Japanese Otaku Culture
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In recent years, Japanese otaku culture has been widely spread overseas. If you want to correctly understand Japanese otaku culture, it is difficult to understand only with pure knowledge of the Japanese language; therefore you need to know their unique terminology.

Types of otaku:
Otaku does not always describe anime and game fans. There are many type of otakus in Japan such as "train otaku", "military otaku" and "car otaku". The "train otaku", particularly, is the group that has longest history, and it has some offshoots such as noritetsu, toritetsu and soushikitetsu. If you visited a rail station in Japan, you can see some people who have cameras in the station. When famous train routes or trains are abolished, they assemble from around Japan and regret the last goodbye of the train and rail.

Geek or Nerd?:
The word "otaku" originates from Japan, therefore there are no words that have fully compatible meaning with otaku in foreign languages. In English, there are some words that have close meaning with otaku such as "geek" and "nerd". However, the words "geek" and "nerd" mean different people so you cannot fully consider these words as synonyms to otaku, because the word "otaku" includes both geeks and nerds. Most otaku have a deep knowledge about computers, but there are some differences by otaku. For example, they can assemble a PC, they can draw an illustration, they have knowledge of foreign languages, or they are good at playing flight simulator games. It is a piece of cake for most otaku to add a memory to their own PC, but it is difficult for non-otaku people.

Military otaku:
Military otaku is one of the groups that have the longest history in Japan. They are not nationalists nor militarists, but they are pure weapon freaks. Most of their themes are about World War 2, the Cold War, and modern wars. However, there are cases that they also refer to pre-modern wars. The relationship between the military and history is very close; therefore there are cases that they refer to even ancient wars. The core military otaku will most likely pronounce the name of the German heavy tank "Tiger", used during WW2, in German; however light military otaku will likely pronounce it in English. You can distinguish that they are core military mania or not by carefully listening their talking.

My wife:
Japanese otaku often say "This character is my wife" about a particular female anime character. It doesn't mean he actually married with the character; it means she is his most favorite character in the production. On other hand, they often say "She is my wife too." about other production character as well. As you know, polygamy is not allowed in Japan, but it is allowed to have another wife between production worlds in the otaku community.

Hentai:
Hentai is already one of the most famous Japanese words; however it used in different meaning between Japan and overseas. In Japan, hentai means the people who have an abnormal sexual orientation; In English words, it is the nearest to "kinky". If you visited in Japan; in particular when you are using a train, don't rashly say the word "hentai". The people around you may misunderstand, and think that a sexual criminal is touching your body.

Events:
There are events that could also be called otaku's mecca in Japan. Particularly, the Comic Market (Comiket) is one of the most important events for Japanese Otakus. It is held in Tokyo Big Site twice a year, but otaku come from all over Japan.
Because this is the biggest otaku event in Japan.
In addition, there are some events of particular comic or anime in Japan.
The Hakurei Shrine festival (Reitaisai) is the festival of Touhou Project.
In these events of anime and comics, you can buy fan-fic comics (dojinshi) which were made by other fans.
If you wish to participate to the event, there are some things that you need to be careful about.
You cannot use 10,000 yen bills in the venue; because most participants don't have enough changes.
Therefore you need to prepare enough 1,000 yen bills and 100 yen coins.
Moreover, the venue is narrow as compared to the number of participants.
So you shouldn't stand in the same place for a long time.

**Dojinshi:**
You can buy fan-comics in otaku events; however there are some comics that have extreme sexual contents.
These sexual comics are sold in different place from where comics for all ages are sold.
Therefore if you don't want to see these hentai comics, you can avoid them by carefully reading the venue map.
The map is added in end of the catalog (the participant circle list) which you can buy to enter the venue.
Most dojinshi have less pages so they are also said to be "the thin books (usuihonn)" in slang.

**Business card:**
As you know, business card (meishi) is a commercial practice in Eastern Asia; you can see that participants exchange their business cards with each other in the venue.
The business cards are designed with rich personality by each circle, and their email address and twitter account name are written on the business card.
If you do some sort of creative activities, you can exchange business cards to deeply communicate with them.
Most business cards are designed with 55mm lengh and 91mm width, the same as for commercial cards.

**2channel:**
2channel (ni-channeru) is a huge bulletin board that is the most used and favorite bulletin board of Japanese otaku.
In foreign countries, there are some bulletin boards similar to 2channel; however you cannot write or read on the Japanese 2channel because access from foreign countries has been forbidden.
There are many categories of bulletin boards such as military, economy, studying language, cooking etc.
On 2channel, there is no function to upload a picture, so users have to host pictures elsewhere.

**Twitter:**
On Twitter, you can find many Japanese people who use a picture of an anime character as their personal icon.
However, this does not mean that otaku always use anime characters as icons.
If they are train otaku, they might use a picture related to trains, and if they are military otaku, they might use a picture related to the military such as a gun or a tank.
Even if you don't know Japanese, you can quickly determine their hobby by seeing their personal icons.

**Pixiv:**
Pixiv is an important community for Japanese dojin (fan-fic) creators.
You can submit your own illustrations there.

**DLsite:**
DLsite is the most popular doujin selling site in Japan.
You can buy various fan-fics like in other internet shops.
There is an English version for foreigners; however you need to prepare a credit card or a Paypal account for shopping.

**Kancolle:**
The Kancolle (fleets collection) is one of the famous online browser games in Japan.
You can lead anthropomorphic warship girls to destroy enemy deep-sea living warships (shinkaiseikann).
Most of characters are based of Imperial Japanese Navy warships.
You don't need deep military knowledge or tactical senses to play the game.
The rules of game are very simple and you don't need to enter commands during the battle.
However, you have to select advance or retreat to save your kanmusu (warship-girl).
Because, when your kanmusu are seriously injured or fatigued, their lives are at risk.
Touhou Project:
Touhou Projects are indie products with a focus on shooting games, which are designed by ZUN. The first product "Touhou Reiidenn" was announced as for the PC-98 in the year of 1996. The Touhou Project became dramatically popular by announcing its first product for Windows in 2002. Then, its production also spread overseas to foreign fans.
There are some things to take note of to enjoy the theme of the Touhou Project. This is because on the internet, there are some elements born from fanwork. In the original story, Sakuya Izayoi didn't put a padding in her bra, nor is Reimu Hakurei poor. Fortunately, there are excellent articles written by foreign fans on the internet Touhou Wikis, so you can learn the real stories from them.

Vocaloid and Miku Hatsune:
Vocaloid series were designed as speech synthesis programs by YAMAHA, and Miku Hatsune is one of the virtual singers. You can make the characters to sing by adjusting the settings, but it requires great skill to make them sing like a real human. Vocaloid sometimes spread to Japanese non-otaku cultures. For example, the US branch of Japanese automaker Toyota Corolla incorporated Miku Hatsune into their advertising. Another example would be; the song "Senbonzakura" which Japanese singer group "AKB48" sings is composed by a Vocaloid user.

Card games in Japan:
There are many card games such as "Pokemon Trading Card Game" and "Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game" which were born in Japan, but the "Magic The Gathering" which was developed by U.S Wizards of the Coast is also popular between otaku.
There are shops which sell used cards, so you can cheaply buy cards to make a deck. On the other hand, you can find very expensive cards on internet auctions. Old rare cards have great value so there are even cases where the value of a card reached over 1000 dollars as a result of auction.

Nico Nico Douga
Nico Nico Douga is the most popular video site among Japanese otaku.
Most otaku prefer Niconico to Youtube, because Niconico has an unique function that allows you to add comments in video as scrolling captions. This style spread to China, then the a Chinese version "Bilibili" was born. You can watch various video which were made by users of Niconico, but there are some times crazy videos. For example, you can find videos that change the running sound of Toyota Purius to that of the different vehicle. It runs sounding like a Formula One car, a tank, or a jet fighter in the residential area in Japan. Moreover, there are many video works (oto-MADs) which are made with various sound sources. Because many video creators can use various sounds like instruments. The sounds of spanking a hip, of firing a gun, and beep of railroad crossing signal are used to create a movie.

Otaku's blog
Google Blogger is widely used around the world. However, most Japanese otaku prefer FC2 blog to Blogger, and most otaku blog author placed their blog on FC2. I don't know the reason in detail, but I can guess that it came from the Japanese internet history. FC2 provides web space service which can be used freely. In addition, it displays compulsory smaller ads than other free web space services on the user's site, and the upper limit of file size is very huge. Therefore, I think that this convenience enhanced the name recognition of FC2. On the other hand, I think that the design of Google Blogger is suited to write in European languages, so the interface alienates Japanese users.

Model:
Many otakus love making models. There's even a type of otaku called a "Model otaku". They make various models of ships, tanks, buildings, aircrafts, or other things. The Gundam model (gunpla) is the most popular model among the model otaku, because it has a structure which be easy to assembled. You can assemble it by just using simple tools such as a sparking file, nipper, and tweezers.
Basically, it does not require many and expensive tools, but if you want to raise the quality of the paint, you can choose other methods.

In addition, you can choose the desired size for the model from 4 different scale sizes to be assemble.
The smallest gunpla "HG" (High-Grade) series are only 13 cm in height, but the largest gunpla "PG" (Perfect-Grade) series are about 30 cm in height.

**Figure:**
The word "figure" has a different meaning in English speaking countries and in Japan.
Because, in most cases in Japan the word "figure" usually means doll.
But, of course the word figure does not always mean the female dolls (*bishouyo*).
Besides the female dolls, there are other kind of figures such as *Ultraman* and Godzilla.
There are some things you need to be careful of when you meet with "figure otaku".
You cannot open the package.
Because, if the figure is from a rare production lot, opening it will lose its value.
Among otaku, there are some people who buy figures for an economical purpose so you need to be careful when touching their collections.

**Body pillow (dakimakura):**
There are many kinds of body pillows in Japan, but you can find stranger body pillows in a otaku shop.
These are rectangular body pillows on which a illustration of the anime character is drawn.
There are even body pillows on which handsome boys are drawn for female otaku.
These items are very famous and valuable as otaku's status.
However, that doesn't mean all otaku have the *dakimakura*.

**Where are otaku?:**
Formerly, most otaku wore just characteristic and similar clothes, but in modern time, otaku's fashion has been diversified so you cannot easily find out a otaku from their looks even in Akihabara.
However, there are chances to easily find otaku in the Japanese trains.
At the day of "Comiket" or "Reitaisai", you can find many people who have many dojinshi in the Yamanote rail line.
Many otaku wait the festival day with amassing the money to buy many dojinshi.
The dojinshi they bought are called as the "spoils" (*senrihin*) by otaku.

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