CREATIVE ENCOUNTERS

Creativity at Work:

Studying Popular Culture in Japan: An Anthropological Approach

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Abstract

This working paper – written for inclusion as a chapter on Japanese society, to be published in Chinese by the Beijing University of Foreign Studies later in 2011 – looks at popular culture as a form of cultural production. It argues for the need to study popular cultural forms like advertisements, ceramics, fashion magazines and folk art as both *products* and as *processes* of design, manufacture, distribution, appreciation and use, which must all be taken into account. Precisely because popular cultural forms are both cultural products and commodities, they reveal the complementary nature of the two categories of culture and the economy. The paper outlines and analyses the different ways in which social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital are converted by those participating in advertising, ceramic, fashion magazine and folk art worlds, and suggests that popular culture may best be seen as a *name economy*.

Keyword

Advertising, art worlds, capital, celebrities, ceramics, fashion magazines, fields of cultural production

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Studying Popular Culture in Japan: An Anthropological Approach

Brian Moeran

The anthropological study of popular culture is in many ways the study of the social organization of media, on the one hand, and of cultural production, on the other. Media forms that fall under the rubric of 'popular culture' include advertisements, cartoons, film, magazines, and music, but may also be seen to embrace such phenomena as craft, dance, fashion, literature, theatre, and so on. Why these and other cultural forms are 'popular' demands that we look at their appreciation and reception: at how people react to, talk about, and identify with them. But the fact that such forms are often backed by vibrant entertainment, cultural and 'creative' industries means that we also need to examine the socio-economic conditions under which they are produced and marketed.

This essay is based on these two premises and traces the evolution of my research on Japanese (and, later, other) popular cultural forms. As such, it does not attempt to provide a comprehensive view of the study of popular culture in Japan, by surveying scholars' writings on such topics as *manga* (e.g. Schodt 1983), 'cute' culture (*kawaii bunka*) (e.g. Kinsella 1995; Belson and Bremner 2004), or the globalization of Japanese popular culture (e.g. Iwabuchi 2002). For that my readers should look elsewhere.

Although I have spent more than 30 years studying different aspects of popular culture in Japan, it was never my express intention to do so. Rather, my interest in pottery, advertising, fashion magazines and perfume has come about because of a more general anthropological interest in the relationship between human beings and things. This interest has led me to study what happens when people take ordinary materials (clay, wood, and flowers, for instance) and transform them into cultural objects of one form or another (pottery, paper for printing, and perfume oils, for example); the kinds of social forms they create around such objects (households, networks, and multinational companies, for instance); the ways that they communicate what is good or bad about them (what some people like to refer to as 'aesthetics'); and the uses (not always as originally intended) to which they put them.

The story that I will tell in this essay is based on personal experience, but my aim is to make two simple general arguments. The first is methodological: in order to understand popular culture in Japan, or in any other part of the world, we cannot, and should not, as researchers be satisfied with relying on our own interpretations of popular cultural forms – whether they be the generation divisions found in different forms of popular music, or the gendered meaning of advertisements (McCracken 1993). Although there is a whole sector of cultural studies that goes beyond individual interpretation to look at how audiences receive and interpret television programmes (Morley 1980), women's magazines (Hermes 1995), and so on, in my opinion this is insufficient as a mode of analysis. Rather, we must ensure that we take account of what Paul du Gay and his colleagues (1997) have referred to as 'the circuit of culture'.

In other words, and this is my second argument, in order to understand popular culture fully, we must study the full trajectory of its various forms and talk to people involved in their production, distribution, appreciation *and* reception. For instance, to decide whether an advertising campaign really is 'sexist' or not, we need to examine how it was made. What were the advertiser's marketing aims? How did the agency that it employed carry out those aims? Who were the targeted consumers (Men? Women? Of what age group, lifestyle, and/or economic class?) What were the various creative alternatives from which the final advertisements were selected? Why was this, and not another, campaign idea chosen? And so on and so forth (see Moeran 1996).[i] It is only by examining all the different social forces that come into play in the production of a popular cultural form, on the one hand, and then by comparing our findings with further research on the distribution, appreciation and reception of that form, on the other, that we can begin to come to an understanding of what popular culture *is* and *means*. The anthropologist's task is to follow the trajectory of a popular cultural form from its conception, through design into production, and then marketing, distribution, sales and reception. This is the essence of what I mean by an 'anthropological understanding' of popular culture in Japan.

Pottery

My first period of fieldwork in Japan was for my Ph.D. at the School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London. From April 1977 to the end of March 1979, I spent two years living in a remote country valley in the northern part of the island of Kyushu, studying the potters of Sarayama Onta – a fourteen household community of which ten made a kind of stoneware pottery now known as *mingei* or 'folk art'. I chose this community for three reasons.

Firstly, when preparing to do fieldwork as part of my doctorate in social anthropology, I wanted to study something 'different'. Not many anthropological studies of Japan had been conducted by the mid-1970s and those that had been published were predominantly about rural Japanese society (e.g. Embree 1939; Beardsley, Hall and Ward 1959; and Nakane 1967), although there had emerged one monograph on urban Japan (Dore 1958) and another on a Japanese company (Rohlen 1974). Since I wanted to live in the countryside, being not at the time ready to spend a year studying a company or an urban neighbourhood, I began casting around for something that I hoped would be more interesting to study than farming, fishing or forestry.

In order to eke out a living as a student, I used to act as interpreter from time to time for a Japanese television company when it sent camera crews to Europe to film one documentary topic or another.[ii] One such job involved accompanying a camera crew to

Madrid to film the Formula One car racer, James Hunt, in the Spanish Grand Prix. We then moved on to Monte Carlo where our television commentator had somehow arranged an interview with Grace Kelly, the wife of Prince Rainier and former Hollywood film actress.

By the time we arrived, however, the interview had been cancelled because our Japanese TV 'personality' had committed some *faux pas* of etiquette.[iii] My immediate task as interpreter was to find somebody else 'famous' for the television crew to interview and film. By chance I had met another interpreter on one of my previous assignments – a young English woman called Sandy Brown who had studied pottery in Mashiko, Japan. During conversation Sandy had casually mentioned an English potter, Bernard Leach, who was – she had told me – extremely famous in Japan. Not knowing anything more than this, I suggested Leach as Grace Kelly's substitute and was astonished to find both director and cameraman extremely enthusiastic. So I set about seeing if we could arrange to meet the English potter. As luck would have it, Leach agreed to see us and two days later we drove down to where he lived in St. Ives, located more or less at the south westernmost tip of England.

The moment I walked into Leach's workshop and saw his pots, I knew that *this* was what I wanted to study. As I listened to the old man – he was in his late 80s and virtually blind – talking about his life in Japan during the Taishō Period (1912-1926), his meeting with Yanagi Sōetsu and the Japanese potters, Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kawai Kanjirō, and Hamada Shōji, I discovered a second reason for wanting to go and do fieldwork in a community like Sarayama. Leach and his friends had been involved in the creation and development of an aesthetic philosophy that they called *mingei*. According to this aesthetic, folk art forms like pottery, lacquerware, textiles and so on would automatically be 'good' and 'beautiful', they asserted, if the craftsmen who made them made use of natural (rather than synthetic) materials and old-fashioned craft methods that relied on hand, rather than machine powered, work. Such workers were not, they said, individual 'artists' but craftsmen who worked together. It was the communal nature of their work that also made it 'beautiful'.

What interested me at once, and it was what provided me with a research question, was this: how did contemporary craftsmen in Japan feel about the aesthetic philosophy of *mingei*? Did they in practice work together as a community? Did they still use natural materials and avoid mechanised means of production? If they did, did they think that their work was necessarily 'good' and 'beautiful'? In other words, I found myself pitching the *appreciation* of a popular art form against the constraints imposed on its *production* processes.

This automatically led me in search of a craft community that might meet these criteria, and so we come to the third reason for my selecting Sarayama as my field site. Given that I had already decided to study pottery, I began to find out all I could about the different pottery communities active in Japan. Mashiko was one obvious choice. But Mashiko was where Leach's oldest friend, Hamada Shōji, lived and worked at that time; and it was an old pottery village that had grown immensely as a result of a burgeoning market demand brought on by tourism (primarily from Tokyo and the Kantō region). It seemed too big, and too mechanised, for my purposes.

So I turned to other *mingei* pottery communities. Aizu Hongō in the north seemed like a potential field site until I learned that there were in fact only one or two households making pots there. Naeshirogawa, near Kagoshima in the very south of Japan, also seemed to fit my requirements in that, in the past at least, potters there (who had originally come from Korea in the late sixteenth century and who still spoke Korean and wore Korean dress in the late 1880s) made use of a cooperative kiln. But I wanted to avoid ending up studying Koreans in Japan because of an earlier fad among Japan anthropologists who had focused on *burakumin* 'outcasts'. So, from what I could find out in the university library back in London, Tamba, near Kyōto, seemed like my best bet – until I learned from Richard Beardsley, Professor of Japanese Anthropology at Michigan University, that one of his doctoral students, Jill Kleinberg, had just finished doing fieldwork there!

It was as I was beginning to despair of ever finding the perfect pottery community that I went to visit my interpreter-cum-potter friend, Sandy Brown. There I met a Mashiko potter, Yasuda Takeshi, who mentioned the community of Sarayama Onta. He had, he said, never been there, but he had heard that the community was really interesting and followed *mingei* ideals fairly closely. Potters shared a cooperative kiln; they prepared their clay by means of water-powered clay crushers and did not use any form of modern machinery to make their wares; they also refused to allow outsiders to come in and become pottery apprentices. Although there was very little information that I could glean from books and magazines other than this, it seemed as if I had found my perfect field site after all!

And so I went there, was accepted as a researcher[iv] and, over the course of the following two years, learned all about a community of potters who were wrestling with *mingei* aesthetics, on the one hand, with local government officials bent on increasing tourism to the region, on another, and with their own family household and community ideals, on yet another. I have published in some detail the results of this research (Moeran 1997) and will not, therefore, go into them here, but this fieldwork taught me a number of things about popular cultural forms in general.

Firstly, popular culture tends to be an urban phenomenon. It is people living in cities who listen most to the latest pop songs, go to movies, watch DVDs, buy the most fashionable clothes, and so on. People living in the countryside also do these things, of course, but to a much lesser extent. The things that they have done in the past – sewing, crocheting, woodwork, and so on – have often been classified as *folk* culture. *Mingei* was an amalgam of popular and folk cultural forms. Leaders of the Folk Art Movement were well educated, some from elite families and brought up in urban areas. The people whose work they idolized lived for the most part in remote country valleys. Their attitudes towards work, and the ways in which they lived their everyday lives, were totally different from those of *mingei* aesthetes like Yanagi Sōetsu. Consequently, their culture of production was very different from that envisaged by the latter, who thought in terms only of beauty and *aesthetics*, while potters were concerned primarily with *social* reproduction and household and community organization.

Secondly, popular culture is never static. Leaders of the Folk Art Movement created an aesthetic philosophy that was based on a pre-industrial way of life when people lived together in different ways and used things differently from modern times. This philosophy, then, idolized 'traditional' Japan and thereby froze *mingei* products in time. And yet, through their very success, *mingei* ideals gave rise to a mass consumer movement in the late 1960s and 70s, known as the '*mingei* boom'. This boom brought a drastic increase in market demand – something that was welcome to potters and other craftsmen who had previously struggled to make a living. However, the fact that this demand originated in Japan's urban complexes meant that potters found themselves obliged to adapt their traditional wares made for rural farm households into contemporary forms for people living for the most part in cramped city appartments. As a result, water urns were transformed into umbrella stands, for example, while pickle jars were downsized to sugar pots. In this process of adaptation both the function and the size of Onta pots came to be changed.

Thirdly, in both art and popular culture, there is a perceived inverse relationship between *quantity* and *quality*. The more limited the output of an artist or craftsman, the 'better' his work must be – and vice versa. The transformations of Onta pottery's forms and functions were criticised by leaders of the Folk Art Movement. Potters, they said, were 'surrendering' to commercialism and were only interested in making money. They were producing too much. The old days, when potters were part-time craftsmen and part-time farmers, were 'best'. *Mingei* aesthetes equated this loss of 'tradition' with a loss of 'beauty' and blamed both potters and pottery dealers for the perceived loss of quality in Sarayama Onta's wares. In other words, I found myself analyzing a classic dichotomy in art and popular culture: *culture* (in the form of aesthetics and social organization) versus *economy* (in the form of income and sales).

Finally, I learned that the appreciation of a popular cultural form is not always as simple as it may seem, especially in terms of its origins. Although *mingei* was presented by leaders of the Folk Art Movement as a uniquely *Japanese* aesthetic, and although it was presented as such by Bernard Leach when he returned to England and by his followers across northern Europe, I discovered that the contents of *mingei* philosophy were in fact extremely close to the arts and crafts ideals held by people like Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and, in particular, William Morris who lived in England during the nineteenth century. These ideals were born out of the industrial revolution, the development of automated technology, and consequent perceived urban *anomie* – all phenomena that later were found in Japan as that country began to modernize and industrialize towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ironically, it was Bernard Leach who, together with Tomimoto Kenkichi, took the ideals of the British Arts and Crafts Movement to Japan and brought it back to Europe transformed into *mingei*. In this way, my research revealed some of the intricacies of cultural appreciation.

Ceramic Art

One of the lessons outlined above – that concerning the relationship between culture and economy – came to the fore during the course of a year's post-doctoral fieldwork that I conducted on ceramic art in Japan, soon after I had completed my Ph.D. This time I asked myself a simple question: how was a potter's success measured? How did a potter rise in the ranks until he (or she) was designated the holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property (*jūyō mukei bunkazai*) – the highest honour bestowed upon artist-craftsmen in Japan? In other words, how did *craft* get transformed into *art*?

The answer lay in exhibiting his work regularly in department store exhibitions. These were of two types. One consisted of group exhibitions of one sort or another, at which prizes were awarded. By having their work selected for such awards, potters were able to gain local, regional or national reputation, primarily through media write-ups. The other type of exhibition was the one-man show. Potters who wanted to be recognized would approach department stores and ask them to exhibit their work in one of their art galleries. Stores were willing to do this because, at the time, their Japanese customers were avid consumers of all things 'cultural'. I spent a year, therefore, visiting both kinds of department store exhibitions and talking to gallery owners, critics, collectors, museum curators and potters, as I tried to understand the workings of this 'art world' (Becker 1982).

The culture-economy equation surfaced in a number of different ways during the course of this fieldwork. Firstly, people in the ceramic art world differentiated clearly between what they called 'aesthetic value' (*biteki kachikan*), 'social value' (*shakai kachikan*), and 'commodity value' (*shōhin kachikan*) when evaluating potters' work. In other words, unlike economists who equate value with price and utility alone, art world participants held that price was affected by at least two other values.[v] This enabled them to adopt two different positions – one regarding their own work, the other regarding the work of others. Both potters and department stores measured their overt success by *sales*. This led to the *sub*jective position that the more you, as a potter, sold, the 'better' your work was. *Ob*jectively, however, you would disagree with this position when evaluating the work of *another* potter. According to this second logic, pots that sold were not *necessarily* good or beautiful. A rival potter was 'successful' because, in your opinion, he had used social connections to his advantage, or bribed a critic to write something nice about him in a newspaper or magazine, or even affixed false *Sold* tags to pots to make it look as if he had sold more than he really had, and so uphold his symbolic capital. In other words, aesthetic and commodity values were offset by social values of one sort or another. 'Value' as such, did not exist in the product itself, but in the ongoing negotiations taking place among those involved in its production, distribution and appreciation. Like the concept of *mingei* referred to earlier, value was not constant, but continually evolving.

The equation between aesthetic and commodity values was reinforced by newspapers, which regularly published cultural commentaries about ceramic art. But, generally speaking, if one newspaper sponsored an exhibition and wrote about the work shown therein, other rival newspaper companies would ignore it. In other words, the rivalry found among potters was mirrored in a rivalry among newspaper companies –

each of which would try to develop a particular 'personality' (the *Yomiuri Shimbun* as 'popular' because it sold most copies; the *Asahi Shimbun* as 'cultural' because of its 'intellectual' content; and so on).

This rivalry also extended to department stores, which were ranked symbolically according to a combination of historical tradition and the amount of sales they could generate. This ranking could be found at both local and national levels simultaneously. Potters would try to get their work accepted by the 'best' store in their local city (for example, at Iwataya in Kumamoto), before moving on to exhibit in a larger regional city department store (Iwataya or Tamaya in Fukuoka). Tokyo department stores (Mitsukoshi, Takashimaya, Isetan, Seibu, Matsuzakaya and so on) were ranked 'higher' than Osaka (Hankyu, Hanshin, Daimaru) or Fukuoka stores, which meant that every potter's ambition was to hold a show in the capital – ideally at Mitsukoshi or Takashimaya Department Stores, which were ranked highest in Tokyo itself.[vi]

The three players in the world of ceramic art – potters, department stores and newspaper companies – thus spent a lot of time and energy converting what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has analysed as different forms of 'capital'. Newspaper companies would 'sponsor' large ceramic (and other) art exhibitions because it gave them cultural capital, which then enabled them to sell more newspaper copies every day (economic capital). Department stores would put on (and pay for) such exhibitions because they, too, would seem to be promoting culture, rather than merely making money, and so gain symbolic capital. Potters would make money from exhibiting their work, but gain cultural and symbolic capital depending on how much they sold (see Moeran 1987).

Such exchanges of different forms of capital are to be found in many different forms of popular culture. For example, anyone who has watched a James Bond film will have noticed how, at certain points during the 'action', the camera will zoom in for a close-up of a Rolex watch on Bond's wrist, or the logo of the BMW that the super spy is driving. Such product placement, which provides film studios with more money than combined box office sales, gives companies like Rolex and BMW a cultural *cachet* that they otherwise lack.

The same principle can be found in advertising, where a superstar like Madonna will appear in a campaign by the fashion house Versace, or a former supermodel like Cindy Crawford will endorse an Omega watch. In each case, the advertiser (Versace, Omega) seeks to gain symbolic capital through its association with a celebrity recognized for some cultural activity (popular music and fashion modelling respectively). Sometimes, such an exchange takes place within a single industry – as when Karl Lagerfeld, chief designer in the elite fashion house of Chanel, was asked to design a limited range of clothing for the mass merchandising firm of H&M. In this exchange, H&M gained symbolic capital from the name of Lagerfeld, while the latter was rewarded financially as a result of his involvement with the Swedish fashion merchandiser. From these examples, we might say that almost all forms of popular culture are currently sustained by a celebrity or star system (see, e.g. Dyer 1979).

This leads to a further general observation about popular culture. Contemporary economies function according to a logic of *names*. Some of us drive a Toyota, smoke a

Marlboro, or drink a Guinness. We might wear Nike shoes or a Chanel dress. In offices, we may well use Scotch tape, Post-its and, in Japan, a Hotchkiss (the name of an early stapler manufacturer). Names are consistently confused in our everyday conversations. Sometimes we use people's names (a Cardigan, a Sandwich), at other times companies' names (a Jaguar, a Burberry), to talk about products. We also use abbreviations (a Coke, a Mac), even metaphors (Golden Arches), and substitute a brand name for the thing itself (a Walkman). Names are found in three distinct interlocking social spheres – of people (celebrities, personalities, stars, CEOs), products (brands) and organisations (corporations, government bodies, international organizations like UNESCO). We make use of names to give 'personalities' to inanimate things and to forms of social organisation

Names tend to take on particular importance in two ways in popular culture and in fields of cultural production more generally. Firstly, we find an active use and dissemination of names as part of the promotional strategies of different forms of popular culture. In the fashion industry, for example, the names of fashion designers and the houses they work for, of photographers and their assistants, of models, stylists, and hairdressers, as well as of fashion magazine personnel, are a crucial site for the functioning of the field as a whole. Each name strives to 'make its mark' in a struggle for power and so legitimate fashion's 'categories of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu 1993: 106).

Secondly, the primary means of linking organisations (corporations) to the products that they sell is through celebrities of one sort or another. So – and my example is again taken from the field of fashion – designers and fashion houses will take a lot of time and trouble preparing special clothes (which may not be worn) for actors and actresses attending the American film industry's annual Academy Awards (known popularly as the Oscars). Jewellers will also lend coveted necklaces and earrings to actresses for the evening, on the basis that they may be caught for a moment or two in the glare of network television coverage of the occasion.

As is evident from these promotional examples, names involve a long-term accumulation of social and cultural capital that is then converted into economic capital and back again. Names serve as 'cultural intermediaries' (Bourdieu 1984: 354-365) operating in a particular commercial field and are thus 'the crucial element in a mixed economy' that we might well call a *name economy* (Skov 2000: 158). But they also link different fields of popular culture – as when supermodel Naomi Campbell makes forays into film, music videos, recording,[vii] publishing and the Fashion Café, as well as the by now customary crossover between runway performances and fashion magazine spreads.[viii] At the same time, Campbell is competing with other models like Kate Moss and Nadja Auermann, each of whom is trying to make her mark in different ways.[ix] It is the struggle among names that maintains a structured difference synchronically and diachronically, within and between the fields in which they operate. They create and sustain 'distinction' in and between different fields of popular culture.

Advertising

One of the fields of popular culture that makes a lot of use of names, in the form of celebrity endorsements, is advertising. I had long been interested in advertising in Japan – partly because I had no idea what some television commercials were trying to sell, partly because of the way in which language and images were used to promote mundane products. When I returned to England to take up a lectureship in social anthropology at the School of Oriental & African Studies in 1982, I taught a course on anthropology and language. As part of the curriculum, I included a number of readings on advertising language. These engaged my students far more than any other parts of the course (with the exception of language and gender, to which I had related the readings in advertising), so I began to think about doing fieldwork in an advertising agency. What astonished me was that nobody, it seemed, had ever done this kind of study before.

It was some years before I was able to take a sabbatical and fulfil my ambition, but in early January 1990 I found myself embarked upon a year's fieldwork in Asahi Tsūshinsha (or Asatsū, now ADK), at the time Japan's sixth largest advertising agency (and now Number 3). Again, I have written about this research in some considerable detail (see, for example, Moeran 1996, 2005, 2006a), but there are certain points that are worth repeating here for their bearing on the study of popular culture.

Firstly, the advertising industry is a good example of a field of cultural production, in which individuals with 'a feel for the game' are predisposed, but not obliged, to act in certain ways as they take up 'positions' in 'a space of possibles' (Bourdieu 1993: 30). This field is hierarchically structured and itself hierarchically structures interlocking fields of media and entertainment that produce popular cultural forms (television, radio, newspaper, magazine publishing, music, sports, fashion, film, and so on). Different actors – advertising agencies, advertisers and media organizations, together with their respective personnel – compete for control of material, ideological and symbolic resources, which they then convert into different forms of cultural, economic, educational and symbolic capital. Such competition and conversion is found in the creative work that goes into the production of advertising campaigns.

Secondly, I decided to study an advertising agency because all previous research relating to advertising was written either by people who had worked in the industry, and who therefore gave rather 'clean' and biased versions of what happened therein e.g. Ogilvy 1987; Rothenberg 1994; or by (mainly cultural studies) scholars like Raymond Williams (1980), Judith Williamson (1978), and others who 'read' into advertisements a series of cultural critiques that sometimes seemed to have more to do with their own (often feminist) dispositions than with advertisers' marketing strategies. I wanted to look at the *social processes* of advertising as an industry, rather than at the *products* of that industry: advertisements. It is such social processes, I believe, that make the study of popular culture in general of such interest.

Thirdly, the by now familiar opposition between culture and economy that I had come across in my previous fieldwork on pottery and ceramic art was apparent in the organization of advertising agency personnel who were assigned to each project undertaken by the agency. In the advertising industry, advertising agencies compete for clients (advertisers like Toyota Motors, Suntory Beer, Mizuno Sportswear, and so on) who set aside a certain amount of money for the winning agency to use in developing an advertising campaign and placing it in suitable media (like television and magazines). This budgeted money is called an *account*, and those assigned to work on creating a campaign for a client form an *account team*. Every account team consists of an account executive (these days, an account planner), who acts as liaison between agency and client; a marketing team of two to three people who conduct research on consumers of the client's product (or services); a creative team, consisting of creative director (a managerial position), copywriter (who writes the advertising language), and art director (who designs the graphics for the campaign in question); and a media buyer, who places the finished ads in a number of different media (including newspapers, television, magazines, and radio) in accordance with the client's budget.

What I learned over the course of fieldwork was that there were two lines of tension in each account team. One was between account executive (AE, or *eigyō*man in Japanese) and the rest of the account team. This stemmed from the fact that the AE worked as much for the client as for the agency. On the one hand, he had to persuade his colleagues that his client as advertiser knew what it was doing (which was not always the case); and, on the other, he needed to convince his client that his colleagues knew what *they* were doing (which, again, was occasionally problematic). This kind of tension, where one person serves a double role, can be found in other popular culture industries. A commercial television producer, for example, has to take into account the sponsoring advertiser's point of view when making programme content, while also ensuring that the programme itself meets certain standards and appeals to its targeted audience. A fashion magazine editor has to make her magazine appeal not just to readers, but also to advertisers *and* to the fashion world in general. In other words, those making some forms of popular culture (in particular, media) have to appeal to more than one audience. This I call the double or *multiple audience property* of popular culture (Moeran 2006b).

The second line of tension was to be found in relations between the marketing and creative teams. The marketing team's job was to conduct market surveys, crunch numbers, and give specific information about *who* would likely use an advertiser's product *where* and on *what occasion*. The creative team's task was to convert such statistical information into language and visual images. This contrast in emphasis between numbers and creative ideas could lead to misunderstandings, as well as disagreements, among personnel within an account team. Such disagreements were also underpinned by the fact that, while the account executive brought in money (in the form of the advertiser's budget) and thus built economic capital for himself within the agency's power structure, the creative team merely spent that money. Both copywriter and art director, therefore, needed to build and sustain symbolic and cultural capital that would make them equal in terms of capital with account executives and the marketing team. This they did primarily by resorting to ideals about 'creativity' (see Moeran 1996).

The concept of creativity is important in a number of other industries concerned with the production, distribution, appreciation and reception of popular cultural forms. But what does 'creativity' mean exactly? Who judges what is and is not 'creative', how it is so judged, and in what contexts creativity is, or is not, important, are the kinds of questions with which those conducting research on a range of phenomena, from fashion (McRobbie 1998) to music (Negus 1999), have been concerned. The various activities of conception, execution, rationale, support work and client reaction that I experienced during fieldwork in Asatsū were all constrained to one degree or another by the fact that the production of advertising is a joint activity involving a large number of people and thus consists of 'networks of people cooperating' (Becker 1982: 35). All those concerned needed to be able to recognize that there were some rules to the game they were playing (Becker 1982: 5). The fact that this is a general feature of popular culture industries suggests that we should probably turn the ideal of 'creativity' on its head. Thus, instead of pursuing questions relating to what does or does not make something 'creative', we need to examine all the things that *prevent* advertisers, fashion designers, music producers, magazine editors, and so on from being creative. In other words, as I quickly learned from talking to copywriters and art directors at Asatsū, *constraints* are what matter (Negus and Pickering 2004). It is different kinds of constraints – material, social, physical, temporal, aesthetic and financial – that enable creativity in the production of advertising and popular culture (Moeran 2006a).

Fashion Magazines

My fieldwork in Asatsū led seamlessly into my next piece of research on women's fashion magazines. Not unnaturally, I collected a lot of advertisements (more than 5,000) while I was there. Of these, by far the best in terms of paper and print quality were to be found in women's fashion magazines. During my research in the agency, I had learned that there were all sorts of women's magazines, targeted at a series of very narrow age groups (like 15-17 teenage girls, or 19-23 year old university students). They were given appropriate Japanese titles (like *Junon*, *an-an*, and *Nonno*), but I also noticed that there were Japanese editions of some foreign magazines like *Elle* and *Marie Claire*. Given that Japanese society and culture were radically different in many ways from French society and culture, I wanted to find out whether the French and Japanese editions of these magazines reflected such differences and, if so, how.

And so I began to take out subscriptions to *Elle* and *Marie Claire*, and later on to *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* as well, not just in France and Japan, but also in England, Hong Kong (where I was then living), India, and the USA, in order to compare their contents. This was a difficult task in a number of ways. Some features could be found in one country's edition of a magazine, but not in another's; some fashion stories appeared in two or three editions of – say – *Marie Claire*, but with the stories given totally different titles and the photographs themselves placed in different order, or cut out completely, in each edition. The Indian edition of *Elle* seemed to be more concerned with sex than with fashion, and so resembled the British or American versions of *Cosmopolitan* rather than sister editions of *Elle*. American *Elle* was so full of advertisements that it was hard to find any editorial text until at least half way through the magazine, while the Japanese edition of the same magazine carefully distributed its ads in blocks between feature articles and photo essays throughout.

How was I to explain such variety? Clearly, the only way to make sense of the anomalies that I found was to talk to people in the industry. And so, over the next few years, I arranged to visit magazine offices in London, Hong Kong, New York, Paris, and Tokyo, where I talked to various members of staff there. Sometimes I also managed to sit in on a photo shoot for a day, but for the most part I had to be satisfied with extensive interviews, since I was unable to persuade anyone to let me follow a monthly magazine's production processes in full.

What I learned, first and foremost, was that a magazine – like most forms of popular culture – was both cultural product and a commodity. Magazines were cultural in the sense that they talked about and illustrated different kinds of clothes and accessories, as well as the people who wore them. In European and American editions of *Vogue* and similar fashion magazines, these people were for the most part celebrities. It was the clothes that Julia Roberts or Britney Spears wore, the handbags they carried, the perfumes they put on, that counted. This 'name culture' carried over to Hong Kong, Indian and Japanese editions of these same magazines, even though local Asian magazines – like the Japanese *Nonno*, which was also put out in Korean and Taiwanese editions – did *not* rely on celebrities, but on more ordinary everyday young women, to model their clothes. At the same time, magazines were commodities in the sense that they were – and are – products of the print and publishing industries. They were conceived, written, put together, produced, and distributed to booksellers, convenience stores, kiosks, and magazine stands, where they were leafed through, perused, bought and read by women of various ages, economic means and lifestyles.

This clear-cut distinction between 'culture' and 'economy' that I noted in my previous research emerged most clearly in the way in which editorial matter and advertising were put together in different magazines. I have already mentioned how different American and Japanese magazines were in this respect. What I learned during my interviews was that this difference in *cultural* appearance was due to *economic* conditions. American – and to a slightly lesser extent, British and French – magazines were able to place all their advertising early on in their pages because they used annual subscriptions at discounted cover prices to attract and secure regular readers, who were happy to save money over a year. This meant that publishers did not have to worry about the structure of their magazines' contents so much because they had already secured their readerships. They could, therefore, devote their energy to pleasing advertisers (by placing their ads early on in each issue of a magazine), rather than readers. In Japan, on the other hand, readers were known to be very particular and only bought a magazine when they liked its contents. This was the way that they saved money! As a result, publishers generally did not try to attract readers by means of a subscription system. Instead, they had to make their magazines as attractive and as easy-to-read as possible. This was why they placed a lot of their advertisements in blocks between features, evenly distributed throughout, rather than consecutively, page after page, in each edition, although they had to have *some* ads early on in a magazine issue to satisfy their major advertisers.

Another thing that I had noticed about magazines was that they seemed to try to match advertising with editorial pages in some way. Thus, when an ad was placed across from some textual matter, there would sometimes be similarities in the dominant colour used on each page; or in their layout; or even in the images used. As I talked to art layout designers, editors and publishers, I gradually learned that they liked to see the two pages of an open magazine as a single page, and thus matched them, if at all possible, to create a sense of 'aesthetic coherence'. In this sense, they seemed to be trying to smooth over, and ideally erase, the divide between textual matter and paid advertisement, and so encourage readers to see the magazine as cultural product rather than as commodity.

This is a technique that we have already noted, though in slightly different form, in the use of product placement in films. It is certainly something that underpins many forms of popular culture – whether it be the use of visual props in film and television, or of air-time for music on radio (where music companies have been in the habit of paying for particular records to be played time and time again by disc jockeys until they are 'hits'). Such an observation leads to consideration of a further problem affecting many forms of popular culture, but perhaps of fashion in particular: the role of *critical appreciation*.

If, as I think Bourdieu (1993: 141) is right in arguing about cultural production in general, the anthropology of popular culture 'takes as its object the field of cultural production and, inseparably from this, the relationship between the field of production and the field of consumers', then we need to consider carefully how that relationship is created and sustained. Reception cannot take place without a special institution which serves that reception and which thus brings about a fruitful dialectic between producer and consumer. In Japanese ceramic art, this institution was the newspaper and book publisher, and in advertising, the advertising agency. In fashion, it has been the fashion magazine.

Fashion magazines can be seen as intermediaries between producer and consuming public. They exist to teach the lay public why fashion should be important in their lives, what the latest trends may be, who are the names that drive them, and where the clothes themselves may be purchased. In other words, they legitimate fashion and the fashion world in cultural terms (cf. Moulin 1987: 76). They make meaningful connections between things that seem to be essentially independent; they give them social lives by creating an imaginary world about them; they create awareness in participants of the field of fashion in which they work; and they provide historical and aesthetic order in a world whose products, by their very seasonality and potentially chaotic quantity, are likely to go unnoticed (cf. Blumer 1969: 290). In this way, a fashion magazine helps form a collective concept of what 'fashion' is, although it also includes aesthetically irrelevant forces such as snobbery, elitism, trendiness, and a fear of lagging behind the arbiters of prevailing taste (Hauser 1982: 431). This is true of almost all forms of popular culture.

The production and reception of fashion are thus interdependent, both in terms of communication and of the organization of production and consumption. The 'creative act' of designing fashion is in a state of constant flux because it is influenced by the attitudes of the buying public and intermediary fashion world. These more or less determine what innovations can and cannot be made. Designers need mediators and interpreters of one sort or another, therefore, to ensure that their work is properly understood and that this appreciation then translates into sales. In other words, like politics, (ceramic) art, and even academia, fashion is marked by a struggle to enlist followers, and one task of fashion magazines is to convert the agnostic. In this way, the reception of fashion is a product of social cooperation among those who form 'a community of faith', based on a collective belief in the power of *haute couture* and *prêt-à-porter*. It is this faith that drives the fashion system.

The apostles who spread the word, who portray and interpret designers' collections each season − giving them a meaning which readers can cling to, removing all the strangeness that accompanies novelty, reconciling what at first glance may be confusing with the already familiar, and thereby creating continuity between previous, present and future trends − are those working for the fashion magazines. Their job is not simply to appreciate new stylistic trends,[x] but to recognize new discoveries, re-evaluations, and reinterpretations of styles that have been misunderstood and/or belong to the past. If designers create the form of fashion items, therefore, fashion magazines create their legend (cf. Hauser 1982: 468), in the same way that newspapers created the legend of 'the ceramic 'art' produced by Japanese potters. In this process, they fabricate mythical personages out of designers and the fashion houses for which they work, as well as of other members of the fashion world. This leads to a situation where collections may be judged not by their intrinsic worth, but by the names with which they are labelled. In other words, we once again find ourselves face to face with, and immersed in, a name economy.

At the same time, the public needs fashion magazines since they help their readers distinguish what is 'good' from what is 'inferior' in the apparent chaos of each season's collections in New York, London, Milan and Paris. In this way, magazines help transform fashion as an abstract idea and aesthetic discourse into everyday dress (Entwistle 2000: 237). This does not mean, though, that they address a single, unified public. Rather, there is a plurality of publics, each of which brings to bear its own preferences on what magazine editors select as part of their process of legend-making − based on culture, lifestyle, age, and prevailing gender norms. It is this that we need to remember when studying other forms of popular culture.

Conclusion

This essay has made selective use of various popular cultural forms in Japan to make a number of theoretical points about the study of popular culture in general. Some of these have focused on the production of popular culture; others on their reception; and yet others on their critical appreciation. Let me now summarize the main theoretical points that have been made.

Firstly, all forms of popular culture have two aspects that need to be addressed. One is that they are commodities that are bought and sold in a particular market; the other is that they are cultural products that people talk about and identify with. This Janus-faced property of popular culture thus links with a broader division between economy, on the one hand, and culture, on the other, and invites us to study popular culture in terms of a *cultural economy*. This means that we need to focus our attention both on the *products* of popular culture (fashion, film, music, vaudeville, and so on), and on the *social processes* underpinning their conception, design, production, distribution, appreciation, sale and use.

Secondly, we have seen this distinction between economy and culture at work in a number of different, but complementary, ways. One is the way in which people involved in a particular field of popular culture evaluate the relationship between quantity and quality, drawing a line at some point between what is and is not acceptable. A potter who too obviously devotes his energy to selling his work cannot be as 'good' as one who does not; an actress who demands $20 million to play a role in a new film is only 'in it for the money'; an artist whose work fails to reach anticipated prices at an auction is clearly 'on his way out'. Where this line on the continuum between quantity and quality is drawn depends on the cultural product in question. With high Art it is close to the concept of 'quality' negotiated and agreed by an art world; with mass culture, it is at the other extreme; with popular culture, it is usually somewhere between these two extremes.

Another way in which the economy/culture distinction is played out is in the play off and conversion between economic, symbolic, social and cultural capital. This we have seen in the activities of potters, newspaper companies and department stores as they put on and talk about ceramic art exhibitions. It was also found in the tension in advertising agencies between accounts and marketing, with their interest in money and statistics, on the one hand, and copywriters and art directors, with their concern for 'creativity', on the other. Sometimes economic capital wins out; at other times, it is more expedient for those concerned to focus on symbolic, social and cultural capital.

The mutual conversion between these different forms of capital is epitomized by the use of celebrities in many forms of popular culture, and it has been argued that advertising, fashion, film, music and so on function according to a 'logic of names'. Names of all kinds – from celebrities to brands – are used to create and maintain distinctions among different players in and between various fields of popular culture. This has led me to suggest that the field of cultural production more generally functions as a *name economy*.

Finally, we have examined the role of critical appreciation in popular culture, and argued that there are usually certain mechanisms – like the fashion magazine – which act as intermediaries between producers and consumers, and so enable the 'circuit of culture' to function smoothly. But because these mechanisms are usually media forms of one sort or another, and because media in Japan (and elsewhere in the world) tend not to be critical, but merely supportive in an information role, there is often little objectively *critical* appreciation of the products of popular culture. Indeed, as my discussion of fashion magazines showed, media appreciation very often ignores such products and, instead, concentrates on the *people* in one way or another associated with them. Thus, 'criticism' of a fashion collection tends to focus on designers, models, celebrities and other names in the fashion world; 'criticism' of a potter's exhibition likewise focuses on that craftsman's background, training, pottery tradition, and previous exhibitions. As a result, it is the scholar who becomes popular culture's keenest critic.

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Endnotes

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[i] Even then, as Danny Miller's account of an advertising campaign for a soya milk product in Trinidad makes clear, consumer inclinations can muddy the apparent clarity of that understanding. What is intentionally 'sexist' to an advertising executive (as well as to an English anthropologist), for example, is not seen as such by the West Indian parents of a targeted school children audience who perceived only the heath-inducing effects of the advertised product (Miller 2003: 84-6).

[ii] I should perhaps explain that I did not become an undergraduate student in Japanese at London University until I was almost 29 years old, and that during the decade since leaving school, I had spent five years living in Japan.

[iii] I never learned what she said or did that caused the Royal Household in Monaco to cancel the interview.

[iv] As a condition of being accepted, I had to promise not to try to become an apprentice to any of the ten pottery households. Later on, however, potters relented and allowed me to make work at the wheel from time to time, as this gave me a physical understanding of some of the aesthetic problems with which they had to deal in the context of the Folk Art Movement.

[v] For a critique of the economists' approach and a development of this idea of multiple values, see Moeran (2009).

[vi] Rankings among ceramic art world participants (potters, newspapers, department stores) almost invariably formed two competing classes: one economic (based on sales); the other 'cultural' (based on more abstract notions like 'aesthetics').

[vii] Naomi's duet with Japanese singer Toshi, *La-la-la Love*, made the Number One spot in Japan's Top Ten Hit Parade some years ago.

[viii] The crossover between runways and magazines started in 1970 when the Japanese designer Kenzo first used models from the fashion pages in his Paris shows, but it only became common practice in the late 1970s (Rudolph 1991: 47).

[ix] Such competition is especially obvious in love relationships formed with other celebrities. For example, over the years, Naomi Campbell herself has had her name linked with that of singer Eric Clapton; Cindy Crawford with actor Richard Gere; Linda Evangelista with actor Kyle MacLachlan; Tyra Banks with golfer Tiger Woods; and Claudia Schiffer first with magician David Copperfield, and then with art dealer Tim Jeffries, who was formerly engaged to another 80s supermodel Elle MacPherson.

[x] This they often achieve by setting up a series of oppositions between these and the previous season's styles (Entwistle 2000: 237).