Creating the Chinese Myth: the Tug of War of Sino- Japanese Soft Power in China's Comics Market

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Abstract

This paper was based upon a study of a Hong Kong-based comic enterprise entering the PRC comics market. By taking the advantages of cross-border production in Suzhou and Shenzhen, the enterprise is supposed to produce comic content related to Chinese mythic stories in the direction of the mainland cultural authority. Such a maneuver implies (1) eliminating the provincial differences on the tastes of the contents and capturing the wider, barely literate, and rural audiences, and (2) diluting and even dispelling the cultural influences of manga and anime in China pointing to any disguised Japanese expansionism perceived as "soft power". Drawing upon analyses by Ronald Robertson and Naoki Sakai, we suggest the interactive dynamics of such "soft power" of China and Japan lies in the fundamental question of inter-state rivalry and/or reconciliation in imitation of western modernity, and more precisely, in the politics of cultural nationalism.

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Introduction

In May 2007, the Japanese Foreign Minister Aso Taro furthers his plans and announces to establish International Manga Award run by the Japan Foundation. Coincidentally, the Award was conferred on a Hong Kong comic illustrator who produced the whole series of Sun Tze's *The Strategies of War*. However, the motive on advocating such a blend of comic diplomacy was being questioned by neightbouring Asian countries as a disguised act of Japanese expansionism. In view of Aso Taro, together with his political ally Ishihara Shintarō on the right wing, such a policy will add values and strengthen the existing civic exchanges as to improving Nippon-Chinese relations. However, Ishihara Shintarō, the Mayor in Tokyo and an unswerving supporter of Japanese militarism after the WWII, is being overtly discredited by South Korea and China for his extremist positions in plainly denying the Nanking massacre in 1941 and deleting any historical descriptions of Sino-Japanese war in secondary school textbooks. His support on comic diplomacy appears like a wolf draping in a sheep's skin.

Despite the ice-breaking visit of the People Republic of China (PRC) Premier Wen Jiabao in Japan in April 2007, the Chinese officials and civilians have so long been agitated at the ambivalent and dodging attitudes of right-winged politicians who are leading the Japanese government, because such attitudes are prone to war memories and agonies of Chinese civilians, especially the elder generations. The most notorious act *de facto* was the Prime Ministers of Japanese paid official visits to Yasukuni Shrines, in which the shrines of the A-class Japanese war criminals were displayed and worshipped. China is faced with a dilemma right here: despite the closer ties in offshore production and trade partnership between China and Japan (Kenichi Ohmae would definitely confirm this importance, especially the production-information complex in the Pearl River Delta), the Japanese disguised positions in the historical question of Sino-Japanese War and the imagined framework of the Greater Asian Co-sphere equivalent to the British Commonwealth have caused many obstacles towards normalization of Sino-Japanese relations. Unfortunately, according to the *Report on Development of China's Cultural Industry* (2006), as the China authorities have known that around 73% nationwide broadcasting show-time allotted for animated cartoons is Japanese, the production and distribution of Japanese comics (ibid. 197). Japanese animated cartoons then becomes an issue that is inevitably geared to a cultural politics in covert responses to Aso Taro's comic diplomacy.

Moreover, what is more revealing is the particular inter-state dynamics that lies in the context of cultural appropriations of Japanese comics in parallel with Sino-Japanese relations and cultural exchanges. Japan, on the one hand, expands her soft power when is faced with the rise of China as economic superpower. China, on the other, is very cautious on Japan for her dodging positions in the crimes of Sino-Japanese War. The crux of this inter-state tension was raised by Roland Robertson, who depicts the different paths to western modernity of China and Japan from their nostalgias (Robertson, 1992: 149). Japan after Meiji restoration adopted a more progressive approach to westernise institutions and capitalism. Chinese, on the other, stagnated in the debates of traditions and modernisation, but she made a detour to Leninist-Marxist-Maoist trilogy as an

alternative to the capitalist pathway (Dirlik, 2005). The dynamics here plots both China and Japan in their search of their own cultural and national identities: imitation, success, drawbacks, and failures of western modernity in their responses of the West.

The national construction and identities of both China and Japan lie in these major differences in their responses to the projects of western modernity. Specifically, Japan was recognised as an exemplar of a non-western modernised country in the West, whilst China has not till the turn of the millennium. Japanese was once a subject of subjugated representations of the Orient in western media, but her technological sophistications and superiority has been comparable to the United States in the last thirty years. As a consequence, the West cannot hold the presumption that 'Japan can no longer be handled simply as an imitator or mimic of Western modernity' (Morley and Robins, 1995: 173). At this stage, the popularity of Japanese pop cultures, including magma and anime, was perceived by other Asian countries as Japanisation, a word equivalent to a threat, in parallel with the Japanese economic expansion since 1980s', which reverberated the haunting ghosts of Japanese militarism in WWII (Befu, 2003: 9). Japan becomes a nation, like America, producing comics which project and represent cultural other-ness or othering to the 'technologically less advanced', 'backward', and 'communist China'. The interplay of this soft power in this Sino-Japanese complex comes to terms with "our Asias" and "our Asians" within Asia in multilateral and multiple constructions, not only 'our Asians' with a cultural referent to the West (Spivak, forthcoming).

We deal with two issues in the backdrop of this inter-state cultural politics of Japanese comics. First, we keep track of an on-going study of a Hong Kong–based comic enterprise. What was originally at issue is the industrial location, cross border production and distribution of comics as a sector of cultural industries by making mythical stories of Chinese Civilisation (cf. Scott, 2000). However, we identify the lateral issue that the conditional entry of this enterprise in the Chinese comic markets is an attempt to dilute and dispel populaces and influences of Japanese comics, as Japan did this by creating *Deraemon* in dispelling the cultural influence of American cartoons in Japan, for instance, *the Popeye Sailor Man* (Allison, 2003) However, this does not necessarily mean the worldwide distribution and trade of Japanese magma and anime has the clear geographical referent of Japan, because Japanese exports to other countries repudiate any reverberations of "wartime-memories" (Allison, 2000: 70, 86). In the similar way, this dispel was a self-assertion of a national identity being resistant to any foreign and colonizing influences as China is now attempting to dilute any Japanese anime and magma in her cultural markets. The production and contents of comics are not only an issue of cultural globalization: it further suggests there is an inter-state dynamics of historical and national identity still being explored and questioned.

Japanese Comics in China

The Japanese comics, or manga, was originated from a series of hand-drawn graphic exaggerations from otsu-e and the toba-e in the late Edo period (1600-1868) and adopted in newspapers and magazines during the Taisho period (1912-26). After the WWII, the late Japanese guru Tezuka Osamu produced prolific comic book series with storylines and themes and 'cinematic techniques' inspired by his American counterpart Will Eisner and *Superman*, starting from his Astro Boy and set out the present format of Japanese comic books (Schodt, 1996: 25; Richie, 2003: 102). Frederik Schodt, the expert on Japan comics, highlights the characters of manga:

'…manga are the direct descendants of popular art… in the late Edo period (1600-1867), art in which exaggerated sexuality and stylised violence – scenes of samurai disembowelling themselves and bloodspatters –were a standard feature (Schodt, 1996: 50).'

The first reception and Japanese comics was dated back to early 1980s' just after the initiation of the 'open door' policies and China started to broadcast *Astro Boy* and the *Volley Ball Girls*. The popularity of Japanese anime and manga had established gradually and extensively to the nationwide audiences as *Doraemon*, *Dragon Ball*, *Ramma ½* and *City Hunter* became popular in early 1990s'. PRC government authorities were well aware of the worrying popularity and market shares of Japanese anime and manga and devised the project 5155 initiated by the State Council and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The initiative offered a blueprint to the overall planning and infrastructure of nurturing domestic production and development of animations, but the project came to demise for some untold or unknown reasons. Meanwhile, pirate copies of Japanese manga and anime infringing copyrights were not and have not been under control in copying and distributions in China (Wang, 2005: 29-30). The markets of comic books in China are an admixture of direct copying and domestic comics mimicking Japanese manga. In 1995, the Central Government of PRC issued directives to ban the imports of manga. Paradoxically, she offered the minimal support in domestic production and content creation of comic books. The ban was then waived later on, and pirate copies flooded into the markets again on demand (ibid. 20).

Apart from the weak infrastructures in copyright protection, creative professionals and distribution channels of comic book markets in China, it is noticeable that the cultural familiarity in Japanese manga takes the following advantages of gaining nationwide popularity. Yang Wang points out that there is an asymmetry of text and images within which the narration follows a series of images, or boxes; text is only a supplement that extends the sounds and the meanings of images (ibid. 32). The key to the success, firstly as Frederik Schodt highlights, is the adoption of Chinese characters as part of the Japanese language system retains the impact of communication in manga with lowering cultural barriers. Secondly, pictographs are commonly found in both Chinese and Japanese and reinforce the cinematic effects as metonyms (Schodt, 1983: 25). In spite of the growing popularity of Japanese manga in China, the influences of Japanese manga are

circumvented by (1) the censorship system of comics in China, and (2) the patriotic motives that lead the development of domestic comics. These lay the backdrop of our study of a Hong Kong based comic enterprise being invited to entry the markets in China and the ethnographic details will be described later.

Censorship of Imported Comic Books and Patriotism

Media control is strict and arbitrary in the PRC. Unlike Hong Kong and Japan in which publication is a matter of both public and private, only state-owned organizations have the right to publish or broadcast information to the general public in the PRC. Although China follows the path of economic modernisation by marketisation, the Chinese legal system offers no substantive protection except lip services to the freedom of speech and privacy. There is no clear-cut boundary between 'censorship' and 'regulations', and 'state scrutiny' and 'personal privacy'. Therefore, there are theoretically and practically no limits to the state power adhered to the doctrines of Leninist ideology (Qiu, 2004: 110).

Any materials in any media to be publicised or published in China should undergo the formal applications to the approvals of state authorities in the PRC before as required. The organizations in charge of state censorship are the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), which is responsible for publishing of books, magazines, newspapers and other forms of textual media; the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), broadcasting in radio channels, cinemas and TV stations. Under this mechanism, the government monitors the mass media in the top-down approach with a hierarchical structure from the levels of government departments to state-owned media, then to private companies and individuals.

The state censorship vested by state authorities usually covers areas of politics, pornography, superstition, violence and many other tissues related to the morality of the society. The list could be very exhaustive and in the current climates of political expeditions. The censorship is in fact an "internal examination" conducted in the consensus *fait accompli* between the government departments and the state-owned media. To get the best chance for survival in China's cultural market, a foreign company should find a local or provincial partner who is familiar with the hurdles and traps of the censorship exercise and establishes solid connections with state authorities.

To gain the maximum chance of success in passing the censorship, all the copyrights of publications are wholly or jointly owned by the state-owned publishers. In other words, all books are published under the name of the state-owned publishers, otherwise classified as illegal. To achieve this, a producer of any media wanting its publications to be published in China first approaches a local publisher for partnership or joint ventures. The editors in the local publisher review all the book contents carefully, and then tell the producer which visual and/or textual contents have to be revised to suit for the criteria and the requirements set by the GAPP, and the producer has to follow accordingly.

Basically, the central and provincial governments in the PRC discourage the introduction of foreign comics and animations. They doubt whether the foreign, imported comic books and animations would contain parts of contents that are considered as unhealthy, morally degrading, or in their terms, 'spiritual contamination' for children. Besides the general characteristics of pornography and violence in Japanese manga, only a few of them, such as *Doraemon* and *Detective Conan*, are accepted and approved for publishing. Even the *Shōnen manga* (Boys' Comics) like *Dragonball*, a story of cosmos fighters by mimicking the famous Chinese fiction, *the Journey to the West*, and *Saint Seiya*, fighters in the mimicry of the Greek Goddess Athena, are treated as adult-oriented in the PRC and classified as not suitable for children. Yet, the children can get in touch of these officially banned comics from and in Hong Kong, in which these comics books are circulated and sold without censors.

The ban and restrictions of foreign comics in China are fuelled by national sentiments against any plotted motives of foreign aggressions. As Article 21 of *Comments on Developing Country's Film, Television and Animations Industry* (2004) of SARFT reads, the Central People's Government reminds the state-owned media of 'resisting corrupted thought and the ideological invasion of the foreign', and 'extinguish bad tastes and vulgar content.' Article 21 also affirms the principle of independence of cultural production and distribution of cultural products for the primary purpose of national building, and China is supposed to 'be self-reliant, suitable for China (*ibid*).' Therefore the *raison d'stat* is not only any advocacy of public morals and parenting, but also a state's modernistion programme to block any foreign influences pending to any means of subversions and successions of central and provincial governments. Despite the tough and tedious control of comics in the PRC, the efficiency to the enforcements of censorship of any imported media is discounted by the uncontrolled pirate copies in the markets.

Creating Chinese Myths: Partnering with a Hong Kong Comic Enterprise

Taking the huge influx and circulations of pirate copies of comics into primary considerations, the governments of the PRC discern the problem of poor qualities in content and poor techniques in drawings. They try hard to find domestic substitutes to effectively dispel Japanese comics. Yang Wang confirmed the problem in his small-scale response survey in Wuhan school children. In his survey, up to 70 % of 110 total respondents do not care about the content of Japanese manga that is against patriotism. Moreover, tight censorship and legislations to ban any circulation and distribution of Japanese magma, and broadcast of Japanese anime, are not supported. Student respondents plainly deny the linkage between comics and patriotism and 'culture should not be bound by with nationality (Wang, 2005: 51-2).' Although the survey did not claim any authority in generalising nationwide responses, it unanimously validates respondents' preference on Japanese rather than domestic comics and animations.

The backdrop brings a Hong Kong-based comic enterprise on the stage, as state authorities anticipate its entry into the comics and animations markets in the PRC. GAPP and SARFT allow the state-owned media, the only form of media corporations operated

in the PRC, to pair up with private enterprises and agencies in Hong Kong for co-production. One of the authors interviewed one of the bosses of this Hong Kong-based enterprise which is the first establishment entering into the PRC comics market by pairing up the state-owned media and other agencies. As the interviewee remarked, the content of co-production should fulfill the 'Six Criteria' set by the SARFT: Chinese Characteristics, Chinese Stories, Chinese Images, Chinese Style, Chinese Manners and Chinese Spirit.'

The establishment was set up in the 1960s' and produced martial-art titles with a rendition of Chinese Kung Fu. Now the enterprise is a publisher with over 120 local titles, and maintains publishing 7 local titles weekly or bi-weekly. For over a decade, the enterprise has bought copyrights of around 400 Japanese comic titles and translates them in Chinese with authorization. With a core team of experienced illustrators and marketing staff, this enterprise is supposed to be the best candidate of co-production. As the interviewed boss of the enterprise, Mr. W, succinctly highlights the competitive advantages of his enterprise: Hong Kong comics are good at the richness of full-colour printing, very detailed graphics; while Japanese comics are printed on monochrome paper in black, white and shaded. However, Japan can accommodate a very large size of readers with different varieties of themes and titles suited for different publics and tastes. When compared with Japanese and Hong Kong comics, Chinese locally produced comics are relatively deplorable in content and poor in drawings because of a lack of investment and training for comic illustrators.

The entry to the PRC comic markets is a matter of size in populations: the 13 billion in China compared with 6.67 million in Hong Kong. Back to 1994, the enterprise made the first attempt to publish a title on the sagas of Chinese emperors to pass the censorship. However, with the intensive reportage on and the uncontrolled exposure of the Deng Xiao-ping's death, the PRC authorities decided to ban all Hong Kong media circulated in the PRC including television, newspapers and comics books in 1996. The turn of the political climate in the PRC applied a brake on the enterprise's original plan entering the PRC comic markets. Yet, quite unanticipated, the enterprise came up with the idea of making zinc-alloy-molded weapon models, which appear in the highlights of the themes in comics, as souvenirs in Hong Kong and Guangzhou comic expos. This marketing strategy has been proved successful. Being faced with rocketing demands, the enterprise outsourced manufactures of souvenirs to plants in the Pearl River Delta and improved its revenues by taking advantages of cheap labour wages and quick production in Shenzhen. The idea is indeed innovative, and supplements the discussion of the thingification of media in the global cultural industry (Lash and Lury, 2007: 85-108). The so-called derivative products, which the enterprise identifies as a new fountain of income, has been in the pipeline and targeted at 300 millions of mainland children. That creates definitely a new market because insofar Chinese state-owned broadcasting channels have only bought the copyrights of foreign animations mainly from America and Japan, but the broadcast, in fact, does not generate lucrative profits.

In 2006, the co-production came to fruition as the Hong Kong based enterprises announced a large project to produce a series of animations with the contents inspired by

the Chinese mythology, and based upon the enterprise's previous storylines of comic production in Hong Kong. It signed an agreement with the China Central Television (CCTV) on 6 March 2006, and the agreement gave assurance of passing the official censorship and post-production. The series was titled *Shen Bing Kids*, or *Sheng-bin Xiao-zhi* in Chinese, to be broadcast on the China Central Television (CCTV) most likely in 2007 and targeted at these 300 million mainland children as the primary audience.

The market strategy does not primarily focus upon the revenues from the broadcasting, but, as Mr. W indicates, the enterprise aims at selling the derivative products in numerous types such as toys, games and many other accessories with the themes of these figures in *Shen Bing Kids*. A subsidiary of the enterprise is hold responsible for the licensing of such derivative products, and commissioned it 'in granting product licensings as well as promotional licensings to renowned licensees of various derivative products of *Shen Bing Kids* including Toys, apparels, premiums stationery, food and drink manufacturers/distributors in the PRC'. The sales will possibly bring tremendous profits. To save costs in co-production, Mr. W and his enterprise plan to outsource the numerous items of derivative products designed in Hong Kong, but their manufactures outsourced in Shenzhen, and illustrations and post-production subcontracted to Suzhou graphic firms. However, the enterprise tries to sort out production sites from inland and remote areas in the PRC because wages in coastal areas are rising.

Finally, when asked why the Chinese mythical stories is the best choice of such a marketing strategy in PRC comics and animation markets, Mr. W takes accounts of two characteristics that are related to demography and contemporary history. First, around 80% of the Chinese populations are living in the rural, with poorer education backgrounds and incomes than the urban. They are barely literate or illiterate. Apart from the urban-rural disparity, provincialism is a problem for Chinese culture. The most common cultural denominator is the Chinese mythology which is well received in all Chinese provinces. Second, a producer takes the high risk at incorporating modern or contemporary Chinese history into the background of the storylines of a comic, lest the contents touch the nerves of state authorities in the censorship. Up to this moment, Mr. W envisions the enterprise should re-brand itself, not a brand from Hong Kong originally, but a comic brand with nationwide or inter-nationwide recognition without any clear geographical referent of regions and provinces. He echoes what Anne Allison (2000) points out: the 'anonymity' of Japanese brand going globally.

The Consequence: the Reinstatement of Cultural Nationalism and the Marginal

Perhaps Roland Robertson addresses a more fundamental question of modernisation in the rest imitating the West: there is still an inter-state complex and dynamics with the non-western societies, and he refers to the specific case of China and Japan still unquestioned. The problem Roland Robertson addresses does help us to understand the present tug of war of Sino-Japanese is not any single instance of two superpowers, but it is an extension and continuation of China and Japan in the inter-state civilisation process.

What is missing here is the distinction between 'culture' and 'civilisation' as Norbert Elias investigated French civilisation versus German culture (Elias, 1996: 123-9). Then we draw the readers' attention to the cultural nationalism and its critics, namely Naoki Sakai on Japan, and Arif Dirlik on China respectively. Cultural nationalism is the central issue of the tug of war of Japanese manga in China, but we have found both critics pay less attention to the mutual and inter-state re-constructions of cultural and national identity in this case. Here we revive the insight of Norbert Elias that is unexamined by Roland Robertson – the distinction between 'culture' and 'civilisation (cf. Elias, 1996)'.

Civilisation, in the general sense, refers to any geographical locations or land with ancient-old heritages, abundance of wealth and cultural exuberance influencing other nations in the images a more civilised state from manslaughters to manners. In ancient-old examples like the Byzantines and China, or France in the seventeenth to eighteenth century in the Elias's frame of analysis, the civilisations were the top of the cream of less civilised or barbarous states like the Prussians and the Celtics. The German nation, with the rise of Aryan race, began to imitate the French manners and to climb up the ladder of civility amongst European nations for self-esteem, honour and recognition. However, the acculturation of the German race did not refrain from developing a military state to the peak of the Nazi as a contradiction of the civilisation process (cf. Elias 1996: 2-10). The acute conflict between 'civilisation' and 'cultures' in China and Japan, *contra* Elias, lies in the constant but fragile worldviews of the 'universal kingship' of the civilised states, like the Byzantine, India and China in the highest of the ancient world order (Schwarz, 1985: 13-4), whose dreams of anachronistic longevity and cultural omnipotence amongst nations were shattered by a less civilised but technologically advanced and militant state. Peter Worsley takes the detailed account of Emperor Qian-lung, who forced the British ambassador Earl McCartney not to half-kneel as if in front of King George of Great Britain, but to kowtow (Worsley, 1970: 20). The clash of manners was an acute clash of bilateral and equal inter-state relations, and China, in return, was subjugated to gun-ship politics and downgraded to a semi-colony in almost a century after the Opium War.

Similarly, Japan was faced with western encounters like China as Captain Perry led his United States naval fleet to ask feudal Japan to open her ports for trade. Japan, like Germany, afterwards followed the path of nationisation and industrialisation by imitating, not rejecting, the West after the Meiji restoration in a wholesale scale from costumes to military systems. With the manners and costumes established, Japan had not yet been satisfied with its nationalised and industrialised image: she went further to be the top of the civilised echelon of the modern history, and to replace China by war and aggression. At this point, Norbert Elias was admittedly too optimistic towards civilisation processes – by social pacification and maintenance of more civilised standards to eliminate the causes of wars and internal violence (Elias, 1996: 173-174). According to Naoki Sakai, the young generation of the Kyoto School, like Koyama Iwao and Kosaka Masaaki as representative spokesmen, discoursed the history cannot escape from the universal process of westernisation and modernisation. Yet, all subjectivities (*shutai*) were subsumed to a nation (*kokumin*) in particular to actualise the moral superiority by conquering other nations, because Japanese were morally and collectively superior to others. The dialectics between universalism and particularism, and *Moralitiat* and

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Sittlichkeiten, provided grounds for the *raison d'stat* of Japanese war and aggression, and referred to the Hegelian view of world history (Sakai, 2005: 163-7).

The development was then diverted into a complex tension between China and Japan. On the one hand, China after the Opium War had never thought of a non-western country under her subjugation in a lower rank of civility could defeat her since the Tang Dynasty and challenge her leading role in civilised Asia by toppling the existing hierarchy of world order. Japan, on the other hand, began to westernise by industry- and nation-building to develop a 'modernised' Japan and distinguished herself from 'the feeble of the Orient'. However, the situation is the reverse at present: after the economic bust in 1990s, and the rise of China's economic power, Japan has been awed by the flex of muscles of her huge neighbour to replace her in the world political and economic order since the 'four modernisations' blueprinted by Zhou En-lai and executed by Deng Xiao-ping and his predecessors. None the less, the development of Sino-Japanese relations is inevitable because Japan has been discontented with the hegemony and interventions of the United States in foreign affairs, as well as closer ties of economic co-operation with China since Japan's economic bust in 1990s. With her technological superiority, Japanese could say 'No!' to China and the United States (Ishihara, 1991). The complex was reflected in some Japanese comics with the hatred and denials of the United States and PRC by caricaturing their peoples. Benjamin Ng, a Hong Kong scholar specialised in Japanese manga, reviewed a manga series called *Introducing China: A Survey of a Troublesome Neighbour* (2005). He summarises the Japanese eyes to the Asians as backward, demonized, and mystic, as opposed to the advanced, kind, scientific, and secured Japan. He concludes Japan has 're-oriented' herself, by 're-orientalise' the Asian others including China, to borrow the oft-quoted concept from Edward Said (Ng, 2005).

Then, the ebb and flow of Sino-Japanese relations is driven by the tensions between Chinese civilisation and Japanese culture in the distinction and dichotomy of Norbert Elias. We do not deny at the very beginning China and Japan underwent modernisation from the West, and China experienced intensive subjugation and colonisation in the first half of the twentieth century by western countries and Japan, leading to a communist and socialist path of development. However, we do not accept China and Japan followed the linear trajectory of nationalisation based upon the western heritage of reason and modernity (Gellner, 1989) at the later stage. After WWII, Japanese power in the world has been transposed from military nationalism into economic and technological nationalism that we have reviewed. The Asian affairs of cultural exchanges and national rivalries do not only lie in the West, but within the Asians to the extent and degree of modernisation and their relative strengths of influences in the region. The consequence of this may lead to a rivalry of cultural representations in our analysis of Japanese comics in China. Japan reinstates its culture by dominating her worldwide diffusion of comics and spreading her media influences in the globe. PRC, in responses to the cultural pervasiveness of Japanese manga, dispels Japanese influences by reviving and reclaiming her civilisational superiority with the themes of Chinese myths and legends against any bloody-violent and sexually explicit stereotypes of Japanese comics, the logic between 'we' and 'they' that constructs the cultural boundary of the alien and the dangerous (Douglas, 1984).

The tug of war in this cultural politics of Japanese manga henceforth brings out the significance of cultural nationalism as responses to western modernity. Cultural nationalism runs counter to cilivisation processes and manners in the exclusiveness of races, cultures and civilisations of one nation to others (Sakai, 2000: 812). As Naoki Sakai indicates, the programme of modernity in the context of US Occupation administration since the defeat of Japan in 1945 has been subject to an 'overarching process of homogenisation' by emanating the West without resisting it (ibid. 796, 793), by means of institutional monarchy and industrialisation, through 'a kind of violent transformative dynamic that arises from social encounter among heterogeneous people (ibid. 799).' Yet, the US Occupation administration, with certain constitutional restrictions, allowed the imperial system as the symbolic unity of all occupied land, nations, and ethnicities. The protection of this unity thus nurtured the mainstream and current political ideologue that Japanese would have no shame on their past imperialist maneuvers in Asian to build the Great Asian Co-operation Sphere, and they show no repent of the comfort women and the Rape of Nanking (ibid. 808). The complicity of US hegemony and Japanese nationalism is obvious here: Japan wants to be member in Europe, and 'ought not to belong to Asia in that respect (ibid. 792).' The paradox of Japanese imperial nationalism with the United States and China was the oppressed of the West becomes the oppressors of the Asians. Japanese modernity is a double-edged civilised process with the close comparisons with the Germans: she imitates the West in the civilisational manners, but wages wars to the East to display her cultural superiority, and later transposes herself from military to technological nationalism.

However, Naoki Sakai reminds us of an articulation of cultural nationalism, *inter alia* in Norbert Elias's analysis of *deutsche Kultur*, into different responses of western modernity. What makes a crucial difference between this articulation and the analysis of *Kultur* is that the different responses to western modernity between China and Japan did not lie in the personal ideals of self-cultivation as an epitome of high civilised standards, as the ideals appeared in the embodiment of Chinese emperors as 'Mandates of the Heaven' in Taoist and Confucian teachings, but a moral ground of progress, with reference to the young generation of the Kyoto School, by adopting western institutions and wars. Naoki Sakai notably condemned the moral wrongness of Sino-Japanese war, and the defeat of Japan, as a reflection of a national and cultural difference between China and Japan that goes beyond cultural nationalism, and Japanese begin to discern China which is an example of resisting western modernity from a feudal state to a communist state (Sakai, 2000: 793). Naoki Sakai's views and opinions are in the absolute minority in today's political realm.

Although Naoki Sakai idealises China as a referent of resisting westernisation, or Americanisation *contra* Japan precisely, we notably find the adoption of western theories in China to reinforce cultural nationalism pointing to the image of an ancient old civilisation representing the world. Arif Dirlik, a specialist in this field, coins this adoption as 'sinicization of theories', or 'sincization of Marxism' till Mao Tze-tung's death in 1976, or 'sincization of sociology in Taiwan and Hong Kong in 1980s'. The Chinese attitudes of 'sincization of theories' 'have ranged from outright rejection of

foreign theories in the name of cultural integrity to the erasure of all consideration of culture in the name of theory (Dirlik, 2000: 77).' There are different forms of 'sincization of theories'. First, Arif Dirlik, in his research on Chinese Marxism, promptly points out that Mao's thought was more adherent to Buddhism and Taoism than the dialectics of Hegel and Marx to the question of 'the end of history (ibid. 84).' Second, the de-historicized construction of 'Chinese-ness' by a handful of Chinese scholars like Rey Chow and Tu Wei-ming, projects a cultural space to image the world as an academic orthodoxy in the United States that entrenches and converts all challengers of Chinese civilisation into a 'Chinese cultural space (ibid.)' Third, the use of western theories was decontextualised from its historical and cultural origins 'to the outright rejection of national differences in theory' and ' the opportunistic uses of theory for national ends (ibid.: 90).' Paradoxically, the 'sinicization of sociology' is to voice out the social, cultural characteristics and sentiments in the global community. Arif Dirlik echoes these sentiments of globalising Chinese sociology are a set of post-colonial responses to the Anglo-Saxon, dominating sociology in the universal language of English, by asserting the centre of Chinese Civilisation in the West (ibid., cf. Robertson, 1992: 20). Japan has therefore no cultural space in any engagements of East-West dialogues.

What Arif Dirlik researched on the courses of western theories and cultural nationalism of twenieth-century China dashes the hopes for reflections on the inter-state, culture-civilisation Sino-Japanese relations brought back to the defeat of Japan in 1945, and this completes what Roland Robertson questions about the inter-state dynamics between China and Japan. The intellectual project of Naoki Sakai of an inter-state reflection between China and Japan can hardly be attained by the following. First, the cultural representation of Japan, albeit economic strength, is ousted to the no-man's land, as Japan was anciently presumed to be 'assimilated' in the cultural space of the Great Chinese Civilisation. Seeking recognition from the West is more important than mutual respect and learning in an equal and bilateral relationship from a neightbour: Japan was subsumed in the territory of Chinese Civilisation. Second, there is a stretching tension of Japanese national psyche of subjugation to a foreign state and the fear of national autonomy, especially the growing power of China in world affairs in replacement of the United States. This is very evident by the continuing tenure of the hard-line nationalist, Ishihara Shintarō, as the re-elected Mayor of Tokyo in the coming term. Third, the no-repent attitudes of Japanese politicians towards the war crimes of Japan in WWII intensify national sentiments of her neightbouring countries, and cause immediate obstacles of both Sino-Japanese diplomatic and cultural exchanges.

Bringing back to the analysis of the tug of war of Japanese manga, we anticipate the consequence will be a series of cultural appropriations of comic contents suited for cultural nationalism under the auspices of states at the expense of in-between sympathizers who are the conveying belt between China and Japan, and being marginalised. Japanese politicians mobilise the public and affiliated public organisations to ban and restrict any publications on 'the Nanking Massacre and Rape' and euphemise it as the 'Nanking Event'. Some illustrators of historical consciousness are faced with tremendous pressures as they draw comics and being faithful to 'the historical truth'. Hiroshi Motomiya in his comic *Kuni ga Moeru* (The Country Burns) narrated an auto-

biography of a young Japanese military officer situated in the Nanking Massacre, and his comic narration about the 'Event' was taken out from the publication of *Young Jump* in vol. 42, 2004, because his version of the 'Nanking Event' was full of fabrications and provoked public criticisms with a huge influx of calls and emails. The publisher had to give way, deleted 10 pages and amended other 11 pages. Similar tactics was plotted against Iris Chang who proposed a Japanese edition of her novel, *the Rape of Nanking*, and successfully forced potential publishers to turn down her proposal. Iris Chang later killed herself because of her deep depression (Joyce, 12 November, 2004).

Meanwhile, Chinese official bodies have no sympathy in any gestures of comic diplomacy proposed by Aso Taro. *The Global Times*, a subsidiary of *the People's Daily* of the official newspaper in the PRC, published an article to warm Chinese readers of that comic diplomacy, and to openly condemn all Japanese manga that poison the younger generation of Asians. To summarise the main points, Fumi Saimon's *The Book of Love* is not romance, but 'plots and personal affairs'; *Slam Dunk* is not teenage friendship and sportsmanship in playing basketballs, but 'courageous and cruel'. 'All Japanese manga are dressing up the Japanese Spirit, or *Yamato Damashii*, and it is the right time to produce local comics with national characteristics to dispel the cultural pervasiveness of the Japanese Spirit, (Tao, 5 June, 2006)'. The one-sided comments on 'the cultural pervasiveness' of Japanese manga, we discern, was a sentimental response to what the politically right in Japan have done much harm on Chinese as they question the veracity of the Rape of Nanking and Sino-Japanese War. We are seriously concerned about this development as a matter of the opinions in the mainstream, constructed and disseminated in eyes with eyes, teeth with teeth. As a consequence, all the good and bad things of Japanese manga will be swept away in a brush of national sentiments.

The negative consequence then follows with a contracted space of these in-between sympathizers who really appreciate Chinese cultures and truly reflect the everyday life related to any exchanges and trade with Chinese. Kenshi Hirokane told the Hong Kong reporter in his interview to reflect the dilemma of choosing this thorny path. He graduated at the Waseda University in the late 1960s and read a lot about Mao Tze-tung and communism. His left position is not supposed to be in the majority of the political current. When asked to comment on the national competitive strengths between PRC and Japan, he definitely affirms the PRC economic growth outperforms Japan, the plain fact that Japan nothing else denies. None the less, He has no regret to read Mao and communism, and he continues to produce comics in this line of development in his famous *Division Chief Kosaku Shima* (Hirokane, 9 April, 2007). Apart from the self-censorship of Japan on 'sensitive historical facts,' our apology is not at the Japanese side; rather, we are very much concerned about the one-sided, and narrow-minded Chinese cultural nationalism, in the form of the images of an ancient civilisation, to clear cut and sift out the voices of these in-between sympathizers in much overheated responses to the Japanese government by state-censorship.

Conclusion

In our conclusion, creating Chinese myths in dispelling Japanese manga means two different levels of analyses. The first level is a reactive re-structuring of locally produced comics against any influx of Japanese manga, which may most likely poison the younger generations by spreading *Yamato Damashii* and technological nationalism. The recent co-production of the Hong-Kong-based enterprise with the state-owned broadcasting authorities was a concerted attempt to dispel, and even drive away, Japanese soft power in effect related to the perceptibly cultural pervasiveness of Japanese manga in the PRC. This deals with the organisations in production and outsourcing under the auspices of states controlling cultural production of national imageries. The second level of analysis, which we ponder in primary importance, goes up to the inter-state historical analysis, and plots the dynamics within these states. We illustrate Sino-Japanese relations quite suited for the culture-civilisation dichotomy as proposed by Norbert Elias. We do uphold a fundamental presumption inspired by Norbert Elias: today's inter-state cultural rivalry and reconciliation represented in Japanese manga are the extension of the civilisation process in the past, the past in which western modernity was introduced. However, we do dismiss the simple postulation that the East follow the West, and agree with Roland Robertson: China and Japan mirror each other in the civilisation process as imitations of western modernity to different extents. Creating Chinese myths is a jerked response to Japan by reinstating China as an old civilisation. We appreciate Naoki Sakai incisively points out the question: both China and Japan, in their common cultural and philosophical roots, always think positively and halt to ponder any negative consequences and entities (Sakai, 2000: 792).

Given our analyses presented, it has been highly argued that any adoption of globalist contentions of cultural products in terms of flows and networks (Appardurai, 1996; Lash and Urry, 1994) would throw any insight in this particular case of Japanese manga. The key to the question of inter-state rivalry does not lie in state capacities to extend and ramify any network as a result of de-territorisation. Instead, comics play the vital role of a powerful medium to politically mobilise patriots and to reinstate cultural nationality through variegated networks. The central issue we critically assess is not networks and flows, but the messages and contents that propel the on-going mutual constructions of cultural nationalism at certain movements of political transiency and expedience. We conclude that a rigorous study of inter-state dynamics related to their historical, or civilisation, process, rather than a cross-sectional analysis of text and visuals of Japanese manga, can help to disentangle the political forces behind the comics. Last but not least, we are deeply concerned about this development of cultural nationalism: it curbs the rigour and varieties of creative ideas, and thus being lethal to the manga industry, by means of censorship, intimations, and political manipulations.

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