

mechanism:
 1) **division of teams; fluid content, rigid form (kenkyusei; overseas groups etc.); possible to alternate and perform on a daily basis possible to transit between center-peripheral, and between generations;**

2) **customer-centered & media-intensive; highly-competitive, prolonged-activity schedule, fully-exposed, highly-commercialized; massive audition; election (only possible after you purchase the latest album); ranking; punishment & elimination; fast development of accessories besides music products**

question:
 1) What is the myth of AKB 48, if they have one?

2) Is such an idol group built upon the idea/mechanism that an "individual" replaceable at any time? If so, does it conflict with the idea about talent/star as unique individual? Could we relate it to some further observations about Japanese social culture?

3) Is the idea of "culture industry" appropriate for critique here? What do these mechanisms for generating and maintaining stars have to do with mass media and (any) customers? Aren't the idols themselves the "products"?



AKB48 Japan's largest idol group, the only idol group to have a dedicated television channel, AKB48 Channel, which is available on YouTube. The group is known for its "idol democracy" and "idol democracy" where fans can vote for their favorite members.

a narrative structured around the Center but who is really at the Center?

pyramid



punishment



sustaining the "dream" narrative?



proposer: Chinese Way of Creating a superstar
 Liu Yang



Li Yanyan (China East 2005 winner of the reality show Super Girl) Her idol group are well located on the Center

with the emergence of "humble-idol" culture, the Chinese youth are no longer those who idolize idols. In the new media era, the idol industry is no longer a closed system, but a highly transparent and open one. —Chang Wang (2011)



one with god-like: AKB48 Center

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Idol boom & Japanese society

Idol and idol boom are the results of neoliberal effects in the mass media, the entertainment industry, the advertising industry and other corporations operating in the creation of profit-generating, low-cost, mass culture, and products.

Idol boom and the Japanese boom appeared at the height of Japan's postwar economic miracle, a new era of growth called by living income and marked by a new generation that was differentiating themselves from their elders not just by working hard but also by enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Idol boom as more than a simple, complex and contrasting to the contemporary culture life

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present in a label across the Japanese idol industry, spreading to creating and creating being group.



SMAP

reflections & conclusions:
 1. Japanese idols as cultural exportations constitute a "brand" that promoting "a lifestyle of urban affluence" (relate to Iwabuchi's theories on cultural odor & "mukokuseki");

2. idols provide a point of reference for making sense of the changing social and workplace conditions that accompany economic growth and "modernization" in Asia; enhance the understanding of commonalities and a potential Asia-Pacific identity across Asia.

Idols & Fandom in Asian Popular Culture



AKB 48

Myth Revisited

a Barthesian/

semiological approach

myth is the hidden set of rules and conventions through which meanings, which are specific to certain groups, are made to seem **universal and given** for a whole society. Myth allows the connotative meaning of a particular thing or image to appear to be denotative.



myth of AKB 48?
myth of Asian/Japanese entertainment industry;
of beauty, sexuality and femininity?

image icon

icon: "an image that refers to something outside of its individual components, something (or someone) that has great symbolic meaning for many people"; they are "perceived to represent universal concepts, emotions, and meanings"...

Nevertheless, we always need to note that "their meanings are always historically and contextually produced"



Marilyn's LAST sitting(LIFE magazine photoshoot proofsheets, 1962)

At the **denotative level** this is a photograph of the movie star Marilyn Monroe. At a **connotative level** we associate this photograph with Marilyn Monroe's star qualities of glamour, sexuality, beauty - if this is an early photograph - but also with her depression, drug-taking and untimely death if it is one of her last photographs. At a **mythic level** we understand this sign as activating the myth of Hollywood: the dream factory that produces glamour in the form of the stars it constructs, but also the dream machine that can crush them - all with a view to profit and expediency.

--Susan Hayward

prosumer: Chinese Way of Creating a superstar

Ling Yang



Li Yuchun (Chris Lee)
2005 winner of hit reality show Super Girl
her fan groups are self-labelled as the **Corns**

with the emergence of "participatory culture",
fandoms such as the Corns have been able to
participate in the star-making process of music-
entertainment industry on an unprecedented scale
and depth. ----Ling Yang p528

besieged music industry
+
new mode developed by
Hunan TV's *Super Girl*

star system

prolonged contest schedule+extensive publicity
campaign+other tactics (SMS voting;
professionalized artist management & marketing
etc.)

[fan-producers VS fan-consumers]

prosumer: integrates fan production, fan promotion and fan consumption all in one

prosumption practices of Corn fandom

Internet and local media formats have been actively utilised to promote Li's star status, which includes the proposal for a global Corn conglomerate

pop idols and the *Asian Identity*

Hiroshi Aoyagi

80s~late 1990s

- a. popularity of Japanese-style "pop idols" in Asia
- b. localized, home-grown idols modeled on the Japanese prototype

pop idols and the industries that produce them contribute to the formation of a pan-Asian identity or consciousness among young people of diverse nationality, in an era in which the Asia-Pacific region is considered energetic and "hot", with high expectations not just for economic growth, but for growing cultural influence on the rest of the world as well.

Japanese pop idols

life-sized, cute & above-average

AOYAGI:

toshindai (life-sized) & gijiteki-nakama (quasi-companions):
indexes of idol-fan relationship

playing on young people's social needs, Japan's life-sized pop idols are produced and marketed as personifiers of a typical "girl or boy next door", chosen to become "lucky stars" and to represent their generation

"their role cannot be accomplished unless they keep pace with the people all around them...they cannot run ahead too fast, or lag too far behind"

NEVER say no to their customers; practices to build up intimacy include "handshaking ceremonies" (akushu-kai); get-together with fans (fan no tsudo); public photo shoots (satsuei-kai); autograph ceremonies (sign-kai)

kawaii----cuteness

rooted in its earlier historic period, the modern term of **kawaii** emerged in the 1970s when Japanese teenagers, mainly female, began using an informal and “cute” style of writing;

cute, child-like and therefore somehow immature/unpretentious physical features, behaviors and styles that evoke the feeling of adoration; female-centered, in the 1980s "kawaii" was considered the cultural expression by the Japanese females who desire independence from marriage life.

07SH 1289



東洋映画「アメリカの伝説」主題歌

天国のキッス

TEIKOKU NO KISS MAGAMAMA HA KAZIKOJI - SENO MATSUO

松田聖子

片一曲がままな片思い

¥700

SAMPLE / Snow Records Japan

idol boom & Japanese society

idol and idol boom are the results of orchestrated efforts by the mass media, the entertainment industry, the advertising business and retail corporations specializing in the creation of profit-generating teen-oriented trends, fashions, and products.

socio-economic background: **boom appeared at the height of Japan's postwar economic miracle**---a new consumer culture fed by rising incomes and enjoyed by a new generation intent on differentiating themselves from their elders not just by working hard but also by enjoying the fruits of their labor.

lifestyle as more dynamic, complex and catering to the contemporary urban life

idols on the wane:

1) socio-economic explanation:

"the fading of idols reflects the current economic recessions, in which the people have lost the energy they once had to move forward together toward social and economic growth";

2) transformation of the entertainment industry itself: under pressure of Internet, rise of social network and so forth.

demand for more versatile artists/celebrities; stronger, less-tamed/outstanding performers

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promotion/talent agency: the Johnny's
Founder: Johnny Kitagawa
specializing in scouting and promoting
boys group.



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努力が報われるかどうかは、わからない。
でも、努力しないと何も始まらない。

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4/26 (fri)
DVD & Blu-ray
発売

DOCUMENTARY OF
AKB48
NO FLOWER WITHOUT RAIN
少女たちは涙の後に何を見る？

INFORMATION インフォメーション	INTRODUCTION イントロダクション	MOVIE ムービー	PHOTO フォト	DOWNLOAD ダウンロード	THEATER 劇場情報	STAGE GREETING 舞台挨拶	TICKET 前売り券	GOODS 関連商品	DVD DVD情報
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AKB48 No Flower Without Rain, 2013

AKB 48: Japanese girl idol group, brain-child of Akimoto Yasushi; active since 2005; based upon the "idol you can meet" concept, with its own performing theater at Akihabara, and the teams alternate in daily performance & fan-oriented activities there.

within Japan, there are NMB 48/HKT 48/SKE 48(NAGOYA)

OVERSEAS groups: Shanghai & Jarkarta

mechanism:

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2) **customer-centered & media-intensive:**

highly-competitive, prolonged-activity schedule, fully-exposed, highly-commercialized: massive audition; election (only possible after you purchase the latest album); ranking; punishment & elimination; fast development of accessories besides music products

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but who is really at the Center?

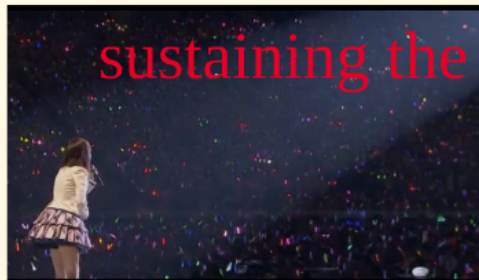
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