

Japanese Culture in Southeast Asia

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Abstracts

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Cultural Hybridity in Japanese Popular Music

Japanese popular culture has historically been mixed and hybridized with other Asian cultures from the very beginning of its development. Popular music is not an exception. Although there has been a deep-seated myth that Japan is homogenous country, diverse origins abroad can be easily found in its history. I would like to delineate the development of Japanese popular music in the post-war period from a transnational perspective.

The originators of post-war Japanese popular music, such as Koga Masao and Hattori Ryoichi invented their unique music styles in mid of their colonial experience during the WWII. Asian singers like Agnes Chan from Hong Kong, Teresa Teng from Taiwan and Yong Pil Cho from Korea, played a crucial role in the development of idol and *enka* (Japanese melancholic ballad) music. More recently in the age of globalization, some musicians have started to create their own trans-national styles in particular in the scene of club music. Through the examination of the development of popular music, I would like to try to discuss the possibility of collaboration and of understanding of histories in trans-national perspectives.

From Colonial Power to Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy in Asia in Historical Perspective

During most of the post-war period the Japanese government did very little to promote its culture in Asia due to fears that such a promotion might resurrect old grievances from the time Japan occupied large parts of this region and attempted to impose Japanese culture on the local population. The government also estimated that cultural exports were not a profitable business that could contribute to the economy. However, the success of Japan's popular culture abroad since the 1990s, and the enthusiastic acceptance of Japanese cultural products such as anime, manga, pop music, and fashion by the younger generations, has caught the attention of the Japanese government. Following the success of the private sector, the Japanese government has recently become interested in the economic advantages of popular culture as a way of boosting the country's image abroad and attaining "soft power".

What is interesting about Japan's cultural policy in Asia is that it has changed dramatically over the past 100 years. Japan's cultural policy during its empire-building period was different from its post-war cultural policy, implemented at a time when Japan attempted to re-position itself as a non-military power primarily concerned with its economy. During occupation and colonization, Japan's cultural policy was designed to help integrate the colonies under the banner of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" and convince the local people to accept Japan's dominant geopolitical position in Asia. Japan's defeat in the war and legacy of American occupation (1945-1952) changed all that. New priorities and constraints under the American umbrella dictated a new policy, which neutralized governmental attempts to actively introduce Japanese culture to Asian audiences. Japan's cultural policy then became rather inward-looking, fearing that the introduction of Japanese culture in Asia once again would prove to be counter-productive and would undermine Japan's economic interests in this region. However, the cultural policy changed again in the 1990s, following the emergence of Japan as a cultural power known not only for its industrial and consumer products but also for its innovative contemporary culture and lifestyle. In this later period, cultural policy became increasingly directed toward economic and diplomatic purposes, designed to produce more export-oriented cultural commodities and present a friendlier image of Japan abroad.

Looking at these issues from an historical perspective, we can see that the character of Japan's cultural policy has been determined by its international relations in Asia and is linked to Japan's changing geopolitical position. In each respective period, Japan's cultural policy was designed to serve its political agenda, first as an empire, later as a "peaceful power", and now as a culturally-exciting country. This is not merely a matter of state branding but part of wider international conduct where culture and the arts serve as an extension of the state. In contrast to colonial times, however, Japan's cultural policy is now less explicit and more directed toward appealing to the younger generation, which is expected to lead its country's march toward the future.

In a broader sense, examining these fluctuations in Japan's cultural policy over the past 100 years allows us to understand how cultural policy is being initiated and implemented, and more basically, how governments view the role of "culture" in the political life of the state. How has Japan used cultural policy to further its geopolitical goals? How did cultural policy shape Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors? And how useful is the concept of "soft power" for analyzing the ongoing impact of culture in Asia's international relations? The Japanese experience shows that cultural policy, even when inward-looking, is not

isolated from a country's geopolitical position and its ambitions in the world, regardless of the political system under which it operates. However, it can be that in an age of globalization cultural policy can be counter-productive if a country is too explicit and too interventionist in its attempts to wield political power out of cultural exports. The state should thus develop a more nuanced approach to wield its culture in a globalized world.

Gan Sheuo Hui
Kyoto Seika University

**Reconsidering the Meaning of “Influence”:
Examining the Work of Kaoru, a Shojo-style Female Comic Artist of Malaysia**

As the enthusiasm for Japanese manga has appeared around the world, there has been discussion of the spreading influence of Japanese popular culture as a part of a trend towards Japanization that has been conceived as a variant on the globalization model. This paper, however, raises questions about the nature of transmission and "influence" of Japanese manga styles through an examination of some aspects of the career of Kaoru, a female comic artist from Malaysia. Kaoru has been widely recognized within Malaysia as a shojo manga artist due to her distinctive manga influenced drawing style. The resemblances are most noticeable in the visualization of character and background drawings, as well as layout of the panels. Nevertheless, aside from these aspects, the theme, development of the narrative structures and personalities of the character often does not follow the conventional narrative pattern and set of norms that have long roots in Japan. It is clear that foreign artists that work with manga style are not necessarily interested in these traditions and readily adapt local genre traditions and expectations into their works. Editors, too, often differently emphasize various aspects to ensure the publication stays within the printing regulations (censorship guidelines) while trying to respond to the latest market trends. This examination of Kaoru's works highlights the way creators outside of Japan select and transform elements of Japanese popular culture. Rather than seeing the popularity of manga styles outside of Japan as a feature of Japanese influence, it is seen as a process of active appropriation of Japanese elements that suit the interests of local audiences.

Nguyen Thu Hang
Vietnam National University, Hanoi

Effects of Japanese culture on Vietnamese youth in the globalization era

Besides economic effects, cultural effects of globalization is a global trend. In this trend, Vietnamese culture has been influenced by different cultures in the world, such as the American culture and European culture. In Asia, Vietnamese culture has been influenced by Hallyu waves (from Korea) and Japanese culture (food, music, especially Manga).

Facing with the impacts of Japanese culture, Vietnamese youth has accepted those impacts quickly and has echoed zealously. Through activities, cultural exchange founds and especially Japanese language classes, the Japanese image now is not only cherry blossom, Fuji mountain or Samurai warriors but also the images of modern items such as Shinkansen, Shushi, Anime, Manga or Harajuku fashion. They are images of new popular culture factors of Japan that have been spreading over Southeast Asian countries, especially Vietnam.

Japanese Manga has become a part in lives of Vietnamese teenagers and students. In the early Twentieth Century, Vietnamese teenagers have been familiar with Doraemon, Sailor Moon or Dragon Ball that Kim Dong Publisher signed with Shogakukan Publisher to publish. Besides regular ways, there have been irregular ways of spreading Manga like illegal translation and publishing.

Manga books are indispensable food for the mind of Vietnamese teenagers, an entertainment way after stressful lessons that encourages imagination, sense of humor and optimism. Manga also has educational effects on the youth which could change their aesthetic eye through nice characters.

However, there are also bad effects. Mostly using pictures to tell the story, Manga could diminish the youth's language ability. The language of pictures has also impacted on their daily behaviors. Moreover, there are some factors that are not suitable with Vietnamese culture such as sex or violence.

Studying effects of Japanese culture through Manga could help diplomats, educationalists and people interested in modern Japanese and Vietnamese culture understanding profoundly about the exchanges and contacts of culture in the globalization.

Putri Andam Dewi
University of Indonesia

Otaku: subculture community in Indonesian Youth Culture

This research focus to identify a subculture community called “otaku” in Indonesian youths. Otaku is derived from a Japanese term for another’s house or family, and also used as an honorific second-person pronoun. In modern Japanese slang, the term otaku is often equivalent to “geek”, “nerd”, or “maniac” most often that of computers. However, it can relate to a fan of any particular theme, topic, hobby or any form of entertainment. In Indonesia, the term is a loanword from Japanese language, and it is usually used to refer to an obsessive fan of manga, anime, games, and/or Japanese culture generally. The first part of the research include literature studies on books, papers, journals on Japanese culture generally, and Japanese popular culture especially. The second phase is through field researches and in-depth interviews with Japanese popular culture communities in several cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta. By identifying otaku communities in Indonesian youths, I will eliminate the assumption that all otaku have the same characteristics. This will allow for more consideration of transmission process of otaku subculture outside of Japan and may direct future research on transmission of culture in Japanese popular culture.

Tricia Abigail Santos Fermin
Osaka University

**Appropriating the Yaoi Fandom in the Philippines:
Opening Familiar and New Sites of Conflict, Resistance and Imaginations**

This paper explores the dynamics of globalization of Japanese popular culture in Southeast Asia by presenting an ethnographic analysis of *yaoi* and Boys Love (BL) fan reception and production in the Philippines. It aims to answer the following question concerning the significance that yaoi and BL's international spread and growing popularity: *What happens when certain images and narratives that have a very specific history and place in Japanese culture are circulated in global space, picked up and consumed by non-Japanese audiences?* Using data gathered from key informant interviews and participant observation in yaoi and BL fan activities in Manila, as well as analyses of fan fiction written by Filipino fans, I will argue that due to similar experiences of patriarchy in the Philippines and Japan, the yaoi genre acts as an erotic media and masturbatory fantasy for women. However, differences in social contexts of these countries also result to differences in fan reception and production, namely Filipino fans': (1) ready identification of yaoi and BL with issues of homosexuality, (2) sympathy towards LGBT social condition and causes, (3) the idealization of male homoerotic relationships as a more intense kind of "ultimate love" than the one imagined by their Japanese counterparts, and (4) the imagination and longing for a "yaoi and BL Japan."

Deborah Shamoon
University of Notre Dame

Teaching Japanese Pop Culture in the United States

This talk will provide a brief overview of issues and opportunities in teaching Japanese popular culture to university students in the United States. The growth of Japanese studies in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States was initially driven by Japan's economic boom, but in the past ten years, interest in business has been displaced by interest in popular culture, particularly manga, anime, and video games. This talk will consider the history and status of anime and manga fandom in the United States, the interests and motivations of university students who choose Japanese studies, as well as strategies for channeling the interests of otaku students in productive ways in the classroom.

Hoang Thi My Nhi
Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences

**The Cultural Exchange between Japan and Vietnam:
The Case Study of Hoi An, Vietnam**

In the latter half of the 16th century, the opening policy on cultural and economic exchanges of the Nguyen Lords promoted foreign trade and attracted foreign merchants to come to Hoi An, one of the most famous commercial centers in Southeast Asian region at that time. Thanks to the policy, Hoi An attracted many foreign merchants, including Japanese ones. Shuin-sen policy was issued by the Japanese Shogun to permit merchants (shuin-sen) to Hoi An and other commercial centers in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, there were many Japanese merchants who had settled in Hoi An and had got married to Vietnamese woman before and, together with local residents, contributed remarkably to construct and develop Hoi An till several centuries later. Such exchanges are now evidenced lively by many remaining artifacts in Hoi An. Succeeding that traditional relations, many cultural exchange activities between Japan and Vietnam have been organized in Hoi An in recent years. Given this situation, this paper focuses on the Cultural Exchanges between Japan and Vietnam by examining the case of Hoi An in history and present.

Nguyen Duong Do Quyen
Vietnam National University, Hanoi

Introduction of Traditional Arts in Vietnam
- The case of the Sit-down Comedy Rakugo -

Japan, in its cultural diplomacy strategy during the last decade, has successfully expanded its achievements in contemporary arts and world's classical arts to overseas, as well as created a rather active "Japanese Pop-culture Wave" in Asia. Along, there exists another wave, though calmer, which is introducing Japanese traditional culture and arts. Beside small clubs practicing Sado, Ikebana or Kendo among interested groups, traditional performing arts such as No, Bunraku, and lately Rakugo (a more than 400 year-old sit-down comedy) have also been more familiar to Vietnamese audience.

This paper examines the process of introducing Japanese traditional arts in Vietnam by official channels, comparing with those of other foreign countries such as Korea, France or Germany, and the reception of Japanese traditional arts by Vietnamese audience and their impact. The paper especially focuses on explaining how a so simple but fascinating traditional performing art as Rakugo has created its "boom" phenomenon in Japan nowadays and its very first successful appearance in Vietnam. Lastly, I wish to share opinions about culture-arts exchange between Japan and Vietnam, and by the case study of Japan, to again emphasize the identities of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian traditional arts and the urgent need to preserve those traditions in modern society.

Karl Ian Uy Cheng Chua
Ateneo de Manila University

Japanese Food in the Philippines: Trends and Perceptions

Japanese culture has embedded itself in Philippine society with its main proponents, anime and manga being readily available. Local channels offer anime dubbed in Filipino while cable networks include channels showing anime exclusively. English-translated manga from American and Singaporean Publishers are sold in bookstores. Internet has made both even more accessible via youtube (and similar websites) and scanlations.

Japanese food has integrated itself as a food choice for Filipinos as well. This can be seen from the advent of a “Little Tokyo” in Manila, the number of local and foreign Japanese restaurant chains throughout the Philippines, as well as the countless Japanese food stalls found in school cafeterias, office buildings and shopping malls. This paper aims to look at what is perceived as Japanese food based on articles from newspaper and magazine articles on food. By doing so, this paper can present how these perceptions were and have influenced Japanese food trends in the Philippines.

Ken Takiguchi
National University of Singapore

**Two Different Sets of “Cultural Differences”:
Examining the Approaches in International Theatre Collaborations between Japan and
Southeast Asia**

Since the middle of the 1990s, there have been a number of theatre productions created collaboratively between Japanese and Southeast Asian artists. Often funded by the national governments, these theatre collaborations aimed to overcome the “cultural difference” between two regions and to create cultural productions which would nurture the mutual understanding. In spite of the common slogans of “overcoming differences”, this paper argues that the perceptions on “cultural differences” are not necessarily homogeneous among theatre practitioners. Rather, there are two different, and sometimes competing, sets of “cultural differences” are at work.

This paper will examine two international collaborations which are among the collections of Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive — an online archive of Shakespeare-related theatre productions created in Asia. One is the multi-country collaboration *Lear* produced by the Japan Foundation Asia Centre and the other is Japanese-Philippine *Romeo and Juliet: A Comedy* produced by the Black Tent Theatre and the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA), both staged in 1997. By referring to comparative literature scholar Naoki Sakai’s theory on “cultural difference” and “culturally specific difference”, this paper tries to point out the different natures of these two collaborations.

Saya Shiraishi
Tokyo University

The Manga-Anime Road in Asia

The Japanese popular culture, Manga and Anime, have found the enthusiastic markets in the world. The ways with which they crossed the cultural borders, however, differed greatly among the regions. In Asia, it was the “image alliance” that played the important role.

Hiroshi Aoyagi
Kokushikan University

Prospects on the Impact of Cool Japan in Southeast Asia

The purpose of my presentation will be to evaluate the current state of Japanese popular cultural dissemination in Southeast Asia in order to infer the extent to which this dissemination can meet Japan's national interests. Japanese pop culture (J-wave), as it is currently recognized throughout East Asia alongside more recent waves of trend from China and Korea, can be considered not only a vehicle of corporate pursuits but also an accelerator of political expectations. Emphasizing its overseas instrumentality as a signifier of Japan's national value, the Japanese government, with its latest effort to intensify the nation's relationship with ASEAN countries, granted J-wave a catchphrase of "Cool Japan." In so doing, relevant policy makers were inclined to promote genres of popular culture such as J-pop music, J-dramas, J-cinema, manga and Japanimation as a part of Japan's national demonstration of soft power. Such an attempt to heighten Japan's name value and cultivate a marketable domain in the region of increasing socioeconomic interests is overshadowed by the lightness of J-wave contents and Japan's national attitudes toward cultural and historical homogeneity. This may provoke the recipients of J-wave in ASEAN nations to the same sort of discomfort that was previously indicated by Japan's conflictive engagements with its neighboring areas such as Korea and China. I intend to highlight these points and engage in a series of intensive discussions with participants from Southeast Asian countries.