

LANGUAGE IN TOU

Language carries our thoughts, culture and also a mood. Here we take a short look into the language of Tou - the language of Japan, as you can hear it in samurai movies and historical dramas. Even if you don't remember the words: The thoughts behind them will already transform your mind. *Ikuzo! Here we go!*



How do you pronounce the words?

r = a sound between L / R ei = like ey in grey
j = as in jungle or joy ou = as in low
y = like in yes CH - as in Chicken
z = soft s as in wise -su - only as -s
s = sharp s, like miss
sh = as in show

Toujin, the people from Tou are properly pronounced Tow-jin and Nantou is called Nantow. But that looks weird, doesn't it? ;)



How to write

In Tou you write vertically, i.e. from top to bottom, starting on the right. (Notes on writing letters can be found at the end)

Different sound, one language

The language Tous can sound very different depending on the speaker: soft and flowing like the chatter of a geisha, imperious and hard like the order of a general or broad, rasping and rebellious like the language of the gangs.

In addition, the choice of words already reveals a lot about who is speaking: higher-ranking people use less polite language towards subordinates than vice versa. And the warrior caste in particular has its own way of expression.

The top 10 words and phrases (more polite version in brackets)

Toujin – People of Tou

Nanjin – People of Nan

Banjin – „Barbarians“, meaning all people from outside Nantou

Yoroshiku (*onegai shimasu*). - like: „I ask for your benevolence.“ *An allrounder.*

Hai – Yes.

Arigatou (*gozaimasu*) – Thank you! For Samurai: Katajikenai.

Gomen (*nasai*) – I am sorry.

Ii (*desu*) ne! – Nice! Great! I agree! For Samurai: Yoi (*de gozaru*)!

chotto – a little, come here for a sec, wait a minute, slow down etc.

eeeh? - an expression of surprise and disbelief: „Reeeeeeally?“

Sou da ne / Sou desu ne – That’s right. Hmm, you are right.

(Super old school: Samurai say „de gozaru“ instead of „desu“ or „gozaimasu“)

Addressing people

Usually you address people you don't know very well by their family name. By the way, the family name always comes before the personal name. Many people from the lower classes don't even have a family name.



In Tou, when talking about others, a small appendix is added to the name, which expresses the status of the person addressed. The subject is complex, but we attempt to summarize it briefly:

...- san - form of address among friends of the same rank.

...- sama - for higher ranking people or respectful for strangers in general

...- donno - "the gentleman / lady". When addressing superior samurai

...- sensei - for scholars, doctors, sword fighters, etc.

(an example of these and other particles can be found at the end)

No particle at all is used only with close family or people who are significantly lower in status than you. You never use a salutation particle for yourself.

You and I

Toujin speak of themselves and others in the third person. That means one says “this unworthy person” or “this one” instead of “me”.

Instead of saying "you", either the name or e.g. the job of his counterpart is used or you can say something general like “The venerable gentleman”. So instead of asking “Are you all right?” Toujin say “Is the honorable samurai all right?” “Is (name)-sama all right?” Or, even better, try to ask indirectly.

When speaking to someone very low, you could “he/she” or “that one” - “that one should get out of the way!” In general, it is important to always make yourself and your own things sound bad, while praising the other in the highest tones. (Example at the end)

5 ways to apologize

Toujin don't like to be a burden to others - and therefore apologize politely for every little inconvenience.

You apologize if ...

- you have a request or question with *Sumimasen*. Samurai say: *Suman*.
- you have let someone wait briefly: *O-matase shimashita* "I kept you waiting"
- you enter or leave a room, interrupt a conversation: *shitsurei shimasu* "I'm rude"
- you disturb the privacy of another person: *O-jama shimasu* - "I am intruding."
- someone has helped you: *o-sewa ni narimashita* - "I have been a burden."



Greeting and Goodbye

- Konnichi wa - good day, hello
- Konban wa - Good evening
- Oyasumi nasai - Good night
- Mata ne, go-kigen yo - see you soon, take care
- Sayounara - Farewell!
- Hora! - Have a look! Hey
- Omedetou (gozaimasu) - Congratulations!
- go-ki o tsukete (kudasai) - take care. Have a good trip, etc.
- Gambatte (kudasai) - good luck! I wish you success! Give your best.

Other useful words:

- O-mizu, o-yuu - cold water, hot water
- O-cha, O-sake - tea, sake / alcohol
- Gohan, meshi - rice / food
- Izakaya – pub, bar Ryoukan – hotel, inn
- Aniki, Oyabun - brother, boss (ways of addressing in the gangs)
- Mon, Monnashi - money in tou, broke
- Kami - spirits, gods
- Oni, yuurei, yokai - demons, spirits of the dead, monsters
- Musubi - connection, knot
- Matsuri - festival

Oh, and there are swearwords too, of course

- kuso yarou - shitty guy
- ahou, baka, utsuke - idiot
- shine, kutabare – Fuck off, go die
- onushi - "boss, master" derogatory way of saying "you" for samurai

Two interesting links:

70 typical japanese gestures: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/46165206/70-Japanese-Gestures>

Talk like a samurai (tofugu): <https://www.tofugu.com/japanese/samurai-speech/>

Arigatou gozaimashita - Thanks for reading this far.
Do you have to know all this? No. Just remember as much as you enjoy.

Gambatte kudasai ne ^^

For those who like the details – Examples



1. The Versatile Uses of Yoroshiku or Yoroshiku onegai shimasu: The expression is generally a request for a good relationship with one another and can be used very flexibly, e.g. in the sense of “I am pleased to get to know you.”, “I ask for your goodwill”, “X wa yoroshiku onegai itashimasu = I entrust you with X” or: “Give my regards to X”, “Let us work well together. ”Etc ...

2. Example of particles of addressing: Yuutaro, the adult son of the Takara fish sellers family, is called Takara Yuutaro. His mother calls him Yuutaro or Yuu-kun, his childhood friend O-Kame officially calls him Takara-san and secretly Yuu-chan because she thinks he is cute. His friends and strangers call him Takara-san, the customers in the shop sometimes simply call him Sakanaya-san (sakanaya = fish seller). When he goes out, the izakaya employees call him Takara-sama or O-kyaku-sama (honored guest). - Alright?

3. How to speak in the third person: A wandering samurai has found accommodation with a peasant woman. "In this shabby house there is unfortunately only simple tea, which is certainly not enough for the honorable gentleman," she says to him. "Please don't bother." He replies. She brings excellent tea and very tasty soup. “What an extraordinarily good soup! This crude stomach has never known anything so delicious, ”he says happily. He has not eaten anything warm in days. “Oh no, that's nothing.” She replies modestly and is secretly happy.

4. Writing letters: Letters and documents are usually folded into an elongated shape parallel to the direction of writing. As a salutation in letters, first simply write the name of the addressee + politeness particles, just as you would address them directly (see above). You can also write “To ...” in front of it. There is no such thing as "Dear ... etc." Then, except for letters written in a hurry or to subordinates, a paragraph about the season and the weather follows. In case of informal letters, you can first emphasize that you are foregoing politeness - without actually doing it. Then comes the main part of the letter. Stay polite;) At the end there is a paragraph in which you usually wish good health, happiness for the family and such general things. And then apologize again for being so curt. At the end you just write your own name without any particle.

(Text: Nantou LARP Team 2018-20 / Pictures: ukiyoestock.com)