

ANIME AND JAPANESE UNIQUENESS: THE CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY OF
JAPANESE ANIMATION

by

David Tyler Crump
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Anthropology

Committee:

_____ Director

_____ Department Chairperson

_____ Dean, College of Humanities
and Social Sciences

Date: _____ Spring Semester 2018
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Anime and Japanese Uniqueness: The Cultural Authenticity of Japanese Animation

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

by

David Tyler Crump
Bachelor of Science
University of Mary Washington, 2013

Director: Susan Trencher, Associate Professor
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Spring Semester 2018
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

© 2018 David Tyler Crump

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my friends, family, and other supporters who have helped me come this far. Specifically, my mother and father who encouraged me to receive a higher education, my older sister Alyssa who attended George Mason with me and helped me adjust to graduate life, and especially to Drs. Trencher, Hemmann, Hughes-Rinker and Schiller, as well as all my university professors, who helped guide me to completing my degree. Lastly, to George Mason University for allowing me to pursue my interests in Japanese popular culture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vi
Abstract	vii
Introduction: Japanese Cool	1
Chapter One: A Brief History of Japanese Animation	9
1.1 Japanese Animation	12
1.2 Contemporary Japanese Anime	30
Chapter Two: Pop Culture Diplomacy	41
2.1 Postwar Perspectives of Japanese Socioeconomics	41
2.2 Emergence of Japan's Pop Culture Industries	53
2.3 "Cool Japan" as a Global Strategy	56
Chapter Three: Cultural Industries	63
3.1 The Cultural Industry System	64
3.2 The Anime Industry System	72
Chapter Four: Cultural Products as Symbols	88
4.1 Expressive Potential of Cultural Products	89
4.2 Fandom Participation and Proliferation	94
Conclusion: Who Owns Anime?	100
References	113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1 Panel from the first <i>Chōjū Giga</i> scroll	12
Figure 2 Crowd of supporters cheering for Mabō	21
Figure 3 Japanese pilots shooting down Popeye	24
Figure 4 Momotarō commanding his animal forces	26
Figure 5 Frame from Daicon IV animation	35
Figure 6 An assortment of <i>Pokémon</i> merchandise	38
Figure 7 Okayama base SDF recruitment poster	59
Figure 8 Nendoroid figures of popular anime and Western characters	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1 Survey respondents' racial/ethnic demographics	101

ABSTRACT

ANIME AND JAPANESE UNIQUENESS: THE CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY OF JAPANESE ANIMATION

David Tyler Crump, M.A.

George Mason University, 2018

Director: Dr. Susan Trencher

This thesis focuses on the conception of Japanese animation or “anime” as a specifically Japanese cultural product, rather than one produced as the result of global influences.

While anime is produced similarly to films and TV shows produced outside of Japan and has overseas influences in its design, it is seen as culturally distinctive as evidenced in particular animation techniques, story themes, and socio-historical contexts. Analysis of relevant literature focuses on the history of anime followed by an analysis of anime as a cultural export. Targeted cultural industry research is included to illustrate global production systems and to demonstrate the expressive potential of cultural products. A short qualitative survey distributed to several anime clubs and organizations is included as a means to get an “insiders” view from anime fans on the question of whether anime is viewed by its audience as purely Japanese.

INTRODUCTION: JAPANESE COOL

In 2012, the Japanese airline All Nippon Airways began the promotional campaign *Is Japan Cool?*, which featured video clips and articles highlighting “cool” examples of Japanese culture for tourists to explore. One such promotional video (ANA Global Channel 2012) intermixes scenes depicting traditional aspects of Japanese culture, such as sumo wrestlers and shrines, along with more recent trends like Harajuku fashion and karaoke bars; blending the traditional and contemporary as if both equally represented cultural milieu in Japan. The video then ends with a series of foreigners intermeshed within a busy crowd in a Japanese urban setting, as they gleefully hold up a sign resembling Facebook’s “Like” button with the English word “COOL” written underneath.

At first the eponymous question, “Is Japan Cool?,” may sound like a standard marketing ploy that uses buzzwords like “cool” in order to attract consumers. Yet, this campaign is a prime example of the Japanese government’s economic and diplomatic strategy known as “Cool Japan.” This national branding strategy attempts to remake Japan’s global image through association with cultural products. These are goods that are directed at a public of consumers that primarily serve as forms of entertainment (Peltoniemi 2014). This includes a wide range of activities such as literature, film, music,

plays, television and radio, fashion, and videogames. “Cool Japan” products are typically centered around Japanese animation or anime, manga (comic books), and videogames (Valaskivi 2013), and are used as a national brand due to the popularity these creative industries have developed domestically and overseas.

Products like anime fill a niche category of cultural goods that are viewed by a small group of consumers both inside and outside of Japan. During the 1970s and 1980s, anime was often co-produced by toy companies and essentially served as half-hour advertisements for toys (Condry 2013; Galbraith 2014). Thus, anime was mostly considered to be for children, and older people who still watched anime were often seen as childish and hedonistic (Kam 2013). For decades anime in Japan was considered something that was enjoyed while young, but ultimately grown out of as one got older. Despite this pervasive sentiment, it has recently been reported that many Japanese nationwide now feel a sense of pride towards anime as a unique form of Japanese culture (Mainichi Japan 2017).

For a nation to suddenly feel prideful towards the cultural impact of an entertainment product, one that was previously deemed merely for children, implies media forms like anime and affiliated products (e.g. manga, videogames, and toys) have undergone a drastic shift in public approval within Japanese society. This sudden favorability can partially be explained by the economic success of the anime industry, which in 2016 was reported to have reached an industry income milestone of 2.9 trillion yen (about 25.5 billion USD) in combined sales of movies, TV shows, home video distribution, overseas distribution, and character goods (Chapman 2017). Although such

success may sometimes be viewed as an economic boon for the people of Japan, these sales figures alone do not fully explain why the Japanese public feel pride towards anime, as most citizens do not gain direct benefits from the financial success of these industries.

This shift in public approval is taken here as evidence that anime is now thought of as a positive representation of Japanese culture. Along with its use as entertainment, cultural products also serve a symbolic and expressive purpose as a means of identity formation and social display (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Comaroff and Comaroff 2010; Peltoniemi 2014; Schiele and Venkatesh 2016). The contemporary Japanese lifestyle is now seen as one of consumption and play, as popular culture products like anime become celebrated and reproduced as powerful symbols of Japanese culture, both domestically and overseas (Daliot-Bul 2009a). This view aligns with the goals of the “Cool Japan” brand strategy, by claiming the success of anime as a product as due to a unique cultural component of “Japaneseness.”

Cultural uniqueness. For the purposes of this thesis, “culture” refers to all shared and, most importantly, learned knowledge and behaviors used to induct someone into a group. There are multiple forms of culture that appear throughout societies, ranging from everyday habits such as diet and hygiene; to social displays such as language and fashion; and even in more complex notions such as value orientations and symbols (Sugimoto 2009). In most societies, there are typically multiple competing cultural ideologies coexisting at once, which often manifest in regional, generational, ethnic, and gender-based variations, resulting in a complex network of cultural heterogeneity. However, as a dominant groups’ worldviews is taken as valid and practiced on a greater scale than other

competing worldviews, eventually, it is naturalized into the everyday life of the society; what Gramsci (2000) refers to as cultural hegemony. This does not mean that other competing worldviews simply disappear, instead they often come to be ideologies centered on resistance, or counterculture, in relation to the domineering ideologies of the society. In this sense culture is also seen as a social process, as worldviews are debated, naturalized, and sometimes resisted between groups of people in pursuit of a shared way of living (Daliot-Bul 2009a).

Early cultural studies of Japan, by both Japanese and foreign scholars, often focused on an essentialist point of view. Assertions of Japan, Japanese culture, and the Japanese as being “unique” have been made throughout various literatures referencing the notion of *Nihonjinron* or the discourses on “Japaneseness.” These unique traits were thought to manifest within nearly every facet of life for the Japanese, including language, human relations, working culture, social organization, and even in the very biological makeup of the Japanese themselves (Sugimoto 2009). This notion of “uniqueness” was popularized after World War II in books and articles attempting to analyze the peculiarities of Japanese culture, but this discourse on exceptionality can be pinpointed as far back as the establishment of the modern Japanese government in 1868 during the Meiji Restoration.

During this period (1868-1912), the Japanese state attempted to homogenize the nation by defining a proper cultural mindset and national identity; a proper way of being “Japanese.” This was mainly done by molding the Japanese and non-Japanese in the peripheral and colonial regions into a state-defined cultural form (Befu 2009, 23). This

included establishing a standardized Japanese language largely based on the Edo (now modern Tokyo) dialect of central Japan, which, for the most part, remains today as the modern national language expected to be taught and spoken by the Japanese. The imposition of the state-defined culture on peripheral and colonial regions of Japan, such as Hokkaido and the former Korean colonies, shows Japan's socially and politically stratified history, as the power to define culture was wrested by the politicians and intellectuals in central Japan (Befu 2009). That is, the core area of Japan where state power resides was, and arguably still is, considered to embody Japan's culture altogether. Here, the "uniqueness" displayed by central Japan's culture, compared to other regional forms, can implicitly be read as superior.

While cultural exceptionalism has mainly gone by the wayside in contemporary discourses on Japanese culture, echoes of *Nihonjinron* are still visible in the state and market forces of Japan today (Sugimoto 2009). The centralized state power still controls much of the cultural imagery of Japan and insists upon the image of Japan as a homogenous nation despite evidence of regional and ethnic diversity (Befu 2009). Now in a new form of cultural exceptionalism, popular culture products such as anime, manga, karaoke, and sushi have become disseminated worldwide as readily identifiable "Japanese" products. However, given the inner workings of the cultural industries the very nature of anime as a distinctly "Japanese" product is open to question.

Goals of the Study

The anime industry is structured similarly to international models of production, in which a variety of actors, each bringing a distinct set of skills and ideas, collaborate in

the creation, marketing, and eventual consumption of cultural goods. Outsourcing labor is a common element featured in global manufacturing methods and given the diversity of these actors it is no surprise that these jobs are not bound by spatial proximity.

Additionally, with the advancement of communication technologies, particularly the Internet and social media, consumers are now able to review and raise awareness for products through online communities built around shared interests. Yet, the Japanese government persists, through the “Cool Japan” strategy, that a cultural essence of “Japaneseness” is above all the undisputed factor of anime’s success, despite its globalized nature.

In this work, the conception of anime as being a distinctly “Japanese” product is discussed through comparison of cultural industry research (including organizational structures and the expressive potential of cultural products) and historical and sociological analyses of anime as both a media product and (specifically through government programs like “Cool Japan”) a cultural export.

Anime is also used to illustrate the cultural impact media products have on individual and collective identities as consistent with the interests and questions of media anthropology: i.e. “how media enable or challenge the workings of power” (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002, 3). This includes questions related to who the focus should be when analyzing this power, the “producers, guided by capitalist interests... or the activities of the audiences that reinterpret multivalent texts” (Condry 2009, 143). I argue here that the binary between producers and consumers is less stringent within cultural industries, as the creation of products tends to be a reciprocal relationship. That

is, products released are appropriated and reimagined by consumers and the creative energies and movements that flow from them are reinvested into the cultural industries, further influencing the future products to come.

Outline of the Thesis

The chapters that follow discuss the main topics of this work. Chapter One: A Brief History of Japanese Animation, explores the medium of Japanese anime by attempting to define its status as a media product, as well as its cultural conception inside and outside of Japan. I provide here a historical analysis of the development of Japanese animation starting with the early days of cinema imports to Japan, followed by the use of animation as a propaganda tool during Japan's pre-war militarization, and finally anime as an entertainment export, highlighting specific anime titles and innovations that are commonly observed as developing anime into its contemporary form.

Chapter Two: Pop Culture Diplomacy covers Japan's sociological rise as a country known for pop culture goods, beginning with Japan's postwar industrial economy from the 1960s to the 1990s. I explain the cultural significance behind Japan's rising middle-class and the work organization skills built on by a division of labor within the Japanese family structure. Followed by the collapse of Japan's formally prosperous "salaryman" (the "working man" provider of the Japanese family) lifestyle during the 1990s and early 2000s, as Japanese companies in the manufacturing industry began to lose their competitive edge in the global economy. Followed by a politically-backed shift to pursue new entrepreneurial businesses in the creative arts and technology industries, eventually forming into a global strategy of nation branding built around popular culture

products, like anime and manga, that later became a method of cultural diplomacy known as “Cool Japan.”

Chapters Three: Cultural Industries and Four: Cultural Products as Symbols delve further into conceptions of cultural products. Chapter three focuses on globalized methods of production within cultural industries, for example, TV shows and movies, and compares them to anime as a media product similarly produced and made available similar to other foreign forms of media entertainment. This illustrates anime’s place as representative of Japanese culture and simultaneously a significant transnational product. Chapter four discusses the potential for cultural products to serve as symbols for personal, cultural, and national identity. Here, I critique the aspects of “ownership,” or more aptly, right over expression, of anime as a cultural product. Specifically, I highlight an (arguably) more intimate form of “ownership” as displayed by fan communities who partake in anime as a form of global popular culture.

Lastly, in the Conclusion: Who Owns Anime?, I conclude by using data gathered from a qualitative survey to show how some fans view the cultural distinction of anime. I also propose a less hierarchical chain of “ownership” of anime, as well as other cultural products that are consumed on a global scale. I argue here that cultural products, whether utilized for personal, cultural or national identity confirmation have become more difficult as something over which it is possible to claim authority. It is important to note that while this work includes mediation of the issue of “ownership” of anime as a cultural product, the goal is not to provide a definitive claim about the cultural distinctiveness of anime, but to investigate the issue of why products like anime can be culturally distinct.

CHAPTER ONE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE ANIMATION

The term “anime” commonly refers to animated feature films and television shows originating from Japan. However, this definition fails to account for the cultural interpretation of what is regarded generally as animation and what is, more specifically, Japanese animation. In Japan, anime is used as a term that applies to all animated works worldwide (Condry 2013), thus, American or French animated shows like *South Park* or *The Adventures of Tintin* would be considered “anime” in Japan. While the terms “Japanese anime” or “Japanimation” may be used to specifically connote a Japanese national origin of an animated work, the distinction of “anime” in foreign contexts, like the U.S. or European countries, often only applies to works originating in Japan. Furthermore, the term anime was not coined until the mid-twentieth century, where it was preceded by other designations in Japan including: *dekobō shin gachō* (mischievous new pictures), *dōga* (moving pictures), and *manga-eiga* (cartoon films) (Clements 2013, 1).

Foreign media and reviewers alike are often quick to cast Japanese anime as being a genre – typically featuring sci-fi or erotic sub-genres – but anime itself is not a genre, nor is it limited to a certain set of genres. While some of the most prolific anime titles may center on giant robots or panty shots from scantily-clad girls, the sheer number of genres encapsulated by the medium, is as expansive as other films and TV shows;

ranging from stories of romance, comedy, action, fantasy adventure, mystery, cooking, sports, drama, and even slice-of-life stories portraying the normal (and not so normal) lives of teens.

From a Japanese historical context, it is similarly limiting to merely consider works produced on celluloid film and contemporary digital technologies to be the only forms of Japanese animation. The term “animation” simply means to give the illusion of life-like motion to a still image. Thus, older means of storytelling and entertainment appearing throughout Japanese history, such as stop-motion, clay animation, and shadow puppetry also fall into the category of animation. The Association of Japanese Animations even considers tasks such as the localization of foreign animated films into Japanese as included in the process of making Japanese animation, despite the content not being domestically produced (Clements 2013, 2). These antiquated forms of entertainment, along with still popular media such as Japanese manga, serve as important precursors to a distinctly Japanese-styled animation.

Because of anime’s strong interdependence with the creative stories and characters developed in manga, the history of Japanese animation is, in many ways, also the history of Japan’s comic industry. Japan’s modern comic industry started in the 1920s when travelling Japanese reporters brought samples of American newspaper comics to Japan, such as George McManus’ *Bringing up Father* and Pat Sullivan’s *Felix the Cat*, which were then translated for local readers (Norris 2009). Eventually the *Asahi Graph*, a weekly pictorial magazine that ran from 1923 to 2000, began to serialize their own original comic strips, the first featuring a boy named Shōchan who went on adventures

with his pet squirrel in the comic, *Shōchan and the Squirrel*. The comic became a hit with city children and the commercialization of the comic strip began with the manufacture and sale of a cap resembling the one worn by the protagonist (Tsurumi 2014); evoking the sale of character goods related to Japanese popular culture today.

Although it is evident that Japanese comics owe some inspiration to their American counterparts, it is worth mentioning that Japan has its own history of cartoon-like drawings that date back over 900 years. Similar artistic styles resembling comics can be seen in Japan during the 12th century. The *Chōjū Giga* scrolls (Figure 1), or loosely “humorous pictures of animals,” is a set of four illustrated scrolls that depict monkeys, rabbits, and frogs frolicking in a meadow; bathing in rivers; wrestling; conducting ritualistic ceremonies and performing other distinctly human activities. The scrolls are believed to be the works of a Buddhist priest named Toba Sōjō, who could be considered Japan’s first cartoonist (Tsurumi 2014). Toba’s illustrations of animal merriment bear a strong resemblance to the animated works of Walt Disney and is often considered to be an example of early cartoon-like drawings appearing in Japan (Schodt 2014).



Figure 1. Panel from the first *Chōjū Giga* scroll. Depicting a monkey thief running from frog and rabbit pursuers.
 Source: Loo, Egan. "Studio Ghibli Animates Legendary Chōjū Giga Scrolls for Ad." Anime News Network, March 2016. <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2016-03-15/studio-ghibli-animates-legendary-choju-giga-scrolls-for-ad/.99820>.

With these precursors of Japanese animation in mind, one can further form a distinction between the animation made by and for the Japanese, which was typically for educational or institutional purposes, and the newer media form of “anime,” which also originates from Japan, but is substantially more entertainment-oriented and is marketed overseas to foreign consumers as well. The progression from the older Japanese animations to the global product of anime has been marked by certain periodic ruptures and “revolutions” that radically transformed the media product (Clements 2013), as these shifting modes were often being brought about by newer technologies, delivery systems, and cultural contexts.

1.1 Japanese Animation

Sideshows and Vaudeville. Arguably, the history of animation did not start in the cinema but was instead formed as an offshoot of classic sideshows and vaudeville acts

which later birthed characters like Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, and Popeye from the personalities of the performers (Condry 2013, 98). Japanese vaudeville acts such as magic-lantern shows and *kamishibai* (paper theatre) played a similar role in establishing the anime industry. The “magic-lantern,” dating as far back as 1696, was an early form of optical projector that used two thin sheets of glass and a transparent, painted slide to project a still image onto a wall or screen. Notably, in 1803, Japanese innovations afforded enhanced novelty to these performances. The original European lantern was made from metal which rendered them difficult to carry, however, Japanese practitioners developed lighter models made from paulownia wood, allowing the Japanese to incorporate motion into their lantern shows (Clements 2013, 21). This often involved several lantern practitioners darting behind a screen, each projecting a character that appeared to move and interact with one another as shadow puppets.

Other forms of sideshows included the picture-card storytelling of *kamishibai*. These cheaply produced, outdoor shows involved displaying illustrated picture cards placed on a miniature-theatre and accompanied by a storyteller who would narrate the drawings to the viewing audience (Norris 2009). Illustrations were often limited to only a few cards, which meant that actions had to be drawn using as few frames as possible. The modern incarnation of *kamishibai* does not date nearly as far back as magic-lantern shows, with the height of its popularity being from the 1930-50s; co-existing with early cinema in Japan. However, this miniature stage performance’s lack of text and use of traditions of pictorial storytelling is reminiscent of the previously mentioned *Chōjū Giga* scrolls.

The advent of silent film imports to Japan in the early twentieth century also introduced a new sort of sideshow attraction accompanying the feature film; the use of a master of ceremonies or *benshi*. These performers set the context of the film and supplied their own live commentary and interpretations to the viewing audience. Intertitles were largely absent from films in Japan before 1920, making it necessary for an interpreter to help guide the audience in matters such as content of upcoming films and any foreign behaviors not understood by the local Japanese audiences (Clements 2013). Far from being ordinary narrators, *benshi* performances drew in nearly as many crowds as the film itself by supplying humorous portrayals in the voicing of actors on the screen and sometimes creating a third-dimension for the audience by dressing as the characters featured in the films. In this context, *benshi* can be considered the predecessor to the modern-day voice actor or *seiyū* in animated works. For many fans of contemporary anime, it is the actors who bring fictional characters to life.

Early imported cartoons. The first public screenings of animated films in Japan did not come from domestic artists or industries but from foreign productions originating mostly from the U.S. and France. It is somewhat difficult, however, to determine exactly which animated films first appeared in early Japanese cinemas, as many films exhibited were often just a random assortment of reels that Japanese distributors were able to obtain and were made more difficult to identify due to the lack of records or promotions describing the films. Moreover, the novelty of the moving pictures during this time was usually deemed more noteworthy than the actual content presented, leaving viewers with little recollection of the narratives portrayed in the film.

An unidentified film with the Japanese title *Kimyō-naru Bōrudo* (*The Board Becomes Strange*), potentially identifiable as Stuart Blackton's *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906), may have been the first appearance of cartoons airing in Japanese cinema at Tokyo's Yachiyo-kan theatre during 1907. A few years later, in 1912, another film described as a cartoon, *Nipparu no Henkei* (*The Nipper's Transformations*), aired at Tokyo's Teikoku-kan theatre and was thought to be a retitling of Émile Cohl's *Les Exploits de feu follet* (1911, *Will-o-the-wisp's Exploits*) (Clements 2013, 23). Initially animated works only served as a minor part of the early cinema attraction (usually only running for three to four minutes) and were played alongside other films and news reels.

Early animated films like the above are classified contemporarily as *dekobō shin gachō* (mischievous new pictures), though there is some confusion over the exact relationship of these films to each other. The Japanese term *dekobō* can be translated as “mischievous” which may connect to the surrealist content of Emile Cohl's collection of films, although, the suffix *-bō* in Japanese could also refer to a boy's name. Further, when these films were, initially in release, patrons might have mistaken this series of unrelated films as the ongoing adventures of a non-existent character known as “Kid Deko,” thought to be a mischievous young boy (Clements 2013, 23-24).

Censorship of films. With the influx of foreign films imported to Japan, increasingly available to a large audience, a moral panic ensued among the authorities concerned with maintaining social order. For example, during the Taisho period (1912-26) labor unions were formed in response to the poor work conditions of Japan's new urban poor, while the Japan Communist Party, formed in 1921 adopted socialist

ideologies from overseas texts which they found useful for articulating their concerns for social justice of workers (Mouer 2009).

In addition, the growing popularity of “Kid Deko” films among juveniles especially worried authorities, particularly those of the Ministry of Education, which believed that children’s minds were being tainted by messages promoting mischief, theft, and disrespect for the state. The French film *Zigomar* (1911) was one example of foreign films that were deemed dangerously influential to impressionable Japanese youth. The story follows the escapades of a French master-thief and was originally shelved by Japanese film distributors, apparently for glorifying criminal acts such as larceny. After finally being released to the public, the film achieved a surprising box office success. By 1912, Japanese newspapers began to report that children were playfully imitating the criminal behavior as shown in the film and went on to imply that other film narratives could be equally detrimental to youths (Clements 2013).

As concerns continued to grow around the corrupting influence of motion pictures, the enforcement of the 1917 Tokyo Moving Pictures Entertainment Industry Control Regulations stipulated new rules in the presentation of state-approved films. Municipal police stations now had the power to censure films; there was also a greater emphasis placed on age and gender of audience members and what films were deemed appropriate for them to view; and oddly enough even the *benshi* were increasingly being regulated, as authorities believed their live interpretations had too much influence on the public (Clements 2013). There was thus a growing concern among certain agencies of the Japanese government that imported films were negatively influencing citizens.

Eventually this led to the regulation of the Japanese film industry and the overall repression of ideology deemed harmful to the state. As a result, Japanese cinema had to strike a balance between the agencies of the production staff and the government regulations. Completed films that failed to meet the standards of the authority figures were effectively blocked from Japanese audiences. Needless to say, the availability of imported children-friendly films, including animated works, fell drastically until the mid-1920s.

Early Japanese Cartoons

Early records of domestically produced animations in Japan are complicated by aspiring Japanese animators having relatively little knowledge of how these films were made. Often the only available frame of reference were speculations about techniques used in imported animations. French cartoonists, like Emile Cohl, gained popularity for animated works that, at first glance, seemed to be drawn using white chalk on a blackboard. This technique was emulated by a Japanese animator, Shimokawa Ōten, who also attempted to produce animated films using similar methods, “First I drew pictures in succession with white chalk on a blackboard... When I wanted to move a character’s hand, I erased that part and redrew it” (Yamaguchi and Watanabe 1977, quoted in Clements 2013, 25). However, the techniques were much more complex than they seemed. Cohl’s works, unknown to Shimokawa, were made using India ink on white rice paper, then were traced and retraced on a light box and then developed using a reverse negative to create white lines on a black background (Clements 2013, 24).

Instructional and educational animations. Prior to 1917 most animated works produced by Japanese animators were narrative-oriented films, but due to increasing government regulations it became more difficult to work and profit in animation as a medium. It is important to note that Japanese government agencies were not wholly anti-film, but they foresaw the great potential it had to influence audiences for good and ill, and preferred it to be used *for* the government's interests. It was this loophole that allowed the Japanese animator, Kitayama Seitarō, to produce more lucrative animations for educational and instructional purposes rather than simply for entertainment.

Kitayama had previously made his debut into films through designing graphics and “trick shots” (camera effects) for live action productions before moving into fully animated films by adapting Japanese folklore stories such as *Urashima Tarō* (1918), *Shita-Kiri Suzume* (1918, *The Cut-Tongue Sparrow*) and *Kintarō* (1918). After obtaining a contract with the Ministry of Communications, the studio Nikkatsu, where Kitayama was employed, developed several public-information films utilizing animation (Clements 2013). The first film, *Itazura no Post* (1917, *Mischievous Post*), was commissioned by the Department of Postal Insurance and followed the (cartoonish) obstacles to a letter being safely delivered to its recipient. This was followed by another public-information film released in the same year, *Chokin no Susume* (*Recommendations for Your Savings*) which contrasted two characters, a wise man who saves his money and an irresponsible man who does not (31).

Kitayama's animations began a trend of government-sponsored animated films used to inform the public on proper ways for Japanese citizens to conduct themselves in

society, as desired by the authorities. Specifically, the Ministry of Education began to offer subsidies and incentives for animators willing to produce educational films that met the requirements of the government education system (Clements 2013, 40). These films comprised the main texts produced for the first 30 years of the Japanese animation industry. Although featuring cartoonish elements, these films were, notably, not intended for children, as they conveyed messages and instructions aimed at adult viewers.

However, later animated works commissioned by government and military agencies in Japan began to indoctrinate viewers into more serious issues, such as patriotism and attitudes towards non-Japanese Asians, and were targeted specifically at Japanese youth.

Foreign influences and modern stories. From the mid-1920s to 1930s a second generation of Japanese animators arose from newly refined production techniques and from the influence of Disney and Fleischer brothers' cartoons. Animated, American icons like Mickey Mouse and Betty Boop were considered hallmarks of success in animation, but this reception was hardly felt at the production end in the U.S. The influx of Disney and other animated works in the U.S. during the 1930s was "...a means of generating ticket sales and concession trades in the wake of the Great Depression" (Clements 2013, 36). The truth of the matter was that early Disney cartoons were hardly making back their production costs through cinema sales. While these cartoon legends would, eventually, etch their way into history as beloved childhood icons, their actual start was fraught with high production costs and little returns; but the Japanese did not know this.

Meanwhile, Japanese animators continued to produce works preaching educational and other public service-type messages, but due to the influence from foreign

animations the public face of cartoons was still based on narrative storytelling. At first, these narratives were often based on classic Japanese folktales such as Kitayama's adaptation of *Momotarō* (1918) and Ōfuji Noburō's *Kujira* (1927, *Whale*). Marketing Japanese animations in their traditionalist appearance was met with minor success abroad, mainly in France, but did not particularly interest domestic audiences who were already familiar with such stories. This prompted Japanese animators to start adapting modern stories and events into their narratives.

Japanese animated works soon began a discourse with American films, some imitating the tropes of animal merriment famous in Disney cartoons like Ōfuji's animated film *Kuro Nyago* (1928, *Black Cat*), featuring a cat that surprises humans in a forest by dancing for their amusement. Other animated works served as commentary for global events like the Olympic games, which Japan first joined in 1912. By the 1928 games, sports films had become a popular subject in Japanese live-action films, eventually spilling over into animated works as well. These included *Dōbutsu Olympic Taikai* (1928, *Animal Olympic Games*) and later on *Mabō no Dai Kyōsō* (1936, *Mabō's Big Race*). Through the medium of animation, Japanese and American works were able to interact in ways previously unseen in Japan's formally closed-off society. Although the environments were fictional, these films offered a unique experience for Japanese characters to interact with foreign media, sometimes literally, such as in the unlicensed cameo appearance of American cartoon characters Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Betty Boop, and Felix the Cat in *Mabō's Big Race* (Figure 2).

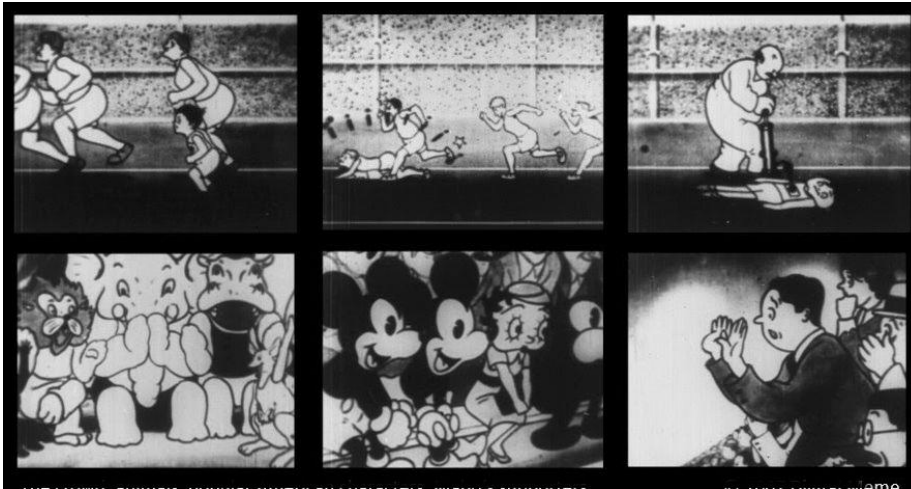


Figure 2. Crowd of supporters cheering for Mabō. Featuring animals, humans, and Western cartoon characters.
 Source: Hotes. Cathy Munroe. "Mabō's Big Race (マー坊の大競争, 1936)." Nishikata Film Review, March 2014.
<http://nishikataeiga.blogspot.com/2014/03/mabos-big-race-1936.html>.

15-Year War Animations

In historical studies of Japan, the “15-year war” is a term used to describe the increased militarization of Japan and the series of aggressions from 1931 to 1945 that ensued as the Empire of Japan attempted to subjugate East and Southeastern Asia. This militarization intensified into an attack on Pearl Harbor, a U.S. naval base stationed near Honolulu, Hawaii, on December 7th, 1941, followed by a formal declaration of war by the U.S. as both countries went down the path to world war.

War cartoons. Prior to the 15-year war period, domestic censorship and control of cultural content in Japan was already heightened. In 1925, the government passed the Public Security Preservation Law aimed at snuffing out any left-wing dissenters who could potentially harm the hegemony of the Japanese state or threaten the status quo of the “national identity” (*kokutai*) (Clements 2013, 43). The terminology of the law was

just vague enough for authorities to deem any references to Western cultural influences as harmful to public safety and morality, and violators were punished with a prison sentence for up to 10 years. The government prohibited the use of English words, banned “enemy music” such as jazz, and suppressed and arrested modern theatre troops and their audience members, which were typically dominated by leftist thinkers (Japan Society, n.d.).

Heavy restrictions were also placed on foreign films, with imports of newer films largely halted. As Japan edged closer to conflict, the domestic film industry was conscripted into the war effort by promoting the national policy through various propaganda films. These films were meant to steer public opinions towards the “right” path and to “correct” any allegedly harmful ideas inspired by foreign films. Circa 1930, there were numerous propaganda cartoons made that were intended to appeal to Japanese youth and create a euphoric reaction to the mandatory military enlistment.

Often these films would downplay the seriousness of war by presenting the violence through benign cartoon antics, such as a “machine gun that comedically rivets a door” or even the supposed humor derived from the grim portrayal of aerial dogfighting and flak batteries (Clements 2013, 54). Another method used to appeal to children was the regular use of anthropomorphic animal characters and protagonists, that, at times, either “valiantly” represented the Empire of Japan or were used as a metaphor to show the “inferiority” of lesser Asian races and Western enemies.

Sora no Momotarō (1931, *Momotarō of the Sky*) is one example of an animated work representing the Empire of Japan’s concern for territorial politics. The narrative

played out as a simple story of good vs. evil in which the protagonist Momotarō (a modern reinterpretation of the character from the classic Japanese folktale), along with his animal companions, the monkey, pheasant and dog (as in the classic story), righteously decide to protect the seals and penguins of the South Sea islands from a “ghastly eagle” (Clements 2013, 54). The implied political message of this cartoon was that the Southern Asian islands and inhabitants would be under Japan’s control and needed protection from the invasion of a dreaded (American) eagle.

It is significant that the inhabitants of the South Seas are imagined as weak and vulnerable seals and penguins, “needing” Japan’s protection as agents of pan-Asian goodwill. Additionally, while the Japanese are mainly represented through the human Momotarō, they are also portrayed through the animal characters of the monkey, pheasant and dog which, according to the tale of *Momotarō*, are brave and strong fighters capable of defeating *oni* (ogres), giant horned monsters carrying iron clubs. These powerful and noble animals of traditional Japanese culture contrasted greatly with the weaker (Asian) animals and the villainous representation of America by the “ghastly eagle.”

Many other animated films during the 15-year war played out similar messages of Japanese patriotism and support for the war through cartoonish tropes and characterizations of the enemy. The Japanese character Momotarō was routinely cast as a protagonist in these works, most likely due to his status as a hero from traditional Japanese folklore; providing an easily identifiable character to symbolize Japan. Some of these films also denigrated foreign media figures. For example, the aforementioned *Mabō’s Big Race* (1936) which featured American icons like Mickey Mouse and Betty

Boop cheering for Japan during the 1936 Berlin Olympics (see Figure 2 above).

Additionally, *Sora no Arawashi* (1938, *Sky Eagles*) had animal pilots shooting down a ghostly visage of the enemy's media icons, in this instance represented by the cartoon character Popeye (Figure 3).

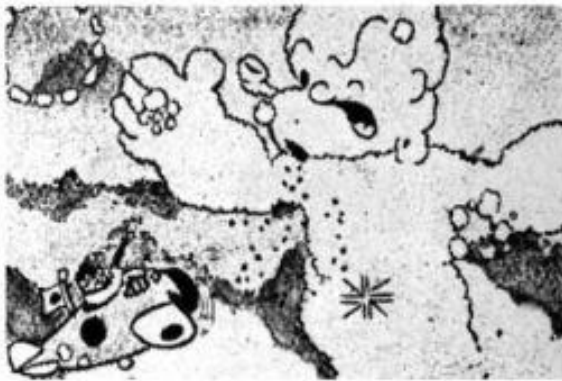


Figure 3. Japanese pilots shooting down Popeye.

Source: Clements, Jonathon. *Anime: A History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

What was meant to be the ultimate of Japanese propaganda cartoons during this period, however, was a film, commissioned by the Navy Ministry Public Affairs Office and sponsored by the Ministry of the Navy; *Momotarō no Umiwashi* (1943, *Momotarō's Sea Eagles*). Directed by Seo Mitsuyo and animated by the Geijutsu Eiga-sha film company, the film was allocated a 200,000-yen production budget and was expected to be completed within three months (Clements 2013). The production staff estimated the project would take between six to seven months to finish, but this original timeline was extended due to critically low staffing available. As it turned out most of the work was

animated by Seo and his assistant Mochinaga Tadahito, because of the damage from the Tokyo air raids occurring eleven months before the premier.

The story was, once again, set around the iconic Japanese character Momotarō (Figure 4) who led not just a small team of animals, but a large battalion of monkey, dog, and pheasant fighter pilots, along with a group of rabbits serving as the maintenance crew for the air forces. Like the classic tale, Momotarō is leading a sneak attack on Demon Island, specifically targeting their naval forces in this iteration in a direct reference to the then recent Pearl Harbor attack. Momotarō, himself, takes a much less active role in combat in this film and is mainly seen giving impassioned speeches to the animal fighters before their raid; perhaps demonstrating his divine authority to command the soldiers just as the actual superior officers did under the rule of the Japanese emperor. In a much less subtle reference to the actual enemy in the film, a character resembling Bluto from the Popeye cartoons, makes an appearance near the halfway mark as a drunken U.S. naval sailor.



Figure 4. Top: Momotarō commanding his animal forces. Bottom: Original character Bluto from Popeye cartoons (left) and the "demon" U.S. sailor (right).

Source: Hotes, Cathy Munroe. "Momotarō's Sea Eagle (桃太郎の海鷲, 1942)." Nishikata Film Review, October 2011. <http://nishikataeiga.blogspot.com/2011/10/momotaros-sea-eagle-1942.html>.

The film earned wide praise from Japanese audiences during this period. Earning over three times the production cost in the box office and with a reported audience of over 1 million; the film was even aired for audiences in certain Japanese colonies. However, this success was mostly fueled by compulsory school outings, in which school children were required to watch the film as a part of their state defined education curriculum (Clements 2013). The hype for *Momotarō's Sea Eagles* was also exaggerated due to the claim that it was Japan's first feature length animated film; a claim seriously questioned by Japanese media reviewers and critics e.g. Clements (2013) who sees the

film's "feature length" status as nothing more than militarist bravado meant to impart legitimacy to the film's significance.

Nonetheless, the film was technically a success among (captive) audiences. The director Seo even went on to create a sequel, *Momotarō Umi no Shinpei* (1945, *Momotarō's Divine Sea Warriors*). Critics like Clements (2013, 64) argue that the sequel was the superior film: "better animated, better written, far more entertaining and (disturbingly) boasting a more persuasive propaganda message." However, *Momotarō's Sea Eagles* remained the more successful of the two films as the sequel was released in the closing days of the war with many Japanese cities being devastated from aerial bombings, leaving few citizens able to attend the film.

It is worth noting that American media also participated in similar types of propaganda during World War II. Notably, Disney cartoon-shorts starring Donald Duck, perhaps selected for his characterization as a sailor, cartoons such as *The New Spirit* (1942) featured similar instructional messages for how Americans could support the war effort, in this case by buying war bonds. Along with more directly confrontational stories featuring iconic American comic book characters like Superman and Wonder Woman defeating Japanese soldiers who were often portrayed as stereotypically Asian, i.e. small, "yellow" men with squinty eyes (Reiley 2014).

Occupation censorship and influences. Following Japan's surrender, more than 350,000 U.S. personnel were stationed throughout Japan as a part of the Allied occupation led by American General Douglas MacArthur. The occupation was meant to help rehabilitate the war-weary Japanese citizens and to dismantle the former imperial

forces, while also punishing war criminals. A variety of messages were presented to the Japanese through American media censorship, particularly concerning the history and incitements for war. Specifically, the Allied forces insisted that the Japanese not refer to the war period as the Great East Asia War (*Dai Tōa Sensō*) but instead as the Pacific War, re-scripting “the act of aggression and hence the crime of war along America-centric lines,” i.e. the attack on Pearl Harbor (Clements 2013). This effectively diminished the significance of the aggressions and conflicts that occurred in East and South East Asia where more of the fighting actually took place (Japan Society, n.d.).

Animators who took part in propaganda production held a complicated status in the Allied forces’ definition of “war criminals.” The original rationalization stipulated that “the creation of propaganda is a natural by-product of war” (Kushner 2006, quoted in Clements 2013, 79) and that those who worked on such activities would not be considered war criminals. However, complaints from newly liberated Japanese leftists demanded the expulsion from all sectors of Japanese industries anyone involved with wartime associations; which over the 15 years of war, included a large number of people. Thus, the Allied Command developed a hierarchical ranking of the most serious of war criminals in the film industry. Those who actively incited war through media content (e.g. high-ranking producers and directors) were typically expelled from the film business permanently, while lower ranked producers, directors and animators generally went unpunished or were placed on temporary suspension (Clements 2013).

Despite producing intentionally manipulative content many Japanese citizens working in the film industry during this time were doing so as a form of draft dodging;

choosing to make such content in lieu of fighting, killing, and, most likely, dying for their country. There is reasonable doubt that not all of the production staff for these works actively believed in the messages they were imparting to the public, some animators such as Mochinaga Tadahito, (*Momotarō's Sea Eagles* above), faced great moral dilemmas which he expressed in his memoirs: "I heard that many youths volunteered for the flying corps and that while they were on duty they died on air raids. I wonder whether the film that we made influenced their decision to volunteer... I thought, in the future I only wished to make a film that would *benefit* the young, difficult though that might be" (Clements 2013, 64).

Yet, other animators expressed feelings of remorse for their lost works which were destroyed by the occupation authorities. In his autobiography the animator Ushio Sōji wrote: "Anything reminiscent of the wartime era, anything that reeked of connections to the military, was either shredded or burned and buried... I was disconsolate when I heard that films I had put my heart into, and animation I had completed with new technology, these treasures had been buried deep in a pit" (Clements 2013, 68).

The Allied occupation took a more serious toll on the revitalization of Japan's animation industry which experienced serious threats from lack of revenue which had previously been sponsored and funded by the government, plus an overwhelming surplus of animators who returned to their jobs and attempted to re-enter the industry after enlistment or liberation from prisons for previously defying the imperial authorities. Moreover, the restriction on foreign media content ended and a flooding of imported

animations, mostly works from the Disney studio, became widely available to Japanese citizens during the occupation period; largely preventing Japanese animations from building an audience.

Thus, Japanese animators competing with more advanced, colored Disney films were forced to seek other means of getting their work out to the public. Many animators shifted from working in cinema productions to creating content for the, at the time, growing television market. Specifically, animators made cartoon advertisements which was well suited for animated works, as they demanded eye-catching, distinctive and memorable images (Clements 2013, 85). For instance, a popular ad for the Asahi brewery, *Beer Mukashi-mukashi* (1956, *Beer through the Ages*), was a 12-minute compilation of animated ads demarcating the history of beer worldwide concluding with its arrival in Japan. This ad was created by numerous animators utilizing an assortment of animation techniques, including stop motion from Mochinaga and cel animation from Ōfuji Noburō. The shift to television would eventually become the main home for contemporary Japanese anime.

1.2 Contemporary Japanese Anime

From the latter half of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, the medium of anime developed gradually over time as the industry learned to cope without government sponsorship for production while the key to Japanese animations survival hinged on migrating from cinema to television broadcasts, though this transition was by no means a smooth process. Through much trials and error, certain anime series and production companies withstood the economic pressures and intensive workloads and are

now commonly referred to as revolutionary moments that defined contemporary anime. The following four anime series illustrate how production techniques, marketing tie-ins, and motivated anime fans have come to shape the modern industry.

Tetsuwan Atomu (1963, Astro Boy). Tezuka Osamu (1928-1989) was born in Toyonaka city in the Osaka Prefecture. Raised by a tech-savvy father who owned a private projector and film reels during the early days of cinema Tezuka early on had an affinity for film, especially for Disney cartoons (Clements 2013, 43). Having lived through both the militarization of Japan and the nation's subsequent defeat, Tezuka grew to detest war and the belligerent nationalism that characterized his young adulthood (Vollmar 2014, 171). By the end of the war, Tezuka attended medical school but could not contain his underlying passion for drawing and soon opted to leave medicine to become a Japanese manga artist (*mangaka*).

Tezuka's first manga *Astro Boy* (1952) was about a powerful robot boy with an acute sense of justice. Seizing on his feelings of social malaise during the postwar occupation while also featuring art and stories evoking futurism and the hope for a better tomorrow, Tezuka managed to etch a name for himself as a successful *mangaka* and by the 1960s he began to diversify into animation (Vollmar 2014). Working on his first feature film, *Saiyuki* (1960), with the Tōei Dōga animation studio Tezuka was tasked with creating the storyboards for the film but was unsatisfied with the amount of creative control he could exert over the project.

Compared to his laxer manga background, where he largely made his own deadlines, Tezuka's time at Tōei felt like being a minor cog in a greater machine. To

reclaim control over his work, Tezuka established an animation division to his pre-existing comic company and soon completely rebranded into the animation studio Mushi Productions in 1961 (Clements 2013). Tezuka started out hopeful about his ability to produce quality animation with his studio's first work *Aru no Machikado no Monogatari* (1962, *Tales from a Certain Street Corner*) but after a series of unwise financial decisions and a mere 550,000 yen per 30-minute episode to produce his *Astro Boy* adaptation (Mori 2011) Tezuka was forced to offset his lack of funds through limited animation techniques reminiscent of Hanna-Barbera cartoons from the U.S.

Representative techniques of Tezuka's animation style included: image banking or the recycling of commonly used cels such as landscapes and character poses; sliding backgrounds to give the impression of movement; and using still images where animation wasn't required, sometimes a single frame being stretched for a whole three seconds (Condry 2013; Clements 2013). These tricks were used to make his animation on time and on budget, while not personally developed by Tezuka himself. These techniques became a staple of television anime that have now been refined into the modern techniques and famous visual elements for which anime is known.

Due to critically low financing, Tezuka was also forced to use merchandising and foreign sales to support his animations. The U.S. release of *Astro Boy* in 1963 became a notable instance of early Japanese popular culture exported to the West. However, the Japanese origin of the show was kept discreet due to lingering memories of the two countries at war. As such, Tezuka was encouraged to de-nationalize the show by removing any Japanese imagery or written language, which was somewhat easier to do

given the show's "placeless" sci-fi setting (Clements 2013, 124). This removal of openly Japanese elements later became a common market strategy in contemporary anime to increase the exportability of Japanese animation. Although Tezuka's animations enjoyed wide success among domestic and overseas audiences, his business model had become too unstable and Mushi Productions was shut down in 1973.

Kidō Senshi Gandamu (1979, Mobile Suit Gundam). The *Gundam* series is a sci-fi franchise created by the animation studio Sunrise that features giant, rideable robots called Gundam. The giant robot or mecha genre partly evolved from previous robot themed anime, including *Astro Boy*, and growing appreciation for sci-fi works during the 1970s, including space epics like the Japanese series and film *Uchu Senkan Yamato* (1974, *Space Battleship Yamato*) and the American film *Star Wars* (1977) (Condry 2013). The mecha genre's development is seen as a gradual shift started by older robot anime series that featured autonomous robots, to remote-controlled, and lastly to a piloted machine (Clements 2013, 150). The series *Mazinger Z* (1972) is often considered the first example of a piloted bipedal robot appearing in anime. Giant robots in anime initially started as a tie-in for toy companies seeking to sell toys to boys, with the content of the show generally not mattering as much as the "cool" robot designs to appeal to kids.

The first of the *Gundam* anime franchise, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, became notable for its more mature themed stories and realistic depictions of characters faced with war. Prior robot series intended for children, also known as "Super Robots," tended to feature a bright and cheerful hero able to resolve any conflict by the end of the 30-minute show.

In contrast *Gundam* was classified as a “Real Robot” anime, often aimed at older teens and adults and featured complex storylines that could drag on for multiple episodes (Condry 2013, 126). *Gundam* was originally designed for children in mind, as the toy company Clover sponsored the show to sell its merchandise, but the complex and mature plots failed to appeal to children and the show was dropped by Clover after 10 months of a full year contract.

Following the show’s dismissal, the toy company Bandai made a deal for the rights to make plastic models out of the *Gundam* robots, recognizing that there was a current trend in the sci-fi genre among older demographics in Japan. The plastic models, later referred to as *GunPla*, were a huge success and re-energized interest in the *Gundam* franchise which continues to release newer iterations to the present. Even though the series failed with its intended young audience the mature stories and themes helped solidify the notion that “real” anime was that which appealed to adults, with the original *Gundam* series representing a generational shift among anime fans (Condry 2013).

Shinseiki Evangerion (1995, Neon Genesis Evangelion). The formation of studio Gainax is an instance of simple fandom turned innovation. The animation studio was originally formed by a group of sci-fi fans who bonded over their shared interest of Japanese and Western-based popular culture, particularly films like *Star Wars* and anime series such as *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*. Takeda Yasuhiro, one of the founders of Gainax, met another co-founder, Okada Toshio, at a sci-fi convention where they quickly bonded over their self-proclaimed “geeky” interests (Condry 2013, 128). Along with other members that would go on to found Gainax, Takeda and Okada

began to shift from being simple attendees to being organizers of their own fan conventions, eventually participating in Daicon III in Osaka in 1981.

In an effort to improve the spectacle of their convention, the group decided to commission a short-animated film for the opening ceremony subsequently meeting Anno Hideaki and Yamaga Hiroyuki, two aspiring art students from the Osaka University of the Arts, in the process (Condry 2013), thus adding more members for their eventual debut as an animation studio. Although the film produced was underfunded and lacked proper animation tools, it was still enjoyed by the convention attendees for its unique plot in which a young girl on a quest to water a daikon (radish), had to fight hordes of robots, monsters, and spaceships along the way. When the time came for Daicon IV in 1983 the group had saved up enough funds from selling fan-made merchandise at conventions, to produce a new film in the Daicon series. The opening animation for Daicon IV (Figure 5) was much longer and the animation more elaborate, impressing even professional animators by its quality (Condry 2013, 131).



Figure 5. Frame from Daicon IV animation.
Source: YouTube video. “DAICON IV Opening Animation.” Accessed April 26, 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-840keiiFDE>.

The creative collaboration exhibited by this group led them further down the path of becoming one of the most recognized animation studios in Japan. Setting their sights on full animation, the studio initially produced various animated films, videogames, and other anime related merchandise. But it wasn't until 1995 that Gainax made its own hit anime, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, that was quite literally described as a social phenomenon, "triggering a tsunami of Web shrines, fan clubs, and commentary across the entire planet" (Redmond 2014, 268).

Neon Genesis Evangelion became proof positive of the fans ability to turn hobbies into a successful business. Directed by Anno, the series follows the invasion of Earth by strange aliens known as "angels," that can only be defeated by giant robots called Evangelions that in turn can only be piloted by a group of prepubescent youth. The series is known for its coming of age themes, strong female characters, and its references to geopolitical issues primarily concerning Cold War-era politics (Redmond 2014). In the wake of the series success, a new appreciation was formed for anime to address real-world issues through poignant storytelling, thus a prominent example of what fans regarded as "serious" anime. This appreciation was also expanding westward, further influencing anime's global proliferation.

Pokémon (1997). At present *Pokémon* is recognized in much of the world. The variously cute, ugly, and powerful Pocket Monsters invaded the globe and the hearts of any 8-year old with a Gameboy (myself included). The series was the brainchild of Tajiri Satoshi a videogame designer who wanted to create an original game based on his

childhood love of nature and hobby of bug collecting (Tobin 2004, 6). The first games, released by Nintendo in 1996, started with the initial goal of catching and training Pokémon to battle powerful Pokémon trainers known as Gym Leaders and then to face the even stronger members of the Elite Four and the regional Pokémon Champion, all in the pursuit of becoming a “Pokémon master.” The game also tasked the player with collecting all 150 Pokémon which could only be done by trading with friends with different versions of the game; intending to promote friendship and communication among players.

As the popularity of the game rose, a deal was made to adapt the game into a series of comics in the Japanese magazine *Koro Koro*. Following successful marketing of the franchise, a television series was then produced by TV Tokyo which remained successful until an incident causing over 700 Japanese children to experience seizures (from a sequence of flashing lights on the 38th episode) resulted in the show being temporarily pulled from the air (Clements 2013). In the meantime, Nintendo developed a marketing strategy with American media companies, including the anime distributor 4Kids entertainment, the Warner Brothers network, and the trading card producers Wizards of the Coast, to bring *Pokémon* products, in a localized form, to American children (Tobin 2004, 7).

The *Pokémon* franchise’s ever-growing supply of affiliated merchandise (Figure 6) became the basis of its business model. Basically, when a child grows tired of one iteration of the franchise there is a different, but overall similar, product available that can be consumed in a different media format. For instance, a child eventually grows tired of

their Pokémon game and decides to play the trading card game instead, after tiring of that, they can watch the anime which may motivate them to start playing the game once more. The beauty of *Pokémon* as a media product is that it can continually be enjoyed in any format due to the overarching virtual universe that encapsulates the series (Allison 2009). This model, widely used for future anime series, keeps fans engaged with stories, characters, and various forms of media products.



Figure 6. An assortment of *Pokémon* merchandise. Including trading cards, action figures, games, and stickers.
Source: Wikipedia. "Pokémon merchandise." Accessed April 26, 2018.
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pok%C3%A9mon_merchandise.jpg

Pokémon became a hallmark of success among anime series, and its eager consumption in foreign markets led to other anime series trying to copy its success through overseas licensors that produced English dubs of anime, assuming that success in

America is connected to global success (Clement 2013). American media companies were just as eager to buy up any Japanese titles they could get their hands on in the hopes of securing the next biggest craze (Daliot-Bul 2013). *Pokémon* also became an influential source of Japanese cultural capital. With the franchise's popularity spreading to global proportions, the Japanese government took notice of creative industries' potential as a viable market commodity (discussed more in next chapter).

Risk of essentializing. In Clement's book, *Anime: A History* (2013), he identifies contemporary examples of anime as of keen interest to scholars of Japanese popular culture. Because of this, these and other influential titles may be considered more significant than they were. For instance, discussing *Pokémon*'s success in hindsight makes it seem like every action Nintendo took to make the series popular was a success, even though this is greatly untrue as the series experienced numerous problems from issues concerning racist depictions, unsafe toys, religious imagery, and many more (Katsuno and Maret 2004; Tobin 2004; Yano 2004). Similarly, Tezuka is often regarded as a genius who essentially created contemporary anime; some referring to him as the Japanese Walt Disney. Other Japanese animators, however, have accused him of cheapening the Japanese animation industry, making it harder for companies to out compete his barebone production costs, including famed Japanese director and animator Miyazaki Hayao who, after Tezuka's death, described him as a hack with a lifelong envy for Walt Disney (Clements 2013, 117).

The important thing to remember is that while these titles are indeed highly influential examples of Japanese popular culture, these works are primarily indicative of

their times and are often viewed through nostalgic sentiment (Clements 2013). Japan's ever-changing culture continues to influence newer titles and genres of anime, while new generations latch onto future titles and inflate their significance. The trends are such that, those who continue to praise the "classics" will eventually fade into the periphery as the newer generation denigrates these works as outdated and overrated.

CHAPTER TWO: POP CULTURE DIPLOMACY

Prior to becoming well-known for pop culture icons like Hello Kitty and Pikachu, the Japanese state preferred more elite forms of cultural representation such as tea ceremonies and *Noh* theatre, classical Japanese music dramas based on traditional literature and folklore (Valaskivi 2013; Burgess 2015). After witnessing the global success of media products, in 2002 the Japanese government introduced a new national policy meant to reinvigorate the Japanese economy through creative industries; particularly media such as anime, manga, and videogames (Daliot-Bul 2009b). Later dubbed the “Cool Japan” initiative, the Japanese government used creative industries to elevate products like anime to national brand status. In part, this initiative was set in motion in the interest of softening Japan’s image overseas, and to promote better understanding of Japanese culture. The formation of the “Cool Japan” phenomenon began in the postwar period with Japan’s rise as an economic superpower.

2.1 Postwar Perspectives of Japanese Socioeconomics

After their defeat in World War II, Japan shifted from its imperialistic aspirations to an economy centered on industrial production. Japanese corporations gained a competitive edge in the global economy by improving upon Western products, such as cars and electronics, and then selling them back to foreign consumers for cheaper prices

(Colombo 2012). Japan achieved a reputation worldwide for mass producing high quality consumer electronics like VCRs, TVs and the Walkman. Technologies such as these became emblematic of Japan's burgeoning consumer culture, as Japanese citizens embraced a more Westernized middle-class lifestyle than seen in the prewar era.

Corporate Japan

Japan's corporate structure was preceded by the large family-run monopolies known as *zaibatsu*. These businesses were vertically integrated and controlled much of the economic wealth and resources throughout Imperial Japan. Patrilineal in nature, *zaibatsu* businesses were managed by a single family at the top which was passed down to a male heir each generation and depended on a close-knit group of workers forming 'feudal' outlooks, relationships and loyalties towards the controlling families (Mouer 2009). Following the end of the war these businesses were largely dismantled by U.S. occupied forces along with other institutions deemed as anti-democratic such as the Japanese military, the nobility, and the state system of education. However, this working structure was retained in Japan's postwar economy, albeit on a smaller scale as the individual family or *kazoku* became the main economic units supporting Japan.

The cultural significance of the family serving the nation started with the implementation of the Meiji Civil Code in 1896. Working towards modernization, the Japanese state enacted laws that administratively defined the family structure (Imamura 2009). These laws were meant to produce modern families that were both foreign inspired and deemed as acceptable by the Japanese state. Drawing from the traditional patrilineal household (*ie*) structure previously applied to the *samurai* class, the husband

acted as head of the household and was responsible for securing the family income; the wife oversaw the household and managed the finances; and children served as heirs and were responsible for caring for their parents in old age (Imamura 2009; Mouer 2009). The introduction of Japan's modern family structure emphasized the welfare of the family over the individual members, which in turn can be articulated as a collectivist ethos prioritizing the welfare of the nation over individual citizens (Kuwayama 2009).

Following the collapse of the *zaibatsu*, *keiretsu* firms became the corporate mediums linking working families with state-defined cultural ideology. *Keiretsu* are a series or subsidiary of interlocking businesses that are horizontally integrated through mutual stock ownership meant to ensure long-term stability and establish connections between companies producing similar products (Colombo 2012). These companies value the principle of social harmony, echoed from Japan's Confucian heritage and national ideology, believing that one must fulfill their societal obligations in order to repay the nurturance received from their parents and society (Rohlen 1974).

During the 1960s and 1970s, corporate life in Japan borrowed from the Japanese family structure. The father was the corporate breadwinner or "salaryman" (*sararīman*), expected and, in those years, commonly able to find long term or lifetime employment. The salaryman was socially defined by his work and ability to provide for his family (Allison 2013). The mother was a housewife but was also given the distinction of "education mama" (*kyōiku mama*) and served as both the caregiver as well as an educator for her children; which entailed everything from monitoring her child's studies to making nutritional *o-bento* lunch boxes (Allison 1991). Lastly, children were expected to become

“proper working adults” (*shakaijin*) by applying themselves to their studies and obtaining full-time employment after graduation.

The bond between businesses and working families was built on a reciprocal relationship of trust and loyalty. Mouer and Norris (2009) have identified three practices that illustrate the core features of corporate Japan’s managerial style. First, the promise of lifetime, or more aptly, long-term employment. Being employed with a company was, in a sense, a merging of households. Workers were ensured that the company would provide them with a stable income and they in turn would support the business through dedication to their jobs and patronage from family and friends (Rohlen 1974).

The second factor involved a seniority-based wage system focusing on age and merit that encouraged workers to stay employed with a company to secure increased benefits as time goes by. Workers were also expected to remain in their jobs till retirement, as changing jobs as in the American system was not socially acceptable because it was regarded as an act of disloyalty to the company.

Last of all, enterprise unions, i.e. labor union within a single firm or multi-firm rather than within an industry, developed. This meant that, as in a traditional Japanese household, it was the company’s responsibility to maintain the welfare of their members. Japanese companies were widely regarded as their own figurative communities in Japan, in which members strived towards similar goals of financial security and productivity-first ideology (Rohlen 1974; Mouer 2009).

Due to features like these, former Japanese Prime Minister Ohira Masayoshi once described the Japanese management style as being a more humane form of capitalism,

culturally distinct from the capitalism seen in Western societies (Allison 2013). This opinion illustrates a nationalistic sentiment that pervaded in the Japanese management style, as the success of Japan's corporations was often conflated with the prosperity of the Japanese state.

Social and economic changes led to a cultural change in Japan. Common habits and lifestyles emerged among laboring masses in urban Japan during the 1960s, including five and half day work weeks; moving to individually owned houses in the suburbs; commuting from considerable distances to school and work by train; high expectations for promotion within larger firms; greater value being placed on higher education; and a steady transition from school to permanent full-time employment (Rohlen 1974; Mouer 2009). The rising standard of living among Japan's burgeoning middle-class was taken as evidence that the Japanese economy (and nation) was thriving.

From Collectivist to Individualistic Culture

By the 1970s Japan was widely understood as a super stable society, given factors such as no involvement in wars or other military activity that disrupts the peace; little crime, permanent positions for workers until retirement (age 55), low divorce rates, and strong societal connections (Rohlen 1974; Allison 2013). Japan's remarkable recovery after World War II was thus partly due to its social economy based on a heteronormative, middle-class family structure mapped by a gendered division of labor.

It was also during this time, however, that a gradual shift began to occur in Japanese society. Concerns for maintaining the traditional family structure and prioritizing the group slowly gave way to a more immediate nuclear family unit and

individualistic care. As more Japanese workers moved from rural to urban areas, visits to hometowns and to family graves became less frequent. Notions of the *ie* household were becoming less central to the everyday lives of the postmodern Japanese citizen. Newer family burial sites were established closer to home and fewer children grew up with a sense of urgency that the family finances needed to be supplemented (Mouer 2009). This change from a collectivist towards a more individualistic culture can be attributed to Japan's rapid economic expansion and international pressure on cultural ideologies.

In the early postwar years, the salaryman lifestyle coexisted with other more traditional family types, usually centered around an heir to a fishing, agricultural, or small business household (Imamura 2009). Yet, as the Japanese economy continued to expand the salaryman lifestyle came to exemplify modernity and economic stability. Men wanted to be salarymen for job security. Women wanted to marry salarymen to be provided for and to live modern homes outside the restraint of their mother-in-law's tutelage; as was customary in the traditional family structure. However, disillusionment began to settle in around the salaryman lifestyle during the 1970s, stemming from the long work hours and little interaction with family and friends outside of the company.

Salarymen can be seen, and can see themselves, as overly dependent on companies for whom they work (Mouer 2009; Riley 2015; Aoki 2016). Employees' work and personal lives may blur together, as they routinely worked unpaid overtime and were encouraged to spend time outside of the workplace with work associates at company outings. After-work activities like drinking and dining with co-workers became social requirements for unwinding from occupational stress. Leisure activities were

administered on a senior-junior work associate hierarchy and were considered prerequisite for further promotions within a firm (Daliot-Bul 2009a). Subsequently, this resulted in workers becoming alienated from their families as they sacrificed their available time at home by working or at business events. Disdain for the salaryman lifestyle has even spread to foreign media through stories depicting Japanese men as working themselves to death from occupational stress leading to stroke, heart attack, or suicide (Sanger 1990; Clements 2012; Petroff 2017).

Although many of these are legitimate concerns about Japanese work life, these critiques often overshadow or exaggerate actual work conditions in Japan. In his ethnography examining the hierarchical work structure of the Japanese company, Rohlen (1974) acknowledges that workers may not completely adhere to company policies and ideologies but often still respect the labor power required to keep the company functioning, "...because the hierarchy is reciprocal and levels are interdependent, there is no reason to assume that it is inherently tyrannical or exploitative" (45). Related research by Allison (2013) also draws similar conclusions, showing that salarymen are often proud of their employment, as displayed through the exchange of business cards or *meishi*; introducing oneself by presenting affiliation and rank with a company. Nevertheless, there was a growing disconnect between generations in Japan about the ideal of the salaryman lifestyle.

Women's roles in Japan also began to change significantly from the end of World War II. The new Constitution drawn up by U.S. forces during the Allied occupation in 1947, gave Japanese women equality and the right to vote; yet, at the same time,

protective labor laws and gender-based employment still significantly impeded women's economic potential (Imamura 2009). As a result, many women remained as housewives and mothers as their primary societal roles. However, women were also becoming less bound to the traditional family structure, as changes to the Civil Code began a transition to a more Americanized nuclear family. Marriage was formally redefined as a union between individuals, rather than households, with both spouses as legal equals.

The rising standard of living during Japan's industrial economy also improved work opportunities for women, giving them a chance to work outside of the home. Jobs were usually minor roles in larger companies, such as clerks, receptionists, and other work only requiring general education and brief training. Women were also expected to leave their job either by the time they were married or from the birth of their first child, as their effectiveness as employees was believed to stabilize or diminish past their mid-twenties (Rohlen 1974), as they shifted to household duties; although some women continued to work outside the home past marriage and childbirth. Rising housing and education costs provided women with a rationale to continue working, i.e. seeking personal goals for employment while still adhering to familial roles given that women working to aid the family was socially acceptable (Imamura 2009).

Overall conservative views of the family structure never completely faded away from cultural life in Japan. Despite legal status as equals, women are still considered to marry 'out' and into her husband's family, meaning she also renounces the right to her family's inheritance and responsibility to care for her parents (Imamura 2009). It is important however, to take into account that legal reforms here and elsewhere are often

more effective in theory than in practice when seeking change in longstanding cultural mindsets and practices.

Japan in Recession

As stock and real estate prices continued to grow, the Japanese government became concerned with ballooning assets. Lenient corporate lending led to aggressive speculation in domestic stocks and real estate prices. Between 1985 and 1989, Japan's Nikkei stock index tripled, accounting for over a third of the world's stock market capitalization (Colombo 2012). The government attempted to intervene by deterring firms from obtaining loans but, eventually, Japan's miracle economy had finally given out and the economic bubble burst in 1991.

During this time, the Japanese economy began to lose its competitive edge in the international market as it experienced increased competition from other global manufacturing countries such as China and South Korea. The recession has been described by some as a period of social malaise, also known as Japan's "lost decade," in which many companies were downsized, restructured, and merged, and unemployment rose, primarily due to a drop in the hiring of full-time workers (Allison 2013). Other significant incidents during this time that contributed to the nationwide low morale included two events occurring in 1995. The first was the Hanshin earthquake that devastated the city of Kobe, and second the sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway by the doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo. Japanese citizens who previously endured the loss of a war and the humiliation of occupation, followed by a miraculous recovery and corporate

wealth were now blindsided by economic downturns and national tragedies; taking a toll on citizens' trust towards society, particularly towards the state and market forces.

On the other hand, while Japan's so-called "lost decade" was often cast as a time of tragedy and a diminishing of global influence, it can also be understood as a passing of the torch from the men who had built Japan's corporate culture to Japanese women and the younger generation of workers going into the millennium (Mouer 2009). This change promoted a cultural shift in Japan from Eastern collectivism to Westernized individualism.

State feminism. From the mid-1990s the Japanese government promoted the creation of various feminist inspired laws and welfare programs that provided women with more equal rights and job opportunities. This included paid leave for childcare, socialized healthcare for the elderly, and enhanced laws promoting a gender equal society (Kano 2011). However, the use of the phrase "gender equality" is notably absent from these laws, due to conservative complaints, and instead opts to using the term "gender free." The consequences of this designation caused a backlash among feminist groups who misconstrued the meaning "gender free" as eliminating the use of gendered terminology, while the actual intent was meant to be free from gender bias.

Youth work culture. By the 1990s, children who had grown up during the affluence of the 1970s and 1980s had developed a new work consciousness differing from the once prosperous corporate culture of the salaryman (Daliot-Bul 2009a), which in turn was part of generating a new worldview that values individualism, freedom, play, and the search for new identities other than the ones enforced by the hegemonic society.

Whether by choice or due to a lack of job opportunities, many Japanese youth (aged approximately from 15-25) began pursuing alternative lifestyles that deviated from Japan's corporate culture and the traditional cultural ideology. One such group known as *furita* (being an amalgamation of the English word "free" and the German word for worker, "*arbeiter*"), encouraged making a living by working part-time jobs instead of pursuing full-time employment (Daliot-Bul 2009a). The connotation of being "free" meant that these workers declared that they were able to choose, and change, jobs, thereby freeing themselves from the permanent obligation to company work and allowing them to pursue personal goals and interests (Allison 2009).

Another lifestyle among youth, vilified by the older generation as the "parasite single," is described as an able-bodied youth who lives off their parents' income while using any money earned themselves for entertainment and other non-essential expenses, such as clothing and traveling (Allison 2009, 99). Women are particularly ridiculed for this lifestyle as by their mid-twenties they are expected to be married and ready for children. In Japanese popular culture the designation of an unmarried woman past 30 is known as a "*makeinu*," literally a "loser dog." This is a reference to the columnist Sakai Junko's, *Makeinu no Toboe (The Distant Barking of Losing Dogs)* which is a self-mocking, yet at the same time, prideful, portrayal describing the author's and other single women's exploits when single and past marrying age in Tokyo (Ashby 2004).

Japan Embraces Neoliberalism. On April 26th, 2001, Koizumi Junichiro was elected Prime Minister of Japan. Koizumi seemed like an unlikely candidate as citizens, and even those within his own party, were wary about his calls for neoliberal reforms to

combat the recession. David Harvey (2005) argues that neoliberalism is a political strategy that, in the face of economic crisis, sets to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and restore the power to the capitalist elites. This is achieved by an institutional structure that favors private property rights, free markets, and free trade. All of these changes were pursued through Koizumi's policies as he pushed for smaller government, deregulation of labor policies, and individual responsibility through entrepreneurial businesses (Allison 2013).

Koizumi's call to deregulate labor, which expanded the length of contract work, have had lasting effects on the employment opportunities of Japanese citizens. Japanese women and youth were particularly affected by decreased job opportunities as they became unable to find full-time employment and thus took on part-time work instead. Annual wages for irregular workers in Japan, as of 2008, averages at 1,950,000 yen (\$20,712 USD) for men and 1,730,000 yen (\$18,375 USD) for women; earnings well below the poverty line (Allison 2013, 32). Deregulation of labor allowed companies to hire temporary workers to do the jobs of full-time employees while paying them at a fraction of the cost. This left many younger Japanese citizens disillusioned with the corporate lifestyle.

The other major reform proposed by Koizumi embraced entrepreneurship by citizens undertaking risk business ventures. This was meant to encourage citizens to become strong and independent, and to move away from their dependency on corporate jobs which were scarce at the time (Allison 2013). However, many people were nervous about risking their full-time careers, or the opportunity for a career, with only a faint hope

of becoming successful entrepreneurs. The unpopularity in entrepreneurship left many citizens either still clinging to the hopes of finding stable employment through corporate jobs or settling for part-time work and decreased wages.

2.2 Emergence of Japan's Pop Culture Industries

An important attribute defining Japan's economic heyday during the postwar era was the increasing presence of consumerism within Japanese society. Starting from the late 1950s more and more citizens were buying into modernity through household electronics. A source of humor in Japan during this period, was to change the definition of the Imperial "Three Sacred Treasures" from the sword, mirror, and jewel to the television, refrigerator, and washing machine. In 1958 only 7.8% of Japanese households owned a TV, 20.2% a washer, and 2.8% a refrigerator, but by 1966 this jumped to 95%, 78.1%, and 68.7%, respectively (Galbraith 2010, 213).

By the 1970s, living in an affluent time within an urban landscape produced a leisure boom amongst Japanese citizens. Originally, this leisure culture was articulated in the dominant public discourse as complementary to work life. Leisure activities were highly structured and were considered to promote "personal growth and socialization" (Daliot-Bul 2009a, 358). For instance, the after-work activities of the salaryman was much more oriented to team building and relaxation, rather than pleasure seeking. However, alongside this institutional form of leisure an alternative worldview defined more by hedonic pleasures was gaining popularity among Japanese youth.

Youth-Driven Consumerism

Pop culture items, i.e. products and activities such as fashion, toys, video games, and anime, relied more on an aesthetic, symbolic, or expressive function rather than strictly use-value, and were steadily gaining favor on the fringes of Japanese society. Between the 1970s and 1990s, Japanese youth had gradually become disillusioned with the rigidity of their everyday lives. Although, families during this time reaped the benefits of Japan's industrial economy, the overbearing societal expectations and inflexible family structure reproduced feelings of passivity and powerlessness among youth (Allison 2013). Through growing consumer culture, however, those who lacked power in this patriarchal society found new forms of self-definition and identity using pop culture goods.

For example, a prominent display of this youthful rebellion can be seen in the kitsch cuteness or "*kawaii*" craze started in the 1970s. According to Kinsella (1995), *kawaii* derives "from a term whose principle meaning was 'shy' or 'embarrassed' and secondary meanings were 'pathetic,' 'vulnerable,' 'darling,' 'lovable,' and 'small'" (221-222). From this definition it is unsurprising that *kawaii* became a term expressive of childhood. Imitating children became a notable form of self-expression among Japanese youth, mostly women, which in the 1980s escalated into teens dressing and acting like children as well. Taking lessons from these teenage producers of style, the fashion industry began to sell products modeled after children's clothing; such as frilly dresses and panties printed with cartoon characters.

Another example of Japanese youth breaking away from their societal roles can be seen in males embracing “girl’s culture” through manga and anime. In the late 1970s, a new type of manga emerged that centered on young female characters known as “*bishojo*,” meaning “beautiful girl,” which often had more character-driven plots than the typical action-oriented manga read by men. *Bishojo* manga continued to gain popularity as fans began to prefer works that stressed a cute aesthetic over realism. Some fans were so enamored of this genre that they soon began seeking out cute female characters in TV anime, such as the series *Magical Princess Minky Momo* (1992), which was intended for young girls but had a considerable adult male fanbase (Galbraith 2014).

Pop culture products and activities such as these were of considerable interest to the media, scholars, and cultural critics, as the Japanese population began to worry that hedonism and decadence were poisoning the minds of their youth. Wider media attention towards these products occurred in 1989 after the arrest of Miyazaki Tsutomu, who was convicted of the molestation and murder of four young girls. Investigations of Miyazaki’s residence revealed over 5,000 videotapes and a variety of manga in his possession, but of specific interest were the tapes’ recordings of horror movies, pornography, and anime (Galbraith 2010). Such a horrific incident fed into the Japanese population’s fears of a new generation of social deviants that were becoming detached from reality; largely thought to be because of an overconsumption of fictional media, such as anime and (unhealthy) manga.

Pop Culture Boom. In 1991 Nintendo released their revolutionary 16-bit gaming console, the Super Nintendo; 1995, the animation studio Gainax (see Chapter 1) achieved

international acclaim for their sci-fi series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*; and in 1997, Bandai's handheld digital pet, *Tamagotchi*, became one of the world's biggest toy fads of the 1990s. As the Japanese industrial economy was still reeling from the recession, creative industries proved to be some of the most rapidly growing businesses in Japan. Ironically, the recession may have been one of the greatest benefactors of the increased pursuit of pop culture industries, as it may have loosened the grip of the corporate hegemony that reigned over Japan's workforce, and lightened social stigma for aspiring entrepreneurs to experiment with creative industries such as art and technology (McGray 2002; Iwabuchi 2004).

Prior to the recession, the anime industry had already gained a small, but noticeable, favorability worldwide. Between the 1980s and 1990s, anime products specifically aimed at mature audiences were already being exported into the Anglophone markets, i.e. Katsuhiro Otomo's cyberpunk thriller *Akira* (1988), and were contributing to a sizeable portion of video sales (Clements 2013). In China, Japanese animation and manga widely appealed to youth following the airing of Tezuka's *Astro Boy* in 1980 on the state network China Central Television (Yang and Xu 2016). This popularity later inspired Chinese piracy of various manga and anime related products in the early 1990s.

2.3 “Cool Japan” as a Global Strategy

Circa the early 2000s, foreign media began to extol the popularity of Japanese popular culture seen in the trendiness of various arts, foods, and fashions originating from Japan, particularly as visible in success stories such as the media-mix sensation, *Pokémon*. American journalist Douglas McGray's (2002) article *Japan's Gross National*

Cool highlighted the idea of “national cool,” that is, a country’s knack for creating trendy culture as a tool for achieving various political and economic ends. Media stories like McGray’s turned out to be extremely influential in popularizing the term “Cool Japan” as well as in future government policies bent on linking the success of Japanese popular culture to the nation.

The establishment of the Strategic Council on Intellectual Property in 2002 by Prime Minister Koizumi signaled a shift from the manufacturing of hardware technologies like TVs and the Walkman to Japanese software that people could consume with such devices. Although certain Japanese companies like Sony and Toyota had become household names, it was often argued that Japanese exports lacked any defining cultural essence that imparted a creative imprint of the manufacturing nation (Iwabuchi 2002; 2004). In other words, although people were consuming Japanese products, foreign consumers often felt little connection to the country of origin. There was a worry that the Japanese nation was only seen as cunning imitators of the West rather than as innovators of consumer electronics.

The first policy outline drafted by the council stressed the goal of making Japan an intellectual property-based nation (Daliot-Bul 2009b). The term “intellectual property” was used in a broad sense, encapsulating fields such as technology, brands, and designs, as well as creative products like music, videogames, and animation. Koizumi became one of the first government officials to acknowledge the potential to capitalize on the popularity of popular culture in an address to the national Diet in 2003: “Manufacturing is not the only area in which Japan excels. Japanese culture, including film and

animation, is also highly praised around the world, and a ripple effect is being witnessed in various areas beyond the area of the economy. We aim to build a richer Japan by utilizing such culture and arts” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003). However, despite the praise from the current Prime Minister himself, the use of Japanese pop culture products in future government policies was sporadic at best.

In 2004, the non-combat troops of the Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF), while assisting U.S. forces in occupied Iraq, painted the character Captain Tsubasa, from the popular soccer anime series of the same name, on their water trucks to appear less threatening to the locals (Lam 2014). In 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed the fictional character Doraemon, a robotic, blue cat from the future, as the first “anime ambassador” of Japan. This was followed by the appointment of three female “*kawaii* ambassadors” in 2009, each dressed in a Japanese youth culture fashion style meant to promote popular culture overseas (Daliot-Bul 2009b; Miller 2011; Burgess 2015).

The Japanese government did not fully embrace the mass marketing of pop culture goods until 2013, during the arrival of the Abe administration, when the Japanese government invested over 50 billion yen into the “Cool Japan” project from a combination of government funding and private business investments (Fujita 2013; Fukase 2013). Since then, the “Cool Japan” initiative is increasingly becoming linked with national interest policies. Creators of anime and manga have even partnered with government organizations to promote national institutions and public welfare.

For example, a recruitment campaign for the Okayama prefectural branch of the Japanese SDF created three original anime-styled female characters to serve as mascots

(Figure 7); drawn as a representative of one of the SDF's military branches (army, navy, and air force) (Komatsu 2014). From a certain standpoint, somewhat unnervingly, this campaign is slightly reminiscent of the propaganda cartoons during the 15-year war period meant to increase support for Japan's military, although Japan's de-escalation of militarization arguably places this campaign as more of a culturally quirky, "crazy Japan" moment, rather than as full-on propaganda. This use of Japanese pop culture not only promotes national policies and institutions in Japan, but also serves as a distinct national image overseas, potentially signaling to foreigners the cultural impact anime has had in Japanese society.

募集種目	資格	募集受付
幹部候補生(陸、海、空)	22歳~28歳未満(男) 28歳未満(女)	2月1日~4月25日
自衛官候補生	18歳~27歳未満	8月1日~9月9日
航空学生	高卒(見込)~21歳未満	9月5日~9月30日
防衛医科大学(前期)	高卒(見込)~21歳未満	平成27年1月21日~1月30日
防衛医科大学(後期)		
他の募集種目	岡山地方協力本部ならびに各事務所にお問い合わせください。	

自衛隊 岡山地方協力本部
岡山県岡山市下区 1-4-1
TEL 086-226-0361 URL <http://www.mod.go.jp/pco/okayama>

Figure 7. Okayama base SDF recruitment poster.
Source: Komatsu, Mikikazu. "VIDEO: New PV Featuring JSDF's Moe Mascot Girls at Okayama Base." Crunchyroll, September 2014. <http://www.crunchyroll.com/anime-news/2014/09/14-1/video-new-pv-featuring-jsdfs-moe-mascot-girls-at-okayama-base>.

Examining “Cool Japan”

“Cool Japan” is commonly described as utilizing a “soft power” discourse, a term coined by political scientist Joseph Nye (2004) which referred to cultural diplomacy through influential or attractive resources such as culture, ideologies, and commodities; as opposed to more conventional ‘hard’ military or economic powers. Pop culture products like anime were chosen as a national brand due to their popularity in Japan and overseas, this was particularly true for other Asian regions such as China and South Korea; countries where anti-Japanese sentiments persist due to Japan’s wartime aggressions (Iwabuchi 2015; Burgess 2015).

It is worth noting that Japan’s use of soft power differs from Nye’s original conception from the standpoint that in the Japanese context, the value of pop culture goods as economic exports is more important, and any diplomatic benefits are considered complimentary (Otmazgin 2014). Through soft power, the Japanese state presents their nation and culture as non-threatening and attractive, as a means to increase international understanding of Japan and improve its political image overseas (Daliot-Bul 2009b; Sakamoto and Allen 2011; Valaskivi 2013).

Rising foreign demand for cultural goods often leads to new markets in which cultural differences are sold as products (Larkins 2015). By elevating pop culture products to a national brand status, the Japanese government is attempting to privatize these industries and market them as products that are reflective of Japanese society; taking a self-exoticizing approach to establish its global brand (Valaskivi 2013).

However, there are noted inconsistencies and issues when utilizing popular culture to promote a national image.

Criticisms of “Cool Japan”. Government policies concerning “Cool Japan” often do not take full consideration of the limits that soft power can achieve in fostering a “likeable” national image. Soft power is after all an extremely fragile construction. “It takes months, even years, to build up... - and all that is gained can be lost in a moment” (Lam 2014, 79). Although there has been a favorable reception of anime among youth in East and Southeast Asia, Japan is still widely criticized in these regions for its previous wartime aggression. Provocative statements from politicians such as Prime Minister Abe’s refusal to offer a sincere apology to South Korea for Japan’s use of Korean comfort women during World War II (Osaki 2018) significantly impinges on Japan’s ability to exert soft power.

Although the international success of Japanese pop culture is evidenced by media sensations like *Pokémon* and Hello Kitty, the question of whether these products can be considered “cool” on a global scale complicates the success of “Cool Japan.” Critics such as manga author Ōtsuka Eiji have argued that anime and manga were never cool in the first place, further stating that in Japan during the 1980s, older fans were often ridiculed for consuming these products (Galbraith 2014). Moreover, there are also still stigmas or biases against acknowledging animation as a legitimate form of entertainment, potentially infringing on its popularity. Animated works or cartoons are often deemed as merely ad-spaces to sell toys to children, a designation that is widely propagated by the Disney corporation in the West. While anime may enjoy a somewhat lucrative success the overall

reception is still rather minor, as products like anime fill a niche category of cultural goods that are viewed by a small group of consumers both inside and outside of Japan.

Additionally, foreign media is often quick to denigrate Japanese animation for its portrayal of supposedly illicit content including violence and sexual abuse, pedophilia, and homosexuality (Clements 2009; Galbraith 2014; McLelland 2016; Yang and Xu 2016). Countries like China have gone as far as blacklisting certain anime titles and other Japanese materials due to perceived objectional content that may cause injury in the healthy development of youth (Ressler 2015; Yang and Xu 2016). This kind of reaction makes anime unappealing as a product advertised as reflective of a Japanese national image.

Cultural products are also generally considered highly subjective among users. Consumers may be prone to state and market forces that dictate how cultural products are seen and participated in, but any intended messages may become redefined or reimagined by audiences to make them more meaningful to their lives (Santos and Sihombing 2016). This can explain the disconnect between the “cool” Japan and political Japan felt by Chinese and Korean fans of anime, some of whom claim to enjoy Japanese cultural products but oppose the political stance of the Japanese government (Yang and Xu 2016). This means that while the goal of “Cool Japan” is to impart some sort of essence of cultural origin on these products, it is ultimately up to the consumers themselves to accept or reject the assertion.

CHAPTER THREE: CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

For the purposes here, the frame of reference for analyzing the organizational structure of cultural industries is based in Paul Hirsch's (1972) seminal article *Processing Fads and Fashions*, in which he examines the multi-structured subsystems involved in the creation and marketing of cultural products. From this standpoint, cultural products are goods that primarily serve as forms of entertainment, directed at a public of consumers (Peltoniemi 2014). This includes a wide range of activities such as literature, film, music, plays, television and radio, fashion, and videogames. The system of organizations that mediates the flow of cultural goods from the producers to the consumers, or as Hirsch calls it the "cultural industry system," is described as: "... all organizations engaged in the process of filtering new products and ideas as they flow from 'creative' personnel in the technical subsystem to the managerial, institutional, and societal levels of organization. Each industry system is seen as a single, concrete, and stable network of identifiable and interacting components" (128).

In other words, the organizational structure of cultural industries is made of multiple subsystems that interact with each other. These subsystems function through an ordered sequence of events, linking various actors, who each have a well-defined job in creating, producing, promoting, and reviewing cultural products for consumers.

3.1 The Cultural Industry System

To better understand production methods as a global phenomenon one should first examine, as in the anthropological tradition, each level of the cultural industry system, specifically the methods and customs involved in the creation and marketing of cultural products.

The Technical Subsystem

The first level constitutes those of the “creative” personnel or the creators who produce the original product. This product is the author’s own work and may serve as a prototype (e.g. a manuscript or screenplay) for the mass-produced replicas later sold to the consumer. However, for the final product to reach the consumer it must first succeed in competition with other creative products vying for sponsorship by entrepreneurial organizations. After selection by sponsoring firms, it should then, ideally, receive mass media coverage in the form of reviews and criticisms given by commentators that decide whether the product is worthy for wider reception among consumers (Hirsch 1972, 128). According to Hirsch, only after passing through these trials can an artist’s product then be sold on a broader scale and elicit a response from audiences.

Aside from the original designer of the product we might also consider that the diverse tasks and actors involved in the creation of the product’s final form also fall into the technical subsystem. Additional creative resources, such as music, sound effects, and acting performances, are also a part of the creative process involved in making cultural goods (Clements 2013). How memorable would *Jaws* (1975) or the *Star Wars* films (1977, 1980, and 1983) be without the mood establishing orchestral ensemble of the

iconic composer John Williams? What would *Jurassic Park* (1993) be like if the various dinosaur yelps and roars developed by innovative sound engineers didn't experiment with an assortment of animal copulation recordings (Brodwin 2015). Lastly, would popular movies be the same without the imaginative performances of accomplished actors that are often perceived as bringing the film to life, as in Robert De Niro's famous, ad-libbed line "You talkin' to me?" in his portrayal as Travis Bickle in Martin Scorsese's film *Taxi Driver* (1976) (Healion 2010). In short, the creation of cultural goods is rarely the work of a single individual.

The Managerial Subsystem

Combining the realms of art and entertainment is often a source of tension in the cultural industries. The imperatives of valuing artistic integrity over mass entertainment or utilizing culture for maximum profit, is a carefully weighed matter during the production of cultural goods. While the artist is usually afforded authority on what is deemed fashionable, the concern for commercial success and "relatability" among consumers is still vital for the sponsoring firms (Lampel, Lant, Shamsie 2000). Finding a compromise between the novel and familiar elements in cultural products is usually undertaken by the managerial subsystem in cultural industries.

"Cultural" or entrepreneurial firms refers to profit-seeking organizations which produce cultural goods for mass distribution (Hirsch 1972, 127). An important distinction between individual artists and cultural organizations is that the commodity produced by the latter is a standardized replica of the original. A publishing company, for example, may use an author's manuscript as a base prototype, but this does not necessarily

represent the final form of the commodity manufactured for distribution and sale. The sponsoring organization is responsible for mediating between the creative personnel's artistic vision for the product and the product's commercial success value that is expected to return, or increase, the firm's initial investment.

Structural characteristics that define certain industries as being "cultural," are related to the aspects of demand uncertainty and oversupply of products (Hirsch 1972; Kretschmer, Klimis, and Choi 1999; Lampel, Lant, and Shamsie 2000; Peltoniemi 2014). Finding a bestselling product, whether it's a book, TV or film script, or videogame, is often delegated to lower-level workers (e.g. artists and talent scouts) that use their professional status as savvy creators or authenticators to locate promising products for production (Hirsch 1972). Although these employees are given the main task of producing or finding marketable creations, the producers of the firm supplying the capital investment also utilize strategies to delegate which products are promoted in order to maximize their earnings.

Because there is no sure-fired formula for generating a successful cultural product, producers will often follow consumer preferences and trends before deciding to sponsor any particular product. The notion of consumer preference, or taste, as studied in the field of philosophy/sociology, was found to be partly contingent on socioeconomic class, such as those of upper classes preferring more "highbrow" forms of art and entertainment (e.g. classical literature or the opera) compared to the lower classes whose tastes align more towards popular culture (Adorno 1991). Additionally, taste is also considered to be a cumulative variable evolving through consumer behavior, sometimes

eventually becoming “acquired tastes” for more specific types of entertainment such as preferences for different genres, like horror movies or country music (Peltoniemi 2014).

While tastes are generally more situated towards the consumer as an individual, consumer trends are conceptualized as the cyclic demand for various products and genres that drift in and out of fashion among groups of consumers (Kretschmer, Klimis, and Choi 1999). In this regard, cultural industries often mimic what has been previously successful. By way of illustration, consider the influx of superhero movies increasingly released by Hollywood since the early 2000s. Arguably, the popularity of superhero films began in 2008 with the release of Marvel’s *Iron Man*. Given the success of the film’s box office revenue, 585.2 million (with an original budget of 140 million), film producers became eager to capitalize on the original film’s success through sequels, crossover franchises, and the development of other superhero films centered on characters from other stories and/or competing companies; such as DC’s *Dark Knight* film series (2005-2012) featuring Batman.

Related to these strategies, entrepreneurial firms typically make small investments in numerous products due to the abundance of creative goods seeking sponsorship and the availability of relatively cheap technologies able to produce a surplus of popular culture products (Hirsch 1972). Additionally, with the availability of outsourced labor in industrial countries like China, the cost of manufacturing cultural goods becomes much cheaper (Mori 2011), further creating a surplus. By investing in multiple products, one could say that sponsoring organizations are careful not to place all their eggs within a single basket.

Many cultural organizations attempt to sell more than one product at a time but tend to delegate a majority of the production and advertising budgets for the perceived biggest earners. Economically speaking, in the cultural industries, many products are expected to fail. While a large advertising budget might increase the overall sales of a product, it becomes rather expensive to try and save an inferior product that is not expected to out-perform competing goods (Peltoniemi 2014). Therefore, cultural organizations will often allocate larger promotional budgets to products that have already succeeded in other markets, like superhero films or young adult novels. Mass media exposure and volume sales of a single (hit) item generally cover earlier losses (flops) and yield additional returns (Hirsch 1972, 130). Furthermore, on the off chance that a suspected inferior product exceeds expectations, a firm has the option of increasing their sponsorship.

While these production strategies seem to overwhelmingly value increased capital gains rather than preserve artistic values, there are some instances where those of the technical subsystem are given enhanced creative control over the product. For instance, producers are aware of the “star-power” held by certain directors, authors, and actors who have previously succeeded with one or more best-sellers (Kretschmer, Klimis, Choi 1999). Attaching a widely recognized name to a cultural product, such as Steven Spielberg, J. K. Rowling or Leonardo DiCaprio, can convince producers to give creators increased control over projects, with the goal to repeat their past success, or at the very least, create a positive buzz among consumers upon hearing about a specific celebrity involved with the production.

The Institutional Subsystem

Another key distinguishing feature of cultural goods are their “nonmaterial” or non-utilitarian nature. Utility-oriented industries define specific features and uses for their products (e.g. detergents and other household cleaners), that provides a standard of quality applied to all products of a similar type. Cultural goods, by contrast, are experiential goods (Hirsch 1972; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Lampel, Lant, and Shamsie 2000). As such, they are dependent on the opinions of consumers, typically after using the product. However, consumers’ time and resources for testing each individual product is clearly limited given the cultural industry’s oversupply of goods. Thus, institutional forms of “surrogate” consumers, i.e. mass media, critics, top charts, and awards committees, serve as “gatekeepers” who exert influence over whether a product reaches an audience (Hirsch 1972; Peltoniemi 2014).

Public awareness of new cultural products is often dependent on positive reviews of critics, ranging from media-based reviews such as the *New York Times* best-sellers list to lay critics who may write or post videos reviewing products on social media. Either way, the outcome of product reviews is highly diverse among consumers and is often based on numerous factors. Deciding factors may include if the initial reviewer of the product is a credible source or simply if the product was received positively or negatively. For instance, daytime talk shows that devote some of their airtime to discussing mainstream products, like Hollywood films and popular music, may not review certain niche goods, like videogames or foreign films, as positively; while on the flipside, lay critics who specialize in reviewing niche products may not be as interested in

lavishing praise on mainstream goods (Kretschmer, Klimis, and Choi 1999; Peltoniemi 2014).

Within the organizational structure of the cultural industries social norms typically mandate the independence of media reviewers and other critics, from the special needs of cultural industries (Hirsch 1972). The segregation between the producers of cultural products from their disseminators supposedly places a restriction on the form of power that cultural organizations hold over consumer agency. However, these controlling processes often get overshadowed or absorbed by the promotional process. The primary purpose of media interviews, after all, is to sell the product to the audience; assuredly skewing the information imparted (Clements 2013).

Extreme scenarios that undermine the autonomy of media gatekeepers include instances of payola and vertical integration. Payola was a practice most often occurring in the music industry, whereby record companies would bribe radio DJs to use their position to promote a particular song or artist; creating a perceived popularity by linking the songs commercial success to the number of times it was played over the radio. Another biased practice, part of industry vertical integration, involves a large production firm assimilating other companies and their chief operations into its mode of production, such as a manufacturer owning its supplier and/or distributor. In the context of cultural industries this firm may control the manufacture and distribution of the product, along with the very media reviewers that critique the products. In this instance there are often laws designed to prevent companies from abusing these systems; however, personal

relationships between producers and media gatekeepers may still have critical influence on the endorsement of cultural products (Kretschmer, Klimis, and Choi 1999).

While it is true that issues of favoritism between producers and institutional forms of media reviewers often do arise, the increase of consumer-based reviews establishes a control system that mediates products from the producers to the consumers while cutting out the middlemen mass media. Through a more technologically focused word of mouth, user review websites like Yelp give users the power to crowd-source thoughts and opinions for future consumers to make informed decisions before buying a product in ways that potentially provide fair and balanced coverage on products that may have been tainted by biased reviews meant to increase financial gain.

The Societal Subsystem

The final level of the cultural industry system represents the consumer environment. During the time of Hirsch's original analysis this predominately took place within physical retail stores and outlets, however, many cultural organizations can now manage their own products through Internet marketplaces like Amazon or eBay, or even run their own private online stores, where consumers can buy straight from the producers. Previously, physical stores served as the conduit where producers final products became available to the public, stocking new items based on the positive reviews and advertising from media critics. While, of course, this model remains largely unchanged today, the introduction of online retailers has had some notable influence on the sale of cultural goods.

The somewhat omnipresent character of the Internet has indisputably changed the contemporary shopping experience. Due to the immediacy of online shopping, stores that were formerly isolated into districts and required us to travel to them to make purchases are now, figuratively, in our own homes. Similarly, online advertisements offer the option to buy a product just by following the URL, possibly increasing the occurrence of spontaneous purchases that could have previously been deterred by the extra steps required to go to the store and buy the same product after seeing it advertised in the newspaper or on TV.

Here, the observations of the philosopher Walter Benjamin concerning the shift of cultural ideologies under the influence of new technologies are remarkably prophetic. “With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned in to a qualitative transformation of its nature” (1969, 7). This means that the increased presence of a work of art from the mass production of cultural goods, and by extension the technologies that made mass production possible, has caused a shift in the ways of seeing and knowing, not just in the artistic medium, but also in the consumption habits of society (Peim 2007). This is especially relevant as the influence of popular culture spreads to our perceptions of identity and cultural beliefs (see Chapter 4).

3.2 The Anime Industry System

Anime refers to Japanese animated films and television shows, but as Ian Condry noted, anime is more than simply what appears on screen, it is “characteristic of contemporary media in its interconnected webs of commercial and cultural activities that

reach across industries and national boundaries” (2013, 1). Thus, Japanese anime, as a media product, is produced similarly to the methods described by Hirsch’s “cultural industry system,” although, it is also a somewhat unique presence among media products given its development outside of Western-based cultural industries.

While the aim of the “Cool Japan” phenomenon is to place a national claim on pop culture industries, before claiming cultural authority for anime, there must first be a reckoning with the dispersed cast of producers and consumers that create and shape it. As in the inter-organizational structure of the culture industry system, authors, directors, animators, music composers, voice actors, marketing and advertisers, producers, consumers, and even government officials all collaborate in the creation of anime (Condry 2009, 2013; Clements 2013). Each participant brings a distinct set of skills and ideas in the formation of anime as a cultural product. This also includes outsourced labor, such as the use of animation studios in China and South Korea, and the proliferation of tastes and ideas shared among fan communities worldwide in reception of anime. Exploring how a typical anime series is created, is helpful in illustrating this collaborative element.

Producer Ambitions

The creation of most contemporary anime typically starts with a media company’s goal of creating a media-mix marketing opportunity (Sevakis 2012a). Pre-existing products of large media companies, such as a manga publisher or videogame developer, are often diversified into products spread across multiple media platforms. As an example of “transmedia storytelling” (Condry 2009, 142), consider CyberConnect2’s *.hack*

(pronounced “dot hack”) series. The franchise revolves around a fictional videogame universe called *The World* in which the gamers are confronted with real-life repercussions when the game mysteriously causes numerous players to fall into comas. The story is contained across multiple media platforms, mainly followed through videogame and anime installations, but also through various manga, novels, and other related media.

However, media-mix through narrative cohesion is not often undertaken when producing an anime series. Instead, anime selected for production is often based on, or associated to, other forms of media such as manga, videogames, novels, and movies, along with original productions as well. The interdependence between the anime and manga industries is particularly significant, as nearly 60 percent of current anime are based on pre-existing manga (Condry 2013, 106). By producing anime adaptations based on already successful stories and characters, producers are given some assurance that their product has potential marketability.

In this same line of reasoning, producers may select series to animate based on the current genres and tropes that are popular among viewers at the time. For example, a popular theme in anime known as military *moé* (pronounced mo-eh) which involves cute, young girls being placed in military-type settings (i.e. schools, mock battles, and wars) was popularized by anime series such as *Strike Witches*, *Girls Und Panzer*, and *Kantai Collection*, and inspired a trend of other similarly styled shows. It is worth noting here that this mimicry is often done in vain, as the market becomes saturated with identical

products that are usually deemed less original than the earlier, often more successful examples (Peltoniemi 2014).

In other cases, a media company may create an anime series centered around products they want to sell to viewers, such as card games (*Yu-Gi-Oh!*) or magic wands (*Pretty Cure*); series typically marketed to children. An anime adaptation might also be made in order to increase the sales of the source material, although often the producer's goal is simply to sell as many DVDs as possible (Sevakis 2012a).

The Production Committee

Creating an animated series is often an extremely expensive proposition. Creation and timely delivery of a single 30-minute anime episode can cost anywhere up to 100,000-300,000 USD (Mori 2011). Multiplied across a standard 13-episode serialization, this averages to 2-4 million USD per production. It is interesting to note that this is still much cheaper than the cost of a U.S. animated series, which for shows like *The Simpsons* or *Family Guy* cost an average of 2-5 million per episode (Flint 2011).

Although Japan boasts the world's third strongest economy, few companies would normally risk such an enormous amount of money in production of a product that would, even ideally, take a few years of sales before breaking even. In the 1980s, during Japan's economic heyday, it was possible for companies to fund shorter 2-episode OVAs (original video animations) made to be released in video rental stores and rented out for a tidy profit. In some cases, longer series were also produced by TV networks that supplemented their funds through ad-sponsorship (Sevakis 2012). This was economically feasible till the stock market crash of the 1990s diminished the value of the straight-to-

video animations and forced TV networks to pursue more cost-effective live action programming.

These days anime series are typically financed by a production committee (*seisaku iinkai*), which is a partnership of several other companies who provide for the initial production cost, and then attempt to make a profit by merchandising the content (Okeda and Koike 2014). Potential investors may include toy companies wanting to sell character goods (e.g. figurines, plushies, and body pillows); DVD publishers seeking a piece of video sales; and online video distributors like Netflix or Crunchyroll that desire the streaming rights to the series. Before any actual animating begins, representatives of the investing companies will meet every few weeks to discuss elements of the show, such as release plans, target audience, important plot points, and where the story might deviate from the original source material (Sevakis 2012a).

Every member of the production committee gets some say in the final form of the product, though this power is not evenly split among members as politics tends to be a factor among different profit-seeking organizations. The *gensakusha*, or original creator of the adapted manga, novel, or other media product, is the one member of the committee that does hold tremendous power over the outcome of the final product (Sevakis 2012a). This position is protected by Article 18 of Japanese copyright law that says that the original creator “shall have the same right with respect to works derived from his (or her) work which has not yet been made public” (Copyright Research and Information Center n.d.). While American copyright law has similar measures protecting authorship, the main difference in the Japanese law is that the rights are automatically applied without

the need of formal registration; instead they are applied to the author once their work has gone public.

While seemingly very supportive of the creative and artistic rights of the author, the actual deal making typically takes place between an intermediary company producer, usually a manga editor, who act as an agent of the author and the publishing company of his work. This producer communicates the demands between the creator and the production committee until an agreeable set of terms is decided upon. This can make the product vulnerable to unscrupulous company men who may merely wish to see the series generate a profit rather than protect the integrity of the original work. Once all demands are negotiated the author essentially signs away the rights of their work for the current production.

From this point, there is little recourse authors have if they become unhappy with the series produced; in which case recourse is usually limited to the ability to drag down the animation process by denying approval for episodes in production. This resistance may sound futile, but most anime series are simultaneously produced while airing, often with the next episode being completed close to airtime. A regular, quick term solution to a bogged down production schedule is to hastily edit together previous episode scenes into a “recap episode,” giving an extra week for animators to catch up on production and to settle any internal disputes among the committee. This solution is best to be avoided, however, as it usually irritates viewers who may stop watching the show out of frustration, potentially hindering future sales.

Making Anime

Mori (2011) divides animation production workers into three general categories: the animation director, who, as the name implies, directs all aspects of the animation process from storyboarding, character designs, background animation, and any other creative aspects of the work. This role is often reserved for people who have been in the anime industry for many years and who have worked previously on successful series and films. Next are the lead animators, workers who handle main character and background designs. These animators have proven themselves through their drawing and graphic design abilities, and because of their skill they also generally oversee the work of the minor animators. Minor animators (who make up the bulk of the animation workforce) generally design minor and background characters and work as “clean-up artists” in charge of touching up the drawings for the final product.

Because animation is an extremely tedious and labor-intensive process, subcontracted animation studios in countries like China and South Korea are often employed as minor animators. The outsourced labor typically involves thousands of artists tracing, coloring, editing and examining tens of thousands of pictures that are exchanged between studios (Mori 2011). While the main creative labor takes place in the Japanese studios, most series could never be produced in a timely manner without the repetitive tasks carried out by the minor animators in these overseas companies.

Moreover, animation itself isn't the only aspect that goes into creating an anime film or series. Clements (2013) persuasively argues that all aspects of the completed anime are part of the creative process; scriptwriting and story boarding, sound

composition, and voice acting, all factor into anime production as well. The roundtable discussion of a storyboard meeting, as observed by Condry (2013) in his ethnography on anime production, reveals itself as a form of visual storytelling as the animators look over the storyboards and scripts gaining a mental image of what the final product will become. Clement's (2009) work describing his own participation in the anime industry as a producer, writer and translator, includes many amusing anecdotes from his experiences, revealing that voice actors are sometimes given nearly blank scripts and are told to ad-lib important lines and stage directions while quirky sound engineers stab cabbages for combat sound effects. The creative labor and energies provided by these dedicated and creative performers is an important feature of anime.

Other processes like advertising and marketing tie-ins are also important elements in the production of anime as a cultural phenomenon. As the anime industry does not merely produce films and TV shows but rather creates "fictional characters and dramatic premises that can be parleyed across diverse media" (Condry 2009, 155), these characters can be consumed in other forms outside of their original source. The popular Nendoroid (Figure 8) figurines is a good example of this, as the series of toys reimagine characters of various personalities (e.g. heroes, villains, scary, weird, etc.) into a *chibi* style, i.e. a character with a highly distorted appearance, usually featuring a large head with a small body, in the pursuit of an overly cute aesthetic. In some cases, the aesthetic contrasts greatly with the actual appearance and tone of the characters as displayed in their narrative contexts, creating new ways to look at and appreciate one's favorite anime characters.



Figure 8. Nendoroid figures of popular anime and Western characters. From left to right: Doma Umaru (*Himouto! Umaru-chan* 2015), Levi Ackerman (*Attack on Titan* 2013), Wonder Woman (*Wonder Woman* 2017).
Source: Goodsmile Online Store. <https://goodsmileshop.com/en/>.

Release and reception. Like TV broadcasting, contemporary anime is released in a bulk seasonal format (i.e. winter, spring, summer, and fall). For a span of 3 to 5 months 60 to 80 anime series air concurrently each season with an average of 12-13 episodes per series. Over the course of its serialization, the marketability of many anime series gradually decline as newer products are released and consumer attention shifts towards the current trends. Making the show appealing to as many demographics as possible, and advertising through commercials, online promotional videos and ads, and studio sponsored events, is essentially the only means that most anime series have to distinguish themselves during serialization.

Once an anime begins to air, it is in the hands of the consumers to decide if it becomes successful. Critics and viewers may evaluate series on factors such as plot

structure, likability of characters, original premises and world setting, so that often only a handful of series actually meet these subjective criteria. Separate groups of anime fans may prefer certain genres and story-telling tropes, such as the romantic hijinks of *shoujo* (girl) anime series like *Ouran High School Host Club* (2006) or the battle hardened, adventure stories featured in *shounen* (boy) series like *Hunter X Hunter* (2011). The diverse tastes of fans contribute to the growing number of genres and to the imitations that follow each successful example.

Profits and International Marketing

Hirsch (1972, 130) holds that cultural products like TV shows and films usually take about six weeks to draw an accurate evaluation by its audience members. Typically, high viewing numbers means a high profit. Ratings, however, are not an accurate means of measuring the overall success of an anime series. In terms of the anime industry, which is mostly reliant on the sales of superfluous goods and extras meant to entice consumers to spend more, a series is considered a success if it sells a large number of DVDs or Blu-rays, as well as other affiliated merchandise e.g. toys and soundtracks (Sherman 2014). This process can take much longer to generate profit than the six-week timeline for other movies and films as proposed by Hirsch. An estimated 70 percent of all anime eventually do turn a profit (Sevakis 2012a), but this happens over the course of years of TV reruns, back catalog DVD sales, and international releases.

Apart from series that are aimed at children, which largely depends on the sale of affiliated merchandise to earn a profit, the success of anime for older demographics are wholly measured through the sales of home video releases. This is partly because these

series tend to air in late night time slots, which combined with their already brief serialization, fails to appeal long enough to viewers before they shift to newer shows. The anime industry's remedy to limited consumer appeal is to release small DVD sets while the series is still airing, usually only containing 2-4 episodes per disc and sold for roughly 65-90 USD (Sevakis 2012b). By Western standards, this price can sound excessive, but this price and release method stems from the previously popular business practice of rental pricing.

In the early days of home video distribution, 1980s-90s, anime series were typically released in small, 1-2 episode, installments. Given the niche quality of the product, only a few thousand copies of these videos were printed, and were then primarily sold to video rental stores for about 90 USD (Sevakis 2012b). Again, this price may seem high, but the video rental stores generally benefitted from having a semi-exclusive selection of rentals that most people wouldn't pay to own. However, the more avid anime fans soon desired to build their own private collections of videos and were willing to pay the same costs as the rental stores to own them. At the time of the Japanese stock market crash it was these fans that continued to keep the anime industry afloat and support its growth during the recession. Today, the few thousands of fans buying DVDs similarly support the budget of an anime production (Sevakis 2012b).

It is also the case that more successful anime series tend to sell affiliated merchandise even after its serialization has ended (Condry 2009). Examples include television series such as *Pokémon*, *Sailor Moon*, and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, as well as feature films like *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke*. The hope is that the remaining

percent of anime that do not generate a profit will at least partially be subsidized by the bigger hits produced by the same studios and sponsoring organizations although merchandise holders bear separate risks than the DVD distributors. Merchandisers must pay for warehouse space and disposal fees if their products fail to sell (Sherman 2014) but DVD distributors generally have an easier time stocking DVDs in Japanese retail stores, than say, a toy company selling a plushie of a character from a mildly popular anime series airing two seasons ago, showing that even merchandise from a hit anime series may cause some companies to go into the red due to a surplus of stock.

Foreign viewer reception. Despite anime's mostly thriving domestic market, a series that also sells well overseas is more desirable for producers wanting to fully capitalize on the product. Iwabuchi (2004) argues that Japanese popular culture products are made to be "culturally odorless," or made more acceptable to Western audiences through the erasure or softening of racial and ethnic characteristics displayed in the product (58). Contemporary anime often features internationalized plots centered on mostly universal topics of love, friendship, and personal growth (Lu 2008, 175); making it easier for foreign viewers to follow the story without getting fixated on cultural differences.

Less ethnic versions of anime may also extend into the designs of anime characters themselves. In a study comparing the perceived racial categories of anime characters to the viewers' own race, it was found that "characters created since 1964... were more likely to be perceived as Caucasian (by Caucasians) rather than Asian" (Lu 2009, 179) based on facial features such as eye shape, skin color, and hair color. Despite

this, as a Japanese product, most main characters in anime are intended to be of Asian descent (183).

Foreign distribution. International releases of an anime series are essentially completely new productions. This process starts with a foreign media company, like Funimation or Aniplex, expressing interest in the licensing rights of an anime series; which they purchase for a fee (Sevakis 2012b). The licensor may then simply release a subtitled copy of the series for mass distribution which is usually the cheaper option, but often they will spend more to produce a dubbed version of the series to appeal to a larger audience. In this event, a new cast of producers, writers and translators, actors, and video technicians are now tasked to re-make an already completed product for a new audience.

This process involves translating scripts, while also (re)interpreting the cultural nuances that were originally written for a Japanese audience. For instance, in the *Pokémon* series two Pokémon are named Sawamurā and Ebiwarā, a reference to the Japanese kickboxers Sawamura Tadashi and Ebihara Hiroyuki. To preserve this pun, the U.S. production renamed these characters Hitmonlee and Hitmonchan, referencing the martial arts experts and film stars Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan (Katsuno and Maret 2004) who are more easily recognizable by Western audiences. Unfortunately, not all edits are as skillfully re-scripted, and certain dialogues may be haphazardly translated or images of sex and violence may be removed completely from the dubbed production, potentially altering the tone of a scene or the entire series.

DVD sales outside of Japan work differently as well. With the gradual decline of the video rental market in North America, Hollywood studios eventually shifted to selling

their products straight to the consumers. Initially, consumers were happy to build their own film libraries for private viewing, but after years of impulse-buying bad films most consumers have begun to limit their purchases; forcing companies to continuously cut the prices of their films to move the product. Furthermore, U.S. retailers are given more of the net revenue earned from anime DVD sales than in the Japanese market, using their shrinking shelf space as leverage for bigger wholesale discounts (Sevakis 2012b). This results in cheaper DVD sets released in the North American markets; where a fully completed 13-episode series set can be purchased from anywhere between 20-120 USD depending on the studio producing the work and included extras sold with the DVD.

Unofficial access and streaming. TV airings and DVD releases represent the official channels where anime can be watched and purchased. However, in the digital age of media piracy there are also fans who illegally watch and provide unauthorized recordings and reproductions of anime online. “Fansubbing” is the practice whereby groups of fans digitize the latest anime broadcasts, translate them using video editing software, and then release the content online for free (Condry 2013, 161). Although this is clearly detrimental to the profits of the production companies and is in violation of copyright ownership and other assorted piracy laws, some see this practice as a means to support the anime industry by providing works that may not be released in other countries to online fans or giving fans the opportunity to experience the non-translated works in their original forms.

In what is largely a reaction to online piracy, production companies have allowed online streaming services to offer anime content for “free.” The costs are usually covered

through ad sponsorship i.e. Hulu or YouTube. Other specialty streaming companies like Crunchyroll or Netflix offer viewers countless anime titles for a monthly subscription price that both subsidizes their businesses and gives minor royalties for increased media exposure to anime production companies. Netflix has even recently partnered with the animation company Production I.G. to release its first exclusive original anime series, *Perfect Bones* (2018), making it the “first ever original anime title to debut all episodes simultaneously in 190 countries around the world” (Wallin 2016). As streaming continues to grow as a primary source for viewing media content, the effects on how anime will be produced in the future is in flux and unpredictable.

Globalization and “Cool Japan”

Certain globalized practices in the production and advertisement of cultural products are universally shared in the cultural industries. The selection of goods for mass production is a carefully analyzed matter that utilizes factors like consumer trends and tastes, mass media endorsement, and the skills and knowledge of authors and producers to create products like books, films, music, and anime. Anime as a media product is produced similarly to other films and TV shows through these globalized methods. In recent years, anime has also become much more sensitive to cultural nuances by creating standardized global products that may be altered to match the peculiarities of local markets (Iwabuchi 2004).

When considering “global localization” or “glocalization” (Tobin 2004) there are ways in which anime both is, and isn’t, Japanese. Images of Japan are still present even in foreign alterations of anime series. One could hardly deny that scenes of a Shinto shrine

or a character wearing a sailor-styled school uniform (*seifuku*) brings Japan to mind. At the same time, however, these images may become altered or muted in the foreign releases of anime series, to the point where it is legitimate to ask whether these products can still be considered Japanese outside of their Japanese context. It is also generally those anime, in altered, localized forms, that are spread globally. Whereby Japanese pop culture products are routinely shipped to the U.S. markets, altered, and then re-distributed to other Anglophone countries (Tobin 2004).

Japanese cultural industries cannot compete internationally without global partners. Western distribution channels (mostly American) are partly responsible for Japanese anime becoming a growing part of global popular culture (Iwabuchi 2004). Similarly, many anime could not be made without the outsourced labor performed by overseas animation studios in East and Southeastern Asia that tirelessly work to deliver anime on time to an audience (Mori 2011). It is rather telling that the Japanese government, then, would want to promote anime as being distinctively “Japanese.” In this case claiming cultural authority is a nationalist reaction to subversion by forces outside of Japan’s control that can take the form of willful ignorance that fails to acknowledge that the global success of anime may extend beyond the creative ideas and production systems of Japan.

CHAPTER FOUR: CULTURAL PRODUCTS AS SYMBOLS

The sheer influence popular culture exerts over societies should never be underestimated. From activities as diverse as reading fantasy novels like *Harry Potter* to watching Disney films featuring the quintessential princess character, popular culture indoctrinates consumers into ways of thinking and knowing, i.e. the “chosen one” will slay the darkness, or true love “always finds a way.” While the themes and tropes presented may not always be applicable or realistic relative to the lives of the typical consumer, hidden messages and meanings are conveyed that are often taken as shallow truths, “a strong leader can solve all the world’s problems” or “a girl is nothing without her man.”

A key trait that strengthens the dissemination of such messages is found in popular culture’s ability to be easily dispersed among the masses. This has been well documented in the fields of sociology, as authors like Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory were quite vocal about the consequences of media technologies’ ability to provide quick entertainment from the simple push of a button, long before the advent of the Internet and now ubiquitous forms of social media. “Their (media technologies) output has increased to such an extent that it is almost impossible

for anyone to dodge them... even those formally aloof from popular culture... are somehow affected” (Adorno 1991, 160).

However, Adorno’s critique on the manipulative nature of popular culture, although apt, fails to consider the ways in which consumers then manipulate these products as they twist and bend these industries to fit their needs and desires. There are also cases in which the practices or goods of a smaller subculture are assimilated into the larger culture and become part of the greater cultural milieu. When Japanese media outlets report that “65 percent of Japanese nationwide now feel prideful about anime culture” (Mainichi Japan 2017), it can reasonably be taken as evidence of a discernable shift in cultural ideology in ways that illustrate the ability of media products and technologies to change the hegemonic influence of the domineering culture.

Further examination of this shift in cultural ideology must consider how these newer imaginings of popular culture are understood in contemporary Japanese society and the ways in which these individualistic hobbies and pastimes once routinely described as only for nerds and other social misfits (Kam 2013) have come to represent the trendsetting and “cool” nature of the entire Japanese nation and culture.

4.1 Expressive Potential of Cultural Products

In addition to serving as entertainment products, cultural products are also considered to be “nonmaterial” goods that serve an aesthetic, symbolic, or expressive function rather than a strictly utilitarian one (Hirsch 1972). Products like fashion or even a TV show can serve as symbols for a consumer’s personal identity or beliefs (Schiele and Venkatesh 2016). Commodified goods are often endowed with qualities that provide

an experiential view into imaginary worlds that consumers use to establish real world meanings and values (Daliot-Bul 2009a).

Hedonic Consumption

Consumption of cultural products, also known as “hedonic consumption,” designates those facets of consumer behavior related to the fantasy and emotive aspects of products (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Through “hedonic consumption” cultural products provide opportunities to experience or create an altered state of reality, one in which it is possible for an individual to live out their wildest imaginations or become their ideal self. This is most often experienced indirectly through a surrogate such as a novel, film, or TV character or game avatar. Being able to insert oneself into the thoughts and actions of a fictional character allows for a more immersive consumer experience. As such, the anime industry’s emphasis on developing well-liked characters takes on a social aspect, where characters are continually developed through interactions with consumers, in which they are systematically evaluated, modified, and re-circulated into fan communities and subsequently back into the industries that produced them (Condry 2009). In this sense, fictional characters are particularly valued as entities that represent both their narrative contexts as well as abstractions of consumers’ hopes, dreams, and desires.

Consumers also experience the imaginative qualities of cultural products in a more direct manner as well. A common example of this is seen with certain Japanese fashion styles, in which clothes or costumes provide the wearer with an experience wholly different from their everyday reality. While fashion subcultures are not an

exclusive phenomenon to Japan, the Lolita style is a good example of how consumers build identities and values around cultural products. Lolita is a mostly female-led fashion style inspired by Victorian-era dolls and clothing, and often features dresses with laces, ruffles, and voluminous skirts (Winge 2014). The name, Lolita, has notable associations with Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel *Lolita*, which depicts the sexual relationship between a middle-aged man and his adolescent stepdaughter. In Japan, it is also typically associated with the "Lolita-complex," or "lolicon," mainly referring to older men, often fans of anime and manga, who are attracted to young girls (Galbraith 2014).

These associations evoke a taboo conceptualization of Lolita, making it seem as if the subculture is depicting children as sexualized objects. Yet, members of this group separate themselves from these sexualized connotations to pursue new meanings that suit their own purposes. Lolita, or as their individually known "Loli," idealize childhood as the "ultimate representation of freedom" (Schiele and Venkatesh 2016, 432). Loli mimic children by wearing cute, childlike clothing meant to deemphasize the wearer's mature body, becoming more childlike themselves and figuratively becoming liberated from social obligations. There is a nostalgic element evoked in Lolita style, as members pine for their lost youth as displayed through their fascination with child-like clothing and toys (Winge 2014). While the subculture is influenced by an anachronistic appreciation for European culture, at the same time this group is also re-scripting the Victorian experience by placing it within a Japanese context and then used as a means for escaping from the overbearing nature of the dominant culture by emulating the less restrictive lives of children.

Identity Affirming Products

In their study of reclamation of group identity after commodification, Schiele and Venkatesh (2016) note that some groups use goods as authenticating tools of empowerment. This is done by attributing symbolic values to cultural products, usually the intent being to differentiate oneself from others and/or to demonstrate a group's knowledge and cultural ways of life. As consumerist goods are increasingly interwoven into the defining traditions and practices of culture, a new sensibility of what it means to be a part of a group is developed wherein cultural identity has become "the object of choice and self-construction" but also paradoxically the "manifest product of biology" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2010, Prologue).

Certain commodified practices and products are said to be symbolic of a nation's knowledge and cultural ways of life. In a similar scenario to the claimed authority over anime, Japanese sushi has become a popular transnational dish, and derives much of its overseas success from being advertised as authentic Japanese cuisine. It has become such a sensation, in fact, that there are even localized variations of sushi such as California and Spider rolls, advertised as genuine "American sushi." Despite this hybridized creation the Japanese state has claimed cultural authority over sushi, and all its foreign interpretations, given its relation to practices originating in Japan; specifically cited as an appreciation for delicate flavors and for, so-called, superior food serving and preparation techniques (Sakamoto and Allen 2011).

In another non-Japanese based example, the South Asian philosophy of yoga is a set of traditions meant to strengthen the body and mind and is practiced by several

prominent religions of Southern Asia including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism.

Allison Fish (2006) notes that yoga is often regarded as a symbol of the Indian nation and of the Hindu religion, but due to a transnational interest in yoga as a weight loss and stress reducing set of exercises it is often contemporarily seen as a commodity, taught overseas in specialty schools and practiced through gym memberships. As Comaroff (2010, Prologue) astutely pointed out, “culture, now, is also intellectual property, displaced from the ‘museum’ and the ‘anthropological’ gaze, no longer ‘naked’ nor available to just anyone pro bono.”

Profit seeking companies have commercialized native practices, built over thousands of years, resulting in a heated debate over the “ownership” of yoga. Particularly the newer forms of yoga such as the Bikram school, started in Los Angeles, California circa 1970, argue that their routines evolved from the traditional practices but should be considered a separate product of their own creation (Fish 2006). At the same time the Indian government worries that this will cheapen yoga’s significance to their own way of life and threatens to rob them of their influence over the yogic traditions developed by countless generations as a cultural movement.

This in turn raises an interesting question about the cultural authenticity of “Japanese” anime. To not call anime “Japanese” would be denying how the medium has been influenced through various experiences and practices of the Japanese people. Yet, to call it “purely” Japanese is equally problematic, as it reifies the essentialist discourse of Japanese exclusiveness commonly propagated by state forces wishing to impose a nationalist agenda.

4.2 Fandom Participation and Proliferation

When customs are perceived as valid and spread between groups on a wide scale, the practicing group or society may begin to interpret these habits as normal and commonsensical (Gramsci 2000). Through the essentialist discourse of the *Nihonjinron*, a long-lasting paradigm continues to be held that Japan is a largely homogeneous society, valuing conformity within the group through a strict adherence to social roles (Daliot-Bul 2009a; Sugimoto 2014). The injustice of this essentialized connotation is that it does not recognize the variety of diverse customs and groups of people within Japanese society. This includes Japanese citizens outside of urban Japan, living and working in farming communities cultivating yam, taro, and other crops aside from the nationally favored image of rice growers (Befu 2009). Additionally, the minority groups living in Japan, including the Ainu, Okinawans, Zainichi Koreans, and Burakumin, are generally denigrated as being not ethnically Japanese despite living in, or being part of, Japan for generations and/or for being of mixed heritage (i.e. half Japanese) (Aoki 2009).

Another group of marginalized people in Japan face different issues, being regarded as social outcasts domestically but also seen as the main driving force behind anime's propagation as a global phenomenon. The obsessive fans of anime known as *otaku*. When questioning the notion of individual claim (i.e. product of Japan) or public rights (i.e. product of the masses) of contemporary anime it is vital to observe the fans, not merely as the consumers who keep anime funded, but also as an integral creative source that collaborates with the production of anime (Condry 2009).

Japanese otaku. The Japanese term *otaku* is generally used to refer to someone who has extensive knowledge on any subject or hobby (i.e. trains, guns, dolls, etc.) (Kam 2013). However, the contemporary distinction of *otaku* pertains to those who fanatically consume, produce, and collect anime, manga, and other related products (Azuma 2009). In 1983, columnist Nakamori Akio, used the word to mock groups of people, mostly males, who participated in fan conventions and other specialized fan groups such as those who enjoyed magazines that catered to lolicon interests, i.e. works provocatively depicting young girl characters (Galbraith 2010, 2014). However, the derogatory usage of the word was not (yet) widely used and the people Nakamori described as *otaku* initially did not self-identify with the term.

Wider media attention towards *otaku* occurred in 1989 after the arrest of Miyazaki Tsutomu, who was convicted for the molestation and murder of four young girls. After discovering Miyazaki's large collection of anime and manga, including lolicon material, a new distinction of *otaku* emerged, mostly propagated by the media, as those "without basic human communication skills" (Azuma 2009, 4), denoting that those who enjoy media products like anime have failed to adhere to societal norms in Japan.

This negative perception associated with *otaku* has not faded from Japanese society, yet the usage of the word has taken on a more positive connotation over the years. One such critic of the derogatory distinction, Okada Toshio, attempted to redefine the term as "those who possessed an evolved vision" (Azuma 2009, 5), referring to *otaku* as a responsive individual in Japan's (at the time) newly consumerist society. However, even with a positive spin, the question remains why someone would want to be

associated with a term disparaged by society. Kam (2013) theorizes the identification with the term arose as a self-fulfilling prophecy, arguing that constantly typifying a group with specialized interests causes them to self-identify with the label. Thus, positive interpretations of *otaku* could be considered a counter strategy by those who enjoy anime and other related media in order to save face.

Comic market and otaku creativity. Comic Market is a three day long, biannual fan convention held in Tokyo that specializes in selling self-financed, amateur manga or *dōujinshi*. Comic Market was formed by fans of manga, and later anime, as a space for communication and self-expression by allowing fans to distribute, and other fans to critique, their work (Tamagawa 2012). Starting in 1975 with a modest collection of 32 circles (*dōujinshi* publishing groups) and 700 general attendees, this convention has since greatly expanded into one of the largest events in Japan. Currently, the convention attracts over 35,000 circles and a total of 500,000 general attendees over its three-day period (Welker 2015).

Comic Market is structurally different from industry-based conventions, like Comic Con or Anime Expo in the U.S. These conventions have an established hierarchy in place; one in which the creators and celebrity guests, preside over the fans. By rule, Comic Market is strictly for amateur self-produced work and the convention was not originally made for professional artists or commercial organizations (Tamagawa 2012). The lines between the producers and attendees is blurred and everyone is understood as a “participant;” thus there are no categories of “customers,” staff, vendors, and attendees,

all of whom are seen as collective participants in sharing fan produced works (Welker 2015).

The amateur works produced by these fans are largely inspired by manga and anime, and more recently videogames as well. *Dōujinshi* material mostly comes in print form, but also includes amateur produced games, animations, and music the defining feature of these works is the amateur status (Kinsella 2014). Furthermore, the material featured may be of the artist's own original creation or, more commonly, a parody of commercially produced manga and anime, akin to fan or slash fiction (i.e. romance between fictional characters of the same sex) (Tamagawa 2012). Parody manga is typically used by fans as a tool to subvert the authority of the original creator, often using overly satirical or campy depictions to "make the parodied characters more fallible, allowing readers to feel more intimate towards them" (Kinsella 2014, 397).

Otaku outside of Japan. By the early 2000s, depictions of *otaku* took a drastic turn in Japanese media, partly due to the broadcast of the popular TV drama *Densha Otoko* (2005, *Train Man*). The story followed a so-called "*otaku*" main character who saves a fashionable career woman from being molested by a drunk man on a train. The series highlights the protagonist's attempts to romantically pursue the woman, who is vastly different from his nerdy and homely appearance. In the end, he proves his love by redirecting his energy from personal *otaku* pleasures into healthy social relationships (Galbraith 2010, 2014; Azuma 2009; Kam 2013); in a sense "graduating" from his adolescent lifestyle and rejoining society as a "proper" adult. The show's redefining of *otaku* as "loveable dork," rather than social deviant, mirrors the growing popularity of

“nerd culture” (Cohen 2014) in the U.S., with similar premises seen on programs like *The Big Bang Theory*.

International media portrayals of *otaku* were not as endearing, as depictions of them focused on the group’s overzealous affection for fictional characters. For instance, a *New York Times* editorial (Katayama 2009) documented the growing trend of “2-D love” in Japan, as evidenced by the “romantic relationship” between the 37-year old “Nisan” (meaning older brother) and his body pillow that he affectionately refers to as “Nemutan.” The pillow case depicting an erotically suggestive image of the little sister character, Nemu, from the X-rated game *Da Capo*. Although the legitimacy of such sensationalized stories should be questioned, media depictions like this nevertheless serve as highly influential material and are partly to blame for anime fans becoming a spectacle outside of Japan.

Nevertheless, with increasing sales of anime related merchandise overseas, estimated to be worth 4.84 billion USD in 2003 (Daliot-Bul 2013, 76), *otaku* culture was eventually seen as contributing to Japan’s economic wellbeing through their production and consumption of Japanese popular culture. Government officials like former Prime Minister Aso Taro even praised *otaku* for spreading “Japanese culture” throughout the world (Galbraith 2010, 22). The popularity of anime and its association with *otaku* eventually blossomed into Western fans adopting the term in a mostly positive connotation, as someone who enjoys and watches a lot of Japanese anime.

Like Japanese fans of anime, foreign fans also participate creatively in the production of anime content. Anime Music Videos (AMVs) are a popular activity

performed by foreign fans. Clips from various anime series, and other visual media, are edited together and paired with music to enhance the theme of the clips. This creative pursuit is often proudly shared online and at fan conventions, and is intended to offer new interpretations on certain shows and music, while also displaying the affection fans feel towards their favorite anime (Condry 2013). Likewise, Cosplay, or “costume play,” is the practice of dressing as anime or other fictional characters and is enjoyed by people in and out of Japan. By dressing as a fictional character, and sometimes performing *in* character, the wearer is given an opportunity to personally portray the character as he or she wishes. This can involve creating hybridized depictions of characters, like a *samurai* version of Iron Man, or a reversed gendered interpretation like a female Son Goku from the series *Dragon Ball* (1986).

Fans in charge. Through these demonstrably diverse fan activities and innovations, it becomes clear, despite Adorno’s apocalyptic decrees that popular culture was the definitive collapse of free-thinking society, that dedicated, perhaps even obsessive, fans are not bound by the industry in the ways they consume cultural products (Condry 2009). In the first-place, Japanese popular culture evolved from the peripheries as marginalized hobbies only enjoyed by social misfits like *otaku*. But even after becoming co-opted by national interest policies, like “Cool Japan,” Japanese popular culture still retains its subversive elements that plays with the established rules and boundaries set by authority figures.

CONCLUSION: WHO OWNS ANIME?

Excluding the intellectual property rights of certain titles and products owned by their respective companies, anime as a medium can be considered more of an open source movement incapable of being “owned” by anyone, even the country of its origin. To further analyze the distinction of anime as a “Japanese” product, a survey was conducted via distribution to several Japanese anime-based clubs/organizations as a means to identify problematic issues concerning the cultural authenticity of anime as a media product.

Anime Fan Survey

Method. A short, qualitative, online survey was distributed to gather the opinions of anime fans concerning the notion that anime is representative of Japanese culture. The following three questions were the primary source of inquiry: “Do you consider anime to be culturally Japanese?”; “Do you think anime positively represents Japanese culture?”; and “Do you think Japanese culture is accurately depicted in anime?”. Following each of these questions respondents were also asked to provide a brief explanation for their answer.

Recruitment and subjects. For a period of three weeks, surveys were distributed in the Virginia and Washington D.C. area to several university-based clubs and other

organizations specializing in Japanese culture/anime. Recruitment took place through email exchanges with club presidents who forwarded the surveys to their club/organization members by email and through social media. The survey was not further forwarded to individuals outside of these organized groups, to ensure that only respondents who were adequately familiar with Japanese anime took the survey.

Survey participants (27) had from March 23 to April 6, 2018 to complete the survey. All the participants were at least 18 years of age and were currently living in the U.S.A. Most participants were Caucasian, (full demographics of respondents are shown in Table 1). Those who identified as racially/ethnically Asian were further asked if they were Japanese, although none of the participants who took the survey identified as such.

Race/Ethnicity	Number
Asian or Pacific Islander	5
Black/African American	1
Hispanic/Latino	1
White/Caucasian	19
Prefer not to answer	1
Other	3

Table 1. Survey respondents' racial/ethnic demographics ($N = 27$).

Results. Of the 27 respondents only three people considered anime *not* to be culturally Japanese. Of these three, two respondents also reported *not* seeing anime as a positive representation or as culturally accurate representation of Japanese culture. The

remaining respondent still saw anime as being a positive representation and culturally accurate, despite previously claiming it was not culturally Japanese. The responses for the next two questions were much more diverse. With a total number of 17 respondents seeing anime as a positive representation of Japanese culture and another 17 describing anime as an accurate portrayal of Japanese culture while 10 people disagreed with both these statements. These opinions were intermixed, some respondents did see anime as a positive representation but not as an accurate portrayal of Japanese culture and vice versa.

Qualitative survey responses. Asking survey respondents directly for their opinion on the cultural authenticity of anime was meant to gauge the superficiality of responses, such as the widely expressed opinion by respondents that classified anime as Japanese simply because it comes from Japan. While these interpretations are not any less valid, it arguably expresses a level of engagement with anime as media product, on the part of the respondents. This preliminary survey suggests respondents watched anime only for its entertainment value rather than because they were interested in/aware of, Western influences or transnational production systems. Additionally, a large group of respondents stated that anime was largely meant for Japanese consumption, using common phrases to express this sentiment, i.e. anime was a form of entertainment “most prominent in Japan,” or that it was almost exclusively “made by and for a Japanese audience.” Some respondents even went as far to say that only the Japanese can make “authentic” anime; implying anything of Western or other country of origin that appears similar is merely “anime-inspired.”

Aside from the origin point of anime's production, some respondents also said that anime was Japanese because the content of many of the shows were primarily set in Japan, or because it featured a distinct Japanese "flavor" shown through various cultural elements and nuances, such as religion and mythology. Interestingly, one respondent expressed that they only viewed Japan as the "default" setting for these stories, often only serving as a "backdrop" for the narrative to unfold via the characters' interactions. Other respondents also expressed the view that anime was Japanese because it "consists of their culture," and "makes Japanese culture look normal" in comparison to Western depictions of Japanese life. A few noted how Japan is typically famous for being "alien" or featuring "unusual themes and story elements."

The second question dealt more with anime as a media product and how it is seen as a favorable example of Japanese culture. This question was mainly designed to test the effectiveness of anime as a means of cultural diplomacy, as in the case of "Cool Japan," to see if Japanese culture was more appealing to the viewer after watching anime. These responses were notably very mixed. Those who did see it as a favorable example commonly mentioned it being a good way to explore the culture and to better understand what life is like in Japan. Others stated that popular films, anime series and characters especially cast Japan in a positive light due to its status as the country of origin. Those who did not see anime as being positive were primarily concerned with the overly warped or skewed depiction that favored certain, usually overly positive, cultural aspects of Japan over others, such as an overindulgence in "*kawaii*" (cute) culture.

Despite most respondents saying they did think anime was a positive representation, many still conveyed some doubt stating that it was usually a neutral representation at best, or that it depended on the type of content featured. Instances of mature themes like extreme violence or gore, illicit sex (i.e. rape and incest) and depressing social issues (e.g. suicide, economic stagnation, etc.) were stated as reasons that made Japanese culture appear less appealing to an extent.

Finally, as an extension of the second question, fans were asked if they saw anime as an accurate portrayal of a Japanese way of life. In other words, if the viewers' expectations of Japan after watching anime remained realistic or were simply seen as embellished entertainment. Those who agreed generally stated that the similar content displayed throughout numerous series showing common aspects of Japanese life (i.e. mythology, school, holidays, work, etc.) made it appear more realistic, though it should be noted that not all participants have lived in or even visited Japan themselves; a few openly admitting that they are making assumptions that anime accurately represents Japanese culture. Those who disagreed, however, saw much of the content featured as being mainly from the creators' views on Japanese society, and as such a lot of the elements are dramatized or satirical takes on living in Japan. Interestingly, one respondent expressed the view that anime was an accurate depiction of Japanese life *because* it was of the creators' experiences living in Japan.

Survey Discussion

In analyzing the results of this survey, the reigning sentiment indicated that most fans do think of anime as a Japanese product, specifically on the basis of its national

origin. Whether or not they also viewed anime fandom as a global phenomenon, respondents still pointed out that anime is usually made first and foremost for a Japanese audience in mind: “Japanese is the language it first airs with” and “anime scripts are written in Japanese, and feature puns, references, and words/phrases that are difficult to translate to other languages.” Mori (2011) makes a similar point that popular anime series are too positioned in a Japanese cultural context to be enjoyed on a global scale, and at most only caters to Japanese audiences and niche fan groups overseas.

Survey results were consistent with Mori’s (above) point as they evidenced an underlying assumption among participants that anime is largely not made with them in mind, despite the fact that certain popular series, like *Pokémon*, are extensively localized to better suit the tastes of foreign audiences (Tobin 2004). The future of anime distribution is also certainly looking more global due to the development of new technologies capable of airing an episode the same day as it airs in Japan through streaming services like Crunchyroll. Furthermore, the American anime distributor Funimation has even begun “simul-dubbing” recent anime titles, i.e. the process of releasing an English dubbed format of the show while it is still airing in Japan, usually only a few days after the release of the un-translated episode. This indicates that Japanese anime producers may have global audiences in mind for future (or even current) anime production.

Some respondents answers were consistent with the view that because most anime took place in a Japanese setting or featured, to borrow a phrase from Iwabuchi (2004), a distinctive “Japanese odor” through cultural nuances present throughout shows (e.g.

dining on a low-end table, studying for high school entrance exams, etc.) thus that it was “natural” to consider anime to be Japanese. It is indeed true that some series are inseparable from a Japanese cultural context. For example, Mizuno (2007) argues that the classic series *Space Battleship Yamato* is a distinctively Japanese-type fantasy dealing with the reclamation of military power. The series begins with the planet in peril from the onslaught of some very Nazi-like aliens and the only hope for humanity is the titular battleship, Yamato; which historically was sunk in World War II before experiencing much combat. Consistent with Mizuno’s (Ibid.) view that the series is a Japanese fantasy about regaining military power, Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) also argue that cultural products are related to fantasy behaviors, and in this way, anime may serve as a source of alternate realities for experiencing distinctly Japanese historical contexts; such as a sunken Japanese battleship becoming the deciding factor for victory in a global war or as re-scripting Japan as heroically defeating the Axis powers.

However, not all anime takes place in Japan, others in overtly fantasy or sci-fi genres commonly are not even set on Earth. In fact, many anime and manga feature characters of indeterminate nationality, or *mukokuseki*, where even though it can generally be implied that these characters are Japanese, or possibly Asian, there is an erasure of any racial or ethnic characteristics. Referring to Japanese popular culture’s growing international popularity Iwabuchi (2004) remains unconvinced that an image of “Japan” is at the heart of anime’s success: “If Japaneseness of Japanese animation is derived, consciously or unconsciously, from its erasure of physical signs of Japaneseness

from the visual imagery, is not the Japan that Western audiences are at long last coming to appreciate and even yearn for a de-ethnicized and cultureless, virtual version of Japan?” (61).

Despite many respondents agreeing that anime was a “Japanese” product it is of interest that most were ambivalent about also saying that anime was a positive or accurate depiction of Japanese culture. Some survey participants mentioned that depictions of Japan were often overly positive and selected only the most flattering attributes. Miller (2011) has also described how the Japanese state has fostered specific images of Japan overseas while downplaying unappealing ones that may be perceived as unattractive by association.

For example, the *kawaii* aesthetic continues to serve as a resource of cultural capital in Japan and is commonly propagated through cute cultural icons like Hello Kitty, but many popular anime and manga series also feature explicit content that may be disturbing to viewers unfamiliar with Japanese media. As Schodt (2014) describes, “Japanese manga (and anime) ... come as a rude shock to most Westerners. With their emphasis on violence, sex, and scatology” (354). The discrepancy between the cute, cuddly Japan exported abroad and the popular works at home depicting graphic sex and violence is an inconsistent cultural resource at best and at worst sends the wrong kind of image when trying to foster a soft power discourse, but it can be argued that audience is key in determining whether there is really an inconsistency.

Anime's Global Success

Cultural symbols and icons are a fickle entity. Culture itself is believed to be a collective output of a social group as they strive for a way of living and being (Daliot-Bul 2009a). But often these symbols and energies grow inconsistent with the changing times and require adaptation by the society for it to continue thriving.

Animation forms an interesting parallel with the rise and fall of certain eras in Japanese society. The introduction of film during the early 1900s brought Japan closer to experiencing global culture through the foreign films and later animations, taking hold of Japanese society as they adapted early media products to fit their needs and way of life. The exploration of animation began a discourse between the Japanese and Western animators, Japan learning the art of animation and the West slowly building an appreciation for Japanese creativity as they released products reflecting an “authentic” Japan. Pre-war animations in many ways represent an early nationalistic reaction to the increasing interconnectedness between societies, whereas the shift from film to television in postwar animation, is reasonably understood as symbolic of the re-articulation of a Japanese identity after war and Western occupation.

The rise of Japan's industrial economy was a sudden shift in global markets, just as the introduction of Tezuka's *Astro Boy* animated series changed the very medium of Japanese animation. As Japan's status as an economic superpower continued to rise so too did anime in the peripheries. By the 1980s those who had grown up watching *Astro Boy* had reached adulthood and developed new tastes for more mature themed anime such as *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*. The crash of the Japanese

markets signaled a generational shift towards youth workers and the rise of creative industries. Anime similarly shifted to a new generation of Japanese fans inspired to create their own works, and it was a group of fans like this who achieved worldwide acclaim for their original series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*; further inspiring a larger cult following for anime in and outside of Japan.

As Japan, once again, was forced to re-articulate its identity from the decline of Japan Inc., popular culture became recognized as a growing industry of “Japanese cool” (McGray 2002). From the discernable influence the *Pokémon* franchise had on foreign audiences the Japanese state also decided to shift their policy outward, via the industries that steadily grew in the shadows alongside Japan’s newly consumerist society. Eventually popular culture became a new means of identity and social display for the Japanese nation, often regarded as a culture where tradition meets contemporary media technologies.

Increased legislation concerning anime’s value as an exportable commodity can be articulated as the second nationalistic reaction to animation. As Japan was commonly perceived as mere imitators of Western innovation during the postwar economy (Iwabuchi 2014). The impulse to label these products as culturally “Japanese” may stem from a fear of cultural erosion. However, cultural products like anime, manga, and videogames became something notable that could be associated with Japanese national identity. A cautionary note here is in order, given that while it is appropriate to acknowledge the influences and cultural origin of anime, it must be remembered that cultural products at their essence are not something that can be authoritatively defined.

Global influences and production of anime as a media product, plus the propagation and new appreciation of anime culture by domestic and foreign fans, are also critical factors when examining anime's success.

Closing remarks. I would like to share an experience I had during the 2018 National Cherry Blossom Festival (NCBF) in Washington D.C. The NCBF is a month and a half long celebration welcoming the coming of spring by appreciating the blooming cherry blossoms in the D.C. area that were originally given as a gift of friendship between Japan and the United States in 1912. Throughout the festival numerous Japanese-inspired events take place meant to educate guests on Japanese history and culture.

This noteworthy experience occurred during the National Freedom Walk, a public event featuring a non-competitive walk promoting racial tolerance, beginning at the National Japanese American Memorial. This monument is meant to memorialize the suffering Japanese Americans faced in the U.S. during World War II. This occasion also coincided with the 20th anniversary of the walk and the 30th anniversary of the passing of the Civil Liberties Act, signed by President Reagan in 1988, which gave a formal apology and reparations from the government to Japanese American families who were wrongfully imprisoned in U.S. internment camps from 1942 to 1946.

One individual attending the walk stood out for me, due to the various assortment of anime paraphernalia he wore from head to toe. Dressed in fox ears and furry leggings, as well as wearing a shirt, carrier bag, and assorted keychains, the man was adorned with the image of the Japanese virtual idol Hatsune Miku. Given his attire I could not help but

feel this man was somewhat inappropriately dressed for an event that took place in a distinctively solemn memorial site. Although his appearance was somewhat striking to me, as a first-time participant in the walk, I noticed that the events staff welcomed him with open arms and even the other attendants were, at least visually, unfazed by his dress, aside from a few people asking if his outfit had any significance to the NCBF or the Freedom Walk event; which it surely did not.

Eventually, I decided to talk to this uniquely dressed man, choosing to do so in a casual manner, not wanting to outright point out what I perceived as the elephant in the room. After talking for a bit, I learned that this was not his first year he had come to the walk, which made me curious if he had dressed similarly in the years prior; but again, I wanted to be respectful and not call attention to his attire. He then proudly showed me one of the accessories he wore, of the many he was wearing; a glove with a small, plastic dragon attached and trimmed with crimson fuzz. Affectionately calling the dragon Ruby, he explained that the dragon was the namesake of the anime character Ruby Rose from the animated series RWBY (pronounced ruby).

What stood out to me from this statement was the fact that the series RWBY was not actually made in Japan but is instead produced and animated by the American company Rooster Teeth. Although the series does owe its inspiration largely to Japanese animation, as stated by series creator Monty Oum: “My vision for the show was to present a two-dimensional toon-shaded look, but with all of the depth and complexity of a 3D-animated production. I wanted to be able to move the cameras and characters freely

while still capturing the essence of the flat, line-drawn look of traditional anime” (Creative Bloq 2013).

Through this curious encounter with a fan who proudly, and literally, wore his fandom on his sleeve, I felt a slight resonance with the significance of the Freedom Walk event. Although the Japanese families imprisoned were American citizens, they were still cruelly locked away for no more reason than their racial and cultural heritage. Similarly, though on a less racially prejudiced note, the series RWBY is regarded as being “Japanese” despite its hybridized background, due to the anime-styled appearance of the characters and various tropes featured on the show.

This, in my opinion, mirrors the cultural authenticity of anime. As a product, anime has transnational extensions that originate in Japan but are spread throughout the world and is subsequently altered by these encounters, both positively and negatively, with different countries, cultures, and people. Throughout this process anime retains its heritage as a Japanese product but is invariably altered through its dissemination and by those who consume it. While, as I argue, anime is not completely authentic in relation to Japanese culture, it has been similarly adapted to fit in with a Japanese way of life; having demonstrably, though incrementally, been accepted as culturally Japanese by many Japanese citizens and the state alike.

REFERENCES

- “The 3D Secrets Behind hip Anime Series RWBY.” *Creative Bloq*, September 16, 2013.
<https://www.creativebloq.com/animation/rbwy-anime-action-dynamic-3d-twist-9134477>.
- “65% of Japanese Feel Proud of Anime and Manga Culture: Mainichi Poll.” *The Mainichi*, October 25, 2017.
<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171026/p2a/00m/0na/004000c>.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, edited by J.M. Bernstein. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Allison, Anne. “Japanese Mothers and Obentōs: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus.” *Anthropology Quarterly* 64, no.4 (1991): 195-208.
doi:10.2307/3317212.
- . “The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no.2-3 (2009): 89-111. doi:10.1177/0263276409103118.
- . *Precarious Japan*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- ANA Global Channel. “Is Japan Cool?” YouTube video, 01:51. Posted February 11, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ozg-B2GOrw>.

- Aoki, Hideo. "Buraku Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 182-198. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Aoki, Mizuho. "Modern Japanese men Dogged by Stoic Salaryman Stereotype." *Japan Times*, December 27, 2016.
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/12/27/national/social-issues/modern-japanese-men-dogged-stoic-salaryman-stereotype/>.
- Ashby, Janet. "Losers and Winners in Contemporary Japan." *Japan Times*, April 1, 2004.
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2004/04/01/books/losers-winners-in-contemporary-japan/>.
- Azuma, Hiroki. *Otaku Japan's Database Animals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Befu, Harumi. "Concepts of Japan, Japanese Culture and the Japanese." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 21-37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.
- Brodwin, Erin. "Here's the Disturbing way the Dinosaur Sounds in Jurassic Park were Made." *Business Insider*, March 12, 2015.
<http://www.businessinsider.com/jurassic-park-dinosaur-sounds-are-animal-sex-2015-3>.

- Burgess, Chris. "National Identity and the Transition from Internationalization to Globalization: 'Cool Japan' or 'Closed Japan'?" In *Languages and Identities in a Transitional Japan: From Internationalization to Globalization*, edited by Ikuko Nakane, Emi Otsuji, and William S. Armour, 15-36. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Copyright Research and Information Center. "Copyright Law of Japan: Chapter II Right of Authors." Accessed April 26, 2018. <http://www.cric.or.jp/english/clj/cl2.html>.
- Chapman, Paul. "Anime Industry Income hits 2.9 Trillion Yen Milestone." *Crunchyroll News*, October 24, 2017. <http://www.crunchyroll.com/anime-news/2017/10/24/anime-industry-income-hits-29-trillion-yen-milestone>.
- Clements, Jonathon. *School Girl Milky Crisis: Adventures in the Anime and Manga Trade*. Titan Books, 2009.
- . *Anime: A History*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Clements, Sam. "Japan's Suicidal Salarymen are Dying for Work." *Vice*, December 18, 2012. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3b5e7k/the-japanese-are-dying-for-work.
- Cohen, Noam. "We're All Nerds Now." *The New York Times*, September 13, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/sunday-review/were-all-nerds-now.html?_r=0.
- Colombo, Jesse. "Japan's Bubble Economy of the 1980s." *The Bubble Bubble*, June 4, 2012. <http://www.thebubblebubble.com/japan-bubble/>.
- Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff. *Ethnicity, Inc.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Condry, Ian. "Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan."

Theory, Culture, & Society no.26 (2009): 139-163.

doi:10.1177/0263276409103111.

---. *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Success Story*.

Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

Dalot-Bul, Michal. "Asobi in Action." *Cultural Studies* 23, no.3 (2009a): 355-380.

doi:10.1080/09502380802326678.

---. "Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of 'Cool Japan' and the Challenges of Cultural Planning in a Postmodern Age." *Social Science Japan Journal* 12, no.2 (2009b): 247-266. doi:10.1093/ssjj/jyp037.

---. "Reframing and Reconsidering the Cultural Innovations of the Anime Boom on US Television." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no.1 (2013): 75-91. doi:10.1177/1367877912464538.

"The Fifteen Year War, 1931-1945: Promoting the National Agenda Through Censorship and Propaganda." *Japan Society*, Accessed April 26, 2018.

http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/the_fifteen_year_war.

Fish, Allison. "The Commodification and Exchange of Knowledge in the Case of Transnational Commercial Yoga." *International journal of Cultural Property* (2006): 189-206. doi:10.1017/S0940739106060127.

Flint, Joe. "The 'Simpsons' Salary Dispute and the Costs of Success." *Los Angeles Times*, October 6, 2011.

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/entertainmentnewsbuzz/2011/10/simpsons-salary-dispute-analyzed.html>.

Fujita, Junko. "Bureaucrats Seek to Pick Winners with \$1 Billion 'Cool Japan' Fund."

Reuters, November 24, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-cool-idUSBRE9AN0JB20131124>.

Fukase, Atsuko. "Tokyo Launches 'Cool Japan' Investment Fund." *The Wall Street*

Journal Blog, November 19, 2013.

<https://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/11/18/tokyo-launches-cool-japan-investment-fund/>.

Galbraith, Patrick. "Akihabara: Conditioning a Public "Otaku" Image." *Mechademia*, 5, no.1 (2010) : 210-230.

---. *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*. North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 2014.

Ginsburg, Faye D., Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. "Introduction." In *Media*

Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain, edited by F.D. Ginsburg, L. Abu-Lughod and B. Larkin, 1-36. Berkley: University of California, 2002.

Gramsci, Antonio. *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1936*, edited by David

Forgacs. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Healion, Karla. "10 Classic ad-lib and off-script Movie Moments." *Den of Geek* (blog), March 2, 2010.

http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/432108/10_classic_adlib_and_offscript_movi_e_moments.html.

Hirsch, Paul M. "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no.4 (1972): 639-659. doi:10.1086/225192.

Hirschman, Elizabeth C. and Morris B. Holbrook. "Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions." *Journal of Marketing* 46, no.3 (1982): 92-101. doi:10.2307/1251707.

Imamura, Anne E. "Family Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 76–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Iwabuchi, Kōichi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

---. "How 'Japanese' is Pokémon?" In *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, edited by Joseph Tobin, 53-79. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

---. "'Soft' Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global." In *Japanese Popular Culture Vol. 4*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 18- 39. London: Routledge, 2014.

- . "Pop-culture Diplomacy in Japan: Soft Power, Nation Branding and the Question of 'International Cultural Exchange'." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no.4 (2015): 419-432. doi:10.1080/10286632.2015.1042469.
- Kam, Thiam Huat. "The Common Sense That Makes the 'Otaku': Rules for Consuming Popular Culture in Contemporary Japan." *Japan Forum* 25, no.2 (2013): 151-173. doi:10.1080/09555803.2012.743481.
- Kano, Ayako. "Backlash, Fight Back, and Back-Pedaling: Responses to State Feminism in Contemporary Japan." *International Journal of Asian Studies* 8, no.1 (2011): 41-62. doi:10.1017/S1479591410000252.
- Katayama, Lisa. "Love In 2-D." *The New York Times Magazine*, July 21, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/26/magazine/26FOB-2DLove-t.html>.
- Katsuno, Hirofumi and Jeffrey Maret. "Localizing the Pokémon TV Series for the American Market." In *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, edited by Joseph Tobin, 80-107. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Kinsella, Sharon. "Cuties in Japan." In *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*, edited by Lise Skov and Brian Moeran, 220-254. University of Hawaii Press, 1995.
- . "Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: *Otaku* and the Amateur Manga Movement." In *Japanese Popular Culture Vol. 1*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 384- 410. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Komatsu, Mikikazu. "Video: New PV Featuring JSDF's Moe Mascot Girls at Okayama Base." *Crunchyroll News*, September 15, 2014.

<http://www.crunchyroll.com/anime-news/2014/09/14-1/video-new-pv-featuring-jsdfs-moe-mascot-girls-at-okayama-base>.

Kretschmer, Martin, George Michael Klimis, and Chong Ju Choi. "Increasing Returns and Social Contagion in Cultural Industries." *British Journal of Management* 10, no.S1 (1999): 61-72. doi:10.1111/1467-8551.10.s1.6.

Kuwayama, Takami. "Japan's Emic Conceptions." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 38-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Lam, Peng. "Japan's Quest for 'Soft Power': Attraction and Limitation." In *Japanese Popular Culture* Vol. 4, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 72- 87. London: Routledge, 2014.

Lampel, Joseph, Theresa Lant, and Jamal Shamsie. "Balancing Act: Learning from Organizational Practices in Cultural Industries." *Organization Science* 11, no.3 (2000): 263-269. doi:10.11287/orsc.11.3.263.12503.

Larkins, Erika. *The Spectacular Favela: Violence in Modern Brazil*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Lu, Amy Shirong. "The Many Faces of Internationalization in Japanese Anime." *Animation* 3, no.2 (2008): 169-187. doi:10.1177/1746847708091893.
---. "What Race Do They Represent and Does Mine Have Anything to Do with it? Perceived Racial Categories of Anime Characters." *Animation* 4, no.2 (2009): 169-190. doi:10.1177/1746847709104647.

- McGray, Douglas. "Japan's Gross National Cool." *Foreign Policy*, no.130 (2002): 44-54.
doi:10.2307/3183487.
- McLelland, Mark. *The End of Cool Japan*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Miller, Laura. "Cute Masquerade and the Pimping of Japan." In *Japanese Popular Culture* Vol. 4, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 57- 71. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "General Policy Speech by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the 157th Session of the Diet." September 26, 2003. Accessed April 26, 2018. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/koizumi/state0926.html>.
- Mizuno, Hiromi. "When Pacifist Japan Fights: Historicizing Desire in Anime." In *Japanese Popular Culture* Vol. 2, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 252-266. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Mōri, Yoshitaka. "The Pitfall Facing the Cool Japan Project: The Transnational Development of the Anime Industry Under the Condition of Post-Fordism." *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* 20, no.1 (2011): 30-42.
doi:10.1111/j.1475-6781.2011.01146.x.
- Mouer, Ross, and Craig Norris. "Exporting Japan's Culture: From Management Style to Manga." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 352–368. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- . "Work Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 113–129. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

- Norris, Craig. "Manga, Anime and Visual Art Culture." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 236–260. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Nye, Joseph S. "The Changing Nature of Power." In *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1-32. New York: Public Affairs 2004.
- Okeda, Daisuke and Aki Koike. "Working Conditions of Animators: The Real Face of the Japanese Animation Industry." In *Japanese Popular Culture Vol. 2*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 275-285. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Osaki, Tomohiro. "Abe Rejects Seoul's new call for Apology on 'Comfort Women' Issue." *Japan Times*, January 12, 2018.
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/12/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-rejects-kangs-new-apology-call-comfort-women-issue/#.WuGbaOmovcs>.
- Otmazgin, Nissim. "Contesting Soft Power: Japanese Popular Culture in East and Southeast Asia." In *Japanese Popular Culture Vol. 4*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 88-116. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Peim, Nick. "Walter Benjamin in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Aura in Education: A Rereading of 'The Work of Art in the Age of mechanical Reproduction.'" *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41, no.3 (2007): 363-380. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9752.2007.00579.x.
- Peltoniemi, Mirva. "Cultural Industries: Product-Market Characteristics, Management Challenges and Industry Dynamics." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 17, no.1 (2014): 41-68. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12036.

- Petroff, Alanna. "Japanese Reporter Died After Clocking 159 Hours of Overtime." *CNN Money*, October 5, 2017. <http://money.cnn.com/2017/10/05/news/japan-work-overwork-woman-dies-karoshi/index.html>.
- Redmond, Dennis. "Anime and East Asian Culture: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*." In *Japanese Popular Culture*, Vol. 2, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 267- 274. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Reiley, Sean. "5 Shockingly Racist Scenes in Famous Superhero Comics." *Cracked*, September 7, 2014. <http://www.cracked.com/blog/5-shockingly-racist-scenes-in-famous-superhero-comics/>.
- Rohlen, Thomas P. *For Harmony and Strength*. Berkeley: University of California, 1974.
- Ressler, Karen. "China Blacklists Attack on Titan, Death Note, 36 More Anime/Manga." *Anime News Network*, June 9, 2015. <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2015-06-09/china-blacklists-attack-on-titan-death-note-36-more-anime-manga/.89055>.
- Riley, Charles. "Pity Japan's Salaryman: Inside a Brutal 80-Hour Workweek." *CNN Money*, March 9, 2015. <http://money.cnn.com/2015/03/09/news/japan-work-salaryman/index.html>.
- Sakamoto, Rumi, and Matthew Allen. "There's Something Fishy About that Sushi: How Japan Interprets the Global Sushi Boom." *Japan Forum* 23, no.1 (2011): 99-121. doi:10.1080/09555803.2011.580538.
- Sanger, David E. "Tokyo Tries to Find out if 'Salarymen' are Working Themselves to Death." *The New York Times* archives, 1990. Accessed April 22, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/19/world/tokyo-tries-to-find-out-if-salarymen-are-working-themselves-to-death.html>.

Santos, Kristine and Febriani Sihombing. "Is There a Space for Cool Manga in Indonesia and the Philippines?" In *The End of Cool Japan*, edited by Mark McLelland, 196-218. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Schiele, Kristen, and Alladi Venkatesh. "Regaining Control through Reclamation: How Consumption Subcultures Preserve Meaning and Group Identity after Commodification." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 19, no.5 (2016): 427–450. doi:10.1080/10253866.2015.1135797.

Schodt, Frederik. "Reading the Comics." In *Japanese Popular Culture Vol. 1*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 354-360. London: Routledge, 2014.

Sevakis, Justin. "The Anime Economy – Part 1: Let's Make an Anime!" *Anime News Network*, March 5, 2012a. <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2012-03-05>.

---. "The Anime Economy – Part 2: Shiny Discs." *Anime News Network*, March 7, 2012b. <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2012-03-07>.

Sherman, Jennifer. "Anime Industry Member Discusses Production Committee System." *Anime News Network*, June 19, 2017.

<https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/interest/2017-06-19/anime-industry-member-discusses-production-committee-system/.117694>

- Sugimoto, Yoshio. ““Japanese Culture’: An Overview.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, edited by Yoshio Sugimoto, 1–20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- . *An Introduction to Japanese Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Tamagawa, Hiroaki. “Comic Market as a Space for Self-Expression in *Otaku* Culture.” In *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*, edited by Mizuko Ito, 107-132. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Tobin, Joseph. *Pikachu’s Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Tsurumi, Shunsuke. “Comics in Postwar Japan.” In *Japanese Popular Culture* Vol. 1, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 105-117. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Valaskivi, Katja. “A Brand New Future? Cool Japan and the Social Imaginary of the Branded Nation.” *Japan Forum* 25, no.4 (2013): 485-504.
doi:10.1080/09555803.2012.756538.
- Vollmar, Rob. “Dark Side of the Manga: Tezuka Osamu’s Dark Period.” In *Japanese Popular Culture* Vol. 1, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 170-179. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Wallin, Anne. “Netflix Brings New Original Anime Series, Perfect Bones, to Members Worldwide.” *Netflix media Center*, February 24, 2016.

<https://media.netflix.com/en/press-releases/netflix-brings-new-original-anime-series-perfect-bones-to-members-worldwide>.

Welker, James. "A Brief History of Shōnen Ai, Yaoi, And Boys Love." In *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*, edited by Mark McLelland, Kazumi Nagaïke, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker, 42-75. University Press of Mississippi, 2015.

doi:10.14325/Mississippi/9781628461190.003.0003.

Winge, Theresa. "Undressing and Dressing Loli." In *Japanese Popular Culture Vol. 3*, edited by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 7-22. London: Routledge, 2014.

Yang, Ling and Yanrui Xu. "'The Love that Dare Not Speak its Name': The Fate of Chinese *Danmei* Communities in the 2014 Anti-Porn Campaign." In *The End of Cool Japan*, edited by Mark McLelland, 163-183. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Yano, Christine R. "Panic Attacks: Anti-Pokémon Voices in Global Markets." In *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, edited by Joseph Tobin, 108-140. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

BIOGRAPHY

David Tyler Crump graduated from Skyline High School, Front Royal, Virginia, in 2008. He received his Bachelor of Science from the University of Mary Washington in 2013.