



Bohemian city keeps updating



(left) "Mikan Shimokita", a large commercial complex under the elevated train tracks. The name "mikan" is derived from the word "unfinished," and is intended to encourage constant and free experimentation and challenge.
(right) A vintage clothing store where more than half of the customers are foreigners.

Photo by Renka Harada

Shimokitazawa, a bohemian and subcultural city in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, which has long attracted the interest of young people, has been transformed into a place of relaxation for all generations while maintaining its atmosphere through redevelopment.

Shimokitazawa, served by the Odakyu Line and the Keio Inokashira Line, has developed as a commercial area around the station built in 1927. After World War II, a black market was established in front of the station, and it became an important commercial center for the community. When the first theater was built in 1981, Shimokitazawa quickly became a vibrant city for young people. Many theaters were built there, and many young people who wanted to become actors, actresses, or band members came to this city. Around this time, the second-hand clothing culture began to take root in Shimokitazawa. Even after 42 years, this city has more than ten small theaters and about 180 second-hand clothing stores, and it is widely known as a "bohemian and subcultural" city.

The redevelopment, in conjunction with the undergrounding of the train stations in the Shimokitazawa district since 2013, was heavily criticized by the residents who had begun to live in the area in favor of the subcultural culture. In 2019, the redevelopment of "Shimokita Railway Street" was underway on the site of the 1.7-kilometer rail line created by the undergrounding of Shimokitazawa Station and Setagaya-Daita Station to Higashi-Kitadawa Station. Its concept was a city that would attract "people from outside the city," including from overseas, and ignored the preservation of traditional subcultures. When The Kugayama Times visited "Shimokita Railway Street" filled with eye-catching brands, the atmosphere there was different from the one of the main street with many traditional theaters and vintage stores, and didn't fit the mood of this town.

In response to this criticism, the Urban Development Division has taken steps to transform the landscape while preserving the unique culture of Shimokitazawa

through discussions with residents and local businesses.

As a part of the renewal project, "Shimokita Ekiue," a small commercial complex, opened on November 1, 2019, on the second floor of Shimokitazawa Station. It aims not only to provide fun and convenience but also to lift the spirits of those visiting the station, with many shops lined up. On March 30, 2022, a large shopping center, "Mikan Shimokita," also opened under the elevated train. It is a commercial and business center with 23 stores, facilities, and a workplace, which is bustling with people every day.

"Not all residents agreed with the redevelopment, but I felt that the area became a better place to live in after the renovation." said one of the residents.

Now, Shimokitazawa is about to be reborn as a city popular among all ages and people from foreign countries. An employee at the Purikura (photo sticker booth) store in "Shimokita Ekiue" said that the redevelopment had been increasing the number of

customers from young people and families.

Diversity was also evident in the city. The bakery in "Mikan Shimokita" was flooded with many people in their 40s and older, and outside the building, many foreigners were walking down the street, and some people were performing comedy in the streets, gathering the audience for their stage. Along the street there were many theaters and lively live music clubs filled with young people.

The plaza in front of Shimokitazawa Station is expected to be completed by the year 2025. Shimokitazawa has retained its long-established character as a "bohemian and subcultural city," having been redeveloped to attract a broader range of customers. Shimokitazawa is a city full of diversity. How about having fun in this modern yet retro and nostalgic city?

By Renka Harada, Yugo Irei,
Masaya Shioiri, Kaho Inagaki

Conservation of Native Plants in “Monet’s Pond”



Photo by SEITAI KOUBOU, a nonprofit organization
Inokashira Pond called “Monet’s Pond,” in 2019

The surface of the water reflects the trees and blue sky, and the clear water is filled with fresh green water plants. The Inokashira Pond in Kichijoji, Tokyo, is so beautiful that people have started calling it “Monet’s Pond” on social media, referring to the famous painting. From 2014 to 2018, the pond underwent three rounds of *kaibori*, a process of draining the pond to improve water quality. As a result, the

precious water plant *Tsutsuitomo* has grown in the water and created a beautiful waterscape.

However, “Monet’s Pond” did not last long: from 2021 to 2022, the native *Tsutsuitomo*, was displaced by an invasive water plant, *Kokanadamo*, and nearly disappeared from the pond. “*Kokanadamo* has spread by multiplying itself,” said Yoshiatsu Abe from the Seibu District Park Office, who is in

charge of promoting the greening of the pond.

According to Takako Nakayama, a member of Inokashira Kaiboritai, who works on improving the environment of the pond, claims “When invasive species with the ability to grow in any season are settled, native species can lose their living environment due to the competition for survival.”

The current *Tsutsuitomo* crisis is just one example. *Kokanadamo* breaks into small pieces and sprouts new shoots and roots from these fragmented sections to multiply. At first, it was found only in a small part of Inokashira Pond, but it has spread to the entire pond due to its multiplication. Plants grow through photosynthesis. It is believed that as the highly reproductive *Kokanadamo* expanded, *Tsutsuitomo* suffered due to a reduction in the sunlight, leading to a decrease in number.

The best way to revive the plant is to continue *kaibori*. It is to drain the water in a pond in winter and dry it for a certain period of time, then check and repair waterways and embankments. Abe said that

it would be the best way to improve the water quality in a pond and get rid of invasive foreign species. However, it requires significant funds and effort. Therefore it isn’t easy to do *kaibori*.

In Inokashira Park, they work on many kinds of measures other than *kaibori*, such as cultivation of *Tsutsuitomo* outside of the pond. In addition, they have placed nets in a part of the pond not to spread the plant throughout the entire pond. Also, they continue their hard work, manually removing it by hand.

The fundamental measures are to understand the current pond conditions in detail. Seibu District Park Office plans to continue its survey of the water quality and distribution of water plants in Inokashira Pond to help protect native species. The efforts at this pond should serve as a model case for the restoration of native species.

By Yuina Komukai, Marika Igarashi, Miko Tanaka, Akira Imai

Road to Win Gold Prize

Kokugakuin Kugayama's Wind Ensemble has two faces. They are best known for supporting the athletic teams, but they practice diligently every day to win awards at competitions. In 2019, the club played “Kugayama Ippon,” Kugayama's chance theme, at the 101st National High School Baseball Championship, winning the Best Supporting Band Award from highschoolbaseball.com, which shows how important their tone plays in the supporting. The tune generates such passionate support that it draws out the club performance. Because of its strong impression, many people may think of the word “support” first when they hear of the club.

On the other hand, one of the club members mentions, “Contests are our most important purpose and we do our best for them.” The club participates in competitions every year, and has won many brilliant prizes. The club was awarded the silver prize as the representative of Tokyo in the East Japan School

Band Competition in 2011.

The target of this year too is to be elected as the representative of Tokyo and to get a gold prize. They have been practicing every day to achieve their goals. According to Aoi Wada and Soya Nishiiri, the leader of the club, they practice by reviewing what was pointed out after the ensemble performance and by trying to overcome their weak points. Since in competitions, every detail is evaluated, there is a sense of tension during practice, which is different from the usual atmosphere. The key seems to be how much each student can improve during their limited time for activities. Since they have to work hard for training in August, it coincides with the time when many national sports club competitions are held. Therefore, the sports support is practiced by members who do not participate in the competitions. The cheering members support every time with the spirit of not giving up until the end, and try to help the sports



Photo by Aoi Wada

Regular concert of the wind ensemble of Kokugakuin Kugayama.

clubs as much as possible. They support the clubs with all the other students in Kugayama.

The club lays much emphasis on not only the support but also the contests in this way. They are enjoying music on the stages while burning up their technique and they all hope to inspire the audiences. The new challenge of the club has just begun because many students have not been able

to enjoy their school life fully under COVID-19 situations. More achievement of the club in the future is highly expected.

By Cocona Hori, Kinu Hattori
Tsugumi Hori, Hiyoka Mori

society

Heavy Randsel Backpack, Heavy Burden on Kids

Have you ever heard of “Randsel Syndrome”? This syndrome is caused by children carrying heavy randsel, the backpack, to school for a long time, resulting in physical symptoms such as back pain, stiff shoulders, and mental issues. According to a survey conducted by Seiban, a major randsel manufacturer, the average daily weight is about 3.7 kg for first graders and 5.4 kg for sixth graders.

In light of the increase in the amount of luggage, the entire education community has been calling for lighter randsel and textbooks. Nakamura Tokumitsu of Nakamura Bag Co., long-established randsel manufacturer, told us that they are working to reduce the weight of the randsel themselves in response to the increased weight of these portable learning items. They are researching how to make randsel



Elementary school students carrying heavy baggage to and from school. Photo by Towa Shinden(left), Courtesy of Prof. Shirado from Taisho Univ.(right)

less burdensome for elementary school students.

On the other hand, further improvements will likely require society to work together to combat this symptom. It is said that the weight has increased due to the larger size of textbooks, the

increasing number of pages, and the introduction of electronic devices such as tablets and personal computers. To solve this problem, the Ministry of Education officially allowed students to leave their textbooks at school in 2018, but not all schools

encourage it. Mr. Nakamura said, "There is a limit to what the randsel industry can do on its own. I hope the textbook industry will also make efforts to reduce the weight of school supplies."

Mr. Takeshi Shirado, Professor at Taisho University, who studies Child Consumer Behavior Theory commented, "Currently, carrying both textbooks and electronic devices places a heavy burden on children. Therefore, the best solution is to promote the use of digital textbooks. At the same time, parents, teachers, and other adults need to make sure that children do not have to carry more than necessary and do not suffer from Randsel Syndrome."

By Yui Shimamura, Towa Shinden, Lisa Ishikawa, Kanna Torigoe

MBTI Among Japanese Youth: Exploring the Reasons Behind its Popularity

Recently, a diagnostic tool called "16 Personalities" has become popular among teenagers. It often comes up as a topic in their chats.

The 16 Personality Types were created in the United States in 1921. They were based on the "typology" of Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, who hypothesized that human beings could be divided into a variety of personality types. The official name is 16 Personalities, and is currently known in Japan as MBTI.

The assessment is available to anyone. Participants have 12 minutes to instinctively answer 60

questions about their actions and feelings under pressure. In this way, they are represented by a four-letter type code and classified into a total of 16 types, and can learn their characteristics instantly.

This time, the Kugayama Times conducted a questionnaire among the first-year Kokugakuin Kugayama Junior and Senior High School students and the second-year high school students to find out how familiar the students are with the MBTI assessment and what students are classified into which types.

The result showed many students had known MBTI. 74% of them had heard of it.

The most common reason given in *Figure 1* was that participants thought the 16 Personalities was interesting. There was also a reason that the Korean influencers, Jungkook of BTS and Jisoo of BLACK PINK, tried the assessment and Korean "MZ generation" (a combination of millennials and Generation Z) were addicted to the test after its introduction.

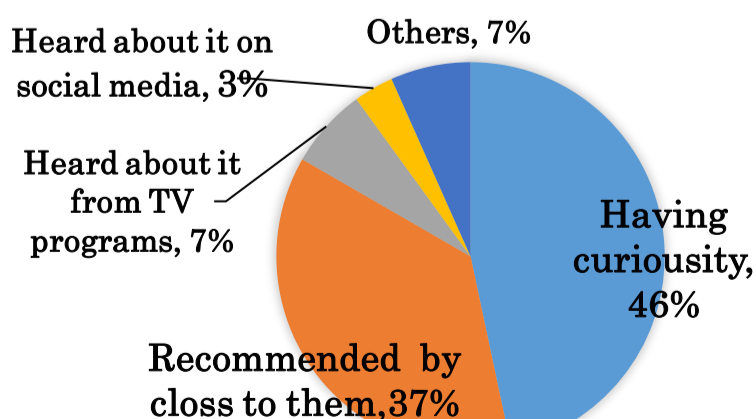
In this questionnaire, subjects in high school were selected from two kinds: students who aim for a university in Science (science students) and students for a university in Arts (arts students). The result among them was different from each other.

Figure 2 presents that science students tend to think logically, while arts students tend to think instinctively. Seen from the consequence, 37% of the science students were rated as "Analysts," one of the 4 types: "Sentinel," "Analyst," "Diplomat" and "Explorer." And 36% of the arts students were assessed as "Diplomat," the nature of whom should be creative and open-minded.

How do you feel? If you are interested, please give it a try!

By Aoi Kamiyama, Hina Ishii, Yuna Sahashi, Shunka Uemura

Figure 1 WHY DID YOU TRY MBTI?



(Answers from 117 students)

Figure 2 COMPARING SCIENCE WITH ARTS

	Science (%)	Arts (%)
Analist	37	15
Explorer	25	34
Diplomat	25	36
Sentinel	13	15

(Answers from 37 science students 41arts students 2nd years of high school)

Society

Discover the Hidden Face of Japan

The end of the coronavirus shows the sign of international tourism to Japan. According to Japan National Organization, the number of foreign tourists to Japan in July 2023 was 2,320,600, about 80 % before coronavirus. The number of foreigners on the street is quite large. How did foreign tourists feel when they visited Japan?

The Kugayama Times conducted a questionnaire to foreign tourists about the difference between their home countries and Japan, and what surprised them. Seven tourists mentioned the politeness of the Japanese people. One tourist from England answered that she noticed that Japanese are more socially conscious, clean streets are everywhere, and good manners are very important. A woman from California said that Japanese people are very polite,

everyone is kind and willing to help find their way. It seems that Japanese culture, which has deep roots from the past, may affect the Japanese people's high awareness of manners and rules, and the national identity to respect harmony. Eleven foreign tourists told about cleanliness in Japan. Also, according to a tourist from Germany, no trash was seen on the road despite the lack of trash cans. This is due not only to the high level of cleanliness, but also to cleaning customs.

There is surely something good about Japan that Japanese themselves don't realize. Many things that are considered normal in Japan are surprising to people overseas. By spreading its public spirit to the world, the demand for tourism in Japan will hopefully increase in the future.



By Mayo Tsukada, Hanin Go, Kanon Kanisawa, Sae Sasame

Photo by Mayo Tsukada

A couple sightseeing in Asakusa, saying that they are surprised at clean streets.

Bringing Joy to Tables - More than Just Meal

In contrast to its name, there are not only children but also people of all ages who are enjoying eating in "Children's Diner". Balanced meals are placed on a desk, with everyone making cakes. Children's cafeteria, or Children's shokudo is a new place where people can connect with local people, regardless of age and whether rich or poor.

Children's cafeterias are free or low-cost cafeterias that children



Photo by Asagaya Gaya Gaya Shokudo

Children are having fun decorating Christmas cakes.

can go to by themselves, and they play the role of providing meals to children, eliminating the problem of eating alone, providing nutritional education, and even serving as a place for interaction within the local community. The Kugayama Times covers their situation of two restaurants in interviews: Asagaya Gaya Gaya Shokudo and Tsutsujigaoka Children's Shokudo. These children's cafeterias are held once a month and provide approximately 50 meals each time. They offer a well-balanced menu with lots of vegetables donated by local greengrocers and farmers.

There are three main things that volunteers of the diner's value. The first is to provide a homely place. According to Mr. Kudo of Asagaya Gaya Gaya Shokudo, they seek to create a third place for children to be other than their homes or schools. Besides helping needy children, the staff aim to create an environment where both local

children and adults can come with peace of mind. Second, they want every customer to feel safe. Mr. Matsuoka of Tsutsujigaoka Children's Shokudo said he addresses each person individually and calls them by name. Being greeted by others eases the tension of those who come and helps them feel that they are in a safe environment. The third is to create a place for participatory exchange. The staff members often cook meals together with the customers, and they regularly hold events such as summer festivals and Christmas parties.

By having a children's cafeteria in their neighborhood, children can have a place to stay. Children's diners are homely spaces where anyone can feel welcome. It's important that there are more places in Japan like this, where children feel they're not alone. The younger generation will be responsible for the future survival of children's cafeterias by considering the



Photo by Asagaya Gaya Gaya Shokudo

Disguised as Santa, the staff member gives presents to a child.

current situation. Why not going to a Children's Shokudo for starters?

By Sakurako Nakatani, Saki Inoue, Aoi Nishikido, Mikoto Hirase

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