

Communities Around the World

Shingu

A Community in Japan



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PICTURE CREDITS

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Shi



Welcome to Shingu,
a community in Japan. Or, as we say here, “konnichi wa!”
(kohn-nee-chee-wah). Read that again, out loud! You
are saying “Hello” in Japanese.

こんにちは

“konnichi wa” in Japanese characters

*My name is
 Reiko. I live here
 in Shingu and I
 would like you to
 come and visit.*

First, I’ll show you how we use the **resources** of the sea and land here in Japan—both old ways and new.

Next, we’ll visit the places where I spend most of my time—school and home.

Last, I’ll give you a tour of Shingu. We’ll go downtown to see the shops. We’ll visit some of the interesting places in Shingu and nearby. I’ll tell you about our beliefs and how we govern ourselves. You’ll meet new people along the way. Don’t forget to greet them by saying “konnichi wa!”



Seacoast near Shingu



CHAPTER 1

Using Sea and Land

Shingu is in Japan, a country in Asia. To find Japan on a world map, first find Asia. That's easy. Just look for the biggest **continent** on Earth. Then look for the large group of islands off the northeastern coast of Asia. That's Japan.

To find Shingu on a map of Japan, first find the largest island. Shingu is on the southeastern coast of this island. Can you find it?

Did you know that all of Japan's islands are really mountaintops? The bottoms of these mountains are thousands of feet down on the ocean floor. Millions of years ago, huge **volcanoes** grew up slowly from the deep, broke through the waves, and became the Japanese islands.

Weather Report



Typhoon!

Shingu has very mild weather. Spring comes early here, and flowers bloom even in winter. But sometimes we do get storms. Do you know what a **typhoon** is? It is a huge storm with waves that can sink boats and winds that can blow down big trees. In your country these storms are called hurricanes. In the Pacific region, such storms are called typhoons. Sometimes we have a typhoon emergency here in Shingu.



"The Great Wave" by the famous Japanese artist Hokusai

Japan is surrounded by water. We Japanese have always used the sea as a resource. Our country has many mountains. Mountains are not good for farming, but are another kind of resource. Many trees grow on our mountains. We use these forests for **logging**. Let's see how we use these resources.



Old Ways

In Shingu we live on the seacoast, so fishing was very important to us in the past. It's less important today. But my grandfather still fishes for a living. Sometimes I join him on his boat. Want to come along? We'll have to get up early! He goes out just after three in the morning.

Several boats go to a fishing spot three miles out. There is nothing but the sea and the rising sun. Did you remember a hat? You'll get sunburn without it. What kinds of fish do we catch? You probably know tuna, mackerel, and lobster. Have you ever eaten fish such as bonito, or bream, or cutlessfish, or saury? What about shellfish such as abalone or turban shell?

We return to Shingu in the afternoon. Then my grandfather and the other fishers sell their catch at the local market. Sometimes they catch more than they can sell here. Then they might send fish to the market in our nearest big city, Osaka.

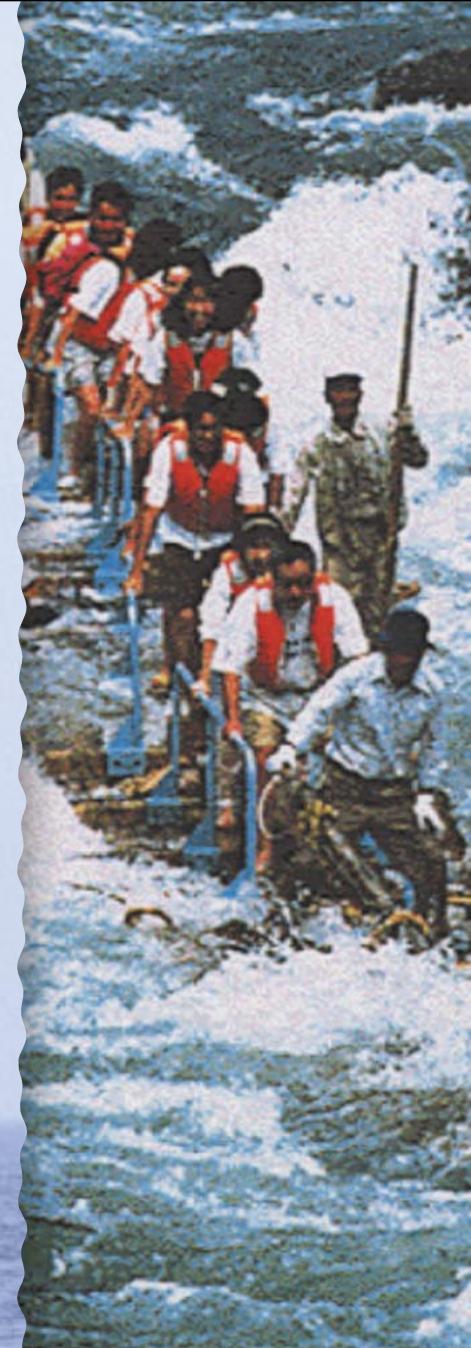
A Shingu fishing boat



The mountains near Shingu have many beautiful forests. Long ago, the area was called “the country of trees.” So logging was important to us.

Years ago, after the loggers cut down the trees, they tied them together to form rafts. Then they rode the rafts down the Kumano River. The river carried the log rafts down to Shingu. Then the lumber would be sold at a big sale on the riverbank here.

Things are different now. A dam was built upstream, and better forest roads were built. So now logs are shipped by truck. But people are still enjoying the excitement of riding the log rafts. Rafting down the river has become a tourist attraction!



Log rafting on the Kumano River

New Ways

Fishing and logging are still done in Shingu. But now we make our living in other new ways too. There are many stores and restaurants in Shingu. People come here from nearby towns to shop and eat.

My father and mother own a **sushi** restaurant. Sushi is bite-sized cakes of cold boiled rice rolled up in seaweed or topped with raw fish. My father is the cook. He makes many different kinds of sushi. My mother waits on the customers. Sometimes they hire extra help when the restaurant is very busy.

My father gets up early in the morning to go to the market. There he buys the fish and vegetables he uses. For sushi, everything must be very, very fresh! He comes home to have breakfast with us.



He opens the restaurant around ten o'clock. He closes the restaurant after lunch is over and comes home to rest until four o'clock. Then he returns to the restaurant to serve his dinner customers.

sanma sushi



mehari sushi

There are so many different kinds of sushi!



Local Culture

Sushi

In Shingu, we are famous for two special kinds of sushi—mehari sushi and sanma sushi.

Mehari sushi is a ball of rice wrapped in a leaf with a spicy taste. Our loggers used to take mehari sushi to the woods with them for lunch. The name mehari means “to open eyes wide.” When the loggers opened their mouths to eat, their eyes got big too!

To make sanma sushi we use fish called saury. A whole saury is placed on rice seasoned with vinegar. Then it's cut into bite-size pieces.



CHAPTER 2

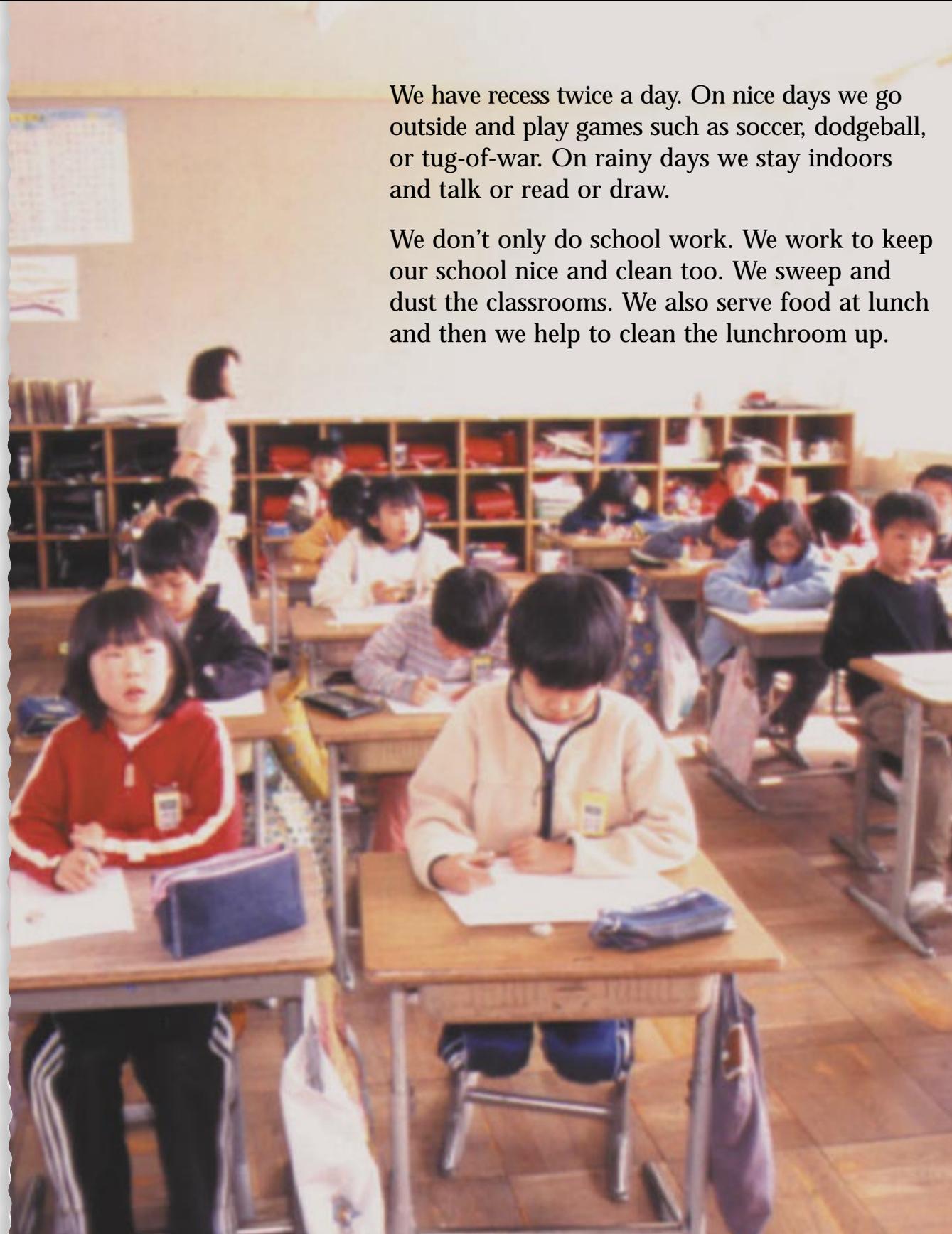
At School and Home

A Day at School

It's 8:30 and time to go inside my school. Please take your shoes off. Leave them in the shoe box at the door. Everyone wears slippers inside.

We have reading, writing, and arithmetic. We also have social studies, science, and gym. We have art and music too.

You learned all of your ABCs in the first grade. But your alphabet has only 26 letters. Japanese words are written with **kanji** characters. There are nearly 2,000 kanji characters. Each one stands for a single word or idea. By the time we graduate from elementary school, we must learn over 1,000 kanji characters. Whew! Learning to read and write is a real big job in Japan.



We have recess twice a day. On nice days we go outside and play games such as soccer, dodgeball, or tug-of-war. On rainy days we stay indoors and talk or read or draw.

We don't only do school work. We work to keep our school nice and clean too. We sweep and dust the classrooms. We also serve food at lunch and then we help to clean the lunchroom up.

Local Culture

Earthquake Drill!

It's an earthquake drill. Quick, get under a desk. These desks are strong and could help to keep you safe if there was a real earthquake. Do you have earthquake drills in your school? All Japanese children know what to do in case of a real earthquake because Japan is in the "Ring of Fire." This is an area where there are many volcanoes and earthquakes. The ring circles the whole Pacific Ocean.



An earthquake drill