



Design: Masako Ban

Mr. Pole

18番 jū hachi ban

Japanese people start holding bōnen kai (forget-the-old-year parties) with friends and colleagues in mid-December. Someone told me that participants are required to sing a song or perform a party trick, and there would be no escaping. I took this very seriously, and I practiced a song for our office bōnen kai until I got a sore throat. The party came around last night, but when I was about to sing, the guys told me to sing my jū hachi ban (18). Baffled, I looked up the song numbered 18 in the karaoke songlist and tried to sing it, but they said it wasn't my jū hachi ban. It seemed everybody else was singing different songs but referred to their songs as jū hachi ban. Ms. Hirayama, clue me in on this!

忘年会 bōnen kai (party to forget the old year)
忘...forget / 年.....year / 会.....party

The reason for having bōnen kai is that Japanese people want to forget the bad things that happened during the year by drinking a lot of alcohol. You may want to remember that Japanese employees become nervous and they cannot enjoy themselves in the presence of their superiors at a party. If you are the boss and propose a toast at the beginning, it would be nice to say "kyō wa burēkō de!" (Let's forget all the formalities and enjoy ourselves!), so that everybody can enjoy themselves on equal terms.

大晦日 ōmisoka (New Year's Eve)

Most Japanese people eat soba (toshi koshi soba) on New Year's Eve. They might listen to temple bells ringing 108 times (jōya no kane) starting nationwide at midnight. According to Japanese Buddhists, it is said people possess 108 kinds of worldly desires (temptations), and they can be removed by listening to the bell ringing 108 times. Scenes at popular temples are broadcast on television as their bells are rung and people visit them. A lot of people visit shrines or temples to wish for a happy new year from very early in the morning, because public transportation is available all night.

The following expression is used as a final parting word at the end of the year. It is said to a person you will not see again until the following year.

どうぞ良いお年を
dōzo yoi otoshi o
I wish you a happy New Year!

These are the greetings used during the first two weeks in January.

明けましておめでとうございます
akemashite omedetōgozaimasu
Happy New Year!

今年もどうぞよろしくおねがいします
kotoshi mo dōzo yoroshiku onegaishimasu
I hope it's going to be a good year for us.



Pera Pera Penguin's

When someone has a particular song that he is proud of and sings often, it is called his jū hachi ban. The term can be used for things other than singing, such as someone's favorite recipe. The expression originally referred to the repertoire of 18 classical kabuki pieces of the famed Ichikawa family. An alternative expression, ohako (the box), refers to the box in which the repertoire was kept. Try asking friends to sing their jū hachi ban at a karaoke box, and they will sing their favorites.

Mr. Pole attended the party of his company last night.

Hirayama: You look sleepy, Mr. Pole!

ポールさん ① look sleepy ですね。
Pole san desu ne

Mr. Pole: Well, yes. I went to a party last night, drank too much, and didn't get enough sleep.

いやあ タベの忘年会で ② I regret drinking too much ... ③ lack of sleep です。
iyā yūbe no bōnenkai de desu

Hirayama: Are you OK? What time did you get back home?

大丈夫ですか。何時ごろ帰りましたか。
daijōbu desu ka nan ji goro kaerimashita ka

Mr. Pole: Well, actually, I came home in the morning.

ううん... 「午前様」でした。
Unnn "gozen sama" deshita

To tell the truth, I misplaced some of my documents last night.

じつは...書類をどこかに ④ I regret misplacing my documents
jitsu wa shorui o dokoka ni

I'm never going to drink again!

もう2度とお酒は飲まないです。
mō nidoto osake wa nomanai desu

Grammar note

- 1. look / looks like i-adjective Remove the vowel i of an i-adjective and add sō. exception: look(s) good yosasō
- 2. have / has done (already) This expression implies that you have done something that you regret.
- 3. A lack of something: e.g. a lack of sleep a lack of funds a lack of explanations



後悔

こうかい
kōkai
regret;
repentance

- 1. 後悔先に立たず kōkai saki ni tatazu A stitch in time saves nine. [It is too late for regrets.]
- 2. 後の祭り ato no matsuri It is too little, too late. [It is the day after the festival.]
- 3. 短気は損気 tanki wa sonki Out of temper, out of pocket. [Impatience makes you lose more money.]
- 4. 因果応報 inga ohō You will reap whatever you sow. [Cause and effect are consistent.]

A. The government advised us to stock up food and drink for a few days over the New Year because of the Y2K problem.

Hirayama: You bought a lot of food, didn't you?

ずいぶん 買い込みましたね。
zuibun kai-komimashita ne

Mr. Pole: Well, no one knows what's going to happen on Dec. 31, right?

だって 31日は 何が起きるか 誰にもわからないでしょう。
datte 31 nichi wa nani ga okiru ka darenimo wakaranai deshō

Hirayama: True, but don't you think you've bought too much?

ええ、でも ちょっと 買い過ぎじゃないですか。
ē demo chotto kai-sugi janai desu ka

Mr. Pole: You think so? But a stitch in time saves nine!

そうですね。 A stitch in time saves nine. ですからね。
sō desu ka desu kara ne

It will be too late after the problem occurs, you know!

問題がおきてからでは ⑤ It's too little, too late. ですよ。
mondai ga okite kara dewa desu yo

B. Mr. Pole was swindled by a business partner in another company.

Cool it, Mr. Pole! Out of temper, out of pocket, as they say.

ポールさん そうカッカしないで ⑥ Out of temper, out of pocket. ですよ。
Pole san sō kakka shinai de desu yo

A few days later, Mr. Pole found out the swindler had been fired.

Hirayama: See? She reaped what she sowed!

ほらね。 You will reap whatever you sow. ですよ。
hora ne desu yo

There are many words that have the consonants (k or g) in Japanese when feelings and angers are described.

to get angry	to explode in anger	to be grouchy
かっかする	かっとなる	がみがみ いう
kakka suru	katto naru	gami gami iū
to get nervously irritated	or	to be disappointed
かりかりする	かーっとなる	がっかりする
kari kari suru	kātto naru	gakkari suru