

connections with "Asia" are tenaciously pervaded by a perceived temporal lag between Japan and the rest of Asia, a lag which prevents the Japanese from meeting the latter on equal terms, they are nevertheless becoming more complicated and ambivalent in ever-increasing transnational popular culture flows in East and Southeast Asia.

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Recentering Globalization:

Popular Culture & Japanese

Transnationalism

1

Taking "Japanization" seriously:

Cultural globalization reconsidered

No one would deny Japan's status as a major economic power. While its power has been relatively undermined by a prolonged economic and financial slump since the early 1990s, this only serves to highlight Japan's tremendous economic influence in the world, particularly in Asia. As Japan has become the second biggest economic power in the world, its external influence has come to be discussed in terms of the export of Japanese management and industrial relations techniques and Japanese organizational cultures (e.g., Bratton 1992; Oliver and Wilkinson 1992; Thome and McAuley 1992; Elger and Smith 1994). Such discourses started in the 1970s, when many Western scholars advocated that the West should learn lessons from the Japanese economic success (e.g., Dore 1973; Vogel 1979). Although not exclusively representing post-Fordism, "Japanization" of industrial relations and organizational cultures was discussed specifically in the search for post-Fordist industrial models, whereby "Toyotism" for example, attracted much attention as a more flexible production system than Fordism (Lash and Urry 1994; Dohse, Jurgens, and Malsch 1985; Waters 1995, 82-85).

However, it was not until the late 1980s that the significance of Japan in the global culture market began attracting wider international academic and media attention. It was a time when Sony and Matsushita were buying out Hollywood film studios and the animation film *Akira* was a hit in the Western markets. In the English-language world, many books and articles have been published on Japanese animation, computer games, and the Japanese advance on Hollywood since that time (e.g., *Mediamatic* 1991; Mark 1991, 1994; Morley and Robins 1995; Schodt 1983, 1996; Levi 1996). The Sony Walkman has even been chosen for analysis, as the most appropriate example of a global cultural product, by a British Open University cultural studies textbook, itself prepared for global distribution (du Gay et al. 1997).

Certainly, the emergence of such discourses on the spread of Japanese cultural products in the world reflects the fact that Japanese media industries and cultural forms are playing a substantial role in global cultural flows. It seems that Japanese cultural power may finally match its economic dominance. Yet crucial questions remain unanswered: what kind of cultural power (if any) is conferred on Japan? and how similar or different is it from American cultural hegemony? In this chapter, I will present a theoretical consideration of the recent rise in Japanese cultural exports and will explore how that rise might be situated within the study of cultural globalization. Rather than seeing an easy comparison between Japanese cultural exports and "Americanization," or dismissing this phenomenon as merely frivolous, I will instead suggest that it offers some new and significant insights into understanding the decentered nature of transnational cultural power.

Culturally "odorless" commodities

Even if the cultural dimensions of Japan's global influence have not been widely discussed until recently, this does not mean that Japan did not have any cultural impact before then. Rather, the hitherto assumption of Japan's lack of cultural impact testifies to a discrepancy between actual cultural influence and perceived cultural presence. The cultural impact of a particular commodity is not necessarily experienced in terms of the cultural image of the exporting nation. For example, in the realm of audiovisual commodities, there is no doubt that Japan has been a dominant exporter of consumer technologies as well as animation and computer games. From VCRs, computer games, karaoke machines, and the Walkman, to the more recent appearance of digital video cameras, the prevalence of Japanese consumer electronics in the global marketplace is overwhelming. This development has been based upon the adage "First for consumers," expressed by Ibuka Masaru, founder of the Sony Corporation (quoted in Lardner 1987, 38). After the Second World War, freed from the obligation to devote its research and development energy to military purposes, and with the support of the Japanese government, the Japanese electronics industry successfully inverted the idea of "scientific or military research first." Instead, technological development would henceforth be propelled by consumer electronics (Forester 1993, 4).

Japanese consumer technologies certainly have had a tremendous impact on our everyday life, an impact which is, in a sense, more profound than that

of Hollywood films. To use Jody Berland's (1992) term, these are "cultural technologies" that mediate between texts, spaces, and audiences. New cultural technologies open new possibilities for the consumption of media texts by audiences. In turn, by promoting the market-driven privatization of consumer needs and desires, new cultural technologies open up new ways for capital to accommodate itself to the emergent communication space in the service of individual consumer sovereignty. For example, VCRs have facilitated the transnational flow of videotape-recorded programs through both legal channels and illegal piracy. This has given consumers, especially those in developing countries whose appetites for information and entertainment have not been satisfied, access to diverse programs which have been officially banned. In response, governments have changed their policies from rigid restrictions on the flow of information and entertainment to more open, market-oriented controls—for example, the privatization of TV channels (Ganley and Ganley 1987; Boyd, Straubhaar, and Lent 1989; O'Regan 1991). On the whole, this development has consequently encouraged global centralization of the distribution and production of software, as well as facilitating the further spread of American software. Despite the fear of profits being skimmed off by piracy, VCRs have helped Hollywood open up new markets and find ways of exploiting new technologies through video rental and export of TV programs to newly privatized channels (see Gomery 1988; O'Regan 1992).

At the level of the consumer, Japanese electronic technologies have promoted strongly what Raymond Williams (1990, 26) has called "mobile privatization." These consumer technologies give people greater choice and mobility in their media consumption activities in domestic, private spaces. For example, while TV and radio made it possible for individuals in their own living rooms to experience and connect with what was happening in remote places, the Sony Walkman conversely promoted the intrusion of private media into public spaces. VCRs allowed people to "time shift"—to record TV programs and watch them at a later, more suitable time. It is an interesting question why such individualistic, private technologies have been developed and have flourished in a supposedly group-oriented society such as Japan. Kogawa (1984, 1988) coined the term "electronic individualism" to characterize Japanese social relations and argued that Japanese collectivity is increasingly based upon electronic communication and therefore becoming more precarious. Although Kogawa views the contemporary Japanese situation somewhat pessimistically, he points out that it offers the dual possi-

bilities of the emancipation of individuals via technologies and, alternatively, the sophisticated control of individuals. Indeed, as Chambers argues, the consumption of one of the most successful Japanese cultural technologies of the past decades—the Sony Walkman—is an ambivalent “cultural activity” that sways between “autonomy and autism” (1990, 2). Such an activity can be seen as a form of escapism that makes individuals feel a sense of atomized freedom from the constraints of a rigidly controlled society. It also has the possibility of substituting a privatized “micro-narrative” for collective “grand-narratives” (3). Speaking of the Chinese, Chow (1993, 398) argues that listening to a Walkman is “a silent sabotage of the technology of collectivization” (for a more thorough analysis of the Walkman, see du Gay et al. 1997).

Despite the profound influence of Japanese consumer technologies on the cultural activities of our everyday life, they have tended not to be talked about in terms of a Japanese cultural presence. Hoskins and Mirus (1988) employ the notion of “cultural discount” to explain the fact that even though certain Japanese films and literature have had a Western following, the outflow of Japanese popular cultural products (particularly to Western countries) has been disproportionately small. Hoskins and Mirus describe “cultural discount” as occurring when “a particular program rooted in one culture and thus attractive in that environment will have a diminished appeal elsewhere as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioral patterns of the material in question” (500). Cultural prestige, Western hegemony, the universal appeal of American popular culture, and the prevalence of the English language are no doubt advantageous to Hollywood. By contrast, Japanese language is not widely spoken outside Japan and Japan is supposedly obsessed with its own cultural uniqueness. Given the high cultural discount of Japanese films and TV programs, Hoskins and Mirus argue, Japanese cultural export tends to be limited to “culturally neutral” consumer technologies, whose country of origin has nothing to do with “the way [that they work] and the satisfaction [that a consumer] obtains from usage” (503).

Apparently, the notion of “cultural discount” does not satisfactorily explain a consumer’s cultural preference for audiovisual media texts such as TV programs. Foreign programs, for example, can be seen as more attractive because they are “exotic,” “different,” or less “boring.” The cultural difference embodied in foreign products can also be seen as less of a threat to local

culture precisely because the imported products are conceived as “foreign,” while those originating from culturally proximate countries might be perceived as more threatening (O’Regan 1992). The legacy of Japanese imperialism in Asia is a case in point. More importantly, Hoskins and Mirus’s argument is highly West-centric. They are not aware that Japanese TV programs and popular music have been exported to East and Southeast Asia, if rarely to Europe or North America, though we also should be cautious not to mechanically explain this trend by employing “cultural discount” or “culturally proximity” in an essentialist manner (see Straubhaar 1991). I will return to this question in later chapters. For the moment, though, I will elaborate more on Hoskins and Mirus’s discussion of the nature of Japan’s major cultural export to the world (including Western markets).

Notwithstanding the argument about Japanese cultural export outlined above, the term “culturally neutral” seems misleading, too. The influence of cultural products on everyday life, as we have seen, cannot be culturally neutral. Any product has the cultural imprint of the producing country, even if it is not recognized as such. I would suggest that the major audiovisual products Japan exports could be better characterized as the “culturally odorless” three C’s: consumer technologies (such as VCRs, karaoke, and the Walkman); comics and cartoons (animation); and computer/video games. I use the term *cultural odor* to focus on the way in which cultural features of a country of origin and images or ideas of its national, in most cases stereotyped, way of life are associated *positively* with a particular product in the consumption process. Any product may have various kinds of cultural association with the country of its invention. Such images are often related to exoticism, such as the image of the Japanese samurai or the geisha girl. Here, however, I am interested in the moment when the image of the contemporary lifestyle of the country of origin is strongly and affirmatively called to mind as the very appeal of the product, when the “cultural odor” of cultural commodities is evolved. The way in which the cultural odor of a particular product becomes a “fragrance”—a socially and culturally acceptable smell—is not determined simply by the consumer’s perception that something is “made in Japan.” Neither is it necessarily related to the material influence or quality of the product. It has more to do with widely disseminated symbolic images of the country of origin. The influence of McDonald’s throughout the world, for example, can be discerned in terms of the bureaucratization and standardization of food; and the principles

governing the operation of McDonald's can also be extended to other everyday life activities such as education and shopping (Ritzer 1993). However, no less important to the international success of McDonald's is its association with an attractive image of "the American way of life" (e.g., Frith 1982, 46; Featherstone 1995, 8). McDonald's, of course, does not inherently represent "America." It is a discursive construction of what is "America" that confers on McDonald's its powerful association with "Americanness."

Sony's Walkman is an important cultural commodity that has influenced everyday life in various ways. For this reason, du Gay et al. (1997) chose it as the cultural artifact most appropriate for a case study using the multilayered analyses of cultural studies. While taking note of the social constructedness of any national image, Sony's Walkman, they argue, may signify "Japaneseness" because of its miniaturization, technical sophistication, and high quality. Yet, I suggest, although such signs of "Japaneseness" are analytically important, they are not especially relevant to the appeal of the Walkman at a consumption level. The use of the Walkman does not evoke images or ideas of a Japanese lifestyle, even if consumers know it is made in Japan and appreciate "Japaneseness" in terms of its sophisticated technology. Unlike American commodities, "Japanese consumer goods do not seek to sell on the back of a Japanese way of life" (Featherstone 1995, 9), and they lack any influential "idea of Japan" (Wee 1997).

The cultural odor of a product is also closely associated with racial and bodily images of a country of origin. The three C's I mentioned earlier are cultural artifacts in which a country's bodily, racial, and ethnic characteristics are erased or softened. The characters of Japanese animation and computer games for the most part do not look "Japanese." Such non-Japaneseness is called *mukokuseki*, literally meaning "something or someone lacking any nationality," but also implying the erasure of racial or ethnic characteristics or a context, which does not imprint a particular culture or country with these features.¹ Internationally acclaimed Japanese animation director Oshii Mamoru suggests that Japanese animators and cartoonists unconsciously choose not to draw "realistic" Japanese characters if they wish to draw attractive characters (Oshii, Ito, and Ueno 1996). In Oshii's case, the characters tend to be modeled on Caucasian types. Consumers of and audiences for Japanese animation and games, it can be argued, may be aware of the Japanese origin of these commodities, but those texts barely feature "Japanese bodily odor" identified as such.

Japan goes global: Sony and animation

While the propensity of Japanese animators to make their products non-Japanese points to how a Western-dominated cultural hierarchy governs transnational cultural flows in the world,² Japan's hitherto invisible and odorless cultural presence in the world has become more and more conspicuous since the late 1980s. On the one hand, Japan has become one of the main players in the development of media globalization, by virtue of the fact that its manufacturers of consumer technologies have extending their reach into the software production business during the 1990s. It was Sony's purchase of Columbia in 1989, and Matsushita's purchase of MCA (Universal) in 1990, which dramatized the ascent of Japanese global media conglomerates through the merger of hardware and software. There was considerable reaction from within the United States against these buyouts, including claims that the Japanese were "buying into America's soul" (Morley and Robins 1995, 150). In the film *Black Rain*, Japanese cosair Takakura Ken replies to Michael Douglas's antagonistic remark about Japanese economic expansion into the United States: "Music and movies are all your culture is good for. . . . We make the machines" (quoted in Morley and Robins 1995, 159). This comment apparently displays a generalized disdain by American media industries for the Japanese fascination with technology. Creative software production should not be controlled by mindless hardware manufacturers.

However, this kind of expression of the creative supremacy of American popular culture has gradually proved to be an American fantasy rather than a reflection of what is really happening. Although Matsushita retreated from Hollywood and Sony at first struggled to make a profit (see Negus 1997), Sony demonstrates that Japanese transnational corporations can make it in Hollywood, as Columbia finally achieved phenomenal box-office sales in 1997. Moreover, apart from the takeover of Hollywood by Japanese companies (as well as by European companies), there is good evidence to confirm that the era in which "the media are American" (Tunstall 1977) has ended. Japanese consumer technologies have become so sophisticated that we can talk about a "technoculture" in which "cultural information and the technical artifact seem to merge" (Wark 1991, 45). More significantly, Japan is not only increasing its capital and market share in the audiovisual global market but also its cultural presence on the global scene through the export of culturally odorless products other than consumer technologies. Japanese animation and computer games have attained a certain degree of popularity

and become recognized as very "Japanese" in a positive and affirmative sense in Western countries as well as in non-Western countries. They embody a new aesthetic, emanating in large part from Japanese cultural inventiveness, and capture the new popular imagination (Wark 1994; Schodt 1983, 1996).

Since the release of Ōtomo Katsuhiko's hugely popular animation film *Akiba* (1988), the quality and attraction of "japanimation" has been acknowledged by the American market. In November 1995 the animated film *The Ghost in the Shell* was shown simultaneously in Japan, America, and Great Britain. Its video sales, according to *Billboard* (24 August 1996), reached No.1 on the video charts in the United States. According to a *Los Angeles Times* report, the export value of Japanese animation and comics to the American market amounted to \$75 million in 1996 (Manabe 1997). Furthermore, three Japanese manufacturers, Nintendo, Sega and Sony, dominate the market for computer games. The popularity of Japanese game software is exemplified by the popularity of such games as Super Mario Brothers, Sonic, and Pokémon. As a director of Nintendo pointed out, according to one survey, Mario is a better-known character among American children than Mickey Mouse. (Akurosu Henshūshitsu 1995, 41–42). The huge success of Pokémon in the global market since 1998 further persuades us to make a serious scholarly investigation into Japanese cultural export. Pokémon's penetration into global markets even exceeds that of Mario. As of June 2000 Pokémon game software had sold about 65 million copies (22 million outside Japan) and trading-cards about 4.2 billion (2.4 billion outside Japan); the animation series had been broadcast in fifty-one countries; the first feature film had been shown in thirty-three countries, and its overseas box-office record had amounted to \$176 million; and there had also been about 12,000 purchases of character merchandise (8,000 outside Japan) (Hatakeyama and Kubo 2000). These figures unambiguously show that Pokémon has become truly a "made-in-Japan" global cultural artifact.

These examples certainly illustrate the rise of Japanese cultural products in world markets, particularly within the domain of animated software. Accordingly, we have observed an increasingly narcissistic interest in articulating the distinctive "Japaneseness" of cultural products in 1990s Japan. As early as 1992, for example, the popular monthly magazine *DENIM* ran a feature article on made-in-Japan global commodities that began "Who said that Japan only imports superior foreign culture and commodities and has nothing originally Japanese which has a universal appeal? Now Japanese

customs, products and systems are conquering the world!" (Sekai ga maneshita Nipponryū 1992, 143). In the article, global Japanese exports included food, fashion, service industry offerings, animation, and computer games (see also Noda 1990). This concern was further advanced in a book on Japanese global commodities entitled *Sekai shōhin no tsukirikata: Nihon media ga sekai o seishita hi* (The making of global commodities: The day Japanese media conquered the world). The main purpose of the book was to reconsider Japanese culture in terms of its influence in the world: "It is a historical rule that an economically powerful nation produces in its heyday global popular culture whose influences match its economic power. Such was the case with the British Empire, Imperial France, Weimar Germany and the United States of the 1950s and 1960s. What, then, has Japan of the 1980s produced for the world? Has Japan produced anything that is consumed globally and influences the lifestyle of world consumers?" (Akurosu Henshūshitsu 1995, 6). Consumer technologies, particularly the Walkman, have long been regarded as representative of Japanese global cultural commodities. The editors of the above volume remark that they originally coined the term *global commodities* in 1988 in order to articulate the phenomenal global popularity of the Walkman, but that there has been a proliferation of Japanese global commodities since then (Akurosu Henshūshitsu 1995, 6–8). Made-in-Japan global commodities discussed in the book include not only Japanese hardware commodities such as the Walkman, instant cameras, or VCRs, but also "software" cultural products such as animation and computer games, and that even the system of producing pop idols, a process that has been predominantly exported to Asia, has come more into the foreground.³

Euphoria concerning the global dissemination of animation and computer games prompted Japanese commentators to confer a specific Japanese "fragrance" on these cultural products. The emergence of obsessively devoted fans of Japanese animation in both Europe and the United States whose craze for Japanese animation makes them wish they had been born in Japan has been often covered by the Japanese media. Many images of Western fans playing at being would-be Japanese animation characters, wearing the same costumes and make-up, have been presented in popular Japanese magazines as evidence of the "Japanization" of the West (e.g., Nihonbunka kosupure Amerika yushutsu 1996; Amerika nimo otaku ga daihassei 1996; Furansu de kosupure kontesuto 1997; Otaku no sekai kara mejā e 1997).⁴ Okada Toshio, the most eloquent spokesperson for the global popularity of

Japanese animation and computer games, further argues that Japanese animated culture and imagery has come to evoke, to a certain degree, a sense of Western yearning for "Japan" (1996, 52–56; see also Eikoku ga mitometa Nihonbunka 1996, 30–31). Comparing the passionate Western consumption of Japanese animation to Japan's and his own yearning, via the consumption of American popular culture, for "America,"—the nation of freedom, science, and democracy—Okada (1995, 43) proudly argues that to those Western fans, Japan "looks a more cool country" than the United States. More recently, the Pokémon phenomenon has provoked an increasing Japanese interest in associating its global appeal with Japanese symbolic power. Japanese scholars have observed that, increasingly, American children who love Pokémon believe Japan must be a cool nation if it is capable of producing such wonderful characters, imaginaries, and commodities (Kamo 2000; Sakurai 2000).

Is the world being "Japanized"?

It remains a contentious issue, however, what power status (image of power) the global spread of Japanese animations and computer games may have granted to Japan. How do these products evoke a distinctively Japanese way of life to consumers and audiences? The cultural presence of a foreign country is often interpreted as a threat to national identity and/or to the national interest, or as a sign of the foreign country's status as an object of yearning in the recipient country. In either case, it marks the foreign country's cultural power. Here, the notion of Americanization and cultural imperialism has long informed discussion of the cultural imposition of a dominant country over others. As Said (1994, 387) argues, "Rarely before in human history has there been so massive an intervention of force and ideas from one culture to another as there is today from America to the rest of the world." The unprecedented global reach of American power is all-inclusive, a complex of political, economic, military, and cultural hegemony. In the Cold War era, it is well known that the United States strategically disseminated an American model of a modern, affluent, open, and democratic society to win the ideological battle against the Communist bloc. Mass media and consumer culture were the major vehicles of "Americanization." American political scientist Joseph Nye (1990, 188) argues that a significant factor that confers on the United States a global hegemony is its "soft co-optic power," that is, the power of "getting others to want what you

want" through symbolic power resources such as media and consumer culture. "If [a dominant country's] culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow" (32). In contrast, Nye contends that Japan is a one-dimensional economic power and its consumer commodities, no matter how globally disseminated, still lack an associated "appeal to a broader set of values" (194) and thus are culturally odorous.

This is not simply due to the fact that since the end of World War II, Japan has had no manifest policy of political, military, or ideological/cultural exertion of its transnational power. More importantly, what is implied here is that there is an inherent difficulty in comparing the advent of Japanese animations or computer games to an "Americanization" paradigm as suggested earlier. This is not to say that Japanese animation does not embody any specific cultural characteristics that originate in what we call "Japanese culture." American fans of Japanese animations are inescapably "dependent upon Japanese culture itself" (Newitz 1995, 12; Kamo 2000).⁵ But to interpret the global success of Pokémon and other Japanese cultural products as the mirror image of the global process of "Americanization" is fallacious. Looking beneath the surface of these celebratory views of Western perceptions of the coolness of Japanese culture, we find a basic contradiction: the international spread of mukokuseki popular culture from Japan simultaneously articulates the universal appeal of Japanese cultural products and the disappearance of any perceptible "Japaneseness," which, as will be discussed later, is subtly incorporated into the "localization" strategies of the media industries. The cultural influence of Japanese animation and computer games in many parts of the world might be tremendous, but it tends to be an "invisible colonization" (Bosche 1997).⁶

One cultural critic, Ōtsuka Eiji (1993), thus warns against any euphoria concerning the global popularity of Japanese animation, arguing that it is simply the mukokuseki (the unembedded expression of race, ethnicity, and culture), the "odorless" nature of animation, that is responsible for its popularity in the world. Likewise, Ueno (1996b, 186) argues that "the 'Japaneseness' of Japanese animation can only be recognized in its being actively a mukokuseki visual culture." If it is indeed the case that the Japaneseness of Japanese animation derives, consciously or unconsciously, from its erasure of physical signs of Japaneseness, is not the Japan that Western audiences are at long last coming to appreciate, and even yearn for, an animated, race-less and culture-less, virtual version of "Japan"?

It is one thing to observe that Pokémon texts, for example, are influence-

ing children's play and behavior in many parts of the world and that these children perceive Japan as a cool nation because it creates cool cultural products such as Pokémon. However, it is quite another to say that this cultural influence and this perception of coolness is closely associated with a tangible, realistic appreciation of "Japanese" lifestyles or ideas. It can be argued that the yearning for another culture that is evoked through the consumption of cultural commodities is inevitably a monological illusion. This yearning tends to lack concern for and understanding of the socio-cultural complexity of that in which popular cultural artifacts are produced. This point is even more lucidly highlighted by the mukokuseki nature of Japanese animation and computer games.

As mentioned earlier, Japanese exports to other parts of Asia are not restricted to culturally odorless products but include popular music, TV dramas, and fashion magazines, in all of which textual appeal has much to do with visible "Japaneseness." Though Japan's cultural presence is thus differently but more clearly manifested in the region, the comparison of Japanese transnational cultural power in Asia to its American counterpart nevertheless raises serious doubts. In interpreting the popularity of Japanese popular culture in Asian regions, some Japanese conservative intellectuals argue that Japan has replaced the United States as an object of yearning (e.g., Morita and Ishihara 1989). However, this is refuted by the fact that it matters not that Japanese animations and TV programs are eagerly consumed. It is argued that a sense of yearning for Japan is still not aroused in Asia, because what is appreciated, unlike American popular culture, is still not an image or idea of Japan but simply a materialistic consumer commodity. A critical Japanese scholar of Asian Studies, for example, is unequivocal in his dismissal of the spread of Japanese consumer culture as a mere extension of the Japanese economy. He argues that "Japanese culture is not received in other Asian countries with the same sense of respect and yearning as American culture was received in postwar Japan" (Murai 1993, 26). Though the Asian popularity of Japanese animation, such as *Doraemon*, according to Murai, symbolizes a convenient and enjoyable Japanese consumer culture, Japanese cultural influence is nevertheless much weaker than Japanese economic influence.

Similarly, in his introduction to an edited volume on the Japanization of Asia, Igarashi Akio gives a concise overview of the "Japanization" phenomenon and then wonders whether the Japanese attention to the spread of Japan's popular culture in Asia merely reflects "a simplistic nationalism among

the Japanese, a surplus of self-consciousness," as there might actually be no distinctive Japanese cultural influence to be found in the "Japanization" phenomenon (Igarashi 1997, 15). While the notion of "Americanization" includes broad cultural and ideological influences, such as ideas of American democracy and the American way of life based upon affluent, middle-class material cultures, Igarashi argues that "Japanization" only embodies consumer culture and thus represents "more materialistic cultural dissemination" (6). A similar observation is made by a Singaporean scholar, Wee Wan-ling (1997). He warns us not to confuse the presence of Japanese consumer commodities, animation, and popular music in Singapore with a "Japanization" signifying a substantial influence on ideas. Congruent with the view regarding Japanese imperialism's cultural power over other Asians as derivative, this argument expresses a difficulty in seeing specifically "Japanese" influence in the spread of Japanese popular and consumer culture in other parts of Asia. What is experienced through Japanese popular culture is actually a highly materialistic Japanese version of the American "original."

Global cultural power reconsidered: Decentered transnational alliances

Certainly, any attempt to interpret the increase in the export of Japanese popular culture in terms of an "Americanization" paradigm would misjudge the nature of Japanese cultural power in the world. There is apparently a different logic of global cultural influence operating here. However, I would argue, it is possible and perhaps productive to take the awkwardness denoted by the notion of "Japanization" as an opportunity to reconsider the meaning of transnational cultural power which has long been understood in terms of "Americanization," and to appreciate the precarious nature of transnational cultural consumption (Appadurai 1996; Howes 1996), rather than to dismiss the pervasiveness of Japanese influence. The rise of Japanese cultural export can, I suggest, be read as a symptom of the shifting nature of transnational cultural power in a context in which intensified global cultural flows have decentered the power structure and vitalized local practices, of appropriation and consumption of foreign cultural products and meanings.

In this sense, it does not seem entirely contingent that the manifestation of Japanese cultural power has occurred in the last decade. This is a period during which the historical process of globalization, as defined by Hall

(1995), has been accelerated by several interconnected factors. These include the global integration of markets and capital by powerful transnational corporations; the development of communication technologies which easily and simultaneously connect all over the globe; the emergence of an affluent middle class in non-Western countries, especially in Asia; and the increasing number of people moving from one place to another by migration and tourism. Theoretical reformulation has become imperative in order to cope with these globalizing forces that make transnational cultural flow much more disjunctive, non-isomorphic, and complex than what the center-periphery paradigm allows us to understand (Appadurai 1990).

The expansive force of globalization, the transmission of cultural forms from the dominant to the rest via communication technologies and transportation systems, has brought about a "time-space compression" (Harvey 1989), or the shrinking of the distance between one place and another. As the merger and cooperation of transnational corporations of different countries of origin intensifies, various markets are increasingly integrated and interrelated. This, together with the development of communication technologies, leads to an increasing simultaneity in the cultural flow of information, images, and commodities emanating from a handful of powerful nations, including Japan, to urban spaces across the globe. The speed and quantity of the global distribution of cultural commodities has been rapidly accelerating. The recent simultaneous popularity, and quick decline, of Spice Girls and Tamagotchi (a tiny digital pet) in many parts of the world testify to this trend. Under these developments, discourse on globalization has tended to facilitate myths of global coherence (Ferguson 1992) by its evocation of global synchronization or a utopian view of world unity, in the same way that Macluhan's famous term, *global village*, connotes a sense of bonding, togetherness, and immediacy.

However, media globalization does not simply promote the global reach of Western media and commodities. It also facilitates "the de-centering of capitalism from the West" (Tomlinson 1997, 140-43) through increasing integration, networking, and cooperation among worldwide transnational media industries, including non-Western ones. For transnational corporations to enter simultaneously those global, supranational, regional, national, and local markets, the imperatives are the establishment of a business tie-up with others at each level—whether in the form of a buyout or collaboration—along with the selection of new cultural products that will have an international appeal.

It is thus important to place the significance of Japanese inroads into Hollywood, as well as the international popularity of Japanese animation and computer games, within a wider picture of transnational media and market interconnections as well. The rise of Japanese media industries articulates a new phase of global cultural flow dominated by a small number of transnational corporations (Aksoy and Robins 1992). These moves testify to the increasing trend of global media mergers which aim to offer a "total cultural package" of various media products under a single media conglomerate (Schiller 1991).⁷ After all, the reason Sony and Matsushita bought into Hollywood was not to dominate American minds, but rather to centralize product distribution. The purpose was to construct a total entertainment conglomerate through the acquisition of control over both audiovisual hardware and software. It was based upon the sober economic judgment that "it is cultural distribution, not cultural production, that is the key locus of power and profit" (Garbman 1990, 161-62). The incursion can be seen as a confirmation of the supremacy of American software creativity and therefore of Japan's second-rate ability as a software producer. Japanese trading companies such as Sumitomo and Itochu also invested in American media giants (e.g., Sumitomo—TCI or Itochu—Time Warner). This suggests that Japanese cultural influence and presence in the world is still overshadowed by its economic power (Herman and McChesney 1998, 104). Seen this way, the purpose of the Japanese takeover was not to kill the American soul; on the contrary, it was to make Hollywood omnipresent. Japanese ingenuity in hardware production and American genius in software go hand in hand because (Japanese) consumer technologies work as "distribution systems" for (American) entertainment products (Berland 1992, 46). These Japanese companies strengthen American cultural hegemony by investing in the production of Hollywood films and by facilitating their distribution all over the globe.

Conversely, finding a local partner is particularly important in facilitating the entry of non-Western media industries and cultural products into Western markets. Morley and Robins (1995, 13) point out three strategic patterns of activities for global media corporations: producing cultural products; distributing products; and owning hardware that delivers products. Penetration of transnational media industries into multiple markets needs the combination of at least two of the above three, particularly production and distribution, both of which are dominated by American industries. If Sony's encroachment on Hollywood articulates Japanese exploitation of

American software products in order to become a global media player, media globalization also promotes the incorporation of Japanese, and other non-Western, media products into the Western-dominated global distribution network. Japanese media industries and cultural products cannot successfully become transnational players without partners. The most serious shortcoming of the Japanese animation industry, despite mature production capabilities and techniques, is its lack of international distribution channels. Western (American) global distribution power is thus indispensable to make Japanese animation a part of global popular culture. The process can be called an "Americanization of Japanization." For example, it was the investment and the distribution channels of a British and American company, Manga Entertainment (established in 1991 and part of the Polygram conglomerate) that made *The Ghost in the Shell* a hit in Western countries. Similarly, in 1995, Disney decided to globally distribute Miyazaki Hayao's animated films. Miyazaki gained prestige from Disney's decision, which helped turn his animated *Mononokehime* into a phenomenal hit in Japan in 1997. As the producer of the film acknowledged, the fact that Hayao's animations are highly appreciated by the global animation giant, Disney, worked well as the publicity for giving the film an international prominence (Mononokehime, datsu Miyazaki anime de 100 okuen 1998).⁸

The global success of Pokémon also has much to do with America's intervening partnership. Most manifestly, Warner Bros., one of the major Hollywood studios, handled the global distribution of *Pokémon: The First Movie*, as well as televising Pokémon on its own U.S.-wide channel. No less significant is how Pokémon has been localized, or Americanized, "to hide its 'Japaneseness'" (Invasion of the Pocket Monsters 1999, 68–69) as part of a global promotion strategy. Significantly, it is the remake-in-the-U.S. version of Pokémon that has been exported to other parts of the world (except Asia). Thus, the successful marketing of Pokémon as a global character owes much to American intervention (handled by Nintendo of America), which testifies to another "Americanization of Japanization." Japanese animation's inroads into the global market articulate the ever-growing global integration of markets and media. The examples discussed above clearly show that the Japanese animation industry is becoming a global player only by relying on the power of Western media.⁹

Global-local complexity: From cultural imperialism to globalization

Decentered processes of cultural globalization have also accompanied a significant theoretical shift—the questioning of the "cultural imperialism" thesis—in studies of asymmetrical transnational cultural flows in the last decade. The cultural imperialism thesis emphasizes the unidirectional flow of culture from the dominant (in most cases equated with the United States) to the dominated. It argues that American popular culture, combined with economic and political hegemony, is disseminated all over the globe, instilling American consumerist values and ideologies. The cultural imperialism thesis, as mentioned earlier, tends to describe the relationship between the West (America) and the Rest as one of unambiguous cultural domination and exploitation (e.g., Hamelink 1983; Matelart, Delcourt, and Matelart 1984; Schiller 1969, 1976, 1991). But the thesis neglects analysis of empirical evidence of audience reception in subordinate cultures, and that is particularly problematic. In considering the global cultural flow and foreign cultural influence in a particular region, "cultural domination" is in many cases a discursive construct rather than the reflection of the subordinate people's actual experience. This is what Tomlinson (1991) convincingly discusses in his book on cultural imperialism and what other excellent studies on the discourse of "Americanization" also demonstrate (e.g., Kuusela 1993). The cultural imperialism thesis bases its argument of domination on a political economy approach and does not pay adequate attention to whether, and how, audiences are culturally dominated through the act of consuming media texts from the center. The thesis explicitly or implicitly sees audiences as passive "cultural dupes" who, apparently without a critical cultural lens, automatically absorb any messages and ideologies from the dominant center. However, such a simplifying view of cultural exchange has been refuted by many ethnographic studies which show that audiences actively and creatively consume media texts and cultural products (e.g., Morley 1980, 1992; Radway 1984; Ang 1985).

Perspectives of globalization, in reconsidering the nature of transnational cultural unevenness highlighted by cultural imperialism discourses, instead stress that what is occurring is not simply homogenization through the global distribution of the same commodities, images, and capital from the Western (and Japanese to a lesser extent) metropolitan centers. Such dissemination also produces new cultural diversity (e.g., Hall 1991; Robins

1997). The term transculturation refers to this process of globalization, in which the asymmetrical encounter of various cultures results in the transformation of an existing cultural artifact and the creation of a new style. Mary Louise Pratt (1992, 6) states this succinctly when she writes, "While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own and what they use it for."

Although Pratt uses this concept to analyze colonial encounters in a "contact zone" through the reading of Western imperial travel writings, the concept of transculturation is helpful for us to understand that it is through engagement with West-dominated global cultural power that non-Western modernities articulate their specificity (Hall 1995). In contrast to the homogenization thesis, this view is concerned more with sites of local negotiation. It suggests that foreign goods and texts are creatively misused, recontextualized in local sites, differently interpreted according to local cultural meaning. Something new is produced in the unequal cultural encounter by mixing the foreign and the local (e.g., Hanenez 1992; Lull 1993; Ang 1996). The ascent of Japanese transnational cultural power should be considered in the context of this wider vista of theoretical paradigm shifts, which attempt to attend simultaneously to the homogenizing forces of globalization and to transformative local practices in the formation of non-Western indigenized modernity, so as to understand the question of transnational cultural power.

The shift from an emphasis on center-periphery relations to a diffusion of cultural power marks the relative decline of the main actor, the United States. It is often pointed out that, contrary to the logic of cultural imperialism, U.S. TV programs are not as popular as "local," or domestically produced, programs in many countries (e.g., Siji 1988; Lee 1991; Straubhaar 1991; Tomlinson 1991). The unambiguous American domination of global culture is also put into question by the rise of other global players such as Brazil (e.g., Sinclair 1992; Tomlinson 1997). Tunstall (1995, 16), the author of *The Media Are American* (1977), argues that American media are still influential but no longer dominant: "The United States is the only media superpower, but it is a media superpower in gradual decline against the world as a whole." Tunstall argues that American TV programs are becoming less popular in the world not because their quality is degrading but, rather, because there exists a process of local indigenization of original American TV formats, a point I will return to later.

This does not mean that the United States has lost its cultural hegemony. Even if the global popularity of American TV programs has declined, American cultural power is still articulated in the recognition that media and cultural forms which originate in America have been fully globalized (Morley and Robins 1995, 223-24). As Bell and Bell (1995, 131) argue, "'America' has rather come to symbolize the very processes of social and cultural modernization themselves." Likewise, Yoshimi (1997, in his studies of the "Americanization" of Japan, argues, with a particular emphasis on Tokyo Disneyland, that "America" shifted from a symbol to an invisible system in the 1980s. While the American way of life has lost its manifest appeal in Japan, according to Yoshimi, the Japanese cultural scene has been saturated with the logic of American consumer capitalism. Baudrillard also declares that "America is the original version of modernity and Europe is the dubbed or subtitled version" (1988, 76). Although admitting that American hegemonic power is in decline, Baudrillard argues that the decline merely shows the changing nature of power: "It [America] has become the orbit of an imaginary power to which everyone now refers. From the point of view of competition, hegemony, and 'imperialism,' it has certainly lost ground, but from the exponential point of view, it has gained some" (107). According to Baudrillard, American power has entered a new stage of "hysteresis," which is "the process whereby something continues to develop by inertia, whereby an effect persists even when its cause has disappeared" (115). America is now ubiquitous as the unmarked model for (post)modern culture.

It is an open question if this transformation of the nature of America's global cultural influence is the pinnacle of Americanization or the demise of Americanization. Smart (1993) criticizes Baudrillard by arguing that an exclusive comparison between Europe and America leads to a failure to realize the limits and decline of all-powerful Western/American modernity. Baudrillard is, deliberately or not, "indifferent to the possibility that America may no longer be the model for business, performance, and international style, no longer the 'uncontested and uncontested' model of modernity" (Smart 1993, 66). While Smart emphatically refers to Japan as an emerging model of postmodernity, the critical issue here is not the substitution or addition of new cultural centers but overcoming a nation-centric view of global cultural power. At the high point in the development of modernization theories, discussions of non-Western modernization either stressed divergence or convergence with the Western model. Or conversely, West-

ern countries were thought to follow the Japanese modernization model as a process of reverse-convergence (Dore 1973; see also Mouer and Sugimoto 1986). However, the late twentieth century is marked by the fact that there is no absolute societal model to follow (Scott 1997).

The disappearance of an absolute center of global power is often interpreted as evidence that Americanization has not melted into air but into global capitalism. Spark (1996, 96–97) makes the point astutely, referring to the British context: “Americanization might better be considered as only the evidential characteristic of modern consumer capitalism, with the appellation ‘American’ referring only to the prime, originating characteristics of the model. In this sense, America is not acting to subordinate foreign cultures: the process is one of globalized modernization, and as the experience of the British with America reveals, it is reciprocal.” Sklair (1995, 153) extends Spark’s point further when he criticizes the view that media and cultural imperialism tend to be equated with “Americanization”: “It implies that if American influence could be excluded, then cultural and media imperialism would end. This could only be true in a purely definitional sense. Americanization itself is a contingent form of a process that is necessary to global capitalism, the culture-ideology of consumerism.”

Sklair’s argument captures the fundamental force of globalization, that generated by the logic of the ever-expanding reach of capital, and few would disagree with this point (Tomlinson 1997, 139–40). However, this argument seems too sweeping a generalization of transnational cultural flows to capture the contradiction and ambivalence articulated in local practices. Hall is more sensitive to the decentralizing feature of global capitalism. He coins the term *global mass culture* to characterize the emerging global diffusion of media images. While acknowledging American and Western hegemony in this process, Hall points out that this is a “peculiar form of homogenization” which does not destroy but rather respects cultural differences in the globe: “[Global mass culture] is wanting to recognize and absorb those differences within the larger, overarching framework of what is essentially an American conception of the world.” Capital does not try to obliterate differences but to “operate through them” (1991, 28). Unprecedented concentration of capital in transnational corporations has generated another feature of decentralization, where the recognition of cultural diversity and difference is increasingly exploited by transnational corporations.

Globalization as structuring differences

The theoretical shift from cultural imperialism to globalization thus goes together with a turn from the notion of a straightforward globally homogenizing cultural dominant toward the idea of an *orchestrated heterogenization* under the sign of globalizing forces; from an emphasis on content to an *emphasis on the form of cultural products*, which structure diversity and difference in the ever-increasing *interconnection* of the world (e.g., Wilk 1995; Hannerz 1996; Robins 1997). Globalization brings about, as Hannerz (1996, 102) put it, “an *organization of diversity* rather than a replication of uniformity,” or a “*reparation of difference*,” which is produced by the local absorption and indigenization of homogenizing forces.

A dichotomous view of global–local would fail to acknowledge the complex, juxtaposed and fractured nature of cultural globalization. We should consider, instead, what Morley and Robins (1995, 116) call the “global–local nexus”: “Whilst globalization may be the prevailing force of our times, this does not mean that localism is without significance. . . . Globalization is, in fact, also associated with new dynamics of *re-localization*. It is about the achievement of a new global–local nexus, about new and intricate relations between global space and local space” (emphasis in original). The conception of globalization as an organizing force of new diversity and particularity is also argued by Robertson (1992, 1995). He refers to globalization in terms of the form in which global interconnection is structured and a new kind of particularism is globally institutionalized (1995, 38). Robertson is cautious to distance his view from the “naïve functionalist mode” of integration. He emphasizes that homogenization and heterogenization, like globalization and localization, are “complementary and interpenetrative” phenomena (40).

Newly articulated particularism or localism in the local negotiation with globalizing forces testifies to the spread of common forms in which difference and diversity can be claimed. In this sense, while the concept of “hybridity” that tries to deconstruct the essentialization of “original” has gained intellectual currency, it should not simply be read as a celebration of the *creative practices of the dominated*. It indicates that global homogenizing power is a constitutive and generative part of any local cultural practice (e.g., Hall 1991, 1992; García Canclini 1995; Lull 1995). Arguing that the hybridization perspective should shift our conception of culture from a territorial/static mode to one of a translocal/fluid movement, Pieterse (1995) defines globalization as an ongoing production of a “global mélange”

through hybridization processes. He distinguishes structural hybridization, where the production of various hybrid forms is facilitated by "the increase in the available modes of organization" (50), and cultural hybridization, where such hybrid forms represent "new translocal cultural expressions" (64). The ever-increasing hybridization in these two processes actually testifies to "transcultural convergence," as Pieterse argues that "the very process of hybridization shows the difference to be relative and, with a slight shift of perspective, the relationship can also be described in terms of an affirmation of *similarity*" (60, emphasis in original).

Likewise, in discussing the discourse of Japanese cultural uniqueness in the wider context of globalization, Morris-Suzuki (1998b, 164) emphasizes the "formatting of difference," by which she means "the creation of a single underlying common framework or set of rules which is used to coordinate local subregimes" as a significant structuring force of globalization. Difference can be convincingly and successfully advocated precisely because of the diffusion of a common format. As I will discuss in detail in chapter 4, if it can be argued that the hegemony of the global cultural system is articulated in globally shared "forms" (Wilk 1995), the latter also promote the production of multiple, distinct indigenized modernities in the world. In sum, a convincing analysis of the unevenness of global interconnectedness should go beyond a global-local binary opposition. The operation of global cultural power can only be found in local practice, whereas cultural reworking and appropriation at the local level necessarily takes place within the matrix of global homogenizing forces.

The Japanese cultural presence under a global gaze

The decentralizing forces of globalization open the way for Japanese transnational cultural power to be seen in a different light from that of "Americanization." The increasing emphasis on the decentralization of global cultural power does not mean there are no longer dominant centers. The suppliers of transnational cultural products and "forms"—which make creative local hybridization possible—are still limited to a small number of centers. Cultural commodities and images are predominantly produced by a small number of wealthy countries, including Japan, and many parts of the world still cannot even afford to enjoy global cultural consumption (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1991). From an American point of view, the globalization process might testify to the decentralization and decline of

American/Western power. From a Japanese point of view, however, it represents a recentralization by means of which new globally powerful nations such as Japan have successfully repositioned themselves.

Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that this reconfiguration of transnational cultural power is occurring in the context in which uneven distribution and circulation of such cultural products are becoming more difficult to trace and the origins of images and commodities become increasingly insignificant and irrelevant. Ang (1996, 13) argues that there has been a significant shift in audience reception of TV texts in the postmodern age, in that audiences are expected to be active, not simply in theory but in their real-life situations, producing meaning out of multifarious media texts. Likewise, it can be argued that the local needs to be creative in articulating difference by indigenizing the global. With the proliferation and accelerated speed of globally circulated images and commodities, the local transnational process has come to be a quotidian site where the local negotiates and appropriates the global rather than that of the unambiguous cultural domination by the center of the periphery (see Hannerz 1991; Miller 1992).

Although we cannot be too cautious in generalizing this picture on a global scale, gradually disappearing in this process is the perception, not the fact, of derivative modernity; the sense that "our" modernity is borrowed from a modernity that happened elsewhere (see Chatterjee 1986; Chakrabarty 1992). Ubiquitous modernity, in contrast, is based on a sense that "our" modernity is the one that is simultaneously happening everywhere. To put it differently, the Western gaze, which has long dominated the material and discursive construction of non-Western modernity, is now melting into a decentered global gaze. To use Lash and Urry's (1994, 29) words about the nature of current cultural power emanating from the core to the rest, "It is there, it is pervasive, but it is not the object of judgement—one does not assent to it or reject it." This might sound exaggerated. Needless to say, there are still clear-cut protests against American global cultural hegemony and strong anti-America sentiments in many parts of the world. Indeed, "America" still stands as a significant (hated) center. Nevertheless, at the least, the age of "Americanization," in which cross-cultural consumption was predominantly discussed in terms of the production of a sense of "yearning" for a way of life and ideas of a dominant country, seems to be over. Global cultural power does not disappear but is now highly dispersed. It is the shift from a Western gaze to a decentered global gaze, manifested in the process of indigenizing modernity, that the new meaning of "Japani-

zation" thrives on. Japanese cultural power has paradoxically become visible and conspicuous, as the absolute symbolic center no longer belongs to a particular country or region and transnational cultural power is deeply intertwined with local indigenizing processes. Transnationally circulated images and commodities, I would argue, tend to become culturally odorless in the sense that origins are subsumed by the local transculturation process. By appropriating, hybridizing, indigenizing, and consuming images and commodities of "foreign" origin in multiple unforeseeable ways, even American culture is conceived as "ours" in many places. McDonald's is so much a part of their own world that it no longer represents an American way of life to Japanese or Taiwanese young consumers (Watson 1997).

The multiplicity of indigenized modernities brought about by local creative practices has, for one thing, spotlighted the Japanese experience of transculturation as an exemplar to be followed by other non-Western countries. As mimesis has become associated less with second-hand cheapness and superficiality than with creativity and originality (Tausig 1993), the borrowed nature of Japanese cultural power has come to be seen as not totally groundless. Tunstall (1995) suggests, in arguing the relative decline of American media power in the world, that the Japanese mode of indigenization of American original media products can be seen as a pattern in the development of non-Western TV industries, which, he predicts, other non-Western countries such as China or India will follow. Local indigenization and consumption is, moreover, consciously incorporated into the global marketing strategy of Japanese transnational corporations, as is the case with Sony's articulate strategy of "global localization" (see Aksoy and Robins 1992; Barnett and Cavanagh 1994; du Gay et al. 1997). The Japanese capacity for indigenizing the foreign is reevaluated in globalization theories, and Toyotism has been replaced by Sonyism (Wark 1991). Sony's strategy of globalization has come to signify a new meaning of "Japanization." As Featherstone (1995, 9) argues, "If the term Japanization of the world means anything it is in terms of a market strategy built around the notion of *dochaku*, or "glocalism." The term refers to a global strategy which does not seek to impose a standard product or image, but instead is tailored to the demands of the local market. This has become a popular strategy for multinationals in other parts of the world who seek to join the rhetoric of localism."

I will argue in later chapters that the exclusive association of Japanization with glocalism looks tenuous and essentialist (see chapters 2 and 3). Suf-

face it to say here that Featherstone's observation is derived from the fact that the Japan-originated marketing strategy of "global localization"—or "glocalization"—has come to be credited as a leading formula for global corporations in the 1990s in place of "global standardization" (Robertson 1995). Profits brought about by cultural power are becoming articulated less in association with the symbolic and ideological domination by the powerful nation-state and more with local camouflaging which smoothes the economic expansion of transnational corporations.

Power reconfigured in the intraregional cultural flow

As suggested earlier, the ascent of Japanese transnational cultural power is most conspicuously illustrated in the specific cultural geography of East and Southeast Asia, as the export of Japanese popular culture to Asia includes a wide range of products such as Japanese TV dramas, pop idols, character goods, and fashion magazines, most of which have rarely found receptive consumers in the West. Although the wide range of Sony's transnational activity can be called "global" and the strategy of "global localization" is deployed in multiple locales in the world, the application of the strategy to the production of popular music and TV programs is clearly limited to the Asian region. Even animations, which are well received in the West, are more eagerly consumed in Asia, and some animations and comics are only exported to Asia (e.g., Ono 1992, 1998; Kawatake 1995). East and Southeast Asian markets were at the receiving end of almost half of the total number of Japanese TV program exports in 1995 (Japanese Ministry 1997). These facts suggest that a Japanese mode of indigenized cultural modernity embodied in popular cultural production is not simply the model for a localizing strategy. Japanese cultural products themselves have come to hold a certain symbolic appeal to other Asian nations—which can be conceived neither as merely "odorless," nor as nonderivative of American cultural power, nor as comparable to the Americanization paradigm—in the context of the proliferation of non-Western indigenized modernities, which we need to examine with a different analytical tool.

The specificity of the spread and consumption of Japanese popular and consumer culture in Asia reminds us of one important caveat: unsubstantiated use of the two-relational concepts "global" and "local" as empty categories would risk overexaggerating the reach and the impact of transnational cultural flows (Ferguson 1992; Chua 1998). It would underestimate

"the historical and cultural situatedness of spaces traversed by [disjunctive cultural] flows" (Ang and Stratton 1996, 28). Even if it has become a common view that globalization processes are too chaotic, decentralizing, and disjunctive to be explained by a center-periphery model (e.g., Lash and Urry 1994; Appadurai 1996), as Ang and Stratton (1996) argue, we should not assume that such flows totally replace the old power relations, as the current cultural flows are always already overdetermined by the power relations and geopolitics embedded in the history of imperialism and colonialism. While, together with the dissolution of the cultural and economic imperialism perspective, fifty years would seem long enough for former colonies, South Korea and Taiwan, to become more tolerant toward, if not to forget, the legacy of Japanese imperialism,¹⁰ this does not mean that Japanese cultural power has altogether vanished. Focusing on supra-national regional flows presents a productive way to analyze how globalization re-inscribes Japanese transnational cultural power in a new configuration of more complex, multiple and intersecting power relations in Asia.

The concentration of Japanese cultural export in East and Southeast Asian regions testifies to another facet of the decentralizing globalization process, in which local practices increasingly acquire another importance: the relative decline of American cultural power has brought about the capitalization of intraregional cultural flows, with the emergence of regional media and cultural centers such as Brazil, Egypt, Hong Kong, and Japan (e.g., Straubhaar 1991; Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham 1996b; Lii 1998). Given the limited reverse cultural flow from these non-Western semicenters to Western metropolises, the rise of non-Western economic power and its transnational corporations in the global arena has not seriously challenged the Western-dominated "power geometry" (Massey 1991). Nevertheless, the analysis of intraregional cultural flows would highlight alternative patterns of transnationalization of media and popular culture, compared to the sweeping view which equates globalization with Americanization, by turning our attention to another significant facet of "locality"—the transnational appeal of a non-Western mode of indigenized modernity for culturally and/or geographically contiguous nations.

Of particular concern for this book is the question of how transnational cultural power is embedded in the perception of cultural distance, which is in a state of flux under globalization processes. Complexity articulated in the intensification of intraregional cultural flows is closely related with the ambiguity of the meaning of cultural intimacy and distance associated with

"locality," in which audiences are thought to find pleasure through the consumption of cultural products from supposedly culturally similar nations (Straubhaar 1991; Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham 1996a). The reservation about claims for Japanese cultural power in Asia occurs not simply because Japanese cultural products are supposed to lack the significance of substantially Japanese ideas and lifestyles or because of a lingering, unambiguous, Western cultural hegemony. Japanese cultural power in Asia, I suggest, also tends to slip into a seemingly power-free perception of cultural similarity and local intimacy which is derived from the narrower temporal and spatial distance perceived among East and Southeast Asian countries than is the case with the latter's relation to the West.

However, it should be stressed that the sense of "cultural proximity" (Straubhaar 1991) is never a given attribute equally embodied in cultural products in a specific region and experienced by various strata of people. Rather, the production of locality (see Appadurai 1996, 178–99) itself is to be considered as a site at which a regional cultural power is articulated. The perception of cultural distance among non-Western nations has tended to be swayed by their relative temporal proximity to Western modernity, the standard by which the developmental ranking of the non-West has been determined (see Fabian 1983). As an apt illustration, such a developmental yardstick was earlier exploited by Japanese imperialist ideology to confirm Japan's superiority to other racially and culturally "similar" Asian nations and justify the Japanese mission to civilize Asia (e.g., Duus 1995; Oguma 1995).

The recent spread of Japanese popular culture in other Asian nations in turn suggests a possibility that the diminishing temporal lag between them (re)activates the sense of spatial affiliation in the region. A certain degree of economic growth might have brought about commonalities underlying the formation of modern Asian cultures. However, as the increase in Japanese export of media and cultural products shows, it also produces the asymmetry in which the Japanese mode of indigenized cultural modernity embodied in popular cultural forms becomes more appealing in other parts of Asia. As I will show in chapters 4 and 5, the different ways in which Taiwanese and Japanese perceive cultural and temporal distance in consuming other Asian cultural products—one marked by a sense of coequality, the other by a sense of nostalgia—demonstrate that unequal cultural power relations are deeply inscribed in one's spatial-temporal experience of "familiar difference" in the popular cultural products of cultural neighbors. While the

consumption of Japanese popular culture in other Asian nations might not produce the same kind of a sense of yearning for Japan as does (or did) its American counterpart, Japan's relatively dominant position in intra-Asian cultural flows is noted in the fact that Asian consumption of Japanese popular culture generates a positive sense of cultural immediacy.

Although offering stimulating new insights into the investigation of decentered global cultural power relations, intra-regional cultural interaction is an underexplored area in the study of cultural globalization. In recent years, theories of modernity and modernization have been criticized for their Eurocentric perspective. Now that many non-Western countries have achieved a certain degree of modernization, it has been fully, though belatedly, recognized that spatial differences were unjustifiably subsumed by the developmental temporality of Western modernity and that equal emphasis should be placed on space so that academics engage seriously with plural modernities, (e.g., Featherstone, Lash, and Robertson 1995). Although globalization perspectives surely complicate the straightforward argument for the homogenization of the world based on Western modernity, the arguments for transculturation, heterogenization, hybridization, and creolization still tend not to transcend the West–Rest paradigm. Global-local interactions are predominantly studied in terms of how the Rest resists, imitates, or appropriates the West. There have been fascinating analyses of (non-Western) local consumption of Western media texts (e.g., see Miller 1992, 1995), which go beyond a dichotomized perspective of the global and the local and explore how non-Western countries “rework modernities” (Ong 1996, 64). Nevertheless, even in these examples, “global” still tends to be associated exclusively with the West.

Likewise, the rise of non-Western cultural centers of power such as Japan and Brazil often has been pointed out to refute a straightforward view of Western cultural domination and to support an argument for decentralized Western cultural hegemony (e.g., Morley and Robins 1995; Barker 1997; Tomlinson 1997). However, how such emerging non-Western semicenters exert cultural power through their dynamic interaction with other non-Western modernities has been seriously under-explored. The following chapters aim to take a further step in the analysis of decentered global cultural power relations by exploring from a Japanese perspective the dynamic and asymmetrical relations between Asian modernities.

2

Trans/nationalism: Discourses on

Japan in the global cultural flow

It has become commonplace to argue that national identity is never naturally given but is rather discursively constructed, invented, and imagined, a conception that has been developed out of excellent studies of the origin of national identity or nationalism (e.g., Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983). It is argued that the precariousness of national identity is becoming more visible and conspicuous as a result of globalization processes which have interconnected the world in multiple, contradictory, and disjunctive ways (e.g., Hall 1992).

The concept of “hybridity,” developed in postcolonial theories, brings to light the doubleness and in-betweenness of national/cultural identity formation. Hybridity usefully counters exclusivist notions of imagined community, as well as the essentialism and “ethnic absolutism” involved in ideas of cultural “purity” and “authenticity.” It creates “the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. . . . It displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (Bhabha 1990, 211). The concept fruitfully displaces our conception of clearly demarcated national/cultural boundaries, which have been based upon a binary opposition between “us” and “them,” “the West” and “the Rest,” and the colonizer and the colonized, with a postcolonial perspective which “oblige(s) us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries forever” (Hall 1996a, 247).¹

In the study of transnational cultural flows, the concepts of hybridity and hybridization, together with others such as creolization (Hannerz 1991) and indigenization (Appadurai 1996), also articulate the dynamic, ongoing, uneven but creative process of cultural interconnection, transgression, appropriation, reworking and cross-fertilization.² The accelerating flow of media