

GLOBAL MEDIA PRODUCT AND CONSTRUCTION OF “JAPANESE IDENTITY”: A CASE STUDY OF ANIME ON MALAYSIAN TELEVISION

JULIANA ABDUL WAHAB
MUSTAFA K ANUAR & FARHANI
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Abstract

Japanese animation or, as it is popularly known, anime appears to be the most celebrated Asian television product around the globe today. Anime was first created in 1917 and developed well into the 1970's in Japan. By the 1990's anime series, such as Dragon Ball, Pokemon, and Sailormoon became worldwide successes (Patten: 2009). By the year 2000, the proliferation of Japanese animation in the global market is beyond imagination. Current global response and market trend suggest that the anime industry is indeed a significant contribution to the economic growth of Japan. Proliferation of Japanese programmes in Malaysia became prominent in the 1980's where more Japanese dramas and anime were used to fill in the time slot. The fact that the percentage of imports of animation programme from the west had decreased in the recent years suggests that Japanese anime has started to claim a steady position in Malaysian television industry. It is in this larger context that this study aims to understand how “Japaneseness” has been negotiated in representing Japan unique identity in anime through critical content analysis of selected anime programmes available on Malaysia television.

Keywords: *anime, television industry, proliferation, Japanese programs, economic growth*

PRODUK MEDIA GLOBAL DAN KONSTRUKSI “IDENTITI JEPUN”: KAJIAN KES TERHADAP ANIME DI TELEVISYEN MALAYSIA

Abstrak

Animasi Jepun atau lebih dikenali sebagai anime telah menjadi produk televisyen Asia yang terkenal seluruh dunia. Anime mulai dicipta pada tahun 1917 dan dibangunkan di Jepun di sekitar 1970-an. Menjelang 1990-an siri anime seperti Dragon Ball, Pokemon dan Sailormoon mencapai kejayaan di peringkat global (Patten 2009). Menjelang 2000, perkembangan animasi Jepun secara global adalah di luar imaginasi. Maklumbalas global dan pola analisis pasaran menunjukkan industri anime telah memberi sumbangan yang signifikan kepada pertumbuhan ekonomi Jepun. Perkembangan program Jepun di Malaysia dikesan di sekitar 1980-an dalam bentuk drama dan anime. Kajian yang menunjukkan bahawa anime Jepun semakin banyak dimport berbanding dari Barat menyaranakan bahawa anime Jepun mempunyai kedudukan yang kukuh dalam industri televisyen di Malaysia. Kajian ini cuba memahami melalui analisis isikandungan kritikal program anime terpilih di Malaysia tentang bagaimana fenomena “Japaneseness” dan identiti Jepun direpresentasikan melalui anime.

***Kata kunci:** anime, industri televisyen, perkembangan, Program Jepun, pertumbuhan ekonomi.*

Introduction

Anime is a term used by Japanese referring to all kind of animation but the West has been using it specifically to refer to Japanese animation (Poitras 2008; Price 2001). Noel (cited in Macwilliams 2008) refers to anime as “one of the mass art that can be defined as a form of art that has emerged recently in urban, industrial and capitalistic society.” Anime emerged at the same time where all the animation comes from. It started in the 19th century where there was a steady flow of technical and artistic knowledge between Japanese, European and American cultures (Poitras 2008). According to Price (2001), anime emerged from Japanese comics, known as manga. They shared the same characteristics and features, such as big eyes, various facial expressions, theme or sub-genre and this includes the artists and writers as well.

The first commercial animation was “Imokawa Kukuzo genkaban no maki”

in 1917, that contained fairytale elements of Japan and the West. During the Second World War, manga and anime were used to deliver political agenda. Anime artists, for instance, were forced to insert military agenda by Japan navy through momotaro umi no shinpei, indirectly depicting the Pearl Harbour attack (Poitras 1991). Anime started to be distinguishable from other animations with the production of the first colour feature, Legend of the White Serpent, and the famous TV series, Astro Boy, by Osamu Tezuka (Lu:2009). In most of the anime, there were lots of characters that were drawn with a big, glistening eye, blonde hair, big boobs, sharp nose and other features of western look. Tetsuwan Atom (Astro Boy) by Osamu Tezuka (the God of Anime/Manga) has created the biggest influence of anime in television. Osamu introduced the stylistic features of characters in manga, such as big-eye style of anime characters which essentially is derived from the Disney animation (Lu: 2009).

In the 1970s, toy manufacturers started to produce the anime-related toys such as robots. Achievement of this robot product can be interpreted as a barometer to measure the achievement or popularity of a particular animation show (Poitras:2008). The subsequent production of anime in OVA (Original Video Animation) format has been the biggest development in the anime industry (Poitras:2008).

Stepping into the new millennium, the animation production has also changed through increased technology from the cell hand drawing to the drawing techniques with the aid of computer. This digital technology allows for a better control given the quality of colour, blending in harmony with a three-dimensional and two-dimensional images (Poitras:2008).

The anime phenomenon not only exists in Japan. In other countries, anime has become one of the most popular cultural products eagerly embraced by many. Otaku or fans of anime and manga are estimated around 2.4 million people in Japan alone and nearly 2.5 billion dollars spent on anime and manga. Search terms for anime and manga in the Google search was reported to reach a total of 180,700,000 hits (MacWilliams:2008). These aspects in many ways suggest that anime is indeed one of the most popular global products around the world. Apart from children and teenagers, both male and female adults these days are also enthusiastic consumers of manga and anime.

The variety of anime genre according to gender and sub-genre has led to this increase in number. According to Japan External Trade Organization, the amount of DVD export has reached the amount of 12 million units in 2005 compared to 2.1 million in 2000 and the amount of porn and sexual anime are one of the main contributing factors (MacWilliams: 2008). The value of anime and manga industry is about 5 billion dollars, exceeding the value of Japan steel export to America (MacWilliams: 2008). Apart from the distribution of licensed video distributors, the fans and consumers of a product or otaku are the main motivating factor that helped boost the anime industry in the global market. Jenkins called anime fans as a cosmopolitan pop and defines them as those who want to get out

of their community surrounding to experience wider culture (Leonard:2005).

Malaysian Animation History and Industry

The history of Malaysian animation started in 1946 with the Malayan Film Unit. During that time mostly simple animation was produced for documentaries, public service filmlets and some commercial animation works. Malaysia's first short animated film *Hikayat Sang Kancil* was produced in 1978, followed by another five short animated film productions in 1980s (Hassan Muthalib:2007).

The increase in animated cinema and TV commercials in Malaysia was contributed by two private animation studios, i.e. Film Art and Lensamation establishment (Hassan Muthalib:2007). In 1994, the government decided to promote locally-made animated TV series. This measure was taken in an effort to cut down on Malaysia's reliance on foreign products and in turn to increase the local content. The origins of Malaysia's commercial animation TV series and cinema began in 1995 with the first TV animation series called *Usop Sontorian* (Hassan Muthalib: 2007).

Silat Lagenda made inroads into the cinema in 1999. This animation, which cost about RM6 million and took two years to complete, received lukewarm response from the Malaysian audience. This was followed by another animation film, *Putih* (2001). Subsequently, a telemovie was made based on a humour comic strip titled '*Kartini*' (1997) and another TV series called *Kumang* (2003) (Hassan Muthalib: 2007).

Most of the local animation TV series had been aired by the government TV stations, TV 1 and TV 2. This is due to the very high payment made by RTM that is around US \$10,000.00 per 3-minute production compared to private TV channels that paid US\$500.00 for similar content (Hassan Muttalib: 2007). This was the dilemma faced by animation producers. All of the animation producers were competing to get the government tender for local animation. Economic downturn in the late 1990s had become the worse time for most of the animation studios where the payment by TV 1 was reduced by 15% and this apparently was not good enough to support all of the local animation studios (Hassan Muthalib 2007). Hence, the biggest challenge is to get Malaysia's local animation product to stand on par with the animations from other countries.

According to Subaidah (2008), Malaysian animation films were not as good as those that were produced by countries such as Japan, Korea or the US. She further points out that there are several reasons why local animation industry could not compete with the foreign animation, such as a lack of animation technology as compared to Japan, Korea or the US; lagging in media content and creative industry subjects; insufficient creative and technical personnel; a lack of capital and training facilities; a lack of advanced training; poor knowledge in creative technology; and poor marketing and distribution strategies (Subaidah:2008). Malaysian society, particularly children, had long been fed by foreign animation products that originated mostly from countries such as the United States and

Japan. The trend of distribution of animation program on Malaysian free-to-air TV channel is as follows.

Table 1: Percentage of anime programmes on Malayisan TV Channel 19 April-25 April2010.

TV Channel	TV 1	TV 2	TV 3	Ntv 7	8 TV	TV 9	Total
Number of Anime	2	11	25	22	1	17	78
Percentage	3 %	14%	32%	28%	1%	22%	100%

Based on local television programme listings for a week starting from 19th April until 25th April 2010, it was found that there were 78 children’s animated shows being aired on free-to-air Malaysian television. The table below shows total distribution of animation programmes by local TV channels. The top three TV channels are TV 3, Ntv 7 and 8TV. It is apparent that TV 3 aired the most animation programmes compared to other channels with 32%, followed by Ntv7 with 28% and TV9 with 22%. These are all commercial TV stations whilst 8TV and TV 1 aired the least anime programmes, with less than 5%.

Table 2: Percentage of animation between local and imported program on local TV channel 19 April-25 April2010.

TV Station	TV 1	TV 2	TV 3	NTV 7	8TV	TV 9
Percentage	%	%	%	%	%	%
Local Anime	50	18.18	0	0	0	11.76
Imported Anime	50	81.82	100	100	100	88.24
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

The data shows that TV 9 is the biggest provider of local animation programmes with 88.24% compared to other TV channels. TV 2 was at the second place with 81.82% and TV 1 with 50%. The other three commercial TV stations such as TV 3 and Ntv7 and 8 TV, did not broadcast any local animation production; all of the programmes that were available were foreign products.

Table 3: Breakdown of animation programme by country of origin.

Country of Origin	TV 1	TV 2	TV 3	NTV 7	8TV	TV 9	Total (%)
Malaysia	1	2	0	0	0	2	5
Unites States	0	1	14	5	0	14	44
England	0	0	1	2	0	0	4
Japan	1	5	8	12	1	1	37
France	0	1	1	1	0	0	4
Thailand	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Canada	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Spain	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
England and Canada	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
England + France	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total (%)	3	14	32	28	1	22	100

Table 3 shows the breakdown of animation programme by country of origin. It is evident that the United States topped the rank as the main source for importing animation to Malaysia. Whilst Japan was rated at the second place with 37% and Malaysia at the third place which contributed to only 5% from the total number of animation provided on Malaysian free-to-air TV channels.

Discourses of Japanese Culture and Identity: Nihonjin-ron

Nihonjin-ron is a popular genre that discusses the unique characteristics of Japanese society. The concept of Nihonjin-ron came about during the 1960s and the 1970s when Japan was fast becoming an Asian economic powerhouse and at the same time embroiled in trade disputes with western countries, particularly the United States. Faced with such conflicts, Japan often argued that the West did not understand the unique situation that Japan was in, which in turn developed into an isolationist psychology that became the very basis of the notion of Nihonjin-ron.

The ideas and discussions about Nihonjin-ron were reflected in Japanese books, magazines, television commercials and other media. It is, according to Dale (1986), a display of cultural nationalism deliberately distinguishing the Japanese ‘Self’ and the foreign ‘Others’. The ‘uniqueness’ of being Japanese was stressed and celebrated although some Japanese people found it to be a problematic notion.

Nihonjin-ron, as a cultural concept and practice, became prominent in post-war Japanese society especially after Japan faced a humiliating defeat in the war. It was aimed at redeeming Japan’s wartime past. However, Nihonjin-ron had also

come under heavy attack from scholars, both Japanese and foreigners, questioning the reliability and authenticity of the Nihonjin-ron ideology. For one thing, these scholars argued that Japanese society was, and still is, not homogenous as to make possible this cultural ideology and practice a 'national' culture and identity. This criticism also caught the attention of the younger generation of Japanese who have less attachment to most things 'Japanese'. The declining interest in Nihonjin-ron prompted the proponents of this cultural ideology to introduce and popularise it via the mass medium of television. Equally important, such a cultural fare on television has developed into a money-making enterprise.

Japan and the search for identity

Nationalism dominates the history of Japan, the kind of sentiment that unifies a group of people based on collective memory, experience and aspiration. It began as an elitist patriotism promoted by a few Japanese men who led Japan at the end of the Edo period (1600-1868) and as political leaders in the Meiji period (1868—1912). These men put heavy emphasis on national welfare over private interests, especially when it comes to defending Japan from foreign aggression (Eckstein, 1999).

Japanese nationalism reached its peak between 1937 and 1945, when an extreme form of nationalism, ultra-nationalism, emerged and consequently pulled Japan back into an era of isolation from the West. This brought about their distinctiveness among the world, particularly in relation to their East Asian neighbours. Japan's distinctiveness is shaped by its geographical isolation, its monolingual culture, its ethnic homogeneity, a common belief in the gods of Shinto, and an Emperor who simultaneously propitiated the gods, legitimized the state, and symbolized the people. These elements lay the groundwork for later patriotic feelings of loyalty to the land and its entire people. In times of political and diplomatic crisis these emotions would become popular (Eckstein, 1999).

After the 1868 Meiji restoration, the Japanese society transformed from a feudal structure into an open hierarchy-based structure that put a high premium on wealth and talent. Hierarchical groups like small manufacture enterprises and agricultural cooperatives started to compete for status. Although these entities competed with one another for narrow political and economic advantages, they nonetheless promoted patriotism that was inclusive and drew attention to the common good and shared interests among the citizens.

A few farsighted elders instilled patriotism during this period that helped cultivate new leaders to power and the reform of the Meiji restoration. According to Eckstein (1999), the nationalist sentiments promoted by a small band of patriots to the public at large coincided with the emergence of an effective central government that helped nationalism to flourish during the Meiji period. The development of media, education, and a single national market during the integration of the Meiji period facilitated the Japanese people to understand the common national interest.

Japan's nationalist sentiment since 1945 is still being discussed. The discussion during this time is perhaps the most crucial in terms of the Japanese people trying to get a good grasp of what it means to be "Japanese" and how they are perceived internationally. Loyalties to the state were subdued after Japan's defeat in World War II, but the bond among citizens has since strengthened.

Intellectuals in Japan, as in many societies, play an important role particularly in the domain of culture, tradition and national identity. In post-war Japan, most intellectuals have been sceptical about any move to link modernisation with spiritual values or national or Asian identity. This is because of the Pacific War experiences that indicate that mythic nationalism and postmodern catchphrases rallied people to destruction, not modernisation.

Indeed, as shown above, the search for a national identity in Japan has become intense with new challenges and realities that confronted, and still confront, the insular nation in an increasingly globalised world. In the old days, Japan had to encounter the cultural might of neighbouring giant China, and Korea's pride in Confucianism. And subsequently, as the years went by, Japan has interacted with the West, particularly the United States.

Although Japan's standing as a great power was further enhanced at the end of World War I in 1918, it also gave rise to some difficult issues. History witnessed Japan's entry into the fellowship of great powers, i.e. the US, the USSR, among others, but it did so as the lowest ranking member of the club. As a direct reaction to this uncomfortable reality, Asianism emerged again in Japan. The US, China and the USSR individually started to show disapproval of Japan's presence and interest in China, and this led to Japan detaching itself from the policy of cooperation with the West that it had maintained since the early years of the Meiji Era. Japan also rejected the 'open door' policy, sought closer Japan-Manchurian-Chinese cooperation, and finally worked towards a 'New Order in East Asia' and subsequently, a 'Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere'.

But as pointed out by Kitaoka Shin'ichi (undated, http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/special_study/seminar1/conver_3.htm), the notion of Asianism is itself problematic given that Japan and its neighbouring Asian countries do not share many things in common. In terms of governance, Japan's political system is much more democratic than, say, Singapore even though the latter enjoys an economic standing second to Japan in Asia. Japan's parliamentary system has been established, and has matured, for many, many years compared to many other Asian countries.

After World War II, Japan was envisaged to become a pacifist 'cultural nation', but this was made difficult by the harsh realities of the Cold War. Critics accused Japan of playing second fiddle to the US in the latter's interaction with the USSR, and therefore was looked upon as still playing an active, although reluctant, role in the battle between the two superpowers.

The Diplomatic Bluebook of 1957 established three principles of subsequent Japanese foreign policy – diplomacy centred on the United Nations, membership

in the Asian community, and maintenance of cooperation with the free world. Japan's policy was one of "cooperation" with the free world but many Japanese did not perceive their country as being an integral part of this democratic group. Japan had just achieved its long cherished desire of becoming a UN member in December 1956 and had been first elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. The sentiment of being linked to Asia gradually disappeared, however, as the rapid economic growth continued in the 1960s. Strong interest in Asia did re-emerge to an extent in 1972 when Japan and China restored diplomatic relations but only temporarily.

Increasingly since the latter half of the 1960s, Japan's economic power has been acknowledged as one factor that defines the essential characteristics of Japan or those aspects of Japan that were especially praiseworthy. The economic strength of Japan was frequently noted as a key element in Japan's identity, discounting the military, political, and cultural aspects of identity which countries normally take into consideration, argues Kitaoka Shin'ichi.

To reiterate, the search for identity has not merely been a matter of intellectual or cultural input, but rather is an issue requiring serious choices in the area of international politics. The tension between modernisation and preservation of tradition persists within Japan, and in turn affects directly or otherwise the cultural products that the country produces for domestic as well as international consumption.

Animation and Construction of "Japanese Identity"

Research and effort in determining the basic constitution of Japanese identity has been studied for decades and there are reason behind this Japanese fascination in finding out who they are and how different they are compared to the rest of the world. The term Nihonjin-ron in this respect plays an intergal role in defining Japanese. As intimated above, Nihonjin-ron refers to the idea of Japanese uniqueness and notion that shows up the distinctive feature of Japanese compared to western identity. Research on anime as a form of 'unique identity shows that there is still a presence of foreign as well as Japanese influences in constructing "Japaneseness" of anime. It has been established elsewhere (Napier:2001, Sato:2003, and Lu:2008) that western elements play an important part alongside local elements in comprehending Japaneseness". Wolf (2000:138-139) specifically points out that Japanese culture is highly hybridized due to the process of adapting and adopting elements borrowed from other cultures. Indeed he states that elements from the West and other cultures have significantly been negotiated, reinterpreted and integrated into Japanese traditional culture (ibid: 139).

As regards anime, the inclusion of foreign elements is due to the fact that most of anime pioneers were heavily influenced by western artists. The turning point in anime history was made evident by the work of Osamu Tezuka who had successfully adapted Disney animation techniques which in many ways

had inspired the development and success of anime today. Lu (2008:170) considers the 'East' and 'West' components in anime as a form of internalization, the incorporation of Japanese or universal elements, aimed at commercializing Japanese cultural products outside of the Japanese market.

According to Lu (2008:170), there are three types of cultural politics behind anime: internationalization de-politicized, occidentalization-internationalization and Orientalized internationalization. By depoliticized-internationalization, Lu (2008) combined 'cultural mixing and blurring' in anime to reflect broader national desire to enter global market that intends to appeal to global audience. This is the reason why characters in anime do not look Japanese nor the narrative represents Japanese context. The internationalization of anime in terms of character design, plot, and narratives is, according to Sato (cited in Lu: 2009), the incorporating of Nihonji-banare or non-Japanese element. In this respect Iwabuchi (2002:2004) used the term 'cultural odourless' to explain anime sensation. He further points out that in order for the non-western cultural products to penetrate and become successful offshore the need to 'dilute its origin' is essential in order to conquer the world market. In this way it allows for a broader imaginary space of identification for people from various cultures (Lu:2008). The second type of cultural politics in anime, according to (Lu 2008), is Occidentalization of international elements, which suggests a backlash from the East. Occidentalization involves the use of negative stereotypes of Western characters to create a central power in the East; in short, to implicitly depict Japan's superiority against the West (ibid).

The third kind of internationalization is called self-orientalized internationalization where Japan claims its superior position amongst Asian counterparts and regards itself as a western country of Asia (Lu:2008). The successfulness in adapting western technology was the factor that triggers the Japanese superiority towards Asian country. This form of self-proclaim could be seen as part of a Japanese modernization process, which is often described as a revolution from above (Duss:1997,1998 cited in Wolf 2008). Japan was never colonized but it chose to indulge in the process of self-westernization so as to avoid the threat of direct colonization, as what had happened in other Third World countries. According to Tsutomu, K. (1976:1) in the minds of most Japanese, modernization was equated with westernization whilst Kiye (1967, cited in Wolf 2000:140) argues that Japan's desire to westernize emerged from the realization that it had to meet the challenge from the West and subsequently became a leading nation in Asia.

Huang (2003) wrote that in the global world, Japan's identity should be removed from the East and West binary relationship. Despite being located between East and West, Japan ought to be known as free floating, where Japan's identity is boundless and should be defined within its own terms without limiting it between the West and East framework (Huang: 2003). The term Hanarezashiki, (a detached room) introduced by Kosaka Masataka, posits that Japanese is to be perceived as belonging to neither West nor East, but instead it is far from China

and yet equally far from the West too. Hanarazashiki thus defines the ambiguity of Japan's identity whereby even though in some aspects of life in Japan seems to be inspired by the West than the East, but yet it still does not make Japan to be part of the West (Huang 2003).

From the rise of science fiction anime genre, Toshiyo Ueno has come up with the term of Techno-Orientalism (Napier: 2001, and Corbett: 2009), or called "Japanoid", where it was claimed to act as "Lacanian mirror-stage" for the production of identity (Corbett:2009). In other words, "techno-orientalism" served as a mirror that reflects the Western understanding towards Japan and Japanese self-identity. Japan was depicted as a technological dystopia or occasionally as utopia by the West (Napier:2001). The West constructs the fantasized identity of Japan for the purpose of its self-interest and Japanese at the same time misunderstood their own identity and begin to believe in the fantasy (Kaori: 2008). She further argues that despite the modernization and technological development achieved by Japanese, they are still trapped in the "Orientalization" mirror through both the Western "Orientalization" of Japan and Japan "self-Orientalization" based on the Western definition (Kaori, 2008:96).

On the other hand, Kenji (1997) argues the internalization in anime is actually a result of self ethnic self-denial that spread among Japanese in search of modernization and westernization, thus rejecting their own tradition. Arguably, it is within this context that modern Japan's identity had not been established as fully western nor is it fully Asian. It is, thus, not a surprise for the anime to be perceived as having lacked national/Japanese identity. As part of a global popular product, Jianxin Xu (2001) [cited in Lu (2008)] sees the internationalization of anime as a form of Japanese cultural imperialism. She argues that the ambiguous issue concerning Japanese identity in anime in actuality reinforces Japanese cultural hegemony (ibid).

On the contrary, Wai-ming Ng (2000) points out that the popularity and consumption of Japanese product is not in the form of cultural imperialism but rather as a form of entertainment. Through observation made in Singapore, Wai-Ming Ng (2000) asserts that anime does not play any significant role in propagating and introducing Japanese culture and value among Singaporeans. This is due to the fact that many of them didn't regard anime as reflecting Japanese culture and identity. This aspect in many ways could be linked to the term *musokukeki*/lack of national identity posed by Iwabuchi (1998). Moreover, the aspect of *mukokuseki* could be identified as the Japanese problematic of cultural identity in reflecting Japaneseness.

Conversely, Shinobu Price (2001) argues that anime in reality possesses every aspect of Japanese society and culture. The ability of Japanese animator to mingle altogether the ancient Japanese elements such as myths, legend and history into a more modern and contemporary way has shown up the distinctiveness of Japanese anime compared to other animations. Furthermore, this argument does not confine to the theme and folk element embedded in the anime. Contrary

to Western animation, anime often appeals to the sound of Japanese musical instrument to evoke feeling and emotion.

Although there are elements which are neither western nor Japanese that are highlighted in most of the anime, this kind of "hybridity" of culture offers a space of identity exploration especially to younger generation who demand for varied forms of electronic entertainment. The flexibility, creativity, and freedom harboured by the animation world are one of the reasons for the high demand for anime products by Japanese and foreign markets (Napier: 2001).

Undeniably, the "absence" of "Japaneseness" in anime has contributed to the high demand for anime globally. For that reason, it is evident that anime was purposely drawn as *mukokuseki* since the producer or the creators of anime acknowledge the global market they pursue. This strategy of global marketing is called global localisation or glocalisation. According to Iwabuchi, due to their attempt to penetrate the global market, global companies try to eliminate any cultural differences and thus constructing more standardized global market while maintaining the sensitivity of local market consumers (Iwabuchi: 1998).

Glocalisation is not a new term in business world, and has become the catchphrase in marketing. The term glocalisation itself is derived from Japanese word *dochacuka*, which means living on one's own land and it has been adopted in Japanese business for global localization, a global outlook adapted to local conditions (Iwabuchi, 1998:168). The need to enhance Japan's standing in the world and in Asia in particular was made evident after recovering from the economic downturn in early 2000 (McGray : 2002, cited in (Condry 2009:144).

Attempts by the Japanese government to penetrate global market manifested in their efforts to embrace anime as part of the national policy in the last few years. The launching of Tokyo International Anime in 2002, became the starting point in the endeavour to publicize to the world Japanese animation and further promotes the anime industry (Source). This success has promoted the name of anime as a Japanese cultural product that assists in the internationalization process aimed to domesticate foreign cultures and disseminate Japanese culture.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to refer to the term 'soft power', which was coined and promoted by Nye in the 1990s, which denotes the objective of provoking others to want what people want via cultural attraction and ideology without having to resort to military might (Lam, 2007:35i2). Anime works within this framework of 'soft power' because ideologically it works to influence the audiences concerned via cultural artefacts such as anime.

Analysis of selected Anime on Malaysian Television

For the purpose of this research, five anime in different categories were chosen for analysis: The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya, Naruto Shippuden Shin Chan

Doraemon and Detective Conan. The selection was made based on the popularity, duration of airing, background and genre of anime. The anime selected were anime that were currently being aired within the duration of the research. The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya, Naruto Shipuden, and Detective Conan were among the anime with the highest popularity and these are the anime programmes that had been aired in Malaysia recently. Until 2006, Detective Conan had reached the second highest rating among other programmes on TV3's kids slot with an estimation of 435,000 viewers (Wikipedia). Doraemon and Shin Chan were chosen based on the period of airing where Doraemon had been aired since the early 1990's by RTM1, continued by NTV 7 from the year 2002 until now while Shin Chan had been aired since 2002 until now by NTV 7 (Wikipedia).

Analysis:

Characters

An analysis of all of the characters in selected anime shows that all of the characters introduced in the animation did not resemble or share the same physical traits of Japanese people. This is obvious if one looks at the facial structures and features such as the size of the eyes, skin tone, sharp nose, and colour of the hair. This aspect can be seen in most of the characters in anime production. From the appearance of the character in Naruto, the traits of Japanese faces can barely be seen where most of the character was produced with blonde hair, big eyes, coloured in blue or green. The Caucasian look is indicative of a Japan that struggles to face the challenges of westernisation and to compete with the West.

On the other hand, it is also a deliberate attempt on the part of the producers to provide universal characteristics that are easily accessible in the West, with the underlying strategy to capture the markets in the west and elsewhere. As Amy Shirong Lu (2008) contends, there is a deliberate endeavour to 'internationalise' anime with an eye on the international market. As a result, many of the characters in anime appear 'Westernised', or at least, do not necessarily have Japanese physical features. Having said that, such westernised physical traits of the anime characters can also be attributed to the cultural ambivalence harboured by many in the Japanese society.

Attire/outfit

In all of the anime being analysed, it is found that the outfit of the characters were more into modern-type of clothing. Outfit and clothing in Doraemon and Shin Chan were more into casual and simple, that is t-shirt and short pants. Characters in anime Naruto Shipuden impose modern design and unique clothes that are different from the original appearance of ninja hero in the time of feudal Japan. However, the representation of traditional Japanese clothing still appears particularly in some of the characters such as Tsunade-same character who is the head of the Konoha Village. Symbolic representation of ninja warriors also

appears in some of the characters through the use of head band, long tied hair, and sandal.

As opposed to *Naruto* and *Shippuden* anime, *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* and *Detective Conan* are more fashionable. It is obvious that there are western influences in the characters' attire for *Detective Conan* anime. *Detective Conan* always wears a suit with bow tie, same as *Maori Kogorou*, the private detective, who wears a complete suit and the chief of police always appears in a trench coat. The hair design and outlook of the women characters, such as *Mouri Ran*, also appear very sophisticated and modern. The Western name in *Detective Conan* as well as his dressing suggests a conscious attempt at giving it a Western and 'universal' appeal as a way of gaining wider international audience. The occupations of the characters also are made transparent through the outfit used where working man like *Nobita's* father wears suit to go to office, while *Nobita's* mother wears apron when at home. As is the case of the above, the western attire used suggests a conscious attempt at 'universalising' the characters and the anime. It can also be argued that this is indicative of the westernising influence in Japanese culture, which includes attire. However, at the same time, there appears a deliberate attempt at keeping some elements of Japaneseness as is found in *Nobita's* father character, which at times can also be read as a cultural dilemma within Japanese society. This is a manifestation of the deliberate effort on the part of the Japanese authorities in the history of Japan to modernise the society while at the same time trying to maintain traces of Japanese tradition so that Japan still preserves its "cultural uniqueness" while modernising itself.

Setting/Background

The environment or setting of place in most of the anime depicts the view of a common residential area in Japan. It is evident in the architecture and structure of the houses and neighbourhood. Each of the houses in the neighbourhood was separated by a brick wall and the locations of the houses are well structured. The element of the Japanese houses are obvious through the exiting of the area in front of their entrance houses where it shows that the character need to take off their shoes before entering the house. Other element or structures of the houses that highlight the designs of Japanese houses are the usage of corridor to connect the other room and the existing of sliding door. The doors that connect with the backyard also have some area as bench. The backgrounds of *Konoha Village* represent few elements of environmental surrounding in Japan through the design of the village with the presence of convenience shop, restaurant, houses and the landscape. It is obvious that *Konoha Village* is a mixture of American ideological influence and exoticised Japanese tradition. This can be seen from the tradition of *Konoha Village* that craved the faces of their head of village onto the mount of *Konoho*.

Through landscape and environment of the animation, there aren't many elements being highlighted except for the appearance of the sakura flowers to

represent the changing of seasons from summer to spring. It seems that the anime producer tries to maintain some Japanese elements in the animation, probably indicative of an effort to showcase the cultural significance of Japanese artefacts. Also, this can also be interpreted as some attempt at appealing to the cultural demands of the proponents of Nihonjin-ron.

The background and setting of places in the Detective Conan and The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya looks very urban and have township where the characters live in modern day Japan. It is made obvious by the architecture of the houses, the density of the town and the logistics (such as underground train). The interior design of the houses, and the furniture, such as low table, represent a Japanese element. It appears that the anime producer is also conscious of the importance of maintaining some elements of Japaneseness in the anime. In other words, the twin objectives of modernising Japan while at the same time preserving certain elements of the country's tradition. This also can be read as an ideological conflict or ambivalence within this anime.

Life Style

From the content analysis made in the Shin Chan and Doraemon anime, it shows that the story content was related to the lifestyle of a typical Japanese family that lives in a town. The representation of typical Japanese family was shown through their small number of family members, the character where father works hard to support his family and the character of mother who is the housewife, doing cooking and cleaning of the house.

The representation of the Japanese lifestyle was found mostly through their daily routine such as during meals, sleep, work, or study. They also have meals using the lower table, and sleeping on futon instead of bed and sit properly on the floor when talking to someone. After returning from work, father will be served for dinner by mother. Here, there are not only aspects of Japanese culture that are depicted but also feudal practices.

The style of sitting is also highlighted during this animation where most of them sit properly when talking with someone older. One of the Japanese cultural elements that are applied is the action of bowing to older people when they meet. Once again, Japanese values are retained in the midst of a modern lifestyle in Japan. This suggests a conscious marrying of the two different cultures that can be considered progressive and modern.

The lifestyle of the characters in Detective Conan and The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya was based on a modern lifestyle and this can be seen from the characters' appearance and their daily routine. There are some of the practices and attitude of the characters that represent the lifestyle of Japanese people such as the practice of wishing 'I'm Back' when the characters return to the house, the way they have meals that still use chopstick and a bowl and spending time with friend in a karaoke box. That the modern lifestyle is juxtaposed with the chopstick etc suggests an endeavour at hybridisation between Western and

Japanese cultural elements. It is also a cultural attempt at retaining Japanese traditional culture.

Naruto anime consists of two cultural representations of Japan that can be seen clearly from the art of ninjutsu individual combat and Japanese myth about the nine tailed fox which is the basis of the treatment of this anime. The other cultural representation is ninjutsu, the Japanese individual combat or known as shinobi in the anime. The representation of ninja is very clear, particularly through the movement of the character that moves fast and quiet as well as in the dialogue that is used especially before the attack, where they would like to mention the name of the Jutsu kage bushin no jutsu (shadow clone) and through the use of a weapon called a shuriken (steel throwing blade). Ninjutsu, like other martial arts of Japan, have been transformed into cultural commodities that are to be exported, and therefore it is unsurprising that it is depicted in anime as part of Japanese traditional culture. This implies a conscious attempt at commodifying cultural artefacts of Japan for material gains.

Gender Representation

In some of the anime, a woman is portrayed through multiple characters such as smart and strong woman, from the character of Mouri Ran (Detective Conan), or Sakura as female ninja in Naruto Shippuden. Apart from that, women were portrayed as a sex symbol through the presentation of the main characters donning sexy clothes such as Mikuru Asahina in *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*. Mikuru Asahina also portrays character of weak and polite, soft spoken woman and always being bullied by other persons. Furthermore, women were depicted mostly as a housewife character such as Nobita's Mother or Masae. There are also other representations of a beautiful girl such as Sazuka which most people will like. In all of the above anime, sexism is very much prevalent whereby the male Japanese claims dominance over his female counterpart.

Such a portrayal of Japanese women is consonant with the hierarchical structure that is prevalent in Japanese society to a large degree.

However, there are exceptions. The character of a mother is depicted as firm and easily irritable by her kids, such as Nobita who got scolded by his mother each time he gets poor grades during examination. The character of woman also looks more dominant than man and this is seen through the relationship between Masae and Hiroshi where Hiroshi would be listening to Masae.

The role of men in the family institution was shown through the character of Nobita's father who work hard to support their family and a father that is protective and take care of his family very well such as Hiroshi, Shin Chan's father. The character of a smart and intelligent man is portrayed by the Detective Conan who will solve every crime case. The character of Itsuki (*The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*) portrays the character of a responsible and protective man who helps Mikuru Asahina when she is in trouble. Here, there seems to be an attempt at challenging the predominance of sexist attitude within the Japanese

culture where patriarchy, or at least its remnants, still prevails.

Conclusion

The facial characteristics and expression and attire as well as lifestyle of the characters in anime seem to suggest a degree of ideological and cultural ambivalence, as argued by Iwibuchi, to the point that the "Japaneseness" in this cultural product is not easily discernable. On the other hand, one could also argue that the cultural ambivalence in this Japanese popular culture is deliberate so as to ensure a universal appeal for the international audience and cultural consumers. The internationalisation of Japanese culture is in operation here. This "ambivalence" has been perpetuated via the anime to such an extent that there are international consumers who tend to equate easily anime with Japan and "Japaneseness".

There seems to be a conscious attempt on the part of the anime producers to promote a 'universal' appeal to their animation in the desire to gain wider international audience and demand. The Caucasian look of many of the anime characters, or characters that are bereft of 'cultural odour', suggests an endeavour to 'universalise' the anime so that the international audiences can relate easily to the characters and the anime concerned.

In addition, we can also say that the Westernised characters in the anime possibly reflect the kind of thinking among some Japanese that Japan has to show the world that it can indeed compete with the West and even triumph at its game. Hence, the westernised characters as well as the westernised names of certain characters in anime. In the sci-fi genre, one could also argue that through anime, the producers appear to be in line with the contention that Japan has the technological and scientific capacity to compete with the West in terms of providing technical fix to most problems in life.

However, there are also elements of Japaneseness in some of the anime productions, suggesting that there is also at the same time a conscious effort to inject Japanese cultural and social elements into the anime and characters as a way of introducing Japan and its cultural and social uniqueness on a world stage. In certain circumstances, there was also tension in the anime in that the modern compete with the traditional as exemplified by the patriarchal traces in certain anime fare. This kind of tension is bound to happen and persist from time to time when the two factors conflict and collide in various ways. Nonetheless, these constraints do not impede the popularity of anime on the world stage.

About the Authors

Juliana Abdul Wahab, PhD is a senior lecturer and Mustaffa K. Anuar, PhD is an Associate Professor at the School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Farhani is a graduate student at the same school.

*The authors would like to express their gratitude to Sumitomo Foundation, Japan for the fund provided for this research project.

References

- Case Closed. (n.d) Retrieved September 15, 2010, from the Wikipedia: http://ms.wikipedia.org/Deteksiif_Conan.
- Condry, I. (2009) *Anime Creativity: Characters and Premises in the Quest for Cool Japan*. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26(2-3), 139-163.
- Dale, P.N. (1986) *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*. London: Routledge.
- Doraemon. (n.d). Retrieved September 15, 2010, from the Wikipedia: <http://ms.wikipedia.org/Doraemon>.
- Doraemon to be Japan First Anime Ambassador. (2008) Retrieved August 1, 2010, from <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2008-03-14/doraemon-to-be-japan-first-anime-ambassador>.
- Hassan Abdul Muthalib (2007) *From Mousedeer to mouse: Malaysian animation at the crossroads*. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 8(2), 288-297.
- Ito, K. (2005) *A History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 38(3), 456-475.
- Ito, K. (2008) *Manga in Japanese History*. In MacWilliams, M. W. (Ed.), *Japanese Visual Culture* (pp 26-47). New York, M.E Sharpe.
- Iwabuchi, K. (2002) *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, Durham, NC.: Duke University Press
- Iwabuchi, K. (2004) 'Introduction': *Cultural Globalization and Asian Media Connection*, in Iwabuchi, K (ed) *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Juliana Abdul Wahab (2007). *The More the Merrier? Current Trends in and Future Directions of the Malaysian Television Industry in the Era of Marketization*. *The Journal of Comparative Asian Development*, 6(2) (219-245).
- Leonard, S. (2005) *Progress against the law: Anime and fandom, with the key to the globalization of culture*. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8(3), 281-305.

- Lu, S. A. (2008) The Many Faces of Internationalization in Japanese Anime. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 3(2), 169-187.
- Lu, S. A. (2009) What Race Do They Represent and Does Mine Have Anything to Do with It? Perceived Racial Categories of Anime Characters. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 4(2) 169-190.
- Napier, S. J. (2001) *From Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Poitras, G. (2001) *Anime Essentials: Everything a Fans Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Stone Bridge Press.
- Poitras, G. (2008) Contemporary Anime in Japanese Pop Culture. In MacWilliams, M. W. (Ed), *Japanese Visual Culture* (pp 48-67). New York, M.E Sharpe.
- Price, S. (2001) Cartoons from Another Planet: Japanese Animation as Cross-Cultural Communication. *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures*, 24(1-2), 153-169.
- Sato, K. (2003) 'More Animated than Life'. Retrieved from <http://www.kampo.co.jp/kyoto-journal/media/animated.html>.
- Shin Chan. (n.d). Retrieved September 15, 2010, from the Wikipedia: http://ms.wikipedia.org/Shin_Chan
- Subaidah Md Top (2008). Report presented at Asia/Pacific Regional Seminar on Animation Culture and Industry for Promotion of Cultural Diversity at Tokyo, Japan.
- Zaharom Nain (1996). The Impact of the International Marketplace on the Organisation of Malaysian Television. In French, D & Richards, M. (Ed.), *Contemporary Television: Eastern Perspectives* (pp 157-180). India: Sage Publication

