quiet and I couldn’t hear the sounds of the waves. When the stars began to fade and the light appeared, the ocean waves shined brilliantly.

After a 30 minute car ride from Mugi Town, we arrived at Ohama Beach, the famous spot where sea turtles come to lay their eggs. These blue waves and white sands were chosen as one of the “top 100 beaches in Japan”. Every year from mid-May to August at nighttime, sea turtles return to their birth place from far away to lay their eggs. The people of Minami treasure the beach, and every year they eagerly await the arrival of the sea turtles. Before Marine Day, a festival is held

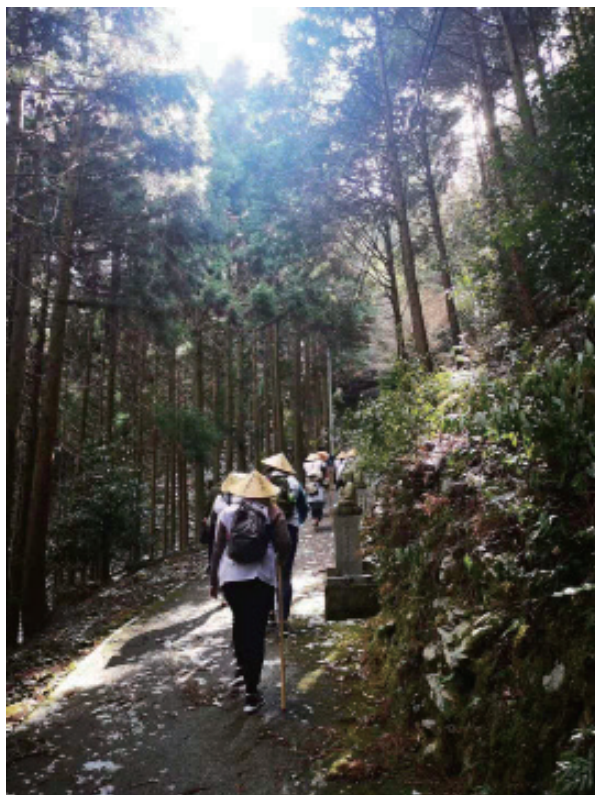
to express appreciation for the turtle's return.

Next, we took a 5 minute car ride from Ohama Beach to Yakuoji Temple. Yakuoji Temple is the 23rd temple of the Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage, and it is also the final temple in Tokushima. It was the end of February, and the mid-day sunlight was warm. We put on our white pilgrim garb and sugegasa hats, and with our pilgrim's staff in hand, bowed at the old main gate and entered the temple. The local people have a tradition of visiting Yakuoji Temple on their "unlucky years" in order to protect against misfortune. They ward off misfortune by placing coins on the steps, with there being steps for both men and women.

Once you climb the stairs, the Shingon sect main temple building is located behind the flowers and trees. Behind the main temple building is a fountain. Located next to a stone statue of Kobo Daishi, it is said by believers to be a miracle water, and for travelers it is a high-quality mineral water.

Yakuoji Temple is a famous spot in Shikoku for sakura (cherry blossoms). If you look upwards from the road approaching the temple, the red pagoda of Yakuoji beneath the blue sky will be surrounded by pink sakura, an almost dreamlike scene.

Located close to Yakuoji Temple is the "Sakura Road". Every year around April, the "Sakura Road Yume Marathon" is held in Minami. Other than the marathon, the Tokushima/Minami Oiwa Course has been chosen by the Japan Walking Association as one of the "New Japan Walking Path Travelogue 100 Series". Rich in green nature, the approximately 150 meter above sea-



level Oiwa lies close to an old town that once prospered as a fishing town.

At the end of the day we stayed at another guesthouse. A French sculpture artist turned a 200 year old large house into the guesthouse while being careful to preserve the retro style. While sitting and looking out of the window on the 2nd floor at the old road, I heard the sound of children's footsteps. They then disappeared into one of the nearby shops. The old lady at the shop had been creating Yakushi Yokan since 1973, and every time the old register would close shut it would make a "kaching" sound, making it feel like time had stopped for that moment.

My trip to Hiwasa was truly a healing journey.

Counselling Service at TOPIA・トピアの相談窓口

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