

HELLO, FRIENDS !!

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Hello, everyone. Welcome to the world of HELLO, FRIENDS!! I'm writing this in the middle of March, and yesterday it was announced that the sakura flowers (cherry blossoms) have bloomed in Tokyo at the earliest time ever with a tie record. According to the news report, the timing closely links how cold it was in the winter and how rapidly it got warm in early spring. When this is issued at the beginning of April, maybe the cherry trees in Shimane will also have bloomed. Welcome to the new students! How precious it is to be able to travel freely across borders now! Enjoy the beautiful nature around you, and enjoy the new life which has just started.

\\ **Let's meet today's guest!!** //



Today's guest is *AUNG PHYO WAI* san from Myanmar. He is in his 4th year in the Ph.D. program and belongs to the Department of Microbiology. He is one of the few international students from Myanmar who we have had so far. His beaming smile has left a strong impression on me and he seems to have many friends thanks to his friendly character. What is he actually like? Just read more to get some clues!!



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

I studied in Thailand for two years to get a Master's degree. After completing the program, I wanted to study more as a Ph.D. student in an advanced country. Among others, Japan came to my mind as a destination, maybe because of its sophisticated and advanced techniques and its proximity to my country, Myanmar.

My mentors or professors in Myanmar (Shimane University) and Thailand (Gifu University) happened to complete their Ph.D.s in Japan and they recommended me to follow in their footsteps. I looked into various sources to see what it is like to study in Shimane University. I found out that an undergraduate friend from my university in Myanmar had been doing his research in Izumo campus. I contacted him straight away, saying to myself "how lucky I am". The recommendation from my mentors and positive views from my friend solidified my determination to go on to Shimane University, more specifically, the Department of Microbiology in the Faculty of Medicine.

It was really lucky for me that the Professor of the Department, Dr. Hironori Yoshiyama, disclosed his contact on the Internet. I e-mailed him to convey my aspiration to become his student. After several exchanges of communication, he accepted me and arranged things so that I could take the necessary procedures smoothly. Having passed the entrance exam in autumn 2019, I finally came to Japan and started research and study under his supervision.

2. What's your favorite sightseeing spot in Japan ?

It is Kyoto. I went there with my fellow students in the same department just before the pandemic spread in Japan. We first visited Kyoto Tower since it was near the bus terminal, Kyoto station. The panoramic view from the top of the tower was awesome. We used the bus with the one-day pass to go around Kyoto city. I finally felt I was in Japan when I saw many people wearing kimono. Actually, I had believed that the Japanese people wore kimono until I came to Japan. So, I was surprised and somewhat disappointed to see the reality.



I also saw rickshaws and even a geisha. “How Japanese”, I thought. It was just a three-day trip, but Kyoto had more than I expected. I definitely want to visit it once again.

You were lucky to run across a geisha. We can spot them only in limited places. Strictly speaking, it might have been a maiko-san. When a maiko reaches a certain age, she becomes a geisha. I don't have kimono, like many others. Nowadays, we only put on kimono for a few occasions such as graduation ceremonies or the coming-of-age day.



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

I don't have any specific plan for my career after getting the degree. There is still one year left. If the situation permits, I want to go back to my country and teach students as a lecturer. I want to spread the knowledge I will have acquired here to as many students as possible.

Thank you, Wai san. His story in Kyoto sounds charming, doesn't it? Whether it's good or bad, we really rarely wear kimono. There are even some stores which remake old kimono into something completely different such as usual clothes or bags. I felt like visiting Kyoto myself after this interview. As he mentioned, I hope Wai san will have another chance to see those good old Japanese things in the city. His story has a lot more. If you want to read it, please go to [“Students' Voices”](#).



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> 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.

My Recommended Sightseeing Spot //

Today's information provider is *Imawaka Shuko* san of our faculty's General Affairs Division. We divided her recommended spots into two parts, this issue and the next issue. Here is the comment from her.

Lake Togo Area 東郷湖周辺

“Hello, I'm Imawaka Shuko. I love traveling, especially to places rich in nature and history, and I also enjoy local specialties and hot springs. If the place offers outdoor activities, or art and music experiences, I become tremendously happy.

My recommended sightseeing spot is the Lake Togo Area (Togo Hot Springs & Hawaii Hot Springs) in Yurihama-cho, Tottori Pref. It's about 3 hours by car from Izumo and therefore a one-day trip is possible, but I recommend you enjoy the activities fully and stay overnight at a nice hotel or inn.



The course walking around Lake Togo is the first one approved by Japan Nordic Walk League. Beginners can join lessons and rent poles at the station.

There are several courses with different distances and locations such as:

Lake Togo one lap course (12km), Enchoen course (5.4km), and Ayame Pond course (4.5km).

It's a fresh and thrilling experience to go walking through rustic shopping streets such as Matsuzaki Shotengai while enjoying the lake sceneries and water birds and sometimes making a detour. Yurihama-cho provides Nordic Walking events on a regular basis. Just check the website: <https://genkiwalking.net/>



Photo by Imawaka san

As for [Activity 2 & 3], you can read about it in the next issue!!

\\ Let's learn about the Japanese culture //

Tsuijimatsu 築地松

Have you ever heard of “Tsuijimatsu (築地松)”? Even if you don't know the word, if you have taken the bus from Izumo Airport to come to the campus, you must have seen it for sure. It is the pine trees called “Japanese black pine” planted west and north of villas or farmers' houses on their premises in Izumo Plain to stabilize the soil and protect the buildings from strong winds.



They soar high and are neatly trimmed to a certain height. The landscape dotted with the pine trees surrounded by rice fields creates an amazing view, with the fields changing their colors in accordance with the season, green in summer, golden in autumn, and white in snow. The origin of Tsuijimatsu is not certain, but one theory goes like this: When farmers' villages were established in this area, the powerful clans raised the ground of their houses by several meters to prevent floods from the rivers, and also built a mound around their houses and planted water-resistant trees or bamboos on it to harden the soil.

Sadly the marvelous view of Tsuijimatsu is now facing the risk of disappearance, due to the damage by the bugs called “Matsu kui mushi (pine weevils)”, and the shortage of the artisans to trim the trees. Some descendants may want to give up maintaining the trees to save the cost. In response to the situation, an organization to protect the landscape was established in 1994. They have hosted various events including photo contests, cycling tours, and discussions with the artisans. If you are interested in their activities, please visit their website:

<https://www.tsuijimatsu.com/?id=157&pre=1>

\\ Let's try this Japanese recipe!! //



Wakame Gohan わかめごはん

*Gohan means cooked rice

You can find wakame seaweed all year round at the supermarket. However, it has its season and now it is the time. Fresh seaweed has a chewy texture and strong ocean flavor. It's definitely different from the salted or dried ones. It does not last long but it is distinctly tasty. It is also nutritious, rich in potassium, calcium, vitamin A, and iodine. Today we introduce a rice dish which you can only enjoy this season.

How to precook fresh wakame

- 1) Wash to remove dirt and small insects.
- 2) Separate into stems and leaves.
- 3) Boil for about 5 - 10 seconds and cool in cold water. You will be surprised to see the bright green color.
※ Don't throw away the boiled water because it is used later.



boiled



INGREDIENTS

(for two persons)

- Rice 2 gou (1gou→180cc)
- Precooked fresh wakame 60g
- Leftover water from precooking ... as needed
- Salt a pinch
- Ground sesame seeds as needed

HOW TO MAKE

- ① Cook the rice with the salt and leftover water in a rice cooker.
(If the leftover water is not enough, add tap water.)
- ② Cut the precooked wakame leaves into bite sizes and the stems into about 5mm-thick pieces.
- ③ When the rice is cooked, add ② and mix well.
- ④ Sprinkle the sesame seeds over ③ and enjoy it. The ocean flavor will please your sense of smell even before you savor the dish.



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

If you have any comments or questions, please contact us:
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The English used on “HELLO, FRIENDS!!” is supervised
by our English teacher, Ms. Murphy, Lynne.

