

# Japanese Pop Culture II: Subculture

**1970s-1980s**  
 The 1970s and 1980s were a period of significant cultural change in Japan. The rise of television and the internet allowed for the spread of subcultures. The 1970s saw the emergence of the **Visual Kei** movement, characterized by elaborate, often theatrical, stage outfits. The 1980s saw the rise of **Visual Rock**, a subgenre of rock music that emphasized visual spectacle. The 1990s saw the rise of **Visual Pop**, a subgenre of pop music that emphasized visual spectacle. The 2000s saw the rise of **Visual Idol**, a subgenre of idol music that emphasized visual spectacle.

## Visual Kei

**Visual Kei** is a subculture of Japanese rock music that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is characterized by elaborate, often theatrical, stage outfits that combine elements of Western fashion with traditional Japanese motifs. The movement is closely associated with the **Visual Rock** subgenre of rock music.

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## Otaku

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Otaku refers to:  
 1. Misaki  
 2. All other things anime and game  
 3. All other things anime and game



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**Subculture in postmodernism**  
 Traditional points of collective identification, such as class, gender, race, and place are gradually replaced by elective, self-own, consumer identities, and the members of subcultures are postmodern in that they demonstrate a fragmented, individualistic, and artistic identification (McGaughey, "Inside Subculture" 2000).

The consumption of cultural goods, such as fashionable clothing, performs an increasingly important role in the construction of personal identity, while the satisfaction of material needs and the emulation of superior classes are secondary.

## Lolita



## variations of Lolita style

- Black Lolita
- Classic Lolita
- Dark Lolita
- French Lolita
- Goth Lolita
- Harajuku Lolita
- Kawaii Lolita
- Mad Lolita
- Neo Lolita
- Pre Lolita
- Rock Lolita
- Sweet Lolita
- Visual Kei Lolita
- Visual Rock Lolita
- Visual Pop Lolita
- Visual Idol Lolita

\*The following is from a Japanese website, "Lolita Fashion"

**Lolita Style**  
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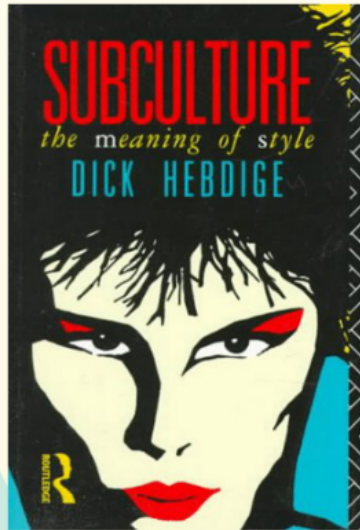
# Japanese Popular Culture II: Subculture

Otaku, Lolita and...



nov 28th

# subculture



Dick Hebdige

*Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, 1979

## what is subculture?

a subculture is constituted by groups of individuals who share distinct values and norms that are against dominant or mainstream society. By the use of clothing, music, style and symbols, subcultures suggest that there are alternative forms of cultural expression that reflect a plurality in a group that seems, on superficial examination, to dominate the members of a society.

**Hebdige:** neo-Marxist explanation (Althusser; Gramsci); on working-class youth subcultures (routine practices of the subcultural groups).





two waves of Teddy Boys [1]

[hegemony]

Hebdige (15-6)  
 the situation in which the provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert "total social authority" over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by "winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural" (Hall, 1977)



punk rock band SEX PISTOL founded in 1975 [2]



- [1] [http://niveditabais.blogspot.jp/2011/03/teddy-boy-fashion-movement\\_1778.html](http://niveditabais.blogspot.jp/2011/03/teddy-boy-fashion-movement_1778.html)
- [2] Bollocks(1977) <http://grooveparty.tistory.com/45>

# [hegemony]

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[conjunction & specificity]

**conjunction** as a concept originally proposed by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci; a **conjunction** is a coming together into a particular articulation of all the complex forces operating in a society during a given period: the situations; the framework

members of a subculture "cobble" together (or hybridize) styles of the images and material culture available to them in the effort to construct identities which confer on them "relative autonomy" within a social order fractured by class, generational differences.

**specificity** is the differentiating effect from the dominant order as a result of conjuncture

spectacular subcultural **styles**: is the way in which youth cultures express their resistance to dominant culture (i.e. ways in which 'punks' question the sanctity of culture)

**styles are rooted in everyday life, and have meanings**: gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus

# [appropriation]

the process whereby people use cultural objects, practices, commodities and so forth in personally relevant, un-prescribed ways; it is a subversion of meanings





[1]



[2]

right second:  
Godfather of Chinese Rock'n'roll  
Music Cui Jian



[3]

[1] <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/11/world/asia/china-cui-jian-floracruz/>

[2] [http://www.danwei.org/music/cui\\_jian\\_on\\_the\\_square.php](http://www.danwei.org/music/cui_jian_on_the_square.php)

[3] <http://www.cluas.com/columns/beijing-beat/china-hang-on-the-box.htm>



right second:  
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Music Cui Jian

## Down: Indie Rock in PRC, Dir. Andrew Field, 2012



Indie Bank: PK14

[1]



[2]

[1][http://blog.abdphoto.net/2011\\_05\\_01\\_archive.html](http://blog.abdphoto.net/2011_05_01_archive.html)

[2]STRAWBERRY MUSIC FESTIVAL'09 (2009)

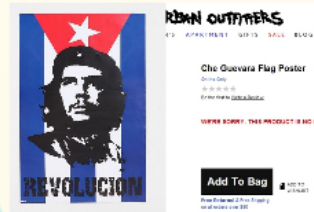
## incorporation (co-optation) Two Forms of Incorporating Subculture

### commodity form

taking the style, trends, dress, music etc of the subcultures and popularizing them so that the subcultures lose their exclusivity. the main force behind this marketing of subcultures as a form of merchandise is the media and as a result, the aspects that once rendered each subculture unique gradually become mass-produced commodities made available to all.

"rebellion" could be marketized--the 'why' and 'against what' - of subversion is emptied out; the style becomes a gesture without critical impact.

John Fiske celebrates creative consumerism as progressive rebellion.



### ideological form

downplay and diminish the interest in "subculture" as **the Other** of the society: deny the differences, the subculture is 'trivialized, naturalized and domesticated'

# critique of subculture after Hebdige

some recent subcultures have an entrepreneurial element from the beginning and actively seek 'moral panic' simply as a marketing ploy. A negative media response is sought because it confers on the subculture an air of 'hip' rebellion without it necessarily being a reaction to specific social inequalities, even unconsciously.

Sarah Thornton, Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital (Cambridge: Polity, 1995)

**Simon Jones**

politics: a structural reading of subcultural formation . . . slides over the question of the political impact of those groups which it has identified.

e.g. Punks' uses of black cultures "contained ambiguities which were susceptible to fascist manipulation. . . .For the same powerlessness, desire to shock and sense of anger at official smugness expressed by punk's more working-class constituency, were precisely the same motives and feelings which steered jobless and powerless young whites towards organized racism"

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# Otaku



## Youth in Japan: the socio-cultural context

in the tumultuous 1960s, youth expressed their aspirations through radical political movements (such as All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee/Zenkyoto) and a broad range of new popular activities, in particular, **manga** medium which expanded enormously in the latter half of this decade.



youth culture: the threat of individualism  
(potentially communism)



## criticism of the immaturity and escapism

qualities of introspection, immaturity, escapism, and resistance to entering Japanese society have been strongly equated with youth, youth culture and manga.



*amateur manga movement*



## amateur manga conventions

Comic Market, since 1975



artists & fans gather, social-networking

age: mid-teens~late 20s

majority participants: raised in large suburban housing complexes and attended lower-ranking colleges/no higher education

gender issue with amateur manga movement

commercial manga was dominated by boys' and adult magazines; printed amateur manga "provided an unexpected new gateway into the manga medium for Japanese women"

Super Comic City (1991)



style (in both parody and original work) **yaoi**--  
 anagram composed of the first syllable of three  
 phrases, **yama nashi, ochi nachi, imi nashi**---  
 no build-up, no foreclosure, and no meaning.



『スターライクワーズ』 (2011) ぢゅん子

main subject matter of YAOI  
 homoerotic and homosexual romance between  
 lead male characters

"young female fans feel more able to imagine and  
 depict idealized strong and free characters if they  
 are male" (p302 Sharon Kinsella)

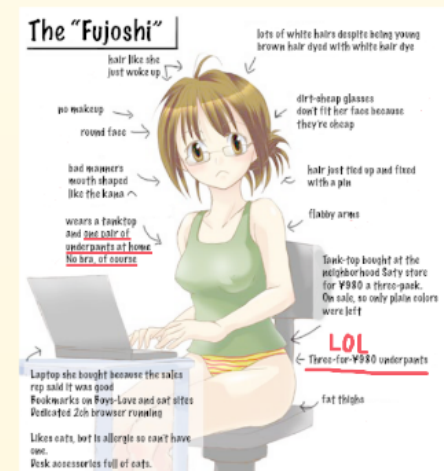


『水温む』 (2001) 山田ユギ

**Fujoshi (rotten girls):**  
 females in Yaoi fandom; female  
 equivalent of Otaku



<http://yulysmile.deviantart.com/art/watashi-wa-fujpshi-desu-381212065>



<http://www.mangatherapy.com/post/15350149401/great-fujoshi-power>

amateur manga panic & Otaku

1988~1989 Miyazaki Tsutomu abducted, murdered and mulilated four small girls. His bedroom was full of girls' manga, rorikon manga, animation videos, soft porn manga and so forth.

Miyazaki: family malfunction; personality disorder, twisted/lack of social relationship

# Otaku

OTAKU= YOUR HOME

invented by Nakamori Akio in 1973

a term used to refer to someone who is not accustomed to close friendships and therefore tries to communicate with peers using this distant and overly formal form of address; who spends most of his/her time alone at home.



Otaku refers to,

1. Miyazaki

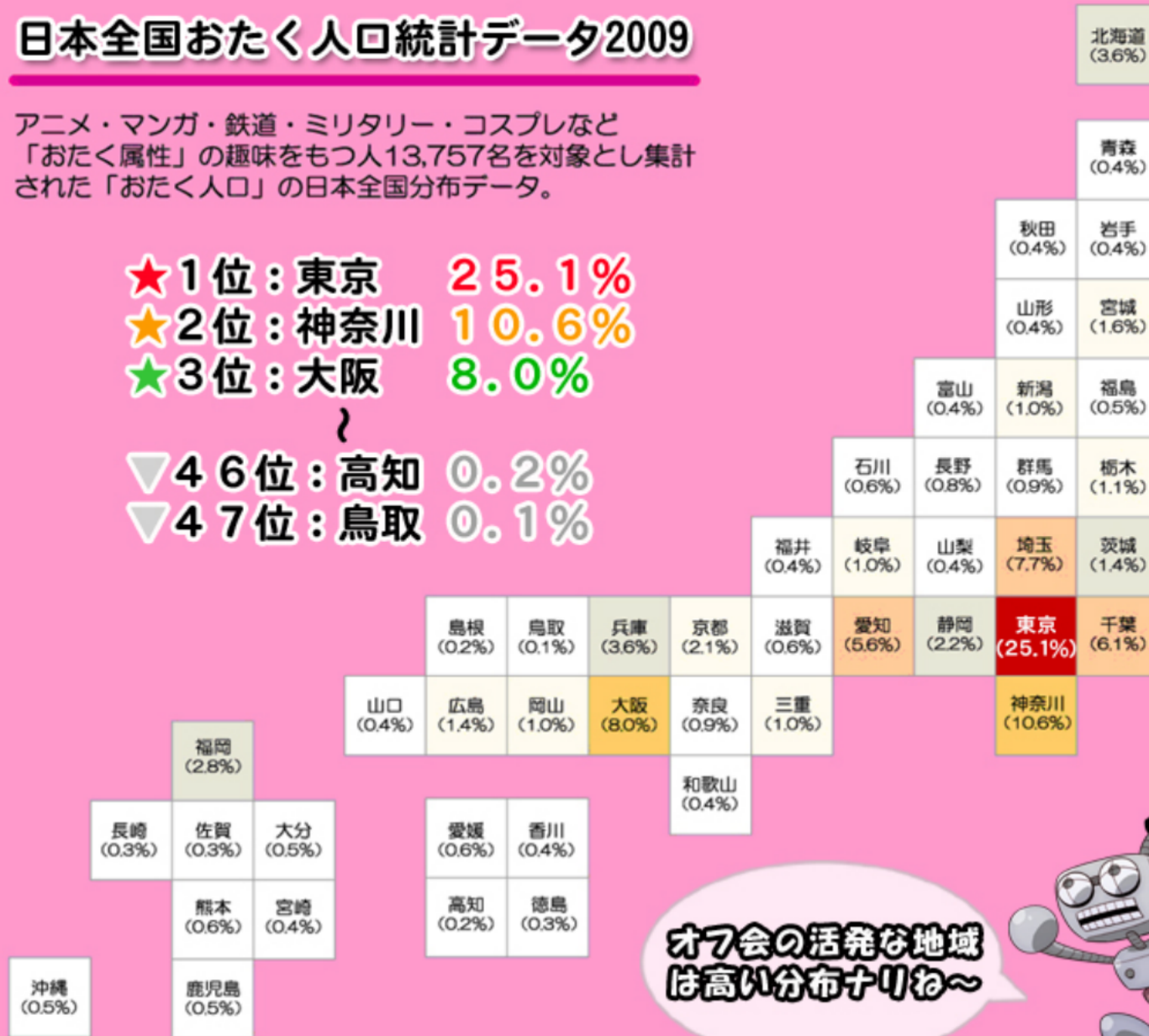
2. All amateur manga artists and fans

3. All Japanese youth in their entirety

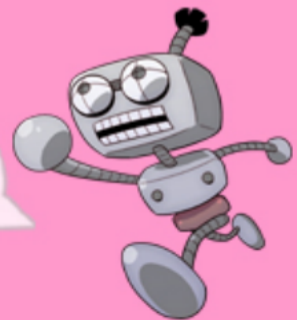
# 日本全国おたく人口統計データ2009

アニメ・マンガ・鉄道・ミリタリー・コスプレなど  
「おたく属性」の趣味をもつ人13,757名を対象とし集計された「おたく人口」の日本全国分布データ。

- ★1位：東京 25.1%
- ★2位：神奈川 10.6%
- ★3位：大阪 8.0%
- ▽46位：高知 0.2%
- ▽47位：鳥取 0.1%



オタク会の活発な地域  
は高い分布ナリね～



サンプル数：13,757名（有効8,479名）  
（ソーシャルマッチングサービス「おたくま」会員データより集計）

copyright and other actions taken to discipline unpublished amateur manga and prevent their wider distribution; society and the public expressed a sense of insecurity about uncontrolled and unregulated new cultural activities like manga otaku.

## Otaku as the symbol of contemporary Japanese society (youth)

late 1980s~1990s

new extreme in the alienation of Japanese youth from the collective goals of society; negative connotation; association with Akihabara subculture

Otaku came to be used as another rejuvenated and modernized version of the aging and overgeneralized concept of "youth": lack any remaining vestiges of social consciousness and are entirely preoccupied by their particularistic and specialist personal pastimes.

**Peter Pan syndrome:** refuse to grow up and take on adult social relations

ultimate anti-social: unable to communicate or have social relationships with other people

# Lolita



## subcultures in postmodern form

traditional points of collective identification, such as class, gender, race and place are gradually replaced by elective, build-your-own, consumer identities, and the members of subcultures are postmodern in that they demonstrate a fragmented, individualistic, and stylistic identification (Muggleton "Inside Subculture" 2000).

the consumption of cultural goods, such as fashionable clothing, performs an increasingly important role in **the construction of personal identity**, while the satisfaction of material needs and the emulation of superior classes are secondary.

## Lolita Style

1970s two fashion brands Milk & Pink House initiated this fashion genre; not necessarily know about Nabokov

styling characteristics:

frills, lace trimmings, ribbons, sheer fabrics such as chiffon, and layers of petticoats, projecting a childlike, innocent, girlie image.

Lolita is self-expression and self-satisfaction (alter-ego; alternative identity); the followers have their online communities and actual gatherings; partial connotation of resisting the adulthood and social reality



# variations of Lolita style

Ama-Loli (sweet lolita)

Classical/Elegant Lolita

Ero-Loli (erotic Lolita)

Futago-Loli (twin Lolita)

Gosu-Loli (Gothic and Lolita)

Guro-Loli (Gore Lolita): using bandage or blood splatters or anything that looks gory

Hime-Loli (Princess Lolita)

Kuro-Loli (Black Lolita)

Ouji (Prince for Lolita)

Pinku-Loli

Punk-Loli

Qi-Loli (Chinese Lolita)

Sailor-Loli (Sailor Lolita)

Wa-Loli (Japanese Lolita)

"Fashioning Japanese Subcultures", Yuniya Kawamura



[1]



[2]



[3]

[1]<http://asbs.jp/english/sp/news.php?id=638>

[2]下妻物語 (2004.5)

[3]<http://dalje.com/en/foto.php?id=22&rbr=8183&idrf=393558>