

The cats escorted me to a very old-style building. From there Botchan whistled through his fingers and a white bird flew down to us from the rooftop.
Kiyo nodded in approval.
“This is Katama. He’s the white heron that discovered this hot spring long, long ago. We call him ‘Katama (the still one)’ because he’s usually always up on the hot spring rooftop standing still as a statue.”
“Katama, take Maru out eastward,” ordered Botchan. “Ke-ke-kwaa” squawked Katama in reply.
They were all staring at me. But this time it was with pleading, imploring looks.
“Maru, we’re counting on you.”

The old building mentioned above is Dogo Hot Spring. It is a symbol of Ehime and is the oldest hot spring in Japan dating back 1000 years. The bird that stands atop it is the white heron that is said to have healed its injured leg in the spring water, leading to the discovery of the hot spring.
Birds feature a lot in Japanese culture. Cranes represent long life, couple cranes symbolize marital harmony, a thousand paper cranes grant good luck and recovery from illness. A three-legged crow guided Japan’s first emperor Jinmu through mountains, while other tales say a gleaming phoenix landed on his bow, emanating lightning bolts helping him in battle. The phoenix symbolizes resurrection. Sparrows symbolize happiness, love, perseverance and agility. Crows are regarded as appeased souls of the departed that become messengers of the gods. Legendary hero Takeru Yamato is said to have turned into a swan after his death. The pheasant features in the Momotaro story and is also Japan’s national bird.
Japan’s incorporation of nature into its mythology and culture never ceases to impress me. Even now birds are featured in popular culture and anime. Birds and flight have always and probably always will inspire and impress us humans. This autumn, do take the time to gaze up at birds flying to southern skies, or to read up on birds from legends... I personally love to watch the greedy herons, stalking and dodging rice combine harvesters in the fields, to feast on insects and rodents left homeless from the harvesting.

かなしきデブ猫ちゃん



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ONE POINT JAPANESE

「～っぽい」の 使い方
(How to use “～ looks”)

A : あれ？くしゃみが 止まらないの？ 花粉症？
Are? Kushami ga tomaranai no? Kafunshō?
(Whoa. You can't stop sneezing? Do you have hay fever?)

B : 何だか この 部屋、ほこりっぽくない？
Nandaka kono heya, hokorippoku nai?
(Doesn't this room look a bit dusty?)

A : 具合が 悪そうだけど、大丈夫？
Guai ga warusō dakedo, daijōbu?
(You look sick. Are you alright?)

B : 昨日から ちょっと 熱っぽいけど、たいした ことは ないです。
Kinō kara chotto netsuppoi kedo, taishita koto wa naidesu.
(I've been a little feverish since yesterday, but it's nothing serious.)

A : 無理しちゃ だめだよ。
Muri shicha dame da yo.
(Don't overwork yourself.)

あとは わたしに 任せて、早く 帰って 寝なさい。
Ato wa watashi ni makasete, hayaku kaette nenasai.
(Leave the rest of the work to me, go home and get some sleep.)

A : 今年の 秋も サイクリング旅行に 行くの？
Kotoshi no aki mo saikuringu ryokō ni iku no?
(Are you going to take a cycling trip again this autumn?)

B : もう サイクリングは 卒業。今は マラソンに 夢中なの。
Mō saikuringu wa sotsugyō. Ima wa marason ni muchū nano.
(I'm done with cycling. Now I'm really into running marathons.)

マラソン大会に 申し込んだから、応援に 来てね。
Marason taikai ni mōshikonda kara, ōen ni kite ne.
(I signed up for the marathon, so come cheer me on.)

A : また 趣味が 変わったんだ…。 飽きっぽいなあ。
Mata shumi ga kawattanda... Akippoi nā.
(You changed hobbies again. You seem to get bored easily.)

< by Niihama Nihongo no Kai>

NNK also provides Japanese lessons for foreigners living in Niihama.
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What's New?

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From Libya to Niihama: My Journey of Discovery in Japan
Hello!! My name is Ataher Ahmed.
As-salamu alaykum (Arabic: السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ)

On August 1, 2019, I arrived in Niihama City and began my career with Nippon Ketjen as a product developer at the R&D Center. Moving from Libya (North Africa) to Japan was more than just a change of location; it was a journey into a world vastly different from what I had known. What I found was a peaceful city rich in tradition, friendly people, and a pace of life that felt both calming and inspiring.

As a Libyan, my first few months in Niihama were filled with adjustment. Prior to arriving in Niihama, I lived in Tokyo and had studied Japanese at a basic to intermediate level. Nevertheless, the local Niihama dialect and its rapid speech took me by surprise. But I quickly learned that the people of Niihama are patient and genuinely helpful. Whether I was lost or needed help reading a sign, someone would always step in, often with a smile and a willingness to communicate even through gestures.

Culturally, Japan was a beautiful contrast to what I had experienced back home. The discipline, cleanliness, and deep respect for nature and others left a strong impression on me. I was fascinated by the rituals in everyday life, from bowing as a sign.

Food was another adventure. I went from couscous and Bazin to sushi, udon, and takoyaki. At first, I was hesitant, especially with raw fish, but over time, I grew to appreciate

the simplicity and freshness of Japanese cuisine. At the same time, my wife, two children, and I found joy in preparing Libyan dishes at home, which we occasionally shared with colleagues and friends.

Living in Niihama also gave me the opportunity to reflect on my identity. I was not just a foreigner, I was a representative of Libya and of Arab and Muslim culture. This meant that I sometimes faced questions or misconceptions, but more often, it became a bridge for dialogue. I enjoyed teaching my Japanese friends about Ramadan, Arabic calligraphy, or Libyan culture, and in return, I learned about their seasonal festivals, such as the Niihama Taiko Festival, an unforgettable experience of drums, teamwork, and tradition.

Working and studying in Japan have taught me the value of patience and humility. Whether it's the quiet dedication of students or the precision of Japanese craftsmanship, I have come to admire the culture of detail and persistence. At times, I sometimes missed my family back in Libya, especially during major holidays, but the natural beauty of Shikoku, the friendships I built, and the sense of purpose I developed kept me going.

Looking back, my journey from Libya to Niihama was more than a move across countries. It was a path toward growth, understanding, and connection. My experiences in Japan challenged me, transformed me, and welcomed me in ways that will remain unforgettable. As I continue to live and grow here, I hope to be a small bridge between our two cultures, proof that even in a small city like Niihama, the world can come together.



This newsletter is published by SGG, a volunteer group that helps foreigners living in and around Niihama. If you need any advice, information, or support, please contact SGG. SGG would welcome any suggestions, questions, or ideas for monthly articles.

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* This month's editors are Taeko Oishi & Kazuko Kumata.

Foreign Workers & Japanese Seniors

(Nikkei Shimbun: July 17, 2025)

KUROFUNE in Nagoya City designs apps that support foreign workers living in Japan. They will start a new service to reduce the workload of companies employing those under the Specified Skilled Worker status. When a foreign worker needs to go to a public office or hospital, KUROFUNE will match them through their app with local seniors to act as a guide, providing better circumstances for foreign workers living in Japan.

The service will launch in Ehime-ken in October at the earliest, and they plan to expand it nationwide in the 2026 fiscal year. Ehime's thriving city of shipbuilding, Imabari, is home to many foreign specified skilled workers who use the "KUROFUNE PASSPORT," a registration support app for companies hiring such workers. Through this app, KUROFUNE provides support services for employers in dealing with departure and arrival transfers, as well as support for their employees' Japanese language learning. Matching employees with senior guides will be added to the list of services.

Typically, when a foreign worker gets sick or needs administrative procedures, a company's general affairs department attends to the matter. But this can place a burden on small and mid-sized companies with limited staffing. Guidance could be done by local seniors with a desire to work who are registered in the app and can accompany a worker in need. Seniors will be paid hourly by KUROFUNE, meeting the needs of both work-seeking seniors and companies trying to reduce their workload.

Taiko Float Whereabouts

Takaoka Taisei
(Ehime Shimbun: August 29, 2025)

Where is the Taiko Float now? The students of Niihama Technical College (Yakumo-cho, Niihama) developed the "Dondoko Map" app to provide the real-time positional information of Taiko floats marching around the city during the Niihama Taiko Festival. Currently, seven Taiko floats from the Nakahagi district have agreed to take part in a demonstration experiment. The number of participants may increase as the students appeal for other districts to join.



A small beacon is installed on each Taiko float, and the positional information is displayed on the map of the app via base stations. The app includes a function that allows viewers to jump to the site where they can see videos of Taiko floats, or to the social network site of each district.

One of the students said, "We can see the location of a favorite Taiko float, and car drivers can forecast and avoid traffic jams." Ito Keisuke, the chairperson of the Taiko float festival steering committee, observed smilingly, "We are thankful to local young people for creating a convenient tool and livening up the festival."

The app can be downloaded free of charge from September using a terminal based in Apple iOS or Google Android, and is also accessible on the website.

October Events (Autumn Festivals)

☆ **Niihama Taiko Festival** will be held from October 15-18.

☆ **Saijo Taiko Festival** will be held from October 11-17.

The Taikodai dates back to the Heian or Kamakura Period in the 12th century. Over a hundred danjiri floats, mikoshi shrines, and taikodai parade through the streets of these neighboring cities in two gorgeous and spectacular festivals. Come and enjoy this unique and traditional experience!

Online Information in English from Niihama City

☆ **A Guide for Living in Niihama**



☆ **The Niihama Medical Institution Map**



☆ **Trash & Garbage Sorting Information**



☆ **What's New? in English**



☆ **Niihama Tourist Information**



<https://niihama.info/>

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