

Imagining Japan



Student Essays from the iCoToBa Course
“What is Japan, Anyway?”
Fall Semester 2015-2016

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Fall Semester 2015-2016

Edited by Brett A. Hack

Course Instructor



2015-2016

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iCoToBa Open Class...

What is Japan, Anyway?

Final Conference

Tuesday, January 19th in the iCoToBa Lounge

Event Schedule

10:30 – 10:35: Welcome Address

10:35 – 10:40: Explanation of the Course

Student Readings

10:40 – 10:55: Anna Tsujimoto

“Decorative English on Instagram”

10:55 – 11:10: Kanako Shimizu

“The Ise Shima Summit Character Controversy”

11:10 – 11:25: Aoi Sakakibara

“Identity Tourism in the ‘Half’ Model Boom”

11:25 – 11:40: Mai Ito

“International Contribution on Japanese TV”

11:40 – 12:00: Reflections on the Course

12:00 – 12:50: Reception

-
- ☞ There will be time for questions at the end of each reading.
 - ☞ Talks will be conducted in English. However, guests should feel free to ask questions in Japanese as well.
 - ☞ Refreshments will be served after the proceedings.

- ☞ 各報告の後には質問の時間を用意しております。
- ☞ 報告は英語で行いますが、質問は日本語でも構いません。
- ☞ 発表の後には、軽食と飲み物を用意します。

Event Organizers: Brett Hack, iCoToBa staff

Course Participants: Ayumi Takeuchi, Jovielyn Okine, Anna Tsujimoto, Aoi Sakakibara,
Mai Ito, Kanako Shimizu, Shinsuke Ojika, Hikari Matsunaga, Nami Amano

Sponsored by: iCoToBa

Flyer for the course final conference, held January 19th 2016.

Introduction: What is “Japan” Anyway?

By Brett A. Hack

Course Instructor

Japan is in need of a ground-level reassessment. As Harumi Befu (2009) has explained, Japan as a physical entity has no meaning outside of its cultural interpretations. “Japan” is first and foremost a concept that changes based on time and perspective. However, this concept is not changing quickly enough to cope with current conditions. While almost everything about its people, society, and culture is currently in motion, Japan’s identity remains hampered by static images of traditional customs and pre-digital business culture. Not only for foreigners but also for many Japanese, Japan is still a country of *tatami* and *tatemae* even when the sum of their daily activities contradicts this tranquil image.

The immovable monolith of “Japanese culture” did not appear accidentally. Postwar Japanese elites expended great amounts of energy centralizing the nation’s conception of itself. The so-called *nihonjinron* [theories of the Japanese] writers attempted to delineate a unique essence of the Japanese and their culture. Whether describing this essence sociologically as a “vertical society” (see Nakane 1978) or psychologically as kind of consciousness (see Doi 1971, Aida 1972), these writers characterized Japanese culture as an inalterable “structure” which could be traced back to ancient agricultural roots.

Befu, a longtime critic of essentialist interpretations of Japanese culture, stresses the inequality inherent in such notions. These definitions always serve to include a privileged category while excluding others. The cliché image of a homogeneous Japan amounts to a strategic denial of ethnic groups such as the Ainu, Ryukyu, and ethnic Koreans, of the numerous local dialects and cultures, and of all the professions outside of white-collar corporate life. Furthermore, *nihonjinron* analyses always sought to define “Japan” against a supposed universal other, generally the West (Kosaku 1992). This has had the effect of erecting a barrier between Japan and the rest of the world. In this view, Japan is necessarily unique, and therefore necessarily alone.

Nihonjinron ideas of homogeneity and uniqueness formed the dominant cultural paradigm partly because of the socioeconomic normativity that characterized the postwar era. Motoaki Takahara (2009) has described how the success of Japan’s postwar system effectively nullified domestic political debate. As long as the system generated prosperity, citizens could ignore its inequalities. In the cultural arena, people were willing to accept sweeping definitions about themselves and their roles as long as they could live in a stable society. But that stability is gone now. Anne Allison (2003) has documented how in the last two decades Japan has changed rapidly into a “precarious” society with uncertainty as its defining characteristic. Daily practice has

responded in kind, becoming more differentiated and mobile. However, the definition of “Japan” is still by and large that of the *nihonjinron*. To put it in Geertzian terms, the cultural system of postwar Japan no longer matches contemporary social milieu (see Geertz 1973: Ch. 6).

This discrepancy has created crises of representation. Practitioners of Japanese traditional arts continue to present themselves as keepers of a true Japanese spirit even while the arts themselves have become foreign to contemporary Japanese, items to choose from in an international “cultural supermarket” (Matthews 2000). Generational conflicts arise when the previous generation’s conception of community as geographic locality runs up against the current generation’s diverse and temporary “communities of consumption” (White 2004). In a more insidious example, the persistent image of the lifelong salaryman perpetuates a uniform career ideal even as more and more workers are forced into unstable and low-paying temporary jobs. As Allison poignantly puts it, “the old [postwar] nervous system is still, to some degree intact, grinding down and spitting out “disposable humanity” in what is now a scarcity of social belonging” (2013: 69). Finally, the “myth of the homogenous nation” documented in detail by Eiji Oguma (1996) continues to define a set ethnic-cultural-political cultural matrix of Japaneseness that does not reflect the increasing numbers of immigrants, returnees, ethnic minorities like *Zainichi Kankokujin* [Korean nationals] and *Nikkeijin* [Brazilians of Japanese descent], and mixed-race children of international marriages.

These and other inconsistencies in the national image of Japan have been well-documented. However, it is not enough that scholars write about them. As stated at the beginning of this introduction, a reassessment of Japan must come from the ground up. Members of Japan’s new generation of adults require opportunities to learn about and discuss these issues. More importantly, they need to understand that, since they must live in the Japan of the future, they have both the freedom and the responsibility to re-imagine what it means to be Japanese. Finally, they must gain the critical thinking and discussion skills needed to productively reinterpret the concept of Japan. While there are many venues for this kind of education, the foreign-language classroom offers interesting possibilities. There, students are already made to step out of their own linguistic-cultural space and interact with other ways of life. It makes sense to utilize this displacement in order to enable students to look critically at their own culture as well. Towards this purpose, the course *What is “Japan,” Anyway?* was created.

Taught in the fall semester of 2015-2016, this was the most recent in a series of advanced language/content courses taught at Aichi Prefectural University’s iCoToBa Multilingual Learning Center. These courses form part of a program of global competency based on three core categories: *Nihon Shōkai* [Introduce Japan], *Hikaku Bunka* [Comparative Culture], and *Risāchi Hasshin Purojekuto* [Research Project and Presentation]. The advanced courses were created to give participating students the chance to critically investigate the program’s central concepts and

use English to engage with relevant sociocultural issues. The previous year's course investigated the term "global" as it relates to society, culture, and identity, fulfilling the *Hikaku Bunka* requirement. For the *Nihon Shōkai* requirement, *What is "Japan," Anyway?* sought to do the same to the term "Japan."

What is "Japan," Anyway? was attended by nine students from the British & American Studies and International & Cultural Studies departments. As with other advanced courses at iCoToBa, it was designed along CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) principles, where the foreign language functions as a medium for teaching and discussing specific content. Classes use authentic native-language materials, supplemented by resources which help learners gain the language skills needed to speak and write about the subject. This method has been shown to be effective in linking language teaching with the full range of cognitive processes (Coyle *et al.* 2010). The stimulation of working in the foreign language for a real-world purpose acts as a strong motivator for students, especially at the university level (Dupuy 1999). It also been shown that gaining the ability to think in another language improves content knowledge (Marsh 2009). CLIL has been well-utilized in the English-speaking world, and has recently proven to be an effective method in Japan as well (Sasajima 2011).

The in-class activities combined reading comprehension exercises, multimedia lectures, and extended discussion. Each lesson was centered on one or two theoretical texts that dealt with Japanese identity, including some of those summarized above. Readings were accompanied by reading guides and a set of working vocabulary which the students studied at home. One unique feature of this class was that students read both English-language and Japanese-language texts, in order to understand what both Japanese and non-Japanese thinkers were saying about Japan. For English-language texts, students answered comprehension questions given by the teacher. For Japanese-language texts, students translated key passages into English. The multimedia lectures served to define key concepts in simple terms and provide concrete examples of the social phenomena in question. With a solid theoretical base and working vocabulary in place, students conducted lengthy discussions in English. Students were consistently encouraged to reject essentialist notions of "Japanese culture" or "Japanese vs. foreigners." This required specific intervention from the instructor at first, but gradually the students acquired the skill of talking about "Japan" as a discursive concept and "Japanese culture" as mutable meaning system.

In the final section of the course, students composed academic essays that applied a theoretical concept to a social phenomenon of their choice. Many students chose to analyze media products in the light of social change, while others chose to focus on contemporary social and cultural practices. After choosing a topic, they began an intensive writing and editing process designed to improve English writing skills and argumentation skills. Since iCoToBa classes are not graded, we carried this process out as workshop. That is, the students did not first complete

an essay to then be evaluated. After meeting individually with me to fully construct a basis for their arguments, they submitted drafts every week, regardless of how much or little was completed. In addition to English-language correction, I added comments, example sentences, and cognitive maps that showed how each student should continue in order to make their argument successful. This process served to point out gaps in students' argumentation and help them understand the difference between "saying what you think" and "proving what you think." Since time to meet in person was limited, much of this was carried out via email. Each essay went through an average of four drafts before completion.

These classes are non-credited and completely voluntary, which leaves an instructor somewhat hesitant about implementing this strenuous process, lest students become discouraged and quit before the course is over. However, these students responded admirably to the challenge and effected the necessary changes in order to make their essays successful. In this class I was particularly pleased at how every student worked hard to complete essays about topics which particularly interested them, regardless of topic difficulty or English language ability. Nobody here took an easy way out, and for that I salute them. The final results of their essays comprise the contents of this volume.

The volume is divided into three thematic parts, with three essays in each. "Part One: Changing Cultures" considers areas where traditional cultural practices are giving way to new forms of interaction. Ayumi Takeuchi's essay "A Community of Consumption: The Halloween Phenomenon in Japan" deals with the recent explosion of Halloween celebrations among Japanese youth. Using Bruce White's ideas about communities and generational change, she argues that the Halloween phenomenon is a reflection of how younger Japanese create interest-based communities in order generate moments of solidarity. In "Changing Conceptions of Women's Roles in Japan," Nami Amano compares the portrayal of working women in sitcoms from the 1980s and the present day. She discovers that while the successful working woman has come to be a standard image, career and home life are still portrayed as incompatible, which Amano sees as a reflection of the unideal conditions female employees still face today. In the final essay for this section, "Japanese Language Guidance for Foreign Students and the Cycle of Avoidance," Jovielyn Okine analyses the relatively new practice of *nihongo shidō* [Japanese-language guidance], which provides special language classes for the growing number of non-Japanese students attending public school. While this practice has many benefits, Okine is concerned that separating these students from their classmates might reinforce the culture barrier between native Japanese and foreign residents.

"Part Two: Self-Presentation and Self-Image" investigates different ways in which young Japanese attempt to create and display positive identities in the midst of contemporary media culture. Aoi Sakakibara's essay "Identity Tourism in the 'Half' Model Boom" looks at the current

trend within young women's fashion magazines of using mixed-race models as examples of beauty and fashion sense. She criticizes this phenomenon, arguing that it dehumanizes people of mixed race while creating an inferiority complex among ethnic Japanese women. Anna Tsujimoto also deals with young women's culture in her essay "Decorative English Posts on Instagram Written by Young Japanese Women." She explains how English is used as a status symbol on social networking sites, which impedes its communicative function. Hikari Matsunaga's "How to Regard Self-Monitoring in Japan: The Case of *Aoi Haru Ride*" examines individual-group tension as it appears in girl's comics. She shows how characters in the manga *Aoi Haru Ride* deal with excessive self-monitoring tendencies, arguing that the work seeks to provide a lesson to young readers coping with social anxiety.

The essays in the final section, "Part Three: Japan on the World Stage," consider different efforts in Japanese media to present a particular national image both to Japanese citizens and to the rest of the world. Kanako Shimizu's essay "The Ise-Shima Summit Character Controversy: Problems with the Cool Japan Policy" describes how a local government's plan to use an otaku-style *bishōjo* [beautiful young girl] character as a mascot aroused criticism. In the light of this debacle, Shimizu offers reasons why official channels should refrain from using anime and manga culture for publicity stunts. In "International Contribution and Positive Nationalism on Japanese TV," Mai Ito analyses a network television program which interviews foreign visitors to Japan. Although the program contains mild nationalistic tendencies, she claims these are based on interaction and cooperation with other cultures and thus offer a healthy way for Japanese viewers to feel a sense of national pride. In the final essay, "National Sports Team Names and the "Spirit" of Japan," Shinsuke Ojika, looks at the use of the word "samurai" as it features in the national baseball and soccer team names. He applies Gordon Matthews's notion of the "cultural supermarket" in order to show how "warrior spirit" connotations are used as promotional tools for the team.

The final lesson of the course was conducted as an academic conference, where four volunteers read their essays aloud with accompanying slides. The other class members read the presenters' essays beforehand and prepared challenging questions. These were asked at the end of each reading, and were followed by lively discussions. Other iCoToBa instructors also joined as audience members. A convivial reception with a selection of food and drinks followed the event. This conference provided a sense of completion for the course, as well as a chance for students to share their efforts with each other.

Working with the students on these essays was a great privilege. The participants showed both determination and optimism in thinking about Japan's image. Their contributions both in class and in these essays gave me a wealth of examples where the various theories of Japan are currently being tested by social reality. It was a stimulating experience for me, both as a language

teacher and as a student of Japanese culture. Most of the graduating seniors in the class had been taking my advanced courses for years, and it evoked a distinct sense of pride to see the level of linguistic and cognitive ability they had achieved. It was also exciting to see the new attendees of my advanced courses overcome their initial reluctance and strive to communicate a higher level of ideas in a higher level of English. My deepest gratitude goes out to all these students and their excellent efforts. I wish them the best of luck in whatever future Japan they will inhabit. My thanks as well to the staff of the iCoToBa Multilingual Learning Center and Atsumi Miyatani for their help with the final conference. I am looking forward to the chance for another successful class and conference next year.

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Part One:

Changing Cultures

A Community of Consumption:

The Halloween Phenomenon in Japan

By Ayumi Takeuchi

Junior, British and American Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze the phenomenon of Halloween in Japan as an example of a community of consumption. Applying both Bruce White's concept of the term and Rogers Brubaker's concept of "groupness," it will show what has made the Halloween gathering one of the most well-known events in contemporary Japan. Ultimately, it argues that the act of gathering in a public place with costumes forms a community created by people who are attracted to both anime cultures and Western cultural images. The Halloween participants enact a moment of groupness to create a temporary community which replaces local community events such as *chonaikai* [town meetings] and *matsuri* [festivals].

Theoretical Outline

As Japan is aging rapidly, the issue that most young people do not join in local communities is a matter of serious concern. However, this is actually a result of a change in our understanding of a "community." Anthropologist Bruce White writes that "there is a marked generational contrast between how particular types of community activities are created and undertaken; alongside this, there is a playing out of community memberships as plural, dynamic and open entities exposed to and connected with the outside world." To the older generations, the community represents the boundaries of social existence. On the other hand, the younger generations consider it to be a group where people sharing common interests gather, which White calls a "community of consumption." These communities are based on things like music, fashion, etc., and can happen all over the world. The communities of consumption are temporary. In fact, sociologist Rogers Brubaker claims that all groups are temporary, created by actions and words. He believes that we should shift from talking about "groups" to "groupness" and treating groups as "variable and contingent rather than fixed and given...to treat groupness as an *event*, as something that 'happens'" (Brubaker 2002). This means that we can see the Halloween phenomenon as a moment of successful "groupness."

Case Study

Nowadays, Halloween is one of the biggest events in Japan. The popularity of Halloween culture imported from the West has been increasing rapidly in the last few years, generating a large amount of profit every year. Every year around the end of October, we often hear news about Halloween parades in many locations in Tokyo. For example, on October 31st 2015, 3,000 people staged a costume parade in Tokyo's Roppongi district that drew 98,000 spectators, while at a separate event near JR Kawasaki Station 2,500 people in costume attracted 110,000 spectators, according to organizers (*Muragon* 2015). Some of them were from outside the Kanto area and came to Tokyo just to join the parade to celebrate Halloween. Revelers – including a group of scary doctors and nurses wearing white coats splattered with blood, a person dressing up as the popular children's show character *Anpanman*, and anime characters – got together to walk in the street and take group photos.

Some people see this phenomenon as a negative trend. They argue that Japanese people just want to dress up in costumes and do not think about the meaning of Halloween, so it is strange to import the Western traditional culture and change it into a Japan event. They also claim that the revelers are socially irresponsible, leaving large amounts of litter in the streets. Although this phenomenon causes controversy, it is certain that the event has become a part of Japanese culture.

Analysis and Conclusion

We can see how the Halloween phenomenon is an example of a community of consumption. The Halloween gathering in Tokyo has two main features. One is that the participants of this event are together for only one day. The other is that it is a group of people brought together by a common interest in dressing up in costume. On Halloween day, they assemble to walk in the street with costumes, in effect creating a huge temporary community. The fact that many are from outside the Kanto area indicates that this new community is not a geographically specific group such as a *chōnaikai*. This temporary, non-local, and interest-oriented group fits White's definition perfectly.

Moreover, the Halloween event is a moment of "groupness." Brubaker mentions that "groupness" is changeable. The Halloween gathering happens for a short time and there is no central principle to fix and define the gathering groups. Therefore, this assembly which has emerged in the last few years shows that the form of communities in Japan has changed. Some people complain that this phenomenon is caused by a bunch of rowdy people who just want to make a noisy scene all together, and produces neither a sense of unity like *matsuri* nor an understanding of foreign culture. However, this idea is based on an image of traditional communities. To the younger generation, communities are places where people having common interests get together and have fun for a short time. Thus, it is a mistake to see this phenomenon

as cultural depravity. The Halloween parade is a new form of community that has very concrete interactions without geographical borders.

These days, most people use social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which makes it easier to communicate with people all over the world. Accordingly, the shape of communities has been changing significantly. Young people's apathy towards local communities does not mean that they are getting more independent, but actually has created new non-geographical communities. One example of these is the Halloween gathering. Therefore, these events, which generate the community of consumption, are going to continue to develop in Japan.

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Changing Conceptions of Women's Roles in Japan

By Nami Amano

Junior, British and American Studies

Abstract

This essay will analyze Japanese sitcoms featuring career women as main characters, as examples of the changing views about the gender division of labor in Japan. Examining two Japanese sitcoms from different periods, it will show the changes in conceptions of women's roles. This examination will elucidate how the roles of women have been changing for many years. Ultimately, this essay argues that, while women have achieved the ability to work in a wider variety of jobs and obtain higher positions, the problem of women's identity still persists 30 years after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1986. Work-life balance is still a large burden for women. In other words, it is difficult for women to have a family while they are working.

Theoretical Outline

Conceptions of women's roles have changed with the times. In the past, society dictated that men work and women remain at home and do housework or take care of their children. As anthropologist Anne Allison explains, in postwar Japan, "women gained recognition for producing children who achieved high academic performances by demonstrating extraordinary output and discipline even as toddlers" (Allison 2013: 26). However, that concept is now becoming outdated. In September in 2015, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, talking about the marriage between a famous singer and an actress, said that it was good for Japanese society because this could influence Japanese women to give birth at the same time the actress does, "so please give birth to many children" (*Sankei News* 2014). This statement became a major controversy, played up by TV news programs. This indicates how the concept of women has changed in Japan. Suga's statement reflects the old idea of women's work, which many people now see as a problem to criticize. This change has an influence on Japanese sitcoms as well.

Case Study

In 1988, a sitcom called *Dakishimetai* [*I Want to Embrace You*] was broadcast in Japan. Two famous actresses played the leading roles. One is a single career woman who works hard as a widely sought-after hair stylist and manages a company where other stylists work. The other is a housewife whose husband manages a Chinese restaurant. Both of them live in a luxury apartment building with a rooftop pool. In this sitcom, the two women stick to their lives as career woman and housewife while they face the troubles of living, that is, one keeps working without marrying

anybody, and the other lives with her husband who supports her.

In 2015, the same type of a sitcom as 1988's *Dakishimetai* was broadcast, called *Otona-joshi* [*Adult Women*]. This sitcom also features a career woman as a main character. She is a single office worker and she works hard as the leader of her division. Although her co-workers talk about her in her absence, she has a strong sense of responsibility for her job and is able to work successfully on her own. Her co-workers say that they do not want to be like her because "she works so hard" and she "could not get married to anybody." Happiness for them is dependent on marriage to an eligible man.

Analysis and Conclusion

We can see how these two Japanese sitcoms are examples of the changing views about the gender division of labor in Japan. In the 1988 sitcom, there are two main characters; one is independent and works hard while the other is a housewife and supported by her husband. This reflects how strongly the idea that women should remain at home was fixed in society. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was passed 1986 and conceptions of women's roles had gradually begun to change, yet most people at that time believed that women should be a housewife. On the other hand, in the 2015 sitcom, the main character is a leader of her division in the company and she has the responsibility of dictating tasks to her coworkers. In addition, her coworkers are almost all women. Furthermore, two of her best friends, who are also main characters in the sitcom, also have careers. This clearly shows that the participation of women in the public sphere has come to be an accepted sight, and that the idea that the workplace is a man's world has disappeared. Interestingly, however, the main characters in both *Dakishimetai* and *Otona-joshi* who have careers are all single or divorced. This may indicate that people in both eras think working women must necessarily struggle to marry or have a family.

Sitcoms always show the features of that specific period's society. For example, the characters' fashion, words, and roles are quite different in each sitcom. Thus, social situation has a big influence on sitcoms. It can be argued that these two sitcoms accurately depict the lives of women in the workplace. Perhaps they go too far in assuming that working women cannot have families, but it is still true that women working at small and medium-sized businesses have troubles when they return to a job after giving birth to children. The companies of Japan should reconsider the system so that more and more women can keep working.

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Japanese Language Guidance for Foreign Students and the Cycle of Avoidance

By Jovielyn Okine

Junior, International and Cultural Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze the new revisions to Japanese education laws which allow for *nihongo shidō* [Japanese language instruction] within the context of the issue of multiculturalism in Japan. Applying Daniela de Carvalho's discussion of *nikkei* [Brazilians of Japanese descent] communities, it will consider how minorities in Japan are part of a "cycle of avoidance" meaning that both minorities and Japanese tend to avoid each other in society. With the application of the new law, children of foreign residents can study Japanese Language as a separate class. This change has the benefit of allowing foreign children to learn Japanese in detail, thus helping them function in Japanese society. However, the danger is that by separating them from Japanese students, this new practice can worsen the cycle of avoidance. Ultimately, this study argues that in order to avoid the dangers of isolation and increase its benefits, schools should conduct *nihongo shidō* through the method of *hairikomi shidō* [inclusive instruction], where language teachers assist foreign students within regular classes.

Theoretical Outline

Sociologist Daniela de Carvalho's work investigates the lives of the Nikkeijin: Brazilian immigrants to Japan who are of Japanese ancestry but culturally Brazilian. As a minority group in Japan, they have created their own communities that are isolated from the larger society (Carvalho 2002). Many Nikkeijin have suffered from what they see as instances of prejudice and misunderstanding by the Japanese-speaking native residents. Despite the similar physical characteristics and their close familial ties with their *issei* (grand) parents in Brazil, many report that the Japanese in Japan (*nihon no nihonjin*, *japonês do Japão*) will not accept them warmly and instead label them as definite "foreigners" (*gaijin*, *estrangeiros*). As a consequence, after residing in Japan for a while, many Nikkeijin call themselves "Brazilians" to distinguish themselves from the members of a Japanese society that imposes rigid social norms and customs on them. According to Carvalho, the attitudes leading to isolation on the part of the Nikkeijin are encouraged by the local Japanese who seldom come into contact with them even when living nearby or working together with them. This causes the minorities like Nikkeijin and the Japanese to tend to avoid each other and not talk to each other. We can call this situation a "cycle of

avoidance,” which is likely to continue unless opportunities for the two groups to interact are created.

Case Study

The Ministry of Education applied new revisions to Japanese education law specifying that Japanese language instruction will be a Special Curriculum starting in 2014. This revision stipulates that children of foreign students attending public elementary schools and junior high schools who need Japanese language study will take Japanese as a separate class. This Japanese Language class is categorized as a special curriculum, and acts as substitute class hours for other subjects, in the range of 10~280 hours per year. Therefore, students can study Japanese language in a different classroom in the whole of usual school time. The teachers of these foreign children should have a teacher’s license, including part-time teachers. Children with foreign nationalities, Japanese returnee students, and students with dual nationalities can take this Special Curriculum (The Ministry of Education 2013).

The purpose of Japanese language instruction through the special curriculum is to help students adapt themselves to school life in Japan and become able to participate in other school subjects and activities in Japanese. In addition, instruction to acquire the necessary Japanese for children in school life is also included. There are specific programs that will be carried out in the Japanese course, for example, Survival Japanese Program, Basic Japanese Program, Skill-Based Japanese Program and Supplementary Subject Lesson programs (Matsumoto 2014). However, this Japanese instruction has the effect of isolating the children of foreign students who need Japanese language into separate rooms.

Analysis and Conclusion

The benefit of allowing foreign children to learn Japanese in a separate classroom is they can understand what the teacher says in class. As a result, they can study each subject in assisted Japanese, so they can catch up to their Japanese classmates. They can take the class at the same pace and of course can participate in other school activities in Japanese. Local communities and schools involved in teaching Japanese language can improve their awareness about multicultural teaching. In addition, Japanese instruction can give foreign students more opportunities to choose their course in Japanese society after they become adults (Matsumoto 2014, Saito 2013).

However, the danger is that by separating them from Japanese students, this new practice can worsen the cycle of avoidance. Certainly, they can study Japanese in more detail if they study in separate rooms. However, without a chance to interact, the Japanese students and foreign children will not have the opportunity to know each other’s culture, religion, personality, and their differences and similarities. This can also lead to *ijime* [bullying], because foreign children run

the risk of being criticized by Japanese students because of their “differences,” if they are treated as a different category of students. They might become more isolated not only in the society but also in school.

The new revisions to Japanese education law which make Japanese language instruction a Special Curriculum are good in principle. However, the form of giving Japanese instruction to the foreign students should be altered. This study believes that *nihongo shidō* would be best conducted through the method of *hairikomi shidō*, in which foreign children study Japanese in the classroom with Japanese children but with a language teacher beside them for guidance. This way, the foreign children can learn at the same time as Japanese children, and thus they will be more motivated and confident. It also gives both types of students more chances to interact with each other and therefore can break the cycle of avoidance.

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Scenes from the final conference.

Part Two:
Self-Presentation and
Self-Image

Identity Tourism in the “Half” Model Boom

By Aoi Sakakibara

Senior, British and American Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze the “half” fashion boom as an example of identity tourism in Japan. Applying Lisa Nakamura’s ideas in her essay “Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet,” it will show how “half” (mixed-race) models give some ethnic Japanese an image that assists them in trying to change their appearance and experiment with their identities. The “half” fashion boom is a phenomenon which makes young people pretend to be someone they admire. Ultimately, this study argues that the “half” boom is a negative phenomenon because it creates unrealistic stereotypes about mixed race people in Japan.

Theoretical Outline

Digital media scholar Lisa Nakamura’s 1995 work “Race In/For Cyberspace: Identity Tourism and Racial Passing on the Internet” first coined the term “identity tourism.” Nakamura describes how people choose characters to play in an online role-playing game “LambdaMOO.” She notes how most male Asian character names that appear in the game are derived from familiar stereotypes from popular media such as video games, television, and film; characters are named Musashi, Bruce Lee, Nunchaku, Akira, etc. Players who choose to perform this type of racial play are mostly white. She argues that this kind of identity tourism allows people to “abandon themselves to a dream of crossing over racial boundaries temporarily and recreationally...a form of travel which is inherently recreational, exotic, and exciting, like surfing” (Nakamura 1995). She notes that white players can “appropriate an Asian racial identity without any of the risks associated with being a racial minority in real life.” Nakamura’s essay was 1995, but now media culture is everywhere so there are many more kinds of identity tourism in the world.

Case Study

In most fashion magazines for young people, various “half” models are featured on the covers recently. The loanword “half” (*hāfu*) refers to a person born from two different races, one of which is generally Japanese. One considerable reason for “halves” to be chosen as fashion models is that they are known to have Japanese identity, which makes ethnic Japanese consumers feel a sense of familiarity, while at the same time allowing the exotic experience of foreignness.

For example, consider the latest issue of the fashion magazine *ViVi* (February 2016). *ViVi* is marketed to young women in their teens and early twenties. The models on the cover are all *ViVi*

models and they are all “half.” The cover reads “All about *ViVi* Models” and “the Secret of their Beauty.” In the past, “half” meant only someone whose parent is a foreigner or born from international marriage. However, the present usage of the term “half” is somewhat changed. Now anyone can dress and adorn themselves to be “half.” The most important point for young girls is the appearance, whether they look “half” or not. There are a lot of articles that show “half” makeup styles and fashion. On the Internet, some websites show “how to look “half” with a Japanese face” (Ely 2015). An ethnic category is becoming a fashion style.

Analysis and Conclusion

We can see how the fashion images in the “half” boom are a kind of identity tourism. Because of these images, “half” fashion is popular now for ethnic Japanese girls because they can enter into a fantasy of crossing over racial boundaries temporarily. However, the ethnic concept “half” indicates they are not completely foreign – they have some Japanese identity – which makes this kind of identity tourism a safe fantasy.

However, the “half” boom has two major negative effects. Firstly, this boom causes Japanese women to feel like their own image is unsatisfactory and that to appear much as possible like foreigners (meaning Westerners) is better. Reading fashion magazines, we can find any number of “half” models wearing “half” fashion and makeup. However, many women feel a sense of futility from this, thinking that the style would not fit their ethnic Japanese face and figure. Rather than a simple reference point for beauty, these images create a sense of physical inferiority among young women.

Secondly, the half boom creates unrealistic ideas about people of mixed race. Because of the boom, the stereotype that “halves are all beautiful” has spread in Japan. Even stereotypes that have positive ideas on the surface are damaging, because they take away the individuality of the person. The phrase “*hāfu dakara* (because she is half)” passed around so easily makes life difficult for regular mixed race people. The fact that someone is beautiful is not because she is “half,” it is because *she* is beautiful. Also, Nakamura’s criticism of how white gamers “appropriate an Asian racial identity without any of the risks associated with being a racial minority in real life” applies here as well. The daily lives of mixed race Japanese have many difficulties, and enjoying their appearance as a fantasy increases these problems.

In conclusion, the most important point is that “half” fashion is only one type of fashion and the stereotype of “half is beautiful” or “half is better than Japanese” should be changed. Mixed-race models became popular in some part because of marketing strategy, but mostly because they are beautiful. They became models because they are beautiful, and the result was that they became categorized as “half.” Identity tourism is exciting and I believe it should be allowed to exist as part of life’s enjoyment. However, people in Japan should understand more about racial equality

and be proud of being ethnic Japanese.

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Decorative English Posts on Instagram

Written by Young Japanese Women

By Anna Tsujimoto

Senior, British and American Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze posts written in English on the photo-sharing site Instagram by young Japanese women as an example of “decorative English.” Referring to anthropologist Bruce White’s notion that “communities of consumption” might encourage young Japanese to be more globally minded, this paper argues the opposite point of view. These communities of consumption on Instagram make English a tool for increasing social status in a small and isolated community of fellow Japanese speakers, instead of a means of communication with non-Japanese. Ultimately, this paper argues that in order to avoid this kind of phenomenon, a more practical English education system is necessary.

Theoretical Outline

Bruce White describes communities of consumption as social groups where friends are connected by “stylistic trends that embody a huge variety of forms, from musically defined interest groups to lifestyle choices” (2004: 53). For example, there are many running events held for young people to join – Color Run, Bubble Run, Electric Run and Zombie Run, etc. – which many young people participate in. These can be considered communities of consumption. He also writes that “the community of consumption represents a new ordering of and exposure to diversity” (54). For White, communities of consumption are positive things that contribute to global society. If this is true, then Instagram communities using English should also somehow contribute.

However, English in Japan is not used primarily as a communication tool. John Dougill explains that in Japan, English has a “decorative” function. He points out that “compared with the Chinese characters used for everyday purposes, the *romaji* (Roman alphabet) of English seems smart, sophisticated and modern.... This English is never even read, even by students and teachers of the language: it’s purely decorative” (2008: 18). Practically, English is often recognized as a cool language in Japan not only because it is a lingua franca, but because it exhibits this “cool” status. Looking through English posts contributed by young Japanese women, we can see that they regard using English as symbol of status.

Case Study

As the Internet is now in use all over the world, the power of social networking sites (SNS) seems to have stronger and stronger effects on people's lifestyles, especially on the younger generation. They seem to deeply depend on SNS to connect with each other. This dependence is often seen in the way young Japanese women contribute posts on SNS in English. The photo-sharing site Instagram is one especially strong example. People upload photos onto Instagram, along with some comments. They share photos of food, fashion, daily life, shopping, animals, views and so on. Better posts usually get more "likes," and so people share photos which they want others to see. This website illustrates how people in the current generation of youth connect each other. They share the same preferences and from these preferences forge social relationships.

Dougill admits that "education has been freed up, English introduced into primary schools, and listening tests established in national exams" and "the number of "international Japanese" has been increasing." However, at the same time, he insists that "the peculiarities of Japanese English continue to adorn the country's buildings, goods and items of clothing" (Dougill 2008: 19). In line with Dougill's observation, the Instagram posts contributed by young Japanese women often contain many mistakes. Here are some examples below:

A. Example 1

This woman is describing a photograph of a light display featuring American flags at a monument in Washington D.C.:

"When I listen to music, I'm so happy. But...I'm alone☹☹ fight!"

"It's a dream to go to here!!!"

From the example above, we can see that she uses English as "decoration." In addition to mistakes in grammar and usage – "go to here" instead of "go here" – she also uses some Japanese-style expressions such as ellipses to express silence while thinking of something or "fight" to express ambition, which never happen in native English usage. From that point, we can see that she is not aiming at accurately describing her feeling with English but writing for her own self-satisfaction, or for expressing her desires to her friends in the same Japanese small community in which she is isolated. Additionally, the photograph she posted is not one she took by herself. This may indicate that she recognizes the United States as a dream location which exists far away from her. In that case, English may have that same status in her mind.

B. Example 2

There are some websites which tell Japanese people how to post on SNS in English. An example can be found on a post from the blog website *I Know* (Urara 2015). In this post, the writer instructs the readers: "You may often write posts about food or drinks. Common expressions will be more fashionable if you use English!" This example shows how many

Japanese people regard English. Some Japanese people contribute posts in English because they think it is cool. Many people think using English acts as a fashion statement, as the website recommends. Just to illustrate, this post has got 157 likes on Facebook.

Analysis and Conclusion

The English consumed among young Japanese women on Instagram does not come as a representation of the diversity of Japanese society. These Instagrammers do use English to contribute posts, but the English there is not used as a global communication tool. English used in the sentences is grammatically wrong and sometimes even includes Japanese expressions. They use English because it seems to be fashionable in their Japanese community. To use English as a fashionable decoration does not help Japanese society to be global. Those usages have the danger of making English in Japan isolated into a small community.

Japanese society is exhibiting more and more interest towards English-speaking cultures than in the past. Young people especially seem to have very positive attitudes toward English. Contributing posts on SNS may be regarded as one example of this. However, as described in this study, young people tend to use English simply as a decoration. I want to suggest that the phenomenon of decorative English in Japan arises as result of the English education system in Japan. Because Japanese English education focuses on reading and writing, Japanese students normally study those sections very hard. However, they do not have many opportunities to use English practically in English classes or in their daily lives. Japanese education makes people recognize English just as a subject, not a communication tool. With the movement towards global participation active now, it seems to be a good time to change Japanese education. If there are more opportunities for Japanese students to feel real English in the education situation, the isolated communities using decorative English may change into open ones with English as a communication tool.

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How to Regard Self-Monitoring in Japan:

The Case of *Ao Haru Ride*

By Hikari Matsunaga

Junior, International & Cultural Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze Sakisaka Io's comic for girls *Ao Haru Ride* (2011) as an example of the phenomenon of self-monitoring in Japan. In this work, the author depicts self-monitoring as "playing friends" – pretending to get along with someone you don't like by hiding your real feelings so as to belong to a social group. This process has a negative image, but the characters conquer their negative feelings by stopping their self-monitoring. Ultimately, this work treats self-monitoring as a regular problem Japanese people often face. The depiction of self-monitoring in this work does reflect real-life, and many people can empathize with the experience. However, in real life it is difficult for some people to overcome the negative feelings created by self-monitoring. *Ao Haru Ride* therefore offers the lesson that people can live by expressing their individuality.

Theoretical Outline

Japanese people tend to place special emphasis on harmonization with the other members of their social groups. Dutch social psychologist Gerard Hendrik Hofstede says that while Westerners act on the basis of individualistic cultural values, Japanese act on those of a collectivistic culture (Gudykunst 1998). Collectivism is the idea that cooperation is a fundamental value. It stresses interdependence and cohesiveness, acting for not only the individual but for everyone within the group. Members of a collectivist culture tend to think it is important to hide their individuality.

A psychological phenomenon related to collectivist behavior is "self-monitoring." This study defines self-monitoring as the act of observing and analyzing one's own behavior and changing one's actions accordingly in order to adapt to one's surroundings. In principle, self-monitoring is just a way to adapt to society and has no negative image. For example, a delinquent can stop to think about their bad behavior and from there attempt to live an honest life in order to survive in the society. However, self-monitoring can be performed to an excessive degree, especially in collectivist society. According to research by Gudykunst, Gao, Nishida, and Sakai, in a collectivist society – in particular Japanese society – people tend to excessively self-monitor because they feel it is important to review their conduct in order to accommodate other people and cooperate with them (1992). Japanese people tend to monitor themselves more because they are in a

collectivist society, so therefore they tend to feel more stress about social relationships.

Case Study

We can see how self-monitoring is treated in *Ao Haru Ride*, a high-school story about the daily lives of youth. The story follows five main characters. One of them is the protagonist, Futaba Yoshioka. She was a quiet girl in junior high school, and was neglected and isolated by other girls. She was popular with boys, so she got on girls' nerves by arousing their jealousy. Therefore, she began to put on a show of carelessness after entering high school, where no one knew her past. For instance, she made the contents of her bag sloppy and made a show of eating quite a lot (*Ao Haru Ride 1*: 44, 50). She purposely displayed these habits so as not to be liked by boys. It was more important for her to be liked by girls than by boys, in other words, to not stand out. In the language of the comic, this is called "playing friends." They get along with friends by hiding their real feelings. Through these habits, she managed to get along with her friends, but they never helped her when she ran into a problem. She felt lonely because of the shallow friendship she had with them.

One day, a boy who Futaba likes confronted her about her habit of "playing friends." She was shocked at being discovered, but she replied to him that playing friends is essential for her. In addition, she was impressed by the words of one friendless girl who couldn't help cultivating an image of sweetness consciously: "I want to be a person who I myself can like." Futaba knew she also was afraid of being isolated, but eventually she chose to show her real character. These events became the trigger of her disclosing her real intentions without thinking to her friends, and their "play" friendship was broken. It led to isolation in the classroom. However she didn't regret saying her true feelings and put all her doubts behind her.

Analysis and Conclusion

In this work, Futaba does self-monitoring. She analyzes herself and concludes that her quiet character led to other girl's jealousy. Therefore, she changed her behavior so as not to be disliked by them. It was only way for her to belong to a group of friends. The author describes this self-monitoring as a negative phenomenon; thus, stopping it and accepting her own character is a positive phenomenon. Probably, many people can sympathize with Futaba's situation. It was treated as a common occurrence in our lives.

In general, people perform self-monitoring unconsciously. Futaba in *Ao Haru Ride* rethought her life and decided to express her unique personality. This work describes a success in overcoming excessive self-monitoring. However, it is more difficult and complex to stop self-monitoring in real life. People who self-monitor less than others may be criticized such as KY (*Kuki Yomenai*). This study defines *kūki yomenai* [lit. "can't read the atmosphere"] as the kind of

people whose statements and attitude are unsuitable for the social atmosphere at the time. They are criticized in Japan as people with no common sense.

Conversely, people who do it too much may be distressed because they feel a constant pressing need to change themselves. Excessive self-monitoring can lead to serious consequences such as *hikikomori* [shut-ins] and suicide. People try to shelter themselves in places where they don't have to change themselves. It is likely that one reason for the many cases of *hikikomori* and suicide in Japan is immoderate self-monitoring. In real life it is difficult for some people to overcome the negative feelings created by self-monitoring. *Ao Haru Ride* therefore offers the lesson that people can live by expressing their individuality. The success story of *Ao Haru Ride* encourages young people who are troubled by excessive self-monitoring. If they follow this advice, Japan will become better because Japanese people can feel they don't have to take refuge from society anymore.

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Japan (as well as any other country) **is...**

A geographical / political entity

A cultural concept

A cultural system



They can change!

A slide from Unit 1 of the class.

Part Three:

Japan on the World Stage

The Ise-Shima Summit Character Controversy:

Problems with the Cool Japan Policy

By Kanako Shimizu

Senior, British and American Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze the controversy surrounding the proposed Ise-Shima Summit mascot character as illustration of problems inherent in the “Cool Japan” publicity measure of local and national governments. The Ise-Shima character was created by depicting a Japanese traditional *ama* diver in the sexualized *moe* style of otaku culture, a decision which drew criticism from real-life *ama* divers in the Ise-Shima area. Applying both Azuma Hiroki’s concept “pseudo-Japan” and Iwabuchi Kōichi’s thoughts on the globalization of Japanese culture, this essay will show the importance of government’s nonintervention into subculture.

Theoretical Outline

In 2002, American journalist Douglas McGray published his article ‘Japan’s Gross National Cool’ in *Foreign Policy*. He mentioned in the article that “Japan already possesses a vast reserve of potential soft power.” Soft power refers to a country’s potential to influence policy based on the attractiveness of its culture. After the article was published, the tendency to look at Japanese subculture such as manga, anime, or otaku culture as “cool” was widely spread.

The Japanese government established the Cool Japan branch in the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry in 2010. They define Cool Japan as Japanese unique culture, focusing on pop-cultural products that have received attention in foreign countries. The purpose of that measure is to promote the coolness of Japanese culture to the world in order to provide a big boom for private markets.

However, the issue of whether the government should control Cool Japan as a matter of policy is debatable. As global studies scholar Iwabuchi Kōichi has mentioned, even if Japanese culture has come to be widely known, “it is quite another [thing] to say that this cultural influence and this perception of coolness is closely associated with as a tangible, realistic appreciation of “Japanese” lifestyle or ideas” (2002: 35). Japanese specialist in Western philosophy Azuma Hiroki has explained that otaku culture is based on the complicated desire to remake “pseudo-Japan” by using American materials because Japan has lost the comfort of a traditional Japanese identity after WW2 (2001: 24). Azuma explains that there are two types of Japanese people: one which accepts otaku culture’s version of Japan, and one which rejects the characters that combine

Japanese tradition and western culture, because they are not perceived as “real Japan.” Therefore, viewing otaku culture as Japanese culture in general is controversial.

Case Study

The 42nd G7 summit, called “The Ise-Shima Summit,” will be held in the spring of 2016 in Shima, Mie Prefecture, Japan. The leaders of the seven G7 members and the representatives of the European Union will participate. The city has traditionally been a center for pearl harvesting. To promote the summit and welcome the participants, Shima City adopted the character of an *ama* [female pearl diver] as an official mascot. The character was depicted wearing a too-short white cloth, exposing her long legs. She was also depicted in the otaku style as both breasty and childish, quite different from real *ama*. The Shima city government explained that the character was a great promotional measure because the younger generation and foreigners were much familiar with otaku culture. However, most of the *ama* who live in Ise-Shima area resolutely opposed the use of this character. One of them, Utsubo Isako, argued that “this character was totally different from the real figure, and insulted the great traditional profession of *ama*. The fishing skill of *ama* is recognized as an important Intangible Folk Culture Asset in Mie. I’m doubtful about treating such an important tradition as otaku culture” (Kimura 2015). Therefore, 309 signatures of *ama* opposing the character, and seven thousand others, have been collected through the Internet. Consequently, the city government apologized for making people uncomfortable, and promised to alter the mascot (Ogino 2015).

Analysis and Conclusion

We can see how the *ama* character is an example of the pseudo-Japan that Azuma indicates. The character was supposed to present Japaneseness by focusing on traditional professions, in this case *ama*. However, it did not depict real *ama*, but showed a particular kind of Japanese imagination by making it in the otaku style. As Azuma explains, the goal of pseudo-Japan is not to show the value of history, but to visually enjoy an imaginative world combining both traditional and modern pop culture. Otaku culture also does not reflect real life but an ideal world like in fiction. Therefore, it should be said that the Ise-Shima character in the otaku style is just an ideal for fun. The *ama* of Ise did not share this same ideal in relation to their history, which is why they got angry.

If a character becomes approved as an official symbol, this means it is public, and thus is supposed to be accepted by everyone in that community. In this case the main reason of those who opposed the character was that the city government officially approved it and began a public promotional campaign. *Moe* characters such as the Ise-Shima mascot are attractive for otaku as fiction, however, they also connect to real-life issues. Many of the *ama* are uncomfortable with

the character because they think of her as sexist. This character is treated as just an attractive figure. In the context of the current government push to encourage more working career women, creating a female character in such a kind of style is contradictory.

In addition, the use of the character is an example of Cool Japan problem that Iwabuchi mentions. The summit is a formal and important occasion for Japan to gain credibility in international politics. Therefore, the use of the character as an official one is a problem, because the purpose of the summit is not to enjoy otaku culture. It is good that many foreigners have an interest in Japanese subcultures such as otaku culture. However, the government should not control Cool Japan as a policy for soft power, because otaku culture will lost its coolness and freedom once the public authorities invade into private culture.

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International Contribution and Positive Nationalism on Japanese TV

By Mai Ito

Senior, British and American Studies

Abstract

This study will analyze the Japanese TV program *Why Did You Come to Japan?* [*You wa nani shi ni Nihon e?*] (TV Tokyo) as an example of how *nihonjinron* theories of Japanese uniqueness interact with more modern ideas of international contribution within the Japanese media. Applying both Kosaku Yoshino's discussion of *nihonjinron* and Ōishi Yutaka's idea of international contribution as a new kind of nationalism, it will show how this TV program simultaneously exhibits both nationalistic *nihonjinron* tendencies and a desire to contribute to and interact with the rest of the world. Ultimately it will argue that even though certain isolating tendencies continue, this kind of show is valuable because it helps the audience realize how much Japan is globalized while at the same time allowing a sense of pride at being Japanese people who can coexist with foreigners.

Theoretical Outline

Nationalism is created through many sources and indirectly influences much of our lives. Kosaku Yoshino explains how Japanese nationalism is connected with *nihonjinron* [theory of the Japanese] a famous set of ideas about Japanese identity. *Nihonjinron* has been widely discussed for decades and is still a key concept to think about Japanese culture. To summarize it simply, it is an idea that Japan is unique (different from foreigners) and Japanese culture therefore does not interact well with other cultures. "Japanese identity is the anti-image of foreignness and, as such, can only be affirmed by formulating the image of the Other; namely, the west (or in a previous age, China)" (Kosaku 1992: 11). The image of Japanese uniqueness which influences our perceptions is created by differentiating Japan from a supposed universal norm. Kosaku also writes that "it should be stressed that those ideas concerning Japan and the West emphasized in the *nihonjinron* do not necessarily represent empirical reality but rather images created to reinforce Japanese identity" (12). Since in *nihonjinron* Japanese identity is deeply related to the images of the Other, its ideas influenced Japanese nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

Another important idea in the discussion of Japanese nationalism is Ōishi Yutaka's notion of nationalism through international contribution. Ōishi explains that mass media takes the role of a window for the Japanese to look at the outside world and to look back on history. He also says

that non-news media such as TV shows, movies and novels stimulates public feeling of nationalism automatically (2006: 4). Ōishi explains several changes in Japanese nationalism after World War II and the economic crisis. According to him, nationalism in pre-1990s Japan was connected to economic success. After the recession hit in the 1990s, Japanese media discourse began to attempt to reestablish a place in the world through “international contribution” (28). The impulse towards contribution is good, but as Ōishi says it can lead to a new kind of nationalism – where Japan is in competition with or trying to show off to other countries.

Case Study

These years, the number of TV shows treating foreign subjects is growing dramatically. One of them is TV Tokyo’s extremely popular *Why Did You Come to Japan?* (*You wa nani shi ni Nihon e?*), which airs Mondays at 7:00 p.m. This TV show started in 2013, and consists of interviews with visitors from foreign countries. The “You” in the title refers to the foreigners who came to Japan. The show’s camera crew begins at airports and travels Japan with these foreign visitors. The show is a documentary and also a comedy; the hosts of the show are popular comedy duo Bananaman. According to the official homepage, the show wants to highlight foreigners because the number of foreign travelers coming to Japan is increasing year by year.

The show generally does not feature celebrity guests in the studio. Bananaman’s job as hosts is to watch and comment on videos of interviews taken before the show. The interviews are taken by a three-person crew of cameraman, director and interpreter who rarely show up in front of the camera. The commentary functions as a substitute voice for the audience, making honest remarks while the interviews are shown. One of the unique features of the show is that it does not have any scripts for the interviewees (this is the documentary aspect) and simply follows the visitor’s stay in Japan basically without giving them any advice or help. Therefore, the audience can feel they are getting raw information about what foreigners really do in Japan and why they came. The interviewees offer the audience new points of view about Japan as seen from outside. Some of the interviews are in fact not travelers but living in Japan. These figures represent how globalized Japan has become.

Interestingly, some interviewees on *Why Did You Come to Japan?* mention parts of Japanese culture that Japanese people do not realize is popular abroad. For example, the December 7th 2015 broadcast featured an American women who came to Japan to visit her boyfriend working in Tokyo. She told the interviewers that she wanted to learn origami. This desire originated with an origami crane she saw decorating a Japanese restaurant in New York. The program showed her visiting an origami museum to learn how to make a crane. The camera showed many kind Japanese who helped her at the museum. Also, Bananaman’s commentary expressed surprise at her huge excitement about making a crane (“just a crane!”) figure.

Why Did You Come to Japan? also sometimes reflects on how Japan contributes towards world culture. In the July 14, 2014 broadcast, the crew followed a group of Americans who came to Japan to join a charity event called Oxfam Trail Walker Japan. In this large annual event, groups of four people mixing foreigners and Japanese walk 100 km for 3 days. Because it is a comedy show, the show focused more on the team than the event itself. However, the audience could learn that Japan hosts such humanitarian events.

Analysis and Conclusion

We can see how *Why Did You Come to Japan?* features both *nihonjinron* and international contribution forms of nationalism. Even though this is a comedy show, this show reflects both Japanese traditional values and globalization by using foreigners as its central material. As mentioned above, the coverage of the American woman interested in origami takes care to display and emphasize the kindness of Japanese people, and to show origami as one of the great Japanese arts. It can be said that this is a clear example of the way of thinking that characterizes Japanese culture as unique and great. However, this is not totally the same as *nihonjinron* uniqueness, since the show depicts how an American woman can understand Japanese values and arts as well as (or even more than) native Japanese. Therefore, this segment does contain nationalist traits but also simply shows the internationalization of Japanese culture. It shows Japanese culture as capable of being shared by everyone in the world.

The Oxfam Trail Walker Japan segment mirrors Ōishi's description of nationalism created through ideas of international contribution. Because the show covers a large-scale charity event in Japan, the audience can revel in the idea that Japan is a great country which can support other people throughout the world, subconsciously stimulating a sense of nationalism. Even though this show does not intend to show off Japan's international contribution, camera shots showing Japanese event staff helping out the foreign runners and working towards the success of the international charity help evoke that sense of nationalism as well.

Although the term “nationalism” has a negative image, this newer nationalism through international contribution might be a better method for contemporary Japan to be proud of itself, and also to think about our globalized society. As Ōishi points out, national media have always created nationalism in their audience in one way or another, even comedy shows like *Why Did You Come to Japan?* TV shows use foreigners – or Japanese people living in foreign countries – to search for a new Japan. This trend follows Ōishi's new idea of nationalism as finding a place in the world. I want to argue that this is better than a traditional nationalism through *nihonjinron* ideas, because international contribution also encourages interaction with other cultures and peoples in this globalized world. To conclude, the popularity of *Why Did You Come to Japan?* reflects both new the nationalism and the globalization of Japan. This show is a good example of

how TV programs contain ideas of nationalism. Audiences should try to be more conscious of what they are being shown through the media.

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National Sports Team Names and the “Spirit” of Japan: *SAMURAI BLUE* / *SAMURAI JAPAN*

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Abstract

Some of the most popular TV broadcasts in Japan are the sports matches of national teams, especially soccer and baseball. These teams have nicknames. The most popular ones use the word “samurai,” which refers to a member of a powerful military class in medieval Japan. This essay will apply Gordon Matthew’s ideas about the consumption of Japanese traditional cultural elements with a sense of “Japaneseness” to the phenomenon of samurai team names. It will ultimately argue that the meaning of “samurai” as a nickname is far from the essence of traditional Japan itself. However, this name does lead to a successful campaign for the promotion of the national teams.

Theoretical Outline

National teams’ nicknames show the spirit or pride of the team, and the existence of the names is often emphasized by the media. This emphasis is related to the consumption of “Japaneseness” or the concept of a Japanese “spirit.” Anthropologist Gordon Matthews (2000) interviewed a teacher of *shakuhachi* [Japanese bamboo flute], and explained the teacher’s opinion of the sense of Japaneseness. “Japaneseness isn’t a matter of race or place, but a way of thinking, a matter of heart, behavior, attitude” (47). Matthews explains that many teachers of Japanese traditional arts claim that they are promoting the roots of Japanese traditions for young people to rediscover them, but Matthews notes that “these practitioners of Japanese traditional arts are less engaged less in the rediscovery of the underlying Japaneseness than in the ongoing invention of Japaneseness for display in the cultural supermarket” (39-40). In other words, Japaneseness is not matter of spirit, but a product to sell.

Case Study

The Japanese Football Association (JFA) started to officially use the nickname “SAMURAI BLUE” for the national soccer team from 2006. The name was decided by the votes from the supporters. On the other hand, the name for the baseball team “*SAMURAI JAPAN*” was created in 2011 by the Nippon Pro Baseball Association (NPB), and these two names are used separately in the field of sports. There is no connection. *BLUE* indicates the color of the main uniform, and

JAPAN evokes the recovery from the great Tohoku Earthquake which happened in the same year. However, both the national soccer and baseball teams have an important aspect in common: great results. Japan hosted the World Cup in 2002 for the first time, and the result of the Japanese national team was successful: best 16, which is the greatest result up to the present moment. The Japan national baseball team won the championship in the World Baseball Classic two times running (2006, 2009). The examples of soccer and baseball are regarded as models of the commercialization of national sports teams.

Analysis and Conclusion

A samurai fights for his master. In the context of national sports teams, the “master” does not only mean the team’s coach, but also the supporters and citizens. The nickname “samurai” certainly implies such a mentality. However, in reality, the word is utilized for the promotion of the team, as the official associations like JFA and NPB tried to respond to people in Japan’s expectations of better results compared to the previous strenuous efforts. Maintaining the popularity of the national team is a big duty for such associations, and the promotion of sports often tries to create a sense of national identity around the team. The method of publicity generates support for or interest in the national team. There is a gap between the fundamental meaning of “samurai” as simply “loyalty” or “bravery” and the intention of the officials for the commercial use of the word. The nickname of the national team did not ignore the original sense of the word, but the impression it creates was arranged for the promotion of the national team in Japan. Therefore, the nickname “samurai” does not always reflect the mindset of Japaneseness accurately, but “samurai” was a successful case as a marketing strategy.

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