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Kanji Camp
Japanese Language & Culture Exploration

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NEWS FLASH

July 2007 2007年7月
Special Edition

Within this News Flash you will find valuable information about programs, activities and/or upcoming events and even Japanese culture.

FACE: American and Japanese Culture in Contrast?

Approximately two weeks ago, we received the second passionate phone call from a local news reporter alerting me that once again his editors had decided to run an article about Kanji Camp. His phone message pleaded wouldn't we call him back pronto and couldn't we deliver the necessary information and materials again within 48 business hours.

As you know we don't take the opportunity for media coverage lightly and we consider it very carefully in respect to our students privacy and program propriety. Yet, we appreciate thoughtful recognition of the program and we like this publication, so I called the local newsman again to learn what he needed for his story. The reporter requested the same information we had already harvested and delivered nearly a month earlier, when they were supposedly going to run a story about us. At that time we received his questions, translated them into Japanese, received responses from Japanese instructors and interpreted them back into English. We asked some parents to write some thoughts about their student's involvement in our program to support the article and they kindly and quickly provided letters. KC's ninja-ographer contributed photos — offering images that would positively highlight our students and program. All the elements requested were provided promptly before deadline.

Over the course of the next three days, I fielded the reporters continued emails and delivered everything requested including decent photographs to highlight the story. But for some reasons it wasn't enough. The reporter kept pushing for us to jump through more hoops to get a story in the paper. Finally, I had to tell him the Japanese decision that we felt we had provided enough for his story. And we would not break our no visitor rules class policy to allow some unknown adult into disrupt lessons with minors and without parental permission just to snap more photos. Despite having an email from the editor mentioning support of the article, come the July 3rd issue, there was no article in the paper...for the 2nd time. Or the week following. Naturally, our Japanese involved with the issue were shocked the reporter or paper would allow situation to happen twice, when so many person's faces were involved.

Among the top five cultural concepts that Japan experts share in their works about Japanese society is the concept of *kao* or face. The concepts of "face" has existed within Japanese heritage for literally hundreds of years. The very act of anyone asking someone else to stop what they had planned for the day, provide information by a dead line puts the reporter's face and his company's face (ie. reputation) on the line. But other faces were also on the line: BlazeCom received the request and forwarded it for assistance; the Japanese who dropped everything to answer reporters questions; the cross-cultural interpreter, the parents who gave time to respond to our request for input; the person who searched files to find applicable photos, etc. Yet, herein lies major cultural contrast. My sense from the reporter was that he was doing us a favor. Yet, in Japanese culture, the situation would be loss of face for all involved...twice. Japanese never offer anything they cannot deliver. Such a situation would never occur from a reputable firm one time. The fact this situation has occurred a second time makes it even more offensive under Japanese society. And very little can be done to repair the situation with the Japanese. So what can we learn from the illustration?

In American culture when it comes to trust, we have the old "fool me once, shame on you, but fool me twice shame on me" philosophy. But in Japanese culture, face an individual's reputation is not really their own. There is always someone else with face on the line in every interaction. Japanese words are followed with action. They rarely agree to action they cannot deliver and avoid risky behavior. Excuses for failure to perform are not really apart of the culture because failure to deliver on promises could cause their families, teachers, or bosses loss from loosing face. Bottom line, Japanese do not promise to do things they cannot deliver, which often makes experience abroad very sobering for them.

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Cultural Note Example:

In Japan how one speaks and acts is equated with morality. In Japan face is connected with even how to perform a bow.





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Events & Fieldtrips

July 5, 2007 launched IUPUI's **Conversational Japanese** class taught by Blake-sensei to 11 students ranging in age from 17 to 65, as voiced by one student.

Sunday, August 5, 2007 Field Trip

Please mark your calendar for the annual Japanese Bon-Odori held between 6:00 p.m.—9:30 p.m. We will all be meeting between 5:00-5:15 p.m. at the classroom to caravan to Ocean World restaurant to find parking and have fun.

Students please wear your KC t-shirt and tan or black on your bottom half for team spirit and to make it easy to keep us together. Families again welcome to enjoy food, folks and fun. Although the restaurant is closed, please anticipate a food and beverage charge. Based on what we recall on beverage pricing, it is recommended to BYOB in a large container. And a Japanese handkerchief due to the heat.

Saturday., Sep. 22 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Saturday Seminar Travel Japan

Interested in going to Japan? IUPUI CLN will offer a class NEW course this Fall to help travelers make the most of treks to Japan. The course will investigate each prefecture of Japan, learning about interesting geographic and historic features as well as unique destinations. We'll explore the

impacts of weather and holidays on travel and sightseeing. Brief highlights of Japanese culture and festivals also will be covered. You'll learn tips to navigate Japan's efficient public transportation system, choose between various types of accommodations and manage shopping and eating. Mr. E having worked and lived in Japan knows how to help you create a travel plan based on your personal interests. The class will be at

Location: CLLC: 515 E. Main St., Carmel

Should your family friends or colleagues have ever talked about travel to Japan, they might like this seminar! Enrollments are handled online by visiting: www.cln.iupui.edu

As always stay tuned for future field trips !

