

Having Fun Fixing Japanese Paper Doors



Everything you need to know about Japanese shoji (paper) doors, how easy it is to put holes in them, and a step-by-step explanation of how to fix them.

Meeting Dr. Yoshiro NakaMats – the "Thomas Edison of Japan"



With Dr. Natamats, February, 13, 2002 at the Gakushi Kaikan in Tokyo

I first wrote this in February 2002 and posted it on my first website at kt70.com/~jamesjpn Because that website no longer exists, I am reposting it here.

On Feb. 13, 2002 while in Tokyo, I was invited by German Marina to attend with her a meeting called "21stCentury Seminar" and dinner held in honor of one of the greatest inventors of all time, Dr. Yoshiro Nakamatsu, also known as Dr. NakaMats. This is his preferred spelling of his name. According to the rules of writing Japanese in Roman letters, it would be Nakamastsu.

One of Dr. NakaMats' well-known inventions is the floppy disk! He is credited

with over 3000 inventions – more than Thomas Edison – and 16 patents to IBM. He is reputed to be one of the 5 greatest inventors of all time! So you can imagine that I considered it an honor not only to meet him and talk to him personally but to be asked by him after the conference to give my impression of his talk while he videotaped me!



Together with Japanese Maggie
(center) and German Marina
before the Gakushi Kaikan
building in Tokyo, Feb. 13,
2002

Forty-seven people were in attendance, two of whom were foreigners, Marina and myself. The rest were Japanese. I was the only American present. Only five of the guests were female. Attendees were primarily businessmen and inventors.

Dr. NakaMats' talk was of course in Japanese but I could follow it quite well including most of his jokes! I was excited at some of the things he had to say and responded with a good deal of obvious enthusiasm. This is probably why Dr. NakaMats wanted to video me after the meeting to record my comments. He often travels to America and so I could give him my response in English on video.

Here are some of the points that Dr. NakaMats spoke about:

- Love for others is the primary motivation of all his inventions – to help make things easier for others. He says that if mere profit were the only motivation, he would not have succeeded as he has. Because of his love for his mother, he invented a squeeze pump to make it easier for her to take soy sauce out of a deep jar. This invention came to become the hand pump that is used this very day to pump out kerosene from containers into portable heaters the Japanese use in their homes.
- The greatest long-term problem in Japan today is that of population decline! The average Japanese family only has 1.3 children. At this rate, in 50 years the population of Japanese will decrease to less than half or only 50 million people. This would further cripple the already ailing economy.
- The reason the Japanese people give for not having more children is the high cost of living and the ailing economy. Dr. NakaMats says this is a very poor excuse! I told him that a fellow missionary from Canada had 13 children! Yes, right in Japan! Dr. NakaMats was impressed.
- Japanese people are not working nearly as hard or as long as they used to. Americans have now surpassed them in work and diligence.
- Japanese pupils are not studying as hard as they used to. The quality of education has gone down.

Misogi – a Shinto Purification Ritual of Standing Under a Waterfall in Winter



Spectators standing before Shiratama waterfall

On January 13, 2011, I attended a traditional local ceremony at Shiratama waterfall in Niigata Prefecture. I've been to this waterfall several times in the summer to escape the heat, but this is the first time to see it in the snowy mid winter, and the very first time to see people stand under it! It's actually a religious ceremony called *misogi*.



Six men and two women standing under the Shiratama Waterfall in mid winter.

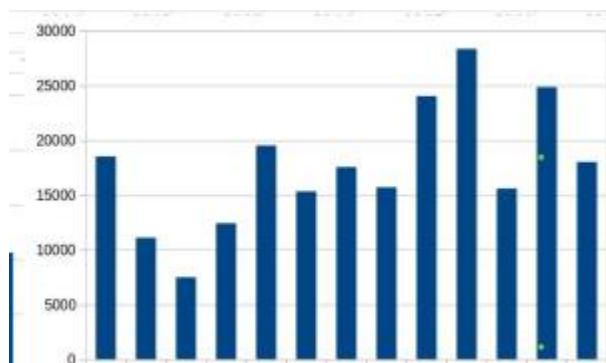
Misogi (misogi) is a Japanese mountain ascetic practice of ritual purification. This may be undertaken through exhaustive activities such as extended periods without sleep, breath training, standing under waterfalls, or other methods. Water-misogi may be likened to dousing practices.

(Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misogi>)

Any of the photos will enlarge when clicked upon.



End of Year 2017 Hitchhike Statistics



Distances I hitchhiked in Japan in 2017.

Japanese Summer Festivals Are Linked to Hebrew Old Testament Traditions!



In midsummer Japan holds public festivals which are called in Japanese *Omatsuri*. One of the ceremonies in the festival is when men dressed in traditional Japanese garments carry an ornamental box that sits on two poles. The box is called *Omikoshi*. They carry the *Omikoshi* passing spectators while bouncing it up and down as everybody chants, “*Wa shoi! Wa shoi! wa shoi! ...*” over and over! You can hear it in the YouTube below:

This word doesn’t even sound like a typical Japanese word. Most Japanese people do not know what it means. I heard it’s from Hebrew meaning “Let’s carry”



In the photos, you can see four men carrying the *Omikoshi* before the crowd.

On Aug. 5, 2006 while hitchhiking to downtown Niigata, a young lady named Manami offered me a ride. She said that she worked in an care center for the elderly and today they were having a festival. She invited me to come. And so I accepted her invitation because my purpose in the first place was to go out to meet people and make new friends.

From the website [Israelites Came To Ancient Japan](#) I knew that the *Omikoshi* in the festival is somewhat similar to the Ark of the Covenant of God as described in the Old Testament of the Bible. It was my first opportunity to photograph it since reading the web page. The photograph of the *Omikoshi* below was taken in the elderly care center just before the start of the festival.



Omikoshi

The second character from the left of the ideograph is the Chinese / Japanese word for “God”. And so it would certainly seem safe to conclude that the Omikoshi has its roots in religious tradition. Most Japanese people today say they are non-religious, but you should see and hear them during festival time when men carry the Omikoshi through a crowd of spectators! They lean it over so the spectators can touch it and thereby get a “blessing!”

What the Bible says about the Ark of the Covenant:

1 Chronicles 15:25 So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom **with joy**.

26 And it came to pass, when God helped **the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD**, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

27 And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that **bare the ark**, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen.

28 Thus all Israel brought up the **ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting**, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

The Bible also says that the Ark was supported by two poles or “staves”.

Exodus 25:10 And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

12 And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.

13 And thou shalt make **staves of shittim wood**, and overlay them with gold.

14 And thou **shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them**.

When you hear the people shout “wa shoi!” over and over in a joyful tone of voice, I don’t see how anybody can say that the tradition of the Omikoshi is not related to the time when “David, and the elders of Israel ... went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obededom **with joy**.” Does this indicate that the Japanese are descendants of the ancient Hebrews? It certainly seems so to me. I think at least some of them are. At the very least I think the Shinto religion on which the Omikoshi is based has

its roots in Judaism.

At the festival I met a Japanese Christian lady. I asked her if she realized that the Omikoshi is a tradition that came from the children of Israel as described in the Old Testament. She replied that she hasn't been a believer that long and didn't know. I encouraged her to read her Bible.



Miss Manami, the lady who picked me up and took me to the festival.



Man beating a drum called taiko in Japanese.
In the back of him is the elevated stage that Manami was standing on.



A little girl dressed in a tradition robe called a *yukata*. This is different, (and certainly less expensive!) than a kimono.

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[Hitchhike Adventure During Golden Week](#)



Another oldie goldie adventure from my old website I am reposting.

On April 30, 2004, I hitchhiked 500 kilometers from Niigata city to Nagoya, the 3rd largest metropolis in Japan. It was the second day of "Golden Week." Below is a brief description of what Golden week is all about:

The Golden Week is a collection of several national holidays within seven days in the end of April and beginning of May. It consists of four national holidays: Green Day (Midori no hi) on April 29, Constitution Day (Kenpo kinenbi) on May 3, "Between Day" (Kokumin no kyujitsu) on May 4 and the Boy's Festival (Kodomo no hi) on May 5. (Taken from <http://www.japan-guide.com/topic/0005.html>)



Tetsunori

The most interesting person who picked me up on the way was a 24 year old Buddhist monk by the name of Tetsunori. He said he sat down in mediation for two weeks straight in a cross legged position without sleeping on 3 different occasions! He was not allowed to sleep nor move during this time! I asked him how it went. "My legs hurt" he replied. I told Tetsunori all about Jesus and my life as a missionary and he told me all about his life as a monk. I was surprised to learn that he is allowed to listen to any kind of music he likes or watch any type of trashy Hollywood film. I would think they would have more separation from the world. But Japanese Buddhists have much more freedom than other Asian countries. They are allowed to marry and have children which is not allowed in Thailand or Tibet. Tetsunori says that he is the 17th generation of Buddhist monks that have been responsible for the care of a temple he lives in. I pray that the Lord used me to plant some seed of the Word of God into his heart. Buddhism is another "works religion". Only the Blood of Jesus Christ can save us! I told Tetsunori that Jesus' Message is simple enough that a young child can understand. We both agreed that if only highly intellectual people can attain to knowledge of salvation, not many would be saved. I know I wouldn't be. I couldn't even spell the word "intellectual" correctly and had to look it up! ☐

In the Nagoya area I stayed with my Brazilian friend Paulo and his family. He took me to a typical Japanese Golden Week festival.



Paulo with his youngest son,
Enoki



Brazilian children dancing



The flags in the shape of Japanese carp are called Koinobori in Japanese. They are flown every year from April till the end of Golden Week.



Booth of the Brazillian school in Okazaki, Aichi Prefecture.

"Koinobori. Carp streamers, called *koinobori* in Japanese, decorate the landscape from April through early May in honor of Children's Day on May 5. In Japanese culture, the carp symbolizes courage and strength because of its ability to swim up a waterfall. Since these are traits desired in boys, families traditionally flew koinobori from their homes to honor their sons. Ranging in size from about a foot to several meters in length, the koinobori resemble jewel-toned sea beasts swimming through the watery, azure skies. May, 1998." (Taken from <http://www.hardfocus.net/stevie/koinobori.htm>)

On May 3rd. I left downtown Nagoya at 1:30 PM to start back home. This is rather late to hitchhike another 500 kilometers, but I couldn't leave any earlier. It was absolutely imperative for me to be back home sometime this evening in order to perform a Christian style marriage ceremony the very next day! I opt to hitchhike at least part way to save some money.

Though I like to be cheap on myself, in order to save some time to get out of the busy city center, I took a 20 minute train ride to Tajimi, a small town that is close to the Chuo Expressway. This expressway passes through Nagano Prefecture which is on the way to Niigata. It is also a tried and proven route I have traveled many times and the same route I used to travel to Nagoya.

The entrance to the Chuo Expressway is about 3 kilometers distance from the train station, a bit too far to walk because I am pressed for time, so I caught a ride from a kind man going that way. I arrived at the expressway entrance about 2:30 PM. So far so good!

I was not surprised to find most of the traffic heading back the opposite direction to Nagoya. I know that at least SOME drivers would be headed to Nagano, but after waiting more than 30 minutes I was getting a bit discouraged. The drivers that were heading the direction I wanted to go ignored me, but others offered me a ride going back to Nagoya. I knew there is a fairly large parking area called Utsutsutoge only 5 minutes down the

road toward Nagoya, so I decided to take up the next offer going that direction (the opposite way I intended to go) thinking that I could find my way on foot to the other side of the parking area which heads back in the right direction. I have done this from time to time when I thought it was necessary. To date there hasn't been a single parking area I haven't figured out how to get to the opposite side. Some have a foot bridge to cross over but most have access roads which run parallel to the expressway with a tunnel going under the expressway. But the Utsutsutoge parking area is the very *first* expressway parking area to have neither! It is situated in mountains with no access road running parallel to the expressway. There was no way I could get to the opposite side going in the right direction unless I would attempt to cross the expressway on foot – something extremely dangerous if not illegal! Cars were whizzing past as fast as 140 KM per hour. That means to give myself at least 5 seconds to cross safely both the East bound and West bound lanes, I would had to wait for both directions to clear for a distance of at least 200 meters or about the length of two football fields. That was not going to happen. It was heavy traffic during “Golden Week” which is vacation holiday time in Japan when folks travel long distances to see their relatives or go sightseeing. Back in 1998 I did the cross the same expressway in this manner, but it was in a area far from the big city with few cars passing that time of day. Happily I wasn't spotted by the police.

All was not lost, however. I knew that though I had to keep heading the opposite direction from what I originally planned, I still had a few more options. One was to travel as far as Maibara from where I could catch a ride on the Hokuriku expressway which would take me to Niigata. But this route is much longer. It would add another 150 KM to my journey. Another possibility was to try a new expressway route that I had never traveled on before. It's called the “Tokkai-Hokuriku”. This also heads toward the Hokuriku expressway which would take me to Niigata, but cuts the distance in half. The reason I never attempted to travel this route before is because the expressway is not completed in the middle (at that time). There is a stretch of 35 kilometers of normal road connecting both ends. My third option was to travel to a point I could get off the expressway I was on now and hitchhike back the opposite way.

The driver who picked me up at Utsutsutoge suggested that the Tokkai-Hokuriku route may be the best one for me. He said he traveled it only very recently toward Toyama. I knew if I could get as far as Toyama, it would be a piece of cake the rest of the way – or so I thought! More about that later.



On the map the blue line represents the route to Nagoya. The red line was my return trip. The green line was a possible alternate route which though much more out of my way, is a route I had traveled much before. The part of the red line that crosses Honshu toward the Sea of Japan and connects two points of the green line ending at Toyama (name not listed on the map) is the Tokkai-Hokuriku, a new route I had never used before.

After a 40 minute wait, a car with 2 men and a women took me half way to Toyama. Their names were Mitsuru (the driver), Yoshinori and Rie, all friends

employed at the same company. We traveled through some of the most beautiful mountain areas of Japan with lots of lakes, rivers and even a waterfall.



(Left to Right) Mitsuru,
Yoshinori, Rie and me



One of the many lakes along the
way

They couldn't take me as far as I would have liked but dropped me off at a tourist area with other parked cars and a constant flow of traffic. It took me at least a half hour to get my next ride, a married couple by the names of Hiroshi and Masayo. I had something in common with them. They both spent a year living in Moscow and could speak Russian! We exchanged a few sentences in Russian. There are not many Japanese people interested in Russia. Only a very small percentage of the population is interested in visiting, and only a very tiny percentage who learn the Russian language.



With Hiroshi and Masayo


It was 7:30 in the evening by the time we arrived in Toyama on the Hokuriku Expressway. I still have some 250 kilometers left in my journey! The winds were blowing very strong along the Hokuriku which runs close to the Sea of Japan. So strong in fact that the cars and trucks were swayed sideways by heavy gusts! So though I originally told Hiroshi and Masayo that I would get off as soon as we arrived at Toyama to hitchhike further, because of the wind and the lateness of time, I lost confidence and turned to "the arm of the flesh" and decided to take the train the rest of the way. They themselves encouraged me to do the same. We thought there would still be trains going to Niigata at 8PM. We were wrong!

As it turned out, I missed the last train by about a half hour. There was no way I could get home by train that night! So Hiroshi and Masayo offered to take me back to the expressway entrance. I lost 45 minutes of precious time

because I didn't have faith to continue hitchhiking, and now I was forced to hitchhike like it or not!

I was desperate! It is now completely dark, about 8:15 PM. Hitchhiking is much more difficult at night. A few cars with Niigata license plates seemed to slow down for me. I ran up to them in excitement thinking the driver would offer me a ride. This only caused the driver to become afraid of me and he fled away! One man stopped and I asked him a pleading tone of voice to take me at least part way home. He refused. So I realized that I needed to calm down and have more faith that God would come through for me. A pleading and desperate sounding tone of voice was working against me.

After about 45 minutes a man offered to take me as far as Arisomi – a large parking area a good distance down the road. I knew from experience that it was a very good place to get my next ride.

Most of the people ignored both me and the paper sign I was holding:  – Niigata.

At the parking area I tried to talk to the few who made eye contact. One man seemed to be willing to take me but his wife was not! She had a look of apprehension in her eyes. So I politely excused myself and left.

I don't like to make the Japanese people feel they must do anything for me. I try to leave it up to them. I know that God's sheep are always around somewhere. Sometimes they seem to be only 1 in a thousand. It was now 9:30PM and the cold attitude most people had was understandable. Why was I so dumb to get myself into such a situation anyhow?

After many rejections I decided to step away from the crowd and stand near the expressway entrance. This way more drivers would see me. But as I turned to go, one couple I had asked only a few minutes before approached me. The wife began chiding me for letting myself get in such a fix! I just smiled and calmly said that I had misjudged the time and had hoped to get a train, but there were no more trains. She softened her voice and said if it was all right with me, they would take me as far as Nagaoka – about 90% of the rest of the way! Of course I was very glad to accept their offer.

Throughout the journey they were both talkative and asked me many questions about my life. The wife asked me what I teach. I told them about Jesus and why He was killed on a cross. Most Japanese don't know or realize the meaning of the cross. They don't know that crucifixion was the preferred method of executing criminals during the reign of the Roman Empire. And so I make it a good history lesson for them. Japanese people tend to be very indifferent toward religion in general, but because they like to learn history, I try to approach them from this angle.

About half way into our trip the couple conferred with each other and decided to take me the rest of the way home – an extra distance way out of their way of at least 100 kilometers! And half of that is by low road. I refused their offer at first but the husband insisted several times. So I left it at that. It was my final answer to prayer to be home that night! Though it was after

midnight when I finally arrived home, there was still plenty of time to get a good night sleep in preparation for the next day. I had to be on a train at 8:02 that morning to travel a 100 kilometers back in the direction I came!

The Rapid Growth of Bamboo



My old website at kt70.com~jamesjpn is no longer on line. I am therefore posting some of the articles from it to this website.

On May 16, 2008 I saw two young bamboo shoots about 3 feet high growing next to my house. I knew because of their thickness they would be taller than me in just a matter of days. And so I thought it would be a fun project to set up a tripod and take a photo of them daily for a few days.

In the photos are two bamboo shoots and three sawed off bamboo stumps. Also notice the many other fully grown bamboo trees in the background. In the first photo taken on May 16, the bamboo shoot in the center is about 2.5 feet high and appears to be growing at an angle in relation to the bamboo stump directly behind it. On May 21, the bamboo in the center is now 256 centimeters or about 8.5 feet tall. It more than tripled its height in 5 days!



May 16, 1:45PM



May 17, 10:30AM



May 18, 5:50PM



May 19, 8:50AM



May 20, 8:30AM The center bamboo has now uprighted itself and is covering the stump behind it.



May 22, 1:10PM The center bamboo is now 3 meters or 9 feet 10 inches in height. I am 183 cm or about 6'1". Its height has nearly quadrupled in only 6 days!



May 28, 8:00AM



June 2, 9:00AM. The bamboo is now approximately 7.8 meters or 25.7 feet in height and 4 times my own height. In 17 days its height has increased 10 fold! Notice that there are still yet no branches or leaves and that the bottom half has lost its thin brown skin.

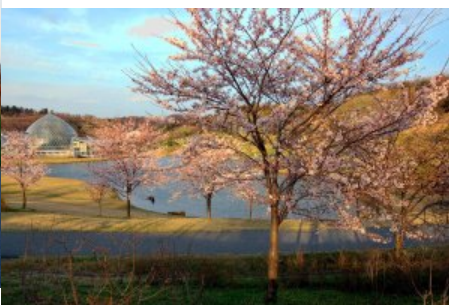


This bamboo shoot is not yet higher than my knee but it's already a bit too big to harvest for food.

Cherry Blossoms in Niigata City

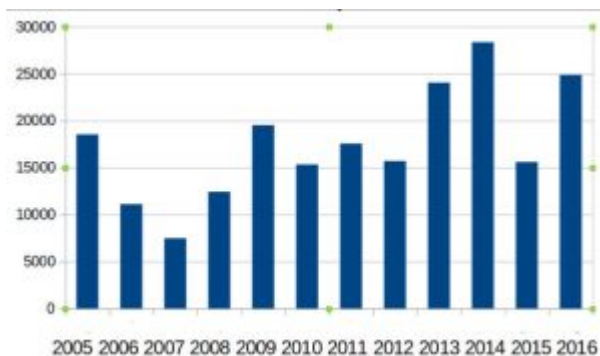


I took these photos in 2008. They were on my old website which is no longer on line, and so I'm re-posting them.





Distances Hitchhiked Since year 2005 / Sharing Christ with the Japanese



A white American hitchhiked throughout Japan consistently over a 20-year period.

Night View of Cherry Blossoms



I went by bicycle to a park an hour from home and took the photos below with a Nikon D50 camera (not mine) and a tripod (mine) with slow shutter speeds as

slow as 5 seconds.



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



Cherry blossoms at night



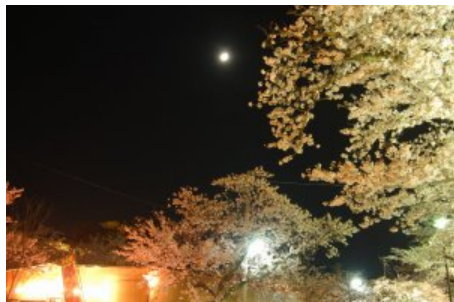
Cherry blossoms at
night



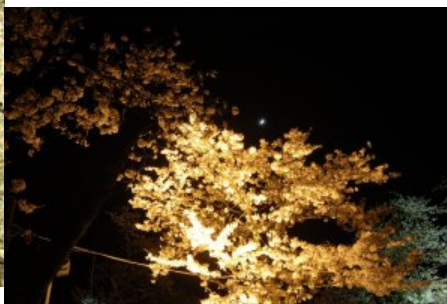
Cherry blossoms at
night



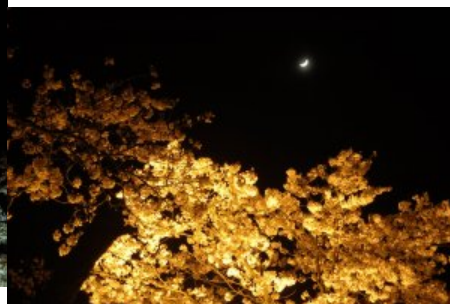
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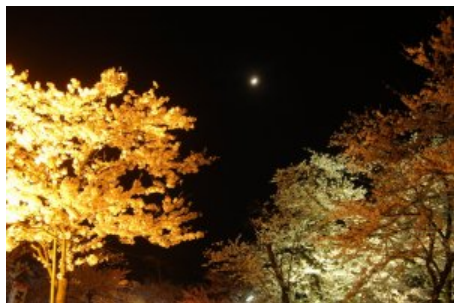
Cherry blossoms at
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Cherry blossoms at
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Cherry blossoms at
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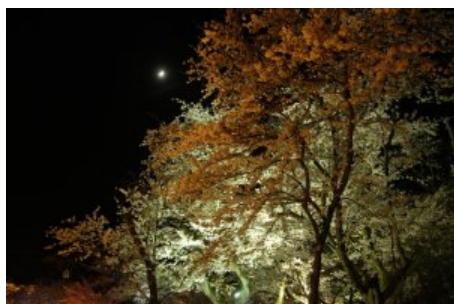
Cherry blossoms at
night



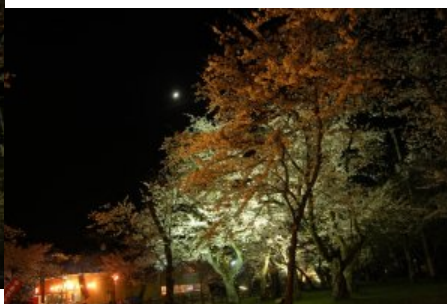
Cherry blossoms at
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Cherry blossoms at
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Cherry blossoms at
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How the Japanese heat their homes in winter



Did you know that in winter, the average temperate of a Japanese home is *colder* than homes in Russia? This is because houses in Japan have no central heating! I know from experience with 3 winters in Russia and 36 winters in Japan. Only individual rooms in Japan are heated by the use of portable kerosene burning stoves. The stoves are ignited only when the room is occupied, and usually extinguished when people leave the room. Even in bedrooms at night though occupied, they are turned off just before bed. It's considered dangerous to leave them on at night when sleeping.

Click on any photo to see an enlargement.



This was the most common type of heater in Japan and is still sold today. It sits on the floor, weighs only a few pounds, and can be moved around easily.

Its fuel is kerosene. In the event of an earthquake or somebody hitting it by accident, there is a mechanism that pulls down the wick to turn it off quickly in order to prevent a fire. The top gets hot and cannot be touched without burning one's hand. Sometimes people set kettles on top to boil water or to add humidity to the air.



Here we see the heating element removed and the wick visible. When these types of heaters are still new, they are lit by pushing a lever which presses an electric heating coil against the wick. The coil becomes red hot when the lever is pressed. It is powered by two batteries in the back of the heater. However, in the case of an older heater, often the electric heating coil is either burned out, or the batteries are dead. In this case, rather than immediately replace the batteries, most people use a match to light the wick. In order to do this, the heating element must be raised up slightly by hand to get the match close to the wick. The problem of using a match is that unless the heating element is set back properly over the wick the way it should be, the kerosene will not burn hot enough and will produce a smelly black smoke that fills the room! Once this happened just after the kitchen ceiling was freshly painted white. The person left the room and it was not until several hours later the problem of the smokey heater was discovered. Can you guess what color the ceiling became? Gray!



This photo shows the back of the room heater. You can see the two dry cell batteries in the holder that are used to light the electric coil that ignites the wick. In a couple years it will stop working and a match will have to be used instead.



In these two photos you can see the tank that holds the kerosene fuel for the heater. The tank needs to be filled every other day if used regularly. The left photo shows the tank on its side on top of a different type of heater than the one above, but it is the same kind used.



Many homes use orange plastic containers to store the kerosene as shown in these photos. Some people use much larger drums and have the kerosene man come when empty, but it is cheaper to use the smaller containers and take them to the local gas station to fill them. I'm using a battery powered pump to fill the heater tank, but many people also use a siphon pump. The battery pump is designed to turn itself off when the tank is full, but sometimes the mechanism fails to work. There are accidents both with the battery pump and the siphon pump. The tank overflows and kerosene spills on the floor. Even without any spillage, I usually wind up with some kerosene on my hands when removing the pump from the tank.



This is a different type of kerosene heater which uses electricity from a wall socket to power an internal fan to blow the heat out. It also uses electricity to initially warm the kerosene to a certain temperature before it ignites. It is also portable can be moved around from room to room. Without electric AC power from a wall outlet, these types of heaters will not run! They are a bit heavier than the non-electric type of heater but it's also more convenient to turn them on because you just need to push the power button. They won't turn on immediately. It takes 2 or 3 minutes for a heating coil to warm the kerosene sufficiently to ignite. The newer models with better technology start a bit quicker because they use electricity to keep the kerosene warm, but it may also up the electric bill. However the quick on function can be disabled. They also have a thermostat device that regulates the amount of heat. You can adjust the temperature to higher or lower. I think the electric-kerosene heater may use fuel more efficiently than the wick only type.

In the event of a power outage, this heater will turn off immediately and are therefore **useless** if the power grid goes down! In January 2006, tens of thousands of homes in my area suffered a day long power outage due to heavy snow shorting out an insulator of a high voltage power line. We were glad that we had several non-AC power dependent kerosene heaters to use to warm our house. The electric AC power kerosene type of heater is high tech and will eventually break down. It cannot be started with a match. The top does not get hot and is therefore safer to use with little children in the room. If jarred or bumped, a safety mechanism will automatically turn the heater off. Another mechanism will turn the heater off after 3 hours. This is to prevent CO poisoning while sleeping at night. This is yet another reason why these heaters are never left on all the time.



Kerosene heater

Top view of the electric kerosene heater. Can you see that it is dented? The top of these types of stoves is thin metal. Because the top does not get hot like the non-electric wick heater, young people often are tempted to use them as chairs! Sitting on it only *once* will dent it **permanently**! Even worse than using it as a chair is to use it as a footstool. The resulting dent is yet more noticeable.



The low table in these photos is called a *kotatsu*. It has an electric heating element under the table connected to a power cord which is plugged into an AC wall outlet. Sitting at a kotatsu is another way the Japanese keep warm at home in the winter. Even though the room temperature may be cold, it feels quite warm and cozy to sit in front of the kotatsu with one's legs under the table with the blanket covering them and keeping in the heat! Though electricity is expensive in Japan, the kotatsu doesn't need much power to keep the small space under it warm. Moreover, it has a thermostat which turns the heater off when the temperature gets too high, and so using them is quite

economical.

Twelve Differences of America Compared to Japan



Me hugging a huge palm street on Hollywood boulevard, Los Angeles California

I've lived in Japan for 36 years at the time of this post – more than half of my life. In 2014 I had an opportunity to go to Los Angeles for a week. You might find my observations of America compared to Japan interesting.

1. People using skateboards for transportation! At least in L.A. they do. I've never seen this in Japan.
2. Exact change needed when riding a city bus! In Japan all buses have a machine by the driver that will break a 1000 yen bill into coins.
3. Some buses don't accept cash, only credit or debit cards! The bus I rode from the airport to L.A. Union station was such a bus. The driver let me ride for free!
4. Toilet technology the same as it was when I was a kid in the 1950s! In Japan, toilets are high-tech! They all have washlets that will wash your bottom just by pressing a button. Some you don't even have to flush manually. The toilet will flush automatically when you leave the toilet seat.
5. Slow service at shops. In Japan, people do not need to wait as long to be served. Lines are much shorter.
6. Trash on the streets. In Japan, some out-of-the-way areas are filled with litter, but not the ones frequented by the public. Ironically America has more public trashcans than Japan does! In Japan, it costs money to get rid of the trash. There are no trashcans in public parks or on the streets.
7. Great pizza and hotdogs! In Japan good pizza is expensive, and hotdogs are not nearly as tasty.
8. Huge variety of food products! The selection in Japan is mostly limited to Japanese food.
9. Great bread! Japanese eat white bread mostly. Good bread is expensive.
10. People bumming money! Twice I was asked for money by strangers. I gave them a dollar each. This doesn't happen in Japan.

11. Crumpled money! Lots of Americans apparently do not use wallets. Japanese do. Paper bills are not nearly as crumpled as American dollars.
 12. More outgoing people in public. Japanese on the street are rather shy and inhibited to talk to strangers.
-

What is “Fukushima”?

福島

fuku shima

It's been my observation that most people who have never been to Japan seem to think of Fukushima as an uninhabitable nuclear wasteland. My Facebook friends are surprised when on some of my posts I wrote that I traveled through Fukushima on my way back home to Niigata. “Why did you go there?” they ask.

Mass media reporters have abbreviated the damaged Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant to a single word, “Fukushima.” Therefore when non-Japanese people hear this word, they automatically think of the nuclear catastrophe in Japan. This is *not* how Japanese think when they hear the name of Fukushima.



Japan divided into Prefectures.

Japan is divided into 47 administrative areas which are called *prefectures*.

Fukushima Prefecture is the area of #7. I live right next to it in area #15, Niigata Prefecture. Because I often travel to Aomori Prefecture, (#2 on the map), if I take the Tohoku Expressway, the route back home to Niigata runs through Fukushima Prefecture. Nobody hesitates for fear of radiation to drive through Fukushima Prefecture.



Here we can see an enlarged map of area #7 that shows Fukushima Prefecture. The damaged nuclear reactor is in a town called Futaba, the area with the red circle drawn around it. The nuclear reactor is right on the Pacific coast. It is mainly the area of Futaba and parts of the areas immediately next to it

which are in the no-go zone! People are living everywhere else in Fukushima Prefecture. Rice is again being planted and harvested in areas not close to the damaged nuclear power plant. You can see that Fukushima Prefecture is a large area and the area infected with radiation is relatively small in comparison.

There is also Fukushima City, the largest city in Fukushima Prefecture. So when I tell a Japanese person I passed through Fukushima, he or she understands that I passed through Fukushima Prefecture unless I specified it was Fukushima City. Nobody, I mean *nobody* would think I meant the Futaba area, the town of the nuclear power plant!

The word prefecture is defined on <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/prefecture> as

noun

1.

the office, jurisdiction, territory, or official residence of a prefect.

The only other countries that use the word prefecture to divide their country into administrative areas are *Roman Catholic nations* such as France and Italy!

Japan was divided into 47 prefectures by the Meiji government in July 1871. The Japanese period of *Meiji* (September 8, 1868 through July 30, 1912) was when Japan was forced to open itself to the West. Interestingly, the Japanese word “Meiji” is composed of two Chinese ideographs meaning “enlightened rule”. Was it because of the influence of the Illuminati (AKA Jesuit order)?

Why did Japan close itself off in the first place? To protect itself from Jesuit influence! The Tokugawa government (the period between 1603 and 1868) in the 17th century with the advice of English Protestant William Adams kicked out all the Roman Catholic **JESUIT** missionaries from Japan. William Adams warned the leader of the government, Tokugawa Ieyasu, that the real purpose of the Jesuit missionaries was not to spread the true faith of Christ to the Japanese, but to colonize Japan for Rome! During the period Japan isolated itself from the West, it’s interesting to note there was still some trade with England and the Netherlands – both *Protestant* countries. You see it was really only Roman Catholic countries, and specifically Portugal, Spain, France and Italy that the Tokugawa government feared. It was the USA which forced Japan to open itself up again to the West. America has been under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church from its very beginning! See [Washington in the Lap of Rome](#).

The Jesuits and Roman Catholic missionaries were expelled from Japan in the 17th century, but they returned in the 19th century during the time of Meiji (Illuminati / Jesuit rule). It’s my conclusion, therefore, dividing Japan into administrative areas called “prefecture” may denote Japan returning back under the control of **Rome**! And by “Rome” I am referring to the Vatican and

the Roman Catholic Church. The word prefecture comes from Latin, the language of the Roman Empire!

By the way, here is Fukushima in Chinese ideographs.



It literally means “fortune island”

Japan's Christian Roots

十和田
To wa da

Towada in Chinese/Japanese characters

There is evidence that Christianity may have come to Japan long before the Jesuit priest, Francis Xavier reached Japan on July 27, 1549. The northern prefecture of Honshu, Aomori, contains many Christian symbols that predate Xaxier, things from the 2rd or 3rd century!

There is an area in Aomori Prefecture, Northern Honshu, called “Towada”. Lake Towada is famous and the largest lake in northern Japan.

As you see, the first character is a cross. It's the Chinese character for the number 10 but nevertheless, it is a cross shape. I believe here it's meant to be the Cross of Christ!

The second character means “peace” and the third and last character means rice field. It literally means “Fields of peace by the cross of Christ.” Christians in the past were numerous in this part of Japan. Not far is the town of Shingo which supposedly has the grave of Jesus Christ! True Bible believers know this cannot be so because Jesus rose to Heaven and didn't stay in the grave. But nevertheless just the fact that there are Christian symbols in the area indicates that Japanese culture may have been heavily influenced by Christianity in the first millennium. This knowledge was suppressed.

I didn't make this stuff up. I heard it directly from the Japanese people. I've lived in Japan now for nearly 40 years.

Though most Japanese do not know or read the Bible, their culture contains many principles taught in the New Testament, principles such as hard work, hospitality to strangers, generosity, humility, etc.. Some may argue that

most cultures in the world can say the same. However, I think one cannot argue that Japan still has one of the lowest rates of violent crime in the world.

Fushishima Nuclear Power Plant Disaster and the Media: Distortions, hype and pure lies!



I still hear a lot of fear-mongering about the Fukushima nuclear accident. Some call it “worse than Chernobyl”. I find no logic in that statement at all. Two and a half years later and yet **not a single Fukushima power plant worker has died** or is even *sick*!

Examples of fear-mongering media manipulation headlines:

- Worse than Chernobyl: The inner threat of Fukushima crisis
- Nuclear disaster: Radiation levels at Fukushima would now be fatal within hours
- West Coast of North America to Be Hit Hard by Fukushima Radiation
- Fukushima Radiation Release Equivalent To 1,000 A-Bombs
- Fukushima leak is ‘much worse than we were led to believe’

Folks, I live in Niigata Prefecture which is the neighboring prefecture to Fukushima. If people were dying or getting sick from nuclear radiation in Fukushima, I would hear the locals talk about it. Nobody is. See [Japan's radiation disaster toll: none dead, none sick](#)

Fukushima Radiation Reports Overblown



The fear mongers of the threat of radiation from the nuclear power plant meltdown were all wrong! Life goes on in Japan as it always had.

November 2012 Adventure to Aomori



Today was cloudy when I started out on my journey to Aomori city, 470 kilometers from home. I wore for the first time this season a warm overcoat. I heard it had been snowing in Aomori, the northernmost prefecture of Honshu.



Mr. Toki who previously picked me up twice.

At 8:05 a.m. after walking 25 minutes on Route 345 from Majime station, the first car of the day stopped for me. It was again Mr. Toki, a cook who picked me up twice previously!. This time I remembered to take his photo. I'll very likely see him again because he drives to work daily on that road usually the same time in the morning when I hitchhike to Aomori Prefecture.



Lady who took me to Atsumi Onsen

The next car was a lady who had picked me once before this year! That's twice in a row meeting people who had previously picked me up. She's a fish merchant who makes daily trips to Murakami City. It's highly likely to meet her again as well. She took me to Route 7 which is the main road going to Aomori Prefecture.

After that I walked about an hour passing through 3 tunnels further up Route 7 to seek a better spot to hitchhike. At Iwasaki a lady stopped for me. She saw my sign that says, "Atsumi Onsen" and was going there. I thought she was in her 20s but she told me she has a 14 year old daughter!



Coast of Iwasaki, Niigata Prefecture on the Sea of Japan. Notice the hole in the rock which was created by erosion from the ocean.



Truck that took me to Odate City,
Akita Prefecture

Atsumi Onsen has a large "*michi no eki*" which in English means "road station", a place where cars and trucks stop to rest. I've stood there many times. Usually from Atsumi Onsen the next vehicle will take me to Tsuruoka City, about 30 kilometers further up Route 7, but this time a truck driver from Maizuru City in Kyoto Prefecture took me all the way to Odate city in Akita! He was going to Aomori Prefecture, but a different area, Mutsu City in the Shimokita peninsula, and therefore wouldn't be passing Aomori city. Though it was only 4:45 p.m. when arriving Odate city, it was already dark. And because it was also raining, I took a train the rest of the way to Aomori City.



Rainbow Bridge in Aomori City.

[Yahiko Shrine's Chrysanthemum Festival](#)

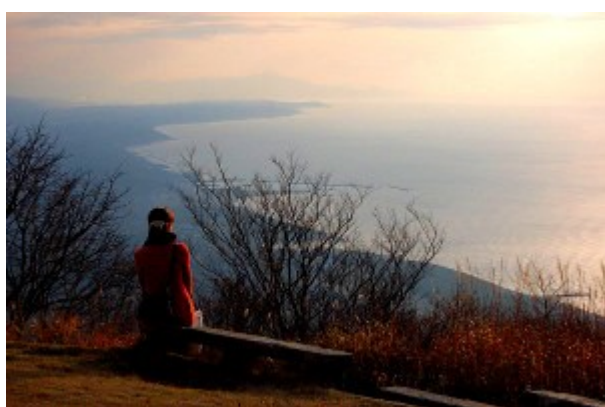


During my cycling trip to the summit of Mt. Yahiko in Niigata Prefecture, I stopped at the Yahiko Shrine which was on the way. I didn't know it before hand, but it was the time of the annual chrysanthemum festival. There were lots of visitors, probably more than usual.





Cycling adventure to the summit of Mt. Yahiko



November 19, 2012: It was a bright sunny day and I didn't want to spend it indoors in front of a PC screen. Instead I rode my bicycle to a village at the foothills of Mt. Yahiko, about 33 kilometers from home, and walked to the top, the very summit of Yahiko Mountain which is 634 meters above sea level.

It took me 2 hours to ride to Yahiko Village where I spent about a half hour visiting Yahiko Shrine and taking some photographs. After that it took a little over an hour to ride and push my bicycle to the parking lot area near the top. After that I walked 30 minutes further to get to the summit to photograph the view showing the Sea of Japan.



My transportation to Mt. Yahiko



View of Mt. Yahiko an hour bicycle ride from home.



View of Mt. Yahiko approaching Iwamuro Village. The arrow down is pointing to the highest peak and my destination. The peak in the center looks higher only because it's closer.



View about 3/4 of the way up Mt. Yahiko



Sign says, Mt. Yahiko, elevation
634 meters



Signs on Mt. Yahiko



View of Yahiko Mura, Tsubama and Sanjo cites from near the summit



Visitor at the summit of Mt. Yahiko



Visitor at the summit of Mt. Yahiko



Visitor at the summit of Mt. Yahiko overlooking the Sea of Japan.



Tori Gate at the summit of Mt. Yahiko



Japanese ladies who asked me to take their photo. I first met them only a minute before.



Tori Gate in Tsubame city near Mt. Yahiko. Twenty years ago it was the largest Tori Gate in Japan.



The same Tori Gate facing Mt. Yahiko.

At 3:30 p.m. I left the summit and cycled down the mountain 30 minutes later. It only took me 20 minutes to get to the village below! But home was still 33 kilometers away and now at 4 p.m. it was getting dark. By 4.45 p.m. I got to Tsubame city and photographed the Tori Gate in the photos above. At 6:30 it started to rain but I had an umbrella. I didn't get home till 8 p.m. with my pants soaked from the rain and thoroughly exhausted. I might have made it back earlier but because I took what I hoped was a shortcut, I got lost. After seeing the Shinkansen train tracks twice after 30 minutes, I realized I rode my bicycle in a circle!

Two Adventures through Northeast Japan



Having fun hitchhiking in northern Japan, making new friends, and saving a bucket of cash.