



Japan Local Government Centre

Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), London

Local Japan: Case Studies in Place Promotion

Manga and Anime statues as local landmarks

Among Japan's most popular exports of the past several decades are Japanese comics and cartoons, or *manga* and *anime* as they are better known. There is a current trend in Japanese cities with ties to *manga* and *anime* (either as the home of the author or the setting of the *manga/anime* itself) that has seen local governments and NPOs contributing to the construction (and promotion) of statues immortalising some of the most popular characters.

While cartoonish mascots or *Yurukyara* are a mainstay of regional promotion in Japan, they usually appear as souvenirs, logos on local attractions and goods, or "in person" at events. On the other hand, "character monuments", such as the ones explored below serve as more permanent fixtures within a region's place promotion and identity. They also add another dimension to the ways in which local governments in Japan can capitalise on the spread of Japanese *manga* and *anime* as global cultural phenomena.

Tetsujin 28-go, (Nagata Ward, Kobe)

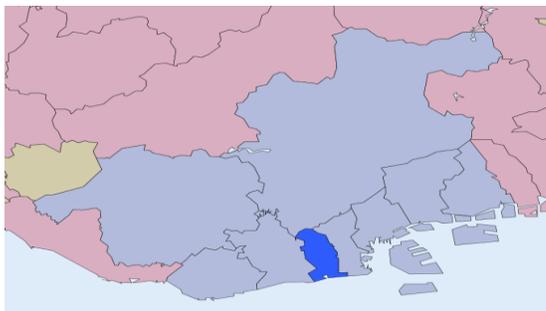
Nagata ward profile

One of the nine wards of Kobe

Population: 102,387

Area: 11.46km²

Density: 8,580/ km²



10km

Nagata ward within Kobe



Kobe within Japan

Built in 2009 to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995, this 18 meter, 50 tonne steel statue commemorates the work of the late *manga* artist, Mitsuteru Yokoyama, a Kobe native. The statue itself embodies “Tetsujin 28-go” (Iron Man number 28), the eponymous hero of a serialised *manga* that ran from 1956.

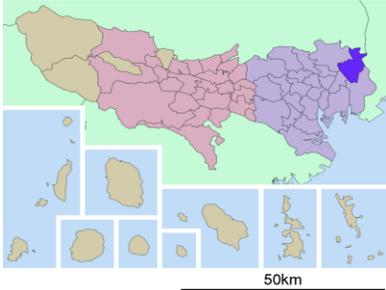


Standing in Wakamatsu Park in the previously earthquake-ravaged Nagata Ward of Kobe City, *Tetsujin* was built by the local business-led Kobe Iron Man Project NPO, costing ¥135 million (around £758,000). ¥45 million (around £252,000) of the total cost was donated by the City of Kobe, with the remainder coming from donations from local residents and businesses.



One of the main aims of the statue’s construction was the revitalisation of the surrounding shopping district after the earthquake, but its creators also had “intergenerational exchange”, “anime culture” and the rather broad concept of “*machi zukuri*” (roughly equating to “urban renewal”) in mind.

Kochira Katsushika-ku Kameari Koen-mae Hashutsujo & Captain Tsubasa (Katsushika City, Tokyo)



Katsushika ward within Tokyo Metropolis

Katsushika ward profile

One of the 23 special wards of Tokyo metropolis

Population: 448,342

Area: 34.84 km²

Density: 12,865.7/ km²

Katsushika City, a special ward located in eastern Tokyo is home to two notable collections of *manga* and *anime* character monuments; the first being 14 bronze statues built between 2006 and 2011 depicting fictional policeman Kankichi Ryotsu and his colleagues from the long-running *manga* series “Kochira Katsushika-ku Kameari Koen-Mae Hashutsujo” (literally “This is the police station in front of Kameari Park in Katsushika Ward”, often abbreviated as “Kochikame”).

Although there is no actual police station in front of Kameari Park (in reality located nearby at the north entrance of Kameari station), before the construction of the statues the area nonetheless drew in tourists from across Japan, demonstrating the depth of the connection between fictional *manga* and *anime* characters and their real world settings, as well as their value in place promotion.

Local businesses have been able to benefit from the arrival of the statues by selling *Kochikame*-related merchandise.

Later, in spring 2013, the area also saw the arrival of eight bronze



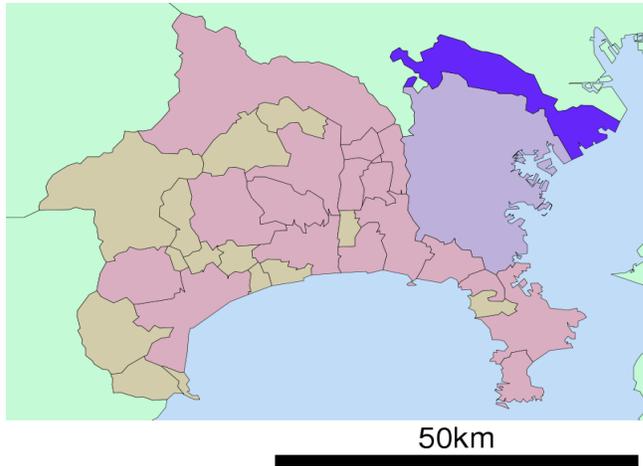
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statues of characters of the internationally popular football *manga* and *anime* “Captain Tsubasa”. Credited with inspiring top level players both in Japan and abroad to pursue a career in the game, the *manga* has sold 70 million copies in Japan alone since 1981. The statues are located in the Yotsugi neighbourhood of Katsushika, home of the series’ creator Yoichi Takahashi.

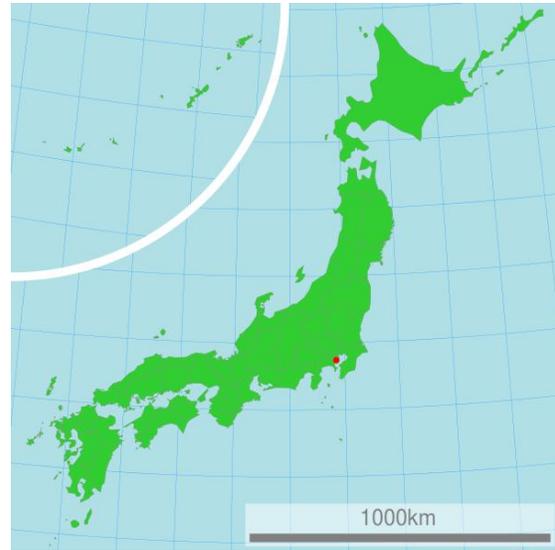
The total of 22 statues from both series cost ¥44.65 million yen, (£252,000) ¥28.65 million (£161,000) of which was provided by the ward office from public funds.

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Kawasaki within Kanagawa prefecture



Kawasaki within Japan

Fujiko F. Fujio Museum (Kawasaki)

Kawasaki City Profile

Twinned with Sheffield since 1990

Population: (2012) 1,437,266

Area: 142.70 km²

Density: 10,070/km²



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Outside of the museum dedicated to works of Fujiko F. Fujio (real name Hiroshi Fujimoto), late creator of the internationally acclaimed “Doraemon” series, the City of Kawasaki bore the entire cost (¥26 million/ £146,000) of erecting nine bronze statues and 14 copper murals of Fujimoto’s various well-known characters. As with the previous examples, this shows the importance placed by local authorities on the area’s ties to a popular series as a means of promotion.



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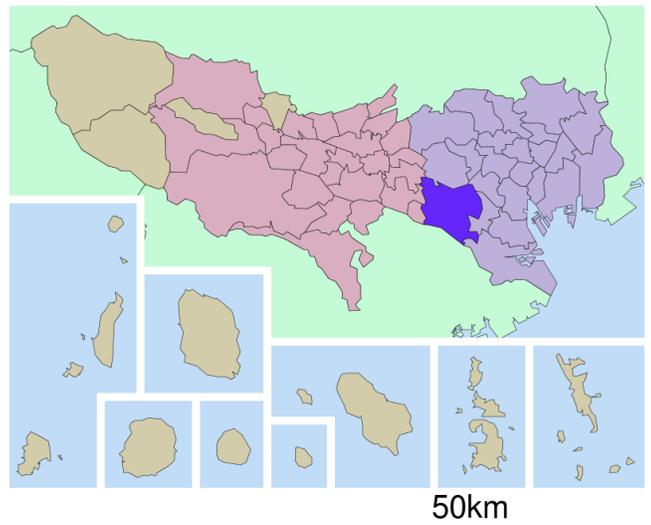
Setagaya ward profile

One of the 23 special wards
of Tokyo metropolis

Population: 837,185

Area: 58.08 km²

Density: 14,414.34/ km²



Setagaya ward within Tokyo Metropolis

Sazae-san (Setagaya City, Tokyo)

Similar to the above, these statues in Setagaya ward, eastern Tokyo make use of the location of the Hasegawa Machiko Art Museum in the area. Machiko Hasegawa (1920-1992) is best known for her “Sazae-san” *manga* and *anime* which holds the Guinness World Record for longest running animated television programme.

The statues, depicting the titular housewife heroine and her family were constructed in a joint project between Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Setagawa Ward office and the nearby Sakurashinmachi shopping centre, at a total cost of ¥45 million (£253,000). From a local brand perspective, there are undeniable benefits of having the area tied to such a recognizable modern culture entity.



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Gundam, Kamiigusa (Suginami City, Tokyo)

Located south of Nerima in Suginami ward, Kamiigusa is also counted as one of the most important locations in the *anime* industry, mainly due to it being the home of the famed Sunrise Studios, creator of the hugely popular “Gundam” series. In 2008, the members of the local shopping district promotion association and the local ward office collaborated with Seibu Railway Company and Sunrise Studios to build a two meter tall bronze statue of “Mobile Suit Gundam”. The ward office allocated ¥20 million (around £112,000) from its annual budget towards the project.



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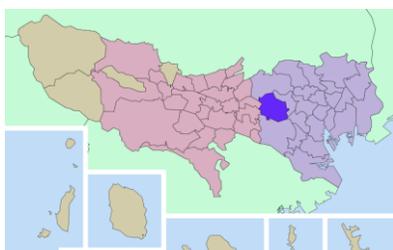
Suginami ward profile

One of the 23 special wards of
Tokyo Metropolis

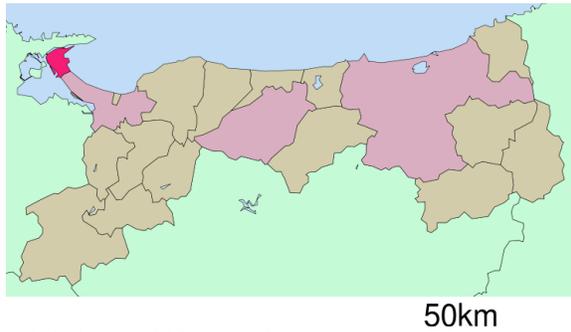
Population: 547,092

Area: 34.02 km²

Density: 16,081.48/ km²



Suginami Ward within Tokyo Metropolis



Sakaiminato within Tottori Prefecture

Sakaiminato Profile

Port of Sakai established as an open port for trade with the UK and USA in 1899

Population: 35,710

Area: 28.79 km²

Density: 1,240/km²



Tottori Prefecture within Japan

Mizuki Shigeru Road (Sakaiminato, Tottori Prefecture)

Perhaps the oldest and best example of “character monuments” outside of Japan’s main metropolitan regions is in Sakaiminato in Tottori, Japan’s least populous prefecture. There, the Mizuki *Shigeru Road* dedicated to the Japanese-folklore inspired *manga* of Sakaiminato native Shigeru Mizuki (1922-) has been gradually lined with bronze statues of his *Yokai* characters since 1993, reaching a total of 153 in 2012. The rise in the number of visitors to Sakaiminato (which had



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previously been a fishing town in decline) can largely be attributed to the statues and the popular “Ge Ge Ge no Kitaro” *anime* series whose characters they depict. Within a year of the completion of the first set of 23 statues in 1994, the number of visitors to the city had increased tenfold to 280,100. Now, some 20 years later, the town sees millions of visitors every year, bringing with them billions of yen in tourism revenue. The completion of a museum showcasing Mizuki’s work was later completed in response to the dramatic rise in visitors to the area.

Interestingly, the statues represent a combined effort between the city’s tourism association, a local shopping street federation, the Mizuki Shigeru Road Promotion Association and Mizuki’s own production company. The city paid for the upkeep of the statues until 2003, at which point a conglomeration of the aforementioned groups came together to seek sponsorship from fans nationwide. The price to sponsor the construction of one *Yokai* statue is ¥1 million (£5,600).



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