



Fascination for Japanese Calligraphy

In this issue of Mimitaro, we talked to a Japanese calligraphy (*shodou*) student from Higashiomi City, Mr. Stanislav Usov.



I came to Japan from Russia 4 years ago and is now enrolled at Tankai School of Calligraphy. Perhaps, the circumstances surrounding my family and homeland has influenced me to study *shodou* in Japan.

In recent years, Russia had an extensive reform in its political system. In the 1917 revolution, the Russian empire became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, but it collapsed in 1991 and was changed into the Russian Federation. Although it is now possible to freely enjoy various cultures, having been a socialist nation for a time during the Soviet era has made it like a country that went through a period of isolation, with hardly no relations with capitalist countries. The interaction with Japan, one of the few friendly countries then, was a valuable opportunity for the citizens to come into contact with foreign culture during that period. When my grandmother came into possession of things such as a Japanese-style calendar with pictures, she kept them even after it has been used, cutting out the pictures and using them as decorations, or even giving it to friends as a present. Even my parents who were both painters, made research on Oriental arts and ideas while studying painting in the university. My father also trained in *judo*. I grew up listening to a lot of stories about the Orient from such parents since I was young.

In the university and graduate school, I majored in Mathematics for 8 years and specialized in information security management. However, my interest in Japanese history, culture and language has heightened since I was in the university, and I studied Japanese on my own and looked forward to doing research on documents about Oriental culture. Due to its linguistic nature, “Calligraphy” (*sho*) is not commonly known to foreigners, but I was drawn to it the moment I laid my eyes on it. I was determined to give it a try. After graduate school, I came to Japan to fulfill my desire to be acquainted with the Japanese culture. First, I enrolled at a Japanese language school in Osaka for 2 years. Meanwhile, while experiencing various Japanese culture, my passion for *shodou* remained and I decided to enroll at Tankai School of Calligraphy.

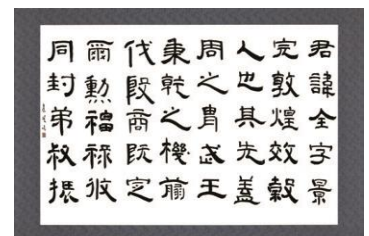
This was the first time for me to actually experience *shodou*. Since *Kanji* is the core of “calligraphy”, it may prove difficult for foreigners, but I feel it is *Kanji* itself that makes it interesting. I met a lot of good people while studying *shodou* in this school, and my impression about it has swiftly and

steadily become broad and full. I, then, was able to understand why I was attracted to calligraphy.

Calligraphy, which originated in China, is a figurative art introduced to Japan along with the Kanji culture. There are other countries that have a culture of writing in beautiful characters, but in today’s modern society, just being able to read what is written has become the standard way of thinking. Even in my country during the Russian empire, people of high stature practiced the art of writing, in contrary to the era of socialism when it was not regarded important and the consciousness to write beautifully has faded.

Writing with ink and brush, instead of pen and pencil, is a distinctive feature of calligraphy. With the use of such tools, the written lines may show thickness and energy that serve as a rich expression of the person who wrote it and is also referred to as the “art of lines”. A good piece of work is said to be brought about not only by the “creator’s own ability”, but also with what is called as “*Bunboshiho*” or the “4 important tools of calligraphy”, such as brush (*fude*), paper (*washi*), ink (*sumi*) and ink stone (*suzuri*) which are all considered vital in the process. Thus, it is not only the artistic nature in the finished work, but as the saying, “The style of writing is the man himself”, it reflects the person’s individuality and enable us to feel his work taking form with his every breath. Moreover, it is an interesting world because those who look and reflect on a work of art may even reveal their own personality.

In a culture with a long history, there are various ways of writing depending on the period. Among them, the one I like best is “*Reisho*” (clerical script), a typeface used by bureaucrats to write official documents in the old days. In Japan’s Taisho era, it was a neatly written font found in signboards and in the kanji characters “千円” in 1,000 yen bills.



Mr. Usov’s work in “*Reisho*” style

I came to Japan seeking knowledge in calligraphy, but I cannot simply leave *Ryugu-jo* (“the palace under the sea”) to go back home just like “*Urashima Taro*”. ※(See next page) Whatever path I choose from here, I will continue to learn calligraphy, which I will value as a friend for life. And if given the opportunity, I would be glad if I could widely convey the wonder of calligraphy.



The working style will change

(Beginning April, 2019)

◆ Regulation on the maximum limit of overtime work will be introduced!

(Small-to-medium sized enterprises will start from April 1, 2020)

As a general rule, the maximum limit on overtime work will be 45 hours per month, 360 hours per year. Even in cases that involve special circumstances, there is a need to set a limit of 720 hours a year, less than 100 hours a month (including work on holidays), and multiple monthly average of 80 hours (including work on holidays).

◆ It is necessary to ensure the acquisition of annual paid leave!

In principle, annual paid leave is given at the time of the worker's request, but due to considerations involving the workplace, etc., there is a low acquisition rate under the existing circumstances. For this reason, it is necessary for the employers of all companies to specify the period when a worker, who is granted 10 days or more of annual paid leave per year, may acquire 5 days out of the number of days of their annual paid leave and have the worker use that leave.

For workers who have acquired 5 days or more of annual paid leave, the employer does not need to specify the period of acquisition of the annual paid leave.

- ☛ Paid leave depends on the number of years of service. A request when the leave is intended to be used is made by the worker to his employer.

Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare multilingual reference:

https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/koyou_roudou/roudoukijun/foreign/index.html

Do you know the activities in community centers?

~ Take on a new challenge! ~

Community and civic centers are facilities that citizens can use for public purposes such as activities for learning and gatherings of independent groups. Personal computer and health classes, yoga, calligraphy, flower arrangement (*ikebana*), English conversation classes are held and offers a place where children can spend time, where citizens can conduct their club activities and where lifetime courses are held. Joining is easy, inexpensive, and you can even make friends in your community. Let's inquire on what kind of activities are offered in city halls and community centers! For those who like sports, classes and club activities such as gymnastics, judo, badminton, table tennis, volleyball, swimming, etc. are held at municipal and prefectural gymnasiums. Inquire at city halls and other public facilities for details.



“*Urashima Taro*” (*Urashima Taro* is a famous Japanese folk tale.)

Once upon a time, there was a fisherman named *Urashima Taro*. One day, Taro helped a turtle being bullied by the children on the beach. As a reward, the turtle carried Taro on his back and took him to *Ryugu-jo*, a palace under the sea. A young princess, *Otohime*, received Taro with generous hospitality in the palace, serving a feast of delicious food with accompanying entertainment. After a while, Taro got homesick and remembered his home. He told *Otohime* that he wanted to go back. *Otohime* gave him a treasure box and told him not to open it, ever. Upon returning to his hometown, he realized that everyone he knew was gone. During the time that Taro had been in *Ryugu-jo*, under the sea, decades have passed in the world at the surface. Out of extreme loneliness, he opened the box and smoke came out, transforming Taro into a very old man.

About the Procedures on Scholastic Support



~Submission of “My Number” will be required from April, 2019~

To apply for the following, submission of “My Number” will be required: “High School Tuition Support Fund (*Koutougakko-tou Shugaku Shienkin*)”, “Supplemental Scholarship Fund (*Shougaku no tameno Kyufukin*)”, and “Enrollment Incentive for Students of Schools for Special Needs (*Tokubetsu shiengakko no jidouseito ni taisuru Shugaku Shourei-hi*)”.

◆ High School Tuition Support Fund

- A grant-type system where the state supports high school tuition fees, etc.
 - Intended for standard households with an annual income of less than 9.1 million yen (The sum of the prefectural and the municipal tax (*per income basis*) is less than 507,000 yen)
 - Apply at the school where you are to be enrolled.
 - The tuition support fund will be received by the school and will not be paid to the parents or guardians. (In the case of private schools, handling of the fund may differ depending on the school).
- ▣ Regarding High School Tuition Support Fund (Multilingual):

http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/mushouka/detail/1342886.htm

◆ Supplemental Scholarship Fund (Supplemental Scholarship Grant for High School Students)

- A system that supports educational expenses other than high school tuition fees (repayment not required).
- All households exempt from paying prefectural and municipal tax (*per income basis*) are eligible for application.
- Parents or guardians should apply in the prefecture where they reside (Those enrolled in schools in Shiga Prefecture should apply at their school).
- As a general rule, the parents or guardians will receive the grant (In the case of private schools, handling of the fund may differ depending on the school).



Info Regarding High School Tuition Support Fund · Supplemental Scholarship Grant for High School Students

(Public schools) Shiga Pref. Board of Education High School Education Division
Tel. 077-528-4587

(Private schools) Shiga Pref. Department of General Affairs

Private School · University Promotion Division Tel. 077-528-3271

◆ Enrollment Incentive for Students of Schools for Special Needs

- A system that provides part or all of the expenses necessary for enrollment to a special needs education school in accordance to the income status of the household.
- Parents or guardians of students in special needs education school are eligible to receive this benefit.
- Apply at the school where one will enroll.
- In general, parents or guardians will receive the school enrollment financial incentive.

Info Educational Bureau of Shiga Pref. Board of Education Special Needs Education Division
Tel. 077-528-4641

❖ The telephone numbers listed here corresponds only to Japanese language.

▲ What is “My Number” (*Individual Number*) ?

- “My Number” is a 12-digit number designated to each and every registered resident in Japan.
- Individual number (“My Number”) may be confirmed in your “My Number” Card, “My Number” Notification Card and in the Certificate of Items Stated in Resident Register.
- Please consult with your local municipal office in case you lost your “My Number” Card or your “My Number” Notification Card.

▣ For more info. regarding “My Number” (multilingual):

<https://www.cao.go.jp/bangouseido/foreigners/index.html>

Event Information

◆ 4 / 1 (Mon) until 10 / 30 (Wed) Okishima Monte Cruise

A 40-minute guided cruise around Okishima
Okishima Fishing Port

Adults: ¥ 1,600 Elem.school students: ¥800

[Info] Council for the Promotion of Okishima Town's
Remote Islands Tel. 0748-32-5589

◆ 4 / 19 (Fri) · 4 / 20 (Sat)

Minakuchi Hikiyama Matsuri

Minakuchi-jinja (3-14 Miya no mae, Minakuchi-cho,
Koka City)

Minakuchibayashi music is performed on the
luxurious *hikiyama* floats.

[Info] Koka City Tourism Association

Tel. 0748-60-2690

◆ 4 / 22 (Mon) Korei Taisai (Taga Festival)

Taga-taisha (604 Taga, Taga-cho, Inukami-gun)

A ritual performed by an estimated number of 400
people and approximately 40 men on horses.

[Info] Taga Tourism Association Tel. 0749-48-1553

◆ 4 / 28 (Sun)

The 51st Kusatsu Shukuba Festival

Along Tokaido and Nakasendo streets around
JR Kusatsu station and Kusatsu City Hall area.

There will be parades, stalls and stage
performances.

[Info] Shukuba Festival Execut. Committee secretariat
Tel. 077-566-3219

◆ 5 / 18 (Sat) Pipe Organ Gala Concert

14:00 until 16:00 ¥ 500

Bungei Seminario (777

Kuwanomiji, Omihachiman City)

[Info] Niji no kai secretariat Tel. 090-2013-6404

◆ 6 / 1 (Sat) · 6 / 2 (Sun) GyuU Poke in Shiga Ryuo 6th Worldwide Flea Market

Ryuo-cho General Sports Park "Dragon Hat"
(3282 Okaya, Ryuo-cho, Kamo-gun)

Antiques, handmade items *marche* (market)

[Info] GyuU Poke Executive Committee

Tel. 080-5364-2345



The Japanese "Heisei (平成)" era will end on the
30th of April. The enthronement of the new
emperor will be on May 1st, marking the
beginning of the new era, "Reiwa (令和)".

The next issue of Mimitaro will be in July.

Japanese Cultural Experience in Otsu

◆ Sword Dance "Kembu"

Reservation is required

Shoga samurai sword dance

(1-4-6 Asahigaoka, Otsu City)

Adults: ¥4000 Children: (12 years & below) ¥3000

[Info] Samurai Kembu

Tel. 075-751-2033



◆ Miidera Temple Experiential Activity

Reservation is required

Miidera (temple) (246 Onjyoji, Otsu City)

Buddhist monk experience: ¥10000 Zen meditation:
¥1000 Sutra hand-copying · Buddhist image tracing:

from ¥1000 Bead bracelet making: ¥1000

The "Exhibition of Buddha Illustrations by Manga
Artists" is also being held until May 19.

[Info] Miidera Head Temple

Tel. 077-522-2238

◆ Japanese confectionery making

Reserve 4 days in advance

Sunai no Sato (4-2-1 Oishi Ryumon, Otsu City)

¥2700

[Info] Sunai no Sato Tel. 077-546-3131

◆ Kimono · Hakama · 12-layered ceremonial kimono (*junihitoe*)

Omi-jingu (1-1 Jingu-cho, Otsu City)

Kimono · Hakama 1 hour: ¥1000

3 hours: ¥2000

Junihitoe Reservation is required 30 minutes: ¥1000

[Info] Omi-jingu (shrine)

Tel. 077-511-4357



Information from SIA

Shiga Prefecture's Training for Care Workers

Training for foreigners to learn the necessary skills in
nursing care that would enable them to work in actual
nursing homes will be held in Shiga Prefecture.

Contents: Care Worker Induction Course

Intended for: Foreign residents of the prefecture
(Will be held at 2 locations in the prefecture)

* Tuition is free, but students will shoulder textbook
expenses.

[Info] Machikado Care Shiga Net (Konan area)

Tel. 0748-60-2899

Nagahama City Council of Social Welfare
(Kohoku area)

Tel. 0749-78-8294

◆ Accepting Foreign Student Applicants for the Biwako Scholarship Year 2019

Eligible: International students · university · junior
college students who are residents of Shiga
Prefecture

Please refer to the 2019 application guidelines at the
following website: <http://www.s-i-a.or.jp>

[Info] Shiga Intercultural Association for Globalization

Tel. 077-526-0931