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**Article**

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# Evolution of male self-expression. The socio-economic phenomenon as seen in Japanese men's fashion magazines

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**Abstract:** Visual aesthetics represented in Western media by the name of “Japanese style”, is presented from the point of view of women’s fashion, especially in the realm of pop-culture. The resources available for non-Japanese reader rarely raise the subject of Japanese men’s fashion in the context of giving voice to self-expression by means of style and clothing. The aim of this paper is to supplement the information on the socio-economic correlation between the Japanese economy, fashion market, and self-expression of Japanese men, including their views on masculinity and gender, based on the profile of Japanese men’s fashion magazines readers. The paper presents six different fashion styles indigenous to metropolitan Japan, their characteristics, background and development, emphasizing the connections to certain lifestyle and socio-economic occurrences, resulting in an emergence of a new pattern in masculinity – the herbivorous man, whose requirements and needs are analyzed considering his status in the consumer market and society.

**Keywords:** salaryman, kireime kei, salon mode kei, ojii boy kei, gyaru-o kei, street mode kei, mode kei, sōshokukei danshi, sōshoku danshi, Non-no boy, Popeye boy, the city boy, Japan, fashion, consumer market

**JEL codes:** H89, I31, J17, Z00

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## 1. Introduction

*Fashion is one of the main issues which divert the attention of people from thinking of what is crucial: ecology and politics. It is a machine of manipulation – Glenn O'Brien.*

The victim of social insect syndrome finds a moment to take a breath and transform from an ant or a bee post-embryonal form of a pupa, no less mobile, yet much more unrestrained in everyday customs. One evolves into a color-clad butterfly, which is not entangled in social norms. This uncanny transformation, not possible in the animal kingdom takes place on the streets of enormous metropolises of the Land of the Rising Sun. How accurate is this poeticized statement?

Subordinate, polite and, at the same time, blown out of the proportion – these are some superficial views on the residents of Japan, seemingly indisputable divagations delivered by the media; the results of hasty conclusions, based on superficial observations.

Visual aesthetics represented in Western media by the name of “Japanese style”, is presented from the point of view of women’s fashion, especially in the realm of pop-culture. Moreover, this ambiguous and vastly voluminous term of “Japanese style” is a misleading one, due to the fact, that modern fashion styles of Japan are far too diverse to be described solely by “Japanese style“, as kimono, with its uniformed cut, is not a compulsory day wear in Japan any more.

The resources available for non-Japanese reader rarely raise a subject of Japanese men’s fashion in the context of giving voice to self-expression by means of style and clothing.

Should one assume, that known image of a Japanese woman is reflected in the image of the opposite sex as well? Should modern Japanese man be perceived as an over-colored bird of paradise? Or rather a goth-like neo-dandy? What makes the Japanese man visible, despite the fact that his casual clothes are not draped fabric, woven from mulberry silk moth thread? Can it be stated, referring mostly to the attire, that Japanese man absorbs the best, the most interesting, assimilates the most creative and innovative “worldwide/global” styles elements? Assuming that this statement is correct, why is it in Japan where a man has acquired such abilities? Who supports him? Is he consistent in his views and in the way he dresses? Is he a representative of an avant-garde? Or maybe he is deprived of his gender role? What differs him from the others, who is he an inspiration for? Does he take care of his body? Do men who are in love with silk kimonos transfer creations seen at the runways and press stylizations to their wardrobes? How does a modern-day Japanese man live in a big city? What are socio-cultural and socio-economic determinants of that? How is the self-expression of a Japanese man influenced by socio-economic occurrences? What is his role in society and what is his consumer profile?

The aim of this paper is to answer those questions and supplement the information on the socio-economic correlation between the Japanese economy, fashion market, and self-expression of the Japanese man, including his view on masculinity and gender, based on the profile of Japanese men's fashion magazine readers. The paper presents six different fashion styles indigenous to metropolitan Japan, their characteristics, background and development, emphasizing the connections to certain lifestyle and socio-economic occurrences, resulting in an emergence of a new pattern in masculinity – the herbivorous man, whose requirements and needs are analyzed considering his status in the consumer market and society.

Insights on every level of inquiry are given a commentary in the context of socio-cultural changes at the fundamental level. Approach to the topic requires a portrayal of the fashions styles dominant in recent years in the context mentioned above.

An additional aim of this paper is to deal with a stereotypical view on Japan and Japanese men. The authors think that in the times of intercultural connections, in which remnants of European imperialism and colonialism still prevail, taking such an approach is necessary.

## **2. Research methods**

In order to acquire sufficient working material, a considerable amount of foreign literature sources and a few Polish publications were considered. In the paper, the authors decided to use the qualitative approach, aiming at full resource of information available in Polish and English sources, both scientific and popular. The latter focus on male reader-oriented Japanese life-style magazines and their target groups.

A library query was conducted; research was based on both printed matter as well as resources available on the Web, which were verified accordingly.

Breward (2003) states, after Dowgiałło (2013: 186), that a small amount of research material on Japanese men's fashion and the new model of living, is not caused by the triviality of the subject, but partly, by the lack of appropriate research method, which could facilitate doing research on this part of social realm.

## **3. Echoes of scientific and popular literature**

As it was already mentioned, the topic of Japanese men's self-expression in Western literature is much less represented than that of women's representation. This state of affairs

seems not to be an exception from a “balance” in approach to the topic among other nationalities.

Jiratanatiteenun et al. (2012) discuss the transformation of Japanese street fashion styles during the period of 2006-2011, presenting both present and emerging subcultures of the time and outlining the process of the transformation of fashion based on women’s representation. The authors consider it relevant to refer to their work, based on the assumption that the styles presented could be travestied into men’s attire and representation. Similar questions are raised by Cylkowska-Nowak and Butkiewicz (2009), Groom (2001).

The following, selected papers directly address the matter of topics of men’s fashion in Japan. Monden (2012b) discusses the basic styles presented in Japanese fashion. However, Monden does not limit his study to teenager subcultures, which seems to be an often occurring limitation. Monden (2012a) continues his thought, describing the aesthetics of men in their twenties, presenting an array of magazines focused on men’s fashion. He discusses the issues, using the example of three titles, while analyzing the context of professional and amateur models presenting the looks, models being both Japanese and non-Japanese, creating the base for approaching the topic of fusion between Western and Japanese sense of aesthetics. Monden briefly presents the analysis of the magazines’ target audience of such magazines printed in Japan, oriented at male, mostly heteronormative audience.

The study presented in this paper requires on-going references to the literature, which is why the typical literature review chapter is omitted and on-going analytical and synthetic references appear in the appropriate locations throughout the text.

#### **4. Six images of men in Japan**

Nowadays, no matter what the attitude or altitude are, a modern man adapts different aspects of self-expression in accordance to requirements of the situation. Man has become an aware customer, no less aware than a woman (Tan, 2005: 7; Tan, 2008: 32; Bocoock, 1993; Davies i Bell, 1991; Firat, 1993). The importance of the fact lies in the statement of Tan (2005: 2, cited by Patzer, 2006; Dimitrius and Mazarella, 2001; Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986), stating, that physical attractiveness has become an important determinant in terms of gaining success and sense of fulfillment and happiness in one’s life.

In Japan, until recently the “white shirt, dark suit, neat haircut” set was considered the base elements, bearing the characteristics of artifacts in the archetypical image of Japanese *salaryman*, Glasspool (2012: 115), Dasgupta and Romit (2003: 123). *Salaryman* (サラリーマン

✓, *sararīman*)<sup>1</sup> is a middle class, white-collar office worker, employed in a Japanese corporation, Lockar (2009: 784), in the sense of a man of success. At the same time, he is a person that embodies the notion of a Japanese man, archetypical husband, father, supplier of goods for the family. As Dasgupta (2003: 119) mentions, *salaryman* has become a dominant pattern of masculinity in Japanese society after World War II, an ideal to be mimicked by future generations. Is this slightly ruffled, like a white shirt and dark suit after the whole day of work, the image still visible in the Japanese streets and office buildings (Figure 1), or is it being displaced by other images?



**Figure 1.** Salarymen on their way home from work

Source: 101 Things in Japan, 2010,  
<https://101thingsinjapan.wordpress.com/2010/12/23/33-drunk-salaryman/>. Accessed 28 June 2015.

The editor-in-chief of *Men's*, one of Japanese men's fashion magazines, in a private interview conducted by Yamagishi (2009: 89)<sup>2</sup> states that “a *salaryman* is a point of reference” for a modern man, an archetype to be compared with a modern man. An archetype, as it seems, not perceived in a positive way. The editor gave a meaningful statement on that matter: “I tried presenting a *salaryman* in the magazine. But the readers did not like it. They asked ‘what are the perks of being a white-collar?’” Yamagishi (2009: 260). What image is the Japanese modern man aspiring to then? From where does he draw his inspiration?

In the literature, six basic types of Japanese man's image, or fashion styles are described, Monden (2012b: 1-2).

<sup>1</sup> Salaryman is a term coined in Japan, based on English words. It did not exist outside Japan before.

<sup>2</sup> Correctly *Men's Ex*. Yamagishi seems to quote the magazine's title incorrectly *Gentleman's Gazette* (2015).

The origins and characteristics of those mostly derive from women's styles, which, chronologically, have appeared first. Women's dominant fashion styles are *casual*, *gyaru*, *onee*, *mode*, *Lolita*, *OL (office lady)* (Jiratanatiteenun et al. 2012: 294). Among men's fashion styles appearing in scientific and popular literature *kireime kei*, *salon mode kei*, *ojii boy kei*, *gyaru-o kei*, *street mode kei* oraz *mode kei* are distinguished. The authors will describe and comment on them in the following part of the paper. Styles representing subcultures will not be discussed. Information on those could be found in publications such as Cylkowska-Nowak and Buklewicz (2009). It is worth mentioning, that despite referring to youngsters (of both sexes) Cylkowska-Nowak and Buklewicz are mostly referring to women's subcultures.

The differences between some of the styles characterized are very vague. Topics of those styles are covered in separate printed magazines and websites, which will be mentioned in the following part of the chapter.

#### **4.1. *Kireime kei***

*Kireime kei* (きれい目系, キレイめ系) is a style that a Japanese man in his twenties, usually a student, uses for self-expression. This style is described as fine, clean, beautiful and conservative. It is an example of an elegant dandy-look, which is why the representatives of *kireime kei* are also described as *mote mote* (モテモテ), meaning, being attractive for the opposite sex,<sup>3</sup> (Monden 2012b: 1). Among women's styles its counterpart would be casual style, because both of those are coherent to Western casual fashion, describing everyday, preppy look, following the present trends. Nevertheless, *kireime kei* is more elegant and sublime than its women's counterpart. Men who decide on *kireime kei*, according to Magazine-data (2015), are readers of magazines and websites such as *Fineboys* (the first issue was published in 1986, the magazine is still being published, Wikipedia 2015a), *smart* (magazine being published since October 1995, Wikipedia 2015b), *B-st* (until May 2010, the bi-weekly magazine was published under title *BiDaN*, ceased in 2011, Wikipedia 2015c), *Samurai ELO* (ceased in 2014, Wikipedia 2015d), *Kirari!*, *ReAL*, *CHEAP CHIC*.

The idea of cleanliness in terms of this style takes on special importance. It refers both to the cleanliness of the look and the cleanliness of the thought. The epithet "conservative" refers to the Western preppy, very codified style, characteristic of the Ivy League, a group of

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<sup>3</sup> In the literature the term *mote-kei* is present, which can be treated synonymously to *kireime-kei* Monden (2011: 238).

eight most egalitarian Universities located in the North-Eastern part of United States, Ishizu et al. (2010). That is why *kireime kei* is compared to the *ivy style*. The peak of *ivy style* in Japan was most apparent between years 2007 and 2008. In the period mentioned, the aesthetics of the styles underwent influences with other styles and many styles proximate to *kireime kei*, with small differences, Monden (2011: 229).

The base attribution of *kireime kei* style is a collar shirt (usually plain), or a T-shirt, a tie, slim-fit jacket or a cardigan and skinny trousers. Taking into consideration all of the above, this aesthetics could be described as boish-man one. The examples are shown in Figures 2-5.



**Figure 2.** Selected pages of May issue of *FINEBOYS* magazine, 2015: 31-32

Source: <http://www.amazon.co.jp/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00TIVCBHC/magazine-data-22/>. Accessed 23 April 2015.

More timid and mature version of *kireime kei* is *kireime onī kei* (きれい目お兄系 or ケイメイめお兄系), a style which translates as a “beautiful older brother”. The scrupulous, well-groomed, tidy image of an older brother, Japanese *onī*, is shown in magazines such as *CanCam* or *JJ*, targeting the women’s counterparts and archetypes of *OL kei* (オーエル – OL, office lady)<sup>4</sup> and *onē kei* (お姉 – onee, an older sister). The representative of *kireime onī kei* is a reader of *Men’s Joker* (published since 2004, Monden 2015; there is also a Chinese edition of this magazine), *Men’s Voi* and *Gainer* (published since 1990, Monden 2015, being read also by other style followers of *mode kei*). According to Yamagishi (2009: 260), quoting an

<sup>4</sup> Office lady, abbreviated OL (reads *o-eru*) is a female counterpart of salaryman, a term also coined in Japan, describing a woman working, mostly as an assistant, in the Japanese office environment. The early term for a businesswoman is a career woman



interview with editor of *Men's X*, Tanaka, the term *kirei onī kei* describes a man who is not a part-time worker like *furītā*<sup>5</sup> (フリーター), freeter, neither low on income like *gyaru-o* (representative of another style described, further in the paper), but a man socially responsible, acting mature, at the same time not being as uptight as a *salaryman*.



Figure 3. Selected pages of April issue of *FINEBOYS* magazine, 2016: 60-61

Source: <http://www.amazon.co.jp/FINEBOYS-FINEBOYS-ファインボーイズ-2015年-04-月号/dp/B00STR3WK6>. Accessed 24 May 2015.



Figure 4. Selected pages of June issue of *FINEBOYS* magazine, 2015: 32-33

Source: <http://www.amazon.com/FINEBOYS-Japanese-Fashion-Magazine-JAPANESE/dp/B00ULU39RK>. Accessed: 5 June 2015.

<sup>5</sup> The term *furītā* emerged in the 1990's to describe the alumnie who could not find full time employment in the times of recession, Condon and Masumoto (2011: Appendix). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *furītā* has become a derogatory term for a part-time worker who is seen by society as lesser to those working full-time.



Figure 5. Selected pages of June issue of FINEBOYS magazine, 2015: 42- 43

Source: <http://www.amazon.com/FINEBOYS-Japanese-Fashion-Magazine-JAPANESE/dp/B00ULU39RK>. Accessed: 5 June 2015.

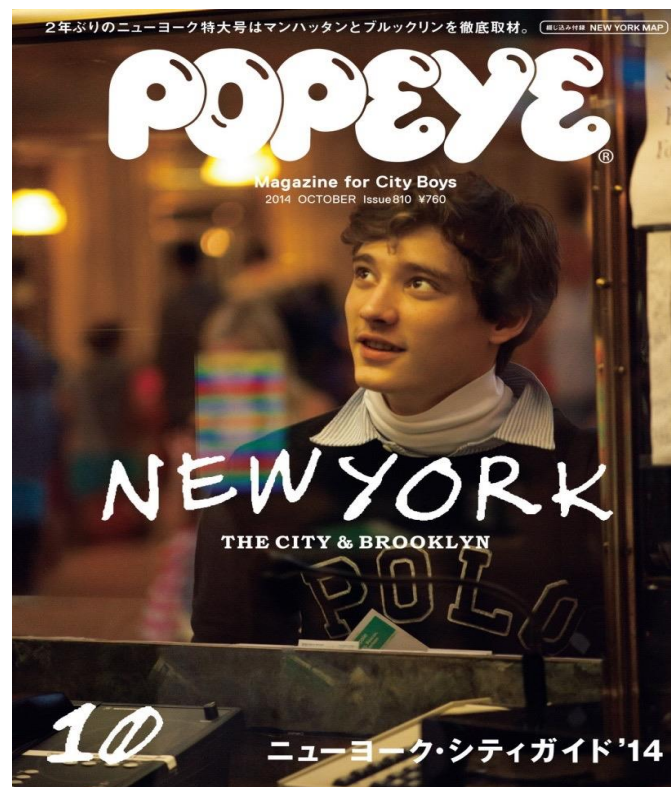


Figure 6. Cover of POPEYE Magazine for City Boys for October issue 2014

Source: [http://www.amazon.com/POPEYE-Magazine-October-MAGAZINE-JAPANESE/dp/B00MTX2D92/ref=sr\\_1\\_cc\\_1?s=aps&ie=UTF8&qid=1435487928&sr=1-1-catcorr&keywords=Popeye+magazine](http://www.amazon.com/POPEYE-Magazine-October-MAGAZINE-JAPANESE/dp/B00MTX2D92/ref=sr_1_cc_1?s=aps&ie=UTF8&qid=1435487928&sr=1-1-catcorr&keywords=Popeye+magazine). Accessed: 28 June 2015.

## 4.2. *Mode kei*

Another style present on the Japanese streets is *mode-kei* (モード系). In English, it is described as casual high-fashion, the most exquisite among the presented styles, referring to the highest fashion standards and it seems to be the most financially demanding one. It can be assumed, that as *onī mode kei* is a matured version of *gyaru-o kei*, *mode kei* is a more developed *kireime kei*. Among men in their thirties and forties, who decide on *mode-kei* look, the most popular magazines, according to Fluch (2011: 25) is *Men's Non-No* (magazine published since 1987, Wikipedia, 2015f; Figure 10), as well as *Popeye* (published since 1976., JapaneseStreets, 2007; Tanaka, 2003: 225; Magazine World, 2015; Figure 6), *Men's Joker* (2004, Monden, 2015; the magazine has a Chinese edition), *Vogue Homme Japan* (published between 2008 and 2012, renamed *GQ Style* in 2013, Wikipedia, 2015g),<sup>6</sup> *Mr. High Fashion* (published between 1980 and 2003, Monden, 2015), *Gainer* (published since 1990, Monden, 2015), *Uomo* (magazine since 2005, Monden, 2015), *Leon* (published since 2001, Monden, 2015), *Fudge* (cover presented in Figure 9 shows a look of *mode kei* man referring to *kireime kei*). As it was already mentioned, this style is similar to *kireime kei*, but it is more expressive, catching attention, sometimes even pretentious. Men representing this style can afford to wear more expensive brands, perceived as luxurious products. Depending on the age and the financial resources, *mode kei* allows a wide spectrum of possibilities, starting with an elegant, dandy-like, formal wear (produced by such fashion houses like Saint Laurent, former Yves Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Dior Homme)<sup>7</sup> as far as *choiwaru oyaji*, bad boy look (ちょいワルオヤジ). The term “bad” refers solely to the look not to the behavior, portraying a “look of a boy in a man’s body“, (see Figure 7) drifting towards more relaxed look, composed of

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<sup>6</sup> The case of the failure Japanese Vogue Homme Japan, spectacularly introduced to the Japanese market is worth mentioning. The possible reason for the title’s failure might be the lack of understanding of the Japanese market and trying to forcefully adapt its consumers to the Western-oriented market. The approach of the editors and photographers working for Japanese fashion magazines favors styling of models in a context resembling everyday situations – sitting at a cafe, (Figure 8), smoking outside, leaving a shop or a restaurant, not gazing into readers eyes, as opposed to the styling in Western magazines, where the models are usually posing in unnatural spaces, for example in front of a brightly colored screen. The gaze is not seducing, rather emphasizing the dominant, masculine role of the model. On the contrary, Japanese fashion magazines targeted at male audience send the message, that taking care of one’s looks and taking interest in the practical side of fashion might be a part of daily pleasure, not a compulsory necessity.

<sup>7</sup> The origin of the style might refer to the *salaryman*, but to his younger, fresher, more vigorous version.

cargo pants, polo shirts, jackets, loafers or sandals (in this case more affordable brands like Baracuda or Banana Republic are chosen, Kingston, 2013: 271).

While describing *mode kei*, one must stress, that Japanese man is not overlooked by the Western market; on the contrary, he is receiving special attention. An example of this are collections by British fashion company Burberry, directed by Christopher Bayley: Burberry Black Label, or a collection of French Maison Lanvin Lanvin en Bleu, tailored for Japanese market (Sherman 2014), slightly more affordable than the “original” collections. One of the reasons for this, could be the body type of a Japanese man, different from the Western one. The other reason, much more important from the financial point of view, is the fact, that according to Euromonitor (data from Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, 2014: 4, 6), Japan is the second (albeit twice smaller than the USA which ranks the first) luxury goods market in the world. Japanese consumers make demand for 40% of global luxury goods market every year, Morimoto and Chang (2009).



Figure 7. Cover of LEON Magazine for City Boys for April issue 2015

Source: <http://www.amazon.com/Japanese-Fashion-Magazine-JAPANESE-EDITION/dp/B00S5TNO9W>, Accessed on-line: 28 June 2015.



**Figure 8.** Photo in Manifesto magazine, spring 2015: 11  
Source: Manifesto (2015)



**Figure 9.** Cover of men's FUDGE for June issue 2015

Source: <http://www.amazon.co.jp/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00TIVCFHS/magazine-data-22/>, Accessed on-line: 24 April 2015.



Figure 10. Cover of Men's Non-no for June issue 2015

Source: <http://www.amazon.com/Japanese-Fashion-Magazine-JAPANESE-EDITION/dp/B00ULU3F7O>, Accessed on-line: 5 June 2015.

### 4.3. *Salon kei*

*Salon kei* (サロン系), also known as *salon mode kei* (サロンモード系) or *salon boy* (サロンボーイ),<sup>8</sup> originally was promoted by metropolitan hairdressers, presently, it used at any location, by hairstylists aspiring to the name. The style is ornamental and multilayered, although not as colorful and flashy as *gyaru-o* style described later in the paper. This style is considered to be feminine, or unisex (Monden 2011: 59). Because it derives from a specific, hermetic group, it could be perceived as a specific to a subculture (Monden 2012b: 1). Due to the source of origin, a special attention is given to the hairstyle. Apart from hairstylists, *salon kei* is chosen by high school students and workers of beauty salons of Shibuya ward, Uraharajuku district, and, as Saladin (2015: 68) states, fashion models and shop clerks. Similarly to *kireime kei*, adversaries of this style are around twenty years old.

<sup>8</sup> Pondering on the etymology of salon boy: "... [t]he haircut is not a glam metal kind of style, but more of a contrived 'messy' and extremely lame kind of style" (Urbandictionary, 2007) one might consider it to have a pejorative meaning.

According to Japanese Fashion Site (2007) this look is a derivative of *Urahara kei*, described later in the paper. Men who decide on *salon kei* read magazines such as *CHOKi CHOKi* (the magazine has been present on the market since 2000 according to Saladin, 2015: 55 or since 2004 according to Monden, 2015; Figure 12), *CAZICAZI*, *CAZICAZI HQ*. The base features of *salon mode kei* are loose, draped, flowing fabrics, usually cut in an unusual way, for example slanted or without a hem, styled as used and tarnished in tank-tops and trousers, like too long baggy pants, T-shirts, slim-fit vests, loose cardigans, long, narrow scarves, metal and leather pendants and bracelets. Nevertheless, there are examples of more orthodox looks within this style, as presented on the cover of a magazine shown in Figure 11, which might imply changes towards *kireime kei*.

#### 4.4. *Ojii boy*<sup>9</sup> *kei*

Despite the popular conviction, stated after Miller (2004: 95), that a lean, young man with plucked eyebrows, long, red hair and glistening eyes has stronger self-expression than *oyaji* (親), an old man, the old-man style proves to be popular with certain groups of young people.

Monden (2012b: 1) points out, that between 2010 and 2011, in *CHOKi CHOKi* magazine, mentioned above, a new look called *ojii boy kei* (おじいボーイ系), the first part of the name referring to *ojiisan* (おじいさん), an old man, started to appear more frequently. The characteristics of the appearance: a modern and stylish, yet orthodox haircut, constituting the “old man” look, jackets in toned colors, plain collar shirts, and, what is most characteristic, bolo ties, originating in the Wild West (a bolo tie consists of a piece of string or braided leather, adorned with metal ends and fastened with a metal clasp).<sup>10</sup> Such accessories are acquired in second-hand shops and at vintage sellers.

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to differentiate between *ojii boy* and *ōji/ōjisama* (王子/王子様, a prince, a fairytale prince) meaning boyish, cute goth-like style with rock influences and a hint of pirate attitude, one of the main male counterparts to female *Lolita* style.

<sup>10</sup> The description suggesting the actual existence of this style can be found in popular literature. “He saw a old man in pristine white suit. Grey hair, glasses which gave him a serious look. On the top of that a mustache and tiny grey goaty beard. White shirt, with a string necktie in cowboy style. The face was of a Japanese, but the attire reminded of a gentleman from the US South”, Murakami (2013: 348).

#### 4.5. *Gyaru-o kei*

*Gyaru-o kei* (ギャル男系, ギャルオ系, ギャル汚系)<sup>11</sup> known also as *gal-o kei*<sup>12</sup> (sometimes referred to as *vui-o*, *V-o*, *V男*, *ヴィオ* because of deep-cut V-neck sweaters and T-shirts representing it (Namba, 2006: 107) derives from the female visual style generally called *gyaru kei* (ギャル系). This style has a very developed structure, covering such sub-styles as *ane-gal* (older representatives of *gyaru*), *mama gal*, *b-gal* (“b“ from “black“, emphasizing connections with rap music), *ganguro* with extreme deep-brown tan, *bihaku gal* with pale faces, *yamamba* (the name derives from *yamamba* – mountain witch) wearing characteristic dark make-up with eyelids painted white, and hair dyed platinum blonde. The list is quoted after Angelaka (2012), Watrous (2000), Suzuki and Best (2003), Marx (2012), Miller (2004). These characteristics correspond to their male counterparts of *gyaru-o*.



Figure 11. Cover of July issue of ChokiChoki magazine, 2015

Source: <http://www.amazon.co.jp/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00TIVCBQI/magazine-data>, Accessed on-line: 5 June 2015

<sup>11</sup> While 男 is a character meaning a „man“, 汚 character, read in the same way means “dirty”, implicating a pejorative sound to the name of *gyaru-o style*.

<sup>12</sup> The term *gyaru* comes from English gal- a girl, or a young woman. *Gyaru-o* was masculinized by adding the suffix *-o*, (see previous comment) despite the fact, that the English counterpart for gal and lad.





**Figure 12.** Selected pages of current FOR WHEN issue of ChokiChoki magazine

Source: <http://www.amazon.co.jp/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00TIVCBQI/magazine-data>, Accessed online: 24 April 2015.

Among magazines read by *gyaru-o* men are *Men's Knuckle* (the magazine has been published since 2004 (Monden, 2015)); in the preceding year, 2003, it was named *G-Style*, (Monden, 2012b: 1)), *Men's Egg* (published since 1999 (Saladin, 2015: 55); the last issue was published in 2013 (Saladin, 2015: 56 and Wikipedia, 2015h), *Men's Egg Youth*, *Men's Roses*, *Men's Digger*, *wolfAsh*. A *gyaru-o* over 23 years old reaches for the *Men's Egg Bitter* magazine. Uncommon for modern urban Japan, deep, almost caramel-like tan, heavily backcombed, bleached and dyed hair<sup>13</sup> pointing outwards, which Monden (2012b: 1) compares to the hairstyle of Jon Bon Jovi, colorful, sexually explicit clothes and garish accessories, such as belts with big ornamental buckles, are the elements of *gyaru-o* look. *Gyaru-o* is an image of an easy going man, enamored in entertainment, interested in trance

<sup>13</sup> In Japan young men started to dye their hair in the 60's of previous century, choosing darker, compared to women's choices, hues. Miller (2004: 89). Hair dying became mainstream twenty years later, after getting wider acceptance. Nikkei Trendy (1997) states, that 65% of young men dyed their hair, what proves the popularity and normalization of what was perceived as a "whimsy". *BiDaN* and *Fineboys*, magazines promoting more traditional approach towards style (see *kireime kei*) published instructions on how to die hair (Miller, 2004: 90). Based on that, one can assume, that as an act, dying hair is not an exclusive domain of *gyaru-o* (*gyaru*). The difference is in the chosen color.

music, including para-para dance music, Eurobeat etc. (Figure 13). Moreover, Miller (2004: 85) mentions one of *gyaru* sub-genres – *kogal*, a style being chosen by men of younger generation, practicing *mikkusu shikō* (*mix chic*), the so-called purposeful mismatch, meaning an attempt to mix different, basically incoherent looks. As an example, Miller (2004: 85) mentions rock inspired T-shirt paired up with wide shorts, preferred by surfers, etc.

In Tokyo, representatives of this styles gather in Shibuya and Shinjuku wards. In Osaka, they choose Amerikamura (Ame-mura) or Shinsaibashi. In Shibuya, there is a merchandising space targeting those rebels opposing traditional Japanese social norms called 109-mens (former 109-2),<sup>14</sup> a branch of GIRLS Shibuya 109.

*Gyaru-os* are thought to live a lifestyle not adjacent to widely approved social behavior. *Gyaru-o* brings attention to his provocative visual silhouette, and thinks of being a “bad-ass” as a way to a social promotion and success. He is coherent in his actions (Arai, 2014: 39-40) described as *tsuyome* (強め) – amplified, a term representing a person not following norms, provoking to revolt, causing laughter and surprise (Saladin, 2015: 62), *charai* (チャライ) flirtatious, having as many contacts with the opposite sex as possible, he is perceived as the one leading immoral life (Arai, 2009: 133). *Gyaru-o* possesses knowledge, *ora-ora* (おらおら), on grey-zone drugs, types of medicines working the same as substances prohibited by law and is characterized by putting that knowledge to use (Saladin 2015: 63).

The style of more mature, even 40-year old representative of *gyaru-o* style is called *onī mode kei* (お兄モード系) or *onī kei* (お兄系), literally speaking the “older brother” style. Characteristics of this style are asymmetrical, spiky, somehow longer hairstyles, dark clothes, belts with richly decorated buckles, accessories, unbuttoned, patterned collar shirts showing the chest, black leather jackets, tarnished denim jeans (preferably vintage), loafers or polished rock-and-roll shoes and military accents. Many of those older brothers could be found on 5th and 6th floor of department store *109-mens*, mentioned earlier. Stylish *onī* reads *Men's egg*, *Men's SPIDER*, but does not decline magazines read by younger fellows: *Men's egg Youth*, *Men's Knuckle*, *Men's Roses*. Beside *onī mode kei* in *gyaru-o kei* style the sub-styles are, after Wikipedia (2015i): *miritarī kei* (ミリタリー系, military look), *rokku kei* (ロック系, rock look), *baikā kei* (バイカー系, biker look), *amekaji kei* (アメカジ系, American casual-type look), *sāfā-kei* (サーファー系, surfer-like look).

<sup>14</sup> <http://109mens.com/>, <http://e-shop.109mens.jp/mens/contents/top//>, on-line access: April 25 2015

#### 4.6. *Urahara mode kei*

*Urahara mode kei* (うらはらモード系) is a style corresponding to Western street fashion, and that is why it is sometimes described as *street mode*. *Urahara mode kei* derives from the name of the Uraharajuku (裏原宿, うらはらじゅく) a district in Shibuya ward, Tokyo. Teenagers and twenty-year-olds representing this style read such magazines as *Tune* (in print since 2004, Groom, 2001: 199; Wikipedia, 2015e), *Ollie* (published since 1999), *Samurai magazine*, *smart* (this title was mentioned in the description of *kireime kei*), *COOL TRANS*.<sup>15</sup> This style is inspired by the American casual, usually that represented by skateboarders, look of pageant, yet simple. It is characterized by earthy colors, ethnic prints, soft, fluffy fabrics and is considerably influenced by the trends of the season.



**Figure 13.** A group of gyaru-o and three gyaru-kei girls

Source: <http://tokyofashion.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Shibuya-Gyaru-Culture-Japan-003.jpg>. Accessed: 28 June 2015

Similarly to *salon kei*, deriving from men working as hairdressers, the origins of *urahara mode kei* can be traced to the profession of a shop clerk. Namba (2006) states, that in the 1990's, young men, especially owners of shops in Ura-Harajuku, perceived as lifestyle-gurus, were influenced by young people who did not take interest in clothes preferred by the majority and, as a result, have developed their own type of style. In their boutique shops they gathered a specific selection of clothes, shoes and men's accessories, Namely, they have been

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<sup>15</sup> Online references to the magazine are not common, see: <http://hypebeast.com/tags/cool-trans>, on-line access: April 24 2015

gathering things they did like, recommending records, books, and various niche products. They communicated through the niche media and use of word of mouth.

The type of entrepreneurship mentioned above, is similar to concept stores idea, still popular in Europe. Clammers (1997: 40) stated that knowing codes and norms in fashion is a base. Yet, it is important to know the wisdom of the street, meaning, knowing, what is what and what is currently fashionable. In Japan, one could see such an influence on *sōshokukei danshi* attitude. The shop owners, mentioned above, were influenced by the teenage subcultures from the USA and Great Britain, namely hip-hop musicians, Harley-bikers, surfers, skaters, punks, etc. It is possible, that they were trying to introduce men into a new era of masculinity, creating a salaryman counterpart – *sōshokukei danshi*, described in the next chapter of the paper.

The styles described above are expressed in daily life. Especially at weekends, some streets of metropolises of Japan are filled with crowds resembling a procession of extremely diverse, sometimes presenting an excess of choice of colors, different silhouettes, specific hairstyles, people clad in variety of draped fabric armors. This is when the charm of those places entices street-fashion photographers, Western spectators or tourists, led by a sudden delight or excitement, into taking numbers of almost impressionist-like photo shots. The looks, in their variety, are influencing other cultures and pop-culture on a global level. Women and girls are the main actors in those performances, but men and boys are not excluded.

## **5. Towards *sōshokukei-danshi*, herbivorous men**

Already eight years ago Harlan (2010), on the pages of *The Washington Post* was wondering, in what direction the Japanese man is going, a man looking for a new pattern of behavior, lifestyle and appropriate look. Less optimistic, less ambitious, not willing to undertake risks, not wanting to have sex neither on first, nor another, according to American standards, third date (despite this, one should not perceive Japanese man as asexual), this is how Harlan (2010) defines Japanese representatives of male sex of the present day. Is this an accurate observation?

A change in mentality and the way of expressing it definitely had taken place, and one may say that the trend is progressive. “Collared” model of a *salaryman* belongs to the past now, and might irreversibly lose its place on the podium among stereotypes of Japan and its citizens. The model of *salaryman* in present days is not functioning anymore. Modern Japanese man seems to be disinterested in finding a partner, a long-term relationship, in

starting a family. Those are far behind his priorities with obvious, exceptions to the rule. “New” Japanese man wants to find joy in life, even to succumb to its pleasures, following the Western philosophy of *joie de vivre*, he does not want to be a *daikoku bashira* (大黒柱, だいきくばしら), the main pillar supporting the household, protecting it from destruction (Saladin, 2015: 56; Gill, 2003: 145). Reasons for that are emancipation of women, women choosing success over mother’s role; trends that transformed the traditional gender roles. “New” man is taking care of himself more, wants to feel good with himself, wants to be liked by people around him and be attractive to the opposite sex. He is spending more money on cosmetics in comparison to *salarymen* and men of the end of the 20th century, adds Harlan (2010). Bringing attention to himself becomes his priority, Luther (2014: 2).

Nowadays a twenty- to thirty-five-year-old is not enticed by 70-hour workweek, the ethics of the *salaryman* typical of the 1980’s.<sup>16</sup> He is not interested in consumption aiming at showing the social status. He does not dream of wealth, but rather of a balanced life and time to spend on his hobbies and with his family, if he thinks of starting one. Japanese youth are very different to their parents and grandparents in their beliefs and values. They have been raised in prosperity, surrounded by electronic gadgets and easily accessible goods. For most of the Japanese, the teenage years are the only time, when they can afford a bit of madness, which includes the way they dress (Cylkowska-Nowak and Butkiewicz 2009: 72).

“Generation of men, who do not know what they want for themselves,” this is how specialists refer to this “issue”, according to Harlan (2010). Is this the correct approach?

Japan became an economic power a generation ago, owing its present economic status to the army of *salarymen* and *office-ladies* (formerly known as business girls), working all day long, sacrificing their out-of work everyday life, their personal happiness for the sake of community. Personal needs were not the priorities for the specialized workers dressed in dark colored suits or ensembles, white or pale blue shirts, not necessarily fit for their figure, not necessarily well designed. After the economic development reached its peak, in 1973 the crisis came, and increased unemployment along with it. The traditional view on masculinity was not appealing any more, the fathers had lost their respect in the eyes of their sons, as Tanaka (2003: 222) stated, after Okabe et al. (1997: 183). Masculinity defined by means of success at

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<sup>16</sup> Surprisingly, a university student as a representative of *sōshokukei danshi* has much better financial background in terms of care for his self-expression, as Tanaka (2003: 222) quotes after Kondo et al. (1988: 204). He receives around 400 USD in pocket money, while an average monthly income of salaryman is only 20 USD higher.

the workplace and being the sole provider for the family was undermined, it was a necessity to extract alternative patterns of behavior for men. The generation of salarymen's sons (and daughters) have lost a will to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the company, but have acquired something new instead, namely an increasing awareness of personal needs. The new generation have no desire for acquiring appropriate social status. They look for new values, different from those describing the generation of their fathers. They strive for life balance and well-being, which translates into the way they dress.

Popular fiction writer, Maki Fukusawa, describes this type of men as *sōshoku danshi* (草食男子), herbivorous men (2006; 2009: 7). This term was coined on the public forum between 2008 and 2009 (Morioka 2013: 1).

Morioka, in an essay from 2006, describes *sōshoku danshi* as young males not motivated by carnal desires, somehow indifferent to topics related to love and sex. That is why, primarily, this term did not refer to look and clothing. Two years later, Morioka (2011: 56) complemented the term by adding the suffix *-kei* (系) meaning a group, a type, or style – *sōshokukei danshi* (草食系男子). According to Morioka, a herbivorous man is a young man, not experienced in a field of romance, who is not authoritative towards his female partner, because of his timid character (Morioka 2013: 6). Morioka points out to a growing tendency towards behavior characteristic for *sōshoku danshi* among a growing group of men. During the years of 2008-2009, the term *sōshoku danshi* took over the media and started to settle in the public forum. At that time, it did not refer only to the delicate, psychic side of a male; it was not only an insight into his approach to intimate relationships. Since then, *sōshoku danshi* has been perceived by means of his outer appearance. He was slim, wearing black thick-rimmed glasses, striped shirts, in the meantime complemented by a growing number of feminine accents, accessories such as rings, piercings, dyed hair, use of bobby-pins, wet tissues and so on. Those who opposed this look questioned *sōshoku danshi* masculinity, calling them feminine, or using more aggressive epithets.

There was no basis to describe *sōshoku danshi* as a part of widely used term Generation Y, or Gen Y (in the UK and Australia), referring to those born between the 1980's and the early 1990's. Sheahan (2007) stated that in the case of Asian societies this generation was born between 1978 and 1994. The other terms describing Generation Y, depending on the location are *Generation Maybe* in Germany, *Generation Curling* in Sweden, *Generasjon Alvor* (*Generation Seriōs*) in Norway, *JPII generation* in Poland, *ken lao zu* in China (which translates as “generation which devours the old”, Lyons, 2016), *millennials* in the USA,

*Generación Ni-Ni* (do not work, do not learn) in Hispanic countries and finally Japanese *nagara-zoku* (乍ら族, ながらぞく, “tribe who do one thing while doing another”). This generation is described as not paying attention to anything, while taking hedonistic approach to life. Lyons (2016) presented a profile of a 27-year old Yosuke Nishimura, a representative of *yutori sedai* (ゆとり世代), generation brought up stressless. His monthly expenses balance the income. Nishimura gives a small amount of money from his monthly wage to his parents, using the rest for going out with friends and hobby excursions. He acts the same as many of *nagara zoku* people. Japanese designer Yōji Yamamoto stated once that many Japanese spend half of their income on clothes. Self-expression is a priority for them, and among such folk are people who came from slums. The idea that everyone can “pretend” is, as has always been, present around the globe. In Japan, clothing is the most accessible luxury item, that is where the narcissism of many young Japanese comes from (Luna et al. 2014).

Lyons (2016) stated that millennials are expecting flexibility, reliability and understanding (tolerance) towards themselves, while expecting the previous generations to keep their promises. Sheahan (2007) expressed his regret that this generation have no talent for running businesses, and want to achieve everything within alarmingly short time. He described them as a community, for whom the time of two minutes, needed for preparation of instant *ramen* noodles takes already too long, while anything slower than the broadband Internet is not acceptable. Millennials are characterized by impatience and unfounded need for a constant change, while in their everyday life they need to face financial difficulties, among other problems. This generation are much more interested in taking pleasure from the present moment, savoring the freedom. *Sōshoku danshi* also reach for this pleasure, which manifests itself through building self-expression and communicating internal feelings.

There are at least three hypotheses on the origin of *sōshoku danshi* (Morioka 2013: 14). One of them states that the evolutionary birth of this new type of masculinity began in the 1980’s, when women achieved a higher social rank, and the “reign” of men was slowly diminishing.

According to the second one, they emerged a decade later, during the economic slump, between 1992 and 2002. This period of time in Japan gained the name of *ushinawareta jidai* (失われた時代、うしなわれたじだい), the time, which has been lost. Recession, bankruptcies of companies, increasing unemployment, losing the privilege of life-long employment in the same place of work until retirement, evoked the need for “invention” of a new pattern of masculinity.

The third hypothesis reaches back to World War II and specifies that in the post-war occupied Japan, the succeeding generations of men became less aggressive, valorous, and serving in Self Defense Forces (after the war, the amendment Japanese military forces are called Self Defence Forces, Mickiewicz 2012) was not a reason to be proud (for more details on these hypotheses see: Morioka, 2013: 12-15). Interchange of *salaryman* and *sōshoku danshi* models was not unexpected.<sup>17</sup> The origin could be observed in the 1980s, when fashion entered the scope of interest of men (Saladin 2015).

According to a poll conducted in 2009 by M1 F1 Souken, almost half of the surveyed men ranging between 20 and 34 years old, identified themselves as *sōshoku danshi*.<sup>18</sup> The term is used to describe men who are subtle, delicate and cautious. *Sōshoku danshi*, or one may say *city boy*, reading Popeye was proclaimed a man, who “does not want to be hurt” (Tanaka 2003). Meanwhile, this generation of men acquire customs which previously described the opposite sex. Presently, men described as *sōshoku danshi* are concentrated on their self-expression, fashion and cosmetics much more than the average man is. Stereotypical masculinity is lost, the feminization of men is proceeding. Men’s sense of fashion intensifies. One cannot overlook the role of magazines, much more vivid and abundant in content than their counterparts elsewhere, carrying simple, almost didactic messages. The didactic function is realized, the magazines give hints on how to satisfy a girlfriend, in a way, which oneself is satisfied too, so to get mutual benefits (Okabe et al. 1997: 183). Other hints explain how to ask a Western woman out, what kind of restaurant take her to, what to wear, even how to converse (Tanaka 2003: 238). Information from the magazines is meant to help the reader to boost his confidence through developing interest in topics concerning care for his looks, appropriately chosen clothes and perfumes and thus elevate his attractiveness in the eyes of women. Magazines targeting young men, for example *Fineboys*, contain hints on how to win a woman with appropriate appearance and let the reader know exactly what women think on current trends and stylings by presenting their opinions. It is ideal for the Japanese reader to have these hints presented in a school-like way, by recommendations and commands. The role of the magazines is thus in a way authoritarian, while showing tendencies to treat their readers in

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<sup>17</sup> Fukusawa stated that before World War II *sōshoku danshi* were described in works of Osamu Dazai and Soseki Natsume. Fukusawa blamed their disappearance on the post-war rapid growth of economy and increasing drive for consumption (Harney 2009).

<sup>18</sup> According to Harney (2009), Media Shakers consulting group stated that they are 60% of men aged 20 to 23 years old and 42% of men aged 23 to 34 years old.



a child-like manner. Completing tasks instead of finding joy in discovering the answers by oneself seems to be deeply rooted in the Japanese way of living. Tanaka (2003: 223) expressed a thought that Japanese magazines targeting young men have more in common with magazines targeting young women than with those designed for more mature male audience. He stated directly that these magazines are characterized by feminine nature, an outlook on life and perception of reality in a way widely considered as feminine, yet not depreciating a man, rather enriching his way of thinking (Tanaka 2003: 223). Tanaka listed here such magazines as *Popeye*, *Men's Club*, *Men's Non-no*.

In Japan, men's fashion magazine market has much longer and richer publishing tradition than the Western market. The first magazine concerning ready-to-wear – *prêt-à-porter* fashion for men, titled *Otoko-no fukushoku* “*Men's garments*”, was published as early as in 1954 and nine years later was renamed into English *Men's Club* (Monden, 2015: 21), and has remained on the market till this day (Monden, 2015: 21). Tanaka (2003: 224) stated that the history of men's magazines began with... publishing of the women's magazine *An·An* in 1970. The *An·An* was a novelty at the time, targeting a reader from the *baby-boomers* generation, a magazine designed for browsing the pages rather than reading the texts. The focus was put on the visuals, due to the overwhelming number of photographs and advertisements; it became a medium for advertising agencies, which treated the magazine as an advertising catalogue. The pressure was put on the consumer lifestyle and hedonistic approach. Shortly after *An·An*, *Non-no* (1971), *JJ* (1975) and *More* (1977) were published. All of them have been published until the present day and have spawned their men's counterparts; *JJ boys* in the case of *JJ*, *Men's Non-no* in the case of *Non-no*. Both magazines have existed on the publishing market since 1987 (the first issue of *Men's Non-no* was sold out in a matter of days). As for male counterpart of *An·An*, it is *Popeye*,<sup>19</sup> considered to be the origin of the city boy subculture (Tanaka 2003: 225; Okabe et al. 1997: 183), which proves, as described below, that it was one of the steps into creating *sōshoku danshi*. Before it happened, two groups of men emerged, divided on the basis of the magazine they were reading: *Popeye boy* (the city boy)<sup>20</sup> and *Non-no boy* (Tanaka 2003: 226). Both magazines were described as

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<sup>19</sup> There is a magazine targeting female high-school students entitled *Olive*, published since 1982. The title refers to the cartoon character, the beloved of Popeye named Olive (Tanaka 2003: 225). The magazine was created, because 40% of the Popeye magazine audience were female (Tanaka, 2003: 232). There is also a counterpart for *An·An*: *Men's An·An*, published since 1988 (Tanaka 2003: 226).

<sup>20</sup> The emergence of *the city boys* generation in Japan is linked with the anti-establishment students'

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magazines on male fashion as seen by women (Tanaka, 2003: 232), which explains a lot, in comparison to other titles present on the market. The *Popeye boy*, following the guidelines of the magazine, was supposed to be narcissistic, and dealing with boyish consumer culture, and the “boy” himself was granted certain asexuality (Tanaka, 2003: 232) not necessarily meaning refraining from sexual actions, but *Popeye* from the beginning avoided publishing sex-related matters, also the sexual orientation of the target reader was not defined. Nevertheless, the magazine was tailored to fit the heterosexual audience, as its main keynote was to support relations with girls “Make men beautiful! Then women also will be beautiful. And this is how the intimate relationships will get better” – this motto appeared in different publications of the magazine called *FRaU Homme* (on the market since 1998, Tanaka, 2003: 233), accurately expressing the keynote of magazines targeting young men. As an aftermath for *Popeye*, emerging on the Japanese market, magazines such as *DonDon* in 1977 (not in print anymore) as well as *Hot-Dog Press*, two years later, in 1980, *Brutus*, a magazine for more mature, working men from big cities also appeared (Tanaka 2003: 225-226).

Magazines influence lifestyle by presenting certain content (meaning not only a font, text, but most importantly images, drawings and photographs) on the different fields of interest, starting with amusement activities, hobbies, such as cooking, home-making, matters concerning well-being, interpersonal relations including romance, as well as topics of erotic or sexual nature. The magazines market in Japan is big, and still growing. Saladin (2015), citing his earlier work Saladin (2012: 190), gave the information that during the twenty years’ period, starting in the early 1990s and up to 2010, the number of magazines targeting interest of young men tripled. At the beginning of the said period, there were 1.5 million issues per month, at the beginning of the 21st century this number rose to 4÷4.5 million issues. One must mention that the tastes are molded also by external factors.

In the Western publishing market, among the magazines targeted at men, lifestyle magazines covering topics related to fashion and clothing take a small share of the market compared with those carrying information on cars, sport, electronics, technical and technological novelties or fitness, which constitute the majority. In Japanese men’s publishing market, these proportions are the opposite. In Japanese magazines, topics of fashion cover no less than 60% of the total content, both in the case of young men’s fashion magazines, such as

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movement between the late 1960s and the early 1970s. It is considered that *the city boy*, having nothing in common with the rioting students and not following any ideology, wanted to be content, cheerful, and to take profit from company of women (Tanaka 2003: 22; Okabe et al. 1997: 183).

*Popeye* (up to 79%) or *Men's Non-no* (69%), as well as those for more mature reader: 77% in *Men's Club*, 72% in *Leon* and 64% in *Uomo* (Monden 2012b: 2). Even magazines for older, more mature and wealthy readers, despite presenting articles and advertisements of luxurious cars and alcohols, due to prevalent amount of fashion-related content could easily be classified as fashion magazines.

Molding of tastes is endorsed by omnipresent smart-phones. In his work, Fluch (2011) conducted polls and short interviews in which he asked students of Japanese elite universities if they used any apps which act as guides in the “complicated world of current trends and tastes in terms of personal looks.” “It depends on what kind of people are using what [kind of application]... If a person who knows what is going on uses it, it is ok, but if it were some weirdo, I wouldn't use it,” a 24-year-old man responded. “Yes, I can use it and feel safer,” was a statement from another 22-year-old (Fluch 2011: 33). Why safer? In what sense? What is the reason for such statements? According to Fluch (2011: 29) fear of choosing wrong in terms of self-expression and fashion – a choice which could be judged negatively by the surrounding environment – leads Japanese young consumers towards fashion authorities, hiding behind such applications, namely fashion lifestyle magazines mentioned above and opinions of pop-culture celebrities. These pop-idols influence such a behavior the most. Followers of rules provided by certain application, a magazine or an idol, are able to fully copy the look presented on the screen or on the pages of a magazine, according to the fashion brand, color scheme and other more or less important details, because the photographs are accompanied by detailed lists on where to buy items shown, how to style them, etc. Learning from the stylizations seems to be a standard behavior of the magazine's readers (a statement on *Men's Non-No* in Saitou (2003: 333)). This statement can be paraphrased and broadened into other titles, as well. Japanese fashion imperative is then characterized by two opposing factors: positive and negative. On the one hand, the young Japanese are driven by the desire and sense of belonging; on the other hand – by the fear of rejection. Many readers who do not feel confident find using the suggestions given in the magazines convenient (Tanaka 2003: 238). Many men use magazines and guidelines they provide to solve problems both in their relationships with women and in terms of fashion.

Clothes do not make a man, yet a man wants to look impeccable even without the garments. Topics on self-expression, as well as cosmetic care, or even surgical interventions have to do with the fact that in Japan, when referring to those topics, the attitude verbalized as *shikata ga nai*, which translates as “nothing can be done” is not in power anymore (Miller

2004: 93). Such an obsession can be explained with slogans and dry descriptions of requirements towards a man's good looks, good character, good genes and, moreover, high income, high education, being tall (over 180cm tall) (Tanaka 2003: 233). Men "bothered" by women with such expectations regarding a potential partner, are less and less willing to decide on marriage. The ratio of married men to women in the 30-34 years old group is 2:1 (Tanaka, 2003: 233; Inoue and Ebara, 1995: 15).

*Sōshoku danshi*, the herbivorous man, is not a hunter, who has to leave his cave searching for a prey. He is much more sensitive and subtle. It is with piety that he cares about his lean body. In Japan of today, the ideal of male composure is lean, not too muscular body (Saladin 2015: 61). Luther confirmed this observation (2014: 6), noticing, that while reviewing men's fashion magazines, most of the models are lean, without body hair, but wearing meticulous, feminine-like haircuts. Luther (2014: 14) did not see the epithet feminine as a negative one, but describes it as masculinity and femininity combined.

There is also approval of the muscular male body. It can be found mostly in *Men's Egg* magazine, whose target audience are mostly sexually emancipated *gyaru-o*. The declaration like "a man who is not muscular does not possess the sexual potency, such a man cannot be a *normal* man," can be readily found in the magazine (Saladin 2015: 63-64). It has been observed that young generations of the Japanese are growing taller than their predecessors, getting closer to an American or European composure, due to the changes in the lifestyle and diet, which to a greater and greater extent resemble those in the West (Japanese Fashion Market 2015).

Is the body image, endorsed by the media, represented by *sōshoku danshi*, a novelty in Japanese history? Men creating their self-expression according to fashion are not. Long before fashion trends were described in the magazines, they were carefully studied and described in court diaries and eposes, presenting romance, trends and customs at the royal court and constructing the image of an ideal man, with all the details helping him seduce women. In the Heian era (794-1185) (Tan, 2006: 33) or (794-1192) (Muszalska 2014: 66), both men and women staying at the court were using make-up and were wearing clothes made of beautiful fabrics, scented with incense. Clothing and scent were a way of expression. In the *Tale of Prince Genji*, the author, court lady Murasaki Shikibu, describes the realm of imperial court of the Heian era, the protagonist, Prince Genji, is preparing incenses himself and puts as much attention to his attire as to other arts, like poetry. As an example of this attitude, special care for men's eyebrows is reflected and confirmed by early representations of Buddha, which can

be seen in Chūgū-ji shrine in Nara (Tsuda, 1985; Tan, 2006: 33). The ideal of beauty at that time was different from the present one. Following the example of China, rounded face, broad forehead, narrow eyes, thick eyebrows, small lips were all highly valued in both sexes' appearance. The unisex approach can also be found in the design of undergarments, like the first layers of kimono, shaped into a letter T, which came into use around the VIII century (Groom, 2001: 193).

The Japanese started wearing Western clothes during the Meiji period (1868-1912) (Kostowska-Watanabe, 2012: 14), when they gradually swapped patterned kimonos for suits, as Saladin (2015), Nishiyama and Tanimoto (2009) noted. In addition, Maeda (2009: 15-17) added, that use of cosmetics by men, by that time, became a taboo,<sup>21</sup> which caused man to be separated from possibilities of fashion and wellness in terms of creating self-expression. This ultimately created a plain utility attire.

*Sōshoku danshi* resembles a metrosexual male from the West, who is described by taking care of his good looks and having nothing against wearing make-up or expressing his feminine side (Luther 2014: 14).

What does Japanese women think of men taking more care of themselves in this way? Darling-Wolf (2004: 292) quoted statements of Japanese women having nothing against such men, as long as they were not their potential partners. Meanwhile, as a cliché, it is stated that in the past, women had to look a certain way, and men in a certain way. Men had to be masculine. But now men have freedom of choice and can choose their look as they wish (Darling-Wolf 2004: 291). Sometimes *sōshoku danshi* is thought to be a Japanese counterpart for modern hipster. Yet it is unfounded, because Japanese *sōshoku danshi* has a different point of origin (see above) from the American hipster's, who, as Pivett (2016: 130) states, originated from Afro-American jazz scene of the 1930's. The term itself derives from a stem *hip/hep*, meaning refined, stylish and a suffix *-ster*, the same as in gangster, for example. Nowadays, the term "hipster" has acquired a new, pejorative meaning.

Aging Japanese society (BBC, 2012, recording: 00:13) seems not to be content with the growing numbers of *sōshoku danshi*, which is expected, concerning the fact that most of the society have been brought up and live according to traditional patterns. The indicator of marriage growth, one of the pillars of Japanese society (Saladin 2015: 57) is dropping

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<sup>21</sup> There are few mentions of face creams used both by men and women in the Meiji period (Miller 2006: 139), (Machida 1997). However, these mentions are thought to be deceiving, and the use of cosmetics by men, as very rare (Saladin 2015: 59).

(Yamada, 2010), while the number of divorces has been growing since the last decade of the past century (Fuess, 2004: 165). The second indicator is explained by higher self-awareness of women, and their growing possibility of self-sustainment. The drop in the number of marriages, the birth rate and, as a result, the aging of society is thought to be blamed on men from the *sōshokukei danshi* group (Saladin 2015: 57). There is even a motion picture entitled “Sōshokukei danshi” (「草食系男子, “Herbivorous man”, directed by Atsushi Wada, premiered on 6 February 2010). The poster designed for the motion picture (Figure 14) was contrasted with one for “Nikushokukei joshi” (肉食系女子, “Carnivorous woman”, directed by Atsushi Wada, premiered 13 February 2010). This combination could be perceived as a critique towards *sōshoku danshi*.

With reference to six styles of self-expression, one might come to the conclusion that all of them, with one exception, could be assigned to a new type of masculinity *sōshoku danshi*. This one exception is *gyaru-o kei*, a counterpart to the British new lad (the man behaving badly, Tanaka, 2003: 222; Edwards, 1997: 87), the remaining types could be described as representatives of the city boys, a term coined by one of the first magazines for young men in Japan, which contributed to the creation of *sōshoku danshi*, *Popeye*, as it was mentioned earlier in the paper.



**Figure 14.** Poster for the motion pictures “Sōshokukei danshi” and “Nikushokukei joshi”

Source: <https://eigapedia.com/movie/sōshokukei-danshi>,  
[http://asianwiki.com/Nikushokukei\\_joshi](http://asianwiki.com/Nikushokukei_joshi). Accessed 28 June 2015.

## 6. The point of an unfinished story

In the modern aesthetics of young Japanese men, looks and fashion seem not to be utilized to accentuate the body shape, while Japanese man does not seem to consider clothing a sort of packaging for his body. Garment is an evident expression of personality, a way to accentuate one's outlook on the world, a way to express opinions on feelings toward oneself, one's mind but also on one's surroundings.

## 7. At the flip side of fashion consumerism

The Japanese are the most uniformed society in the world, where every member of society is wearing a costume appropriate to their social role and described by the form of this hierarchy. For example, schools in Japan have different levels of regulations on uniforms and many decide on students' hairstyle, bags, socks and even underwear they wear (Groom 2001: 201; McVeigh 2000).

In the days, when buying glitz and acquiring products according to stylizations suggested by "prestigious" brands has ceased to be perceived as something exclusive in the global society, individualist groups, such as intelligentsia, academia, artists and architects, decide to wear self-proclaimed uniforms, showing their affiliation to those groups – black costumes, which Japanese designers endorsed for years. The ruffled fabric mimicking emotional fragility of the wearer, or perceived as symbolic fusion of pop culture and radical thinking, are the indispensable factors determining the awareness of consumer of these types of goods. With the older generations of the Japanese in the 1950's and the 1960's, the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre was very popular. It suggested a path for those who were lost and confused, being caught in between tradition and ongoing westernization after World War II, stating that continuation between the past and the future is an act of social creation, based on human effort. This way of thinking was accompanied by black, a color that is subtle, elegant, elite and egalitarian and the same time, democratic in a way, because fashion is made for "ordinary" people: "fashion is at its fullest only when worn by mediocre people, who live in the moment, who can cope with their lives, who love, who get sad, who worry," (Davies and Bell 1991: 22). It is being accompanied by recurrence, loyalty and development of the conceptual idea, refraining from signs of luxury, social status, or explicit sexuality. This course of subtleties, described in this paper had also influenced the birth of *sōshoku danshi* and, as a consequence - *sōshokukei danshi*.

In Japan, the sense and need for beauty is transcendent – not dissected from everyday life, not something limited to the space of art gallery or museum. The Japanese sense of aesthetics has resulted in elevating any creative process to a level of art, without creating rigid divisions between what is art and what is not. It can be observed not only in arts in the Western meaning, such as traditional theater, poetry, painting and architecture, but also in more timid actions, like drinking tea, arranging flowers or gardening. The aesthetic ideals, born from the base of common outlook on the world, are transcendent to all kinds of art. “Every aspect of Japanese life – the Japanese cuisine, clothing, painting, architecture is set to evoke an artistic effect. It does not come as a surprise then that the Japanese have had created many aesthetic terms,” said Ching-Yu Chang hundreds years ago (Wilkoszewska 2001: 9).

The Japanese do not draw a line between what is considered “high art” in the West and crafts and design. In *Ishi Bigaku* (“Aesthetics of Mr. V”) by Nakae Chomin, the Japanese word *bigaku* was used to translate the French word *esthétique* (Kaneda 2001: 58). The term “art” is translated into Japanese in various ways, as *gijutsu* (技術, ぎじゅつ) – skill/techique/technology, *geijutsu* (芸術, げいじゅつ) – the Arts, *gigei* (技芸, ぎげい) – skill/artistic ability, *kogeï* (こげい) – craft. All of these terms can refer to the idea of aesthetics. As it was already mentioned, in Japan high art and craft, and also design are not perceived as separate. One may assume that in Japan, fashion is considered art as well and a utilitarian approach to a piece of art, which should serve the wearer by both protecting and adorning him, is not an extraordinary approach. A craft of fashion design is being placed among painting, sculpture architecture, or the performing arts.

## 8. Art as a way of living

Words like *aikido*, *judo*, or *bushido* – the Japanese names for martial arts – are known globally. In every term the suffix *-dō* (-道), meaning a way, a road, is present. The idea of the road focuses on acquiring certain skills, aiming at the very best, basing on effort, time and focus. There is a proximity between martial arts and the way of a warrior, the way of tea, calligraphy, the way of a brush, etc. Following that trope, *sōshoku danshi* could be perceived in the context of emergence of a new, modern male code, not another bushido warrior, but a man who values aesthetics the most. Might it be that the suffix *-kei* will soon be replaced by the suffix *-dō*? Maybe the *sōshokudō* would be a new way, this time applied to aesthetics?



This paper is an attempt to approach the topics focusing on the self-expression of Japanese man in the socio-economic context. The research presented was based on present state of research combined with an individual approach.

The part covering the topic of different male representations in the Japanese society was described carefully, with high attention to detail and references, creating a compendium of a kind. The issue of self-expression of the Japanese man and its deciding factors, including those of the socio-economic nature, present a possibility of further research, which, the authors express their hope, will continue, and the results will be presented in forthcoming publications.

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**EWOLUCJA MĘSKIEGO AUTOWIZERUNKU.  
SOCJOLOGICZNO-EKONOMICZNE ZJAWISKO DOSTRZEŻONE  
W JAPOŃSKICH MAGAZYNACH O MODZIE MĘSKIEJ**

Streszczenie

Znana z mediów estetyka wizerunku, określana mianem „japońskiego stylu”, na Zachodzie koncentruje się w głównej mierze na płci żeńskiej. W zachodniej literaturze niewiele treści traktuje natomiast o japońskim mężczyźnie w kontekście jego podejścia wobec świadomego wizerunku. Celem tego artykułu jest uzupełnienie informacji na temat społeczno-ekonomicznej korelacji między japońską gospodarką, rynkiem mody a ewolucją wizerunku japońskiego mężczyzny, w tym jego poglądem na męskość i płć, w oparciu o profil japońskich magazynów męskich o modzie. W artykule przedstawiono sześć różnych stylów mody charakterystycznych dla metropolii w Japonii, ich cechy, tło i rozwój, podkreślając związki z pewnym stylem życia i wydarzeniami społeczno-gospodarczymi, czego wynikiem jest pojawienie się nowego wzoru męskości *sōshoku danshi*. Wymagania i potrzeby dotyczące tego wzoru są analizowane, biorąc pod uwagę jego status na rynku konsumenckim i w społeczeństwie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** salaryman, kireime kei, salon mode kei, ojii boy kei, gyaru-o kei, street mode kei, mode kei, sōshokukei danshi, sōshoku danshi, Non-no boy, Popeye boy, the city boy, Japonia, moda, rynek konsumencki

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