

Lesson 14

John's short account of his trip to Kyōto

十月の半ばに京都へ行った。ユースホステルに二泊、京都大学の近くのお寺に三泊した。正君の弟さんの実君に会った。いっしょにお寺を見たり、郊外をドライブしたりした。木下さんにも会った。去年は同じころ北海道へ行ったがとても寒かった。今年の京都はまだかなりあたたかかった。最後の日は一日中雨が降ったりやんだりしたが、それ以外の日はよいお天気だった。京都は初めてだったがとても気に入った。毎日楽しく過ごした。イギリスの両親と祖母に秋の京都の絵はがきを出した。

14.1 The ～た form of true verbs

十月の半ばに京都へ行った。

We saw in 13.3 that the ～た perfective form expresses both the idea of completed actions; or states and the 'past'. You should be clear in your mind about the distinction between tense and aspect. *Tense* specifies the relationship between the time when an action, event or state of affairs occurs and some other time. When that 'other time' is the actual moment of utterance then we talk of absolute tense; when the 'other time' is essentially unconnected to the moment of utterance we talk of relative tense. As we shall see, tense in Japanese can be explained as a combination of the two. At this stage you can assume that a verb in the ～た form is referring to something in the past as seen from the moment of utterance, although later on you will come across grammatical structures where this is clearly not the case. Verbal *aspects*, on the other hand, are different ways of viewing the internal make-up of a situation, irrespective of the position of the speaker; expressions of habitual, progressive or resultative action, for example. The plain citation and the ～た forms of the Japanese verbal system

cover both tense and aspect, depending upon context. It is for this reason that we have given them the general titles of imperfective versus perfective. The differences in usage should become clearer as you proceed.

	<i>imperfective</i>		<i>perfective</i>
<i>Group I</i>	ending in <i>-u, -ru, -tsu</i>		ends in <i>-tta</i>
	言う	say	言った
	買う	buy	買った
	会う	meet	会った
	使う	use	使った
	ある	exist	あった
	入る	enter	入った
	乗る	ride	乗った
	待つ	wait	待った
	ending in <i>-ku</i>		ends in <i>-ita</i>
	書く	write	書いた
	歩く	walk	歩いた
	聞く	listen, ask	聞いた
	ending in <i>-mu, -nu</i>		ends in <i>-nda</i>
	飲む	drink	飲んだ
	読む	read	読んだ
	死ぬ	die	死んだ
	ending in <i>-su</i>		ends in <i>-shita</i>
	話す	talk	話した
	貸す	lend	貸した
	ending in <i>-gu</i>		ends in <i>-ida</i>
	泳ぐ	swim	泳いだ
	かぐ	smell, sniff	かいだ
<i>exception:</i>	行く	go	行った

	<i>imperfective</i>		<i>perfective</i>
<i>Group II</i>	ending in <i>-ru</i>		ends in <i>-ta</i>
	いる	exist	いた
	出る	go out	出た
	かける	hang	かけた
	見る	see	見た
	寝る	go to bed	寝た
	起きる	get up	起きた
	食べる	eat	食べた
	<i>imperfective</i>		<i>perfective</i>
<i>irregular</i>	来る	to come	来(き)た
	する	to do	した

As you will see from these lists, the perfective form of Group II and irregular verbs is obtained by adding *～た* to the conjunctive form that you met in 7.2. This is also in fact the case with Group I verbs, although a number of sound changes have taken place in the modern language that obscure this fact.

The polite form of the perfective is obtained by simply adding *～ました* to the conjunctive form.

Examples where it is clearly a matter of past tense:

きのうロンドンへ行きました。

Yesterday I went to London.

おとといおもしろい映画を見ました。

The day before yesterday I saw an interesting film.

Examples where the *～た* form is being used more for an aspectual marker denoting perfectivity.

もうその新聞は読みました。

I have already read that newspaper.

昔はそろばんで計算しましたが今は電卓を使います。

We used to count on the abacus but we use the calculator these days.

14.2 に会う

正君の弟さんの実君に会った。

As we saw in 7.6, the verb 会う takes に. Take note here that this is the verb that you should use when translating the English 'see' in a sentence such as 'I went to see Mr Yamada', where 'see' in fact means 'meet'. To use the Japanese 見る in such a context would be wrong and might not be understood at all.

14.3 The alternative form

いっしょにお寺を見たり、郊外をドライブしたりした。

The alternative form; ～たり is produced by adding り after the ～た form:

会う	会った	会ったり	行く	行った	行ったり
話す	話した	話したり	買う	買った	買ったり
出る	出た	出たり	見る	見た	見たり
来る	来た	来たり	する	した	したり

This form is used when you wish to link verbs together in an 'I do (did) this and/or this' fashion, the final verb always being followed by する 'to do'.

夏休みには海で泳いだり、山に登ったりする。

During the summer holidays I go swimming in the sea, climbing mountains and so on.

きのうの日曜日は手紙を書いたり、散歩をしたりした。
Yesterday, Sunday, I wrote letters, went for a walk, and so on.

14.4 More on years and dates

去年は同じころ北海道へ行ったがとても寒かった。
今年の京都はまだかなりあたたかかった。

今年 (ことし) is 'this year', 来年 (らいねん) 'next year', and 去年 (きょねん) or 昨年 (さくねん) 'last year'. 'Which year?' is 何年 (なんねん). Years are counted in two different ways in Japan. You will find the Western system is understood; the numbers are simply followed by the word for year, 年 (ねん): 千九百九十年 (せん きゅうひゃくきゅうじゅう ねん) 'one thousand nine hundred ninety year'. Note that the number 4 coming before 年 is pronounced よ rather than よん, so 1984 is read せん きゅうひゃく はちじゅう よ ねん. Much more common, however, is the indigenous system which operates on what are known as 年号 (ねんごう) 'era names;'. Prior to the Meiji Restoration the habit was to change the name of the era frequently because calamities could be warded off by choosing a new auspicious name; but post-Meiji the era name has been coterminous with the Emperor's reign. 1868 was the first year of Meiji, 明治元年 (めいじ がんねん), and the name did not change until he died in 1912, 明治四十五年 (めいじ よんじゅうご ねん). With the accession of his son, the era was renamed 大正 (たいしょう). 1912 is therefore 明治 45 and 大正元年. When Emperor Hirohito came to the throne in 1926, the era was renamed 昭和 (しょうわ); 1988 was 昭和 63. The new era name is 平成 (へいせい). 昭和 dates are quite easy to transform into the Western equivalent: just add 25. For 平成 dates you will have to add 88.

明治	めいじ	(1868–1912)
大正	たいしょう	(1912–1926)
昭和	しょうわ	(1926–1989)
平成	へいせい	(1989–

Study the following synoptic chart:

		<i>past</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>future</i>
<i>days</i>	<i>kanji</i>	昨日	今日	明日
	reading	さくじつ	こんにち	みょうにち
	[colloquial]	きのう	きょう	あした]
<i>weeks</i>	<i>kanji</i>	先週	今週	来週
	reading	せんしゅう	こんしゅう	らいしゅう
<i>months</i>	<i>kanji</i>	先月	今月	来月
	reading	せんげつ	こんげつ	らいげつ
<i>years</i>	<i>kanji</i>	去年, 昨年	今年	来年
	reading	きょねん, さくねん	ことし	らいねん

14.5 Adverbial use of descriptive verbs

毎日楽しく過ごした。

The adverbial form of the descriptive verbs is obtained by replacing the final い with く. In this form the descriptive verb can be used to modify other verbs, much in the manner of English adverbs.

きのうの晩は早く寝ました。

I went to bed early last night.

この子はまだ三歳ですが、よく歩きます。

This child is still only three, but he walks well.

You will often find this adverbial く form in conjunction with the verb なる 'to become', in the sense of 'getting...':

このごろ、めっきり寒くなりました。

It's turned really cold recently.

Key to passage

Romanisation

Jūgatsu no nakaba ni Kyōto e itta. Yūsu hosuteru ni nihaku, Kyōto daigaku no chikaku no o-tera ni sanpaku shita. Tadashi-kun no otōto san no Minoru-kun ni atta. Issho ni o-tera o mitari, kōgai o doraibu shitari shita. Kinoshita-san ni mo atta. Kyonen wa onaji koro Hokkaidō e itta ga totemo samukatta. Kotoshi no Kyōto wa mada kanari atatakakatta. Saigo no hi wa ichinichijū ame ga futtari yandari shita ga, sore igai no hi wa yōi o-tenki datta. Kyōto wa hajimete datta ga totemo ki ni itta. Mainichi tanoshiku sugoshita. Igrisu no ryoshin to sobo ni aki no Kyōto no ehagaki o dashita.

Translation

In mid-October I went to Kyoto. I stayed two nights at a youth hostel, and three nights at a temple near Kyoto University. I met Tadashi's younger brother Minoru. We looked at temples together, and went driving into the surrounding countryside. I also saw Miss Kinoshita. Last year at the same time I went to Hokkaido but it was very cold. This year Kyoto was still quite warm. On the last day it rained on and off all day, but apart from that the weather was good. It was my first visit to Kyoto and I liked it very much. I enjoyed myself every day. I sent postcards of Kyoto in the autumn to my parents and grandmother in England.
