

RICE UNIVERSITY

**The Affect-Emotion Gap:  
Soft Power, Nation Branding, and  
Cultural Administration in Japan**


by

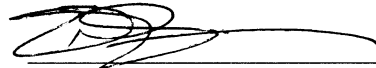
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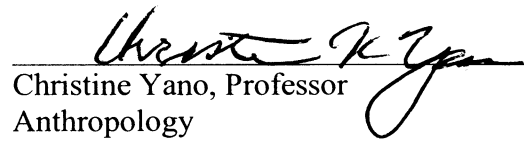
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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes the appropriation of the political theory “soft power” within Japanese national bureaucracies as a discursive mechanism through which anxious concerns for Japan’s present are manufactured into hopeful sentiments for its future. In doing so, it examines how certain nonconscious capacities to feel, *affects*, are made knowable in more formally narrated and perceived sentiments, *emotions*. These terms constitute the two sides of what I call the *affect-emotion gap*, whereby the slippages between what one feels and what one knows about what one feels are made into sites of political and economic investment.

Based on two years of fieldwork conducted at the major national bureaucracies engaged with cultural diplomacy and policy in Japan—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Japan Foundation—I observe how soft power ideologies are translated into administrative policies that seek to turn aesthetic production, specifically within the field of Japanese popular culture, into political resource. Ultimately, I argue that the uneasy accommodation of soft power ideology to everyday bureaucratic practice reveals a

contradictory movement in which soft power is at once delegitimized as practical policy and activated as discursive ideology which, in suturing economic anxiety in the present to hope for Japan's culture industries in the future, nonetheless sustains soft power's circulation.

## Acknowledgments

The debt incurred from this dissertation is enormous. Thankfully, what would otherwise weigh heavily upon me as a consequential burden is lightened by the realization that little of this product is solely my own. Where it has succeeded it has relied on partnerships, collaboration, and dialogue with a great many individuals whose contributions warrant listing each of their names as authors of this dissertation as much as my own. Where it has not succeeded it has largely strayed from these individuals, treading increasingly unstable ground to the degree I isolated my own thought from theirs. With these thoughts in mind, then, I express my deepest gratitude to those who share this dissertation's meager contributions with me and reserve its shortcomings for myself.

I am compelled to begin this section by thanking those who have been the most gracious and impressive of my supports. I am deeply humbled and forever indebted to my dissertation committee. James Faubion has been a hero of mine well before I entered the program and will remain so long after. The scope of his knowledge is unhuman. This would not be so entirely shocking if it weren't combined with an honest and skillful gentleness, graciousness, and carefulness. The combination of all these traits in a single individual is rare and special, a fiercely fine-tuned kind of wisdom and care, and I feel it a privilege to have shared his company and friendship over the years. Elizabeth Vann's dedication to her students is remarkable. I cannot yet fully fathom the pressures levied on faculty members who, new to a department, must take on a heavy load of new teaching and administrative responsibilities all the while facing increasing publication demands.

All this makes Libby's conscious and deliberate dedication to her teaching and to her students' needs all the more impressively selfless. She is an artful teacher and ideal advisor. Dominic Boyer joined the committee late in my research process and despite us having never been in residence at Rice together he admirably and graciously agreed to participate. He has quickly become an incredibly active and immensely helpful advisor. His insight is sharp and every single comment and recommendation he has given me has been precisely crafted and tremendously useful. I am sincerely grateful for his generosity. The creativity and diversity of Steven Lewis's thought is astonishing. I can recall a number of lunch meetings I have shared with him and other faculty members where he has startled the audience with the breadth of his insight but befriended them with the genuine affection with which he delivers it. I am enamored of his positive style of critique. Despite an enormous amount of responsibilities, Steve has always found time to thoroughly read and comment on my work and I am incredibly appreciative to him for it. Christine Yano has seemingly inexhaustible energy, which is dedicated to more projects, publications, and students than I can keep track of. This makes it all the more incredible that despite having no obligation to me as a student from a different university she agreed to join my committee. It is indicative of her unending kindness. Christine has long advised me in both formal and informal roles and my research could not be completed without her guidance. I am deeply grateful for her direction and support.

The anthropology department at Rice University is without a doubt an ideal environment for intellectual work. The respectfulness, collegiality, and inspiration I received from all professors in the department have sustained my own interests in anthropology. I could not do this without them. And even if I could, I would most

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My time at Rice has been made deeply significant and meaningful by all the graduate students—my friends—with whom I have shared it. I have learned immensely from them and am grateful for their friendship. I am especially indebted to my original cohort members: Ayla Samli, Michael Adair-Kriz, and Amanda Ziemba. They taught me much and their companionship, especially through the stimulating but hazardous trials of pro-seminar, has been indispensable. I also express appreciation to my adopted cohort, Stacey Pereira, Maria Vidart, and Nikki Payne, for their endearing friendship and comic relief. Two fellow students deserve special attention. First, I have never enjoyed anthropology so much as I have in Sewall Hall's basement offices in conversations over late night pizza with Nahal Naficy. No one inspires more creativity in others than Nahal and I have endlessly benefited from her friendship. Second, I would never have come this far in my project without the guidance and unwavering support of Valerie Olson. Her advice has always been equal parts incisive, encouraging, and kind and I thank her greatly for all she has done for me. I regret not being able to list all the other students to

whom I am also indebted. They have been exceptional as friends, enjoyable as companions, and I hope to keep them equally so as colleagues in the future.

I can never repay the debt I have incurred to my friends and informants in Japan over my fieldwork term. So many of them have readily and selflessly offered their time and assistance to me with clearly nothing to gain from it. Their generosity has been inspiring. Most regretful of all is the fact that I cannot thank each of them in name. Guaranteeing their anonymity is my primary responsibility. I want to express my thanks in general terms, though, to those officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Japan Broadcasting Corporation for their time and generosity. My deepest gratitude goes to those members of the Japan Foundation who with no obligation took a special interest in my project and unknowingly shepherded it along the way. Despite impossibly demanding schedules they unhesitatingly offered help at every moment and this dissertation has been entirely dependent upon their generosity.

Of those whose names I am able to mention, I offer a special thanks to Koichi Iwabuchi for his long time guidance, support, and friendship. This dissertation is as inspired by his own work as it is indebted to it. I also want to especially thank Glenda Roberts for her generosity and for the eagerness with which she has offered her assistance over my period of fieldwork. She has been an invaluable advisor to me in the field. My work has benefited from a number of other scholars in Japan without whose contributions and guidance this project could not have been completed. They have also been conscientious and generous stewards of my professional activities more generally in Japan and I know whatever progress I make in the field is due entirely to their guidance.

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Most importantly, I thank my parents Arlyn and Patti White. I have yet to fully comprehend their capacity to offer such selfless and unending support. They have enabled and sustained this project from beginning to end and this dissertation is dedicated to them.

Finally, I end with an additional and sadder dedication. The last month of this dissertation has been completed in the immediate aftermath of the Tōhoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami which have destroyed so many lives in Japan. Such events



render intellectual inquiries like this one mute, at least for a while. Presently, I welcome this silence out of reverence for the many people in Japan with whom I have developed deep connections over the last several years. At the same time, I hope this study can in even the most minimal way become relevant, useful, or even pertinent to a future and likely still recovering Japan. I dedicate this dissertation to those people struggling with disaster but ever and courageously optimistic about the future. The very best of my hopes and wishes are with you.

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### **Note on Language**

Japanese words in this dissertation are written in revised Hepburn romanization. Names are given in the traditional Japanese style of family name first and given name second. All names of personal interlocutors are pseudonyms except where permission was granted to the author. Any names resembling actual individuals are coincidental.

## Commonly Used Acronyms

ACA	Agency for Cultural Affairs	<i>Bunkachō</i>
BC	British Council	
JETRO	Japan External Trade Organization	<i>Nihon bōeki shinkō kikō</i>
JF	Japan Foundation	<i>Kokusai kōryū kikin</i>
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency	<i>Kokusai kyōryōku kikō</i>
METI	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry	<i>Keizai sangyōshō</i>
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	<i>Gaimushō</i>
NHK	Japan Broadcasting Corporation	<i>Nippon hōsō kyōkai</i>

To coin a new word or phrase for an inchoate, affectively imbued thought is both to express what has not yet found articulation and to change the dark precursor as it is drawn into an intersubjective network of similarities and contrasts. But to place a new word or phrase into an established network is also to alter the network itself in a small or large way.

—William Connolly, *Neuropolitics*

Now that's soft power!

—Japanese Director of the  
Agency for Cultural Affairs

## Chapter One

### The Affect-Emotion Gap

Signs and stories of anxiety pervade Japan's present. Falling birthrates, a rapidly aging population, a faltering economy, rising debt, slipping political prestige: these are the dominant figures through which the nation is today imagined. As if to officially confirm this anxiety, Japan's public broadcaster (NHK) has gone so far as to call it a national "syndrome" and proposed a series of programs in order to address the situation:

#### NHK to launch Overcoming "The Japan Syndrome" Campaign

January 6 2011 (Tokyo) – NHK is to start months of intensive coverage about Japan's national malaise rooted in years of economic and social stagnation, naming it "The Japan Syndrome."

The campaign will be lead by "Next Japan," NHK's flagship project providing comprehensive reporting and analysis of long-term issues surrounding Japan.

Masaru Shiromoto, head of "Next Japan" project, said "anxiety clouds over the society as Japan faces unprecedented demographic change and global competition. We will address the issue head on and search for a remedy to climb out of this situation." [NHK 2011a]

NHK's press release describes a persistent, long-lasting anxiety inflicting Japanese society and, most importantly, gives it a name: "The Japan Syndrome." Interestingly, the title is not NHK's own but is taken directly from an article in the November 20, 2010 issue of *The Economist*, "The Future of Japan: The Japan Syndrome."<sup>1</sup> Thus, in a rhetorical act that has been performed repeatedly throughout Japan's modernity, the NHK release fuses a particular national anxiety to an image of Japan as seen by the West.

In naming an abstractly perceived, national malaise, "The Japan Syndrome," NHK effectively transforms anxiety into an object amenable to administration and

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<sup>1</sup> The *Economist* article features in the NHK's promotional video for the new series (NHK 2011b).

management. Problematizing anxious sentiment as administrative object enables projects of hope as political strategy, and despite what NHK identifies as a national anxiety rooted in “years of economic and social stagnation,” there is reason to be optimistic. It is best articulated in an article widely circulated among Japan’s national government bureaucracies:

Japan is reinventing superpower—again. Instead of collapsing beneath its widely reported political and economic misfortunes, Japan’s global cultural influence has quietly grown. From pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and animation to cuisine, Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic one. [McGray 2002: 44]

Douglas McGray’s article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 2002 and translated into Japanese in the popular literary magazine *Chūō kōron* (Central Review) in 2003 became a neatly crafted narrative through which to understand Japan’s uneasy position at the cusp of shifting global power relations. True, McGray acknowledges, with its economic problems, a rapidly growing China, and an increasingly disinterested United States, Japan seems to be struggling. On the other hand, Japan’s popular culture is loved around the world; its content industries tripled in size from 1993 to 2003, making it the second highest exporter of cultural goods in the world (METI 2005); and, as was repeated to me by a number of Japanese government officials, it ranks second out of twenty-three countries in a BBC World opinion poll measuring perceptions of a nation’s “positive influence” (BBC World Service 2008). These repeatedly circulating sets of negative and positive images indicate the double movement that seems to characterize Japan’s contemporary moment. Today, to think of oneself in relation to Japan’s present is to feel both anxious and hopeful for its future.

It is no wonder, then, that in this unsettling environment of loosely circulating anxieties that McGray's article would attract so much attention. Although in no way solely responsible for igniting hope among those most responsible for Japan's future, its elite bureaucrats and politicians, like NHK's "Japan Syndrome," the article gives hope a name with its title: "Gross National Cool." The term was quickly and widely circulated throughout Japanese government offices and media and contributed in part to the label that now marks a number of national branding campaigns: "Cool Japan." The power of McGray's article lay in its ability to so neatly and concisely link Japan's growing cultural prestige with its slipping economic and political status.<sup>2</sup> The mechanism through which it did so was by associating Japan's growing pop culture presence with an emerging and quickly growing theory within international relations that this dissertation takes as its primary object of inquiry: "soft power."

### **Soft Power**

If NHK imagined Japan's contemporary anxiety through a framework that explicitly referenced Japan's relationship to the West, it is no surprise that narratives for imagining hope for Japan's future would make similar appeals. Responding to criticism in the 1980s that the United States might be losing some of its own political and economic prestige, a rapidly growing Japanese economy, not incidentally, stimulating much of this concern, Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye set about investigating the legitimacy of these claims. In 1989, as he recalls (Dodd 2011), he began by measuring the general strength of the United States' military and economic power. But he quickly realized something was missing. He called this "soft power," the ability for a nation to

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<sup>2</sup> The article itself is short, only eleven pages, and illustrated with attractive color photographs making for an easily digestible and aesthetically pleasing read.



get what it wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. Rooted in a country's culture, its ideals, and its policy, it operates by getting others to want what you want (Nye 2004: x). Most importantly, it operates distinct from a power based in military or economic strength. Nye introduced this concept in his book *Bound to Lead* in 1990 and, due to the term's rapid popularization, he outlined his theory more explicitly in *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* in 2004. The theory has been wildly popular in Japan, no doubt facilitated by Joseph Nye's widely published statement that "Japan has more potential soft power resources than any other Asian country" (Nye 2004: 85). In Japan today, one need not search far in any number of fields—political science, international relations, media studies, popular culture, economics, business—to find references to soft power as an innovative concept of modern government, politics, diplomacy, and even industry.

Today, soft power is by all measures a global discourse, circulating within an interlinked register of elite, national administrations of government and supported by a media network that in its hyper attentiveness to government and national politics facilitates communication and integration. Contributing to its global circulation is the perception that the United States, in its economic crises, war on terror, and unilateral style of international politics, is losing credibility, enabling the rise of other soft power contenders, especially in Asia. "Contenders" refers not only to Japan but, increasingly, to countries like India and China. India's rising high technology and communications sectors combined with its status as having one of the few legitimate democracies in South Asia, it is suggested, make it a viable competitor for soft power (Dodd 2011); and if the United States' soft power has often been measured in the influence of Hollywood,

Bollywood's quickly rising number high budget productions and rapidly growing fan base throughout Southeast Asia and the Middle East make India a formidable challenger. On another front, China's "charm offensive," as it has been branded (Kurlantzick 2007), is attracting even more attention than India. It made impressive displays at both the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, and its Confucius Institutes, 282 centers offering generous funding for Chinese language and culture classes, now operate in 88 countries. *Hanban*, its administering organization, aims to establish 1000 of these centers around the world by 2020 (China Daily 2010).

Typical debates surrounding the global soft power discourse discuss questions such as what is and is not soft power; who has it and who doesn't; in what is it actually rooted, whether content industries, culture, or political values; and to what degree is it dependent on harder forms of military and economic power. These are not the questions I am interested in. Rather, I want to understand how this global discourse is appropriated within national administrations whose bureaucratic elites perceive global power relations in particular ways that transform soft power into a discursive agent capable of producing and organizing new forms of local culture. National administrations make especially interesting sites in which to analyze processes like these as they occupy a middle position between global and local power structures, acting as important conduits of globalization as national officials translate perceptions of global urgencies into problems of policy imagined through local frameworks of thinking and feeling. Administrative practice, then, activates global discourses in local environments. Its capacity to affect local lives is enabled by its formulation in national policies that through intricately linked bureaucratic structures are able to penetrate everyday lives. This dissertation traces these processes

and, in doing so, shows how soft power in ideology is something much different from soft power in practice.

### **Anxiety and Soft Power**

Portraits of Japanese national anxiety like the one offered by NHK above, suggest a kind of cultural sensibility rooted in and pervasive to a uniform Japanese society. This is not what I found in my research. I conducted fieldwork among bureaucrats in Japan's national government agencies that are concerned with the administration of national culture, public diplomacy, and national branding campaigns. Specifically, I was interested in those agencies working on projects related to or designed explicitly through the lens of soft power. I refer to officials working in fields related to cultural policy as "cultural administrators." Although there is not a commonly used Japanese designation for those working specifically within the field of culture, national officials are referred to in general as *kōmuin*, or, more informally, as *oyaku nin*, a generic term for a government official or bureaucrat.<sup>3</sup> I was most interested in those *oyaku nin* tasked with the responsibility of strategizing how to effectively and ethically administer what is formalized as "Japanese culture," most specifically, "Japanese popular culture," toward a number of different ends designed to secure Japan's "national interests" in one way or another. Putting several of these words in quotes—"Japanese culture," "popular Japanese culture," "national interests"—emphasizes the contingent nature of these categories that I hope to best define through the course of ethnographic description. These officials among whom I conducted fieldwork are located in a number of different bureaucratic organizations: Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Agency for Cultural

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<sup>3</sup> *Oyaku nin* consists of the honorific prefix "O," which is sometime omitted given the relative formality of the situation, and two Chinese characters: (役), which means "duty" or "office," and (人), which means "person."

Affairs (ACA), the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and most importantly, the Japan Foundation.

What I found among these officials was a particular set of sentiments of concern, unease, and distress over the future strength and status of Japan that for the time being I call “anxiety.” An anxious concern for the future state of a nation one calls his or her own is in no way particular to the Japanese case, and, indeed, that such anxiety can be found in administrations of national culture across a number of nation states constitutes important evidence for one of my arguments that the form of anxiety found among Japanese government officials is sustained as much by interrelated structures of global culture as it is by those of local culture. However, what I identified in these administrators was a *particular* way that bureaucratic obligation binds one to a *particular* form of imagining and caring for the nation. For example, the work of national cultural administration demands that the administrator think about the state—its vitality, its problems, its future—in a way that is at once an occupational obligation and a personal responsibility.<sup>4</sup> Such a form of thinking about national concerns could in no way be conflated with a sense of national cultural identity pervasive to Japanese society or culture in general. That narratives of national culture are to a large extent produced in powerful networks circulating between national administrations and media does, in fact, signify a capacity for these narratives to circulate and affect widely, but to conflate this with Japanese culture at large masks the particular ways that powerful institutions shape

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<sup>4</sup> One might be tempted to call this particular pairing of obligation and personal investment a “vocation,” following Weber (2004). However, I see the form of obligation among cultural administrators less constitutive of subjectivity than I do in Weber’s politician and scientist; rather, I see this obligation as rooted in a particular arrangement of bureaucratic practice. A vocation in this sense does not construct a life purpose so much as it does a temporary occupational register through which one moves in and out of relative to shifting personal demands.

and circulate the discourses through which many operate in adopting, resisting, or creatively reformulating their relationship with the nation they call their own.

The study of national anxiety in Japan is not new. Its themes—insecurity in relation to Western countries, the self-Orientalization identified as a product of it, and the reactionary ethnocentrism identified as central to the still thriving genre of *nihonjinron* (“theories of Japaneseness,” often called *bunkaron* in Japanese)—have become conventional storylines in studies of modern Japan. There is no need to repeat them. However, there is, I argue, something importantly contemporary about the anxiety I found among government administrators, which is to say that in so much that the contemporary can be defined, following Rabinow, as “a moving ratio of modernity, moving through the recent past and near future in a (non-linear) space” (2007: 2), there is something particular, emergent, and instructive about such anxiety. This sense of anxious urgency, its particular contemporariness, has motivated my attempt to situate anxiety empirically within those institutional networks that sustain it. My primary aim in this dissertation is not to provide an argument about the character of Japanese culture but rather to show how, in the contemporary, particular affects of anxiety and hope both sustain and are sustained by the idea of “Japanese culture,” a discursive field hardly restricted to the geographical parameters of Japan or to those who identify themselves as of Japanese ethnicity or citizenship. I argue that soft power within Japanese national administrations serves as a discursive mechanism through which loosely formed anxieties over Japan’s economic and political future are manufactured into clear policies and vessels of hope. My secondary aim is to present fieldwork findings on the appropriation of soft power within Japanese administration as evidence for a particular way that affect

and emotion function in relation to each other in producing new arrangements and forms of cultural life.

### **The Soft Power Contradiction**

Early in my research I was struck by a particular contradiction that seemed to characterize the soft power discourse in Japan. In short, the amount of energy and optimism over soft power's potential was not matched by evidence suggesting it could, in fact, be successfully realized. Soft power seemed to face a number of real problems. First, within administrations strategizing soft power, definitions of it were multiple, poorly formulated, contradictory, and vague. Second, there was a large consensus that soft power could not be quantified in measurable indexes, a particularly acute problem for bureaucracies that are required to demonstrate clear relationships between programs and outputs in order to justify their taxpayer supported budgets. Third, what indicators *might* exist for measuring soft power's positive effects would likely become foreseeable only far into the future. The benefits of educational exchange programs, for example, can best be evaluated only ten to twenty years after their implementation, when students reach positions in industry or politics high enough to effectively influence colleagues and form partnerships beneficial to the host country. Fourth, hard evidence from those content industries cited as resources for Japan's soft power demonstrates a stagnation if not decline in many sectors (Kawamata 2005). Finally, Japan's pop culture content industries (anime, manga, music, games, film), the sector of the economy most optimistically perceived to generate Japanese soft power, is threatened by the common observation that consumers in adoration of a nation's cultural goods are equally as capable of despising its policies. While Chinese and South Koreans may adore manga,

for example, this in no way aids the Japanese government in realizing its policies, which, as issues like Yasukuni and various territorial disputes illustrate, often elicit outright hostility from foreign publics. Further, where national governments do seek to involve themselves with cultural commodities the results are often counterproductive. To put it bluntly, there is nothing more uncool than having ageing, stiff-suited bureaucrats promoting counter-culture.

Given this set of challenges imbedded in the concept and combined with the obviously enthusiastic narratives of soft power's promise relayed to me by some officials, soft power seemed to constitute a discourse sustained largely by affective energies. That is, through its ability to transform present anxiety into future hope, soft power proved effective in generating an optimism powerful enough to sustain soft power's ideological promises even in the face of its practical challenges. As soft power became slowly inscribed in various bureaucratic organizations, it manifested this contradiction more poignantly. Bureaucracies which had over a long time established standardized procedures and objectives found it difficult to incorporate such a vague concept into practical administration. However, the circulation of the concept itself increasingly naturalized the term within bureaucratic environments. Thus, as soft power was becoming naturalized within government administrations it was at the very same time revealing its unnatural adaptability to them. What resulted was a number of new kinds of policies and programs, some quite strange in the eyes of everyday observers (see chapters 6 and 7), that were previously unimaginable outside a logic of soft power. All this demonstrates the power of affective investments in national imagining to direct, sustain, and alter both policy and the forms of its institutionalization. I argue that in the way soft

power becomes unevenly appropriated and inscribed by government administrations we see a particular function of how affect and emotion interact with each other in the production of emergent cultural forms.

### **Culture, Emotion, Affect**

Anthropological investigations of emotion have been traditionally undertaken within frameworks of “culture.” These are the elegant ethnographies of Levy’s Tahitians (1973), Rosaldo’s Ilongets (1980), Lutz’s Ifaluk (1988), and Schieffelin’s Kaluli (1990). Such works have gone far in relativizing the Western demarcation between emotion and reason and the common subjugation of the former to the latter. As is commensurate with ethnographic texts from the 1970s and 80s, arguments proceed within a cross-cultural framework, taking up native narratives of emotive life and contrasting them with familiar Western cases in an exemplification of cultural difference. Emotions in these works reside in individuals who embody, feel, and perform those sentiments particular and common to a particular culture or “collective body,” an illustrative metaphor. The idea that single individuals can serve as typified representatives of the collective at large is the premise upon which these as well as other, classic single-informant or “person-centered” ethnographies—Crapanzano’s *Tuhami* (1985), Shostak’s *Nisa* (1990)—are legitimized. This cross-cultural framework serves the time and object of these ethnographies well. Ethnographic work among globally intertwined networks of cultural processes, however, cannot rely on the same conceptual borders between self and other. Globalization has in many sites, though not all, rendered this relationship virtually unworkable; and the reflexive critique of anthropological authority in the 1980s has rendered it almost unthinkable. These developments have had significant effects on the working conditions



of ethnographers in the field (Faubion 2009), significant enough to inspire anthropologists to rethink the notion of “emotion” as an individuated, collectively shared object appropriate to the study of sentiment in cultural context.

Recent years have seen a burgeoning interest in the notion of “affect.” Patricia Clough has gone so far as to call it the “affect revolution” (2007: ix). And like most academic “revolutions” or, perhaps more appropriately named, “fads,” definitions, redefinitions, and reformulations proliferate faster than the time it takes to establish a common ground for inquiry. In general, recent work on affect follows one of two genealogical trajectories. The first is more generally found in psychology, often intersecting with evolutionary debates inspired by Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), passing through and often splitting at James’s publication, “What is an Emotion” (1884), then authoritatively relegated to the realm of instincts and the unconscious in Freud, soon after adopted in various forms in the cognitive sciences, and finally culminating in its most recent forms in works like Silvan Tomkins’ momentous *Affect Imagery Consciousness* (2008). The second and more often-cited trajectory is philosophical, beginning with Spinoza’s *Ethics* in 1677, rekindled in Deleuze’s radical materialism, and most popularized today in the work of Brian Massumi (2002). The plethora of scholars (Lawrence Grossberg 1992, 2005; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri 2000, 2004, 2009; Rei Terada 2001; Philip Fisher 2002; Eve Sedgwick 2002; Sara Ahmed 2004; Theresa Brennan 2004; Manuel De Landa 2006; Patricia Clough 2007, Kathleen Stewart 2007; Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth 2010) within the humanities and social sciences recently taking up projects that at least in part address affect are most often indebted to this latter tradition.

The explosion of these studies, especially in the social sciences, begs the questions, why affect? Why now? Do these publications indicate a simple resurgence of interest in emotion under a newer and somewhat sexier new name? Or does affect constitute a realm of feeling distinct from emotion and worthy of alternative modes of inquiry? A survey of the literature suggests, I think, both. For example, in 1983 Arlie Hochschild published *The Managed Heart*. In it she introduced the concept of “emotional labor” (7) to both emphasize capital’s dependence on and appropriation of emotion as well as to designate a set of industries in which, as in her example of the flight attendant, “the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself” (1983: 5). Almost two decades later, in their books *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004) Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri introduce, or at least popularize, the term “affective labor”:

What warrants this focus on affect rather than emotion is that "unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking. Affective labor, then, is labor that produces or manipulates affect. [2004: 108]

To be fair, Hardt and Negri indeed mobilize the term “affective labor” to describe a set of processes unconsidered by Hochschild, specifically in their historicization of the changing role of labor under evolving forms of capitalism (Hardt 1999). Still, their distinction between emotion and affect as apportioning the former to “mental phenomena” and the latter to both “body and mind” hardly constitutes a distinct field of inquiry. As testament to this, Hardt and Negri seem even to allude to, if not outright appropriate, Hochschild’s example: “One can recognize affective labor, for example, in the work of legal assistants, *flight attendants*, and fast food workers (service with a

smile)” (2004: 108, italics added). Although it is grossly unfair to limit a critique of Hardt and Negri’s “affective labor” to this single example, it indicates the degree to which terms like “affective labor” have become commonplace within current social scientific rhetoric without clear justifications for its distinction from terms like “emotional labor.”<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Brian Massumi’s work provides a clear justification for why affect should be distinguished from emotion, thus opening up a new space for critical theory’s investigation of feeling outside the realm of emotion. Massumi builds from Deleuze’s materialism, rooting affect not only explicitly in the body but, in faith to Spinoza, in the body’s capacity for movement. Preserving Spinoza’s definition of affect as a capacity to affect or be affected and the body as that which is defined by “relations of movement and rest” (2002: 15), he says, “For Spinoza, the body was one with its transitions. Each transition is accompanied by a variation in capacity: a change in which powers to affect and be affected are addressable by a next event and how readily addressable they are” (15). Massumi maintains Spinoza’s emphasis on affect as a capacity, an important point in my own application of the term. Affects are capacities enabling action and an exercise of power: power to affect but also to be affected. Further, each affective movement enables a “next event,” in which relations of affect are in a shifting relation with others with different capacities to subsequently affect. Massumi’s philosophy is one of movement and *in-betweenness*, charting how possibilities for new appropriations and forms of life are constantly emerging.

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<sup>5</sup> Despite what I think is a limiting characterization of it at this citation in *Multitude* (2004: 108), subsequent engagements with the term “affective labor” by some anthropologists have proved effective in mobilizing “affect” as a term distinct from emotion, specifically to refer to modes of feeling that become the object of particular projects of politics and labor rather than the medium of them (see especially Muehlebach 2011).

Most important to Massumi's treatment of affect is his clear distinction of it from emotion on the basis of consciousness. Affects are explicitly nonconscious, and as such, are absolutely resistant to narrative, to cognitive capture: "It is the perception of this self-perception, its naming and making conscious, that allows affect to be effectively analyzed—as long as a vocabulary can be found for that which is imperceptible but whose escape from perception cannot but be perceived, as long as one is alive" (36). In short, in trying to describe and to name affect one only accomplishes the realization that affect has escaped perception. By quantum logic, once one observes the phenomenon, in fact, precisely *because* one does so, it's gone. Taken at his word, the consequences of this fact should be devastating for an anthropology of affect whose task is precisely that of capture and narration. How does one capture the *uncapturable*, narrate the *unnarratable*?

This is precisely the problem that Kathleen Stewart makes the object of inquiry in her experimental ethnography, *Ordinary Affects* (2007). Admitting, or really posing as a question, the impossibility of capturing affects in academic prose, Stewart presents a number of vignettes stripped of explanation, interpretation, or analysis that are intended to *point* to affect. She does not narrate affect but rather recreates the situations in which a particular matrix of affects arise. Her work is beautifully crafted, her point effectively expressed, and she succeeds in *communicating* rather than *describing* affect. The problem that remains, though, is accounting for what allows for Stewart's ability to communicate affect at all? Remaining faithful to Massumi's distinction of emotion from affect requires understanding the latter as uncoded intensities of feeling, devoid of semantic content. Given this fact, we should not expect Stewart's vignettes to affect the

reader through description alone. Yet they *do* affect. The reason, I think, is because those readers having similar experiences to those described by Stewart have had the particular capacities to feel similarly in those situations *similarly* built into their bodies. That is, experiences do, in fact, code bodies in certain ways, making them susceptible to arousal in particular cultural arrangements of space and time. Stewart's vignettes affect a good number of American readers, then, because they are, for lack of a more appropriate term, "American" affects.

My point in this is not to challenge Massumi's distinction. Massumi would in no way object to the suggestion that affective capacities do not depend on their environment for both construction and activation. In fact, rooted firmly in systems theory, his argument depends on it. However, I do want to mobilize Massumi's rich description of affects for my own project of ethnographic description, and this requires finding a way to write about the social construction or "coding" of affects.

Given Massumi and Stewart's problematization of affect as one of "vocabulary" and "narration" respectively, it is fitting that I should find the most suitable treatment of affect for my own study in a literary theorist. Sianne Ngai is more confident than me in attributing to Massumi an understanding of affect and emotion that categorically distinguishes between the two. Extrapolating from his claim that "affect is feeling or 'intensity' disconnected from 'meaningful sequencing, from narration'" (Massumi 2002: 28), she reasons the following:

The difficulty affective "intensity" poses for analysis is thus strikingly analogous to the analytical difficulty which Williams coined his term "structures of feeling" to address—that is, the kind posed by social experiences which "do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and action" (1977: 128). In escaping qualification much

like Williams' structures of feeling, which as "social experiences in solution" lie "at the very edge of semantic availability" (132), affective intensity clearly creates difficulties for more positivistic kinds of materialist analysis, even as it always remains highly analyzable in or as effect (Massumi 2002: 260, note 3). [Ngai 2005: 26].

The "difficulty" Ngai identifies is analogous to the one I described in Stewart. However, Ngai offers a working solution. Rather than placing affect and emotion in categorically distinct fields whereby one can in no way "know" the other, she places them on a continuum of feeling. She calls this a "modal" distinction in contrast to Massumi's "formal" one:

What the switch from formal to modal difference enables is an analysis of the transitions from one pole to the other: the passages whereby affects acquire the semantic density and narrative complexity of emotions, and emotions conversely denature into affects. [Ngai 2005: 27]

Ngai maintains Massumi's critique that affects do not have the social formalization of emotions but she argues that this does not mean they lack structure altogether, that they are "code-free" or "meaningless" (27). The distinction, thus, is one of degrees of perceptibility. Her formulation opens the possibility for ethnographic description and an anthropology of affect that enables the study of emotional processes not exclusively catalogued under the domain of emotion. And also importantly, it does so by remaining open to processes of movement and transition that better characterize cultural processes under globalization today, processes that move in transnational lines and feedback loops less constrained by classic models of culture.

This finally brings me to the formulation of affect upon which my own study relies, one highly indebted to both Massumi's categorical cognitive distinction between affect and emotion and Ngai's move from the formal to modal frame of analysis that seeks to transcend it. What both theorists emphasize in their treatment of affect is its

resistance to formalization in conscious thought. Massumi surmised that knowing affect in its pure affective form was impossible. Ngai suspended this impossibility for what she calls “aesthetic productivity” (2005: 28). Both approaches acknowledge what can be called an epistemological gap between affect and emotion. It is precisely in this gap between feeling that is felt but not perceived and feeling that is felt and made known that I identify a particularly active process of cultural generation. I call this function the *affect-emotion gap*.

### **The Affect-Emotion Gap**

The affect-emotion gap posits that what we feel and what we know about what we feel are two distinct things. Most importantly, and faithful to Massumi, what we feel is, in its reality, impossible to know.<sup>6</sup> And it is this inability to know affect combined with a will to make it known that gives the affect-emotion gap its productive capacity.

Although I take liberty in constructing affect in a way more conducive to anthropological analysis, I feel it at the same time preserves both Massumi’s and Spinoza’s understanding of it entirely. I treat affect as nonconscious capacities to feel, built into bodies by the impossibly complex feedback loops established between the organism and its environment, or what amounts to the same thing because it is inextricably and thoroughly a part of it, its culture. One can recognize affect most simply in moments of individual laughter or tears, where feeling swells in the body irrespective of the mind’s ability to account for it. One can also recognize it in the surging energies of crowds, where collective bodies are moved to action, often violent, that no individual subjects would in their singularity otherwise perform. Affects are rooted in bodies but they are also entirely

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<sup>6</sup> More specifically, it is impossible to know in both the moment and quality of its ontological emergence. It can only ever be known as something other than what it is.

social things. That laughter is at once the most spontaneous and most culturally dependent forms of affective evocation is evidence for this.

Emotion, on the other hand, is what a body knows, performs, and communicates as feeling. It is feeling embodied in mind, narrative, and symbol. The distinction is nearly commensurate with the American psychologists Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer's "two factor theory of emotion" (1962), breaking emotion into a physiological arousal and cognitive label. However, I want to allow for the possibility that affects can take form in a range of objects in processes of being made known, not simply in cognitive labels like love, pride, and anger but also in complex narratives, symbols, processes, and in a diverse array of configurations in which feelings are made perceivable, such as public policy. This is the point made by Silvan Tomkins in a profound but deceptively simple observation: "Affect can take any object" (1991, I: 347, cited in Sedgwick 1995: 503). The point is also captured in Michael Taussig's notion of the "mimetic faculty," although I want to avoid his distinction between culture and a nature that exists outside it, however figurative his always elegant writing might have otherwise implied: "I call it the mimetic faculty, the nature that culture uses to create second nature" (1993: xiii).

The impossibility of entirely accounting for one side of the affect-emotion gap via the other enables its productivity. However, to be more precise, it is not the gap alone that activates its productivity but the formulation in culture of the gap as something that *should*, *could*, and in many cases, *must* be reconciled. One could call this desire, or motivation. One could also, I think, call it "will," of a kind that if not in accordance is at least in tune with the form of Nietzsche's "will to power" that claims, "All meaning is a



will to power” (Cavelier 2010). However, one should wholly *not* mistake such a will as some universal mark of *anthropos*, as if it either preceded or constituted some necessary condition for the human, or even the *uber*-human. One could certainly imagine and even point to ethical projects of living, many called “religious,” that take gnosis not as the telos of practice but as the impossible, unattainable, or sacred object whose secrets are meant to be venerated rather than known.

Today’s economics and politics have, however, found the activation of the affect-emotion gap in their own will to power more productive and more desirable than its veneration. The affect-emotion gap reveals how the difference between what we feel and what we think about what we feel often becomes the site of repeated political, economic, and ethical appropriation. It recognizes that any project to make affect known is a political one. Knowing is an action that is always already constituted through arrangements of power and techniques for knowing. Projects of knowing become projects of power as narratives offering closure of the affect-emotion gap, and the varying methodologies—ethical, religious, scientific—mobilized toward that end, are applied to economic and political gain. This is not to suggest something necessarily sinister about such projects—even the most venerable of meaning making practices operate under similar configurations of epistemology and power; it is only to say that those narrative investments in the affect-emotion gap backed by the most resources and most sound infrastructure tend to turn what enables their success—largely, social, political, and economic capital—into ends themselves.

Psychoanalysis is an exemplary model of the institutionalization of the affect-emotion gap. Through the naming of the “unconscious” it constitutes a science and

politics of knowing or interpreting what one is affected by but cannot realize. Further, psychoanalysis creates the desire that both sustains and legitimizes its discourse, inspiring in many of its American interpretations both a will to know one's "true" self and a methodology to do so. Related, though by no means constitutive of it, one finds similarly constructed models of interpreting affect in a pharmaceutical industry operating under a logic of late capitalism where advertisements name low level states of affect as "depression" or "social-anxiety disorder" (SAD) and high ones as "hypertension" or "restless leg syndrome" (RLS).

The advertising industry, which also serves the pharmaceutical industry's generation of capital, is perhaps the most dominant appropriation of the affect-emotion gap. Pioneered in large part by Freud's nephew Edward Bernays in an industry newly imagined in the form of "public relations" in the 1920s, it applied Freud's science of the self to industry, reappropriating the affect-emotion gap to even more radically productive ends. It reasoned that if there exists such opacity between what people feel and what they know about what they feel, one need not be satisfied with a science that *explains* affect but can extrapolate from that science a method that actually *engineers* it (Bernays 1952). Bernays transformed public relations from a mechanism that sought to understand what consumers want to one that explicitly *tells* them what they want. Interestingly, such a logic of advertising operates similarly within nation branding campaigns, a major strategy of soft power cultivation.

Today, realized in the advertising industry, public relations has inundated our lives to such a degree that not only do we expect industry to tell us how we feel but we also know perfectly well that we are being manipulated by it. It is obvious that the sports

car ad appeals to us through images of sex and prestige. We get it now. However, what is significant about this is that recognizing advertising's effects is not in itself sufficiently liberating. We may still be motivated to buy the car despite knowing that we are being manipulated to do so. Such a fact confirms the power that affects hold over emotion: decoding them does not necessarily disarm them.

### **The Empirical Basis of the Affect-Emotion Gap**

From one perspective, in understanding how emotion functions in culture one may do without the philosophy of Spinoza and the high theory of Deleuze and Massumi. That is, in the way they appropriate aspects of culture toward their own ends, the pharmaceutical industry, advertising, nation branding, and, indeed, soft power, have their *own* theory of emotion. It is a pragmatic one. Advertising discovers quite on its own a slippage between feeling and its form of cognizance. It proves or manufactures this slippage by producing out of it capital. Thus, the empirically observable products of these discourses in action serve as evidence for the affect-emotion gap as an operative theory of feeling in culture. In my fieldwork, soft power proved to operate similarly, identifying a productive incongruence between what people feel and what they “know” about what they feel. I examine how the affect-emotion gap is brought to light in my fieldwork in two ways: one that operates through the discourse of nation branding and one that operates through the term soft power more generally.

#### *Nation Branding*

Nation branding stakes a claim in the gap between what consumers feel about their products and what they know about what they feel about their products. In Japan, where nation branding is applied specifically within the field of popular culture, it seeks

to capitalize on the affective attachments consumers build between themselves and their commodities. Nation branding offers an alternative narrative for these affective attachments, suggesting that one likes anime not for its unique story lines or fantastic worlds but because it possesses a charm rooted in a Japanese culture. And on account of that, if one shows affection for anime, a commodity imbued with the charm of Japanese culture, nation branding reasons that one might also show affection for other products and elements of Japanese culture in which, precisely because they are “Japanese” things, possess the same charm. “Japaneseness,” then, becomes the object of appeal, and to the degree that popular commodities can be labeled with the charm of Japan, called in Japanese branding strategies “Cool Japan,” nation branding can stimulate appeal in other commodities produced by Japanese industry, both revitalizing industry as well as cultivating an affection that can be counted as Japanese soft power. I take up this aspect of the affect-emotion gap in nation branding strategies most specifically in chapter 5.

### *Soft Power*

My analysis of the affect-emotion gap within administrations of national culture treats soft power as a discursive mechanism for making anxious affects known through various narratives, policies, and strategies for realizing national prestige. Soft power as operative discourse, rather than as ideological theory, reveals some of the ways capacities to feel anxious about the nation have been variously built into bodies, both administrative and personal. Discovering slippage between soft power’s promises and its actual products, and between its ideological forms and its practical ones in administration, I show how in the various ways that soft power assembles new fields of knowledge and power in relation to one another it reveals the productive function of a gap between

feelings that are experienced and felt in one way and stories that make those feelings known in another. In this way one can witness how the incongruence between both sides of the gap function like a fractal equation, each side feeding the other with new information that enables subsequent responses and capacities to affect.<sup>7</sup> The dissertation primarily addresses this function of the affect-emotion gap.

Finally, before moving on from an explicit discussion of affects in relation to emotion, I want to make a further distinction, not between affect and emotion but between *affect* and *affects*. By doing so I hope to establish some precision in both my own application of affect and in the way affect comes to be discussed in anthropological theory more broadly. By “affect,” I refer, quite faithfully, to Spinoza, to the body’s ability to affect and be affected. That is, I refer to affect fundamentally as “capacity,” most specifically, as capacity to feel and be moved in particular ways. By “affects,” on the other hand, I refer to different *kinds* of feelings and capacities, to their moods, intensity levels, and tendencies. This enables me to describe a particular set of affects as “anxious,” in that they are characterized as having a medium intensity level with an irritating and uneasy tone and show a general proclivity to attach to certain kinds of feelings and narratives over others.

### **Making Affects Known**

In his study of the relation between neural and cultural networks, William Connolly offers a passage which eloquently captures how my research moves from an analysis of anxious affects to their inscription and transformation in soft power policies:

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<sup>7</sup> I refer to Benoit Mandelbrot’s discovery of a set of fractal equations for which each side of the equation establishes a feedback loop with the other, essentially enabling new and unique outputs to infinity in both positive and negative directions. I allude to Mandelbrot’s equation as a metaphor for how affect and emotion continually affect and effect changes in the other, creating new responses but also forming perceivable patterns and trends of affective production (See Lesmoir-Gordon 2010).

To coin a new word or phrase for an inchoate, affectively imbued thought is both to express what has not yet found articulation and to change the dark precursor as it is drawn into an intersubjective network of similarities and contrasts. But to place a new word or phrase into an established network is also to alter the network itself in a small or large way. [2002: 72]

Connolly's description resonates with an image of the affect-emotion gap that recognizes a productivity in the translation of unformed but circulating affects into a network of relations always already shot through with unequal lines of power in which those affects are put into discursive and cognitive play. The NHK press release I opened this chapter with is just one way of naming a set of abstractly perceived, uneasy feelings evoked in imagining the state of Japan as nation. It calls these feelings "anxiety" and "melancholy" (NHK 2011). In the course of its reporting on the "Japan Syndrome" NHK will no doubt provide even more well-formulated narratives in which anxious affects can take knowable shape. In turn, it will consequentially alter those affects, providing, in the hopes of the broadcaster, a "remedy to climb out of this situation" (2011).

In John Dewey's unique theory of the public (1927), he describes the role that agencies like Japan's public broadcaster play in taking what he calls the "indirect consequences" of human action, which are "felt rather than perceived," and making them known: "At present, many consequences are felt rather than perceived; they are suffered, but they cannot be said to be known" (1927: 131). Required in the process of making such unperceived feelings known is a form of presentation: "Presentation is fundamentally important, and presentation is a question of art. Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling of it by emotion, perception and appreciation" (183). Dewey's theory emphasizes the role artists play in the process of making "indirect consequences," a term

entirely commensurate with my use of the word “affects,” known. He published these words in his work *The Public and its Problems* (1927) at a time when the mass media in the United States was perceived as having more influence in society than ever before.<sup>8</sup> His “artists,” thus, referred equally if not explicitly to the media which he saw as having significant responsibility in aiding in the construction of a healthy public.

Interestingly, Dewey’s theory of the public was simultaneously a theory of the emergence of the state, broadly conceived: “When indirect consequences are recognized and there is effort to regulate them, something having the traits of a state comes into existence” (12). States, publics, or communities more generally come into being, Dewey argues, through specific problems around which they organize. The translation of unperceived consequences of social interaction affecting a group of individuals into known perceptions is the process through which that group comes to realize itself as a community. Extrapolating from both Dewey and Connolly, we can understand soft power as a form of presentation that translates a set of anxious affects, themselves a consequence of a particular social organization of “nation” and “citizen,” into known emotions of concern for the nation’s present status or of hope for its future revitalization. Constituting those affects in terms of a discursive pairing of politics and culture, as Connolly writes, is to alter those affects—his “dark precursor” (2002: 72). But to bring forth a new form of presentation is also to alter the previously existing network of relations that paired affects to cognitive scripts and symbols in different ways.

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<sup>8</sup> This problem, in fact, became the central point of what came to be called the “Dewey-Lippman debates,” an expression referring to a set of arguments put forth in text between Walter Lippmann (1922; 1925) and John Dewey (1927). In fact, there was no actual set of formal debates; nor was there significant evidence that the two consciously wrote in response to one another. As Michael Schudson argues, the expression was an invention of liberal intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s who sought to “take stock and seek hope” in a similar “moment of democratic dissolution” (2008: 1032). (Also see Marres 2005).

### **Methodology and Figures of Fieldwork**

How does one go about tracing an ever-shifting network of relations between affect and its discursive presentations? George Marcus provides one possibility in what has now become a rather standard approach to multi-sited research. Revisiting his definition of the multi-sited is useful, especially in noting the imagery with which he describes it:

Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography. [1998: 90]

Marcus imagines the multi-sited field in various kinds of lines: “pathways,” “chains,” “threads.” They are lines of the ethnographer’s own design but they are argued as having embedded in them an empirically observable logic of connection. One strategy for both discovering and observing these lines is to follow particular subjects, objects, metaphors, stories, or conflicts as they circulate within a network of relations, illuminating the logic of those relations in the process (89-95). Following “soft power” through a network of national bureaucracies is an ideal strategy for tracing patterns of affective evocation and attachment. Where soft power emerges, I found, and perhaps not surprisingly, it is often accompanied by historical contextualizations that emphasize themes such as prestige (“Japan as number one”), confidence (and its escapes), and attention (specifically in regard to the United States). Such themes consistently evidence the development of a poignant capacity among officials to feel anxious in various moments of imagining Japan. And as I have already mentioned, soft power also elicits sentiments of hope for Japan’s revitalization through the fields of popular culture and the content industries. In



tracing soft power through networks of Japanese administration, which, incidentally, are in no ways limited to Japan's national borders, what I observed was soft power's ability to suture loosely formed affects of anxiety surrounding images of Japan's current status to sentiments of hope for a more prestigious future. In this way soft power acts as a discursive needle and thread repeatedly stitching tight the affect-emotion gap.

Marcus's lines, then, serve as an important metaphor guiding a multi-sited methodology. Most importantly, they provide a way of orienting oneself in conditions of fieldwork where traditional notions of the "culture" concept prove unsustainable. Soft power continually moves through and in relation to global circuits of influence. Under these conditions one needs alternative models for piecing together sometimes awkward and incongruent wholes from the ever-moving parts. Paul Rabinow's formulation of a toolkit to negotiate precisely these conditions proves useful, especially in his appeal to Michel Foucault's understanding of the *dispositif* (apparatus), a model equally as dependent on images of lines and relations:

A resolutely heterogeneous grouping comprising discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, policy decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic, moral and philanthropic propositions; in sum, the said and the not-said, these are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements. [cited in Rabinow 2003: 51]

Rabinow's consideration of Foucault's few and sometimes altering views on the apparatus suggest a concept constructed with less formality than could safely warrant a direct application in fieldwork. But as Rabinow notes of Foucault's work, as he does of his own, such concepts might be unproblematically taken up in so much that they prove useful as "toolkits" for subsequent research, within reason of course (Rabinow 2003: 50). Soft power may not meet Foucault's criteria for the apparatus as a network of relations; it

may be better to call that network “cultural diplomacy” or “public diplomacy.” However, in my fieldwork I observed how soft power functions as precisely that which *establishes* relations between heterogeneous groupings of objects. Soft power shows an amazing ability to connect a set of knowledges, images, institutions, utterances, and administrative techniques in a particular relation with one another that was previously unimaginable. Foucault’s apparatus proves useful in so much that it aids in the elucidation of this fact.

The imagery of lines that arises with Marcus and Foucault are even more explicit in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. There, they serve not only as metaphors of circulation and connection but also of determination. This is another function of lines that proves important in my fieldwork. In “What is a *Dispositif*,” Gilles Deleuze generalizes Foucault’s work as an “analysis of concrete ‘*dispositifs*.’” He then proceeds to define an apparatus as a “skein,” a “multilinear whole,” “composed of lines of different natures” (2007: 343). “Lines,” then, become essential for Deleuze’s description of Foucault’s apparatus. He describes them as directions of force that establish connections between elements, rendering them capable of affecting one another and even productive of things—the way a fishing line can produce a fish by means of connecting a pole to bait (345). Deleuze identifies four different types of lines: lines of visibility; lines of utterance; lines of force; and lines of subjectivation. In this sense lines enable what can be seen, expressed, affected, or, in the latter case, individuated into something called a “self,” “subject,” “group,” or a “people.” Deleuze’s lines provide a richer metaphor than those of Marcus in suggesting how a researcher should move through a network unveiled by their tracing. In short, he should not simply identify which lines are of importance but also pay attention to *how* those lines connect, given the fact that the way they relate

disparate objects to one another actually determines the kind of cultural formations that are subsequently produced. Deleuze suggests that research among apparatuses might entail not only following lines but “untangling” them: “Untangling the lines of an apparatus means, in each case, preparing a map, a cartography, a survey of unexplored lands—this is what [Foucault] calls ‘field work’” (343-344). In turning fieldwork into ethnography through writing, I tried to pay specific attention not only to how lines of soft power connect objects but also to how they enable varying capacities to affect and determine those objects.

For example, while tracing soft power reveals numerous lines of connection, not all of these are significantly productive of cultural emergence and influence. The term “soft power” certainly moves through spaces of theory, academia, government administration, media, and a number of sites in the everyday, but it proves most productive in those lines that connect administrations of national culture, not only between different bureaucracies in Japan concerned with cultural administration but also between their parallel organizations in other nation states. Like neurons in a neural network, as more of these lines of communication are established between bureaucratic nodes and enable more frequent exchanges of information, they grow in strength and in affective capacity, making them significantly more powerful in their ability to shape and activate the soft power discourse. This is why I limit my study of soft power primarily to those bureaucratic agencies engaging with it. Supported by significant capital and infrastructure, they play the most prominent role in determining how soft power will affect those sites and subjects it attempts to accommodate to its own interests.

### **Cultural Expediency**

The way Deleuze's lines differently enable cultural production across time and space also describes the uneven processes by which "culture" has become variously appropriated by capital and politics under globalization. Global flows are not, of course, smooth. Soft power's emergence has dramatically reconstituted the field of culture as an active site for new projects of political investment and contest through its ability to turn aesthetic production into political resource, or what George Yúdice has called "culture-as-resource":

*Culture-as-resource* is much more than commodity; it is the lynchpin of a new epistemic framework in which ideology and much of what Foucault called disciplinary society (i.e., the inculcation of norms in such institutions as education, medicine, and psychiatry) are absorbed into an economic or ecological rationality, such that management, conservation, access, distribution, and investment—in "culture" and the outcomes hereof—take priority. [2003: 1]

The increasing circulation of the soft power discourse has reframed older debates of cultural imperialism, recasting culture in a new ethical matrix of criteria for determining the proper and improper uses of culture. If Hollywood under the framework of cultural imperialism was a malignant force, under soft power it is an exemplary resource for a more modern and ethical employment of power relative to older, less refined, hard power strategies of military and economic coercion. The increasing naturalization today of soft power as something every nation *can* and *should* cultivate puts culture at the forefront of the field of international political contest. Such developments shows culture's unique ways of globalizing relative to other spheres of global flow, as Malcolm Waters describes in the opening to his book, *Globalization*:

The theorem that guides the argument of this book is that: *material exchanges localize; political exchanges internationalize; and symbolic exchanges globalize*. It follows that the globalization of human society is contingent on the extent to which cultural arrangements are effective relative to economic and political arrangements. We can expect the economy and the polity to be globalized to the extent that they are culturalized [1995: 9, cited in Yúdice 2003: 29]

National administrations like the ones among which I conducted fieldwork occupy a critical position in the processes Waters describes. Interlinked with counterpart agencies in other nation states, they create powerful architectural grids that direct the flow of certain *kinds* of cultural exchange, enabling and accelerating some forms while effectively demobilizing others. Such functions of an interlinked register of national administrations, which I discuss at length in chapter 3, reveal potential ideological closures embedded in soft power thinking. These closures have serious consequences for how nation states construct notions of cultural citizenship as it is accommodated to economic and political demands made urgent by intensifying pressures of international competition.<sup>9</sup>

As a globally circulating discourse, soft power shows itself exemplary of what Appadurai has called the “cannibalizing” properties of globalization more generally:

The central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thereby proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular. [1996: 43]

Soft power’s ambiguity as theory makes it an especially productive agent of globalization’s cannibalizing capacities: it is as capable of facilitating homogenization as it is of fracturing and resisting it. This dissertation argues that the cultural production emerging from much of soft power’s fracturing as it is appropriated within Japanese

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<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Koichi Iwabuchi for his discussions with me on the notion of “ideological closure.”

national administrations is dependent on the degree to which soft power feeds on and is fueled by affective energies engendered by particular arrangements of national imagining, bureaucratic structure, and locally circulating sentiment. I argue that a constellation of affects loosely identified as “anxious” are the dominant energies feeding soft power’s prolific output of new cultural arrangements and forms of life in and through the idea of Japan.

### **Anxiety’s Space**

In situating the affect-emotion gap within the context of Japan and the literature of Japan anthropology more generally, I want to establish more clearly what I mean by “anxiety” and how I treat its relationship to soft power. Anxiety as a field of related affects is a set of capacities to feel an ongoing, medium-level intensity of energy that is irritating and irksome enough to motivate its realization in emotion or some other cognitive vessel of conscious recognition in order to transform it into something less uncomfortable. As such, it always shows a propensity to move forward, to find objects in which it can be made known, managed, and, ideally, converted into something more positively productive. Anxiety has both spatial and temporal dimensions. Its space, although certainly that of the individual body, is also, and more importantly, that which is created in the relation *between* bodies. This aspect of affect is shared, albeit somewhat differently, between both Freudian and resolutely anti-Freudian theorists of feeling. While the former define affective space as that which is formed between one subject and another through processes of “transmission” (Brennan 2004) or one subject and either a subject or object through processes of “projection” (Freud 2009), the latter, more specifically, those consistent with a Deleuzian understanding of the social, define space

in terms of connections made not only between one subject and another but between parts of subjects and parts of other things in vast matrixes of interdependence too complex to trace and model with certainty. This arrangement of the social builds affective capacities; its complexity makes those capacities unavailable to a conscious mind working in much slower, simpler, and linear modes of reasoning. The body, as Damasio explains (1994), is better at registering this complexity in its own faculties of detection, a point I take up in more detail in chapter 6.

Additionally, the space of anxiety, as affect, is necessarily more diffuse than more socially determined emotions like jealousy or envy that emerge once they have taken precise objects. Though anxiety has a propensity to realize itself in objects, it does not always and necessarily do so (Ngai 2005: 21). Kierkegaard explains this in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1980), arguing that anxiety has nothing as its object (cited in Ngai 2005: 224), which, one can easily imagine, can be a source of anxiety itself. This does not mean, however, that anxiety does not transfer and transform into more semantically rich forms of emotion as it attaches to perceivable objects.

### **Anxiety's Temporality**

Anxiety is one of a number of affects Ngai characterizes as “ugly feelings.” Ugly feelings bear less intensity than others. They are defined by a “flatness or ongoingness” (2005: 7). This characteristic “ongoingness” of anxiety is one quality of its general temporality, which is consistently future-oriented. Ernst Bloch calls these kinds of feelings “expectant emotions” (cited in Ngai 2005: 210). Expectant emotions have an “anticipatory character,” activated by matters of concern whose directedness toward the future determines their present effects. “They aim,” Bloch says, “less at some specific

object as the fetish of their desire than at the configuration of the world in general, or (what amounts to the same thing) as the future disposition of the self” (Bloch 1995: 74-75, cited in Ngai 2005: 210). From this perspective, imagining Japan’s future—the task required of those managers of the Japanese state—is to feel anxious in the present (in fact, as I show later in chapter 6, developing the capacity for anxiety is one important requirement for successful managers of national culture).

What makes this anxiety even worse is what Sheldon Wolin (1997) and William Connolly (2002) have pointed to as the fracturing of the contemporary into several registers or “zones of time,” all moving at different tempos (Connolly 2002: 140). Most significant is the distinction between fields like economy and culture, which “move at breakneck pace, due to changes in the infrastructure of transportation, communication, and entertainment” (140), and a field like politics, which demands a more “leisurely pace”:

Starkly put, political time is out of sync with the temporalities, rhythms, and pace governing economy and culture. Political time, especially in societies with pretensions to democracy, requires an element of leisure...in the sense, say, of a leisurely pace. This is owing to the needs of political action to be preceded by deliberation and deliberation, as its “deliberate” part suggests, takes time because, typically, it occurs in a setting of competing or conflicting but legitimate considerations. [Wolin 1997: 2, cited in Connolly 2002: 140]

Connolly and Wolin point to an affective mood of political administration that is necessarily anxious given its disjunction from the fields of economy and culture that it is ever attempting to control but with which it can never keep up. This results in an anxiety that in political bureaucracies becomes disproportionately attached to images of the nation it is itself trying to manage. The consequences of this fact are significant for anthropological treatments of national anxiety in Japan that typically ascribe that anxiety



to Japanese culture at large. That anxiety, as the NHK press release suggests, seems pervasive to Japanese society in general may be a consequence of an oversensitivity to anxiety in national organizations that have a disproportionate role in shaping and circulating national narratives. My research tracing anxiety's emergence and paths of circulation as it connects with soft power indicates as much.

### **Nostalgia and Anxiety**

In illustrating this point, it may help to compare my approach to anxiety to one that treats anxiety as a condition more uniformly distributed throughout a bounded cultural space. Marilyn Ivy's work *Discourses of the Vanishing* (1995) is one of the richest ethnographies written on Japan; and this dissertation is entirely indebted to it. However, her treatment of "Japan" in her work as an integrated and cultural whole in which one can identify homologous structures, patterns, and sentiments from top to bottom is not consistent with what I found in fieldwork. Within this bounded albeit uneven cultural field, Ivy identifies a logic of loss, or "nostalgia," that is similarly constructed across varying sites. She argues that this sense of loss emerges with Japan's transition to modernization, which evoked a "double movement whereby that which was marginalized by the advent of nationalist modernity in the Meiji period (1868-1912)—peasant practices, superstitions, the folkloric—was in the same movement objectified as most essentially traditional" (1995: 25). The objectification of that which is lost, namely, "traditional Japanese culture," creates an object in which that loss can be sustained and continually experienced as loss itself. National culture, then, becomes importantly fixed to a past that must be repeatedly recalled to affirm it. She makes her point in a brilliant elocution: "For the loss of nostalgia—that is, the loss of the desire to

long for what is lost because one has found the lost object—can be more unwelcome than the original loss itself” (10). This characteristically Japanese kind of nostalgia identified by Ivy operates on the logic of Freud’s fetish, which is to say that it operates therapeutically, addressing a “symptomatic” anxiety rooted in Japan’s past (11). I wonder, however, if the degree to which Ivy situates her treatment of anxiety within an assumed, bounded space of culture does not efface some of the multiple and diverse ways anxiety takes form through Japan as a discursive rather than organic object. Ivy’s ethnographic method is multi-sited, and impressively so. She identifies her cultural logic of nostalgia in a number of divergent sites: the nativist ethnology of early twentieth century folklorist Yanagita Kunio; contemporary tourist campaigns of Japan’s then national railway; memorial practices at Japan’s holy Mount *Osore*; and in *taishū engeki* (traveling variety theater). Ivy suggests that what is found in each of these distinct sites is a uniform pairing of nostalgia and anxiety—that the form of anxiety in one place is the same as that in another. Reading Ivy’s text, it is unclear how much her ethnographic evidence vouches for such cultural uniformity and how much her theory of a uniform cultural logic assumes it. On either account, her reliance on the culture concept to secure the legitimacy of her ethnography is clear.

To be fair, Ivy’s work is, she confesses, not traditionally ethnographic (26). Hers is a discourse, or discourses, analysis, one that examines “narratives” and “rhetorics.” And she too puts “Japan” in quotes. She too questions what Harootunian calls the “holonic society,” the image of a homogenous Japanese community whose totality is recognizable in each of its multiple parts (Ivy 1995: 19, n39). But despite Ivy’s critical positioning and conscientious reflexivity, her identification of a uniform logic of

nostalgia found among disparate yet homologous sites within Japanese culture is ultimately guided by the very image of the integrated, holonic society she herself sets out to critique. By relying on a bounded model of culture to hold together the widely disparate sites of her fieldwork, thus rendering complex and multiple registers of anxiety uniform, she reveals the limitations of such a model's conceptual reach.

Ivy's reliance on the culture concept fixes not only the spatial dimensions of her ethnographic purview but also its temporal ones. By rooting her analysis of national culture in the concept of nostalgia, broadly conceived as endemic to a society that was created in the process of Japan's modernization, she portrays Japanese culture as haunted by a form of anxiety that has passed relatively unchanged from the Meiji Revolution (1868) to the present. It is a surprisingly static picture of culture. In contrast, the discourse of soft power that emerges in Japan in the early 2000s in response to widely circulating unease over the state of Japan's economy, China's rapid development, and the United States' seemingly waning interest in Japanese affairs, reveals anxious concerns in regard to national culture that seem to be in dynamic transition. Further, Ivy's analysis locates anxiety's antidotes in the past, in a sentiment of nostalgia for traditions lost. The soft power discourse, on the other hand, is entirely future-oriented, positing anxiety as a fear of what is to come and hope as anticipation of anxiety's demise. Ivy's study is one of the most rigorous and theoretically refined ethnographies on modern Japan. For all its brilliance, though, it may also be outdated. If in the latter decades of the twentieth century it was the past that inundated Japan's present, in the opening decades of the twenty-first century it is its future.

This study seeks different figures of anxiety and culture than does Ivy's. Through a theory of feeling that soft power and nation branding themselves operationalize, it traces soft power's translation of one side of the affect-emotion gap into the other. In soft power's ability to turn ambiguous anxieties of the present into concrete hopes for the future, it also enables the inscription of that future in present-day policy.

Institutionalizing soft power in bureaucratic organizations, themselves powerful organizers of everyday life, increasingly fixes feelings of national pride to the global proliferation and perceived prestige of Japanese pop culture commodities, echoing similar couplings of national prestige and economic success in Japan's recent past. But in showing how perceived national anxieties like those articulated in NHK's "Japan Syndrome" are much more a product of a style of administrative practice than a pattern of Japanese culture, it demonstrates the contingency of this pairing, opening up spaces for alternative figures of culture that might resist such homogenous and even hegemonic narratives.

### **Outline of Chapters**

The next chapter explores the emergence of the soft power discourse in Japan. It identifies an embedded contradiction in the way soft power is appropriated that reveals the affect-emotion gap at work. Specifically, it identifies an inconsistency between the optimistic energy soft power generates and the practical political resources it produces. Chapter 2 also introduces the concept of "registers," different regions of interlinked structures and forms of communication, institutions, and knowledges in which particular affects more typically circulate relative to other registers. Important to the notion of registers is their ability to be organized horizontally across national borders rather than

vertically within them. I locate the particular set of anxious affects that feed soft power thinking in Japan within a register of national bureaucratic agencies linked internationally with their counterpart organizations in other countries.

Chapter 3 examines the structure and characteristics of this register more closely, analyzing how bureaucracy carries out the function of what Don Handelman has called the “torquing of passion and reason” (2007: 134). Situating Japanese bureaucracy in historical relation to the West, I analyze how an anxiety produced out of perceptions of a symmetry in administrative structures but a dissymmetry in degrees of power becomes inscribed in typical bureaucratic practice. By examining a symposium hosted jointly by the Japan Foundation and its British counterpart, the British Council, I describe how the transnational interlinking of national administrations creates an architecture for cultural difference that facilitates certain kinds of cultural exchange and inhibits others.

Establishing channels for cross-cultural exchange proves not always to result in mutual influence. Rather, it often produces inverse relationships of affectivity. The British Council’s disinterest in soft power and cultivation of more non-national, cosmopolitan forms of culture, for example, shows tendencies to elicit more nationally imagined, protectionist strategies of cultural administration by the Japan Foundation. Chapter 3 explores this kind of productive friction enabled by an increase in the integration of transnational organizations coupled with keenly perceived power imbalances.

Chapter 4 explores feelings of “urgency” within Japanese bureaucracies and how they are engendered by perceptions of increasing international political and economic competition. I look at how soft power serves as a rhetorical mechanism for conceptualizing this urgency in well-formulated problems made amenable to bureaucratic

management. Through the analysis of narratives of Japan Foundation officials and the observation of advisory panels (*shingikai*) on issues of cultural diplomacy within Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, I trace how this urgency and anxiety becomes inscribed in formal administrative procedures, practices, and policy.

In the fifth chapter I show how nation branding strategies both reveal the affect-emotion gap as an operative and practical theory of feeling in culture and appropriate it toward its desired aims. Nation branding stakes its ground in the space between what foreign consumers feel about their desired commodities and what they think about them, effectively attempting to affix the former to images of Japanese culture in general. Nation branding achieves its end to the degree that it transforms affection for manga and anime into affection for Japanese culture at large. I examine nation branding strategies in two major sites: the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's *Neo-Japanesque* project and NHK's television program, "Cool Japan." In this chapter I seek to understand the processes and political consequences of the hypernormalization of the Cool Japan discourse and its ability to channel affects of national anxiety into simplified national brands, slogans, and narratives.

Chapter 6 analyzes how affects work on a micro scale. Based on a one-month internship I conducted at the Japan Foundation, I assemble observations on everyday administrative practice. I argue there exists an organizing homology between how Foundation officials are made to feel obligated to their work and colleagues and how they are made to feel obligated to the nation. I introduce the term *obligatory nationalism* to describe how patterns of office organization that affectively bind an individual to his work similarly bind him to images of the nation as they are practically employed in the

realization of that organization's ultimate objectives. Government agencies in Japan are organized around a specific coupling of practice and objective. And each agency is responsible for realizing *different* objectives of Japan's national interests more broadly conceived. In incorporating interviews with officials from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I analyze one specific, strategic project of cultural diplomacy jointly administered by the Ministry and the Japan Foundation. This project, focused on the creation and deployment of *kawaii taishi* (cute ambassadors), proved to be a polarizing one. Observing how the program was discussed and administered by each agency's officials, I look at how obligatory nationalism is differently constructed in two bureaucratic organizations. I show how national anxiety is not only more characteristic of styles and practices of Japanese national administration than it is of Japanese society in general but also that it differs between one organization and the next. The existence of varying bureaucratic objectives between agencies both of which are involved in projects of cultural diplomacy produces an ideological rift: while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to mobilize culture toward the realization of explicitly national interests, the Japan Foundation seeks programs that facilitate cross-cultural understanding not necessarily conceived of in national terms. I conclude this chapter with an analysis of how Japan Foundation officials adopt a practical ethos of "balance" (*baransu*) in reconciling explicitly nationalist interests with more globally conceived cosmopolitan ones.

Chapter 7 analyzes the cute ambassador program more closely and shows how soft power functions like Foucault's apparatus, establishing new relations between previously unrelated fields. Further, in its power to assemble, soft power also exhibits a productive capacity, enabling the emergence of new forms of cultural life previously

unimaginable outside soft power's organizing logic. Through analyses of *kawaii* (cute) culture, I also consider some of the ways gender is unequally built into national policy, ultimately asking if anxiety is an affective mode more typical of masculine styles of imagining the national body. I conclude with observations on how soft power is not only reorganizing cultural arrangements in the present but also how it is reimagining the present's relationship with the past.

Chapter 8 follows soft power out of bureaucracy and into sites of the everyday, examining the way it assembles affect and national sentiment differently from how it does so in national administrations. Analyzing soft power's penetration into media, creative arts industries, and academia, it acknowledges soft power's ability to circulate outside bureaucracy while at the same time noting its shifting function as it does so. Not always a vessel for anxiety's alchemy, it does different things in different registers of social life, sometimes realizing new objects of culture as political resource but also sometimes inciting resistance and transforming ideas of cultural citizenship in ways unanticipated by national officials. Despite soft power's fracturing in these sites, however, this chapter nonetheless finds evidence for a powerful integration of bureaucracy, media, and everyday life that facilitates the proliferation of soft power thinking and a national consciousness in which it is rooted. Whether this also serves as a conduit for transmitting a bureaucratic anxiety over Japan's slipping prestige into the everyday is, however, less evident.

Chapter 9, the conclusion, imagines alternative ways of thinking through "Japan" as a discursive organizer of national thinking and identification. By positing my own speculations about possible future Japans as ethnographic data produced collaboratively



between interlocutors and ethnographer in discussions on author Murakami Haruki, it entertains possibilities of affective rather than rhetorical strategies of resistance and self-fashioning. In concluding with my own reflections on the future, it proposes that one value of the ethnographic engagement can be its ability to stimulate a kind of positive imagination of anthropological alternatives, rooted in empirical observations of contemporary culture but directed toward future desires of the ethnographer's, interlocutor's, and reader's collaborative creation.

## Chapter Two

### **Soft Power's Emergence, Contradictions, and Registers**

It's June of 2009 and I'm attending a conference sponsored by Fulbright and CULCON, the US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange. This year's theme is, "Japan and U.S. Soft Power: Addressing Global Challenges." Many high level officials from the United States and Japan are in attendance, including former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, former chairman of the bank of Tokyo Gyōten Toyō, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Shibayama Masahiko reading a message from then Prime Minister Asō Tarō, and even the crown prince Naruhito. After the customary opening *aisatsu* (greeting) the lights are dimmed and our attention is drawn to a ten-meter-tall screen upon which is projected a gigantic image of Joseph Nye's head. Seated in front of the screen are a number of Japanese national administrators, cultural and otherwise, and me among them, craning our necks to give Joseph Nye's giant visage and its elocution of soft power through a video recorded earlier our undivided attention. The image is commanding, overbearing even, but the voice more compassionate, a softer and gentler uncle to Orwell's Big Brother. As the lights come back on I look around, startled. The electricity and energy quickly dissipate and the conference proceeds with a palpable discordance between the intensity of the opening and the formality of the proceedings that follow. The scene serves as an apt metaphor for the varying moods of excitement and reticence, optimism and pessimism that characterize soft power's respective ideological and administrative forms in Japan.

Soft power was, of course, the theme of the conference and after cataloguing interpretations of the term from politicians, economists, bureaucrats, and arts

administrators, I had collected a wide variety of definitions. For Richard Armitage, soft power came down to, “and you’re not going to like this,” he warned the audience, “cool calculated national security.” This obviously contrasted with, and one could also likely assume irritated, the definition given by Director of the Japan Society Art Gallery, Joe Earle. For Earle, soft power was not about security but about cultivating artists and art exchanges between Japan and the United States. Long-term diplomat Agawa Naoyuki proposed that soft power is a relationship of trust and rapport cultivated in face-to-face diplomatic exchanges, something Japanese officials are not exceptionally skilled at. Professor at Japan’s National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Kurokawa Kiyoshi, suggested that soft power relied on educational exchanges. Managing Director for Morgan Stanley Japan, Robert Feldman, and former Chairman of the Bank of Tokyo, Gyōten Toyō, debated how Japan’s economic policy contributed, or more likely did not, to soft power. There were almost as many interpretations of soft power as there were panelists. All noted the difficulty of defining soft power; many also noted the near impossibility of measuring it.

So why so many resources, capital, prestigious names, and above all, excitement invested in a concept extremely difficult to define and equally as challenging to measure? If soft power is so elusive and abstract, how is it capable of organizing such a large group of elite national administrators and politicians? The answer is surely complex and multi-layered, involving paths of influence and connection that circulate meaning in sometimes more global and sometimes more local spheres of determination. In tracing these lines of soft power through various sites, one can start almost anywhere—like a drop of rain in the water cycle or of blood in the body, it doesn't quite matter where it begins: eventually

it will cycle through the entire network that sustains it. Tracing its path—this is done through what is quite literally called a “tracer,” usually radioactive, in medicine; anthropologists working under multi-sited fieldwork designs might just call it a “key word” or “trope” (Marcus 1998: 89-95)—reveals the nature, structure, and environment of the network as it travels. The questions guiding this process, then, are, how does soft power circulate? What things assemble around it or are assembled *by* it—the activeness or passivity of this process seems less relevant in fieldwork than it does in language. And finally, how is its circulation sustained? As my finding is that affects play a large role in the process, I pay particular attention to this last question.

Let me begin a discussion of the soft power discourse broadly, looking at the network from afar. I’ll then narrow my focus to particular segments and details of the network, eventually enabling the capacity to move fluidly between a more general and more specific frame of understanding. In a way, then, I am working through Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle ethnographically.

Most generally, one cannot think of soft power outside of nation states. National imagining, which also enables the rationalization processes of the state (bureaucracy) whose task it is to regulate the vitality of the nation, is a prerequisite for thinking through soft power. Gellner’s distinction between nation and state proves useful for thinking how soft power is mobilized toward varying instrumental (state) and sentimental (nation) ends.<sup>10</sup> As the nation has been traditionally imagined as that community of others to

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<sup>10</sup> The social psychologist Herbert Kelman (2001) uses the words “instrumental” and “sentimental” to denote two different ways individuals emotionally invest, or “cathect,” in national political systems. I employ his terms here not as distinct ways in which autonomous subjects relate to a single nation state but

which one relates affectively through shared symbols, imagery, stories, texts, or practices, the state serves as that political entity whose responsibility it is to administer and secure the integrity of it. “Nationalism,” as Gellner explains in the opening to his classic work, “is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (1983: 1). Implicit in this definition is the idea that to the degree the state falls short in establishing a harmonious connection between shared ideals of the national body and the laws that guarantee or, more importantly, represent it, national identity is increasingly threatened. He explains, “Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle [that the political and the national unit should be congruent], or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment” (1). Gellner’s theory, if overly prescriptive, provides a framework for analyzing how state demands and national desires co-opt each other through the narrative provisions of soft power.

Despite efforts to theorize soft power beyond the nation state, it seldom proves convincing (see Repeta [2008] and Imata and Kuroda [2008] on soft power in civil society). This is due less to the logical and more to the affective components of it. As seen in the Fulbright/CULCON conference, Nye’s theory is abstract enough to afford a multiplicity of interpretations. Should one want to apply soft power to an explanation of civil society or even al-Qaida, as Watanabe does (2008: xxii), he certainly could without too much fumbling, or close reading, of Nye’s discussion of it (2004). But one would not get very far in the discursive environments where soft power is more often and more publicly discussed. This is because the discourse itself is invested with far more energy

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to show how discourses of state bureaucracy and national cultural administration impose different demands on the subjects they touch.

and hope by those concerned with its potential benefit for realizing national interests. Those who take a more public, cosmopolitan, or international stance traditionally opposed to the narrow conceptualization of national interest have no need for soft power. In general they are skeptical of it, but find their position hard to convey to soft power thinkers. This is demonstrated in chapter 6 where I discuss certain officials opposed to soft power. These subjects find themselves forced to use the language of soft power in order to have their ideas which are alternative to a public diplomacy which operates exclusively for the benefit of one nation's interests even heard.

Despite attempts at a formulation of it, then, there is no cosmopolitan soft power. Or, I should say, there is no very "adequate" way to think about a cosmopolitan or non-national soft power. Spinoza defined adequacy in relation to power and truth. To the degree that one's ideas were adequate, one approached truth. One knew this by the fact that the adequacy of one's ideas proved more powerful: "One importance of the adequate idea, then, is that through the expression of its causes it increases our power of thought; the more adequate ideas we have, the more we know about the structure and connections of being, and the greater our power to think" (Hardt 1993: 90). Crudely put, one who knows more can essentially more adequately wield the powers of nature. Spinoza seemingly believed quite faithfully in the objectivity of his "nature," which he actually called "God"—such were the times. This kind of faith today, especially in a postmodern ecumene, is harder to come by. But by relativising Spinoza's "adequacy" to discourse, as Foucault has done, one is able to trace how truth is measured by how far one's ideas propel one to success, or power, in discourse. To the degree that soft power becomes naturalized through the scope of its circulation and the extent of its institutionalization in

national institutions of public diplomacy it establishes discursive legitimacy, or relative truth, which increasingly excludes more cosmopolitan voices of objection. This makes the work of the anthropologist, someone who in general cultivates more cosmopolitan sensibilities, more difficult. And the disjunction of ethical positioning toward the nation state enables the problem of complicity. Taking an antagonistic stance toward soft power in my research, for example, asking not what it really is but how it is understood and used by others, has not gotten me very far with national administrators who are by obligation concerned with building the nation's prestige. Finding it hard to participate in the soft power discourse on account of my own more cosmopolitan opposition to it serves as evidence for its rootedness in nationalist sensibilities.

Academically, soft power is most often taken up within international relations, a field in which thought attaches itself to giant amorphous bodies: a powerful and imposing United States clashing with a rising and somewhat threatening China; an anxious Japan considering more sanctions on a volatile North Korea. It is also popular in political science, where it is imagined on an only slightly smaller and more concrete scale: American youth consuming Japanese manga and, perhaps, seeking study opportunities in Japan. Joseph Nye, his authority on matters of importance in international relations already well established, came up with the term in the 1990s, first in his book *Bound to Lead* (1991). It began circulating widely enough throughout the decade that Nye made it the topic and title of an additional book, *Soft Power* (2004). And in only three more years it found its way into the Japanese government's most important annual policy report, the *Keizai zaisaku kaikaku no kihon hōshin*, the "Annual Policy Plan for the Japanese Economy," or the more informally called *Hone buto* (thick bone):

With the economic forecast predicting an economic crisis in addition to sweeping changes in industrial and employment structures, there is a need for a shift from excessive dependence on economic growth based on foreign consumption to a new, more dynamic model of growth. First, endeavoring to bring forth a productive cycle based on markets and innovation through the creation of global, cutting edge markets in fields like low carbon steel, health and longevity, and *soft power*, we aim to acquire an international competitive edge by realizing high quality employment and creation. Necessary to achieving this goal is regulatory reform, the creation of model markets, domestic and foreign capital, human resources, and the continued advancement of technology. At the same time, we stand to benefit domestically by resolving problems such as resources, the environment, and the improvement of infrastructure facing this new world in Asia through the mobilization of our country's superior industrial and technological power, contributing to the revitalization of the world. [Kantei 2009: 2, italics added]

The *Hone buto* is only one of a myriad of policy papers in which the term can now be found. Its emergence in the document shows at least two things. First, it is an idea taken seriously enough to make its way into Japan's foremost annual economic strategy report. The committee of economists and researchers is set up by the Prime Minister's office, well funded, widely circulated, and seriously discussed. Second, the term is ambiguous enough to be interpreted in a variety of ways, many of them diverging quite significantly from Joseph Nye's original conception of the term. Again, for Nye, soft power is distinguished from both military and economic strategies for effecting influence on others. It is defined by how well attractiveness to a country's culture can be translated into policy objectives. That soft power is conceived of often as a tool for economic development, and more enthusiastically, as a potential regenerator of Japan's economic and political prestige of the 1980s, shows how various concerns of national feeling are thought into the concept. It is also one example of the power of these concerns to sustain what appears as a reoccurring contradiction in the soft power discourse: *an excitable enthusiasm for soft power's potential to revitalize Japan on one hand and a dearth of evidence for its*



*applicability and effectiveness on the other.* The Fulbright/CULCON conference is an example of this.

The most demonstrable example of the soft power contradiction comes in a highly detailed review of Japan's content industries (2005) by professor at Kyoto Sangyō University, Kawamata Keiko. Kawamata's report, "Outlook for the Japanese Content Industry" (*Nihon no kontentsu sangyō no genjō*) was distributed to METI officials and informally circulated around other government ministries. Although the paper provides varying assessments of each of the content industries' individual fields, its overall prognosis is bleak: "Based on the data taken up in this field, it can be said that the future for [Japan's] content industries does not look optimistic" (*honshiryō de toriageta bunya ni kan shite wa, kontentsu sangyō no mirai wa rakkan sen dekinai to ieru no de wa nai darō ka*). Despite the fact that the content industries as a whole have tripled from 1992 to 2002 from 500 billion to 150 trillion yen, trends in individual fields such as music which has shown a steady decline since 1998 and in anime where production is increasingly moving overseas to China and South Korea suggest the content industry at large may be headed for decline and, in fact, Kukhee Choo shows that largely due to illegal downloading since the middle of the 2000s this suggested decline has already become a reality (2010: 53). While Kawamata's critique is focused largely on the domestic market, leaving the possibility for hope in foreign markets, the failure of Japanese licensors to so far capitalize abroad leaves marketers with no hard facts indicating Japan's content industries can meet the optimistic expectations put on soft power by hopeful officials.

Kawamata's paper shows that where soft power's hopes are conflated with those for Japan's content industries, the outlook is, or should be, discouraging. That fact that it

is not, that hope for soft power continues to circulate, shows soft power's embedded contradictions. Where soft power is discussed in less purely economic terms and presented as a mechanism for winning foreign hearts and minds, though, evidence is equally as elusive, as the example of the Japan Expo illustrates. The Japan Expo is a public event showcasing Japanese pop culture and entertainment, occurring annually since 1999 in Paris, France. It is organized by SEFA (Specialists for Public Oriented Events), a private public relations company in France which organizes a number of conventions showcasing Japanese entertainment. The event hosts numerous booths displaying manga, anime, food, film, martial arts, and anything else remotely related to Japanese arts and entertainment. They have a cosplay contest, a fashion show, music concerts, and a number of other interactive displays. Attracting only 21,000 attendees in 1999 it has grown to 164,000 in 2009, a figure often cited as evidence for the penetration of Japanese pop culture abroad. Though late to attract the attention of government officials, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry now each send representatives, and the event has become a major focus for the soft power debate in Japanese bureaucracies.

Cataloguing the event is the Japanese media outlet MX TV along with representatives from MOFA and METI. Over the course of the event, an anchor for MX TV interviewed a number of young French attendees, many of them dressed as their favorite anime and manga characters, asking them why they have taken an interest in Japanese culture and what else about Japan is charming (*miriyoku teki*). In another, extended interview with Jean-Marie Bouissou, political scientist and manga specialist at the *Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales*, the anchor asked what Bouissou

thought about the relationship between soft power and Japanese pop culture. Bouissou provided a somewhat pessimistic response:

In 2007 and 2008 the EU Manga Network (administered by myself) conducted a survey of 1600 people focusing on their image toward Japan. Of these manga lovers, the majority still had an image of Japan as a very traditional culture, meaning manga had not become soft power. And within that group there were also negative images of Japan (violence, a stressful society, a grueling work environment). Of course there were also views of Japan as being a very technologically advanced society, but this in no way seems to represent this Cool Japan.

We also conducted a study among people who do not read manga. The result was that this group had a slightly more positive image of Japan. However, as this favorable impression has not seemed to change from before it does not seem to be producing soft power, meaning that it doesn't justify Japan supporting soft power at the United Nations or on the international stage.

The number of visitors to the Japan Expo is increasing every year. This year it climbed to over 150,000. On the grassroots level there is a growing interest in Japan and in the study of Japanese, and the number of people visiting Japan is also likely growing, but I don't think one can say this is producing soft power. [Unpublished interview, Tokyo MX 2009; also see Bouissou 2008 and Bouissou and Dolle-Weinkauff et al. 2010]

Bouissou's response seemed to deflate the Japanese interviewer, despite no shortage in similar critiques of soft power by other academics (Choo 2010; Otmazgin 2008).

Exchanges like these between Japan and other show the extent to which Japanese hopes ride on the evaluations of those others. As this mode of thinking generalizes and reifies national cultures, opinions from representatives of a highly refined French culture become especially valued.

The publication of evidence against the productivity of soft power, like that of Bouissou's, is hardly enough to deflate the growing tide of excitement for what it might bring. As shown in the two examples above, countries like the U.S. and France play a

major role in validating perceptions of Japanese rising or slipping prestige, as another example demonstrates.

In 1988, out of an incident in which U.S. senators smashed a Toshiba radio on the steps of the Capitol in protest of the Japanese company's decision to join "a Norwegian consortium to illegally sell submarine technology to Moscow" (Tolchin 1988), the phrase "Japan bashing" was invented, or so goes one theory.<sup>11</sup> A similar story comes from 1998 when U.S. President Bill Clinton spent nine days in China, returning home without stopping in Japan. Playing off the already popular phrase "Japan Bashing," the phrase "Japan Passing" was invented (Chang 2009). It was perhaps, then, inevitable that in the 2000s one would begin to hear a phrase circulating around the media that seemed to so aptly characterize the last three decades of U.S.-Japan relations: "Japan bashing, Japan passing, Japan nothing" [*japan basshingu, japan passhingu, japan nasshingu*]. A characteristically broad stroke for Japanese mass media, the phrase captured Japanese national sentiment from the 1980s when Americans criticized Japan's seemingly threatening economic growth, to the 1990s when such growth, and accordant political influence, seemed to be in decline, and finally to the 2000s when it was anxiously perceived that Japan's influence in world affairs was disappearing altogether. Under such circumstances, it should come as little surprise that Joseph Nye would rekindle some hope amidst the increasing despair with this statement: "Japan has more potential soft power resources than any other Asian country" (Nye 2004: 85).

### **Two Registers of Anxiety**

Nye's assessment, in addition to becoming an enormously popular citation for Japanese authors writing about their own country's soft power, serves as a useful

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<sup>11</sup> Credit goes to Watanabe Yasushi for this reference.

example in which to observe how soft power functions in Japan to bring one form of anxiety to bear on another. Put crudely, to be concerned about one's individual economic future and to be concerned about *Japan's* economic future are two different things. When someone talks about "*fukeiki*" (poor economic conditions) in Japan or simply "the economy" in the United States, what is evoked is a set of concerns about one's job, investments, family, and personal capital and resources: in short, one's economic security. When someone talks about Japan's economic future, or more specifically, does so in reference to a rising China or gaining Korea—that is, in a national comparative frame—a very different set of concerns and feelings are evoked. The latter is what has been over generalized and exhaustingly analyzed under the term "national identity." Nye's phrase pithily captures how soft power brings concerns over a country's domestic "resources" and economy into the register of national culture, especially in reference to its most immediate and significant sphere of distinction, "other Asian countries." I call what distinguishes these two forms of anxiety "registers."

### **Registers**

Think of three different modes of human movement: walking, jogging, sprinting. Each is determined and sustained by a particular kinesthetic relation of muscle, joints, and nerves. Each can be qualitatively distinguished from the next, so that there is a clear and definable distinction between one and the other (without it racewalking could not exist as an Olympic event distinct from the marathon). Each has its own temporality, crudely put: slow, medium, fast. Each has its own experiential mode: different sensations of the foot connecting with pavement; of the wind blowing through hair; of objects, both animate and inanimate, passing one in space. Such registers grow even more

complicated with horses, which, depending on the breed of horse, are said to have four “gaits”: walk, trot, canter, and gallop. Interestingly, the distinctions between each are, among other ways, determined rhythmically: the trot, for example, having two beats, the canter three and the gallop four.<sup>12</sup> To complicate things, one can distinguish between these “natural” gaits and other, “ambling” gates, which include a variety of “footfall patterns” that can be taught by trainers (“Horse Gait” 2011). Registers can be taught. They are distinct and rooted in the body but mutable and mobile. They are simultaneously natural and social things.

Registers are networks of thoughts, symbols, narratives, and feelings that assemble together in repeated associations. They resemble clusters of neural networks in the brain where the firing of one neuron repeatedly activates the firing of associated others. My conception of registers is similar to Foucault’s apparatus in so much as it designates a set of relations between a heterogeneous set of objects and is characterized not by the constituents of that set but by the way they are related to one another. An ethnographic example that approaches what I’m talking about can be found in Judith Irvine’s study of the linguistic registers of the Wolof in Senegal (1990), who perceive class distinctions through, among other things, different “affective registers,” the *waxu geer* manner of speaking associated with high-ranking nobles, characterized by a low-level, reserved affectivity and the *waxu gewel* manner, characterized by “high affectivity” (131). While Irvine’s analysis is invaluable for the work it does situating affect within

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<sup>12</sup> Rhythm is one particularly salient element demonstrating how affect operates on conscious thought. William Connolly describes the importance of rhythm for thought in discussing the process of “remembering,” a situation marked not by the replacement of absence with presence but by a multilayered process of recalling that appeals to a variety of strategies, rhythm being one of these. As Connolly concludes this discussion, “If you forget a name it may be difficult to recall it, but if you forget the rhythm too, it may be lost forever” (2002: 72).

social relations rather than in the mind or bodies of individuals, my conception of the register is broader still.

Registers are not restricted to linguistic style, although they are often marked and distinguished by it. They incorporate a much larger set of relations including, again, like Foucault's apparatus, architectural styles, forms of dress, bureaucratic structures, forms of deliberation and other scripts for thinking, speaking, and feeling. An easy way to think about social registers is to think of one's relation to ideas like "family," the "public," or "work." Such spheres have their own sets of rules, values, and modes of operation. One interacts differently in each register, with different criteria for ethical conduct. The "good" husband is construed differently from the "good" citizen or "good" official. Different registers demand different amounts of time, moving at different speeds. That both occupational and familial obligations demand time of the individual often results in conflict between registers. But such registers are not rooted in classical portraits of a particular culture but deconstruct and transverse them.

### **Socioeconomic Anxiety**

Anxiety over economic security within society constitutes a register not necessarily implicated in ones of national identity, at least not in so much as the latter is constructed in a comparative framework. This anxiety attaches stringently to the problems that evoke it. They are called in Japanese *shakai mondai* (social problems) and there is even a section at any average sized bookstore in Japan with the same heading, directing one to books on a variety of contemporary issues troubling Japan's present. The most commonly circulated of these problems address Japan's debt (currently highest among developed countries); its declining birth rate and graying population (*shōshi kōrei*

*ka*); and the lack of employment opportunities and related sense of hopelessness among its youth. A typical example comes from Genda Yūji, a professor of sociology at Tokyo University, and his work, *Shigoto no naka no aimai na fuan* (*A Nagging Sense of Job Insecurity*):

Confronted by the challenges of globalization and a mountain of bad debts, Japanese companies, unable to make flexible, rapid decisions or take decisive action, continued to stagnate. Long-term employment and a seniority-based pay system came to be regarded as evil practices that these struggling companies were unable to change...In any event, Japan in the 1990s had lost confidence in itself and had no clear sense of where it was heading. As the economy continued to stagnate, the Japanese media referred to the 1990s as the “lost decade.” What had been lost, however, was not simply economic income and wealth. Most Japanese had been deprived of any faith in the future. [2005: ix-x]

Anxiety over this kind of economic security is internally structured. Although it is certainly affected by things outside it—all registers bear some lines of connection and influence with others—it is imagined in rather autonomous terms, which is why it is referred to as *shakai mondai* (social problems), without any reference to Japan, a referent that only makes sense in distinction to other nations.

Concerns over economic security grab hold of a subject through lines of practical, calculative, and instrumental thought: “How can I budget for my son’s college education?” or “What will become of my retirement fund?” And although they invoke an anxiety intense enough to incite a serious personal crisis—an overwhelming majority of suicides in Japan, the sixth highest country in the world for suicides per year, is attributed to burdens of financial debt—it is not a crisis that is imagined through national symbols staked on their relation to those of other nation states.



### **National Cultural Anxiety (Cultural Citizenship)**

National cultural anxiety is perceived not as a threat to one's material needs but to his symbolic ones. Personal anxiety is not personal in the sense that it is "owned" by the person but is a consequence of symbolic, social interaction that *personalizes*. This kind of anxiety subjectifies or *subjectivates* (Foucault 1982), creating a subject that is both a member of a national body (and thus subject to its influences) and a subject that perceives and feels its anxiety as its own in distinction from other subjects with whom it, ironically, shares affinity. Affects are created and made possible by communion with others, in the classical sense of Durkheim's collective effervescence and Turner's *communitas*, but the effect of them is that they individualize, creating the subject as it is made to *feel*, whether warm, excited, hopeful, or anxious. This is how a nation serves as the narrative channel through which affects of collective effervescence take on semantic meaning and perception. In this way, the status and meaning of the symbols of the nation—increasingly in Japan's case, anime, manga, and kawaii fashion—affect the individual in degrees and forms of feeling, often seemingly quite independent of the subject's effort to transform or resist their influence. This is evidence for the affect-emotion gap: affect constructed in processes too complex to understand but that are evidenced in feelings and in seemingly spontaneous reactions to stimuli. Tears, such as those evoked at a national anthem, can serve as an example. They are spontaneously evoked but made knowable, into emotion, through political processes of narration and dissemination.

Under the soft power discourse, Japan's popular content industries—and its media commodities that have personal significance for its consumers—are increasingly

promoted and circulated as the representative images of national culture through a variety of nation branding strategies designed to stimulate economic growth (see chapter 5). In this way, national symbols in which subjects are implicated sentimentally are offered as solutions for economic anxieties. Individual meaning is staked, then, on economic success, a rather tenuous and, ironically, anxiety-producing remedy for anxiety's relief.

Soft power offers a narrative, a particular line of affect that connects one register or network of concerns with another. To the degree that national administrations are successful in strategies of soft power cultivation that appropriate domestic concerns of economic security, the cultural field of individual identity inundates the economic field, an example, again, of Waters comment that "we can expect the economy and the polity to be globalized to the extent that they are culturalized" (1995: 9). Culture, especially in the breakdown between its high and lower forms rapidly progressing in postmodern styles of art and living since the 1960s (Jameson 1991), has been long undergoing processes of inundation by economic rationality. What is new in the soft power discourse is the degree to which it encourages the nation to invest in culture for both economic and political expedience. This particular assemblage of economic rationality, cultural production, and national imagining is both sustained by and produces varied affects relative to the cultural configurations that inform it.

### **Insecurities of National Administration**

To think through the narrative of soft power for national administrators is to activate a set of anxious affects structured along asymmetric lines of power. As the capacity for those power lines to effect influence is dependent upon the perception of national and cultural difference, to the degree that difference is evoked and emphasized,

the intensity of those affects is increased. This is the ironic conundrum of “Japanese uniqueness”: as the trope of uniqueness is increasingly offered as an answer to perceptions of national power imbalances, the anxiety evoked by the appeal to difference intensifies. To be more specific, the language of soft power activates the perception of a kind of difference that is intimately entangled with feelings of anxiety as it posits Japan in relation to a United States that is increasingly turning its interest to Japan’s primary competitor, China. Operating in this register of national difference and competition, as national administrators do, is to be continually affected by an anxiety over Japan’s slipping position in the configuration of contemporary geopolitics.

In a presentation given by an American diplomat at Japan’s International House, I heard an even less guarded articulation of the relationship between these gigantically imagined, abstract national bodies, America and Japan, as experienced by elite administrators: “The relationship between the U.S. and Japan too often, I think, resembles a husband and wife,” he began. “Sometimes when there is instability in a relationship one partner will ask the other, ‘do you still care about me?’ ‘Do you still need me?’ It’s not a healthy relationship. Japan sometimes does this. I think Japan needs to stop being so concerned with what The U.S. thinks and start telling it what Japan wants.”

Although this represents the most candid and perhaps most tellingly gendered, if not also sexist, version of it, I heard this analogy a number of times in talking to administrators. Saitō-san is a retired diplomat who worked for over thirty years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among a number of honorary positions he holds, one of them is as a board member of a particularly large corporation, an enormous conglomerate of manufacturing, banking, trading, and real estate. These jobs, officially named *ama*

*kudari* in Japanese (descent from heaven), are reserved for prestigious government officials reaching their retirement age. They command high prestige with little obligation and are often the object of controversy in Diet debates. I sat with Saitō-san in his spacious office on the twenty-seventh floor of the corporation's headquarters as he told me about the various problems facing high level diplomats: "Japanese diplomats are too quiet; they listen too much, a Japanese virtue not respected by other countries. We have to do better. Chinese diplomats speak English very well and they always voice their opinion." Saitō-san's reference to Chinese diplomats was typical of criticisms I heard from Japanese diplomats and bureaucrats reflecting on Japan's inability to both formulate and communicate its interests.

Agawa Naoyuki was the Japanese ambassador to the United States in charge of public affairs. Agawa has an excellent command of English with a witty and somewhat sarcastic attitude, which made me feel comfortable in speaking with him. He spoke much more candidly with me than did other officials, both in Japanese and English, and thus appeared to me as someone who could step outside the bureaucratic register in offering his reflections. He had a very laid-back attitude, informal, and often gently poked fun at bureaucrats and the various odd formalities and communication styles that were required of them. Agawa, too, noted the English language and a general passiveness as major barriers to communication between the U.S. and Japan, especially when it came to Japan expressing its own interests. He reflected on this at the Fulbright/CULCON symposium. Agawa-san was asked a question by the Executive Director of the Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnership: "Japan is very hesitant to exercise its soft power. This may be due to the nature of the Japanese, but could this change?" Agawa-san responded:

It is very difficult for the Japanese to be very eloquent...however, even if we do not express ourselves as well we are often evaluated for what we are speaking about and our message is appreciated. The attractiveness of the speaker and that of the content of the speech is much appreciated, and there is no need to imitate the Americans or be as aggressive.

However...this is an age of world politics and we need to improve our communication skills. For example, when I arrived at the Embassy, I underwent training as to how to speak on television. Such opportunities for improvement should be made available, not just to diplomats, but to others, especially academics. [Fulbright/CULCON 2009: 121]

The imbalance of power felt in the personal relations between U.S. and Japanese officials and formalized in a rather simple narrative of “the Japanese are quiet, listening much more than talking; the U.S. the opposite” is shared by *both* groups of officials. Richard Armitage commented on it as well at the symposium:

In terms of public diplomacy, I am afraid that the United States is often accused, and many times correctly so, of confusing public diplomacy and loud speech. If we only speak more loudly, people will understand us. I could make the opposite point that if we were only quiet a little bit and listen to people, that might make for more effective communication. The criticism for Japan, however, is just the opposite of that for the United States. I think that for far too long Japan has spoken too softly. [2009: 103]

Obama’s newly appointed ambassador to Japan, John Roos (the appointment of Joseph Nye for this position, highly anticipated by Japanese officials I spoke with, fell through), expressed a similar sentiment in speaking to a smaller audience at a major university in Tokyo: “60 years now after the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance, I want to hear what Japan wants today. What does Japan need?”

Such comments reveal the way national imaginaries among bureaucrats are linked horizontally across a register of elite diplomats and the institutions, events, and forms of communication in which their practices and discursive negotiations take place. (I talk more about this register in chapter 3). A good part of national administration takes place

in international settings where more ambiguous perceptions of global power relations are often felt and played out in intimate settings: dinner and cocktail parties, small meetings and working groups, chats and casual conversation between such meetings, and in speaking to press and posing for pictures.

The latter of these is an especially salient site for how these power relations are felt on an intimate, personal level. The precedent was impressionably set by McArthur's photograph with the emperor Hirohito post Japanese defeat in the Pacific War. In a now classic depiction, McArthur, both nonchalant and confident, two important markers of power and cool, towers over the rigid and conciliatory Hirohito (fig. one). The image is familiar to many Japanese today. And its impact is re-evoked in the media's thorough coverage of every meeting between high level U.S. and Japanese officials. The new Prime Minister Asō Tarō's first meeting with Barack Obama was covered with especially high interest, with media anxiously speculating over what kind of impression he would make on the enormously popular and charismatic new American President. News anchors evaluated Asō's *sonzaikan*, a term combining the words "existence" (*sonzai*) with "sense" (*kan*) and used to judge Asō's visual strength and presence. With explicit emphasis on the appearance of Japanese representatives of state abroad combined with the cultural pervasiveness of MacArthur and Hirohito's image, it is not going too far to suggest that the two are linked through a similarly constructed affective experience of power imbalances (fig. two).



(Figure 1. MacArthur and Hirohito, 1945)



(Figure 2. Asō and Obama, 2009. This was the second image to appear in an image search for “Asō and Obama” on Google Japan)

### **All Form but no Message? McGray and “Cool Japan”**

The unformed, loosely perceived, uneasy buzz of anxiety that colors Japanese national thinking when it is done, as it most often is, in reference to its Western counterparts, takes a more formalized, conscious, and poignantly felt form as it attaches to objects, symbols, concepts, and stories. This is the process Ngai describes in *Ugly Feelings*, “the passages whereby affects acquire the semantic density and narrative complexity of emotions” (2005: 27). Discussion of soft power in Japan has grown to such a significant degree that the story of its emergence has taken on the status of a kind of origin myth. It is a story shared by journalists, bureaucrats, and, increasingly, academics alike, and it goes something like this: Joseph Nye constructed a theory of power that served as an alternative to hard power forms of military coercion or economic incentive; then, in a famous article (2002), Douglas McGray tied this to Japan’s pop culture commodities casting them as national resources; and Japanese politicians and bureaucrats, fueled by the excitement for soft power’s potential at a time of anxiety over Japan’s future—a declining economy and aging population; a rising China; an increasing insecurity about its relationship with the US—began circulating and entertaining the theory as a real solution to Japan’s economic and cultural woes. Add to this the global context in which nation branding strategies have become a new and common technology for political administration and we have the general background in which most soft power discussions in Japan take place.

The fact that my own analysis seems at times to accept this story quite unproblematically and at other times questions it, constructing the story itself as a primary script by which such anxious affects are made public enough to think through



consciously, reveals how much the formulation of my own research questions are dependent upon a discursive formation of which I am already a part. Pushing for some analytical distance by focusing on affect and emotion is the anthropological work of the dissertation, resulting in, at best, what has been called by Rabinow as a position or “mode” of adjacency (2007); admitting its inextricability from the already circulating narratives of soft power and Cool Japan is the reflexive work of the dissertation, revealing, for better or worse, what Marcus has called the “complicity” of fieldwork, no doubt intensified by the increasing number of job postings for specialists of Japan who can teach a course on Japanese popular culture. However, most any product of negotiation between the poles of objectivity and complicity must still, I think, begin with the article that has become a shibboleth for authoritative soft power analyses in Japan.

Douglas McGray’s 2002 article makes an important contribution to soft power’s capacity to energize hope in the role it plays of discursive *bricoleur* and translator. Not only did it link two previously distinct discourses of public thought—Japan’s pop culture trends and its political aspirations—but it translated the personal investments of the former into objective resources of the latter. Since the broad circulation and institutionalization of his article, it became more difficult to think of foreign consumption of Japanese pop culture in exclusively cultural or even economic terms. Consumers were no longer just consumers but were political resources, as were commodities, fashion trends, and a number of other artistic mediums belonging beforehand exclusively to the field of culture. McGray’s article, with its translation into Japanese (2003), also translated an emerging global discourse into locally imaginable terms. Increasingly identified within the discourse of “nation branding,” it constitutes “culture-as-resource,”

in George Yúdice's words (2003: 1). While bureaucrats had begun thinking about soft power prior to the article, it was only after its publication that the links between soft power and Japan's pop culture were formalized in the phrases "Gross National Cool" and "Cool Japan."

The format of McGray's article is simple. In eleven pages he catalogues a number of emerging pop culture trends in Japan, places them in the historical and comparative context of American products of cultural globalization, introduces—and this is the important moment of translation—Nye's theory of soft power, and then speculates on the cultural significance of these developments. Despite not being a Japan specialist himself, it is not difficult for McGray to recognize the oscillating affects of anxiety and hope characterizing the social register in which he conducted his three months of research. He begins with the hope:

Japan is reinventing superpower—again. Instead of collapsing beneath its widely reported political and economic misfortunes, Japan's global cultural influence has quietly grown. From pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and animation to cuisine, Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic one. [44]

The optimistic outlook is enough to capture the eye of any steward of the nation whose occupational obligations render him or her regularly attentive to assessments of Japan, especially foreign, even more especially, Western. Later in the article, McGray situates Japan's cultural resurgence within its more anxiously infused patterns of thinking Japan's present:

High incomes, long life expectancy, and many more of the statistics that mean anything in terms of quality of life still tilt in Japan's favor. But the national swagger is gone, a casualty of a decade-long recession. Gross domestic product is down; the yen is down; the Nikkei Stock Index hit a

17-year low; and full employment, practically a natural right in Japan, has been replaced by near-record rates of unemployment. Tokyo has tried to keep the International Monetary Fund from investigating its banking system, which is suspected to be in even worse shape than the finance ministry has admitted. A recent downgrade from Moody's Investors Service rates Japan only slightly more creditworthy than Botswana. The country limps its way into G-8 meetings and remains locked out of the U.N. Security Council. [46]

Adding to these concerns over Japan's steadily ageing population and low birth-rate, McGray provides a neat example of conventional domestic assessments of Japan's present state of crisis, a more intense, punctuated, and emotional rendering of anxiety.

The key transpositional moment in McGray's article comes with his reference to Joseph Nye, a figure whose prominence and authority has already been documented at the opening of this chapter:

National cool is a kind of "soft power"—a term Harvard dean Joseph S. Nye Jr. coined more than a decade ago to explain the nontraditional ways a country can influence another country's wants, or its public's values. And soft power doesn't quantify neatly. How much of modern American hegemony is due to the ideological high ground of its democracy, for instance, how much to its big corporate franchises, to Hollywood, to rock music and blue jeans, or to its ability to fascinate as well as intimidate? National cool is an idea, a reminder that commercial trends and products, and a country's knack for spawning them, can serve political and economic ends. [52]

Making an explicit connection between Japan's pop commodities and its national prestige serves as the transistor by which the former can be thought of in terms of the latter, and subsequently turned into political strategy and public policy. The connection would come to be repeated in a number of speeches by politicians and cultural administrators, in policy papers, and in interviews and discussions I had with interlocutors.

The clarity of the formula—foreign consumption of Japan's pop commodities = Japanese soft power—also provides for the easy solidification of affect into more

semantic, public, and emotional forms. That it was most explicitly articulated in a form of media popular among administrators, the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, is important for this process. I recall John Dewey. In *The Public and its Problems* (1922), Dewey calls journalists, like McGray, the “real purveyors of news,” although he uses the word “artists” (1991: 184). Dewey describes a process by which unperceived, unconscious, and what he calls “indirect” consequences become matters of public concern that resemble Ngai’s description of the transformation of affect into emotion. Indispensable to this process of realization is the formalization of “indirect consequences” in “presentation,” and presentation, says Dewey, is always a question of art:

The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. This process is art... Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation. [Dewey 1991: 184]

Although this quote comes at the end of Dewey’s work where he waxes more abstractly and poetically, straying somewhat from his original intention of demonstrating how a public comes into being, his point is relevant. What he calls here the “deeper levels of life” are ultimately only consequences of collective organization that go unperceived by everyday consciousness most importantly because they do not take form in public narratives. These “indirect consequences” are “felt” and “suffered,” Dewey says, “but they cannot be said to be known” (131).

McGray’s essay provides an easy format, in both the logic and ease of the argument as well as in the brevity and aesthetic layout of the article, in which anxious concerns over thinking Japan’s present move from one end of the affect-emotion gap to

the other as they take a particular conscious form. As they do they grow in intensity and perception and as such become much more amenable to political and administrative management. However, McGray also leaves bureaucrats with a number of problems: “It is impossible to measure national cool,” he says (52). Moreover, whereas American soft power was perceived to carry particular messages with it— “democracy,” “freedom,” “modernity”—Japan’s seems at times “all medium and no message” (52). In this context, McGray muses, “It’s hard to imagine that Japan will be content to remain so much medium and so little message” (52). These two problems of measurement and message became prominent themes of the subsequent soft power debate in Japan, most specifically in those bureaucratic sites where administrators were tasked with constructing specific policies and programs contributing to a new national brand (see chapter 5 on nation branding).

### **McGray in Japan**

How much influence does this short article by McGray really have? Surely he did not single-handedly usher in a new national fervor for Japan’s own pop culture industries. The multiple and variant paths of circulation that enable discourse make this difficult to say. The notion of soft power had been circulating since the early 1990s, and even before McGray’s article Prime Minister Koizumi had launched a commission investigating the political potential of investing in Japan’s content industries. Still, the proliferation of references to McGray’s article after 2003 begs our attention. What made it so powerful? Ian Condry’s impressions on McGray prove useful here:

McGray's article was the catalyst, but the ideas had been floating around for a while. I would also point to the success of Pokemon worldwide, Miyazaki winning the Academy Award for "Spirited Away," and, retroactively, "Ghost in the Shell" grabbing #1 for DVD (1996), i.e., this

happened earlier, but people then looked back at it in the early 00s as another example of Cool Japan's legitimacy. It wasn't so much the insights of the article itself as the timing, just as Japan was emerging from its decade-long recession, and the way it seemed to offer a new direction at a time when China (and other low wage countries) are dominating manufacturing. There are the generational differences too, exemplified by Asō Tarō, where people in power now grew up with (and appreciate more) manga and anime. What, of all this, is most important? In my opinion, *Spirited Away*, but McGray gave it a name. [Email correspondence]

In accordance with Dewey's emphasis on the importance of artists who give form to swelling energies and only abstractly perceived affects accompanying shifts and tremors of social change, Condry cites the importance of "naming." It was only after McGray's article that "national cool" became "Cool Japan," with McGray's article serving as the shibboleth of its legitimacy. Examples of this saturate popular media and publications in Japan. I offer just a few of these below.

Nakamura Ichiya is a former bureaucrat from Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (*Sōmushō*). He serves on a number of committees and research groups connected with supporting Japan's content industries such as the Content Policy Research Group (*Kontentsu seisaku kenkyū kai*) and the Pop Culture Policy Project (*Poppu karuchā seisaku purojekuto*). Onouchi Megumi is a media arts producer and a researcher at Japan's International Foundation for Information Technology (*Kokusai IT zaidan*). Together they published a book titled *Japan's Pop Power: The True Story of how Contents are Changing the World* (*Nihon no poppu pawā: sekai o kaeru kontentsu no jitsuzō*, 2006). The opening line could hardly better demonstrate the anxious context out of which hope for Japan's resurgence through its content industries spring: "Japan's economy may have escaped the lost decade [referring to the stagnant 1990s], but it does not have the confidence that it has found the path to steady growth" (1). Things are not looking good. Within this grim assessment, however, there is, of course, hope: "Industry

builds culture, and culture is a mechanisms for building industry, so how about hitting upon this light of the so-called ‘power of the culture industries’ (*sangyō bunka ryoku*)? The power of the culture industries is clearing the path to a new age” (1).

As justification for such hope, the authors present McGray:

At the level of evaluation [*hyōka no reberu de*], since the publication of Douglas McGray’s article “Japan’s Gross National Cool” in the magazine *Foreign Policy*, Japan’s entertainment industries have been garnering attention. Gross National Cool is a concept likened to Gross National Product and serves as an index of a country’s power based on the fashionable cultural power, or its “cool.” [16]

The authors follow McGray’s logic translating subculture trends into a measure of a country’s potential power and cite the following, much noted passage from his article:

Japan is reinventing superpower—again. Instead of collapsing beneath its widely reported political and economic misfortunes, Japan’s global cultural influence has quietly grown. From pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and animation to cuisine, Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic one. [McGray 2002: 44]

McGray posed the theme of Japanese soft power as a question, asking whether or not Japan would be able to turn its culture into a source of power. For McGray, power was very much about message. In the caption to a photo showing a male Japanese teenager, hair dyed bright blonde, speaking on a cell phone, he quips, “Cool phone! But does he have anything meaningful to say to the world?” (52). For the authors, though, McGray’s article is presented as a confirmation of Japan’s already extant soft power resources. Message plays little to no role in their work. Most important is identifying the sources of Japan’s resurgence, and McGray’s label, “Gross National Cool,” serves as a useful guide in the search.

Another work, *Cool Japan: The Japan the World Wants to Buy* (*Kūru japan: sekai ga kaitagaru nihon*, Sugiyama 2006), reveals such similarities in style and content that one wonders how it could even sell as a separate book without infringing upon copyright law. Like Nakamura and Onouchi, Sugiyama views Japan's content industries as a source of hope in an anxious time:

The rejuvenation of “Made in Japan (*meido in japan*) is a new industry economizing culture and technology to a high degree. This new industry is no doubt gaining traction to a new level within a contemporary Japan that feels an anxiety over the fate of its national economy and dwindling population [*shoshi kōrei ka*, literally, “decreasing birth rate and increasing rate of elderly”]. [5]

Sugiyama's article cites McGray's article as well, calling it the “impetus starting this new benefit to citizenship” (*shiminken o toku hajimeta no wa*) and one sees how through the lens of Cool Japan, culture becomes resource: “The fate of Japan's future is dependent on the ability to activate the resources of ‘Cool Japan’” (5). Ultimately, Sugiyama is hopeful: “Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, manga and anime, which have attracted high praise of Japan's pop culture abroad, are enormously popular...I feel a bright future for Japan's content industries” (3).

The hopeful sentiments often rooted in anecdotal evidence for the popularity of Japan's pop culture overseas might be easy to dismiss as a peripheral soft nationalism typical of popular literature on Japan, called in Japanese “*bunkaron*” (theories of Japanese culture), even if often authored by university academics. The degree to which the phrase “Cool Japan” or “Japan Cool” (*japan kūru*) enters into government policy reports or “white papers” (*hakusho*), however, reveals a network of circulating sentiments that pervade bureaucracy as much as media. The report by Kawamata and distributed to METI officials provides an illustrative case of how “Cool Japan” finds its way into both



academic and government spheres. The paper opens with a reference to McGray and a citation from Sugiyama:

GNC (Gross National Cool). The word was coined by the American Douglas McGray in the June issue of *Foreign Policy* in 2002 to commend Japan's role as a new super power in the field of culture in the 1990s compared to its power in the economic field in the 1980s. [2005: 107]

The phrase “Cool Japan” begins to appear more frequently in the early 2000s, most noticeably in a number of METI reports by the Contents Global Strategy Study Group (*Kontentsu gurobaru senryaku kenkyūkai*) and even leading to the title of a special section within METI called the *Kūru japan shitsu*, translated into English as the “Creative Industries Promotion Office” but literally meaning, “Cool Japan Room.”<sup>13</sup>

Such examples, best highlighted by Nakamura, Onouchi, and Sugiyama's accounts, are representative of a discourse not only rapidly and widely circulated among those thinking through Japan's future but also highly normalized (see chapter 4), narrating a hopeful anticipation for Japan's content industries from within a position of saliently-felt anxieties over its economic future. McGray's article appears repeatedly as the paramount example for the legitimacy of Japan's claim to a future of both economic and cultural prestige. Its reoccurrence points to the dependency of practices of national administration on Western evaluation. In the next chapter I look at the formal, organizational, and institutional structures in which this dependency is inscribed.

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<sup>13</sup> Kukhee Choo traces a similar process in governmental proceedings on anime and content industries, finding a sudden and significant proliferation in the early 2000s of proceedings in which the words “content” (*kontentsu*) or “anime” are cited (2009: 122).

## Chapter Three

### An Architecture for Cultural Difference

Chapter 2 explored how soft power imagined within the register of national and cultural difference organized affects ideologically. This chapter analyzes the institutional frameworks in which such difference and its associated affects are inscribed. While the previous chapter showed how anxious affects serve as a stimulus of ideology, this chapter shows how both those affects and ideology are sustained in state apparatuses that organize, manage, and in the process naturalize such an affectively imbued ideology in policy. This is what Don Handelman has called the “torquing of passion and reason,” a major function of bureaucracy whose ultimate objective is to negotiate the mutual demands of nation and state:

The modern state depends on torquing together the sides of this divide. The vector of bureaucratic logic shifts the State towards the mathematical, towards lineal topologies of separating and fitting together parts with the exactitude of sameness and difference, while governing these machinic processes through rationality, clarity, precision, control. By contrast, the vector of totalizing effervescent emotion shifts the State towards the modern national, towards the romantic sublime (Weiskel 1976), combining a secular metaphysics of transcendence with nationalism, generating the intense arousing of emotion, their over-abundant penumbra of effervescence spilling over, uncontainable within lineal classification... The State must join the two sides of the divide, yet does so without being able to predict emergent outcomes. [Handelman 2007: 134]

Bureaucratic logic is generally understood as absent of emotion; however, as Handelman shows, it establishes a fluid and mutually constitutive relationship with a national imagining that is actually motivated and sustained by it: “Bureaucratic logic may constrict, strangle, choke off the emotionalism of the national, and the enthusiasm of the national may overflow and swamp the neat borders and divisions made through

bureaucratic logic” (135). Such unpredictable mutual appropriations can produce some strange, emergent forms of life, some of which I discuss in chapters 7 and 8.

Weber’s classic account of the emergence of bureaucracy (1968) has contributed to an understanding of it as existing in a natural and structurally uniform relationship with the nation state, as if its forms in nineteenth century France and post-colonial Indonesia should be of the same nature given they are of the same category. Although Weber certainly allowed for the cultural variation of bureaucratic style, it is Michael Herzfeld’s study of the cultural history of Western bureaucracies (1992) that goes the furthest in contextualizing bureaucracy to its local and particular function in relation to state needs and national desires. His subtitle to the work, “Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy” is ironic not only because the idea of a bureaucratic style uniform across a wide range of countries in the Western hemisphere bears little resemblance to social reality but also because it is the imagined symbol of the “West” that Herzfeld posits as the object of his study of national identity (2-3). “Nationalist ideologies usually lay claim to some kind of constructed ‘national character,’” Herzfeld says, “Their bureaucracies have the task of calibrating personal and local identity to this construct” (3).

That bureaucratic practice demands the calibration of reason to ideals of national character and, more importantly, does so in a way that guarantees the *authenticity* of that calibration, secures the relationship between what Handelman calls “mind-work” and “body-work (2007: 135).<sup>14</sup> Required of the official engaged in the former is a type of concern for or way of knowing the latter and of thus being able to calculate authenticity.

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<sup>14</sup> Herzfeld goes so far as to propose “authenticity” as that which displaces “charisma” and “social relations” as the basis for modern authority (1992: 62). Herzfeld does not argue that “authenticity” replaces Weber’s “legal” authority as the form of power particular to the modern state but that it emerges as a primary affective defense against the sense of disenchantment that comes as a natural consequence of modern rationalization and the loss of charismatic authority.

It requires a way of judging whether a film, novel, or art exhibit, for example, does or does not authentically represent national character. As I discovered in fieldwork, however, developing a sense for authenticity in cultural administration is often far less calculative a process than one might expect. It more often resembles a more spontaneous and practical “I know it when I see it” ethos, as I show in chapter 6.

Unique to the demand of negotiating state and nation within Japanese bureaucratic practices is the uneasiness with which the two were coupled in the birth of the modern Japanese state. Modernization—more accurately, its historical narratives—initiated in the Meiji period in the form of a concession to exogenous forces seen to threaten the very survival of a unified Japanese body rendered impossible the ability for both structural reform and national imagining to be undertaken in anything other than a comparative framework. The lack of works of Meiji intellectual history that do *not* reference the history of Western thought, as Naoki Sakai has shown (1997: 48), attests to this. Further, the similarity of this discursive mode—“If there is thought in the West, there ought to be its equivalent in Japan” (48)—to today’s nationalist *bunkaron* literature (theories of Japanese culture) shows both the lasting power of this discourse as well as, self-referentially, one of the major institutions in which it is sustained: language and the publishing industry, a major constituent of national imagining as Anderson has shown (1991: 37-46).<sup>15</sup> The interesting problem that this inextricability from imagining the West when imagining Japan poses is that, for bureaucrats in Japan, calibrating state administration to guarantee the successful survival of an authentic national body is to unavoidably appeal to Western criteria for statehood, national power, and national

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<sup>15</sup> The often-quoted statistic that Japanese consume more newspapers, magazines, and books than any other nation is both a fact reaffirming the power of this discourse as well serving as an example of its discursive mode of imagining difference through cultural terms.

prestige, what Sakai calls “mimetic desire” (1997: 48). And for all the negotiation and ambiguity with which the “West” is imagined in Japan, soft power as first, an increasingly ubiquitous resource that nation states seek to procure, second, as a concept attributed to a Harvard professor and council to a U.S. president, and third, as an idea first put into practice by Britain in its “Cool Britannia” campaign, the concept is imagined as a thoroughly Western one.

### **History of Japan’s Bureaucracies and their Western Models**

Even to recognize oneself as a national administrator in Japan is to identify with a formal occupational and personal status conferred by the West. One is necessarily implicated in a history of unequal vectors of determination that either more implicitly (in styles of dress, office organization, forms of speech, standards measuring the good, competent, or ethical administrator) or more explicitly (in the circulation of a position paper by Barack Obama at the opening to a hearing at the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs, see chapter 5) forces one to repeatedly perform patterns of mimicry whereby authenticity is measured by one’s proximity to Western administrative forms of conduct.

Historians of the Meiji Restoration have painted varying pictures of Japan’s modernization in relation to those Western models of administrative organization to which Japanese elites looked for guidance. They place them variously along a line between the poles of Japan as the “clever copier” of Western traditions and the more innovative adapter of Western systems to Japanese contexts (Westney 1987: 4). Both views represent varying interpretations of the single fact that Japanese systems were, indeed, consciously and rationally modeled after a number of Western ones: “the navy on the British; the army first on the French and then on the German...the communications

systems on the British; the police on the French; the banking system on the American; the legal system first on the French and then on the German” (Westney 1987: 5). In the contemporary genre of Japan’s *bunkaron* (again, theories of Japaneseness), it is the latter perspective—Japan as innovative adapter—that wins out. Numerous works in this genre laud Japan’s ingenuity at incorporating elements from other traditions and making them its own—tea ceremony from China, Buddhism from India, technology from the West, food from everywhere.<sup>16</sup> The praise of Japanese adaptability turns adaptability, itself, into a unique national trait. As Westney writes, “Copying is less estimable than inventing; imitation is less honorable than innovation.” And “the Japanese of the Meiji period, like their descendents today, felt belittled by the Western image of their nation as an assiduous copier of other peoples innovations” (5).

In critiques of the national it is difficult to resist succumbing to the naturalization of the metaphor of the national body as logically congruent with the personal body. In Westney’s case, this conflation results in the interpretation of a form of Japaneseness in which the Japanese body (both personal and national) undergoes an affliction of dependent imitation in Meiji that is transformed into, or in psychoanalytic terms, repressed by, a value of creative innovation still prominent today. Such an interpretation seems too easy, and too much a product of convenient confluences with analytic modes found in history and psychology (anthropology’s school of national character studies succumbed to similar temptations). What, in terms of a structure of feeling, does the Meiji administrator really share with the modern one? What is the practical effect of

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<sup>16</sup> One Japanese amateur photographer and chronicler of local festivals in Japan enthusiastically expressed to me his satisfaction at the fact that no where else but Tokyo could one have at his disposal Korean, Indian, Italian, French, Thai, and Japanese food while walking down a single street. Having also boasted travelling to over fifty countries, at least one of which must surely have contained a stroll down a London boulevard or a visit to an American food court, the comment could hardly be attributed to inexperience.

Sakai's historical analysis of the birth of the Japanese imaginary on practices of Japanese imagination today? To what extent can or should a continuity be established?

In asking myself these questions and taking what James Faubion might call an "Occamist" perspective on my object (Forthcoming: 1), I sought only those most immediate narratives, symbols, and institutional structures in which anxious affects of national imagining were rooted. What such an ethnographic perspective on current modes of national belonging reveals is not only their particular contemporariness but also their dependence on thoroughly transnational and transcultural organizational structures.

### **An Architecture for Cultural Difference**

National cultural administration takes place within a bureaucratic register that is organized in parallel to a set of numerous agencies, bureaus, and departments in other nation states all responding to similar urgencies of both local and global concern. Its integrity is established through a number of different modes but its most rigid is organizational (Sassen 2007). Importing its organizational structures guaranteed that Japan's national administrations would be linked structurally with those of the West, and in so doing would consequently establish an asymmetric flow of affectivity, of power. Modeling the Japan Foundation after the British Council, for example, which it did in 1972, guaranteed that administrative structures, styles of operation, and forms of evaluation and critique would resemble one another.

Such organizational symmetry is both a primary marker and facilitator of modern globalization. Although people like Appadurai and Tsing have drawn attention to the imbalances which generate global flow, in metaphors of "cannibalization" (1996) and "friction" (2005) respectively, it is symmetry or compatibility established at least in some

degree that allows for affectivity. One needs compatible systems to establish connectivity, or, in the language of Deleuze and Guattari, for machines to connect with other machines (1983: 5). This is today represented organizationally in the parallel relationship of national administering bodies: Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs parallel to the U.S. State Department and British Foreign Commonwealth Office; the Japan Foundation to the *Alliance Française* and *Goethe Institut*.

The importance of organizational symmetry is, perhaps, most clearly exhibited in the field of overseas development. For example, the aim of Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the state's administrative arm for administering overseas aid (its counterparts are USAID and Britain's Department for International Development), is not simply to donate money to various sectors of developing countries' economies. That is, they do not donate money so much as they export bureaucratic structures. An overwhelming number of officials sent overseas by JICA are administrative staff rather than technical experts. And even experts are engaged much more in organizational restructuring than they are in technical development. An expert in customs inspections, for example, does not simply introduce x-ray scanners in Phnom Penh's airport but, rather, organizes structures for the management of the flow of people. He (male experts in JICA far outnumber female ones) reorganizes the placement of lines, the position of customs agents, and all the procedures of inspection that depend on such a spatial arrangement for their smooth implementation. ODA and other facilitators of globalization function through the homogenization of organizational structures: the



establishment of symmetric systems that enable the systematization of asymmetric flows of capital and power.<sup>17</sup>

Paying attention to these systems is not to reduce culture to institutional determinism but to show how their parallel organization establishes connections between different localities, however variously imagined, enabling *particular kinds* of mutual influence: feedback. They allow for both exchange and influence, rough homologies to the “communication” and “transaction” of Bertalanffy’s general systems theory (1969). The homogenization of organizational forms, then, allows for the entrenchment of significant difference along lines of standardization (although both “nation states,” for example, the U.S. and Japan are different kinds of them). They enable various affective relationships as well, capacities to feel, affect, or be affected that come as both consequences of and motivations for connection. “Japaneseness” is found at the intersection of this organizational compatibility and affective disequilibrium.

#### **The Japan Foundation and British Council: Facilitating Mutual Differences**

An example of how such homogenizing organizational forms also function to structure particular kinds of difference can be seen in a symposium organized jointly by the Japan Foundation (JF) and British Council (BC) in Tokyo in January 2009, “The Significance of International Cultural Relations in the World Today” (*Kyō no sekai ni okeru kokusai bunka kōryū no igi*). Participating in the event were the respective

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<sup>17</sup> Over the course of my fieldwork I held a part-time job as an “English Resource Person” at JICA, which provided significant insight into systems of ODA administration. My job entailed assisting in one to two-week intensive English courses designed to brush up the English skills of technical experts and administrators before they would leave for their assignments overseas. English levels were generally quite low. The most common activity I engaged in was helping experts design and perform introduction speeches that would be presumably delivered at their first meeting with local counterparts. One expert travelling to Indonesia as a council to their justice department captured this idea of organizational homogenization quite tellingly. He concluded, “In the past, Japan learned judiciary systems from the west; now Japan is teaching these systems to the rest of the world.”

presidents of the British Council and Japan Foundation, the director of the British Council's Japan headquarters, a number of Japan Foundation officials, two professors of cultural policy, and the director of a private foundation for arts funding.

Through the course of the symposium, both the JF and BC officials expressed similar opinions on matters of cultural relations and in similar rhetorical styles: representatives from both sides advocated for cultural relations as a tool for peace and solving international problems; they both offered the idea of arts and traditions as global, public goods rather than national ones; and they both voiced concerns over the use of the phrase soft power in cultural relations. Officials from both sides wear suits; they both speak from prepared drafts and take questions; and after the formal presentations they mingle with each other with ease and familiarity. Despite critical interpretations challenging globalization's homogenizing tendencies, the register of international administration exhibits an incredible uniformity of style, deliberation, and, perhaps in large part consequentially, of discourse itself. Organizational homology, thus, establishes structures and forms of communication that, precisely because international communication is one major function of these organizations, homogenizes. Difference between organizations, then, emerges only in forms these homologous organizational structures allow, or, alternatively, in forms of local language and affective motivations that lie outside it.

Both the director of the British Council, Martin Davidson, and the director of the Japan Branch, Jason James, take positions on cultural relations that plays down the role of the state, if not also at times making a conscious and deliberate effort to distance itself from it. "Cultural relations is not about business, government, industry," Davidson at one

point said, “It’s about people, cooperation, trust, understanding, communities, peace. It’s about engaging overseas publics.” The metaphor through which Davidson imagined the BC’s role in the administration of cultural relations, and that was also expressed to me in an interview with Jason James, was of a bridge between individuals and groups. It was about forming relationships and connections: “We’re trying to build two-way mutual relationships. Sometimes we use the metaphor of a bridge, so we’re trying to build a bridge between Japan and the UK that people can walk across in two directions” (James, interview). In his speech Davison made a special effort to distinguish the role of the BC from the Foreign Ministry: “The British Council is aiming for an honest view of culture and leaves the positive view up to the foreign service.” Although cultural relations builds influence, he later said, the goal is mutual understanding between people, not the achievement of foreign policy objectives. James adds, “We’re not comfortable with power. We’re not trying to exert power on Japan. We build relationships that can potentially be used by the Foreign Office but we would never use them ourselves. We just build relationships. We don’t much like the word power.”

Three points that Davidson outlined for cultural relations were: one, it should be separate from government; two, it should be made in partnership with people and organizations in the host country; and three, it should be built on mutual respect. This deliberate effort to clearly distinguish the British Council from the British state reveals the organization’s ethical obligation to a public imagined to also be independent and distinct from the state. Comments from Japan Foundation officials reveal a slightly more intimate relationship between cultural relations and state administration.

Where Davidson made a special comment expressing his desire to “avoid the word ‘diplomacy’ altogether,” Japan Foundation President Ogoura entertained the possibility of thinking of the role of the JF through a diplomatic framework. A key word for Japan’s international cultural exchange is *kokueki* (national interest). Ogoura explained, “The question is of how to tie *kokueki* to cultural diplomacy.” Included in this question are issues of globalization, Ogoura continued, of how to meet the other’s mode of understanding in order to shape messages for transmission (*hasshin*) and reception (*jushin*). Although here Ogoura problematizes the relationship between national interests and cultural exchange, genuinely posing the relationship as a question open for debate, he has in other places been more forward about cultural diplomacy, characterizing the role of cultural diplomacy in Japan’s past as “motivated by the desire to respond to and dispel specific misunderstandings and prejudices on Japan” (2009: 29) and calling for a more assertive approach:

It is therefore high time for Japan to voice its vision on the future of the world community rather than simply defend its position. If Japan cannot summon the nerve and ambition to express its opinions on the shape of the world of tomorrow, it risks becoming more and more invisible in the global policy-oriented intellectual discussion. [2009: 29]

Ogoura here shows an often-expressed concern for the fading visibility of Japan on the world stage, a concern that time and time again reveals itself as the affective energy motivating much thought on cultural exchange and, in its more deliberately political iterations, soft power.

Ogoura’s take on cultural exchange, the JF’s translation of *bunka kōryū* (the BC uses the phrase “cultural relations”), at times resembles Davidson’s, but one British

official noted what he sensed as a slight difference in emphasis between the British and Japanese side in the symposium:

It did become apparent that there was this slight difference of emphasis between the idea of projecting your culture to other people and more like sharing things on a mutual basis. If you put it to Ogoura like that I'm sure he would disagree with the British Council's approach but there seemed to be a difference of emphasis.

The “slight difference of emphasis” perceived by this BC official could not be easily demonstrated with examples. He simply sensed that Ogoura had a different “emphasis,” a level of intensity that was dedicated to a different aim of cultural exchange. This concern or urgency underlying the motivation for cultural exchange efforts operates in the affective background of what seems an otherwise highly formalized and affect-less environment. (I discuss the tone of this background in more detail in chapter 4.)

Ogoura represents opinions at the most cosmopolitan end of the cultural diplomacy debate in Japan. He goes on in his speech to argue for a “new paradigm for cultural relations,” one that addresses the responsibility of private enterprise (*minkan kigyō*). He also offered the idea that “one’s culture could be anyone’s culture,” that Japanese culture was not the propriety of just the Japanese people but of everyone, what he has in other venues called the “precious heritage of all humankind” (2009: 18). As one example of a contribution Japan might make to this heritage he offered the notion of *mottai nai seishin*, an ethos of preservation and of not letting something go to waste, whether it be culture or natural resources. Ogoura’s example of *mottai nai seishin*, however, is a contested one. Along with other notions like Japan’s ability to incorporate other cultural traditions into its own and its record of environmental preservation (in reality spotty at best, Kerr 2001), it is more often appropriated as an example of Japanese

uniqueness in the rhetoric of *nihonjinron* literature than it is a proposal for a global public ethic. In this sense, to the degree that feelings of pride motivated by affects of anxiety over unbalanced power relations attach themselves to objects like *mottai nai*, or manga and anime as the case may be, the very substance of cosmopolitan, trans-national communion and communication becomes appropriated as the particular propriety and prestige of the nation. As the nationally imagined discourse of soft power and nation branding circulates and gathers energy, Ogoura's cosmopolitan claim loses traction.

What these subtle discursive distinctions reveal are more significant affective ones underlying them, and the notion of "pride," explained by Ogoura, serves as a particularly useful point for analyzing how the latter affect the former. An additional role for cultural relations highlighted by Ogoura is that of "restoring a country's pride" where it is found damaged or lacking. He offered this in line with a number of other ethical services to which the JF can contribute through cultural relations: *kokoro iyashi* (soothing or healing hearts); *fukushi* (welfare); *kokusai mondai* (environmental problems). It is more difficult to imagine representatives from the BC making a similar point, and in fact, in Davidson's own thoughts on an issue related to pride one sees a very different set of feelings: "Culture should carry any amount criticism. One should have enough confidence in one's culture to be willing to undertake such critique." Granted Ogoura's and Davidson's comments are offered in different contexts, one can discern very different sentiments underlying investments in cultural relations. Where Davidson connects a country's pride—or an individual's pride as he imagines himself as a member of that country—to the ability to accept criticism of it, Ogoura emphasizes the necessity to build pride where it is found lacking. While Davidson embodies a pride that is open to

critique, Ogoura seeks a form of critique which can build national pride. These distinctive “styles” of national imagining, to use Anderson’s phrase (2006: 6), materializes out of a set of affective capacities to feel differing degrees of confidence in a set of cultural traits, objects, or practices one calls his own.

The joint Japan Foundation/British Council symposium reveals different lines of connectivity and influence. Abstracted somewhat crudely from the more detailed analysis above, they operate on a sliding scale of sameness and difference: from organizational homogeneity on one end to affective particularity on the other. Strangely enough, affects, which have traditionally been understood as the most “biological” and thus the most universal of human traits, reveal themselves here to be the most particular, personal, and distinctive. Organizational structures, imaginaries, and values—the usual stuff of cultural difference—prove far more rigid, consistent, and uniform within national administration. Such a fact posits affects, understood as capacities to feel and to be affected in certain ways enabled through complex processes of socialization, as evidence for globalization’s failures to homogenize absolutely or, as Wim Wenders has it, as evidence that the Yanks have yet to completely “colonize our subconscious” (Adam 2005: 351). It is also evidence for the localness of affect and affect’s dependence on intimate forms of communication not entirely interchangeable with communication technologies, a point which has been suggested by Appadurai as well (2005). What accounts for the British Council’s development of the metaphor of the bridge between peoples of different publics while the Japan Foundation sticks to more nationally embedded “sharing of cultures” framework is, of course, a great many things. But affects seem to play a major role. The importance of affirming national affinity is far more

prevalent in the Japan Foundation. If it is difficult to chart the complex network of relations that allows for the BC to concede national identity where the JF clings to it, the fact that one concedes and the other clings is still good evidence for the distinction between what those networks allow: differing affective capacities within the national register.

The progressive notion that British pop, for example, can also be understood as a globally shared public good is a point far less stressful to concede for the British administrator than it is for the Japanese one thinking about manga. Consider briefly this response by a Japanese METI official to a South Korean government-sponsored booth displaying Korean *manhwa* (manga) at the Japan Expo, a major festival exhibiting Japan's pop culture hosted outside Paris each year since 1999: "Who would have thought Korea would go this far? It looks as though we will be overtaken even by *manhwa*" (Asahi 2010). The dismay expressed by METI's Cool Japan Monitor demonstrates how deeply cultural commodities like manga and anime are rooted in and claimed for by a national consciousness. The foreign challenge to appropriate a cultural commodity perceived as the exclusive propriety of Japan produces visceral responses of shock and disgust. The plethora of critical comments vilifying Korea that this story elicited on blogs and online discussion boards demonstrates just how deeply the notion of national propriety of certain cultural commodities is inscribed in bodies. The story published in the liberal and progressive Asahi Newspaper concludes, "Sports, the economy, in one field after another Japan's ascendancy is being robbed by these two countries (Korea and China). Now one can feel their increasing presence in the field of culture" (2010). Under such conditions where the participation of groups of two different nations in a common



field of cultural production (manga) evokes impassioned and automated affective responses of disgust and fear, it is hard to imagine Ogoura's softer view of cultural exchange taking root in cultural administration in Japan.

What can be extrapolated from this is that in the nationally imagined relationship between the UK and Japan there is far more at stake for the latter. One affiliating with Japan feels there is more to lose in forfeiting one's national cultural traditions to a "heritage of all humankind." Other cultural relations administrators working in or with Japan identify this sense. One officer from the British Council offered an eloquent summary of what has become the typical narrative through which this sense of Japanese anxiety among administrators is perceived by its counterparts in other nations:

The rise of China puts Japan in quite a difficult position in many ways. Japan has seen itself as natural leader in this part of the world...And obviously after the war has been trying to develop that in most peaceful means... and this has been mainly based on economic relationships where Japan is a massive investor in a lot of the countries in this region and wants to be seen as the sort of elder brother for other countries in the region. Um... it never quite worked the way Japan wanted...so Japan now may have kind of missed its opportunity because China has suddenly appeared in the last ten, fifteen years. The Chinese economy will overtake the Japanese economy within the next year as is generally expected and now the Chinese are coming up with proposals that they be the natural leaders of Asia, which in a sense is more logical. They are a particularly much bigger country in terms of population and if you look at the very long sweep of history China has been the leader of Asia for most of it so you can kind of see where they're coming from, but that leaves the Japanese rather uncertain about how they fit into the picture and I think there's a lot of soul searching about that at the moment. And that's feeding through in this area of public diplomacy and how Japan can best project its culture and its image, particularly in the Asian region. But also how Japan can avoid being ignored by everyone else because they're only interested in China these days.

Stories like these root perceptions of Japanese feeling in narrative. And while it may not be entirely useful to investigate to what degree narratives produce feeling and to what

degree feelings take form in narrative—given that the two are quite obviously mutually determined—keeping Dewey’s model of the public in mind draws attention to the process by which affects, perceived within relationships of power, solidify into more semantically rich and pointedly perceived emotions in narrative. The way these perceptions informed the perspective of the British administrator are likely too multiple to trace completely, with influences coming in numerous forms: history classes, popular media, perceptions of race, everyday encounters in Japan. On an administrative level, though, this official can point to specific instances where such power imbalances become obvious, such as when Japan Foundation officials seek advice from the UK on program evaluation methods. And even without these everyday performances of power imbalances, the fact that the Japan Foundation appropriated the British Council as an organizational model permeates perceptions of contemporary relations between the two organizations.

Such power imbalances, perceived sometimes more and sometimes less keenly, are heightened by the contemporary intensification of competitive power struggles between a China and Korea increasingly seen as “threats” (*kyōi*) as labeled by the story on Korea’s *manhwa* exhibit. Contemporary public and cultural diplomacy within the Japan Foundation is structured in response to a keenly perceived urgency that seems to be lacking within the British Council. How this more ambiguous and pervasive sense of urgency is translated into more semantically structured narratives of self-reflection, understanding, and subsequently, administration and policy is the subject of the following chapter.

## Chapter Four

### **Managing Urgency in the Agency for Cultural Affairs**

“What Japan lacks is a coordinated effort to strategize its public diplomacy.” This was offered to me by a high-ranking official in the Japan Foundation’s Intellectual Exchange Division. It was a common theme running through public diplomacy debates in Japan. At an informal study group meeting of Japan Foundation and Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ officials, a woman posed the concern in the form of a question: “What can Japan do to organize officials from different ministries and politicians to build its soft power and current activities in cultural diplomacy?” In a class on international cultural relations I took from another Japan Foundation official, the problem was formulated in a similar way: “bureaucracies in Japan work primarily for their own interests and there is no coordination between them. Public diplomacy requires coordination between agencies.”

In different ways, Foucault and Dewey both described how discourses often emerge in response to specific urgencies. Foucault called these “problematizations”; Dewey called them “problems” (Rabinow 2003: 18-19). Around these emerge sets of collectivities, institutions, and rhetorical styles that order truth and falseness, significance and irrelevance, called “discourse” by Foucault and the “public” by Dewey. For a long time after my exposure, observation, and participation in the discourse of public diplomacy and soft power in Japan I simply could not follow along. Although I quickly became familiar with the language and “concerns” of Japanese public diplomacy, I could not sense the urgency that motivated it. This uncomfortable discord which I attributed to a particular cognitive deficit in my understanding of public diplomacy repeatedly

generated a simple question: why?! Why is it necessary to coordinate Japan's public diplomacy efforts across different bureaucracies? Why is it important to increase the number of Japanese speakers and exchange students to Japan? Why should Japan officials spread the news of anime's popularity both domestically and abroad? After several months of fieldwork, though, I realized my confusion was not due to a lack of understanding but to a lack of feeling.

For much of my fieldwork, I was disappointed at the simplicity of my question, "why?" Surely my training in anthropology should elicit far more critical of a research question than, "why this policy?" The question was entirely reactive. Sensitive to the affective moods accompanying my thought, I found these ones irksome. And I identified in them a certain affinity with the American diplomat who in similar irritation likened America and Japan's relationship to a husband and wife, however politically incorrect. I also identified in them an affinity with the Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy, Ron Post, and the director of the British Council in Japan, Jason James: a somewhat condescending perplexity at Japan's strategic investment in pop culture which manifests ultimately as a sentiment bordering on a chauvinistic indifference. Here were styles and affective investments in national affinity clashing: broad and abstract generalizations (stereotypes) of cultural difference imagined through national character and operating in the everyday. They were ubiquitous and strong enough to penetrate a decade of anthropological training in reflexivity and elicit from me the same irritating and condescending reaction that it did from my Western interlocutors: "What's the big deal? What are you Japanese bureaucrats so worried about?!"

Frustrated with encountering the same soft power narrative repeated over and over again in interviews with interlocutors, daily conversations with officials, and magazine and newspaper articles on public and cultural diplomacy, many of them written by these same officials, I tried a more direct and uncensored approach. Speaking with an official with whom I worked closely at the Japan Foundation about one of these articles I was recently reading, I asked:

Why do we so seldom hear in these articles promoting Japan's cultural diplomacy the reason or justification for it? For example, the author here [pointing to the article] once again argues that while although the Japanese language is being increasingly taught around the world it is not enough. But he does not tell us why. My concern is that if there is no discussion over the justification for Japan's cultural diplomacy efforts then all the reader hears is a kind of empty nationalism, or even propaganda!"

Although my questions did not always take this direct of an approach, they were most often motivated by this reaction that was somehow kindled in me over and over again. It was perhaps my desire to move beyond this form of evocation that most motivated the directness of my question. My colleague and friend who apparently understood much more of my perspective than I did of hers gave an answer which cut to the root of my question. She later formulated this answer in writing:

Indeed, culture could be a scary thing should it become a mere tool. Where to draw the line between using culture for the purpose of fostering peace and for gaining power for your own country over others is difficult. The recent popularity of Japanese pop culture emerged, for better or worse, not out of a desire to gain attraction overseas; rather, culture produced in local Japanese settings simply happened to become popular overseas. The idea that some people have since expressed that if Japanese pop culture is this popular we should use it for diplomacy as well is not a very deep one, in my personal opinion. Pop culture is ultimately only a virtual (*bācharu*) thing. I think it's important from there to deepen an interest about the real (*riaru*) Japanese culture and people. It's less about nationalism and more about security (*sekyuritei*).

It was this last line that jarred my senses. The notion of security spoke precisely to that sense of urgency motivating an interest in cultural diplomacy efforts. Interestingly, it also reminded me of John Ashcroft's bald statement that soft power was simply about cold calculated national security; however, I also assumed that my colleague's understanding of "security" was much deeper than that of Ashcroft's. Asking her to elaborate, she offered the following:

I haven't studied the academic meaning of the word "security" (*sekyuritei*) but for me (*jibun no naka de wa*) one part of security (*anzen hoshō*) is based on the people of other nations looking positively (or at least not having feelings of animosity) at the Japanese people and the nation called Japan (*Nihon to iu kuni*), which I think involves politics, economics, and the study of culture. So, the ultimate purpose of the Japan Foundation is to increase the number of people abroad who like Japan and the Japanese people. If we can use culture for the "utilization of peace" (*heiwa riyō*) then I think it's a good thing. I want to contribute to programs that use pop culture as an entry way (*iriguchi*) for people to take an interest in the real (*riaru*) Japan and Japanese people.

Revealed in my colleague's statements, which, again, were conveyed to me in writing, suggesting that she took more time thinking and reflecting than she would in answering this question in person, is a sense of urgency slowed down, calmed through a process of thought, and expressed through the language of cultural diplomacy. Anxiety over the state of the national image, here, is expressed in terms of people liking Japan and mutual security and peace. My colleague's narrative serves to formalize the complexity of anxiety's affective makeup into something manageable. In this way affect becomes an object accessible and amenable to work, most specifically, the work of cultural administration and image management that can in turn alter and influence the original affective composition elicited when thinking through the register of the nation state.

If my colleague's description of soft power and cultural diplomacy as tools of peace and garnering affection differed from Ashcroft's "cool and calculated national security" (it hardly approaches, according to Yúdice (2003: 65), Ashcroft's role in legalizing violations of immigrant and citizen rights and abridging the Freedom of Information Act, for example) it is also not entirely distinct from it. That is, to think through the lens of soft power is to think of the nation competitively and to admit that an official of the nation works not primarily for a common or public good but for the interests of his or her nation. Even though officials often stress that there can be "win win" solutions to soft power strategies, such a perspective concedes that the playing field of geopolitics is a fiercely competitive one, and some nations have clear advantages over others. This sentiment was noted by the Director of the Japan Foundation, Ogoura Kazuo:

The concept of soft power is usually put forward by the party exercising the power and discussed from the perspective of that party... While words like attraction and influence may appear "soft" to the party exercising the influence, those on the receiving end of the soft power often perceive elements of compulsion, threat or coercion. [2009: 43]

With Joseph Nye and John Ashcroft headlining the Fulbright/CULCON conference on soft power, the imbalance of the power relationship between the two nations was palpable. However, the hope seemingly expressed by Japanese organizers was that any threatening elements of American soft power could be abated by the Japanese convincing John Ashcroft, the obvious star of the event, and the other Americans that Japan had enough cultural resources to legitimize its role as an equal partner in soft power, rather than as a victim of it.

The “power” (in Japanese, *pawā*) element of soft power is simultaneously that which inspires hope that Japan can achieve as much prestige as the U.S. or Britain as well as that which sustains the anxiety that Japan’s future is indefinitely tied to nation states historically and presently far superior to it. A young Japanese official at the Japan Foundation, Tanaka-san, summarized this conundrum of Japan in a narrative that had been repeated to me a number of times (here, he offers his thoughts in English in an email which I edited slightly for fluency but maintained much of his punctuation and idiosyncrasies):

If you look at the history of Japan, you realize that Japan has never created a system which enforces the common rule or built the common foundation for even regional countries to follow. It became more obvious and somewhat interesting to look at the contrast between Japan’s rapid success after the Meiji Restoration and WWII, yet Japan has never enjoyed the status of hegemony. Japan developed so rapidly during/after the Meiji Restoration—supposedly more rapid than any other country in the world at the time. As you know the motto of Japan at the time was “Wealthy Nation and Strong Soldiers” [usually rendered in English as “rich country, strong army” *fukoku kyōhei*] and Japan was so determined to go out of Asia and enter Europe, culturally, socially, economically, and even militarily. And they (...We??) did it. We so successfully adjusted many parts of society to mimic Western styles and even become so strong as to defeat Russia, which must have been the biggest astonishment for most of the Western countries as well as for Japanese themselves. Western countries must’ve thought, “Oh no, (yellow) monkeys defeated humans!”

Again, after we lost the war, we determined one more time to rebuild our economy. This time, we pursued only economic development since we learned a very harsh lesson after the war, and people were somehow traumatized. And again, we successfully rebuilt our economy and became almost no 1. in the world. At that time, as you know, Japanese were called “Economic Animals,” but at the same time, they were respected. Japan as No. 1 [*Japan as Number One*, Ezra Vogel, 1979] was the best seller at the time. Many Asian countries were also encouraged by Japan’s success.

But again, we were only trying to pursue economic development, according to the Western Capitalist System, and we never came up with our own creative idea to control the world. We have never taken the initiative to commit ourselves to international affairs, such as the Gulf War



or the Iran-Iraq War, etc. You might think this is true for almost all non-Western countries, and I do think you are right about it, to a certain extent that this free-market, capitalism system with democracy was somewhat very unique system created by the Western countries. And since it is so appealing, it is extremely hard for non-Western not to follow the same system or to create our own system. However, even in comparison with other emerging Asian countries, I think a significant difference is that those emerging countries commit themselves toward, at least, regional problems, but Japan still remains indifferent to them.

Tanaka-san's narrative is interspersed with sarcasm, however imperfect, acquired over an extended period of study at a university in the U.S. The humorous tone of phrases like "yellow monkeys" and a "creative idea to control the world" serve to distance himself from the narrative he offers. Tanaka's uncertainty over to what degree he identifies or not with the narrative he offers is further demonstrated in his statement, "And they (...We??) did it [escaped from Asia]." He offers the statement parenthetically, as a graphic representation of a moment of self-reflection.

Although Tanaka-san is unsure about his own relationship to the narrative he provides, that the narrative is the one he immediately appeals to and that it in so many ways resembles the narratives of other officials and authors thinking through contemporary national identity reveals the degree to which to even begin to think of one's relationship to the Japanese nation requires the body's capacity to feel an anxiety rooted in an unrealized desire to be, as Tanaka writes, "No. 1." Such affects both inject feeling into particular histories of the nation and are, in turn, evoked by their telling. Feeling in this way is a kind of understanding. And the fact that I could not understand the urgency underlying the discourse of cultural diplomacy in Japan was due to my inability not to *conceive* of it, but rather to *feel* it.

Interesting about Tanaka-san's narrative is his reference to Vogel's *Japan as Number One* (1979), which he referred to as the "best seller of the time." In fact, *Japan*

*as Number One* is, today, still a top seller of books in Japan written by foreigners.

Incidentally, Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) is also at the top of the list. Vogel's book has achieved iconic status in Japanese culture, despite, as Edward Seidensticker laments in a review, having listed in its index not a single native informant (1980: 416), and the trope of "Japan as number one" has continued to serve as a vessel into which much hope and anxiety over Japan's international prestige has been invested.

At an English training session for officials of Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA), equivalent to USAID or the UK Department for International Development, one official referenced the book in his practice biographical sketch which was expected to serve as a draft of the speech he would present to his counterparts in Bangladesh as part of his introduction. "My reason for becoming a civil servant is because I want to help make Japan number one," he said. Even granting that the official's English ability, like that of most officials taking JICA's training course, was limited, his reference to Vogel's book makes clear that to think of the nation state is to think of it in competition for prestige. Such expressions reveal the pervasiveness of the anxiety among national officials over Japan's slipping status.

A similar narrative of urgency and soft power is found in the research on Japan's higher education conducted by Yonezawa Akiyoshi, professor at Tohoku University. Yonezawa describes Japan's contemporary political position as one of "crisis" (2008: 54):

Overall, Japanese education as a source of soft power is in crisis. Reflection on history and current conditions is indispensable to the development of a future vision. The report "Japan's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vision" (Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy 2005) clarified the danger that

Japan will be left behind in the process of globalization, and specified human resource development and education as priority areas for policy action [2008: 55]

Yonezawa exemplifies, quite conspicuously, how an anxiety over Japan being left behind by processes of globalization motivate strategic thinking of soft power in national policy. He is equally forthright in explaining precisely what countries serve as the prime motivators for Japan's soft power investment:

Japanese academics and students are aware that they are not at the global center, and they feel the necessity to further internationalize Japanese higher education to improve linkages with the global community. In contrast to the U.S. example, the soft power of Japanese education in the domestic context and in the global context are clearly distinguishable. [55]

In Yonezawa's explanation we find the reproduction of a familiar global model which posits the United States at the top and, below that, Japan, struggling to maintain its status at the top of Asian countries: "Japan is no longer the only Asian country that can be proud of high academic achievement and technological advancement" (55). After 170 years of internationalization it is still this perceived geopolitical order of Japan at the top of Asia, but threatened, that represents a source of anxiety.

Although Japanese students may indeed admit to occupying less than the "global center" of education, it is more difficult to assert that they feel an urge to bolster education to "improve linkages with the global community," similar to how elites like Yonezawa feel. Average university students in Japan are far more concerned with their respective club activities or "circles" (*sākuru*) than they are with educational prestige. These keep students far busier than does their school work, which is minimal at most, seldom requiring students to read more than fifty pages a week (the average amount of reading in my MA program in international relations was about thirty pages). Fourth-

year students typically reduce their club activities in preparation for *shūshoku katsudō* (job hunting activities). University life in Japan, thus, is typically thought of as a much-earned break from the demanding studies required to secure a spot at a top university and the grueling life of a company employee (*shain*) that follows. University students, thus, are faced with few invocations to think through national identity in the same register that bureaucrats and many academics do. It is primarily in adopting the role as a steward of the nation that one enters into it.

As this particular register of national affinity characterizes the culture of the upper tiers of policy and administration, the history that sustains it is institutionalized in powerful bureaucracies in the position to effectively circulate such narratives to wider publics, most efficiently achieved through national education policy (the enduring revisionist history textbook issue an iconic representation of this) and the media, whose particular structure in the form of exclusive clubs attached to each government ministry (*kisha kurabu*) guarantees the faithful translation of policy into news. It is understandable, then, that Yonezawa would provide a narrative similar to Tanaka-san's in describing Japan's historical relationship with soft power. Beginning with Meiji, Yonezawa, like Tanaka-san, appeals to the idea of *fukoku kyōhei* ("rich country with a strong military," 56) as the primary policy guiding Japan's modernization project. He goes on to narrate three distinct periods of the historical relationship "linking education and the military, the economy, and soft power" (56). In the process he rewrites soft power, an altogether novel term, into Japanese history, showing how it transformed from a resource that first relied on military power (1868-1950), then was accumulated with economic development (1950-1980), and finally became employed as a tool for

transforming Japan into a postindustrial society (1980-2007) (56). In this reimagination of history we see how anxious affects take a more sentimental (and semantically rich) form in narrative in response to a contemporary urgency imposed by perceived threats of globalization—perceivable only on account of an affective capacity to feel a gap between a nation imagined as a leading country in the world and a state that falls short in realizing it,<sup>18</sup> a sentiment offered in the form of a warning with which Yonezawa concludes his discussion: “If the Japanese fail in their efforts to establish such educational environments [ones that ensure the well-being of citizens living both inside and outside of Japan], the soft power of Japan’s educational institutions and therefore of Japanese society itself will face very challenging international circumstances in the not-too-distant future” (72).

### **The Coding of Affect in Memory**

National histories like those provided by Tanaka and Yonezawa encode anxious affects in narratives that express explicit power imbalances between Japan and other Western nations. Present experience and historical narrative are thus mutually constructed with affect serving as the motivating principle guiding both the interpretation of experience and the construction of history. Images such as the one I showed in chapter 3 of McArthur and Hirohito, discussions of the Japanese Constitution’s Article 9 prohibiting Japan from having a standing army often interpreted as a “castration” of Japan’s national autonomy, or Joseph Nye’s giant visage lecturing Japanese bureaucrats on soft power: all these scenes encode in bodies an anxious sense of an imbalance in power relations. Inversely, the repeated evocation of such narratives and images reactivate and entrench those affects. This pairing of anxious affect with stories

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<sup>18</sup> Recall Gellner’s distinction between nation and state discussed in chapter 2.

representing a power imbalance between Japan and other nations then serves as a formula through which to interpret future evocations of affects recognized as of a similar kind. Narrative and affect are mutually reinforced in their telling.

Stories like Tanaka-san's that condense a modern history of Japan into a few paragraphs illustrating Japan's efforts to achieve a "number one" status in the world (the phrase itself coming, like soft power, from an American author in Ezra Vogel) are short, concise, and easily circulated. They were constantly repeated to me in discussions of soft power and U.S.-Japan relations. Such stories of Japan's loss of prestige are found across literature and history from World War II to today and their precedents can be easily found in every generation going back to the appearance of Commodore Perry's black ships in Edo Bay in the nineteenth century. Their prevalence today demonstrates the amazing strength by which anxiety over Japanese prestige is fixed to narratives of its relationship to Western nations.

Even further, these anxious affects attached to comparisons of national prestige and power prime one's attention to recognize other similar stories. Anxiety, then, functions like a metal detector mining the resources of history in search of stories that confirm its relevance and prevalence today. This mode of historical reproduction is confirmed over and over again in the literature: from Maruyama's intellectual history (1974) to Dower's cultural history of Japan's defeat in World War II (1999) to the plethora of references idolizing the "Overcoming Modernity Symposium" (Calichman 2008). The "Overcoming Modernity" thinkers did not succeed in their task to overcome that precise attachment of anxiety to perceptions of Western superiority on account of the failure to understand their relationship to the modern or to provide alternative modes of

thinking it, but because the conference itself became idolized as the iconic symbol of Japan's crisis of dependency on Western nations. As anxious affects still found their way into future experiences of contact between Japan and other, the conference became an inescapable precedent for even more stories into which such affects were made conscious enough to be formulated into an object of self-understanding and strategies of management, transformation, and therapy, however unsuccessful the latter of these proved. The soft power discourse necessarily invokes these stories in efforts to reimagine and reformulate Japanese prestige, this time along cultural lines.

**The Agency for Cultural Affairs and the  
Administrative Translation of Anxiety into Hope**

Although the trope of "Japan as a cultural nation" (*bunka kokka*) has circulated since Japan's defeat in the Pacific War, serving as an alternative national narrative through which to reconfigure national pride after its humiliation in the war, the accelerated economic growth of the 1970s and 80s largely replaced this image with one celebrating Japan as an economic giant: Vogel's *Japan as Number One* (1979). With the economy's collapse in 1989 and the subsequent stagnation of the 1990s, however, the image of *bunka kokka* slowly returned. But only with the introduction of "soft power" did there emerge a practical, administrative mechanism for turning anxiety into hope. Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA) serves as a primary administrative site where Japan's economic and national urgencies are translated into policy aimed to boost Japan's cultural prestige and soft power.

The notion of soft power has inspired the formation of a number of *shingikai* (working groups or advisory councils) within the ACA. These *shingikai* are made up of

government officials and various experts from the private sector. They are organized by all government ministries and are one of the many structural forms of Japanese bureaucracy that facilitate *kanmin yuchaku*, “the growing together of the public and private sectors” (McVeigh 1998: 91).<sup>19</sup> Although *shingikai* are often promoted as government giving a voice to public concerns from a wide variety of social sectors, both its official and unofficial procedures most often produce a consensus adhering closely to ministry policies. It is, in general, a privilege to be invited to participate on such panels and rarely are overly critical opinions voiced. Moreover, as members are selected and invited through informal networks of social capital established by ministry officials, opinions tend to be rather uniform even before proceedings begin. Reports drafted in these councils, usually by ministry officials themselves, serve as evidence for careful deliberation and justification for the enactment of policy. As these meetings operate entirely outside parliamentary approval and expenditures do not appear in government budgets (McVeigh 1998: 91), they serve as a primary mechanism sustaining the often criticized but seldom reformed system through which bureaucrats rather than politicians are said to control Japan’s government policy and administration.

Over the course of fieldwork I attended several meetings of a number of different advisory councils of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The agency is organized as a section of the Ministry of Education (MEXT) and is in charge of Japan’s cultural policy, the administration of national museums and cultural and religious artifacts, arts education, and most importantly for Japan’s content industry, copyright law. Key words

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<sup>19</sup> The characters for *kanmin* (官民) stand for “officials” and “people” respectively. In Japan the word public (*kōkyō*), as Hayashi explains (2003), most often refers to officials of state administration rather than in the traditional Habermasian sense (1989) in which the public stands for that which is precisely distinct from it. *Yuchaku* (癒着), a medical term, means adhesion, healing up, or union (McVeigh 1998: 91).



like “soft power” and “cool Japan” can be heard throughout these meetings but the most common thread uniting the variety of these panels is the notion of Japan as a cultural nation (*bunka kokka*). The ideological framework in which Japan as a cultural nation is imagined is best revealed in a 2005 book *Imitated Japan (Mohō sareru nihon)* by Hamano Yasuki, a professor in the graduate school of media studies at Japan’s most prestigious academic institution, The University of Tokyo, and member (one as the deputy chairman [*kaichō dairi*]) of a number of these advisory councils. In his introduction, Hamano constructs a comparison between France and Japan, noting how in the past France was known as a cultural nation and Japan as an economic one. “However,” he says, “in contrast to then, now in France it is common to hear one say, ‘cultural Japan, economic France’” (2005: 8). While in the past Japanese people embraced French fashion and brand name products, now, patters have changed:

The value of Japanese animation has been rising among French people, shops focusing on Japanese manga and Japanese pop culture goods are growing in the Bastille area of Paris, and there are frequent events focusing on anime and manga. Moreover, there are many photographic journals focusing on Japanese youth street fashion being published. [8]

Hamano goes on, just as other authors (cited in chapter 2) writing on Japan’s new pop culture power do, to cite Douglas McGray and his evaluation of “Japan’s Gross National Cool.” He concludes the opening section to his introduction with another common reference, Ezra Vogel’s *Japan as Number One* (1979):

Just like the time of Ezra Vogel’s *Japan as Number One* that praised Japan’s economy, Japanese people who are constantly having critique thrown at them from the outside have jumped at this essay by McGray. The axis of Japanese critique has all of the sudden changed from economy to culture, specifically to pop culture. [11]

Hamano's account is simultaneously a reflection on and endorsement of those scripts through which national cultural identity is imagined. Although Japanese seem dependent on outside critique for understanding the state of the nation, he also introduces Vogel and McGray as authoritative accounts of it. The remainder of his book consists of short synopses on a variety of lifestyle trends, cultural traditions, and products of Japan that have been "imitated" (*mohō*) by admiring foreigners. If in the past there was a certain anxiety coupled with the importation and imitation of foreign traditions by Japanese bureaucrats since the Meiji period (Westney 1987: 4), that anxiety is today transformed into pride in the fact that Japan is now the source of imitation. This script of Japan learning from the West and then in the late twentieth century becoming a model for other less developed nations has remained an incredibly resilient one in Japan's modernity. It is the lens through which Hamano constructs his theory of *mohō* (imitation) and through which Japan's soft power is interpreted: if the United States was the original model of soft power's efficacy it is now Japan's turn. Formalizing this ideology in the form of the Fulbright/CULCON conference, discussed in chapter 2, is both an affirmation of this ideology and a strategy for inscription in institutions that sustain it. And while it is the institutions themselves—MOFA, ACA, the Japan Foundation—where researchers, including this one, look to analyze Japan's soft power investments, it is important to identify the affects of anxiety that inspired institutional change.

Hamano's text provides an insight into the affective dimensions of bureaucratic reform. His reflection on the practice of incorporating foreign critique in the construction of Japanese character, a point rendered cliché by the number of academic works both inside and outside Japan making this same assessment, shows how the perception of

power imbalances motivates a hopeful desire for reconciliation, for Japan to regain what ground it lost since Vogel's proclamation of it as number one. This perception of a power imbalance, especially between the Japan and U.S., is poignantly felt. It seems always to reside just at the surface of consciousness, ready at any moment to burst into speech.

The U.S. and the powerful affects its image elicits often appeared in administrative deliberation. In the ninth meeting of the cultural advisory panel on culture policy (*Bunka shingikai bunka seisaku*) within the ACA, at which Hamano-san was in attendance, the section meeting deputy chairman (*bukaichō dairi*) opened the meeting asking members to look at the first reference document (*shiryō*) customarily provided at each meeting. It was a two-page printout from [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com) titled, "Barack Obama and Joe Biden: Champions for Arts and Culture" (2009) along with a two page translation into Japanese. The deputy chairman, Fukuzawa-san, introduced the policy summary as an example of how much energy the United States was putting into improving arts education. He followed this point by indicating that both China and Korea were also making enormous investments in cultural policy.<sup>20</sup> Implicit in his comments was the view that if the U.S. was investing heavily in culture then so should Japan. Further, that China and Korea were making similar investments while Japan was not was seen as an embarrassment. It was this sentiment of embarrassment that had clearly pushed Fukuzawa-san to introduce Obama's policy statement into the council meeting. Later in the meeting, in response to Fukuzawa-san, Takahagi-san, the vice president of the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space (*Tōkyō geijutsu gekijo*) voiced a counter

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<sup>20</sup> See again Kukhee Choo's work (2009) on the emergence of "Cool Japan" as in large part stimulated by South Korea's own investments in its culture industries.

perspective. He highlighted a specific passage in the policy summary: “The purpose of arts education is not to produce more artists, though that is a byproduct. The real purpose of arts education is to create complete human beings capable of leading successful and productive lives in a free society.” Takahagi-san’s comment is representative of someone not directly affiliated with bureaucracy but with arts promotion in the private and civil sector. Representative of this, the passage to which he drew the committee’s attention was not a statement by the author of Obama’s policy position but a quote by the Chairman of the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts. Takahagi-san’s statement was politely received but not discussed, and attention quickly turned to other members voicing other, separate opinions on the subject of the council: Japan’s cultural policy.

Takahagi-san’s statement reveals the difference in motivation for Japan’s investment in cultural policy between arts administrators and national administrators of the arts. While his own opinion seems clearly inspired by an understanding of art as a value in itself—art for art’s sake—Fukuzawa-san’s is focused first and foremost on the nation. The latter’s investment is clearly motivated by affects generated within a bureaucratic register that demands a national imagining of Japan and a concern for its prosperity. And this register, especially in so much as it relates to Japan’s soft power, proves repeatedly and seemingly unavoidably interlinked with the United States.

This is how powerful affects of perceived power differences enter into administration. Affects, thus, pervade discourse, from policy discussions and decisions over cultural policy to the more intimate sites of bodies capable of being affected by perceived imbalances of global power relations. Affects inundate bureaucracy, policy, and consciousness. They are not separate spheres of social action in which affect

differently resides but spheres placed in a particular relation to one another by the nature of those affects. That this form of affect emergent with the register of imagining Japan not only pervades but also places in relation to each other bureaucracy, policy, consciousness, and even unconsciousness, is best exhibited by the closing remarks to the meeting. As is traditionally done at these meetings, the director of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, a rather ceremonial position recently given to individuals outside the agency itself, was solicited for some final thoughts. At the time of the meeting in January 2009, the director was Aoki Tamotsu, a prominent cultural anthropologist. Aoki-san responded in his typically cheerful and informal manner by telling the council about a dream he had the previous night in which Obama appeared and offered his thoughts on Japanese culture. Affects stirred and sustained by perceptions of imbalanced power relations between the U.S. and Japan, subsequently inscribed in institutions of national cultural administration, seem to appear not only in policy but even, perhaps not surprisingly, in dreams.<sup>21</sup>

Hamano's historicization of the shift in the image of Japan from an economic power, represented in Vogel's account, to a cultural power, represented in McGray's, points to an affective mechanism of social reproduction. As I mentioned earlier, the urge to see Japan at the top, as number one, or as a leader has emerged so often in Japan's modernity that accounts of it, whether in narratives of *nihonjinron* literature that promote it or in those of academic critique that deconstruct it are all but cliché. However, the fact that such an urge has persisted, taking so many various objects in history—Japan as economic leader, technological leader, even military leader for a period, and now as

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<sup>21</sup> The affective energy surrounding Obama's rhetoric of hope has been described as a global phenomenon. Christine Yano's essay (Forthcoming) on its permutations in Japan is especially informative and relevant to my discussion here.

cultural leader—calls for a different kind of interpretation. That Japan's nationalism has been reproduced in superlatives indicates the power of narrative to shape sentiment. The discomfort ensuing from the perceived fall from the number one economic status of Japan in the 1970s and 80s, for example, is interpreted as a state of affairs reconcilable only by Japan's reclamation of that status in a separate field. Its inability to do so, then, is productive of an anxiety among those most obliged to care for Japan's future: its bureaucrats.

I want to suggest that the seemingly unchanged desire to be number one represents not some immutable Japanese cultural disposition but, rather, the way that anxious affects have been built into national organizations, institutions, and modes of administration and become subsequently attached to nationalist narratives. The construction of the soft power discourse and its inscription in these organizational structures demonstrates this. As Ngai reminds us by way of alluding to Ernst Bloch's description of "expectant emotions," feelings like anxiety "aim less at some specific object as the fetish of their desire than at the configuration of the world in general, or (what amounts to the same thing) at the future disposition of the self" (2005: 210). He says that expectant feelings have an "incomparable greater anticipatory character" than other feelings (Ngai 2005: 210). Anxiety is one of these. So is hope. And it is the pairing of these that so characterizes the affective dimensions of the soft power discourse. As they propel one's thought further and more deeply into the future, anxious and hopeful affects become entangled in a numerous array of plans, organizations, and structures that impose strictures on one's mood in the present. It is the job of policy makers more so than others to plan, organize, and guarantee the security and feasibility of

this future. If affects of anxiety become inscribed in this future that by the very means of its planning imposes upon and constructs the character of the present, then those subjects who occupy that present are increasingly invested in its success. In other words, they are hopeful. In the event of the future's failure or collapse, such affects are neither easily nor completely disentangled from the present and the subjects who imagine themselves as belonging to it.

Emotions are more dependent on precise objects than are affects. Emotions *attach* where affects *entangle*. Thus, affects which solidify into emotional attachments, such as pride in Japan's economic prestige, should that prestige be destroyed, they can easily and quickly re-solidify into pride for something else, say, Japan's cultural prestige. Although emotions might be quickly dissolved, affects are not, on account of their entanglement in so many structures of both daily and, especially for national bureaucrats, administrative life. My suggestion is that anxiety as an affect that is constructed in a Japanese modernity modeled on the West is repeatedly built into administrative practices of bureaucratic organizations that parallel those of the West. This is the social reproduction of affect in Japanese national administration. That a kind of anxiety produced both emotions of pride in the Japanese economy in the 1980s and a pride in cultural prestige in the 2000s suggests this action of administrative inscription. Such an anxiety is not rooted in an unchanging "culture" pervasive to Japanese society at large, as Ivy suggests (1996), but rather is reproduced in structures of administration that employ the term "Japanese culture" as a discursive tool of politics. The size and complexity of bureaucratic organization in which anxiety is inscribed makes it difficult to disentangle. Such anxiety may extend into those sites of the everyday that bureaucracy touches, as I

discuss in chapter 8, but it need not, and there are plenty of sites where the everyday proves to contest and overcome such nationally constructed forms of sentiment (see Condry's study of hip-hop 2006).

The Agency for Cultural Affairs' *shingikai* represent just one mechanism for inscribing hope for Japan's future as a cultural nation into a number of organizational structures in the present. Anxiety over its possible failures, also secured in memories and histories of Japan's past failures, motivates this process and even utilizes those memories in formulating strategies and mechanisms for hope's realization, for soft power's realization. One important advisory council (*shingikai*), or called in this case a "roundtable" (*kondankai*), that does this is the Roundtable for the Transmission of Japanese Culture (*Bunka hasshin senryaku ni kan suru kondankai*). While McGray's article opened the eyes of Japanese bureaucrats to how much presence Japanese media commodities had established overseas, Joseph Nye's theory indicated a gap between cultural presence and soft power: cultural resources, though they may contribute to soft power, are not synonymous with it (Nye 2004: 11). Thus, while the popularity of anime, manga, and video games abroad are enough to stimulate hope for cultivating Japanese power among top level bureaucrats and politicians, the much more difficult process of translating resources into actual power falls to the administrators within government ministries. The Roundtable for the Transmission of Japanese Culture, thus, employs the term "cultural transmission" (*bunka hasshin*) as a way to facilitate a particular kind of cultural exchange that should lead not only to the increase of Japanese presence abroad but also to the translation of that presence into soft power. It is in this process of strategizing and policy making in roundtables like these where those affects of anxiety



are made into hopeful policy, and where hope for the future becomes institutionalized in the present.

The Midterm Summary (*Chūkan matome*) for the roundtable on transmitting Japanese culture lists strategies and suggestions for ways to improve Japan's cultural transmission. The purpose for this as outlined in the report situates the translation of presence to power in terms of "international cultural relations" (*kokusai bunka kōryū*) and "cooperation" (*kyōryoku*):

With the advance of globalization, the charm (*miriyoku*)<sup>22</sup> of various forms of Japanese culture, from the traditional to the modern, are being transmitted and the deepening of understanding between Japan and foreign countries is being strongly sought after. Further, the achievement of this depends on the promotion of all of Japan's cultural arts. Under these conditions in which Japanese culture on a whole and in various fields has achieved this present status, there is a need to construct a mechanism for the culture's effective transmission. Toward this purpose we establish this roundtable of experts to clarify the state of contemporary Japanese culture and provide a general investigation into the strategies for cultural transmission through Japanese international cultural relations and cooperation. [Agency for Cultural Affairs 2009: 6]

The "aim" (*shushi*) of the roundtable recognizes the "charm" (*miriyoku*) of Japanese popular culture abroad and seeks ways to construct a "mechanism" or "framework" (*shikumi*) for its transmission (*hasshin*). It aims to do this by way of thirteen different recommendations, which I paraphrase below:

1. Create a plan to meet the interests that other countries, beginning with Asia, have in various fields of Japanese culture, especially in regard to new media arts like manga, anime, and games.
2. Utilize the network of foreign organizations such as overseas consulates, Japan Foundation Offices, and the Japan National Tourism Organization to introduce various aspects of Japan's cultural arts.

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<sup>22</sup> *Miryoku* (charm) is written with the characters *mi* (魅), meaning "charm," and *ryoku* (力), meaning power.

3. Utilize overseas broadcasting, the internet and other media sources in order to raise the level of interest of foreign people (learners of Japanese language, former exchange students and those desiring to conduct exchanges, and related individuals) already interested in Japan.
4. Establish a system to recognize the efforts and achievements of foreign people working toward the introduction and exchange of Japanese cultural arts abroad.
5. Promote the translation of websites, Japanese literature, and other prestigious artworks, making these available to people through many different languages. Promote contemporary Japanese arts by offering explanations of lectures and exhibitions through programs and catalogues in multiple languages.
6. Establish and promote international festivals and meetings featuring Japanese art.
7. Build and support student exchange programs with the aim of producing a future group of people who understand the value of Japanese culture through establishing programs and cultural establishments for exchange students, providing volunteers to offer Japanese language education in different regions, build model plans for travel, and establish various consortiums and venues for cultural exchange.
8. Establish educational programs and opportunities for arts education in order to raise the awareness among Japanese people of the value of their own Japanese culture, creating so called “Japanese cultural ambassadors” out of each citizen (*kokumin hitori hitori ga iwaba ‘nihon bunka taishi’ no yakuwari o hataseru yō*).
9. Establish information bases for the transmission of Japanese culture such as national art centers, museums, and theaters. Also, investigate the establishment of facilities that can collect, preserve, and sponsor general information on our country’s manga, anime, games, and other new media arts.
10. Support high level Japanese education for the purposes of deepening understanding of Japanese culture through the development of researchers and experts of Japan.
11. Encourage the creation of so called “creative cultural arts cities” (*bunka geijutsu sōzō toshi*) in order to cultivate the creativity of artists contributing to creative industries such as design and film.
12. Promote the establishment of heritage sites that preserve Japan’s traditional culture and towns, as cultural assets are a source of Japan’s cultural arts and fascinate many foreign visitors. Promote the passage of

the Law for the Preservation and Maintenance of Historical Sites of Scenic Beauty.

13. Improve the association between institutions and collaborate between the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Foundation, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and other related ministries and offices in order to build the effectiveness of Japan's cultural transmission. [2-5]

Out of each of these strategies have emerged various programs and projects which have or are beginning to institutionalize both the ideology of “culture as resource” under the narrative of soft power and the affects of national anxiety and prestige that sustain it.

Many of these programs are designed and executed by the Japan Foundation, where I conducted an internship, and I discuss these in chapter 6. However, what is most important to recognize in these strategies, and in cultural administration in general, is a tension between integration and departmentalization, also clearly exhibited in the last of the roundtable's strategy points. Bureaucracy, as Weber first articulated, is dependent upon the division and distribution of responsibilities. One consequence of this is a particular protectionism among bureaucrats for their respective agencies. Inter-administrative battles are typical. They compete for funding, for maintaining positions and jobs, and for prestige in general. Bureaucrats identify with their agency, which produces images, feelings, talk, and stereotypes of the character of different organizations—the *sōmushō* (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications) the arrogant elites with the most money and power; the *keisanshō* (Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry) full of University of Tokyo number crunchers. The capacity for this identification and consequential name-calling requires a particular in-group organizational ethos. Built into this ethos is an ethics of administration composed of a practical and organizing telos. Put simply, administrators in different agencies work

toward the realization of different ends. While members of METI are focused on rejuvenating Japan's industries, the Japan Foundation is working to build mutual understanding between publics of different nations. This is different from MOFA whose officials are concerned about security and the smooth implementation of foreign policy and the exercises in diplomacy that accompany it. This is different still from the ACA whose job it is to cultivate artists, provide for the arts education of Japanese citizens, and maintain artistic facilities and treasures of the nation. The aims of each organization, the strategies, technologies, and methods it uses to meet these aims, and the general everyday ethos that arises from this are distinct from one agency to the next. Yet the rhetoric of soft power and Cool Japan can be found in each of these agencies. As I noted earlier, the ambiguity and breadth of soft power theory allows for multiple interpretations. It is consequently able to sustain a variety of ethical investments from each of these organizations, even those most contradictory (I examine one of these programs that seems to embody such contradictions in chapter 7).

Despite this division of interests, often promoted in political theory as a benefit to democracy as it provides for a multiplicity of opinions and a system of checks and balances on a potential monopoly of them, there are constant calls among administrators from many agencies to establish a mechanism for the integration and collaboration of these bodies, as called for in recommendation thirteen above. Administrators from both the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have even suggested to me the possibility of creating a separate, overarching body to collaborate with different agencies. What emerges from this is a contested discourse of soft power into which many different bodies struggle for determining the ethics of the political uses of culture. Soft power,

though it reveals itself as an ideology capable of organizing a diverse field of interests and organizations not previously imagined in relation to one another, is also an open field. Its meaning is not precisely defined, although it is still productive of a variety of programs and policies. This is what makes soft power such a rich and timely object of study today as it proves to hold within it extraordinary potential to imagine Japan's future in a way that inspires a wide variety of institutional changes in the present. Such change, especially in a bureaucratic field as resistant to it as is Japan's, requires powerful affects to realize. Further, it is precisely at this moment of change when those affects are inscribed in institutions that facilitate their integration into numerous facets of administrative and daily life. It is in this process of institutionalization that new assemblages of ideas, rhetorics, and organizations acquire durability and temporal longevity, approaching the status of an institutional apparatus that has the potential to determine the meaning and uses of culture in rigid and inextricable ways. Whether this in fact happens or not is unknowable, but the emergent connections between politics, art, consumption, and power that soft power is generating makes the contemporary a period of both significant interest and consequence for thinking through possible futures.

#### **The National Media Arts Center and Soft Power Objections**

One new ACA program that drew particular attention as well as criticism, largely due to the enormous budget it called for (roughly 11.7 billion yen or 120 million USD), was the establishment of a national media arts center (*Kokuritsu media geijutsu sōgō sentā*). After receiving significant support from officials in MOFA and the ACA and especially strong support from then Prime Minister Asō Tarō, who served from September 2008 to September 2009 and is known for his love of manga, plans for the

center were entrusted to the Committee for the Preparation of Establishing the National Media Arts Center (*Kokuritsu media geijutsu sōgō sentā yakuritsu junbi iinkai*). This comparatively large committee, made up of fourteen permanent members and additional five to six temporary members and advisors that rotated with each meeting, included ACA officials, academics, arts administrators, industry, and a number of prominent figures in film, manga, anime, and video games.

The committee was headed by the same Hamano Yasuki whose book, *Imitated Japan*, I cited above. As the chairman of the committee and as one who serves as the default mediator for the meetings, Hamano-san commands significant influence on the direction of the proceedings. At the third meeting of the committee, held at MEXT's headquarters in Kasumigaseki (the site of Japan's primary government ministries), Hamano-san took a rather strong stance on the Center which had been receiving criticism from DPJ (Democratic Party of Japan) lawmakers intent on claiming power from the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), which they in fact did in August 2009: "The international competition is severe (*hageshii*), so we have to do something now! Why is there a manga museum in Korea and not in Japan?" The heightened emotional tenor of Hamano-san's plea was atypical for the generally mild-mannered mood of these proceedings. There was little dissent from the committee.

As I mentioned earlier, the proceedings at advisory councils facilitate consensus. And although this committee was designed under the assumption that the Center would, indeed, be built, it invited a different set of "experts" from various fields each week to voice what opinions, whether supportive or critical, they might have. Such consensus is facilitated by a number of factors. Besides the fact that many members are chosen

through informal networks of social capital that all but guarantee a similarity of opinion from the start, the structure, setting, and mood of the proceedings further facilitate consensus. There are many different settings and rooms in which advisory panels take place. And through the architecture and design of the rooms some evoke a sense of central power and authority more so than others. In fact, many government offices, even in the highest sections of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, strike the visitor as rather plain, drab, and mundane, hardly evocative of the kind of dignified regality that one might imagine of such institutions. However, the room at which the third meeting of the Media Center committee took place was of the more formal and imposing kind. Let me draw a picture of this rather typical advisory council meeting.

#### **Advisory Panel: Setting the Scene**

The room was large and rectangular with dark wood walls and bright fluorescent rather than soft lighting. The carpet was light gray with a simple but elegant print and the long rectangular table a dark mahogany, in color at least. The chairs were leather and large, the back tall enough to support the head of most members, even extending above it for some others. As I entered the door I was greeted quietly by two young women and one young man who marked my name, handed me a large packet of materials for the meeting's proceedings, and directed me to a row of seats at the far end of the rectangular room. On one long side of the rectangular table, farthest from the door through which I entered, sat eight specialists from different fields of media arts. Opposite them were five officials from the ACA. Hamano-san, the chairman, and the deputy chairman sat at the head of the table. Advisors invited to give their opinions to the committee that day sat on the row next to ACA officials, at the end of the table opposite the Chairman and closest

to the rows of seats made available to observers like myself. Behind the main table was a second row of tables in a u-shape where other officials and support staff of the ACA sat.

As a few of the invited specialists entered the room there was a quiet but formal exchange of *meishi* (business cards) with each of the members of the committee. One never fails to bring at the very least twenty-some cards to these meetings, enough to cover exchanges with the entire committee. At 3:00 PM not all of the members had yet arrived. Those present say quietly, many of them their hands folded rather formally on the table. One member, a representative from NHK, Japan's public broadcaster, was working on a palm pilot. An older gentleman in a black apron wheeled a cart of coffee into the room. He placed the decorated paper cups (sometimes these are ceramic) along with sugar and cream in front of each member, next to the bottle of water and glass which had been placed on the table prior to the meeting.

At 3:05 the last invited advisor arrived along with a couple of officials from the ACA. Apologies were offered and the meeting began. A male official read a summary of the previous meeting. A separate assistant, a woman, read a summary of the current meeting and confirmed that everyone had all of the materials provided in the packet of information. Hamano-san then offered some updates on the development of the Center. He introduced the three invited advisors, each of which took ten to fifteen minutes to present their thoughts and the materials they had prepared in advance. After each speaker, Hamano-san offered some further comments and after all presenters had finished Hamano-san then solicited opinions from other members of the committee.

The exchanges at such meetings are formal and polite. Even though the room is not necessarily large enough to require the use of microphones, they are, in fact, used.



One is placed in front of each of the members. When one speaks he or she pushes a button on the stand of the microphone to activate it. A red light appears on the side of the stand facing out, indicating not only which microphone is activated but the person who has the informal authority to speak. This facilitates more formal statements of opinions rather than informal and conversational exchanges and debate. Members will usually offer a number of different opinion points rather than respond to those of others, suggesting that many came prepared with ideas to offer. Each member is given a chance to speak and given the infrequency of the meetings, about one a month, it is clear that participants feel the urge to be heard at least once.

This format produces little contest and critique, as it would appear to delay the formal deliberation of the meeting and the implicit consensus that everyone's opinion be heard. Hamano-san, as the Chairman, is the most informal of the group, interjecting his opinions and thoughts more frequently and spontaneously than others. His presence at the meeting, the formality of the deliberation, and the not unimpressive stateliness of the room is not overbearing but is certainly imposing enough to make the invited speakers hesitate at voicing overly critical opinions.

Perhaps the most relatively critical of the opinions I heard voiced at these meetings came from a professor specializing in cinema at one of Japan's national universities whom I call Kobayashi-san. Although he struck a rather detached and academic tone with his comments, he offered what might be described as a more global, cosmopolitan perspective on the Center which contrasted with Hamano's more nationalist one. Speaking from an academic perspective, he offered ideas on how the Center could be used to facilitate research. Central to his presentation was the idea that it be used less

for the “pursuit of profit” (*rijun tsuikyū*) and more for education and research, creating an “international public cultural asset” (*kokusai teki na kōkyō teki bunkazai*). Although supportive of the Center, the tone Kobayashi-san struck was implicitly counter-nationalist. The ethos of creating something for an internationally-imagined and organized public, though not entirely unvoiced, especially not in circles of public diplomacy focused more on educational exchange, such as at the Japan Foundation, was rather novel to the committee. In a later online conversation, Kobayashi-san confirmed the lack of publicity for this perspective, saying that such “ideas are almost completely absent on Japanese websites and blogs, perhaps all 704,000 sites I hit on Google.”

As Kobayashi-san was much more critical of the project in confidence than he was in the public hearings, I asked later for his opinion on how the dynamics of the meeting might have affected him:

The structure of the meeting frustrated me. That the regular members gave each of their opinions by turns after the presenters' speeches was very automatic. Only one member referred to my talk. And, because this was a critique of me, I wanted to make a counter-argument to him, but the Chair did not give me a chance to refute.

Overall, when I gave a speech, I tried to avoid overt criticism because the most important thing is to make them accept and reflect on my ideas on their actual plan, and criticism, I thought, would hamper this purpose. In this sense, I might have been under some kind of pressure. Also, I was a little bit nervous and was under the pressure of the limited time, and if I had not, I could have offered clearer and more persuasive statements.

Kobayashi-san's comments during the hearing, indeed, avoided criticism. He was polite, congenial, and deferential to the Chair. However, when I gave him an opportunity to be more critical of the meeting, asking what he thought motivated the administrators at the meeting, he quickly opened up:

I think the strongest motive for this project has been the bureaucrats' desire to demonstrate their presence as significant among the national governmental administrations. For the committee members from industry, possibly the economic benefit is the most powerful driving force. For the rest of the members, nationalism is the rationale to accomplish their plan, while they might also have certain practical purposes (like preserving deteriorating materials). To some extent, I understand it is natural that they are all trying to appeal to nationalism because they have to convince the taxpayers to invest money in their project. But if they only consider their own benefits and the ones of the nation, I think the prospective center would not be useful for researchers, educators, and general users over the world. I would like the committee members and bureaucrats to elaborate on how they can practically serve the users well, rather than how they will raise Japan's presence and economic effects. But in the hearing I attended, I got an impression that they spent most of the given time for confirming how excellent Japanese products were.

Kobayashi-san's comments reveal his rather stark division between himself and fellow researchers on one hand and the "bureaucrats" or "administrators" on the other. He defined this distinction most overtly through a particular relationship to nationalism. Although I have been met with a diversity of opinions from administrators, sometimes from the same individual, I admit sharing in Kobayashi-san's framework of thinking, despite my efforts to represent my interlocutors in ways that respected their individual, individuated, and nuanced perspectives.

This division between a more nationalist and more cosmopolitan ethos is easy enough to identify in rhetoric. Hamano's reference to the Korean manga museum and Kobayashi's to public cultural assets in the committee hearing are two simple examples. And in a kind of Bourdieusian sociological scatter, one could very likely plot these distinctive relationships to the nation in space by means of a number of different variables: generation, occupation, education, family, etc; though, on the other hand, Hamano and Kobayashi, both researchers at national universities and members of a similar generation, might likely occupy rather similar positions in this scatter.

Nonetheless, what seems most immediate, most tangible, and most striking about these differences is not how they are constructed sociologically, rhetorically, or otherwise categorically, but the kinds of feelings they evoke.

In many of my interviews when listening to articulations of soft power and public diplomacy I sensed in myself a feeling of unease and discomfort, even a low level of disgust. Many of these interlocutors' arguments were well-articulated, well-argued, complex and convincing. And pressed into a corner where I had to make my own decisions about public diplomacy, my conclusions might not differ incredibly from those of my more "nationalistic" bureaucratic informants. Asked to explain this feeling, or justify why I thought the opinions of some interlocutors were unjustifiably nationalistic and mine more commendably not, I know I would struggle for an answer.

This sense of frustration at the difficulty of finding rational interpretations for the feelings of national sentiment is common. It is beautifully captured by Richard Handler's work (1988) on Quebecois national identity, an incredibly skillful anthropological analysis of nationalism that still encounters frustrating moments. At one point in the work Handler asks his informant what makes him Quebecois and by what criteria in general one could call oneself Quebecois. His informant responds with the statement that Quebecois identity is not a rational thing, it is more a matter of feeling (32). This moment in dialogue, where words reach their impasse, is significant. Its importance inspires Kathleen Stewart's work on affects I introduced in chapter 1. Her problematization posed more simply, is, what do we do at the outer limits of narration? Despite his interpretive acuity, Handler too is stumped here. How does an interviewer proceed after a reflective informant responds defensively and impassionedly with, "I

don't know! It's just something you feel!" Handler does proceed though. He must. And he does so in a semiotic, interpretive framework, describing his informant's national ideology as a "relationship to local territory and a style of living or code of conduct." What is clear in this exchange, though, is that sentiment is neither reducible nor equivalent to code. Should one ever be able to encode the entire matrix of a personal history, which necessarily extends far beyond a single individual, into a formula that accurately predicts an emotional response, the code itself would not be a satisfying explanation of frustration, anxiety, or pride. This is not a matter of simply choosing between an interpretive or phenomenological approach, but of seeking a way to understand how they relate to each other under different cultural configurations. The affect-emotion gap might be one way of formalizing this problem conceptually.

So far in this chapter I have shown where anxious reactions to power imbalances are translated into policy, in this final section I want to show where it manifests more explicitly in subjects.

### **Hopeful Embodiments of Japanese Soft Power**

In 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized and participated in a number of events showcasing Japan's new pop culture. One of these took place in Rome, attended by several high ranking members of Japan's and Italy's Ministries of Foreign Affairs, including Japan's Prime Minister to be, Asō Tarō. It was an extravagant affair, hosted near the *Basilica di San Bartolomeo all'Isola* on Tiber Island. There were speeches by officials from the respective countries, dance performances by a Japanese pop group, cosplay displays from Italian fans of Japanese culture, and presentations of the *kawaii taishi* (cute ambassadors, see chapters 6 and 7). Amateur film was taken of the event and

included interviews with some of the attendees at the event's reception. Here I provide a transcript from one portion of an interview conducted informally at the event (in English). Pay attention to the way the Japanese Interviewer (JI) directs his interviewees to confirm his presumptions about the increasing presence of Japanese pop culture abroad:

Japanese Interviewer (JI): "What do you think of this event, first of all?"

Italian Woman (IW1): "Wonderful collaboration between two cultures."

Italian Woman 2: "Nice to introduce *sake* to Italians. And different types of food, not only sushi."

JI: "Do you like sake?"

IW2: "Yes, love it!"

JI: "Drink often?"

IW2: "Only in Japan."

JI: "Oh, you've been to Japan?"

IW2: "Yes, many times."

JI: "So you speak Japanese, *sukoshi* (a little?)"

IW2: "*Sukoshi*."

JI: "And what do you think about the new Japanese culture, not old ones but new tendencies: the animation, the fashion?"

IW1: "The animation is fun; the fashion is fun" (in a concessionary tone).

IW2: "I think they should show more."

IW1: "Yes, like introduce new designers."

IW2: "And it's nice to see these new movies, the new animation. It used to be that people only knew Ozu and Kurosawa, and that was it and..." (interrupted by JI).

JI: "And do you think there's a lot of presence of Japanese new culture in Italy?"

IW2: "No, not at all."

Jl: "Not enough."

IW2: "Not at all!"

Jl: "*Naturale?*" ("Of course?" in heavily accented Italian).

IW2: "I don't think there's a lot of new culture. As far as it goes it's sushi. And at a restaurant maybe some sake."

IW1: "But animation. It's popular. More so than U.S. movies."

Jl: "And do you like Japanese food?"

IW1: "Love it."

Jl: "You love it! (laughing excitedly) And do you cook sushi?"

IW1: "No, just eat."

In conversations like this, one sees a kind of stifling of communication. The interviewer's aims and relationship to his interviewees is clear. He attempts to elicit responses that confirm what has become two conventionalized tenets and tropes of Japan's cultural diplomacy push: first, the belief that affection for Japanese pop culture is growing abroad; and second, that the Japanese government should do more to facilitate its continued growth. Toward a confirmation of the first, he attempts to find out what kinds of Japanese things the women consume. It turns out that sake is one of them and he follows up on it. Later he asks if they like Japanese food. One woman answers affirmatively and animatedly, "Yes." Building off her energy and adding to it his own boost of intensity upon confirming his hope, he exclaims "You love it!"

Toward confirming the second tenet, that others are open and in need of introductions to new elements of Japanese culture, he asks unabashedly, "And do you think there's a lot of presence of Japanese new culture in Italy?" She responds, "No, not at all." Not hearing her precisely he assumes the answer he is obviously looking for: "Not enough." She corrects him with, "Not at all!" The Italian women represent what is

often expressed by fans of various things increasingly labeled “Japanese”: simply put, they are fans of some things and not others. These women like *sake* and sushi, less so the fashion and anime. Food and anime do not, for them, signify in equal amounts the attraction of a charming foreign culture. They are more discerning. They express an attraction for certain commodities that evoke Japan to the degree that it represents cosmopolitan, high-class tastes and sensibilities in Italy. Anime is less attractive on this point. The interviewer is clearly thinking not as a consumer but as an administrator, as one who by thinking of sushi, *sake*, fashion, and anime as equal embodiments of a Japanese brand can measure the penetration of that image into Italy and the degree to which it garners affection for Japan by Italians: “You love it!”

Perhaps there is no better representative of how cultural anxiety and soft power hope become embodied sentiments than the individual Sakurai Takamasa, advisor to MOFA on anime diplomacy. Sakurai has been sent abroad as an informal ambassador of Japanese anime through programs organized jointly between MOFA and the Japan Foundation. At events at cultural expos and Japanese embassies overseas, he often presents a PowerPoint presentation titled, “The Secret of Japanese Anime’s Power” (*Nihon anime no pawā no himitsu*). The title is hardly original but expresses a sentiment widely circulated since the early 2000s, most deliberately represented in the title to Nobuyuki Tsugata’s 2004 work, *Nihon animēshon no chikara* (The Power of Japan’s Animation), but also seen in a number of works celebrating the potential of Japan’s new pop culture industries (Koyama 2004; Hamano 2005; Nakamura and Onouchi 2006; Sugiyama 2006; Shima 2009; Sakurai 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b). Sakurai has offered this presentation in a number of cities, the most recent one being in São Paulo Brazil (“O



*Segredo do Poder do Animê*”). His second slide to his PowerPoint presentation, with the English title “Japan is Cool!,” proclaims, “Japanese anime is being warmly embraced by young people all over the world” (*O animê japonês é calorosamente apoiado pelos jovens do mundo todo*). Sakurai then proceeds to present statistics representing anime’s global popularity, measured in the number of people attending major anime and Japanese pop culture expos in Italy, France, Spain, and the US. He shows pictures of these events, mostly of the young attendees and fans of pop culture, often dressed in cosplay as their favorite anime or manga character. He goes on to list the most popular anime across the world and explain a bit about the process of anime production. He also presents some notable characteristics of Japanese anime: “diversification,” “the portrayal of actual Japanese fashion, culture, and society,” and its “ability to spread via the internet.”

Sakurai’s presentation reads more like a celebration of anime’s popularity around the world than as an introduction to anime culture. The content seems even more curiously out of place when considering the audience to whom he is speaking, composed overwhelmingly of anime and manga fans. From the perspective of a soft power strategy, Sakurai is addressing the wrong people. His enthusiasm for anime’s global appeal clearly motivates his work, demonstrated best in two of his books, *Anime Diplomacy* (*Anime bunka gaikō*) and *The Global Cute Revolution* (*Sekai kawaii kakumei*). Sakurai is also often quoted expressing his disappointment at how little Japanese people understand of anime’s global appeal:

Most Japanese people do not know about the popularity of Japanese pop culture overseas. Many young people in other countries grow up with Japan's anime. For instance, there is a bookstore near Lac Lemán in Geneva that has about 11,000 Japanese comic books. You don't see a lot of bookstores with 11,000 comics, even in Japan! [“Anime Makes Japan Superpower” 2010]

In this light, Sakurai's anime diplomacy seems as much a practice to confirm Japan's appeal overseas than it is a program to cultivate it. In one especially telling segment of this presentation, Sakurai presents a slide showing the "Evolution of the Reception of Japanese pop culture," starting with anime and progressing through manga, the Japanese language, fashion, and finally, "interest in Japan in general" (*interesse sobre o Japão em geral*). Through the logic of soft power Sakurai transforms fans of anime into fans of Japan, implicitly making soft power resources of his listeners in the space of one slide.

In another section of his speech he again casts his audience as resources for soft power, warning them about the current crisis the anime industry is facing, citing illegal anime streaming and downloading sites as major threats to the continued production of quality anime. In this version of soft power, fans consuming anime illegally are lost as soft power resources to the degree that they do not contribute to the support and growth of Japan's content industries. In these new sites of Japan's "anime diplomacy," Sakurai's presentations reveal the degree to which his hopes for soft power confirm its emergence as the dominant discursive lens of cross-cultural exchange.

The observation of such intimate hopes clearly sustained by affective energies enabled through national thinking reminds scholars of late liberalism of the capacity such affects have to guide, restrain, and contradict the increasing economic rationalization that predicted the dissolution of so-called "primordial" attachments to national identity. Although examples like the emergence and globalization of mass media confirms the capacity for capital to transcend national imaginaries, the naturalization of soft power confirms the power of those same imaginaries to appropriate global flows toward nationalism's own, more particularly and personally invested desires. This is, again,

Appadurai's cannibalization properties of globalization on display. Affective dimensions of this process, as seen in Sakurai, appear to split and divide subjects in national terms. Soft power renders Lolita fashion, for example, Japanese, and Russian fans of it fans of Japan. Only by dividing consumers by nationality through the rhetoric of soft power can one feel communion with them as other. The naturalization of soft power, thus, reclaims for national identities much of the ground claimed by cosmopolitan ones. The flow of power in this process reveals itself as hegemonic: national bodies with significant funding and power show their ability to affect the meaning and feeling of consumption. As this process becomes increasingly realized through its institutionalization in national branding campaigns, one can expect to see an increasing cannibalization of the global and cosmopolitan by the local and national. The materialization of national branding campaigns, the affective dimensions that sustain it, and the affective transformations it engenders, are the subjects of the next chapter.

## Chapter Five

### **Nation Branding: *Neo-Japanesque* and “Cool Japan”**

With advancing globalization and its pressures to enhance international competitiveness, many in Japanese government and industry feel an urgent need to establish a distinctive brand for products and services originating in Japan to serve as a mark of excellence.

In this context, and in light of recommendations of the *Neo-Japanesque* (Japanesque Modern) Brand Promotion Council, a Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry advisory panel, a Committee (Japanesque Modern) has been set up on the belief that enhancing the value of such a “Japan” brand—i.e., creating an integrated image encompassing Japan’s culture, technology, and sensibilities and their strengths and benefits—will serve to enhance the international competitiveness of products and content originating in Japan.

The Committee’s (Japanesque Modern) founding members envision a membership consisting of a broad range of industrial associations, enterprises from all industry sectors, and private individuals. The council’s role will be to propel an extensive program of activities, including management of the (Japanesque Modern) brand; provide assistance in the development of products and content, and actively distribute information to the rest of the world. [Japanesque Modern “*Raison d’Etre*,” 2006]

This “*Raison d’Etre*,” as it is labeled on the organization’s website, is the mission statement of Japanesque Modern (*Shin nihon yōshiki* or “new Japan style”), a project overseen by Japan’s Intellectual Property Policy Headquarters (*Chiteki zaisan senryaku honbu*) and administered by Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry to foster the production and global reach of a new Japan brand. It is just one of a number of programs initiated by the Strategic Council on Intellectual Property, organized by the Office of the Prime Minister in 2003 as the head body designing and integrating strategies for Japan’s new investment in nation branding.

#### **The Emergence of Nation Branding**

Nation branding has come to occupy the center of soft power strategies, not only because of the potential it appears to have for building economic and political prestige

but also because the marketing logic of branding has been naturalized as a common strategy of public diplomacy. Each nation, it is now argued, must market its image to compete in the global economy. One of the first textbooks on nation branding, while acknowledging its critics, ultimately reinforces its naturalness, calling it a “benign force at the disposal of all nations” (Dinnie 2007: 251). Given that nation branding has become a ubiquitous field of international competition, the book argues, it can help “smaller, poorer or otherwise struggling nations, to help them compete effectively on the world stage rather than being trampled upon by more powerful rivals” (251). The conclusion: nation branding is not only natural, it is indispensable.

Naomi Klein’s historical account (2000) of the emergence of the “new branded world” provides one account challenging the naturalness with which Dinnie describes nation branding’s emergence. Deregulation and privatization policies of the 1980s, she explains, not only opened public service sectors to private investment but rendered them dependent on it. With the logic of branding and the growing power of the logo already expanding since the late 1970s, privatization facilitated a brand competitiveness that finally engendered a metaphorical shift in which products carrying a brand name were eventually swallowed by the brand itself, goods becoming “empty carriers for the brands they represent” (2000: 28). This freed the name from product and enabled the branding of culture and of lifestyle itself.

This transition is clearly exhibited in the marketing of Japanese goods from a strategy that in the past sought to erase the national essence or “odor” (*mukokuseki*) of commodities to one that today seeks to cultivate it (Iwabuchi 2002: 24-28). The goods that measured Japanese presence in foreign markets in the 1980s, for example, VCRs,

computer games, video cameras, and Walkmans, evoked little sense of Japanese culture or lifestyles, and given the virulent nature of the competition between the US and Japan in the field of manufacturing, appealed to images of Japan only to its detriment. The conscious shift to market Japan's content industries represents the inverse of this marketing strategy. As consumption of anime, manga, and video games produced in Japan increases around the world, it is the branding of these commodities as Japanese that, it is surmised, holds the most potential for economic gain.

### **Nation Branding and the Affect-Emotion Gap**

Before returning to the *Japanesque Modern* project and to some of the concrete policies through which nation branding is realized in Japan, I want to return to the affect-emotion gap and its basic productive friction that enables nation branding's emergence. As I discussed in chapter 1, the enormous amount of opacity between what one feels and what one knows about what one feels opens up a number of sites for political and capital investment and appropriation. Like particular sectors of the pharmaceutical industry, nation branding appeals to a particular technology—advertising—in staking its claim in the unexhausted region of affectivity between the felt and the known, between affect and emotion. That this realm of rather slippery and never quite satisfactory correspondence is continually tapped for opportunity indicates not that it is necessarily an inexhaustible frontier with as yet untapped resources but, rather, that its plasticity, mutability, and relative opacity is as resistant to single as it is to final, authoritative accounts of it; that is, one can neither hold it in place nor guarantee its accuracy. This makes it a richly productive field, culturally, economically, and politically. And nation branding is dependent upon intersecting interests of all three of these categories.

Nation branding stakes its claim in the space between consumption and identity, between a desire that arises as affect and a narrative that names that desire. It recognizes that consumers invest heavily in both significance and feeling not only in the things they buy but also in the *way* they buy. Consumers both affect and are affected by their commodities, a fact of social life identified by Marx in his definition of the “commodity fetish” and alluded to in classic studies of gifting and exchange (Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1924; Weiner 1992). Nation branding reasons that if consumers attach positive feelings to their commodities then they might equally as plausibly attach positive feelings to the nation state in which those commodities are produced. If Chinese youth show affection for manga and anime, it is argued, why can’t they show affection for Japan at large? The responsibility of brainstorming and designing strategies in response to the potential productivity of this notion falls to politicians concerned with political prestige and bureaucrats in various government agencies charged with the task of thinking through nation branding’s potential relative to their administrative domains: economy (METI, JETRO), foreign relations (MOFA), public diplomacy (Japan Foundation), culture (ACA). In their active investments in nation branding they confirm empirically what is theorized in the abstract by psychologists and philosophers of affect: that there is a modal difference between it and emotion and that the transformation from the former to the latter is at once an epistemological and political project—a project of knowing and legitimizing that, because of affect’s complexity, is open to contest.

In the early 2000s Japanese politicians for the first time actively encouraged programs that sought to build the Japan brand. Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō’s speech to the diet in 2002 is usually cited as the watershed for this transition to building a

*chizai rikkoku* (intellectual property-based nation, Dinnie 2007: 211), although, again, the trumpeting of Japan as a cultural nation has been performed repeatedly since the end of World War II. This time, however, Koizumi's speech inspired a number of administrative actions, the most significant of these being the enactment of the Basic Law on Intellectual Property (*Chiteki zaisan kihon hō*), out of which came the formation of the Strategic Council on Intellectual Property, known as Policy Headquarters (*Chiteki zaisan senryaku honbu*), composed of the prime minister, high level politicians and ministers, and experts from industry (211). In 2003 Policy Headquarters drafted the Intellectual Property Strategic Program, which outlined 270 measures for the "creation, protection and effective utilization of intellectual property" (211). This strategy report is renewed each year and has since its inception increased its scope to include not only technology but also design, brands, media content, music, movies, game software, and animation (212). Along with this report came a number of other programs organized in conjunction with Policy Headquarters and government ministries. The *neo-Japanesque* project introduced at the beginning of this chapter is just one of these programs. I explore the background and details of this project in detail below.

### ***Neo-Japanesque***

The mission statement of the *Neo-Japanesque* project that I opened this chapter with represents a version of nation branding most specifically concerned with the regeneration of Japan's economy. This is, after all, the primary obligation of METI officials. And with memories of Japanese prestige based on Japan's economic prowess in the 1980s not nearly forgotten, narratives of hope for Japan's future are often formulated, at least in some way, in economic terms.



The connection between soft power and economic development, however, is neither natural nor intuitive, at least not by reading Nye's text alone. As is demonstrated by the Fulbright/CULCON conference, the term is ambiguous enough to allow for a range of interpretations and applications. This fact is further demonstrated in thoughts on soft power by a chief official in METI's Content Industries section, Kitagawa-san:

It's not easy to define the word of soft power, it depends on the people who explain it. I'm in charge of content industry policy. The content industry is one of the main sources of soft power of a country. I mean, through the content industry we express our lifestyle, Japanese animation, TV broadcasting, etc. If we provide our content to markets abroad, it is one of the best ways to promote understanding of our lifestyle... If people look at Japanese content, like movies or animation, people may want to buy Japanese goods, like Japanese cars, Japanese televisions, I mean, cool gadgets.

Kitagawa-san's view of soft power is based on an American version of it, close to Nye's own. He expressed this point through a personal narrative:

In the 1960s, when I was a child, many of my friends watched TV programs from the US. So we understood what life is like in the US, and what is a better life: people drive big cars, live in a big house, and that kind of thing. At that time, young people wanted to buy big cars and to go to some theater or somewhere with a girlfriend, in an American style. And people wanted to eat hamburgers. Ok, that kind of thing. That is soft power. We can promote our lifestyle to the world market. There is no logical linkage between soft power and hard industry. It's kind of an emotional linkage.

This reference to the "emotional" element of soft power, especially given in the context of a personal reflection, reveals the importance that US pop culture had on youth growing up in the 1960s, the generation largely occupying the middle to upper management in Japanese bureaucracies today. One sees similar sentiments expressed in the interviews of the prominent author Murakami Haruki, of the same generation of Kitagawa's, and in the multitude of American pop culture references from the 1960s in his literature. And I

heard it expressed to me a number of times in Japan. Perhaps the most impressionable of these moments was during the standing ovation to an especially energetic jazz set by three African American musicians in a small club in the Aoyama district of Tokyo. The director of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs with whom I was in attendance that night turned to me and yelled enthusiastically, "Now that's soft power!"

Responding to the urgency of Japan's slipping economic and political prestige, the hopefulness in the soft power discourse propels the term into a field of national administration—"Economy, Trade and Industry"—where the term is both appropriated to previous projects and styles of administration and generative of new ones. Kitagawa saw the formation of the Content Industry section of METI in 2000 as a consequence of soft power discussions in Japan. As the meaning of soft power originally conceived of by Nye and, in Kitagawa's own words, does not bear a direct relationship to "hard industry," which is the target of METI's projects, framing economic revitalization in terms of soft power takes some discursive remodeling. McGray's article connecting Japan's media commodities to soft power and the subsequent hypernormalization of Cool Japan aids in this. And recent programs administered by METI and other related organizations have institutionalized an understanding of soft power that sees affection for Japanese lifestyles, the products that inundate them, and the media forms of anime, manga, and film that convey those products in digital images as resources for economic development. Soft content thus translates into hard economic power.

The strategy, then, for nation branding campaigns which see potential for economic growth through soft industries is to attach images of Japan to as many products as possible, or at least potentially profitable. Kitagawa-san explained this logic to me

straightforwardly: “If people look at Japanese content, like movies or animation, people may want to buy Japanese goods.” Simple enough. The question that follows is, then, how does one turn goods made in Japan into Japanese goods?

The *Shin nihon yōshiki 100 sen* (New Japan Style 100 Selections) is a project of METI’s *Japanesque Modern* group. The “100 Selections” refers to a hundred specific items chosen by the group that “represent the link between cutting edge modern technologies and our country’s most highly valued traditional culture, expressed in modern lifestyle trends” (*Japanesque Modern* 2006b). The elegantly designed website of the project displays each item along with a description. From “silent violins” to cell phones, pencils, toilets, manga, video games, and a number of other things that are most appropriately named by Kitagawa-san as “cool gadgets,” the items are all products which one could readily purchase (see figs 3-5).



(Figure 3. Toilet)

繊細な表現は  
少数の職人の手仕事。

世界で評価される日本アニメには、その表現はもちろ  
人、独特の世界観、表現スタイルがあり、いずれも世界  
に類を見ないものである。

この映画は少数の職人のスタッフによって生ま  
れた名作。主人公の高校生らしい、軽々しい切な  
さを全うこみ込んで描き、そこに重なる音楽や  
音場の美しさを堪能してください。

**J100**

株式会社角川グループホールディングス  
「時をかける少女」  
角川書店劇場用アニメーション

● 子 ● 画 ● 閉じる

(Figure 4. Animation, *The Girl who Leapt Through Time*)

## 「新日本様式」100選

「100選」カタログ   「100選」について   「100選」選定を終えて

2007年選定 ● J054~J075 ● J076~J100 ● J101~J116

2006年選定 ● J001~J025 ● J026~J050 ● J051~J053 [テキスト版リストへ](#)

J051	J052	J053	J054	J055
J056	J057	J058	J059	J060
J061	J062	J063	J064	J065

(Figure 5. List of items from 2006-2007)

Criteria listed for the selection of each product include the following:

1. Products should fuse Japanese traditional culture, materials, techniques and spirit with cutting edge global technologies (hard and soft), including those from Japan. Further, such products should fittingly express Japan's traditional culture, materials, techniques, spirit and forms of modern lifestyle.
2. Products should realize the integration of "traditional culture and cutting edge technologies" or "traditional culture and modern lifestyles."

Along with the criteria for selection are listed the objects the committee aims for:

1. Made by Japanese industry (including individual and entrepreneurial Japanese bodies)
2. Products "Made in Japan" ["Made in Japan" is given in English]
3. Objects are not limited to the genres of products, content, service, systems, and space.

The emphasis on the fusion of traditional culture and modern lifestyle trends shows how an ideology of soft power as rooted in a national culture stretching far into a nation's past is realized in specific branding programs. This rhetorical exercise of history, connecting Japan's contemporary popular culture with the traditional, is repeatedly performed by elite administrators, as is seen in a speech by the most elite of them all, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō:

Japanese pop culture such as manga (comic), animation, game, music, movie and TV drama, as well as modern art, literature, theater arts and others are referred to as "Japan cool." It is gaining popularity among the younger generation around the world. Japanese lifestyle represented in its cuisine and fashion has also widely spread in other countries. However, [it is not only] the attractiveness of [contemporary] Japanese culture transmitted and spread through cultural exchanges [that can] be classified as being "cool." As shown by the fact that Japan is the very country of the cradle of "Japanimation," Japanese contemporary culture's coolness is founded in and derived from its traditional culture. [Asō, Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet: 2007]

Such historical integrations of the old with the new are seen as imperative to the construction of a strong national narrative. As Japanese traditional culture has long served as a source of pride and a resource for a modern, unique Japanese identity, it seems only natural that in the turn to the promotion of pop culture national administrators would seek to connect its significance to the traditional. In terms of narrative structure, reconciling an obvious disjunction between the traditional high arts and contemporary popular culture by identifying the latter as originating from the former is the most readily available and convincing alternative. Establishing this connection in speech acts, in the public performance of it, is essential to securing its authenticity. Its subsequent circulation in a media field characterized by the faithful rendering of official government statements into news, thanks to the structure of its *kisha kurabu* (press club) system (Hall 1997), naturalizes it through sheer publicity. And a public field permeated by the constant affective energy of anxiety and hope for Japan's future propels it into the forefront of those scripts to which one appeals when interpellated to give an account of oneself in terms of the nation. (The process by which this increasing demand on the citizen to account for him or herself in terms of Japan's contemporary pop culture is the subject of chapter 8.)

The next step for a nation branding strategy operating on the logic that if one associates an affinity for a product with the nation from which it originated then he may show similar affection for other products associated with the nation is to create a brand image in the form of a trademark that easily and readily evokes those associations and forms of affection. With such intentions in mind, the Japanesque Modern project created its own logo (fig. 6).



(Figure 6. Japanesque Modern Design Mark)

The Japanesque Modern group's website provides an explanation of the logo's design:

Within Japanese calligraphy, this shape embodies the originality and meaning of *tome* (to fix), *harai* (to brush), *ore* (to weave), and *magari* (to curve). In the first stroke of a character and in the stroke *order* of the character, it delivers beauty's energy to the tip of the brush.

Not limited to a literal meaning, the character's shape and significance represents the Japanese identity (*aidentetei*) flowing from the bottom of the heart, which is also seen in Japanese craftsmanship.

Imbued with the Japanese heart, and combining the wonderful culture of deep sensibilities and aesthetic beauty with cutting edge technologies, "Japanesque Modern" embodies the originality and strong international competitive power of content unique to Japan. These are the things represented in this mark. [Japanesque Modern 2006b]

One can identify in the explanation of the logo the welding of three themes: a traditionally construed Japanese aesthetic sensibility; a highly-valued, French-inspired cosmopolitan style; and an economic competitiveness premised on popular content and advanced technologies. Such themes represent fairly well what one expects from the fields from which committee members were largely selected: Japanese academia, design, and art, the latter field including a renowned kabuki actor. Representing in the particular



what Foucault describes of the *dispositif* in the abstract, nation branding mobilized toward the realization of soft power connects this rather disparate set of interests in new assemblages, a new way of relating objects and fields. Kitagawa explains some of the more specific aims nation branding is mobilized to achieve:

The problem of our industry is that they [content commodities] cannot go abroad. Why? Because we don't have a distribution network. Hollywood has it. Disney has it. Some European countries have global distribution channels but they are much smaller. We don't have such kinds of things. We have big movie companies but they are only domestic. They don't have a distribution network outside of Japan. This is the biggest problem. So if we make good animation movies we need to sell it to other distributors and they take the money. We cannot make money from that. We need to have a kind of branded distribution network. Disney itself is a brand. If you attach the Disney mark, there will be many buyers from abroad. But we don't have that kind of thing. One solution is that we make our own distribution channel. And that channel should have kind of a brand power. An image.

Creating a brand image with the status of a Disney, for example, becomes the immediate and practical aim of nation branding strategies most specifically aimed at distributing soft content to global markets.

When I asked Kitagawa-san about whose job it was to create this brand he indicated that it was the private sector. He added, "The Chinese government might want to make their own government-branded network but we cannot do that. We are different from that kind of thing." In answering my question, one that might be perceived as loaded to set him up for a condemnation of strong handed government investments in culture, Kitagawa clearly separated his own activities from those of nation branding. However, despite Kitagawa's distinction from more government controlled branding campaigns like the kinds he identifies in China, the everyday practices of METI activities reveal a much less demarcated division between government and industry. As Kitagawa



at another point explained, one of his responsibilities is to serve and support Japanese industry. And the *Japanesque Modern* project was, in fact, created in conjunction with and overseen by METI itself, along with other government agencies: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

### **NHK's "Cool Japan"**

Another cultural administration which has a long history of criticism for its inextricability from government control is Japan's public broadcaster, NHK. With a budget and staff more than three times the size of any other private television station in Japan, it commands significant influence. Its revenue is collected largely through door-to-door solicitations by NHK officials, thus organizationally distinguishing itself from government by avoiding the direct use of tax revenue. But as Kawasaki (1997) and Kawasaki and Shibata (2004) have shown, in practice, NHK has proved quick to acquiesce to the influence of politicians.

"Cool Japan," as former MOFA Public Diplomacy Department Chair Yamamoto Tadamichi explained, is the label inspired in part by UK's Cool Britannia campaign of the 1990s and applied to Japan's new cultural diplomacy efforts. With McGray's article making famous the phrase "gross national cool," the label's appropriation was all but assured. The "Cool Japan" phrase is stamped on a variety of media forms across government, from posters and videos from Japan's National Tourism Organization to MOFA and METI white papers.<sup>23</sup> Like "*Japanesque Modern*," the term is applied to any

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<sup>23</sup> See again Kukhee Choo's work tracing the proliferation of the terms "content" and "anime" in government white papers paralleling this same trend (2009: 122).

and all commodities marketable as part of Japan's contemporary culture of charm and cool. In 2008, NHK produced a program built around the new brand:

COOL JAPAN - Discovering what makes Japan cool! COOL JAPAN is a term that describes the growing international interest in Japan. From the worlds of fashion, anime, architecture to cuisine, the cultural aspects of Japanese society that have long been left undiscovered are starting to make a strong impact on global trends. COOL JAPAN is a television show that illustrates the quickly changing Japanese culture and how it is perceived by the international community that have recently made Japan their home. ["Cool Japan" 2010a]

Embedded in the production logic of "Cool Japan" is an irony that underlies the entire soft power discourse in Japan. The "grassroots" consumers that Bouissou (chapter 2) credits for the growth of interest in Japanese pop were primarily attracted to objects of Japanese counter culture, those forms of artistic production which were either traditionally understood as distinct from traditional images of the nation (often deliberately ignored by cultural administrators and bureaucrats, see Choo 2009) or which took mainstream images of the nation as objects of critique, distinction, or even ridicule (Condry 2006). The major media commodities attracting attention were manga, anime, and video games, whose consumers were in their respective societies seen not as cool but as precisely *uncool*: nerdy, techie, and geeky (Condry Forthcoming). Zealous fans of these commodities in Japan are called "otaku" (literally "one's home"), a word connoting similarly uncool character traits (Galbraith 2010). When McGray offered the word "cool" to describe an array of popular subcultures, including a number of things which could more likely pass as cool and trendy (architecture, fashion, rap music), he shifted the meaning of consumption, opening the possibility for popular subcultures within, and mostly counter to, mainstream Japan to become authentic symbols of a new Japanese mainstream. To the degree that these subcultures were claimed by media and bureaucrats

as products of Japanese culture, commodities could be transformed from things made in Japan to *Japanese things*, and subsequently, into Japanese soft power. “Cool Japan” was the label used to facilitate this process of rebranding Japanese things not as traditional and high art, but as new, modern, and cool.

The production logic of the “Cool Japan” program continues this trend and inscribes it in processes of media production and dissemination that affect the discourse of soft power and cool Japan on a much larger scale. The format of the program begins by introducing a particular theme for each week’s show, providing a description and history of the topic, and then soliciting the opinions on the theme’s relative coolness from foreign residents in Japan. While some shows focus on obvious topics like manga, idols, and robots, the continuation of the show into its third year has resulted in some increasingly ambitious extensions of the cool label. Here is an extended list of Cool Japan themes from previous shows:

Stationary, shopping, winter, examinations, childbirth, childrearing, memorial services, Japanese men, Japanese herbivorous men (*sōshoku kei danshi*, the name given to men characterized by a lack of traditional masculinity, a disinterest in women, and soft, effeminate features), Japanese women, mothers, fathers, anniversary parties, sweets, discipline, hot pots, sightseeing, toys, health, luck, *konkatsu* (the variety of activities designed to facilitate the meeting of couples wanting to wed), lights, rain/the rainy season (*tsuyu*), privacy, the Japanese language, Japanese companies (parts 1 and 2), prayers, gifts, tears, containers, soy sauce, shame (*haji*), sleeping, books (including the book published by NHK on the program “Cool Japan,” titled *Cool Japan*), and disaster prevention.  
[“Cool Japan” 2010b]

The humorous nature of the list, obvious to most any Japanese person on the street, demonstrates the absurdity of a discourse that attaches the label of “cool” to every marketable and appropriable element of Japanese culture. The fact that the list even includes themes traditionally understood as markers of Japan’s negative cultural practices

(company culture, privacy regulations, discipline) seems to push the rhetoric of cool Japan into the realm of satire, or more precisely, what Boyer and Yurchak call “hypernormalization” (2010).

### **American *Stiob*, Cool Japan**

In a collaborative study of what Boyer and Yurchak call “American *stiob*,” the authors analyze forms of political satire analogous to societies of both late socialism (“Soviet and Eastern European socialist public culture in the 1970s and 1980s”) and late liberalism (U.S. and Western capitalist public culture in the late 2000s: *Colbert Report*, *The Onion*, *the Yes Men*) (2010: 180). Appealing to the Russian term *stiob* to describe a form of critique in which the critic performs an over-identification with the forms characteristic of each respective hegemonic and normative ideology in operation, they analyze standardized and simplified modes of address in late socialist and liberalist discourses that appear to resemble one another. Their critique draws attention to the institutional conditions that allow for the “hypernormalization of discourse” (209).

While the type of *stiob* that emerges in response to the political cultures of late twentieth century Eastern Europe and the early twenty-first century West bear a particularly similar resemblance to one another, the hypernormalization of political discourse itself can be viewed as a much more ubiquitous phenomenon of contemporary neoliberal governing cultures, incidentally evoking a variety of satirical styles that emerge in much more localized forms, humor constituting a mode of performance much less vulnerable to globalization’s homogenizing tendencies. Japan’s soft power discourse represents just such an overly normalized rhetoric characteristic of late liberalism’s dependency on simplified and easily circulated narratives of economic rationalization. It

also serves as an example of the increasing encroachment of such narratives into the field of culture, engendering the normalization of Yúdice's logic of "culture-as-resource" (2003).

NHK's "Cool Japan" performs the hypernormalized utterances of Japanese soft power by first, introducing disparate items of cultural production in Japan, and second, confirming the popularity of such culture. In the process, it renders such items the propriety of Japanese national culture by appealing to the evaluation of it by foreigners who stand outside it.

In one particular program featuring *kanji*, Chinese ideograms used in Japanese script, the Japanese host asks each of the seven foreigners what he or she thinks is the coolest part of Chinese characters. Some of the foreigners having participated in a kanji study class taken by Japanese adults, the host asks one of them, "Andrew-san, what did you think was the coolest thing about kanji?" (*Andoryū-san, nani ga ichiban kūru deshita ka?*).<sup>24</sup> Andrew responds, "I liked that a lot of Japanese people of all ages still study kanji. It's really nice." (*Kotoba* 2009).

This pattern of asking foreigners what they think is cool about particular elements of Japanese culture and then having the hosts respond in confirmation—"naruhodo, *kanji wa kūru desu ne*" (Ahh, I see kanji are cool, aren't they)—represents the typical style of exchange on the show for each element of culture taken up for discussion, whether robots, anime, or disaster prevention. Incidentally, the style closely resembles that of another NHK show, "Kawaii Japan," which features elements of Japan's "cute culture." This time, however, instead of confirming the coolness of Japanese culture by appealing

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<sup>24</sup> The word "cool" here is left in English, pronounced in Japanese, "*kūru*."

to the foreign word “cool,” the reverse strategy is taken, attempting to export the Japanese word “kawaii” as a particular, and particularly marketable, trait of Japanese culture (see chapters 6 and 7).

An additional rhetorical strategy central to “Cool Japan” operates to establish a connection between Japan’s traditional and its contemporary cool culture. In another segment the show follows a student from Israel through a day with an American writer of haiku. The two visit a park in Tokyo and discuss the charm of haiku while composing poems along the way. Transitioning from the video footage of the two writing haiku in the park to the studio where hosts and foreigners again engage in discussion, a woman narrator’s voice says in a cute and somewhat adolescent style, “Haiku, condensing the eternity of time into short passages: cool isn’t it!” (*mijikai bunsho ni eien no toki o gyoshuku suru haiku: kūru deshō!*). What would certainly in the eyes of many poets and scholars of Japanese poetry be considered sacrilegious, the show reads cool into Japanese literary history, appropriating what was traditionally the symbol of Japan’s high traditional arts as a resource of soft power rooted in the spread and circulation of the Cool Japan brand.

In a similar segment on traditional pillow making (*makura zukuri*) in an episode focusing on sleep (*suimin*), a young American, David, concludes his visit to a small artisan’s pillow and futon making shop with an obviously well-coached narration: “I really respect the amount of effort and craftsmanship that went into their family business. And it made me realize that a pillow is not just a pillow, there’s a lot that goes into it. And giving someone a goodnight’s sleep is very important and very cool” (“*Suimin*” 2010). David ends his line, backed by a generic and sentimental music track, with a

thumbs up. A woman's voice narrating the segment concludes, "Stuffed with Japanese tradition and the spirit of craftsmanship, traditional pillows *are* cool" (2010). Curiously, the English translation voiced over the Japanese for the version oriented to foreign viewers emphasizes the "are" rather than "cool," as if defending the statement against someone who would argue they were not. After a discussion with other foreign young people and the hosts in the studio, and following comments by a professor of Japanese culture from the University of Tokyo, a male narrator's voice says, "Blended with traditional materials and traditional skills, custom made pillows *are* cool." This time the "are" is drawn out, similar to how a director might characteristically close a scene he is satisfied with by the phrase "aaaand cut!" The segment reads like an infomercial, the male narrator's voice offering the final verdict that traditional Japanese pillows are, indeed, cool.

NHK has invested heavily in propagating the cool Japan discourse, and while shows like "Cool Japan" do not go so far as to represent an explicit and integrated strategy to boost Japanese soft power, they do play a major role in circulating the trope of Cool Japan widely. This is important for at least two reasons. First, and as I illustrate in an interview with a MOFA official in the next chapter, circulation itself becomes one major goal of soft power strategies of cultural diplomacy. While government bureaucrats may not be interested, or allowed, to influence what *kinds* of media are circulated abroad, they can affect the *degree* to which media are circulated, effectively boosting Japan's cultural presence abroad. Second, the circulation of Cool Japan normalizes it as a legitimate trope of discourse on Japanese culture. It facilitates the normalization, at times the *hypernormalization*, of branding discourses. To the degree that this discourse attracts

publicity and establishes presence in media spheres it becomes a part of everyday language, increasingly calling on everyday citizens to account for their relationship to the nation in terms of its “cool” culture. These interpellations of cultural citizenship might be easily dismissed as momentary and isolated, but their increasing frequency indicates the possibility for significant shifts in the way people are incited to feel when imagining a nation state to which they are identified as belonging. I discuss these possibilities further in chapter 8.

### **Conclusions on the Hypernormalization of Cool Japan**

In Boyer and Yurchak’s article, significant attention is paid to the institutional and historical conditions enabling both the hypernormalization of political discourse and the forms of satirical critique it evoked:

It is important to emphasize that parallels in the economic, organizational and technical ecologies of late-socialist and contemporary Western media and political culture are necessary but not sufficient to account for the hypernormalization of late-liberal political discourse. We argue that a final and crucial generative element lies in a reorganization of political ideology that occurred in the West after the collapse of Eastern European and Soviet state socialisms in the years between 1989 and 1991. [209]

Boyer and Yurchak’s analysis that pays equal attention to the institutional and historical mechanisms of the evolution of public political culture is entirely convincing. I wonder, though, if one might build upon it by focusing explicitly on the affective dimensions of change. The argument that the emergence of American stioib is in large part dependent on the “evaporation” of the threat of communism serves here also as an explanation of those affective factors that motivated and sustained what the authors identify as the magnification of “ideological tendencies within liberalism toward discursive self-referentiality and self-aggrandizement, just as happened under late socialism” (210). The



assumption is that the dissolving of a communist threat left in its wake a void, a yearning for a desired enemy through which such discursive forms could be continually replayed. The absence of this enemy resulted in forms of “self-referentiality” and “self-aggrandizement,” as if the feeling of threat remained and needed to find its expression in alternative forms.

I think that such an interpretation invites opportunities to investigate more thoroughly those affective dimensions of the contraction of discourse. As Boyer and Yurchak demonstrate, such astringent discourses are increasingly typical of late liberalism. That a form of American stioib has not emerged in Japan does not, of course, suggest that political discourse there has not undergone similar processes of normalization (styles of humor in Japanese media are far from those of stioib); examples from NHK and anime diplomacy demonstrate the contrary. And even if a gaping hole of political crisis left by the Cold War’s dissolution has affected the soft power discourse as well, aligning new partners against new rivals in new fields of competition, it does not serve as a sufficient anthropological account of affect’s role in it.

The urgency of Japan’s contemporary investment in soft power is, no doubt, multi-faceted, but the hypernormalization of the Cool Japan discourse reveals a salient and shared source of affect motivating it. The channeling of anxious affect into narrowly constructed narratives of coolness, cuteness, and international appeal results in more punctuated and conscious emotions like pride and even love for one’s culture. The globalization of the soft power theory has inscribed the term in the everyday rhetoric of international relations, and in the process has legitimized new and more ambitious forms of government investment in the field of culture. The normalization of soft power, thus,

fuses national sentiment cultivated through cultural consumption with international political competition. For those bureaucrats invested in political strategies that attempt to nationalize cultural commodities that previously circulated independent of national imagining, soft power ties pride in one's culture (cultural identity or cultural citizenship) to its success overseas, determined largely by its significant presence in relation to cultural commodities perceived as the property of other states. In this way soft power serves as a contemporary, more refined, more ethical, more personal, and more urgent contest of cultural competition previously discussed under the rhetoric of cultural imperialism.

The description of soft power as a source of "security," offered by a Japan Foundation official whom I described earlier (96-97), fits nicely here. In order to secure the economic, political, and cultural stability of the nation, and a healthy personal identity that depends on it, one has to secure the nation's cultural commodities and presence in foreign markets. The inevitabilities of global competition today are perceived to demand the employment of nation branding as one strategy for realizing such security. What motivates nation branding campaigns and soft power talk, however, is not the calculated analysis of realizing a nation's interests, but an intense, urgent, and anxious buzz of energy stimulating excitement over Japan's possible and hopeful futures. In the next two chapters I look at how this feeling of urgency within administrative practices of public and cultural diplomacy are experienced in more intimate ways and evoke sometimes differing sentiments among officials.

## Chapter Six

**Cute Ambassadors I:*****Obligatory Nationalism in the Japan Foundation and  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs***

The notion of *meiwaku* plays a particularly important role in Japanese public culture. In English it means something like “disturbance,” “bother,” or “trouble,” as in “to trouble someone.” But simply providing English equivalents to *meiwaku* will only help so much. Why a mere translation is insufficient for understanding *meiwaku* is because using the term correctly does not require understanding its meaning but in sensing its presence. *Meiwaku* can be used in the passive sense, as in, “someone is causing me *meiwaku*” (*meiwaku o kakerareru*). But it is more often used in the active sense: “I am causing *meiwaku* for others” (*meiwaku o kakeru*). In Japanese public spaces one is constantly in danger of causing *meiwaku*. So as not to cause *meiwaku* to others, one should refrain from talking on a cell phone in the vicinity of others, and never on the train; one should not have music playing through earphones too loud; students talking with friends should not walk through quiet residential streets (police officers sometimes stand at entryways to these shortcuts with signs saying so); and one should always, always separate and dispose of trash in one’s allotted area. Understanding *meiwaku* takes time, not because there are so many particular contexts in which to learn appropriate and unacceptable behavior but because it takes the body time to become sensitized to the feeling of appropriate and unacceptable behavior. *Meiwaku* is a skill, a capacity, and it takes the body time to build the capacity to sense it.

Simply learning all the behavioral codes will not suffice for understanding *meiwaku*. There are too many. And one often forgets. It's better to trust one's feeling. Cognitive scientists call this ability to sense intelligently the "adaptive unconscious." The neurologist Antonio Damasio, who has also studied Spinoza's philosophy of affect, gives it a better name: "somatic markers" (1994: 165-201). The "somatic marker hypothesis" posits that the brain catalogues a history of experiences in which an action results in a particular negative outcome, and a subsequent negative feeling. It stores these affective consequences in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain that specializes in pairing mental phenomena with visceral responses (1994: 32). The feedback assembled through an enormous amount of past experiences pairing conditions with affective outcomes produces a mechanism that is able to judge the outcomes of situations with variables far too numerous to be able to work through with the conscious mind. Thus, it signifies through feeling. Interestingly, for this process to work well the brain needs a relatively stable environment in which to build feedback loops. Encountering altogether novel situations one after another, the brain can only catalogue; it cannot establish relations between situations. For this, it must see patterns, dare I say, of culture.

The resolutely anti-positivist cultural anthropologists need not be alarmed at my digression. I am not turning positivist myself, nor am I embracing wholeheartedly the presumptions of modern neuroscience. Consider it an analogy. It is certainly no more bold of a metaphor, and no less useful, than the machinic one that Deleuze and Guattari propose (1983), and with which the aforementioned anthropologists are likely far more comfortable. Damasio's theory allows plenty of room for culture. In fact, it depends on

it entirely. This is one reason Geertz, no positivist, adopted Damasio's template for emotions rather unobjectionably in his own reflection on them (2000: 203-217). The theory and/or analogy reasons that people learn about and navigate their cultural surroundings through somatic indicators: affects. New environments demand exposure to new conditions in order to build bodily capacities to activate affect effectively.

Upon visiting Japan for the first time, I learned appropriate behaviors quickly enough. I avoided the usual faux pas of loud speech around others, cell phones on trains and so on. But it was only after living there for more than a year that I became really good at it. The difference between then and now is, literally, palpable. I now sense *meiwaku*. It feels more or less equivalent to feelings of embarrassment, and to what Benedict identified classically as shame. Of course, there is nothing particularly "Japanese" about *meiwaku*, but people accustomed to living in Japanese public spaces know, feel, and experience it under similarly constructed conditions.

The point of all this is to draw a comparison between *meiwaku* and a particular mode of feeling among administrators with whom I worked at the Japan Foundation and, to a lesser degree, MOFA. I call it "obligation." A sense of obligation among cultural administrators is not unique to cultural administration or public diplomacy in general, nor is it, of course, entirely unique to Japanese work environments. However, like *meiwaku*, the particular conditions that produce particular ways of feeling obligated to meet certain tasks and demands differ from one context to the next. And patterns of work, office organization, language, and ethics do, in fact, take relatively well-integrated and structured forms in Japanese work places. Produced from this is a specific mode of feeling obligated to one's colleagues and one's administrative tasks through which

notions of soft power and nation branding must eventually pass and establish accommodation with. Let me provide a simple example similar to my one of *meiwaku*.

Consider a typical evening in the Japan Foundation. Work at the Japan Foundation inevitably slows toward the evening. There are no more meetings in the day to prepare for, no more deadlines to meet, and very few tasks that cannot be put off until tomorrow. Employees are thus usually engaged in much more mundane activities: researching on the internet, reading relevant magazine or newspaper articles, or browsing materials from the stack of *ringisho* (documents required to be circulated to all employees for confirmation that they have been viewed) that never seems to exhaust itself. Thus, an employee can often, but not always, discern a rather tangible shift from work that demands one's immediate attention to work that doesn't. And this shift usually comes around six in the evening, the official time until which employees are required to be at work and marked by an electronic chime. Employees take more relaxed positions in their chairs and gazes to the clock on the wall are more frequent.

Despite being officially allowed to leave the office at six o'clock, rarely does this occur, with officials more often leaving around nine, and often only after their section or division chief has left (departures usually begin from the top of each section and work themselves down the chain of command). To breach this code of conduct takes significant courage as employees' bodies are conditioned to feel a great amount of self-conscious unease at being the first to depart. Despite an employee entertaining the idea of leaving for the day, an inkling that would sit with me quite soon after six o'clock, he would have to be sure that his contribution to work that day had been seen by his colleagues as significant enough to legitimize him leaving the office. This is largely

determined simply by time, but one who had been laboring at a particularly grueling task that day might be justified in leaving earlier. Upon finally feeling that it is acceptable to leave, an employee starts to gather his things, already attracting the untelevised attention of colleagues. He finally stands and loud enough for all in the office to hear announces his departure with, “*Osaki ni shitsurei shimasu*” (literally, “excuse me for leaving before you”). His colleagues all look up and confirm his announcement with “*Otsukare sama desu*” (“thank you for your efforts”).

Upon my first extended stay in Japan I worked as an English teacher in a small rural town in southwestern Japan. One week a month I was posted at a desk in an office at the town’s Board of Education. My desk was positioned at the end of a closed “U”, facing the assistant director (*jichō*) and section chief (*kachō*) at desks at the opposite end of the U but separated slightly from it to indicate their special status. Most everyday within five minutes of the closing 5:15 chime I would stand, offer my departing farewell, and be on my way with little hesitation or inhibition. It was only after one more year and an increased sensitivity to Japanese working conditions that my body developed the capacity to feel uneasy at being one of the first few to stand, bow slightly, quite casually, and leave the office. This was the result of a kind of education of the senses not unlike Damasio’s somatic marker hypothesis.

Through these practices of office culture nearly ubiquitous in Japanese companies, feelings of obligation to both one’s colleagues and duties are built into subjects. One cannot fulfill the latter without respecting the former. Administrative duties demand that the official work toward the positive communication, representation, and cultivation of the nation’s culture. Failing in these tasks is failing one’s colleagues,

which, as the two examples I provided above suggest, results in incredibly unpleasant feelings. Thus, by fulfilling one's obligations to his colleagues he must at the same time fulfill obligations to the nation state. This is how national administrators are made to feel obligated to and personally invested in the status of the nation's culture. *Obligatory nationalism* seems as straightforward a name as any for describing this particular mode of thinking and feeling the nation within national administrations of culture.

When the term "soft power" entered into administrations it stimulated positive sentiments as something that both represented and could be used to build even further the status of Japanese culture. Serving one's colleagues and national organization well, then, was to take soft power seriously. Comments made by a female official about soft power show how it connects simultaneously to the nation and to one's everyday responsibilities to colleagues and duties:

Soft power is definitely something the Japan Foundation is concerned with, but as I am not yet at the section chief or director level yet and do not do much work with managing, at the everyday project level I do not think of it too much. I'm focused less on what can contribute to Japan's interest and more on doing a good job. However, on the other hand, I know there are many administrators who put priority on contributing to soft power, so as an organization it is a highly important concern.

Here, the official I call Ōtsuka-san demonstrates her commitment to her personal duties. She considers her own interests secondary to those of the organization as a whole, providing an insight into the role that obligation plays in understanding, as Mary Douglas put it, "how institutions think" (1986). Interestingly, Ōtsuka-san notes how soft power does not necessarily concern her on an everyday level. This is evidence for the fracturing of soft power as it moves from the abstract realms of ideology among high-level officials to the more practical concerns of low-level ones. As I show in this chapter, the latter are



much more concerned with the immediate tasks of administrative management and although soft power does affect the way they think about and conduct their work, soft power's inability to be accommodated to the practicalities of program creation serves as another example for the contradiction underlying the soft power discourse: although soft power serves effectively as ideology sustained by affects of hope for its potential, realizing that potential in practice proves far more difficult.

In the rest of this chapter I want to examine how affects of obligation to a Japan Foundation official's occupational demands simultaneously produce feelings of obligation toward the nation state. By analyzing one particularly polarizing program administered jointly by MOFA and the Japan Foundation, I analyze how soft power illuminates a tension between public diplomacy conceived of in variously nationalist and non-nationalist terms. Finally, I look at how such tensions are reconciled in bureaucratic practice simultaneously with accommodations of soft power.

### **Kawaii Taishi: The Cute Ambassador Program**

The kawaii taishi project was the program with which I worked closest during my internship at the Japan Foundation. The kawaii taishi (cute ambassadors) is the informal name given to the *popukaruchā hashinshi - fuasshon bunya* (New Trend Communicators of Japanese Pop Culture). They are three young girls (ages 23, 23, and 27) selected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' public diplomacy department (*Kōhō bunka kōryū bu*) to represent the latest in Japanese youth fashion trends. Each girl represents a particular fashion trend: Kimura Yū represents the *Harajuku kei fuasshon* (Harajuku-style fashion); Aoki Misako does the same for the *rorita fasshon* (Lolita fashion style); and Fujioka Shizuka represents the *joshi kōsei fuasshon* (girls' high school uniform style). Together,

the girls represent MOFA's most creative plan to brand Japanese kawaii (cute) culture.

Monji Kenjiō, the head of MOFA's Public Diplomacy Department, explained the role of the girls at a press conference in February 2009:

The main mission of the three ambassadors is to transmit the new trends of Japanese pop culture in the field of fashion to the rest of the world and to promote understanding of Japan through their respective cultural projects carried out by the Japanese Embassies and the Japan Foundation. Pop culture, including fashion, is an integral part of today's Japanese culture. It enjoys worldwide popularity and we witness that its fans are ever-increasing. Pop culture is expected to help the people of the world have more chances to know about contemporary Japan, hand-in-hand with other parts of traditional and contemporary Japanese culture. [MOFA 2009]

The cute ambassadors have become a contested symbol. For many in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs they represent a progressive and cutting edge technology of foreign relations. For many others in government administrations they are the example par excellence of Japan's misguided Cool Japan campaigns. Only a few of the many people outside administration I spoke with about the cute ambassadors liked the idea, with most others objecting to the use of government budgets being spent on such embarrassing (*hazukashii*) activities.

Despite the Japan Foundation establishing quasi-independent status from MOFA in 2003 under the status of an "independent administrative body" (*dokuritsu gyōsei hōjin*), with many administrative and personal connections still governing the relationship between the two bodies, administrative independence only goes as far as MOFA is willing to concede. This is especially true given the fact that two-thirds of the Japan Foundation's budget comes directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the rest coming from a variety of donations and other private investments. Roughly two-thirds of the Foundation's programs are conceived of internally or in conjunction with other arts

organizations in Japan or with counterparts abroad. Of the remaining one-third of programs, many of these come as ideas created directly by MOFA or by officials in its consulates overseas. The cute ambassador program is one of these, having been brainstormed by a handful of people in and associated with MOFA's Public Diplomacy Department. As such, it is largely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and not the Japan Foundation that is in control of the program.

The many stories on the cute ambassadors in the foreign press, and there are many, generally treat the girls as yet another facet of quirky Japanese culture, similar to its robot pets, love hotels, video game urinals, and a plethora of inventions, gadgets, house-hold appliances, and other curiously odd contraptions. Many of these stories are tracked by Japan Foundation officials and filed in large, plastic binders. Thus, officials are perfectly aware of some of the less flattering views on the cute ambassadors in foreign media. However, they have just as many articles highlighting the ambassadors' success and their many fans who never seem to fail to fill seats for events on Japanese pop culture, a fact which is cited sometimes as evidence for cool Japan's success abroad and sometimes for its redundancy as policy, depending on who is speaking.

Public polarization between policy seen as alternatively smart and silly characterizes discourse on the cute ambassadors. And the conflict is of course recognized and shared by some of the officials tasked with administering the logistics of the cute ambassadors' appearances at various events. During my time at the Japan Foundation the team in charge of the cute ambassador program was preparing for one of the ambassador's visits to Brazil to participate in two events sponsored by the Japanese embassy in São Paulo. This meant making travel, accommodation, and transportation

arrangements; monitoring the expenses of the trip to assure it stayed within budget limitations; and finalizing the ambassador's trip schedule based on input from the embassy.

The officials within the team offer only the most minor contributions in terms of the schedule's content. The program's design and format is primarily left to Sakurai Takamasa, the "Special Expert Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Anime Diplomacy" (*Gaimushō anime bunka gaikō ni kan suru yūshikisha kaigi in*), who is in charge of introducing the girls at various venues displaying the latest in Japanese pop culture trends, which I describe in detail in the following chapter.

The cute ambassador program exemplifies how abstract ideological initiatives imagined under the logic of soft power are filtered through the more mundane practices of administration. While the aims of soft power and nation branding mesh fluidly with how national policy is imagined by high-level officials in the Japanese cabinet in positions that allow for overarching strategizing, they do not accommodate so easily to planning within ministry-level bureaucracies that are charged with administering programs with specific, measurable outputs applied to objectives specific and unique to each ministry. Strategizing within each ministry has as its ultimate aim objectives which are distinct and that sometimes outright contrast with those of other ministries. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's primary objectives, for example, are to support, stabilize, and invigorate Japanese industry; the ministry of Foreign Affairs' are to guarantee the security of the nation state and realize national interests in the foreign sphere; those of the Japan Foundation are to build understanding of and stimulate interest in Japanese culture abroad. Each of these administrations is directed to carry out

programs designed in part to contribute to Japan's soft power as it is imagined in abstract terms by elites less connected to the practical functions of bureaucracy. The everyday administrative demands of bureaucratic practice do not, however, sustain soft power ideology as well as do those abstract modes of strategizing afforded to high-level officials. The result is the division, dispersion, and appropriation of ideology to particular administrative bodies that, in the practice of translating such ideology into programs that meet their respective administrative demands, transform that policy into programs whose newly imagined objectives sometimes differ, sometimes contest and conflict, and sometimes expose some of the ironic contradictions of the soft power discourse in general.

Splitting the administration of the cute ambassador program between MOFA and the Japan Foundation, each with its own internal and highly rationalized criteria for what counts as legitimate policy and how such policy is to be ethically implemented, reveals some of this ideological fracturing. Important to understand in this process is how affect and emotion serve as the points and cracks of fracture, acting as breaks against which ideology infused with a particular affective tone can no longer flow and permeate other administrative practices smoothly. Sara Ahmed's analysis of emotion and politics theorizes this process of "how emotions operate to 'make' and 'shape' bodies as forms of action, which also involve orientations towards others" (2004: 4). The different and distinct positions one takes toward the cute ambassadors—either enthusiastically favorable or resolutely critical—is characterized by a distinct tone of feeling—either excitedly hopeful or moderately disgusted. There is an extensive and complex social matrix that builds these capacities to feel in subjects and one could, should he have the

time and resources, attempt a stratification of qualities that to some degree characterize and predict one's position in regard to the cute ambassadors. Such qualities could be potentially charted through categories such as age, sex, level of education, aesthetic interests, experience abroad, and any other variables that interviews or surveys indicate are operational. Bourdieu's undertaking of a study like this (1979) enlisted several researchers conducting surveys over a period of five years. The final work in French nears 700 pages. It is a momentous work in both scale and significance. Its experimental conditions can and have been repeated across social contexts and yield results of similar productivity and predictability. Such a study would no doubt aid the one at hand. Still, in works like Bourdieu's there are always embodied clusters of particularities we call subjects that challenge findings, one reason anthropology often deals with the particularities of subjects as much as it does the commonalities of them. Given obvious limitations, I want here to articulate the two clusters of feelings, or ideal types, embodied by those on average favorable to and those on average opposed to programs like that of the cute ambassadors. Rather than viewing them in a Bourdieusian scatter constructed across numerous social categories, I locate them within the organizational structures and demands pulling officials to one side or another.

#### **Official Types: MOFA and the National**

On average, a MOFA official is far more likely to favor the cute ambassador program than a Japan Foundation one. Although he is more likely to have certain personal qualities that suggest a more conservatively national identification—older, male, regimented University of Tokyo education—rather than a more liberal cosmopolitan one, such factors are secondary to the demands of MOFA's administrative culture which are

simply more likely to elicit positions favorable to the program, not because administration demands allegiance to policies formed by elites at its head, at least not entirely, but because the forms of thinking that characterize the realization of strategies to particular ends in MOFA are more amenable to it.

As opposed to a Japan Foundation official who is required to account for the educational content of a particular program, the MOFA official is primarily concerned with the ability for that program to generate positive appeal for the nation state. From this perspective, it is quantity and not quality that matters. This ideal was represented in the comments of both the former and current directors of MOFA's public diplomacy department I interviewed. In response to a question about criticism of the cute ambassador program, the current director offered the following:

There are criticisms of course. I received a question in the parliament from a woman member of the parliament whom I've known for a very long time. And she herself is a very attractive lady. And she said there may be some misunderstanding in a recipient country if a young girl walks around with a very short mini-skirt. But, first of all, it is only one girl who shows her legs and... [laughing]. But my response was very formal, but I thought it was appropriate to answer, in order for the cultural or art of soft power, when we send or deliver this soft power culture, the most important thing is that it is well-received by the recipient country. So in order for that we have to make a thorough groundwork or survey in advance about local conditions, situations, and so-on, so certainly we're not sending her to Saudi Arabia [more laughing]. So it was my simple answer but see, there are so many articles, programs on TV, media, and it is a good thing. See, one of the objectives is already achieved, to attract people's attention to those activities by the Foreign Ministry.

Monji-san's answer reveals an understanding of soft power that reasons that in so much that the Japan brand can attract positive attention, it serves as a useful resource for soft power. And even despite criticism, he suggests, simply attracting attention is useful, a version of public diplomacy that adopts the "bad press is better than no press" mantra of

public relations. Soft power here is reduced to branding and the circulation of things Japanese becomes a primary goal. Stories of the cute ambassadors become political commodities circulating along with and, at times, *as* economic ones. With soft power turning cultural objects into producers of social and economic capital, the political concept becomes in processes of administration effortlessly enfolded into the logical production of Deleuze and Guattari's capitalist machine (1983). Incidentally, the director's conflation of the Diet member's attractiveness with that of the cute ambassador's adds to the commodification of cultural symbols, here along gendered lines as Japanese female attractiveness is made into a Japanese product, an issue I take up further in the next chapter.

Where Monji-san's interpretation of soft power diverges from the economic reductionism of METI's is where it connects with security. Security serves as the primary framework in which strategizing within MOFA takes place, and it is the mode of thinking most natural for Monji-san who had worked twenty-seven years in the field before moving to his post in the public diplomacy section. Immediately before his move he served as ambassador to Iraq, thus, he also thinks of soft power in relation to hard power strategies he was in charge of administering for most of his career:

For the first twenty-seven years of my career I was in charge of security, either in Japan or in Brussels where the head of NATO security is, or in London. Iraq was the first time I was sent to the front lines. And I enjoyed it very much. Iraq is where hard security counts most. But at same time I also discovered that soft power is a tremendous strength. That is, the image of a country. Japan is very popular in Iraq. Also, it is well respected and trusted by people. Of course, we have no difficult historical past in the Middle East. And we have an especially good reputation in Iraq, because in the 1970s Japan and Iraq established a special economic relationship. There were more than 10,000 Japanese living in Iraq at that time. Many Iraqi people worked in Japanese companies and have good memories of that experience working with Japanese people. And of



course Japanese products have a good reputation there. But, Iraqi people also look to Japan as a model for the reconstruction of a nation, as nation building. I was often told how Japan is admired for performing miraculous construction after the war in such a short time and in its own way. Not like the European way. So they wanted to build their nation learning from Japan's experiences because this is the first time Iraqi people have become able to build their nation. [Because] they looked to Japan that helped my job enormously, my job of diplomacy as an ambassador. I really enjoyed it. Of course, economic assistance or reconstruction assistance by the Self-Defense Forces or by grant aid or by loans were much appreciated by Iraqis, but this good image, which is soft power, helped me quite a lot. So with this understanding I'm now in charge of soft power in a different ministry, so in this sense I'm very pleased.

Stories of Japan as a model nation, as an economic miracle, and as a leader resonate with Monji-san, like they do with many officials operating in a register of nationalism built on the idea of Japan as number one. This kind of nationalism opens bodies to be especially attracted to these kinds of stories, making them powerful reproducers of the ideology itself. Evidence for this can be seen in the amazing faithfulness with which the Japan-as-number-one ideology is reproduced one generation to the next, attaching itself to different criteria of distinction: reconstruction in the postwar period; economic giant in the seventies and eighties; cultural one in the contemporary period. Narratives cannot take root in brains without an affective intensity that secures them in rigid neural networks. The intensities to which the body is tuned are turned into emotions of national and personal pride by the mind's effort to make such feelings—affects—conscious.

The process is recursive: narratives make bodies into feeling entities and feelings become emotion in narrative. Narrative thus propels one through the affect-emotion gap as the complexity of the affective side of it is rendered intelligible in the emotional side. One way bodies are made capable of feeling moved by stories of the nation is through long processes of socialization, most observable in formal institutions like education. It

is not surprising, then, that Monji-san would refer to his own education in providing a personal narrative of these feelings of national pride, here in the context of responding to my question about current anxieties over Japan's economic status:

We faced a major challenge in recent history. We say "Restoration" (referring to the modernization processes of the Meiji Restoration) but it looks more like a "revolution." We were afraid of colonization so we worked really hard to prevent it. It was said that millions would have died of starvation [in the postwar period]. No one thought Japan would become such an economic power in such a short time, but because we strived for that we worked so hard. When I was in elementary school, I was taught that Japan is small and has no resources so we must work very hard. This was wrong. Actually, Japan is big. Its size and population is greater than most countries in Europe. We were told we would have to work so hard and that's how we could survive. That's what made Japan today's Japan, so if we are concerned about the future then we can overcome difficulty once again...But now we look at our current status and if we realize our real strength—that's what I mentioned before about soft power in close collaboration with hard power—in that case Japan's future is bright. All this depends on people's attitudes, just like Japan did in the past.

Monji-san is discerning about parts of his education he feels today were right and which were wrong—notions about Japan being small in scale wrong, an ethical precept that working hard would lead to growth right. However, he attributes Japan's economic success to Japanese people's hard-working "attitudes," instilled through education.

National pride of this kind takes root in simple and sanguine narratives of national history. As Bell has shown (2000), sentimentalism operates best through simple, well-structured storylines. Also conducive to these kinds of stories are clearly understood images of a protagonist. Monji-san's accounts portray the nation as a singular, uniformly integrated body. The abstraction of the nation from its people (*minshū*) reduces its multiple, complex parts into a single entity that requires cultivation, protecting, and strengthening. Its uniformity makes it conducive to the embodiment of a national

sentiment that responds positively to praise for the national body (*kokutai*) as a whole and defensively to criticism, a reaction entirely natural for a body that has been conditioned over many years, not only through education but through occupational and administrative obligation, to defend the nation as integrated whole.

The administrative culture of MOFA emphasizes security and the flourishing of the nation. The cute ambassadors serve nicely both as symbols of Japan's new status of cultural cool and as tools for guaranteeing Japan's security. Under the logic of soft power, the more people come to know and hold affection for a nation's images, the safer, stronger, and more secure the nation will be.

#### **Official Types: the Japan Foundation and the International**

In part responsible for the general degree of antagonism toward the cute ambassador program within the Japan Foundation, and among the public at large, is an administrative framework that emphasizes images of the nation that differ from MOFA in at least two important ways. First, although officials certainly imagine the nation as an integrated body, they are also taught that public diplomacy today is not about country to country relations but rather about public to public, or people to people exchange. Second, as the Japan Foundation's charter requires the organization to work to "deepen the mutual understanding of Japanese and other foreign cultures" (Japan Foundation 2010), simply circulating popular images of Japan is insufficient. The job of its officials is to provide multiple, deeper, and more nuanced images of Japan. These two facets of cultural administration in the Japan Foundation require officials to reflect on the ability for programs to deepen the understanding and relationship between peoples of different nations. The cute ambassadors embody and evoke affects of Japan's status as pop culture

powerhouse, but in the eyes of many cultural administrators they do little to deepen an understanding of everyday Japan.

The ideal type of this ethos of cross-cultural understanding—the ideological counterpart to Monji-san’s nationalism—is best expressed in an essay by the Japan Foundation’s chairman, Ogoura Kazuo:

Many players engaged in contemporary Japanese cultural diplomacy, including the Japan Foundation, have adopted the policy of viewing “Japanese” cultural traditions not as Japan’s property but as the precious heritage of all humankind. This implies that Japanese cultural diplomacy should not only propagate Japanese thought and traditions to the world but also aim at introducing non-Japanese culture to Japan to enrich the cultural heritage of the world. This helps to preserve cultural diversity, thereby contributing to the maintenance of a rich cultural environment for all humankind. [2009: 18]

Ogoura’s comments express a view of culture slowly being adopted by administrations of public and cultural diplomacy, that of culture as “international public good” (*kokusai kōkyō zai*):

If we look upon culture not as the property of one nation or ethnicity but as international common property that belongs to all human beings, then efforts must be made in the field of diplomacy to preserve not only the culture of one’s own country but the cultures of other countries as well. Policies to preserve the cultural diversity of all humanity should be developed. [2009: 30]

This ideological understanding of culture is formulated specifically with practices of cultural exchange (*bunka kōryū*) in mind, the primary activity of the Japan Foundation:

If we regard culture as the common property of all human beings, we will clearly understand the importance of “cultural exchange for the sake of cultural exchange itself.” In other words, it is important to implement cultural exchange in a true sense, rather than out of a narrow sense of national interest or for mere diplomatic purposes. [2009: 31]

Ogoura's description of the ethical ends of cultural diplomacy clearly contrast with that of Monji-san's. Side by side, they serve as concise summaries of the aims to which programs are designed and administered in each organization. Inscribed in policy positions and mission statements, institutionalized in the allocation and administration of programs, and rehearsed in everyday exchanges between officials, which take place largely through written *shanai mēru* (inter-company email) in the case of the Japan Foundation, it makes little sense to distinguish between the ideals of the organization and of the individuals who speak for it. The telos guiding each organization's operations differs; and so too does it differ from other organizations—METI, ACA, MEXT, JETRO, NHK—that also think through the relationship of culture and the nation state. Interesting to observe in this process is the way soft power is taken in and accommodated to the varying ideological aims of each organization.

#### **Accommodating Soft Power to Bureaucratic Practice**

As I argued in chapter 2, understanding soft power requires imagining the nation state and, for officials who hope to cultivate soft power, investing emotionally in the state's prosperity. Such an intimate coupling of national interests and soft power makes discussions of soft power within an organization seeking "exchange for the sake of exchange" difficult, on both logical and sentimental grounds. First the logical. Simply put, there is an obvious paradox in a national organization, the Japan Foundation, administering a national culture that is argued ideologically as not, in fact, the property of one nation. Everyday practices of administration in which officials attempt to design programs that in the most responsible way represent the nation's culture constantly clash with an ideological ethos that imagines it as equally the property of some other nation's

publics. Of course, all kinds of logical resolutions are possible and examples proffered. Problematic, though, is the fact that the cultural commodities offered as examples of Japan's internationalism—sumo with its influx of foreign wrestlers; the emergence of foreign manga writers; the internationalization of Japanese food in general—are at the very same time identified as wholly Japanese things. This is what Michael Herzfeld calls “cultural intimacy” (2005), the practice of using particular elements of culture to at one moment deny cultural exclusivity and at the next moment claim it. McVeigh calls this seeming inability to ultimately distinguish cultural practices from national identities “proprietary nationalism,” in which categories through which national identification is imagined—namely, ethnicity, aesthetics, citizenship, and race—construct Japaneseness in rigorously exclusive terms (2004: 187). One need not search far for evidence of this: foreign sumo wrestlers are welcomed in the sport officially, but the sport's recent domination by Mongolian wrestlers is clearly begrudged by many; and in baseball the participation of non-Japanese players is officially limited to four; foreign writers of manga are considered for a special category of awards separate from Japanese writers and, as shown in the article on Korean manga (*manhwa*) in chapter 3, manga is not only understood but vehemently claimed as an exclusively Japanese commodity; finally, no one, Japanese or otherwise, can deny that being served sushi from a chef who looks physically “unJapanese” feels somehow inauthentic, indicating the significant way race structures cultural propriety in Japan (see Yano Forthcoming). Without even mentioning the more widely publicized, polemical and volatile issues constructed along nationalist lines that garner media attention in East Asia, such simple everyday examples confirm the depth to which national culture is ingrained in everyday cultural practices, rooted

deeply in conceptions of kinship, race, ethnicity, and self-fashioning that cannot be uprooted from the subject as they are not simply a *part* of it but entirely and wholly constitutive of it.

That national identification is made of, experienced, and understood in terms of affects activated over long processes of socialization, language adoption, and basic navigation and negotiation through social environments in general guarantees that any ideological reinterpretation of the role of national culture in it, whether in terms of international public goods (*kokusai kōkyō zai*), cosmopolitanism (*kokusai shugi*), the public sphere (*kōkyōsei*), or multiculturalism (*tabunka kyōsei*) will be met with resistance. What complicates this matter even more is that such competing values are positioned against one another even between government agencies. If it is the Japan Foundation's aim to employ culture as a non-national entity (*mukokuseki*), it is the aim of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry to stamp the Japanese brand on any facet of cultural conceivably marketable as an exclusive product of the nation. All this makes the employment of soft power within the Japan Foundation especially problematic.

Having acquired such pervasiveness within Japanese bureaucracies, conscious avoidance of the term “soft power” within the Japan Foundation becomes nearly impossible. Given its prevalence within the everyday parlance of cultural administration, to avoid alluding to it and the discourse it has spawned is not only difficult but would be seen as a deliberate protest. The affective ties of organizational obligation do not accommodate such disruptions well. While an organization like the British Council is able to dismiss the concept, as was done in my interview with its president of the Japan Branch (chapter 3), and thus more easily operate within a framework of administration

that treats culture as global rather than national commodity, the Japan Foundation does not have the luxury. In this sense, soft power, though a concept embraced by most Japan Foundation officials, also proves to be an incredibly slippery concept.

The Japan Foundation's chairman, Ogoura-san, has explicitly raised concerns with the phrase. He is not ultimately dismissive of the concept but warns that misinterpretations of it could lead to a kind of hypocrisy (*gizen*) (2006: 60). The point is based on his reasoning, rejected by Nye (2004: 9), that soft power cannot exist exclusive from hard power. Nye's distinction between hard and soft power is defined in part by a distinction between, respectively, coercion and attraction. However, as Ogoura points out, such a definition changes relative to the party exercising influence and the one being influenced. Related to this point is his concern that soft power may become either hard power in disguise—"koromo no shita kara yoroi ga mieru" (you can see the iron fist in the velvet glove, 2009: 44)—or simply a substitute for contexts in which hard power fails or is unavailable.

Rather than doing away with the concept altogether, though, Ogoura attempts to redirect the concept toward the benefit of an international community rather than nation states exclusively. His explanation of this is worth citing at length:

Insofar as Japan has little or no leeway to exert coercive force through the use of hard or economic power, which is a precondition for the exercise of soft power, it is doubtful whether using soft power in tandem with public diplomacy can be truly effective. There is the popular argument, based on the "Japanese cool" concept, that Japanese culture should be thought of as a form of national power, but to remove from the equation the issue of who will use this power and to what ends renders this argument meaningless.

It may well be desirable for the sort of cultural content embodied in "Japanese cool" to spread naturally around the world through market forces or people's efforts, but this will not necessarily lead to an increase



in understanding of Japan. Those on the receiving end of contemporary cultural activities either from or related to Japan, such as anime or fashion, are not necessarily aware of any Japanese connection. Indeed, we should bear in mind that linking culture to the state carries a high risk of impeding, rather than promoting, the spread of cultural activities around the world.

The view that culture is a form of power is connected to the belief that there is a self-evident link between culture and the state, but this belief is itself fatally flawed. The worldwide spread of Japanese culture is a manifestation not of Japanese power but of how the notion of state-based power is gradually losing its meaning in an increasingly globalized world. *If the concept of soft power has any benefit, therefore, this benefit comes not from its use by the state but from the power of people engaged in cultural, religious, or educational activities to cultivate a common global awareness, increase creativity, and enrich the international community as a whole. The term "soft power" should be used only in this sense.* (2006: 65, italics added).

Ogoura's recontextualization of soft power to a global rather than national community represents a liberal interpretation of Nye's original concept, which explicitly defined soft power as a tool of realizing a nation's interests. In his most concise articulation of his point, Ogoura argues that "soft power should be discussed in connection with the exercise of power in the international community rather than in the context of domestic politics" (2006: 61). Sites where these kinds of discussions are taking place are, alas, hard to find. Where Ogoura's vision in terms of nations mobilizing influence toward the resolution of global problems *is* discussed, rarely is the term soft power invoked. Rather, soft power remains a discursive organizer of ideologies and strategies making up a register of thinking and feeling concerned more exclusively with realizing national interests.

Ogoura ultimately adopts and adjusts the phrase "soft power" to fit his bureaucratic obligations, but this is not to say that such obligation is left unaffected. Important to recognize in the emergence of the soft power discourse and elucidated in William Connolly's observation that "to place a new word or phrase into an established network is also to alter the network itself in a small or large way" (2002: 72) is that

introducing soft power into practices of administering national culture alters that administration, enabling new thoughts and practices or interjecting new tensions and problems that in their accommodation are productive of administrative change. While soft power operates in media and at the upper levels of bureaucracy in more abstract but significantly productive ideological ways, it operates in different but equally as significant ways within more micro processes of everyday administrative practice. Here, where I turn to ethnographic evidence of the administrative everyday, things become, predictably, more complicated.

### **The Administrative Everyday: From Ideology to Ethos**

Michel Foucault makes a distinction between morality and ethics that characterizes well, I think, two distinct modes of engaging with soft power found within the Japan Foundation. Morality, he says, refers to a code (*prescriptions*) by which acts are determined as permitted or forbidden. An ethics designates a kind of relationship that a subject establishes with himself (*rapport a soi*) in the constitution of “himself as a moral subject of his own actions” (1997: 263). As the former is concerned with prescriptions and with absolute statements over what is and is not, ought and ought not, it is more conducive to ideological thinking. In Ogoura-san’s comments about what soft power is and is not, should and should not be, he relates to soft power in a moral way, arguing for one absolute view of it over another. This way of thinking is typical of high-level bureaucrats who, removed from the more complex demands of managing cultural programs, are free to think of soft power in absolute terms. As ethics for Foucault refers to a subject’s relation to self and to others (255), and to a way of caring for oneself and one’s others (287), it demands some skill or technique, a way not only of managing

relationships but of managing them well. As such, an ethics does not operate in absolutes: it requires one to adapt to particular contexts where the codes for prescriptive behavior are not entirely clear, and then to others where such already unclear prescriptions are then challenged, compromised, or contradicted. An ethics is a way of conducting oneself well in relation to particular rather than general contexts.

Managing soft power within the micro spaces of cultural administration means compromising and manipulating its terms in establishing harmonious relationships between oneself and his working colleagues, and meeting obligations imposed upon him by the organization, both necessary conditions for the smooth operation of the bureaucracy as a whole.

Early in my internship at the Japan Foundation an article criticizing particular foundation practices of funding Japanese films was published in a prominent Japanese periodical, the *Asahi Shinbun*. To provide a brief background, the Japan Foundation contracts with producers and distributors of Japanese films to show the works at overseas Japan Foundation offices and embassies. The Foundation pays to show the films a particular number of times a year, whether or not the film is actually screened or not. The article criticized the Foundation for sometimes not showing the films the number of times they were contracted for, essentially arguing that the Foundation is wasting taxpayers' money to the sum of \$900,000 by paying for films that are never screened (Gerow 2009). Taking off from this point, the author broadens his criticism to suggest that many of these films actually depict scenes of explicit sexuality and violence, insinuating that they do not cast Japanese culture in a positive light. The author asks why taxpayers' money should be spent on films propagating negative images of Japan.

The critical article was authored by a journalist well-known for his practices of stirring up controversies, especially when seemingly outing corruption within government institutions, and it was seen as largely unfair by Japan Foundation officials who were discussing the article at work the day after it was published. A few days later I came across a critique of the Asahi article written by Aaron Gerow, prominent professor of Japanese film at Yale University. Gerow's critique, first posted on a mailing list for people interested in Japanese film and then later on his website, amounted to a criticism of the article and a defense of the Japan Foundation. I shared Gerow's response with a couple members of the Japan Foundation over *shanai mēru*. *Shanai mēru*, or "intercompany email," is part of a software program internal to the Japan Foundation which organizes information, news, policy updates, daily schedules, and intercompany correspondence and file sharing. A significant amount of communication within the organization takes place over this internal email system.<sup>25</sup> After sharing Gerow's response, an email came back to me quite quickly from a high ranking official to whom I had sent it expressing his desire that articles like this be published for other people to better understand the position of the Japan Foundation. Thinking to follow up on the wishes of my superior, someone whom I would hope to please and impress, as would any subordinate official in the organization, I told him I would send his thoughts to Professor Gerow and subsequently did so.

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<sup>25</sup> Often, *shanai mēru* serves as a substitute for casual conversation and correspondence, even when officials are within an immediate proximity of one another that would allow for quiet, face-to-face conversation. I would often get article recommendations, meeting updates, or invitations to lunch over *shanai mēru* by a colleague of mine who sat immediately diagonal to me, our desks actually close enough to touch. The reasoning for this is that such verbal interaction might be seen as *meiwaku* (disturbance) to surrounding team members.

Having not yet grown accustomed to the pace at which discussion over *shanai mēru* proliferates, I returned to my inbox an hour or so later, and only at the prompting of another colleague of mine to take a look. I was startled to find in my box a dozen lengthy emails by both the colleague to whom I had sent the response as well as several other officials to whom the response had circulated. To summarize what turned into a lengthy and complex incident, I had essentially caused a minor storm by sending the official's comments to Gerow. The problem I had not anticipated was that in doing so I had facilitated what could be seen as the Japan Foundation attempting to unfairly influence media reports about its activities. I was directed to withdraw my solicitation to Gerow as soon as possible. After much prolonged and anxious deliberation that followed throughout the next two days it was decided that we would wait to see how things developed before taking more serious action to prevent further complicating the already problematic incident.

Events like these capture how office administration is most immediately concerned with, essentially, office administration, with managing its own management. Debates over the type and quality of Japanese images being represented in film, issues that connect more immediately to ideas of soft power, become of secondary importance to the more primary task of maintaining the integrity of the organization itself and harmony among its human stewards. There are no explicit guidelines for how to respond to a situation like this. Officials must do the best they can, balancing a number of complex criteria. Their goal is homeostasis, a low-level affective state of calm and stability that characterizes bureaucratic practice in general. This incident excited the system, raising a threat that was perceived in affects of anxious intensity. After appealing

to techniques of management and control, namely, deliberation, officials could only wait for the intensity to dissipate, and without any further escalations of the incident, it eventually did. Deliberation is the most effective and most often-appealed-to technique of bureaucratic management. In this case it was especially pertinent as it was human agency, an actor, me, working outside the customary bounds of his duties that upset the system's stability. Managing and restricting such agency is an effective mechanism for stabilization.

This incident also demonstrates how administrative work proliferates in bureaucracy. Administrative action begets administrative action. It moves in large swells and lulls. The one I in part incited took up a large part of the afternoon of many officials. It attracted the full attention of officials for several hours and then slowly declined in attention and intensity over the next few days. An average day at the Japan Foundation is full of management tasks like these, albeit far less immediately urgent. One moves between a number of mundane duties throughout the day: emailing colleagues; coordinating schedules for meetings; typing, copying, and collating budgets and expense reports; organizing event details such as ordering chairs or caterers; and perhaps most often, purveying the numerous documents (*ringisho*) continually placed in a team's file box that require the official's stamp indicating the document has been read. This leaves very little time and space in administration for serious deliberation on issues of cultural diplomacy, public policy, and soft power. Most often, dealing with such ideologically formulated problems such as the tension between meeting either national or public interests, for example, is a process of accommodating the problem to more primary demands of maintaining institutional stability. There is simply an enormous

number of demands on the official. Much has to get done. And when ideological problems are confronted in the course of such administrative practice, it is often only the most expedient of solutions that wins out.

This makes for some rather mundane and banal resolutions of what is otherwise crafted in more serious stylistic strokes of cultural diplomacy's ideological dilemmas. The cute ambassador program is a site where many conflicts between national and public interests obviously arise. However, as a program designed by officials in MOFA, Japan Foundation administrators have little say in its content. Over the term of my internship, Takada-san, the primary Japan Foundation team member in charge of the program, spent much of his time in correspondence with officials at the Japan Foundation and embassy office in São Paulo, Brazil, where an event was planned to showcase the ambassadors along with other items of Japanese pop culture, most specifically anime and manga.

Reading over materials for the event, most specifically the power point presentations to be given at the event by Sakurai Takamasa, "Special Advisor to MOFA on Matters of Anime Diplomacy," I was struck by the nationalist treatment of Japanese culture.

Although I mentioned his presentation in chapter 4, here I want to address how some overly-nationalist sentiments perceived in his presentation was reconciled with the Japan Foundation's more cosmopolitan working ethos. As I described earlier, Sakurai's power point prepared for his presentation in Brazil was titled "The Secret of Japanese Anime's Power" ("*Nihon anime no pawā no himitsu*"; or in Portuguese, "*O Segredo do Poder do Anime*"). The first section of the presentation is titled "Japan is Cool!" and spends a number of slides documenting various events where Japanese pop culture has been showcased, recent statistics on the amount of anime and manga being consumed overseas,

mostly highlighting Western European nations, and all the countries where anime is featured as a part of regular programming. Sakurai calls anime a “universal language” (a *lingua universalis*). What he really seems to mean by this is that anime has achieved a nearly universal presence in media spheres around the world, for he ignores the fact that anime is often edited to fit local tastes and contexts when sent overseas. He also diminishes his own point about anime’s universalism by listing some of the unique traits that he thinks accounts for anime’s attractiveness overseas: its diverse storylines; its accurate representation of Japanese culture and society; and its portrayal of popular trends in Japanese fashion and lifestyles. Sakurai goes on to list some of the problems anime is facing, namely, illegal downloading and piracy which is cutting into the industry’s profits and threatening its future.

Sakurai’s presentation exhibits all the characteristics of an American style soft power that serves as a legitimization of cultural hegemony. Presented under the general canopy of “Japan is cool,” he essentially documents the successful spread of Japanese anime around the world. Why this information would resonate with fans of Japanese pop culture in Brazil of which his audience was largely composed is unclear; but why Sakurai *thinks* it would stems clearly from an understanding of soft power as a marker of national cultural status measured in the increasing reach of Japanese pop commodities around the world. This is most evident in the original title Sakurai gave to his presentation: “*Nihon anime no kako, genzai, mirai~sono kokusai kyōryōku no himitsu o meguru*” (Japanese Anime Past, Present, and Future: Investigating the Secrets of International Competitiveness). Clearly animated by an excitement over Japan’s rising status in the global field of culture, Sakurai confuses his audience of Japanese pop culture fans for



fellow MOFA officials. And it is precisely this affective intensity that propels his view of soft power beyond the parameters originally outlined by Nye. A perception of a rising Japanese status measured in the increased presence of pop commodities abroad becomes conflated with soft power. And the excitement that both draws and limits Sakurai's attention to all those global sites to which Japanese culture has reached is translated into a view of the world that sees Japanese soft power everywhere. Under these conditions saturated with the affective buzz of national prestige, soft power emerges not as a political term mobilized to understand and address particular problems in either domestic or international spheres but as the categorical vessel through which a present prideful sentiment is expressed.

There is little in Sakurai's presentation that meets Ogoura's standards for how soft power should be employed in cultural diplomacy. I raised some of these points to Takada-san who in general agreed with my assessment. However, the content of the presentation, he indicated, was at this point largely up to Sakurai-san of MOFA. Takada-san's job was largely to facilitate the smooth implementation of the event in São Paulo. Seemingly in way of a defense of an obligation he could in no way escape, he suggested that the Cool Japan campaigns might stimulate as much interest in Japanese culture as it could discourage it. Takada-san is an incredibly sharp and inventive thinker. He is discerning in the way he thinks about the merits of Japan Foundation programs and he thinks about them a lot. However, in programs like this there is simply very little space to offer critique, or even more difficult, effect change. The only place in which he did seem to interject his opinion concerned the title, which was eventually changed from Sakurai's original title emphasizing Japanese competitiveness to one emphasizing culture

more explicitly: “*Nihon anime no pawā no himitsu*” (The Secret of the Power of Japanese Anime), a minor but typical victory within the Japan Foundation for Ogoura’s more broadly conceived soft power.

Another site where this tension between the national and international arose came in a task I was given to translate into English the Japanese advertisement for the cute ambassador events in Brazil and the profiles of Sakurai-san and the three cute ambassadors. While the language did not necessarily convey a sense of culture being appropriated to feed a national pride to the degree that Sakurai’s presentation did, there were still passages that I thought clearly demonstrated an understanding of cultural exchange programs as serving a set of exclusively national interests, contrary to the way in which Ogoura argued that cultural diplomacy should be used as a means for transcending them. I wanted to broach the topic with Takada-san but first reflected on my feelings, attempting to discern whether my desire to do so stemmed from a particularly personal, irksome reaction to the language or from a desire to bring forth a more consciously ethnographic intervention in the attempt to produce some hard data. Coming to the conclusions that first, I couldn’t quite tell, and second, that neither motivation would at this time prevent me from voicing my opinion, I approached Takada-san.

While none of the language was as troubling to me as I had seen in other Japan Foundation advertisements, I still deemed it worth discussion. One example of a passage I brought to Takada-san’s attention read: “As seen in the bustling excitement of the World Cosplay Summit held in São Paulo and the establishment of the Brazil J-Pop society in May 2009, now in Brazil, the opportunity to stimulate interest in Japanese pop

culture is rising at the hand of Brazilian people” (*ima, burajiru de wa, burajiru hito no te ni yotte nihon no poppu karuchā o moriagete ikō to suru kiun ga takamatte imasu*) (Japan Foundation 2009a). Why in an advertisement for Brazilians to come learn about Japanese pop culture trends should there be a passage about now being an opportune (*kiun*) time to build an interest in Japanese pop culture was unclear to me. From my point of view the passage did little more than to reaffirm a self-serving satisfaction at the global proliferation of Japanese pop culture, a sentiment more typical of Sakurai-san and MOFA officials than the views of the Japan Foundation. Takada-san was receptive to my critique, although he did not necessarily think it a vital point necessarily worth revising. I offered him an alternative translation that with some negotiation resulted in a compromise: “With the widely attended premier of the “World Cosplay Summit” in São Paulo and the establishment of the Brazil J-Pop society in May 2009, Brazilians are stimulating a rapidly growing interest in Japanese pop culture” (Japan Foundation 2009b).

In the broader debate over the meaning of soft power and the role of MOFA and the Japan Foundation in contributing to it, discussions like the one between Takada-san and me seem trivial and inconsequential. But it is in these seemingly trivial, minute details where soft power is accommodated to the usual practices of administration within the Japan Foundation. Without a doubt, a program featuring the cute ambassadors would never have originated from within the Foundation. It simply does not satisfy enough criteria for what counts as a program worthy of foundation expenses, namely, one that significantly deepens an understanding of Japanese culture. It thus challenges the Japan Foundation’s working ethos and effects changes in it, albeit in small degrees. The advertisement for the São Paulo event was left unchanged in Japanese. My version

negotiated with Takada-san was adopted in English. Takada-san thus effectively managed the minor disruption I had interjected into the system. Knowing no Japanese colleagues would see a problem with the Japanese language he chose to leave it unedited, not wanting to occupy his colleagues' time with an issue that was not absolutely demanding of their attention. He allowed the change in the English version to appease my own concerns. Problem solved. Although this specific tension between the interests of MOFA and of the Japan Foundation was largely made public by my conscious intervention, tensions like it arise elsewhere. And the form of its resolution operates similarly, usually resulting in a somewhat banal compromise that accommodates both parties' interests and, as a consequence, absorbs change rather than stimulates it. At an everyday level, this is one example of how soft power is accommodated into bureaucratic organizations working through representations of Japanese culture, each with their distinct interests and objectives.

### **Balance as a Working Ethos**

In asking officials how they characterized their relationship to the contradicting demands of serving both national and international or public interests, I was met repeatedly with the appeal to the notion of balance (*baransu*). Managing soft power and, indeed, being a good cultural administrator in general is to strike a balance between the interests of the nation and the demands of the public, and realizing the latter often requires satisfying the former. The same Ogoura-san, for example, that warned against using "cultural activities to increase the prestige or improve the image of a particular nation" (2009: 45) at another point provided an example of one ideal Japan Foundation

program that challenged this principle. The project aimed to restore ceramic arts in the Istalif district of Afghanistan:

Reviving the ceramics of Istalif—a proud part of Afghan heritage—was a symbol of the country’s pride in its cultural traditions. The Japan Foundation invited ceramic artists from Istalif to Japan and gave them the opportunity to interact with Japanese potters. This prompted some people in Japan to express an interest in introducing Istalif ceramics to Japanese people and selling their works in Japan. By creating a network for international interaction, the initiative inspired further hope among the people of Afghanistan, boosting their determination to build peace. [2009: 42]

In general, it is not entirely difficult to discern the difference between programs explicitly designed to boost a country’s image and those that seek cultural exchange as a value in itself, but programs like this one reveal just how much the notion of “value” in exchanges like these are perceived in national terms. Success in this program was measured in the reclamation of pride in “Afghan heritage” and hope among the “people of Afghanistan.” Given the degree to which the national register of thought permeates the most personal levels of self-confidence and identification, in some cases, building national pride rather than transcending it becomes the mark of value in cultural diplomacy.

Recently, the notion of “cosmopolitanism” has been increasingly proposed as an alternative to the nationalist framework within discourses of cultural exchange.

Understood as a rough constellation of identification markers that are uprooted from a single site of national belonging and dispersed across multiple geographic sites, traditions, practices, languages, and ideas, it shows the potential to disentangle identity processes from more primordially perceived attachments to the nation. Still, in the practice of administration, even cosmopolitanism shows itself as much dependent upon the nation as it is transcendent of it. A female foundation official around forty years old, Ōtsuka-san,

said she never thought of nationalism and cosmopolitanism as a dichotomy (*nibunhō*) but rather she viewed the latter as being enfolded into the former (as Ōtsuka-san incorporates English words with her Japanese I have used parentheses to indicate her original words):

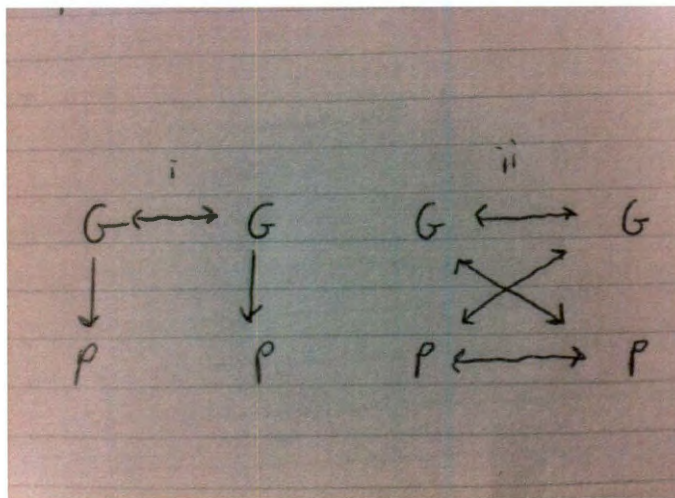
When I speak of culture as a nation's policy it might seem as if I'm mistakenly collapsing a nation's culture (x country's culture) to the state, but I don't think that's quite right. The reason is because there is not a one-to-one relationship between the nation and state. I think the term "Japanese culture" includes the cultivation of a "nation-less cosmopolitanism" within a place called Japan. However, even saying that, when considering what kind of culture to introduce, we take as a target the notion that the main work of the Japan Foundation is to "introduce Japanese culture to people abroad." In general, and this is different from what researchers on Japan like you do, I think we usually try to choose "content" (*kontentsu*) representing so called "authentic Japanese culture" (*ōsenteikku na nihon bunka*), things that show off Japan to regular people who don't have opportunities to experience Japan. One point every Japanese employee is careful of is that each presentation (presentation) is composed of something that is absolutely (*akumade*) Japanese culture. On the other hand, one can feel a tendency for the state to take up things it finds desirable, such as when organizations like the Agency for Cultural Affairs says this is proper Japanese culture (I think this attitude is seen as contrary to the perspective of Europe or globalism), but I think that when conservative people say "this is true x culture" or "this is proper x culture," and reproduce this in places of education, they are writing culture in ink through cultural policy. This is a misguided behavior that leaves culture out to dry. But, some people also say that Japanese are too uninformed about their own culture. I think this is in part true...both points can be made I think. It's a complicated problem.

Despite Ōtsuka-san's careful and reflective comments on the complex relationship between national and cosmopolitan culture, she still struggles between reconciling how to represent "nation-less" culture and "authentic Japanese culture." The dilemma between the nation-less and national is, of course, imbedded in the function of Ōtsuka-san's work which inevitably labels culture, nation-less or not, "Japanese." This is the irony of national cultural administration that seeks, following Ogoura-san, to cultivate a global sense of community: through the sponsorship of culture identified as worthy of the

“common property of all human beings” (2009: 31), it labels that culture the property of Japan. All one can do in this reoccurring clash between a national and global ethos is to aim to strike a balance relative to the needs of each party participating in a program of cultural exchange, but like Ōtsuka-san says, “It’s a complicated problem.”

### “Public” Diplomacy

An even greater challenge in balancing Ogoura’s globally-minded ethos with nationalist demands comes from an understanding of “public diplomacy” within the Japan Foundation—often used interchangeably with “cultural diplomacy”—that constructs the notion of “public” in exclusively nationalist terms. Within the Japan Foundation public diplomacy is defined as “people to people” exchanges. This point is emphasized as an important development in how public diplomacy is conceived, given that in the past it was conducted primarily between governments. An official at the Japan Foundation drew a simple diagram for me (fig 7).



(Figure 7. Diagram of shifts in public diplomacy)

Important to the new model is the fact that arrows go both ways between peoples and governments. Also important is the role government plays in facilitating people to people exchanges. The same official explained to me how he sought a very broad definition of public diplomacy, one that worked for the benefit of people and that sometimes required and sometimes did not require thinking about national interests.

Even though the working ethos of Japan Foundation officials appeals in name to the concept of the “public” in its public diplomacy, the term itself is left relatively unproblematic. It stands more generally for the people of a specific nation, not yet approaching the ideal of Ogoura-san’s “culture as international ‘public’ good.” It is different too from Habermas’s (1989) more precise definition that sees the public as a sphere of free and rational debate established independently of, and thus able to oversee and regulate, the power of the state. Even were his ideal adopted as the Japan Foundation’s own, however, Japanese scholars like Hayashi (2006) and Hanada (1997) warn that the notion of a Habermasian public sphere does not and cannot operate in a Japanese context where the notion of “public” (*kō*) refers not to the people but to the government official.<sup>26</sup> Thus, public interests are always conflated with those of the nation state.

The notion of public diplomacy provided to me by certain Japan Foundation officials represents this more nationally inflected meaning. It was defined this way in materials distributed to me in a course on international cultural relations taught by a Japan Foundation senior officer:

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<sup>26</sup> In Japanese, *kō* is represented in the Chinese character (公), meaning “official” or, more traditionally, “lord.”



Public diplomacy should contribute to achieving the foreign goals and interests of a country by building the presence of that country, improving its image, and deepening an understanding of it through building relationships with foreign people and organizations, holding dialogue, transmitting information, and conducting various forms of exchange. [2008]

These three points—building a country’s presence, image, and understanding among foreign publics—become the key components of a country’s public diplomacy, where public refers to the people of a particular foreign country.

The same materials outline why public diplomacy has become important for Japan in recent years:

1. The rise of the importance of strengthening Japan’s power to communicate its interests to the foreign community which determines its international status (*kokusai teki na chi’i*)
2. The amplification of the need from the perspective of Japan to solicit international opinion (*kokusai teki na yoron*) given the intensification of competition within the sphere of information.
3. The existence of anti-Japanese sentiment in countries such as China.
4. The existence of historical problems (*rekishi mondai no sonzai*) [this refers to memories of Japan’s imperialist incursions in areas of East and Southeast Asia in the buildup to and midst of World War II].

The understanding of “public” within this context points almost exclusively to activities designed primarily to secure the interests of a particular nation state. Where an organization might pursue various forms of cultural exchange—in arts, education, or academic research—they are done so for the benefit of the nation (*jikoku no rieki*). That this understanding of the public interest as defined in terms of *jikoku no rieki* exists adjacent to ideas of Ogoura-san’s culture as “international public good” shows the complex and contrary sets of ideologies that inundate cultural administration within the Japan Foundation.

I often felt torn between these two ideals over the course of my fieldwork, perhaps more so than did employees themselves. I attributed this to the fact that my distance from the actual practice of cultural diplomacy, like that of Ogoura-san, Monji-san, and other elite officials detached from the everyday demands of administration allowed me to entertain problems in more theoretically abstract terms. As I have already argued, officials have a far greater number of concerns to balance, people to appease, and tasks to complete. Balancing these becomes a practical skill adjusted to each context's particular demands. As in the translation example with Takada-san, the problem of balancing global and national ideals becomes enfolded into resolving more immediate demands of micromanagement. Before understanding this, I felt frustrated with this ideological contradiction between the global and the national, which manifested in a very palpable irritation. I asked one official if he did not feel a similar frustration. His answer summarized as concisely as possible what I have tried to describe as the dominant working ethos of cultural administrators within the Japan Foundation: *baransu o toranakereba narimasen ne* (one has to strike a balance).

### **Banal Nationalism**

The varying ethical demands of administration found within MOFA and the Japan Foundation affix affective obligation to one's colleagues and work responsibilities to the nation in different ways. As illustrated through the cute ambassadors program, the mode of working to secure the interests of the state, typical of MOFA officials, and working to build an understanding of Japanese culture that is distinct from the state's interests, typical of Japan Foundation officials, can take very polarizing forms. However, what appears problematic in ideology is rendered less pertinent in practice as bureaucracies

have over a long time established a general operative stability that accommodates tension by treating ideological problems as secondary to maintaining the organization's status quo. When MOFA directs that the Japan Foundation administer a program like the cute ambassadors project, imagined through the lens of Japan's new pop culture soft power resources, it raises the level of tension between ideals of conducting cultural exchange for varying nationalist and non-nationalist purposes. Given bureaucracy's primary and recursive focus on maintaining bureaucratic stability, such tensions are resolved in relatively banal ways.

Banality, in fact, accounts for many of the accommodations of problematically narrow, nationalist conceptions of cultural exchange programs to ones imagined in more global and cosmopolitan terms. Nationalism is not inherently a problem. It is conceived of more simply as a natural category of cultural identification and citizenship. That the Japan Foundation's task is to introduce Japanese culture, art, knowledge, and lifestyles which are the propriety of the nation state is the natural assumption which enables its activity. It is built into the organization's name. Roland Barthes's insight that "ideology speaks with 'the Voice of Nature'" (1977: 47, cited in Billig 1995: 37) is echoed in the transcripts of officials. Nationalism is the most natural and pervasive of modern ideologies, organizing so many facets of administrative and personal life. Its absolute givenness renders Ogoura's proposition that Japanese culture belongs not exclusively to the Japanese people and that national interests need be transcended almost radical. Although it is an attractive ideal *as* ideal, and one promoted by a number of critics seeking to move Japan beyond its more rigid and culturally essentialist forms of self-understanding (Iwabuchi 2007), it finds little traction in the day to day planning and

execution of cultural exchange programs. And in so much that the framework of soft power proliferates throughout Japanese bureaucracy so too does the naturalization of the idea that it can and should play a role in cultural exchange activities, whether to meet the more overtly nationalist aims of MOFA or the less assertive ones of the Japan Foundation.

Michael Billig's work (1995) goes far in describing this kind of naturalness in regards to national imagining. His notion of "banal nationalism" (1995: 6) is effective in describing a broad category of ways of relating to the nation separate from the more publicized ones of radical conservatism, xenophobic violence, and jingoism. He argues that nationalism is a consciousness more flexible than those, sometimes manifesting as an impassioned defense of a nation's perceived values but more often residing in the everyday interpellations in forms of address in the newspaper, in the singing of national anthems before sporting events, or in simply speaking languages which are held to be the propriety of some nations and not others. While his argument is convincing, I feel that in accepting it unconditionally there is a danger of assuming that national sentiment is constructed uniformly across societies. In this chapter I have tried to be more careful and discerning in my understanding of nationalism, showing how it can elicit different feelings toward images of the nation state through different ways of organizing a subject's obligation to it. In the next chapter I move beyond analyses of how soft power is accommodated to bureaucratic practice to look at sites where soft power as discourse is more actively affecting and altering that practice, establishing new relationships between organizations, enabling new thoughts and policies previously unimaginable within the terms of cultural diplomacy, and producing new, emergent forms of cultural life.

## Chapter Seven

### **Cute Ambassadors II:**

#### **Soft Power and its Emergent Forms of Life**

In this chapter I want to examine soft power more specifically in its function as the organizing principle of that which resembles Foucault's *dispositif* (apparatus), establishing a particular way of relating disparate, heterogeneous objects within a network of relations (Rabinow 2003: 51). In treating soft power this way it may seem as if I am ascribing a kind of agency to soft power. This is not exactly right, and presumably Foucault would have his own objections to the suggestion. Moreover, I am also not attributing to soft power an institutional durability or temporal longevity that Rabinow ascribes to the apparatus (2003: 55), although it might, in fact, acquire it. Treating soft power as a specific, emerging, and institutionalizing and institutionalized entity with the productive capacity to organize previously disparate objects, utterances, and regimes of thought characterizes well how soft power operates. In short, Foucault's concept assists in the description of this process. In this chapter, then, I examine soft power's emergent properties. A further caveat: by appealing to the category of the "emergent," I mean to acknowledge Michael Fischer's description of it as a lens through which to understand contemporary cultural formations for which our traditional "ethnographic datum[s], social theoretic heuristic[s], and a philosophical stance regarding ethics have grown increasingly inapplicable (2003: 37). However, my analysis does not abide as assiduously to Fischer's criteria for the emergent as might be appropriate. Thus, I temper any suggestions of theoretical novelty, as does Fischer himself, in fact, by situating my understanding of the emergent in conjunction with the other two historical

horizons with which Raymond Williams tells us it most always appears: the dominant and the fading (Fisher 2003: 37). Most simply, I am interested in the emergent's ability to establish connections to and between new things; to enable new possibilities for thought; and even to produce and imagine new objects altogether. I begin with perhaps soft power's most famous of emergent life forms, introduced in the previous chapter: the cute ambassadors.

At the modestly sized and minimally decorated press room at Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 26, 2009, Public Diplomacy Department Director Monji Kenjiro presented Aoki Misako (age 27), Kimura Yū (age 27), and Fujioka Shizuka (age 21) with their official appointments: *popukaruchā hashinshi - fuasshon bunya* (New Trend Communicators of Japanese Pop Culture) or, abbreviated, *kawaii taishi* (Cute Ambassadors [fig. 8]). "The main mission of the three ambassadors," Monji-san explained, "is to transmit the new trends of Japanese pop culture in the field of fashion to the rest of the world and to promote understanding of Japan through their respective cultural projects carried out by the Japanese Embassies and the Japan Foundation" (MOFA 2009). As the three young girls lined up in front of flashing cameras, Monji-san elaborated:

Pop culture, including fashion, is an integral part of today's Japanese culture. It enjoys worldwide popularity and we witness that its fans are ever-increasing. Pop culture is expected to help the people of the world have more chances to know about contemporary Japan, hand-in-hand with other parts of traditional and contemporary Japanese culture. [MOFA 2009]

The introduction, part two of a daily announcement MOFA holds for the Ministry's *kisha kurabu* (press clubs) (there are usually two meetings a day), directly followed a briefing on a symposium held a day earlier, a follow-up to the Tokyo International Conference on

African Development IV, titled “Japan's Efforts to Promote Peace and Security in Africa: The Case of Sudan and Beyond.” Foreign Ministry Deputy Press Secretary Kawamura Yasuhisa summarized Foreign Minister Nakasone’s four major points concerning Japan’s role in building sustainable peace in Africa:

One, Japan's active involvement in ending conflicts and achieving peace by citing the cases of Sudan and Somalia. Two, Japan's active involvement in implementing peace agreements. Three, the importance of enhancing Africa's capacity for peace building. And, four, the necessity of strengthening Japan's personnel contribution to peace-building efforts in Africa. [MOFA 2009]

The irony of the especially discordant two announcements would not have eluded Monji-san himself. Five months later while talking about the transition from his old job as Ambassador to Iraq to his new one as Public Diplomacy Department Director (*kōhō bunka koryū buchō*, the literal translation would read something closer to “Public Relations and Cultural Exchange Director”), he handed me a 9x11 sheet of paper with two pictures. The top picture showed him in Iraq during his appointment as ambassador, posing in front of a HMMWV with members of Japan’s defense forces and Iraqi translators.<sup>27</sup> The bottom picture showed him with the winners of the World Cosplay Summit championship, held annually in Nagoya, Japan, where young fans dress up as their favorite anime characters and compete for prizes. Sharing laughter with Monji-san at the juxtaposition of the two images, my mind recalled other images I had encountered that evoked similar sentiments. One was of another group of Japanese self-defense forces, this time distributing water in Iraq. On the side of the Japanese water tanker trucks was an image of Captain Tsubasa, a character from a famous 1980s soccer anime in Japan and

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<sup>27</sup> Monji-san inserted black lines over the eyes of the Iraqis to protect their identity. I have decided against publishing this photo altogether.

popular throughout the Middle East where he is known as Captain Majed (fig. 9).

Another image was of former Foreign Minister Kōmura Masahiko presenting a life-size figure of Doraemon, a popular animated robot cat, with a formal letter of assignment making the cat the official Anime Ambassador of Japan (figs. 10 and 11).



(Figure 8. Cute Ambassadors Fujioka Shizuka, Kimura Yū, and Aoki Misako)



(Figure 9. Water tanks with popular anime figure called “Captain Majed” in Iraq presented by MOFA)





(Figure 10. "Inauguration Ceremony of Anime Ambassador")



(Figure 11. "Inauguration Ceremony of Anime Ambassador")

Whereas each of these images taken alone might elicit a casual smile at the ironic juxtaposition of playful cuteness and hard line security operations, taken as a series, they encourage us to think further, asking what circumstances allow young girls in eighteenth century French haute fashion, anime soccer stars, and robot cats to share discursive and temporal space with African and Iraqi peacekeeping efforts? The answer, I think, points

to the capacity of soft power to not only assemble disparate objects in newly imagined logical relations with one other but also to produce new objects, new forms of life unthinkable outside the network of those relations.

### **Kawaii Taishi**

The *kawaii taishi*, according to Monji-san, represent the cutting edge in the field of cute fashion trends in Japan. Each girl represents one style of such trends. Kimura Yū is the leader of *Harajuku-kei* fashion (Harajuku-style fashion), named after the trendy area up the street from one of Tokyo's most famous urban centers, Shibuya, and its iconic bustling crosswalk, Hachiko-crossing. Harajuku is the epicenter of the latest trends in youth street fashion. Kimura's style is eclectic, mixing and matching items and accessories from second-hand clothing stores. It is bright, colorful, and somewhat garish (*hade*), an aesthetic accentuated by her bright blond hair with pink highlights. Kimura is recognized for her ability to match a number of different, and often discordant, items collected from several different boutiques along Harajuku's main *shōtengai* (shopping street). As many of her items are second-hand and generally cheaper, embedded in her style is also an ethical practice that values the effort put into the search for just the right items marked at affordable prices, not an insignificant challenge in central Tokyo. Where talk of price tags might be consciously avoided in other Tokyo fashion circles, among Kimura's fans low prices are a point of pride and aesthetic distinction.

Aoki Misako is the representative of the more established and eccentric *rorita fashion* (Lolita Fashion style), named after Nabokov's pubescent object of desire in the novel by the same name (1989). In contrast to the lascivious allusions, however, the style appears much more conservatively Victorian in taste, characterized by frills, lace, long

skirts and sleeves, and high socks and collars. Aoki herself claims to be nothing of the sexualized object portrayed in Nabokov's novel. Instead, her object of adoration is a mixture of the Victorian styles of nineteenth century England and the Rococo period fashions of eighteenth century France. Although there are several ever-evolving genres of Lolita fashion, Aoki's is the most conservatively "sweet," represented by such brands as Baby, the Stars Shine Bright and Angelic Pretty. Compared to Kimura's Harajuku style, Lolita items are significantly higher in price, with dresses usually marked between two and three hundred dollars, but sometimes going as high as five or six hundred, and accessories like headdresses, shoes, and bags going from between one and two hundred.

The actress and fashion coordinator Fujioka Shizuka represents the *joshi kōsei fuasshon* (girls' high school uniform style), characterized by plaid skirts, blazers, and ribbons and scarves. Although similar to the uniforms mandatory at all of Japan's public and most of its private secondary schools, the school uniform has also emerged as its own genre with its accordant fashion magazines and catalogues (Conomi 2009). The schoolgirl uniform is a highly polysemic symbol in Japan, sometimes representing conservatism, sometimes cute culture, and very often made into a highly fetishized sexual object. The schoolgirl uniform has been made especially popular abroad through manga and anime, many stories of which focus on young girls (*shōjo manga*).

The fashion styles of the cute ambassadors are distinct, representing, as with most trend setting, not only differences in taste but also distinctions in the practices of its consumers. Each *kei* (type or style), a word that could refer as much to a style as it could to a person who embodies it, carries with it its own ethos, and given the number of sub-categories within each style, the different sites and forms of leisure associated with each

group, and the vastly different price ranges between each style, one finds a rich web of subtle distinctions and nuances among its consumers.

Such richness and subtlety of fashion's lived expressions, however, are nonetheless lost in the introductions of cute ambassadors at overseas events. The media producer and "General Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Issues of Pop Culture," Sakurai Takamasa, who I described in previous chapters, is the individual in charge of accompanying and presenting the ambassadors at overseas events.<sup>28</sup> At the 2009 Japan Expo in Paris, Sakurai, dressed in the breeches, cloak, and ruff of the Elizabethan Period and speaking through a French translator, began his introduction of Kimura Yū by asking his audience of about one hundred, "How many people know the word 'kawaii'?" (the word "kawaii" was left in the original Japanese). He pointed his microphone to the audience and raised his hand, eliciting a lackluster and confused response. He then asked, "Who wants to see the cute ambassador?" repeating the same routine. After inviting Kimura-san to the stage he asked again, "Who thinks she is cute?" After having Kimura-san turn around for the audience—"chotto guru guru shite" (do a little turn)—he interviewed her about what she was wearing and how she selected her clothes to make her ensembles. He then showed a slide show of other cute fashion trends in Harajuku and ended having Kimura sing sections from two of her pop songs *a cappella* (she is also a moderately famous pop star). Assuming that people would likely want to take pictures of Kimura-san, Sakurai ended the presentation and invited audience members to bring their cameras to the front of the stage.

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<sup>28</sup> At the time of writing Sakurai had accompanied at least one of the ambassadors to Russia, Italy, France, Spain, Thailand, and most recently, Brazil.

Sakurai's introduction is commensurate with a number of critics' readings of cute culture (Ōtsuka 1989, 1991; Shimamura 1991; Yamane 1991; Miyadai 1993; Kinsella 1995; McVeigh 1996; Harris 2001) that note the ability of cute to resist critique. Asking young Tokyo women to define cuteness, McVeigh notes a common answer with which he was often met: "Cuteness is something one can't talk about. It's something one can only feel, in one's heart" (1996: 294). Harris agrees that cuteness is above all an affective aesthetic but certainly not one, in his opinion, we should necessarily cultivate. For him, cuteness evokes sentiments of the malformed, grotesque, and pitiable, triggering, "with Pavlovian predictability, maternal feelings for a maternal condition of endearing naiveté" (2001: 2). Cuteness is not something we find in subjects, he says, but something we *do* to them, effectively rendering them helpless and dependent upon our care (2001: 5). This ability for cute to resist critique as well as elicit one's parental desires for nurturing is evidenced in Sakurai's presentation. In projecting images of cute fashion from Harajuku on screen, Sakurai has little more to offer the crowd than "*kawaii desu ne*" (isn't it cute?). He provides nothing of the context of the cultural *mise-en-scène* of Kimura's fashion, neither relating fashion to Kimura's social life, interests, work, or leisure activities nor soliciting questions from audience members who might be interested in such things. In effect, he renders Kimura—just like that famous kitty who without a mouth is unable to speak—anonymous, void of any distinctive personality traits.

### **Gendering Soft Power and Kawaii**

Not surprisingly, in my presentations at conferences and other public venues in which I relayed Sakurai's performance I was consistently met with reactions of disgust at Sakurai's treatment of the girls as "products" (*shōhin*). These came mostly from Western

men and women, more than a few of them anthropologists. They also came from women identifying as Japanese, but these were fewer in number than I expected. This might be in part explained by the more exclusive relegation of the aesthetic of cute in the West to adolescence compared to the Japanese *kawaii*, which has its acceptable counterparts in adult fashion trends; thus, *kawaii* is seen as the dominant and natural—thus less problematic—aesthetic defining femininity in Japanese fashion. Although such disparaging displays toward women, especially as performed by older men toward young women, is cited as typical to Japanese institutions—job hiring (*shūshoku katsudō*), classrooms, media, pornography—it takes on a new significance when cast in the light of soft power strategies and the affects of cultural anxiety that sustain them.

Sianne Ngai offers a portrait of anxiety as a particularly male-dominated affect. In her literary readings of “spatialized representations of anxiety” in works by Herman Melville, Alfred Hitchcock, and Martin Heidegger, she sees anxiety as acquiring a “certain epistemological cachet” (2005: 212-212): “Pointing to the general prominence of phobia as a signifying economy in modern culture, expressions such as ‘anxiety of influence,’ ‘middle-class anxiety,’ and ‘millennial anxiety’ use the negative affect they invoke as a handy way of immediately establishing a skeptical or critical stance toward the phenomena described” (213). She finds parallels in the “primary model of gender differentiation” of Freud’s psychoanalysis as well as in the Continental tradition of existentialist philosophy, where the “privileging of anxiety as a key for interpreting the human condition is accompanied by its being secured as the distinctive—if not exclusive—emotional province of male intellectuals” (213). To females, incidentally, are attributed the less traumatic and less profound affects like nostalgia and envy. Ngai sees

this particular male anxiety too in the Don Giovanni of Mozart's opera who is described as "anxiety itself" (214). Through a number of literary readings of Western culture Ngai examines how anxiety comes to acquire a special status as the distinctive "feeling-tone" of self-inquiry, slowly replacing its precursor of a melancholia that was the intellectual's signature sensibility prior to the modern period.

If anxiety does become the signature affective mode of male self-inquiry in the modern West, as Ngai argues, could it be especially characteristic of a form of national Japanese belonging that emerged specifically in response to a perceived threat of Western modernity in the late twentieth century? Although I do not want to stretch such a generalized historicization of modern masculinity in Japan too far beyond its ethnographic indicators, the cultural crisis formalized repeatedly in modern Japanese literature and scholarship—from the literature of Sōseki and Dazai to the Kyoto school scholars of the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium (*Kindai no chōkoku*) held in the midst of the Pacific War—consistently conflated modernization with Western culture. Despite rhetorical alternatives that aimed to split the two, *wakon yosai* (Eastern spirit, Western technology/techniques) being the most prominent, the highly sought-after modernization toward which Japanese elites strived was inescapably entangled with Westernization. Extending this logic, if anxiety was the dominant affect characterizing self-reflection in the West, a crisis of Japanese national identity instigated by the West itself could not be overcome but through the West's own modes of reflection and resolution. This was the irony inspiring and ultimately derailing "Overcoming Modernity," an exclusively male project (not one of the thirteen participants was female). Styles of soul searching for the Japanese spirit in the new Japanese state, in its prewar

military buildup, in its postwar depression, in its economic expansion, and now in the persistent malaise that followed in its wake prove to be male dominated and anxiously affected.

Such a reading, broad though it may be (and I am narrowing now), is consistent with the genealogy of the cute ambassador program, which emerged out of discussions by a handful of men in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its critiques, which might be labeled feminist of a general kind, have been few, the most prominent one so far being the diet woman's concern raised to Monji-san about potential misunderstandings should such cute girls in short skirts be paraded about Middle Eastern countries. This reading is also consistent with Sakurai's treatment of the cute ambassadors in Paris and even more clearly evidenced in the nationalist enthusiasm he exhibits for the spread of cute culture throughout the world in his 2009 publication, *Sekai kawaii no kakumei* (The Global Cute Revolution), which I describe in more detail below. Finally, national identity as emerging from a particularly male anxiety is most acutely demonstrated in a passing comment during an interview with the female director of a prominent graduate program in cultural policy in Japan. Upon soliciting her thoughts on the cultural programs of MOFA and the Japan Foundation, she fell back in her chair and let out a scoffing laugh. It was the first mocking tone I had encountered from my informants formally engaged in cultural policy. "The Japan Foundation is just a money bag for MOFA; I never know what those bureaucrats are thinking," she said, laughing again. In one short mocking comment she had undermined the entire project of my male interlocutors' investments in cultural policy as a safeguard against an impending national crisis. And in our exchange and, indeed, in her writings on cultural policy (which I do not cite to protect her



anonymity), I could identify little of the anxious urgency I had elsewhere encountered among male informants.

Critics like Tomiko Yoda have identified what they see as clear metaphorical shifts in the historical development of gendered frameworks used to imagine Japanese society. Yoda argues that a concept of maternal society (*bosei shakai*) defined ideologies of social management in the late 1960s and was then reconfigured into what was called the “enterprise society” (*kigyō shakai*) during the 70s and 80s (2006: 240). Recently, though, she sees this maternal “metaphor of power and order” giving way to a “vogue of paternalism” (241). Yoda’s critique is useful in showing how rhetorical abstractions of the national body rely on differing and developing models of gender in their articulation. In the generalization of these frameworks for imagining Japanese society to a pervasive, culture-wide sensibility, however, I think Yoda sacrifices some precision in showing which institutions effected social change discursively and how (a point similar to the one I raise with Ivy in chapter 1). Less emphasized in this generalization is a critique of a male-dominated bureaucratic system (*kanri seido*) that in its practices leaves the manufacturing of national discourses to male elites, resulting in distinctively gendered policy and emergent forms of life like the cute ambassadors. Further, to say these discourses of paternalism and maternalism pervade Japanese society is likely an overstatement, and one that too easily portrays Japan as a homogenous and integrated cultural unit. I want to alternatively suggest that the discourse of soft power within Japanese bureaucracies divides maternalism and paternalism administratively rather than historically, applying symbols of maternity to “society” (*shakai*), often imagined through issues like welfare, and those of paternalism to the “nation” (*kokka*), imagined in terms of

prestige and status (*chi'i*). Common critiques, which I described in chapter 2, of Japan too often occupying the role of the needy and nagging wife in relation to a more masculine husband in the United States demonstrate this. Such emasculating characterizations of Japan inspire defensive responses of Japanese masculinity, seen in works like Hayashi Yoshimichi's *Fusei no Fukken* (The Restoration of Fatherhood, 1996) and Ishihara Shintarō's *Chichi nakushite kunitatazu* (No Father no Nation, 1997) which argue that Japan needs to become a stronger, more assertive, and thus more masculine nation (Yoda 2006: 240).<sup>29</sup>

Contrary to Yoda, I do not want to say this kind of paternalism pervades contemporary Japan at large. It does, I think, fairly characterize sentiments pervading Japanese national bureaucracies, but only when bureaucratic practice is mobilized to address *international* concerns, where the framework of competitiveness inspires responses articulated in more masculine symbols and imagery. In the next chapter I attempt to show where such administrative practices and their associated affects of anxiety begin to penetrate spaces of the everyday, but in doing so I want to be very careful in showing this discourse as existing primarily in only one register of nationalism, one constellation of symbols, sentiments, and utterances that exists alongside others. Soft power, then, in no way evokes or is sustained by affects of anxiety characteristic of Japanese society as a whole but rather is limited to this specific, masculine register that imagines the nation as responding to definitively foreign threats and competitors. This register of imagination and feeling characterizes the bureaucratic mode of engaging with

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<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Article 9 of Japan's constitution stating that the nation will not engage in belligerent activity of any kind has been long interpreted through the metaphor of castration, a nation without the ability to wage war analogous to a man without a penis.

soft power; it extends beyond it only where bureaucracy touches the everyday through tangible sites of administration and media.

The performance in Paris of Sakurai and Kimura, the cute ambassador, exhibits the signs of a political discourse that characterizes anxiety over cultural prestige as an overwhelmingly male concern. Kimura embodies Japanese charm but does not explain, interpret, or critique it. That is Sakurai's job. From the perspective of soft power, Kimura is a resource of soft power while Sakurai is the administrator who must care for it, cultivate it, and ultimately make it into something productive. Through Sakurai's introduction of Kimura and through his solicitation of particular responses from the audience—Sakurai: “Isn't she cute?!” Audience: “Yeeeahh!”—he turns *kawaii* into a cultural trait that has its origins in a locally produced Japanese culture that one can take pride in precisely because of its uniqueness.

The particular coupling of national anxiety and cultural pride is even better exhibited in two of Sakurai's publications, *Anime Diplomacy* (*Anime bunka gaikō*, 2009a) and *The Cute Revolution* (*Sekai kawaii kakumei*, 2009b). The two works share a similar structure with his cute ambassador presentations, charting the respective popularity of Japanese anime and cute culture abroad both in statistics and in personal anecdotes of his encounters with young foreign fans of Japanese pop culture, such as in meeting adulators of cute culture in Paris who express to him their desire to become Japanese (2009b: 21); speaking with youth in Bologna who tell him they were raised on anime (2009a: 69); or in encountering die hard fans of Japanese anime and TV drama in places as seemingly removed from Japan as Saudi Arabia (2009a: 34-35) or Syria (2009a: 53-55). Overly tuned in to praise for Japanese pop culture, Sakurai presents such cases as

hard evidence for the success of Japanese soft power. He returns home anxious to bring his message to other Japanese who have no idea their culture is so respected abroad. This notion of Japanese being not sufficiently aware of how popular their culture is abroad was commonly cited to me as a concern among administrators, and it has become a common trope of cultural diplomacy. Building Japanese people's awareness of their own culture's presence overseas has even been taken up by the Japan Foundation as one role of cultural diplomacy. Such repetitive public evocations of self-reassurance only make sense as remedies for confidence building, turning, like soft power does in general, cultural anxiety into national hope.

### **The History of Cute: Critical and Revisionist**

Also characterizing the discourse of the cute ambassadors and kawaii culture more generally is its ahistoricism. Turning cute into a tool of cultural expediency requires a naturalizing process, obscuring the particular context of its emergence so as to define it as a product of a Japanese cultural essence unchanged over the nation's long history. Sharon Kinsella's (1995) and Yamane Kazuma's (1986) historical accounts of the emergence of cute challenge national narratives connecting Japan's pop commodities to its traditional ones. They trace the origin of Japanese cute to the practice of junior high and high school students in the 1970s who started writing in a creative and feminized script—"rounded characters with English, katakana and little cartoon pictures such as hearts, stars and faces inserted randomly into the text"—in contrast to the more conventional and more typical, straight vertical style (Kinsella 1995: 2). The handwriting went by a number of names according to Kinsella, such as "*marui ji* (round writing), *koneko ji* (kitten writing), *manga ji* (comic writing) and *burikko ji* (fake-child writing)"

(1995: 2). Associated with the popularization of cute speech and baby talk in the 1970s and combined with transformations in mass-consumption habits, companies like Sanrio began to capitalize off these new youth trends by offering so called “fancy goods,” the essential ingredients of which, says Kinsella, “are that it is small, pastel, round, soft, loveable, not [a] traditional Japanese style but a foreign, ...European or American style, dreamy, frilly and fluffy” (1995: 4). Consumers today recognize these qualities in Sanrio’s most iconic commodity, Hello Kitty, the small, white, cartoon cat cited earlier, created in Japan but who, as her biography indicates, is originally from England and whose face now covers everything from toasters to assault rifles.<sup>30</sup>

What establishes a logic of relationships between Hello Kitty, teenage writing styles, Lolita fashion, and cute ambassadors? What makes these things objects of Japanese culture that share affinity with other pop culture life forms like animated cats (Doraemon) or mobile robots (Asimo), or with traditional ones like geisha, samurai, or any other number of artifacts designated as representative of Japan by MOFA’s public diplomacy divisions or the Japan Foundation? Finally, how do these things become objects of national administration? I think the answers point to soft power’s potential to create and illuminate connections between these heterogeneous objects, assembling them in relation to one another within an apparatus of cultural diplomacy. So effective does the affectively sustained discourse of soft power prove to be in establishing relationships between new things in a network that it produces not only new ways of understanding the present but also of the present’s relationship to the past.

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<sup>30</sup> Credit goes to Christine Yano for first drawing my attention to the latter of these products.

Japan's Prime Ministers have made specific allusions to the continuum between Japan's traditional and contemporary pop culture. Asō Tarō does this by identifying both traditions as equally emergent of a single national heritage:

We continue to get the word out on Japan's truly splendid traditional culture, and we are very fortunate that in addition to the items of *Noh* drama and *Bunraku*, tea ceremony and flower arranging, Japan also boasts many newer forms of culture that have a high degree of appeal. This would be pop culture, including *anime*, music, and fashion among others, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is really going all out to "market" this, so to speak. [Asō 2006]

Abe Shinzō's address to the National Diet in 2007 even more directly integrates the traditional with the contemporary: "Japanese contemporary culture's coolness is founded in and derived from its traditional culture" (Abe 2007). A similar logic has been repeated to me numerous times in interviews with officials and administrators, and from multiple agencies. This rather new rhetoric linking Japan's contemporary popular arts to its historical ones, effectively effacing historically particular narratives of pop culture such as those provided by Kinsella (1995) and Yamane (1991), only grows stronger and more natural with the plethora of new publications trumpeting the "pop power" of Japan's "cool culture" (Koyama 2004; Hamano 2005; Nakamura and Onouchi 2006; Sugiyama 2006; Shima 2009; Sakurai 2009a, 2009b).

Such examples employ homogeneous tropes of Japan in the reproduction of familiar, culturally essentialist antidotes in response to perceived threats to Japanese integration and national prestige. In many ways, these tropes constructed in narratives of history invert the usual affective order of anxiety's effects on national identification: rather than anxious affects in the present contributing to the formulation of hopeful futures, in repeatedly imagining impossibly pure, enclosed, and exceptional portraits of a

distinct culture untenable under conditions of globalization today, hopeful expectations for the future are made perceivable in memories of a glorified past. Hopeful portraits of prestige for a future Japan produce the perception of power imbalances as anxious threat in the present. The familiar discomfort of nostalgia that Ivy describes (1995) reproduces itself by guaranteeing the failure of propitious futures measured against impossibly prestigious pasts.

Emergent forms of life like the cute ambassadors, though, suggest that the symbols of Japanese nostalgia might be more easily shrugged off than Ivy predicts: in so much that the future of Japan and its new popular symbols of national culture secure a familiar connection between cultural uniqueness and cultural anxiety, soft power promises to alleviate the latter by regenerating the former. Soft power seeks out symbols for such regeneration, combining pop cultural fandom with economic and national security in the manufacturing of strange new entities. Its institutionalization in national bureaucracies—large, complexly structured, slow-moving blunt bodies—naturalizes soft power while at the same time almost certainly guaranteeing its inadaptability to the speed and flux of global economies. Such a situation promises to sustain the disjunction between the affective excitement that characterizes soft power as ideology and the practical challenges that burden it as policy. In the next chapter, I trace how the adoption of Nye's "soft power" by Japanese national bureaucracies has begun to alter not only relations within national administrations but also, as a consequence of the highly integrated organization of government, media, and daily life in Japan, the network of relations between politics and culture in sites of the everyday as well.

## Chapter Eight

### Soft Power and the Everyday

This chapter begins from an observation that I more conservatively treat as a hypothesis but that in his study of the rationality and rituality of the Japanese state Brian McVeigh treats more literally:

What is significant for my present argument is that the ministries have set the pace, tone, and standards not just for the more obvious aspects of modernization, but also for the rationalized, bureaucratized, and ritualized resonance of daily life in present-day Japan. I also contend that Japan's bureaucracies have taken advantage of and sustained sociopolitical arrangements that do not always distinguish clearly between public (state) and private (society) interests. Thus, much of Japan's bureaucratic power rests on its ability to segment, fragment, and categorize society (gender, interests, regional, national, etc.) as it sees fit, thereby weakening state-society distinctions. [1998: 72]

McVeigh's evaluation of how administrative bodies in Japan blur the boundaries between the public and the state is consistent with Hayashi (2006) and Hanada's (1997) discussion of the Japanese public sphere that I presented in chapter 6. What all these critics point to is the degree to which national bureaucracies in Japan have established smooth administrative mechanisms for integrating policy and national narratives into everyday life.

If McVeigh is right about bureaucracy's ability to extend its structures of control into the more intimate spaces of private lives, then the fact has serious consequences for the way people think through cultural citizenship. Throughout this dissertation I have attempted to describe a particular anxiety characteristic of a mode of bureaucratic practice that is oriented to problems of global urgency, thus evoking both a desire to strengthen Japan in response to its perceived threats and a hope that it can, in fact, be done. If Japan is this well integrated administratively, and this administrative mode is



characterized by a particular national anxiety, to what degree can we expect these forms of anxiety and hope generated by the discourse of soft power to become inscribed in the everyday? Entertaining McVeigh's idea that a good deal of culture in Japan flows from the top down, through government administrations to those sites of the everyday with which they come into contact, I want to attempt to trace a few paths by which the rhetoric of soft power in national administration does seem to be affecting life outside it.

However, in order to avoid providing a homogenous view of this process, I want to take up three very different cases in order to show how the emerging institutionalization of soft power affects in diverse ways, in no way providing for the inscription of a singular affective mode of imagining the nation analogous to that of national bureaucrats. While in some cases soft power rhetoric might be seen to affect discourse directly, producing results anticipated by administrators, at other times it elicits dissonance and estrangement, producing the exact opposite of desired outcomes. In illustrating this suggestion I draw on fieldwork examples from media, the content industries, and education.

### **Media**

In media, Japan's unique *kisha kurabu* (press club) system has long been regarded as a major institution through which government establishes influence and control. In Japan, news organizations do not compete freely for information but are granted or denied formal access to government briefings through passes allotted by each ministry. Thus, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for example, must grant an organization like the *Asahi Shinbun* (Asahi newspaper) a pass in order for its journalists to attend briefings where information is disseminated. Such a system restricts access to information to only

the major news agencies whose staff must establish a congenial rapport with ministry personnel. The system also guarantees that reporting on the government will be relatively consistent from one news organization to the next. Investigative journalism and harsh government opinion pieces, thus, are rare relative to Western press (although the United States' cable news networks are increasingly complicating this distinction). Government and press in Japan, then, have established a cooperative and reciprocal relationship that is criticized equally by scholars of media both in and outside Japan (Hall 1997; Kawasaki 1997; Krauss 2000; Kawasaki and Shibata 2004).

NHK, Japan's public broadcaster, has been similarly criticized for its close relationship to government. A number of works in Japan criticize the intimate relationship between politicians and the high-level administrators of NHK (Kawasaki 1997; Kawasaki and Shibata 2004). NHK sponsors the show "Cool Japan" I discussed at length in chapter 5, and although space limits further discussion of it here, the section can be reread in the context of how nation branding logic reaches everyday publics.

A story told by a prominent media scholar in Japan reveals exactly how a register of nationalist thinking within government bureaucracy translates and appropriates more cosmopolitan critiques circulating in media spheres toward its own ends. Iwabuchi Kōichi begins his story by explaining how excited he was at reading a 2006 newspaper article stating that the Koizumi cabinet was looking to create new television channels within Japan that went beyond the usual programming in Japanese and English, providing broadcasts in Korean, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Thai. Iwabuchi writes, "I remember thinking after reading that article, wow, finally, even Japan can construct a media environment that respects the diversity of its multiple peoples" (2007: 114). The

cabinet (*kakugi*) seemed to be finally getting the message of the need for more culturally diverse broadcasting that Iwabuchi and other prominent academics and media figures had been suggesting for some time. However, Iwabuchi's optimism was quickly deflated:

What I was shocked at was that the point of view emphasizing the importance of providing broadcasts in languages other than Japanese for foreign residents of Japan was at later cabinet meetings suddenly supplanted by the view emphasizing the importance of transmitting media from Japan to the world, with only the latter one being forwarded. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs then quickly set up a foreign ministry advisory committee with the theme “strengthening Japan’s transmission power” (*Nihon no hasshinryoku kyōka*) in order to discuss such things as policies to enhance NHK’s international broadcasts. The committee was called the “Council on Foreign Relations” (*Kaigai kōryū shingi kai*) and it invited the vice chairman of Toyota, Fujio Chō, to serve as the council’s chairman. As former Foreign Minister Asō Tarō’s words made perfectly clear—“It is important for the common people of foreign countries to have an understanding and a positive image of Japan. Shouldn’t it be appropriate to have this done through foreign broadcasts of NHK like the BBC and CNN?”—what was being aimed for was to deepen an understanding of Japan through information and image transmission, and build Japan’s image in the world by tying this to Japan’s interests on the political and economic front. However, the provision of a public broadcasting service for the various people living in the country and the transmission of information to the world toward the aim of procuring “Japanese understanding” fundamentally differ. In the way the development of this debate suddenly twisted, the limits and point at issue in the debate over media cultural policy that emphasizes varying public and national interests in Japan can be plainly seen. [Iwabuchi 2007: 114-115]

Iwabuchi’s story demonstrates the practice of *transposition* played by government administrators. In music “transposition” refers to the process of transferring a written piece into a different key, or, following the metaphor I developed in chapter 2, a different register. In an administrative setting transposition takes place discursively. The original finding of the council is organized in a register of cosmopolitanism that aims to transcend (*kokkyo o koeru*) the narrow framework of thinking in terms of a nation’s interests (*kokueki*). It recommends that significantly increasing the amount of coverage on foreign

issues will cultivate a more international outlook that might even open spaces for the emergence of transnational publics, a step that might, incidentally, go a long way in finally overcoming Chinese and South Korean resentment rooted in memories of the Pacific War. In subsequent meetings, however, the suggestion to increase international coverage is transposed into a plan to broadcast Japanese issues to an international audience. “Taking in” (*ukeire*) is transposed into “transmission” (*hasshin*) as a key concept for public diplomacy strategies given that establishing a presence of Japanese culture in foreign countries is seen as an important first step in cultivating soft power. A register of nationalist thinking enables and, in fact, guarantees that the original suggestion will be taken this way. A shared lexicon of “culture” and “internationalism” constitute the “notes” of cultural policy discourse; cosmopolitanism and nationalism make up the different registers or keys between which the notes are transposed.

NHK has since reconstructed its sister corporation, NHK World, to increase coverage of Japan to foreign markets. Two of its five mission points are, first, “to present broadcasts with great accuracy and speed on many aspects of Japanese culture and lifestyles, recent developments in society and politics, the latest scientific and industrial trends, and Japan’s role and opinions regarding important global issues,” and second, “To foster mutual understanding between Japan and other countries and promote friendship and cultural exchange” (NHK World 2011). Its flagship news program, “Newslines,” now broadcasts thirty minutes in English every hour on the hour to an increasing number of foreign locations, mostly within the Asia-Pacific region, aiming to compete not only with the BBC and CNN but with a number of other agencies in China, Korea, Singapore, and Australia.

As seen in Iwabuchi's narrative, debates and deliberation over what constitutes the ethical and organizational position of a public broadcaster is lost in the inscription of national interests in NHK's media structures. Institutionalized in media practices is not only a process of production that aims to transmit particular versions of Japan to the world—versions consistent with soft power ideals of broadcasting that which is thought to appeal most to foreign communities—but also forms of program evaluation and design that similarly operate through the lens of soft power, substituting debate about what constitutes programming serving a public's needs with unilateral decisions on meeting the *nation's* needs. In reality, as Hanada (1995) and Hayashi (2003) argue, the nation (*kokka*) and public sphere (*kōkyōsei*) have always been conflated through the notion of the *kokumin* (literally “country's people”) in Japan's modernity, so the shift is not as dramatic as might be perceived from the perspective of public broadcasting debates within the BBC for example (see Born 2004). But the reorganization of NHK World toward the specific purpose of increasing the presence of obviously Japanese content in foreign media markets reveals how much the framework of soft power has inundated and appropriated existing bureaucratic structures toward its own ends. Measuring the degree to which shows like “Newline” and “Cool Japan” actually increase forms of nationalist thinking among its consumers is difficult to measure, or would at least require another research project to investigate, but it is clear that there has been an increased proliferation and solidification through media spheres of a discourse that is appropriating more and more of culture toward imaginaries of national consciousness, and the anxieties that characterize its affective contours.

I opened the dissertation with a press release about NHK's new series, "Overcoming the 'Japan Syndrome'." Shortly after the press release the Executive Director-General of Broadcasting at NHK, Imai Tamaki, elaborated on the show:

The 'Japan Syndrome' is the name that has been given by the 'Tomorrow's Japan' project team at the News Department to describe the malaise that afflicts the nation. It refers to the loss of confidence and anxiety among large numbers of people in Japan. The nation is experiencing a falling birth rate, a greying population, and a shrinking workforce, and the pressures of global competition. The ensuing economic and social malaise has shaken long-held values, and seen youngsters withdraw into themselves, and diluted family and community ties, which in turn has manifested itself in various ways, such as the atomizing of society and the numerous elderly people who have seemingly vanished without anybody knowing or caring about their whereabouts. Starting from the New Year, the News Department will focus on the Japan Syndrome and offer prescriptions and ways of overcoming it. [NHK 2011b]

In chapter 2 I discussed two different forms of anxiety, one that connects with one's personal economic security and one that connects with those of the nation. The two are not synonymous but operate in distinct registers that appropriate different symbols, narratives, and affects in their manifestations. Soft power, however, shows the potential to conflate these two forms of anxiety, appropriating the former to meet concerns of the latter. Under this logic, one's personal financial concerns are imagined and felt increasingly in national, and, perhaps, *nationalist* terms. With series like this one, NHK operates as the storyteller of the nation, narrating one's personal concerns through the eyes of the nation. Programs like it serve as a mechanism for moving from the affective to the emotional end of the affect-emotion gap, translating Dewey's unperceived consequences into public sentiments (1991: 131). Although documenting responses to such programming would, again, demand a research project of its own, the repetition of anxious national narratives in public broadcasting reveals the degree to which they

become naturalized as a common story of national character. In my consideration of creators and artists in the next section, we witness how certain subjects who are interpolated to give an account of oneself in terms of the nation must increasingly do so in reference to its anime, manga, and general “pop power.”

### **Content Industries**

In October 2009, The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in conjunction with the Japan Licensing Association organized a trade show, Tokyo Contents Market and Licensing Asia, which assembled creators and licensors in a single venue in hopes of stimulating partnerships between industry and the arts. The program was created within METI’s Creative Contents Division, whose director I interviewed and discussed in chapter 4. In attending the symposium and speaking with a number of creators and licensors, I tried to get a sense of to what degree ideas of soft power informed their thinking.

The METI event took place at Big Site in Odaiba, where some of the biggest conferences, trade shows, and other events take place throughout the year. I paid the equivalent of twelve dollars for a day pass to the two-day event and entered a giant hall only moderately filled with small booths and stations. The hall was split down the middle with creators on one side and licensors and advertisers on the other, including *Dentsū*, the largest advertising company in Japan with a domestic market share of over twenty percent. Participants in the show apply to METI for an invitation, those seeming to have the most market potential selected for entry. The atmosphere was fun, with “soft characters” (*yuru kyara*), animated characters that accompany a majority of Japanese

products, companies, and events, splattered everywhere in bright colors. A few human-size versions of them even walked around the event posing for pictures.

I walked around from booth to booth stopping to speak with many of the participants about their hopes for the event and their thoughts about Japan's content industries. Many of the creators expressed gratitude to the Ministry for sponsoring the event as they have few opportunities in general for exposure to licensors. The creators I spoke with primarily saw themselves as artists and simply wanted to find an economically viable way to pursue their art. As a consequence, few showed explicit interest in the government's investments in pop culture but most all had heard of its new policies and welcomed them.

Matsumoto-san works for a company called Animo Creative Works, a group that produces animated graphics for movies and anime. It also does character design. Without any prompting from me he alluded to the phrase "soft power" in describing his work. Matsumoto-san said he heard the phrase about three to four years ago. On the news he heard it used by a government official and at that point realized that Japan actually had a significant amount of charm (*miriyoku*) abroad. He was happy (*ureshii*) that Japanese pop culture is popular overseas, he said. This reaction, "*ureshii*," was by far the most common answer to the questions I asked about the positive reception of Japanese pop culture abroad. Matsumoto-san compared Japan's case to Korea, saying he hoped the Japanese government would support creators like Korea does. "*Yatto, mitai na kanji*" (It's about time!).

Shimizu-san's company, Mozaiko, produces "ultra low resolution painting" and his work received an award from METI for most creative project. Shimizu-san had a



very cosmopolitan outlook on nationalism and national support for the arts. “I have no interest or pride as a Japanese or in the status of Japan in the world,” he said. “I would only use ‘Japan’ in my work if the name happened to sell, if it had the power to sell it as some kind of representative or evocative image of Japan. But I don’t care if I’m Japanese, Chinese, or American, whatever.” Shimizu-san alluded to how a hundred-yen bag (\$1.20) can sell for 1500 yen (\$18.00) due to the brand. “For Japan, this is the *only* way to compete in the world as China can always win on selling cheap items. Japan only has its contents (*kontentsu*).” Shimizu-san’s point, however, did not seem to extend from a concern about Japan surviving in the world but about him surviving as an entrepreneur. “Perhaps we really need a crisis like a sinking Japan,” he said, alluding to the famous science fiction novel *Japan Sinks (Nihon chinbotsu, Komatsu 1973)*, “in order to be able to evoke what national sentiments exist on non-conscious levels.” Shimizu-san’s point was that he saw little of this nationalist sentiment among his friends and colleagues, and he certainly didn’t cultivate much of it himself. He was familiar with the phrase soft power and interpreted it as an economic strategy, Japan’s “only choice” to compete economically.

Eyes Japan is a computer graphics technology company specializing in virtual reality technology for the medical education industry. They also engage in open source software, 3D printing, computer vision, robotics, motion capture, and a variety of other technologies. The owner, Ken-san, is in his early forties and a high school dropout. He is fond of Arthur C. Clarke and cited to me a favorite quote from him: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” The phrase is printed at the top of all his information pamphlets. His booth was significantly more decorated than the

others, in either a meager attempt at appearing haute or a satirical critique of it. Wine and cheese were served and an inflatable moose-head adorned one of the booth's walls.

In thinking about the relationship of his business to the nation, Ken-san compared his marketing strategy to war, where one can sell weapons to both sides. He quickly tempered the statement though, saying it was kind of a ridiculous analogy. He was disappointed at Japan's system of supporting creators because "there is no copyright protection and no [government] budget, so we can't compete with the U.S. Ken-san has given up on going to a yearly licensing conference in the U.S. that he has attended for the last fourteen years and now just focuses on technology. He said Japanese companies have very nice CG but no budget. He added that the event's sponsorship from the Ministry of Economy was helpful because he had few chances to meet other clients on his own.

The company Shikia-chan does illustrations, character design, flash media, and web design. It is run primarily by a young man, Kobayashi, who was inspired by Hanna Barbera's characters. He had not heard of the phrase "soft power" but said quite brightly, "If we can spread our content through it, why not?" Indeed, he hoped that people abroad would take an interest in Japanese pop culture. Kobayashi-san, like Shimizu-san, showed little interest in economic competition on a national level. He did not feel threatened by the U.S. dominance in media markets like Ken-san did. He had no problem with Hollywood and Disney, saying that animation was a common medium for creation, which is a good thing. "If Japan can participate in that field then great!" He also showed little concern for how anime was perceived overseas. "Animation is just a form of art (*sakuhin*), like Pixar. We should just enjoy it as such."

On average, creators and licensors alike showed little concern for Japan's economic status in the world. For the most part, it only concerned them in so much that it either facilitated or stifled their chance to make a business out of their art. Such findings are consistent with the distinction I drew earlier between registers of economic and national anxiety, the latter being more characteristic of government administrators whose job it is to support Japanese industry at large. For them, economic success and cultural anxiety become fused under a rhetoric of soft power that imagines the former as an anecdote to the latter. For creators, however, art has little to do with national status or prestige.

Although the Contents Market demonstrates a site where government bureaucracy under a soft power logic intervenes administratively into the relationship between culture and economy, there is little evidence to suggest that the ideology affects creators themselves, save Matsumoto-san who seemed, at least to some degree, motivated by the concept of soft power. In general, though, the only site where explicit ideological formations of soft power *do* seem to bear on the work of creators can be seen in the role it plays as interpellator, in Althusser's conceptualization (1972). In the same way that many women officials at the Japan Foundation express uneasiness at the pairing of pop culture, as represented in the cute ambassadors, and national identity to which they feel pressure to respond, some artists feel the pressure to contextualize their work in response to an increase of government interest in the fields of anime, manga, and video games. I spoke about this concern with an emerging Japanese sculptor.

Shigematsu Hisashi (48 years old) is not a well-known artist by most measures but he does have a rising group of patrons from Japan and a few from abroad. He quit his

job as a “salary man” (*sararī man*) for a public relations company eight years ago to devote his attention to art full time. He is gentle and humble but also very outgoing, and when talking about his art and the ideas out of which it comes he becomes more intense. He cares deeply about his art. He also cares deeply about the state of Japanese society and the dreary malaise that characterizes it. His art is what gives this malaise its palpability. He works mostly in clay of a gray ash color. And, in fact, it is this ash color (*hai'iro*) that he thematizes in his work. In the introduction to his “ash” series, he writes:

Gray is something difficult to express  
 As a color close to black it expresses darkness  
 As a color close to white it resembles crushed bones  
 At the base of all the colors there is gray  
 Color expresses happiness, anger, sadness and sorrow  
 But gray expresses nothing  
 Gray has only silence [Shigematsu 2011]

Shigematsu-san sculpts life-size human figures out of clay, the color of his desolate gray ash. One work shows an aging couple seated at a traditional Japanese hearth, the color and texture of their bodies the same as the ash of the fire at their feet. There is also a boy, lying almost flat on his back with just his head propped up by a wall only so much to let him see the TV screen on which he is playing a video game. The color of him and the snowed-out picture on the TV are the same gray. Next in the exhibition is a drunken salary man, the gray color of both his face and suit matching that of the vomit he has just expectorated on the sidewalk. Another figure, a woman, is at a desk with her head slumped over her arm, exhausted and asleep. She holds in her hand an open cell phone, the screen, again, gray.

Shigematsu-san went on to me at length about how he imagined the installation. The dreariness and affectlessness represented in some of the work and expressed in his line, “Gray has only silence,” is not matched by the passion that animates his criticism of contemporary Japanese society. He bemoans the lack of human ties and face-to-face communication in modern society (often referred to as *muen shakai*). He laments the lack of empathy as well and feeling more generally. He also bemoans the lack of historical consciousness among Japanese, expressing admiration to me at an exceptional young girl from Okinawa he saw on TV the previous night advocating the importance of having the older generation of Okinawans with memories of the war pass them on to the younger generation who has no such experience. Shigematsu-san complained that there seems to be no desire in people today to carry on traditions from the past nor impart them to future generations, an element he thought especially lacking in Japan and that distinguished it from other countries that did, in fact, have in their cultures mechanisms for generational transmission. He blamed Japan’s contemporary malaise squarely on a culture of self-contempt resulting from the war, specifically instilled through the public shame of the “International Military Tribunal for the Far East” (*Kyokutō kokusai gunji saiban*). Shigematsu-san writes to me in an email, “From the Meiji Restoration forward Japan had a wonderful culture and traditions. However, since the Tokyo tribunal, all of it, everything seemed to vanish like mist (*unsan mushō*)! What was left was only historical masochism.” Shigematsu-san considers this new Japan born after the Pacific War only sixty-five years old, a short but thoroughly disappointing period compared to the nostalgic portraits through which he imagines its more traditional pasts.

In bringing up Japan's contemporary pop culture, its anime, manga, and the government's branding of it in Cool Japan campaigns, the patient and pleasant Shigematsu-san closed his eyes, seeming to suffer viscerally from his reflections on the topic. After a pause and a deep breath he tells me that he knows all about it and is definitely troubled at what he sees as a steady inundation of all things pop into a more diversely and richly composed field of Japanese art. He mentions Murakami Takashi as an example of how art has become commodified to new degrees in the present. However, this latter point did not trouble him as much as the former one. Artists like Murakami do not infringe upon his own art, which he is happy to pursue, feeling little pressure to yield to particular market demands. But he bemoaned the conflation of Japanese culture with anime and manga, concluding with, "I want to ask these officials, is that really all Japan is?"

Shigematsu-san experiences culture that he labels as Japanese—and of which he considers himself a part—deeply. It affects him viscerally, in a disenchanted and disappointed tone that he experiences, perhaps, just slightly too intensely to be called malaise. The intensity is, after all, irritating enough to compel him to action, to produce art. Like a few of the other artists I spoke with and like a great many of the eclectic groups of people with whom I spoke over drinks at a number of Tokyo's drinking establishments, Shigematsu-san does not take the government's support of pop culture very seriously. He does not feel much connection with it and certainly does not see it as representative of a Japanese culture in which he does, in fact, have some personal investment. In these sites of conflicting representations the state, from Shigematsu-san's perspective, and in Gellner's terms, fails to guarantee a particular image of the nation one

feels affinity for. The result is a sense of alienation from those administrators of state affairs and the labeling of the bureaucrat as “inept” (*dame*), by far the most common epithet used to describe Japanese bureaucrats. It may not be fair to cite Shigematsu-san’s case as an example of a kind of interpellation that happens often enough to call it either ideological inscription or cultural ostracism. Perhaps the most imposing case of interpellation he experienced, in fact, came from me. However, I suspect it actually happens quite often. I suspect this moment of interpellation happens each time he hears a story about Cool Japan or soft power or the government funding of a manga and anime museum in Tokyo. I suspect this because of his response to my question about it: the closed eyes, the deep sigh, and the palpable displeasure his body, voice, and words exhibited. Such a response could not be generated by my question alone: confusion or curiosity rather than discomfort would have been the more likely response. What this indicates is that the particular register of bureaucratic anxiety out of which excitement over soft power is produced has very different effects outside it. Certainly it produces among many subjects a kind of hope similar to that experienced by government administrators. But for many others it is productive of a disconnection between the official and the everyday citizen, even to the extent of eliciting embarrassment. The narratives of nationalism circulated among officials in response to global pressures and perceived at the same time to be both in line with and in the service of Japanese people in general seem to engender even more anxiety over the status of Japanese culture, both within and outside administration. Under conditions like these, state policy does not touch the everyday like a radio dial, tuning each subject to its own interests, but rather like a winch, torquing sentiment against its best intentions.

### **Higher Education**

Bourdieu draws a pithy sketch in the abstract of how the state and its structures of education produce culture at the level of the everyday: “Matters of culture, and in particular the social divisions and hierarchies associated with them, are constituted as such by the actions of the state which, by instituting them both in things and in minds, confers upon the cultural arbitrary all the appearances of the natural” (1993: 55). I recalled this quote over the course of a four-day “field research program” I took part in at a prestigious university in Tokyo. The course syllabus states the following: “Purpose: Some say that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Japan should make its living by its ‘soft’ industries. This year we will visit some sites of anime production, observe the manufacturing process for these products and consider the new support industries that form the back-up for anime production” (Anonymous 2010). The course was run by two professors in the school’s Department of International Relations and invited a number of guest lecturers from the field of anime and manga. The course also included a trip to an anime production studio where participants could observe and speak with artists and producers.

Although the course included a number of Japanese students among its enrollment of around forty, it was overwhelmingly attended by Chinese, Korean, and Southeast Asians, students from countries often identified as composing Japan’s regional economic bloc. Sharing two experiences from the course will illustrate the general assumptions upon which a framework for understanding Japan’s soft industries was constructed. First, a Japanese media studies expert on anime and manga was invited one day to give a lecture to the class. He described the general state of the anime industry in Japan, noting particular economic challenges the industry and its employees faced. By way of



demonstrating what he characterized as the increasingly dilapidated state of the industry, the lecturer showed a slide indicating the growing number of illustrator jobs that were being sent overseas, most specifically to China and South Korea. The purpose of the slide was, first, to demonstrate the increasing loss of profit in the industry to overseas markets through foreign distributors and, second, to show how insufficient capital within the industry resulted in comparatively low wages for Japanese employees. This particular example was just one of many provided in the class to illustrate the current problems facing Japanese industries and to stimulate ideas on how to address and overcome them. The assumption on which these examples rely is, of course, that international students should be concerned with revitalizing exclusively “Japanese” industries. The example of outsourcing within the manga industry is particularly revealing of this assumption as it, somewhat insensitively I felt at the moment, asks Chinese and South Korean students to think how Chinese and South Korean jobs could be returned to Japan. Given that the course was offered by an international relations department and not the school’s economics department or business school, and further, that the notion of a “national” company or industry was left unproblematic despite the company’s clearly multinational composition as well as the increasing number of other production companies that now regularly invest in transnational productions (The joint Chinese, South Korean, and Japanese production of the two-part saga *Red Cliff* [Woo 2010] being an illustrative example), the lecturer’s point seemed to be cast exclusively within a logic of soft power that imagines Japan’s content industries as contributing, or failing to contribute, to the growth of a singularly “Japanese” economy.

The second example I take up from the class more succinctly and plainly illustrates the exclusively nationalist terms in which soft content markets were imagined. The final essay assignment for the course was simple: “Offer your analysis on how Japanese industries can be revitalized for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” Subsequently, Chinese, South Korean, and a host of other students from various countries set out to strategize how Japan could best build its content industries, precisely the approach taken by Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in realizing a strategy of soft power cultivation reduced to economic growth.

The course I took on Japan’s soft industries provides one example for the increasing conflation of industry and higher education in Japan, not a trend limited to but certainly accelerated in a Japan characterized by its close relationship between universities and the government’s Ministry of Education. For example, the department in which I took the fieldwork course I discussed above is part of one of thirteen universities in Japan receiving funding from the Ministry of Education’s Global 30 Project:

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has launched the “Global 30” Project for Establishing Core Universities for Internationalization, for the purpose of selecting universities that will function as core schools for receiving and educating international students. In 2009, thirteen universities were selected. These core universities will play a major role in dramatically boosting the number of international students educated in Japan as well as Japanese students studying abroad.  
[MEXT 2011]

“Internationalization” (*kokusaika*), as Roger Goodman (1990, 2007) has documented extensively, has been a key word for the last two to three decades in Japan, and especially in the field of education. It serves as the ethos guiding, at least in name, of an array of programs opening Japan to the world and making it more competitive internationally. Given Japan’s declining workforce and an increase in an elderly population stretching the

state's pension system to its limits, the inclusion of foreign workers has been proposed as an inevitable if also largely begrudged solution. Increasing the number of foreign students to Japan facilitates this aim:

Japan formulated the 300,000 International Students Plan in July of 2008, with the aim of receiving 300,000 international students by 2020. The "Global 30" Project for Establishing Core Universities for Internationalization is being implemented to realize this goal by selecting measures for the internationalization of universities including the recruitment of international students, along with forming Japan's centers of internationalization. Selected universities will receive prioritized financial assistance of 200 to 400 million yen per annum over the next 5 years. Endowed with this aid, each university will strive to recruit 3000 to 8000 international students. [MEXT 2011]

Resulting from these measures has been the emergence of undergraduate and graduate school programs catering specifically to international students. These schools are in general academically broad, incorporating several disciplines under one department; they have comparatively low admission standards as their goal is to meet international student quotas established by the Ministry's policy; and their makeup in curriculum and faculty reveal a close partnership between government and education. The department in which I took my fieldwork course, for example, included faculty members who had previously worked in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of General Affairs and Telecommunications, and the Japan Foundation. Given this revolving door between bureaucracy and education perhaps I should not have been surprised at a Japanese MA student who upon hearing that I conducted work on soft power came to me with his research proposal for his anthropology *zemi* (seminar), just one of several sections of the school's Department of International Relations. His research was on how to boost Japanese soft power through the training of instructors teaching Japanese to foreign students at Japanese universities. If I was shocked at the

quite literal discursive appropriation of a student's research project by government policy, at least I could rest assured that my own at times seemingly complicit research on soft power was, by comparison, rather objective.

Another school receiving funding from Japan's Global 30 project is Meiji University. In 2011 they established an English track within the School of Global Japanese Studies which will offer students the opportunity to earn all their credits in English toward a Bachelor of Arts degree. The description of the program traces a clean line between soft power and education policy:

This program features a curriculum that concentrates on traditional and modern Japanese culture, as well as Japanese society in the global community, all of which are currently attracting worldwide attention. The Cool Japan.

The school also provides total support for students' careers in Japan or in Japan-related fields. They will have opportunities to learn Japanese as a second language, which will be included in the credits necessary for graduation. They will also have hands-on experience in the real world through workshops, extracurricular activities, and internships. ["Cool Japan Program" 2011]

If in the example of NHK above we witness a transposition of a transnational consciousness into a nationalist one, here there is little transposition at all: government policy is written, unchanged, into an educational curriculum.

In conjunction with this program, the university also set up a "Cool Japan Summer Program." For two weeks in August the university invites twenty international students for a series of lectures, fieldtrips, and workshops among Cool Japan specialists. Lectures include titles such as "Akihabara and Japanese Pop Culture," "Manga Literacy," and "Movie, Music, and Fashion." Fieldtrips visit Akihabara, Harajuku, the Suginami Animation Museum, a manga studio, the comic market in Odaiba, and the Ghibli

Museum (Studio Ghibli is the production studio of director Miyazaki Hayao's widely celebrated animated features).

One could argue that curriculums are one thing, classes another. And in both knowing some of the course instructors and in speaking with them, I am assured that at least some of the content was less celebratory than critical of Cool Japan. But the discursive inscriptions seem obvious, and like the director of MOFA's public policy department made clear, it is the very circulation of Cool Japan that serves as one goal of soft power policies. Analogous to a logic of capital, the more these narratives circulate and establish presence in foreign markets, the more potential they have to affect sentiments of foreign publics—to “sell” so to speak. Meiji University, in fact, is doing much more than simply offering courses on Cool Japan. They have received funding for the installation of a manga archive and museum in Akihabara, the Tokyo International Manga Museum (*Tōkyō kokusai manga toshokan*), which will serve simultaneously as a museum, research center, and tourist attraction (see the project at [www.meiji.ac.jp/manga/](http://www.meiji.ac.jp/manga/)). These are only a few of the programs and sites where Cool Japan is being institutionalized in education.

All this suggests that soft power is not on the wane but is establishing some permanence institutionally. Soft power proves enormously effective in uniting heterogeneous fields of knowledge—economics, academia, tourism—toward its own ends. Its discursive work produces new assemblages of objects, statements, and knowledges. To the degree that soft power continues to become inscribed in administrative structures of education, economy, politics, and the everyday, its assemblages approach the status of “apparatus,” a set of relations with institutional

mechanisms for the increasing naturalization of the soft power discourse and the nationalist consciousness upon which it depends.

### **Reflections on Soft Power in Academia**

What can be concluded from these observations is that state investments in soft power indeed prove effective in appropriating other fields to its interests to the degree that it establishes with them significant degrees of administrative integration. Just like the register of internationally interlinked administrations of national culture that I discussed in chapters 2 and 3 creates an architecture enabling the flow of certain kinds of cultural exchange, the connections bureaucracy establishes between itself and the everyday enable varying kinds of influence and determination. In METI's Tokyo Contents Market these lines of connection prove relatively weak, not likely to encourage creators to embrace soft power with much resolve. And in fact, in artists like Shigematsu-san, it appears to alienate rather than appropriate: still a consequence of connection but not one desired by soft power administrators. The partnership of government and media seen in NHK World and the program "Cool Japan" reveals forms of integration that facilitate widespread circulation. But its effects are as yet unclear, showing again equal potential to alienate and appropriate. Where bureaucracy seems to activate soft power's most productive connections with the everyday seems to be in higher education, where state money can be directly invested in universities serving a growing number of young students interested in popular culture. Observing these movements of soft power through academia and higher education is simultaneously to reflect on my own complicity with them.

The globalization of Japanese pop culture and the government's own creative investments in it have sparked an enthusiastic response from academia. Japanese and, increasingly, Korean pop culture are hot topics in East Asian studies and anthropology. There are a plethora of conferences on the subject, some even funded by the Japan Foundation and other government sources. Most significantly, there has been an explosive demand for courses on Japanese pop culture. If the trend were not obvious enough based solely on my encounter with international students in Japan, many academics working in and on East Asia have offered other evidence, if anecdotal, citing the vast increase of students who choose to study Japan out of an interest in anime, manga, or some other form of pop culture. Professor of Comparative Media Studies at MIT, Ian Condry, provides an entirely exemplary account of these observations:

I felt like most of my classmates in Japanese language at Harvard in the mid-1980s were interested in Japan as a business opportunity (i.e., many were Econ majors in my cohort). Now, my sense is that students come to classes on Japan because they were introduced to the country through popular culture, especially manga, anime, and games. Of course, there is always a percentage (10-20% perhaps) of my classes where students come to Japan through other interests: martial arts, literature, family connections, and so on.

Condry suggests, somewhat casually, that on average eighty percent of the students in his courses on Japan enroll out of an interest in Japanese pop culture. While my own decision to study Japan came more exclusively from an interest in the language, I was exposed to popular media in Japan through courses like the kind Condry teaches and, subsequently, I developed an interest in the consumption of popular Japanese literature. Much of my academic training and the dissertation I currently write are, thus, entirely a product of this assemblage between economic policy, soft power ideology, and education, sustained and made coherent by a particular set of anxious sentiments over the status of

the Japanese nation. I have been invited to speak at conferences on Japanese pop culture in Japan; the few publication opportunities I've had were also solicited by scholars working on popular culture; and without a doubt, the most likely employment opportunities I will have upon graduation will depend upon my experience researching Japanese popular culture, and it will also most likely be located in Japan, where an increase in classes designed to both meet students' needs and increase university foreign enrollment (and revenue) will put someone who has researched Japan's pop culture in demand. As can be predicted, however, the cycle is self-perpetuating and as the number of classes increase, so too do the number of researchers capable of teaching them. Soft power is an inevitable theme of such courses. And to the degree that more academics like myself owe their livelihood to tracing its movement, it promises to become even more entrenched in culture.

This flow of soft power, its ability to move through culture like an anxious tornado, collecting and assembling new constellations of power, language, policy, and aesthetic production, has produced a particular anxiety even in me. I have stumbled through research self-consciously concerned about being labeled an "anime person" or "pop culture" person. Chalk it up to personal pride, to a desire for academic originality and distinction, or even to a simple and stereotypical sort of American individualism. Whatever it is, it is uncomfortable, anxious—not the anxiety of my bureaucratic interlocutors but certainly enabled through its integration in soft power policies. This distinction is important to recognize. It shows how a powerfully productive pairing of anxiety and hope in government administration is able to spawn other kinds of anxiety. So although the anxiety found among political elites is not the same as NHK's or Ivy's



culturally pervasive anxiety, discourses like soft power prove able to elicit and even produce other anxieties through its refraction in different registers of social life. Such are the predictable consequences of globalization's uneven arrangements of interconnectedness.

Perhaps Sianne Ngai is right and anxiety is our age's characteristic mode of intellectual inquiry. From a more optimistic perspective, though, I might reflect on my own anxiety as a mark of ethnographic progress: I could argue that in so much that ethnography has once again laid bare both the fundamental contingency of culture and the unavoidable complicity of cultural inquiry it has accomplished something anthropological. We should expect the process to produce some existential discomfort, which, of course, is exactly what attracted me to anthropology in the first place. Hopefully, this personal anxiety has also been productive, enabling a mode of inquiry that in seeking to understand itself must necessarily work to describe the cultural conditions that produced it. Certainly it is no coincidence that anxiety became a dominant theme of my research. This is just one of the unavoidable but not entirely unwelcome products of ethnography's complicity. It is typical of a dialogic mode of anthropology I was attracted to as an undergraduate student and am indebted to as a graduate student. I hope admitting and, at times, even cultivating such complicity has yielded a richer description of soft power than denying it might have otherwise accomplished.

In my concluding chapter to the dissertation I entertain alternatives to a shared anxiety operating through national registers. I submit my speculation and imagination as a potentially legitimate mode of cultural critique in the tradition but not the letter of

Marcus and Fischer's own reflections on it (1986). Anthropology stimulates imagination, but imagination itself, like all things, operates through culture; thus, in the last chapter, I explore the anthropologist's empirically inspired speculations on the future as an artifact of ethnographic exchange between self and other.

## Chapter Nine

**Murakami Haruki and Alternative Futures of Affect:****Anthropology as Speculation**

So far I have described how soft power imagines a particular Japanese future that entrenches affects of cultural anxiety in the present. In this final chapter I want to imagine an alternative future that does not. I do this not to perform a kind of anthropological therapy, nor to politicize ethnography by extrapolating potentially productive policy positions from my observations;<sup>31</sup> rather, I want to imagine an alternative anthropological future as method.<sup>32</sup> Doing so allows two things. First, it enables an engagement with national culture in affective rather than exclusively narrative terms. In short, by looking at some artifacts from my fieldwork that suggest this might already be happening, I want to suggest that ethical projects of re-creation in terms of how subjects relate to the nation might be effected through work that operates on the self's affective responses to persistent, fixed narratives of the nation rather than on the rhetorical recomposition of those narratives themselves. Second, imagining an alternative anthropological future as method posits reasoned speculation as ethnographic data, similar to how literature—imagined other worlds—can be made into an ethnographic object evidencing and reflexively describing the cultural conditions that give rise to it. And, in fact, I take literature as a primary object of analysis in this last chapter. By thinking through the literature and readers' reflections on author Murakami Haruki, I offer my own imaginations of an alternative way of experiencing Japaneseness

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<sup>31</sup> I am reminded of Ernest Renan's playful comment on a related notion: "I like ethnography very much, and find it a peculiarly interesting science. But as I wish it to be free, I do not wish it to be applied to politics" (1995: 150).

<sup>32</sup> The idea of constructing imagination as method alludes and is indebted to Hirokazu Miyazaki's theoretical consideration of hope as method (2004).

as a reflexive exercise that demonstrates how literature functions as cultural object, stimulating different ways of imagining and feeling that become part of a new ethnographic record rooted not in a Japanese or American culture but in an intersubjective dialogue that moves through frames of both.

In an English conversation class I teach for some staff and professors at the University of Tokyo, the day's workbook exercise called for each student to list three possible "heroes" for a mock magazine that would feature the "World's Hero of 2010." I also participated in the exercise and feeling it salutary to include a Japanese nominee in my list of three, I chose the popular author Murakami Haruki. In explanation of my choice I suggested that Murakami wrote narratives of such a cosmopolitan character that people from almost any nation could appreciate it. I added, as a special note, and as deferentially as possible, that it might be a particularly suitable choice for Japanese people as his stories provided a way of thinking about one's "Japanese" identity in similarly cosmopolitan and less culturally essentialist ways. Despite the directions of the assignment calling for nominees for a "global" hero, perhaps I was not surprised that eight out of the nine nominees submitted by the Japanese students were, themselves, Japanese, including the only moderately known sociologist, Satō Kaoru, and the sixteenth century warlord credited with instigating the unification of Japan, Oda Nobunaga (the remaining nominee, incidentally, and submitted by the only woman in the group, was John F. Kennedy). If, however, I was not surprised at this, I *was* surprised that three out of the four students in the class also selected Murakami as a nominee.

In one student's explanation for his nomination I found perhaps the best description of the affective quality of Murakami's work. In response to another participant who suggested that upon reading Murakami one wanted to *keep* reading, the student offered the following: "I don't *want* to keep reading his books. But when I read his stories I'm left with this kind of strange feeling. I don't really understand what's happening in the story but somehow I'm attracted to it." He elaborated, "Many authors can write a story that makes you feel very strongly one way or another, but it's very difficult to write a story that leaves you with just such a strange feeling that compels you to read more."

Murakami seems to affect readers without them being able to convey exactly how or why. That this is so even with university professors and experts in cultural administration, articulate and intelligent individuals who read and discuss literature for pleasure, makes this fact especially illustrative of how affect works. Granted Murakami's novels are characterized much more by a uniqueness of style than an originality of narrative, perhaps making it difficult for fans to explain precisely why they like him, still, the inability to articulate Murakami's appeal in the face of such an enormous consensus on his popularity is strange. The marketing campaign launched by the publisher Shinchōsha for the release of his newest novel in 2009 displayed nothing more than the title, *1Q84*, with a large green "Q" filling up the cover of the poster, the same as the book cover. There was no description of the story, not even a catch phrase or slogan. The name Murakami alone accounted for the over 650,000 copies which were purchased in the first week by fans who had no idea what kind of story they were reading. After asking a number of friends who had recently read the first two installments what kind of

story it was, they were again at a loss to say. “It’s kind of about religion,” one said. “I didn’t really understand the story,” said another. “It doesn’t really have an ending,” claimed a third, “and I heard Murakami decided to write an additional volume to the story” he added.

At one point in graduate school I had contemplated doing a research project on fans of Murakami. I was interested in how they took his narratives and incorporated them into individual practices of self-development and ethical growth, a kind of case study for Foucault’s “technologies of the self,” Murakami’s novels a sort of readymade stand in for the *hupomnēmata* (“individual notebooks” or “guides for conduct”) of Foucault’s ancient Greece (Foucault 1997: 209). Although there were a number of reasons I did not pursue the project, one significant one was the plethora of diverse answers I got upon asking the admittedly naive question, “Why do you like Murakami?” Some liked Murakami’s protagonist “Boku”; some liked the mysterious and otherworldly elements of his stories, what literary critics call “magical realism”; others liked his short and direct style. Many people told me they liked the “feeling” (*kimochi*) of his stories. But the answer I received the most was, “*nan to naku suki*” (somehow, I just like him). How does one talk about Murakami’s somewhat esoteric power to leave people moderately affected, or more accurately, significantly affected with a moderate tone?

I argue that it is exactly this low to medium register of confident, alluring affectivity that seems to attract people to his work and that can be mobilized in crafting an alternative, healthy relationship between self and state. Murakami’s literature is often described as cool and detached but, somehow, enticing, always just slightly pushing the reader to seek out something significant in the text, or in themselves. This is also the

quality that characterizes Murakami's protagonists. They are often thirty-something-year-old males, single, engaged in some kind of monotonous but intellectual work, such as translation. They are cool, sometimes witty, but more often just isolated and detached, happy to stay at home enjoying homemade pasta with cans of beer. They are not impassioned, single-minded heroes but are more modest, seeking only moderately energetic escapes and engaging in only half-inspired protests against imposing social structures. Yet, it is precisely through this low-level affectivity that such characters find their strength. While maintaining only just enough anxiety to push them forward in their search for something other, they cultivate a kind of affective disinterest that proves productive in their search and in their resistance to seemingly always lurking, powerful and somewhat ominous entities.

Without a doubt it is this disinterested and melancholic affective tone that attracts many readers to Murakami. It is a tone that resonates with many of the dwellers of highly developed, late capitalist urban centers: New York, London, Seoul, Tokyo. Far more often lauded for his style than his narrative, his ability to capture the mood of the urban everyday while offering subtle glimpses of hope for something slightly better and somewhat more satisfying appeals to readers. The satisfaction at this affective resonance of mood between author and reader explains much of the difficulty readers seem to encounter when trying to describe the source of their admiration.

In contrast to Murakami's narratives, those of soft power and Cool Japan seem to strike a much more dissonant chord with many. It does, of course, seem to resonate with a number of politicians, officials, and bureaucrats whose sense of self is far more invested in the prestige of the nation in relation to its global competitors. More than resonate,

actually, it excites: one can run away with it. And politicians and other nationalists do—to such an extent, in fact, that soft power begins to circulate on an affective wave of expectant energy optimistic enough to render negligible any evidence suggesting its hopes are misplaced. But for many subjects, several of which I discussed in the previous chapter, the soft power rhetoric just feels uncomfortable. Some for whom it feels this way, like the Japan Foundation’s Ogoura-san for example, even occupy those national bureaucracies in which it is sustained. Cute ambassadors in their short skirts and cute smiles provoke an awkward uneasiness; and sometimes, depending on the degree to which the element of *kawaii* is enhanced, the sensation can seem outright sinister (the art of Nara Yoshitomo with its cigarette-toting, slyly scowling adolescents explores this theme). These uneasy, imposing feelings associated with powerful national organizations are captured by Murakami in figures like the “boss” (*bossu*) of *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982) or the “system” (*shisutemu*) of his *Hard Boiled Wonderland* (1991). They are foreboding figures from which one seeks escape but often cannot because they are too large, too complex, and too well integrated into those structures of the social world in which one, even in formulating projects of resistance, is implicated.

There is perhaps no better real-life enactment of this play of appropriation and resistance than in the Japan Foundation’s organization of a 2006 symposium on Murakami Haruki’s literature. In the symposium’s organization we see how the logic of nation branding extends the reach of the state into popular culture and the everyday, working to transform even the most cosmopolitan and international of writers into the quintessential Japanese author. The Japan Foundation symposium was titled, “‘A Wild Haruki Chase’: How the World is Reading and Translating Murakami” (*Haruki o meguru*



*bōken: sekai wa Murakami bungaku o dō yomu ka*). The purpose of the conference was, in the words of the Foundation, “to search for the unknown appeal of Murakami’s literature by comparing the ‘Haruki boom’ in each country. Focusing on the novels and the translations of one of the most popular contemporary novelists in the world, it is aimed at exploring the secret of this Murakami boom” (Japan Foundation 2006). The symposium represents the culmination of Murakami’s shifting status within Japan. With the increased political investment of national administrations in the field of culture, the symposium marks the reclamation of Murakami Haruki, once the quintessential cosmopolitan, un-Japanese author, as the representative par excellence of contemporary Japanese literature.

Ironic in this particular appropriation is precisely this status Murakami held in his early career as the most Americanized, international, and resolutely un-Japanese writer as determined by the Japanese *bundan* (literary establishment). The mouthpiece for the establishment as it stood in the late 1980s and early 90s was the Nobel Prize laureate Ōe Kenzaburō, who stated, “Murakami Haruki writes in Japanese, but his writing is not really Japanese...I suspect that this sort of style is not really Japanese literature” (cited in Strecher 1990: 374). Ōe and other old guard critics relegated Murakami to the realm of *taishū bungaku* (mass or pop literature). Ōe further lamented, “I believe that any future resuscitation of *jūnbungaku* (pure literature) will be possible only if ways are found to fill in the wide gap that exists between Murakami and pre-1970 postwar literature” (1989: 200). Murakami’s cosmopolitanism provoked a nostalgic response from the old guard who defended pure literature on the grounds of its Japaneseness. Murakami represented the popular, and the popular was Western, not Japanese.

With the elevation of the popular to political in the government's Cool Japan campaigns, however, Murakami's status has grown. Like the trajectory many other pop culture products in Japan have taken, his work became popular at home only after securing its status as important literature abroad. Such a process indicates the degree to which Japan's field of literary production has steadily shifted to the heteronomous pole of literary evaluation, in Bourdieu's terms (1993), increasingly inundated by new critics more open to Western standards and theories of literary taste. Ōe bemoaned this trend:

This group of young intellectuals is composed of critics, playwrights, screenwriters, and introducers of new and diverse literary theories from America and Europe. It even includes writers whose works are not considered to be in the realm of *jūnbungaku* as well as journalists in various fields and a group who nowadays in our country enjoy the greatest popularity among the younger generation: the copywriters of commercial messages. One might also add almost all the "cultural heroes" of today's grotesquely bloated consumer society in Japan. [1989: 199]

Ōe's comment indicates the degree to which ideologies of cultural difference determine standards of literary production. For him, Western literary theory has no bearing on a Japanese literature that is crafted out of different aesthetic sensibilities. The application of Western theory was equivalent to nothing short of cultural imperialism. Ōe lumped Murakami together with these categorically un-Japanese literary figures.

Such pressure from an establishment that no doubt shaped Murakami's early desire to write led to a predictable animosity in the writer. In an interview Murakami says, "The literary establishment was nothing but a pain for me, which is why I have stayed by myself, writing my novels. This is also why I went off to Europe for three years, and after a year in Japan, went to live in America for a little over four years" (Rubin 2002: 47). Out of such alienation, themes of "escape" became prominent in Murakami's literature and interviews. Late in his career, Murakami reflected on this

alienation: “All I could think about when I began writing fiction in my youth was how to run as far as I could from the ‘Japanese condition.’ I wanted to distance myself as much as possible from the curse of Japanese” (cited in Rubin 2002: 47). Looking back, Murakami saw himself as a rebel and outcast from the start; although, the submission of his first novel to the rather mainstream literary magazine *Gunzō* suggests that such alienation might have grown out of a desire for mainstream recognition from the establishment more so than his comments here suggest. Nonetheless, Murakami increasingly saw himself as an author isolated and alienated from Japan and he developed a certain antagonism toward what he saw as mainstream Japanese society. Such antagonism is demonstrated in Murakami’s declination to participate in the Japan Foundation’s symposium on his work.

Murakami’s leeriness of the symposium was no doubt born of this political appropriation of a literary project he saw as always counter and consistently resistant to the Japanese mainstream, in which he identified an institutionalized power he was on principle opposed to. This theme permeates his literature, perhaps most overtly in his novel *A Wild Sheep Chase* in which his vulnerable protagonist, *Boku* (“I” or “me”), finds himself the accidental enemy of a large, malevolent, right-wing organization. It is more explicitly addressed in his acceptance speech for the 2009 Jerusalem Prize. In a rare public appearance by the author, he offered a less-than subtle condemnation of the state’s campaign in Gaza:

A fair number of people advised me not to come here to accept the Jerusalem Prize. Some even warned me they would instigate a boycott of my books if I came... Finally, however, after careful consideration, I made up my mind to come here... Please do, however, allow me to deliver one very personal message. It is something that I always keep in mind while I am writing fiction. I have never gone so far as to write it on a piece of

paper and paste it to the wall: Rather, it is carved into the wall of my mind, and it goes something like this:

"Between a high, solid wall and an egg that breaks against it, I will always stand on the side of the egg."

Yes, no matter how right the wall may be and how wrong the egg, I will stand with the egg. Someone else will have to decide what is right and what is wrong; perhaps time or history will decide. If there were a novelist who, for whatever reason, wrote works standing with the wall, of what value would such works be? [Murakami 2009]

Murakami's metaphor, in which he aligns himself always with the "egg" against the "wall" explains both his antagonism toward the Japanese government and mainstream society in general and his disinterest in the Japan Foundation's symposium in particular. Interestingly enough, this speech has gained wide popularity in Japan and I encountered officials who similarly expressed admiration for it. That an official in Japanese cultural administrations might show sympathy for the egg, or, even further, align himself with it against a "system" he himself represents is neither ironic nor contradictory. It is, rather, exemplary of an inevitable and obligatory nationalism that recognizes that despite one's uneasy ambivalence toward discourses of the nation, one cannot deny one's subjectivity as indebted to it, or, more fundamentally, as a piece of it.

The low-level affectivity that characterizes my Japan Foundation colleagues' national sentiment, and obligatory nationalism in general, resonates with Murakami's literature. Such a position taking is not entirely pessimistic. There is an optimism to be found in that "strange feeling" permeating Murakami's work and identified by my English student. For those subjects engaged in projects that in some form or another aim to establish a healthy distance from the state, it serves as a useful tempering of the more impassioned rhetorics of nationalism that dominate the soft power discourse, if not political discourse in general today. In its mood of disinterestedness, it offers at the very

least a moderate space of refuge within the dominant and continually recycled national narratives of “Japan as number one,” “Japan as economic giant,” or, today, “Japan as soft power superpower.”

At sixty-one, Murakami has now made Japan his permanent home. He continues to write voraciously, motivated perhaps by this unresolved desire for escape and difference, but he seems also to have forfeited the possibility of complete escape. In another interview he provides what I think is an ideal articulation of the conflicted position in which many subjects in Japan, including my Japan Foundation colleagues, find themselves:

No matter how much of an independent individual I am, and even though I think I live a life unrelated to Japanese literature, day after day I have to squarely face up to the objective reality that I am a Japanese writer who writes novels in Japanese. [cited in Seats 2006: 65]

Drawing an analogy between the establishment of Japanese literature and the rhetorics of soft power and nation branding, Murakami’s comment is ideal for thinking through how the nation-state affects many of the discourses through which subjects growing up and living in Japan inevitably make sense of their lives. As the Cool Japan discourse circulates, propelled by powerful state institutions and its national coffers, subjects are increasingly required to give an account of themselves in relation to it. While subjects like Sakurai-san, government officials, and some content producers who prove to benefit from it might embrace the image of a cool Japan, for many others it is seen as something imposed from above, something that feels uneasy, something to be wary of and resisted. Murakami’s literature in its low-level but productive affective disinterestedness proves effective as one form of this resistance. It is not a resistance materialized in conscious

political projects of opposition and refusal but one simply confirmed and legitimated in the feelings of affinity that many readers of Murakami find in his work. For them, Murakami's narratives capture the complex reality of their social worlds more so than do those of soft power and Cool Japan. They do so not through stories that more accurately represent that world but through a style that affects in a way similar to how the realities of their urban worlds do. The affective resonance they find in his work and the strange attraction they feel to keep reading confirm its authenticity. His works in this way "speak" to them. Soft power does not. It feels uneasy and discordant, less true.

As if it were not already obvious, I share some affinity with those who feel displaced, threatened, or simply uneasy in the face of soft power's normalization. I was drawn to them in fieldwork and, precisely on account of it, feel more confident in my depiction of their feelings and sensibilities. The majority of my interlocutors, however, were those more excited about soft power's potential than cynical of it. Although I could understand their position, I did not ultimately share their affective energies. No transmission there. And given affect's important role in sense making as demonstrated by Damasio (1994), this no doubt adversely affected my ability to both understand and faithfully represent their feelings. I would be remiss if I did not admit reservations at this in closing. However, that said, I am also confident that these concluding ruminations on alternative future figures of imagining and feeling Japan are a product of conversations with both groups of interlocutors and would engage them with equal interest. What convinces me of this is an interesting convergence I found between how some of my interlocutors as cultural administrators and how I as anthropologist think through the notion of "Japanese culture." Bourdieu's insight that I quoted earlier helps frame my

explanation of this convergence: “matters of culture, and in particular the social divisions and hierarchies associated with them, are constituted as such by the actions of the state which, by instituting them both in things and in minds, confers upon the cultural arbitrary all the appearances of the natural” (1993: 55). Despite the attempts of both Japan Foundation officials and anthropologists—and writers of literature at that—to find alternative frameworks to Japanese culture through which to think about the nature of the social more deeply, in its inundation of both cultural diplomacy and academia alike, the increasing naturalization of soft power proves to have similarly naturalizing effects on notions of “Japanese culture.” Although I have attempted to locate anthropological critique outside the confines of a uniformly constructed Japanese culture, it is a concept to which I am both historically and personally indebted and, like many of my interlocutors, unlikely in the near future to escape, for better and for worse.

### Postscript

On March 11, 2011 a moving earth in northern Japan rattled and in many cases quite plainly destroyed both physical and social worlds. On the day of writing this the death toll climbed above 10,000 and with nearly 15,000 still missing is sure to climb even higher. Ironically, or perhaps appropriately, a dissertation dedicating 250 pages of words to the elucidation of feeling reaches its limits at destruction of this magnitude. Images and affects will have to stand alone as image and affect. That is fine. No one is in the mood to politicize just yet anyway. Moreover, this dissertation provides neither the context nor the levity to attempt accounts of this kind of loss. No eulogy here. Grieving—and there is much of it—will be done elsewhere.

What I might more conservatively offer here is an extension of this dissertation's conclusion in its mode of imagining possible affective futures based on present ethnographic observations. The future imagined in the final chapter is, in all honesty, not likely to pass. If a long-standing, low-level anxiety characterized many of the national narratives circulating among Japan's bureaucratic elites, the Tōhoku earthquake ruptured this, punctuating history with a fist. Although it is unclear exactly how prominent it will come to fix itself in memory, the event will no doubt find a place for itself alongside its national-historical kin: the Kantō Earthquake of 1923, the Pacific War, the collapse of the bubble economy, and the Hanshin earthquake and sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway, both in 1995. Nationhood, and especially the sort that has found its way into Japanese officialdom, proves effectively stoked by grand, romantic responses to overwhelming tragedies like these. Given the scale of the recent string of disasters—earthquake, tsunami, leaking radiation—how could one expect anything less?



We want to feel deeply in these moments, sentiment elicited far more readily by already established and celebrated scripts of disaster and regeneration than by those of intellectual skepticism and hedging. What can already be witnessed as emerging from the quake's aftermath, in fact, is precisely this resurgence of Japan's classic national tropes of collective determination in the face of disaster. How long it will last is unknown, but in so much that the loss from the quake is experienced intimately as tragedy and suffering, it will likely find its potential for transformation in these long-tested stories of national regeneration and hope.

Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself or am too immediately affected by the moment, but Japan's soft power and pop culture futures seem at present, like many things, precarious. Should soft power be seen to come and go like so many a national fad, I might rest just slightly more intellectually reassured knowing that the workings of the affect-emotion gap that sustained it will surely not. In fact, in this environment of anxious tension more communally shared and intensely suffered than any moment since World War II, as Prime Minister Kan Naoto has claimed, one expects that both sides of it might appropriate and feed the other to impressively transformative ends. For those of us deeply invested in and affected by the moment, we must, I think, also recognize in it a vulnerability, an increased susceptibility to what narratives might emerge to either push or pull us away. Capturing these affective moments, vulnerabilities, and proclivities to change in prose remains a challenge for ethnographies of affect, and in the face of such affective intensity one feels compelled to mobilize more fictional, more personal, and more experimental poetics to do so, whether in search of representation or just plain catharsis.

What all of this reveals, I think, is not only anthropology's role in understanding feeling but in feeling's role in affecting anthropology. Moments of intellectual rupture like these unveil their mutual determination and importance. While one may feel discomforted, slightly nauseous even, at the notion of anthropologizing when so poignantly and personally affected by one's feelings, one might also find solace in admitting that our anthropology has never nor has it ever been capable of doing otherwise. It was always already an affective enterprise. And if the deep and personal engagement which characterizes ethnographic inquiry rebounds hurtfully where our poetics seem to so plainly fail our informants, it does so because ethnography, as much as it ever can, has hit its mark. Here, where words prove wanting for anthropologist and informant alike, a shared silence seems like the most authentic account of culture one could offer.

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