

# The NUIS Times

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## ROBOT TEDDY BEARS ARE COMING! They want to help

by Benjamin ETHERIDGE & Brittany F.BARDSLEY -MARCIAL

The robots are coming...but they are here to help you this time, thankfully. “My job is to help you in your time of need, I will pick you up when you need me and carry you when you feel weak. I will be by your side in your golden years if you need me, I'm always happy to help even if I am a robot and... a Kuma”- ROBEAR the bear.

be worn while carrying patients from a bed to a wheelchair or to the toilet. These devices help to reduce the load on the caregiver's back, and can be put on without help. Panasonic's AWN-03 is an example of a wearable transfer aid, as this is used to help pick up heavier loads however, the AWN-03 has not currently been designed to be used as a means to help carrying people but this type of design could prove to be a future solution. Next, we have the non-wearable transfer aids which tends to be a robot that is controlled by a caregiver. They can use this to help in lifting the patient safely, and an example of this is the strangely cute ROBEAR by Riken. This bear (Pictured below) uses its strong arms and tactile

sensors to lift a person (whether sitting or lying down, up to 135 lbs.) to another location. ROBEAR can lift a patient up from a bed, transfer them from a bed to a wheelchair, and various places. ROBEAR also uses two cameras and microphones to take cues from its operator, truly fascinating!

Picture The ROBEAR demonstrating how it can be used to help lift people in its care. Picture provided by RIKEN.

Now let’s look at this from another angle, we have all seen elderly people struggling to walk from time to time and wonder how difficult it must be for them. Well, there are ways to improve this for them. Why not use something like The

Robot Assist Walker, designed by RT Works, which can help with walking?

The RT walker uses a motor that helps the patient go up hills and applies brakes when going downhill. These aids use sensors to judge movement and the immediate surrounding area, applying automatic power when necessary. They also include areas to hold small luggage or shopping carts. Now, these issues probably don’t seem too drastic to you, because you can probably move and your body listens to you but, one day this may not be the case when we are all old and grey and when that time comes, robots and technology will be there to make things smooth and easy for us!

“One of the main issues we have in the care industry is that a lot of patients cannot move from one place to another without one of us needing to help move them. It is not hard to do but the problem is it can take up so much time and time is critical for us here, if there could be a way around this problem we would save a lot of time and use that time to help in other ways and we want to do is look after our patients”- says Stephanie Owens from the United Kingdom who has been a caregiver for 10 years.



The ROBEAR demonstrating how it can be used to help lift people in its care. Picture provided by RIKEN.

Most countries rely on a large youth population to support their economy and the elderly through labor. However, in Japan recently, this “population pyramid” has started to turn upside down. A mix of culture and technology advancement has caused the Japanese average lifespan to be the longest in the world creating an “elderly population”. At the same time, young people are having fewer children, or no children at all. This means that soon, there will be fewer people to take care of the elderly and to generate tax dollars to pay for their care.

“There is a real stress for care workers within the care industry in the United Kingdom especially from what I have seen, when I do my check-ups in care homes, I always find there is not enough staff members. I have even seen elderly patients care for other elderly patients, this is worrying and we need a solution, fast” says Dr Williams, a welsh general practitioner (GP doctor) of 30 years.

Japan is known to share this worrying issue, Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications released its “Japan Statistical Yearbook”, showcasing Japan's most recent population census. The report stated that as of 2017, 27.7% of Japan's population are 65 years

old and over (the highest since the census began in 1920). Meanwhile, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare estimated in 2017 that the country's total fertility rate (the number of children born to each woman in her lifetime) was at 1.44.

For perspective, the rate to replace a population as it grows old and dies is 2.1. With more people to care for and fewer people to do the caring, Japan has been forced to adapt by a variety of means. One of these means involves the use of medical robots as nurses or aids. A survey conducted with people aged between 15-50 from both the United Kingdom and Japan found that 80% of those who, when asked “Would you mind a human controlled robot to help care for your family if needed” said they would not mind this. 65% when asked “Would you give up your social and work life to care for your elderly family” answered “no” which, is the sad reality of some people in both countries.

Let’s look into some of the possible ways technology could help your family in the future!

The first useful way technology can and is already in use at some places are transfer aids which come in 2 forms; ones that the care recipients wear, kind of like an exoskeleton. They can



# Excessive Food Waste in Japan



Common produce stand that can be seen around the country. Photo : by Adam Wilson On June 21, 2019

How Japan has made great progress, yet it is still not enough.  
Now other nations are beginning to notice.

*by Yuki HATA & Kenneth B. ELDER*

The heel of a bread loaf, the piece of meat that is just a bit too chewy, the extra ginger in your konbini bento you bought. These are all miniscule remains, that amount to nothing next to the rest of the meal and are tossed out with the rest of the rubbish each meal. This miniscule amount multiple times a day, every day of the year, for everyone in Japan grows rapidly.

A study on food waste in Japan by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) estimated that a total of 37.86 million tons of food waste was generated in 2011 alone. This amount includes the agricultural and farming phase of production, the storage and transportation stage, the commercial, and the household as well. The commercial and household sections of the production chain though amounted to 53% and 27% respectively, significantly larger portions than the other half of the chain. Still waste can be managed, for example, the Japanese people have a robust sorting system so that the waste can be recycled effectively. The IGES found that the commercial stage, while making the largest amount of waste, had the highest percentage of waste being recycled, about 80% of it. Yet the household sectors food waste had an abysmal 4%. That's over 9.5 million tons of waste being incinerated or added to landfills in a single year.

Several attempts at remedying this situation have come into effect since this study was done. Some are done by the Japanese government, while others are initiated by companies in the food industry who are directly affected by the costs of this waste. One of the more frequent places for people to get a quick bite to eat is the ever present *konbini*. The big three branches each deal with fair amounts of waste daily. Family Mart 15.9kg, Lawson 15.2kg, and Seven Eleven 14.7kg each day. They have come up with their own unique means of solving the issue. Seven Eleven in June announced that they will be having a rewards program for food that is close to expire. If you are a member you could get up to 5% of the cost of the product as points for other purchases. Lawsons is also trialing a similar program in select cities this summer. This is all in a way to try and clear out products

before they are forced to dispose of it. “We will try to cut food loss by 50 percent by 2030 from the current level.” said Sadanobu Takemasu of Lawson’s in a major press briefing recently. Such a goal can be commended, if it comes to fruition.



A look at the daily waste from a relatively small konbini, Photo: by Authors On May 13, 2019

There are several government lead initiatives also in effect, mainly tending to target the consumer. The “NO FOODLOSS PROJECT” is a nationwide campaign to reduce food waste, one jointly done between 6 different ministries. The goal is to invoke the spirit of “Mottainai” which is translated as both “what a waste” and “don’t be wasteful”. The idea is to only make what will be used, and to consume all that was made. This idea of mottainai is not new as it has been around for quite some time but the government is now pushing for its resurgence. A more con-

temporary creation is the 3010 campaign. Its conception was in Matsumoto city back in 2011 and since has been adopted around the nation, even being officially endorsed by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment. The focus is simple and multipurpose. The first 30 minutes of a meal should be focused on eating, same with the last 10 minutes. The idea is that this will prevent food from being ignored or forgotten about, cold karaage is just not as appealing after all.

These changes sound beneficial and the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries released a study that showed it to actually be so. Currently the waste derived from food is only about 28 million tons among the nearly 81 million tons of used food in Japan a year, far better than years ago. This is not a free pass to continue our current habits, nearly 6 and a half million tons of this food waste that people can still eat safely. This is still nearly 8 percent of the whole food consumed. Charles Boliko, head of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations’ Liaison Office in Japan, once commented on this fact saying “In the case of yoghurt, it can typically stay edible up to two weeks after the expiration date, as long as it remains in the refrigerator. The taste may change, but your health is not at risk”

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has stated that the waste is equal to every Japanese person tossing out a bowl of rice everyday. Still half of this food waste is from households, these are places that individual action matters most. On a global scale this has drawn some negative attention as well. After all this amount of waste is about \*twice\* the amount of food that the UN World Food Program provides to some developing countries. A “Save Food” study on global food losses and waste, was conducted in partnership with the Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology. It indicated that a third of the food consumed globally, or 1.3 billion tonnes are lost or wasted each year. All these moves to improve food waste creation needs to go further if Japan wants to be leader in efficiency and cleanliness. This a lesson for all levels: government, corporate and consumer.



# Privacy

## The Price of Privacy in Japan

### When you want to be alone, are you willing to pay for it?

by Adam R. WILSON & Amin A. RISSAOUI

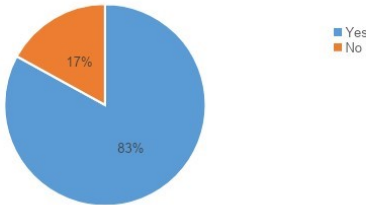
In many countries, privacy is available simply because of geography. Single family homes with separating yards are very affordable in many wide-open American states. Some countries have less cultural pressure to be respectful of other people’s space. Japan, however, is very densely populated and very respectful. Tokyo’s streets are filled with people trying to move through daily life while causing as little inconvenience as possible. Whether or not a person’s presence is actually inconvenient is irrelevant to many Japanese people. The risk of being seen as rude is high, so utmost precaution must be taken. These factors leave few places for people to spend their free time how they want. As a result, selling privacy is big money.

The difficulty of finding privacy in Japan has caused several unusual industries to develop. Net-Cafes let customers pay for the rental of personal cubicles where they can work, study, or relax. Karaoke clubs sell spaces for people to be as loud as they want. Love hotels provide a space for adults to guarantee privacy during sex. Some restaurants even place walls between customers and staff to limit interaction as much as possible. All of these services, however, come at a price. Love hotels alone generate over 40 billion dollars each year in Japan . For wealthy individuals, this

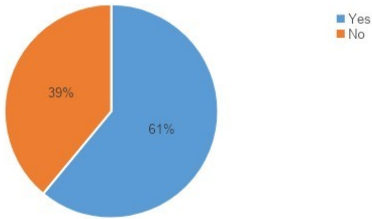


Dense crowds in Shibuya pass Karaoke clubs and other privacy-focused businesses.

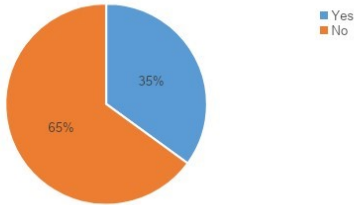
Do you feel your privacy isn’t protected?



Is it hard for you to find quiet places to study?



If you want to study in a quiet place, do you pay money for it?



The survey was conducted on Instagram. Number of respondents starting with the top graph: 75, 79, 83.

might not be of much concern. But, this cost can be a financial burden to students.

When comparing the availability of privacy in America to Japan, several key differences become apparent. First is geography. The massive amount of land in America makes single-family homes much more common. A permanent, personal, space allows for individuals to function with less concern for causing noise or disrupting others. Japan’s public transportation system is extensive, making driving unnecessary for many people. With this increased convenience comes the loss of some privacy. Rather than commuting alone by car, many Japanese share dense train cars. Within many Japanese cities, driving and parking is simply too inconvenient to be practical. For many Americans, car rides are an opportunity to conduct phone calls or sing without interruption. These differences have caused commercialized privacy to be less common in America.

So, how does the commercialization of privacy in Japan affect students? To learn more we surveyed students about their thoughts on privacy in Japan.

75 students responded to our question, “Do you feel that your privacy is vulnerable in Japan?” 83% said “yes,” while only 17% felt their privacy was secure. The population density of Japan as well as the increase of technology jeopardizes physical and digital privacy. Even in locations where a person is physically alone, their data may be visible over Wi-Fi. Question 2, “Is it hard for you to find quiet places to study?” received 79 responses. 61% responded that it was difficult. Finally, students were asked if they pay money for access to quiet study spaces. Over a third (35%) stated that they do. Effective studying is an essential part of the learning process. Busy environments increase distractions, and therefore the amount of time wasted. The inability to study in private can impact a stu-

dent’s grades, and therefore their future career opportunities. Net-cafes and capsule rentals have now developed in order to tackle this issue.

People from all walks of life face the challenge of finding privacy in Japan. As a result of this, it is important for individuals to be aware of how this challenge is affecting them. The lack of privacy can increase stress, but if the only option to achieve real privacy is to pay for it, is it worth the sacrifice? People are forced to make these choices daily. Finding the balance between paying for privacy and surviving without requires individuals to prioritize comfort in ways that many other countries do not.

Love hotels are also an industry developed in response to the challenge of finding privacy. Close-quarters and multi-generational homes can lead to some uncomfortable situations when adults want to have sex. For many, the easiest option is to take a visit to a love hotel. These businesses guarantee complete privacy for a few hours, and can provide any amenity needed during the stay. However, this can cost upwards of 4,000 yen. Couples then have to choose between comfort or price.

As Japan’s population has grown, the challenge of finding privacy has only increased. Geography and cultural expectations create an environment where people must be hyper aware of how they are impacting others. The difficulty of finding privacy impacts many aspects of daily life, from education to romance. The easiest way to guarantee privacy, however, requires payment. Each individual must determine how much they are willing to pay. Privacy in Japan will continue to become more commercialized as the years progress. Younger generations will have to decide between paying for privacy, going without, or ignoring social norms.



# Life in Japan

## What is it like to be Different?

By Yolanda WELL RULL & Marina J. FUNES

The media suggests Japan welcomes many foreigners, but how far does that welcoming hospitality go when foreigners do live in Japan? Nine people at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies talk about their experience as a foreigner living in Japan or even as a Japanese citizen who feel foreign themselves in their own country.

Japan is getting more popular as a country to visit for traveling and to immigrate. While coming as a tourist is easy and fun, immigrating to Japan and working here is far more complicated than most would expect. Foreigners experience many difficulties when applying for visas and permanent residency.

Right now, the only way for foreigners to enter Japan is by acquiring either a working, educational or entertainment visa as well as a tourist visa for a limited time. These visas are issued based on their certificates of eligibility and are valid for a fixed amount of time. These visas can be renewed every few years if there is still a valid purpose of stay. Permanent residency is only given to those married to a Japanese citizen or to those proving a connection to Japan, but even in those cases it can be revoked.

“If I could keep both nationalities, it’s going to be more comfortable for me because sometimes I’m thinking ‘what if something wrong happens?’ and my visuals are Russian, but I’m living in Japan. How can I explain to people [that I] have been living a long time in Japan? For assurance, I’ll show the passport, but if people are watching me, [they would] say that ‘you are not Japanese’” said Roman Eguchi, a NUFS student.

Japan’s Nationality Act states that citizens with dual nationality have to choose only one and therefore give up the other one by the age of 22. For many young adults possessing dual citizenship this can be difficult as people are forced to choose one citizenship if they identify with both. “I had to choose when I was 22, but I still haven’t chosen because I don’t want to lose either passport and I have both identities, so I keep both and I think it’s not fair to choose one”, said Selina Rush, who is the daughter of Philip Rush, a professor at NUFS. She has dual citizenship between Japan and the United Kingdom, as her mother is Japanese and Philip is British. These regulations exist but no one takes them seriously, so it is nothing more than a rule without actual repercussions.

After immigrating to Japan, foreigners face other challenges, the first one is they obviously look different and are easily recognized as outsiders. Generally, foreigners are welcomed to Japan but sometimes they also are treated like strangers. “They love you because you’re foreigner or they hate you because you’re foreigner, it’s 50/50. And it’s so funny [...], when you walk down the street, lots of Japanese look at you just because you’re foreigners. And you can feel if that look is like an admiration look or is a ‘I hate you’ look” says Julianna Omura, a NUFS student.

Many still experience prejudices after living



Above: Selina Rush, model with her father Professor Philip Rush at NUFS

Below: Julianna Omura, Brazilian student at NUFS (left) and Roman Eguchi, Japanese student at NUFS.

in Japan for a long time, especially of same ethnicities, end up creating their own communities inside of Japan, but separate from locals. Ethnicity and gender also influence the discrimination someone may face in Japan. Some of the interviewees mentioned stereotypes about Chinese that they hear from Japanese: rude, loud, lazy, bad manners. Even Japanese media goes as far as giving the impression that Chinese are untrustworthy when the media reports crimes that involves Chinese people. “I guess it depends on where you come from. I think for people who look like me, it’s not that bad. I think it must be harder for people of other ethnicities. Asians, people of African origins, I think it’s much harder. I think the only stereotype that I face is I’m expected to be an English speaker because of the way I look, well, I speak English obviously, but not as my first language.” says Jakub Marszałenko, a lecturer at NUFS. While they were many prejudices about Chinese people, other ethnicities, specially western ethnicities are more accepted.

Another minority group in Japan that faces special treatment are “ha-fu” and foreign ethnicities with ties to and raised in Japan. Japanese

Pop Culture especially creates certain standards for ha-fu’s image which do not collaborate with the actual reality. They are expected to fit into these stereotypes, looks and behavior, which makes them objects of desire and dehumanizes them. Real life looks different for them, they don’t fit in anywhere or they end up choosing one of their ethnicities. For example the mixed club Blenders, created by Selina, allows people to embrace themselves as they are without judgment.

With stereotypes in mind, discrimination against foreigners does exists. Many immigration bureaus won’t offer any assistance in any other language but Japanese. Considering only foreigners visit these places and their language proficiency will vary, this isn’t inclusive nor welcoming behavior. As Julianna mentions, “only foreigners go to that place [Immigration Bureau] and no one can speak English, which is insane. Why is a place [such as the Immigration Bureau] where there’s no Japanese customers and there are no translators [for foreigners]? You have to bring your own. Someone has to translate for you”. Japanese often assume foreigners are oblivious to Japanese culture and customs even after living there for many years. Discrimination can also affect Japanese people that act like foreigners or do not follow the rules of Japanese society. They would be treated like outsiders and face more discrimination than actual foreigners.

Hiroko Tokumoto , a professor at NUFS, has been through discrimination not only with her family, but also within the workforce: “My colleague, [said] to my face, ‘You know that you are different from us.’ I told her that, ‘Yes I know it, but I can’t do anything about it. It’s me.’ It took them a long time to accept it, I think. [...] I say ‘I want to do’ or ‘I don’t want to do’ quite clearly. In Japanese culture, we don’t say that. So of course, you know they treat me as [...] not a real Japanese, not way of a foreigner, but in the middle. [...] They say that it is very difficult to get along with me.”

Everyone has agreed that Japan needs more diversity to benefit and enrich Japanese society, and dual citizenship should be legal in Japan. Recently the requirements for working visa have been lightened and many workers immigrated to the country which had been unprecedented in Japanese history. Japanese people love foreigners but are afraid of them and the changes coming along with them.

It is important for them to learn that being curious and allowing changes is going to be surprising and bring many good things for them and their society. These changes don’t pose a threat to culture and customs, but the modern world requires to change and adjust to the flow of time so everyone feels welcome everywhere.



# Japanese Education System



## Away with the Japanese education system?

by Shiori SUGO & Thomas RENNICH

In an ongoing globalization Japan finds itself in a conflict between traditionalism and internationalism. Students have always been influenced by changes in the educational system.

So before making statements if the current system can or should remain, Japan should ask its citizens first. Since education forms how the future of Japan will be, both students and working people should be asked. Forming a conclusive image of what citizens deem important is key and this is what NUFS newspaper has been striving for.

In order to get an overview of attitudes towards the education system, five relevant questions have been chosen, ranging across various topics. Since school in Japan has always been a full-time activity for students with classes and club activities until the late hours, the question comes up if the hours should be cut back in order to enable more social activities after school, similar to how it is in Europe.

While 65% of all students agreed to cutting back hours, the working field has a different opinion. More than half of people in this field disagree and rather wants to let the system remain, however this doesn't mean that bad intentions are behind this. Interviewed teachers simply responded that they couldn't put in enough hours doing their job and are thus earning less. In addition people working outside the education system mentioned that the school was usually the place, where they saw their friends.

As mentioned in the beginning Japan is getting increasingly international especially with the Olympic Games coming up in 2020, so speaking English should be considered very important. However, even though the government is doing big efforts to push it, the lack of results is pretty clear because many Japanese can barely communicate in the language. Besides this the youth shows a lot of interest in English speaking countries, with the USA and Canada being popular places for Japanese study abroad students. So should Japan teach their students then to actually learn the language?

Despite the above, students surprisingly remain quite unsure with a 60-40 split wanting more support and the other side feeling no need to learn more than what is already being taught now. Out of all the interviewed working people 85% agreed to better education in English, stating that in the future it will only get more important, notably for the job market. In this case a generational difference is at hand, since stu-

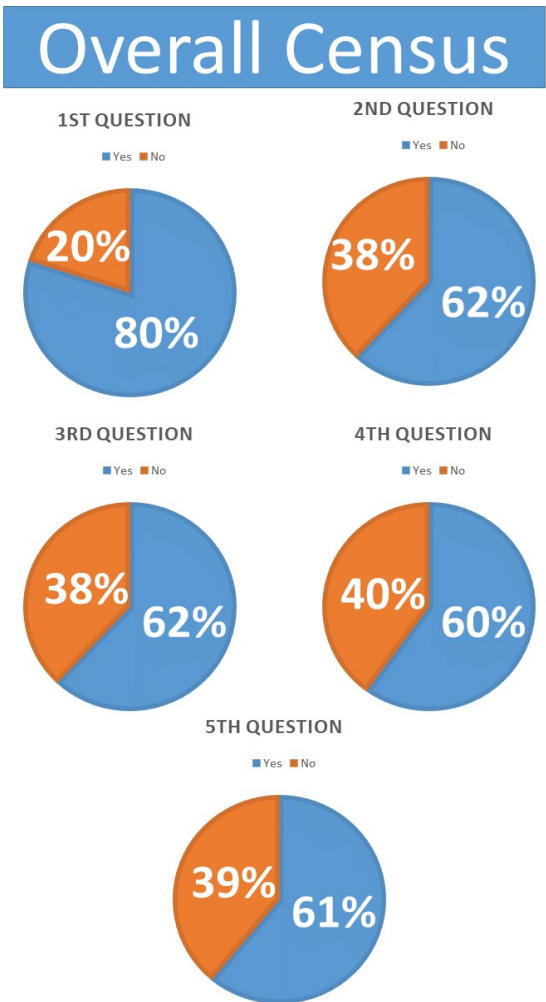
dents haven't entered the job market yet and don't have enough experience to evaluate the current situation.

One subject that has stood the test of time is Japanese class, where old texts like poems get analyzed, which leaves no room for variety. Even though the subject is seen as very important to learn one's culture there are also people, who want it to be less significant. Interviews on both fronts indicated that new texts from contemporary authors should also be included, since their works also represent Japan's culture. In that regard it comes as no surprise that the majority of students (59%) and working people (78%) want the subject to be less relevant.

The next topic shows a generational discrepancy, in both interest and experience. The typical Japanese class consists of thirty to forty students, which in comparison to Germany's twenty is quite a lot. Students were mostly undecided on whether they would prefer smaller classes, a trend however is still visible with 57% approving. In comparison, all working people and teachers answered that they want the situation to change. Teachers gave the reason that they can focus more on the single pupil, while working people agreed with the statement. Students though enjoy big classes because they don't have to participate as much if there are more students.

Japan is considered a country in which the collective has a lot of power, so that Japan would rather go by the book or with what the majority says instead of coming up with one's own solution. This societal norm also plays a big role in the education system. Despite that it is important to also acknowledge that a change is happening right now and exactly that is visible in the results. 80% of the students and 85% of working people want pupils to come up with their own solutions instead of just memorizing the textbook contents.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the Japanese education system definitely needs improvement. There are still a lot of problems, things that could be handled differently as the questionnaire shows. Some of the asked questions would require massive changes and more effort on the pupil's side as well as the school's side. Besides this it is important to point out that while many people took part in this survey, it can't represent all students or all working people of Japan. In addition while only five topics were chosen, it doesn't automatically mean that other problems don't exist. The results of the survey indicate that despite societal norms, people still have their own opinions, which can bring things to a change that is well needed, to make sure Japan's youth is well prepared for the future.





# The long black haired woman is coming back!

By Laurent LOUALOUP & Nodoka NAKAGAWA

On 24 of March 2019 a new horror movie called “Sadako” came out in Japanese cinemas. Anybody who is interested in horror movies knows Sadako Yamamura's character and her cursed video tape.

Sadako is a ghost, *yuurei*, more precisely, an allegory of *onryou* or vengeful spirit. This kind of ghost targets the living to take revenge against the wrong it received while alive. An *onryou* can harm or kill their targets, or even cause natural disasters to take revenge. There are different kinds of *onryou* but the most famous kind is the long black haired woman, popularized by the new wave of Kaidan Eiga (Japanese ghost movies) at the end of the 90's.

Sadako Yamamura is the most famous representation of the unkempt long black-haired woman *onryou*, in a white burial kimono and with a deadly pale face. She first appeared in the movie “The Ring” (1998).

So, How did it start ? How is it different from the first “The Ring” film in terms of Sadako's representation? What kind of differences are there between classic kaidan eiga and contemporary Japanese horror movies?

Those are the kind of questions that we asked Takenori Sento, the movie producer who is also a visual media professor at Nagoya University of Arts and Sciences. He contributed from the beginning of the “Boom of J-Horrors” in the 90's with 3 major movies for the genre he produced: “Don't Look Up” (1996), “The Ring” (1998) and “Rasen” (1998).

At the very beginning, professor Sento received a visit from Nakata Hideo who worked for the Nikkatsu Company. He said he wanted to do a documentary about Joseph Losey.

But professor Sento wanted to make a modern Japanese horror movie, because until now there were only Kaidan Eiga in Japan; a movie with a ghost like Oiwa-san. “Before making a documentary about Joseph Losey, could we make a horror movie ?” he asked Nakata-san. He accepted the proposal and with professor Sento and another filmmaker called Takahashi Hiroshi and a new team was created to make modern horror movies. The first project was “Don't Look Up” followed by “The Ring”.

It was professor Sento who brought the big funds and the rights to use the story “The Ring” from the best-seller written by Suzuki Koji to make “The Ring” movie.

First, the purpose was to bring a new kind



Abobe: The most famous archetype of Japanese ghost: Sadako Yamamura  
Below: Professor Sento in front of posters of the movies he produced.



of fear.”The original plot was a suspense novel, not a horror. So we wanted to change the suspense into a horror to make a modern Japanese horror movie. And during the project the keyword was: Sadako will replace Oiwa-san”.

“We grew up with foreign movies. A movie like “Suspiria” (1977) by Dario Argento was for me a true horror movie, because the fear was

psychological.” Professor Sento also wanted to add more psychological aspects in his modern horror movies.

Thus, we asked professor Sento about Sadako and the image of the long black haired women.

According to him, the old representation of woman *onryou* with long black hair and a funeral white dress is an image of death as well as an image of *on'nen*. *On'nen* means “a deep-seated grudge” or “hatred” that explodes like a curse when a person, often a woman, dies with a strong feeling of sorrow or rage.

When professor Sento explained what he thinks about the symbolism, he said: “The deadly pale face of Sadako reminds me of traditional Noh masks, especially masks used for ghost characters.” But he said that the face of the ghost woman in “Don't Look Up” was too visible and the hairstyle was too “directly opposite”. So he changed the style of Sadako in “The Ring” by hiding her face with the hair. However he let just one eye visible, in reference to Oiwa-san.

“I was disappointed by the style of my first ghost in “Don't Look Up”, so the reason for the change was physical, not conceptual.” However, for the sequel “Rasen” he decided to change Sadako because he felt that she became closer to a monster than a *yuurei*. So, in “Rasen” Sadako became more realistic and sensual, like a femme fatale. “But the public only remembers the first Sadako who became an iconic character.”

Regarding the difference between classic *kaidan eiga* and modern horror movies, professor Sento said that the concept of *on'nen* disappeared little by little in Japanese horror movies. “The reason is that Japanese horror movies are increasingly influenced by Hollywood. Japanese filmmakers try to scare and to surprise the spectator with a lot of jumpscare or violent scenes. In the first “The Ring” the fear came from the cursed video.”

Finally, he said: “Now, the figure of the zombie coming from American culture spread out into Japanese cinema and replaced the ghosts of the dead who come back to haunt the living because they have a strong volition.”

What kind of surprise will the new “Sadako” movie currently in theaters bring? Is Sadako represented like a traditional ghost woman or rather like a monster as a lot of fans expect? Or maybe has she changed into a totally new form?

The best way to find out is to watch the movie by yourself. See you at the cinema!

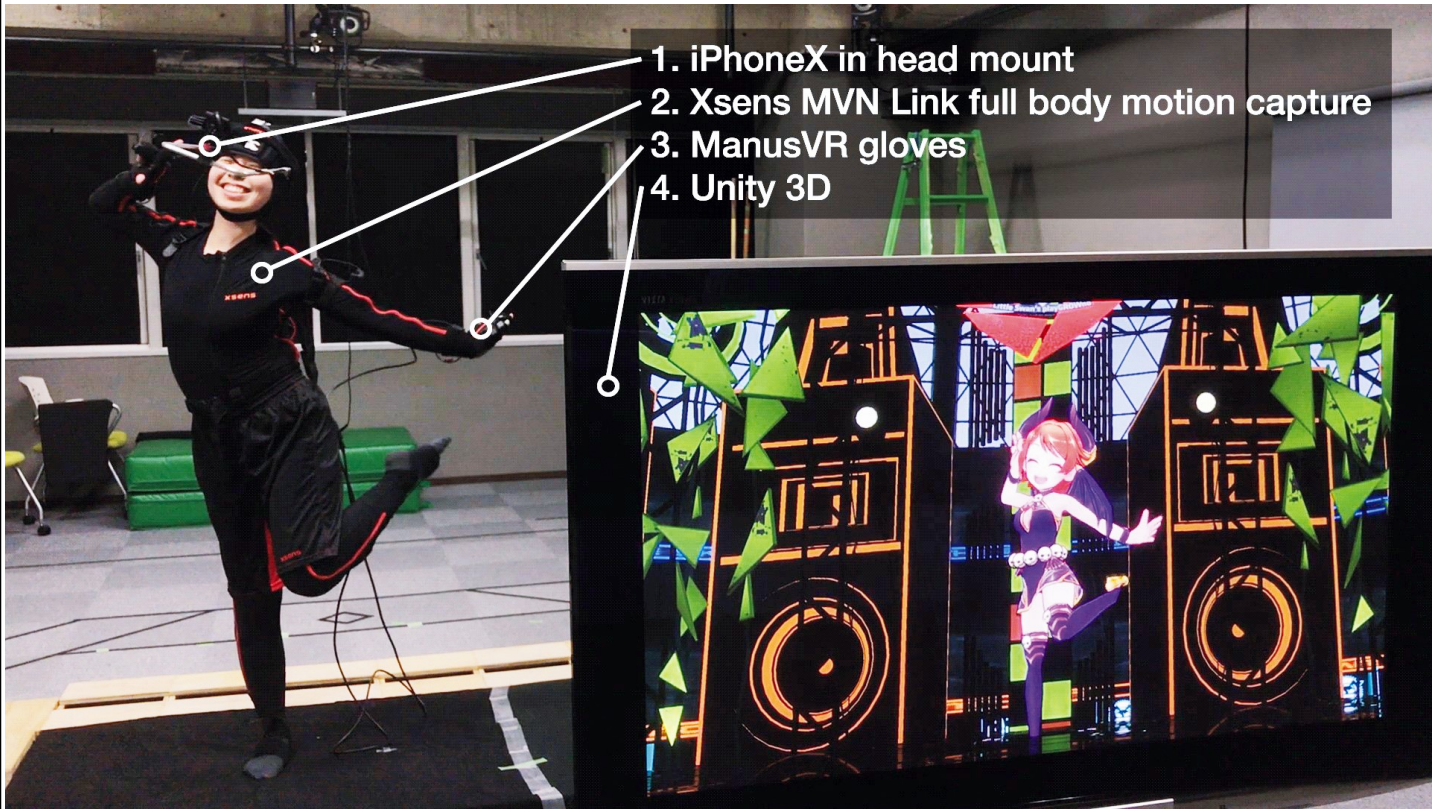


# Virtual Idol

## Hai Doumo! You’re a Virtual YouTuber!?

Can people trust a personality that isn't real?  
What does it take to create an authentic virtual avatar?

by Brittney BARDSLEY-MARCIAL & Arianna WELLS & Yukako EGUCHI



Many YouTube videos focus on the exploits and creative musings of online entertainers and vloggers. An unusual choice to content creation comes in the form of Virtual YouTubers.

“VTubers” are online entertainers who use virtual avatars to represent themselves in their videos, and upload them onto YouTube. The avatars are generated by computer software, which uses movements and facial expressions recorded with motion capturing technology. Their voices are otherwise human.

No matter how experienced or unskilled a VTuber is, all of them need some form of animation software.

We'll start with two apps. One of them is the Puppemoji (puppet and emoji) app, available on the Apple store for iOS devices for free (iPhone X and up). It uses a face-mapping camera to transform any face into an animated character, complete with voice distortion and the recording of facial expressions. There is also Holo-live, an app that is similar to Puppemoji, but can be used on iPhone and Android devices.

Wright Flyer Live Entertainment (WFLE) sells the ability for anyone to become a VTuber. WFLE allows users to use their “REALITY” service to create their own virtual avatar and livestream said avatar directly to subscribers. They offer special tools to enhance fan interaction, and allow VTubers to appear together on the same stream (without the users having to be physically together in real life).

VTubers are essentially virtual AIs, much like Hatsune Miku, one of the most famous virtual idols. Are VTubers really well-known enough to warrant potential failure? If so, what is their appeal? Could they reach the success of Hatsune Miku, who's lasted for well over a decade, is virtually (and literally) everywhere, and even performs at concerts? To test this, my group decided to ask questions concerning virtual AIs to a group of 12 people (half being foreigners and half being Japanese).

The first thing we discovered was that more Westerners knew about Hatsune Miku and Kizuna Ai than native Japanese people. We believe part of this is due to the uniqueness of Japanese

Photos; above; An ideal setup for creating a Virtual YouTuber, according to Xsens: ©Xsens, 2019

Below; Brittany dressed up as Kizuna Ai during Halloween 2018 at the NUFs Halloween Party.



culture. Unusual things in Japanese society will stick out more to western eyes, since these things don't really exist within our own cultures. Their responses to the interview questions also reflect this intrigue as well.

One of the first questions we asked was “Have you heard of virtual idols or virtual YouTubers?” All of our Westerners responded yes, while only very few of our Japanese interviewees knew of them. We showed both groups a couple videos of Kizuna Ai as an example. Our next question, “Do you think Kizuna Ai is popu-

lar because she is virtual, or because she has a nice personality?” Both groups agreed on it being because she was virtual. Her actual content seemed secondary. This aligns with what dedicated Japanese viewers have said as well. In a Japanese article written by Matsumoto Atsushi, Kizuna Ai’s popularity is attributed mainly to what she offered as a YouTuber at that time --- being a beautiful and cheerful young girl in a sea of Japanese YouTubers doing comedy. Frankly, she offered something new.

Our next question, “Why does Japan have such a strong interest in these kinds of characters?” In both groups, some explained that it was partially due to the young schoolgirl look already being a part of Japanese culture, through Hatsune Miku and anime. The fifth question

brought a lot of responses and debate: “How do you feel about VTubers gaining popularity across the world?” The Japanese largely felt positive, feeling glad that technology had improved to spread their take on content creation. The answers were less positive in the foreigners group. Many felt concern over becoming attached to a fake personality, who could be voiced and created by anyone. They couldn't trust a content creator who was anonymous, such as Kizuna Ai. This attitude shows that westerners value authenticity.

Finally, our last question was “If VTubers are so popular in Japan and gaining popularity across the world, how come other countries aren’t making their own local VTubers?” There were a variety of answers: What was popular in a culture may not translate well to other cultures, especially cultures who don't have a history with animation or virtual idols. It would be difficult for another creator to do more than Kizuna Ai was doing already (gaming, singing, cooking, DIY crafting, vlogging). The general consensus that VTubers aren’t being created in other countries because said countries haven't created a need for them.

These interviews intended to explore a niche part of Japanese culture that could potentially have a worldwide impact. Tech companies are investing millions of yen into VTubers. Kizuna Ai's audience has almost doubled since early 2018. She has also shown up at conventions, on television, and in advertisements, and on merchandise across Japan and also across the world.

Our group wanted to see if virtual YouTubers could integrate into a more western audience, and perhaps see how Japanese VTubers like Kizuna Ai will progress. The Japanese see her in a more positive light and excitement for her success while the western side appears more cautious. Could you see yourself viewing videos from Kizuna Ai as you do with real YouTubers in the future? Are you interested in trying out the software to create your own virtual avatar? With an increase in accessibility, this may happen sooner than you expect.



# Idols in Japan

## Life of an Idol. ‘Anjo Shotengai Kanban Musume’ It’s hard work being perfect. How do idols overcome this?

by Kainoa K. WRIGHT & Setsuka KUBOTA



In the West, discussion of idols is next to non-existent. However, in East Asian countries idols play a very unique role not only in the culture but the communities created out of it. The focus of this topic is usually centered around the idols’ fanbase. Hardly anyone talks about the idols themselves. What is it like in the life of a Japanese Idol? How does an idol handle their audience? What motivates them to continue pursuing their career? The rise of Japanese idol groups has had a major impact on Japanese society and culture. However, what impact has this had in the idols’ personal lives?

Idols have only recently been prominent in Japanese culture and only started becoming known around the late 1900s. Since then Japan has seen many different variations of idol groups emerge all around the country, along with their own type of “work culture”. In general, idols must be able to pull in fans with more than just their singing and dancing. As a result, idols are not only selling their merchandise and music, but their personalities.

The strength of a fanbase determines the longevity of an idol group. To learn more about the topic we interviewed a local idol group from the town of Anjo named “Anjo Shotengai Idol Kanban Musume”. When asked about what made them want to be an idol, one member, Kannon, said that she wanted people to know more about what made her town special. What inspires people to become an idol can vary greatly. Anzu, another member, said that her main reason for choosing to be an idol was that she her-

Abobe: Anjo Shotengai Idol Kanban Musume dancing on stage.  
Below: Their colorful shoes.



self was a fan of idol groups from a very young age. So her parents and dance teacher encouraged her to audition for Anjo’s idol group. An idol’s job is to maintain a cheerful and lively persona, but they face challenges like any other person with a job. When asked about the biggest challenge about being an idol, Rui said that it’s hard to balance her school and idol life, especially when there is a test coming up. She says that it can be hard to find time to study on the weekends as idol activities are often held on Saturday and Sunday. Idols must work to make sure that their focus on schools does not disappoint fans. Even if a big test is approaching, fans will still want to see their favorite groups perform. Finding the right balance between their idol group and school is a challenge for many of

Anjo Shotengai’s members. Idols in Japan require pristine images of themselves in order to sell their characters. As a result, their social media accounts are often heavily managed so that their image is maintained. We asked Anjo Shotengai about how they manage their social media pages and blogs. One idol said that they don’t write anything negative on their social media because it reflects negatively on the rest of their group. The manager of this group stated that there are in fact rules that exist in regards to social media posts. Some specific rules being that, if you are in high school, you may not post past midnight, nor talk about test taking, and may not use direct messaging on Twitter. Idols are constantly in the public eye. Every aspect of their personas needs to meet strict standards. As the industry continues to grow, people will hopefully be able to see that idols deserve the same respect as any other person. It is easy to forget about the normalcies of life when the people you look up to most seem conveniently content, but each and every person with a career has something driving them when the curtains close. With any type of celebrity the choice has to be made on how to interact with the fans and how to connect with those who only see what is being shown to them at face value.

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