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Re-interpreting Japanomania: transnational media, national identity and the restyling of politics in Taiwan

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RE-INTERPRETING JAPANOMANIA: TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE RESTYLING OF POLITICS IN TAIWAN

by

Hsin-Yen Yang

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
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Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Joy E. Hayes

ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a historical and cultural analysis of the highly controversial Japanomania phenomenon (哈日現象) in East Asia with a special focus on post-authoritarian Taiwan. Despite its colonial relations with Japan and its relatively small population of twenty-three million, Taiwan has become the largest market for Japanese trendy dramas outside Japan in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Attracted by these Japanese idol dramas, pop music and fashion, many Taiwanese youths became loyal to anything Japanese. The Japanomania phenomenon in Taiwan aroused stringent public condemnation for being detrimental to national pride and was commonly regarded as a social pathology. I offer my intervention into this debate by arguing that Japanomania consumption has little to do with nostalgia towards Japanese colonization. Rather, Japanomania is best understood as a response to the particular, lived conditions of the generation of Taiwanese who came of age in the 1990s. Given the prevalence of Japanomania among this generation, and given the fact that this was the same generation of young voters who were key to the election of the first opposition party President in 2000, it is remarkable that the connections between these two significant youth movements have been overlooked in existing scholarship. Based on my research and on my own lived experience and participation in both of these movements, I argue that Japanomania discourse in fact played a crucial role in Taiwan's democratization and nation-building in the 1990s.

To de-mystify the intensive consumption of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan, I critically analyze interviews, online Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), historical archives, Japanese TV dramas, and political campaign materials. Such mediated forms give us access to the fluid and mobile field of subject formation

in a transitional society. I conclude that transnational culture serves as a medium for Taiwanese politics, and for the current fourth generation in particular. In addition, I suggest that transcultural consumption has political potential not only in Taiwan but also in other contexts such as the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. This dissertation tackles some of the most fundamental questions in communication studies: the influence of media on politics and the role that people play in making meaning in the context of democratization and globalization. By creating a dialog between this East Asian cultural phenomenon and Western critical theories of culture and globalization, my research also contributes to the development of a multilevel and multicultural approach to discourse, audience studies and globalization studies.

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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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To My Parents

獻給我最敬愛的父母

楊瑞秀先生和陳阿雲女士

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a historical and cultural analysis of the highly controversial Japanomania phenomenon (哈日現象) in East Asia with a special focus on post-authoritarian Taiwan. Despite its colonial relations with Japan and its relatively small population of twenty-three million, Taiwan has become the largest market for Japanese trendy dramas outside Japan in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Attracted by these Japanese idol dramas, pop music and fashion, many Taiwanese youths became loyal to anything Japanese. The Japanomania phenomenon in Taiwan aroused stringent public condemnation for being detrimental to national pride and was commonly regarded as a social pathology. I offer my intervention into this debate by arguing that Japanomania consumption has little to do with nostalgia towards Japanese colonization. Rather, Japanomania is best understood as a response to the particular, lived conditions of the generation of Taiwanese who came of age in the 1990s. Given the prevalence of Japanomania among this generation, and given the fact that this was the same generation of young voters who were key to the election of the first opposition party President in 2000, it is remarkable that the connections between these two significant youth movements have been overlooked in existing scholarship. Based on my research and on my own lived experience and participation in both of these movements, I argue that Japanomania discourse in fact played a crucial role in Taiwan's democratization and nation-building in the 1990s.

To de-mystify the intensive consumption of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan, I critically analyze interviews, online Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), historical archives, Japanese TV dramas, and political campaign materials. Such mediated forms give us access to the fluid and mobile field of subject formation

in a transitional society. I conclude that transnational culture serves as a medium for Taiwanese politics, and for the current fourth generation in particular. In addition, I suggest that transcultural consumption has political potential not only in Taiwan but also in other contexts such as the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. This dissertation tackles some of the most fundamental questions in communication studies: the influence of media on politics and the role that people play in making meaning in the context of democratization and globalization. By creating a dialog between this East Asian cultural phenomenon and Western critical theories of culture and globalization, my research also contributes to the development of a multilevel and multicultural approach to discourse, audience studies and globalization studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE JAPANOMANIA TRIBE IN TAIWAN

Since 1970s, long before American youth fell in love with Hello Kitty, Japanese comics (*manga*), and pop singer Gwen Stefani's "Harajuku Girls," Asian consumers have indulged in Japanese pop cultural products. But unlike "Japan fever" in the United States, which has been considered more a matter of individual consumer taste, the craze over Japanese popular culture in Asia has been highly politicized. In light of Japan's imperial past, many Asian governments have banned Japanese cultural products since the end of the Second World War. However, pirated *manga*, animation (*anime*), video games, variety shows and pornography have remained omnipresent in East and Southeast Asian markets regardless of official bans. Moreover, beginning in the early 1990s, aided by satellite and cable technologies and media deregulation, Japanese "trendy dramas" have become widespread in East and Southeast Asia and have taken the Japanese cultural impact to an unprecedented level and scope (Iwabuchi, 2002; Iwabuchi, 2004).

In May 1992, Hong Kong-based Star TV (Satellite Television Asian Region) broadcast two pioneering Japanese romantic drama series, *Tokyo Love Story* and *101st Proposal*. These two series soon became hits and thus encouraged Star TV and other cable operators to air more Japanese trendy dramas. The proliferation of new TV channels and the success of *Tokyo Love Story* and *101st Proposal* dramatically boosted the demand for Japanese TV programs in Asia throughout the 1990s (Iwabuchi, 2002). Japanese trendy dramas—also called "idol dramas" by Star TV in order to stress the appeal of the actors and actresses—target young viewers and commonly focus on fashion, urban life, romance, family and friendship.

Among all East and Southeast Asian countries, Taiwan, a former colony of Japan, has been most intensely receptive to Japanese idol dramas. Despite its colonial relations with Japan and its relatively small population of twenty-three million, Taiwan was the largest market for Japanese TV programs and pop music outside Japan in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Hara, 2004; Koh et al., 1999). Attracted by these Japanese trendy dramas and their by-products, such as pop music and fashion, many youths became loyal to anything Japanese. The legions of young fans of Japanese popular culture are known collectively as the "*ha-ri-zu*,"(哈日族) which is variously translated as "the Japanomania Tribe" (the translation I use in this dissertation), "tribe of Japanese infatuation" (Hsiao, 2002), "Japan lovers" (Peng-Er, 2004), and "Japan-crazy tribe" (Koh et al., 1999). Extreme Japanomaniacs are individuals who, whenever possible, buy only products with a "made-in-Japan" tag; they wear only Japanese clothes, eat only Japanese food, listen only to Japanese pop music, and buy Japanese magazines (even though they don't understand Japanese) because they love seeing the pictures and fashions each new season (Kyoko, 2002).

The conspicuous fanship and consumption of the Japanomania Tribe aroused stringent public condemnation for being detrimental to national pride (Lee, 2002) and was commonly regarded as a social pathology (Tseng, 2001). The Japanomania phenomenon has also created rigorous debates unprecedented in Taiwanese academia due to the issues of national identity and appropriateness that it raises (Ko, 2004). For more than a decade, the Japanomania Tribe has been constantly under attack for being shallow, apolitical or self-submissive to the former colonizer. In this dissertation I offer my intervention into this debate by arguing that *ha-ri* consumption has little to do with nostalgia towards Japanese colonization. Rather, Japanomania is best understood as a response to the particular, lived conditions of the generation of Taiwanese who came of age in

the 1990s. Given the prevalence of Japanomania among this generation, and given the fact that this was the same generation of young voters who were key to the election of the first opposition party President in 2000, it is remarkable that the connections between these two significant youth movements have been overlooked in existing scholarship. Based on my own lived experience and participation in both of these movements and scholarship, I argue that Japanomania discourse in fact played a crucial role in Taiwan's democratization and nationhood-building in the 1990s.

In this dissertation, I investigate the conditions of the emergence of the Japanomania Tribe in Taiwan, the fan practice, the social debates over *ha-ri* and issues of Taiwanese national identity, the connections between popular aesthetics and political communication, and finally, the implications of Japanomania in terms of contemporary media globalization and regionalization. Instead of viewing Japanomania as a "given phenomenon," I view *ha-ri* consumption as a discursive practice with implications for social discourse and cultural democracy at work. In this introductory chapter, I first explain the historical context in which the Japanomania Tribe emerged and then situate my methodological foci in relevant cultural and media literature.

Defining the Japanomania Tribe

Although the definition of the Japanomania Tribe is somewhat slippery because it could refer to audiences, consumers and fans, the demographics of the Japanomania Tribe can be roughly identified as youth and young adults between 15 and 35 years of age living in metropolitan areas (Lee, 2001). Based on a TV rating report conducted by AC Nielsen Taiwan in 1999, Huang (T. Huang, 2000) showed that *ha-ri-zu* consisted of age groups ranging from 4 to above 65 years old, divided by media content. For example, 42% of Japanese cartoon viewers

were 4 to 14 years of age, while most idol drama viewers were 10 to 24 years old. Over all, the age group of 10 to19 years of age composed the majority of the Japanomania Tribe. The gender ratios tended to be 1:1 but shifted slightly depending on the content of the TV programs. The opening paragraph of the article accurately described the recent Japanomania:

> In recent years, Taiwan has turned from its previous *chong yang* (崇洋; worship of anything foreign/western) into *ha-ri* (哈日; infatuation with Japan). In our everyday lives, we can see Japanese brands dominate durable consumer goods, such as cars and home appliances, and small commodities, such as stationery and gifts, as if anything that is in the slightest degree related to Japan can generate a fashion trend. Television, the medium that is closely tied to people's leisure lives, is also becoming Japanized without our noticing. (p. 118, originally in Chinese, translated by this author, Yang)

The "Japanization" of Taiwanese media and people's everyday lives did not only interest the advertisers and marketing professionals but also concerned the society as a whole. In April 1997, a special issue of a major Taiwanese weekly, *The Journalist*, declared in its headline, "Beware! Your kids are becoming Japanese" and featured two young women dressed in Japanese fashions. In the feature article, scholars and journalists expressed concern over the "lack of cultural subjectivity" among Taiwanese youth in light of the recent Japanomania. On December 19th, 1999, *The Liberty Times*, a major Taiwanese newspaper, named Japanomania one of the top ten social trends in Taiwan that year. The stereotype of the Japanomaniacs as irrational and excessive was further strengthened by the media when over 200,000 Hello Kitty dolls sold out in the first 90 minutes of a McDonald's promotion, which caused a minor stampede in early 2000 (Y. Ko, 2003; Koh et al., 1999).

Connotations of the Japanomania Tribe were somewhat derogatory at first in Chinese language societies on account of nationalist feelings. When the Japanomania phenomenon first emerged, many incorrectly predicted that this

fever would be transient. However, for longer than a decade, the term *ha-ri* has been widely used in Taiwan, mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan and has become a popular term both colloquially and in political rhetoric. Today "*ha-ri-zu*" is an entry in *Wikipedia*, both in the Chinese and Japanese versions.

National Identity in Question

Many Taiwanese scholars, politicians and cultural critics believe that the Japanomaniacs' heavy media consumption has created an "imagined community" among them and that their idol worship would lead to a strong identification with Japan and therefore weaken their national identity. To understand the identity question and controversies raised by the Japanomania phenomenon, we should first trace the history of the relationship between Taiwan, China, and Japan. In 1895, the Japanese defeated the Manchu's in the Sino-Japanese War, and in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Qing China ceded Taiwan to Japan in perpetuity. During the Japanese occupation (1895-1945), the educational system in Taiwan was established according to the same standard as in Japan, and infrastructure, trains, roads, etc. were developed extensively. When WWII ended in 1945, the Allied powers agreed that the former Chinese president Chiang Kai-shek and his Chinese Nationalist Party (*Kuo-Ming-Tang,* KMT) would take over Taiwan, on behalf of the Allied forces.

On February 28th of 1947, a local conflict between police and civilians in Taipei led to large-scale demonstrations against the corruption and injustice of the KMT throughout the island. In all, between 10,000 and 20,000 people were killed by the KMT government, including a large number of Taiwanese elites and students. This is known as "The 228 Incident" in Taiwanese history (S. Lee, 2004). In 1949, the situation in mainland China changed drastically: Chiang Kai-shek and his nationalist party lost the civil war to Mao Zedong's Chinese

Communist Party (CCP) and fled to Taiwan with three million soldiers, officials and accompanying dependents. For the sake of security against military assault from China and its own political control over Taiwan, the KMT government declared a state of martial law in 1949, and Taiwan remained under KMT dictatorship for almost four decades. Before the lifting of martial law in 1987, freedom of expression was suppressed and thousands of dissidents were executed or imprisoned (Makeham & Hsiau, 2005).

The new immigrants and their descendants who came to Taiwan after WWII were regarded as Mainlanders (*waishengren*, people who came from the other province), while families whose ancestors settled in Taiwan before Japanese colonization were commonly called Taiwanese (*benshengren*, people who originated in this province). Although Japanese rule was resented by many Taiwanese for being harsh, it was not corrupt or backward, as Chinese rule was perceived to be (Copper, 2009). Taiwanese who sympathize with the victims of the 228 Incident tend to regard the KMT regime as an émigré party state, a Chinese colonizer that has been far worse than the Japanese. The 228 Incident became a collective memory and a unifying discourse for people who advocate Taiwanese national identity and ultimately *de jure* independence. Taiwan's first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was established on September 28, 1986, representing the once-repressed *benshengren* identity and publicly supporting Taiwan's independence.

But the collective memory of people who support the KMT ideology (particularly mainlanders and their descendents) focuses on the Japanese invasion of mainland China, which caused their lifelong suffering from warfare and diaspora, and favors eventual reunification with mainland China (Harrison, 2006; Rigger, 2006). Today, the ideological division between Mainlanders and

Taiwanese—including their feelings toward Japan and China—remains the major source of social and political controversy on the island.

For nearly four decades in the Cold War era, Taiwan (ROC) and China (PRC) had very little contact, although China still regarded Taiwan as a renegade province and continued to threaten Taiwan with missile weapons and diplomatic onslaught. The U.S. government has stationed the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait to prevent a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan since the outbreak of the Korean War in the 1950s. In practice, Taiwan is a *de facto* independent polity and has never been under the rule of the People's Republic of China. However, the historical legacy complicates Taiwanese national identity. A Taiwanese journalist commented on the political dilemma:

> Our national title is surely "ROC," but to speak of the "Republic of China" to foreigners, nine times out of ten it will be mistaken for the PRC. To speak of the "ROC on Taiwan" sounds awkward, and the listener can make neither head nor tail of what it means. But if we speak of "Taiwan," we will be accused [by the PRC] of advocating Taiwan Independence. Thus, under the close examinations of the PRC, the unificationists, and the Taiwan Independence supporters, to refer to our country without making mistakes . . . is like walking on a high wire; a slight slip of the tongue will cause troubles. . . . Taiwan's current predicament lies exactly in *not knowing how to be ourselves*. (Zhang, 1997)[1]

The question of "how to be ourselves" nicely depicts the anxiety and uncertainty Taiwanese people have been facing since ROC lost its China seat in the United Nations in 1971 and consequently became increasingly isolated in world politics.

In the 1980s, Taiwan's miraculous economic rise gained international recognition and Taiwan was named the "Little Dragon in Asia" by international

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[1] This commentary was originally written in Chinese, and was translated by Wang Horng-Luen (2004, p. 811).

economists and media (G. D. Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2003). After the ban on traveling to the mainland was lifted in 1987, the political, economic, and cultural differences between the ROC and the PRC became apparent for Taiwanese. DPP's discourse of "Taiwanese nationalism" gradually gained popular support and came to be considered politically correct in the 1990s. The discourse of Taiwanese nationalism emphasizes the differences between Taiwanese and Chinese and the preference for "Taiwan" as the national title over the ROC. Such discourse also stresses Taiwan's subjectivity and democratization and, ultimately, *de jure* independence (Hughes, 1997).

Taiwan's rapid constitutional reform and democratization in the 1990s further separated Taiwan from China. During the 1996 presidential campaign, political rhetoric fostered an intense search for identity in Taiwan. In March 2000, Taiwan elected its first president, Chen Shui-bian, from the opposition DPP, which publicly supports Taiwan's independence, thus ending the fifty-year authoritarian rule of the KMT. In the 2004 presidential election in Taiwan, the DPP president won again with a narrow margin.

Post-Colonialism in Taiwan

This overview of the history of Taiwan helps us understand the dynamics of Taiwanese identity formation and the issues surrounding the Japanomania controversy. Influenced by the cultural imperialism thesis, which emanated from the West, Taiwanese intellectuals were vigilant about this new trend and tended to overemphasize Japanese colonialism. However, here I want to argue that we should not omit the "China factor" in this controversy. The stress on "everything Japanese" by Taiwanese youths in fact signifies a strong need for distinction from their parent culture, which was largely defined by Sino-centric doctrinairism under KMT martial law.

As Taiwanese scholars Ping-Hui Liao and Kuan-Hsing Chen have each pointed out, in Taiwan, the term "postcolonial" can be used to describe two historical moments. The first is the Japanese withdrawal from Taiwan in 1945; the second is the end of martial law in 1987 or KMT's election of its first Taiwan-born President, Lee Teng-hui, in 1988, which marked the indigenization of the émigré party state (K. Chen, 1996; Liao, 1999). In both historical moments, Japan and China (both ROC and PRC) are regarded as colonizers or the Other. However, the majority of the scholarship on Japanomania seems to be haunted by Japan's imperial past and therefore downplays the political message carried by the fervent Japanomania of the 1990s. In this dissertation, I would like to shift the focus of attention to the second post-colonial moment—the post-martial law era in which the Japanomania phenomenon emerged.

Literature Review: Globalization Theory

By asserting the existence and influence of regional cultural centers, this study first challenges those who view globalization as a process of Americanization and homogenization exclusively. According to the cultural imperialist thesis, the process of globalization is a monolithic one-way flow from the west to the rest of the world. However, many scholars in cultural studies have argued that globalization cannot be seen as "cultural homogenization" but rather, should be considered a process of hybridity and complex cultural flows. Moreover, in the increasingly de-centered process of globalization, westernization is only part of the dynamic (Appadurai, 1996; Iwabuchi, 2002; Straubhaar, 1997). As Joseph Straubhaar points out, "the globalization discussion also often overlooks the rise of a new level of television flow and impact, that within regions of the world" (1997, p. 285). I would argue that the regional media centers play a rather significant role in everyday life, and the

study of globalization cannot be complete without regional and local cultural studies.

This dissertation attempts to fill the gap between the Americanization-centered theories and real East Asian experiences of globalization, with abundant empirical research and cultural theorization. This dissertation also aims to study the impact of regional television—Japanese TV dramas—at the local level, in order to unravel connections among the development of hybrid cultural spaces, collective memories and political imageries influenced by regional cultural centers.

In the following literature review, I shall first look at criticism that speaks to the overarching framework, media and cultural globalization, and then move to subsections on East Asian regionalization and Japanese TV dramas in East Asia.

Earlier Views on Media and Cultural Globalization

Over the past fifty years, the development of cultural theories on media globalization has gone through at least three stages. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the mainstream view on global media and culture saw the world through a Western lens and with the geo-political bias that developing nations ought to imitate western models in order to achieve modernization (Curran, 2002). In the second stage, beginning in the late 1960s, critical theorists started to examine the dominance of the United States and western powers in the global political economy with a focus on communication.

Herbert Schiller, a pioneering critic of cultural imperialism, identified U.S. multi-national corporations as the major force in the power inequality of global information and economic systems in the 1960s. In his 1969 book, *Mass Communications and American Empire*, Schiller examines the role of American

mass communication systems and policies. Drawing from neo-Marxist theory, Schiller criticizes the capitalistic U.S. media and their domination through the export of television programs around the world. Schiller's view coalesced with other critical views from the Third World to become known as the cultural imperialist thesis and soon these critical discussions incited Third World countries to demand a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). During the more than three decades since, the cultural imperialism thesis has stirred restless debates within the academic community. In his writings until his death in 2000, Schiller continued to frame his discussion about communication within the context of media ownership and to insist that persistent American domination of global communication systems could not be denied. However, in a notable departure from his original views, Schiller modified his concept of "American cultural imperialism" in a revised edition of *Mass Communications and American Empire* published in 1992. In a foreword entitled, "A Quarter-Century Retrospective," Schiller claimed that American cultural imperialism still existed but that it was more appropriate to view transnational corporate culture—with a heavy U.S. flavor—as the central force in international communications.

During the more than three decades since his 1969 book, Schiller's media/ cultural imperialist thesis has been useful in examining the domination of the United States and the disappearance of indigenous cultures as a result of Americanization. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the media imperialism thesis came under attack due to its simplistic economic determinism, its homogeneous view of global culture, and assumptions of a one-way flow in global media traffic. Several famous reception studies from the 1980s suggested that audiences also "actively" decide what to watch and do not automatically

embrace the values reflected in available programs. For instance, in their book, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-cultural Readings of Dallas* (1990), Liebes and Katz argue that the critical discourse on cultural imperialism simply "labels" American programming imperialistic but doesn't prove it. Objecting to the imperialist thesis, the authors give three reasons for the worldwide success of U.S. television programming: the universality of its themes and formula, the openness of its stories, and the sheer availability of American programs in a marketplace where local producers are not competitive (Liebes & Katz, 1990). Through this cross-cultural research, the authors found that ethnic groups reacted to episodes of *Dallas* differently, depending on their social-cultural backgrounds. The study has become a classic of audience reception studies because its findings have suggested that both producers and audiences contribute to the construction of meaning.

In the cultural imperialism debate, one of the core arguments is whether structure determines human agency or vice versa. John Tomlinson argues that economic or media power is not equal to the ability of cultural imposition because the agency of the audience is key in assigning meaning within a particular cultural and social context (J. Tomlinson, 2003). He suggests that it is more useful to think of cultural imperialism as the spread of capitalist modernity, by which he means a process, not a totalizing cultural imposition. In another well-known essay based on a case study of Brazilian television programming and transnational reception, Joseph Straubhaar (1991) argues that global media flows are not just one-way (from the West to the Rest) and that audiences tend to choose national and regional television programs rather than American imports on account of "cultural proximity." Straubhaar's study not only provides evidence of the development of regional cultural centers but also

helps us better frame global cultural flows as "asymmetrical interdependence." The U.S. import of foreign language programming exemplifies that global TV trades are not just one way. However, the exchange is still "asymmetrical" considering the greater volume of American exports to other countries.

The complexity of global TV trades extends to the entire global cultural economy. As Arjun Appadurai points out, "(t)he new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order," and he coins the following terms to better analyze five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (Appadurai, 1996). By these terms he means to convey that globalization incorporates the dynamic and disjunctive movement of ethnic groups, technology, capital, media images, and ideological clashes. The transnational flows of labor, from the third world to relatively wealthy countries in particular, have created a new phenomenon of "deterritorialization," which has become one of the central forces in globalization (Appadurai, 1996; J. Lull, 2000; Rogers, 2006). As William Rowe and Vivian Schelling put it, the concept of deterritorialization is "the release of cultural signs from fixed locations in space and time" (Lull, 1995). For example, people who work abroad do not leave their homeland behind: Ethnic groceries, dress, information, languages, communication products, and other cultural symbols are desired by diaspora groups. These movements, disjunctures and interconnections in globalization have interested theorists in studying the living conditions that arise in new cultural orders.

At the third stage of media globalization theory, scholars placed more emphasis on cultural hybridity and the interplay between global capital, corporations, governments and audiences, than on the dominance and

dependency between nation-states (J. Lull, 2000; Mosco, 1996). "All cultures are involved in one another," wrote Said (1994) of the present cultural condition, "none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic"(p.xxv). Historically pervasive, cultural hybridity has been central to the work of a number of theorists across disciplines (Ang, 2001; Bakhtin, 1981; Bhabha, 1994; Burke, 2009; Clifford, 1997; García-Canclini, 1995; Kraidy, 2005; Martín-Barbero, 1993; Naficy, 1993; Said, 1994; J. Tomlinson, 1999), and their writing has attracted more scholars to the investigation of the processes and consequences of cultural hybriditization.

A New Direction in Globalization Studies: "Region Making" in East Asia

Recent developments in media and cultural globalization theories can also be characterized by their interest in the regionalization and geo-cultural markets of transnational television. Joseph Straubhaar (1997) points out that there are a number of regional markets emerging, such as in Western Europe, Latin America, East Asia and South East Asia. These regional markets, built upon cultural proximities, might be more accurately called geocultural, or cultural-linguistic, markets because they also involve diaspora populations and thus are not necessarily graphically contiguous. Straubhaar calls for a multi-level approach capable of studying and distinguishing between television flows at global, supranational regional, national, subnational regional, and local levels.

In East Asia, scholars have begun to identify a new form of regionalization, which is led not by nation-states but by popular culture and privately-owned media industries (Otmazgin, 2005). Since the 1970s, East Asia has experienced tremendous economic growth—first in Japan, then in Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and now in China. The booming economy soon

created the rise of affluent consumer societies, especially in major cities such as Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, and Taipei (Otmazgin, 2005; Watson, 1997). Some said that the prevalence of Japanese popular culture since the 1970s has created an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983/1991) and composed "a structure of feeling" (Williams, 1961) for East Asians. The newly emerging regional media alliance further facilitates the transnational negotiation of a common identity, or a shared sense of "Asianness" (Craig, 2000; Iwabuchi, Muecke, & Thomas, 2004; Katzenstein & Shiraishi, 2006; Otmazgin, 2005; Pempel, 2005). As Eva Tsai nicely puts it, this East Asian media space is "characterized as a self-aware but non-consensual force field articulated by the region's mixed postcolonial experiences, negotiation with globalization, and interacting media cultures"(E. Tsai, 2005, p.102).

While in the conventional study of regionalization researchers tend to focus exclusively on the role of the state and the interactions between governments, Otmazgin (2005) opposes the idea of region that is defined solely by either geography or national boundaries. He re-defines the concept of "region" as "creations that are initiated and developed by people's consciousness and practices as well as by a variety of potential participants"(p. 504) in order to discover and incorporate other forces in regional formation. Otmazgin then takes a cultural approach and focuses on the cultural practices of the middle class, regional media producers, popular culture, and media alliances in the process of regional formation since the 1990s in East Asia. Otmazgin identifies three characteristics of East Asia's regionalization: first, regionalization in East Asia is generated "from below" by popular culture and the market, rather than by the state. Second, regionalization in East Asia is not an equal process. For example, confluences of cultures usually happen only in mega-cities such as Tokyo, Taipei, Seoul, and Beijing, and it is the affluent middle classes who play a

rather active role in the regionalization process, mainly by consuming transnational cultural commodities and creating new cultural forms. Third, East Asia's regionalization is not leading to a homogeneous transnational culture or identification, but rather, Otmazgin argues, "it decentralizes East Asia's cultural structure, highlighting local productions and appropriations" and enriches East Asians with a variety of new images and options" (p. 517).

In previous mainstream regional studies (mainly within political science), researchers have tended to look at political actions and economic agreements between nation-states or formal institutions. However, since recent regional formation in East Asia has been led by the market and by regional popular cultures, in which audiences and media corporations both play crucial and active roles, the conventional model for regional studies now seems less relevant. I argue that in the theorization of the "new form" of regionalization in East Asia, we must conduct an in-depth historical analysis at the local level and examine how local audiences accept, reject, and negotiate Japanese cultural texts. In addition, with its focus on identity formation, meaning production and social change, cultural studies has become a tool imperative for the analysis of this new form of region-making. My hope is that my study of the Japanomania Tribe in Taiwan will not only serve as preliminary research for future studies on regionalization in East Asia but will also open up an intellectual dialogue between cultural studies and political science. In the following section, I will introduce the work of Koichi Iwabuchi, the main figure in current East Asian cultural studies who focuses on Japanese TV dramas and transnationalism.

Re-centering Globalization: Japan as a Non-Western Cultural Center

Throughout the past decade, the Japanomania phenomenon in Taiwan and the rest of Asia has raised much scholarly discussion in that region, but in

the English-speaking world, there are only two books that specifically examine the influence of Japanese TV dramas since the 1990s, both written or edited by the Japanese scholar Koichi Iwabuchi. In his book, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (2002), Iwabuchi traces Japanese cultural power in East and Southeast Asia since the 1990s. Due to its colonizing history, Japanese culture had a negative resonance for many people in Asia before the 1990s. To overcome the negative notion of "Japaneseness" in the Asian marketplace, Iwabuchi argues, Japan deliberately exported "culturally odorless" products—VCRs, the Walkman, comics, cartoons and animation, computer and video games—to its neighboring countries. Iwabuchi explores why Japanese transnationalism has succeeded in East and Southeast Asia, how other nations have responded to Japanese products as representative of a dominant cultural power, and what the implications are for cultural studies in the context of globalization.

In the chapter that examines Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan, Iwabuchi argues that the notion of "cultural proximity," defined mainly by language and culture, cannot fully explain the recent spread of Japanese popular culture in other Asian countries. "Most obviously," Iwabuchi writes, "Japan does not share with other parts of Asia the most important factor of cultural proximity, namely, linguistic commonality" (p.131). Iwabuchi further points out that what has been constantly lacking in studies of cultural proximity is research of audiences. In addition, drawing on Stuart Hall's "articulation theory," Iwabuchi argues that we should situate the notion of cultural proximity in a wider context in order to better understand how the sense of cultural proximity "is articulated when audiences subjectively identify it in a specific program and context" (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 133). Iwabuchi suggests that we understand cultural proximity not as a

given but as an experience lived and perceived by audiences in specific historical and social conditions.

The second book, *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas* (2004), is a collection of papers aiming to shed fresh light on the emerging regional cultural connections and transnational cultural flows in East and Southeast Asia. This book consists of papers delivered at an international conference held in Tokyo in 2001 by scholars from Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Singapore, and Thailand. It is divided into four sections and followed by an afterword by the leading cultural theorist Ien Ang. Below I shall give a synopsis of the essays relevant to my project.

Ōta Tōru (大多亮, 1958-), the producer of numerous popular dramas, such as *Tokyo Love Story* and *The 101st Proposal*, shares his experiences fostering a new era of Japanese TV production in the late 1980s and early 1990. Despite the popularity of his work in other countries, Ōta reveals that the producers created the stories without other Asian audiences in mind because they didn't anticipate those TV series would soon be aired throughout East and Southeast Asia. He further points out that it is impossible to design TV dramas for the Asian audience as a whole and that the producers will continue to make TV dramas exclusively targeting the Japanese market.

In his essay "Traveling with Japanese TV Dramas: Cross-cultural Orientation and Flowing Identification of Contemporary Taiwanese Youth" (2004), Taiwanese scholar Ming-tsung Lee reports on his ethnographic research on the consumption and lifestyle of the Japanomania Tribe, emphasizing intensive tourism to the shooting locations of Japanese TV dramas. Another Taiwanese scholar, Yu-Fen Ko, examines the academic arguments about Japanese popular culture in Taiwan, and discovers at least four main themes: youth

cultural identity, cultural consumption, Japanese cultural imperialism, and the homogenizing force of global culture (in this case, in reference to Japanese TV dramas). Both Lee and Ko have advocated an understanding of the audience as active, one that does not reduce the Japanomania Tribe to cultural dopes or brainless consumers.

These studies are illuminating for my project because they provide rich empirical data on the local appropriation of Japanese popular culture and establish the connection between youth identity and the consumption of Japanese TV dramas. However, in their studies of the Japanomania Tribe and Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan, scholars tend to downplay local identity politics and international relations, which have in fact been of central importance to debates over the Japanomania phenomenon in the past decade (Ching, 2000; Y. Ko, 2004). In this dissertation I want to address the following questions: What were the conditions of the emergence of the Japanomania Tribe in Taiwan? What is the relationship between the Japanomania phenomenon and issues of Taiwanese national identity? How can this the Japanomania phenomenon be understood in terms of contemporary media globalization and regionalization?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

To attend to these questions, this historical and cultural analysis of Japanomania first examines the broader context in which the unity of Japanese popular culture and Taiwanese youth is situated, then looks at the power struggles between the dominant and subversive discourses, and then follows this with a critical discourse analysis focusing on the Japanomaniacs' online activities. As Japanomania has become a cultural force in shaping youth consciousness in Taiwan's democratization, I will examine the role of Japanese popular aesthetics in Taiwan's presidential campaigns. Finally, I will reflect on

these research findings and attempt to shed new light on cultural theories and media globalization. This study draws on a range of materials including journalism, popular literature, online postings, television programs, tourism advertisements, field study and secondary sources. The theoretical framework of my study emerges from cultural studies and discourse analysis and is especially sensitive to the political and economic factors of audience reception.

In the following section, I will review various approaches mainly within cultural studies to audiences and also briefly introduce Giddens' structuration theory and Hall's articulation theory. Both provide insights to reconcile the debate between political economy and active audience.

Cultural Analysis and Audience Research

During the 1970s and the 1980s, theories developed by the scholars affiliated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham became the new orthodoxy on media and subculture studies. Rather than view subcultures as "deviant"—the sociological term—the CCCS scholars tended to analyze subcultures with an emphasis on the ideas of ideology, resistance, hegemony, gender, race, class, and struggles over meanings.

For instance, in his influential book, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Hebdige, 1979), Hebdige utilizes the semiotic approach to decipher the meanings embedded in British post-war youth subcultures. For Hebdige, the style of punk groups can be read as a sign of refusal. In his discussion of ideology and hegemony, Hebdige points out that "the challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them, rather it is expressed obliquely, in style" (p. 17). Hebdige also argues that "the struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is therefore always, at the same time, a struggle within significations: struggle for

possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life" (p. 17). In short, struggles over meaning and ideological wars happen in people's everyday lives and are expressed through trivial details such as style.

Understanding the media to provide the most important cultural forms in contemporary identity construction, cultural studies was most interested in audiences' appropriation of media texts. Nevertheless, CCCS's semiotic approach is not immune to criticism. Foremost, cultural studies tends to interpret media reception using the language of the researcher's professional training, which is mainly in literature and sociology, rather than in the voices of the research subjects. The absence of the viewers' subjective voices in the cultural studies' textual approach risks a totalization of, and detachment from, actual audiences.

Fan Discourse and Social Change

From a feminist perspective, it is important to understand more thoroughly the lived experience and meaning production of marginalized groups, which often involve women and the youth. By understanding what makes them feel pleasurable in their use of media, fan practice, contexts and moment of production, we can know better about our own subordination in the society (Ang, 1985; J. Fiske, 1989). In his book, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (1992), Henry Jenkins utilizes an ethnographic approach and explores fans' discourse by analyzing their letters, online interactions and discussions. Self-identified as a long-time *Star Trek* fan, Jenkins challenges the traditional representation of fans as passive and ideologically vulnerable consumers. Drawing from Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), Jenkins uses the term "poaching" (p. 24) to depict the active reading done

by the fans of *Star Trek*, *Blake's 7*, *The Professionals*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Starsky and Hutch*, and *Twin Peaks*. Jenkins maps fandom as an interpretive and creative community which actively appropriates media content for its own pleasures. Ethnographic accounts of audiences challenge traditional media theory—which often regards the audience as a capitalist-ideological construction—with a reconsideration of the nature and character of fan cultures.

Given that fans are increasingly using online space to interact, it is necessary to examine the nature of community in the newly emerging virtual space and the capacity of discourse analysis as a research method. Discourse analysis enables this research to take an ethnographic account of identity formation. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001) suggest, a discursive formation, such as identity, is articulated according to certain logic, like a common theme or shared concepts. In exploring the identity formation of the Japanomania Tribe at the turn of the century, I examine online fan discussions using the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA). My account of discourse stems from Foucault, according to whom discourse, in Hall's words, is "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall, 1992, p. 44). Foucault's contribution is to unearth the relationship between discourse and social inequality. For Foucault discourse is not only a technique of dominance but also a site of struggle. Discourse is always a terrain of struggle and politics, because our sense of social reality is not created by nature, but is always made "by the social power to give it one set of meaning rather than the other" (J. Fiske, 1994, p. 4). Therefore, among the various available approaches to the study of discourse, this study draws heavily on CDA to examine the interrelations between the personal and the social-political.

According to Teun van Dijk (1993), CDA focuses attention on "*the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance*"(p. 249, emphasis in original). Norman Fairclough, the founder of CDA, identifies the purpose of CDA: "to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and *struggles over power*" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 132, emphasis added by this author, Yang). Critical discourse analysis, therefore, offers a useful theoretical lens to examine the interrelations between the personal and the social-political. However, given the non-western context of this study, I also pay particular attention to the recent multicultural critique of the dominant West-centric CDA scholarship.

In promoting a multicultural approach to discourse, Shi-xu (2009) has noted:

> CDA seems to appeal to the particular ideology of universalism as a ploy for globalisation. For, it discusses neither possible cultural bias in its epistemological, axiological, theoretical or methodological perspectives, nor possible inappropriateness of its application to non-Western cultures. Rather, it indirectly or explicitly presents itself as universal, good, right and true, over and above other possible cultural approaches. (ibid, p.33)

The goal of the multicultural approach to discourse, however, is not to dismiss the Western paradigm of CDA altogether, but to improve it with expanded epistemological tools and research methods. The multicultural approach to discourse aspires to be sensitive to local cultural context and the connections between discourse and social change. In my adaptation of CDA with a multicultural sensibility toward discourse, I analyze the often marginalized or even ignored discourse of the youth who comprise the major

population of the Japanomania Tribe, by articulating the discourses to traditional Confucian culture and post-martial law society.

Structuration Theory and Articulation Theory

Although I focus more on audience subjectivity and agency, I would like to extend my sensitivity to structural aspects of the process of identity formation by drawing on Giddens' structuration theory and Hall's articulation theory. Concerning the enduring debate over the primacy of social structure and human agency in history and society, Giddens argues that these two cannot be separated from each other. Central to the structuration theory is the belief in the duality of structures. According to Giddens (1984), structures are not something determining or external to social actors, but rather structures are both a set of operating rules and a store of resources produced and reproduced by actors in their practices. He also argues that power and freedom are not opposites, but "on the contrary, power is rooted in the very nature of human agency, and thus in the 'freedom to act otherwise'" (1984, p. 4). In addition, because the process of structuration always occurs and is embedded in a specific time and space, historical analysis of social theories becomes indispensable.

Similarly, struggling against a reductionist view of the social structure and an uncritical celebration of human agency, cultural studies offers "articulation" as a theory and a method to contextualize one's analysis. Based on Laclau's elaboration of Gramsci's notion of articulation, Hall (1996) explains that articulation is:

> the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.' The 'unity'

> which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. (Hall, Morley, & Chen, 1996)

Articulation takes an anti-essentialist position, asserting the principle "that nothing is guaranteed, that no correspondences are necessary, that no identity is intrinsic" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 53). Articulation provides a theory to describe the complex connections between practice and effects. Articulation does not merely acknowledge the context, it aims to theoretically and historically (re)construct the context in which a cultural practice connect to its, often unpredicted, effect. Drawing on the theory of structuration and articulation, I examine the ways in which Japanomania discourse was both structured by and affecting the concurrent trends towards political democratization and cultural indigenization (*bentuhua*; 本土化) in 1990s Taiwan.

Chapter Outlines

The remainder of the dissertation is divided into five sections. The second chapter examines the making and the reading of the media text of the first popular Japanese trendy drama aired in Taiwan: *Tokyo Love Story*. Chapter Two will also offer an overview of the Japanomania fan activities and the cultural impact of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan. In Chapter Three I propose a generational perspective to examine the public criticism made by social elites and the media towards Japanomaniacs and the discursive struggle of Taiwanese youth against the dominant discourses. This is followed by an analysis of the Japanomania Tribe's responses in Chapter Four. The major source I analyze in Chapter Four is a set of online posts found in the major Taiwanese bulletin board systems (BBS). In Chapter Five I examine the ways in which Japanomania changed political communication in Taiwan. I analyze political marketing tactics of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, which successfully articulates

the *kawaii* ("cute" in Japanese) aesthetic and Taiwanese identity in its campaign merchandise in Taiwan's vital presidential elections of 2000 and 2004. Chapter Five also examines popular literature, online postings and existing ethnographic studies and deals with the changing political culture influenced by youth consumption and regional media flows. The concluding chapter will tie up the main themes and the theoretical significance that emerges in relation to East Asian cultural studies and the political consequences of cultural hybridity. This dissertation lends support to the following two trends in global media research: bottom up globalization studies and historical approaches to audience discourse.

CHAPTER TWO
TOKYO LOVE STORY AND THE FORMATION OF THE *ZEITGEIST*

Television is a daily staple for most people in industrialized countries, providing information, entertainment and new perspectives on the world. Before the advent of satellites, the history of television was largely a national affair. Since the 1980s, new information technologies have overcome many restraints on the terrestrial broadcasting systems. In the late 1990s, television became an increasingly de-territorialized, global industry. The global expansion of television accelerated local media deregulation and caused the withdrawal of the state from previously government-controlled broadcasting systems. In this chapter I begin to map out the contours of the cultural transformation brought by media deregulation and the entrance of Japanese idol dramas in 1990s Taiwan. This chapter analyzes the iconic pioneering drama *Tokyo Love Story* and the ways in which Taiwanese audiences responded to not only this drama but also to rapid changes of media institutions and cultural trends.

Institutional Changes of Taiwanese Television

For longer than two decades before the passage of the Cable TV Law in 1993, which legalized cable TV in this country, Taiwan's television was dominated by only three national television companies: Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV), China Television Company (CTV) and Chinese Television System (CTS). The major shareholder of TTV was the Taiwanese provincial government. The second television company, CTV, was established by the KMT in 1968, followed by CTS in 1971, which was controlled by the Ministry of National Defense. The ownership of these three companies represented the party/government/military complex of the KMT dictatorship. Although

commercial in nature, the three TV companies served the KMT government's needs for social control and were under the strict censorship of the Government Information Office (GIO), a branch of the Executive Yuan (L. Lin, 2006; M. T. Rawnsley, 2003). Prior to 1993, Japanese programs were forbidden on television, with the exception of Mandarin-dubbed cartoons that did not promote Japanese traditions or national images. Although limited, however, the circulation of Japanese audiovisual products never entirely disappeared in Taiwanese people's everyday lives. For example, pirated Japanese comic books and video tapes were ubiquitous.

In the 1980s, video home systems (VHS), the videocassette recorder (VCR), and satellite and cable television became popular in Taiwan's bubble economy. Remarkable economic growth since the 1980s has given birth to a well-educated and affluent middle class, including a young generation with more disposable money. The middle class was not satisfied with the commonly perceived dull and poorly-produced programs by the three government-controlled television stations (Chan, 1994; Y. Tsai, 2004). Many stock investors installed a satellite dish or cable television in order to monitor stock markets, while others wanted to learn English or simply to have a greater variety of entertainment. By the time the Legislative Yuan passed the Cable Television Law in August 1993, cable television already penetrated half of Taiwanese households (C. J. Chen, 1999).

The sizable and affluent Taiwanese audience attracted Star TV (Satellite Television Asian Region) to make Taiwan the primary target market of its Mandarin Channel since its establishment in 1991. In May 1992, Star TV broadcast two pioneer Japanese romantic drama series, *Tokyo Love Story* and *101st Proposal*. These two series soon became hits and thus encouraged Star TV and Taiwanese cable operators to air more Japanese trendy dramas. STAR TV challenged the KMT government by ignoring the prohibition of Japanese series

on television. In addition to local demand for media deregulation and this challenge from Star TV, the American media and government also put enormous pressure on the KMT government to pass the Cable Television Law in order to protect their films and TV shows from piracy by the cable TV operators in Taiwan (C.C. Lee, p. 192). In 1993, under this local and global pressure, the Legislative Yuan passed the Cable TV Law to legalize the already widespread social phenomenon of cable TV (C. J. Chen, 1999). In the same year, the KMT government lifted the ban on showing Japanese programs on TV. And in 1994, the GIO permitted Japanese films and videos to be imported and distributed freely in Taiwan (Lo, 1996).

The series of legalization and deregulation not only ended the more than twenty-year old ban on Japanese TV programs but also transformed Taiwan into one of the freest media markets in the world. As of 2007, Taiwan had 5 terrestrial TV companies, 66 cable TV companies and 155 satellite broadcasting channels. The take-up rate of multichannel cable TV is about 85%, the highest in East Asia (BBC). In 2007, a total of 61 domestic and 16 foreign companies were offering 110 and 45 satellite channels respectively. These include NHK from Japan; Home Box Office (HBO), Disney, and Discovery from the United States; and groups of specialized, satellite-based channels operated by local media conglomerates, such as Eastern Broadcasting, TVBS, ERA, and CTI. The major news channels include TVBS-N, FTV news, ERA news, Sanlih news, and the Eastern News Channel. Among imported TV dramas, Japanese and South Korean dramas record higher ratings than those from mainland China, Hong Kong, or English-speaking countries (The Government Information Office, 2008).

The media deregulation mentioned above opened a windows on a variety of images, sounds and lifestyles from other cultures that were not available only a few years ago. These new experiences were most passionately embraced by

Taiwanese youth. In the 1990s, Taiwanese youth between 12 and 18 years of age commonly spent more than 12 hours a day studying on weekdays. After school, they spent a few hours in the privately-owned cram schools, where they received intensive courses to prepare for the two United Entrance Examinations necessary for entering high school and university. Romantic relationships were discouraged or prohibited in junior and senior high schools. Today, the most prestigious senior high schools in Taiwan still enroll only either males or females. For example, Taipei First Girls' High School consists of only girls and Taipei Municipal JianGuo High School consists of only boys. In the 1990s, even when boys and girls entered the same school, they were often divided into separate classes. High school students were required to wear uniforms and their hair styles were under strict regulation instructed by the Ministry of Education. Because it was a widely held belief that adolescents should fully focus on their academic performance before college, the three government-controlled networks targeted adults and children rather than this teenage group.

In sharp contrast, Japanese idol dramas targeted urban youth by providing stories about romance, friendship, fashion and urban lifestyle in Asian contexts, which were largely missing in American and domestic programming (Ku, 1998). The entrance of Japanese idol dramas have changed the ways that Taiwanese youth look at the world, and it is vital to study the construction of their gaze at Japan. In this chapter, I examine the production strategies, the media text and the Taiwanese youth reception of the first popular Japanese idol drama, *Tokyo Love Story* (1991), an East Asian equivalent of the American drama *Dallas*, followed by an analysis of fans' practices, with a focus on "Japanese Idol Drama Tours." In this chapter I argue that the symbolic system that constructs the gaze of the Japanomania Tribe is sustained and reinforced not only by

Japanese producers but also by Taiwanese fans, the local government, small business and media-travel industries.

The Inception of Japanese Trendy and Post-Trendy Dramas

In 1980s Japan, teenagers and young adults were largely underserved until Ōta Tōru (大多亮, 1958-), the inventor of trendy dramas, decided to produce this new genre catering to young women. His *Tokyo Love Story* soon became an epoch-making drama series that marked the advent of the Japanomania era in East Asia and was followed by numerous reruns, merchandise and public discussions. Up to the late 1980s, Japanese TV dramas mostly targeted housewives in their 40s and above. Amid the bubble economy boom, the Japanese TV stations were still struggling to raise their mediocre ratings. Ōta, a young producer in his late 20s at Fuji Television, proposed to produce dramas that would target women in their 20s, who were interested in fashion, music, hip places and love stories. The company approved Ōta's proposal and thus brought the so-called "trendy drama" to life. Unlike American and Taiwanese soap operas that can go on for years, Japanese idol dramas always end within ten to twelve episodes, and each episode lasts one hour (Iwabuchi, 2002). At first, the trendy dramas paid much more attention to "superficial" aspects of their production, such as music, setting, and cast, than to content. While criticized for being rough, shallow and theme-less by the veterans in the Japanese TV industry, Ōta's trendy dramas gained excellent ratings, which showed audience approval. Becoming more experienced and skillful, Ōta later produced "*Tokyo Love Story*," which went on to occupy a significant position in Asian media history. With its sophisticated scriptwriting, casting and production, this drama changed the common perception of trendy dramas as shallow and unrefined and therefore launched a "post-trendy drama

era." In all post-trendy dramas, as Ōta points out, fashion, music and fancy places are fundamental elements (Tseng, 2001).

Figure1: The DVD cover of *Tokyo Love Story*

Source: http://bit.ly/cUKLBC

Originally broadcast in Japan in 1991, *Tokyo Love Story* was a hit, with an average rating of 22.9 % in Japan and the highest rating reaching to 32.3 %. Adapted from a popular adult *manga* by Saimon Fumi (柴門ふみ), a female *manga* artist and novelist, this drama series is about romance, friendship and life dilemmas among two men and three women in their early twenties. Having spent her teenage years overseas, the heroine Rika is an exceptionally independent, charming and witty Japanese woman. Rika is attracted to her new colleague, Kanji ("Kanchi" for Rika), a gentle young man who has just moved from a small town to Tokyo. Upon his arrival in Tokyo, Kanji reunites with his two best friends from high school: Satomi, a domestic-natured woman and an

elegant kindergarten teacher, and Mikami, a wanton dandy who studies at a medical school. After years apart from one another, the relationships between Kanji, Satomi and Mikami develop into a love triangle. Rika is always by Kanji's side, offering moral support and advice when Kanji is nervous about his new life in the big city and, most importantly, when Satomi and Mikami become a couple. Overcoming the fact that he has lost Satomi to his best friend, Kanji gradually falls for Rika's unconditional love and optimistic personality. As Kanji and Rika's love progresses, Satomi discovers Mikami's ambiguous relationship with his medical-school classmate Naoko, a beautiful rich girl who is going to marry another man through an arranged marriage. Seemingly submissive and vulnerable, Satomi eventually leaves Mikami and turns to Kanji, an old friend who has supported and admired her for years. When Kanji is painfully wavering between Satomi and Rika, the company approves Rika's previous application to work in Los Angeles for a three-year project. Kanji does not ask Rika to stay and continue their relationship because, according to Kanji, he "doesn't have the confidence" to be with a woman like Rika, and he does not want to sabotage her career. Sensing the indifference of Kanji and his feelings towards Satomi, Rika decides to accept her new appointment in Los Angeles. Suddenly realizing the importance of Rika in his life, Kanji rushes to the train station to stop Rika from leaving. At the station, he finds only a handkerchief tied on the fence with writing in Rika's handwriting saying "goodbye, Kanchi." Three years later, after attending the wedding of Mikami and Naoko, Kanji and Satomi together cross paths with Rika on the street in Tokyo. Satomi, already the wife of Kanji, generously lets Kanji and Rika spend some time together in private. The story ends with a heartfelt conversation between Rika and Kanji, followed by a scene in which the two head separate ways—at the same spot where they held each other for the first time.

According to Ōta Tōru, producer of *Tokyo Love Story* and many subsequent hits, the key to the success of this drama series is that for the first time in the history of Japanese TV dramas, the heroine is unhesitating in her commitment to a relationship. In addition to the physical attractiveness of the actress Suzuki Honami (鈴木保奈美), who plays the role of Rika, both the conventional and the unconventional behaviors of Rika have created much admiration and identification among women viewers. Rika is conventional in the sense that she is sweet, caring, and loyal to her lover. However, compared to Satomi and Naoko, who both have long hair and always wear skirts and heels, Rika is unconventional because she is always in suit trousers and flat shoes. While Satomi tends to be passive in relationships and Naoko yields to her parents' will to marry someone she does not love, Rika takes initiative in her relationship and is frank and energetic about life. She once famously proposes to Kanji, "Let's have sex!"—not a phrase that would have commonly appeared on television in East Asian countries at the time. Rika is also the only person in the drama who has lived overseas and is capable of carrying out a company project in Los Angeles. Towards the end, Satomi learns to be assertive and expresses her feelings to Kanji, which causes the breakup between Rika and Kanji before Rika leaves for Los Angeles. Having been a rich and proper girl throughout her life, Naoko eventually runs away from her honeymoon for her true love, Mikami, leaving her husband, parents and in-laws in shock. These three women characters together revolutionized the representation of contemporary women in Japanese dramas (Ito, 2004).

Having received phenomenally high ratings for *Tokyo Love Story* and its subsequent dramas, Fuji Television has become the leading company in East Asia due to its trusted "formula" for successful TV series. In the meantime, Ōta Tōru has become the master of both television and film production in Japan.

According to Ōta, the most important qualities of a favorable heroine are the ability to stand on her own and endure solitude without seeking men's help. After the success of *Tokyo Love Story*, most Japanese hit dramas adopted the same character composition: A wavering man (Kanji), a hateful woman (Satomi), and an independent, adorable, yet unfortunate woman (Rika), but no domestic, submissive and always-decorous heroines. Instead, the heroine must be independent and eccentric. Ōta also points out that "unrequited love" and "tragic love" are the most effective formulae in making hits. In spite of its classic status, however, it would be a misconception to view all Japanese TV dramas as analogous with *Tokyo Love Story*. Often adapted from popular *manga* series and novels, Japanese idol dramas cover a wide range of themes and genres, such as detective, comedy, and critical investigation of social realities and detailed depiction of various professions. For example, the 2003 hit *Shiroi Kyotō* (literally translated *The Great White Tower*) is adapted from a best-selling novel, which depicts politics among doctors in a prestigious university hospital and highlights the powerlessness of victims in a medical dispute. Juxtaposing two male assistant professors with different ambitions and a different work ethic, this drama reveals the bureaucratic politics in the Japanese health-care system and questions the technocentric rhetoric of modern medicine. Also directed by Ōta Tōru , the *Shiroi Kyoto* reached its highest rating in Japan at 36.9%, when it aired there in 2003, and its highest rating in Taiwan at 1.02%, when it aired there in 2004 (cite: http://wispa.myweb.hinet.net/news.htm).

Sponsored by major Japanese and transnational corporations, Japanese dramas usually cost 40 million yen[2] per one-hour episode, and about 50% the

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[2] 40 million yen approximately equals to $ 430,000 based on the conversion rate in April 2010.

budget goes to the cast (Chua, 2008; Ōta, 2004). The primacy of the show's visual pleasures and the glamorous roles can be easily identified in the dreamlike sets and scenes, the well-dressed beautiful protagonists and heroines, cozy apartments and high-end Western restaurants. Not only have Ôta's formula for scripts become the recipe for TV dramas in East Asia, but the aesthetic standards in Japanese dramas, the beauty norms for creating male and female idols in particular, have been zealously emulated by TV producers in Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea (Chua, 2007a).

Watching *Tokyo Love Story*

In Taiwan, *Tokyo Love Story* was first aired in May 1992 by the STAR Chinese channel and soon became a hit. The success of Japanese dramas did not go unnoticed by the local broadcasters. While the illegal cable operators were busy importing more Japanese TV shows to meet viewers' high demand, the three national networks were still constrained by the ban on Japanese TV programs. In April 1993, the national network TTV was permitted by the GIO to broadcast *Tokyo Love Story* under the guise of showcasing foreign TV series in celebration of the annual Golden Bell Award, a television production award equivalent to the Emmy award in the United States. On the first day of TTV's airing of *Tokyo Love Story*, the show received a high average rating of 27%. In light of the promising market for Japanese TV dramas, the three networks petitioned the KMT government to lift the ban on Japanese TV programs. In addition, four cable channels dedicated to Japanese programs were established by 1997: Video Land Japanese, Gold Sun, Po-shin Japanese, and Japanese Entertainment Network (JET). These cable companies bought their programs directly from Japanese stations and claimed to offer "simultaneous broadcasting" of Japanese television as well as reruns of popular series.

On the website of Video Land Japanese, the introduction page for *Tokyo Love Story* states:

> The starting point of the love for Japanese dramas—is all in the *Tokyo Love Story*.
>
> If someone asks which Japanese drama initiated the *ha-ri* trend in Taiwan, we believe *Tokyo Love Story* fully deserves the title! …. No wonder many Japanese drama fans are still talking about it with great relish, praising *Tokyo Love Story* as the No. 1 Japanese Drama! (http://japan.videoland.com.tw/channel/tokyo_loves/default02.htm, accessed on January 10, 2010)

This statement is no exaggeration. According to a 1999 online survey titled "The Classic Japanese TV Drama—Which One Is Your Favorite? " conducted by National Taiwan University on the University's bulletin board system (BBS), *Tokyo Love Story* was voted number one by 42% participants, followed by *Long Vacation*, at 28.6%. Many fans admit that *Tokyo Love Story* was their first Japanese TV drama and that they have watched it more than ten times through television reruns and pirated VCDs. The breakup of Rika and Kanji is widely regarded as the "eternal heartache" and the story "a collective memory of the generation" (Tseng, 2001).

Between 2004 and 2010, I surveyed the BBSs, websites and blogs using both English and Chinese keywords such as "Japan" (日本), "Japanese TV drama" (日劇) and "*ha-ri*" (哈日). The analysis in this study was based on the hundreds of posts I read in the six-year time span.

In the hundreds of blog, University BBS posts and news articles I analyzed, most viewers described the physical appeal and performance of the Japanese idols as key to making them fall in love with *Tokyo Love Story* and its successors. The relevance of the scripts to their lives and the overall quality of the production were also important. The subtlety and sophistication of the production techniques in *Tokyo Love Story* were additionally well received. *Tokyo*

Love Story addressed many "real life" issues and offered a new way of representing romance among young adults, which was a neglected area in local television programming. In addition, with the technology and easy accessibility of pirated VCDs, fans could collect Japanese idol dramas and watch them repetitively. This was why *Tokyo Love Story* was regarded by many Taiwanese viewers as a collective memory of "our generation" and a story about "us" for Taiwanese viewers (Iwabuchi, 2002).

Name of the Online Source	Address
PTT BBS (The largest BBS portal in Taiwan)	telnet://ptt.twbbs.org
National Taiwan University BBS	http://bbs.ntu.edu.tw
Name of the Online Source	Address
CIA Taiwan BBS (closed in 2009)	telnet://cia.twbbs.org.tw
Japanese Idol Drama	http://dorama.info
Video Land TV station	http://japan.videoland.com.tw
Japan Entertainment Television (JET TV)	http://www.jettv.com.tw
Yeh's Station of Japanese Entertainment (Blog)	http://www.readingtimes.com.tw/discuss/japantv/index.htm

Figure 2. List of major online sources of this dissertation

Female viewers tended to identify with Rika for her courage in life and devotion in relationships, while overwhelmingly despising Satomi because of her indecisiveness, selfishness and her relatively backward representation of women. Many male viewers, however, showed ambivalence towards Kanji's decision. While most male posters expressed their admiration of Rika for her beauty, passion and wittiness, they also defended Kanji's choice of Satomi over Rika. Some male posters suggested that Satomi is Kanji's high-school sweetheart and she represents an ideal wife who is domestic and always proper. Rika, on the other hand, seemed to be too carefree for a man who grew up in a small town and valued traditions and stability.

An imported romantic drama like *Tokyo Love Story* and its successors may have unintended effects on audiences, such as generating critical discourse related to broader issues in the society. My informant Tang, a woman writer now in her 40s, told me that she was deeply troubled by the ending of *Tokyo Love Story* when she first watched it in the 1990s. She received a phone call from another upset friend, who was a feminist, on the night of the finale. Bemoaning that Rika ends up alone, these two women tried to make sense of their feelings about the love story. Tang's friend was disturbed by the message this drama may have produced: A career-oriented, free-spirited woman is not as favorable as a domestic-natured, traditional one. The finale could have discouraged modern women in Asia from performing well at work because doing so might threaten their gentle boyfriends like Kanji. Tang suggests that the fact that Kanji and Satomi were both migrants in a big city was vital in Kanji's decision-making process: "Their shared memories of growing up in the small town is the most powerful glue that ties Kanji and Satomi together. Rika can't beat that despite all her efforts" (Tang, 2009). Tang and her friend went on to discuss the changing gender roles and life dilemmas the show represents. The enthusiastic discussion

between these two women was typical of the audience responses towards *Tokyo Love Story* and its successors (I. Lin, 2003; Tseng, 2001). Japanese idol dramas provide audiences narrative frameworks within which audiences recount their ideas and feelings, interweaving their own experiences into discussions over the scripts and characters.

Online Fan Communities

Since the Internet became prevalent in the late 1990s and as of January 2010, approximately 8,460,000 online forums related to "Japanese TV dramas" in traditional Chinese have been established according to a Google search. Popular online *ha-ri* forums include the university BBSs, discussion boards owned by TV channels or online stores, and online newsletters, often sponsored by major Internet Provider Services (IPS). These online fan communities provide a rich database to investigate fans' experiences through their extended writings. One example is *Reading Japanese Idol Dramas*, a free online newsletter created by Wei-Yu Tseng in 1999. In her inaugural edition of *Reading Japanese Idol Dramas*, Tseng states:

> We are going to discuss everything about Japanese idol dramas, but will certainly not be limited by them. The reason why I intentionally replaced "watching" with the word "reading" [Japanese Idol Dramas] was because I would like to send out a message – even as most ordinary viewers confronting ephemeral popular texts, we can still read the embedded meanings that belong to ourselves. There are many intriguing elements in Japanese idol dramas, but the emotions and thoughts arising after watching the dramas are even more fascinating. These emotions and thoughts differ from person to person, and that is why I want to share mine with you. (Tseng, 2001, originally in Chinese translated by this author, Yang)

Tseng went on to explain how Japanese idol dramas make her life warm and colorful:

> When I encountered obstacles in my relationships, I would think of Rika's courageous yet adorable smile in *Tokyo Love*

> *Story*. When I had conflicts with my family, I would think of those silly brothers and sisters in *Under the Same Roof*. When I got frustrated at work, I would think of those absolutely confident female workers in *Power Office Ladies*. When I was wavering about whether or not to keep writing, I would think of Yuji's devotion to boxing in *To Heart*……I am anxious to share these [experiences] with you in case you have not already experienced them.

Tseng's enthusiasm for sharing her feelings on Japanese idol dramas and her subjective voice were very well received by other online users. More than 20,000 people subscribed within a few weeks after the inaugural newsletter in November 1999. This newsletter was renamed *Renata Report* in 2001 and it had at that time over 60,000 subscribers, many of whom regularly contributed their own thoughts and stories.

Tseng later wrote her Master thesis, "Reading Japanese Trendy Drama : *Tokyo Love Story* Text and *Renata's Report* Users" (2001), in which she analyzed the texts of *Tokyo Love Story* as well as the audiences' writings in *Renata Report*. Tseng concludes that the viewers actively made connections between the drama and their real life experiences. These connections are, Tseng asserts, largely determined by viewers' *reading* of the *conversational dialogues* in a drama. Therefore, rather than using the phrase "watching dramas," Tseng stresses that Taiwanese viewers are in fact "reading the dialogue" in the scripts. According to Tseng, viewers deconstruct and reconstruct the conversational dialogue in the scripts, gauge the relevance of a drama to their own lives, and often seek emotional comfort and practical solutions in the dialogues. For example, a reader of *Renata Report* draws on the dialogue in the popular drama, *Beautiful Life* (2000),[3] to make sense of a devastating event in her own life:

> One evening, I received an email from one of his friends notifying me that he had drowned. I couldn't believe this

[3] *Beautiful Life* depicts a love story between Kyoko, the heroine who suffers from a terminal illness, and Shuji, a young male hairdresser.

> [losing her lover at a young age] could happen to me. After a series of ceremonies and days of endless tears, it occurred to me what Kyoko told Shuji in *Beautiful Life*: "Since I can't live, you live for me." (Email No. 041, Tseng, 2001, p. 6 in chapter 5; originally in Chinese, translated by this author, Yang)

Audiences constantly related to the characters in the dramas and found heart-warming messages in the dramas. By owning VCDs and DVDs (often cheap pirated copies), viewers are able to listen, read the script repetitively. Many fans memorize and write down their favorite quotes from the scripts and share the quotes with their peers or other fans. In a major online discussion forum Japanese TV dramas (http://dorama.info/esc-1528.html), a user opened a thread asking people to share their favorite quotes:

> Having watched so many Japanese dramas, I feel that every *dorama* provides a number of unforgettable quotes that leave viewers with profound feelings. I hope we can discuss [your most memorable quotes] here. Thanks!

(posted by anight 2002-03-04 00:23:44; http://dorama.info/esc-1528.html)

Similar responses to *dorama* scripts can be found, quite frequently, elsewhere. Yeh Jungjey (葉俊傑), a popular writer on Japanese TV dramas, states in his blog:

> The magical power of Japanese TV dramas is truly amazing. Whenever I am facing a difficult situation, those invaluable conversations would come out to help me make a decision. It's true that the lines in Japanese TV dramas are sometimes more convincing than the indoctrination of government officials.
>
> (Yeh; http://www.readingtimes.com.tw/discuss/japantv/profile/index.htm)

Here Yeh compares the *doroma* scripts to the "indoctrination" of the government, indicating suspicion or even refusal of the dominant discourse and paternalistic political style. Although unintended by the producers, the pleasure of watching Japanese dramas may often create oppositional attitude toward local authorities. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The appeal of the scripts mainly derives from two types of messages frequently shown in Japanese dramas. The first type is the so-called the "*ganbaru"* message. *Ganbaru* is a Japanese phrase meaning "to strive or to struggle hard" (Leung, 2004). The *ganbaru* messages in Japanese dramas not only encourage people to work hard and to strive forward but also offer discourses to reframe the everyday obstacles for viewers. In *Tokyo Love Story*, for example, in order to soothe Kanji's jitters about his unknown future in Tokyo, Rika advices him: "We should live energetically precisely because we don't know what will happen in the future! All that happened in the past happened for the purpose of the present. Think that way." Many audiences prefer Japanese dramas because *doramas* not only make them "think" but also make them believe that all obstacles in life can be conquered with perseverance. The uplifting power of the Japanese idol dramas is in fact the vital factor, if not the most important, for creating hardcore *dorama* fans (Leung, 2004; Tseng, 2001).

Another frequently appearing message in Japanese dramas is about "happiness and well-being" (幸福). Japanese idol dramas employ various techniques to create discourses about happiness. The most common one is through dialogues. One poster, among others, contributes eleven quotes related to happiness in response to anight's invitation to share favorite quotes. Some of the quotes are:

> You are searching for happiness, right? But everybody has different definitions of happiness. You have your happiness and others have theirs. Their happiness does not necessarily

> suit you. Even if you build relations with those who are happy, their happiness may not become yours. You can to a large extent smell the aroma of their happiness. What I can tell you is that, there is no overflowing happiness around us. You must search for it, and you cannot take away that of others'. What happiness looks like is what your heart looks like.
>
> (*Please Give Me Love*, 2000)

> If you like someone, say it. You can never grab happiness if you are always unnecessarily reserved.
>
> (*Love Generation*, 1997)

> Why can't unmarried women achieve happiness? I don't like that notion. I simply don't want to lose my selfhood by becoming someone's wife and someone's mother.
>
> (*Tomoko to Tomoko*, 1997)

The emphasis on happiness in the scripts did not go unnoticed, as seen in the fans' collections. Japanese idol dramas are often regarded as a "factory of dreams" by fans. The dreams *dorama* create are not so much about romance or idols, writes Tseng, than about the message carried out in every drama that, "everyone has the opportunity to achieve happiness" by trying harder and maintaining faith in happiness. Fans are well aware of the sugar-coated or glamorized nature of *doramas*, but they keep watching because the experience creates "deep emotion, just like someone is holding my heart keeping it warm" (Email No. 029, quoted in Tseng 2001, translated by this author, Yang). While the scripts are polysemic, the messages about happiness almost always celebrate liberation, hardwork and love.

The lion's share of Japanese idol dramas offers coaching advice and uplifting conversations, which viewers can both conceive in their minds and discuss with their peers. Each *dorama* features one or a number of professions from working class to social elites with detailed depictions of the lives of people in those professions. Exposing to such narratives is an important part of

"vocational anticipatory socialization"(Cockburn-Wootten & Zorn, 2006), which prepares the young viewers for the world of work with examples and discussions. As a result, some cultural critics in Japan and Taiwan regard Japanese TV dramas as constructive educational materials through which adolescents and young adults can learn and grow up with the characters (Tseng, 2001), while others remain skeptical about the power of capitalist media texts (Ku, 1998).

The Fashion for the Foreign

Within ten years of the first broadcast of *Tokyo Love Story* in Taiwan, the impact of Japanese popular culture on the local lifestyle had become omnipresent in Taiwan, ranging from food, tourism, colloquial speech, youth consumption patterns, and subculture formation (Y. Ko, 2004). In daily conversations, Japanese loanwords such as "wait a minute" (*chottomate*), "thank you" (*arigatou*), "delicious" (*oishii*), and "cute" (*kawaii*) have become local colloquialisms (Hsieh, 2006). Japanese language and media imagery became dominant media in Taiwanese TV commercials. For example, the TV commercials of 7-11 convenient stores in Taiwan often featured Japanese foods such as *bento* and *oden*, drawing heavily on imageries of the Japanese urban lifestyle, rural landscapes and the Zen atmosphere (I. Lin, 2003).

Japanese pop idols have not only provided the prototype for idol production throughout East Asia (Chua, 2007a; Craig, 2000) but have also influenced beauty norms for young men and women in this region. In addition to their multi-talents, the Japanese female idols are known for their *kawaii* looks and mannerism, while male idols for their androgynous beauty.

Figure 3. Cute style in the 80s: Iconic Japanese idol Seiko Matsuda (left) and Taiwanese idol, YoYo Jin (right)

Figure 4. The Japanese superstar Takuya Kimura (left) and the Taiwanese idol Jiro Wang (right)

Hello Kitty, an innocent-looking mouth-less cat created by Japan-based Sanrio Company has ignited a collection fever among the Japanomania Tribe and many other consumers. In 1999 alone, Hello Kitty products, including credit cards, appliances, and cellular phone accessories, generated a sizable profit of 35 million U.S. dollars in Taiwan (Hsiao, 2002). Between 2005 and 2009, Taiwan-based Eva Air launched a Hello Kitty campaign, featuring Hello Kitty and other Sanrio motifs on the exterior of their aircrafts and in their interior fittings.

Figure 5. The Hello Kitty jet of Eva Air

source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:EVA_hellokitty1.JPG

The following pictures of the interior of the Hello Kitty jet were posted online by two different Taiwanese bloggers. The bloggers and their fellow travelers commonly express their amazement over by the airline's creativity and

attention to detail, although sometimes it is excessive or awkward (e.g. Kitty on the toilet paper).

Figure 6. Welcome On Board message on the personal TV screens in the Hello Kitty Jet (left); Kitty on the toilet paper (center); body care products in the lavatory (right)

Source: http://blog.yam.com/pingchen/article/11681598

http://rainjapan.blogspot.com/search?q=hello+kitty

Figure 7. Hello Kitty meals, Eva Air

Left: http://rainjapan.blogspot.com/search?q=hello+kitty

Right: http://blog.yam.com/pingchen/article/11681598

The transnational alliance between Eva Air and Sanrio exemplified the fact that the Japanomania phenomenon in Taiwan was promoted not only by the Japanese corporation, but also by Taiwanese fans, local businesses, and even the local government.

The Construction of the Gaze on Japan

In the 1980s and 1990s, the popularity and influence of Japanese culture was best observed in Ximending, the busiest shopping area and gathering place for young people on the west side of Taipei City. Ximending had been a popular area for entertainment since Japanese colonization. In the 1990s, Ximending Circle was often filled by jostling crowds waiting for the arrival of Japanese pop idols. In Ximending, even the American brand Tower Records regularly put out billboard advertisements featuring Japanese pop singers. Trendy clothing stores were jam-packed with the latest Japanese fashion products labeled "just in from Japan" or "worn by Amuro Namie," the Japanese female pop star. Young people's personal organizers were filled with sticker photos about 100 New Taiwan dollars, approximately three U.S. dollars per sheet from Japanese-made photo booths (Hsueh, 1999). In Ximending, more than 6,000 small shops, individual vendors and department stores together offered the latest Japanese magazines, books, CD albums, cute dolls, clothing and fashion accessories. Therefore, Ximending came to be regarded as "the haven for the *ha-ri-zu*" (Chi, 2001). In 1999, the city government and local stores renovated Ximending into the first and largest pedestrian area in Taiwan, in order to attract young consumers and to revitalize business, which had been declining due to competition from the new shopping district on the east side of the city. The

urban planning of Ximending was designed after Japanese urban landscapes such as Tokyo's Daiba and Harajuku districts, which often appeared in the idol dramas (ibid). The images of these Japanese media sites became symbols of Asian modernities, and the desire to visit the actual media sites was further promoted by the local media and by travel agents.

The Power of the Media and the Tourist Gaze

> I was able to grasp how the daily life and the living condition of the Japanese look like after watching their dramas, and therefore become in touch with other things related to Japan. Having watched Japanese dramas motivated me to know more about Japan. (A-Fang, quoted in Lin, 2003, p. 58, originally in Chinese, translated by this author, Yang)

As fans watch a large number of Japanese idol dramas, they become accustomed to the lifestyles represented in the dramas, and many among them may want to live up to the tastes or living standards seen on TV. In their blog entitled "The Japanomania Tribe's Online Travel Journal"(哈日族旅遊記錄; originally in Chinese, translated by this author, Yang), the Chen family recorded their journeys from Taiwan to Japan and shared them with the public. The subtitle of the blog reads:

> Our whole family is Japanomaniacal.
>
> The only destination for our previous 10 overseas trips was Japan.

Now in his forties and working at a bank, the father, Rain Chen (penname, *sic.*) wrote me the following statement:

> Everyone in our family is a fan of Japanese TV dramas. I really didn't anticipate that I would have visited Japan ten times in a row. Visiting Japan successively did not entirely result from our watching *doramas*. But of course our desire for visiting Japan became stronger after watching a Japanese drama. For example, the Rainbow Bridge in the Tokyo Bay looked so beautiful in *doramas*. The bridge is located right in

> Tokyo, so whenever we went to Tokyo, we definitely visited it. (Rain Chen, April 2010, personal communication via email, translated by this author, Yang)

The Chen family is not alone. One of the most significant effects of Japanese idol dramas in Taiwan has been the emergence and popularity of "Japanese idol dramas tours." While Japan ranks 35th in the world and 9th in Asia for foreign tourists, it has been the most popular destination among Taiwanese tourists, due to the popularity of idol dramas (Hayakawa, 2003; Lee, 2004). In 2004, according to the Japan National Tourist Organization, 3.8 million foreign tourists visited Japan, of which 0.96 million were Taiwanese. That is, on average, out of every four foreign tourists in Japan, one comes from Taiwan (JNTO, 2004). It is curious why people would spend time and money to make journeys to those media sites. As many scholars in geography, media studies and sociology suggest, these trips to the media sites are less due to the material glamour of these places than to the symbolic power of the media that constructs and shapes the tourists' gaze.

To serve the purpose of our later discussion, at this point it might be useful to distinguish three similar terms: exploration, travel, and tourism. As Paul Fussel addresses the differences among the three, "…all three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveler that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of publicity" (Sack, 1992). Since the nature of tourism is ready-made and easy, consequently, tourism requires abundant capital, material, and labor to make transportation, food, accommodations, and other commodities and services available to visitors. In addition, tourism also heavily relies on the media, marketing tactics and visual cultural displays. Therefore, tourism does not only involve places and tourists but also cultural and material resources. Outside of East Asia, tourism

associated with media production has also become increasingly important to the media and the tourist industries. For instance, Disney-MGM Studios and MCA's Universal Studios in the United States respectively attracted 299,000 and 170,000 visitors from the UK alone in 1996 (Couldry, 2000). In the United Kingdom in 1997, the shooting sites of popular TV shows attracted more than 4,500,000 visitors, according to the English Tourist Board report (2000, p. 31).

To study the ways in which Taiwanese fans gaze upon Japan, it is important to trace the process in which the gaze is constructed and reinforced. Further, it is also necessary to find out who or what has the symbolic power to authorize the gaze, considering the social, historical and economic factors within both local and global contexts. British sociologist John Urry (2002) argues that our gaze as tourists is socially constructed and systematized by media, professional experts and non-tourist practices. This "mediatised gaze" is a collective gaze through which mediated sites are viewed with anticipation, fantasy and memories. This mediatised gaze is constructed through signs, constructed and reinforced by television, film, magazine, records and videos. That is to say, tourists are always looking for signs such as romantic Paris, typical Japanese behavior, or authentic Chinese cuisine. And these ways of looking are mainly constructed by the media.

Similarly, in his book *The Place of Media Power: Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age* (Couldry, 2000), Nick Couldry investigates the naturalization of media's symbolic power to construct reality in a general sense. He uses the term "media frame" to emphasize the media's ability to structure or set up our perceptions of realities or our actions. Based on his interviews with people who visited the site of *Coronation Street*, a long-standing popular TV drama in Britain, Couldry analyzed what people do on the media set and how they talk about their journey in terms of memory, identity, being on set, aura and history. As

Couldry points out, the media set is "a place which condenses memory, a place with 'aura,' a ritual place, even a place of 'pilgrimage'"(2000, p. 69). While tourists only do ordinary things on the *Street* set, like walking and looking, just being on *Cornation Street* has important meaning for them. As Couldry argues, "[T]he whole process of being on the Street…brings out connections—and differences—between the 'ordinary' process of television viewing (the 'now' of everyday viewing) and the 'extraordinary' moment of the visit (the 'now' of being on the 'actual Street')" (2000, p. 85).

Given Urry and Couldry's studies of tourism and media, intensive Taiwanese tourism to the shooting locations of Japanese TV dramas raises questions concerning how Taiwanese tourists' mediatised gaze is constructed, what signs Taiwanese tourists are looking for in Japan, how media sites in Japan are represented in and created by TV dramas, and how those places in Japanese TV dramas are used by the media-travel industry to generate profits.

The idea of "Japanese idol drama tours" in Taiwan was influenced by the 1999 best-selling book, *Cinderella's Tour in Tokyo: Fieldnotes on the Sets of Japanese Idol Dramas* (originally in Chinese, translated by Lee Ming-tsung, 2004). In light of the success of this book and the popularity of Japanese idol dramas, several travel agencies started to design and promote new package tours named "Japanese TV drama tours" (M. Lee, 2004). A-Tong, the author of *Cinderella's Tour in Tokyo*, was a 23-year-old woman when she wrote it in 1998. A-Tong explains how she prepared for her trip to Japan and the significance of this trip in her book:

> In the beginning of 1998, I immersed myself in a pile of copied and pirated videotapes of Japanese TV dramas, the map of Tokyo's 23 districts, and many Japanese travel guides, though I did not yet understand any Japanese at the time. Three months later, I left for Tokyo, I felt like a medieval navigator using a nautical chart to search for the New World….I arrived in Tokyo when I was 23 years old. I

> breathed the air of Tokyo, and then I wrote this book. It was one of the most important events in my life. (A-Tong, 1999, p. 268, originally in Chinese, translated and quoted by Lee, 2004, p. 136).

A-Tong's bestselling book qualifies as representative of the numerous fan writings of Japanese TV dramas and therefore should be seen as a text important to the study of Japanomania culture. A-Tong's book was constructed in patchwork style, containing narratives and photos related to Japanese TV dramas and her journey. The colorful pictures include snapshots from VCD/DVD covers, as well as pictures taken by herself during her adventure to the sets of TV dramas in Japan, which included Japanese people, shops, buildings, interior design, food, Japanese fashion, clothing and so on. Surrounding those colorful pictures are dialogue clips excerpted from the TV dramas, plot descriptions, her personal journal, her reminiscences of life in Taipei, useful travel advice and directions to Japanese idol dramas' shooting locations. A-Tong's book provides an example of how Taiwanese youth appropriate the images, the plots and lifestyle of Japanese dramas and "re-stitch" them together for their own uses.

A-Tong's book also shows us that fans are not merely passive victims of the cultural industries but are creative researchers, travelers, food critics, and fashion gurus who were inspired to "search for the New World." While the Japanomania Tribe is commonly considered to result from nostalgia for Japanese colonization, A-Tong shows us in her book that her motive for visiting Japan had nothing to do with colonial history but originated from her craze for the other world represented in dramas.

For the Japanomania Tribe, idol dramas provide a symbolic system in which fans construct their realities and ways of seeing the world, which are distinct from the symbolic system of the old generation preoccupied with Japanese colonization. For example, the following excerpt from *Cinderella's Tour*

in Tokyo illustrates how Tokyo Tower (the landscape) is represented in an idol drama and how its viewer, A-Tong, reacts to it:

> 'On windy night, a magical light will radiate from the top of the Tokyo Tower. The light will embrace you tightly with its warmth. Something must have happened after I arrived in this city. This city will certainly bring me a lucky and happy future. I will always believe this dream.' This is what Yukiko (the leading role of *Sister*, a popular Japanese TV drama) said. Now I think the same.
>
> (A-Tong, 1999, p. 27-28, translated and quoted by Lee, 2004, p. 141).

For A-Tong to visit the Tower, on the one hand, was to "confirm" the cheering spirit, the magical light, and the warmth she had already experienced on television. However, while media experience triggered fans' desire to visit shooting locations, they may not always be able to "confirm" the glamorized experience as seen on TV. For example, the Chen family visited the Rainbow Bridge twice, both times on a rainy day; therefore Rainbow Bridge seemed grayish when they were "actually there." But they kept going back to Japan because, according to Rain Chen, the family wanted to learn new things and expanded their horizon of knowledge. And every time they voted for Japan despite the family budget and time constraints. The media sites are not the only destinations of the drama fan-travelers: Department stores, restaurants, hotels, streets, train stations and airports, etc., together provide travelers physical, non-mediated references for comparison between *real* Japan and their countries of origin. Not uncommon to other Japanomaniacs who stated elsewhere, Rain Chen writes, "Japan is truly worth our emulation." For people in industrializing Asian nations, Japan serves as the "near future" for them to imitate in order to catch up (Chua, 2008; Iwabuchi, 2002).

Media Power and Collective Memories

Under the influence of the media, the "power of place" rests not on official public history but on fiction created by TV dramas and shared by audiences. This raises another important question: How is media's power maintained and naturalized? In the case of Japanese TV dramas, the media's symbolic power was sustained and naturalized by fans and the media-travel industry.

Following A-Tong's best-selling book, the travel agencies and media owners in Taiwan quickly responded to the increasing need for "Japanese TV drama tours." In 2000, there were two major types of business moves aimed at idol dramas fans. First, several established travel agencies made strategic alliances with Taiwan's Japanese TV channels. For instance, Creative Travel Ltd. cooperated with JET TV in the summer of 2000 to promote a Japanese idol drama, *Beautiful Life*, by providing a package tour with the same name to the shooting locations of the drama. Second, some media owners directly invested or established new travel agencies targeting Japanese TV drama viewers. For example, SET TV, another Japanese TV importer and broadcaster in Taiwan, established E-Lui Travel Ltd. and provided its debut package tour "The Age of Japanese TV Drama: Tokyo 5 Days" in the summer of 2000; the tour turned out to be a success (ibid).

Based on his textual analysis of advertisements for Japanese TV Drama Tours, Lee (2004) identifies three strategies used by the media-travel industry to construct the tourist gaze. First, when visiting traditional tourist sites in Japan, instead of stressing their historical significance, the travel agencies use Japanese TV drama scenes and story lines as points of reference for the audience. For instance, in their description of Tokyo Tower, the copywriters did not explain the history of the Tower but rather said it was on the set where Aya waited a long time for Shuichi in the popular TV drama, *Hoshi no kinka* (*Heaven's Coins*, 1995).

Second, since the 1990s, trendy sights such as shopping areas or other newly emerging tourist spots in Japan have been intentionally selected by Japanese TV producers to promote local business and have been represented in various TV dramas repeatedly (2004, p.140). Taiwanese media and travel agencies did not reveal the marketing intention of Japanese producers but instead helped reinforce the tourist romanticized gaze on these places. For example, the O-Daiba area, location of the famous Rainbow Bridge, Fuji Television and a trendy shopping area in Tokyo, has been portrayed in the leaflet of a Taiwanese travel agency as a must-see place in Tokyo because it was the setting of some of the most popular romantic dramas, such as *Love Generation*. Third, in the advertisement, many ordinary locations are transformed into special places by Japanese TV producers and Taiwanese travel agencies. For example, an ordinary apartment becomes a hot spot because it was the main character's home in *Long Vacation*.

However, the popularity of the packaged tours to Japanese drama sites did not last as long as expected. Soon the travel agencies realized that young Taiwanese are "post-tourists"(Burns & Novelli, 2008) who prefer exploring the new territories on their own based on both media promotions and their own knowledge, than joining "mass-produced" tour groups. The tourist industry swiftly modified its marketing strategy by placing more emphasis on booking services for airlines, ground transportation and hotels, and targeting backpackers who plan to travel to Japan.

Conclusion

Numerous young Taiwanese have become post-tourists and producers, creating their own online blogs, photo albums or even publishing books to share their thoughts, experiences and their artistic creations inspired by Japanese

popular culture. On one side, then, we may find Japanomaniacs to be to some degree "manipulated" by many professionals: photographers, writers of travel books and guides, travel agents, hotel owners, tour guides, TV producers and so on. On the other hand, however, many among them also become subjective meaning producers who formed their own opinions and expressed their ideas by creating new texts.

By watching, collecting and discussing Japanese idol dramas, Taiwanese audiences became involved on a unprecedented large scale in the "Japanization" of local lifestyles. The pleasure and memories of watching Japanese idol dramas were extended by consuming Japanese products and visiting the actual places that were previously shown in the dramas. While obviously the Japanese media hold great power to create media content, it is important to note that the symbolic system that constructs the gaze of the Japanomania Tribe is co-created and reinforced by fan texts (e.g. A-Tong's book, online discussion boards, blogs, etc.) and, by the local media-travel industry. Catering to the taste of the Japanomania Tribe, the local business also started to appropriate Japanese popular aesthetics such as delicate packaging, *kawaii* designs, colorful presentation, etc., in order to boost the marketability of their products. In the broadcast media, Taiwanese performers have been emulating Japanese idols for decades, drawing heavily on cute femininity, beautiful masculinity and other trendy elements.

The *dorama* fans' craze for Japanese popular culture originates far from the older generations' nostalgia for Japanese rule in Taiwan. Rather, the rise of the Japanomania Tribe indicates the emergence of a new "age class" and "emotional community," which shares relatively homogeneous tastes, values, fashions and lifestyles. For *dorama* fans, to discuss what happiness means often involves (re)discovering one's personal needs and (re)thinking the socio-political

condition one inhabits. The Japanomaniacs constitute a kind of implicit background knowledge which they acquire through inculcation and which provides them with a shared meaning system to make sense of the new world they are facing.

In the era of media globalization, images and narratives across national borders have also blurred the lines between national identities (Appadurai, 1996). In the case of the Japanomania Tribe, I argue that it is less likely that members of the Japanomania Tribe construct their identities around Japanese nationalism than around media content and the sense of modernity. To locate the Japanomania Tribe in a more accurate historical context, it is important to recognize that in the past few decades, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore went through a very rapid democratization and modernization process. As cultural theorist Ien Ang has pointed out, "young people in the 1990s were among the first generation faced with the task of figuring out how to be truly modern in a modernized Asian context. Media imagery plays a crucial role in this respect" (Ang, 2004). Taiwanese youth's self-fashioning (Thompson, 1995) based on their appropriation of Japanese TV dramas created a conspicuous space in which the meanings of the collective past, present and future could be contested. While some people regarded this youth consumption as benign and even positive, others argued that this Japanomania was embarrassing and dangerous to the nation. The study of Japanomania exemplifies how a seemingly mundane consumption practice can form a nodal point where individual lives, ideological conflicts, and political tensions meet, to international affect.

CHAPTER THREE
ANTI-JAPANOMANIA DISCOURSES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL IDENTITIES

Cross-cultural encounters almost always involve some sort of cultural clashes and power struggles. In his study of cultural hybridity, British historian Peter Burke (2009) identifies the four most common responses to cultural imports. They are: acceptance, involving "the fashion for the foreign" as an extreme reaction; rejection, which includes resistance and purification; segregation; and finally adaptation. Recent Japanomania resembles previous cases of the fashion for the foreign: Italophilia in the Renaissance, followed by Francophilia in the seventeenth century, and Anglomania in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the fashion of Westernization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which was particularly welcomed in Japan and China, though accompanied by defensive reactions. In East Asia, China is the source of traditional cultures. Confucius teaching and traditional Chinese characters serve as the cultural backdrop in this region for more than one thousand years.

At any rate, the craze over a foreign culture almost always creates disturbance in the indigenous culture. At the local level, communication plays the central role in the creation of hybrid cultures by bridging the various positions above through negotiation (Martín-Barbero, 1993). In the previous chapter I have described and analyzed the structural changes of Taiwanese media followed by the emergence of Japanomania. This chapter will now turn to the social context in which the Japanomania Tribe was situated, the social resistance that Japanomania brought out, and the significance of the fashion for Japanese culture.

Ha-Ri as Pathology

The term *ha-ri*, meaning "infatuating Japan," first appeared in a comic book, *Good Morning Japan!*, published in Taipei in 1996. The author, Chen Guei-Sing (陳桂杏, 1970-), a Taiwanese female cartoonist and travel writer, coined the term "*ha-ri*" to describe her own obsession with Japanese culture. Her pen name, Ha-Ri Kyoko, is a combination of three languages: *ha* (infatuating) is Minnan, *ri* is an abbreviation of Japan in Mandarin, and Kyoko is a Japanization and feminization of the last character in her name "Sing" (杏). The name Ha-Ri Kyoko, therefore, represents a postmodern, intentional linguistic hybrid indicating multiple identifications with Taiwanese, Chinese and Japanese cultures.

As of September 2009, Ha-Ri Kyoko had published 26 books relating to Japanese popular culture in the Chinese language with mainstream publishers in Taiwan. In her 1998 bestseller, *I've Got Ha-Ri Syndrome* (我得了哈日症), Ha-Ri Kyoko detailed her obsession with Japanese cultures:

> *Ha-ri* Syndrome, by definition, refers to: Eating exclusively Japanese cuisine, watching only Japanese dramas and movies, reading only Japanese publications, listening exclusively to Japanese language and songs, using only whatever is "made in Japan," speaking in Japanese or of Japan-related issues whenever possible, shopping only in Japanese-invested department stores, and feeling insufferable unless indulging in a fully Japanized world every moment. If you feel sick breathing Taiwan's air and drinking Taiwan's water yet are always keenly aware of Japan's everything and care about it, and in the meantime you regard yourself as a Japanese living in Taiwan, then there is no doubt that you have acquired the Japanomania syndrome. (Originally in Chinese, translated by this author, Yang)

This statement seems to reflect an uncritical embrace of modernity at the expense of one's national identity. Ha-Ri Kyoko says she intentionally created the term *ha-ri* to contrast with the existing phrase *chong yang* (崇洋; worship of anything foreign, often indicating western or American). And this contrast has been

picked up in many social debates concerning the legitimacy of American cultural power in Taiwan, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Aiming at young consumers, the commercial sector in Taiwan today has fully embraced use of the term *ha-ri*, which has become a catchphrase and was picked up by the Taiwanese media, tour agencies, fashion industries and inserted in names like "*ha-ri* shop," "*ha-ri* tour," "*ha-ri* intelligence network," and "*ha-ri* frontline." However, the Japanization of Taiwanese culture aroused widespread moral panic on account of the issues of Japanese imperialism, consumer agency, and national identity.

Figure 8. *Ha-Ri* Dragon: Dream Factory, a shop specializing in Japanese cute dolls. Kaohsiung, Taiwan, June 2008

In May 1999, a two-day international conference named "Japanese Popular Culture in Taiwan and Asia" was held in Taipei. The essays presented

at this conference were published under the same title in two volumes by the Communication Arts Research Institute, Taipei, in 2002 (T. Lee, 2002; T. Lee & Chiou, 2003). Among all presenters, the Japan-trained Taiwanese scholar Chiou Shwu-Wen received particular media attention (Tseng, 2001). In her essay, "Cultural Imagination: Japanese Television Trendy Drama in Taiwan [*sic*]," Chiou condemns the *ha-ri* writers, such as A-Tong, Yeh and Ha-Ri-Kyoko, and their fellow Japanomaniacs for internalizing Japan's imperialist gaze. In addition, she argues that the "self-submissive" behavior of the young Taiwanese fans further deepens Japan's contempt and discrimination towards the rest of Asia (Chiou, 2002; T. Lee & Ho, 2002).

Another common criticism of the Japanomania Tribe does not connect the fans to Taiwan's colonial history. Instead, for these critics the Japanomania Tribe represents a generation of victims of consumerism and the cultural industries. For instance, Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, a prominent Taiwanese sociologist and the adviser of former President Lee Teng-hui, holds pessimistic views on consumer agency. According to Hsiao:

> The *ha-ri-zu* might not know much about Japan's history, economy or politics, and they do not have the profound nostalgia towards that country still felt by some members of the older generation who grew up during Japanese rule. Instead, they are *the products of Japanese pop culture and media manipulation*. (Hsiao, 2002, p. 56, originally in English, emphasis added by this author, Yang)

Hsiao's disapproval of the Japanomania Tribe is not unique but rather represents a common social bias towards fan culture. In one important sense, Hsiao's remark is correct: The Japanomania Tribe is emotionally remote from and may have little to do with Japanese colonialism. However, similar to Chiou, Hsiao's understanding of the Japanomania Tribe as shallow youth and ignorant consumers seems to be overtly speculative and pessimistic. In addition, the DPP Vice President Hsiu-lien Annette Lu criticized the Japanomania Tribe for being

detrimental to national pride and Taiwan's image at several public occasions in 2001. She called for "re-igniting patriotism" against Japanomania and Sinophilia in Taiwan and said otherwise the people of Taiwan will not be able to stand tall on the global stage (Jung, 2001).

The criticisms surrounding issues of colonialism, nationalism, and consumerism were passionately responded to by a number of younger Taiwanese scholars (Ching, 2000; Y. Ko, 2003; M. Lee, 2004; I. Lin, 2003; Tseng, 2001). Drawing on historical, textual, and ethnographic analyses of colonial history, fan practice and youth lifestyle, these scholars showed that *ha-ri-zu* need to be understood as active meaning producers and choosy cultural consumers in the context of media globalization and cultural hybridization. However, we must push our inquiry further: As the reception of Japanese media by Taiwanese consumers filtered through the socio-historical relationship between the two countries, how did Japanomania reflect or mediate Taiwanese national and cultural identity? Moreover, given ethnic politics in Taiwan, what do national identity and nationalism mean? Do they mean the same things to all Taiwanese?

National identity in Taiwan is a polysemic term: it could mean Taiwanese, Chinese, or both. As stated in the first chapter, in Taiwan there are two historical moments that mark post-colonialism: the first is the Japanese withdrawal from Taiwan in 1945; the second is the end of KMT martial law in 1987 or KMT's election of its first Taiwan-born President, Lee Teng-hui, in 1988 (K. Chen, 1996; Liao, 1999). The complexity of Taiwan's colonial history further complicates public opinion on cultural and identity politics. In this chapter I argue that, while many Taiwanese scholars have attributed *ha-ri* to the cultural legacy of Japanese colonization between 1895 and 1945, it is more meaningful to situate the *ha-ri* phenomenon in the post-martial law era (1987-1999), in which Japanomania occurred.

In the existing literature on *ha-ri-zu*, the majority of scholars tend to focus on Japanese colonialism and therefore either omit or simply gloss over the KMT's hegemony under which the Japanomania Tribe came to flourish. The advancement of communication technologies and the "narrow casting" of the 1990s not only brought about the fragmentation of media channels but also the fragmentation of the once unified representation and discourse of Chinese national identity in the authoritarian era. The emergence of the Japanomania Tribe was an intriguing result of this historical transition: namely, the decline of Chinese nationalism and the rise of Taiwanese consciousness. Before getting into an analysis of the cultural debates over the *ha-ri* trend, I propose a generational perspective to unravel the ideologies underpinning contesting discourses surrounding Japanomania.

Identify Formation: A Generational Perspective

In *The Analysis of Culture* (2001/1961), Raymond Williams provides the useful concept "structure of feeling" to refer to what it feels like to belong to a particular culture or generation. Williams explains that

> the new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many continuities, that can be traced, and reproducing many aspects of the organization, which can be separately described, yet feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling. (p. 49)

Use of the concept, however, could risk neglecting the struggles within the structure, and therefore, writes John Fiske, "(w)e may need to conceptualize it as an unstable aggregation of smaller scale structures of feeling by which different social formations relate differently to the large one" (J. Fiske, 1994, p. 9). That is, we need to be aware that each social formation may experience change differently at different parts of the structure. According to Karl Mannheim (1952), a generation is defined by two features. Clearly, members of a generation

must be born in the same time period and in proximate geographical locations. But this temporal-spatial proximity alone only makes a group an "age cohort" rather than a generation. As Mannheim suggests, "(w)e shall therefore speak of a *generation as an actuality* only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization" (Mannheim, 1993). Therefore, the second nexus in defining a generation is "participation in the common destiny of this historical and social unity" during its formative years (ibid, p. 378). However, similar to Fiske's critique of the concept of the structure of feeling, Mannheim reminds us that it would be misleading to speak of a generation as a homogeneous unit. Within a generation, writes Mannheim, there are always "polar forms of the intellectual and social response to an historical stimulus experienced by all in common" (p. 379). Generally, scholars seem to reach an agreement that the formative years, approximately those between 18 and 25 year of age, are the most crucial years in shaping one's worldview. Nevertheless, there have been a number of debates on the arbitrariness of defining "formative years" and "de-stabilizing events." As categorizing generations is "more a matter of art than science" (Rigger, 2006), it is the researcher's responsibility to justify the decision to classifying generations in any particular way.

Influenced by Mannheim, there have been two pioneering studies on Taiwanese politics. Andy Chang and T. Y. Wang (2005) have identified four generations in which members experienced four historical, "de-stabilizing events" in their respective formative years. These four events are: the retreat of the KMT government to Taiwan in 1949, Taipei's withdraw from the United Nations in 1971, the establishment of the DPP in 1986, and the peaceful transfer of political power in 2000. These events are commonly viewed as watershed moments in the

country's economic, political, and social development, and therefore they can serve as criteria for identifying political generations. In her study, "Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics, and 'Taiwanese Nationalism'" (2006), the well-known Taiwan specialist Shelley Rigger follows Chang and Wang's periodization. My generational analysis will draw on the models developed by Chang and Wang (2005) and Rigger (2006), with slight modifications.[4]

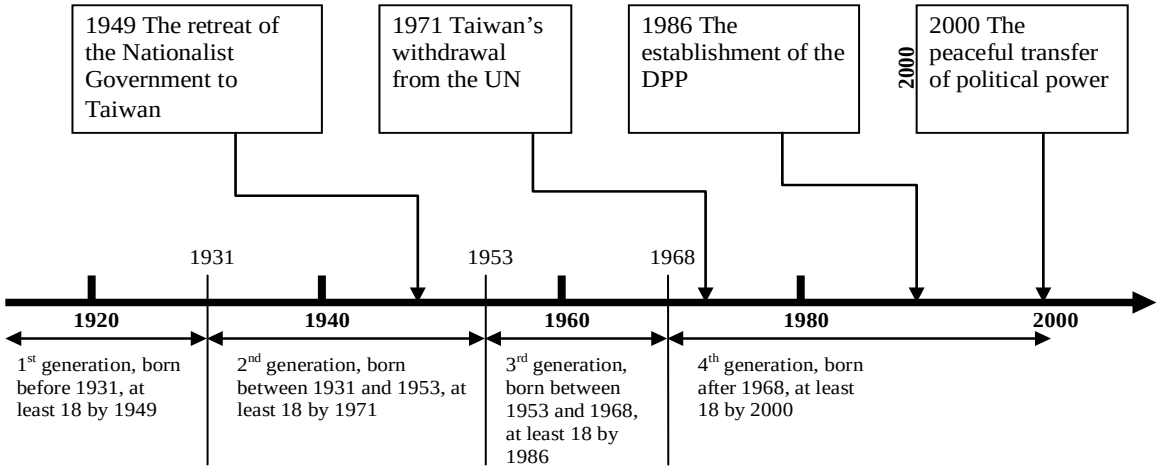

Figure 9. Periodization of generations in Taiwan. Adapted from Chang and Wang (2005)

The logic of this classification is based on the premise that members of each generation would have reached at least the age of 18 when the definitive

[4] My classification is slightly different from Rigger's (2006) in terms of the definition of the fourth generation. While her study seems to include all people born after 1968 as the fourth generation, I suggest that those who were born after 1983 enter their affirmative years after 2000 should count as the fifth generation. The fifth generation's political experience was formed after Taiwan's first transfer of political power. Thus their worldview was sharply different from their predecessors, who have experienced the one-party rule under the KMT between 1945 and 2000.

event occurred. For instance, people who belonged to the first generation were those who were born on or before 1931 and would have reached at least the age of 18 when the KMT government retreated to Taiwan. This generational model offers us a useful tool by which to locate the Japanomania Tribe, which roughly corresponds to the fourth generation in Taiwanese society. For the purpose of my study of the Japanomania Tribe and its impact on social discourse, I will briefly review the differences among the first four generations and place a focus on the fourth generation: the generation of Japanomania.

The First Generation: born before 1931; entered the formative years before 1949

Taiwan Residents (benshengren)

This group grew up under Japanese rule when Japan was the strongest nation in Asia. To date, many elder Taiwanese are fluent in Japanese and enjoy the Japanese lifestyle. The most prominent representative of the first generation is former president Lee Teng-hui. Born in 1923, Lee once famously stated that he was Japanese before he was twenty-two years old and that he still feels more comfortable speaking Japanese than Mandarin. At the end of WWII, the Taiwanese population was approximately 6 million, and the literacy rate was 70%, which means 4,200,000 Taiwanese used Japanese as their daily language. In addition to the Japanese language, most Taiwanese spoke Minnan language as their mother tongues. However, many Taiwanese became illiterate almost overnight when the KMT imposed Mandarin as the only official language and prohibited the Japanese language along with all "dialects," including Minnan and other languages (Y. Huang, 2007).

First-Generation Mainlanders born before 1931

After the Chinese Communist Party won the civil war in 1949, Taiwan's population suddenly increased by approximately two million refugees who fled from China with the KMT government. First-generation mainlanders hailed

from all walks of life, including the greatest Chinese thinkers, scholars, and government administrators along with tens of thousands of peasants and soldiers. They came from different provinces, and many spoke different dialects. However, first-generation mainlanders' political attitudes were relatively homogeneous. The eight-year anti-Japan war (1937-1945) in mainland China defined Japan as an unforgivable imperialist country: Japanese killed, raped and robbed Chinese people, exhausted the KMT army, and therefore caused KMT's defeat in the civil war. After taking over Taiwan, the KMT government deemed the Taiwanese "enslaved" (奴化) by the Japanese, and it was the KMT government's first priority to conduct cultural and psychological reforms, namely the implementation of "De-Japanization" and "Re-Sinicization," in order to purify the tainted Taiwanese culture (Y. Huang, 2007). Major government positions and resources were controlled by the mainlanders while the local Taiwanese (*benshengren*) were treated as inferior. The KMT government strenuously banned the use of Japanese language in school, on the radio and in the newspaper. Even after Japan and ROC established diplomatic relations in 1952, still only a few Japanese films, under strict censorship, were allowed to be screened at designated cinemas each year (Lo, 1996).

For the KMT government, Taiwan was only a temporary "Revival Base" (反攻基地) for the Chinese nation. With the support of the United States, the KMT proclaimed itself the sole legitimate representative of all China and Chinese nationalism and successfully remained in the China seat in the United Nations till 1971.

The Second Generation: born between 1931 and 1953; entered the formative years between 1949 and 1971

Taiwan Residents (benshengren)

This generation experienced the high tide of KMT authoritarian rule, commonly referred to as the "White Terror." Internationally, polarized Cold War thinking allowed the ROC to play the reverent role of "Free China" in contrast to "Red China." Domestically, the KMT used Chinese nationalism to prepare its regime for retaking the mainland and to legitimize its authoritarian rule at the expense of democratic reforms. As the KMT regime was recognized and supported by most western countries led by the United States, dissidents at home knew that there was little hope to change the status quo. Therefore, most of the dissidents remained silent, and those who openly challenged the KMT paid a great price.

In terms of culture and the media, all indigenous languages, practices and beliefs, as well as Japanese influences, were weeded out or degraded. To members of the second-generation *benshengren*, Taiwanese nationalism was built upon the idea that the Chinese KMT was the fundamental impediment to justice and democracy in their land. The three KMT actions most resented by Taiwanese were (Rigger, 2006, p. 40):

- The KMT's imposition of itself on Taiwan by force
- The denying of *benshengren* voices in government: The subjugation of the will of the majority to the will of a privileged minority, the mainlanders (*waishengren*)
- The denigration of Taiwan's culture and the forcing of Taiwanese to adopt "Chinese culture" as the mainlanders defined it

These transgressions generated widespread resentment and "Taiwanese consciousness" against the China Complex resulting from the presence of the KMT, mainlanders and Chinese nationalism. Because of the ban on travel

overseas, which was not lifted until 1979, for the second generation, the "China" they knew was the KMT and mainlanders and consequently for them, China was a symbol of oppression and hegemony. According to Chang and Wang (2005), many second-generation *benshengren* demonstrate the strongest Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese identity among the four generations.

The second-generation mainlanders were expected to stick together and support the KMT government's efforts to recover the mainland. Compared to their parents, the second-generation mainlanders were a little more integrated into Taiwanese society. But the social interactions between mainlanders and Taiwanese were still strained by the language barrier and residential segregation.

The Third Generation: born between 1954 and 1968, entered the formative years between 1972 and 1986

Taiwan Residents

In 1971, ROC lost its China seat in the United Nations and was replaced by the PRC. This historical shift shook the KMT and citizens of Taiwan to the core. Questions about the KMT's legitimacy in Taiwan were raised and once-marginalized issues such as Taiwanese identity, independence, freedom and equality were gradually moving to the center. In 1986, the DPP was established, followed by the lifting of martial law in 1987. Ever since, national identity has become the most hotly debated topic in this island country. It is important to note that at this point concepts of Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese identity supported by the third-generation Taiwanese had become more inclusive and pragmatic: They were and are now based on civic consciousness and the sense of a shared future, regardless of citizens' ethnic origins.

For third-generation mainlanders, the title "mainlander" has become an irrelevant, or at least inaccurate, signifier of their identity. The third-generation mainlanders were born and raised in Taiwan, and many of them are children of the intermarriages between mainlanders and Taiwanese. The overall differences between mainlanders and Taiwanese became obscure. Some of the third-generation mainlanders became supporters of the DPP and were leading figures in the democratization movement. And for those who now support the KMT, many embrace the label "New Taiwanese." As Rigger (2006) points out, "While the second generation can be rigid and dogmatic, the third generation tends to be flexible and pragmatic: their formative years accustomed them to change" (2006, p. 44).

The Fourth Generation: Born after 1968 and entered the formative years between 1986 and 2000

The fourth generation, or the so-called "E-generation" or "N-generation" (Net-generation)—members in this generation use e-mails and have abandoned letter-writing—witnessed the rapid social reform of the 1990s, successive intimidation from Beijing, media globalization, and, most importantly, the country's first peaceful transfer of political power in 2000. Taiwanese identity became the common ground shared by the young Taiwanese and mainlanders, even though there might be nuances about the definition and some might still feel "culturally Chinese," influenced by their family heritages and school education (Rigger, 2006).

This introduction of the four generations gives us a framework to more systematically analyze the cultural politics surrounding the Japanomania Tribe in the 1990s. Given that the majority of Taiwanese grew up with the KMT's anti-Japan education, I argue that the burgeoning of the Japanomania Tribe while the

KMT was still in power indicates a historical moment at which some form of ideological conflict has taken place.

Generations and Social Change

> The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible—and achieve it, generation after generation.
>
> Pearl S. Buck

Situated in the continuities and discontinuities among the generations, the emergence of the Japanomania Tribe appeared to be at odds with both Chinese and Taiwanese nationalists and all kinds of existing political correctness. In all, under the KMT's De-Japanization policy (1945-1993), Japan became a cultural taboo in public. In academia as well, departments of Japanese language have also long been excluded from public universities, which often enjoy higher rankings and charge much less tuition than private institutes.

For elder mainlanders, the term *ha-ri,* infatuating Japan, makes a mockery of their horrific diaspora caused by Japanese imperialism. Even for the first- and second- generation Taiwanese who might see Japan in a relatively positive light, *ha-ri* appears to be a shallow and childish pursuit of mass culture that does not compare to the Japanese virtues and tradition they appreciate. Moreover, the elder Taiwanese do not seem to find so-called Taiwanese dignity and subjectivity, which are essential to the rhetoric of Taiwanese nationalism, among the seemingly self-indulging Japanomania Tribe. For those who still remember the rigid social control and anti-Japan campaigns, the sudden eruption of Japanomania seemed to introduce a new era. Marshall Berman's famous depiction of the experience of modernity using Marx's words can adequately describe the rapid changes in Taiwan: "all that is solid melts into air" (Berman, 1988).

As Pierre Bourdieu (1979) points out, concepts of good taste, appropriate behavior and aesthetic value are not natural or universal. Instead, they are social constructs reflecting social experiences and particular class interests. For those who regard themselves as possessors of legitimate cultures—such as Chinese, Taiwanese, American, and "genuine" Japanese culture—the boundaries of "good taste" must be constantly policed. The rigorous criticism of the Japanomania Tribe in fact reflects the desperation of both Chinese and Taiwanese nationalists to conceal their frailty: the lack of consensus on national identity in Taiwan.

Whose Geography and History?

The maniacal *ha-ri* consumption is perhaps a recompense for the frustration and failure of Taiwan's political condition and education systems as experienced by the fourth generation. Although members of the Japanomania Tribe seem to enjoy more economic freedom than their parents, they also live in a difficult new era, in which the social constrains and instabilities they experience are no less than those of previous generations. In the authoritarian era, as the dissidents were rounded up or silenced, China–centric discourses were secured, and the society was relatively stable. In a transitional society, however, existing discourses and rules are always subject to challenge. For the greater part of the 1990s, school curriculums, history and geography courses in particular, still focused on mainland China and were largely based on the 1949 ROC territory and political conditions. Since the KMT regarded Taiwan as only one of ROC's 36 provinces, the textbooks talked about Taiwan and the rest of China in that proportion. Though passé and irrelevant, Taiwanese students were still forced to memorize the textbooks in order to pass the exams. Even though people tend to agree on the principle of indigenization in cultural policies in the post-martial law era, the way the principle was put into practice often still aroused heated

debates. This was exemplified by a series of conflicts on the streets and in the news media before the new history textbook, *Getting To Know Taiwan* (*Renshi Taiwan*), was scheduled to be adopted by all seventh graders in the country in September 1997 (F. Wang, 2005). The Taiwan-centered textbook challenged the old sino-centric paradigm and therefore aroused ethnic conflicts and public debates over national identity.

Generational Style and Subversiveness

Environmental factors such as affluence, media proliferation and rapid social transformation nurtured a distinguishable style in the fourth generation. As Mannheim (1952) notes:

> When as a result of an acceleration in the tempo of social and cultural transformation basic attitudes must change so quickly that the latent, continuous adaptation and modification of traditional patterns of experience, thought, and expression is no longer possible, then the various new phases of experience are consolidated somewhere, forming a clearly distinguishable new impulse, and a new center of configuration. We speak in such cases of the formation of a new generation style, or of a new *generation entelechy*. (Emphasis in the original, p. 384)

Whereas the first three generations tend to conform to a style that is relatively idealistic and rigid, the fourth generation seems to be eccentric and carefree. The style of the fourth generation is most conspicuously exemplified by the Japanomania Tribe, whose style has become more individualistic, cosmopolitan and hedonistic. Like most popular cultures, *ha-ri* shows refusal of the dominant organization of knowledge and power.

Biopower and the Docile Body

In Taiwan, students at the pre-college level do not have much freedom over their bodies. Starting in junior high school, and unofficially in elementary school, students' daily schedules are structured on fierce academic competition.

In the 1990s, it was common for students to spend hours in cram schools on top of their regular schooling, producing over twelve-hour school days during week days. From elementary through senior high school, every morning all students were required to participate in the school-wide assembly and calisthenics in a militaristic fashion. Before college, students' uniforms, hair styles and lengths were still regulated by school administration. Although the DPP government announced the abolition of all kinds of regulations on students' hair, schools still implement their own regulations, which have continuously caused controversies between parents, students and the school administration (Humanistic Education Foundation, 2008). The dress code and hair regulations are commonly carried out by "military instructors" (教官), who have been implemented in all high schools since 1951 to offer military education and disciplinary sanction. The most recent, but not the only, controversy was widely mediatised: a high school girls' protest in Tainan, the fourth largest city located in southwestern Taiwan on March 19, 2010. More than 1,600 students of Tainan Girls' Senior High School took off their long pants and revealed their shorts underneath at the school morning assembly. This large-scale event was organized by students to protest the school's new ban on wearing sports shorts outside physical education classes. This new regulation was suggested and implemented by a female military instructor, who just joined the school and believed that girls should always wear long pants or skirts outside physical education classes (Ma, 2010). Although this protest has been relatively well received by the public today, it reminds us how rigid school life was in the 1990s.

The lifting of martial law in 1987 did not suddenly change the hegemonic ideology formed in the age of martial law, with which the society has operated for decades. In the 1970s, the police often searched the leisure areas and entertainment districts such as Ximentin, and arrested men with long hair (Ou &

Tseng, 1990) according to *The Law Governing Misdemeanor Enforced by the Police*. In November 1990, Liu Wei-Ren (1963-), a nearly blind, long-haired rock singer, was arrested on the street near his home and was then forced to have his long hair cut at the police station. The police officer, surnamed Kong, later publicly offered his apology to Liu for his conduct, explaining to the media that he talked Liu into the haircut without using any force (Ou & Tseng, 1990). Kong would not have had to apologize were the time have been three years before. What changed was not the law because the law was not abolished until 2005. It was the renewed interpretation of the law based on culture that forced Kong, representing the police system, to apologize to Liu and to the public.

The structural changes in relation to individual freedom and the ownership of the body only progressed slowly in the 1990s. Until the end of 1997, the national anthem of ROC, which implied a one-party regime ruled by the KMT, was still required to be played before each movie screening. Thus personal pleasure was always preceded by a national fantasy—one that people had started to disagree with. I witnessed an incident in 1993 in a movie theater in Taipei. Three college students remained in their seats while all other audience members stood up during the national anthem session. This unexpected act of civil disobedience created tension and awkwardness in the theater. One audience member threw a crumpled napkin at them, and it hit one of the three students. That student ignored the attack, and the three of them remained in their seats quietly. In the 1990s, Taiwan was full of struggles between the old and the new as well as struggles over the definitions of the ethical and the immoral.

Political power in the modern state often takes forms of discipline exercised through and on the body, and this is what Michel Foucault called biopower. According to Foucault: "the body is also directly involved in a

political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (1977, p. 25). The subversive nature of the Japanomania Tribe lay in its claiming ownership of the body against school rules: having long, colored hair, wearing clothes in Japanese fashions, and watching Japanese idols dramas rather than studying the Chinese history. The Japanomaniacs' "misdemeanor "and "irrational conduct" (e.g. zealously welcoming Japanese pop idols at the airport) often create anxieties about violation of the existing social order and cultural hierarchies.

According to Confucianism, which has been a dominant cultural influence in Taiwan, all people should strive to achieve harmony and to become "*jūnzǐ*" (君子, gentleman, literally the lord's son). The ideal of a gentleman is to be always proper, cultivated and loyal and to show filial piety to one's parents. Obedience to the elder is considered a virtue in most Asian societies influenced by Confucianism. As the older generations are still largely haunted by Japanese imperialist history, the "uncontrollable" consumption of the Japanomaniacs not only contradicts political correctness but also challenges generational power relations in the Taiwanese society. For example, despite the Confucian teaching, the name of Ha-Ri Kyoko was a self-parody, which drew on the social taboo, Japan, and made fun not only of Kyoko's own obsession with Japanese goods but also the existing dominant anti-Japan ideology.

Ultimately, it was the Japanomania Tribe's overt clashes with the KMT and Confucian traditions as well as Japanomaniacs' reclaiming ownership of the body that shocked Taiwanese society. These lived experiences of the fourth generation and the subversive meanings produced by the Japanomania Tribe were, however, more than often overshadowed by the public discussion of a famous and elder Japanophile: the former president Lee Teng-hui.

Japanomania as a Colonial Legacy?

Between 1988 and 2000, Taiwan was led by Lee Teng-hui, who came of age during Japanese rule. Lee's open Japanophile-tendency has aroused much criticism from Chinese nationalists. After twelve years of presidency, Lee Teng-hui stepped down and left the KMT; at that point, he became the leading advocate of Taiwanese independence. His surprising turnaround may be best interpreted by the fact that, like other first-generation *benshengren*, his identity and the idea of Taiwan were formed at a time when Taiwan was wholly disconnected from mainland China. Thus, fifty years as a KMT member infused in Lee little true feeling for Chinese nationalism and the dream of "recovering the mainland" (光復大陸) or unification. Due to the close relations between their Japanese background and their pro-independence political view, the elder supporters of Taiwan independence are today still often labeled "the slaves of Japanization" by unificationists, both in Taiwan and China.

While the Japanomania Tribe challenged China from within, it also alarmed China from without. On February 15th, 2001, *The China Youth Daily*, a state-run newspaper in PRC, published an article entitled "Perspectives on the Problem of the Japanomania Tribe in Taiwanese Society" (透視台灣社會的哈日族問題). The journalist Fan Liqing states,

> The toxic residue of Japanese colonial rule is still inflicting Taiwan! There is no doubt that the Japanophile complex like Lee Teng-hui's is the toxic residue of the Japanese imperialization (*kōminka*), which makes him fail to remember the shame of being invaded [by Japan]. But the young generation of Taiwan also lack understanding of the history. The most dreadful thing is 'forgetting who I am.' (Fan, 2001)

For Fan and most other Chinese nationalists, the Japanomania Tribe is closely related to ignorance and political disloyalty to Chinese identity. She goes on to conclude the article with a political "taxonomy":

> […] Therefore, the "political Japanomania" is the required course for "Taiwan independence" associates, who did not necessarily receive the "*kōminka*" education. To achieve "Taiwan independence," the "Taiwan Independence" associates must "open the door to the wolves," willing to become the foreign invader's "boy [puppet] emperor" and "servant." I believe that most people can draw a conclusion from the speeches and actions of the "political Japanomania Tribe in Taiwan" about where "Taiwan independence" will leave Taiwanese comrades and Chinese people. It is clear at a glance.

Ignoring the fact that Taiwan's development has been separated from China for more than a century, Fan blames Taiwan independence movement on Japanese colonization. Fan's rhetoric frames the following as the anti-Chinese bloc: Lee Teng-hui, the Japanomania Tribe, and Taiwan-independence supporters. Thus, the Japanomania Tribe, politically speaking, is in conflict with Chinese nationalism. It is not clear, however, why Taiwan's *de jure* independence would become a "puppet state" to Japan. On the contrary, under the One China policy and the "One Country, Two Systems" proposal by the PRC, Taiwan loses its sovereignty and becomes another Hong Kong: a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, in which the ROC president becomes the Chief Executive who is elected by the Election Committee and then appointed by the Central People's Government of PRC, a puppet indeed to most Taiwanese. Given the ethnographic value of her study, however, Fan's article has become a widely cited source for Japanomania discussions in China. And because of her political correctness and seniority as a journalist, Fan was appointed spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council by the PRC in November 2007.

Popular Culture, Drama, and Democracy

Throughout western history, drama has been a medium for addressing social issues and arousing collective responses. The word drama derives from

the Greek word *dran,* meaning "to do" or "to act," which connotes subjectivity and human agency. Given the subversive potential of drama, the ruling class has tended to place certain restrictions upon styles of dramatic expression. In his historical analysis of the classic melodrama of 1800s Europe, Martín-Barbero suggests that the sentimental styles in melodrama were cultivated by a particular sociopolitical condition—the prohibition of dialogue in plays. Thus, the cultural significance of this dramatic style and the unruly audience responses which accompanied it are manifested in its historical contexts. For example, ordered by the king to investigate popular entertainment in 1800s Spain, Javellanos condemned the vulgar behaviors of the melodrama audiences and later proposed moral reform:

> (T)he shouts and unseemly screams, the violent contortions and rude postures, the exaggerated gestures and, finally, that lack of study and memory, the shameless impudence, the lewd looks, the indecent shaking, the lack of propriety, decorum, modesty, manners and decency which so stirs up the lawless and insolent people and upsets the sane and well educated…. (Javellanos, 1967, p. 121-122, quoted in Martín-Barbero, 1993, p. 115)

The cultural significance of drama lies in its expressiveness and interactivity with audiences in repressive sociopolitical contexts. Twentieth-century Taiwanese society shares the repressiveness of nineteenth-century Europe as a result of a century of Japanese colonization and the KMT's martial law. Not available in the formal educational system or in the government controlled media, expressiveness, liberation, and the recovery of lost identity through an overcoming of obstacles are common themes in Japanese idol dramas. Therefore, Japanomania marks a watershed between the fourth generation and its parent culture. The rhetoric of excess among fourth-generation Taiwanese, such as the rhetoric surrounding *ha-ri* fanship, represents not only a victory over repression but also a form of resistance against paternalistic moral systems.

I would argue that it is a misinterpretation to say that the Japanomania Tribe love Japanese culture for the same reasons as the first generation Taiwanese. It was the lived political and cultural experience of the fourth generation that produced the Japanomania Tribe. The *ha-ri* trend has drawn Taiwanese youth into "semiotic guerrilla warfare" unexpectedly, and the rise of Japanomania has posed an important question in terms of Taiwan's identity politics: What political significance should we assign to this *ha-ri* trend? Has *ha-ri* consumption generated any new form of political consciousness? In the next chapter, I will examine online discussions among college students which address the meaning of *ha-ri-zu*.

CHAPTER FOUR
JAPANESE MEDIA AND YOUTH CONSCIOUSNESS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TAIWANESE ONLINE BULLETINS

Japanomania and Taiwanization

Paralleled with the *ha-ri* trend in the 1990s was an equally significant movement: Taiwanization (本土化; *bentuhua*). When used as a cultural term, *bentuhua* refers to the notion that the uniqueness of Taiwanese culture, history and society must be understood and appreciated from the standpoint of the Taiwanese people (Makeham & Hsiau, 2005). Since the 1970s, Taiwan has undergone a process of political indigenization in which *benshengren* demanded political power and citizenship equal to that of mainlanders. However, China-centric ideology had long penetrated almost every aspect of Taiwanese society and severely hindered the process to achieve true democratization. For instance, the policy that privileged Mandarin had given the mainlanders much advantage in media representation as well as in academic and job competitions. The close relationship between Taiwanization and politics was boldly articulated in 1983 by the Taiwanese writer Lan Yiping (藍一平): "Democratization is precisely Taiwanization" (Jacobs, 2005).

In the 1990s, Taiwanese nationalism and cultural Taiwanization was on the rise thanks to media deregulation. The once degraded Minnan language became positively fashionable, and locally produced pop music and puppet shows in Minnan were extremely popular among the young, while TV dramas in Minnan enjoyed high ratings among the middle-aged house wives. In the news media, the uses of "China" and "Chinese" to refer to Taiwan decreased significantly (Shih, 2007). One of the effects of these structural and cultural changes in the 1990s was that fewer and fewer people in Taiwan regard

themselves as exclusively Chinese. In 2003, an annual poll conducted by Taipei's Chengchi University shows that the proportion of Taiwan's habitants who consider themselves "exclusively Chinese" had dropped to 10% from 26% in 1992, while people who think of themselves as "exclusively Taiwanese" had jumped to 42% from 17% in the same period.

At a time when the notion of "Taiwanese subjectivity" was germinating, the enthusiastic embrace of everything Japanese among the young seemed to be a backlash. However, I argue that Japanomania in fact contributed to the construction of Taiwanese identity among the fourth generation in the 1990s. Instead of viewing Japanomania as a "given phenomenon," I suggest viewing *ha-ri* consumption as a discursive practice. My approach to *ha-ri* is grounded in the following insights concerning discourse. First, identities and social realities are discursively constructed. Second, discourses are context-bound. Third, discourse is social action. Finally, identity is constructed and negotiated in interactions. In his article, "The Role of Media in Generating Alternative Political Projects" (2000), Robert A. White concludes that the fan discussion networks are "prepolitical" because they create social conditions and alternative discourses that could prepare media users for potential social changes. White argues that the ways audiences deconstruct and reconstruct the media text based on their own personal and cultural identities are of crucial importance in generating alternative sociopolitical projects (White, 2000). In the process of discussing the media text, people begin to reflect on social reality and elaborate alternatives individually and collectively. In a similar vein, the discussion of Japanomania contributed to the construction of Taiwanese identity in the 1990s.

This chapter tries to answer the following questions: How did Taiwanese youth respond to criticisms of the Japanomania Tribe? What does it mean for

them to be Japanomaniacs? How did they see their role as *ha-ri-zu* in terms of Taiwanese national identity? Among the various available approaches to the study of discourse, this study draws heavily on critical discourse analysis (CDA) to read online posts against historical trends. In discovering the cultural politics surrounding the Japanomania Tribe, this discourse analysis is also an ethnographic account of the ways in which the Japanomania phenomenon was presented, negotiated, and argued by Taiwanese university students. Given the Japanomania Tribe mainly consisted of young urbanites, this study identifies online forums for university students as appropriate sites for this study. Here I treat the online discussions as texts that are "empirical materials that articulate complex arguments" about identity and social reality (Denzin, 1994, p. 509).

I focus on two threads that were culled out of hundreds of online posts that I found using the Yahoo-Kimo search engine in Taiwan between 1999 and 2001. At the turn of the millennium, Taiwan was going through its first democratic transition of power and an ongoing debate over national identity; therefore, the timing of these posts is also particularly meaningful to this study. This chapter focuses on two online threads, "Emulate the Japanomania Tribe!" and "Japanomania, so what?," found on the National Taiwan University and Soochow University's Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) in 1999 and 2001 respectively. I chose these two threads because they are rich in content, covering a variety of voices of preference, aversion and ambivalence about *ha-ri* that have been identified in previous ethnographic studies on *ha-ri-zu*, newspapers, TV and radio call-ins, and online discussion boards (Y. Ko, 2004; Ku, 1998; M. Lee, 2004; T. Lee & Ho, 2002; I. Lin, 2003; Tseng, 2001). These threads resonate with the social debates over *ha-ri* including Taiwan's education, media, cultural subjectivity, and relations with Japan, etc. and therefore are representative for fans' discourses. In addition, online BBSs offer naturally occurring text that has

not been sanitized. In their online posts, writers autonomously framed discussion issues in the post-colonial and post-authoritarian context, making them the best possible "real-world data" for a historical analysis of fan culture and its social relations. The selection of the online posts does not claim to deal with a statistically representative sample of posters. Rather, these posts should be read "symptomatically" as rich empirical data. This analysis aims to provide for theoretical questioning and the opportunity for micro-analysis of a series of naturally occurring conversations.

The BBSs are divided into dozens of forums under different topics and attract thousands of users every day. For the purpose of clarity, the thread "Emulate the Japanomania Tribe!" is labeled *thread A* and "Japanomania, so what?" *thread B* throughout this chapter. The particular posts I consider are labeled with letters and numbers (e.g. A1; B6). Most selected posts were originally written in Traditional Chinese and translated by this author. The translations attempt to render the style, the tone and any original lack of clarity as faithfully as possible while providing interpretations in brackets only for the sake of readability.

Defending Japanomania

The analysis will be divided into three parts. First, I will closely examine thread A and thread B separately. Second, I will group and cross-analyze the responses in relation to one another under A1 and B1. Lastly, I will discuss the overall findings and their meanings in the historical context.

The posts that will be analyzed here are extracted from two threads found in the NTU BBS: the topic "Emulate the Japanomania Tribe!" under "Politics" in the Soochow BBS. These two corpora both start with a single poster's defense of the Japanomania Tribe, followed by various responses.

Thread A: "Emulate the Japanomania Tribe!"

This original post was found under the category of "Japan: Social [aspects]" and was followed by twelve responses from May 1999, approximately ten months before Taiwan, for the first time in history, elected a president from the opposition party.

Alles, the poster who created the column, celebrates the Japanomaniacs and denounces the conventional view that fans are dismissible as unintelligent:

Extract A1:

"alles" <meitatsu@xxx.xxx.jp>

Thu May 13 20:47:39 1999

Alles says:

> Many people regard the phrase, "Japanomania Tribe" with contempt, thinking that they [the Japanomaniacs] are immature and blind followers. However I think people who hold that view are ignorant adults.
>
> First, people who have watched Japanese dramas know that Japanese dramas express emotions very well and resonate with people's lives. Every time I see my mom watching Taiwanese serial dramas, I feel they are so noisy or too slow-paced. They are either related to princesses [of the Chinese Qing dynasty], or to the royalty [of the pre-modern Chinese societies]. Always the same old plot. Strong-minded and thoughtful youth naturally love watching Japanese dramas.
>
> Second, sure people would be longing for [living in] advanced cities in Japan. Japan not only significantly develops its urban infrastructure but makes life in its countryside very convenient as well. Most important of all, [Japan has] cleanliness, priority for pedestrians, and orderliness. If we young people don't like Japan's living environment, but feel smug about the dirtiness and disorder in Taipei, then Taiwan is really hopeless.
>
> Third, it shouldn't be surprising that people adore Japanese idols. Of course the performance of the idols cannot represent their national character because if they are just like everybody else, there is nothing to be fond of about them. In Japan, most people pay great attention to their appearance and are rather reserved and polite when they talk. If you pay attention to their demeanor while watching Japanese dramas, you might see what I am saying.

But do not overly trust the media. Most things conveyed by the media contain particular qualities, that are, uncommon actually.

Fourth, it's even more natural to love Japanese stuff [products, objects]. I can't say that [all] Japanese stuff is the best but its quality usually meets certain standards. Japanese objects can attract people, usually by their appearances.

But, what's wrong with that?

What bores me most about Taiwan is her lack of sense of beauty.

Houses are only expected to accommodate and are built like pigeonholes. Houses built of iron sheets are seen everywhere.

Things are badly manufactured thus appearing ugly; when exported to foreign countries, they are always put in the discount corner, or even given out as free gifts.

The failure of aesthetic education in Taiwan really shows the gap between good and bad readily and leaves the inferior outshone by the superior.

Fortunately, here we are a generation with extraordinary sensibility, we would not be content with the status quo, but instead, long for beautiful things, develop new concepts of consumption, and urge industries to pursue high qualities.

As a result, Taipei can expect to become a city of beauty.

Arrogant and ignorant adults: When can you stop living in the past and start to rediscover the advanced neighboring country so as to further emulate them with modesty and stop bluffing about something of little value simply because it's our own [?]

You only remember the evil in their past, just like when you see a well-established person, you try to dig out his past rather than look at the current goodness in her.

How narrow-minded!

However, I still hope the fellow Japanomaniacs can get to understand Japan in more depth and learn their manners, law and order, and gentleness, not just their pop culture. [End of extract A1]

Even though the poster didn't make it explicit from the outset, the Japanese male alias "meitatsu," the poster's affiliation details (the abbreviation in the email address ".jp" and the origin "Japan") and the poster's calling upon "*fellow* Japanomaniacs" in the end, altogether strongly suggest that the poster self-identifies as a member of the Japanomania Tribe. Thus, this post can be read as a justification of the Japanomania Tribe, wherein, the action of justifying is an action of claiming social power by the often-stigmatized fan group member. Alles creates tension by starting with an argument against the conventional perception of the Japanomaniacs as "immature and blind followers." The poster's tone shifts from declarative tone in the title, which calls for more followers of the Japanomania Tribe, to an explanatory tone that lays out the reasons why so many Taiwanese youth love almost everything about Japan. By addressing "fellow Japanomaniacs," at the end of his post, Alles finally identifies with the Japanomaniacs. The poster's strategy to first disassociate from admitting an affiliation to the tribe, and only later use the term "fellow," is possibly an attempt to be perceived as an objective analyst.

The poster's hedging indicates the possibility that social stigma associated with the Japanomania Tribe plays a role in these entries. More importantly, Alles' hesitation of "coming out of the closet" as a Japanomaniac signifies a degree of "fear of speaking freely"—a psychological legacy of oppression from the martial law era. The shift from being detached to admitting affiliation by the use of the word "fellow" exemplifies Alles' determination to speak the truth and is thus a sign of social agency for change.

Topical, macro-structural analysis

Alles titles this post "Emulate the Japanomaniacs!" and proceeds to legitimize the discursive practices of the Japanomaniacs. The first discourse

structure I will analyze in the post is the semantic macrostructure, also known as topics or macro-propositions. It represents the global meaning or the general, most important information of the discourse. The following are the semantic macrostructures found in Alles' post:

A1M1. People from the older generation who have contempt for the Japanomaniacs are in fact backwards, self-satisfied, arrogant and without a sense of beauty.

A1M2. A Japanomaniac is what Taiwanese youth should aspire to be. Japanomaniacs are role models for Taiwanese youth.

A1M3. Japanomaniacs love Japanese culture for many sensible and legitimate reasons:

A1M4. Japanese dramas are better-scripted and produced.

A1M5. The demeanor of Japanese idols is admirable.

A1M6. The quality and aesthetic value of manufactured items from Japan is impeccable.

A1M7. The Japanomaniacs are open to learning new things and possess great qualities for social change. Taiwanese should aspire to a better living environment like that of Japan.

A1M8. The Japanomania Tribe should not limit itself to popular culture but should also learn from other advanced aspects of Japanese society.

One can further summarize these macro-propositions with the higher-level proposition: "Taiwan needs change from a lower state to a better state with Japanese standard." Thus the structure of discourse reflects a general category of social issues.

At the moment this post was written, Taiwan was facing the fiercest political competition in her history. When many middle-aged Taiwanese were concerned with how a transfer of power might impact financial and social stability, the

young voters seemed impatient for a new age. It is worth noting that instead of singling out Japanese as "the Other," Alles identifies the "arrogant and ignorant adults" in Taiwan as the out-group members, in opposition to the in-group member Japanomaniacs, who have unconventional taste, sensibility and vision. This in-group/ out-group differentiation indicates a generational rupture, a process of re-grouping social relations and re-prioritizing social values among the fourth generation (see Chapter 3).

The Responses

Among dozens of posts responding to "Emulate the Japanomania Tribe!," three themes emerge:

- Theme One: Taiwan and the United States
- Theme Two: Taiwan and Japan
- Theme Three: Taiwan and China

This finding indicates that Taiwanese identity is found at the nexus of these three international and historical relations.

Theme One: Taiwan and the United States

Following Alles' "Emulate the Japanomania Tribe!" Haha argues that Taiwan should emulate America instead. Haha's post sparks critical discussion challenging the cultural power of both Japan and the United States.

A2 Haha says:

> The concept of law and order Japan has is indeed worth learning. (….) Why not learn from the United States instead of Japan? I think Japan is a very abnormal nation. (….)

Two posters respond to Haha:

A3 Chiyen says: [replies in English]

> The U.S. has lots of weirdos [*sic*] too. You can see tons of abnormal behaviors (on TV) just trying to be listed on the Guiness [*sic*] book or so.

A7 Cx says:

> Taiwan has already been super US-maniac. If you yourself can be a US-maniac, why can't others be Japanomaniacs?!

In this extract, the Taiwanese university students appear to be not passive followers but active cultural critics. While Japan and the Unites States are both regarded as models of modernization and urban life styles in Taiwan, in this 1999 thread, Haha compares Japanese culture to American and suggests that Japan is an "abnormal" nation. Chiyen and Cx's posts question the taken-for-granted "US-normality" in Taiwan and indirectly challenge the existing social order sustained by the KMT regime for more than five decades.

During the Cold War era, the United Sates aided its allies worldwide, including the KMT in Taiwan, as part of its anti-communism efforts. And through its corporations and cultural industries, "America" has become not only a political but also a cultural force in many countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. However, when Third Wave democratization occurred in Asia, the close ties between Asian authoritarian governments and the United States often gave rise to widespread anti-America sentiment (Yoshimi, 2007). Therefore, Japanomania did not just pose a challenge to the KMT's Chinese nationalist discourse but also to the American hegemony that was rarely questioned publicly in the martial law era. The series of questioning about cultural hierarchies in Taiwan is symptomatic of the social trend of Taiwanization. And this is of cultural and political significance considering the historical context in which these conversations emerged.

Theme Two: Japanese Culture and Taiwanese Consciousness

The following responses to Alles are tied to two themes: First, Japan is a good model to emulate and second, many of the Japanomania Tribe are "blind" and the name "*ha-ri-zu*" is derogatory.

A4 IF says:

> About the good points of Japan, you are damn right.
>
> Only that Japanomaniacs cannot adore Japan to the point of losing their own characters….
>
> Although we are inferior to Japan in some aspects, we still have a good side no matter what, but some Japanomaniacs have become like whenever it comes to Taiwan it sucks, sucks and sucks…while with Japan it rocks, rocks, rocks….
>
> Is this the so-called "dignity of the Taiwanese people" that the Taiwanese keep talking about? I cannot help but say that some of the Japanomaniacs are reaching the degree of blindness.
>
> It is one thing that Japan has a lot of good points; it is quite another the attitude the Japanomaniacs hold.

IF basically agrees with Alles' defense of the Japanomaniacs except in the case of behaviors that might be face-threatening to Taiwanese people. IF's stress on the "dignity of Taiwanese people" echoes the Taiwanization rhetoric and implies that the excessive behavior of fans is a national issue rather than merely personal. According to Confucian teaching, individual virtue is always related to the "collective face"; therefore, one should strive to avoid bringing shame to one's community. Another reoccurring topic among the responses is about the already stigmatized name "*ha-ri-zu*." Some posters denounce the term and disassociate themselves from "those blind Japanomaniacs." For example:

A6 Toad says:

> I'm a student who likes Japanese serial dramas (just finishing *GTO* recently) and Japanese songs (especially C&A), enjoys reading Japanese comic books and animation pictures (*Rurouni Kenshin; Kindaichi*), likes to play "*ge e mu*" (just finishing playing FF8) and is currently learning Japanese. But I feel ashamed of being called a "Japanomaniac." I don't think I'm a blind follower, so please do not classify me with those Japanomaniacs!

A11 Shuffle says:

> I feel when the media use this term [Japanomaniacs] now, they give it a very shallow meaning…[which is] people who

> blindly pursue Japanese fashion. So I've rejected such a term.

These posters agree with Alles' arguments that Japan offers many advanced artifacts and cultural values for Taiwanese to emulate. But the meaning of *ha-ri-zu* is still highly contested. Toad, for example, detests the title of "Japanomaniac" despite all the qualifications for inclusion in the group that he or she possesses: watching Japanese drama series and anime pictures, reading Japanese *manga*, and playing Japanese video games. Given the list of Toad's current "favorites," it is obvious that Toad is quite knowledgeable and choosy about Japanese cultural products. In addition to all these activities, Toad is also learning Japanese. The rejection – even after Alles' call for emulation – of the name *ha-ri-zu* reveals the subtle relation of power not only between the mainstream media and the Japanomaniacs but also among the Japanomaniacs themselves.

As Sarah Thornton suggests in her study of the social logic of subcultural capital, "(d)istinctions are never just assertions of equal difference; they usually entail some claim to authority and presume the inferiority of *others*" (Thornton, 2005). The mainstream ideology that posits "blind" Japanomaniacs permeates the fan community and re-creates a social hierarchy among members.

Another response under the theme of Taiwan-Japan relations focuses on cross-cultural learning and self-reflexivity:

A 10 Plymouth says:

> The point is whether we can learn the essence from the cultures of other countries or not. Otherwise, if something comes into vogue in some country and we simply follow the vogue, there is nothing wise about it.
>
> The power and prosperity of this nation [Japan] don't stand to no reason. The quality of its citizens simply ranks much higher than that in other countries. We really lag too far behind from them!

> The education in Taiwan fails through and through. Maybe you have not realized, but it is absolutely true.

The reoccurring discussion of "learning" indicates the educational aspect of intercultural consumption. While these youth seem to be indulging in meaningless consumption, they are inspired by the high quality and modern lifestyle represented in Japanese media texts. Like the terms "beauty," "aesthetics," and "quality" mentioned in previous posts, the word "essence" indicates the selective taste of Plymouth and others. Their repetitive demand for quality and distinctiveness indicates an emerging social consciousness among the youth, one of political consequence in democratization.

Theme Three: Taiwan and China

The following post further addresses Taiwanese subjectivity and the unstable nature of national identity:

A8 Pizzi5 says:

> Learn what we should learn from others, do not repeat their mistakes and meanwhile develop and exalt what we should develop and exalt in Taiwan.
>
> It is only that; do not fuss over such boring things back and forth again. For those blindly pursuing foreign cultures, you had better understand the beauty of Taiwanese culture a bit more.
>
> At a time when the "Chinese imperialism" is eager to invade Taiwan, only the love and appreciation for Taiwan's culture can pull all our strength together to fight against outside forces unanimously. Those who still have a bias against Japan should face up to the aspects where Japan has made progress.
>
> I hope we Taiwanese are surely united.

Pizzi5's post raises the issue of China's status as an imperialist power actively hostile towards Taiwan and thus a more immediate threat than Japan, which has "made progress" from its imperialist past. In March 1996, before Taiwan's first popular direct presidential election in history, the PRC engaged a

large-scale military exercise and missile tests inside Taiwan's territorial waters, just off the ports of Keelung and Kaohsiung. Beijing intended to send a message to the Taiwanese that voting for Lee Teng-hui meant war and to the White House that Beijing was willing to deter Taiwan independence by force. On March 15, 2000, three days before the second direct presidential election in Taiwan, Chinese premier Zhu Rongji addressed Taiwanese voters on television with a fulmination against the DPP candidate, Chen Shui-bian. Lee's victory by 54% vote in 1996 and Chen's two-terms presidency between 2000 and 2008 proves that Beijing's hostility backfired.

By employing the address "we Taiwanese," a marker of collective identity, Pizzi5 excludes China from the in-group and renders it the Other, a more dangerous Other than Japan. This indicates a shift of identification from "we are Chinese" in formal education to the recent Taiwanese subjectivity. In addition, Pizzi5 also stresses the "beauty of Taiwan" that demands appreciation, which is consistent with the emergent discourse of Taiwanization and de-Sinicization in the 1990s, both of which are concerned with Taiwanese subjectivity (Lams, 2008; Makeham & Hsiau, 2005).

Thread B: "Japanomania, so what?"

The second thread, "Japanomania, so what?" was found under the category of "Politics" in the Soochow BBS in February 2001, approximately a year after the DPP won the presidential election. This original post evoked nine responses.

Extract B1:

Messiah (pxxx@bbs.scu.edu.tw)

Subject: Japanomania, so what?

27 Feb 2001 06:25:12 GMT

> I remember that in the Oath of the Meiji Restoration of Japan, the first sentence was: Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule. Exactly because we are less advanced compared to them, we need to learn hard [from the Japanese] and be as much as Japanomaniac as we can.
>
> Why do people love watching Japanese TV dramas? Is our own prime time television watchable? Only idiots would think they are the best in the world. Seeing so many Japanomaniacs we should be further aspired for catching up [with Japan]. How come we are wasting all our time on anti-Japan sentiment?

Topical, macro-structural analysis

The subject, "Japanomania, so what?" was itself a deliberate form of rebellion as the East Asian tradition places a high value on young people's obedience and not to "talk back" to their elders. Many people considered Japanomania a social vice because young people were not supposed to indulge in fan cultures until they "earn" their right by enrolling in good colleges. The second part of the post consists of a series of questions, showing an attempt to provoke rethinking of social conditions in Taiwan. The metalanguage of this post is both social and political because it involves the use of power in language (to talk back) and aims to make social changes by questioning the status quo. In this post, four macro-propositions are identified:

B1M1. Japanomania shares the same characteristic of the Meiji Restoration of Japan: learning from the advanced Other(s) to strengthen the Self.

B1M2. Japanomania aspires to create a better Taiwan.

B1M3. Taiwanese TV dramas are poorly produced.

B1M4. Anti-Japan sentiment seems to be dominant or excessive in Taiwanese society.

The first three propositions above are related to the need for advancement of Taiwan, which is also consistent with Alle's post and the larger social discussion on Taiwanization. For Messiah, Japanomania in Taiwan is equivalent

to the Meiji Restoration of Japan because both cultures believe in learning from the more advanced countries in order to strengthen their own. Messiah evokes the Meiji Restoration (AD1868) of Japan to indicate Taiwan's national crisis moment at the turn of the century. The Meiji Restoration marks the historical turning point that transformed Japan from a feudal society to a modern super power. While preserving its traditional culture, Japanese leaders deliberately sought knowledge from the western industrial powers to conduct a series of drastic social, political, economic and cultural reforms. Messiah's defense of Japanomania shares the same essence with Alles' post, that Japanomania is about "learning from the more advanced country (the Other) to improve Taiwan (the Self)."

Whose History?: Ambivalence and Tension

Both the defense of and attack on the Japanomania Tribe often draw on history; but which part of history? Or, more importantly, whose history are they referring to? For Messiah, history tells us that cross-cultural learning is a good thing. But for another poster, Ant, history defines who to learn from, or keep away from.

> B2 (in response to "Japanomania, so what?")
>
> Ant says:
>
> > If you have a neighbor across the hall whose knowledge and economic status are better than yours, of course you feel pressure to work harder to emulate him, you won't be against him! But, if one day, he comes to your house, drags your mother and sisters to the street and forces them to become prostitutes, and then he tells you that they are willing to do so because they can make a lot of money by being hookers. Unless you are a moron and idiot, you won't fight him, right? Are you still infatuated [with Japan]??!!

Ant's passionate statement (expressed by many exclamation marks) is aligned with the anti-Japanese discourse prevalent in the KMT history education,

which stresses the national shame (國恥) brought by Japanese imperialism and the recent debate in Asia over "comfort women" or sex slaves during WWII. In Taiwan, Japan serves as not only the major modern image factory but also an ideological marker, which indicates different collective memories and supports different political trajectories. For instance, while for Ant Japanomania is worth condemning due to Japan's war crimes, Fong unveils Ant's political position and brings "the China factor" into the discussion.

B3 Fong says:

> Many morons will tell you that it is okay to become a "Sino-maniac" but never a Japanomaniac. Some idiots [….]will further tell you that it is shameful to be slaughtered by Japanese but it is fine to be slaughtered by "people on our side." Of course you can ignore those aberrant racist morons……

Here "people on our side" should be interpreted as the ethnic Chinese and this post is referring to the 228 Incident and the missile crisis in the Taiwan Strait. After the martial law was lifted in 1987, two previously prohibited topics became the most discussed topics in political discourse: the 228 Incident in 1947 and the national identity of Taiwan and its complex relation with China (Lams, 2008). Taiwanese who sympathize with the victims of the 228 Incident tend to regard the KMT regime as an émigré state, a Chinese colonizer that has been far worse than the Japanese. Both the Chinese governments from within, the KMT, and without, the PRC, are regarded as oppressors and the Other. The 228 Incident became a collective memory and a unifying discourse for people who advocate Taiwanese national identity and ultimately *de jure* independence.

Fong immediately writes another posting responding to Ant:

B4 Fong says:

> Your posting just adequately describes those patients with Stockholm Syndrome [5] who are still adoring the two Chiangs' regime. Your words also adequately portray those morons who still love the Chinese communist regime while China is firing missiles at Taiwan.

Holding different views on history, Ant and Fong use terms like "idiots," "morons," and "patients" to address their opponents. Their modalities show antagonism towards each other and mirror the social tension between different political and ethnic groups in Taiwan. Fong's posts indicate the changing notion of political correctness in Taiwan: the Chinese identity that had been celebrated in the era of president Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo has since the 1990s become a symbol representing the autocratic KMT regime. Fong's two postings with their references to the recent military threats from China are in alignment with the fast-growing Taiwan independence discourse.

The flourishing Taiwanese nationalist rhetoric is, however, often attacked by Chinese nationalists as unrealistic and irresponsible given the PRC's anti-Taiwan independence policy.

B5 Ant says:

> Of course neither infatuation nor phobia towards [Chinese] communists is good, but if you treat the Chinese communists like a paper tiger, you are worse than a blind day dreamer!! Those who provoke the Chinese government from time to time are playing people's lives like playing balls, and they are responsible for casualties!!

Ant's post is typical of the Chinese nationalism discourse in which the Taiwan independence movement is held responsible for social instability and a

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[5] A psychological condition in which victims of kidnappings develop positive feelings towards their captors. Source: "Stockholm syndrome n." A Dictionary of Psychology. Edited by Andrew M. Colman. Oxford University Press 2009. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University of Iowa. 13 April 2010 <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t87.e8014>

potential attack from the PRC. Another poster, TAIWANESE, uses all capitalized letters to stress his/her national identity and argues against Ant:

B6 TAIWANESE says:

> May I please ask what you meant by "provoke"?
>
> When Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji threatened Taiwanese people with his savage statement on television, was it because the presidential election in Taiwan provoked the mainland?
>
> When Chinese communists target Taiwan with their 200 missile weapons, is it because the existence of Taiwan provoked China? Does anyone in Taiwan say that we will attack China? Why don't you condemn the thug? Why do you only criticize the innocent people? What else would your behavior be other than infatuation and phobia towards [Chinese] communists? [End of Thread B]

Compared to Ant's statement, the TAIWANESE's post shows strong identification with the Taiwanization movement, which emphasizes the subjectivity of Taiwan and the differences between the PRC and the ROC. The tension manifested in the posts of Ant, Fong and TAIWANESE is caused by their articulation of Japanomania to available ideologies in Taiwanese society. The Japanomania culture is always articulated within complex nation-building discourses in relation to China, Japan and the United States. Like thread A, the second thread also starts with a statement to account for how Japanomania is beneficial to Taiwanese society and then ends with the subjective position of Taiwan in relation to its cultural political Others. For example, both Alles (A1) and Mesiah (B1) argue for their own preferences, not for Japan, and view Japan as an admirable nation to learn from. Behind both statements is the same logic: learning from Japan is the way to improve our Taiwan. Both threads end with the discussion on the crisis of Taiwan-China relations between 1996 and 2000, as seen in excerpts A8, B3, B4, B5, and B6.

Japanomania, therefore, becomes a legitimate preference in the context of the Taiwan Strait crisis and the De-Sinicization movement.

Envy, Reflexivity and Identify Formation

The following excerpt exemplifies the ways many Taiwanese scholars have viewed the Japanomania Tribe:

> This identification with modern global culture via Japanese pop culture can also be observed in many other societies in Northeast and Southeast Asia. However, the popularization of U.S. and Japanese popular culture in Taiwan has not enhanced a deeper public understanding of the two 'model' societies and cultures. *No profound cultural exchange or learnings have come about; nor has it inspired reflection on Taiwan's own society and culture.* (Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, 2001, p.57; emphasis added)

In contrast to Hsiao's observation, this case study shows that the Taiwanese youth in fact draw on Japanese TV dramas as a springboard for reflexive discussions of their own social and political conditions. The online discussion boards offered a new space for moral and political deliberation in the 1990s. These BBS discussions show that discourses surrounding Japanomania are always policed, filtered or influenced by available ideologies.

The goal of this chapter is to investigate how agency functions in the process of cultural appropriation and how reality is constructed through articulation and contestation of meanings. The interactions among Taiwanese netizens demonstrate a reflexive process of identity formation. According to Giddens (1991), self identity is "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography"(p. 53). Self-identity is formed through the constant, ongoing creation of narratives that answer questions of "What to do? How to act? Who to be?" (ibid, p. 75). In the post-martial law and post-Cold War era, the Taiwanese were facing a series of dramatic social changes in which the old ideological discourses were no longer adequate, and the new social

discourses were still works-in-progress. Thus foreign media text could offer fresh ideas and new rhetoric for describing self and others.

As John B. Thompson suggests, the appropriation of foreign media involves "the accentuation of *symbolic distancing* from the spatial-temporal contexts of everyday life" (1995, p. 175, emphasis in original). Symbolic distancing enables viewers to compare their own life conditions with foreign life styles and to think critically about their social political environment. The phenomenon of symbolic distancing in Taiwan is exemplified in the discussions among Japanomaniacs and their dissidents. Typical of what I have found in *ha-ri* studies, Japanomaniacs constantly express dissatisfaction with their own everyday lives and their power struggle surrounding issues such as the education system, the military threats from China, the poor quality of local TV production, and social upheaval in post-authoritarian Taiwan. Japanese TV dramas provide Taiwanese youth a glimpse of what life is like elsewhere, new ways of thinking, new aesthetic values and new vistas.

In their book, *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World* (1995), Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon define cultural politics as struggles over the power to name, the power to represent common sense, the power to create "official versions" and the power to represent the legitimate social world. In a post-colonial and post-authoritarian society such as Taiwan, cultural politics almost always involves struggles over naming – such as the meaning of *ha-ri* (salutary versus derogatory), the name of the country (Taiwan versus the Republic of China), national identity (Taiwanese versus Chinese), and the need of a new language to re-describe the rapidly changing social world.

Conclusion:

Japanomania Discourse and Alternative Political Projects

Hsiao's comment may seem analogous to Adorno's pessimism: both expressed concern over the manipulative power of the cultural industries and disappointment in the consumers of popular culture. As Hsiao (1948-) and Adorno both experienced authoritarian rule, their pessimism was not groundless. But Adorno does not reject the notion that consumers are active agents. What is at stake for Adorno, as John Peters puts it, "is not simply that people are duped: they are active agents in their own duping" (Peters, 2003, p. 64). Hsiao's statement deems popular culture as trivial and fans vulnerable and shallow. In cultural studies, however, there is an established tradition of considering fans to be active agents (Ang, 1985; J. Fiske, 1987; J. Fiske, 1987; Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007; Sandvoss, 2005), textual poachers and aficionados (Certeau, 1988; Jenkins, 1992) who often critically and creatively appropriate media texts and negotiate meanings based on their situated contexts. The meanings of popular culture are not fixed by media texts but are produced in the participants' actual usage. Recent media convergence has further facilitated a participatory culture among media users and expanded the range of voices and ideas that can be heard in society (Jenkins, 2006).

The question remains: when do fan discourses and interactions contribute to social and political change, if at all? This discourse analysis has shown that Japanomania serves as a medium for Taiwanese identity construction. The desire for Japanese cultural forms in Taiwan in the 1990s signifies not the fantasy of becoming Japanese but rather a new culture that enabled the dis-identification from Mainland China and the construction of a uniquely Taiwanese subjectivity.

Japanomania and Taiwanization are not incommensurable. Instead, they complement each other. In the online posts analyzed in this chapter and

elsewhere, I have found that Japanomaniacs could be strong advocates for Taiwanization. For example, in my recent communication with the blogger RAIN CHEN, whose family has visited Japan ten times successively as mentioned in Chapter 2, he tells me that the reason why he feels fine to be called and self-identify as *ha-ri-zu* is because:

> we are learning from a more advanced nation than us, and therefore our country will progress and our living standard can be improved. [….] The important thing is how to upgrade the people's living condition and culture in our own country.

Japanomania and Taiwanese subjectivity are constantly articulated in a similar manner. In terms of the "nationality" of Japanese popular culture, studies have found that there is nothing essentially "Japanese" embedded in Japanese pop aesthetic. In his study on subcultures and fashion magazines in Japan, Martin Roberts argues that the Japanese pop aesthetic exemplifies "a kind of conspicuous cosmopolitanism, where an ostentatious fluency in the language of global fashion style appears to be the basis for subcultural capital" (Roberts, 1997). The new aesthetic embedded in Japanese pop culture is best understood as *pastiche*, a style that combines cultures from the west and the east; the traditional and the novel. It is important to note the "hybrid" nature of Japanese popular culture, which is characterized by its ability to indigenize western cultures into "Asianized," often more delicate forms (Iwabuchi, 2002).

Echoing White's analysis of the positive relations between fan discussion and social movements (2000), I argue that popular culture and fans' discussion networks help creating oppositional views on the hegemonic culture and get the community ready for social-political changes. In Chapter Two we briefly mentioned the 2003 hit *Shiroi Kyotō* (*The Great White Tower*), which depicts the corrupt system in a major hospital featuring a medical dispute. The success of

this Japanese drama not only encouraged TV stations in Taiwan to produce or purchase more serious dramas but also prepared audiences to discussing formerly neglected social issues. In January 2005, a four-year-old girl, surnamed Chiou, fell into coma after being beaten by her drunken father and being rejected by 30 municipal hospitals in Taipei City. The emergency operations center only found a hospital in Taichung to treat the little girl six hours after her initial injury. This incident was widely reported in the media, often with reference to *The Great White Tower*. A series of health care reform was implemented swiftly in Taipei, as a result of the public uproar over this cruel ill-treatment (Taipei Times, 2005). At Chiou's funeral in February 2005, Dr. Lee, who treated Chiou in Taichung, read a letter to her on behalf of the entire crew. Dr. Lee read aloud that Chiou's four years of life was indeed too short, but her suffering awakened *The Great White Tower* in Taiwan and saved the lives of numerous others. Japanese TV dramas provide symbols, discourses, and aesthetics showing how change and happiness can be achieved with diligence and creativity. These elements in Japanese popular culture generate consumer aspiration for quality and beauty in the public domain, which have contributed to political communication in the transitional Taiwan. In the next chapter, I will examine the ways in which the Japanese "cute" aesthetic has become a new language unifying those who were once marginalized and silenced in the political process.

CHAPTER FIVE
JAPANESE POP AESTHETICS AND TAIWANESE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Politicians and scholars condemned the young fans as apolitical because the Japanomaniacs seemed to be indifferent to the history of Japanese imperialism and current social reform in Taiwan. In contrast to this view, as discussed in chapter four, I argue that critical distancing and reflexive thinking are prevalent among fans and fan discussions, and this could prepare them for political changes (White, 2000). But what will eventually make fans actually participate in alternative political projects? This chapter will demonstrate that actual political participation is often made possible by young campaigners and politicians, who apply their knowledge of popular cultural aesthetics to bring fans to politics through political communication.

Contemporary political communication is not about conveying information or persuading people *exclusively* through rational argumentation. Rather, political communication is now about capturing the popular imaginary, thereby giving symbolic importance to everyday practice creating signs for collective identification in the process (Chua, 2007b; Holland, 1976; Sanders, 2009; Street, 1997). In short, whoever wants to be "in charge" in politics also has to be "in touch" with popular cultural trends (J. Street, 2003). Therefore, popular culture has gained great currency in political campaigns.

Recognizing the widespread Japanomania in Taiwan, the DPP drew heavily on the aesthetic elements of Japanese popular culture for its campaign merchandise in the 1998 Taipei mayoral campaign and in Taiwan's vital presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 (Bian Mao Factory, 1999; Chuang, 2007). The DPP *kawaii* (cute in Japanese) merchandise sparked unprecedented youth

political participation, which contributed greatly to Chen Shui-bian's victory in 2000 and 2004 (O. Chung, 2009). According to a survey conducted by Gallup Market Research Corporation in Taiwan in February of 2000, 83% of young voters between the ages of 20 and 29 believed that Chen Shui-bian and his running mate (Annette) Lu Hsiu-lien were the most attractive candidates (Hsu & Lo, 2000). In the 2000 presidential election, the number of first-time voters increased by approximately 1,500,000 from 1996. While voters between the ages of 20 to 39 constituted 50.5 % of the total vote, the majority of them voted for Chen Shui-bian (Lijun, 2001 April). Chen's successful youth campaign has been well documented in several books on Taiwanese politics, both locally and internationally (Cheng, 2004; Chuang, 2007; H. F. Lin, 2001; G. D. Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2003; Rigger, 2001).

This chapter also investigates how Japanese popular aesthetics has been appropriated by political figures and how political communication in Taiwan has been altered by this appropriation. I will explore the ideology represented by the *kawaii* aesthetic and the role of cute merchandise in transforming the political culture in post-authoritarian Taiwan. This chapter offers a historical-textual analysis of both the *production* and the *consumption* of the cute merchandise with a focus on two of the most popular items: the knitted hat and the cute doll. My methodology is qualitative in nature and incorporates field observation and participation in the election campaigns of 2000 and 2004. In addition, this analysis draws heavily on newspapers, magazines, campaign-related publications, previous studies and online discussions. The findings indicate that the *kawaii* aesthetic served as an effective political communication tool, catering to the youths' Japanomania lifestyle. The cute merchandise generated conversations on oppositional ideas that were previously repressed in people's everyday lives. The use of kitsch art in elections helped in creating and

sustaining affective participation involving popular pleasure and bodily performance of the voters.

Japanomania and the Restyling of Politics

Japanese "cute," or *kawaii* style, became the dominant force in Japanese popular culture and gradually gained its global appeal in the 1980s (Allison, 2009; Kinsella, 1995; Koh et al., 1999; Sato, 2009; Tsutsui & Itō, 2006; Yano, 2004). Most salient in East Asia, *kawaii* figurines and logos such as Hello Kitty, an innocent-looking mouthless cat; Pikachu, a fictional mouse-like creature with yellow fur; and Doraemon, a blue robot cat; and many other *kawaii* products saturated the media, commodities and arts. Japanese *kawaii* style, when applied to figures, is often characterized by a combination of pedomorphic traits such as a disproportionately big head, a small round body, big eyes and an innocent look. Compared to the concept of cute in English, the *kawaii* style is somewhat quirky. In her article, "Kitty Litter: Japanese Cute at Home and Abroad" (2004), Christine Yano suggests that *kawaii* seems to represent "an almost dreamlike state involving small leaps of logic, which makes it more childlike, vulnerable, and durable than the notion of 'cute'" (p. 67). The *kawaii* style not only permeates fashion and art, but also influences colloquialism and personal mannerism. In 1992, the word *kawaii* was estimated by Japanese teen magazine *CREA* to be "the most widely used, widely loved, habitual word in modern living Japanese" (Kinsella, 1995). While *kawaii* style can be applied to both objects and human behavior, this chapter mainly concerns the former and more specifically, the ways in which cute objects change public conversation on politics. Although *kawaii* culture started as youth culture, especially among young women, today in Japan *kawaii* aesthetic works across gender and age groups (Sato, 2009).

Influenced by the Japanese cute fad, East Asian governments and businesses have also drawn heavily on *kawaii* figures to soften and humanize authorities as well as to feminize spaces (Angier, 2006; Yano, 2004). For example, in Japan, the Tokyo police and the government television stations all created their own cute mascots. All Nippon Airways (ANA) has featured Pikachu on the company's aircrafts (Roach, 1999). In Taiwan, the presidential candidates have drawn on the *kawaii* aesthetic in creating their campaign merchandise. Despite its ubiquitous appeal in public space and everyday life, the role of the *kawaii* style in the political process has received only limited discussion to date. In this chapter, I argue that the *kawaii* style not only has become a popular aesthetic but also has become a powerful political rhetoric. Drawing on a case study of the presidential election of Taiwan in which *kawaii* merchandise such as cute dolls, coffee mugs and stationery sparked the most successful youth movement in Taiwanese history, this chapter explores the ideology and function of the *kawaii* aesthetic in political persuasion and civil engagement.

When the Cute Becomes Political and the Political Becomes Cute

Although discussions on *kawaii* typically focus on marketing strategies and consumers' craze, an increasing number of scholars acknowledge the cultural and social significance of this cute trend.[6] In her study of the cultural history of cuteness in Japan, Kumiko Sato suggests that "(c)uteness today is a means for expressing identity from the margin of society where powerlessness can lead to

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[6] In 2004, scholars at Harvard University named this *kawaii* phenomenon "Cutism," at a one-day conference focusing on "the manifestations of Cutism" and "social uses and effects of Cutism" (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Anime Club, 2004).

subversion" (Sato, 2009). I contend that the seemingly trivial *kawaii* in fact became a popular expression of resistance to dominant ideology and therefore requires more scholarly attention. The popular presidential election of 2000 was a turning point in Taiwan's history. The DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian won the election and thus ended the KMT's 54-year one-party rule. One of the most extraordinary aspects of this historical transition was the unprecedented youth support of Chen's campaign and his unconventional *kawaii* merchandise (O. Chung, 2009; G. D. Rawnsley, 2003; Rigger, 2001). Although many factors contributed Chen's victory in 2000 such as the split of the KMT and the ethnic conflicts, support from the young was key to the transfer of power because Chen's electorate mainly consisted of young voters. The KMT severely attacked the DPP for its lack of ruling experience; therefore, a symbol that signified accountability, strength and good judgment would have made more sense than a cute mascot. Its associations with vulnerability, femininity and childishness make *kawaii* an unexpected political rhetoric for this historical election.

Unlike previous political leaders, who were mostly addressed by their legal names and titles, Chen Shui-bian was commonly referred to by his affectionate childhood nickname "A-Bian" in Taiwanese media and among his supporters. Like Hello Kitty fans (Y. Ko, 2003), thousands of supporters would wait in long lines to buy Chen's merchandise, such as the olive-colored knitted hats called "*Bian Mao*," the doe-eyed A-Bian Dolls, and tee shirts, coffee mugs, key chains, and stationery items, among other products displaying his *kawaii* image. Between 1998 and 2000, over one million *Bian Mao* were sold in support of Chen's mayoral and presidential bids, and almost all of Chen's 99 other merchandise lines sold over 100,000 items each, not to mention the number of

unauthorized imitations sold (Chung, 2008). The A-Bian merchandise remained in vogue until 2006.[7]

The A-Bian merchandise mania became a social phenomenon and has been regarded as the most successful youth movement and political marketing campaign in Taiwanese history (O. Chung, 2009). The triumph of the A-Bian merchandise was usually attributed to the chic design and the application of American political marketing strategies (G. D. Rawnsley, 2003; Rigger, 2001). However, this A-Bian merchandise mania seems to raise more puzzling questions about consumption and politics. For one, the adaptation of Japanese cute aesthetics in Taiwan's high politics might just as easily have backfired given Taiwan's colonial history with Japan, as I shall discuss in a later section. Moreover, considering the large number of what were, according to many, cuter and cooler commercial merchandise available on the market, the fervent consumption of the political merchandise cannot be adequately explained by either a "marketing miracle" or "deliberate political manipulation." I argue that the significance of this intensive consumption of Chen's cute merchandise needs to be situated within Taiwan's specific historical moment—the post-colonial, and post-martial law era, and Taiwan's complex relations with Japan, China and the United States. By historicizing the A-Bian phenomenon, I want to offer insight of the ideology represented by the *kawaii* aesthetic, the democratic experience of the younger generation, and the ways in which popular culture and consumer culture alter the political communication process.

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[7] Chen's popularity slipped significantly amid the economic downturn and a series of corruption charges against his wife and son-in-law in 2006.

Politicians as Idols and Voters as Fans

Chen's political marketing was engineered by his "*Bian Mao* Factory" (hereafter BMF or the Factory). An alternative headquarters and social gathering space for youth and women, the BMF was established in 1998 when Chen was running for his second term as the mayor of Taipei City, capital city of Taiwan. Although the BMF showcased the campaign merchandise, these products were actually manufactured elsewhere. This so-called "factory" was in fact a three-floor building providing a public space with a vogue café atmosphere where citizens could sip a cup of free coffee, surf the Internet, attend a small pop concert or *karaoke*, or shop for campaign merchandise. The Factory also served as a venue for press conferences and other campaign events, particularly for youth and women voters. The interior of the BMF was designed by two leading young architects who aspired to transform the typically "boring election" into a bold, postmodern, and proletarian urban experience (Bian Mao Factory, 1999).

The founders of the BMF consisted of a group of young advertising and marketing professionals along with Chen's campaign staff members. Alice Chang, the chief designer of *Bian Mao*, is a popular writer and cartoonist. All of the team members were in their 20s or 30s. They identified their target audience, the Generation X, as a group of independent thinkers who cared for current affairs and valued freedom and creativity. Luo Wen-chia (1966-), head of the creative team and long-time aide to Chen, stated that he wished to create "a hat that all young people would love to don" (ibid, p. 81) during the 1998 Taipei mayoral campaign. A team member, Staci, responded, "Then we cannot be out-of-touch with the psyche of the young. Young people do not like to be coerced" (ibid, p. 81). To fulfill Staci's goal, Alice Chang began a study of Taiwanese youth fashion. Eventually she found the prototype of *Bian Mao* in a Japanese fashion magazine featuring the Japanese male star Kimura Takuya donning a

woolen knitted hat. DPP's youth campaign was designed by these members of the younger generation whose tastes and thought processes were close to the fourth generation Taiwanese voters.

Figure 10. *Bian Mao* and logos of A-Bian Family (left); A-Bian tee shirt and bag (right)

Surprisingly, even though he had a 70% approval rating among the citizens of Taipei City, Chen failed to win a second term as mayor in 1998 (Cheng, 2004). As the majority of the residents in Taipei City were composed of Mainlanders, Chen's unexpected loss was attributed to ethnic politics and thus aroused enormous sympathy towards Chen and DPP's Taiwanese nationalism throughout the island (Cheng, 2004). The sales of *Bian Mao* skyrocketed even more after the 1998 Taipei mayoral election. Supporters from southern Taiwan spent hours travelling by train to the BMF in Taipei City and waiting in long lines to buy the knitted hat for themselves and their loved ones.

To commemorate the *Bian Mao* phenomenon, the Factory published an official art book, *Ah! Bian Mao/@ [Bian Mao]* (1999), as a biography not of Chen but of the merchandise itself, as well as the Factory staff and all the people involved in the A-Bian phenomenon.[8] Later the "@" sign became the logo of A-Bian. In this book, words from Chen Shui-bian appeared only briefly, as a side-show in the inner cover page, while the interviews, pictures and articles about the volunteers, staff members, and supporters composed the majority of the book. By foregrounding the staff members and supporters rather than the candidate, this @ *[Bian Mao]* official art book epitomized the humility and the democratic political ideal of the oppositional DPP.

In addition to this book, fans of Chen, also known as "*Bian Mi*" (扁迷) and "The *Bian Mao* Tribe" (扁帽一族) shared their anecdotes online and later published an anthology, *Cyber Bian Frienos Never Sleep!* [*sic*, original English title] (2000) of online articles they had written in support of Chen's 2000 presidential election. This participatory fan culture facilitated by media convergence played an important role in Taiwan's democratization (Jenkins, 2006). The rise of the digital media and the Internet enable individual voters to meet and network with their comrades both online and in person across geographical borders. The cute commodification of Chen successfully transformed a solemn election into a "nation-wide practice for all people" (Bian Mao Factory, 1999) and "a button-down politician into the darling of the young" (Rigger, 2001).

With his strong nationwide popular support, Chen was soon appointed by the DPP to run for the presidential election in 2000. The BMF, for that reason,

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[8] The book title itself @*[Bian Mao]* is a creative design. It is intended to be read polysemously as "at the Bian Mao Factory," "A-Bian's hat" or "Ah, *Bian Mao*."

continued to operate. In the spring of 1999, A-Bian merchandise was patented under the registered name of "A-Bian Family Company." According to the general manager of the Company, Lo Sheng-Shun, the success of the A-Bian accessories was due to their positioning "as personal commodities rather than electioneering products [*sic*], this was a breakthrough in Taiwanese politics" (Chuang, 2007). DPP's product positioning is in line with the business philosophy that places the customer at the beginning rather than the end of the production-consumption cycle (Scammell, 2003). This "breakthrough" signifies an ideological shift from collectivistic and militaristic doctrines to one that values personal needs and enjoyment in the political process.

As for the production process, Lo states:

> All different kinds of accessories were developed by a design team. We not only used a sense of marketing, but also consulted lots of pop magazines. The design team even went to Japan to study their successful commodities. Every single commodity was created after a process of investigation, discussion, design and production. (Chuang, 2007, p. 113)

Aesthetically, the company chose the Japanese *kawaii* style because the cute commodity was the most popular seller in Taiwan according to market research. Lo also mentioned that they chose the Japanese *kawaii* style after comparing samples of campaign merchandise from Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. Inspired by the dominant *kawaii* fashion in Japanese popular culture, the BMF designers created what would become the cute mascot of the Chen campaign: the "A-Bian Doll." Blended with the local cultural elements and the *kawaii* aesthetic, the A-Bian Doll quickly became the most popular piece of merchandise in the campaign. Given the intense popularity of baseball in Taiwan, the 2004 version of the cotton-stuffed A-Bian Doll is designed to look like a boy in a baseball uniform: a black cap emblazoned with the logo, "@" and

"A-Bian Family" in English; the green jersey signifying the green flag of the DPP, and the trendy grey pants and black-and-white shoes.

Figure 11. A-Bian Doll wearing Bian-Mao (left); A-Bian Doll at a baseball game (right)

The Doll has a disproportionately big head and a small body, innocent doe-eyes and a friendly smile on his rosy-cheeked chubby face. The A-Bian Doll comes in different sizes, ranging from 27 inches to 1 inch. Like the Hello Kitty series created by Sanrio Inc., the A-Bian cute merchandise contained a variety of consumer products including clothes, school supplies, kitchen utensils and fashion accessories. Given its enormous success in sales, the A-Bian series products were rated one of the top 10 "trendiest concepts" of the year by *Business Weekly* magazine in Taiwan in 2000 (Phipps, 2004). An anonymous blogger writes about the A-Bian phenomenon between 1998 and 2000:

> The Bian-Mao Factory set a new record in Taiwan's political history. It was never imagined that the political merchandise could possibly be so fancy and cool without sacrificing utility.

> I was a hardcore Bian Fan at that time. I dare say that I collected almost 90% of the merchandise items made by the *Bian Mao* Factory: *Bian Mao*, Bian shirt (long and short sleeves), Jacket, watch, letter paper, three-way pen, sticker, notebook, Bian doll, tote bag, pin, calendar, CD, etc. Plus, I have the membership card of *The Friends of A-Bian*.
>
> Being a Bian fan, of course I was there at every one of Chen's campaign events in Kaohsiung; I went to every single event with my sister. (Anonymous blogger March 19, 2008)[9]

Rather than militaristic and ideological training prevalent in the martial law era, consumption has become a new form of political socialization for the young Taiwanese.

The *Kawaii* Aesthetic and Political Style

The consumption of popular culture, which encompasses a wide range of consumer practices and attitudes such as buying, acquiring, collecting, desiring and fantasizing, has become the major shaper of identity, meanings, and social membership in today's consumer society (Dunn, 2008; Durham & Kellner, 2001). As John Fiske has noted:

> Everyday life is constituted by the practices of popular culture, and is characterized by the creativity of the weak in using the resources provided by a disempowering system while refusing finally to submit to that power. The culture of everyday life is best described through metaphors of struggle or antagonism…These antagonisms….are motivated primarily by pleasure: the pleasure of producing one's own meanings of social experience and the pleasure of avoiding the social discipline of the power-bloc. (J. Fiske, 1989, p. 45)

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[9] Originally in Chinese and translated by this author, Yang. Quoted from a blogger's memoir "Bian, Hsieh, and Su in my memory," posted on March 19, 2008. Retrieved from http://www.wretch.cc/blog/iutm/12156780

Based on my conversation with the voters and campaign staff members, the younger generation that seemed to be indulging in goalless consumption can well be enthusiastic participants of election campaigns as long as the political agenda is relevant to them, and maybe more importantly, communicated to voters in the right language. The *kawaii* aesthetic was a friendly way to speak to the fourth generation voters who came to age in the 1990s when the Japanomania lifestyle was most popular.

A former DPP staff member Chuang Chia-Yin (1975-), for example, relates her involvement in politics to her indulgence in Japanese popular culture:

> At the end of 1998, at that time still too heavily involved with the plot lines of the Japanese TV dramas on cable TV, I bought a *Bian Mao* from the *Bian Mao* Factory—the first political commodity I ever bought and the first political commodity in Taiwan. (…)
>
> From buying Hello Kitty accessories to buying A-Bian Doll accessories, I felt I was making "progress."[*sic*] (…)
>
> Half a year later, I joined the DPP and Chen's campaign team for the 2000 presidential election. (Chuang, 2007, p.10)

Chuang was not alone. In her doctoral thesis, *Political Consumerism in Contemporary Taiwan* (2007), Chuang asserts that Taiwanese people's obsession with the *kawaii* aesthetic and the lifestyle influenced by Japanese popular culture greatly contributed to their intensive political participation as *Bian Mi* (fans of A-Bian). For example, in Chuang's interviews with *Bian Mi* between 2004 and 2005, a 56-year-old full-time housewife Hsiu-Hsiang stated:

> I love the A-Bian Doll because it is very cute and *kawaii*… I collect almost all accessories…It is so fantastic to buy and collect them. I not only collect the dolls, but also support the DPP and express my love for Taiwan. (Quoted in Chuang, 2007, p. 208)

Chia-Wei, a 26-year-old lawyer expressed her obsession of *kawaii* commodities and her two seemingly contradicting needs of "belonging" and "distinction":

> ….it was so natural: if you saw a long queue there, you would join it and buy what they were buying….it was so similar to my experience of being in a long queue to buy a McDonald's Hello Kitty…I think I am very tempted by the idea of "limited edition." (ibid, p. 223)

Jay, a 17-year-old senior high school student, was a big fan of the *kawaii* figure Pikachu when he was a child, and now he became a hardcore *Bian-Mi* who collected a wide range of A-Bian accessories (ibid). These cute accessories helped voters display their political preference in public with a fashionable and non-threatening style.

In the 1990s, most of the DPP campaigns relied on the Minnan speakers' vengeful triumphalism against Mandarin speakers due to the KMT's discriminating language policy and decades of oppression (Y. Ko, 2007). The first DPP presidential candidate Peng Ming-min (1923-) is a world-renowned law scholar and a victim of the white terror. During the first direct presidential election in 1996, the DPP held a masquerade party to attract young voters and tried to replace the solemn and sad image of the DPP with a happy face. The DPP campaign managers dressed Peng as a fairy tale prince and his running mate a pirate. Peng and his running mate refused to dance at the party because they felt that the party had turned the "holy" democratization movement into a "monkey business" (Y. Ko, 2007). Many DPP supporters were in agreement with Peng.

In addition to the holiness of democracy, it was commonly considered as a matter of "individual consciousness" to support the opposition party before the creation of the BMF in 1998. People who supported the DPP's subversive discourses tended not to express their political ideas outside the political gatherings. A DPP supporter, A-Quen (1999), recalls that:

> People even hesitated to talk about their own political identification [with the oppositional DPP] to their families and friends. Everything was done quietly. Even when two people who shared the same political ideal passed by each

> other on the street [after a political gathering], they still felt unfamiliar and indifferent toward each other.

A-Quen notes that the BMF has invented a pleasurable way for voters to relate to politics and to identify their comrades. He writes:

> The cute and playful @-Bian Family merchandise and stickers allow us to wear them on our bodies, to don them on our heads, and to put them on our scooter helmets. Hello Kitty and Disney are no longer our only choices.

Thus, politics becomes a site of bodily performances for expressing previously prohibited ideas. Politics is no longer holy or top down; it becomes part of people's everyday lives just like the Hello Kitty and Disney motifs. Previously repressed political ambition becomes visible to the outside world. A-Quen shares a story about a middle-aged father and his daughter:

> In the past, many parents [who supported the DPP] did not have the nerve to talk about politics with their children, fearing that their kids, being indoctrinated by the KMT, would hold different views from theirs, and therefore cause conflicts damaging their relationships….In the line [to buy *Bian Mao*], a middle-aged father behind me told me that he spent thousands of NT dollars traveling from the southern Taiwan to Taipei just to buy a *Bian Mao*, of only one-hundred- NT-dollar value, as a gift to his daughter.…They actually had shared the same political ideal for several years but this topic never came up in their daily conversations. One day he discovered that his daughter was collecting the news about *Bian Mao*, then he came to realize that they belong to the same camp. (A-Quen, 1999, p. 200)

This is a significant shift in Taiwan's political culture: from repressiveness to expressiveness, with the help of the unthreatening cute merchandise. In previous political campaigns dominated by the KMT, the common political souvenirs consisted of pins, pens, hats and packet tissue with the candidate's names on them, and political bribery was very common during the elections. One of the most intriguing parts of the A-Bian phenomenon was that, instead of expecting something for free, thousands of people were willing to wait in lines to buy multiple items as political donations, personal collections,

gifts to loved ones. Their boning collective waiting were just like protests: making political views visible in public.

Chen Shui-bian was the pioneer in Taiwan of turning the "monkey business" into youth mobilization. But it perhaps is more accurate to say that it was Chen's young aides who helped him transform the rigid image of politics. Chen was surrounded by aides, staff members and volunteers in their 20s and 30s, and they were fluent in the language of cosmopolitan fashion styles. The book, *Ah, Bian-Mao* also recorded that there were DJs, cartoonist, architects, fashion gurus, the president of Michael Jackson's fan club in Taiwan, and the "Kitty Group of Seven" (i.e. seven girls who were known as loyal Hello Kitty fans) working or volunteering regularly at the Factory. Chen was the youth and the media's favorite politician because he threw good parties, and did not hesitate to put on any costumes designed by his young assistants (O. Chung, 2009; H. F. Lin, 2001; Wiseman, 2000).

These popular cultural aficionados are of crucial importance to the generation of new political communication styles in the post- martial law era. The impact of popular culture on politics is not directly through the media texts such as *manga* and Japanese idol dramas, but is mainly made possible by experts of the popular culture who appropriate cosmopolitan fashion codes and create an indigenized hybrid version. These experts help politicians generate symbols and a style of visual rhetoric that bridges the gap between politics and young people's lifestyles and convince them to vote. The success of the cute A-Bian Doll accessories may contribute to its clever design, but the symbolic meaning of the commodity presented by the politician and the political party is of equal importance.

The consumption of A-Bian Doll was a process of active identification of Chen's life experience and his political ideals. Chen Shui-bian was born in a

poverty-stricken farmer's family in southern Taiwan. He nevertheless flourished in Taiwan's competitive educational system and became a lawyer. Chen later joined the opposition movement and ran for office against KMT. His wife, Wu Shu-chen, was tragically hit by a truck in 1985, while the couple was thanking their supporters on the street. The hit-and-run case, although unproven, was believed by many DPP supporters to be election violence ordered by the KMT (Rigger, 1999). Since then, Wu Shu-chen has suffered permanent paralysis from the chest down. In spite of his life traumas and the oppressive political environment, Chen's 1994 Taipei City mayoral campaign slogan was "Joy and Hope" (快樂希望). His successful reform of Taipei City proved that the untested DPP could actually govern. Although often criticized as "puritan" by his critics, his supporters praised him for unclogging Taipei's roads, cutting the crime rate and offering courteous services to his citizens (Wiseman, 2000). Chen's rise from destitution, his wife's tragic injury, his political achievement and his optimistic outlook for Taiwanese nationalism have all together fostered emotional identification from his supporters.

Chen's two major rivals, Soong Chu-yu and Lien Chan, were both born in mainland China and closely tied to KMT's elitist status and corruption scandals. Soong (age 58 in 2000), the independent candidate, former secretary general of KMT and provincial governor, was regarded as the most competitive rival of Chen Shui-bian (age 49) for his charisma and performance as a Governor of Taiwan province. However, Soong's alleged embezzlement scandal and his independent candidacy split KMT's vote, leading to the ascendency of Chen Shui-bian. KMT candidate Lien Chan (64), then vice president and vice chair of the KMT, was having a difficult time winning over the young votes due to his wooden image and the centuries-old traditions of his party (G. D. Rawnsley, 2003). Compared to Soong's and Lien's elite images, Chen's youthfulness and

his cute mascot conveyed a message that resonated well with the young people who appreciated innocence, pleasure and the *ganbaru* spirit. The generic campaign merchandise of Soong's and Lien's camps versus the "cuteness" manifested in Chen's merchandise not only marked product differentiation but also connoted disassociation from gerontocracy and Chinese identification as discussed in chapter four.

Caught between the Real and Fantasy

In 2004, Lien Chan and James Soong reconciled and ran for presidential and vice president respectively on a joint ticket against Chen Shui-bian and Lu Hsiu-lien. Not to be outdone by the DPP's *Bian Mao* series, the KMT followed suit and expanded its campaign products to 74 lines (Phipps, 2004). According to an interview with the KMT's product marketing department, conducted by Taiwan's major English newspaper *Taipei Times* in February 2004, the KMT consciously avoided the *kawaii* element that was salient in DPP's campaign merchandise. KMT's project manager Chen Yen-yuen said,

> We wanted to appeal to as wide a section of the public as possible. Whereas the DPP seems to only want to appeal to those who like cute things we've manufactured goods that not only look nice, but are also useful to everyone (ibid).

And although cuteness usually appeals to women, not all women are buying the cute political style. A female KMT supporter quoted in the chapter comments:

> I don't think that creating cute items is any way to look at an election. (….) How can a government be taken seriously when it makes everything look so childlike and cute? We think it just looks idiotic and makes us, Taiwan, look laughable. It should be serious and ordered with everything in its proper place.

This statement vividly suggests the postmodern and transgressive quality of cuteness. For the previous generation, the political socialization of youth was

guided by Confucius's teaching and Chinese tradition, in which the leader of the state was considered the model of people's behavior and the symbol of the state's honor and dignity. The leader of the state should epitomize the "face" of the people, and the followers shall give their respect and loyalty to the leader (Wilson, 1970). Therefore, the *kawaii* merchandise disrupted the existing social order and offended the middle class sensibility by bringing in the childlike, idiotic, laughable, and disordered into formal politics. In addition, it is important to note the ideological contradictions represented by the *kawaii*: Adopting *kawaii* is to acknowledge the Japanese cultural influence on Taiwan's cultural and political agenda in spite of the historical feud between China and Japan. For the KMT campaigners, *kawaii* and the KMT's previous anti-Japan propaganda are simply un-reconcilable. But for the DPP supporters, these "childish" and "unrealistic" traits of cuteness make *kawaii* a symbol of distinction from the old political culture.

Figure 12. KMT merchandise 2004 (left); DPP merchandise 2004 (right)

Source: http://news.epochtimes.com.tw/155/4670.htm

An online blog article titled "I have an A-Bian Doll" written by "Snail," a male graduate student who was studying in Germany in March, 2004, compares the lifelike, *real* bronze statues of the former KMT leaders to the *unreal* image of the cuddly A-Bian Doll. In a nostalgic voice, the writer first recalls that the KMT presidents were usually represented as God-like national saviors or military heroes. According to Snail, the images of the KMT presidents were "lifelike and real," yet "very distant." Rather than being sarcastic or resentful, Snail writes sympathetically about Chiang Kai-shek's bronze statues: "(H)is eyes were filled with the desolateness of exile, like the so-called frontline islands [between Taiwan and China]: gazing afar at the homeland that he could never return to" (Snail, 2004). For Snail, in short, the images of the previous KMT presidents were realistic and charismatic, but very distant and sad.

Figure 13. Chiang Kai-shek's bronze statue (left); Chen Shui-bian and A-Bian Doll (right)

But things started to change. Snail writes,

> One day a few years ago, the image of our leader was no longer solemn and inhibited, and the color of his clothes was no longer bronze green. He became tender, laid-back, smiley, wearing bright colors, and had a history of running barefoot at the farm just like many of us in our childhood.

Thus for the DPP supporters, the childlike image of the A-Bian Doll has transformed elitist, paternalistic politics into a fun, down-to-earth and "fantastical" phenomenon for the voters. Although the A-Bian Doll did not indicate any connection to "running barefoot at the farm," the cuteness of the A-Bian Doll and A-Bian's rise from poverty triggered many voters' affectionate childhood memories of the land and of Taiwanese rural life. This emotional association between the A-Bian Doll and the land of Taiwan constituted a sense of subjectivity in contrast to Chiang's lonely gazing at the mainland.

Knowing that the cute A-Bian Doll is nowhere close to the lifelike sculptures or the real candidate, Snail writes about the ways in which the *unreal* Doll makes politics more *real* in people's everyday lives:

> He [Chen] enters your life just like other big shots, but he does it in a whole new way: You can cuddle him like a kitten or a puppy, and it's totally no offense to call him 'cute.' He comes in big and small sizes, so you can spend s few hundred [New Taiwan dollars] or a thousand to buy "a" him, and put him in bed next to your Teddy Bear, Doraemon, and Hello Kitty, sleeping with you at night.

The entrance of political merchandise into a voter's bed, alongside Hello Kitty, teddy bears and Doraemon, indicates the transformation of the role of politics from something "very distant" to "very intimate." In post-authoritarian Taiwan, the commodification of the opposition candidate offered a way for the common people to acquire not only a social *membership* but also a political *ownership* through their participation in consumption. At a time when Taiwan was undergoing a series of political reform and social movements, the *kawaii*

style not only softened the image of elections; it also broke the rigid boundary between popular culture and high politics.

Cuteness and Otherness in the New Taiwanese Subjectivity

Differing greatly from the patriarchal political culture under KMT's rule and the vast, masculine and aggressive image of China, the *kawaii* A-Bian series acknowledged the girlish aesthetic, which had been a fad in Taiwanese popular culture since the 1980s. As Chuang (2007) nicely puts it, "*Bian Mi* re-invoke the *kawaii* style and so further internalize the femininity, petiteness and vulnerability of Taiwan" (p. 212). Drawing on Mary Ann Doane, in her article on "Cuteness and Commodity Aesthetics," Lori Merish (1996) comments:

> Valuing cuteness entails the ritualized performance of maternal feeling, designating a model of feminine subjectivity constituted against those (ethnic, class, or national) Others who lack the maternal/ sentimental endowments (and aesthetic faculties) to fully appreciate the cute. (p.186)

In this regard, cuteness served as a marker between the in-group and the Others—such as the KMT supporters who did not appreciate the cute, and the PRC government, which had threatened Taiwan with missiles, policies and tirades.

As the KMT was losing its legitimacy and the mainlander-elites their political privileges in Taiwan in the 1990s, they shifted their emphasis of political rhetoric from anti-communism to anti-Taiwan independence, holding the DPP responsible for social turmoil and the potential war with the PRC. In 2000, for example, KMT presidential candidate Lien Chan made two TV commercials featuring a clip of Chen Shui-bian giving a speech, followed by war scenes and dozens of Taiwanese young men marching in military uniforms. This commercial echoed the message sent from Beijing indicating that voting for Chen would lead to war. This commercial exploited fear and was widely criticized for

being manipulative and improper by Taiwanese scholars and the media (Cheng, 2004). The Chen camp responded with an advertisement in major newspapers featuring Chen's only son doing push-ups single-handedly.

Figure 14. Political ad of Chen Shui-bian, March 6th, 2000

Source: http://mypaper.pchome.com.tw/kuan0416/post/1281895872

The caption reads: "He is going to serve in the military next year. His father is Chen Shui-bian." This ad effectively challenged the privileged class whose sons are exempt from the military for various reasons. While the 2-year military service is an obligation of all male citizens in Taiwan, the sons of the KMT elites, such as Lien and Soong, could easily get proof from doctors to be excused from the military. This ad therefore attracted many independent voters for Chen's identification with common citizens and his call for social equality. This ad, in a non-combative manner, also conveyed a counter message to Lien's: Rather than being intimidated by the Chinese, Chen was determined to take a stand and protect Taiwan's sovereignty should there be a war.

On March 15, 2000, Chinese premier Zhu Rongji addressed Taiwanese voters on television with a threatening remark against the DPP candidate. "Let me advise all these people in Taiwan"; Zhu warned, "do not just act on impulse at this juncture, which will decide the future course that China and Taiwan will follow. Otherwise I am afraid you won't get another opportunity to regret" (BBC News, 2000). On the same day, KMT candidate Lien Chan commented, "if Chen is elected, young men would have to trade in their *Bian Mao* for bullet-proof helmets" (Alagappa, 2001). Lien's remark and Zhu's warning backfired. On March 18, 2000, Taiwanese voters shrugged off Chinese military threats and sent Chen to the presidential hall.

Figure 15 Left: A-Bian Doll in the 2004 rally against Chinese invasion and for Taiwan Independence. Right: Chinese premier Zhu Rongji addressed Taiwanese voters on television on March 15th, 2000.

By articulating the cute aesthetics in Taiwanese discourse and consumer culture, the DPP was able to arouse the voter's empathic adoption and protection of the emerging Taiwanese identity. On February 28, 2004, the *228 Hand-in-Hand Rally for Peace*, organized by the ruling DPP, exemplified the effect of the articulation of cute merchandise and Taiwanese nationalism. At the rally, over two million Taiwanese formed a human chain across the island to protest Chinese military threats (L. Chung, 2004). At this rally, the entire range of A-Bian commodities was in attendance: People were waving A-Bian Dolls and wearing *Bian Mao* along with A-Bian Tee-shirts and accessories (Chuang, 2007). Once again the cute served as a symbol of new Taiwanese identity associated with youthfulness, peace and hope, against the hegemonic Chinese power.

After two defeats in presidential elections, the KMT was forced to undergo a series of internal reform such as transferring power to its younger generation and appropriating the DPP's campaign strategies (Liu, 2003). The A-Bian phenomenon not only restyled Taiwanese politics with popular culture and feminine expressions but also rendered the combative, paternalistic and masculine political style obsolete.

Conclusion:

From Chinese Authoritarianism to "*Kawaii*" Culture

Fans of Japanese popular culture live not only in sphere of media consumption but in the realm of political relations as well. The Japanese popular aesthetics entered the political process in Taiwan along with the young people who participated in the political movements in the 1990s. As Robert Dunn (2008) correctly argues, a consumer is not a "mere agent of something or someone else" but an active actor "who thinks, feels and acts in self-motivated, self-interested and self-reflexive ways" (p. 79).

In post-authoritarian Taiwan, the *kawaii* style became a subversive political rhetoric. The cute rhetoric helped reterritorialize Taiwan into a democratic realm where previously marginalized groups such as youth, women, and the working class were welcome. By softening the images of politics and adding consumerist participation into the election, the *kawaii* merchandise invites and enables Taiwanese voters to gain their grip on the complex political process. The *kawaii* aesthetic, a kitsch art that is usually applied to household items and mundane expressions, advocates a political process that is more close to everyday life and therefore more accessible to ordinary citizens.

The ideological power of *kawaii* lies in its ability not only to mock political supremacy and hypocrisy but also to legitimize the personal, emotional and fantasy-laden forms of political engagement. In Barthes' semiotic terms, "*kawaii*" for the young Japanomaniacs and DPP supporters signifies not only notions of "hip," "modern," and "cosmopolitan," but also "not backwards," "not KMT," and "not China." The concurrent Japanomania and A-Bian phenomenon connote the rebirth of consumer subjectivity as much as a disassociation from the imposed Chinese identity, as discussed here and in chapter four. Structurally, cute politics in Taiwan marks a historical shift from gerontocracy to rule by the young, from authoritarianism to a consumerism-driven democracy, and citizens from "not knowing how to be ourselves" to claiming a new subjectivity.

The success of the cute merchandise in Taiwan's vital presidential elections contradicts our common sense of politics, which tends to dismiss the feminine and the emotional as unreliable and unsound. The Bian-Mao Factory pioneered a revolution in political communication in Taiwan by employing the "effeminate" style (Jamieson, 1988), which focuses on narratives, interpersonal relations and good looks while the "male" style conventionally emphasizes facts, rationality and powerfulness. In her classic study of the transformation of

political speechmaking in the United States, Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1988) notes that the rise of television, an intimate medium, requires the ability to disclose a sense of private self at ease and to speak comfortably about feelings. In describing the fact that the once debased effeminate style is now desirable, Jamieson wittingly states: "The traditional male style is, in McLuhan's terms, too hot for the cool medium of television" (ibid, p. 81). Politicians who are proficient in both manly and womanly speech styles are more likely to prosper in the broadcast age. Jamieson warns that, however, only a politician who is widely considered tough can risk adopting the feminine style stereotyped as feeble.

In Taiwan, the popularity of Japanese popular culture facilitated the development of the effeminate style in politics. The androgynous beauty and cuteness embodied by Japanese male idols and the male characters in *manga* and *anime* helped narrow the gender gap between men and women in Taiwan. So it was less awkward to use a *kawaii* doll to represent a Taiwanese president than a U.S. president such as George W. Bush or Barak Obama given the different gender expectations. However, given that Japanese *manga* and *anime* are gaining enormous popularity among the younger generation in the west, the notion of Japanese masculinity and femininity may also be distributed along with the popular culture and perhaps influence the political communication in the western societies.

The recent corruption charges against Chen and his family have severely shaken the DPP and created widespread cynicism among its supporters (Rickards, 2008). The cute aesthetic, once a promise of innocence and hope, became a symbol of deception. Despite the rise and fall of the politicians, what has been established is the maturity of a participatory democracy and the new political style that is not state-centered. In March 2008, the KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou (1950-) won the presidential election voted by 7.658 million, or 58.45

percent of all eligible voters, despite the DPP's attack that Ma was born in Hong Kong, served Chiang Ching-kuo and grew up as a elite Chinese rather than Taiwanese (Bradsher, 2008). The victory of Ma, a Harvard Law graduate and known for his appearance and sincerity among his supporters, signifies that the rigid notions of nationalism and ethnic divide are no longer suitable for Taiwan. Corner and Pels (2003) noted, consumerism, celebrity and public cynicism have together restructured the field of politics that foregrounds aesthetics and style. To conclude, I draw on the following quote that nicely captures the political style in current Taiwan:

> Political style increasingly operates as a focus for post-ideological lifestyle choices, which are indifferent to the entrenched oppositions between traditional '-isms' and their institutionalisation in the form of political parties (for example, left *vs.* right or progressive *vs.* conservative), and which favour more eclectic, fluid, issue-specific and personality-bound forms of political recognition and engagement. (Cornor & Pels, 2003, p. 7)

CHAPTER SIX
MEDIA, TRANSNATIONAL CONSUMPTION AND AFFECTIVE POLITICS

Otherness as a Strategy of Indigenization

Classical political thought tends to treat foreignness as a threat to national identity or a problem to existing social norms. In her book, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (2001), Bonnie Honig switched the question—from "how should we solve the problem of foreignness" to "what problems does foreignness solve for us?"(p.4). Honig's investigation of the symbolic politics of foreignness opens our eyes to the fact that domestic identities cannot form without the Other, and democracy is often achieved with the help of foreign influences.

According to my analysis of Japanomania in the 1990s, Japan emulation helped shore up Taiwanese identification by differentiating Taiwan from China and Japan. Paraphrasing Taiwanese writer Lan Yiping's sentence that "democratization is precisely Taiwanization," I argue that "Japanomania is Taiwanization." The foreignness in Japanese popular cultural forms provided the novelty necessary for breaking the stale Sino-centric discourse of the post-authoritarian era. The widespread desire and envy of Japanese products expressed through maniacal consumption created the momentum for civic engagement in which a new form of Taiwan-centric politics was further fortified.

In addition to their manipulative potential, transnational media and foreign culture can provide unexpected expressive styles and new vistas for local liberation and social reform. Scholars have reported similar findings elsewhere regarding the close relationship between transcultural consumption and local politics. For example, in France, the popularity of American pop and rock music

has drawn policy makers and sociologists into years of heated debate over the notions of "authenticity" and "national culture" (Looseley, 2003). Similarly, in his study of television audiences in China in the 1980s, James Lull finds that foreign lifestyles shown on television inspired the Chinese in their struggles for a better standard of living: After the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, television remained a critical medium providing Chinese audiences images of freedom and democracy (J. Lull, 1997). Similarly, Ubonrat Siriyuvasak asserts that Japanese popular music, *manga*, and TV dramas together provide middle-class youth in Thailand the means to express their frustrations and symbolic resistance in a highly paternalistic society (2004). In Iran, the result of the 2009 presidential election stirred worldwide protest over voting fraud and state violence. While foreign journalists were prohibited from the "unauthorized" street demonstrations, supporters of the opposition and tech-savvy Iranians at home and abroad used social networking media, Twitter in particular, to disseminate information to the world about the most up-to-date developments in Iran. This democratic movement is now known as "The Twitter Revolution" by many political observers (Morozov, 2009).

This dissertation employs a corrective reading of Horkheimer and Adorno's writings on mass culture and a re-thinking of cultural imperialism. While no one would disagree that "The Culture Industry" is gloomy in its tone, Horkheimer and Adorno never entirely rejected the positive potential of mass media and popular culture, as many think. In their 1944 preface, Horkheimer and Ardornno wrote: "Large sections, long completed, await only a final edit. In them also the positive aspects of mass culture will be discussed" (1944, p. viii, quoted in Peters, 2003, p. 65). These sentences were missing in later editions. In his 1966 essay, "Transparencies on Film," Adorno celebrates the ways in which

youth mimic films to resist conservative social norms, and he argues that the media users can find their own ways to resist and rebel:

> In its attempts to manipulate the masses the ideology of the culture industry itself becomes as internally antagonistic as the very society which it aims to control. The ideology of the culture industry contains the antidote to its own lie.

In addition, Adorno's study on television anticipates a politics of interpretation based on the heritage of polymorphic meaning, which may lead to populist political movements. Today, with the development of media convergence and the emergence of social media such as Twitter and Facebook, audiences can easily become producers who create and disseminate meaning and greatly contribute to a participatory democracy.

The Push and Pull in Cultural Globalization

Throughout this dissertation, I have shown the ways in which transnational culture served as the medium for Taiwanese politics. Japanese idol dramas triggered social discussions on local TV production, consumption, love and beauty, and most importantly, questions of national identity in post-authoritarian Taiwan. Given the competitive education system, traditional Confucianism, and the legacy of the martial law era, Taiwanese youth encountered few resources for developing political competency and confidence. Facilitated by the rise of the Internet, Japanese TV dramas provided fourth-generation Taiwanese with a new aesthetics that suggested new means of challenging traditional paternalistic styles. In a country at the crossroads of the old and the new, Japanese aesthetics was also reflective of ethics and politics, as manifested in the 2000 presidential campaign.

In democratic societies, politicians increasingly find themselves competing with commercial media and commodities for public attention. As a result, political campaigns rely heavily on marketing strategies in order to "sell" their

policies to voters. The practice of "political marketing" in general has raised questions about the integrity of politics. Western critics have argued that political marketing subverts participatory democracy by transforming politicians into commercial products and entertainment celebrities, and worse, citizens into consumers and fans (O. Chung, 2009; Sanders, 2009; Scammell, 2003). This critique echoes the classical debate over the primacy of social structure and human agency (Giddens, 1984; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). This study, while avoiding naiveté about the manipulative potential of commodities and their producers, places emphasis on the dialectical tensions between structure and social actors. Imported popular cultural forms are not always imperialistic; they can be used for resistance and social change.

The tension between public criticism and fanatic fans reflects the tension between collective and individual needs in the age of media globalization. James Lull (2006) uses the phrase "push and pull," a dichotomy appropriated from the field of information technology and marketing, to theorize the seemingly antithetical forces in global culture. "Push" refers to the given, sometimes intrusive aspect of communication and culture. On the Internet, for example, junk mail and unwanted pop-up windows are push intrusions. "Pull" refers to the user-driven side of information technology and marketing. For instance, a user actively searching, selecting, communicating and setting up preferences according to his or her lifestyle and priorities is an example of cultural "pull."

In terms of present cultural experiences in globalization, "push" refers to the structural aspects that come to our lives without our consent: primary language, religious orientation, food and clothing, and so on. The "pull" side of culture, on the other hand, refers to individual choice, human agency and the dynamic nature of communication. In Lull's phrasing, "The push and the pull of culture therefore does not describe a bipolar category *system* of cultural direction

or influence; it refers to an ongoing, interactive, undetermined, mutually constitutive *process*"(p. 54, emphasis original).

Lull's push and pull dichotomy directs attention to the dynamic relations between the community, the media and the individual. Influenced by the cultural imperialism thesis, a majority of media studies in the so-called Third World focuses on the "push" side of culture—typically framed in terms of a "bottom-up versus top-down" dynamic (J. Fiske, 1989). My re-interpretation of Japanomania is an attempt to correct the imbalance of intellectual investment by placing more weight on the "pull" side and the complexity of local and regional struggles.

Cultural Appropriation and Nation Branding

Recent scholarly discussion suggests that cultural appropriation may be divided into four categories: exchange, dominance, exploitation, and transculturation (Rogers, 2006). While the media flows between Taiwan and Japan do not exemplify an equal relation of "exchange," it is also problematic to conceive of Japanomania as the result of outright coercion. Transculturation suggests a more realistic and complex view of cultural appropriation: a process in which cultural forms are created through appropriation from and by multiple cultural origins. The concept of transculturation allows us to better grasp the hybrid, fluid, and overlapping nature of global culture as it is influenced by the hegemonic power of transnational capitalism, nation-states, and post-colonial legacies. A vivid example can be found in the rise of Korean and Taiwanese idol dramas and pop music.

The dominance of Japanese popular culture in East and Southeast Asia began to decline in 2001 due to the increasing popularity of South Korean TV productions; this new trend was known as the "Korean Wave" (Chua &

Iwabuchi, 2008). In the early 2000s, Taiwan replaced Hong Kong as the center of production of popular culture in Chinese-language societies. Nevertheless, Japan remains the source of cultural symbols, aesthetics and media formats for Taiwan and South Korea (Chua, 2007a).

Inspired by Japanese (post-)trendy dramas, Taiwan's Chinese Television System (CTS) released the first locally produced idol drama, *Meteor Garden* (流星花園) in April 2001. Adopted from the popular Japanese *manga*, *Hana Yori Dango* (*Boys over Flowers*), *Meteor Garden* depicts the story of Shan Cai, a poor female college student who nevertheless enrolls in an elite school, and a clique consisting of four rich young men called "F4," standing for "the flowery four," whose families control not only this elite school but also several transnational corporations. While other students and faculty fear and yield to the powerful F4, Shan Cai confronts these four bullies and protects her weaker friends. Mutual respect and friendship gradually develop between Shan Cai and F4, followed by a romance between the high-spirited heroine and the leader of F4. *Meteor Garden* became the most popular drama of 2001 in Taiwan, scoring a high of 6.43 in the ratings (A. Wang, 2009). More significantly, *Meteor Garden* also became an instant hit outside Taiwan in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Japan and South Korea (Boentaram, 2002; Salterio, 2003). The four clean-cut, good-looking young men in *Meteor Garden* also formed the Mandarin pop band named F4, which was embraced by millions of devoted audiences across Asia (Lersakvanitchakul, 2003; Seno & Prelypchan, 2003).

The fanatic consumption of *Meteor Garden*, including the TV series, music albums, magazines, posters and the F4 concert tickets, resembles Japanomania in the 1990s: In Manila, fans paid up to two hundred U.S. dollars, the equivalent of several months' salary, to attend F4's live concert in September 2003. In

Indonesia, the youth "turned on to anything Chinese" (Asmarani, 2002), despite the recently lifted ban on Chinese cultural display in public. The cultural and political stigma associated with the Chinese groups in Indonesia was mainly caused by anti-Chinese laws dating back to 1966, when a failed coup attempt was blamed on a communist party allegedly supported by Beijing. As a result, many Chinese descendants adopted Indonesian names and downplayed their ethnic background. However, the frenzy over the Taiwan-made idol drama changed the status of the Chinese groups in Indonesia. "*Meteor Garden* is a phenomenon. It has made Mandarin a trendy language and ethnic Chinese actors the most wanted faces on TV here," says Media analyst Veven Wardhana (ibid). As a 2003 *Newsweek* article states in its subtitle: "F4 may be the first Mandarin pop band that all of Asia can love. And they're helping to make Chinese culture cool" (Seno & Prelypchan, 2003, p.56). Traditionally voracious consumers of Mexican telenovelas, Filipinos coined a new term, "chinovela," to refer to the Mandarin TV series amidst the widespread popularity of Taiwanese idol dramas. The differences between Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong are not recognized by most fans outside Greater China. According to Indonesian entertainment executive Daniel Tumiwa, "Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kongers. For ordinary people here, it doesn't matter; it's just Chinese to them. It makes no difference. F4 is huge, huge, huge" (ibid).

The success of Taiwanese idol dramas and pop music has generated much discussion and investigation. When being asked why they love watching Taiwanese dramas, viewers in the Philippines, Indonesia and China commonly answer:

- the low quality of local media production
- the novelty and high quality of Taiwanese imports
- fashion and "coolness"

- physical attractiveness of the idols
- peer pressure: everybody is talking about Taiwanese dramas
- a sense of "Asianness" and cultural proximity when compared to the Mexican-produced telenovelas (What makes *Meteor* chinovela so popular.2003; Lersakvanitchakul, 2003; Salterio, 2003; Seno & Prelypchan, 2003; Suwanpantakul, 2003; Torre, 2003; Torre, 2003)

These answers are strikingly similar to the answers of the Japanomaniacs in 1990 Taiwan. A comparative close examination of fans' response reveals more of a critical mass than a group of submissive followers.

The success of *Meteor Garden* provided Taiwanese producers the confidence and financial resources to create more TV series, films and pop idols and made Taiwan the leader in the world of Mandarin popular culture. When I attended a conference in Shanghai in the summer of 2007, a colleague introduced me to Ping, a 17-year-old Chinese man. Ping grew up watching many Taiwanese dramas and variety shows and listening to Taiwanese pop music. Ping told me in an enthusiastic tone that he had become a fan of "anything Taiwanese" and he was excited to get to know a "real person" from Taiwan. Other Taiwanese scholars have shared with me similar experiences of encountering enthusiastic young Chinese urbanites. While the older generations speak of colonization, the World Wars and the Cold War, the younger generation in Taiwan and China speaks the same language of popular culture. As of this writing, within the societies influenced by Chinese culture, Taiwan has become a "brand," which is somehow distinct from China in terms of quality, trustworthiness, hipness and democracy (Chua, 2007a; Seno & Prelypchan, 2003). The way Taiwanese popular culture and consumer products are embraced in China is just like the way the Japanese "brand" was enthusiastically welcomed in Taiwan. While the term "*ha-*

ri" is still derogatory in China, "*ha-tai*" (infatuating Taiwan) is perfectly acceptable and fashionable.

Conclusion

For many cultures outside of the United States, democracy and consumer society are relatively new phenomena, and therefore researchers need to be equipped with "local knowledge" and "local theory" (Geertz, 1983). When Japanese popular culture swept Asia in the 1990s, many Asian intellectuals took it as an ominous sign of the return of Japanese cultural imperialism. However, I contend that foreign media are not necessarily the most immediate oppressors and could become the source of subversive symbols and meanings for local resistance and political mobilization.

Our faulty assumptions about the purity of indigenous culture may be more responsible for the fear of Japanomania than the cultural industries of Japan themselves are. The consumption practices that seem lunatic to the elder generations are in fact closely related to consumeristic rationality, in which the good life, the trustworthiness of the product, and creativity are central to the buyers' decisions and political judgment. This consumerist rationality is key to transforming consumers into citizens (García-Canclini, 2001). As consumers get more and more choices on screen and in stores, the government and politicians have been forced to catch up with the public imagination and to compete with popular discourse, indigenous and imported. The restyling of post-authoritarian politics was carried out mainly by the younger generation Taiwanese who introduced their tastes, lifestyle, and popular culture literacy into the political domain.

Similar examples can also be found elsewhere. Countries like Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Iran, just to

name a few, share the common experience of having been dominated by imperialist and authoritarian regimes. Contradictory to many western critical theories, for many people in these countries, transnational media are less threatening than an oppressive government, outdated nationalistic discourse or bellicose neighbors, if not actually liberating. Too often, critical scholars place their focus on the ideological power of the transnational media and the struggles between exporting and importing nations, especially when the exporting country is a former or a current imperialist regime. What have been largely neglected are the local and regional struggle, the "pull" side of cultural experience and the democratic potential of the foreign media.

In the case of Taiwan, shaped by centuries of Dutch, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese imperialism, the local culture had long been formed through an ongoing interaction of foreign and domestic culture. At every inauguration of a new ruler, people would again suffer from the newly invented social stigma of their "tainted" cultural identity in relation to the previous ruler. De-Sinicization under Japanese rule, de-Japanization and re-Sinicization under the KMT, and Taiwanization and de-Sinicization under the DPP all show the intervention of political institutions in defining cultural legitimacy. This re-interpretation of Japanomania in 1990s Taiwan is an attempt to re-direct our attention to the often-silenced local violence and suffering as well as to under-theorized human agency.

Young people in East Asia have now developed a sense of East Asian identity that is constructed by regional media. Chua (2007) noted that "the construction of a pan-East Asian identity is a conscious ideological project for the producers of East Asian cultural products, based on the commercial desire of capturing a larger audience and market" (p. 134). Co-financing and the use of artists from different East Asian locations has become a common practice among media producers in this region. The younger generation is growing up with the

same urban, youthful and consumeristic lifestyles shaped by East Asian media conglomerates. Further research is called for to illuminate the (un-)changing role of nations and nationalism in a non-Western context and the shaping of political communication by the popular imagination in a global culture of hybridity.

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