The "characterization" of Japan : from merchandising to identity
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Chapter 2
Character Consumers and Consumption

In his pioneering book *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, anthropologist Daniel Miller looks at the relationship between people and things and argues that "the human subject cannot be considered outside the material world within which, and through which, it is constructed" (1987: 86). He suggests to investigate things in the specific contexts, since the diversity of commodities, the various origins of their production, the multiple interests invested in them during their different stages (such as design and promotion) and the distinctive social-cultural contexts of their use and consumption have made a complex material culture (Lee, 2000: 11). "What underlies this complexity is less an appeal for pluralism than a recognition of a pluralism which already confronts us," continues Miller (1987: 175). He focuses on mass consumption and notes that the materiality of commodities matters. His argument is particularly relevant for character consumption. As I explained in Chapter 1, characters are commodified through the practice of character merchandising, by which the rights to characters are licensed to various producers and transformed into a great variety of character goods. In this sense, character merchandising may function as an effective mechanism that continually provides new forms and materials for consumption, which already displays a certain degree of familiarity. Since the 1970s characters have become an important feature of mainstream consumption, functioning as a social-cultural tie between private and public, connecting old and young, men and women, consumers with different interests and preferences. The story of how characters entered their lives offers an effective tool for the investigation of the relationship with between people and objects. This is the main objective of this chapter.

Character Consumers

It is taken for granted that children are the main consumers of character commodities. Producers of toys and food for children frequently employ character goods in order to appeal to their consumers. Indeed, the Shō-chan-bō, the Akadō sword and the Atomu stickers described in the previous chapter are all products targeted specifically at children. In their study *Children as Consumers* (1998) Barrie Gunter and Adrian Furnham suggest, children from an early age spend a lot on sweets, toys, clothing, electronics, entertainment and hobbies. In this sense, "children are, like adults, avid consumers" (Jansson-Boyd, 2010: 158). And their behaviour is easy influenced by the mainstream media, particularly television (Bushman and Huesmann, 2001). Moreover, Gunter and Furnham note, the focus on the children consumers has been especially directed towards "understanding the types of products and services they purchase and the extent to which they influence family purchase decisions" (1998: 2).

In Japan as well, character merchandising primarily targeted children and by doing so inculcated them to become "fully functioning capitalists even as financed by parents" (Yano, 2013: 29), whose desire to consume character goods was increasingly

stimulated. However, character consumers are not only children but also adults (which can be seen from previous Ally Sloper's products such as cigars). Thus as characters developed in Japan, producers quickly realized that character goods could potentially develop into a market for adults and step by step began to expand their markets. Today, both children and adults are important consumers of characters in Japan.

Targeting Children

Starting with Atomu in 1963, large quantities of licensed character goods emerged in the market, especially the Atomu stickers that were launched by the sponsor of the *Atomu* television series, Meiji Seika, as the premium in their chocolate products and were quite popular with children. For example, as Steinberg examines, its first official campaign took the form of "a prize-in-the-mail variety of premium" (after this campaign finished it turned to the in-package premiums): children could receive the Atomu sticker as a reward in the mail by sending two tops of Marble Chocolates boxes; at last through this campaign Meiji had "received a total of 3.7 million requests for sticker sheets—overwhelming the local post office—and saw its Marble Chocolates sales soar" (2012: 58). According to Tsugata Nobuyuki (2007), it was from the experience of Atomu in 1963 that business executives learned that character merchandising could be a powerful source of revenue; with this in mind, many sponsors such as toy makers and food companies preferred merchandising rights to characters over other forms of advertising.

For example, a competitor of Meiji Seika, the confectionery company Glico looked at Tetsujin 28-gō (Iron Man no. 28), the main character of the manga of the same name, created by Mitsuteru Yokoyama (1934-2004) in 1956. The manga was later adapted into a television anime series by the Television Corporation of Japan and aired on Fuji TV from 20 October 1963. The series concentrated on the adventures of a young boy called Kaneda Shōtarō, who controlled a giant robot named Tetsujin 28-gō. The television series was among the first Japanese animation series to feature a giant robot. Glico sponsored the broadcast of the TV anime series and promoted the character goods, Tetsujin 28-gō badges, through its products, using a similar method to the Atomu stickers.

Following Mushi Production and the Television Corporation of Japan, Tōei soon started its television production and distribution and launched its first television anime series, *Ōkami shōnen Ken* (Wolf Boy Ken, 1963), which imitated Tezuka in that it utilized character merchandising to pay its debts and turn a profit. Its characters appeared on the labels of products such as *manga kokoa* (manga-cocoa-powder, see **Figure 11**) and *terebi gamu* (television-chewing-gum) produced by Morinaga Seika, which had lost the battle for Atomu sponsorship with Meiji Seika. The battle, known as "chocolate war," led by Meiji Seika's product, Marble Chocolate which was warmly welcomed by Japanese children because of the novelty of the package design, products

and marketing campaign (Steinberg, 2012: 58).[1] In response to Meiji's success, Morinaga also released the similar chocolate product, Parade Chocolate, but at last still lost. The key to help Meiji win the war was its cooperation with Atomu and launched the Atomu stickers in its Marble Chocolate.

Leading candy manufacturers, such as Meiji, Glico and Morinaga, usually placed "character-cum-stickers" on their products, which made them extra desirable for young consumers (Ichihashi, 2002). Pharmaceutical producers constituted the second largest category of sponsors: Fujisawa Yakuhin sponsored *Shōnen ninja kaze no Fujimaru* (Fujimaru of the Wind, 1964), Takeda Seiyaku sponsored *Urutoraman* (Ultra Man, 1966), and Ōtsuka Seiyaku sponsored *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giants, 1968). What the early sponsors of characters had in common was that they were all closely linked with "the body and growth of children" (Hikawa, 2005:15). This was by no means a coincidence.

Figure 11. The advertisement of *Okami shōnen Ken* stickers in Morinaga Seika's manga-cocoa-product; Source: *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper, 25 November 1963.

As Millie Creighton notes, children are cherished in Japan since ancient times in Japan, as it testifies by the saying "*ko wa takara*" (children are treasures) (1994: 35), and today the common expression of children as treasures equates to offering them more consumer goods. I argue, this implication also reveals an important aspect of the postwar Japanese children's lives.

After the Second World War, attention paid to children increased. In 1949, the Japanese government released *Jidō Hakusho* (The Children's White Paper) and established a national day for children. In 1951, *Jidō kenshō* (The Children's Charter) was published, which aimed to increase the understanding of children and ensure their happiness. In the high-growth period that followed, when technological innovation (*gijutsu kakushin*) was seen as the most effective way of rebuilding the nation (*Keizai*

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[1]According to Steinberg's examination, there were two marketing campaigns of Marble Chocolate in the 1960s: the first period (1962-1963) was developed around Uehara Yukari, a five-year-old girl who soon became famous because of the chocolate and was affectionately known as "Marble-chan" (Little Miss Marble); the second period (1963-1966) was based on Atomu (2012: 48).

hakusho, 1956), children were seen as forming the foundations for it. As Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato (1899-1965) stated in his speech to the Japan Congress in 1962, "I will do my best to develop the talented person [*hito zukuri*] that is fundamental for building the nation [*kuni zukuri*]…particularly to cultivate children and young people's good moral character and patriotism and make them learn knowledge and technology that are necessary for the progress of the era." Ikeda's words indicated that with the recovery from the devastation of the war and the increase in economic prosperity, the talent pool that children represented was the future of the nation as well as the family. Hence, in the survey conducted by *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper in 1968 based on a national sample of 10,000 persons between 15 and 79 years of age, to the question "what is your chief concern in life?", 24.1 per cent answered "my family," and 24.4 per cent, "my children" (1 January 1969, quoted from Ishida, 1971: 102).

This concern for children found articulation in the term "edutainment" (Creighton, 1992: 49), a combination of education and entertainment. The idea of this concept was especially reflected in children's lives. For instance, according to Japanese children's culture specialist Katō Osamu's study, in one report in the prewar magazine *Fūzoku gahō* (Folklore Illustrated) a father recalled his experience of an *omocha-ya* (toy shop) and stated, "The toy shop is another aspect of family education. And it has many indirect benefits. I approve of the toy shop that can care for children" (2010: 26-27). Katō notes that most of the advertisements for toy shops in Tokyo at the time were based on education, which demonstrated that "the idea that toys must be educational is one of common sense between the producers and those who need the toys" (2010: 27).

This common sense continued in the postwar period which was particularly valued by mothers. Japan is a country that places a high value on mother–child bonding; thereby the mother is seen as the best and most important early educator for her children (Creighton, 1994: 37). For instance, as Tony Dickensheets investigates "The Role of the Education Mama" in Japan and points out that the ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife and wise mother) defines the task of Japanese women and places them as the "managers of household affairs and nurturers of the nation's children" (1996: 74).[2] Since 1955 these wise mothers hold their convention called *Nihon hahaoya taikai* (Japan Mother's Congress; by 2016 it has been the 62nd) every year. They focus on the impact of societal changes on children and respond it actively.[3] Particularly they care about their children's education. Norma Field (1995: 63) examines the childhood of Japanese children and notes that in postwar period many activities were directed at education and developed it to be a rights-centered, antimilitarist and democratized domain. Japanese mothers also threw themselves in those activities. Except for the

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[2]*Ryōsai kenbo* was constructed in the ideology of late Meiji period. According to Kathleen Uno (1993: 293-322), at the end of 19th century, the term was promoted by the Ministry of Education, and gradually became an official discouse on woman in Japan at the end of the Second World War. After the war though the restructuring of the state and society and the democracy nurtured by American occupation affected this term, as Uno suggests, it still remained influential in Japan until the late 1980s. In postwar period, the term particually emphasized the role of the latter, the wise mother.

[3]For example, the first *Nihon hahaoya taikai* was held for protesting the hydrogen bomb test conducted by U.S. in Bikini Atoll.

mother congress, they took part in the nationwide *akusho tsuihō undō* (movement against harmful books, mainly against harmful manga) for constructing a good reading and cultural environment for children.[4] Thus Dickensheets argues, "They, more than any other group, will shape Japan's future" (1996: 75).

The Japanese government also shared this view. As an illustration of this, when the Japanese government realized that societal changes were taking place following the fast postwar economic growth, it feared a negative effect and thus published the *Jidō fukushi hakusho* (Children Welfare White Paper, 1963) in which it pointed out the importance of mother for family: "Children in our country are in a dangerous stage… which has been caused by the collapse of the family. The solution for it is the mother's return" (quoted from Kan, 1968: 159-160). An evidence for "mother's return" could be found in the fact that, according to Japanese sociologist Ochiai Emiko, after the Second World War, particularly during the era of rapid economic growth (1955-1970), the female labor participation rate followed a downward path and many full-time housewives emerged, and the statements in Japanese society at the time maintained that "women should be housewives" and "women's primary role should be homemaking and child care" (1997: 15; 21).[5] Japanese mothers were expected to devote themselves to every aspect of the lives of their young children, and thus had to consider which kinds of characters were better for their children's growth and education.

Akadō was such an example that was welcomed by Japanese mothers. Following the transmedia effect of the *Akadō* series, Akadō became the nationally known media character star (see chapter 1). Naturally characters about fighting and war were not welcomed by mothers because of their associations with violence and militarism (Kan, 1968: 96-98). However, Akadō was an exception. The reason mainly lay in the fact that Akadō built up "an ideal image of children's education of self-improvement [*shūshin kyōiku*]," as Japanese children's literature specialist Kan Tadamichi suggests (1968: 110). As a young swordsman, even though he had the superior skill of *shinkūkiri* (vacuum-cutting), Akadō did not kill anyone except the enemies of his master, and even this was in the sense of delivering justice. To his master, he was filial and loyal. To others, he was friendly and liked to help them. Through his own actions, Kan argues, Akadō actually "perfected his own personality" (1968: 110).

Moreover, Akadō kept up with the pace of the age. As Kan points out, in the Akadō manga series, there was "a volume depicting aliens that wore a flying cape the same as Superman's" (1968: 140). In this story, Akadō was not sure how to get on with these aliens, who came from a "Country of Stars," so his master took him to consult a scholar who understood the Western advanced knowledge very well. The scholar used his astronomical knowledge to explain and told Akadō that it was possible for aliens to arrive on earth because of their advanced technology. This story to some extent

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[4]Out of worry of children's reading life, Japanese mothers established *akusho tsuihō undō*. But then the movement was exaggerated to be a social political issue of censorship of culture and widely criticized.
[5]However, the female labor participation rate at the time still maintained high: in the mid-1960s state labor policies encouraged full-time work for unmarried women, and part-time work for married women because of their responsibilities for childreaing (Uno, 1993: 305).

expanded children's imaginations while corresponding with the popular topic of the time, technology. Hence, Japanese mothers generally accepted Akadō and they allowed their children to read and watch the *Akadō* series.

The 1950s and 1960s were the period of rapid development of the mass media including newspapers, magazines, radio, film and television, as discussed in Chapter 1. The popularity of television in particular had significantly changed the lives of children and teenagers. According to a study conducted in 1960, "Japanese over the age of ten, including those who did not have a set at home, watched television for an average of 56 minutes every weekday, however, from 1960 to 1964, the average time spent on watching television increased three times" (Ishida, 1971: 85). This data demonstrates how television began to beat the centre of teenagers' lives, breaking down the existing fabric of time. The toy specialist Saitō also points out, "Beginning in the Shōwa-40s [1965-1974]…was increasing unbanization, the shrinking of outdoor free play spaces in children's neighbourhoods, as well as the decrease in play time due to the encroachment of television and cram schools…" (1978: 282). In short, children and teenagers spent much their leisure time watching television rather than with each other and playing games. Even if they did play, the games were almost all learnt from the television, such was the popularity of character accessory goods. Their motivation might be the dream of being the character or the intention to follow a trend, but the outcome was that Japanese children and teenagers' lives seemed to have become assimilated with a certain standardized pattern. This was what the Japanese critic Ōya Sōichi (1957) pointedly called the *ichioku sō-hakuchika* ("the dumbing down of the 100 million").

According to Kan, the risk that television brought about was soon realized by mothers, which triggered the *kōzairon* (debate about the merits and demerits) of the mass media (1968: 9-10). One side argued that as the products of advanced technology, the mass media and the content they diffused were not the issue but rather that the concern related to whether the receivers were able to discriminate between the content or not. In contrast, the other side pointed out that the mass media exaggerated the importance of entertainment and disseminated certain ideologies, such those regarding violence, sex, and war. A popular anecdote at the time talked of the mother who, because of these concerns, urged her child to study hard instead of watching television. Yet some mothers appealed to the television station to add the words "broadcasting ends" at 8 pm in order to "protect children from the bad influence of television" (*kodomo o terebi no warui eikyō kara mamorō*) (18 February 1960 *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper).

However, the arguments surrounding the mass media are not unique to Japan. Based on his study of mass media, American media theorist Neil Postman argues that it is not good for children, as it can lead to *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982). He contends, "The electric media and the graphic revolution together represented an uncoordinated but powerful assault on language and literacy, a recasting of the world of ideas into speed-of-light icons and images" (1982: 72-73). Japanese mothers expressed the same concerns. They saw the mass media as the cause of the literacy crisis among their children. Yet Postman specifically points to television as the most

powerful of the mass media forms, as it reveals to "children at the earliest possible age" many things, including "the joys of consumerism and the satisfactions to be derived from buying almost anything" (1982: 96). Television turns children into consumers, the same as adults, which means that "in the direction of requiring no distinction between child and adult sensibilities, inevitably the two stages of life merge into one" (1982: 99).

Postman's statement throws light onto another implication of the mass media, that is, the changing role of children as consumers. Generally, children are "prepared consumers" or "future consumers" (Kawakatsu, 2010: 58), who rely on their parents to consume on their behalf. This is in part because children are less socialized and need their parents to pay close attention to them. As the Japanese children who spent their childhood during the Shōwa-30s (1955-1965) recalled, "The happy memory of that sweet touch [of Morinaga milk-caramel and television-chewing-gum], the images of the granny who was the owner of the *dagashi-ya* [similar to a penny candy store], friends who had shaved heads, our mother who gave us pocket money and us begging for 10 yen are still fresh in the mind. The stickers within the caramel were what we wanted…" (Ichihashi, 2002: 8-10). The fact that they needed to beg mother for pocket money to buy television-chewing-gum means what would be bought or not bought was much decided by the parents.

More importantly, the reason why those children wanted the chewing-gum was because of the premium, the Ōkami shōnen Ken character stickers. In fact, at the time, the Japanese children had certain amount of spending money each month. According to Boye DeMente and Fred Thomas Perry's study in the 1960s, "Primary school children [received] from $1 to $2, while the average allowance for middle-school students [was] $2" (1967: 126). In the 1960s, one dollar was equal to 360 yen (Lewis, 2007). And the character items were cheap, such as above mentioned television-chewing-gum was only 10 yen. Thus, as the mass media opened the door to consumerism for children, they became the "present consumers" (Kawakatsu, 2010: 58) or "direct consumers" who had particular desires for particular commodities, characters and character goods. As the *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper commented, "With the development of television, the familiarity, cuteness, and distinctiveness of characters of manga, anime, mascots, and so on, have been the selling point, whereby those characters become popular with children" (24 March 1975). For Japanese sociologist Saitō Jirō, these characters were much like the advertising celebrities, as he looks at Atomu and suggests that Atomu became an "advertising boy for candy makers before becoming the hero within the world of children's play." He further predicts that "children became absorbed in the game of 'consumption' rather than in the game of playing the characters" (1975: 49, quoted from Steinberg, 2012: 110-111).

This leads us back to character goods. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Miller has emphasized that the materiality of commodities matters. John Clammer maintains that "consumption behaviour involves, at one level, individual choice, but at another level both choice constrained by what is available in the market and the tyranny of fashion and by the willing acquiescence to that tyranny" (1997: 48). As we will see below, the diversity of character goods (mainly character toys) brought by two

monster character booms in the 1960s and the early 1970s and the popular trend that they created released much or excessive desire of Japanese children at the time to consume.

Setting sail anew, the toy industry flourished in the postwar period, producing a wide range of character toy accessories that were popular choices with children (see chapter 1). Particularly since the mid-1960s, toys as an important part of character goods market developed fast. Building on its previous successful experience with characters, the Japanese toy industry became more involved in character merchandising—in a more innovative way. According to Allison (2006), since the mid-1950s many high-quality materials such as vinyl, plastics, and battery-powered electronics had been used in toy manufacturing, which had improved the variety and quality of the toys. A tendency for a sense of realism had also appeared: toys were created in the shape of characters and had begun to provide a new model for the toy industry. These toys could broadly be classed as "character toy figurines" (thereby differentiating them from the previous character toy accessories and the subsequent character toy models) and their emergence implied the coming of what above mentioned toy specialist Saitō calls the *honmono jidai* (the era of real things) of character toys (1978: 282). Saitō notes that this tendency became more apparent after 1965 with the toyification of characters from *Obake no Q tarō* (Monster Q tarō, animated for TV in 1965), *Osomatsu kun* (literally, Mr. Nothing special, animated for TV in 1966) and *Urutora Q* (Ultra Q, 1966). Of these, the last, *Urutora Q,* contained spectacular special effects and introduced a large number of *kaijū* (monster) characters, fuelling the *kaijū būmu* (monster character boom).

As a vital form of mass media, the overwhelming influence of television attracted many creators, including Tsuburaya Eiji (1901-1970), who was known as "the god of special effects" (*tokusatsu no kamisama*) in Japan. Tsuburaya followed in Tezuka's footsteps in the exploration of special effects for television—earlier in his career, Tsuburaya had created the monster film *Gojirā* (Godzilla, 1954). In 1966, the first *Urutora* series, *Urutora Q,* produced in black and white by Tsuburaya Production, was broadcast on the Tokyo Broadcasting System with a total of 28 episodes. The second series, *Urutora man,* was more popular and began airing two weeks after the first series ended.[6] These works were based on both the influence of previous monster films, and on the appeal of threats from supernatural monsters and aliens, which combined could realize the universal fantasy of children to have an improved human body that featured the superpower and technology and met the expectations of the era. As a result, both the characters and the narrative became popular with children. This led to what was known as the first monster character boom.

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[6]Although Tsuburaya intended this second series to be more paranormal, futuristic, and aimed at adults, the Tokyo Broadcasting System intended to target children as they had shown an interest in the monsters, and thus convinced him to add more monster characters (Ragone, 2007).

Driven by the monster character boom, the soft vinyl monster character figurines made by toy company Marusan Shōten became particularly popular.[7] The new materials made the mass production of toy figurines possible and the various ranges of monster characters attracted children's attention, effectively giving rise to a consumption phenomenon. More importantly, these toy figurines had the same effect as character accessories: consuming them meant getting closer to the world of the characters. While manga and anime provided the narratives that gave the characters a world in which to exist, consuming character accessories to some extent realized the children's dreams of being the character; they provided a way for children to become involved in the character's world. Toy figurines enabled the re-enactment of the character's actions in reality in its most tangible form. Purchasing toy figurines made children feel even closer to the character's world, and even that the character was real, and that they had a degree of control over the character (Steinberg, 2012). Thus, even though there was then a change in the producer of the toys (Marusan went bankrupt and became Blue Mark) and the materials used, the figurines were still the number one mass communication toy targeting children (Saitō, 1978).

Meanwhile, in 1966 the British science fiction series *Sandābādo* (Thunderbirds) was broadcast by Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation).[8] Similar to the *Urutora* series, the theme of the stories was technology, but unusually the vehicles and equipment themselves became popular with the audience. Toy manufacturer Imayi Kagaku seized on the opportunity to release toy models of Thunderbirds 1 to 5 and the secret bases. Among them, children particularly loved the transformable Thunderbird 1 model and the interchangeable Thunderbird 2 model, which began the trend for "transformation and union" as the central features of character toys (particularly character toy models) in the 1970s (Hikawa, 2005: 18).

In 1971, another special effects series, *Kamen raidā* (Kamen Rider), was broadcast. This work featured a motorcycle-riding superhero who owned a morphing superpower that allowed him to fight supernatural criminals (monsters). This series generated the *henshin* boom (transformation boom), also known as the second monster character boom. Children were especially fascinated by two Kamen raidā character items: the Kamen raidā snack and the Kamen raidā belt. The former was launched by food company Karubī (Calbee) and was similar to Meiji's chocolates in that it put Kamen raidā cards in its snack products. However, this product caused an over-consumption phenomenon among children. According to a *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper article titled "*Kamen raidā: Kanetsu no dōshin*" (Kamen Rider: The over Enthusiasm from Children), many boys and girls only bought the products for the cards and threw away the food (9 October 1972). The product was thus called a

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[7]Just like television animation, special effects pieces required a lot of time and money, and so needed the royalties coming in from character merchandising and overseas market sales to ensure financial stability. Many child-friendly enterprises, including the pharmaceutical business Ikeda Yakuhin, the stationery companies Kyokuto Nōto and Shōwa Nōto, and the toy manufacturers Marusan Shōten and Masudaya, gained licences to launch numerous character goods related to the *Urutora* series.

[8]The story *of Sandābādo* followed the exploits of International Rescue, a secret organization headed by the Thunderbirds fleet of advanced technological vehicles and equipment that rescued people who were in danger.

misplaced commodity.[9] However, as it was clearly the premiums that the children desired, this phenomenon to some extent illustrated that children had become present consumers and that their desires had been completely directed towards characters.

Also in 1971, Popy, one of the most important toy manufacturers in Japanese toy history, was set up. Aware of the popularity of Kamen raidā, Popy quickly launched the Kamen raidā belt as toy merchandise for the character. Although Popy was not the first manufacturer to produce this product, only it captured the fantasy of this product and turned it into a reality. In the story, the belt was the key item needed for the character to *henshin* (transform) into the superhero. The belt created by Popy had the same colour, gloss, and size, and the same glowing function as the one in the television programme: when the switch was rotated, the belt would glow (Igarashi, 2004). When the belt was released onto the market, it received a warm welcome from children and about 3.8 million sets were sold (Bandai, 2006). This number also made a record of character merchandising at the time: the royalties that Popy paid for Kamen raidā (for the series *Kamen Rider Stronger*, 1975) reached up to 1.2 billion yen (Ikada and Takahashi, 2001). While the Kamen raidā belt was still actually a character toy accessory, like the Akadō sword, it embodied the essence of *honmono jidai* as it was produced as a complete physical replica of the one that belonged to the character. Such a product greatly satisfied children's imagination and "they would like to bodily incorporate these goods themselves and, by doing so, thereby acquire the powers they promise," as Allison suggests (2006: 112).[10] This was the secret of Popy's success and paved the way for its subsequent development in the character toy field: working on the reproduction of imaginary characters. After the belt, Popy thus created a new line of miniature die-cast metal replicas of the Kamen raidā motorcycle, marking the start of die-cast toy production in Japan (Tsuchiya, 1995).

Toys Beyond Children

At the beginning of this chapter I indicated that the character merchandising expanded from children to the adult market. In this section, I will examine how adults were included in character consumer group. I argue that it firstly followed the shift of manga and anime whose readers and audiences were expanded to young adults.

Since the early 1960s, there had been many manga works created for appealing to adults. In 1964, the first young-adult manga magazine in Japan was established by Nagai Katsuichi (1921-1996) with the help of Shirato Sanpei. It was named after one of the characters in Shirato's manga, *GARO*. This magazine respected the manga per se and originality over commercial value, which ensured considerable freedom for creators. Shirato was the first creator for the magazine, publishing his Ninja *gekiga* (dramatic pictures), *Kamuiden* (The Legend of Kamui, 1964), which contained the themes of class-struggle and anti-authoritarianism. This work was a hit among

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[9]The issue even received attention from the Parent–Teacher Association of Japan. Karubī was forced to adopt various measures, such as printing "Please do not waste snack" on the individual packets and "Please do not allow one person to buy many" on the retail box to enlist the retailers' help (Kinoshita, 1997).

[10]*Henshin* is a crucial reason for consuming characters. I will return to this question in Chapter 3.

Japanese university students, who became the major force behind the student movement of *zenkyōtō* at the end of the 1960s (Kinsella, 2000).[11] Another magazine welcomed by university students was *COM*, published by Tezuka in 1967 in response to the success of *GARO* (Yonezawa, 2007). With the hope of some new successes in his work, Tezuka started the magazine and published the first seven stories of his work *Hi no tori* (Phoenix, 1967) in it.[12]

According to Japanese anime critic Hikawa Ryūsuke (2005), in the period from the later 1960s to the early 1970s, various values associated with social events such as the Vietnam War, the struggle for a security treaty, and pollution problems, became interwoven in Japanese society, igniting a fierce clash of opinions. In the realm of television anime, *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giant, 1968) and *GeGeGe no Kitarō* (Spooky Kitarō, 1968) were distinctively different from previous works, which had been dominated by special effects. The former was the first sports television animation and the latter was best known for its popularization of folklore monsters known as *yōkai*. Both had been adapted from manga that appeared in the *Shūkan shōnen magajin* (Weekly Boy Magazine) and contained "anti-technology elements such as mud, tears, sweat, cemetery and resentment" (Hikawa, 2005: 18). This contrasting attitude towards technology echoed the flexibility and fickleness of Japanese society, which appealed to many readers, especially students, who grew to be loyal fans of the *Shūkan shōnen* magazine. The magazine continually provided works that resonated with these readers. For instance, *Rupan sansei* (Lupin the Third), published in manga from 1967 to 1968 and animated for TV in 1971, apparently had an "adult sense of sex and violence" (Hikawa, 2005: 18). As a result, *Shūkan shōnen* magazine became a platform on which young adults could approach the struggles for self and society, thus winning over even more young adults to its readership. As the contemporary commentary of *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper observed, "The role of manga has shifted from the 'snack' to the 'staple,' and correspondingly the role of young adults from literature consumers to manga consumers" (Osaki, 1969).

I argue that at this point the development of character toys forked into two directions, exploration and extension, meaning into the exploration of new products for children and the extension of the market towards adults.[13] The first direction was promoted by *Majingā Z* (Mazinger Z), Nagai Gō's manga published in 1972, later animated for television. This work features a young hero who controls a giant robot called Majingā Z. The robot was constructed from a fictitious material—*chōgōkin* (Super-Alloy). This was a narrative that opened a window for character toys. The show's sponsor, Popy, utilized its new production line—die-cast—to metaphorize

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[11]*Zengaku kyōtō kaigi* refers to the student movement that occurred in Japanese universities from 1968 to 1969. It started with disagreements over specific problems such as university tuition fees and developed into an irreconcilable conflict between students and universities.

[12]The seven stories includethe volumes of *Dawn, Future, Yamato, Universe, Hō-ō* (Phoenix), *Resurrection,* and *Robe of Feathers.* Some scholars argue that following *GARO* there was a *geikiga* era in which *COM* was regarded as old-fashioned and outdated. Those who still read *COM* were always laughed at by other students (Natsume, 1999).

[13]Characters and toys discussed in this section are mainly for boys and adult males. Characters and toys for girls and adult females will be discussed in section on *shōjo* culture.

chōgōkin and produced die-cast character models of Mazinger Z targeted at children aged 3 to 10 years old. These character models, which featured the ability to "transform and unite," gave a sense of "actuality" (Onozuka, 2009: 26-28) rather than *honmono* (the real things), which the previous character toy figurines had offered. The new products and new characters immediately triggered a toy boom, as well as a massive increase in the popularity of giant robot characters. One million sets of Majingā Z models were soon sold and *chōgōkin* had become a buzzword in Japanese society (Tsuchiya, 1995: 84). In the wake of the popularity of giant robot characters, Popy focused its character exploitation on giant robot models and launched a 90-cm-high giant model series which was both a visual and a tactile reproduction of the giant robots.

Furthermore, toy manufacturers were becoming increasingly involved in the creation of characters. For example, Popy's industrial designer, Murakami Kasushi known as the "man of chōgōkin" (*chōgōkin no otoko*) who was responsible for developing Majingā Z models, took the lead in exploring the character Yūsha Raidīn (Brave Raideen, 1975), working in cooperation with the SF Design Studio. The animation of the same name was created by Suzuki Yoshitake and directed by Tomino Yoshiyuki and Nakahama Tadao (1932-1980). In the process of producing this animation, Raidīn was intentionally positioned as the main character in order to highlight the message of "character=toy merchandise" for business purposes (Hikawa, 2005: 20).

The second direction—the extension of character toys was revealed in 1974 with the release of *Uchū senkan Yamato* (Space Battleship Yamato), which was produced by Nishizaki Yoshinobu (1934-2010) and directed by Matsumoto Leiji. This was a seminal series in the history of anime, marking a turn towards more complex and serious works that attracted the attention of many young people and adults. It was a science-fiction war adventure story in which a space battleship called Yamato hunts for a certain type of new space device (called the "Cosmo Cleaner D") to save the earth. The many details of the ship (which was equipped with a "wave-motion engine"), its weapons (the "wave-motion gun"), and the characters carried audiences away with their rich creativity, while presenting a kind of humanity that could arouse much more sympathy from adults than children. In fact, as it was broadcast, *Yamato* was not very welcomed and in part because of the competition with another popular work, *Arupusu no shōjo Haiji* (Heidi, Girl of the Alps, 1974), it was forced to end after just 26 episodes. However the science-fiction fans had other ideas, and voted for *Yamato* to help it win the annual *Seiun* ("Nebula") Science-Fiction Award and appealed to the television station to bring it back. As a result, a film version of *Yamato* was created and released in cinemas. It was following the film that a *Yamato* craze came. According to the reports of *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper, the tickets were so hard to get that many fans had to queue outside the cinema from the night before, and cinemas even started to show the film at four o'clock in the morning (5 August 1978). Character merchandising also played a role in boosting *Yamato*'s crazy popularity. The animation store, Rappot, launched various Yamato character goods including printed

T-shirts, stationery, posters and *genga* (key frame animations) from the film,[14] selling 15 million yen's worth of goods in a week (Tsuchiya, 1995).

Toy manufacturer, Popy, decided to participate in the commercial exploitation of *Yamato* at the last moment (Inumata and Katō, 2010). It launched a series of battleship models of the same name which targeted the young people rather than children, and proved very popular. In addition, following the film release of *Yamoto*, Popy continued to update its products: for example, the company produced a display model ("image model/Uchū senkan Yamato") based on a film poster (Inumata and Katō, 2010: 49). Though having less operability, this display model reproduced the charm of the battleship in the poster and attracted many young anime fans.

From the above it is clear that there was a turn towards adult, both in aspects of the narrative of works and in character merchandising. I argue that there were three reasons for this turn. First, the creators were aiming to appeal to those who were born after 1955 and had been raised on mass media. They were known as *gendaikko* (the Modern Children) (Abe, 1961), and had grown up with manga and anime characters and had been cultivated to be character consumers. The second reason for this turn towards the activities of fan groups was that with their common interests in manga and anime, these *gendaikko* had found like-minded friends and formed their own communities. And, in 1975, the first Comic Market was held, which further stimulated their enthusiasm. More than seven hundred *Yamoto* fan clubs were established by fans; a special manga edition of *Yamato*, which imitated the animation with the aim of promoting fans-created works, was serialized in the magazine *OUT*. The latter actually planted the seeds for the growth of *otaku* subculture in the 1980s. The third reason for the change in direction was emphasized by the inspired meanings behind the narratives. As a science-fiction story depicting a war adventure, *Yamato* transmitted certain nationalistic messages, as was the intention of its producer (Matsumoto and Nishizaki, 1978). *Yamato* was thus named after a Second World War battleship belonging to the Imperial Japanese Navy, with the aim of awakening national pride and confidence among young adults.

Certainly, this was relevant to the economic situation at the time, as the Japanese economy had not grown as quickly as it was then growing since the early 1970s, and the negative consequences of high-speed growth such as environmental pollutions and the future of nation were beginning to be questioned and concerned about. As scholar Takekawa Shun'ichi (2012) argues, *Yamato* was much like an educator, telling the young adults how to face and overcome difficulties by showing how the characters of the space battleship were inspired by faith and friendship to cope with the crises together. This educational spirit was also present in the subsequent works, *Gingatetsudō 999* (Galaxy Express 999, manga published in 1977 and animated for TV in 1978) and *Kidō senshi Gandamu* (Mobile Suit Gundam, the first TV anime series broadcasted in 1979). Both series were science fiction works. The former depicted an ordinary boy who experienced many adventures on the way to his destination, which was the end of the line for the Galaxy Express 999 train. The story revealed much

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[14]From then on *genga* becomes an important aspect of character products.

about growth and life. *Gandamu* was similar to *Yamato* in that it started in the midst of a future war in which human and giant robots were fighting together to protect their homeland. Both series to some degree reassured the Japanese about the anxious situation at the time and were popular with them. But the popularity of the latter also rested on its character merchandising, which inaugurated a new era of characters toys.

Interestingly, like *Yamato, Gandamu* also took time to produce results: as TV anime (first series aired from 1979 to 1980) it had failed to begin with and was not truly a success until the release of the film animation (1981). According to Condry, this was because that *Gandamu* had "complex story arcs, with storylines extending across many episodes" which meant "if you missed an episode, it would be difficult to catch up the following week" (2013: 125). And that time was still a period without advanced technology and services such as VCRs and Video rental stores. The main characters were still the giant robots as in the earlier *Yūsha Raidīn*, but were designed to be very human. It was in part because the narrative of *Gandamu* portrayed the growth of a young person who had to do battle with his enemies alongside the Mobile Suits Gandamu that protected his fellow citizens and homeland. As Tsuchiya Shintarō in his book *Kyarakutā bijinesu* (Character Business) argues, "In terms of the development of giant-robot-works, *Gandamu* may have been a late bloomer but its character goods were immediate successes" (1995: 90-93).

This time Bandai, the parent company of Popy, took on the sponsorship of *Gandamu* and produced the character toy models. These models were made from plastic and were known in Japan as Gunpla, a portmanteau of Gundam and pla[stic]. The plastic material could highlight the details and made the model kits more sophisticated. And significantly, compared with the previous character accessories and character figurines, the character models provided consumers with a capacity for recreation, based on the fact that they could transform and unite the model kits as they wished. If accessories and figurines could allow consumers to access the world of characters, the models could both allow fans to approach the character world and to create another one outside of the existing world of Gandamu.

Around the time when Gandamu model kits went on sale, the model magazines such as *Hobby Japan* had introduced many ideas and methods of transforming Gandamu plastic models and published a special issue series on "How to build Gundam." Along with the rebroadcast of *Gandamu* TV series at the time and the announcement of the plan of film animations, Gandamu plastic models became a hit among primary and secondary school students. Their considerable enthusiasm for Gunpla led to temporary stock shortages in the market (3 May 1981 *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper); to obtain the limited Gunpla items available, consumers crowded into shops, even causing an accident that left a dozen injured and four badly wounded (25 January 1982 *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper); this accident was reported by the media, and as a result Gunpla became a household name (Futabasha, 2009).

Because modifying the models required a certain understanding from and creativity among the players, there was a gradual expansion of appeal from children to adults (Inomata and Katō, 2010), especially after Bandai improved its production lines, that also challenged the existing impression of "anime belonging to children." The initial

model kits lacked articulation and had single-colour, which required the players to use glue to build them and paint them by hands. To improve on this Bandai tried various strategies (or tactics), such as introducing an injection system, using polycap (soft plastic) as the connecting material for the articulation of joints, using colourful plastics, and introducing the concept of snap-fit models, all of which greatly improved the craftsmanship and quality of the model kits. These improvements stimulated the adult players' passion for assembling model kits, opened up the Gandamu world and created a "larger world" in which models not only belonged to children but also adults (Kawamura, 2011).[15] Another aspect of this "larger world" was the high sale figures. New products on the *Gandamu* series are still being launched. By the end of March 2011, 406 million Gandamu model kits were sold (quoted from Wagner, 2015: 50), and in 2016 (from March 2015 to March 2016) the Gandamu franchise generated 78.6 billion yen in revenues (Bandai Namco Fiscal Year 2016 Fanancial Statement).

Moreover, not only the main Gandamu mobile suits were available in plastic model kits but also their details including the vehicle and the weapon parts. There was even a Mobile Suits Variation range that did not have its own anime series or films as the basis. However, relying on the promotion of model magazines, these ranges became popular and familiar with players. From these ranges, players created many do-it-yourself Gandamu plastic models, and not only that, they interpreted those models in details based on the narratives of Gandamu, which expanded and deepened the whole character world (Kawamura, 2011). In this way, many new models, specifically, new "Gandamu-characters," were derived. Gandamu plastic models became a means for consumer to create their own Gandamu world that pointed to a tendency in which the character was separated from its original narrative. As part of this separation process, character-models were able react to the growth (development) of the characters; and the dominant participant became mainly the consumer who gradually took on the leading role in the subsequent development of characters and established a very complicated relationship with them (something to which I will discuss in chapter 3).

Arguably, the toy industry played a vital role in stimulating children's consumer desires and prompted them to become present consumers. From today's perspective, it might seem to be a natural development that toys would incorporate characters. But at the time, the Japanese toy industry had to experiment to work out what it could rely on for income, and this experimentation included character toy accessories, toy figurines, and toy models. Most importantly, the industry's development saw an extension of consumer groups, with adults also becoming character consumers. Along with this expanded consumer group, character consumption began to manifest its pluralism in the subsequent development, as asserted by Miller at the beginning of the chapter, and engaged with various aspects of Japanese consumers' lives.

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[15]Bandai explores different product series for consumers of different ages (see, for example, Kawamura, 2011: 54). On the other hand, the updating of products also attracts the original children consumers. When they have grown up, they are still the loyal players of Gandamu model kits (15 November 2005 *Yomiuri Shinbun* newspaper).

Character Consumption

As many scholars have argued, the significance of consumer goods rests in not only their utilitarian and commercial values but also their ability to carry and communicate cultural meanings (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; McCracken, 1988). On the other hand, consumer goods are always produced and marketed according to certain cultural codes. Cultural anthropologist Grant McCracken maintains that the cultural meaning of consumer goods is "constantly in transit" which requires us to "see consumers and consumer goods as the way-stations of meaning" (1988: 71-72). This mobile quality of culture meaning implies that consumption is like a kind of communication mode in which "consumers are not seen to be the mere products of structural forces such as advertising and the media," as Steven Miles (1998: 29) points out, they are always "subject to certain pre-established patterns of consumption and social convention, but symbolic goods are purposefully managed by consumers within cultural rules and codes laid down for and by them."

Shōjo Culture, Kawaii, Disneyland and Otaku Subculture(1970s-1980s)
This section will examine character consumption as a relevant phenomenon which is included in some particular cultural aspects and cultural segmentation in Japanese society and expresses them. Such relevance contributed to the diverse character consumption in the 1970s and 1980s which specifically interwove *shōjo* (girl) culture, *kawaii* (cute), *otaku* (geek) subculture, and Western consumer culture represented by Disneyland.

Subcultures are always defined as groups that have their own distinctive styles but also share the values of the larger society. In her book *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures*, Kawamura Yuniya points out, in the modern society such as Japan, "there is a great diversity of such subcultures" and they can "project a certain image, which is composed of costume, accessories, hairstyle, jewellery, artefacts, and a distinct vocabulary" (2012: 8-9). Consumption is an efficient tool for them, as Paul Willis (1990) notes, that they use cultural goods to express identity and resistance. At the same time the cultural industry can often re-absorb the components of their style and transform them into goods again. David Muggleton (2000) suggests that as the "elective, build-your-own, consumer identities" become dominated, the identification of the members of subcultures present "fragmented, individualistic, and stylistic" features (Kawamura, 2012: 68). In Japan, *shōjo* and *otaku* play important role in subcultures. The former expresses their distinctive style in the 1970s and 1980s by using a cute writing-style, which led the development of *kawaii*. The latter contributes to the consumption of mass media images such as anime, science fiction and games. But Thaim Huat Kam (2012: 2-23) argues that *otaku* is like a labelled group. The fact that *otaku* is labelled explains Japanese's certain rules on how popular culture should be consumed which present the demands of contemporary capitalist Japan as common sense, continues Kam. In short, *otaku* are the "perceived violators" labelled by the individuals' common sense under certain social and historical conditions.

In the 1970s, *shōjo* culture blossomed. *Shōjo* culture had developed at the beginning of the twentieth century, and its driving force was mostly young Japanese girls. At that time, many works of literature, such as novels for girls, were published that provided their audiences with imaginary things. These works soon became popular with Japanese girls and gradually *shōjo* culture took shape in Japan. With the rise of *shōjo* culture, terms such as "purity," "fragility," "dreaminess," and "mysteriousness" were used to describe Japanese girls, which consequently evoked a fantasy of how girls should behave in Japanese society. In the postwar period, Nakahara Jun'ichi launched the magazines such as *Soreiyu* (Soleil, 1946), *Himawari* (Sunflower, 1947) and *Junia Soreiyu* (Junior Soleil, 1953), which introduced the cultivation of a personal aesthetic that included developing an appreciation of literary masterpieces, Western clothing styles, and art, thus greatly promoting *shōjo* culture in the fields of literature, fashion, art and life. However, according to Kan, *shōjo* culture, namely, "a happy theory of staying in the corner," reveals the idea that girls actually does not care about the overall situation of society but the small status of self and the ways in which to defend it (1968: 239). That is to say, *shōjo* culture to some extent is independent and girls have their own particular interests. In the realm of character consumption, girls are less interested in monster figurines and robot models, which originally appealed to boys, than in fancy things, such as *shōjo* manga and cute goods.

Shōjo manga started in the postwar period. Many scholars often trace the god of manga, Tezuka, as the pioneer since he created the manga work—*Ribon no kishi* (Princess Knight, 1953) which featured a princess character and published it in girl magazine. Even Tezuka himself thought that he created a *shōjo* manga. However, Tezuka was not the mainly inventor for *shōjo* manga (Shamoon, 2012) but a contributor for connecting the prewar and postwar *shōjo* culture. The main character of Tezuka's *Ribon no kishi* was created with the exaggerated eyes. Tezuka claimed such a feature was much impacted by the prewar Takarasiennes' eye makeup.[16] In short, Tezuka was much a successor to prewar *shōjo* culture. But along with Tezuka, a clear tendency to draw the exaggerated eyes emerged. This tendency was actually developed by Nakahara Jun'ichi and his aesthetic represented in his *shōjo* magazines: "an ornate, decorated style, use of flower motifs, and exaggerated eyes" (Shamoon, 2012: 87; Matsuda, 2015). This style also inspired the *shōjo* manga artists (particularly the female artists) in the 1960s who contributed to using and developing it as a particular style of *shōjo* manga. Moreover, in the 1960s, many *shōjo* manga works, such as *Mahōtsukai Salī* (Sally the Witch, 1966) and *Himitsu no Akko-chan* (The Secrets of Akko-chan, 1962), in particular featuring the magical girl characters were turned into television and got rise to the popularity of girl toys such as magical compact (Odagiri, 2010: 30).[17]

Here it is not to deny the influence of Tezuka, though the girl character that he created was criticized that lacked emotive details such as highlights in the same

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[16]Takarasiennes are the actors of *Takarazuka kagekidan* (Takarazuka Revue). All of them are female.
[17]In *Himitsu no Akko-chan*, the main character Akko-chan can use the magical compact to realize her *henshin* (transformation) and by doing so borrow the power of the compact to help others. The work also impacts on the subsequent development of magical girl characters and girls' *henshin* boom.

exaggerated eye (Shamoon, 2012). Tezuka and his *Ribon no kishi* indeed gave enlightenment to the later development of narratives of *shōjo* manga.[18] Noticeably in the 1970s, various themes, including science fiction and fantasy, nonsense jokes and boy-love were unprecedentedly brought into the story-setting of *shōjo* manga by the famous *Hana no nijūyo-nen gumi* (Fabulous Year 24 Group). This group included Aoike Yasuko, Hagio Moto, Ōshima Yumiko, Takemiya Keiko, Kihara Toshie, Yamagishi Ryōko, Kimura Minori, Sasaya Nanae, and Yamada Mineko, most of whom had been born around Shōwa 24 (1949). The group made a major contribution to the popularity of *shōjo* culture: on the one hand, they incorporated the development of girls' interests by combining the literary genre with the independence of *shōjo* culture; on the other, they expanded the world of girls and opened it up by gaining more acceptance from the wider population.

In the 1970s, the term kawaii became a key word of *shōjo* culture (Koga, 2009). As Sharon Kinsella summarizes in "Cuties in Japan," *kawaii* or cute essentially means "childlike"; it celebrates "sweet, adorable, innocent, pure, simple, genuine, gentle, vulnerable, weak, and inexperienced social behavior and physical appearances" (1995: 220). This analysis, while concise and comprehensive, in fact conceals the evolutionary meanings of *kawaii*. According to Mio Bryce (2004: 2266), since ancient times the Japanese have loved "small, and cute things": at first the word "kawaii" was equated with "*utsukushii* (pretty)"; it was then used to express a passion for all things "miniature," symbolizing the "mixed sentiments of love/affection and sense of pity/compassion"; finally, in the modern period, it became "visually formulated and fixed in meaning, as being small, soft and somewhat playful." Moreover, continues Bryce, in the modern period there were some differences between prewar and postwar conceptions: influenced by Western culture, the image of cuteness in the prewar period represented "innocence, sincerity, defenselessness, and appealing to the spectator for protection"; after the war the docile images were gradually changed into "a more active, independent and rather comical representation."

At the time, as noted by Kinsella (1995), in Japanese society a cute style of handwriting had become popular among Japanese teenagers, mainly girls, who were always sensitive to fashions. This new style was different from traditional serious Japanese handwriting, which used forceful strokes, as it used rounded characters with many decorations of small hearts, tiny stars and various emotional face-marks. In his study, Yamane Kazuma calls the cute handwriting *hentai shōjo moji* (anomalous girlish writing) and argues that it belongs to *shōjo* (1986: 17). On its origin, he notes that many believe that illustrator Mizumori Ado sets the trend for using round characters; while others define it as *manga-ji* (comic writing), implying a similarity between the cute handwriting and the comical expressions of manga (1986: 43).[19] However,

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[18]According to Deborah Michelle Shamoon, Tezuka gave the main character with two souls, male for protecting her kingdom as a boy and female for acting as a princess, which promoted the "later narrative tendencies toward gender ambiguity"(2012: 89). For details concerning the development of *shōjo* manga in this period, see also Shamoon (2012: 101-136).

[19]Although Yamane (1986: 33-50) affirms both the influences of Mizumori and manga, he argues that neither of them is the origin of the cute handwriting.

wherever it came from, it was girls that carried forward the style and promoted the trend, leading to the boom in *kawaii*. The style is always seen as the deviant subcultural aspect of *shōjo* culture since "girls use this writing style to confront gender socialization, in which femininity is linked to elegance and refinement not only in their comportment, but in how they fashion their writing of languange" (Miller, 2011: 16). Yano maintains, "This form of bottom-up (no pun intended) cute culture suggested girls out of control; however, what it really portended was girls gaining control of their consumer lives …" (2013: 52).

Kinsella points out, although "cute culture was not founded by business" (1995: 225), *kawaii* in Japan soon exhibited rich potential as a thriving commercial culture, driven by the enormous variety of cute, fancy goods available. As Shimamura Mari notes in the subtitle of her book *Fanshū no kenkyū* (The Study of Fancy, 1991), "kawaii dominates people, things and money," which indicates the capacity of *kawaii* to embrace business. This capacity was first explored by the company Sanrio, which originally sold silk, but today is most well known for its character Hello Kitty. As the founder of Sanrio Tsuji Shintarō recalled, he found that if cute designs and cute characters were added to the products, they would "sell in a completely different way" (2000: 93). Thus from the early 1960s, Sanrio began to focus on selling Mizumori Ado's character goods by highlighting their cuteness as their symbolic value. In 1970, Sanrio experimented with "cute"-decorated goods such as writing paper, fancy diaries, and other stationery, which greatly attracted the girls who were using cute handwriting. At the same time, Sanrio attempted to create its own characters. In fact, as soon as Tsuji realized the importance of cute characters, he was so eager for Sanrio to have its own that he first commissioned designers, and then hired them. By hiring them Sanrio could have the original licence and avoid paying royalties. Since 1962, hundreds of original characters have been invented by Sanrio, including the superstar Hello Kitty (1974), KiKi & LaLa, boy and girl siblings (1975), My Melody the bunney (1975), Tuxedo Sam the penguin (1979), Keroppi the frog (1988), Monkichi the monkey (1991), Chococat the cat (1996), Sugarbunnies (2004), and Cinnamoroll the puppy (2011), which together founded the Sanrio empire. Moreover, Tsuji also utilized existing famous foreign characters, for example, gaining the licence for Snoopy from Peanuts and becoming the exclusive representative of Barbie dolls in Japan.

At the dawn of character merchandising, Disney had had a hand in the development of the whole industry; in the 1970s it still signified everything in the world of children's culture. Like Tezuka, Tsuji also idolized Walt Disney, and intended to make his company's flagship character. Hello Kitty thus became a superstar on the same scale as Mickey Mouse, not only in the marketplace but also in the imaginary world of characters. As I have discussed above, by forging a link with *shōjo*, *kawaii*, and fancy goods, Sanrio had opened up a new field for the industry. But Sanrio proposed to go much further than that by exploring the term of *asobi* (play).

As Yano points out, "Like the seen-but-not-seen aspects of shōjo, kawaii as exemplified by Hello Kitty includes cute and its distancing through twist of meanings, commentaries, and nuances that fall within the framework of *asobi*" (2013: 59). *Asobi*

refers to play that is "more than a mere physiological phenomenon or a psychological reflex" (Huizinga, 1949: 1), which means that this behaviour can be extended to the meanings and uses of characters (Yano, 2013). In contrast to the characters that almost always came from anime or manga, a new characteristic in the 1970s was the emergence of non-narrative characters, with Sanrio's Hello Kitty being the prime example. Without strong story-telling, there were only fragmented images of these characters. Indeed Sanrio has only given Hello Kitty a basic backstory, with simple images. However, these do depict the details of Hello Kitty: a round head; small ears and a red bow; dot-style eyes and nose; three-line whiskers on each cheek; white and pure; and mouthless. From the images it can be ascertained that Kitty is a cat (because of the whiskers and the name) or a girl (because of the bow). Undoubtedly Kitty is a character, as that is what Sanrio always reaffirms and emphasizes. The ambiguity regarding being a girl or a cat comes from Kitty's lack of narrative as well as her being mouthless. Mouthless characters are known as *muhyo kyara* (expressionless-character), a popular term in the world of characters. The lack of a narrative and expression does not mean that the character is boring and emotionless, but rather that it is easy for consumers to imagine a story or an expression and project them onto the character. In this way, characters like Hello Kitty become the ones consumers want; consumers can arbitrarily combine Kitty with their personal situation through playing with her. Kitty's appeal and image is thus not always the same, a factor which has also helped Sanrio to deeply explore this fanciful world.

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, Sanrio updated its range and extended it, using the same strategy of *asobi*: it offered new colour options, fashion costumes, more decorations, and varied poses for Hello Kitty, with the aim of appealing to women. The consequence of this change was surprising, because it resulted in the introduction of a surprising number of character goods, of impressive quality, covering almost the whole female world, from cuteness (for girls) to coolness (for young women) to fashion (for women). Thus today Kitty appears on countless goods, even those for men (see **Figure 12**) (Adelstein, 2015). Everyone has the chance to access Hello Kitty's happy life with a set of cute Kitty-decorated kitchen devices; to drive a small, white, cool Hello Kitty car equipped with Hello Kitty wheel covers and pink or blue Hello Kitty seats; to wear a luxury customized ring containing a Kitty-shaped diamond; or to buy a man's t-shirt with a radiographic image of Kitty on it. These items are just the tip of the iceberg. Around 2004, Kitty's face was "plastered on 22,000 different goods and sold in over 40 countries" (Belson and Bremner, 2004). Ten years later, Kitty spanned "more than 70 countries and more than 50,000 products" and was "worth some 7 billion dollar to Sanrio" (Lisanti, 2014; Marsden, 2015).

By producing not only children's goods but adult-oriented items too, Hello Kitty realized the expansion of characters from children to adults. Although her success is located in a relatively independent female culture, ultimately her history merges into one stream (from children to adults). Established on the premise of *kawaii*, such cute characters have enriched the industry as well as absorbing other fields, elements, and cultures into the character business. Therefore, the 1970s saw a change in the quality of character consumption, which also created the conditions for its diversification in

the 1980s. By the beginning of the 1980s, the scale of character market had surpassed 1 trillion yen (Kayama and Bandai Kyarakutā Kenkyūjo, 2001: 192) and expanded rapidly in the following years. This signalled the arrival of the character industry as the leader of the related market.

Figure 12. Poster for Hello Kitty Men Project; Source: Sanrio Homepage News for "Hello Kitty Men Project Start."

The most eye-catching spectacle in the 1980s was the opening of Tokyo Disneyland (TDL). Within just half a year, more than 5 million visitors had streamed through the park's gates; a year later, this figure was almost 10 million. These high numbers show the excitement that TDL brought to the Japanese people: in Disneyland there was a real-life character paradise. However, one may wonder why the Japanese did not see Disneyland as exotic. This was partly because it had been more than 30 years since Disney had re-entered the Japan market and therefore most Japanese were familiar with Disney's creations and characters; in addition, TDL had adopted a strategy that aimed to build familiarity among the Japanese.

According to Raz Aviad, "Disneyland is recontextualized in Tokyo…in two forms: making the exotic familiar and keeping the exotic exotic. The 'exotic' stands for the original American fantasy, the 'familiar' denotes 'Japan'" (1999: 61). If we follow Raz's analysis focussing on character, these two forms can be translated as making Disney characters familiar to the Japanese visitors while retaining the fanciful nature of the imaginary character world of Disneyland. It is easy to appreciate that the former had been achieved through the use of screens, images, and various types of character merchandise. But how was the latter achieved? In Baudrillard's description (1983), Disneyland is the archetypal simulacrum in that everything in it is presented as imaginary in order to make people believe that the rest is real, but the fact is that the whole world has fallen into a more real than real world, hyper-reality (something to which I will discuss in chapter 3). The distance between the hyper-reality and the simulation present in Disneyland is somehow shortened. Disneyland intuitively reproduces the world of characters in reality, which not only allows people to access

the character world but to be in it. This coincides with one of Disney's philosophies—that of the "dream world" (Brannen, 1992: 217), in which the emotions of the Japanese are further stimulated by a sense of longing. Raz quotes an American teacher's words after a visit to TDL: the teacher thinks that what the romance of the past offers for Americans is but a charmed vision of the future for the Japanese, thus "instead of a sense of loss, there is a sense of longing" (1999: 66).

This sense of longing has to be maintained by TDL, because it can be easily turned into a strong desire to consume, especially as TDL presents a commercial culture full of American consumer values. As we know from Chapter 1, as the major vehicle for merchandising, Disneyland maximizes the opportunities for visitors to access and purchase various types of Disney character merchandise. Complexes of shops, restaurants, theatres, and entertainment facilities surround the characters. The World Bazaar, TDL's version of Main Street, the main shopping area of Disneyland, is equipped with even more shops selling character merchandise than other Disneylands (Raz, 1999). Moreover, TDL uses the Japanese festivals and events cleverly as a way to attract the Japanese to return. This technique, the local adaptation of Disneyland, can also be seen as a familiarization strategy. For instance, during the *shōgatsu* (New Year's celebrations), TDL launches special programmes and character goods: in the latest official TDL blog post, the New Year celebration schedule for 2016 has been released, and it includes a *wafuku* (traditional Japanese-style cloth) parade in which Mickey, Minnie, and their friends will wear traditional clothing to celebrate with the Japanese visitors, and *wafuku* Disney character dolls will be available as limited edition character merchandise.[20] As this time of the year is the busiest for TDL, one Japanese visitor's metaphor is apt: "if you look at it from above, the crowd of people swallow up the ground…"[21]

To sum up, the hyper-reality of Disneyland triggers surprise and excitement among the Japanese that they are in an imaginary character world; Disneyland therefore becomes what they are longing for, and their longings are hugely satisfied by the ability to purchase various character goods in a familiar way. Hence, Raz argues, when confronting the "black ship" of Disneyland, the Japanese are prone to "Japanize" it with "more colorful and playful themes characterizing the local practices of consumption" (1999: 14). For them, consumption is an effective way to catch and maintain the fantasy of Disneyland and the creativity of the character world. Thus, in the wake of the opening of TDL there was a character theme park boom: Sanrio Puroland (*Pyūrorando*), which opened in 1990 in Tokyo, combined entertainment, hands-on experiences, and shopping to provide a one-stop shop for Sanrio characters; and the first Anpanman Land opened in 1994 to offer the opportunity to enjoy the characters of the *Anpanman* TV anime series as well as the consumption of related

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[20]Almost every year Tokyo Disneyland holds such *wafuku* parade; See "Disneyland and DisneySea *shōgatsu*," Tokyo Disney Resort Official Blog, accessed 1 December 2015, http://www.tokyodisneyresort.jp/blog/pr151020/.

[21]See Question of "On whether go to Tokyo Disneyland during the New Year," Oshiete goo, accessed 1 December 2015, http://oshiete.goo.ne.jp/qa/240433.html.

character goods (by 2015 there were four "lands" and one museum[22]). These theme parks not only promoted the incorporation of characters into the Japanese life world through qualitative methods (their diverse offerings) but also through quantitative ones (their huge amount of products).

The 1980s also saw the rise of *otaku* subculture. In general, the term "otaku" was used to describe a certain group of people who had an unrelenting exclusive "love for 2D," including manga, anime, games, and so on, and who stayed alone at home most of the time and were lacking in social skills (Katayama, 2009; Kinsella, 1998; Kam, 2013). However, many scholars argue that this definition contains misunderstandings and prejudices and is not a comprehensive interpretation of *otaku*. They offer analyses of *otaku* from their own standpoints. These scholars include author and critic Okada Toshio (1996), who was once called the *otakingu* (otaku king), and who introduces the term "otakuology" in several of his books; psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki (2000), who discusses the significance of fiction for *otaku*; manga artist and critic Ōtsuka Eiji (2007), who traces the spiritual development of *otaku* in the 1980s; and philosopher Azuma Hiroki (2001; 2007), who examines the postmodern characteristics of *otaku*. Based on their analyses, I suggest that the characteristics of character consumption in *otaku* are embodied in three aspects.

According to Azuma, by the end of the 1980s *otaku* had spread through two generations: the fans and audiences of *Yamato* and *Gandamu*, born in the 1960s, formed the first generation, while those born in the 1970s who had continued the passion of the first generation formed the second generation (2007: 13). These groups were obsessed with consumption that focused on manga, anime, and games: 2D culture. As Japanese economist Morinaga Takurō (2005) suggests, consumption was a key part of the *otaku* lifestyle. *Otaku* were frequently seen as pioneers who were passionate about purchasing the goods that they were interested in regardless of the price. When a character figurine or character model was released, they would queue through the night to be among the first to get it, as mentioned above with regard to the Yamato and Gandamu merchandise. They also aimed to acquire many non-commercial items: an *otaku* would collect everything relating to his/her favourite character, even a rubbish bin from the company that created the character. Thus the *otaku* market was always growing. According to the Nomura Research Institute, "the market capitalization (only for new products) of otaku relating to manga, anime and games (including the overlaps among these three categories) reached 124 billion yen in 2004, with 620,000 consumers" (2005: 52).

Although *otaku* were viewed in a much more negative manner after the Miyazaki incident,[23] they were not excluded from society and their consumption behaviours were not pathological. Their seemingly irrational consumption lay in the fact that they

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[22]Anime or manga museum (or gallery) always combines the art experience such as exhibitions with goods such as character shops and services such as character-themed restaurants and cafés. There are a dozen such museums (or galleries) in Japan. The famous includes Ghibli museum and Fujiko F Fujio museum.

[23]Miyazaki Tsutomu was arrested in 1989 for the murders of four young girls. Police found quantities of anime videos and *shōjo* manga at his home, leading *otaku* to be labeled as dangerous criminals.

saw the goods they bought as symbolic commodities with high additional value (Ōtsuka, 2007; Azuma, 2001). At the same time these symbols could be used in their own creations, as the Gandamu model kits were by the fans who not only reproduced the Gandamu world but also expanded it through their created Gandamu. In this sense, for *otaku*, their consumption was their production: this is the second characteristic of *otaku* character consumption.

Additionally, these signs were very important as a way to constitute their identity and help them to find a sense of belonging. *Otaku* had their own communities in which they consumed together and also communicated with each other. Thus, the third aspect is that they were also significant information collectors, sharers, and consumers, who frequently promoted communication through media and technology (Galbraith, 2010; Grassmuck, 1990). This contributed to them becoming dynamic character consumers in the subsequent information society. The 1990s saw the emergence of the third generation of *otaku*, who were good at utilizing the new media to share information and communicate with each other. In line with this, we will now turn our attention to another aspect, the media mix, by which character consumption is included in multiple media forms.

The Media Mix (after the 1990s)

The media mix, as a Japanese model of media convergence, is popular in the Japanese character industry. It refers to the circulation of characters in multiple media or platforms, which balloons the amount and range of character goods and brings out new consumption patterns. The phrase developed in the late 1980s and was in widespread use by the 1990s. In his book, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*, Steinberg focuses on anime and suggests that the media mix mainly consists of two intertwined phenomena: "the translation or deployment of a single work, character, or narrative world across numerous mediums or platforms (also known as repurposing) and the synergetic use of multiple media works to sell other such works within the same franchise or group" (2012: 142). These two phenomena expose the mechanism of the media mix, and through them I will examine how the media mix applies to the character industry and influences character consumption. Particularly after the 1990s, with the development of media and technology, more and more new forms have been added, ultimately making it a major factor in the trend for character consumption.

According to Ōtsuka, the attempt of the media mix can be traced back to the 1920s when Shō-chan had combined with the media of newspaper, manga, records and films (2013: 90). In the postwar period, as seen in Chapter 1, Akadō as the first media star made contribution to the transmedia activity. First shown in manga, with the rise of the mass media Akadō soon appeared on radio, television and film screens, which led to him becoming a hit character and to the popularity of his character toys. Along his transmedia activity, Akadō made a multiple dimensional media environment which, as Kan suggests, "actualized the representative form of the three-dimensionalization of mass communication [*masu komi no rittaika*]" around children (1968: 93). The term three-dimensionalization of mass communication was always seen as the media mix's

precursor that emphasized the synergy of multiple media and put manga as the important medium form (Steinberg, 2012). For example, before Akadō, there were some three-dimentionalized works such as *Fuefuke dōji* (Flute Playing Boy, 1953) which first showed in radio and then was adopted for manga works. Manga here created a foundation of characters' popularity. After Akadō, Atomu was the next media star and his rise combined the media mix with character merchandising closely.

In the 1960s, as the new and influential medium, television began to play important role. As shown in aforementioned merchandising practices, with the success of *Atomu* TV series, many merchants particularly food and toy makers also took part in Atomu's character merchandising which brought the character to various products (platforms). Such practices provided a basis for the commercial exploitation of characters that supported the formation of the early character industry chain: characters first through manga became popular, then were transferred to television, and finally transformed into commodities (Yamada, 2000). Television was targeted by many producers, including Tsuburaya, who launched the *Urutora* special effects series. This series was first shown on television at almost the same time that the manga version was published and many character goods were launched in the market at that time too; this generated the first monster character boom. The popularity of the *Urutora* series indicated that television had become the central component of the media mix and was leading the development of mass communication methods. By the 1970s, the central position of television had been strengthened. In 1974, the first season of the TV anime *Space Battleship Yamato* began airing. Like the *Urutora* series, *Yamato* was also first shown on television, with the manga version being published almost simultaneously. Without manga as its basis, at first it *Yamato* received depressing TV anime ratings. Nevertheless, *Yamato* finally triggered a boom, driven largely by its film release in 1977 (see section 2.1.2) and various character goods. With *Yamato*, the increasing capacity that anime, manga, film, and other media or platforms had to complement each other and together be successful was remarkable.

Moreover, in the 1970s, the new medium of games became popular and carved out a space in children's consumer lives. In this decade ATARI[24] launched *BREAKOUT* and Taito released the game *Space Invaders*. Both triggered a games boom among children, who would happily wait in long queues to buy them. They also created the conditions for the subsequent gaming fad in the 1980s. In 1983, Nintendo invented the Family Computer (Nintendo Entertainment System) and opened a new era for the games industry. Driven by gaming software such as *XEVIOUS* (1984) and *Super Mario Bros.* (1985), sales of the Family Computer reached 19 million sets (Takita, 2000), which encouraged family gaming. By the 1990s, with the arrival of the second generation of computer games consoles, including the Super Family Computer, the Nintendo Game Boy and the Sony Play Station, games had become must-have items for children.

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[24]ATARI Company was founded in 1972 in U.S. whose products helped define the development of electronic entertainment industry in the world from 1970s to the mid-1980s.

At this point, the media mix also became weighted in favour of games, specifically in the form of Pokémon. The Pokémon franchise started with a pair of video games in 1996, with its first release being *Poketto monsutā aka midori* (Pocket Monster Red & Green) and the second *Poketto monsutā ao* (Pocket Monster Blue) (at first this was a limited edition, before being generally released). Pokémon soon became a hit, particularly among primary school students. In the same year, manga versions of Pokémon were published by *Gekkan Korokoro komikku* (Monthly CoroCoro Comic) magazine.[25] The anime series was first broadcast on TV Tokyo in 1997 and continues to air today (different series). Since 1998, films have been released every year; a total of 19 had been released by August 2016. Furthermore, the franchise has succeeded in exploiting trading card games; it was the first to incorporate these as part of the media mix. Alongside these there were picture books, TV programmes, music CDs, novels and various character goods. Each of these media acted as a way to expand the world of Pokémon. "The *general* consumption of any of the media mix's products [would] grow the entire enterprise" (Steinberg, 2012: 141; emphasis in original) of Pokémon, turning it into one of the most important franchises of the 1990s.

Moreover, since 2000, many new trends, such as light novels, have been introduced to the media mix. Light novels refer to those that tell the story of a certain character and are illustrated with anime-style images of the character. Young readers are the main target audience. Light novels are frequently serialized in magazine and published in *bunko* imprint,[26] for example, many light novels published under Fujimi Shobo's (Fujimi publisher) *Fantajia Bunko* (Fujimi Fantasia Bunko) are serialized in Fujimi Shobo's *Doragon Magajin* (Dragon Magazine). Although a genre of literature, light novels feature images of the characters and thus have become a popular choice in the media mix. For example, the Suzumiya Haruhi franchise, which was first published by Kadokawa's *Sunīkā Bunko* (Sneaker Bunko) in a light novel format, was followed by manga versions, anime series, video games, and a flood of merchandise onto the market.

Since the early 1990s, the evolution of technology and the development of the Internet have changed the daily lives of young people. The new ways of communication, including computers, mobile phones, blogs, bulletin boards, discussion forums, and tweets, have interwoven to create a closely connected media net through which young people can enjoy and consume characters. To take an example of mobile phones, according to Larissa Hjorth (2003: 51), many official sites of characters offer the download services for the use of characters in mobile phones, such as Bandai's site "*Doko-demo Kyarappa!*" has a one million subscriber group who

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[25]This manga version was firstly created by Anakubo Kōsaku with the title of *Fushigi Pokemon pippi* and was printed in *Bessatsu Korokoro komikku* (the separate volume of CoroCoro Comic) magazine from April to August 1996 and then turned to the *Gekkan Korokoro komikku* magazine. According to Yamada Tōru, this manga was like the "Bible" for boys with a circulation of 1.6 million copies (2000: 62). Except for this version, there were others created by different creators.

[26]*Bunko* or *bunkohon* are affordable and portable small-format paperback books usually in A6 (105×148 mm or 4.1"×5.8") size. Many major Japanese publishing companies have their light novel imprints such as Asahi's *Sonorama Bunko* (Sonarama Bunko) and Kadokawa's *Sunīkā Bunko* (Sneaker Bunko).

enjoy daily supplies of characters by paying only 100 yen a month. This consumption of characters through mobile phones promotes the role that characters play in individual expression, identity and social communication.

Following the release of *Shin seiki evangerion* (Neon Genesis Evangelion), the third generation of *otaku* became established. In many respects *Shin seiki evangerion* continued the trends of *Gandamu*, such as the robot theme, the futuristic world, and the complex story. When its anime was released in 1995, it became a hit among audiences, especially among the youth and adults that formed the major component of *otaku*. Compared with the previous two generations of *otaku*, this generation has grown up in a fairly advanced technological environment in which their concerns and the ways in which they consume have changed greatly. As Azuma notes, "The third generation pays more attention to mystery and personal computer games than the first generation's science fiction, their fan events have moved onto the Internet, and their fan creations are completed using CGI [Computer Generated Imagery]" (2007: 14). The changes are also reflected in the transformation of Akihabara, Tokyo, which was known as the Electric Town, where household electronic goods used to be sold after the Second World War. Since the 1980s, Akihabara has become a sacred place for *otaku* (Torii, 2001). The stores shifted to personal computers, games, software, and manga and anime characters: posters and advertisements featuring female characters were put up inside and outside their stores (Morikawa, 2003). Thus *otaku* cannot only buy electronics but can also enjoy the 2D atmosphere there.

From these changes we can see the inevitable tendency for *otaku* to become part of the media and technology worlds. Through the use of media and technology, they have become what Jacques Attali (2006) calls "virtual nomads" who allow selves to be surrounded by a virtual universe and actively engage in it. This engagement is particularly embodied in their strong interest in the Internet, which has also set a trend for consuming characters, for example, Hatsune Miku. Miku is a character who originally featured in the Vocaloid music software that went on sale in 2007. This music software, known as "a singer in a box," used the image of a young female character and allowed users to create music by entering melodies and lyrics. After its release, Miku soon reached the top of the software sales rankings. One year later, more than 40,000 units had been sold, with an average of 300 units per week (23 July 2008 *ITmedia*). Miku won the AMD (Association of Media in Digital) Award, the Seiun Award, the Animation Kobe Awards and the Good Design Award. The Committee of the Good Design Award specifically pointed out that Miku "reveals the new possibilities for content on the Internet," which is the key to understanding the popularity of Miku.[27]

Miku's instant success was the result of her diffusion on the Internet. Many users created original songs using Miku and uploaded their work onto the Internet to share with others. Inspired by these online works, others became fans of Miku. Nico Nico Douga (literally, "smile video"), a sharing website in Japan, made a big contribution to

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[27]See "Hatsune Miku Good Design Award of 2008," accessed 1 May, 2014, http://www.g-mark.org/award/describe/34937?locale=ja.

Miku's popularity by providing a web platform. As a result, as well as music, fans could also create anime videos using Miku's character image and post them on Nico Nico Douga. A significant feature of Nico Nico Douga was that, unlike other video sharing sites, comments could be overlaid directly onto the video, in sync with a specific playback time. This emphasized the sense of sharing in two ways: it combined a watching experience shared with other viewers, and communication with the creator of the video. Furthermore, the sense of sharing could be found in the calls for ideas and the reuse or remixing of others' creations into one's own works. Some creators would post their unfinished work online and ask others for help; as long as the source was indicated, creators could borrow elements from others' works to make their own creations. In this way, Miku was not only a piece of music software or a character but also user-generated media through which users, fans, and audiences could actively participate in consuming as well as producing Miku. This suggests a "participatory turn," as emphasized by Henry Jenkins (2014) when discussing contemporary media convergence, following which character consumption began to shift onto a more participatory stage.

One thing that we should note here is that neither Urutoraman nor Pokémon nor Haruhi nor Miku originate from manga and anime. I argue that this change is a significant result of the media mix. Although early media mix practices place manga and anime at the centre, with other forms such as special effects, games, light novels, and software become the increasingly important components and sources, they are all capable of producing the starting points for characters. In this sense, the media mix not only provides a multiple platform for developing characters but also expands the whole industry by absorbing various other characters such as business logo characters, design characters, government and institutional characters, and event characters. Driven by the media mix, today's character industry has an ever broader conception, including characters from all areas.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the historical development of characters through two key words: consumer and consumption. I have argued that each word addresses different characteristics of the different development periods of characters: the extension of the consumer group through which both young and old became loyal consumers of characters in the initial development phase, and the diversity of character consumption driven by the involvement of various cultural aspects in the thriving development of the industry.

Consumers, as the targets of character merchandising, not only decide on the economic direction of the industry but also reflect its trends and values. Children were not only the natural consumers of characters but were also the demographic most valued by Japanese society, and thus character producers initially attempted to draw their attention and actively explored various character goods that would appeal to them. Toy producers played a particularly important role: the products that they launched from the 1950s to the 1970s, from character toy accessories to toy figurines and toy models, satisfied children's ideas about characters as well as their consumer

desires. Surrounded by these character goods, children became present consumers who expressed their direct desires for characters. From the 1970s character producers began to focus more on the adult market, following the trend of manga and anime shifting towards a more adult audience. With the rise of youth manga and the release of the anime *Yamato* and *Gandamu*, more and more young adults became fans and consumers of characters. This expansion effectively laid a broader foundation for the subsequent diverse character consumption.

In the same decade, character consumption became part of *shōjo* culture, which contributed to the development of cute culture and led the boom in the consumption of fancy goods. Many cute characters, appearing on a wide range of goods, were created to target girls and young women. In the 1980s, the opening of Tokyo Disneyland realized the reproduction of the imaginary character world in reality, as well as providing a paradise for character consumption. Many Japanese consumers were surprised by this paradise and enjoyed it. In the 1980s *otaku* gradually formed their distinctive subculture. They were obsessed with manga, anime, and games, and had a special love for 2D characters. Their consumption of characters was also part of their own production process, in which they valued information collecting, sharing, and communicating. Hence, *otaku*, particularly the third generation, were good at using media and technology. This was in part because they had grown up in an advanced technological environment. Since the 1990s they act as pioneers who have mastered the new media and the Internet and set the trend for consuming characters.

This chapter has provided a historical overview of characters as well as a mirror that has shown how the intimate relationship between consumers, including children and adults, male and female, and characters has been built through merchandising and consumption in Japan. This relationship has also rooted characters in consumers' mind, and this will be the focus of the third part of this dissertation.