



wagazasshi

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Into the **West**

Discover the
natural wonders of
Western China

Events | Cinema | Sumo | Nagasaki-ben | Fortunetelling

nagazasshi

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November/December 2013

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When I tell people that I'm from Los Angeles, they often assume I don't like Nagasaki because it's considered to be *inaka*. Wrong. Nagasaki is beautiful and anyone who doesn't think so just needs to take one look at the fall colors on the rolling mountains or one whiff of the crisp autumn air to fall in love.

Being American, my association with the late fall season has always been with Thanksgiving. While I'm personally not a huge fan of the turkey feast that is the stereotypical Thanksgiving celebration, I appreciate the meaning behind the holiday. I am blessed not to need to worry about the success of this year's harvest, but I do like to take some time to appreciate my friends, family and all the opportunities and experiences I have had so far in life, and I've gotta say, I am pretty lucky.

In the thankful spirit, on behalf of the entire Nagazasshi staff, I'd like to thank all of the readers, our sponsors and the tons of people who come to our fundraising parties. You make this magazine happen. Moreover, I'd like to thank everyone who bought a calendar this year. As promised, a hefty (yet to be determined) chunk of money will soon be given to the children at the orphanages in Omura.

This issue is full of fun articles to light up your day like the illuminations light up your night. Enjoy and I hope you have a very wonderful holiday season. See you in the New Year!

Audrey Akcasu, Editor-in-chief



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photo flickr. com/shidenov



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photo Carol Anne Stanton



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film still Utamaro and His Five Women (Utamaro o meguru gonin no onna, 1946)

photo Doug Bonham

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Event of the Month

Winter Night Fantasia

***Late December – Early January,
Shimabara City***

Enjoy the brisk weather with your loved one under the “romantic arch” or in the “couple zone” in Shimabara City. You can also bring the family to enjoy the decorated Christmas tree and other wintertime festivities.

Events

Hasami Festival

November 3, Hasami

Yet another opportunity to buy some famous Hasami pottery, you can also eat local cuisine, play games, experience pottery and enjoy a lively atmosphere in the crisp autumn air.

Kawatana Kiba Festival

Early November, Kawatana

Enjoy illuminated rice terraces as well as wild-boar races, good food and even a beautiful walk. The landscape and fun will surely not disappoint.

Oshima Local Products Fair

Second Sunday of November, Oshima

Local agricultural products from the island of Oshima are on sale. At the end of the fair, rice cakes are scattered around to pray for a good catch in the coming year.

Fall Colors Viewing

Mid-Late November, Unzen National Park, Obama

Considered the best place to view the changing of the leaves in all of Kyushu. If you are in the area, this is the place to go.

Omura Autumn Festival

November 17, Omura Park

The conclusion to a three-part fall fair, this festival brings together Omura's famous curry, fresh produce, a lion dance and a battle of traditional dances between Omura and neighboring Isahaya.

Ikitsuki Autumn Harvest Fair

November 23, Ikitsuki

A variety of local products will be on display

and for sale, including fish, agricultural products, and even household goods.

Kira-kira Festival

November 21-December 25, Sasebo

If you're craving some Christmas festivities, this festival is for you. Shimanose Park's buildings and trees will be decked in Christmas lights. You can listen to carols and even enjoy some fake snow on the weekend.

Iki Iki Festa

November 31-December 1, Omura

This festival, only occurring once every three years, brings together singers, musicians and dancers from a variety of Japanese traditional schools. With other performances throughout November, the main event should not be missed.

A Nagasaki Christmas

Mid-Late December, Nagasaki City

Parks and attractions across the city are decorated in dazzling Christmas illumination. You won't have to walk far to be surrounded by the festive atmosphere.

Glover Garden Winter Festival

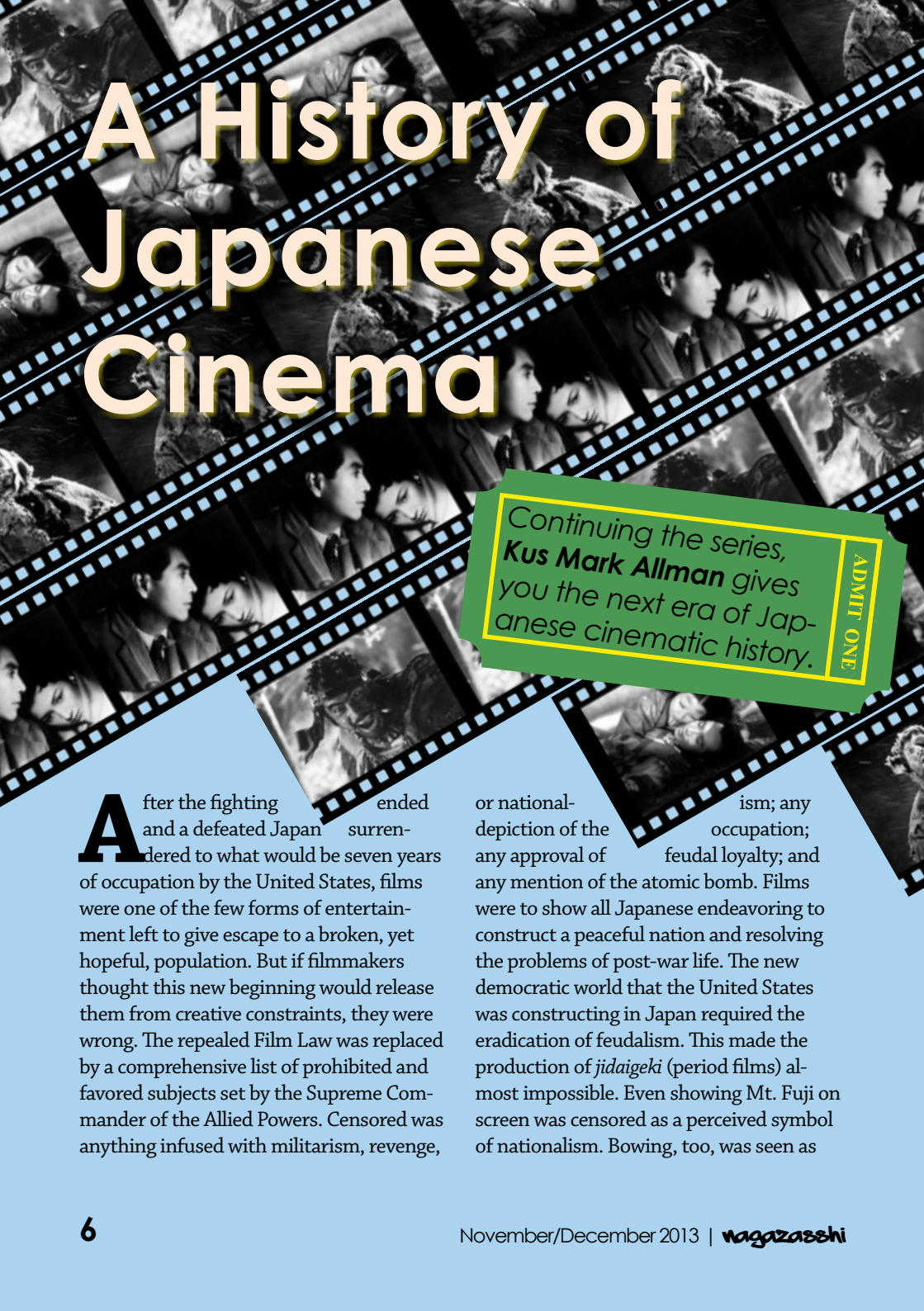
December 22-25, Nagasaki City

Enjoy a great view of Nagasaki City while surrounded by dazzling Christmas illumination. There are various events like the Candle Event, where you can make a wish. The night air is also filled with gentle, relaxing music.

Huis Ten Bosch Countdown

December 31, Sasebo

Always a hotspot for ringing in the New Year western style, the Dutch town is illuminated with lights and at midnight there is a vibrant fireworks show. It's also a popular event for marriage proposals.




A History of Japanese Cinema

Continuing the series,
Kus Mark Allman gives
you the next era of Jap-
anese cinematic history.

ADMIT ONE

After the fighting ended and a defeated Japan surrendered to what would be seven years of occupation by the United States, films were one of the few forms of entertainment left to give escape to a broken, yet hopeful, population. But if filmmakers thought this new beginning would release them from creative constraints, they were wrong. The repealed Film Law was replaced by a comprehensive list of prohibited and favored subjects set by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. Censored was anything infused with militarism, revenge,

or national-depiction of the any approval of feudal loyalty; and any mention of the atomic bomb. Films were to show all Japanese endeavoring to construct a peaceful nation and resolving the problems of post-war life. The new democratic world that the United States was constructing in Japan required the eradication of feudalism. This made the production of *jidaigeki* (period films) almost impossible. Even showing Mt. Fuji on screen was censored as a perceived symbol of nationalism. Bowing, too, was seen as



Part II – The Golden Age (1946-1965)

a feudal expression, but such a part of daily life that a ban would have been ludicrous. Instead, the American censors encouraged kissing as a salutation— and so, the first ever kiss in a Japanese film was seen in 1946.

Films about contemporary life, *gendai geki*, were a different matter. The Occupation authorities

thought these could include instructions for the future, as well as recriminations for the past. As the Occupation prolonged,

“ **Films were to show all Japanese endeavoring to construct a peaceful nation and resolving the problems of post-war life** ”

however, Japanese filmmakers became less interested in presenting rose-tinted advertisements for a changed nation. At its end, they revelled in the spectrum of subjects now open to them. They could again return

to exploring what it was to be “Japanese.” Post-war, this included harsh realities.



Shindo Kaneto's *Children of Hiroshima* (*Genbaku no ko*, 1952), and Kobayashi Masaki's *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no joken*, 1959-1961), dealt with controversial and painful subjects. The

latter harshly criticized Japanese war atrocities in China. Films criticizing the USA's use of atomic weapons were made alongside films sharing the world's growing fear of a nuclear apocalypse. Kurosawa Akira's *I Live in Fear* (*Ikimono no kiroku*, 1955), and most famously, *Godzilla*

(*Gojira*, 1954) are examples. *Godzilla* has, so far, spawned 27 sequels!



down or dissolution, are crafted with a serene greatness. Repeated shots of empty rooms, meticulous scene arrangements, and most famous of all, his low “tatami” camera placement, are all signatures of Ozu's style. And by the time he was making color films, the camera rarely moved at all. All



of his post-war films are worth watching. Although Ozu's films were not appreciated internationally until the 1970s, *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo Monogatari*, 1953) now regularly tops “Greatest Films of All-Time” lists.

“ **The volume of important cinematic works produced in Japan in the 1950s and early 1960s is incredible** ”

This wasn't the case with Kurosawa. *Rashomon* (1950) won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and

The three great masters who dominated this era were Kurosawa, Ozu Yasujiro, and Mizoguchi Kenji. In such a tightly controlled studio system, it was really only these three that, due to their genius, were consistently given free rein. Other immensely talented directors such as Naruse Mikio, Kinoshita Keisuke, and Ichikawa Kon, too often had to do their best with what they



were given. Despite this, some of their works are the equal of any from this period.

Ozu started making films in the silent era, and by the late forties, he was simply refining the celebrated style he had perfected. His familial stories, often showing their break-

opened the world's eyes to Japanese cinema. *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no Samurai*, 1954) went on to be regarded as one of the most influential films of all time. He continued to make films that were celebrated internationally until his retirement in 1993. The fact that he's seen as the most ‘Western’ of the masters probably made his films more accessible to an international audience.



The volume of important cinematic works produced in Japan in the 1950s and early 1960s is incredible. The industry was immense: In 1960, 537 features were made in Japan. This volume gave opportunities to a new wave



of filmmakers. Young directors wanted to make films that related to the changing times and youth culture, something they perceived directors such as Ozu and Mizoguchi missed. More action, faster cuts – Hollywood style. Yet it was at this exciting chapter was beginning that the seeds of the industry's collapse were being sown: the Tokyo Olympics, 1964. The historic moment that Japan reintroduced itself to the world community. Also the year that every household in Japan bought a television set to watch the Games. By the end of the sixties, the film industry would be on its knees. 🍷

Seven films to start with:

Rashomon (1950)
Kurosawa Akira

Gate of Hell (*Jigokumon*, 1953)
Kinugasa Teinosuke

Tokyo Story (*Tokyo monogatari*, 1953)
Yasujiro Ozu

Sansho the Bailiff (*Sanshou dayuu*, 1954)
Mizoguchi Kenji

When a Woman Ascends the Stairs (*Onna ga kaidan o agaru toki*, 1960)
Naruse Mikio

The Gate of Flesh (*Nikutai no mon*, 1964)
Suzuki Seijun

Tokyo Olympiad (*Tokyo Orinpikku*, 1965)
Ichikawa Kon

Film stills (pp. 6 - 7, left to right): *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no Samurai*, 1954), *Ugetsu* (*Ugetsu monogatari*, 1953), *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no joken*, 1959-1961) and *Floating Clouds* (*Ukigumo*, 1955).

Movie posters (p. 8, clockwise from top left): *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no joken*, 1959-1961), *I Live in Fear* (*Ikimono no kiroku*, 1955), *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo Monogatari*, 1953), *Rashomon* (1950), *Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no Samurai*, 1954) and *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954).

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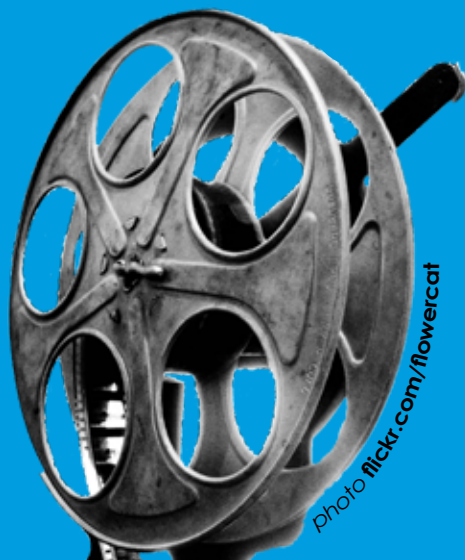


photo flickr.com/flowercat

Sumo

photo
Sue Ann Simon

**Doug
Bonham**

*on the history
and tradition of this power-
ful and symbolic Japanese
sport.*

It's a sport, it's a fight, it's an internationally recognized symbol of Japan, and it even has its roots in religion. What is "it"? Yes, it's sumo. And while it's great fun to see two sweaty mountains in loincloths throw each other around, there's much more to the sport than meets the eye.

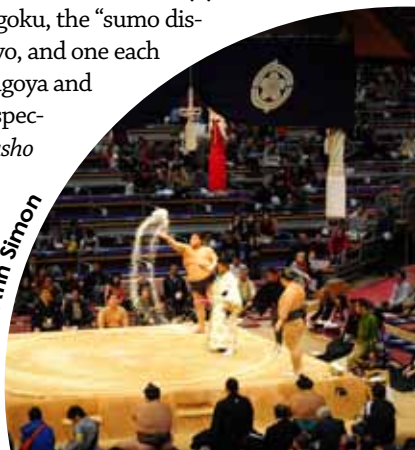
Sumo wrestling traces its history back to the Japanese Shinto religion. Originally performed as a contest to entertain the Shinto gods, sumo competitions were held at shrines. To this day, the sumo ring, or *dohyou*, is still considered religious, and the construction and purification of the ring remains important. Referees wear uni-

forms inspired
by ancient Heian-era

Japan. Sumo as a professional sport even has a long history: it became a form of entertainment and spectacle during the *Edo* period, more than 300 years ago.

As with most aspects of Japanese life, there is great order to sumo. There are six major tournaments, or *honbashi*, every year – three in Ryogoku, the “sumo district” of Tokyo, and one each in Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka, respectively. *Honbashi* take place in the odd-numbered months, always beginning on a Sunday,

photo
Sue Ann Simon



and lasting 15 match days. Wrestlers win matches by being the first to push their opponent out of the ring or to the ground. Given that, matches can end quite quickly and it makes the longer ones feel like dramatic battles. Based on these wins and losses, the competitors are strictly ranked into hierarchies; as a wrestler competes and wins in tournaments, he climbs up the ladder. This is true even at the top professional *makuuchi* level, though not strictly for the *yokozuna*, the highest rank – these wrestlers must be voted in under specific criteria, and though a *yokozuna* can never be demoted like in other ranks, he is instead expected to retire if his abilities wane.

Of course the best place to watch sumo is at a *honbasho*. Fortunately, Fukuoka is the location for the November tournament every year! At a tournament, matches begin in the morning, starting with the lowest ranks. Every wrestler will compete throughout a *honbasho* tournament's two weeks and the total records at the end decides the winner in each division. Since the wrestlers at the lowest level are still young men in training, size and skill mismatches can be comical. Contrast that with the professional matches, which begin at 4 pm – these are skilled athletes in peak condition, especially the *yokozuna*. A current *yokozuna*, Hakuho, is a magician, and even after a day spent watching matches, his ability stands out. A teacher at Nagasaki's Kakunan Special



Needs
High

School recently became ranked as the number one sumo wrestler in Japan, and will be attending the next *honbasho* in Tokyo to prove his mettle against other top-level competitors.

Photo Doug Bonham

What really stand out at a *honbasho* are the traditions. There's the introduction of each wrestler, the purification of the ring, and then the gesticulations. And a match never starts right as scheduled; no, a series of false starts build tension. It's part religion, part gamesmanship. And when the professional *makuuchi* wrestlers enter at 4 pm, the accompanying ceremony is a sight to behold. It's a centuries-old sport alive in front of our very own eyes. **M**



Exploring Western China

Trying to decide where to travel this winter? **Qi Yang** gives you an inside look at the other side of China.

photos Qi Yang

What images come to mind when you hear “China”? Crowds, bicycles, smog, and general rudeness are some of the usual suspects. What people don’t envision are clear blue skies, national parks with translucent bodies of water, and stunning landscapes. For nature enthusiasts seeking less-traveled regions of the country, let me introduce two destinations that you certainly won’t want to miss while trekking through the Middle Kingdom.

Jiuzhai Valley (九寨沟):

Jiuzhai Valley is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in the Northern Sichuan

Province and is famous for its fairytale-like landscapes. It is both a home to nine Tibetan villages and a national park containing over 220 bird species and a number of endangered plants and animals. The park, which stretches 720

“ **There is something for every nature aficionado in the valley** ”

square kilometers and whose elevations range from 1,900 to 4,764 meters, is well known for its clear blue and green lakes and waterfalls. Some highlights of the park include Nuo Ri Lang Waterfall, Five Colored Pond, Panda Lake, and Mirror Lake.

The park is open all year round, with the scenery changing dramatically during the different seasons. Some suggest you

visit Jiuzhai during each of the four seasons. Whether you prefer the colorful pigments of fall or the frozen stillness of winter, there is something for every nature aficionado in the valley.

Jiuzhai is best seen in two days, utilizing the bus system combined with walking on the wooden trails. For those who want to avoid the crowds, there is an eco-tourism option to hike and camp in Zharu Valley. These tours range from one to three days and are a great chance to check out flora and fauna and meet the Tibetan villagers.



How to get there: Although it is very difficult to get here, it's worth the journey. Fly to Chengdu airport and take an 8 to 9 hour bus or another 50-minute flight to Jiuzhaigou airport (the flight is, of course, recommended). From the airport, take another hour-long bus to Jiuzhai Valley.

Places to stay: Angelie Hotel – English and foreigner friendly.





course of several days. So far, this center is the only one in the world dedicated to the conservation research of giant pandas in China. Through several years of research in mating, pregnancy, and cub survival, coupled with artificial insemination, they have increased their panda population from just ten in 1991 to 165 currently. Bifengxia has the largest captive giant panda population in the world, accounting for 60% of the world's total.

Bifengxia Panda Base (碧峰峡):

China is a mecca for animal lovers, especially lovers of the giant panda. The city of Chengdu is famous for places to see pandas and even hold them for a ridiculous sum, but what about volunteering? Bifengxia Panda Base is a giant panda breeding center located near Ya'an City in Sichuan Province. Bifengxia (literally "Valley of the Green Peak") is located in a secluded area of western China and is therefore not well-known amongst foreign travelers.

The charm of Bifengxia is that it allows visitors to volunteer as giant panda keepers over the

Volunteering is highly recommended because you get an inside peek as to how the center and staff function. In a typical day, you will clean the panda enclosures, throwing out the eaten





bamboo and clean the panda's cage. Then you will prepare panda cake (a nutritious diet of corn and carrots) and feed them four times a day. During the downtime, you can talk to the highly skilled workers, who all speak excellent English. It

is interesting to see how much the staff care about the pandas and how much they know about each panda's temperament. Not only do you experience the daily life of locals and their work, but you also learn about the animals in their natural habitat.

“ **Not only do you experience the daily life of locals and their work, but you also learn about the animals in their natural habitat.** ”

How to get there: Fly to Chengdu airport and take a 2.5-hour bus from Xinnanmen bus station in Chengdu city to Ya'an. From there, take another 30-minute bus or taxi to Bifengxia.

How to volunteer:

It's easy! Fill out the application forms (in English) at the Panda Club website (<http://www.pandaclub.cn/english/>).

Places to stay: There are several hotels located near the entrance of Bifengxia for reasonable prices. 📍

A Basic Intro to

Nagasaki-ben

photo flickr.com/m-louis

Speak Japanese but don't understand what you're hearing? Let **Ray Arcega** show you the ropes of Nagasaki dialect.

Living in Nagasaki, it is inevitable that you come across the dialect here, called Nagasaki-ben. However, within the prefecture, there are a greater number of dialects, unique to each city or town. You might find that the people of Hirado speak differently than folks in Minamishimabara, but there are lots of common words that can be understood universally.

Let's break some down.

Lesson 1: Don't touch me.

If you recall basic Japanese, remember how to say a normal verb (like **taberu**) and how to negate it (**tabenai**). In Nagasaki-ben, when you negate a verb, you stop at the n. I won't eat; **taben'**.

I won't listen to you; **kikan'**.

And if you want to do a request using the negation, just add a **de**.

Don't touch me; **sawaran'de**.

But remember, telling someone not to do something takes a different kind of shape changing.

Don't do that; **sore o sen'de!**

One last thing to remember is that when you speak about something in the past in a negative sense, add a **yatta**.
I didn't know that; **shiran' yatta!**

Lesson 2: What are you doing?

You want to ask your buddy what they are doing: **nani o shiteiru no?**

But in Nagasaki, you would say: **nan'ba shiyoru to?**

Do you see how the **o** (or **ga**) is replaced with **ba**, and the **no** with **to**? Easy enough, but let's explain what we did to the verb. Basically, all you have to do is connect the verb stem with the suffix **yoru**, and you have the progressive tense. Also note the end question sound changes from "no" to "to."

I'm munching on some pizza: **piza o tabeyoru.**

You can even throw in a **bai** (or **tai**) in there to say desu yo like you mean it. Don't worry, I'm coming to the party now; **paatii ni kiyoru bai.**

If that's too many syllables to say, don't worry; Nagasaki folks love abbreviations as much as we do, so you can shorten our first sentence into **nan'ba shiyotto?** Or just **nan shiyotto?**

Lesson 3: I'm sitting down.

If you didn't know, you can use the progressive form (**teiru**) to also describe a state of being.

You're standing: **tatteiru.**
I knew that already: **shitteiru.**

In Nagasaki, you simply change the **teiru** into **toru**.

Don't disturb me, I'm in the bath: **ofurou ni haitteru.**

I'm sitting down: **suwattoru.**

It all comes from the verb **oru**, which is the Nagasaki way to say that you're here (**iru**). One last thing, you will definitely impress your neighbors if you ask if the seat near them is taken. **Kono isu ba tottotto?**

Lesson 4: You have to give your all!

Ganba-kun and Ramba-chan are Nagasaki's athletic mascots. Their names come from the word **ganbaran'ba**, which is the Nagasaki way to say **ganbaranaito ikenai** – "you have to do your best!"

You see the pattern? You just have to take what you learned from Lesson 1 and add **ba**.

Students need to listen: **kikan'ba.**
You have to do something: **sen'ba.**

Lesson 5: It's so delicious!

It's easy to say adjectives like **atsui** like a true Nagasaki resident. Just replace the **i** with **ka**! You can even add that to adjectives such as **kirei**.

Your baby is so cute: **kawaika!**

This curry is so yummy: **umaka!**
But remember, when you want to say something's good by saying ii, you say **yoka.**

Lesson 6: Keigo

Nagasaki-ben also has the formal language we all hate to speak, **keigo!**
The basics are easy-peasy. All it takes is a simple mod to the dialect you already know.

Will you come to class, Sensei? **Jugyou ni kiyorasu to?**

Mr. Principal, are you drinking? **Nomiyo-rasu to?**

Lesson 7: Last tidbits.

Let's take this time to talk about other phrases.

If you want to show off your manliness, say **oi** instead of **ore.**

-I'm hungry! **-Oi ba onaka suitoru!**

You can replace **deshou** with a number of things, such as **yarou, charou,** and **jarou.**

-You're hungry too, right? **-Kimi mo onaka suitoru yarou?**

When someone says **kara** to explain their reasoning, they say **ken.**

-Because I already ate, I'm not hungry. **-Oi ba mou tabeta ken, onaka suitoran' bai.**

If you want to say "but", it's easy to say it in Nagasaki-ben because the dialect's version, **batten,** sounds like "but then."

-I want to eat, but I have a dinner party later. **-Nan'ka tabetai na batten, ato de**

enkai ga aru.

Don't be surprised if someone asks you if you're "coming" somewhere instead of the usual "going".

-Are you coming (going) to the dinner party later? **-Ato de enkai ni kuru to?**

And remember if you ask a question, instead of letting your intonation rise towards the end like in normal Japanese, let it fall to show you're from Nagasaki.

-Afterwards, what are you doing?

-Kon'yattara, ato de nan'ba shiyotto?

Thus we conclude our intro to Nagasaki-ben. There are way more words and phrases to be learned, but the fun part is learning them from your friends and acquaintances. We hope this helps. **Ganbaran'ba! 🍀**

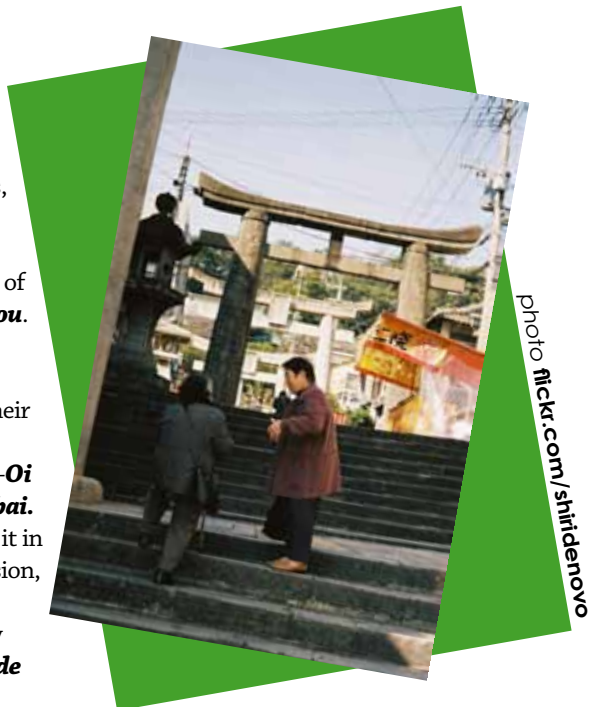


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Fortunetelling

photo Laurel Williams

Dan Ayres on how to take part in the ancient Japanese New Year's tradition of fortunetelling.

Wander into a shrine or temple on a frosty New Year's morning and you will be greeted by a quintessentially Japanese scene: a plethora of paper strips littering the ground. While this may sound like an extension of the Japanese penchant for wasting paper—as seen in offices everywhere—it is actually part of a traditional practice that goes back centuries. The strips are

individual fortunes known as *omikuji* (おみくじ), which translates as “sacred lottery.” Originally prevalent at Shinto shrines, the practice crept into Buddhist temples as the distinction between the two religions began to blur.

The fortunes themselves vary from great blessings, *daikichi* 大吉 (wonderful, let's go to pachinko, I'm feeling lucky) to great curses, *daikyou* 大凶 (flaming Norah! I'm going to make a fort out of my futon and cocoon myself in it for the foreseeable future”) with a host of others in between, ranging from mildly perturbing to pleasantly uplifting. Additionally,

“ **Whether in good or bad fortune, you should tenaciously do your best. You can carve out your own fortune.** ”

- Sensoji Temple's English disclaimer

each *omikuji* comes with a written fortune, prescribing advice on topics such as wealth and marriage. *Omikuji* is particularly popular over the New Year's period, when families traditionally come together and visit places of worship.

However, rather like an *omikuji*, I can foresee your next question. How does one 'do' *omikuji*? The routine varies from shrine to shrine, but what remains consistent is the small donation made. Often, folks will plump for the five-yen coin, not because they are being sneakily thrifty, but because "go-en" also happens to mean "good luck." My personal experience was in Sensoji Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo. After diligently popping in a donation, I was instructed to pick up a metal container and shake vigorously. To my delight, a numbered stick appeared from one end of the container, like an inquisitive *tanuki* (raccoon dog) peering out from a long winter. The number corresponded with a drawer where the fateful *omikuji* lay. If I remember correctly I was rather underwhelmed with the English translation (a rarity on most *omikuji*) assuring me that "most of your lost articles will not be found." Thus I looked to the wire rack, to which hundreds of little paper slips were deftly adorned. This is a practice that goes back to the days of yore, whereby worshippers would tie unlucky *omikuji* onto a pine tree, as *matsu* means both "pine tree" and "to wait." People reasoned that the undesirable prophecy would recognize the power of the pun and linger by the tree instead of inflicting untold damage. Conversely, *omikuji* foretelling good fortune were to be taken home and allowed to flourish. These days, slips forecasting good and bad fortunes are tied

all over the place, though my own paltry attempt contrasted pertinently with the elegant examples nearby, quickly unravelling and twitching ominously in the breeze.

Don't take a leaf out of my book though. Pick up your own *omikuji* and you could be in for untold fortune. And if it's rubbish, simply tie it to a tree and hope for the best. 🍵

- Great blessing (*daikichi* 大吉)
- Middle blessing (*chuukichi* 中吉)
- Small blessing (*shoukichi* 小吉)
- Blessing (*kichi* 吉)
- Near-blessing (*suekichi* 末吉)
- Near-small-blessing (*sueshoukichi* 末小吉)
- Curse (*kyou* 凶)
- Great curse (*daikyou* 大凶)



Kanji of the Month

肉

Radical Kanji Niku or Nikuduki

This character is supposed to have originally resembled the ribs of an animal's torso, or a cut of meat. You may have seen it in compounds such as 牛肉 (gyūniku) – beef, 豚肉 (butaniku) – pork and 肉まん (nikuman) – meat-filled steamed buns, which sit temptingly on the combine counter.

It can also appear as a radical at the base of a character, such as 腐 which refers to decay. 腐る (kusaru) means "to rot" and 豆腐 (tōfu) means "bean curd," aka the white spongy block that makes a reasonable substitute for... meat!

However, the most common location for this radical is on the left of a character, where it is called *nikuduki*, or "meat-moon." This is because over time, the radical's shape has been altered until it looks just like 月 (*tsuki*), the moon.

The most useful thing to remember about the meat-moon is that it appears in the characters for many body parts. Here are just a few:

胃 (*i*) – stomach; 背 (*se*) – back; 肩 (*kata*) – shoulder; 脳 (*nou*) – brain;
脚 (*ashi*) – leg; 腹 (*hara*) – stomach [ever heard children yell, 腹減った!
(*hara ketta*)? It means "my stomach's empty!" i.e. "Isn't it time for *kyaushoku*
(school lunch) already?"].

It also appears in body-related words, such as 脈 (*myaku*) – pulse, vein; and 脂肪 (*shibou*) – fat, blubber.

Lastly, there is a much smaller set of regularly-used characters wherein the moon-like radical really represents a moon, and a few waifs and strays that include a moon-like radical descended from boats, rivers and even beards, but that is a story for another day.

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