Concerning Youth Subcultures in the Postwar Era, Vol. 5: ‘Ko-gal’ and ‘Urahara-kei’

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s, a certain type of highschool girl was called ‘Ko-gal’. They were the center of attention during this decade. They were identified as wearing remodeled school uniforms, in particular ‘cho mini(-skirts)’ and ‘loose(-socks)’, had sun tanned skin, and dyed their hair. Furthermore, they were considered to loiter on street corners or at fast-food shops in the Shibuya area with their friends all night long. The mass media, especially magazines for adult men, represented them as being easy to love and sometimes prostituting themselves. While the mass media bashed them, micro- or niche media, such as pagers, mobile-phones, Pri-kura, and several magazines featuring them, were frequently used to connect them with each other. They had their counter-part ‘Gal-o’, who always paid attention to be loved by (Ko-)gals. If it couldn’t be regarded as drastic gender confusion, at least, the Ko-gal phenomena caused a gender panic.

In contrast, during the 1990s, young men didn’t have any movement of their own. With the exception of some shopowners in the ura-Harajuku area, who as gurus of style and taste of life, influenced a certain type of young people who didn’t like to wear popular clothes favored by the majority. Such gurus created or selected clothes, shoes and accessories basically for men, collected their favorite things, and recommended some records, books and various goods through micro- or niche media and word-of-mouth communication, as Ko-gals did. They were influenced by youth subcultures in the USA and in the UK, i.e. hip-hop, biker, surfer, skater, punk etc. It seems that they attempted to reconstruct masculinity in the new era as non-white-collar heroes. A certain type of young girl shared their taste as well.

Key Words: youth subcultures, Ko-gal, Urahara-kei