

2014 OCHANOMIZU SUMMER PROGRAMME IN ENGLISH

Open Seminar: Introduction to Japanese Culture III

The Formation and Development of Japanese Girls' Culture

: From Girls' Magazines to *Shojo Manga*

Thursday 7 August, 13:20-18:10

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[Outline]

Everybody would agree that Japanese Pop culture is influential to youth on a global scale. The Japanese government, recognizing the new marketing opportunity, has even started to utilize it as a means of promoting Japanese tourism. One of the most fascinating aspects of Japanese popular culture is girls' culture, or "*shōjo bunka*," represented such as by Sanrio characters, *shōjo manga*. The idea of "*shōjo*" is often equated to the term, "*kawaii* (cuteness)." However, the association of cuteness and girls' culture happened quite recently (in the past 30 years or so). Japanese girls' culture cannot be simply summarized by the idea of cuteness, but has a long history which goes back to the Meiji period; its development must be understood in the context of the development of women's education.

The origin of girls' culture, particularly *shōjo manga*, is considered to be found in the girls' magazine culture which emerged in the 1910s. These magazines had "*ryōsai kenbo*" (good wife, wise mother) ideology as their educational goal. In other words, girls' magazines were founded to create modern Japanese women, who as good wives and mothers would help bring about the prosperity of the state. The target audience of these magazines consisted of school girls. Girls' magazines provided a communal space for school girls for the first time; borrowing Benedict Anderson's term, the magazines became their "imagined community." This girls' community invented its own codes of language and sentiment. It eventually inculcated readers with a sense of identity, the identity of *shōjo*, which is neither child nor woman. Although the form of community altered as time went by, its spirit and tradition are inherited in today's girls' culture such as *shōjo manga*, light novels and anime.

The session will be divided into three phases: 1) women's education and prewar girls' magazine culture 2) girls' culture during the war, and 3) emergence of "*kawaii*" culture.

While following the development of Japanese girls' culture, we will study the history of Japan and the changing roles of and social expectations for women as well. At the end, we will examine recurring "themes" and "desires" observed in girls' cultural media, and discuss the function of "popular culture." The session consists of lectures and discussions. Magazine stories, readers' letters, and images will be presented. The students are encouraged to actively express their opinions and views, particularly from a comparative point of view (as the students will be multi-national).

[If possible, read in advance... (not compulsory)]

***Banana Yoshimoto's Kitchen* by Banana Yoshimoto (1988, Washington Square Press)**

Japanese *Shojo Manga* (= girls' comics) [available as PDF, please inquire at e-summer@cc.ocha.ac.jp]