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James Roberson

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# **Fight!! Ippatsu!!**

## *“Genki” Energy Drinks and the Marketing of Masculine Ideology in Japan*

JAMES ROBERSON  
*Oxford Brookes University*

*This article focuses on the marketing of “genki” energy health drinks to consider the role of media representations in the everyday construction of ideologies of masculinity in contemporary Japan. It is shown that advertisements for these drinks have employed two dominant sets of images of Japanese men and masculinity, portraying either work- and company-based needs for energy and mental acuity or the (masculine) physical strength needed to compete successfully, overcome obstacles, or defeat foes. It is argued that such advertisements have participated in the representational circumscription of the visual codes of masculinity in contemporary Japan, and through this representational regime have reflected and reproduced a dominant gender ideology that sanctions a powerful, corporatist, middle-class masculinity.*

*Key words:* energy drinks; masculinity; ideology; hegemony; reproduction; representation; media; advertising; Japan

### **INTRODUCTION: MEDIATED MASCULINITY IN JAPAN**

In this article, I consider how men, masculinities, and the media (Craig 1992) are interrelated in contemporary Japanese society. I focus on one common form of advertising—for so-called stamina or energy drinks—that makes use of masculinist imagery to reflect on how a dominant or hegemonic masculinity is represented and constructed within the Japanese popular media. While a number of recent publications in English examine the interrelations among women, femininity, and media in Japan (Miller 2000; Skov and Moeran 1995; see also Allison, 1996), there are few such scholarly

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pieces focusing primarily on representations of men and masculinities (but see McLelland 2000; Miller 2003; Standish 2000). This representational imbalance is true of Western research about gender in Japan in general. With the important exception of recent scholarship on male homosexuality (see, e.g., Lunsing 1999; Pflugfelder 1999; McLelland 2000), studies of men and masculinities in Japan remain rare compared with studies of women and femininity (but see Roberson and Suzuki 2003).

Critical interpretation of the mass-mediated representational construction of masculinity in Japan (as elsewhere) is important since, as De Lauretis (1987) notes, the “construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation” (p. 5; see also Saco 1992). Analyzing advertisements “can suggest how gender ideology is being constructed at any particular time” (Kervin 1990, 51), because the media create, reflect, reinforce (Vigorito and Curry 1998, 136), and are otherwise imbricated in the reproduction of dominant gender ideologies (see also Horrocks 1995). However, media-produced “visual codes of masculinity” and “regimes of representation” (Nixon 1997), as well as associated masculine ideologies, are neither singularly composed and consumed nor static and unquestioned. Instead, as with masculinities more generally (Connell 1995), including in Japan (Roberson and Suzuki 2003), they are multiple, (potentially at least) contested, and historically contexted and changing (Pendergast 2000).

While recognizing such complexities, contestations, and historical changes, I investigate how advertisements for a particular, popularly consumed product have participated in the representational circumscription of the visual codes of masculinity in contemporary Japan and through this representational regime have reflected and reproduced a dominant gender ideology that sanctions a powerful, corporatist, middle-class masculinity. My concern here is not with issues of consumption and intent but with a critical reading of the ideological implications and interconnections of the masculinist representational regime mediated by the imagery of the advertisements under consideration.

### **GENKI<sup>1</sup> DRINKS: BOTTLED ENERGY**

Just about anywhere that you go in Japan, and certainly just about any time that you turn on the television during mid- to late-evening “golden hours,” you are likely to see an advertisement for one brand or another of a kind of “popular medicinal” (*taishū seiyaku*) drink. These drinks (also commonly referred to as *drink-zai* and *vitamin-zai*) are typically vitamin (B) rich and laced with a combination of caffeine, nicotine, (Korean) ginseng, garlic, and various other ingredients. Many, such as the popular Lipovitan and Regain brands may be purchased at any convenience or grocery store, train station

Table 1:  
Major Energy Health Drinks and Advertising

Drink Name	Company	Advertising Phrase/Image	Advertising Actor/Character <sup>a</sup>	Price
Alinamin-V	Takeda Healthcare	Let's Go with "V" ("V" de Iko!)	Maruyama Shigeki (as a young husband and salaryman)	50ml @ ¥280
Lipovitan-D	Taishō Pharmaceutical	Fight!! One Shot!! (Fight!! Ippasut!!)	Two young men overcoming obstacles in outdoors adventures	100ml @ ¥146
Regain	Sankyō Co.	Positive!; Forward facing strength (Mae muki no chikara)	Sorimachi Takashi (as a young salaryman)	50ml @ ¥290
(New) Guromont	Chūgai Pharmaceutical	Burn! New Guromont (Moero! Shin Guromont)	Ihara Masami (professional soccer player); Bruce Lee	100ml @ ¥130
Yunker (Kotei L)	Satō Pharmaceutical	Major Power	(Suzuki) Ichiro (Major League Baseball player); Tamori (comedian)	30ml @ ¥840 (up)
Zena	Taishō Pharmaceutical	Energy with Zena (Zena de Genki); Japan's Energy (Nippon no Genki)	Tokoro George; Sanada Hiroyuki (both as salarymen)	50ml @ ¥80 (up)
Oronamin-C	Otsuka Pharmaceutical	Energy liveliness (Genki hatsuratsia)	Yomiuri Giants (professional baseball players); Jake Shimabukuro (ukulele player)	120ml @ ¥100
S-Cup (Esukappu)	SS Seiyaku Pharmaceutical	Energy blast off (Genki haashin)	K-1 kick-boxing champions	NA
Guronsan	Chūgai Pharmaceutical	There's no reason to be tired	Beat (Kitano) Takeshi (actor/director)	100ml @ ¥130
Mio-D	Kōwa	Drink down effect(iveness) (Kikime o gui to nomikiru)	NA	50ml @ ¥300 (up)
DekaVita C	Suntory	Dekavita Charge	Boxer; J-league soccer players	NA
Royal (Star)	Satō Pharmaceutical	"I like dad to be energetic" (genki na otosan ga suki)	Young girl's voice	100ml @ ¥190 (up)

a. All Japanese names are in their culturally appropriate order; that is, family name followed by personal name.

kiosk, many drink vending machines, and elsewhere. Other brands, such as Kōwa's Mio-D, must be purchased at drug stores (see Table 1 for a list of drinks mentioned in this article).

These energy (forthwith also genki) drinks are big business and their advertising has been part of the postwar Japanese mediascape for more than forty years. The first bottled energy drink to be marketed was Lipovitan-D, introduced in 1962 by Taishō Pharmaceutical (*Asahi Shinbun* 2001); this was followed by Oronamin-C in 1965 (Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2003a) and Yunker in 1968 (Satō Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2003). This marked the first of three "booms" in the market for genki drinks (*Asahi Shinbun* 1996) and coincided with the central period of Japan's postwar economic "miracle," when workers were called on (and required) to labor especially long hours. This was also when televisions simultaneously represented one of the three-C "treasures"—cars, coolers (air conditioners), and color televisions—of the emerging postwar consumer culture (Kelly 1992, 1993) and "became the primary means for the codification and dissemination of [the] conception of the middle class as a consumption category" (Ivy 1993, 249).

The second peak in the genki drink market, led by the expansion of sales of smaller 50ml bottles, occurred during the late 1980s tertiary sector based "bubble economy" (*Asahi Shinbun* 1996) and included the notable entry of "Regain" in 1988 (Sankyō Co., Ltd. 2002). The third "boom" (in product line if not in sales) in the genki drink market began in 1992 with the relaxation of government regulations, which allowed a rapid expansion in the number of brands marketed, including those introduced by companies new to the energy drink market (*Asahi Shinbun* 1996). There are now some 150 different types of energy drinks; they are sold in bottles that commonly contain either 50ml or 100ml, and they range in price from just under ¥150<sup>2</sup> to more than ¥4000. Although slowed during the 1990s recession, sales totaled more than ¥200 billion in 1996 (*Asahi Shinbun* 1997). The Taishō Pharmaceutical Company annually sells nearly ¥80 billion of its top brand, Lipovitan-D, accounting for nearly one-third of all genki drink sales (*Asahi Shinbun* 2001). Total volume sales for all brands amounted to the equivalent of ten bottles per person in the late 1990s (*Asahi Shinbun* 1997). A rough calculation would be that 1,260,000,000 bottles are sold annually!

### **FIGHT!! IPPATSU!! IMAGINING MASCULINITY**

Genki energy drinks are advertised as relieving, as an ad for Lipovitan-D more comprehensively puts it, "physical fatigue, lack of appetite, nutritional deficiency, fever and exhaustion." Genki drinks may, in fact, be consumed by men and women of nearly all ages. There are also related drinks produced by the same companies that are marketed to women, but these tend to be dietary

health drinks that, for example, provide fiber supplements and are advertised with phrases such as “beauty starts from within.” The advertising of genki drinks, despite whoever might actually consume the drinks, has, on the other hand, been predominantly male in orientation and masculinist and middle-class in composition. Furthermore, unlike advertisements for similar drinks now being marketed in some Western countries that represent the power and energy of the drinks with nonhuman (if still masculinist) symbols such as bulls, in Japanese advertisements, such energy and power is symbolically, and I argue ideologically, embodied in as well as represented by certain kinds of men.

Without a fuller knowledge of the range of advertisements for genki drinks in Japan, one may miss the masculinist nature of some of the print media ads. For example, one newspaper ad for Lipovitan-D simply shows a photograph of the central portion of a bottle with the brand name, above which are statements that it is a nourishment reinforcement and nutritional supplement. To the right of the central figure is written “That’s right. (It’s) Fight. (It’s) Lipovitan-D” (*Sō da. Fuaito da. Lipovitan-D da*). A masculinist bias is partially revealed in the reference to “fight” and in the shortened, informal, masculine sounding copular *da* form. Moreover, one cannot read this particular advertisement in Japan without also being aware of the related television commercial in which the voice-over is in a deep, almost gruff, male voice, making the related print ad also more masculine in tone.

I now want to turn to a fuller consideration of the marketing of masculinity that is part of the advertising of these genki drinks in print and television media. I will suggest that while not wholly uniform or without (sometimes self-aware and comically constructed) contradictions, an ideologically embedded and biased set of dominant images and representations of (Japanese) men and masculinity may be seen to characterize the advertisements—print and electronic—for genki drinks.

### ***Strength and Power of Mind: Company Men***

Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda (1995) note that the image of the typical Japanese man, both inside and outside Japan, is that of

a workaholic who toils long hours for . . . some . . . large corporation, goes out drinking with his fellow workers or clients after work and plays golf with them on weekends, and rarely spends much time at home with his wife and children, much less does anything around the house, such as cleaning or changing diapers. (P. 229)

This image of Japanese men as middle-class, white-collar “salaryman” employees whose lives and identities are constructed within and by corporate and work contexts remains not just predominant but hegemonic in the sense,

as Donaldson (1993) puts it, of possessing the power to set the terms through which or in reference to which things are discussed and understood (p. 645). Furthermore, as Donaldson continues, "Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural,' 'ordinary,' 'normal'" (p. 645).

Salaryman-based constructions of Japanese masculinity remain representationally and ideologically hegemonic, despite the fact that many men are neither white-collar employees nor workers in large companies (see Roberson 1998), in part because they define the terms of the discourse, including those that are critical of Japanese men or masculinity. While it is beyond the scope of this article to review such literature here, important critical deconstructions of hegemonic masculinity have, in fact, arisen in Japan not only from among women but also from various men's groups (see Ishii-Kuntz 2003; Men's Center Japan [MCJ] 1996, 1997; Nakamura 2003; Nakamura and Nakamura 1997), feminist informed men's studies (see Inoue, Ueno, and Ehara 1995; Itō 1993, 1996; Nishikawa and Ogino 1999; Taga 2001; Tsutamori 1999), and gay (and lesbian) activists (see Ito and Yanase 2001; Kazama and Kawaguchi 2003; Vincent, Kazama and Kawaguchi 1997). These activists, writers, and works are important because they are creating public spaces where, in both discourse and practice, further such deconstructive action is possible. Thus, as will be discussed further below, while the salaryman masculine hegemony remains still largely in tact, this does not mean that it has been unmoved—while this in turn does not mean that it is no longer in need of deconstruction or critique.

A common genre of genki drink advertisements reproduces the representation of Japanese men as white-collar salarymen who are portrayed in work- and company-related contexts and who do not share significantly in domestic-sphere work and child rearing. For example, over the past several years, commercials for Alinamin-V have employed golfer Maruyama Shigeki, who appears as a white-collar salaryman. In one commercial from the late 1990s, he is shown drowsy and tired as he exits his apartment in the morning, with obvious exhaustion from the previous day's work—and perhaps "night work" socializing (Allison 1994)—yet unrelieved. Behind him follows his loving young wife, who, with a look of worried concern on her face says, "Dear, you're still tired aren't you?" He mumbles his agreement, "Uhhh." The wife then says, "But, do your best" (*demo, ganbatte ne*). As she says this, she hands Maruyama a bottle of Alinamin-V. He takes the bottle, and we see him smiling as he energetically exclaims, "I'll be back!" (*itte kimasu!*). Maruyama literally blasts off from the exposed walkway, a huge Alinamin-V bottle-turned-jet-rocket strapped to his back and propelling him through the sky as he joins a phalanx of other flying office workers. The commercial ends with a shot of his faithful wife rocketing after him with a *furoshiki*-cloth-wrapped box lunch, forgotten in his sudden rush to get (back) to work.

In the late 1990s, comedian Tokoro George appeared as a salaryman in commercials—for the Zena line of drinks—that were set in company contexts or outside with coworkers. In one commercial, Tokoro is shown walking through a typical Japanese office. He passes a tired and consternated-looking younger man laboring over what appears to be a copy machine. Tokoro cries, “What are you doing?!” Then, exclaiming, “that’s not a copier! That’s a shredder!” Tokoro offers the physically and psychologically overcome and collapsing younger man a bottle of Zena. In late 2001, stylish actor Sanada Hiroyuki replaced Tokoro, supposedly to improve the product’s image (Taishō Pharmaceutical 2002). Sanada plays a businessman who “with his colleagues is optimistic and boldly seeks out the fulfillment of his dreams. This dynamic business man has ‘no time to be tired’” (Taishō Pharmaceutical 2002). However, the commercials have not lost their sense of humor. In one, as he and colleagues rush off, Sanada makes a wrong turn in his energy and enthusiasm and is called back to join the others.

Another of Japan’s most popular and certainly widely advertised brands of energy drinks is called Regain. First marketed during the “bubble economy” years of late 1980s and early 1990s, television commercials for this drink featured young Japanese businessmen engaged in one form of competition or another with a foreign (white European or American) business rival. One commercial had the two corporate contestants slugging it out on a tennis court, the Japanese man at an apparent disadvantage, facing a larger foe. The Japanese businessman is also without a tennis racket but improvises and uses his briefcase to defeat his foreign opponent. The theme song from this period even became recorded as a karaoke cover song that could be sung at local bars and pubs, with a refrain asking its “business man, business man, Japanese business man” if he can “fight for twenty-four hours.”

A commercial for Regain from the late 1990s took a rather different view of its salaryman hero. After the bursting of the 1980s bubble economy had led into what is now over a decade of recession, we find the young salaryman returning from a business trip overseas, pulling a suitcase and carrying a duty-free bag. As he comes to a small playground outside his apartment building, he pauses, puts down his luggage, and walks over to pick up his young son, who is playing in a sandbox with other children. The businessman, very fatherly, bends over and lovingly picks up a cute young boy of perhaps two years of age—while his real son is looking on and up at the father, saying, “Papa! Papa!” The embarrassed young man puts down the mistaken boy, picks up his own son, and says to the giggling young mothers nearby, none of whom is identifiable as his wife or the boy’s mother, “If you don’t see them for even a short time . . .” (*Chotto minai to nē . . .*).

With the collapse of Japan’s bubble, the Regain salaryman became nationally domesticated, managing to maintain only a confused masculine space for himself outside of the domestic home. More recent commercials for Regain have attempted to recoup a “positive,” if still nationally bordered,



image by using popular young actor Sorimachi Takashi to portray a salaryman with “forward facing strength” (*mae muki no chikara*; Sankyō Co., Ltd. 2002). His energy is such that Sorimachi, surrounding buildings, and passersby are all depicted (using computer graphics) at a sharp angle—positively facing forward in an era of record unemployment and restructuring.

In this group of commercials, genki drinks are the source not only of physical energy but also of mental alertness and acuity. Furthermore, these advertisements portray men in relation to work and company, and they represent these company employees as middle-class, white-collar salarymen. While women as workers also occasionally appear, men as homemakers or child caretakers do not—in the latter instance reflecting a reality against which some men have begun to react (see Ishii-Kuntz 2003).

### ***Strength and Power of Body: Outdoors and the Sporting Life***

A second set of images that typifies advertisements for genki drinks makes use of men in outdoors and sporting activities. Regardless of whether particular men are themselves interested or not, sports in Japan, like elsewhere, are as Ishii-Kuntz (2003) notes one of the main ways that hegemonic masculinity is learned and perpetuated. In her analysis of sport metaphors and hegemonic masculinity in advertisements appearing in the German magazine *DER SPIEGEL*, Martha Wörsching (2000), writes that “Catching the reader’s eye is clearly the most important task of any advertisement, and sport as one of men’s interests with high social prestige suggests itself as a powerful device” (p. 72). She further notes that sportsmen are used in advertising “to energize a product” (p. 76). In the case of the Japanese genki drinks discussed here, the relation between sportsman and energy is mutual, male sports figures used to “energize” advertisements for products that supply instant energy to the sportsman in the ad and so to the consuming public.

Lipovitan-D, first marketed in 1962 with the slogan “Let’s Go with Fight!” (*Fight de ikō!*), employed a series of sports figures such as baseball star Oh Sadaharu in its early commercials. Since the mid-1970s, Lipovitan commercials have used teams of two young actors (Taishō Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002) who are generally engaged in some outdoors activity and who encounter some difficulty or danger. After struggling together to overcome that obstacle, the two men get recharged with bottles of Lipovitan-D. A commercial from the late 1990s shows the two young men in an American West-like setting, straining as they pull two thick ropes tied to a huge log. Dressed in khaki shorts and tank-top T-shirts revealing bronzed skin and muscular physiques, they struggle to set the large log against a fulcrum stone

and pull it up, erect, shouting out the Lipovitan-D slogan “Fight!! *Ippatsu!*!” (Fight!! One-shot!!) before releasing the log to fall, crashing across an open crevice. Congratulating each other, they each grasp a bottle of Lipovitan-D and thrust it out toward the camera, skillfully showing the blue-and-white label with its Taishō eagle mark.

As seen in the early Lipovitan-D ads, another set of television commercials features figures, predominantly male, involved in sports activities. Advertising for Oronamin-C long used professional baseball players from the Tokyo (Yomiuri) Giants. Catching a difficult ball, hitting home runs, pitching a strike out, the ever popular Giants players are pictured in scripted scenes where they are, of course, successful (Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002). Major League baseball superstar (Suzuki) Ichirō has replaced comedian Tamori in advertising for Yunker energy drink ads (Satō Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002). Recent television commercials and print advertisements for *Esukappu* (S-Cup, from SS Seiyaku) have featured (primarily) non-Japanese K-1 kick-boxing champions, including some black athletes.

Commercials in 2002 for Chūgai Pharmaceutical’s drink New Guromont (*Shin Guromonto*) featured soccer star Ihara Masami, through whose use Chūgai hoped to convey that by drinking New Guromont one can acquire “a feeling of power and energy” (Chūgai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002). Ihara “combines it all, a strong but flexible body, intelligent and strong spiritual power, inexhaustible fighting will, all beyond those of normal people” (Chūgai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002). He is shown in workout shorts only, his muscular torso, arms and legs highlighted as he heads, traps, and kicks a burning soccer fireball, which symbolizes New Guromont (Chūgai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002), the slogan “Burn! New Guromont” (*Moero! Shin Guromonto*) also appearing on the screen to reinforce the message through use of the command form *moero*. Earlier commercials made use of images of Bruce Lee. The young, fit, half-naked Lee is pictured going through various kung-fu moves, in some commercials and advertisements apparently pausing to hold out a bottle of the energy drink. In one television commercial, a husky male voice-over proclaims, “Power will overflow”; and the commercial ends, “Burn with nourishment reinforcement!”

In all of these commercials, the focus is essentially on the male/masculine body, establishing and exploiting associations of male bodies with power and energy and of both with a marketed and consumable product. Men are represented as being physically active, muscular and strong, powerful, skillful, and confident in acts of physical prowess. The association and the representational focus here is on bodily strength and stamina and the struggle and skill to overcome obstacles or defeat foes—real men and manly acts—components of an ideologically imbricated representation regime not reducible to simple marketing ploy.

## INTERPRETATIONS: GENDER IDEOLOGY/IES IN JAPAN

Genki energy drinks are consumed in large quantities by a great many Japanese every year, both men and women. Advertisements for these drinks, while not exclusively so or in a uniform manner, primarily employ images of men in two general types of settings or activities, focusing either on work and company-based needs for energy and mental acuity or on the (masculine) physical strength needed to compete successfully, overcome obstacles, or defeat foes. I now turn to a discussion of the interconnections between such media representations and masculine ideology in Japan.

### *Social Spaces: Men in and out of Family and Class*

Over the past twenty or so years, a great deal of attention has been paid to gender ideology in Japan, particularly as this affects women's identities and experiences. According to the dominant gender ideology, women are primarily expected to be or become "good wives and wise mothers," supporting and nurturing, subordinate to men and disadvantaged by and/or within various public (educational, employment, legal) institutions (see Brinton 1992; Uno 1993).

To varying degrees, such representations of women and femininity are also present in advertisements for energy drinks. The "good wife/wise mother" female is most fully performed in the Alinamin-V commercial, with the wife sending off her rocket powered salaryman husband and then chasing him to give him the *aisai bentō* (loving wife's box lunch) she has prepared for him. Women or girls may be cast in other kinds of nurturing roles, such as in a late 1990s commercial for DekaVita drink in which a professional wrestler who has just lost his match is being given a bottle of this drink by a young female fan. An older commercial for one of the Royal Star line of drinks had a young girl giving her father a bottle, the girl's voice-over saying, "I like dad to be energetic" (*genki na otōsan ga suki*).

In commercials where working women are represented, taking on the first of two shifts (Hochschild 1989), they do not threaten their male stars, male prominence and dominance at work, or the gender order of Japan in general. "Office Lady" pink-collar women do sometimes secondarily appear in Zena commercials, while in a recent Regain commercial, Sorimachi Takashi's boss is a woman who is adoringly impressed with his "positive" attitude as he volunteers for an assignment.<sup>3</sup> An Alinamin-V commercial from 2001 has both Maruyama and his wife smartly dressed and smiling as they ready to leave for work. They say, "Today as well," "All day," as Maruyama takes two bottles, handing one to his wife. The couple are next shown in small rocket-powered Alinamin-bottle jets, speeding off to work, greeting commuting

coworkers and shouting “Let’s Go, with ‘V’!” (*V de ikō!*; see Takeda Healthcare Company 2002).

The inclusion of this coworking wife may be read both as an advertising ploy to boost sales among women and as an acknowledgement that women are an increasingly important part of the white-collar workforce.<sup>4</sup> In the latter case, women are being representationally incorporated as white-collar employees into hegemonic masculinist discourses and ideologies. Women become in this light subject not only to a real double-shift but also to a double representational regime as both good wives/wise mothers and as energetic white-collar employees.

Like some American advertising, the portrayals of working women in these commercial may be new, but this does not mean that the commercials should be viewed as particularly progressive in their representation of gender, at least as far as men and masculinities are concerned. Kervin (1990) notes, for example, that “it may be the case that portraying females as ‘equals’ makes the males seem *more* masculine, suggesting that they are manly enough not to be threatened by such women” (p. 67). While Maruyama’s or Sorimachi’s characters may not be made “more masculine,” they are not made less so, and they certainly are not being portrayed in any kind of role reversal—staying at home while their wives speed off to another day of work and genki drink derived energy.

The male/masculinist complement to representations of women/femininity singularly portrays men as employees who work (or are on their way to or from work) outside the home and away from the family. Edwards (1989) has proposed the notion of “complementary incompetencies” in describing Japanese gender roles, wherein ideologically assumed female domestic and nurturing competence is complemented (ideally in marriage) by supposed male competence in roles based outside, in work, employment, and other public action. This Japanese gender ideology is heterosexist and hetero-normative, simultaneously assuming the “common sense” (Lunsing 2001) of heterosexual desires, relations, and institutions—including the nuclear family—and excluding or occluding whomever or whatever is non-normative. Nonetheless, these components of the construction of Japanese masculinity are both key elements of the dominant gender ideology in Japan—and in no small degree also constitute (the social context of) actual practice, desired or not (see Mathews 2003).

(Heterosexist) Japanese masculinity thus constructed is that of the male as *daikokubashira* (strong pillar; see Gill 2003; Matsunaga 2000), the financial and rational mainstay of the now ideally nuclear family, on whom others depend. In representing men as workers or as outdoors sportsmen, genki drink advertising participates in the representational reproduction of gender ideological assumptions about and imaginations of preferred, probable, and possible male gender practice.

At the same time, however, I think that it is important to recognize that as seen in various of the advertisements reviewed above, there can also be a degree of self-critical or self-deprecating humor involved in such media representations and reproductions of masculine gender role ideology. There is, in fact, a long history of such comic self-criticism of salarymen in Japan (Dasgupta 2000). However, as with the inclusion of working women characters, while simultaneously incorporating a recognition of change, such comic criticism does not necessarily challenge either the salaryman model of masculinity or the gender relations of which it is a part. As Diana Saco (1992) more generally states, "modifications in various aspects of hegemonic masculinity [often] work to recuperate it" (p. 34). It is still the heterosexual, married, white-collar salaryman whose image is being representationally reproduced and comically and ironically reinforced.

Thus, in commercials for Guronsan, actor/director (Kitano) "Beat" Takeshi first challenges the viewer, saying, "If you're living as you please, there's no reason to be tired." He then compromises and after the narration explains that "When you're tired, it really works—Guronsan," and he says, "so I'm never tired!" (Chūgai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2002). The forgetful Regain father comes back for an energetic reprise at the very end of the commercial, exclaiming simply and strongly, "Yeah! (*ka!*); the lampooned Zena characters will drink the bottled energy and get back to work—and comedian Tokoro has been replaced by actor Sanada.

The Alinamin, Zena, and Regain commercials, like many media depictions of men in Japan, are engaged not only in the representational construction of a general masculine hegemony but also in the representation of a masculinized class hegemony. In presenting men (and women) who are unquestionably and unquestioningly white-collar salarymen, these commercials cooperate in the construction of the salaryman as a masculine ideal and of the white-collar, middle-class as a social ideal. This is important, in part because of the ideological implications of the white-collar, middle-class focus and in part because of the correlated representational denial, subordination, or concealing of class-contexted diversity in Japan.

The complications of class and its intercourse with gender are excluded from a prominent representational place in much of the media in Japan, not just the commercials examined here. This representational obfuscation of class-based diversity operates both in terms of social (cultural and economic) difference and in terms of the plurality of gender(ed) practices. Against media, academic, and state representations of Japan as an essentially homogeneous and egalitarian classless society, the practical reality and importance of class stratification and difference has been emphasized in a number of publications (see Ishida 1993; Sugimoto 1997; Roberson 1998). The potential significance of the class-related diversity of masculinities has been more generally theorized and examined by writers such as R. W. Connell (1995),

while I have elsewhere pointed to class-related differences in masculine gender practices in Japan (Roberson 2003).

### ***Body Politics: Masculinity, Strength and/as Power***

While genki energy drink commercials tend to portray men in interrelation with work and company contexts or situations, it was argued earlier that a second set of advertisements focus on the male body as a site of strength and power. The men in these commercials are (generally) young, athletic—if not, in fact, professional athletes—muscular, strong, and confident. The commercials make and exploit the association of their energy- and strength-providing products with the strength of the men in their commercials. Even the image of Bruce Lee, now long dead, has been revived to suggest that the consumption of New Guromont drink will help one “burn” with strength and energy. It is the ideological implications of this representational equivalence of men/masculinity with strength and power that are at stake here.

These commercials portray men who are not only physically strong but who use their strength to overcome obstacles, difficulties, and competitors. In the Lipovitan commercials, these crisis events are always set outdoors, in natural, wilderness locations. These outside settings may in one sense be read as simple variations on the male-equals-outside/ female-equals-inside assumptions of the dominant gender ideology. Male strength is expressed in settings outside, away from the home, whether at work or not. But although the two muscular young men are shown sweating and soiled as they strain to overcome obstacles in trying situations, this should not be confused with working-class 3-K (*kitsui, kiken, kitanai*) labor that is also but rather differently *difficult, dangerous, and dirty*. The Lipovitan men are not physical laborers but members of a privileged male/masculine leisure class. As Kervin (1990) notes for advertisements in the American magazine *Esquire* in the 1980s, leisure is portrayed as middle class and “being a man is associated with leisure activities and sports, but with the underlying message that these are not pursued for pleasure alone, but as another arena in which one must prove oneself” (p. 67).

Representations of the masculine leisure class are also found in other advertising aimed at men in Japan. For example, Japanese beer commercials also reproduce the middle-class, white-collar bias of the genki drink advertisements under consideration here—an interesting social-cultural difference from the often working-class imagery of American beer commercials (see Strate 1992). Although there are exceptions such as recent Boss coffee commercials featuring female pop-star Hamasaki Ayumi as a member of a road construction team, advertising for canned coffee in Japan has typically similarly participated in (an often comic and cool, jazz inflected) construction of work and leisure as white collar and middle class. Popular female

talent and actress Iijima Naoko was employed by Georgia brand coffee to implore young salarymen to take a relaxing and refreshing break “with/in Georgia” (*Georgia de*).

Like the Lipovitan commercials, a number of other commercials make dramatic use of male muscularity and physical strength. New Guromont’s use of Ihara Masami and Bruce Lee, their sweat covered torsos burning with energy, is perhaps the most vivid of these images. The common contracting of baseball stars, fighters, and wrestlers also suggests that male strength is made truly masculine through competition, combat, and winning. There is also an element of the fetishization of the “male as erotic spectacle” (Kervin 1990, 63), again especially in the Ihara and Lee commercials, but the message here is that a “real man” is able to fight and fights to win—whether the physicality of the representation is taken as sign or symbol.

While many of the genki drink commercials visually imagine men who are young and muscular, male power may more generally be strength not only of body but also of mind. Wörsching (2000) makes such a connection when she notes that the use of sports images and figures in advertising is done “as a metaphor for the mental attitude of ruthless competition” (p. 61). Competition and the overcoming of foes and obstacles to victory or one’s goals require also mental and spiritual strength. An older anthropological discourse on Japan has also made this connection, especially in relation to sports activities (see Moeran 1984). The ability to persevere is for men perhaps much more strongly tied to competition with others than it is for women, for whom self-control, if not self-suppression, has been more common (see Lebra 1984).

Itō Kimio (1993) has more recently suggested that (Japanese) masculine ideology is based on three tendencies or desires—those for power, authority/superiority, and possessions. He is highly critical of the hold that these have over both women and men. Men are supposed to be strong, able to compete and overcome obstacles. In Itō’s reading, together with gender ideological assumptions about male strength and silence, this places a heavy psychological burden on men. Itō is aware, of course, that the burdens of gender ideology are also born by women. For men, I would argue that this burden is felt in part because of hegemonic gender ideological exclusion from representational and public discourse of socially and culturally sanctioned alternatives, whatever their sexual identification, class position, and so forth. The advertisements reviewed here participate in this class-based, masculine/ist exclusionary hegemony.

### *Men, Masculinity, Race, and Nation*

Finally, let me suggest that there are connections between men, masculinity, race, and nation in Japan that may also be at work or at stake here. This

linkage was made in commercials for Zena energy drinks in which Tokoro George and his coworkers proclaim Zena to be "*Nippon no Genki!!*" (Japan's Energy!!). This was also, and perhaps most clearly, brought out in the Regain commercials cited previously, which, during the bubble economy years of the late 1980s, applauded and hoped to give strength and support to Japan's businessmen as they fought and competed with (white) foreign others.

The white racialization of the foreign "other" with whom the young Japanese businessmen competed may be read in complex fashion, indexing assumptions about the West as white and the white West as rival in both business and in a nationalist project of ascendant modernity (see also Kelsky 2001). At the same time, this white racialization inversely indexes Japanese discourses that, for example, exclude African Americans from a shared modernity, denying blacks recognition as potential competitors in intellectual and economic fields and chaining blacks to stereotypes (influenced by white racism) of pure physicality (see Russell 1992). The use of Asian star Bruce Lee in advertisements for New Guromont, however, complicates any simple and straight critical and contrastive dichotomization of Japan versus the white West/rest that might be imputed from the late 1980s' Regain commercials and that some might wish to imagine as seamlessly forming the discursive foreign fantasy-scape of Japan.

Perhaps we may see the national incorporation of these powerful men not only as attempts to associate the given product with their strength but also as an attempt to domesticate, in Tobin's (1992) sense, the men, their sport(s), and their power. They are no longer really "foreign," even if they will never truly be Japanese either. Even as foreign, however, they are not threats to Japanese masculinity but rather figures whose strength one may acquire by association, which requires some form of national incorporation. Such incorporation and absorption of the masculine power of "other" men requires that these men not be portrayed as rivals and competitors but more simply and singularly as symbols of male strength and physical power, thus allowing for the use of black athletes in ads that portray physical not fiscal power and prowess. In these processes of incorporation are perhaps reflected both the contained internationalization and globalization of Japan and its imaginary, and the postbubble desire for external sources of (masculine) power that will, like Nissan Motors President Carlos Ghosn, rejuvenate the ailing male/economic Japanese body politic.

## CONCLUSION

As described in this article, the representational construction of men and masculinity articulated within Japanese advertisements for various genki energy drinks reproduces a middle-class, white-collar, work-oriented masculinity which in leisure is complemented by physical power and strength.



Such representational reproduction simultaneously participates in the ideological exclusion from public gender discourse of a fuller range of masculine identities and experiences.

This is not to say that men who are neither salarymen nor sportsmen are not represented in other advertisements or certainly not in other media. However, such men often tend to be identifiable characters, such as yakuza gangsters, policemen, or young men who have not yet fully matured into their roles as *daikokubashira* bread-winner, company man. In other cases, especially in advertising, the men selected are known entertainers, actors, musicians, or talents—such as Kitano “Beat” Takeshi or Kimura “Kimutaku” Takuya—with unique qualities and personalities, whose lives in the entertainment world place them acceptably outside of the normative everyday in Japan. Their difference lends cachet to products like coffee, with its thirst for coolness, while preserving the quotidian normalcy of the middle-class salarymen that they inversely index.

I am certainly not attempting to suggest here that masculine identities and experiences other than those of middle-class salarymen are unknown or unrecognized in daily life in Japan. Kelly (1993), stressing the importance of recognizing the simultaneously co-optive, complicit, and contested nature of the social order in (Shōwa) Japan, notes that “ideological representation both generalizes and naturalizes,” while “the power of institutions is the power to normalize in the twin senses of idealizing and routinizing certain patterns of conduct” (p. 216). Similarly, I argue that because of hegemonic “visual codes of masculinity” (Nixon 1997) focusing on middle-class, white-collar salarymen—in whose construction advertising participates—other men and other masculinities are thereby made less publicly speakable as also natural, routine, and acceptable. This is significantly so because, intentionally or otherwise, the middle-class salaryman-cum-strong-and-competitive-sportsman representational regime itself is reflexively imbricated in a broader hegemony of the middle-class salaryman.

Although I have focused here on advertisements for a particular (i.e., particularly gender marked) product, other Japanese media should thus also be critically examined for how, through their representational construction in popular cultural forms and figures, gendered ideologies of life in Japan are reproduced and resisted, constructed, contested, and changed. While simultaneously interrogating the reproduction in popular culture of a dominant/hegemonic masculinity against which other masculinities are defined, I think it important to recognize that a fuller investigation of texts, discourses, and images of men and masculinities in Japan will certainly also reveal greater diversity than the ideologically hegemonic that is reproduced within/by the genki drink advertisements examined here (see Roberson and Suzuki 2003).

More importantly, of course, as indicated briefly earlier, Japanese men and women have begun the (self-)critique essential for the construction of individual, institutional, ideological (see Kelly 1993), as well as

representational and discursive spaces of publicly recognized and accepted difference and diversity. The inclusion of women in the representational space of the masculine workplace in certain commercials introduced here perhaps suggests one screening of an increasingly multivocal, gendered public sphere in Japan. Such change (as also marketing strategy) may also be suggested by the use of “Beat” Takeshi in Guronsan commercials and of pop stars from the group Da-Pump and energetic Okinawan American ukulele player Jake Shimabukuro (from Hawaii) in recent commercials for Oronamin-A (Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. 2003b).<sup>5</sup> As voices of contestation continue to be (publicly) raised and as pragmatic challenges, many in the form of everyday practice, are made to and faced by the various institutions, ideologies, and (representational and practical) codes and regimes of hegemonic masculinity, perhaps genki drink marketers will have to create a fuller range of images of what is imaginable for men and masculinities in contemporary Japan that more naturally recognize the plurality and diversity of both.

## NOTES

1. *Genki* means (individual) energy, stamina, vitality, liveliness, cheerfulness.
2. Although fluctuating over the period covered by this article, approximately ¥130 = US \$1.
3. Laura Miller (personal communication December 15, 2000) points out that, given that Sorimachi often appears among the top ten most popular male talents in lists in women’s magazines, perhaps there is an extra layer of meaning or implication here related to a reflexive awareness of female desire. Perhaps we should also read Sorimachi’s boss’s adoring look as sexualized, the message of the commercial for men then being one of association of (hetero)sexual desirability and the consumption of energizing genki drinks.
4. Thanks to Mark McLelland and an anonymous reader here. I am unable to confirm the marketing strategy, although the commercial’s narrative certainly seems to suggest this as also likely.
5. I thank an anonymous reader for this updated information regarding the Oronamin-C commercials. I would still suggest a certain representational ambivalence, noted earlier, of the use of recognized—and especially younger—stars in commercials, who in many ways are already located outside of normative spaces. Similarly, while the use of Jake Shimabukuro is encouraging both in its implications for representations of gender and ethnicity, it is also rather ambivalent. Shimabukuro is shown wearing jeans and a brightly colored, touristy, Aloha shirt while playing his ukulele on a harbor pier, a liminal place indexing his origins outside Japan. His “foreignness” is also indicated by the self-scripted use of both Roman letters and *katakana* (a syllabary system commonly used to write foreign words and names) in writing his name, which appears on screen. He is young, hip, and obviously not a salaryman, which is positive, but he is also very recognizably not a mature adult and not really Japanese. His family name, Shimabukuro, is a common Okinawan nonmainland Japanese name, and its presence is also ambivalent: a positive public recognition of a historically marginalized minority within Japan, whose being associated with Hawaii again displaces this diversity.

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*James Roberson is a senior lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. His research interests are in issues of class-, gender-, and ethnicity-based marginality in contemporary Japan. He is the author of Japanese Working Class Lives (1998, Routledge) and coeditor (with Nobue Suzuki) and contributor to Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan (2003, RoutledgeCurzon).*