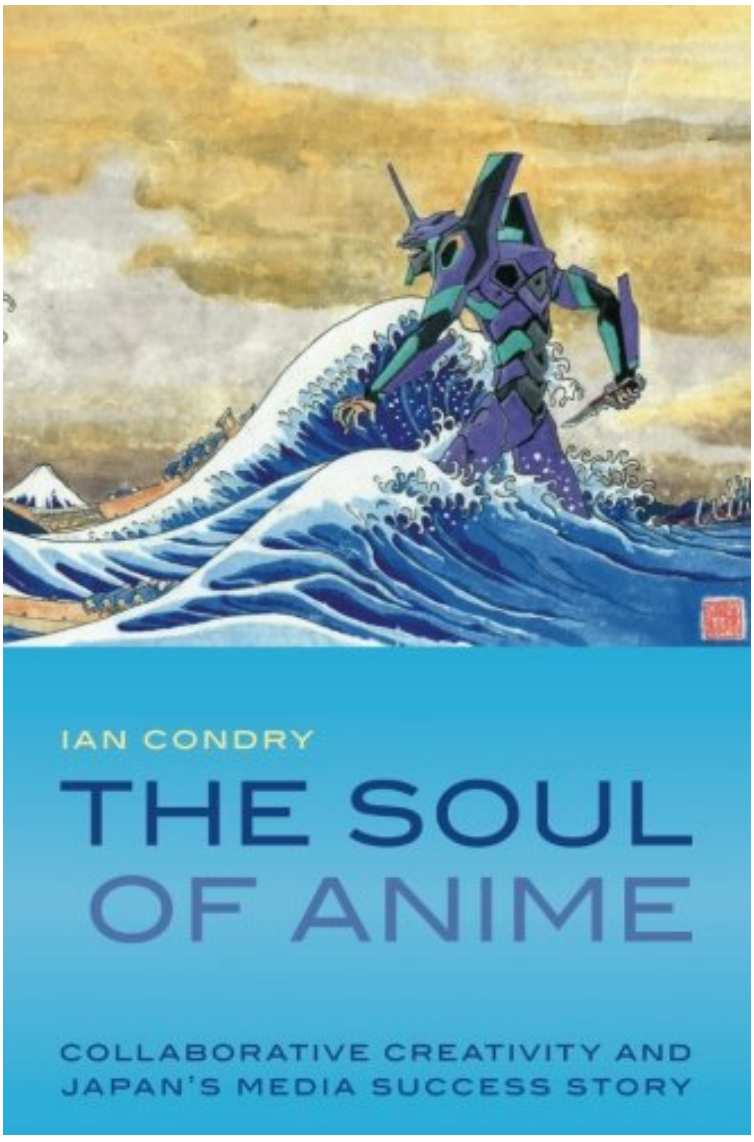
# The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story (Experimental Futures)

*Ian Condry*
*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*






#484476 in Books Condry Ian 2013-02-11 2013-02-11Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.25 x .63 x 6.13l, .80 #File Name: 0822353946256 pagesThe Soul of Anime | File size: 72.Mb

**Ian Condry : The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story (Experimental Futures)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story (Experimental Futures):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Ghost in the ShellBy Etienne RPIn my opinion, The Soul of Anime should be read in business schools. It provides a wonderful case study of a particular industry, and it can teach management practitioners many things about globalization, creative industries, and flexible labor. Unlike what is stated in the books subtitle however, the story of Japanese anime is not a success story. As Ian Condry states in the introduction, in terms of economic success, anime seems more of a cautionary tale than a model of entrepreneurial innovation. Judged from a management perspective, the anime industry is in many ways a case of failure: a failure to globalize, a failure to create value on a sustained basis, and a failure on the side of market participants to reap profits and secure employment. But management can learn from failures as much than it can learn from success stories. Whats more, the anthropological perspective adopted by the author points towards a different theory of value creation: for cultural content industries, value is not synonymous with profits, and the relation between producers and consumers cannot be reduced to monetary transactions and economic self-interest. This is the intuition that the founders of anthropology developed when they analyzed trading relations among primitive tribes in terms of gift-giving and reciprocity; and this is the conclusion that this modern anthropology book reaches when it describes the popular success of this particular case of industrial failure.Why didnt anime transform itself into a profit-making machine for Japanese media groups? Why didnt studio Ghiblithe producers of Princess Mononoke and Spirited Awaydevelop into a franchise akin to Walt Disneys? Why didnt stories based on manga seriesthe main source of inspiration for Japanese animegive birth to blockbuster movies the way that Marvel Comics did? For all its popular success andin the case of Ghibli productioncritical acclaim, Japanese anime production remains in many ways a cottage industry. The studios in which the author of The Soul of Anime did his fieldwork, with names such as Gonzo, Aniplex, and Madhouse, are small-scale operations that continuously stake the house on their next production. Even the biggest players such as Studio Ghibli, Production I.G. and Toei Animation are limited in size and do not generate extraordinary profits. As Ian Condry describes it, a studio can employ anywhere from fifteen to a few hundred people, and relies heavily on local freelance animators as well as offshore production houses located in South Korea, China, and the Philippines. Like other segments of the Japanese industry, the anime sector has been hollowed out: by some estimates, 90 percent of the frames used in Japanese animation are drawn overseas.The work that remains in Japan is not very well-paid and is precariously flexible. Long hours are the norm, and many animators work freelance, moving from project to project, often without benefits. Visiting a studio is more like entering the den of a manga production house, with papers piling up everywhere and people working frantically on deadlines, than witnessing the cool working environment of a high-tech start-up. Indeed, manga stories provide most of the content later developed in anime movies, and the two worlds are closely interconnected. Osamu Tezuka, the creator of Astro Boy otherwise known as the god of manga, used to quip that manga was his wife, while animation was his mistress. Like manga, anime now attracts a cult followership across the globe, and fans are present on every continent. They often start to watch anime from a very young age: by some estimates, 60 percent of the worlds TV broadcasts of cartoons are Japanese in origin. Despite its global reach, the anime industry failed to give rise to corporate giants that could have become global actors. Even Studio Ghiblis biggest overseas success, Spirited Away, which won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, scored much less on the international box office than U.S animated productions of much lower quality. Mamoru Oshiis cult film Ghost in the Shell reached number one in DVD sales in the United States in 1996, but failed to generate profitable spin-offs and lucrative sequels. Toei Animations original ambition to become the Disney of the East has failed egregiously.In a way, the failure of anime to globalize is just another case of the Galapagos syndrome: many globally available products take a local form in Japan, a variant that is sometimes more advanced and attuned to the local ecosystem, but which diverges from global trends. This isolation from the global market acts as a form of protectionism, allowing species to develop in unique ways, but leaves Japanese companies ill-prepared for global competition. Although cultural content industries such as manga, anime, video games, music, and films are being promoted by Japanese authorities for their ability to attract foreign audiences, the fact is that creators, drawers and scenarists mostly have a domestic audience in mind when they design their stories. The scorecards that manga readers send to weekly magazines to rate their favorite episodes is a case in point: it makes manga scenarios highly receptive to the reactions of the public, as unpopular series are discontinued and only the most popular manga stories survive and evolve according to their readerships taste. But the system also makes manga series dependent on the whim of a group of core fans or otaku that do not necessarily reflect the national public, let alone global audiences. Copyright and intellectual property rights may also be an issue: Japanese companies reap hefty profits on the domestic market where IPR protection is strong, but are pilfered in neighboring countries through copycats, illegal downloading, and video streaming. Yet another argument that explains animes parochialism is that the global slot of blockbusters and megahits is already occupied by American productions, leaving only the niche markets of national cinema and sub-culture.There are many reasons anime didnt go global the way Walt Disney did. But perhaps we are using the wrong yardstick. Perhaps the value that anime generates belongs to a different class that is more diffuse and evanescent. As Ian Condry notes, so much of what makes media meaningful lies beyond the measures of retail sales, top-ten lists, and box-office figures. Anime cannot be gauged solely by examining what happens onscreen or by how it is marketed by studios. Instead of analyzing the cultural content of particular series or the business strategies of anime

producers, Condry looks at the role of fans, the circulation of anime series and the dynamics between niche and mass market. He shows how the unexpected turnaround from failure to success for the Gundam franchise was linked to the energy of amateur builders of giant mecha robots and fans forming research groups into Minovsky Physics, an invention from the sci-fi series. He follows hard-core fans in sci-fi conventions, cosplay contests, and other fairs where amateurs distribute home-made manga and otaku videos. He focuses on fansubbing, the translation and dissemination of anime online by fans, which is governed by complex rules that are not always hostile to copyright protection. He considers how people can express strong affection or moe for virtual 2D characters with and sees it as pure love with no hope for a reciprocal emotional payback. This is a multi-sited ethnography, based on participant observation or learning by watching (kengaku), in which the author attempts to assess how value arises through the social circulation of media objects.Economists follow the money; anthropologists follow the soul, the energy, the mana. In his classic study of the Kula trade among the Trobriand islanders, Bronislaw Malinowski described the complex rules by which shell necklaces and trinkets circulated around a vast ring of island communities to enhance the social status and prestige of leaders. Kula valuables never remain for long in the hands of the recipients; rather, they must be passed on to other partners within a certain amount of time, thus constantly circling around the ring. French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, author of The Gift, reconceptualized this analysis of the Kula trade to ask: What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?" His answer was that Kula objects were invested with a certain property, a force binding the receiver and giver that he called the hau or life-force. Another Polynesian notion that Marcel Mauss used was the mana: a form of a spiritual energy or charisma which can exist in places, objects and persons. Applying these notions to the Japanese context, we can say it is the hau of anime that makes fans devote some of their time to give back to the community of anime lovers through writing subtitles or designing cosplay costumes. By summoning the soul of anime, Ian Condry reconnects with some basic concepts of the discipline, and renews the inspiration of two of the great founders of anthropology. Both Bronislaw Malinowski and Marcel Mauss tried to build theories of exchange and the economy that went beyond monetary transactions and the economic interest of rational individuals. We find that same attention on how energy flows, reputations accumulate, and people collaborate in the production and circulation of anime.Management scholars can also learn a lot from reading this modern anthropology book. The concept of co-creation used by management scholars and sociologists is close to the collaborative creativity used by Ian Condry to describe emergent structures of creative action in which both anime studios and fans play an important role. Similarly, platforms are a hot topic in management studies. Business scholars see platform industries as embodied in technologies that allow open collaboration and value creation on an unprecedented scale. Economists see platforms as multi-sided markets having distinct user groups that provide each other with network benefits. Rather than viewing technologies or markets as the platform, the anthropologist draws our attention on the circulation of emotions and meanings that define and organize our cultural space. Observing script meetings for a particular children TV series, Condry describes how a logic evolving around characters and worlds form the basis on which anime scripts are constructed and evaluated. Characters and worlds are trans-media concepts: they make a particular design or atmosphere move across media and circulate among people. They attract and connect, without being tied to any particular story or media. A well-known example is Hello Kitty, a character which exists independently from any storytelling and which has become an icon of a world of cuteness or kawaii. But characters are ubiquitous in Japan: they advertise anything from government agencies to city wards, and character designer is a popular profession among the young generation.Anime is often considered as the land of otaku, the realm of geeks, the kingdom of nerds. It is segmented into different categories or sub-genres, and a series appeal is generally limited to one single age group, as even the biggest successes very seldom straddles generations. It is, in essence, a niche market. Very seldom can it hope to reach a mass audience. But as Condry argues, the path from niche to mass may first involve jumps from niche to niche. Indeed, this might be the key to a more accurate definition of mass: to see it as network of niches acting in unison. The notion of media success often hinges on a movement from something small-scale that expands to become large-scale, yet niche has a chance in the context of global popular culture, free downloads, and viral videos. This is a new world after all, a world where the music video of an obscure rap singer from South Korea can be viewed over 2.5 billion times on YouTube, or where a gore movie such as The Machine Girl, whose schoolgirl heroin has a machine gun grafted to her amputated arm, can feature among the most often downloaded films on some media sharing platforms. Management should better pay heed to the otaku out thereor, in Steve Jobs words, to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.Ian Condry also redefines what we mean by social media. As he remarks, today, media forms are more than something we simply watch, listen to, or consume; media is something we do. Social network services like Facebook or Twitter have demonstrated that media could be a platform for participation as much as an object of consumption. What makes social media new is not the technology as much as the idea that media is not something to consume from a Network (like ABC) but something we participate in through our (small n) networks. Social network services or SNS make real what is virtual by making virtual what is real. In other words, Facebook-like platforms project onto the virtual world structures of relations between people and objects that form the basis of our day-to-day interactions; and by doing so, SNS show the materiality of the invisible bonds

that connect components of the real world. Social media has helped put back the social into the media; but as the story of anime illustrates it, the social has been there all along. Animes success as a media form relies on the feedback loops between producers and audience. This brings us back to the energy around anime, which arises through its circulation and the combined efforts of large number of people. We might think of this collective energy as a kind of soul. The social in the media is what the anthropologist calls the soul. It is like a ghost in the shell: it animates real and virtual bodies, it moves across media platform and licensed goods, it makes energy flow from producers to consumers and back again. Anthropology is a very useful means of capturing these dimensions of our social reality that are ghost-like and often spirited away, because fieldworkers can gain access to that which is most meaningful to people through persistent engagement and critical questioning. This is why, in my opinion, anthropology should be taught in business schools.

In The Soul of Anime, Ian Condry explores the emergence of anime, Japanese animated film and television, as a global cultural phenomenon. Drawing on ethnographic research, including interviews with artists at some of Tokyo's leading animation studiossuch as Madhouse, Gonzo, Aniplex, and Studio GhibliCondry discusses how anime's fictional characters and worlds become platforms for collaborative creativity. He argues that the global success of Japanese animation has grown out of a collective social energy that operates across industriesincluding those that produce film, television, manga (comic books), and toys and other licensed merchandiseand connects fans to the creators of anime. For Condry, this collective social energy is the soul of anime.

Get this if youre interested in the depth of anime, the pioneers and renowned figures within the anime movement (yes, of course including Miyazaki), and significant anime milestones. . . . For the serious anime lover who wants to move from fan to expert . . . this is a must.