“Media idols and national ‘representation’: Strengthening the national identity in contemporary Japan (Ídolos mediáticos y ‘representación’ nacional: Fortaleciendo la identidad nacional en el Japón contemporáneo)”

Tesis presentada por

Yunuen Ysela Mandujano Salazar

para obtener el grado de

DOCTOR EN CIENCIAS SOCIALES

Director de Tesis

Dr. Víctor Manuel Hernández Márquez

Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, octubre, 2014
To my parents, who have always supported my crazy dreams.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of completing this dissertation I was supported by many persons and institutions that I need to give due acknowledgments. I would like to thank the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT) for providing the financial support that allowed me to focus for three years to the completion of this doctoral program, the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez (UACJ) for the different grants received to perform fieldwork in Japan and to attend to international symposiums, and to The Japan Foundation and The Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute Kansai for the grant received to participate in the Japanese-Language Program for Specialists in Cultural and Academic Fields.

I am immensely grateful to Víctor Manuel Hernández Márquez, my advisor, who believed in my project since the beginning and supported me every step of the way. Also as part of my dissertation committee, Roberto Sánchez Benítez gave me his valuable time and comments. Hiroshi Aoyagi, who inspired my interest in Japanese idols as phenomena of study years before, received me in Tokyo, provided me with many insightful remarks and valuable contacts, and invited me to experience his stimulating seminars about Japanese popular culture.

I would also like to thank Satomi Miura, who has continued supporting me since my time at El Colegio de México. In my fieldwork trips, I also had the fortune to meet Jason Karlin, who kindly invited me to participate in his seminar on Celebrity Studies and this turned out to be an experience that allowed me to explore new terrains on the approach of the phenomena I was studying. He also took the time to carefully read previous versions of my manuscript and his comments helped me obtain a clearer view on the way my ideas were taking.

Thanks to all the professors and colleagues of UACJ, whose conversations were always fruitful. I also express my gratitude to teachers, friends and staff of Kansai Center, who made of my six months there one of the most rewarding experiences in my life and a determinant factor for the successful conclusion of this project. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Mark Almklov, who read and acted as my English editor in record time.
In this dissertation, all Japanese and Korean names will be written following their custom of putting first the surname and then the given name.

Except if indicated otherwise in a footnote, all the translations into English from written and media materials, interviews, and so forth, which were originally in Japanese or Spanish are from the author.

For the transliteration and transcription of Japanese language it will be preferred the form commonly employed in the Japanese media, if any. Many of the names and words that will appear in this study are commonly romanized and used as an alternative of the Japanese form for style in some contexts (for example the names of artists, sport players or places). However, when no equivalent in romaji (a system of romanized spelling used to transliterate Japanese) is typically used, the method followed will be the one of the Kenkyūsha’s New Japanese – English Dictionary (3rd and newer editions). The Japanese terms that have been adopted in the English language and incorporated in the Oxford English Dictionary (6th and newer editions), as well as the names of people, places, groups or teams, will not appear highlighted as foreign words.

The referential style used in this document follows APA’s 6th edition guidelines. There are two sections of references at the end of the document. The first is for all bibliographical and referential sources mentioned in the text. The second enlists the media sources that were part of the analysis and involved several episodes, numbers or a continuous follow up (television programs, magazines, commercials, web pages, blogs, promotion videos, concerts, etc.); for these, the dates correspond to the period of production that was analyzed or the period that the resource was monitored. For example, if many episodes of a television program transmitted from 2005 to 2008 were analyzed, then (2005 – 2008) will be written; on the other hand, if a web page was monitored from 2011 to 2012, then (2011 - 2012) will be indicated. In the case when a specific number or episode is referred in the text, then the data of the source will be detailed in a footnote.
ABSTRACT

From the perspective of the Cultural Studies, building on notions of national identity and theories of cultural and banal nationalism, through extensive interpretative textual analysis of two samples of dominant media phenomena and supported by observations and experiences obtained from fieldwork, this dissertation focuses on the examination of the discourses produced by Japanese power elites about the national identity, embedded in contemporary media banal texts inside the producer society. In Chapter 1, the historic context of Japanese nationalist movements and the construction of the national identity discourses are reviewed, finding that the hegemonic discourse on Japanese identity has maintained some essential traits across time. This discussion leads to evaluate the current political and economic context in which the discourses of interest have developed, resulting in the promotion of Japanese national culture as a mean to solve the nation’s economic issues. In Chapters 2 and 3, through the analysis of the sample media phenomena, it is argued that in Japanese media there is a hegemonic patriotic discourse promoted in banal ways, intended to strengthen the national identity while lessening the provocative nationalist references linked to Japanese military past. The dominant discourse inserted in these phenomena is related to a national representativeness linked to traditional Japanese gender roles disguised in a contemporary and cosmopolitan outfit. Chapter 4, presents the discussion on the incongruences found in such discourse regarding the limited definition of what is considered Japanese and its implications for the relation of Japanese with non-Japanese. In the conclusion, it is argued that the elite-produced discourse on Japan and Japanese people appears to be already naturalized in society, acting as a regime of truth on the national identity. Finally, this study also calls the attention on the potential uses that the elites may try to give to the patriotic feelings that are being promoted by banal texts, which may signify an open and hegemonic resurgence of Japanese nationalist stance in the world.

Keywords: Banal nationalism; cultural nationalism; national identity; media culture; Japan.
RESUMEN

A partir de los estudios culturales, basada en las nociones de identidad nacional y nacionalismo cultural y banal, por medio de un extenso análisis interpretativo de texto de dos fenómenos muestra y apoyada en trabajo de campo etnográfico, esta tesis examina los discursos producidos por las élites de poder en Japón acerca de la identidad nacional insertos en textos mediáticos *banales* dirigidos a la sociedad nipona. En el capítulo 1, los diferentes movimientos nacionalistas de la historia moderna japonesa y la construcción de los discursos sobre la identidad nacional son revisados, encontrando que el discurso hegemónico sobre la identidad japonesa ha mantenido algunas características esenciales a través del tiempo. Esta discusión da paso a la evaluación del contexto político y económico en el cual lo discursos de interés se han desarrollado, resultando en la promoción de la cultura nacional como medio para resolver los problemas económicos del país. En los capítulos 2 y 3, a través del análisis de los fenómenos mediáticos muestra, se argumenta la presencia de un discurso patriótico hegemónico promovido por medios *banales* que busca fortalecer la identidad nacional, mientras disimula las referencias nacionalistas ligadas al pasado militarista japonés. Se encuentra que el discurso dominante inserto en ellos está relacionado con la representatividad nacional y el apoyo a cualidades de género y roles sociales tradicionales cubiertos por exteriores contemporáneos y cosmopolitas. El capítulo 4 presenta la discusión sobre un doble discurso acerca de los japoneses y no japoneses que promueve que esta sociedad se mantenga cerrada a cualquiera que no cumpla con los atributos naturalizados del ciudadano ideal. En la conclusión se argumenta que el discurso producido por las élites sobre Japón y los japoneses parece estar naturalizado en la sociedad, actuando como un régimen de verdad sobre la identidad nacional. Finalmente, este estudio llama la atención hacia los usos potenciales que las élites podrían dar a los sentimientos patrióticos que están siendo promovidos por medio de los textos banales, los cuales pueden significar un resurgimiento abierto y hegemónico de la postura nacionalista japonesa en el mundo.

Palabras clave: Nacionalismo banal; nacionalismo cultural; identidad nacional; cultura de medios; Japón.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................... iii
Author’s note ...................................................................................................................... iv
Abstract ............................................................................................................................ v
Resumen ............................................................................................................................. vi
Contents ............................................................................................................................. vii
List of Illustrations ........................................................................................................... ix
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1
  Objective ......................................................................................................................... 3
  Theoretical and Methodological considerations ............................................................. 4
  Debating the nation matrix ............................................................................................. 10
    Theories on nation and nationalism ............................................................................ 11
    The feelings of the nation: Nationalism, patriotism and civil religion ....................... 15
  Talking banal: Disclosing the social significance of media idols ................................ 19
Chapter outline .................................................................................................................. 22
  1  Overcoming Japan’s national bipolarity: Trends of worshipping the national culture ... 25
    1.1  From nationalist revolution to ultra-nationalist imperialism ............................... 26
      1.1.1  Embracing modernity in Japanese terms: The process of building a powerful nation-state ...... 27
      1.1.2  The national identity: Inventing traditions and finding the Japanese essence .......... 33
    1.2  Cultural nationalism: Strengthening Japanese identity ....................................... 40
      1.2.1  Post-war society and its challenges ................................................................. 42
      1.2.2  Recovering the pride of being Japanese: The discourse of the nihonjinron ...... 48
    1.3  The ‘new’ and the ‘petit’: Renewed forms of nationalism at the end of the 20th century .... 54
    1.4  Beyond nationalism? The politics of cultural promotion in the 21st century ............ 60
      1.4.1  Cool Japan, selling culture and building soft power ......................................... 62
      1.4.2  Flagging the national identity in media culture ............................................... 69
    1.5  Abe’s post-3.11 administration: Aiming for a patriotic boosting or a nationalist rebirth? 75
  2  A storm hits Japan: The national in the banal throne ................................................... 79
    2.1  Japanese tarento system ......................................................................................... 79
    2.2  Japanese male idols and the dual masculinity power ............................................. 85
    2.3  The rise of the national idols ................................................................................ 92
  3  National representatives turned into media idols ......................................................... 109
    3.1  Sports and their social relevance ......................................................................... 109
    3.2  Football becoming part of popular culture in Japan ............................................. 114
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Proudly representing Japan: Union and fight in the name of the homeland</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Portraying archetypes of Japanese men and women</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The two-folded discourse on Japan</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>A heterogeneous Japan living the myth of a homogeneous society</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The international-friendly Japan</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>The discursive regime on <em>Japaneseness</em></td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex</td>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media references</td>
<td></td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Images

Image 1. Poster of Japan. Endless Discovery campaign ........................................70
Image 2. Posters of Tokyo bidding campaign for 2020 Olympic Games..............74
Image 3. Ichi oku sansenmannin ga erabu Best Artist 2003...............................96
Image 4. Ichi oku sansenmannin ga erabu Best Artist 2008...............................96
Image 5. 2013 24-hour TV campaign...............................................................102
Image 6. Kirin Beer Commercial Spot (CM) 2011.............................................121
Image 7. Opening of the program Cool Japan Football.................................126
Image 8. Campaigns with Samurai Blue............................................................128
Image 10. Nadeshiko Japan’s fashion.................................................................134
Image 11. Nadeshiko in News Zero.................................................................134
Image 12. Campaign by the JFA for the support of Japanese team in Thailand......143
Image 13. Foreigners in Japanese variety shows..............................................145
Image 14. Message from Japan by JTA..............................................................148
Image 15. Mr. Sunday.........................................................................................151

Tables

Table 1. Dai-ichi Life yearly survey to elementary school boys about what they want to become, top three professions (1989-2012).......................................................116
Table 2. Rating for Japan national team’s matches in the 2006 and 2010 FIFA World Cups (by gender and age range)...............................................................118