

# awa life

**Farewell and Welcome  
Messages**

**"Big Shoes to Fill"**

May 2022

# 379



**Introduction to Tokushima  
Overseas Cooperative  
Association**

**Gairaigo Galore:**  
アンコール



**TOPIA**

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

We hope all of you had a great Golden Week! May is the perfect month to spend time outside before the heat and humidity becomes intense in Japan. While March and April are famous for cherry blossoms, there are also some flowering plants that bloom in May. One very famous example is the wisteria (see the picture below), or fuji 藤 in Japanese. There are a few places in Tokushima where you can enjoy wisterias, but one particularly popular place is Jinkoji Temple in Kamiyama, famous for its "climbing wisterias" ( のぼり藤 ). Have a relaxing May, everyone!

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:

Your editors,  
Sydney and Nico

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

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



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## "Big Shoes to Fill"

By: Michael R. Comer

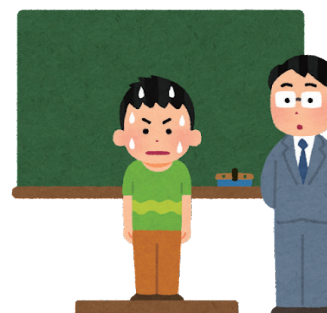
When I first arrived at my placement, I was, by necessity, placed within a bit of a patchwork schedule. It was just another impact among many that the pandemic wrought. The long delays in the 2020/21 cohort's arrival had left many boards of education looking for temporary measures with which to fill increasing vacancies in their English teacher staffing. Regardless, it was not something which I found particularly troublesome to deal with. Rather, I was just happy to have finally made it to Japan.



As part of my initial three months, my schedule dictated that I worked with a number of the more senior ALTs, and I was keen to benefit from their accumulated knowledge and experience. Despite my qualifications and past work experience within the education sector, in moving to Japan, I was effectively starting again from scratch. I viewed it as my responsibility to learn the new lay of the land now that I had leapt into entirely new territory. In this, I had nought but gratitude and respect for my seniors. Their example was something which I could aspire to, and I hope to do precisely that.

However, there was one in particular that I hold in the highest regard. At my base school, a delightful little Junior High, which I count myself most fortunate to be placed at, I worked with an excellent ALT. She had been 'at the coal face' for a number of years and that very much showed in her approach and practice.

I was fortunate too, in working beside her, she was wonderfully supportive and a kind of safety net for whenever I was left flailing for a good way to explain grammar that a student could understand. Her Japanese ability was frankly enviable, and through that she had built an excellent rapport with her students that seemed to stem from a genuine love for helping them. It reminded me of the attitude with which I had initially gone into teaching some four years ago, prior to the UK education system having stamped it out of me in short order.



There was, however, an issue. As with all good things, this too had to come to an end. She

was contracted by the Board of Education as a temporary measure to help ease the burden on the remaining ALTs. This left me with a considerable problem, for while I admired her method of teaching and the high standard of practice, these only helped to exacerbate that issue. In leaving, there were some titanic shoes to fill- a fact which was only emphasised further in the send-off which students and teachers alike had arranged for her.

I was, for all intents and purposes, now left to navigate my way forward. Even though I am confident that she would be all too willing to offer



advice or support should I need it, with the training wheels taken off, I, like the metaphorical child learning to ride a bike for the first time,

am left to teeter around precariously and in desperation, frantically trying to avoid falling and catching a mouthful of pavement for my trouble.

Yet, having thought about it at some length while my impending doom approached, I was led to recall an old mantra from the mandated wellbeing meetings of my teacher training days: 'Good is good enough'.

What this boils down to is a fundamental notion- I am not her; I am me. Now, this may feel like a painfully simplistic statement, and a blindingly obvious one at that, but how often do we sit and compare ourselves and our achievements to those of the people around us?

These days, the process is made all too simple. Social media feeds us an endless stream of highlights from the lives of others, and it is all too easy of a trap to fall into. So often, we blindly compare ourselves without pausing to consider something of key importance:

*"If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."*

This applies to the professional setting which I have described. I was comparing myself to the other ALTs around me. People who were well versed in the English teaching environment, all of whom have different experiences and personalities driving them along. This is, of course, not an inherently bad thing. In watching the teachers around us, we can learn key lessons to carry forward and implement in our own teaching, but fundamentally each person's teaching style is as unique to them as their fingerprints.



Why judge my own teaching style and ability by the measuring stick of those around me? In doing so, I would be just like the fish, lamenting its inability to climb. However, taking this further led to a mind-set of reflection and introspection, and subsequently to a series of key questions.

"What can I do that others cannot?"

"What can a history teacher from the west midlands possibly bring to English education that other teachers can't?"

Therein lay my answer. I determined a desire, where the curriculum would allow, to teach English through the prism of what I know best- British history and culture. There are countless stories, both historic and those in folklore, which provide a way of learning that aren't tied down to textbook learning and, through this, I would be able to promote a little cultural exchange.

With that, I had fulfilled the 'good is good enough' mantra. I was no longer tied to the concept of having to fill the shoes of my predecessor. They were shoes that simply wouldn't fit me and

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## "Big Shoes to Fill"

nothing would be able to change that fact. I could not do many of the things which my predecessor could, in many cases because certain skills or aspects of personality weren't something that I possessed.



My approach was something that I could do, and something which I was good at. My good was good enough. Lessons from her

would be absorbed and utilised where they could be, but from there on out, everything would still need to come from me. When I cast off those self-imposed shackles, there was a prevailing sense

of relief underlain by a sense of excitement; excitement that I might be able to show these students something new and fun that might kindle an interest to investigate further- Whether it be the different manner in which Welsh Valentine's is celebrated, or the displays of fireworks on bonfire night and their origins in sinister plots of treason. I will aim to teach the students about it all, if only to show that English learning can go beyond vocabulary lists and textbook study.

So, I will finish here with a question- both to the newest ALTs and those that have been here for a while. Ask yourself this; what is it about your method of teaching that is unique to you, and if you can, what can you do to inject a little of yourself into the lessons that you teach?

## Farewell Messages

### Miraku Miyachi, Multilingual Consultation Staff (Vietnamese)

It is never easy to say "Goodbye", but unfortunately, the time has come that I will have to. I will be leaving my job at Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA) at the end of March 2022 to pursue my goals!

Time has gone by so fast; it has been almost three years since I began working at TOPIA as a Vietnamese consultant. Through my job, I've realized that foreigners coming to Japan for work, regardless of visa status, need to adapt themselves to the unique culture of Japan and overcome many obstacles along the way. This can include anything from the gaps in daily life habits to the differences in the legal system. In most cases, Japanese people tend to not speak their thoughts clearly in order to be courteous, but this may cause confusion for foreigners. Just a funny instance, I once offered coffee to my Japanese friend, and he said "It's OK". I got embarrassed, not knowing whether his "OK" meant he wanted the coffee or if he was fine without it. On the other hand, it may hurt Japanese people's feelings if we talk to them too openly and directly. All of these

experiences can be hard for expatriates, but they can also be interesting for us to discover.

Over the past 3 years, the busiest part of my consultation job was supporting Vietnamese people facing difficulties in the pandemic. There were so many cases of technical trainees who had finished their contracts but could not return to Vietnam, or those who got infected by Covid-19 but could not communicate with health centers due to the language barrier. We have acted as a liaison between these people and the relevant authorities in order to help solve these problems.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of TOPIA, and for being provided good working conditions during my duty. From the bottom of my heart, I pray for the health and prosperity of those at TOPIA.





## Welcome Messages

**Seiji Miyoshi, Chief Director of TOPIA**

Nice to meet you! My name is Seiji Miyoshi, and I am the new chief director of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA). I was born in the western part of the prefecture in a place called Hiruma, Higashimiyoshi, which happens to be near the birthplace of the feudal warlord, Nagayoshi Miyoshi, who has been a popular topic recently (I am not his descendant, though). I currently live in Aizumi.

For the past 36 years, I have worked at the Tokushima Prefectural Office. I have done a variety of different jobs, but this will be my first time involved in international exchange. I will do my best to help you all in any way I can, and I greatly appreciate your kindness and consideration in advance.

I still have space left to write, so let me tell you about the bento I made today. My bentos consist primarily of rice and 3 side dishes, including an egg dish, a meat or fish dish, and a vegetable dish. Today's egg dish is tamagoyaki (rolled omelette), filled with chirimenjako (dried young sardines) and green onions, which is something my late father used to make for an evening snack. The meat dish is stir-fried miso pork and eggplant, and the vegetables are simmered pumpkin, hijiki seaweed, and lotus root. The vegetable dish was

a recipe from "CookPad" which takes quite a bit of time to make, so I prepared a week's worth on Sunday evening. Since the school my wife works at is currently on spring break and cafeteria lunches are not available, I made a bento for my wife as well today.



I first started making bentos when my two sons entered high school, and I needed to start packing their lunches everyday. Since my wife had trouble in the mornings due to her low blood pressure, and I was an early riser and could cook a bit, I took on the responsibility of making the bentos. After my sons graduated from high school, I continued to make bentos as I found it much easier to stick to my lower carb diet and eat a smaller amount of rice for lunch if I just made it myself. Sometimes I get too tired or bored to do it everyday, so on those days, I take a break and just rely on frozen foods or eat out. Unfortunately, I haven't really seen any results from my diet.

I would like to continue making bentos, though, for the sake of my family's happiness and my health.

### Yukari Nagata, Coordinator for Local Internationalization

Nice to meet you, everyone! My name is Yukari Nagata, and I began working as a Coordinator for Local Internationalization in April. I will be working alongside four multilingual consultants (English, Chinese, and Vietnamese) with the hope of making Tokushima an environment that is easy to live and work in.

I have been involved in international cooperation for over ten years, working in Community Development and living mainly in Africa, namely Senegal and Sierra Leone. The fact that I was able to have such an enjoyable and fulfilling life and job while living in an environment with a completely different language, culture, and work style was all thanks to the locals who accepted

me into their community as their friend, coworker, and family member. Now, it is my turn to accept people from other countries into my community!

By working hard to support people with any issues they may have and promoting a multicultural society in Tokushima, I hope to help make Tokushima a place where everyone is happy to come to. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime!



## Tokushima Overseas Cooperative Association (TOCA)

徳島県青年海外協力協会

We are a private organization of experienced JICA Volunteers living mainly in Tokushima Prefecture. We are known by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and others as the **OV (Old Volunteer) Association**.



### About the JICA Volunteer Program

Volunteers are dispatched by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) to live alongside the locals in developing countries and contribute to problem-solving within their communities, with the hope that upon returning to Japan, they will put their experience to use in various countries and fields, including in Japan.

JICA Volunteers gain the experience of adapting to the language, culture, and customs of their partner country, as they live and work together with the locals to solve problems within their community. As globalization advances and the world becomes more closely connected, we would like to use our experiences to promote international exchange and cooperation in Tokushima by sharing the cultures and realities of countries around the world, and by developing activities that lead to multicultural coexistence within our community.

### Examples of the OV Association's Activities in Tokushima



#### Panel Exhibition

An introduction to the partner countries and activities of JICA volunteers, as well as work/activities after returning to Japan. (Photo: August 2021/Tokushima Prefectural General Education Center)



#### Multicultural Understanding Citizens' Seminar

Two former JICA participants who volunteered in Ghana gave an introduction to the country, described their volunteer experiences, and held a Ghanaian cooking class. (Photo: October 2021/Awa City "Aeruwa")



The menu included **jollof rice**, which is similar to takikomi gohan (Japanese mixed rice), **okra soup**, and **boiled eggs with shito** (a spicy condiment), along with lots of bright orange **palm oil**.

#### Multicultural & International Cooperation Seminar for High School Students

A seminar with volunteer stories and discourse on achieving international cooperation (e.g., through exchanges with the foreign community). (Photo: High School Summer Camp/Kamikatsu)

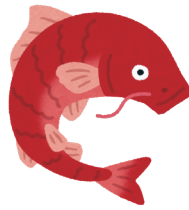


Recently, the number of foreign residents and people with a foreign background in Tokushima have been increasing, with about 1 in every 110 people being a foreign resident. Even so, there are still many people in Tokushima who don't know about other countries or cultures outside of Japan, and aren't sure how to connect with people from other countries. In order to build a community in Tokushima where Japanese and foreign residents can coexist, the Tokushima OV Association, with everyone's help, are promoting activities in an effort to create a society that breaks the barriers of nationality, language, and culture, so we can all live in harmony. Why not join us?

## Japanese Culture and Reading Corner: こいのぼり

By: Shoko Nomizu

大空に 泳ぐ こいのぼりは、5月5日「こどもの日」(端午の節句)の 象徴です。  
 こいのぼりは、江戸時代に、子どもの 健やかな 成長とともに、立身出世を 願って 始まった、  
 日本の 風習です。  
 昔、中国の 黄河上流に、登り切った 魚が 竜(皇帝の象徴)になれるという 「竜門の滝」  
 が ありました。鯉だけが 登りきったので、竜になったという 伝説があります。  
 この伝説から、鯉は、出世の シンボルとして 扱われるようになったそうです。  
 こいのぼりの 由来には、子どもに 対する 深い 親心を 感じますね。  
 最近では、ベランダ用や、お部屋で 飾れる こいのぼり などが あります。季節の 飾りもの  
 として、お部屋に 飾ってみては いかがでしょうか。



象徴 Symbol	立身出世 Social Success	黄河 Yellow River	上流 Upper Stream
伝説 Legend	由来 Origin	親心 Parental Love	皇帝 Emperor
出世 Success in Life	シンボル Symbol	扱う To treat (as)	飾る To decorate

## Gairaigo Galore



## アンコール (encore)

By: Nico Bohnsack

I can still remember my first concert experience in Japan as if it was yesterday. This is not because the concert was one of the greatest concerts I've ever been to, but because I was actually one of the performers. It was at a German beer festival in Fukuoka and we performed a few times each day for about a week. At the end of each set, the audience shouted "AN-KO-RU!!". I couldn't speak Japanese at all at that time but it didn't take long for me to realize that they wanted an encore. Interestingly, it reminded me about what people in Germany would shout in the same moment: "ZU-GA-BE!!". It's shouted in exactly the same way, and I had the feeling that even the word itself sounded similar.

Two years later, I played at a similar festival in another city, but the difference was that I had been studying Japanese for almost two years at that time. Now, I knew that the audience was shouting アンコール and that this is also the usual Japanese expression for "encore". As with the English version, アンコール actually stems from the French word "encore" which carries the meaning of "again" or "some more". However, it's not clear if the Japanese language borrowed the word directly from the French language or if the English version is actually the origin of the Japanese word.



Shouting アンコール is most commonly practiced during rock and pop music concerts, but sometimes also within other genres such as jazz, so you should definitely try it out the next time you go to a concert in Japan. The artists will definitely be grateful.



## Japanese Lesson

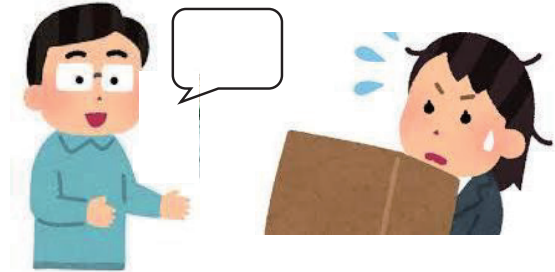
By: Kyoko Kamura

## 「申し出をする」

You see a person carrying something large, and you would like to help them. What should you say?

A: <sup>てっだ</sup>手伝いましょうか。

B: すみません。お願<sup>ねが</sup>いします。



When you are voluntarily offering to do something for someone, you can use 「ます形+ましょうか」.

When someone is offering to do something for you, you can say 「すみません。お願<sup>ねが</sup>いします。」 or 「お願<sup>ねが</sup>いします。ありがとうございます。」.

When declining someone's offer, you can say 「いいえ、けっこうです。ありがとうございます。」 or 「だいじょうぶです。ありがとうございます。」.

Remember to say 「ありがとうございます。」, even when turning down an offer.

A: <sup>えき</sup>駅まで、送<sup>おく</sup>りましょうか。

B: バスで行きますから、だいじょうぶです。ありがとうございます。

\* You can also give a reason when declining, e.g., 「バスで行きますから」.

## &lt;練習&gt;

1. 右の絵を見てください。男<sup>おとこ</sup>の人は何<sup>ひと</sup>と言<sup>なん</sup>いますか。

男<sup>おとこ</sup>の人<sup>ひと</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_。

女<sup>おんな</sup>の人<sup>ひと</sup>: お願<sup>ねが</sup>いします。ありがとうございます。



2. 右の絵を見てください。男<sup>おとこ</sup>の人は何<sup>ひと</sup>と言<sup>なん</sup>いますか。

男<sup>おとこ</sup>の人<sup>ひと</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_。

女<sup>おんな</sup>の人<sup>ひと</sup>: すみません。お願<sup>ねが</sup>いします。



3. A: コーヒーをいれましょうか。

B: (Decline the offer, giving a reason) ⇒ \_\_\_\_\_

3. 例) いいえ、けっこうです。さっき飲みましたから。ありがとうございます。

2. 取りましようか。

1. エアコンを消<sup>け</sup>しましょうか。/ 温<sup>おん</sup>度を上<sup>あ</sup>げましようか。

# Events & Memoranda

## Kamiyama Onsen Festival 神山温泉まつり

Kamiyama Onsen Festival is an annual hot spring festival, featuring a shop selling local specialty produce, a bazaar, and plenty of fun events, such as Awa Ningyo Joruri (Puppet Theater) performances and mochi pounding.

毎年恒例の温泉まつりです♪神山特産品青果物販売やバザール、人形浄瑠璃の上演に餅つきなど楽しいイベントがいっぱいです。

When: May 22nd (Sun.)

10:00 – 16:00

Where: Kamiyama Onsen

Fee: Free

Inquiries: Kamiyama Onsen Festival Executive  
Committee

TEL: 088-676-1117

URL: <https://kamiyama-spa.com/>

日時：5月22日（日）

10：00～16：00

場所：神山温泉

料金：無料

問い合わせ：神山温泉まつり実行委員会

TEL：088-676-1117

URL: <https://kamiyama-spa.com/>



## Forms of Kami (Special Exhibition) 特別展 カミのかたち

Since ancient times, people have perceived the mysterious, hidden powers of the world through animism, myths, legends, and religion, regarding the beings with such power as "kami" (gods). In this exhibition, we explore "kami" found in post-modern Japanese paintings, Western paintings, sculptures, and contemporary art from our museum's collection.

古来から、人々はこの世界に潜む神秘的な力をもつものを、アニミズム、神話や伝説、宗教などによってとらえてきました。本展ではそのような威力を持つものを「カミ」ととらえて、当館の所蔵コレクションの中から、近代以降の日本画、西洋絵画、彫刻、現代美術などにみられる「カミ」を探ります。

When: April 22nd (Sat.) - June 19th (Sun.)

9:30 – 17:00

Where: The Tokushima Modern Art Museum  
(Exhibition Room 3)

Fee: 400 Yen (adults), 300 Yen (university and high school students), 200 Yen (junior high school and elementary school students)

Inquiries: The Tokushima Modern Art Museum

TEL: 088-668-1088

URL: <https://art.bunmori.tokushima.jp/>

日時：4月23日（土）～6月19日（日）

9：30～17：00

場所：徳島県立近代美術館 展示室3

料金：400円（大人）、300円（高・大学生）、  
200円（小・中学生）

問い合わせ：徳島県立近代美術館

TEL：088-668-1088

URL: <https://art.bunmori.tokushima.jp/>

## 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.

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

**Vietnamese:** Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, 10:00 - 14:00

Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, 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)