What's So Funny about IRON

By MARK GALLAGHER

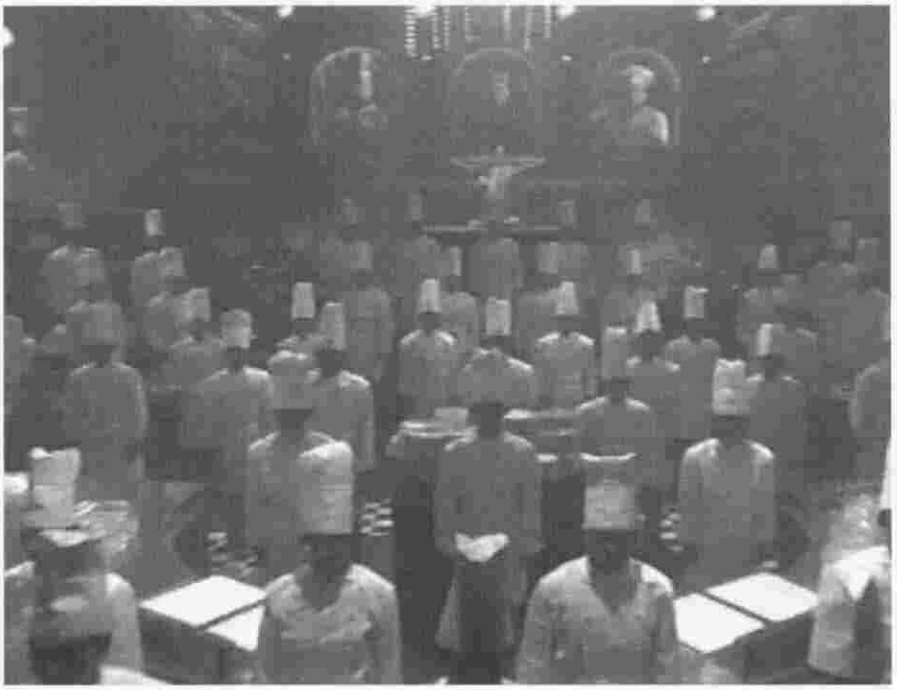
Abstract: Cable television broadcasts in the United States of the Japanese cooking-competition show *Iron Chef* allow viewers to position themselves both alongside and above the program's Japanese participants and original viewership. The author analyzes the processes by which U.S. media corporations recontextualize non-Western media texts and the consequences of such translation strategies.

Key words: cooking shows, Food Network, game shows, globalization, *Iron Chef*, media, television

At the end of the 1990s, the Japanese cooking-competition program *Iron Chef* became a cult favorite among U.S. television viewers through its grafting of spectacular pageantry, incongruous dubbing, and head-to-head competition onto the conventional structure of the cooking show. The program attracts viewers both for its culinary displays and its frenetic translation of an already unconventional Japanese media product. The Food Network U.S. cable station, which has aired *Iron Chef* since July 1999 (it debuted in Japan in 1993), bills it in promotional material as "*Ultimate Fighting Champion* meets Julia Child." The program combines conventions of the celebrity-judged game show, the television variety show, the samurai film, and the cooking program, all genres that circulate in the media marketplaces of the contemporary Eastern and Western worlds.

East Asian popular culture has long been noted for cannibalizing and refining elements of U.S. popular culture, from the Godzilla films' recasting of atomic-age monstrosities, to *Speed Racer*'s relationships between adolescents and fast cars, to *Pokemon*'s inborn consumer appeals, to Takeshi Kitano's reformulation of the gangster film and Jackie Chan's and John Woo's transformations of the action film. In each case, Japanese or Hong Kong Chinese artists or merchandisers adorn preexisting textual forms with particular regional inflections, producing a hybrid product that later gains subcultural or mass appeal when it circulates back to the West. Such a relay and translation of genre codes and texts demonstrates both the global currency of particular media products and the complex decoding strategies used by viewers in the receiving cultures.

In this article, I address the cultural tourism and possible condescension implicit in *Iron Chef*'s U.S. popularity. The program allows viewers to immerse themselves in a complex but



The chefs' assistants

N CHEF?

accessible manifestation of East Asian culture. The program's narrative format and televisual style—its dubbing, editing, and camerawork—permit viewers to position themselves both alongside and above the program's Japanese participants. To a large extent, martial arts, the samurai mythology, consumer goods, and sushi bars constitute most North Americans' engagement with Japanese culture, and viewers may perceive *Iron Chef* in similar terms. The program emphasizes consumption and martial competition, which make possible the program's exportation. *Iron Chef* demonstrates that U.S. media industries' recontexualization of non-Western media texts can produce both progressive and conservative pleasures.

Most research on media globalization considers the effects of transnational media productions as received in ostensibly subordinate cultures, chiefly demonstrated in the reception of U.S.–produced media texts in developing nations. Although the global saturation of U.S.–produced texts clearly inhibits the output of film and television industries in other nations, many communications scholars dispute hypotheses that warn of the erosion of local cultures and values by the products of hegemonic media industries.[1] Relatively few scholars, however, have considered the reception in the West of non-Western media, perhaps because those texts make up an extremely small portion of the texts available to mainstream U.S. film and television viewers. Precisely because of their relative scarcity, however, imported media texts can provoke valuable insights into the dynamics and consequences of popular taste. *Iron Chef*, for example, showcases both a form of Japanese nationalism and a celebration of cultural fusion, the former through emphasis on Japan's revered Iron Chefs, the latter through both the program's format and its links among Asian and European cuisines.

Japan is the world's second largest television market, behind only the United States, and like the United States, its market is largely self-sufficient, producing more than 95 percent of its programming domestically (Iwabuchi "To Globalize," 143). (This self-sufficiency does not extend to film, however: as of the mid-1990s, Japanese theaters received only one-third of their revenues from Japanese films [Iwabuchi "To Globalize," 144].) Japan's television producers export programs principally to other Asian markets, such as Taiwan, and animated series and dramas dominate exports.[2]

Kitchen Stadium

Programs distributed to the United States have been almost exclusively animated programs, including series such as *Dragon Ball Z*, *Sailor Moon*, and the ubiquitous *Pokemon*. Game shows, although hugely popular in Japan and somewhat infamous for their bizarre formats, have not been repackaged for U.S. audiences, despite the resurgence of prime-time game shows in the United States following the successes of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and *Survivor*.[3]

Exhibiting the pageantry germane to Japanese game shows, *Iron Chef* opens with abundant pomp and extensive exposition. Accompanied by martial music and amid a backdrop of flaming torches and raw vegetables, voice-over narration sets up the program's premise: A billionaire gourmand, Chairman Kaga, has assembled Japan's finest chefs in four major cuisines and brought them to his castle, where they wait to do battle with other esteemed chefs. Each contest begins with the unveiling of a surprise "theme ingredient" that must serve as the centerpiece of each chef's various dishes. Following the unveiling, the chefs and their assistants scramble about for 60 minutes—a period condensed by more than half through editing—finally producing three to five courses each for judging. Roving cameramen monitor the chefs' maneuvers, as do the on-set hosts and guests who provide ongoing play-by-play and color commentary.

Although *Iron Chef*'s cooking sequences are stimulating and fast-paced, they adhere largely to familiar televisual codes germane to cooking programs of any national origin. Consequently, for U.S. viewers, the program's lengthy introductory segment is perhaps the program's most disorienting component, fascinating for its novelty and its outlandish visual spectacle. Unlike the hosts of game shows or cooking programs in the United States, *Iron Chef*'s charismatic master of ceremonies, Chairman Kaga, appears as a fantasy figure, dressing and acting in an exaggerated, cartoonish manner. His elaborate, vividly colored costumes typically feature such elements as ruffled shirtfronts, high collars, and elbow-length gloves, locating him visually somewhere between the entertainer Liberace and a comic-book supervillain. Kaga offers a series of pop-philosophical statements about the gravity of each program's competition, the challenger's impressive résumé, or the culinary significance of a theme ingredient. The international version presents these brief monologues in the original Japanese, with English subtitles, thus preserving the actor Katsuta Shigekatsu's arch vocal intonations. Producers of the program's English-language version retain this sound element for its apparent cultural specificity. Still, Kaga is entirely a fictional construction, his persona borrowed from the fanatical patron characters of martial arts films such as *Enter the Dragon* (1974).[4] The introductory segment's iconography—a moving, overhead shot of rows of chefs' assistants standing in semi-shadow, flaming braziers placed about the set, Kaga's theatrical gesticulations—and its punctuation by bombastic musical accompaniment creates an environment of spectacle, melodrama, and performativity far different from the more legible and earthbound zest-for-food tone of most cooking programs produced in the United States or elsewhere.

As with many exported media texts, dubbing and subtitling of foreign-language speakers account partly, and dubiously, for *Iron Chef*'s comic appeal. In the U.S. television incarnation of *Iron Chef*, all voices except those of the onscreen Chairman Kaga are dubbed into English. In the program segments in which these other speakers appear onscreen, the result mirrors the uncanny effect of an inexpensively dubbed martial arts film: East Asian subjects speak in voices that sound as if they emanate from someone of an entirely different racial or national origin. Martial arts films, because they feature the global currency of action and violence, have been the principal type of film dubbed into English since the 1960s. Other similar examples include Italy's Westerns and strongman films, but the unintentional comedy of dubbed Italian films is offset by the fact that they feature white Europeans dubbed into another European language. Japanese and Hong Kong films dubbed into English often provoke laughter among Western audiences not only because of simplified, literal, or erroneous translations but also because of the visual incongruity

of Asian actors seemingly speaking in unaccented English (or more precisely, in English with American, British, or Australian accents rather than Japanese or Chinese ones) ill-matched to their facial expressions and mouth movements. This incongruity lends itself to comic parodies that flirt with racist caricature, as in Woody Allen's *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1964) and the action comedy *Kung Pow* (2001). Notably, much of *Iron Chef*'s dubbed dialogue is presented in voice-over, in the manner of television sports commentary, so the disconnect between Asian speakers and European or North American voices occurs only in the program's introductory segments and during the tasting sessions late in each episode.

The acoustics of dubbing and translation mediate the original Japanese program in other ways. In *Iron Chef*, as in most dubbed Asian and European film exports, the acoustics of dubbing do not correspond with the spatial properties of the shooting location. Thus, with minor exceptions, all of the show's subjects speak with virtually the same resonance; the dubbed statements lack even the acoustic variation afforded by the studio set, further homogenizing them. A notable exception occurs during the program's "Judgement" finale, in which much visual and verbal fanfare precedes the contest results. During this segment of the program, a pronounced echo effect is added to the voice of the performer who dubs host Fukui Kenji, an effect that gestures toward the acoustics of the host's amplified voice on the set.

In another embellishment, scenes early in the program that introduce each challenger chef and theme ingredient feature a dubbed voice-over connoted as that of Chairman Kaga. (The voice-over occurs between segments of Kaga onscreen and uses flowery language similar to that of his subtitled statements.) Unlike the show's other vocal performers, the actor providing this voice, Duncan Hamilton, has a pronounced (and almost farcically aristocratic) British accent. These introductory segments include reverential biographies of each chef and paeans to each food item, so the vocal contrast with the North American speakers associates the fictional Kaga with English refinement.

The interplay of original and dubbed voices, combined with the intermittent visibility of the Japanese participants, produces further tensions between *Iron Chef*'s original, Japanese culture and the Western viewerships that receive it in translation. The dubbing establishes an auditory hierarchy in which North American voices literally overwhelm Japanese ones. For example, although multiple voice actors provide each episode's dubbing—the program credits list fifteen performers—these same performers supply voices for each successive episode. Consequently, each new chef or celebrity judge speaks with the same voice as the previous week's. Aside from the subtitling of Kaga, the only exception to the show's wholesale dubbing occurs during the program's tasting scenes, in which judges sample the dishes and ask questions of the chefs, who stand nearby. During these scenes, the panelists' and chefs' real voices can be heard at a low volume, below that of the English dubbing. As in translated news soundbites, for example, the original language is apparent, but the translation gains aural primacy. Through the overall sound mix and dubbing, U.S. viewers gain consistency and coherence at the expense of individuation, and the program preserves the longstanding popular stereotype of East Asians' racial homogeneity.

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Iron Chef's videography does curtail the program's audio-visual disconnect by devoting nearly all of its contest time—about half of each program—to footage of the chefs at work. During these sequences, the program eschews images of the commentators, many of whom are not particularly telegenic. (Even the young actresses who appear merely sit at a long table, giving their presence the undynamic look of a press conference.) Thus, the voices of Western speakers, who add many American idioms to their translations, overlay scenes of mostly Japanese men laboring. In addition, one cast member, sidelines reporter Ota Shinichiro, appears on screen only during the introductory segment and in post-competition interviews with the chefs. Consequently, although the dubbing preserves his Japanese-language form of address (particularly the honorific "san"), for the most part his presence is signaled only by a North American's voice.

Although programs such as *Amos 'n' Andy* long ago demonstrated the marketability of racial caricatures, stereotypes alone probably do not account for a foreign program's entry into the crowded U.S. television market. Indeed, most popular programs include a high degree of local or regional specificity; the further removed a program is from a culture's core values and styles, the more limited its appeal will be. Japanese animé has succeeded in the United States partly because of the modesty of what Colin Hoskins and Rolf Mirus term a "cultural discount," a waning of a text's appeal as it moves away from its originary culture (500–01; qtd. in

Straubhaar 202). Excessively "discounted" programming does not circulate profitably outside its producing culture. (Animé, in contrast, can be dubbed easily with domestic voices, and its characters typically carry exaggerated Westernized features such as round eyes and blond or wavy hair.) For *Iron Chef*, however, the substantial gap between its Japanese origin and its U.S. viewership seems essential to the program's appeal. If the program's cultural proximity to the United States was greater, it would closely mirror existing U.S. programming, and the lack of differentiation would limit its distinctive appeal.[5]

For U.S. viewers, then, part of *Iron Chef*'s appeal derives from the cultural illegibility of its participants and the program's apparent exaggeration. The program treats its chefs as icons of nobility and steely heroism, a veneration that appears almost inherently parodic. Even spectacle-loving gourmands might react with incredulity at the sight of Paul Prudhomme, James Beard, and Jacques Pépin posed together in costume on a raised platform. The relative unfamiliarity of the Iron Chefs intensifies the excessive qualities of the image; even regular viewers witness the chefs' exploits only within the confines of the program, not in other cultural contexts or media.[6] In addition, the program's judging panel, which usually consists of a male celebrity or intellectual, a giggling young actress, and a food critic or connoisseur, offers U.S. viewers another possible source of amusement both because of the unfamiliarity of the panelists and the apparently limitless supply of these types in Japanese popular culture.[7]

As with many international media texts that find marginal audiences in the West, the necessity of cultural decoding—and the limit of that decoding, the texts' very illegibility—provides a source of engagement and interaction. Relative to the monolithic and yet transparent products of Western media, programs such as *Iron Chef* fuel the U.S. belief in the unthreatening eccentricity of Japanese culture. This belief serves as a corrective to the fears of Asian economic dominance widely disseminated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Japan's long-lasting recession partly quelled such fears, but the circulation of texts defining Japan as a nation of lovable kooks rather than industrial titans also can comfort Americans accustomed to their nation's global cultural and economic hegemony.

The longstanding stereotype of Asian inscrutability often leads to dubious comedy or to hysterical reactions from mainstream news and entertainment media. In an article on television's representation of Judge Lance Ito, who presided over the 1995 O. J. Simpson murder trial, Brian Locke showed how the recurring television presence of a powerful Asian American resulted in a reactionary parody on *The Tonight Show*. As Locke noted, "Asians have long been coded in U.S. popular culture as a threat, a people who keep their motives and means well hidden" (247). Comic anxiety often arises to fill this gap in perception. In other cases, anxiety about perceived Japanese inscrutability is directed specifically at the nation's pop-culture exports. For example, many Western news outlets carried a story in December 1997 about Japanese children experiencing seizures as a result of the stroboscopic effects of a popular television program, the name of which was unfamiliar to nearly all Americans.[8] Some reports struck an alarmist note, but many instead highlighted the novelty of the situation. The program in question was *Pokemon*, a property of Japan's Nintendo Corporation, and within a year, *Pokemon* and its surrounding merchandise had become hugely popular in the United States.

Despite *Iron Chef*'s foundations in Japanese culture, the program functions as a cross-production of global media interests and actors. Japan's Fuji TV network produced the original, Japanese-language *Iron Chef*, which ceased serial production in 1999.[9] Canadian actors living in Japan supply most of the dubbed voices. The English-language version appears on the Food Network cable station, owned by the U.S. media company E. W. Scripps, the nation's ninth-largest newspaper publisher and the owner of ten broadcast television stations and three other cable networks. In addition, both the Japanese and international (i.e., English-language) versions of the show draw theme music from a group of American and British films, including *Glory* (1989), *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* (1993), *A Zed and Two Naughts* (1985), and most prominently, *Backdraft* (1991).[10] Although the *Iron Chef* seen in the U.S. is thus effectively an international coproduction, a pastiche of different cultures, the program's appeal depends on its deployment of Japanese—that is, foreign—cultural references. For U.S. viewers, then, the program's obvious foreignness is requisite for engagement. The U.S.-produced *Iron Chef USA*, airing on Viacom's UPN network in the fall of 2001 and featuring the exhaustively self-parodying William Shatner as host, required none of the decoding strategies of the Japanese program.[11] In the case of *Iron Chef*,

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Iron Chef Sakai

what Koichi Iwabuchi refers to as the "cultural odor" of a Japanese media text, an odor largely masked in successful Japanese pop-culture exports such as video games and animé, becomes an essential component of viewer appeal ("To Globalize," 146; see also "Marketing").

Whereas the Japaneseness of *Iron Chef* accounts for its humor and cult appeal among U.S. viewers, its presence on Food Network attests to a broader area of interest: food. Americans in particular tend to comprehend many foreign cultures principally in terms of their national cuisines, or at least the components of those cuisines that suit Westerners' palettes. In terms of North Americans' experiences of Japan, China, Italy, and Mexico, among others, Marshall McLuhan's "global village" becomes, more accurately, a global food court. Television food programming tends to focus either on in-home cooking or on restaurant dining during vacation travel; in both cases, the spectacle of food itself invites viewers to join in its consumption. Food programs offer spectacle through close-ups of completed dishes, kitchen footage of expert food preparation, and occasionally, views of restaurant interiors and urbane or picturesque vacation destinations. Indeed, much of Food Network's programming carries the aesthetic stamp of a tourism infomercial or a restaurant ad, displaying and promoting appealing locations and commodities. The very universality of food programming—its generic content and iconography—grants it a high degree of legibility across cultures. Viewers are thus encouraged to regard food as a gateway to a full cultural experience, or more troubling, as the totality of that experience, with complex cultures abridged to a few signature dishes. Of course, it is not food itself but images of food that serve as the potential gateway, as viewers have no immediate access to the tantalizing (or to some tastes, repulsive) referents on screen. This absence stimulates the capacity for interaction, however, as many viewers of food programming cook along with the chefs they watch or use the programs to develop ideas for their own cooking.[12]

The rapid pace of competition in *Iron Chef*—in addition to its competitive format, rapid editing and condensation of time, and repeated asides from judges and commentators—prevents home viewers from cooking in tandem with the chefs. Instead, the program's format is similar to a sporting event, as indicated by the somewhat aggrandizing designation of the show's set as "Kitchen Stadium." Aside from the reliance on close-ups and extreme close-ups, the program's visual style and editing also adhere to patterns more common to televised sports than to cooking shows. Occasional slow-motion replays highlight particularly dexterous handling of cooking pans or ingredients, for example. The program also uses multiple handheld video cameras to shoot the chefs and their assistants in action, using medium shots of the men working and many close-ups and zoom shots of ingredients being prepared. Like other cooking shows, *Iron Chef* does favor high-angle shots of its showcased foods, created by cameramen standing above tables or counters with lenses pointed down. During the cooking segments, the only stationary camera shots are low-angle views of the chefs at the cutting board, shot with a wide-angle lens, offering a sort of vegetable's-eye view of the action. The show uses four cameras to tape the chefs and their assistants in competition, two for each separate kitchen, so that many medium shots include views of another cameramen in the background. Shifting camera views, along with frequent camera movement, contribute to an aesthetic of mobility and immediacy that counterbalances the show's otherwise polished production values.

Iron Chef's patterns of shot selection, editing, and dialogue lend the program substantial formal and narrative coherence, although considerable mediation among the program's levels of imagery and discourse occurs as well. To provide textual stability and coherence, voice-overs of the commentators and guests accompany shots of the food preparation, typically with the group speculating about the nature of dishes being prepared or zealously exclaiming their desires to taste the finished products. Also for coherence, the cooking portion of the program concludes with still photographs of each chef's set of prepared dishes. The principle of redundancy is at work

The panel of judges

Chairman Kaga introduces the theme ingredient.

here: Varied close-up views of gourmet foods stimulate the appetites of viewers, especially those drawn to Food Network's principal content (that is, traditional food programming rather than unconventional hybrid formats imported from other countries), and the commentators' exclamations reinforce the shots' aesthetic and gustatory appeals.

Many degrees of mediation occur as well, however: The on-site commentators, who are seated at some distance from the cooking area, respond to shots of food presumably shown on video monitors. Then, during post-production, vocal performers dub the panelists' statements in English, adding embellishments to guide or reinforce English-speaking viewers' reactions. A process of culinary translation is involved as well, if only in the connotations of Asian-inflected dishes made legible to Western viewers.[13] Although most of the dubbing actors are Canadian (and few, if any, are of Japanese descent), most have lived and worked in Japan for many years, so they are presumably familiar with the taste preferences of Japanese natives. Consequently, their translations may be regarded as more sensitive to cultural distinctions than translations provided by actors residing outside Japan. Together, the show's levels of discourse contribute to an emphasis on commodification and consumption.[14] *Iron Chef* celebrates culinary agility and artistry through a backdrop of the fantastic, but its real-world referent is expensive dining, which the program implicitly promotes.

The program foregrounds not only capitalist, consumerist values but also the notion of a competitive trial as a site for individual and national achievement. The visual emphasis on competition and affiliation includes recurring graphics showing each chef's country of origin or the national cuisine in which he specializes. In addition, sports references abound in the English translations of commentator Fukui Kenji, who describes contestants' movements; speculates on their strategies, relative exertion levels, and mental states; and reminds viewers of the ongoing countdown, which is also reinforced by a prominent graphic at screen left showing the time remaining for the contest. A recorded, amplified female voice is also heard periodically, announcing the time remaining. The sound of the voice, heard in English, does approximate the acoustic properties of the *Iron Chef* soundstage, but this reverberation is presumably an effect added during post-production. The program constructs the act of cooking not only as an art and a form of service but also as a test of strength, speed, endurance, and mental dexterity (and, to a less visible extent, management, as each chef must efficiently direct a team of cooking assistants). The representation of the kitchen as the stage for physical and strategic tri-

als links the program to Western competitive values promoted in sports, business, and other forums. The reconfiguration of the kitchen, the traditional location for "woman's work," as a space for the deployment of artistic and physical energies, conventional markers of masculinity, also merits investigation. All of the Iron Chefs are male, as are the majority of the challengers. (Julia Child and Nigella Lawson notwithstanding, the vast majority of high-profile chefs worldwide, whether restaurateurs or television personalities, are men.) Typically, the program's cast includes only one woman: a guest actress or a food critic. One episode carries a verbal reference to an Iron Chef's "humiliating loss to a woman," and although the program identifies each defeat for the touted Iron Chefs as a loss of face, the defeat by a woman seems particularly crushing in the martial *Iron Chef* world. Still, the time-driven, competitive emphasis perhaps obscures the program's foundation of Japanese modesty, by which the chefs' work contributes not to individual glory but to a collective benefit, either for the fortunate contest judges or the reputation of Chairman Kaga's fictitious "Gourmet Academy," which the Iron Chefs represent.

With regard to the phenomenon of media globalization, one can interpret the repackaging of the Japanese *Iron Chef* program for international, and particularly U.S., audiences in many ways. Food Network's broadcasts of the program's so-called international version might be understood as a Westernization of the Japanese original, diluting its local specificity. Some American critics have preferred the show's original version, which was broadcast for a short time in some urban markets in unsubtitled Japanese.[15] The combination of limited availability and the lack of any translation prevented the program from gaining a measurable following among non-Japanese speakers. Thus, the international version, which is still principally a Japanese media production, uses dubbing as a form of acculturation, adapting Japanese cultural codes to Western viewing habits and worldviews. Although the effect of this dubbing is problematic because of its perhaps unintentional hilarity, dubbing facilitates the program's transmission among English-speaking audiences. (Moreover, the show's proliferation of speaking voices would be virtually impossible to subtitle coherently.)

By granting non-Japanese speakers access to a dynamic text of Japanese popular culture, Food Network could be viewed as a cultural ambassador.[16] However, the program's international broadcasts clearly serve the economic interests of both Japan's Fuji TV and the U.S.'s Scripps Company, Food Network's parent. The shared profiteering reflects Iwabuchi's argument about Japanese media: "the rise of non-Western transnational media corporations in the global arena has not so much countered long-standing West-centric power relations as coopted it by joining the alliance. De-centralization of Western cultural hegemony," he continues, "is accompanied by the re-centralization of the still West-dominated cooperative transnational media system" ("To Globalize," 158). Indeed, most of the U.S. television networks that broadcast media texts produced overseas are properties of what *The Nation* calls the "Big Ten" multinational media conglomerates: General Electric and other corporations share ownership of Bravo and the Independent Film Channel; Disney, GE, and the smaller Hearst corporation co-own the A&E network; and even the International Channel is owned by the U.S.–based Liberty Media.[17] However, it bears noting that Scripps and Food Network actually fall outside of this "Big Ten." Although neither qualifies as an alternative media source, their broadcast of *Iron Chef* to U.S. viewers constitutes a relatively rare case of "contra-flow," a reverse export back into the epicenter of media imperialism (Boyd-Barrett and Thussu; cited in Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham 23). Contrary to the visible phenomenon of U.S. texts saturating international markets, the transmission of Asian media into the United States presents opportunities for engagement with a subordinate culture. Members of a dominant culture translate such texts into their own cultural schema in ways—such as through derision or unconscious racism—that uncomfortably reinforce dominant ideology. Nevertheless, in an era of continued xenophobia, the program does transmit a Japanese version of Japan and its culture. By highlighting Western viewers' unfamiliarity with that culture, the program can produce dismissiveness or ridicule, but also worthwhile cultural engagement.

NOTES

1. Paul S. N. Lee, for example, argues that "[g]lobal television has been assigned too important a role in the process of globalization and the formation of a global culture" (196). See also John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka, and Stuart Cunningham's "Peripheral Vision," in which the authors argue for a consideration of regional transmission of media texts rather than the "one-way street" model of U.S. cultural imperialism prevalent in communications scholarship into the 1980s.

2. On media exports within Asia, see Su and Chen.

3. In "Drama and Entertainment," Richard Paterson observes that game shows and variety shows are the most popular form of programming on Japanese television (65). For recent news characteristics of U.S. media coverage of Japanese pop culture, see "Japanese Game Show Antics Test TV Limits."

4. In this Hong Kong film, for example, Bruce Lee journeys to a secret island where a reclusive mastermind uses his vast personal fortune to amass an army of fighting men and to stage a series of martial arts contests. *Iron Chef* simply substitutes food for fisticuffs.

5. For example, given U.S. television audiences' apparent preferences for programs in English and featuring white performers, Japan's successful family dramas will probably not appear on U.S. cable stations in the foreseeable future. Although the program format may be conventionally appealing, the proliferation of U.S. programs in the genre precludes the importation of a similar program from a non-English speaking country (and with a different racial heritage). As Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham argue, "[t]he capacity for peripheral countries to export their programmes across diverse markets is to some extent based on their substitutability or non-substitutability for U.S. material" (20).

6. *Iron Chef* cross-promotions include many products sold principally in Japan—food products and kitchenware, clothing, souvenir pins, and the like. In the U.S., Food Network sells some *Iron Chef* merchandise online, the Costco discount-supermarket chain sells an *Iron Chef* sauce, and some major book chains carry a licensed *Iron Chef* book. One Iron Chef also operates an upscale restaurant in New York City, and the program has featured celebrity U.S. chefs as challengers, including in one notorious episode the flamboyant Bobby Flay. Nevertheless, aside from a small group of online fan forums and occasional articles in national print media, the program's personalities, rules, and iconography have not saturated U.S. culture.

7. Reversing the dynamic, one could imagine Asian TV viewers in the 1970s laughing uproariously at a dubbed version of *The Hollywood Squares*. For detailed information about the program's recurring judges, see "The Hall of Judges" on the "Iron Chef Compendium" Web site.

8. See, for example, Sullivan.

9. Production information comes from the "Iron Chef Compendium" Web site, an exhaustive catalog of fan-produced information about the program's multiple formats. See, in particular, the FAQ page.

10. *Iron Chef* producers may have chosen the *Backdraft* theme to accentuate the program's extensive flame imagery, which includes not only that appearing during cooking but also flaming braziers shown onstage during the opening ceremony and a recurring video image of flames shown with the program title that leads into and out of commercial breaks. Still, the *Backdraft* score, known for its applicability to many situations, has been licensed for use in numerous other media texts, particularly coming-attractions trailers for Hollywood films. (On this point, see Sella.)

11. *Iron Chef USA* was poorly received by critics. See Goodman for a representative review.

12. Instructional cooking programs, such as Julia Child's network program or Food Network's *Emeril Live*, regularly use this appeal, directly addressing the camera and guiding viewers through the production of a complete dish or meal.

13. Although each Iron Chef specializes in a different national cuisine—Japanese, Chinese, French, and Italian—only "Iron Chef Chinese" Chen Kenichi is himself Chinese, whereas the others are of Japanese descent.

14. Lee questions global television's capacity to alter entrenched cultural traditions, arguing that "[i]t is doubtful if global television contains commodification values all the time, and if it can persuade people to commodify every aspect of their everyday practices" (196). Nevertheless, as Lee would likely concede, the inherent promotion of consumption in *Iron Chef* and countless other media texts compellingly reinforces capitalist values.

15. Some stations first carried the unsubtitled, Japanese-language version. An English-subtitled version appeared later but was removed from circulation before Food Network began broadcasting the dubbed program. Tim Goodman decries the show's permutations: "First there was the taking away of the series, then there was the Food Network version that added hideous dubbing."

16. Sinclair, Jacka, and Cunningham note that "[m]any nations, both core and peripheral, place special importance on the international profile they can establish with their audiovisual exports" (21).

17. "The Big Ten" also shows that the Spanish-language Telemundo network is a property of a multinational corporation; General Electric completed its acquisition of the network in April 2002.

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