



# THE TOMIICHI TELEGRAPH



STUDENT EDITION, JANUARY 2023

## THE HIDDEN EFFORTS OF SHOHEI OTANI



Baseball glove

Photo by: stanbalik (pixabay)

### SPORTS

Have you heard of Shohei Otani? I'm sure nearly all of you will have heard of him. He is one of the most famous baseball players in the world and has shown it is possible to make the leap from Japanese baseball to the Major League.

When he first started playing for the Major League, the fact that he was a 'two-way player' was seen as a negative, but he realised his goals and made a huge impression on people. Many people now recognise this and respect him for his ability. In fact, people often say that he is a 'Martian', as his skills are not of this world. How has he managed to achieve such incredible things? Let's have a look at three reasons

The first reason is his extraordinary effort. He has natural physical abilities, but people criticised him for being a two-way player because they believed his natural gifts would be cut in half, as he could not dedicate all his effort to just pitching or fielding. In addition, when Otani was a high school student, he wanted to join the MLB, but the Hokkaido Nippon-

Ham Fighters negotiated a contract with them instead. At first, he was disappointed, but with the support of that baseball team, he was able to develop the skills he makes use of today and was finally able to not only realise his dream of playing in the Major League but also become a top-class player. He achieved all of this through extraordinary effort.

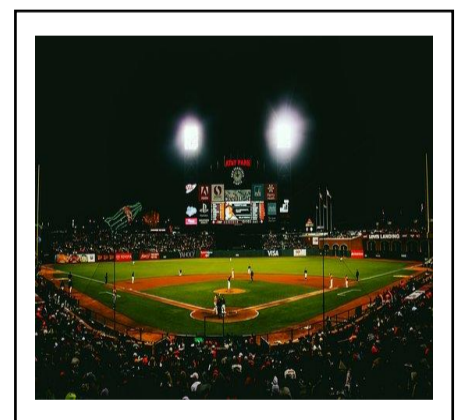
The second reason is his motivated aim.

When he was a high school student, Otani expressed his aim symbolically. He drew his goal as a mandala chart. His aim became clear by expressing it creatively. From this, he flowered. Otani made his achievement a necessity, not a choice.

The third reason is his respectful personality. Otani is famous for picking up garbage around the stadium, and he has a reputation for being a good young man. Furthermore, he is very faithful to baseball. It seems his enjoyment of baseball comes from the heart. Mixed with his high ability, he will be remembered fondly for this.

From this, we can see the

reasons that Shohei Otani is the most famous baseball player in the world. If a player wants to overtake him, they will be waiting a long, long time.



T Park Stadium

Photo by: 12019 (pixabay)

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By Daiki Takeuchi  
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# WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF K-POP?

## POPULAR CULTURE

Recently, K-pop has started to become more popular in Japan, especially groups such as IVE and LESSERAFIM, for example. I have some questions about this, like 'why is K-pop so popular' and 'why do many Japanese people still dislike K-pop?'. I am going to do a deep dive into these topics.

First, what is K-pop? To put it simply, K-pop originated in South Korea. It is short for 'Korean Pop'. It features elaborate costumes, high-level dance performances, complex song topics, distinctive choruses, and good-looking performers. Recently, K-pop audition survival programmes



Korean flag

Photo by: KINNYtv (pixabay)

have become very popular. Famous groups such as Twice, I\*Zone and Niziu have all been formed from these programmes. The format is very effective as the audience gets to vote for their favourite candidates while watching the trainees improve. You experience their journey alongside them.

Also, these programmes do not only feature Koreans, but Japanese and Chinese trainees too, as many K-pop companies are trying to expand their overseas market. This greatly increases these programmes' popularity abroad, as people in Japan and China can root for their own candidates.

However, for all its popularity, many people hate K-pop. It seems that nowadays the number of people who don't like K-pop is growing, with people over 60 seeming to hate K-pop the most.

Why is this the case? The main reason that you hear these days is that a lot of people dislike male

idols wearing makeup. Historically, men have not worn makeup. However, gender equality is on the rise, and it is becoming more socially acceptable. Men are even starting to paint their nails! In Japan too,



A K-Pop promo bus in Japan

Photo by: hiholdmyhand (unsplash)

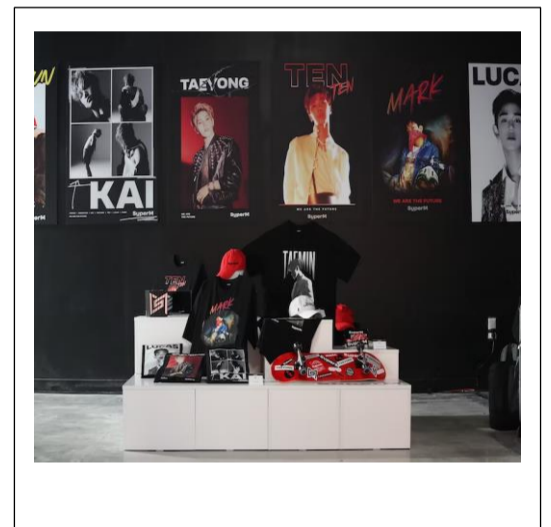
many men are becoming more aware of beauty, so that they can be seen as neat, tidy and groomed. Times are changing!

Another reason people might not like K-pop is that they are uninterested in music that is in a foreign language. Maybe lyrics are very important to people, and

they feel that they cannot connect to lyrics that they cannot understand.

Given these reasons, maybe people dislike K-pop because it takes a little more time to understand than J-pop. It is common for people to dislike things that are unfamiliar. Maybe with rising gender equality, and a more global world, more and more Japanese people will begin to like K-pop.

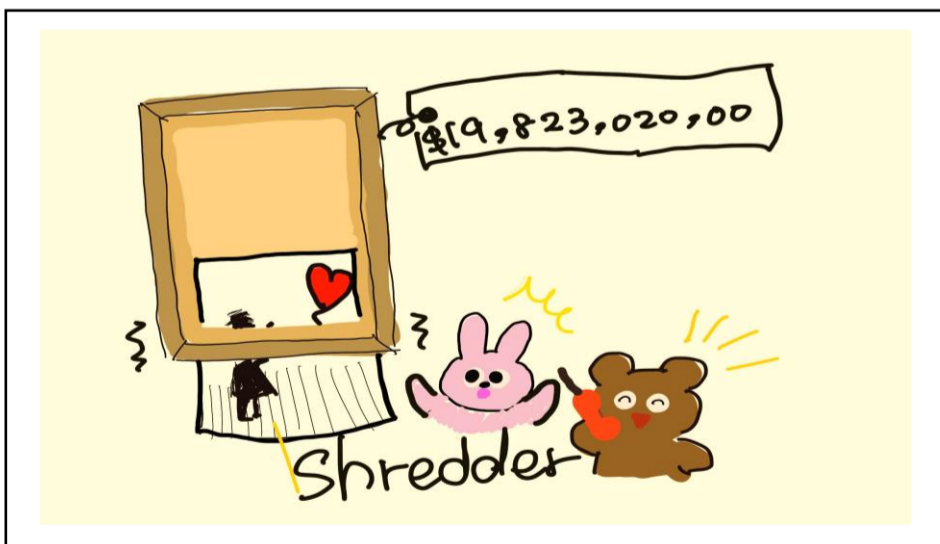
By Toma Takahashi



K-Pop merchandise for sale

Photo by: Joel Muiz (unsplash)

# BANKSY: ARTIST OR VANDAL?



An illustration of Banksy's famous art prank Illustration by: Eri Iwai

## POPULAR CULTURE

We often see graffiti on signs, shutters etc. Many people would be offended by that, as it could make them feel unsafe and dirty. In fact, many cities have been damaged by graffiti. Especially,

graffiti damage has skyrocketed due to the Corona disaster. This is probably due to the reduced number of people on the streets due to them voluntarily refraining from going out. In Shibuya, where graffiti is particularly prevalent, a project to eliminate graffiti was set up at a cost of about 100 million yen. This all shows that

graffiti in cities is detrimental to us.

But contrary to that problem, there is one artist who is getting a lot of attention around the world.

That is, Banksy!

You know he's such a hot figure that he is often featured on TV shows now. He is characterised by his unidentified identity, the strong political message of his work, and his bold performances. He attracts people with his charm, but he has a big problem. That is, his production activities could be criminal because he paints on public property and private homes without a permit.

Then, how can he continue his activities without being sued? For example, there is an illustration of

a rat found in Tsukiji, Tokyo. The site has been removed and is now managed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, but it became famous for a while when Koike (the current governor of Tokyo) took a picture with it. Thus, Banksy's graffiti is not considered annoying by most people, but rather valued and cherished.

Graffiti, as was mentioned at the beginning, often gives us a bad impression. But now that we are living in a world where Banksy is getting a good reputation, there is a big contradiction.

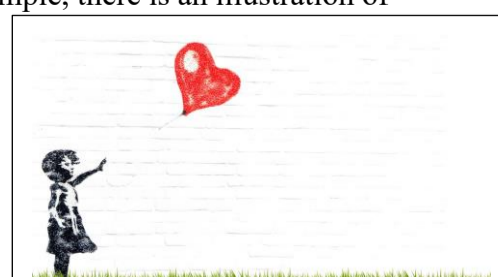
Can we accept this act as art?

By Eri Iwai



A Banksy art exhibition

Photo by: Nicolas J Leclercq (unsplash)



Banksy's work

Photo by: NoName\_13 (pixabay)



## TOURISTS RETURN TO THE ALPINE ROUTE

### TRAVEL

Recently, the corona restrictions have been loosened, and the number of tourists has increased.

The Tateyama Alpine Route, one of the Toyama Prefecture's most popular tourist attractions, is focusing on reopening for tourism. Last year, Toyama City announced that the Tateyama Alpine Route would have 480,000 visitors in 2022. This was 170,000 more than in 2021, but the third lowest on record compared to before the Corona pandemic. The Toyama Prefectural Government must make more people aware of the charms of the Alpine Route in order to bring even more tourists back in the future.

The Tateyama Alpine Route is a mountain sightseeing route that runs through a series of 3000-meter-high mountains. Six different types of transportation will take you to some interesting spots. The most popular of them all are the Yuki no Otani. Here you can pass between huge walls of snow in the spring and early summer. It is visited by many people every year and is especially popular among foreign tourists.

This strange wall of snow is made in a special way. The snow valley's location has a very heavy snowfall, with about 20 metres of snow annually. There they will be digging out the snow with GPS to get the snow-covered roads ready for the opening in April. This is how the world's most popular snow wall is created.

The Kurobe Dam is also a very popular spot to visit. One of the most famous attractions here is the gushing water stream. 10 tons of water is discharged every second. It makes for a very powerful sight. In addition, you can see the stream of water from the observation deck and terrace, and on clear days you can see a beautiful rainbow! If you have a chance, definitely try the famous dam curry!

When the coronavirus has been eradicated, make sure to plan a visit to the Alpine Route!

By Eri Iwai and Toma Takahashi



Kurobe Dm  
Photo by: n-k (pixabay)



Senbei omiyage  
Photos by: Jelleke Vanooteghem (unsplash)

## TOYAMA'S PROMOTION PROBLEM

### OPINION

Most people in Japan must know or have heard the name 'Toyama' as a prefecture. However, do they know more? Do they know places to visit, sports teams, food, and so on? There are a lot of things to enjoy here, such as Glass Shrimp, brilliant squid, rice, water etc. Not only are there a lot of kinds of food, but also hot springs which can be enjoyed as baths.

I talked with two European visitors who enjoyed their time in Toyama. How about people from other prefectures in Japan? I think hardly any people have visited Toyama. Why do only a few people come to Toyama from other areas in Japan? Trains are not convenient enough? The food I mentioned earlier is not tasty enough? That's not true, so there must not be enough promotion.

How many times have you heard of or seen the name 'Toyama' in other prefectures in Japan? I've only seen it a few times. Besides, these 'few times' includes watching bad news about it. So, I think we should promote the good things about Toyama more and more.

However, the promotion mustn't be done in the wrong ways. There is one snack in Toyama which I don't think has a good enough name to promote Toyama. It's called 'Toyama no Koibito', koibito means girlfriend or boyfriend. So, the whole name means 'girlfriend or boyfriend in Toyama'. Almost all prefectures have snacks of the same kind. The origin of this is the 'Shiroi Koibito' of Hokkaido. This name means white girlfriend or boyfriend. All of the others are imitations of this one.

So, to improve Toyama's one I think the name should include something from Toyama, not only the name itself. I thought about what this snack should be renamed to, and I had an idea. How about 'Shiroebi-I Koibito'? Shiroi means white and we call glass shrimp 'shiroebi' here in Japan, which means white shrimp, after their white colour.

In my opinion, they should make rice cookies with glass shrimp. A cream sandwich made with shiroebi senbei! What do you think?

By Katsuaki Sano

## IS THE LOW PAY OF ANIMATORS FAIR?

### POPULAR CULTURE

'Animator' is one of the most famous jobs in Japan. However, it is said that the animator's salary is too low.

In fact, it depends. The monthly salary of an animator is about 200,000-450,000 yen. But, it's difficult to judge just from this number. So, we have to judge whether the salary corresponds to their work.

The main job of an animator is drawing pictures for anime. But, they are not drawing pictures that they want to draw, of course. They use characters that are already made and draw appropriate pictures that match the anime's storyline.

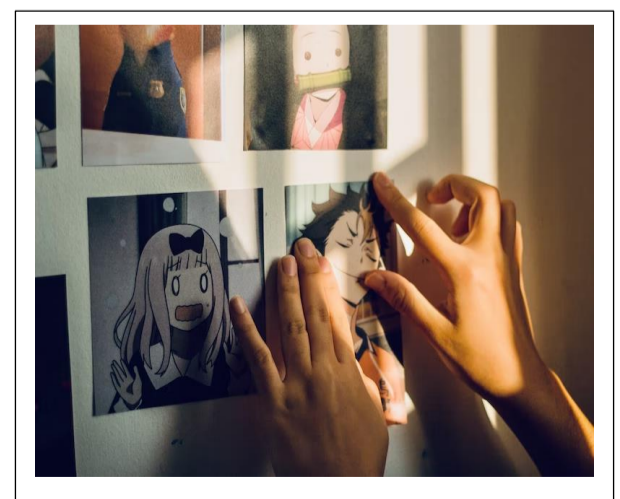
Also, they have to draw a lot of pictures, as these pictures are joined all together to make a whole movie. As such, they must make the deadlines set for them. So, they are required to work fast to make quality images. For these reasons, animators' work is very hard.

In contrast, this job does have good points. Most animators probably love drawing pictures. It's a very precious thing to have the thing you like become your job. Also, anime is made by a gathering of people with many different abilities. Some people think completing one thing in cooperation is an attraction. They will be happy if the anime they worked on becomes popular.

Considering the difficulties of this job, animators' salaries may be low. So, the company should pay them a salary that corresponds to their hard work. Though, we should not forget that there are wonderful things they can get from the job other than the salary.

Anime is made with immeasurable effort. That's why it's appreciated by the world. Therefore, animators should be respected for making amazing anime every day.

By Ai Motomatsu



Anime drawings on a wall  
Photo by: Gracia Dharma (unsplash)



# AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGIA SENSEI

## INTERVIEW

Georgia Hennessy is a 22-year-old ALT based in Toyama, Japan. She came to Toyama from London, England to participate in the JET Programme (Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme). The aims of the programme are to help promote cultural exchange between English-speaking countries and Japan. We interviewed Georgia to find out about her impression of Japan and her observations of high school students here.

### Why did you come to Japan?

Growing up in London meant I was exposed to different cultures a lot, and everything I had experienced about Japan back in the UK was interesting. I especially loved Japanese food, literature, and films. Alongside that, I had always wanted to travel!

### Wow, so you ate a lot of Japanese food in London. What is your favourite Japanese food?

I really love Japanese sweets! I didn't get to try many of them in the UK, as a lot of the ingredients are difficult to find, or are quite expensive.

### Which sweets do you like?

I love traditional Japanese sweets, like daifuku or mitarashi dango. I think sweets from the UK are very sugary. I prefer the taste of flavours like matcha or red bean, as they are not too sweet.

### So, UK sweets are too sweet! What do you think of British food in general, then?

British food definitely gets a bad reputation. Many people seem to think British food is tasteless or not flavourful, but I have to admit I really enjoy British food! I miss it a lot, even though I love Japanese food too.

### What British food do you recommend?

Definitely a Full English Breakfast. It is a big savoury breakfast of sausages, bacon, mushrooms, baked beans, hash browns, toast, eggs and tomatoes. Some people eat it with 'black pudding', which is a type of blood sausage, but I usually leave that out!

### So, you were interested in Japan before coming here.

### What surprised you the most about Japanese culture?

I'll give two answers to this: my most positive surprise, and my most negative surprise. My most positive culture shock was how well Japanese people treat their belongings and their surroundings. I think it is a great thing to instil in people. Japan's streets are so clean, people are always dressed well, and second-hand shops are full of goods that look brand new! My most negative surprise was experiencing 'honno' vs 'tatemaie'. At first, I wasn't aware that expressing your honest opinion could come across as quite rude. Now, I understand it, but I still find myself becoming frustrated at

times. It is a big cultural difference!

### What is your impression of Japanese high school students?

They are definitely very different to high school students in the UK. They are well-behaved and polite mostly, but I wish school was a little less stressful here. I remember having a lot of free time when I was at school, which I would personally like to see be more prioritised in Japan.

### It is interesting that Japanese students and UK students are different! When you were a teenager, what were you like?

When I was a teenager, the style 'emo' was very popular. Maybe this will surprise you but I was a total emo! I dyed my hair black and had piercings all up my ears and wore dark-coloured clothing. I listened to rock music and read angry poetry. Looking back, I think I looked ridiculous!

### Wow, so did you have a uniform in High School? How could you dye your hair and have piercings?

We do wear uniforms in the UK, but they are a lot less strict. You are allowed to wear jewellery and style your hair any way you want it.

### Did you like studying?

I liked studying the subjects I was good at, like English, History, and French, but I found maths and science difficult. I am glad the JET Programme is a programme for English teachers. If it was a cultural exchange maths programme I definitely wouldn't be here!

### You say you studied French, what second languages do students learn in the UK?

Because we are in Europe, we get to choose between learning French, German or Spanish, the languages of our closest neighbours. We only study 3 or 4 subjects from 16-18 years old, so if you choose to study a language at that level you become close to fluent I would say.

### What is your goal for the future?

I would like to make sure whatever I end up doing helps people. Maybe I won't be a teacher forever, but right now I feel I am able to help students. It is nice to watch them improve!

### That's lovely! Do you have a personal motto?

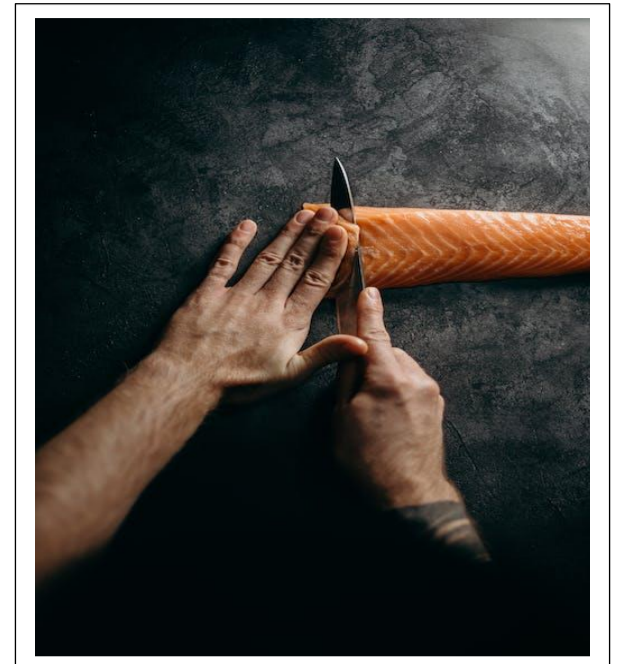
Since we were talking about being emo, I'll give you some of my favourite song lyrics from a band called The Smiths: 'It takes strength to be gentle and kind'. Sometimes trying to do the right thing can be scary, but it is always stronger to be kind than to do nothing at all.



Georgia with Himeji Castle

Photo by: Georgia Hennessy

By Eri Iwai, Ai Motomatsu, and  
Toma Takahashi



Trout being sliced

Photo by: cottonbro (pexels)

# TROUT SUSHI

## FOOD

It's said that the origin of sushi was 'Masuzushi' in Southeast Asia. 'Masuzushi' is a fermented food characterized by firmly fermenting the rice grains until they are thick. People who lived in the mountains devised this method as a way of preserving fish that went off quickly. The river fish was pressed between cooked rice grains, marinating them together, and preserving the fish by the fermentation of the rice.

Masuzushi is a local dish of Toyama Prefecture. It is often eaten as an 'eki-ben', a train station boxed lunch. Masuzushi has a unique shape. It looks very different to the typical idea of sushi. It is flat and round, and very large. It is also wrapped in large bamboo leaves on a round wooden base.

### How to eat Trout Sushi

When cutting, do not take it out of the bamboo leaf, but cut it with the leaf still wrapped around it. By doing so, you can prevent your hands from sticking when you turn over the bamboo leaf and enjoy the delicious sushi.

By Yu Sou

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