



**Japanese Language Center**  
6011 152nd Ave. SE, Bellevue, WA 98006  
Phone: 425-891-2129 Fax: 1-612-241-9652  
Email: [info@japanese-language.net](mailto:info@japanese-language.net)  
Website: <http://www.japanese-language.net/>

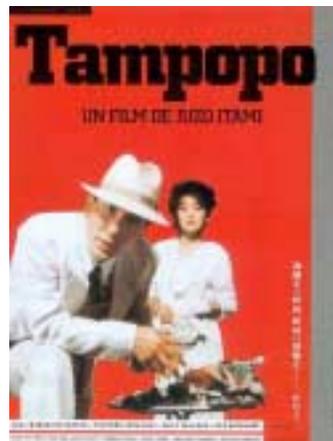
# J L C 通信

Japanese Language Center (つうしん)  
Newsletter April 2006

＊ **映画 (えいが)** ＊ **Movie たんぽぽ Tampopo**

We had Movie Night on 28 March and watched a Japanese comedy "Tampopo (which means dandelion)". It was a potluck party also.

Juzo Itami, the director of the Japanese film "Tampopo," may be the most impenitent hedonist director ever seen. As a filmmaker, he revels in sensual pleasure, and the spirit of his film is exultant, orgiastic. The movie has been described elsewhere as "Zen and the Art of Noodle-making," but its spirit couldn't be less Zen-like. Itami isn't interested in detachment. He's a zesty, immoderate connoisseur of pleasure taking in all its forms; food, sex, and movies and he jumbles them all together here into a hilarious concoction. It's half movie, half dessert topping, and a film gourmand's lusty dream.



The movie, which Itami calls a "noodle western," is a rambunctious mixture of the bawdy and the sublime. Primarily, though not exclusively, its subject is food or, more precisely, eating. The main story is about a restaurant called Tampopo with a chef who struggles mightily to keep the modest noodle shop her late husband had opened on the outskirts of Tokyo in business.

Tampopo is a willing but hopelessly inept cook, and she can't attract much of a clientele. One afternoon, though, a truck driver named Goro wanders in with his partner during a downpour and offers his opinion of her cooking in the presence of a gang of rowdies that regularly gathers there. His reward is a sound thrashing (at five against one the match is hardly even) but Tampopo, touched by his honesty, nurses his wounds. Also, it seems, his criticisms of her culinary skills have struck a chord, and soon she is begging him to stay a while and help her become a real master chef, to instruct her in the path of the noodle.

As it turns out, Itami's approach provides the perfect jokey structure for his gags. The secondary object of his attention is another couple, a slickly dressed gangster and his fetching moll. These two are the pleasure principle's most ardent advocates; indulgence is their way of life. In one sequence, inside their hotel room, they wriggle on the bed, like sensation-crazed toddlers gone mad, applying whipped cream and whatever else room service will provide to heighten their delirium. In pursuit of even higher-flying thrills, they execute the film's kinkiest stunt -- a long, soulful kiss in which an egg yolk is passed seductively, gently, back and forth between them until it breaks, spilling the yellow all over their clothes.



When sampling Tampopo's noodles, Goro and his team of advisers, which includes the almost Babe Ruth-ish Piskan, who's sweet on Tampopo, and an old man with beaming, beatific eyes, referred to only as "the master," come forth with trenchant analyses such as, "They have sincerity, but lack substance." When talking about food, they wax florid with statements such as, "It's the soup that animates the noodles." Or on the subject of a rival noodle joint, "Only their welcome has clout."

What fuels the movie's comedy is its characters' exaggerated lack of perspective about their enthusiasm. The movie's ground is the ludicrousness of its characters' passions. It's a parody of the epicure's fetishistic rapture in obscure delights. Itami forces his characters to extraordinary lengths to feed their appetites. In order to attain her goal of becoming a master chef, Tampopo trains like a decathlete, with Goro acting as her coach.



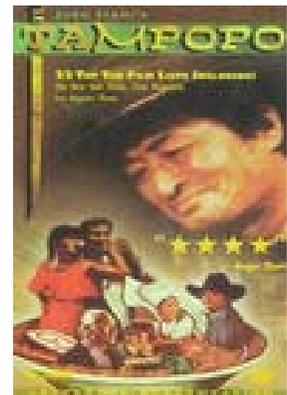
The characters are deliriously joyous feeders. They rally round their bowls like greedy pups at chow time, savoring each nuance. But although they are extremists with seemingly bottomless stomachs, they're not greedy, indiscriminate hogs. They drink in their enjoyments too deeply to settle for mediocrity. Only the finest, subtlest, most imaginative chefs can meet their standards. Even the gaggle of bums and vagabonds Goro goes to for advice rummage through the garbage at the finest four-star restaurants and, like true gastronomes, mull over their relative merits and lament the decline in quality.

Itami has crammed his movie full of allusions and mini-homages to westerns. When Tampopo dreams that a visiting gang of ramen chefs from another restaurant comes to challenge her noodle-making skill, they stride down the street like gunmen out of "The Magnificent Seven." And when the time comes for Tampopo's final noodle exam, Itami films it like a shootout. There are also comical western aspects in Goro, who functions as a sort of combination of Shane -- the mythical hero, who comes to town, sets everything right, and then moves on -- and the tight-lipped, Man-With-No-Name character Clint Eastwood played in the Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns.

The gangster couple evokes potent movie echoes, too. The film's movie-movie allusiveness climaxes in perhaps its most eloquently outrageous scene. Tomatoey red blotches staining the front of his suit, the gangster falls in the street from gunshots, and with his girlfriend standing over him, wailing, the rain pouring over them both, all he can think about is food.

"Tampopo" is perhaps the funniest movie about the connection between food and sex ever made. But, as you're watching it, the movie's base broadens, and the parallels between the noodle-maker's art and the filmmaker have become richer, sweeter.

Itami loves his noodle-slurping food maniacs. And the closing shot, of a baby nursing at its mother's breast, is a marvelous final note. It brings everything in the film -- all the connections between food and sex and the consuming desire for both -- together in one image. It's a delicate, poetic, perfect finish. (Hal Hinson)



### Biography for JUZO ITAMI

Date of birth (location): 15 May 1933 Kyoto, Japan  
 Date of death (details): 20 December 1997 (suicide)  
 Spouse: Nobuko Miyamoto (heroin in Tampopo)

Trivia: Itami was attacked by Yakuza (the Japanese mob) in 1992 due to the release of "Minbo no Onna", which portrayed Yakuza in a bad light. He was slashed around the face and neck and was hospitalized. Flash, a Japanese tabloid, alleged that Itami was having an affair. Itami left a note denying the affair and jumped from the roof of the eight-story building where he had his office.



### \* 映画鑑賞会 \* Movie Night

The Bellevue-Factoria Japanese Language Meetup is planning the next Movie Night at 7:00PM Tuesday, 23 May 2006 (Event fee: \$1). We are going to watch "Minbo no Onna."

📅 **コーススケジュール** 📅 **Course Schedule**

The schedule of summer intensive courses for teens has been announced. All classes listed on the schedule of our website have space available. We will close enrollment and remove the class from the list when a course becomes full. Please sign up early. To enroll in the class you have to complete your registration and payment \$220 no later than 72 hours before the first class of each course. We don't accept payment for enrollment on the first day of the course.

Courses with less than 4 registrants will be transferred from the regular group course to the Special Offered Course automatically. Depending upon the skill level and number of students class may be combined.

The schedule may change without notice, so please visit the website, <http://www.japanese-language.net/schedule.htm> for the updated schedule,

Summer Course	6-day	Time		Term	
		From	To	Start	End
Teens 100	Mon/Wed/Fri	9:10	11:30	6/26	7/7
Teens 200	Mon/Wed/Fri	9:10	11:30	6/26	7/7
Teens 300	Mon/Wed/Fri	9:10	11:30	7/10	7/21

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Course	Day	Time		Term
		Start	End	Start
JPN 101	Mon	7:10	9:00	4/10
JPN 101	Sat	11:10	1:00	4/22
JPN 102	Wed	7:10	9:00	4/12
JPN 103	Wed	7:10	9:00	5/31
JPN 104	Fri	4:40	6:30	4/7
JPN 104+	Thu	7:10	9:00	4/6
JPN 201	Thu	7:10	9:00	4/6
JPN 202/203	Mon	7:10	9:00	4/17
JPN 204	Thu	9:10	11:00	4/13
JPN 301/302	Sat	9:10	11:00	5/27
JPN 303	Mon	7:10	9:00	4/10
JPN 304	Thu	7:10	9:00	4/13
Teens 101	Sun	11:10	1:00	4/9
Teens 102	Wed	4:30	6:30	4/12
Teens 200	Sun	9:10	11:00	5/21
Teens 300	Mon	4:40	6:30	4/3

🌟 **生徒の紹介 (せいとのしょうかい)** 🌟 **Student of JLC**



Hello, I'm Jason. I'm nearing the end of the Japanese 101 class at JLC. It's amazing to think about what I have learned in the course of a few short weeks. Having already graduated college and working fulltime in my profession it is difficult to find a Japanese class anywhere which fits my time schedule. JLC's night sessions are the perfect fit for someone in my position. Classes are a lot of fun and I always look forward to them.

Why am I studying Japanese? Well, Japanese culture and language has always been an interest of mine but until recently I haven't had the time to study it diligently. I believe it's important to know more than a one language. In doing so, you increase your intellectual and cultural

awareness. This is especially apparent with languages like English and Japanese, as they are so different from each other.

In the years to come I plan on increasing my ability to communicate in Japanese. I guess you can say that becoming a fluent speaker of Japanese is one of my "life goals". I enjoy studying Japanese but to become fluent it will take hard work, patience, diligence and many embarrassing mistakes. I am looking forward to the challenge though. My advice to anyone wanting to learn Japanese, for whatever reason, is to find a good Japanese Language program, study at a reasonable and consistent pace and most importantly, do it now!

\* **日記 (につき)** \* **Diary of JLC students**

2月24日

昨日、教えているあいだ、生徒は授業を無視して、風船で遊んでいた。僕はやさしい声で「やめなさい」と言ったが、まだ風船で遊んでいた。それをやめさせようと、僕は科学の質問をした。「どうして、風船は飛ぶんだらうね」と僕は聞いた。生徒は「虫が中にいるからです」と答えた。いつも、こんな答えは僕をおこらせる。だれかがばかなことを言うと、教室の空気はクレージになる。「何でそんな答えをするんだ？」と僕は聞いた。「先生、本当に虫が中に...。」と彼は答えた。教室の前に彼を来させた。「それをよこしなさい」と僕は命じた。彼が風船をよこした時、風船の口から車のモーターのような音がした。僕が風船を開けると、中から虫が十五ひきとび出した。(B)



3月18日

一年六か月前に、私は日本語を勉強し始めました。日本の文化や文芸や料理や山に興味がありましたから、日本語を習って日本に引っ越したいと思いました。今すぐ、北海道へ引っ越したいです。北海道には日本人の友達がいる、札幌に住んでいます。北海道では冬雪がよく降ります。それはすばらしくて、季節の中で冬が一番好きですよ。私は北海道に住んだら、英語を教え、ニセコパウダ コネクションに勤めたいです。ニセコパウダーコネクションはスキーの会社で、ニセコグランヒラフの近くにありますが、ニセコグランヒラフは大きい山だと思います。

日本についてよく話しますが、日本に行ったことはありません。お金がありませんから。だから、私は一生懸命働かなければなりません。残念です。でも、もうすぐ日本に行くんです。行く前に日本語の会話を練習したいです。この新しい日本語の授業を楽しみにしています。グループの方が一人より言葉の勉強になるんです。(J)

3月3日

名古屋は日本でも大きな都市の一つです。大学院のルームメートの雅が、そこに住んでいます。今日、雅夫婦の家に泊まります。名古屋のこの郷土料理は珍しいと思います。たとえば、味噌ラーメンはたくさん味噌を入れるから、味が強く、麺はてみじかに煮るから、少し堅いままです。太い箸を使うから、あまり食べやすくないです。でも、美味しいと思います。

陶器は雅夫婦の趣味の一つです。名古屋の陶器は、粘土がとてもいいから有名なのだと聞きました。そして、近くに窯が多いです。今日、僕たちは雅夫婦と一緒に、どんぶり、皿、花瓶を作りました。作った物を家で使うかどうか分かりません。でも楽しかったです。(R)



\* **おしらせ** \* **Remarks**

- Policy about lesson fees for Private & Semi-private Lessons will be changed from 1 May 2006. The minimum order becomes 5 lessons instead of 4 lessons.
- Lesson fees for Group Lessons are \$220, however an early registration with payment by check/cash before your present course ends can get \$7 discount.
- Please bring your friends to JLC. Any referrals signing up for a class results in a 20% discount of your next block of lessons.
- JLC supports a Japanese Language conversation group in the community and JLC's instructor Junko is the organizer of Bellevue-Factoria Japanese Language Meetup. The regular monthly meet up session is on the second Tuesday at the Bellevue region Library. The monthly Field Trip is on the forth Tuesday. Please visit the website, <http://japanese.meetup.com/17> for more information.

あいうえおかきくけこさしすせそたちつとねにぬのひひるへろまみゆめやゆりるれろわんあいうえおかきくけこさしすせそたちつとねのひひるへろまみゆめやゆりるれろわんあいうえおかきくけこ



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**and Translation Services**