

awa life

July 2024

#404

**Embracing the Way of the Sword:
A Foreigners Journey into Kendo**

**Representing Kaiyo at
Asan Circuit (2)**

Japanese Lesson

**Nihongo Know-it-all:
Japanese Superstition**



TOPIA

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I am literally melting as I write this. I knew summer in Japan would be tough, but nobody prepared me for this. I hope you all have taken measures to not die from heat stroke or dehydration.

Nonetheless July in Tokushima has a lot to offer. The heat gives a perfect excuse to explore the many beautiful beaches of Tokushima and summer also brings along many outdoor festivities to enjoy. The streets are already filled with the sounds of taiko on every corner, as the Awa Odori Groups get in their last practice sessions. Quick reminder: It's not too late to join!

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

Your editor,
Rasmus

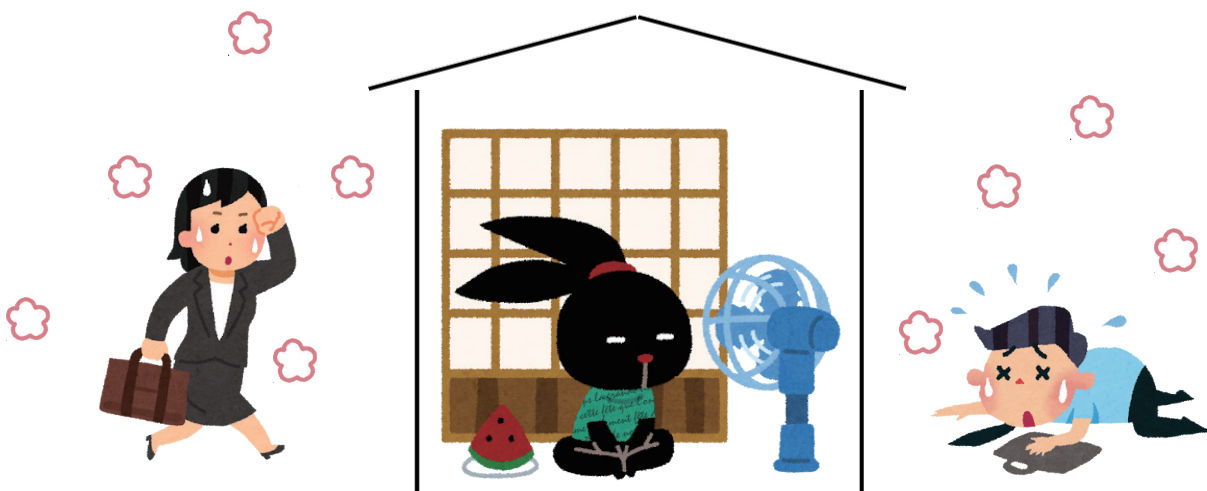
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Embracing the Way of the Sword

A Foreigners Journey into Kendo

By: Malik Sherif

Embarking on a journey to learn Kendo as a foreigner in Japan has been an exciting but difficult undertaking. Immersion in the practice of Kendo, also known as the “Way of the Sword,” is a highly culturally embedded activity that has given me a unique and enriching experience. Over the past decade, my commitment to Kendo has been a profound experience that has shaped not only my physical abilities but also my character and outlook on life. As I reflect on this journey, I want to share the three most formidable obstacles I have faced and the three greatest benefits I have gained from persevering through these challenges.

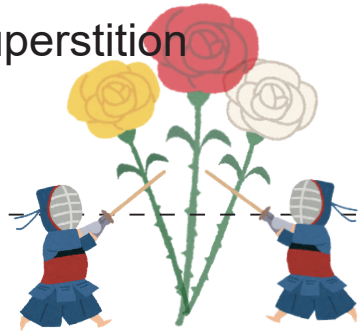
The largest obstacle from the start, as a foreigner learning Kendo with no knowledge of Japanese, has to have been the language barrier. Particularly in traditional dojos, a large portion of the teaching is given in Japanese. This linguistic challenge encompasses not just the methods but also the cultural subtleties and historical background that are fundamental to Kendo.

Fortunately, the Kendo Sensei I have trained with have been quite understanding and patient with me and have taken the time to teach me the related Japanese vocabulary required. But outside of the dojo, I study videos on YouTube and read online instruction manuals to make sure I don't lag behind other pupils.

Another thing to be conscious of is that Kendo is not just about mastering the physical techniques; it is also a path of self-discipline and respect. For those not familiar with Japanese customs, Kendo etiquette can be complex and difficult to understand and follow.

The ritualistic greetings in particular can be quite complex, they are still something I slip up on even today. But I think that clothing has been the biggest change for me. When I first began attending class, I would do so in sweats and socks, but I soon had to shift to wearing a keiko-gi (a coat-like top) and a hakama (a skirt like divided pants), all while being barefoot. It took some getting accustomed to, which led to a few blisters and other ailments, but it was all worth it because it made me feel like the samurai I admired in the movies I watched growing up.

The third challenge that I came across was adapting to the Japanese teaching styles of Kendo. This is because Japanese teaching methods in Kendo often emphasize learning through observation and imitation. This kind of instruction, in which the sensei shows a technique and pupils are expected to absorb and duplicate it, can take some getting used to for foreigners. Repetition throughout practice was one part of this that I personally found to be rather difficult. Having started this journey while in high school,



I used to excitedly jump into sparring without taking the time to ensure that I had mastered the fundamentals, but as I got older and realized how important practice was, I started to look forward to the days when we would spend the entire class period swinging a shinai and getting corrected for form errors as that time served to be quiet meditative and quite helpful for self reflection.

In addition, the demanding training sessions, which are interspersed with war cries and the sound of shinai strikes, push practitioners to their physical and mental limitations. Although this rigorous training brought me to the edge of exhaustion on a few occasions, it was always energizing and offered a comprehensive approach to personal growth. When combined with the contemplative elements of Kendo, I discovered that I was progressing beyond what I had thought was possible when I initially entered a dojo.

Looking back on it now, these challenges and the growth that I found within would not have been possible if not for the welcoming atmosphere of the dojos I joined. Studying Kendo in Japan is a special opportunity to experience a different culture. In addition to learning about the art, participants discover more about Japanese culture, which deepens their respect for the nation's customs. Furthermore, Kendo has a long history because it originated with the martial arts of the samurai. Engaging in Kendo practice in Japan offers a concrete link to the art's origins, enabling non-native practitioners to personally encounter the historical and cultural milieu that molded the modern form of Kendo.

Learning Kendo also opened my eyes in other ways, as it provided a unique platform for cross-cultural exchange as Kendo dojos serve as a microcosm of Japanese society, fostering a strong sense of community. A climate of support

is created through the senpai-kohai connection, in which seniors mentor juniors. Beyond linguistic limitations, the sense of camaraderie I have developed with other practitioners has enabled me to form ties with people through common challenges and accomplishments, as well as enduring friendships within the Kendo community.

Speaking with other practitioners, I discovered that although samurai movies were a major factor in encouraging individuals to learn Kendo, that was merely the tip of the iceberg. Beyond the influence of movies, people are driven to Kendo for other reasons, like a general love of martial arts, personal growth, physical fitness, familial obligation, or cultural curiosity.

Personally, the reason was very straightforward: I wanted to look cool by swinging a sword about (I was a highschool student at the time, what can I say). For me, Samurai movies came to life because of the traditional garb, the ceremonial elements of swordsmanship, and the disciplined attitude of Kendo. I wanted to live out and embody the heroic journey, personal development, and pursuit of internal justice that are so beautifully portrayed in films.

In conclusion, learning Kendo as a foreigner in Japan is a complex process that combines the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture with the thrill of fully engaging in a rich and ancient custom. It includes overcoming obstacles both mental and physical, delving deeply into philosophy, taking advantage of cross-cultural learning possibilities, and realizing childhood fantasies. Accepting these facets improves the whole experience, making the Way of the Sword a rewarding and transforming journey that, perhaps, will encourage you to get more involved in your local community as well as Japan's larger cultural fabric.



Hiking Mt. Bizan for the first time

By: Qin Yao

Time flies like an arrow. It's already been 2 months since I started living in Tokushima, during which I managed to settle in and feel comfortable. Seeing how beautiful the nature of this prefecture is I wanted to immerse myself in it and went to climb Mount Bizan together with a friend.

Bizan rises up with a height of 290 meters right from the center of Tokushima City. It is said that no matter from what point you gaze upon it, its shape resembles an eyebrow, which is why it was named Eyebrow Mountain. Compared to the mountain in my hometown it is fairly small, almost like a hill. There is a saying though, which proclaims "even small mountains are inhabited by gods" and that's why - despite its size - Bizan appeared in ancient Japanese poetry (Man'yōshū) which led to it becoming a famous symbol of Tokushima.

Depending on the mountain trail you choose, your experiences can differ completely. My friend is an expert in physical activities but I myself don't really work out. Thanks to her expertise we were able to choose an adequate route, which would take about 3 hours back and forth. It was a clear day and a little hot. We did some warming up at the foot of the mountain after which we began our hike.

First thing we encountered was a long and steep staircase. The trees on both sides of the path stood facing each other, their branches connecting other like other like Beneath there were Jizo statues in red scarfs smiling at thought to "This really I am in an



e a c h lush green and leaves with each "parasols." the trees m a n y dressed w a r m l y me and I m y s e l f feels like a n i m e."

After reaching the top of the stairs we chose the more difficult path and set foot on an actual mountain trail.

The trail was narrow and slowly winding upwards,

lined with trees. What impressed me most was how the roots of the trees that had grown over the years were crossing each other vertically and horizontally, almost forming a natural staircase. Thanks to that, climbing the mountain became a little easier for me. Wandering through the forest of trees and stones accompanied by the lustrous signing of birds we got completely immersed in the beauty of nature and reached the summit in about 40 minutes.

...or so I thought. But my friend explained to me that where we stood was in fact not the highest point. After a short break we headed toward the actual peak of the mountain. On our hike we encountered many other mountain enthusiasts, from young



students to elderly couples. I was impressed by their endurance, but what amazed me even more was how they were able to run along the mountain trails! As I myself was gasping for air while only slowly walking, I struggled to understand how one could run up a mountain like they did. "I guess I have to train my body more" I grumbled to myself. Finally arriving at the peak we spotted a wooden sign reading; "Bizan, 290 Metres."

I had often heard that climbing up the mountain is the easy part compared to climbing back down. In order to see as much beautiful nature as possible we chose the more difficult mountain trail on the way down too. The path turned out to be very steep, mossy and slippery...nothing for weak legs. Because of that I learned the expression of "laughing legs" (if your legs shake from exhaustion). All in all it was a very enriching experience.

For this hike, we didn't choose the easiest path nor did we take the ropeway. The twisting and turning mountain trail allowed us to truly get in touch with the gorgeous nature. Just like in life, there will always be a rich landscape waiting for you at the end of a rough road.

Representing Kaiyo at Asan Circuit (Part 2)

By: Tony Lu

The idea of me turning my delusions of basking in the glory of first place into a reality was definitely appealing, but what if I had to give a speech?? I dreaded the possibility of having to give impromptu comments in front of everyone. Factoring in that the overarching goal of the day was to have fun and get home in one piece, getting into a tussle with another car and having to pay for repairs to either my car or myself was intimidating. But, I decided to pull the trigger, since I could pull out at any time just in case I got cold feet.

To cut a long story short, I ended up taking part in the race, and I was lucky enough to clinch 3rd place amidst the chaos - a podium finish! - after one of the cars in the top three had a small incident in the final corner of the last lap which strewn bits of sharp fiberglass bodywork all over the track. I swerved in panic and fear of puncturing my tyres, which then caused my car to feel like it was almost about to topple over. It was truly a heart-stopping moment, which was immediately overridden by a mix of confusion and adrenaline, followed by relief as I saw a waving checkered flag.



As I made my way up to the podium, the announcer introduced me as someone from Australia currently living in Kaiyo, and just as I thought, they did indeed ask me to comment on the race to which I mentioned that I totally wasn't expecting to be able to place 3rd, and I had a lot of fun driving with everyone. One of the event organizers also gave our team a small mention, announcing that we had actually come all the

way from Kaiyo that morning and thanked us for participating, which induced some murmurs and whispers of surprise in the crowd. We had represented Kaiyo in a way that I would have never imagined, and I think we were able



to put a decent dot on the map for car enthusiasts in Tokushima prefecture.

I was a little hesitant to take part in the race at first, but I was glad I did. It was a good reminder that the quality of my experience here was dependent on not only the effort that I put into things, but also owed to my connections with the community.

Our friend from the petrol station brought his family along that day, and it wasn't until the next week that I had realized his daughter was actually a former student that I had occasionally taught at one of the local elementary schools. The university student in our group was actually another former student of one of our Global Kaiyo team members and there were also a couple of other drivers who had recognized us from previous random encounters along public roads and greeted us after the award ceremony. Small world, right?

On its face, our team was made up of people who had almost no reason to be acquainted, but looking deeper, I could actually uncover some hidden connections. In a place where everyone brings their pride and joy and every car is "special," I felt that it's really the coincidental connections through a common interest that really serve to enrich the whole "living in Japan" experience, much more than just seeing and admiring cool cars.

Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner

By: Junko Kimura

7月に入り、夏の季節が始まりました。夏といえば、花火やかき氷、海水浴、お祭りなど沢山あります。みなさんの「夏といえば」は何ですか。私の夏は登山と海です。

今日は、剣山を紹介しします。剣山は徳島県にある山です。標高は1955メートルで、四国、そして西日本で二番目に高い山です。

剣山は、とても美しい景色が有名で、山の頂上から見える風景は、四季によって変わります。7月下旬頃には、高山植物の「キレンゲショウマ」という黄色い花が咲きます。秋には紅葉で山が赤く染まります。天気がいい日は剣山の頂上から、隣にある次郎岬や三嶺という山などが見られます。

剣山は、登山初心者には安心して楽しむことができます。山頂までの道は歩きやすいように整備されていて、登りやすいです。また、リフトもあり、途中まで楽に登ることができます。見ノ越という登山口までバスで行くことができます。バスは11月中旬まで運行しています。徳島県の人たちは剣山を「けんざん」という人も多いです。夏に剣山に登って、いい汗を流してください。



Vocabulary List

標高 elevation	四季 four seasons	高山植物 alpine plants	染まる to be dyed
登山 mountain climbing	初心者 beginner	整備 maintenance	登山口 trailhead
運行 operation			

Japanese Superstition

By: Rasmus

Nihongo Know-it-all



Did you ever enter an elevator in Japan, wanting to go to the 4th floor only to realize that the button for that floor is missing? Opposed to what you might initially think, this is not a case of the architect being terribly bad at math, but an intentionally crafted building design.

Like every culture, Japan also has its fair share of superstition. One of the more famous ones is the number 4, which is regularly omitted on several occasions in public or private spaces due to its association with bad luck. Similarly, to the number 13 in western culture, most people don't really take this superstition too serious, but some people go to insane length to avoid the number and "tetraphobia" (fear of number 4) is much more visible in everyday life.

But why is the number 4 considered unlucky? Different to the west, this superstition has nothing to do with religion. Its origin can be found in the Chinese characters. The Kanji for the number 四 can be read as よん, or also as し. The Kanji for death 死 can also be read as し, connecting the number to the meaning of death, therefore being regarded as an omen of bad luck.

Like a lot of things in Japanese culture, this superstition also originates from china, where the same connection to death preexisted, which spread through all of East-Asia through the implementation of the Chinese writing system.

Looking at the Kanji for Shikoku (四国), our beautiful little island, one might start to worry if all of us are doomed to an eternity of bad luck. After all, is this not the "Land of the Dead" (死国)?

「～て」と「～たり」

This month, let's take a look at a common mistake by students, the difference between connecting sentences with 「～たり」 or 「～て」.

Verb building: 「～たり」 = た verbform + り, 「～て」 = て verbform

例 1) 昼ごはんを^た食べて、シャワーを^あびて、それから友達ちに会いました

「～て」 is used when you talk about things you have done in the exact order you have done them.

Sentence structure: 「～〈1〉て、～〈2〉て、(and then) ～〈3〉ます」

例 2) A: 日曜日 何をしましたか。

B: 友達ちと^か買い物^もをし^えたり、映画^みを見^えたりしました。

A: そうですね。

「～たり」 is used when talking about 2 or 3 acts/events specifically picked out as a representative example for a given timeframe. Sentence structure: 「～〈1〉たり。～〈2〉たりします」

例 3) A: 日曜日 何をしましたか。

B: X 朝^あ起き^さたり、ごはんを^た食べ^くたり、夜 11時半ごろ^よ寝^ねたり
しました。



「朝起きる」 and 「夜寝る」 are acts of everyday life and therefore not something you can specifically pick out, so using this sentence structure is incorrect. How about the next one?

例 4) A: 昨日何をしましたか。

B: X 大学へ^だ行^いったり、実験^じをし^ったりしました。 *(実験する = conduct an experiment)

If you want to say that you did the experiment at university, you have to build the sentence like this:

「大学へ^だ行^いって実験^じしました」。



【Practice】 Fix the following sentences:

1 日曜日朝^に起き^ちたり、洗濯^{せんたく}をし^にたり、日本語^{にほんご}の勉強^{べんきょう}をし^にたりしました。

2 銀行^{ぎんこう}へ行^いったり、ATM^{かね}で お金^いをおろしたり、それから デパートへ行^いきました。

*(お金^{かね}をおろす = withdraw money)

2 銀行へ行^いって ATM^おで お金^{かね}をおろして、それから デパートへ行^いきました。
1 日曜日朝^に起き^ちて、洗濯^{せんたく}をし^にたり、日本語^{にほんご}の勉強^{べんきょう}をし^にたりしました。

Events & Memoranda

Retra! 2024 Water City Festival Retra! 水都祭 2024

Experience the charm of the "Water City Tokushima" on this 3-day long event!

This year, in addition to increasing the size of the popular gamezone for children, we will also introduce the "Tokushima Soul Food Market", as well as a waterpark and opportunity for water sports!

On the mainstage you will be treated to karaoke battles, and dance contests. This year we will also have fireworks going off on 2 days!!

When July 12th - July 14th 10:00-21:00

Where Aiba-Hama Park, Tokushima City

Inquiries: Water City Festival Comittee

Mail: info@suitosai-tokushima.com

TEL: 070-8392-7484

『水都とくしま』の魅力を体感する3日間が今年もはじまる！

今年からご成婚広場に子供が大好きなゲーム屋台ゾーンを増設し、『とくしま食楽市』や、ウォーターパーク、水上アスレチックも登場します！

メインステージではカラオケバトルやダンスコンテストを開催♪今年は花火を2日間開催します！！

日時 7月12日（金）～14日（日）

10:00～21:00

場所 徳島市 藍場浜公園

お問い合わせ

水都祭実行委員会事務局

Mail: info@suitosai-tokushima.com

TEL: 070-8392-7484

Summer School Japanese Lessons 夏休み子供日本語教室

Why not enroll your child in the Summer School Japanese Lessons held at TOPIA? Teachers are on hand to help your child out with their homework, and they can learn Japanese through lots of fun activities, like games and quizzes!! Let's do our best together!

Free of charge!

When July 23rd, 25th, 26th, 28th and 30th

August 1st, 2nd, 3rd

Each day 10:30-12:00

Where TOPIA, Tokushima Station, Clement 6F

Application and Inquiries: TOPIA (Nomizu)

Website: <https://www.topia.ne.jp/english/>

Mail: coordinator2@topia.ne.jp

TEL: 088-656-3303

TOPIA で開催される夏休み子供日本語教室にお子様を参加させてみませんか？

日本語の生徒と一緒に宿題をしたりゲームやクイズをしたりしながら楽しく勉強しましょう！！

一緒に頑張りましょう！

参加費は無料です！

日時 7月23日、25日、26日、27日、30日

8月1日、2日3日

午前10:30～12:00

場所 TOPIA

徳島駅 クレメントプラザ 6F

問い合わせ / 申し込み

TOPIA (野水)

ホームページ: <https://www.topia.ne.jp>

Mail: coordinator2@topia.ne.jp

TEL: 088-656-3303



Events & Memoranda

2024 Tokushima Japanese Speech Contest 2024年度外国人による徳島県日本語弁論大会

True internationalization cannot be achieved without first coming in touch with other cultures and ways of life, fostering a sense of international awareness and gaining mutual understanding with people of the world to create a society in which we can all work and live together in harmony.

This speech contest seeks to give a voice to the international residents of Tokushima Prefecture and engage them in a dialogue to further discourse on cross-cultural understanding and fostering multiculturalism.

When July 21st (Sunday) 13:00-16:30
Where Awagin Hall, Small Hall (5F)

Inquiries: TOPIA
MAIL: coordinator1@topia.ne.jp
TEL: 088-656-3303

真の国際化とは、まず他の文化や生活様式に触れ、国際感覚を養い、世界の人々と相互理解を深め、共に働き、共に生きる社会を実現することなしには達成できません。

このスピーチコンテストは、徳島県に在住する外国人県民の声を代弁し、異文化理解や多文化共生のための対話を促進することを目的としています。

日時 7月21日(日) 13:00～16:30
場所 あわぎんホール (5階)

お問い合わせ TOPIA

MAIL : coordinator1@topia.ne.jp

TEL: 088-656-3303



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)