

～ Learning more about Japan ～

January 2024
Winter Edition

Topics

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Kokugonomori "Connecting Words"

Let's Learn about Seasonal Events through Manga

— 節分 (Setsubun) —



節分 (Setsubun), a Traditional Japanese Event

February 3rd is the day of 節分. On this day, people scatter beans while calling out "Out with the demons! In with good fortune!" to drive away evil spirits and welcome in the new year. It is customary to eat the same number of beans as your age under the traditional age counting method (current age + 1) and to eat an Ehomaki sushi roll in silence while making a wish. The Ehomaki should be eaten facing the Eho direction, or the direction that is believed to bring good luck. The Eho for 2024 is east-northeast.

“とも” provides helpful advice on living in Japan, tips for learning the Japanese language, and other such information, in Japanese with furigana and nine foreign languages (Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, Indonesian, Thai, Cambodian, Burmese, Mongolian, and English). The Japanese version is available on paper, and the foreign language versions are available in PDF format on JITCO's website for viewing on a smartphone, PC, or other such device. We hope you make good use of these resources. (<https://www.jitco.or.jp/ja/tomo/>)





~Japanese New Year~ Try Your Hand at 書初め (Kakizome)!

書初め is a Japanese New Year's tradition of writing characters or drawing pictures using ink and brush at the beginning of the year. Generally, people write words representing their resolutions or goals for the new year or kanji compounds that wish for health and happiness. We encourage you to try this tradition and write your New Year's resolution or future dream on a large piece of paper.



In this January issue of とも, we interviewed two Vietnamese trainees who work for Aioidensikougyou, a company that holds a 書初め contest every year. The president of the company, Mr. Gengo Yajima, notes, "In addition to the 書初め contest, we hold various other events throughout the year, such as the coming-of-age ceremony, cherry blossom viewing, strawberry picking, and a fireworks festival. Opportunities like these that provide Japanese cultural experience help trainees deepen their understanding of Japan. They also provide a good conversation starter."



Special thanks to : 相生電子工業株式会社 (神奈川県高座郡寒川町)



ファン ティ ミー フェン
シン (Self-written name)

■ Why did you choose to write “成長” (seicho; growth)?

—I chose “成長” because after four years of living in Japan, I felt I have learned and grown a lot.

■ How was the experience of writing using ink and brush?

—I used a brush for the first time. We also have brushes in Vietnam, but we don't usually use them. In the beginning, it was a challenge to write with a brush, as the paper kept tearing.

■ What do you enjoy the most right now?

—I love to travel. When I visited Shirakawago in Gifu, I was amazed by the snow.

■ What difficulties have you encountered, if any, after coming to Japan?

—I felt lonely not being able to see my family. Now, I video chat with them on my days off.

■ What is your future dream or goal?

—When I return to Vietnam, I would like to work using what I've learned in Japan.

■ Why did you choose to write “團結” (danketsu; solidarity)?

—I chose this word because it refers to many people making an effort as one, facing the same direction.

■ How was the experience of writing using ink and brush?

—I used a brush for the first time. It was difficult to write neatly, and I had to redo my writing a number of times while looking at a sample.

■ Is there anything that impressed you after coming to Japan?

—Vietnam is hot and prone to frequent rains throughout the year, so I was struck by Japan's four distinct seasons.

■ What is your favorite Japanese food?


—I like sushi, although I don't particularly like raw foods. I love natto.

■ How do you see Japan now after actually coming here?

—I decided to come to Japan because I like Japan. Although I wasn't aware of this before coming here, there are all types of people in Japan, such as kind people, difficult people, and people who are strict about work. There were times when I was confused about the differences between how Vietnamese and Japanese people think. However, through my daily life, I've gradually gotten used to the Japanese people and their ways of thinking.



ファン ティ ミー フェン
シン (Self-written name)

JITCO offers a variety of Japanese language learning materials, including textbooks that mainly focus on teaching conversational Japanese commonly used at technical intern training sites. Visit the JITCO teaching materials online shop to view our entire selection.  <https://onlineshop.jitco.or.jp/>



相撲 (Sumo), Japan's National Sport

Sumo is a form of martial art or match that has a long tradition in Japan and is unique to the country. It is thus considered a national sport. Its age-old origin goes back to mythical times.

Sumo initially spread throughout Japan as a ritual performed during festivals, to pray for abundant harvests. During the samurai era, which lasted from roughly 800 years ago to 400 years ago, it became widespread as a form of training for battle. Later, with the arrival of a more peaceful era, people emerged who engaged in Sumo as a sport and profession. They were called 力士 (rikishi: "sumo-wrestlers") and helped to popularize Sumo as a paid form of entertainment.

Over the course of its long history, rules were established that formalized Sumo as a sport, and various aspects of sumo wrestlers, such as their appearance, lifestyle, and interaction with society, became embedded in society as a culture that continues to this day. The rikishi's hairstyle of bundling their long hair and placing it delicately atop their head, known as ちょんまげ (chonmage), is perhaps an example you are all familiar with.

Many words that were initially used exclusively in the world of Sumo have come to be used in the daily lives of the Japanese people. One such example is がちんこ (gachinko). Serious battles are now commonly referred to as "がち (gachi) battles," from the Sumo language. Another is 土俵際 (dohyogiwa). Sumo is taken in an area bounded by a circle, and the first wrestler to step outside this circle loses the match. From this, the precise moment that a decision

is about to be made is referred to as dohyogiwa. Last is 千秋楽 (senshuraku). This word refers to the final day of a Sumo tournament, as well as the last day of a movie, play, or other such performance. Numerous other words have their roots in Sumo, including 序ノ口 (jonokuchi), 死に体 (shinitai), 力水 (chikaramizu), 水入り (mizuri), and ぶちかまし (buchikamashi). It might be interesting to look up their meanings.

There are six grand tournaments held every year in Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Fukuoka. In each of these tournaments, more than 100 matches are fought per day, and each sumo wrestler appears once a day by turns for 15 consecutive days. This is a very unique system even among the world's sports. In regional tournaments held across Japan, local residents feel a particular affinity with the sumo wrestlers and affectionally call them お相撲さん (osumo-san), adding the honorific "-san" to the word Sumo. This is also a unique aspect of Sumo when considering that even baseball players are not called お野球さん (oyakyu-san).

When sumo wrestlers collide with each other body to body and head to head, the air reverberates with the impact. It is nothing short of astounding. Experience it for yourself!



Kokugonomori

This is an exercise for learning Japanese words and kanji and their usage. Think of the correct answers while having fun! (Answers are provided on the next page.)

と に を も の
が へ も で

こくごのもり

指導・元世田谷区立
小学校教諭
高橋 希子
イラスト・奈良恵

①上と下の言葉をつなぐ一字の言葉を書きましよう。

ど	弟	だれ	かぜ	バス	七時	にこまる	ノート
こ							
行こうか	わらわせる	いない	休む	つく	おきる	かさ	えんぴつ

言葉をつなぐ

Group Shot Full of Gentle Smiles



Trainees dressed in a traditional Burmese costume called Longyi pose for the camera with gentle smiles on their faces under a clear blue sky in front of Sensoji Temple. They spent the day taking a stroll around Nijubashi Bridge in front of the Imperial Palace, cruising on Tokyo Bay by ferry, and visiting Tokyo Tower and Tokyo Skytree, creating many memories of their day in Tokyo.

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Every month, a photo is selected from among those which receiving/supervising organizations have contributed to “技能実習 Days” on the JITCO website. Scan the QR code at right to visit the 技能実習 Days page and learn about the entry guidelines.

(<https://www.jitco.or.jp/ja/days/>)



Inquiry and Consultation Services

If you need help... (<https://www.otit.go.jp/notebook/>)

The Organization for Technical Intern Training (OTIT) offers a variety of services and resources you can use when you need help. These include Native Language Consultation, information on local consultation services and disaster prevention, and convenient apps such as the “On-site Japanese Language” app and “Technical Intern Trainee Handbook” app.



ある言葉について、さまざまな働きをする小さくて大事な言葉が助詞です。ある言葉の下について、他の言葉との関係を示したり、ある意味を添えたりする働きをします。

ほかに「から・けれど・こそ・さえ・ほど……」などがあり、言葉の大事なつなぎ手となっています。



Particles are small yet important words that are attached to other words to serve various functions. When they are suffixed to a word, they define the relationship between that word and another, or add extra meaning. In addition to those mentioned here, there are also particles like “から, けれど, こそ, さえ, and ほど.” They all play an important role as word connectors.

とも

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