

awa life

Farewell Messages from
TOPIA Staff

Apr. 2025

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Letter from SUKETO
NAKAYOSHI

A Day of Simple Wonders
Tosayama's Heartfelt Story
(Part 2 of 2)

Nihongo Know-it-all:
Cat Phrases

写真：眉山公園のパゴダ

Photo: Pagoda in Mount Bizan Park



TOPIA

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

Welcome to April, everyone! Spring is in full swing now and sakura season is upon us. I hope that you all have been able to take the time to get outside and enjoy the season. April is a month that signifies both endings and new beginnings. A new school year starts, many will start new jobs, and the fiscal year begins anew in April. Combined with the new flowers blooming, many consider this as the season of rebirth. Maybe now's the time to pick up that new hobby you've wanted to try?

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. Additionally, please keep articles around ~300-500 words (if writing in English), or ~1000 characters (if writing in Japanese). If you have any questions or want to check if your topic will work, feel free to reach out to us before you start writing.

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 editors,
Riley and Lisa

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



Editors:

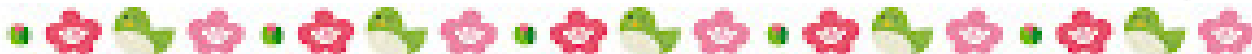
Riley Henke, Lisa Knitter

Contributors This Month:

Qin Yao, Mako Kobayashi, Odbayar Dorj, Kazue Inoue, Miyui Okamoto, Yukiko Watanabe

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Farewell Messages from TOPIA Staff

Qin Yao

Coordinator for International Relations

As my time as a Coordinator for International Relations draws to a close, I would like to give my thanks to the many people who supported me over this past year. It is thanks to your warmth and kindness that I was able to successfully complete a very fulfilling term as CIR.

In April of last year, I first arrived to Tokushima a bundle of nerves and anticipation. However, upon visiting the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA) and the International Relations Office and receiving such a warm welcome from my new coworkers, my feelings of unease lifted. In the year since then, I have been able to fully enjoy Tokushima's beautiful scenery and delicious food. From the bottom of my heart, I can say that I am truly glad my first experience abroad was here in Tokushima.

I first came to Tokushima with the goal of acting as a bridge between China and Japan and strengthening relations between the two countries. I felt that if there were anything I could do to help contribute to the friendship and exchange between our countries, then it would be a great honor. At first, all I considered was my home



country and Japan. However, as I worked in the International Relations Office, I heard stories from countries all over the world every day, which gave me the opportunity to gain new perspectives. The daily conversations we would have discussing the customs of different countries and sharing about our own experiences abroad were always interesting. Through these experiences, I feel I was able to broaden my perspective and develop a mindset that is more accepting of diverse ways of thinking.

Being in a position where I was able to do work

Farewell Messages from TOPIA Staff

involving foreign diplomacy was an incredibly valuable opportunity. I came to learn that international relations work is indeed built on the efforts of people over generations. International exchange is not easy, and there are times when differences in culture or work styles become a barrier to friendly relations. Therefore, as a CIR, I believe it is most important to communicate facts and resolve misunderstandings.

In order for foreign residents to be able to live a more comfortable life in Tokushima, the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association works to support foreigners in various ways, such as with free Japanese language classes, consultation services, and tourist information. The staff at TOPIA truly, sincerely want to help. When I would see the smiles on the faces of people from all around the world at TOPIA, a strong desire

grew within me, too, to work hard and be of help to even more people. I once again felt the deep significance of international exchange: beyond language barriers and country borders, hearts-to-heart connections form, and bonds between people grow.

This year has not only been full of valuable work experiences, but unforgettable life experiences as well. I am grateful that, surrounded by Tokushima's beautiful nature and kind people, I was able to learn and grow so much. I would like to put the experiences and knowledge that I've gained here to good use moving forward. Finally, meeting you all in Tokushima was a miracle that I couldn't be more grateful for, and I am sure that our time together will be a light that illuminates the path forward. Thank you all very much.

Mako Kobayashi

Multilingual Consultation Staff - English

I was fortunate to be able to work at TOPIA as the multilingual consultation staff in charge of English from April 2021 until now. Although my role in this position has been to provide support to foreign residents of Tokushima, I realized that all the while I was being supported by them in turn, as well as by the Japanese people who helped connect us. To everyone who has been a part of my time here, thank you. I am also grateful to all the staff that has worked alongside me at TOPIA these four years. It may be easy to experience the good times together, but we made it through the frustrating, difficult times together as well. It's only thanks to the "miracle members" that make up this staff that no matter what I was feeling, I was able to share it with others. The me of today is made up of all the people who played a part in these four years. And thank you, of course, to those of you reading this as well. I'm so grateful to all of you.

A friend of mine whom I respect once told me, "You know, there's really no such thing as failure." Recently, as I prepare to start anew in a new place, I have been repeating those words to



myself. Failure is scary for everyone, and there's no shortage of things to worry about. But now, thanks to that friend's words, I can see that even if something might feel like "failure," that experience and the precious wisdom gained from it might just be exactly what is needed to help me or those important to me in the future. So, if there's something you'd like to try, I'd encourage you to give it a shot and try it out, because there's no such thing as failure! I know it'll turn out alright. Everyone, until we meet again!

A Day of Simple Wonders: Tosayama's Heartfelt Story A Memory Worth More Than a Simple "Thank You" (Part 2)

By: Odbayar Dorj

(The following article was submitted by Odbayar Dorj, a master's student from Mongolia studying Global Education at Naruto University of Education. It shares a memorable trip to Tosayama, where international students joined a locally organized tour to support regional tourism and cultural preservation. This is part 2 of 2, continuing from the Awa Life March 2025 Edition.)

Lunch was a masterpiece. I saw a beautiful Bento box that I had never seen before, so stunning it seemed almost too beautiful to touch. The meal was called "Mother's Lunch Box," a tradition passed down from the Meiji era. Beside our meal, the menu and ingredients for the day were written. Before we started eating, the guide asked the chefs responsible for the meal to share with us how it was prepared and which dishes they recommended. The main dish was Five-colored Onigiri (rice balls), and all the vegetables used were locally grown in Tosayama. It was clear that the students, the school, and even the local people had put so much heart and soul into making this meal a memorable experience for us.

When I opened my Bento box, I was amazed at the gorgeous presentation of the food. I remembered reading a story by the Japanese scholar D. Tumurbaatar, who had once written, "Japanese people eat with their eyes." This phrase came to mind as I looked at the food. It was truly a feast for the eyes before it was even a meal for the stomach. I thought to myself, "A mother must put so much heart into preparing a meal like this for her child," and my thoughts drifted to my homeland and my own mother. The feeling of homesickness grew stronger as I ate, as if by savoring this meal, I was also experiencing the love and care my mother would put into preparing my meals back home.

As I ate each bite, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the care and thoughtfulness that had gone into making this meal. It reminded me of how food prepared with love and care is universal, transcending nationalities and cultures,

and how deeply a mother's love is felt through her food. Smiles appeared on everyone's faces, and it was clear from the expressions on our faces that we were all thoroughly enjoying the meal. After finishing, we expressed our thanks to the chefs and took photos to show our appreciation.



As we left the restaurant and boarded the bus, the guide told us to look out the window, as the chefs were standing in a line, waving goodbye to us with big smiles on their faces. I couldn't help but reflect on how lucky I was to feel such warmth, such respect, from the people of Tosayama.

After lunch, we visited a yuzu farm, where students shared fascinating insights about yuzu cultivation and its significance to Tosayama. Equipped with gloves and pruners, we harvested yuzu ourselves, guided by the friendly farm owner. This hands-on experience made me appreciate the region's dedication to preserving traditions.



Our journey continued to the Tosajiro chicken farm, renowned for its free-range chickens. The farm owner's passion was evident as he introduced us to his chickens, even letting us pet them. Before leaving, he generously gifted us a basket of fresh eggs, a gesture of genuine

A Day of Simple Wonders: Tosayama's Heartfelt Story

kindness.

At Goto Goto Rock, we encountered a mysterious boulder said to grant wishes. Nearby, the Yamanba waterfall's beauty left us in awe. The surrounding nature, with its changing autumn leaves, showcased the serene charm of rural Japan.

Our final stop was Auberge, a unique hotel with no clocks, encouraging guests to live fully in the moment. The head chef presented a special yuzu-inspired dessert created in collaboration with the students. This act of teamwork and creativity embodied the spirit of Tosayama Gakusha's community. Reflecting on the day, I was reminded of the Japanese philosophy of *Ichigo Ichie*—cherishing life's fleeting moments.



October 25, 2024, will forever remain etched in my heart. The respect, kindness, and warmth I experienced from the students, teachers, and locals made it one of the most unforgettable days of my life. Thank you, Tosayama Gakusha. Thank you, Professor Kusaka. Words cannot fully express my gratitude.

Letter from SUKETO NAKAYOSHI

By: Kazue Inoue (Center for Early Childhood Education and Care SUKETO NAKAYOSHI)

Occasionally you may see news of accidents involving children choking. Because children have a tendency to try and put anything and everything in their mouths, it is important for the adults around them to be careful and pay close attention.

It is said that the diameter of a child's mouth is 39mm, and the depth is 51mm. Items that are smaller than this can fit into a child's mouth and can be a choking hazard, so extra caution must be paid. Round foods such as small tomatoes or grapes, and foods with a springy/elastic quality and hard fibers such as konnyaku (or konjac) can easily become stuck in a child's mouth. To avoid this, cut them into small pieces before giving them to the child. When feeding a child foods like bread that can absorb saliva and become sticky, be sure they do not eat too much at one time, and are drinking plenty of liquids. Additionally, hard and round foods such as peanuts, beans, and candy, as well as sticky foods such as rice cakes (mochi) and sticky dumplings should not be given to children under 4 years of age. Toys and other objects can also be choking hazards, so please be extra careful with round objects and toys that can fit inside the child's mouth until they are about 3 years of age.

Signs of choking include: grasping the throat, putting fingers in the mouth, inability to speak, labored breathing, and turning blue in the face. If you notice a child is choking, call an ambulance (119) immediately and give first aid. First aid procedures vary depending on the child's age, so research the appropriate measures to take beforehand.

Sweet Potato Mochi

- ① Peel sweet potatoes (60g peeled), cut into pieces, and soak in water.
- ② Drain, cover with plastic wrap, and microwave until tender.
- ③ Mash sweet potatoes, add 2 teaspoons milk and 2 teaspoons potato starch, mix well. Shape into rounds and heat in a frying pan until golden brown.



Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: 阿波の土柱

By: Miyui Okamoto

みなさんは「土柱」という言葉を知っていますか？土柱とは、地震などによって盛り上がった土地が、長い年月をかけて、雨や風によって削られてできた地形のことで、土柱はとても珍しく、アメリカのロッキー山脈、イタリアのチロル地方、そして、徳島県の阿波市でしかみることができません。高さ10メートル前後の土の柱が立ち並ぶ、阿波の土柱は、壮大で美しいです。土柱は正面の展望台から見ることもできます。さらに、山の上に登って、土柱を上から見ることもできます。夜には土柱がライトアップされ、昼間とはまた違う幻想的な景色を楽しむことができます。徳島にある日本にあって、ぜひ見に行ってみてください。



ライトアップされ、昼間とはまた違う幻想的な景色を楽しむことができます。徳島にある日本にあって、ぜひ見に行ってみてください。

Vocabulary List

土柱 earth pillar	年月 months and years	地形 geographical feature	珍しい rare
山脈 mountain range	前後 around, approximately	壮大 magnificent	正面 front
展望台 observation deck	幻想的 fantastic, whimsical		

Nihongo Know-it-all

Cat Phrases

By: Lisa Knitter

Humans and cats have had a close relationship for a long time. Therefore, it is no surprise that cats found their way into our language in form of proverbs, expression etc. In last year's October edition we talked about 猫を被る, but this time I would like to tell you about the phrases 猫舌 and 猫の手も借りたい.



In Japan, if you have a 猫舌 or cat's tongue, it means that you cannot tolerate eating or drinking hot food and beverages. Since cats originally were predators hunting prey, they cannot eat something that is above body temperature. So, it seems logical to use this fact as an analogy for describing people as well. It is said that the word 猫舌 originated in the Edo period (1603-1868) when cats were kept inside the houses as pets and to catch mice. When people tried to feed them hot food they noticed that the cats would not take it and together with the knowledge about this phenomenon the term 猫舌 spread.



Another phrase involving cats that emerged during the Edo period is 猫の手も借りたい. The literal translation is "I would like to borrow even a cat's hand". Just as you can lend someone a hand in English, "to borrow a hand" in this case means to get help with something. The phrase is used when someone is very busy. So busy in fact that they would welcome the help of anyone – even a cat. The origin of the phrase is said to be a sentence in a puppet theater play by famous playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon.

けいようし
「形容詞①」

【Conversation】

Teacher: 漢字の勉強はどうですか。

A: 楽しいです。

B: えー? 漢字はむずかしいですよ。

A: かんたんな漢字もありますよ。

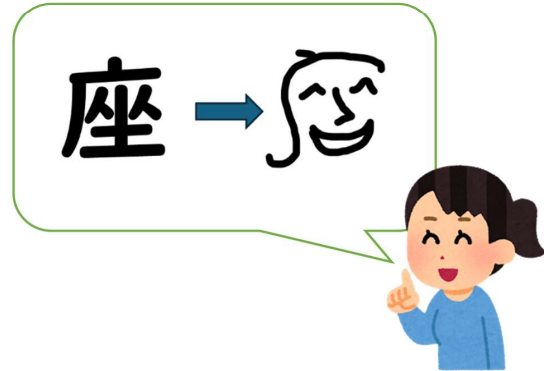
Teacher: じゃ、Aさんの好きな漢字は何ですか。

A: 「座る」です。

B: どうしてですか。

A: 「座」の字は、かわいいですから。笑う顔です。

B: Aさんは、おもしろいことを言いますね。



The words that are underlined in the previous example are all adjectives. Adjectives are words that describe the state of things, such as something's qualities, characteristics, feelings, etc. There are two types of adjectives in Japanese. In the previous example, the underlined words ending with 「い」 are 「い形容詞」 and the rest are 「な形容詞」. When a 「な形容詞」 precedes a noun, 「な」 is added to it. Furthermore, although it is easy to get confused, the adjectives 「ゆうめい」「きれい」 and 「きらい」 end in 「い」 but are actually 「な形容詞」. How an adjective is conjugated depends on if it is an 「い形容詞」 or a 「な形容詞」. This month, we will study the non-past form of adjectives. Take a look at the table below.

Adjective type/ non-past form	い形容詞	な形容詞
Affirmative	たのしい です	かんたん です
Negative	たのしく ない です たのしく ありません	かんたん じゃ (では) ない です かんたん じゃ (では) ありません

Let's practice! Insert the correct form of the adjective into the blanks below.

- ① 漢字の勉強はきらいですか。—いいえ、(きらい→)。すきです。
 ② 田中さんはどんな人ですか。—とても (げんき→) 人ですよ。
 ③ あのレストランはどうですか。—あまり (いい→)。とても高いですから。
 ④ あれは桜です。—ああ、(きれい→) 花ですね。

Events & Memoranda

Hana Haru Festival 2025 はな・はる・フェスタ 2025

At Tokushima's "Hana Haru" Spring Festival, visitors can enjoy the charm of Awa Odori dance in spring, with free admission to a special stage and a spectacular dance competition by famous dance troupes. In the brisk spring weather, you can enjoy Tokushima's culture and food with Awa Odori dance, live music, dance contests, Tokushima's gourmet food trucks, markets, and more.

Date: Sat. April 19 - Sun. April 20

Location: Tokushima City (Aibahama Park, Awagin Hall, etc.)

For inquiries: Hana Haru Festa Executive Committee Office

Phone: 090-5214-2737

Website: <https://hanaharufesta.wixsite.com/2022>

徳島の春の祭典「はな・はる・フェスタ」は、有名連による特設ステージや屋外ステージでの有名連の豪華競演が無料で観覧できる、春に阿波おどりの魅力を満喫できるイベントです。

春の賑やかな陽気のなか、阿波おどりをはじめ、スペシャルライブやダンスコンテスト、徳島のグルメキッチンカーや特産品マルシェなど、徳島の文化と食を楽しめるひとときをお届けします♪

開催期間： 4月19日（土）から4月20日（日）

開催場所： 徳島市
藍場浜公園・あわぎんホール等

お問い合わせ：はな・はる・フェスタ実行委員会事務局 TEL：090-5214-2737

ホームページ：<https://hanaharufesta.wixsite.com/2022>



2025 TOPIA

Study Japanese Online!



Dates: May 2025 - February 15th, 2026

Time: Once per week for 1 hour

Number of Classes: 20 - 30

Teachers: Volunteer Teachers (Not specialist teachers)

Eligibility: Those living in Tokushima

Those not already studying Japanese at school, their company, a Japanese class, etc. (First-time participants will be given priority.)

Necessary Items: Please download ZOOM on your computer, tablet, or phone.

It may be necessary to purchase a textbook.

(Please consult with your teacher.)

Number of Spots: About 20 People

Cost: Completely Free

Application: Please see TOPIA's website: <https://www.topia.ne.jp/english/>

Inquiries: Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA)

Contact: Nomizu - coordinator2@topia.ne.jp Okamoto - tagengo1@topia.ne.jp

TEL: 088-656-3303



Events & Memoranda

2025 TOKUSHIMA PREFECTURE JAPANESE SPEECH CONTEST



1. **PURPOSE** 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.
2. **DATE & PLACE** July 20th, 2025 (Sunday), 13:00 - 16:30
Awagin Hall (Tokushima Arts Foundation for Culture) Small Hall (5F)
3. **ELIGIBILITY** Only foreign residents whose native language is not Japanese are eligible to apply.
(Additionally, foreign residents who have had over three years of compulsory education in Japan, or those who have previously won the Grand Prize or the Tokushima Prefectural Assembly's Chairman of the Federation of International Exchange Assembly Members Award, are not eligible to apply.)
4. **SELECTION** We are recruiting a wide-array of foreign residents. We will have all applicants submit a draft of their speech. After a screening of the speech drafts, we will select 10 applicants to participate in the actual contest.
5. **THEME** The topic is left to your discretion, but it should relate to the event's purpose of fostering cross-cultural understanding and multiculturalism.
* Speeches must not include political or religious content, and must not criticize a particular person or group.
* Speeches must be original content that you have not presented on before. If it is discovered that the speech is not original or has already been presented on, awards may be rescinded.
6. **LENGTH** Speeches should be no more than 6 minutes in length.
7. **AWARDS**
 - Grand Prize, one person (Prize: 50,000 yen gift certificate)
 - The Tokushima Prefectural Assembly's Federation of International Exchange Assembly Members Chairman's Award, one person (Prize: 30,000 yen gift certificate)
 - Awa Bank Award, one person (Prize: 30,000 yen gift certificate)
 - Tokushima Taisho Bank Award, one person (Prize: 30,000 yen gift certificate)
 - Tokushima Chamber of Commerce and Industry Award, one person (Prize: 30,000 yen gift certificate)
 - Tokushima City International Association Special Recognition Award, three people (Prize: 10,000 yen gift certificate)
 - Special Effort Award, to be decided (Prize: 5,000 yen gift certificate)

*All participants will receive a participation award.
8. **HOW TO APPLY** Submit your application form and speech draft by email, FAX, or in-person (information written below). Please type your speech on a computer. You can download the application form from TOPIA's website.
9. **DEADLINE** May 23rd, 2025 (Friday) Applications must be turned in by 5:30 PM.
10. **ORGANIZED BY** Tokushima Prefecture &
Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA)
11. **SPONSORS**
(Planned) The Tokushima Prefectural Assembly's Federation of International Exchange Assembly Members, Awa Bank, Tokushima Taisho Bank, Tokushima Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tokushima International Association (TIA), Otsuka Pharmaceuticals, Nichia Corporation
12. **WITH THE SUPPORT OF**
(Planned) NHK Tokushima, Shikoku Broadcasting, Tokushima Shimbun, Cable TV Tokushima, FM Tokushima, FM Bizan
13. **WHERE TO APPLY** Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association (TOPIA)
Address : 〒770-0831
Tokushima City, Terashima Honcho Nishi, 1-61, Clement Plaza 6F
Website: <https://www.topia.ne.jp/>
Tel: 088-656-3303
Fax: 088-652-0616
Email: coordinator1@topia.ne.jp
Person in Charge: Kimura

Speech Contest in 2024



Consultation 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. Consultation 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)