

# HELLO, FRIENDS !!

Shimane Hello Friends

**VOL. 17**  
2022.2.1

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the world of “HELLO, FRIENDS!!”.  
One month has already passed since the beginning of the new year. What makes me excited the most now is ... “Beijing Winter Olympics”. As a big fan of figure skating (never do, just watch) and as my favorite figure skater is to compete, I’m looking forward to the days when I can immerse myself in the big sports event. Hopefully the competitions will be held safe and sound with near-zero infections.

## 1 . LET’S MEET TODAY’S GUEST !!



Today’s guest is **HOSSAIN MOHAMMAD MAHMUD** san from Bangladesh. He completed the Ph.D. program last December. He used to be a veterinarian but changed his research field and studied in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Not many could be more versatile than him, ... because he is also a great cook, angler, and badminton player. It is really a shame that I cannot taste his spicy food or sweet snack as the pandemic has suspended the school festival for the last two years. Anyway, please enjoy his story being unfolded from now.

### 1. First, may I ask why you became interested in Shimane University to study as a Ph.D. student?

When I had just graduated from university, my cousin’s sister’s uterine cancer was detected. She survived thanks to Almighty, but unfortunately, her whole uterus had to be removed. So, she has lost chances to become a mother. The fact strongly motivated me to do research in this field and someday discover the ways to save such women. Luckily, I had an acquaintance in the department of Shimane University and asked her if there could be some ways for me to study in the same department. She discussed it with the professor, Kyo sensei and he instantly accepted it. The only thing that I had to do was to prepare for the entrance exam.

### 2. What was your first impression when coming to Izumo?

Cold was my first impression. I started living in Japan in April. Even in the month when people in Japan rejoice at the arrival of Spring, it felt as if it’s still in the middle of winter to the person who had come all the way from a much warmer country, Bangladesh. As I have lived here since then, I can say I’m used to it now.

- I know. I cannot help laughing when I see students from Bangladesh sometimes bundle up in several layers of thick clothes even when it is warm enough.

### 3. What has been your biggest culture shock since coming to Japan?

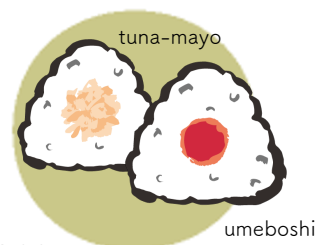
When I first came to Japan, my department held a welcome party for me, where I saw people eating raw fish. It was unbelievable. Raw fish. I thought: How is it possible? But, they say, when in Rome do as the Romans do. I tried it anyway and found it amazingly tasty. I even wondered why my country didn't have the habit of eating raw fish. It was also my first encounter with chopsticks. We Bangladeshi use our fingers when eating something. So, it was very shocking to see people using a simple pair of sticks gracefully to eat. Even now, I'm not good with them but my kids can handle them very well, maybe because they have school lunch using them every day, and actually they prefer chopsticks to fingers. Children can adapt to anything very quickly, can't they? Come to think of it, our department hasn't had parties for a long time since the pandemic began. I miss them.

### 4. What's your favorite Japanese food or Japanese word?

I've come to love sushi, and I love onigiri, rice balls, too.

- What kind of onigiri do you like?

I love tuna-mayo (mayonnaise) onigiri and ebi (shrimp) -the mayo one.



- When it comes to onigiri, I first come up with “umeboshi, pickled plum” as an ingredient. But, actually, I remember another international student from Bangladesh mentioning tuna-mayo and ebi-mayo as her favorites before. Have you tried umeboshi?

Yes, I have. I love it.

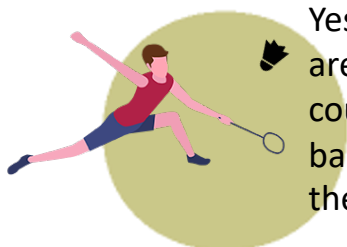
- Really? I thought people from overseas hate its sour taste.

We pickle olive and enjoy the similar taste in our daily meals in Bangladesh. I think those who love pickled olive love umeboshi as well.

- Wow, it's an eye-opener. I haven't tasted pickled olive so far, but I think I should if I have a chance. Hossain san, you are a good cook. Please let me know how to use pickled olive for cooking someday.

Sure. Back to onigiri, I get onigiris mostly at convenient stores, but my wife sometimes makes them. My son is a member of the badminton club of his junior high. When there is a game and he is on the roster, she makes onigiris for him. Sometimes we (my wife, daughter and I) go to the venue to root for him and enjoy her onigiris together.

- Onigiri is loved by all your family. Great!! Is badminton popular in your country?



Yes, it is one of the most familiar sports in Bangladesh. In cities, there are gymnasiums, and people can play it all year round. But in the countryside without such facilities, winter is the only season when badminton is possible. It is very windy in summer so we cannot control the shuttle and it is impossible to play badminton outdoors.

## 5. What's your favorite sightseeing spot in Japan?

My favorite sightseeing spots are Hiroshima and Miyajima. I love them so much that I have been there several times since I joined a tour organized by "Izumo Host Family Association" and visited those places for the first time. I was instantly hooked by Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki.

**- I love it too. It needs some techniques to make such a layered okonomiyaki. I didn't make it myself. Just talking about it makes me hungry.**

My kids' school trip's destination used to be Hiroshima and Miyajima, where they can learn about the atomic bomb and the history of the magnificent shrine. Sadly enough, these experiences have been suspended due to the pandemic. My son went to Tottori in 2020 and my daughter went to Matsue last year instead.

**- The pandemic has affected valuable opportunities children should have in many ways. It is really a shame.**

## 6. What do you picture in your mind as a career path after graduation?

As I told you, my ultimate goal is to reduce the suffering of women who are plagued by uterine cancer. In order to achieve it, I want to hone my skills by accumulating experiences as a researcher. I think the United States, Canada, and Australia are among good candidate sites. Maybe I will apply for a postdoc status in one of these countries someday.



**- I have one question I have wanted to ask you for a long time. You are a veterinarian too, right? Which is more difficult to treat, humans or animals?**

It's animals definitely because humans can speak. They can explain their symptoms verbally. We cannot help but diagnose animals just by looking into the affected area. This difference is huge.

**- It is another eye-opener. If animals could speak, many more lives would be saved. Someday, someone might invent such a translator from animals cries or attitudes.**

Thank you, Hossain san. This time we did this interview remotely as we saw the growing number of infections in Shimane.

I remember he was skillfully making the food at the Bangladeshi stall before the pandemic, and the served curry was something even those who didn't like spicy food would love. I also remember he asked me once where he could do exercise with his kids when school was closed and when I suggested one place, he looked really happy. Not only being a good researcher but also being a good cook and a good dad, I'm sure he will enjoy life whatever he will do in the future.



*This corner, "Let's meet today's guest!!" is now recruiting volunteer interviewees.*

*Please contact me, Yuko Okada, at [gakumh04@jn.shimane-u.ac.jp](mailto:gakumh04@jn.shimane-u.ac.jp) or come to my office if you can take time for the interview.*

*If we have no volunteers, we will ask someone to be the next interviewee.*

## 2 . LET'S TRY THIS JAPANESE RECIPE !!

### SEKIHAN (赤飯 / せきはん)

Sekihan is a traditional Japanese food and served at a festive scene such as a birthday party, a wedding banquet, Coming-of-Age day, or to celebrate one's graduation or the start of a new life. "Seki" in Sekihan means red and "han" means rice in Japanese. It has been considered in Japan that "red" has the power to expel evil spirits and avoid disasters. The recipe here introduces how to make "Sekihan" from scratch\*.



※ If you would like a shortcut, please use a can of boiled red beans.



#### INGREDIENTS

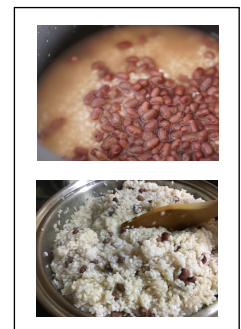
- Sticky rice (called Mochi gome) ..... 360 cc (2 gou\* (合))
  - Rice (normal) .....180 cc (1 gou)
  - Red beans ..... 55g
  - Water ..... 360cc
  - Water left over after boiling the beans ..... 90cc
  - Sesame & salt ..... as appropriate
- ※ "gou" is a unit to specifically measure the amount of rice.



#### HOW TO MAKE



- 1 Mix the sticky rice with the normal rice. Rinse the mix well and drain in a colander.
- 2 Rinse the red beans lightly, put in a pot together with 400 cc of water, and place it on a high heat. When boiling hot, drain the water.
- 3 Put another 400 cc of water in 2 and place it on a high heat again. When boiling hot, reduce the heat to low and cook for about 15 min. Turn off the heat before the beans get too soft and leave to stand until cool.
- 4 Strain 3 through a colander and separate the red beans and water.
- 5 Put 1, 360 cc of water, the boiled red beans, the leftover water of 90 cc in a larger-sized Teflon-coated pot or rice cooker and leave it for three hours.
- 6 Put a lid on 5 and place it on a medium heat. After it comes to the boil, simmer for 15 minutes on a low heat. Don't take off the lid.
- 7 Turn off the heat and let the cooked rice steam for 5 min.
- 8 Mix the rice and beans evenly, serve in a bowl, and sprinkle the sesame and salt as you like.



### 3 . SIGHTSEEING SPOTS



~LET'S ENJOY THE SCENERY FROM THE "KOTATSU"!!



I have lived in Shimane for more than 20 years, but it was only last summer when I tried it for the first time, even though it is very famous. Why? Maybe I was afraid that a huge crowd would be waiting and it was something for tourists from outside Shimane. After the 50 min. ride, however, I thought it was fun. This time of year, it is even much more fun, thanks to the Kotatsu, a table with a built-in heater and a blanket. The boat goes through the canal around Matsue Castle and the vicinity still holds the quaint atmosphere from the Edo period. The roof of the boat is lowered and you have to crouch down when it narrowly passes through under the bridges. Just enjoy the thrilling experience!!

#### ● DETAILED INFORMATION

<https://www.matsue-horikawameguri.jp/language/en/index.html>

There are three stops to get on. Please check the website and choose the one you like.

If you go there by car on the weekend, you can use the parking lots in Shimane Prefectural Office free of charge. If you use the Ichibata Line, you can get another warm experience as introduced in 2).

#### ● FARE FOR ONE DAY PASS

JPY 1,200/adult (age 13 or above)

JPY 600/child (age 6 ~ 12)

If you want to enjoy the privilege, don't forget your foreign passport or residence card.



After enjoying the sightseeing boat, why don't you warm your feet with hot spring water to ease your fatigue? There is a roofed footbath in front of "Matsue Shinji-ko Onsen Station", the terminal of Ichibata Line.



Matsue Shinji-ko Onsen Station



You can enjoy it free of charge. Just make sure to avoid the cleaning hours, from 6:00am to 8:00am on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

※The service is suspended from Jan.27 to Feb.20 due to COVID quasi-emergency.  
Please check the latest information on their website.

## 4. LET'S LEARN ABOUT A SEASONAL EVENT AROUND THIS TIME.



### GRADUATION CEREMONIES



From mid to late March, Japan resounds with weeps and cries here and there, from the venues of graduation ceremonies where many people cannot hold back tears remembering those good days during their (children's) school life. I don't know what it is like in your home countries but here in Japan, we never forget to bring a handkerchief.



Otherwise, our faces would be a total mess with tears coming endlessly. Joking aside, a graduation ceremony usually consists of congratulatory addresses by the headmaster, guests, and junior students, acknowledgements from the graduates, as well as the singing of the school song and other ones, and the awarding of diplomas. In some schools, even the angle of the bow when receiving the diploma is strictly decided. People are in formal attire and the atmosphere is somber enough.

Sadly, due to the pandemic, the way it is conducted has been drastically changed with parents or other relatives just allowed to join online in some cases. Anyway, as it is also called "commencement" in US English, it marks the beginning of a new life. So let's celebrate the upcoming graduation of those around you with a big round of applause.



**"HELLO,FRIENDS!!"** is created by *The English Project Team*.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact us:  
[gakumh04@jn.shimane-u.ac.jp](mailto:gakumh04@jn.shimane-u.ac.jp) (addressed to Yuko Okada)

The English used on **"HELLO,FRIENDS!!"** is supervised  
by our English teacher, *Ms. Murphy, Lynne*.