
The Globalization of Japanese Popular Culture

Globalization of the popular culture entails the examination of the ongoing evolution from a new and challenging perspective, through taking a keen observation of the movements of the popular culture into and out of Japan. From a multidisciplinary approach, scholars have noted that the changing nature of Japanese popular culture lies in its engagement with globalization. The crucial interaction between the flows of Japanese popular culture and the constant development of globalization can be illustrated by presenting the current, confronting, and sometimes controversial insights into many forms of Japanese popular culture emerging within the global context. Apparently, there is a specific part of the Japanese culture that gets popularized and accepted by the world because of several reasons. The Japanese culture also happens to become popular because of several reasons surrounding the anime and manga cultural aspects.

Parts of Japanese Culture that gets Popularized and Accepted Globally

The Japanese culture is a composition of many aspects, a factor that has greatly contributed to its popularization globally. The culture consists of anime, manga, movie and series of derivative products. However, the aspect of anime is the mainstream of soft power of the Japanese culture that has led to its popularization. Although the Westerners consider animation as an entertainment feature that is largely associated with children, it is a major aspect of Japanese culture that has led to its popularization. The form of entertainment has built a known record in the Japanese media, therefore popularizing the entire culture even as the media continually develops.

Apparently, the anime aspect of the Japanese culture had been in existence from several years back when the media strongly embraced the form of entertainment. For instance, the Japanese studio releases in 1988 were approximately 40 percent animated. The trend in animating studio releases constantly increased till 1999 when approximately half of the releases were animated. Animation as a component of the Japanese culture was, therefore, popularized when television stations also began creating its impact to viewers throughout the day. The animation of television programs from morning to midnight is an indication of the anime culture of the Japanese being accepted by the viewers of such television stations (Napier, 2005, p. 15).

Before the popularization of the anime culture of the Japanese, the culture of live action and cinema was the widely known alternative to child entertainment. The popularization and

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acceptance of the anime culture in Japan was indicated by the decline in the Japanese film industry, which was widely accepted globally in the 1950s and 1960s. The decade was also marked as that of film masterpieces exemplified in artistic works such as those of Kurosawa Akira and Mizoguchi Kenji. The decade was clearly noted as one whereby film attendance was at its peak. The film attendance, as well as the great film masterpieces, produced between 1950 and 1960 is an explanation enough for the popularization and acceptance of live-action cinema culture in Japan. Due to increasing globalization in the entertainment industry, there has been an increase in competition between local television production and American imports. The existence of American imports in Japan is a proof that the Western world is aware of, and has accepted the existence of film culture in Japan; thus it has identified the need to compete the dominant accepted culture in the Asian continent. The film has continued to be animated as a unique aspect to viewers globally (Napier, 2005, p 16).

The anime culture was imitated from the Western world in 1909 when animated film started appearing in the Japanese media. The culture of animation, being widely used by nations in the Western World, was a motivation to the Japanese to start their animated films that later thronged the entertainment industry. Although the Western World produced animated films for the entertainment of children, it's determination to introduce the culture in Japan and later import other forms of film to Japan shows the global acceptance of the anime culture in Japan. The Western World is believed to be the mother of all innovations globally; thus its support for the anime culture is an expression of the global support for the entertainment form.

The Japanese anime popular culture is compared to the other popular culture of the American people; the pop culture. Although many aspects of the Japanese culture such as the anime, Karaoke contests, and ramen noodle initially seemed like newcomers to the global marketplace, they are today popular and known worldwide. Historical records indicate that the popularization of the Japanese culture never occurred overnight or even over the past two decades when the Japanese creations flooded global media. The culture is noted to have grown from the time the Western World brought new experience to the people of Japan. The Japanese popular culture is evidently an imitation and development of some innovations that the Western World took to Japan. Today, Japanese mass entertainment, a representation of the anime culture in Japan, has attracted international audiences due to its unique cultural aspects. Diversity is probably the most conspicuous feature of the Japanese popular culture; thus proving its worldwide acceptance (Tsuitsui, n.d. p. 5).

Reasons why the Japanese Culture is Popular in the World

The popular anime culture in Japan became popular since the animated films that were aired for television viewing were produced by studios that were popular for their production of live-action films. Studios such as Toei became a factor for the popularization of the famous Japanese

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culture since they exposed the anime culture to producers who came from all walks of life to get the quality production that would attract a wide market. Moreover, the studios ensured that the animated films were well edited and of high quality to attract several viewers globally.

The Japanese anime culture became popular globally because the first production that was aired for television was of great quality and features. The television series “Osamu Tezuka’s Legendary Astro Boy” was an immediate success in the history of Japan due to its perfect and exciting story line. The first successful production of the animated film paved the way for several other productions that later achieved the popularity of the anime culture of Japan. The graphic design, as well as the color series of the first animated film, became a challenge to the live-action cinema that was dominating the entertainment industry. The possibility to blend the anime culture with pleasing graphic designs and colors motivated producers; hence the culture was well-spread since it was represented in more exciting and entertaining forms.

The consecutive production of good quality animated films, which immediately became major hits in the entertainment industry, was a factor that led to the popularization of the popular Japanese culture. The constant production of animated film series in Japan was a major reason for the popularity of the anime culture by the late 1960s when the animated television series were securely established in Japan. The famous studios in Japan were also strong admirers of Disney Animation, a factor that led to the production of animated films that would be widely accepted outside Japan. The Japanese animation was aware of the Animation in the Western World, more so the United States of America. The awareness on the existing animation in the globe was a factor that enabled producers to create animated films of high quality, similar to those produced outside Japan, but in a different direction. The animated films were produced for adult orientation as well as other more complex story lines in a complex overall structure. The popular Japanese culture was, therefore, well spread in the country since the animated film production was for both junior and adult orientation. The production of animated films that were unique in their structure was a favorable factor that contributed to the globalization of the popular Japanese culture globally. The adult orientation not only gave the adults in Japan an opportunity to learn more about the anime culture but also led to the spread of the knowledge across the globe. Many adults in the entire world got to watch the animated films since they were of adult orientation, a factor that led to the popularization of the Japanese culture globally (Napier, 2015, p. 17).

The fact that the animation industry in Japan was well-connected with the television industry led to the attraction of a lot of talented people, who proceeded with the popularization of the Japanese culture. In the mid-1960s, there was increasing television popularity in Japan; hence more talented artists who had been denied opportunities by the previous dominant live-cinema were offered chances to build their skills. The young and talented artists were ambitious to develop their career in entertainment; hence they managed to help grow the popular anime

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culture of Japan.

How the Japanese Culture Becomes Popular Globally

The Japanese culture of anime and manga exercise considerably wider influence in the Japanese society than the American comics and animation. By having a wider influence in the society, the Japanese culture of manga and anime becomes popular globally since the two cultures have a relation that works towards influencing the cultures in the society. The Japanese cultures of anime and manga have a varied subject matter, therefore, covering a dazzling range of topics. The Japanese culture covers a wide range of topics that is relevant for people of different ages globally. The culture ensures the production of child-oriented stories, club stories aimed at educating adolescents, as well as stories that are relevant for the adult population in the whole world. The Japanese culture, therefore, gets popular globally when the anime and manga cultures are represented in works of art that are widely used by children, adolescents, and adults globally (Napier, 2005, p. 19).

The Japanese culture of manga happens to influence a large number of people in the society by providing broad information that is for the interest of many people. Data on the usage of reading materials in Japan indicate that about 40 percent of published material is in the form of manga. It is also factual that comics in Japan have been fully pledged as a medium of expression because of its wide range of uses. The culture ensures that it touches on alarming issues in the contemporary society that affect everyone in the society. The visual style of connection that is brought about by anime and manga has attracted wide audiences since it is considered that anime is a kind of animated comic strip. The existing similarities between anime, and manga, therefore, are an added advantage for the popularity of the Japanese culture.

The Japanese culture is rapidly getting popular since anime and manga media are linked in their formation of stories. In most cases, anime are based on stories that had appeared in manga. The media in Japanese popular culture, therefore, creates an aspect of repletion, thou the anime versions tend to be somehow different from the original version of the stories. The fact that both media in the Japanese culture share the same heritage is a privilege in popularizing the Japanese culture. Today's animators in Japan are consciously influenced by the fact that the tidal wave of Western influence is almost being neutralized by the connection between anime and manga in Japanese culture. In the contemporary Japanese society, animators are no longer motivated to create scenes that represent bizarre and macabre as it was the case in the nineteenth century. The media has continually promoted Japanese culture by responding to the historical challenge of exposing bizarre images to the public. Embracing the art of other lands and responding to the realm of imagination has been significant in popularizing the Japanese culture globally (Napier, 2005, p. 21).

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The Japanese culture is becoming popular through its participation in global culture. The anime-media in Japanese culture influences and is influenced by a plethora of Western cultural products. In the real sense it is difficult to ignore the constant cross-pollination popular cultural borrowing that complicate and enrich anime texts. The artistic work done by young Japanese artists pay generous and excessive scrupulous homage to diverse sources worldwide. The cross-pollination between the Japanese culture and the western cultural texts is constantly leading to a Japanese culture that is no longer composed of pure Japanese practices. The culture is continuously being known globally for its inclusive nature. The ability of the elements of Japanese culture to collide and mutate has led to the existence of anime and manga at a nexus point in global culture (Napier, 2005, p. 22).

The Japanese culture is becoming popular globally because the mass media in Japan has been persistent in the provision of animated images that include the manga and anime. Such aspects of the Japanese culture have been significant in shaping the identity of modern women. The approach of using Japanese anime in studying the role of women in the society is useful for several reasons, a factor that has led to the popularization of the culture since it cares about the position of women in the society.

The culture serves to reflect and inspire changes in the Japanese society as identified when observing the changes and themes in anime. The inclusion of the role of women in the society is important in understanding the dynamics of the Japanese society and culture. The Japanese animation has been playing a critical role in catering specifically for female tastes. The inclusion in Japanese animation is a method that has seen the culture become popular and accepted worldwide. Different from the computer graphics production in the United States where animated films are aimed at young boys, the Japanese animation industry takes into consideration both sexes across a wide age group (Martinez, 1998).

In conclusion, the global popularization of the Japanese cultural products is a significant development in the globe's cultural landscape in the contemporary society. Japanese popular culture has eventually become an integral part of the global culture through the artistic works that have been shared globally through the television network. The Japanese culture has been a rival to the American culture, although it is currently being popularized and accepted more than its American counterpart.

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