

How Japanese Street Fashion is Shaped ? : A Case of Horie in Osaka City.

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1 Introduction

In the past 15 years in Japanese metropolises, a number of new fashionable areas attracting young people have appeared in the vicinity of old shopping centers: Ura-Harajuku in Tokyo and Osu in Nagoya are just two examples. These new or renewed spaces have a lot of dress shops and cafés, drawing well-dressed, fashion-conscious young people. One of the major characteristics of these new fashion areas is that the whole landscape and even land use are transformed in a way that is more acceptable to ever-increasing young people. The other characteristic is that well-dressed young people shape their own street fashion and bring vitality to this area.

Therefore, in this presentation, I would like to provide an insight into the interrelationship between urban space and practice of young people. First of all, I will describe the process of developing commercial space in which fashion holds the key to development. Then, I will discuss how young people have shaped street fashion based on the narrative data collected from young people.

1.1 A Review of Recent Studies and My Viewpoints

Let me first review recent relevant studies and discuss my own viewpoint before moving on to the main part. Urban transformation to commercial space has often been addressed from the point of view of city planning. However, there have appeared studies which stress the importance of the roles of the part played by urban culture. In sociology, Mita (2006)¹⁾ notes that young designers, DJs, and dress shop staffs have contributed to the development of Uraharajuku. Nakamura (2007)²⁾ also stresses the importance of taking street fashion into account to examine the transformation of commercial space. These studies are of value in that they see the impacts of urban culture on regional transformation. However, they are not concerned with the roles played by young people who actually practice urban culture.

In this regard Yamaguchi (2002)³⁾ and Miki (2006)⁴⁾ in the field of geography are of great importance in that they focus on street performers in Osaka. The former addresses how they make use of and find meaning in urban space, and the latter puts them in the light of time geography and analyzes them in terms of social network. I sympathize with these studies because they discuss urban space from the viewpoint of young people.

I will take, however, a closer look at street fashion which young people take part in creating in actual social context. As Kawamura (2004)⁵⁾, who also analyzes street fashion in the light of Symbolic Interactionism, points out that teenagers in Tokyo do create street

fashion actively and exert a great influence on the fashion industry, I also make a point of young people's roles played in fashion-conscious urban areas.

1.2 Research Area

I will introduce the research area here. Osaka City is the second largest city in Japan and the district of Horie is a part of Nishi ward located in the southwest of Osaka City. This area is now one of the most fashionable areas in the Kansai region. Dress shops for young people, cafés, smart furniture and goods shops began to concentrate around the east side of Tachibana Street in late 1990s. It had once been a famous agglomeration of wholesale and retail shops of bridal furniture and Buddhist altars. However, this area started to decline between 1970s and the early 1990s. Adjacent to the east side of Horie is America-mura (American Village), which has proved successful as a new fashionable area for youths since around 1970, and just to the north of America-mura is Minami-senba, which has also come to be prosperous since the late 1990s. Horie in this paper refers specifically to 1-chome Minamihorie (1 South Horie) because this area has shown the most dramatic change recently.

1.3 Research Method

First, I will show three town maps drawn in 1964, 1997 and 2003 in order to examine the varieties of shops observed in Horie in each year, and trace the changes in land use during the period. Second, I will present and analyze the data which came from an interview I carried out with the editor of *Cazi Cazi*, a popular fashion magazine in Kansai. Third, I will examine the interview data from young passersby in Horie.

2 Spatial Transformation in Horie

First, let me show the spatial transformations that occurred in Horie between 1964 and 2003, especially from 1997 to 2003. Maps in the following represent the distribution of shops in the east part of Tachibana Street in 1964, 1997, and 2003.

In 1964, we can see 36 bridal furniture and Buddhist altar shops; most of them are lined along Tachibana Street. This map shows the old Horie.

In 1997, in contrast, there are 28 bridal furniture and Buddhist altar shops. During those 30 years, more or less small shops were closed, while some shops were demolished to build 14 parking lots in this small area. In the 1970s retailing activities of bridal furniture had declined. Especially noteworthy is the appearance of first two clothing shops.

Although there were only two clothes shops in 1997, we can see, in 2003, 60 shops for clothes and accessories and 10 shops for interior decor. Meanwhile the number of furniture shops decreased to just 12. It is a decrease of more than 50% since 1997. These maps show the dramatic changes which occurred in Horie from 1997 to 2003.

Two reasons may be pointed out for this dramatic change to fashionable district during the years. First, the local shop owners made efforts for the revitalization of the whole area:

in the late 1990s several shops there started to provide entertainment, apparel goods and fashionable furniture for interior decoration. Second, attractive apparel shops from Tokyo squeezed in. Many companies came to realize that Horie is near the central shopping districts, Nanba, Shinsaibashi, which have the power to draw crowds of young people, and that therefore Horie's future prospect looked positive.

As observed above, we have traced the urban transformation of the whole landscape and even land use to fashion-specific district in Horie, confirming the process fashion-related shops have appeared remarkably. Next, I will turn next to street fashion which transforms the atmosphere of Horie. I will discuss how street fashion is shaped in this fashionable district and how they are interrelated.

3 What Is Street Fashion

To begin with, I will describe the concept of street fashion. What is street fashion in the first place? A dictionary defines it as "a fashion that automatically comes into existence and grows naturally among young people in urban streets, not one created by professional designers and businesses."⁶⁾ This definition may be supplemented by two more characteristics of contemporary street fashion. First, the media takes an important role. Second, as Polhemus⁷⁾ insists, this generation of young people are equipped with a wide knowledge of fashion and an ability to pick out, mix, and tailor different styles to their own tastes.

3.1 The Role of the Media

Consider first the role of media, especially print media.

At the present day, plenty of fashion magazines are published in Japan. The contents of these magazines cover not only latest clothes or fashion forecasting but also fashion styles in other times, movies, paintings, music et cetera because the fashion is closely related to any culture. Therefore young readers can get wide range of knowledge about fashion and culture and all the contents of magazines can be the resource of dressing. In addition, most notable point is that these magazines increasingly started to introduce clothes worn by ordinary young people in streets.

This figure is a picture called "street shot". We often see this type of pictures in contemporary fashion magazines for youth. In actual fact photographers now go out of their studios to real fashion areas, taking pictures of ordinary young people who they consider cool. An interview with the editor of *Cazi Cazi* confirms that "street shots" are very popular, suggesting that young people do like to know the real state-of-the-art fashion style, not the artificial styles which fashion magazines recommend from the studio. Young people would not like to know the latest styles from ordinary fashion magazines but rather to learn directly from the real state of streets.

What is more, I would like to mention the apparel businesses here. Next picture shows

a dress shop in Horie. As well as fashion magazines, it is important for apparel businesses to find out trends in young people. They attempt to understand youths' trends and offer more stylish clothes.

3.2 Real Actors of Street Fashion

Next, This slide shows a young man who walked around Horie on November 13th, 2003. He is probably in his twenties. With medium length hair with a wave, he is wearing womens' accessories. He is also wearing work clothes. This working class wear forms a part of the fashion he has taken in. It shows that young people have the ability to sample and mix multiple styles and adopt them to suit their own style. In addition, they communicate through their styles and influence each other. Thus they can create an alternative fashion on their own.

4 Street Fashion in Horie

The interviews I conducted with young people in Horie demonstrate a number of things: among others, how young people like to dress themselves and how they contribute to fashion production and/or reproduction in Horie. 14 young passersby were interviewed from July to November in 2003. They are A to N in the following. Mainly, they were in their twenties and particularly part-time workers and students were remarkable. I asked them what they thought of as important to produce their own styles and how they dress up when they visit Horie.

4.1 Plenty of Knowledge Which Young People Share with One Another

Now let me focus on what the above-mentioned 14 young people talked about. First, they seem to have much knowledge of subcultural styles and the meanings.

For example, A samples the styles of his favourite music and M's style represents the genre of "old-school". H says "I love anything to do with rock styles and London fashion". In addition, They seem to have a deep knowledge about the genre of music which they love and how they can express their taste in fashion.

In addition, they know much about the context and the atmosphere of Horie. M notes that although he loves music he would never like to be considered that he is showing off his DJ hobby just by carrying records. He knows what kind of meaning is attributed to record-carrying in the context of Horie. C observes an important point: Horie is now the center of fashion with an exciting atmosphere where there are crowds of young people who wear smart and cool clothes.

It may be concluded from these observations that young people coming to Horie have knowledge of the meanings of styles and the atmosphere of Horie.

4.2 The Imitation of Others

Let us go to next, which shows that young people visiting Horie try to dress themselves by watching and sampling others' appearances on the basis of their general knowledge mentioned above. A says, "I usually steal others' skills of dressing when I meet cool people". C raises motivation for new fashion by being in Horie and watching peoples' appearances. C also tries to steal someone's dressing technique when she thinks the person is worth observing. D seeks good samples and uses them in, if any, so that she could make some adjustments in her own way.

In this way young people often "steal" or sample others' clothes, what is more, "street shots" are also samples and clues to know the atmosphere of street. However, we also have to pay attention to the fact that they do not simply imitate one another. They consider carefully whether a piece of clothing, an item or a combination of them is smart enough and evaluate them accordingly. They are coming and going between imitation and creation in order to get to the best possible individual expression. Anyway, even someone who is imitated by others no doubt imitates still another, thus exerting subtle influence on one another as is happening in the whole district. As a result, street fashion in Horie tends to flow in one direction slowly to which we will turn in the next section.

4.3 The Motivating Power to Renew the Fashion

However, the street fashion doesn't change? It may be said that young people in Horie are in a sense greedy for fashion and they have sophisticated their styles. A says "I steal all the high skills of others if I like them". For example, he samples not only the styles of his favorite music, but also passersby's new fashion in the streets, and keeps an eye on designers in Tokyo who he favors. He seems to be always searching for anything new to inspire him and he is eager to build up his own style. For I, her current style is the result of ever-lasting quests for the best for her. They seem to have developed sophisticated senses of fashion tastes and styles by continual trials and learning.

However, if street fashion flows in one direction and the current becomes more or less stable, it may become less interesting and even disappointing for some young people who are full of fashion knowledge but still ever-hungry for something new. For I the fashion in Horie "looks the same" and "not original", and she criticizes the young in Horie. Similarly, M regards the fashion in Horie as "too stable" and N points out "You find a lot of mere copycats there". There should be a certain number of young people who are really radical and revolutionary, i.e., those who are willing to go out of stable fashion and disturb the stagnant water, thus contributing to the ever-lasting renewal of fashion. For example, M wears sunglasses which he like and they are not in fashion. By so doing he ventures to call the current state-of-the-art fashion into question. He feels himself a pioneer offering alternatives to the things now in fashion. Thus street fashion is produced and reproduced dynamically, i.e., through active interactions between mainstream and anti-mainstream.

4.4 The Uniqueness of Horie

Lastly it is important to note that the street fashion raises the uniqueness of Horie by changing the atmosphere. As I mentioned above (in 4.2), many young people, just as media and businesses, consider Horie a special fashionable area.

On the other hand, this atmosphere strengthens the uniqueness of Horie as fashionable district increasingly. Visitors act to attend the atmosphere which young people dressed up and shops make and Horie draw the smartly dressed people increasingly.

J says, "When I visit Horie, I shouldn't dress myself in such a way that someone tells me 'Don't come here with those frumpy clothes'", and she seems to think that Horie demands a style of its own because "most people in Horie are young, smart and sophisticated". L and K wear make-up neatly and they are more conscious of their own appearances in Horie than they are in their hometown. And they feel uncomfortable and embarrassed and want to run back home immediately if they are not satisfied with their own clothes. It can be said that street fashion makes the uniqueness of Horie and it also makes street fashion somewhat.

What is more, now, it is difficult for shop owners to maintain their shops without being conscious about young people and fashion.

5 Conclusion

Finally, I will collect the main points of the presentation here:

- (i) I have discussed the change of land use. Horie spatially transformed itself to a new fashionable area, especially between 1997 and 2003.
- (ii) I have reconstructed on the basis of the narratives collected from young people in Horie and editor of fashion magazine how young people interact and make their fashion. They observe and imitate each other, causing a slight adjustment of the current fashion. In a similar way, young people sample styles on magazines and tailor them to match themselves and their practice creates street fashion in Horie.
- (iii) Young people improve their fashion by combining clothes and accessories in a unique way, thus suggesting alternative styles of fashion for others in Horie. It contributed to the renewal of street fashion.
- (iv) Street fashion increasingly attributes a unique characteristic to Horie.

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