The Momentary and Placeless Community:
Constructing a New Community with regards to *Otaku* Culture

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine how a new community in information societies is constructed by referring to the cultural practices of Otaku and their methods of communication. Today, the realities of internet space are gaining ground. The Otaku are the most acclimatized people, or the most addicted, to the information society, however, when they gather in certain real geographic places that they denominate by religious terms, they affirm the existence of their reference group and strengthen the plausibility of their structures. The practices of Otaku present one of the ways of living in the information society.

Keywords: the *Otaku* culture, community, CMC, Internet

要旨

この論文は、情報社会における新たな共同体の在り方について、オタクと呼ばれる人々による文化的実践とコミュニケーションに言及することによって論じるものである。インターネット空間のリアリティが増進している今日、オタクは情報社会にもっとも適応した人々であり、あるいはそこに耽溺しているとも言える。しかし、彼らが宗教的語彙で呼び表す現実の場に集う時、彼らはそこで準拠集団の確認と信憑性構造の強化を行っている。そうしたオタクの実践は、情報社会における１つの生き方を提供している。

キーワード：オタク文化、コミュニティ、CMC、インターネット

Introduction

This paper aims to present how a new community in modern and information societies is constructed by referring to the cultural practices of the *Otaku* (geeks or nerds) community and their methods of communication. The *Otaku* culture includes animation works, comics, video games and a certain segment of the internet culture. The above-mentioned productions are very highly rated and are generally taken as constituting "Cool Japan". Young people form the core of this culture, and adherents of the culture are known as *Otaku.* According to a certain survey, 13% or more of the population of Japan are *Otaku* (Kawamoto 2006: 164).

In order to examine the cultural practices of the *Otaku* community, this paper will discuss three cases: the first is the *Comic Market* (hereinafter shortened to the *Comiket*) which is by far the world's largest *fanzine* (amateur fan magazine) on-site convention; the second case study is that of the journey to locations figuring in animation works; the third case is Akihabara Electric Town in Tokyo.   *Otaku* use religious terminology in all three cases; for instance the *Comiket* is called "the festival" or "the carnival", the journey to visit animation locations is called "a pilgrimage", and Akihabara, which is the heartland of *Otaku* culture, is called "the sacred place".

In each case, we can observe that *Otaku* regard these places from the point of view of their own world. In other words, in each case, the two-dimensional contents to which they are addicted become real geographic spaces. With regards space, the *Otaku* culture is constructed of both real geographic space and computer-mediated communication space (hereinafter shortened to CMCS). Although ordinarily *Otaku* exchange information and impressions in CMCS, they do sometimes gather and interact in real space. In this way, *Otaku* confirm their particular world-view as created in *Otaku* culture. Both in real space and in CMCS, *Otaku* are a tribe which treats *Otaku* culture as their totem. They affirm their own reference group and strengthen their plausibility structure by moving between two spaces, and thereby raising the intensity of their community.

1.   Annual activities of the *Otaku* culture: the *Comiket*

1.1. History and tenets of the *Comiket*

This chapter examines *Doujinshi* Marketplaces which show strong active participation and are highly appreciated by *Otaku*. We will more especially discuss the *Comiket,* Japan's largest indoor convention operated by a single private non-governmental group. Otaku often refer to this venue as "the sacred place" or "the festival place".

According to *Comiket* (2007-2008), *Doujinshis* are "books edited and published by individuals with the aim of presenting their own material, and as a norm, *Doujinshis* are not included in the commercial publishing distribution system. So generally, commercial profits are not the primary rationale for *Doujinshi* endeavors. The primary goal of *Doujinshi* publishing is self-expression" and gaining recognition of the work. "*Doujinshi* Marketplaces are functions centered around the display and distribution of *Doujinshis*."

Although *Doujinshi* Marketplaces in foreign countries are often held side by side with *Manga, Anime* or *Cosplay*[1] events, in Japan, they are for the most part dedicated events. The marketplaces can vary in scale and genre. In a small function for example, there would only be a few dozen circles[2] and one genre; this is called "an only event". The *Comiket*, on the other hand, figures over 35,000 circles, with a total attendance of 550,000 persons (*Comiket* 2007-2008: 4).

The *Comiket* has been held about twice a year since 1975. August 2009 was the 76th convention. The first convention had 32 circles and an attendance of about 700 people, whereas the 76th convention had over 35,000 circles and an attendance of over 560,000 people (Figure1). However, a cursory glance at the date shows that the *Comiket* must have met with some problems over the course of its development. The *Comiket* has indeed had to overcome problems of copyright infringement, regulations on child pornography, letters threatening to bomb the event, and so on. As a result, the *Comiket* was expelled for a while from certain venues and *Comiket* participants, *Otaku*, drew a metaphorical comparison between themselves and the Jewish peoples living outside Israel, calling themselves "the people of the Diaspora". Furthermore, due to its continued growth, the *Comiket* now faces chronic overcrowding and will soon exceed the capacity of its latest venue which is also the largest such venue in Japan, i.e. Tokyo Big Sight. In other words, the *Comiket* can only be held at the present venue and relations with the management of the present venue are tense. The *Comiket*, therefore, faces yet more problems if it continues in its present form.

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[1] A Japanese word derived from the English words "costume" and "play". It is a blend of make-believe, costumes, role-play and fashion that create a surreal social phenomenon (Kazuhisa Fujie and Sian Carr 2007: 3).
[2] *Doujinshi* publishing groups

Fig.1: Evolution of *Comiket* Participants: 1975-2009 (1st-76th Conventions)
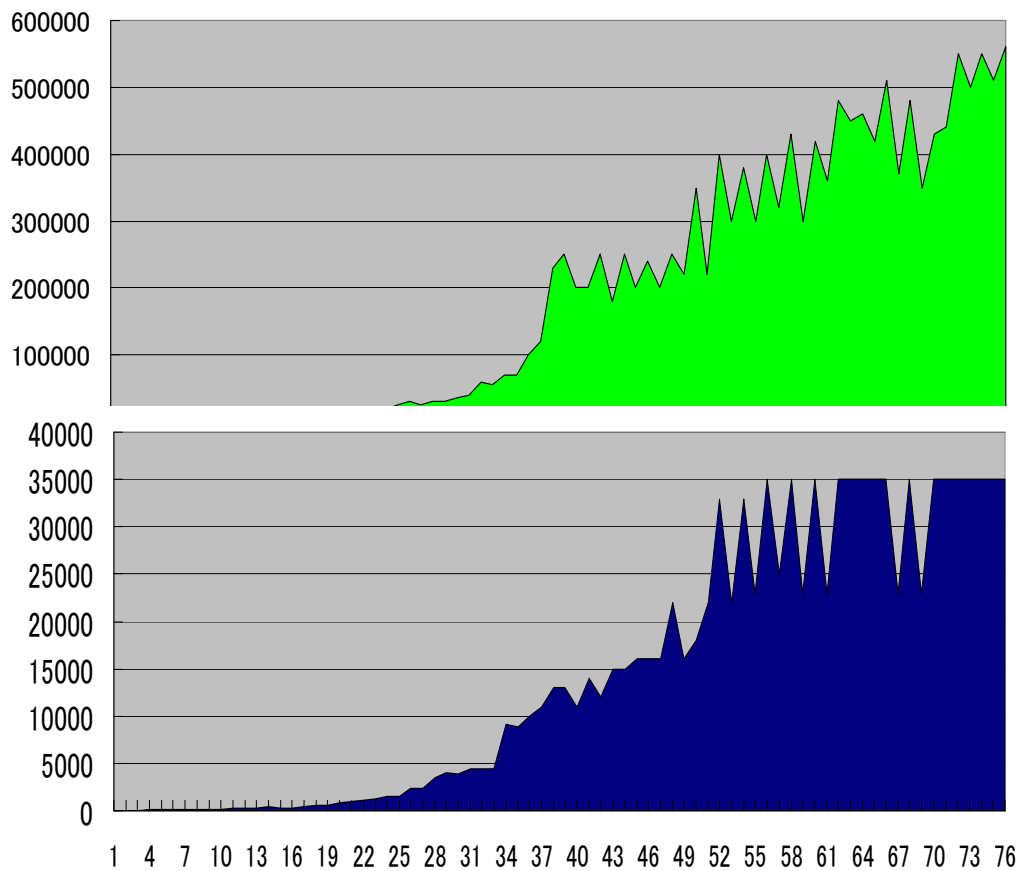
The top graph shows number of participants: the bottom graph shows number of circles.
According to *Comiket* Preparations Committee (2005) and *Comiket* (2009)

So much for *Comiket* history, now to turn to its tenets as set out by the *Comiket* Preparations Committee, an extract of which is given below:

- Everybody is a participant.
- There are no "customers" at the Comic Market.
- The Comic Market is operated, maintained, and comprised by those who participate in the event.
- All participants are treated equally.
- Comic Market must remain a space where freedom of expression is maintained. It must expend every effort toward securing as much freedom of expression as possible.

(*Comiket* 2008: 26)

From the above, we can see that the *Comiket* is a place of communication, a marketplace that is realized by all participants. So the *Comiket* aims to be a free community space like an *Asyl* (=asylum). Yoshihiro Yonezawa, a former representative of the *Comiket,* said "the *Comiket* is a city which appears for a few days a year by the participants' will" and there is "a momentary Utopia in a space where *Manga, Anime* and game fans are able to come together in a common time" (*Comiket* 2005: 193). In the following section, we will discuss how this statement is realized.

1.2. Is the *Comiket* a market or a festival? Driving out marketplace principles

In the former section we introduced the history and tenets of the *Comiket*. The tenets of the *Comiket* especially emphasize equality of all participants and the *Comiket's* function as a Utopia. In this section, we will examine differences between the *Comiket* and usual markets in order to establish whether or not the *Comiket* can be considered a festivity and a community.

Kunio Yanagita, a famous folklorist in Japan, grieved over present-day festivals which are violated by commercialism (Yanagita 1990: 294). Does the *Comiket* then have market principles? Kaichiro Morikawa indicates the difference between the *Comiket* and usual markets. According to Morikawa, in the usual marketplace, leading companies customarily occupy the central area and are allocated a bigger space, but in the *Comiket* this is the opposite (Morikawa 2004: 12-15). In the *Comiket* leading circles are sent to periphery areas of the venue[3] and regardless of a circles' sales figures, participating circles are allocated more or less the same space[4].

Finally, relatively few circles make money at the *Comiket* (Figure 2). According to the *Comiket* Preparations Committee (2005), about 70% of all circles show a loss and only a few circles (0.8%) mention making a profit as a reason for producing *Doujinshi*. Further, the Comic Market Preparation Committee staff-members are all volunteers (roughly 2400 members). Thus, there is hardly any profit-making activity at the *Comiket*[5].

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[3] Any circles that are likely to have long lines of people are positioned near the loading bays so the lines can be arranged to be extended out into the truck yards. Some circles will sell an excess of a couple 1000 copies of their books at a single session of the *Comiket*. *Comiket* Preparations Committee (2005: 295).

[4] Space allocated to each circle: half a desk (90cm wide and 45cm deep); 2 chairs; space for storing inventory (90cm x 70cm x 150cm). *Comiket* (2007-2008).
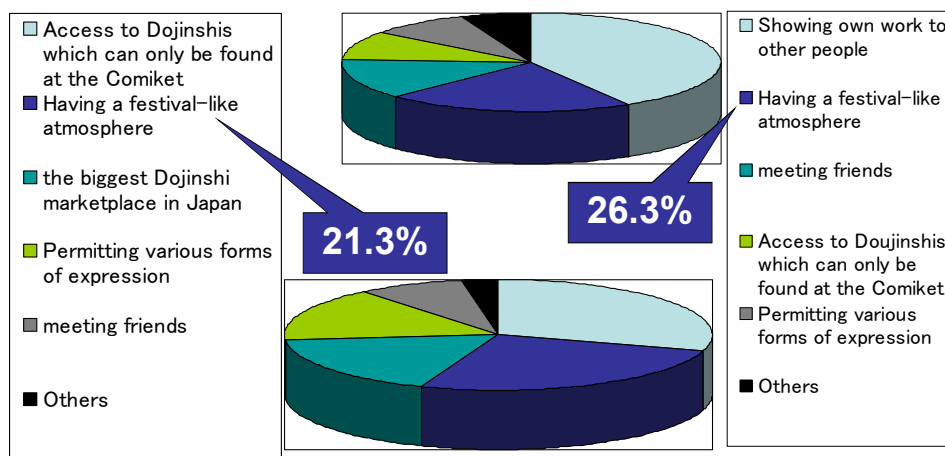
[5] Not only participating circles but *Comiket* Inc. itself hardly makes a profit.

Fig. 2: Income of circles
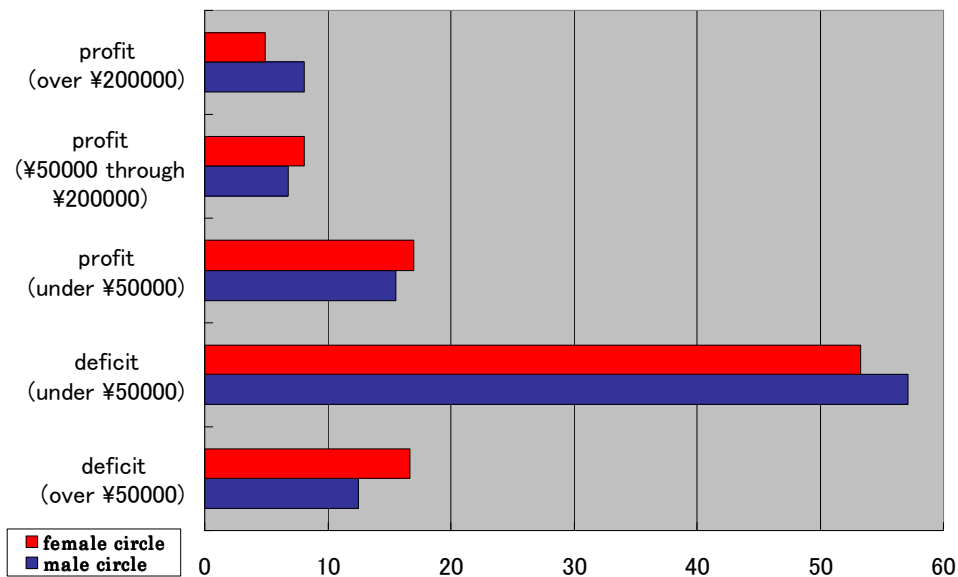
Fig. 3: Reasons for participating in *Comiket*

What is the purpose then, if the participating circles, the general attendees and the staff-members of the *Comiket* do not aim at earning money? A possible answer can be seen in Figure 3 which gives the reasons for participating in *Comiket*. The category showing the

highest rate of response from both the circles and general attendees is "having a festival-like atmosphere" (circles: 21.3%; general attendees: 26.3%). Also, the communication category of "meeting friends" is similarly high. From Figure 3, it is evident that participants enjoy communicating in the festival-like atmosphere of the *Comiket*. Of course, *Otaku* carry out this communication by means of *Doujinshis*. Figure 4 shows an example of reports by *Otaku* written on *Doujinshis* bought directly at the venue itself. By attending certain *Otaku* events, *Otaku* can affirm their real community which usually only exists on the internet. Certain *Otaku* events provide rare chances for people having the same hobby to gather, creating a homogeneous space.

Fig. 4: Manga reports by attendees

Comiket 2005a:1266 (upper), 2005b: 888 (lower),
2006:1270 (right)

In ordinary life, Japanese society has no sympathy for deep *Otaku* culture. So in the *Comiket*, each participant has a feeling of community, of asylum, of Utopia or of "a place of festival" which they themselves make. Durkheim states that the first effect of religious ritual is to bring participants together and to develop a close relationship between them; during the period of the ritual a collective idea occupies the thoughts of the whole group (Durkheim 1912). It would seem that *Otaku* have these underlying feelings in the *Comiket* which they call "the place of festival".

2. "Sacred journeys" in *Otaku* culture: visiting animation locations

2.1. Physically standing in the world of animation

This section discusses the "sacred journeys" or "pilgrimages" as they are called in *Otaku* culture. Briefly, this is the act of visiting locations depicted in animation works, similar to film or cinema tourism[6]. "Sacred journeys" in *Otaku* culture attract many customers, for example the ever-increasing number of visitors celebrating the New Year at Washinomiya shrine in Saitama Prefecture, the location of *Lucky Star*: 130 thousand visitors in 2007; 300 thousand visitors in 2008 (a 131% increase from the previous year); 420 thousand visitors in 2009 (a 40% increase from the previous year) (Asahi Shinbun: December 21, 2007; January 9, 2008; January 8, 2009). "Sacred journeys" are even taken into account in town development projects, as in *Wahimiya*, Saitama Prefecture (Yamamura 2009; Okamoto 2009). Both the "sacred journeys" of *Otaku* culture and film tourism resemble each other in that fans of a certain production visit its setting. But *Otaku* performing a "sacred journey", notwithstanding the fact that animation works are unreal, are extremely attentive to the reproducibility of the work in question (Figure 5). The following section will describe how this strange acting unfolds.

Fig. 5: Visited web page showing the location of an animation work

This page contains screen shots, the actual landscapes, comments, links to the map and evaluation of reproducibility.
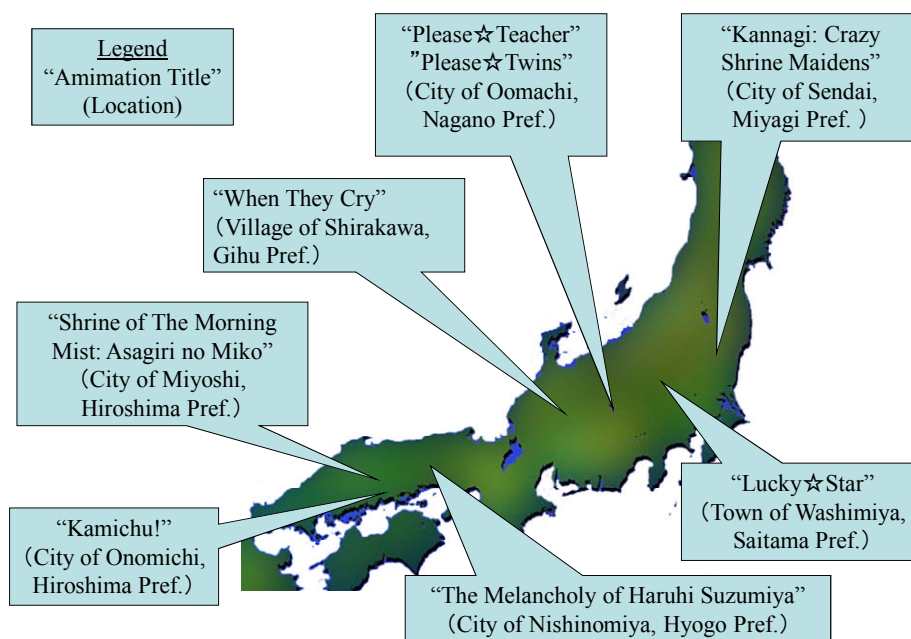
(「日本全国聖地巡礼の旅」, <seichi-junrei.com>)

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[6] Film tourism is a visit of film locations.

First of all, to perform a "sacred journey" a participant must watch the animation work. It is also necessary to ascertain that the animation refers to an actual geographical location that can therefore be visited, as many locations of fantasy or science fiction productions cannot be visited. A representative listing of recent "pilgrimage sites" in Japan is given in Figure 6. These sites have been identified by fans of each animation work. Film tourism is generally organized through travel agencies; however, this is not the case for "sacred journeys" in *Otaku* culture as locations of animation works are not usually divulged to the general public. *Otaku* therefore, must look for the location by themselves. On this point, as it is difficult to single-handedly identify a location, *Otaku* rely upon the help of their internet networks. Today, after an animation is broadcast, *Otaku* exchange their impressions and discuss the location of the work in their personal blogs, bulletin board systems or Social Network Services. At the earliest, the locations of animation works are identified a week later and *Otaku* upload a report of their surveys. The reports often juxtapose animation screenshots with photographs of the physical geographic location and maps (see again Figure 5). In certain cases, *Otaku* take the same pose in their photographs as in the animation. In this way, *Otaku* look for locations and share information. Their performance starts in two dimensions (the animation or CMCS), then proceeds to three dimensions (the physical geographic place) and finally returns to two dimensions (CMCS). This process can be compared to van Gennep's or V. Turner's theory of the rite of passage (van Gennep 1909: Turner 1966). They argued that the rite of passage is composed of three phases: separation, liminality and re-incorporation. *Otaku* performing "sacred journeys" withdraw from internet communities and go to a "sacred place" to experience *communitas*, finally they return to CMCS and reinforce the capacities of the *Otaku* culture. What kind of *communitas* do *Otaku* experience in their "sacred place"? In order to answer this, the next section will argue that "sacred journeys" in *Otaku* culture could be considered as travel in *existential mode* (Cohen 1979) according to the theory of tourism.

Fig.6: Representative pilgrimage sites in Japan

Legend
"Amimation Title"
(Location)

"Please☆Teacher"
"Please☆Twins"
（City of Oomachi,
Nagano Pref.）

"Kannagi: Crazy
Shrine Maidens"
（City of Sendai,
Miyagi Pref. ）

"When They Cry"
（Village of Shirakawa,
Gihu Pref.）

"Shrine of The Morning
Mist: Asagiri no Miko"
（City of Miyoshi,
Hiroshima Pref.）

"Lucky☆Star"
（Town of Washimiya,
Saitama Pref.）

"Kamichu!"
（City of Onomichi,
Hiroshima Pref.）

"The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya"
（City of Nishinomiya, Hyogo Pref.）

2.2. *Otaku* travels in *existential mode*

As V. Turner and E. Turner said, if a pilgrim is half-tourist, a tourist is half-pilgrim (Turner and Turner 1978: 20). Likewise, many researchers have pointed out the resemblance between pilgrimage and tourism (MacCannell 1976) therefore we will treat "sacred journeys" in the *Otaku* culture as a subject of tourism.

Similarly to the journeys of the *Otaku* culture, some researchers consider the Walt Disney World as a sacred place (Moore 1980: Kottak 1982: Masako 1990: Fjellman 1992). They stress that the Disney World is not an ordinary world but a dream world or a magic world, and the visitors of Disney World experience a brief but strong solidarity, this is *communitas*. "Pilgrims" of animations may also have a similar experience.

But there are two differences between the Disney World and the "sacred journeys" of the *Otaku* culture. Firstly, the locations of the animations are not a "dream world" as in Disney World. That is, they are not designated reserved lands but are part of ordinary space. Moreover, the animation spots are indistinguishable for the non-*Otaku* because the spots often consist of commonplace markers; although it is easy to pick out an archway to a Shinto shrine, it may be quite difficult to distinguish a pier or a swing in a public garden and so on. For this reason, only devotees of animation works can find the "sacred places". D. MacCannell said that "the sacralization of sight" is through markers of information (i.e. guide books, travelogues,

magazines, etc.) of particular sights (MacCannell 1976: 42-45, 110-111). Although "sacred journeys" in the *Otaku* culture are difficult to grasp for the non-*Otaku*, *Otaku* are attracted to the markers and in turn sacralize the places. From a sociological or Durkheimian perspective, the sacred exists by virtue of its believers (Durkheim 1912). So it is little wonder that animation locations become "sacred places" only for animation devotees. Secondly, the Disney World produces the "sacred place" in a top-down approach, but in the case of animations it is the opposite. To be more precise, animation fans must find their locations according to a bottom-up approach. As mentioned above, the markers of animation locations are very difficult to pick out, therefore *Otaku* unite their efforts and share information in CMCS. J. Smith said that the sacred places of Christianity had been found based on an examination of the Gospels (Smith 1992: 89); a similar structure can be seen in the "sacred places" of animation works. Nowadays "the pilgrims" of the *Otaku* culture create communities in CMCS and the animation locations are sought out and found based on printed or computer-captured animations.

As previously mentioned, the "sacred journeys" of the *Otaku* culture have even been considered for sightseeing or town development projects. Accordingly, I will use E. Cohen's theory of tourism. Cohen focused on a tourist's viewpoint of the world and thought that "[p]henomenologically distinct modes of touristic experience are related to different types of relationships obtained between a person and a variety of 'centres' [and the 'centres' are] the individual's 'spiritual' centre, whether religious or cultural, i.e. the centre which for the individual symbolizes ultimate meaning" (Cohen 1979: 180-181). He distinguished five main modes of touristic experience from the "pursuit of 'mere' pleasure in the strange and the novel", to that of the "modern pilgrim in quest of meaning at somebody else's centre": 1. the recreational mode; 2. the diversionary mode; 3. the experiential mode; 4. the experimental mode; and 5. the existential mode (Cohen 1979: 183). Cohen defined the existential mode as:

> [T]he 'existential' mode in its extreme form is characteristic of the traveler who is fully committed to an 'elective' spiritual centre, i.e. one external to the mainstream of his native society and culture (Cohen 1979: 189-190)

Moreover, Cohen distinguished two features in the existential mode: the meaningful 'real' life and visiting over again (Cohen 1979: 190-191). The "sacred journeys" in the *Otaku* culture satisfy these two conditions. For animation fans, the world of the animation is a universal/real world (Osawa 2008: 87-94); the ordinary world is periphery. And "the sacred places" of the animations are frequently revisited (Figure 7).

Fig. 7: Memorial tablets in a "Sacred Place"

The lower left tablet bears the inscription "My 68th visit"

(photographs taken by the author)

Animation fans visiting "sacred places" affirm and activate their worldview by travelling to these sacred places. Then when they return home and upload their photographs to the internet, they try to break down the boundaries between the real world and the animation world by juxtaposing them in CMCS.

3. The center of *Otaku* internet culture: Akihabara Electric Town, Tokyo

3.1. Historical and geographical situation of Akihabara

This section will discuss Akihabara Electric Town which *Otaku* consider as the "sacred place". *Otaku* are proud of its worldwide renown. Although places like Nipponbashi, Osaka Prefecture or Higashi-Ikebukuro in Tokyo are also mentioned as "sacred places", they are less frequently cited than Akihabara. Akihabara Electric Town began as a black market after W.W.II, spreading out underneath the GHQ[7]-built overpass of Akihabara railway station. Later on, in the mid-1950s, Akihabara was renowned for "the three sacred treasures"[8] and then in the 1960s for

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[7] (Military) General Headquarters: established by the American Army during the occupation of Japan following World War II.

[8] A parody of the three divine symbols of the Japanese imperial throne; the three treasures were the Television, the Refrigerator and the Washing Machine.

the "three Cs"[9], and in the early 1990s numerous stores specializing in personal computers appeared. The many stores specializing in comic books, action figurines or dolls, *Doujinshis* and a variety of other *Otaku* goods had been scattered throughout Tokyo, but in the late 1990s they started to be grouped together in Akihabara, making Akihabara "the sacred place" of the Otaku community. Today apart from the *Doujinshi* marketplace "festivals", all *Otaku* goods can be bought in Akihabara. To cite a description of Akihabara today:

> Exiting the Akihabara train station is like that moment in the *Wizard of Oz* when a drab black-and-white world suddenly erupts into Technicolor. (Macias and Machiyama 2004: 80)

As the citation puts it, on exiting Akihabara station a large number of neon signs, two-dimensional advertisements and people dressed in cosplay costume suddenly appear. Morikawa suggests that "[i]n a reversal of the received wisdom that cyberspace is replicating the city, here the city has begun to mimic cyberspace" and he compares the advertisements of the shops in Akihabara to the banner advertisements in CMCS (Morikawa 2004: 28).

According to Morikawa, Akihabara is a town where cyberspace is made real. The cityscapes of Akihabara, which "ha[ve] become a play pantheon permeated by narrative auras, every surface – walls, floors, screens – imaged with *anime* nymphets" are especially familiar to the *Otaku* (Morikawa 2004: 18-20). In Chapter 2 we argued that *Otaku* try to break down the boundaries between the two- and the three-dimensional worlds, in Akihabara such boundaries have collapsed. When *Otaku* or internet-fans denominate Akihabara "the sacred place", they feel at ease and consider Akihabara as familiar CMCS or Animations, *Mangas* and Game worlds. Moreover, Akihabara is an actual physical location, and they can enjoy their perception of CMCS reality as a real bodily sense in Akihabara. In the next section, we will discuss the issue of reinforcing reality in CMCS in order to address the indiscriminate murder spree in Akihabara.

3.2. Appealing to the significant others in CMCS: indiscriminate murder in Akihabara

On June 8, 2008, there was an indiscriminate murder spree in Akihabara resulting in seven killed and ten wounded. Of course this was a very sad incident, but we believe it can be characterized as an incident bordering on CMCS because the murderer[10] posted a message on an internet bulletin board just before carrying out his criminal act. We will examine his message to argue that the murderer saw this as a chance of getting through to "the significant others" (Mead 1934: Berger and Luckmann 1966) in CMCS.

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[9] Composed of the initials of the three most important machines at the time: the Car, the Colour television and the air Conditioner which is called a *Cooler* in Japanese.

[10] The murderer is a man, 25-years old at the time of the crime.

Significant others are defined as people who are attributed higher importance in psychological terms. They give individuals a basis for self-assessment and, acting as a frame of reference, affect them in their evaluations and decisions (Mead 1934: Berger and Luckmann 1966). So who are these significant others in CMCS? They are netizens[11] in a bulletin board system. The murderer wrote "I am lonely both in the real world and in the internet world" (Asao et al., 2008: 55)[12]. From this message, we can begin to understand that the murderer equated the real world with CMCS. A mobile-phone addict, he frequently posted messages on bulletin boards; sometimes as many as 200 messages a day. Then too, he harbored a deep grievance at his lack of friends and girlfriend. In the following deposition he made after the crime, it is quite clear to whom his grievances were directed:

> I wrote to them that I wanted them to be concerned about me, but I was neglected. So I thought that if I created a big incident in the actual world I would be given attention.
> I thought that if I committed a crime I could triumph over the people who had neglected me in the internet world. (Yomiuri Online July 7, 2008)

But he also said "I wanted to be stopped by a person who had read my messages" (AERA June 23, 2008). Looking at the murderer's depositions, we can piece together his ambivalent feelings and understand that his target was CMCS. Then why did he select Akihabara as the place to commit his crime? Because Akihabara is the place netizens pay the most attention to and is the place which connects the real world with CMCS. Media reports actually discussed at length whether the murderer was an *Otaku* or not (Asahi Weekly June 27, 2008 etc.). Furthermore, as a result of this incident, postings on CMCS have been strictly controlled by the police, and many people claiming responsibility for future crimes in bulletin board postings have been detained. In this sense there is no difference between the real world and CMCS.

Today, subjective reality does not necessarily have the same scope as the real world, but the world in which an individual lives is inter-subjectively constructed in a specific reference group through the significant others. Although we would rather avert our eyes from the murderer's diminutive world, it is important to note that he said "I wanted to be stopped" to the others who live and function in CMCS and that he expected them to take a role which would fulfill his desire for approval. His chance of salvation could well have been in the internet community.

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[11] Internet citizens
[12] The full text is published in Asao et al., 2008.

Conclusion

Norbelt Bolz said that both the right of making the choice of a sense of solidarity and the fulfilling choice are the only fixed points in the postmodern world. And today's people must make their choices all throughout their lifetimes. Choice is notable in a consumer society, and Bolz called the chosen ties "communities of choice". He further said that the process of communication is the very process of community (Bolz 2001). In this way, some scholars have connected communication with the formation of a community (Redfield 1971; Fish 1980). In other words, the form of communication differentiates communities. The term *Otaku*, which originally had the meaning of a person "withdrawing from society and keeping him/herself indoors", became defined by a form of communication (Nakamori 1989). At first Otaku could only connect with each other through certain specialist magazines or events, but nowadays they can create their community and shape their direction through the internet.

Therefore, we would like to propose the concept that the *Otaku* culture represents the most radical form of communication and community in the present day. The most prominent feature of the *Otaku* culture is communication depending on selected contents, and we have highlighted the places where the *Otaku*'s worldview stands out. *Doujinshi* marketplaces, the location of animation works and Akihabara are the places with which *Otaku* feel an affinity and where their treasured worldview can find expression. Actively committing themselves to their "sacred places" or "the festival place" may have functions of reaffirming their identity as *Otaku* within the *Otaku* group and of reinforcing their ethos as a member of the *Otaku* culture. What is more, CMCS is essential in each case. Thanks to the medium of the internet, a place can be created where people sharing similar hobbies and interests can meet. Although "the global village" once conceptualized by M. McLuhan might have been realized with the spread of the internet (McLuhan 1989), the internet is in fact compartmentalized according to the different communities. It is not possible to surf the internet without using search engines or links, web sites only pop up by entering search words; nothing catches the eye or ear by chance as with a newspaper or the radio. Benedict Anderson (1991) once said about "imagined communities" that are constructed by the media, that the medium of the internet is the purest. Here individuals are inevitably grouped into communities by virtue of their own specific hobbies and choices.

As *Otaku* are similar to geeks or nerds, they are generally more familiar with computers than other people and therefore have the ability to find reality in CMCS. Furthermore, *Otaku* have a different sense of reality in CMCS from other people. Though there are of course exclusions in all societies, the *Otaku* communities are part of their society and are necessarily restricted by law. However, such restrictions are often put in place after an incident takes place. The Akihabara incident is

noteworthy in that afterwards, announcements of murder on the internet were strictly controlled; during the four months following the incident the police detained 50 people who had posted such announcements (Asahi Shinbun October 24, 2008). As we can see, in the sense that the law 'tags along' after an incident takes place, *Otaku* are the new heralds of our information societies.

This paper discussed the fact that people who search the internet for the culture to which they are committed, also gather in real geographical spaces. They are wayfarers who travel between the real world and CMCS. They participate in every activity through CMCS and reaffirm their worldview. This study also examined *Otaku* "pilgrimages" and "festivals". Of course, whether in real space or in CMCS, *Otaku* aspire to attain their committing contents: Animations, *Mangas* and so on which are the *Otaku*'s totems. In travelling the double distance between real space and CMCS with the same intention, *Otaku* reaffirm their reference group and strengthen their subjective reality and the intensity of their community.

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