Mass Media and the Anthropology of Visual Communications: The Case of the Television Production of James Clavell’s SHOGUN and Some Related Works

Two recent and widely publicized television series have raised once again a number of issues of importance to the emerging field of the anthropology of visual communication. NBC’s Shogun miniseries and PBS’s Odyssey series provide two excellent examples of media’s current exploration of culture. One of the most troublesome issues for anthropologists raised by these series, different as the two may be, is the issue of the degree of sophistication with which the cultures involved and the anthropological perspectives on cultures are treated. Although there is every reasonable expectation that this should be a central concern for the PBS series, the issue is raised in the Shogun series both because of the nature of the television adaptation of the novel, which stresses the enculturation of an Englishman into Japanese culture, and because NBC funded a viewer’s guide for general audiences that provides not only a synopsis of the story but also attempts to provide some insight into Japanese culture and into the concept of culture as a whole.

The viewer’s guide, produced and distributed by Cultural Information Service of New York City, raises in the mind of its readers a series of questions that require further exploration. Initially, these questions have to do with (1) the nature of Cultural Information Service, its personnel, and its history of involvement in providing viewer’s guides for commercial television, and (2) with the nature of the reception of the viewer’s guide to Shogun by anthropologists with expertise in Japanese culture. After longer reflection, these questions become more general. They concern the relationship between scholarship and the treatment of culture (1) on both public and commercial television, (2) in publications specifically distributed to provide additional “information” about and “insight” into cultures depicted in television productions, and (3) in those novels that seem to treat the concept of culture seriously. In a sense, these questions inquire into the very nature of American society.

They involve, for example (1) the potential conflict between private and public interests in a society in which the major mass media channels are dominated by wealthy private interests; (2) the nature of the control over the major educational instruments and processes in our society; (3) and the relative powerlessness of scholars in the mass media arena. For example, (1) Given the increasing involvement of commercial and public television in the production of programs that are implicitly or explicitly educational, should there be some minimum set of standards enforced by the Federal Communication Commission that seek to ensure that such programs provide informed insights into their subject matters? Or alternatively (2) How can scholars, who generally have little status or power in the realms of commercial or public television and frequently even less money with which to produce programs with divergent viewpoints, expect to effectively influence television producers to change the images of culture that they portray on commercial or even public television when these images are unscholarly, distorted, or misrepresent that culture or an academic discipline in some major way?
Although these and other questions could be raised about James Clavell’s book SHOGUN itself, they become especially important in treating the television adaptation of the book and particularly the reader’s guides because the television production implicitly and the reader’s guide explicitly attempt to attach an educational function to the primarily entertainment function of the novel.

The distribution of CIS’s viewers guide to the television series SHOGUN thus became the catalyst for a reconsideration of the relationship between the perspectives of the discipline of anthropology and the perspectives of the commercial world of mass media, an important issue if anthropologists are to become more involved in the commercial world of visual communication.

In beginning the exploration of this relationship, I initially decided to obtain the reaction of a number of anthropologists who had an interest in Japanese culture to the CIS viewer’s guide to the television production of SHOGUN. I wrote to a number of anthropologists whose views of Japanese culture arose from quite disparate involvements in Japanese culture. Three accepted my invitation to write a short statement for the NEWSLETTER: Don Rundstrom, an anthropologist who along with his brother, Ron, produced the film THE PATH, a film about Japanese culture as viewed through the Japanese tea ceremony; Edward Norbeck, an anthropologist whose interest is contemporary Japanese culture; and Robert J. Smith, an anthropologist with interests in the ethnohistory of Japan. I also contacted Mary Ann Brussat of Cultural Information Service, one of the authors of the CIS viewer’s guide, and asked her to provide me with a statement about the context of CIS’s involvement with the viewer’s guide to SHOGUN.

In the process of this inquiry, I learned that there were several other projects related to the SHOGUN television series that might provide additional insights into the way that academics and commercial mass media producers dealt with the cultural issues raised by the SHOGUN television series. One of these was a book edited by Henry D. Smith II, professor of history at the University of California at Santa Barbara, that was already in the production process. The second was an additional but quite different viewer’s guide to the SHOGUN television series produced in the magazine section of the Chicago Tribune and syndicated elsewhere. The third was an in-process analysis of a survey of viewer’s reactions to the television production of SHOGUN that was conducted by Mary Ann Heller and Sheldon Hersel of the School of Communications at the University of Washington. I contacted key individuals involved in each of these three projects and asked them to provide the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER with a statement about their project.

In the statements that follow, the thread that binds them is the common interest in the educational function that the novel and the television series SHOGUN stimulated. The value that the publication of such a set of statements has for the readers of the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER is that they represent to some small extent the concerns of some academics and some representatives of the mass media and related organizations with respect to a particular attempt at exploring the problems of learning to understand another culture. Strangely enough, the presentation of these comments may allow two sets of individuals from two quite different subcultures in the U.S. to begin to explore the problems of learning to understand each other.

Jack R. Rollwagen

A VIEWER’S GUIDE TO “SHOGUN”: AN INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FROM CULTURAL INFORMATION SERVICE

(Before the television broadcast of “Shogun,” 170,000 Viewer’s Guides to the miniseries were distributed by Cultural Information Service. Many guides went to anthropology departments, inter-cultural studies programs, Asian studies departments, libraries, and high schools. The guide was written by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, directors of Cultural Information Service; its development and distribution was made possible by a grant from NBC.)

The Viewer’s Guide to “Shogun” is one of many such resources developed by Cultural Information Service. During the past year, we have written over 50 discussion guides on a wide variety of cultural events—from feature films shown on TV; to “The American Short Story” series; to made-for-television movies on aging, single parenthood, middle age, marriage, science fiction, bioethics; to books on change, women’s consciousness, imagination; to films on marriage, identity, work, and more. All these materials are based on the assumption that contemporary media events provide a window on our world, influencing, shaping, and feeding back the complex values systems of our culture.

Media events provide a fertile field of possibilities which can fuel a personal or group experience in lifelong learning. We use that term as Ronald Gross defined it in his excellent book LIFELONG LEARNING (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1977): Lifelong learning is “self-directed growth. It means understanding yourself and the world. It means acquiring new skills and power—the only true wealth which you can never lose. It means investment in
yourself." Such learning by its very nature has to be
designed by an individual to fit his/her own needs
and learning style. Our part is to provide the wide variety
of materials to spark interests.

The television series "Shogun" turned out to be a
good catalyst to lifelong learning. The guide was
developed after a reading of the script, viewing of a
rough cut of the film, interviews with the director
Jerry London and the producer/teleplay writer Eric
Bercovici, study of the book SHOGUN, and research
into the history of 16th century Japanese. We were
intrigued immediately by Eric Bercovici's decision to
take the basic story and retell it from the Englishman
John Blackthorne's point of view. Japan was to be
seen through his eyes; the language would be
understandable to the non-Japanese-speaking audience
only as Blackthorne absorbed the language; the
culture of Japan would be explained to viewers as it
was explained to Blackthorne. Blackthorne and the
audience, we expected, would experience some
"culture shock," and the interplay of cultures-
Japanese and Western--would be a major current
underlying the whole story.

The Viewer's Guide then took shape as we played
around with this basic theme. The guide contained a
night-by-night story synopsis (for viewers who might
miss an episode or have trouble with the labyrinthine
plot) and five learning modules: The Interplay of
Cultures, Language, Japanese Culture, Ethnocentrism,
and History. Each section was followed by a
bibliography of resources for further exploration.

The questions themselves took two approaches.
Some were oriented toward research possibilities,
using an element introduced in the story and
encouraging viewers to investigate it further, study
the historical background, etc. Other questions were
experiential--an attempt to help viewers relate what
they were seeing on the television screen to their own
lives. Throughout, we used a generous sprinkling of
quotations--both as thought-piece headings for each
section, and as discussion starters within the
questions. In order to introduce different points of
view into the guide, we drew from historians,
anthropologists, experts on Japan, and the screenplay
itself.

The goals of this Viewer's Guide, then, were to
increase audience understanding of the story, its
themes, and its implications. We hoped to give people
a taste of a different culture while also identifying
areas of common experience between Japan and
America. Finally, we used the TV program as a
"launch pad" to encourage viewers to take a deeper
look at their own culture and values.

Response to the guide was very good; over 20,000
orders were filled after the initial mailing. The guide
was used extensively in schools, libraries, adult
education programs, hospitals, churches, and
community centers. The Viewer's Guide and the
television series "Shogun" became the subject of
several research projects. (One study attempted to
measure the impact of the guide on viewing and on the development of cross-cultural understanding. For more information on this project, contact Mary Ann Heller and Sheldon Harsel, School of Communications, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195.

Cultural Information Service is interested in any feedback from viewers and users of our material. (If you have not seen a copy of the viewer's guide to "Shogun" and would like one, write CIS for a free copy.) Any comments on the viewer's guide to "Shogun" in particular are welcome, but we are most interested in response to our work in general. You can receive CIS materials during the coming year by subscribing to Cultural Information Service. Subscribers receive a twice-monthly magazine (containing reviews of television, hardcover and paperback books, films, and records, plus overviews of cultural trends) plus all the Viewer's Guides we develop outside the magazine (about 35 per year). An annual subscription is $25.00—all materials are mailed First Class to give subscribers plenty of time to plan educational uses. Write: Cultural Information Service, P.O. Box 92, New York, NY 10156.

C.I.S.

COMMENTS BY THREE ANTHROPOLOGISTS ON THE CIS VIEWER GUIDE

Don Rundstrom

As we move into the '80s, it appears that the entertainment media is destined to play an increasingly important role in the educational process. The Cultural Information Service Viewer's Guide of James Clavell's novel SHOGUN is an innovative and pioneering effort in this direction. This type of pedagogical instrument, combined with the audio-visual experience of home viewing, introduces a powerful updating of our educational enterprise into the realm of synthesized "ways of knowing."

However, if such a vehicle is to be given a chance to develop in a nourishing environment, there must be careful assessment of the materials being linked and of the perspective from which the learning experience derives. There are some important issues in this regard which are suggested by the viewer's guide to SHOGUN that merit serious consideration -- much more than can possibly be given adequate exploration here. However, I would like to raise an important issue which I see being exemplified in this and other attempts.

In outward appearance, this Viewer's Guide is very well presented, and in form and content it delineates a model that could be a very effective teaching device for mass audiences. In itself, the Guide is a commendable model in that it explores not only the story-line and Japanese history, culture and language, but the subject matter of cultural interplay and enthnocentrism. It encourages the audience to regard the TV program as "a starting point for an extended study of Japanese culture" (Brussat and Brussat 1980:4), in addition to offering an insight into the dimension of "culture shock -- that certain uneasiness brought about by exposure to an alien environment" (Brussat and Brussat 1980:4). It is important that such guides attempt to introduce the anthropological epistemology to a mass audience. The Guide's study format introduces the viewer/reader to "how" the anthropologist works. At this subtle level it provides a useful tool for adaptation and survival which should be developed into stronger public awareness. However, when relating the content, quotations, questions, and exercises of the Guide to the TV presentation of SHOGUN, a serious conflict arises which is never given adequate exposition, solution or exploration within the guide.

One example of this is the exploration into the nature of the "field experience" in which the Guide asks us to "...rehearse what it is like to encounter a way of life sharply different from our own" (Brussat and Brussat 1980:4). The point is that this "field" (the TV portrayal) is not historically authentic; it is fictional, an illusion, and constructed, from the filmmaker's perspective, to entertain. It is not "a way of life sharply different from our own." It is our own. Although the questions, exercises and quotations presented in the Guide might serve as an introduction to how a Western epistemology looks at or studies another culture it falls short when it does not examine the nature of what it is being asked to examine. On almost a one-to-one transfer, the reader/viewer is asked to accept a "Western production" as a substitute for an Eastern culture.

The filmmakers themselves can be used as informants to elucidate this "field" for which the Guide has been "designed to serve as a passport into the story and the culture of Japan" (Brussat and Brussat 1980:4). James Clavell, author of SHOGUN and executive producer of the television production, perceives this "field" as "12 hours of television being made for Middle America, with NBC putting up a huge amount of money. In filmmaking you've got to be practical. You've also gotta be fiscally responsible, responsible to the money.... But they've [certain filmmakers] forgotten that the basic rule is entertainment. John Ford found out a long time ago that you do two things to make a good movie. You open it with a man galloping into town and you end it with a kiss" (Anonymous A 1980:951). "I would say, 'It's a love story. It's the story of an Englishman who goes to Japan and falls in love with this beautiful bird' " (Anonymous A 1980:951). The screenwriter/
producer, Eric Bercovici states, “We felt that we were not making a documentary; we were not making a piece of historical research. The film is fiction and the film is designed to entertain... We were not making a Japanese film; we were making an American film set in Japan” (Anonymous C 1980:895). “The story had to be told completely from Blackthorne’s point of view... because Blackthorne is the character Western audiences will identify with. As Blackthorne learns the Japanese language and customs - so do we” (Anonymous C 1980:894). “...you have the illusion/author’s emphasis/that you can understand Japanese...” (Anonymous C 1980:948).

Because of such issues raised in the television series SHOGUN, the Japanese American Citizen’s League was concerned with the transfer of values which might result from the viewing of this production. They submitted a disclaimer to be added to the NBC disclaimer: “Racial epithets expressed are not intended to demean or stereotype” (Anonymous B 1980:1). They were particularly concerned with the “use of Jappo and Japper (substitutes for ‘Jap’)” (Anonymous B 1980:1), which are in the film, but not in the book. NBC replied “that previous statements by the author and NBC have disclaimed any historical authenticity and that it is fictional” (Saito 1980:6).

Even though we work with sophisticated notions such as “ethnocentrism,” there is still an element that prevents us from seeing the “other’s” perspective from his point of view, for we generally work from our own monoperspectivistic viewpoint. This is evident in the guide, as well as in the film. Just because we go to other ports and hang the trappings of exoticism within the camera frame, have we really gained insight into new epistemologies and other ways of doing things? Are we not just submerging ourselves deeper and deeper into the “Odyssey syndrome” (the adaptive behavior of media to exploit that which is odd or different in order to induce interest)?

This study guide/tv production tandem approach to learning is most valuable as a mirror by which we can understand our own mechanisms of ethnocentrism, sexism and racism. However, we need to go further and develop tools for the synthesis of diversity. It is important to be able to perceive the need for a multiperspectivistic approach that maintains the integrity of each perspective, yet which creates a nourishing environment which accepts their complementary synthesis.

One final point to be considered is distribution, which seems to be a major drawback for such material. In order for study guides such as this to be most effective, it should reach the mass viewing audience. When I took an “opportunity survey” among my friends, neighbors, and associates, most never saw or heard of the guide. A telephone call to the local NBC affiliate in Albuquerque, New Mexico, revealed that the available viewer’s guides had been consumed by local schools. This somewhat diminishes the usefulness of such guides in educating the mass adult viewing audience. A solution might be to put it in the magazine supplements or TV sections of local newspapers, or perhaps approach TV Guide to add it in their weekly installments. In this way a wide range of the viewing audience will at least have received it on their home front prior to telecast and be afforded the chance of its use.

Miura Anjin (John Blackthorne’s real life counterpart, William Adams) along side his Japanese wife Lady Bikuni, is probably turning over in his grave high on that hill near Yokosuka Naval Base (The Washington Post 1980:C1, C9), but he would more than likely understand that in order to know where you’re at, you’ve got to know where you’re coming from and have an orientation to where you’re going.

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I write these comments with the advantage of receiving from colleagues in the academic world, university students, and non-academic friends and acquaintances statements of opinion regarding the television production of Shogun. Many of their remarks and opinions relate to the viewer’s guide, which I asked several of the commentators to read. The comments which follow are a statement of my own opinion. However, I believe that my appraisal of the viewer’s guide fairly well represents a consensus of the views of a number of people.

The synopses of the television segments of the plot of Shogun are indeed helpful and impress me as being the most useful part of the guide. The plot is complex, involving many persons, and without these synopses I believe many people found it difficult to follow the tale with clear understanding and to identify all of its characters. Even for persons who had read the novel, the synopses were helpful.

I think the entire synopsis would have been improved if it were prefaced by a brief introduction presenting actual historic information. Specifically, I think it would be useful to include in such an introduction the paragraph appearing at the beginning of the last page of the guide, which gives the historic basis or inspiration for the novel. I think this introduction might well include additional historic information on the Jesuit and Franciscan orders of priests, their national origins, and their relationship. Similarly, I think it would be useful to present some information on the Japanese social order of the time, clearly identify the samurai class and describing the roles of samurai in Japanese society as well as those of feudal lords and the shogun, especially the role of the shogun as de facto ruler of the nation. Some of my commentators asked what happened to the emperor, a question which could easily be given an anticipatory answer in the guide. Commentators familiar with Japanese society and with the novel asked about the outcaste class, which was treated at some length in the novel. This segment of Japanese society is essentially ignored in the television production and is not mentioned in the guide.

The remainder of the guide impressed me and others as having little value except for the too-brief passage on history. The headings of “Interplay of Cultures,” “Language,” “Japanese Culture,” “Ethnocentrism,” and “History” are probably useful. However, the tenor of much of the content of these passages alienated me, and others, suggesting that their prevailing motif was inspired by courses in elementary schools or in schools of education. I do not think that viewers, highly educated or not, respond well to the suggestion that they keep a diary of their “feelings, reflections and insights.” I do not think they would care to do such things as rank circumstances that seemingly cause discomfort to Blackthorne or have a debate over whether or not suicide is an honorable act.

I shall add the opinion, again shared by others, that the television production was worthwhile, that it did indeed give viewers some notion of Japanese history (if fictionalized), language, and culture in general as well as providing many illustrations of ethnocentrism. Producing such a drama is surely a mountainous task, and the finished product was handsome and otherwise commendable.

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My instructions were to write about the Viewer’s Guide to the television series based on James Clavell’s Shogun rather than about the novel or the television program. I am nonetheless bound to say at the outset that I found the television series only marginally less offensive than the novel, which is riddled with inaccuracies, misinformation, stereotypes, and pretension. Perhaps the principal improvement that the television mini-series makes on the novel is in the rendering of the Japanese language. Happily, the Japanese actors and actresses could not have spoken the novel’s fractured Japanese even if they had been ordered to do so, nor did most of the absurd personal names of characters in the novel survive on the screen. There simply is no excuse for naming a farmer “Carrot” or a fisherman “Fish,” and the hilarity of such concoctions as “Genjiko Suzuko,” and “Toda Mariko-nob-Buntaro” suggests that we have not got much beyond “Pooh-Bah” and “Nanki-Poo.” Indeed Toranaga is actually referred to once as “The Lord High Executioner”!

The Viewer’s Guide to Shogun, financed and distributed by NBC, asks us to seize the occasion of the broadcast of the mini-series to stifle a blow for cross-cultural understanding and the promotion of anthropology. Why? Why should we as anthropologists support the patently false proposition that an adventure story about Europeans in 17th-century Japan written by an Australian-born author provides us with materials about either culture that need be taken seriously? We would not rush to exploit a showing of Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra for the insights it offers into Roman and Egyptian character and culture, surely, nor would it appear likely that anyone would urge us to think anthropologically about the clash of the two cultures as they are portrayed by the Elizabethan Englishman who wrote the play, unless we are interested in his
perception of them. But the Guide does not invite us
to consider Clavell’s perception of Europe and Japan
almost 400 years ago; it invites us to consider
the characters and the situations of the mini-series as if
they were factual presentations of some reality,
without ever suggesting that we are dealing with a
work of fiction.

To put the matter bluntly, then, I find the
Viewer’s Guide to Shogun to be fatally flawed by its
basic misconception of the task at hand. That is not
to say that many good anthropological lessons are not
to be drawn from viewing the television series
Shogun. The Guide might have pointed out that
Blackthorne is undeniably a quintessential 20th
century man, and not of the 17th century at all. What
Elizabethan would have been horrified by public
decapitations, foul prisons, crucified or pilloried
convicts? Nor were they prudes, as Blackthorne is;
the most cursory reading of Elizabethan literature
and history amply documents the generally bloody
and bawdy nature of that society, and Blackthorne is,
after all, a sailor.

It would have been possible in the Guide to make
something of the drama’s vicious stereotype of the
Jesuits. When in recent years have we seen so rank a
defamatory picture of members of a religious group
on our television screens, until, that is, the currently
fashionable slander of the Muslim faithful? The Guide
might have made something of the very close kinship
between Mariko and the equally improbable Madame
Chrysanthemum and Madame Butterfly, and asked
why Japanese women are portrayed with such
consistent one-dimensionality in Western literature. It
would have been worthwhile also to take up the
question of the degree to which the mini-series
perpetuates one of the oldest mythologies in our
repertory, that of Orientalism, for it is filled with
phony exoticism, garbled mysticism, and fortune-
cookie philosophy.

The writers of the Guide could easily have devoted
considerable space to calling attention to the wholly
erroneous and insulting implication (often rendered
quite explicit) that the Japanese were dependent on
their stronger, wiser, cannier, and more competent
Western visitors. Some examples come immediately
to mind. Halfway through, the life of Toranaga (a
character based on the great military commander
Tokugawa Ieyasu) has been saved three times by the
pluck and resourcefulness of Blackthorne, while the
multitudes of his Japanese retainers and troops either
stand by helplessly or mill about in panic. The
Portuguese pilot is charged with taking Toranaga’s
ship from Osaka to pick up the Englishman because,
we are told, the Japanese are great at coasting, but
fearful of the deep waters. And this at a time when
Japanese vessels were in the East Indies and Southeast
Asian ports, and their pirate ships the scourge of the
coasts of China! One of the many villainous Jesuits
even remarks that without the Portuguese trading
ships, the Japanese would not have enough silk with
which to make their kimono. Why did the Guide not
point out that the White Man’s Burden is very much
with us in Shogun, and suggest that the truth of the
matter is that the European presence in Japan in the
17th century was of negligible importance to the
course of Japanese history?

The Viewer’s Guide does none of this. Rather than
using the novel and the mini-series for what they are,
a novelist’s invention, it makes a doomed attempt to
treat the material as though it were history and
ethnography. The error is fundamental. The viewer is
constantly enjoined to put himself or herself inside a
society or one of its members that existed -- let me be
generous -- about 400 years ago. The implication is
that by doing so, he will gain insights into Japanese
culture and himself/herself. Perhaps it is so, but we
must not overlook the use of the ethnographic
present in its most pernicious form. The viewer is
encouraged by virtually every question in the Guide
to imagine that he or she is seeking something which
will aid in the understanding of contemporary
Japanese culture. In what way are Blackthorne’s crew
like tourists, asks the Guide. Toranaga is said to
represent “the Japanese mind,” and we are told that
the story reveals how the approaches to sex and love
differ in the West and the East. Like the White Man’s
Burden, the Unchanging East is with us still.

Only in the final section on history does the Guide
offer any counsel of use. It suggests that the viewers
do some research on various historical events and
personages dealt with in the drama. Those who follow
this excellent advice will find out for themselves just
how seriously flawed Clavell’s own research into these
matters was. As for its heavy anthropological
component, the Guide is totally misconceived, based
on a false premise.
Audience Research on Intercultural Communication: The Television Production of Shogun

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Since the advent of the modern mass media of communication, especially but not exclusively television, there have been many hopes, fears, and assumptions about their influence on our abilities to understand and interact with ourselves and others. Unfortunately, however, “meaning” and “effects” have often been attributed to media content based merely on the predispositions of those who write and speak on the subject, and not on systematic attempts to understand the media audiences which, after all, is where both “meaning” and “effects” are to be found. Exceptions have primarily been research on advertising, education, violence, diffusion, and informational and attitudinal effects of political communication.

It seems evident, though, that television has the ability to influence our knowledge of, and attitudes toward, other cultures and our own relationships with them. Questions about whether it does, how, to what degree, and in what direction for whom seem especially relevant given the recent fashion of historical, cross-cultural, and “docu-drama” programming. Besides “Shogun,” attention and controversy have characterized such television shows as “Roots,” “Death of a Princess,” “Playing for Time,” “Beaulah Land,” “Holocaust,” and the perhaps never-to-be-broadcast “Hanta Yo.”

To study what the television production of “Shogun” meant to its audiences and whether it had any intercultural communication uses for them, Mary Ann Heller and I devised a five-page questionnaire consisting of Likert-type scales, open- and closed-ended questions, and demographic items. The week after the broadcast the survey was mailed to approximately 1,400 randomly selected Seattle area households divided into three samples; Japanese-surnamed, those to whom we had sent the Cultural Information Systems “Viewer’s Guide” the week before the broadcast, and a general adult population. Clay Vollon, of the East-West Center’s Communication Institute administered the same survey to 300 Japanese-surnamed and 300 other households in Honolulu.

An expanded form was administered to two other groups, 70 University of Washington undergraduates and about 45 participants in a “Shogun” workshop, primarily secondary school social studies teachers. The additions were the 40 ethnocentrism items of the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale and items drawn from two other “Shogun” research projects with which we are collaborating. One is a general population telephone interview by Ithiel de Sola Pool of M.I.T. which is particularly concerned with portrayals of violence, and the other is a study of social distance and learning from “Shogun” by Felipe Korzeny of Michigan State University, seeking, for example, recall of particular facts and vocabulary.

The Seattle (and Honolulu) study related demographic variables (age, sex, religion, ethnicity) to amount and kind of previous knowledge about Japan, amount and kind of “Shogun”-induced knowledge and attitudes, ethnocentrism, content and direction of stereotypes, and perceptions of similarities and differences across time and cultures.

The data have not yet been completely analyzed, but a few tentative and preliminary observations can be made. Primarily, people did develop an informed appreciation of similarities and differences between 17th century Japan (as presented in Shogun) and contemporary Japan, and between the cultures of Japan and the United States.

Japanese and Japanese-American respondents appear to have expected “Shogun” to produce more negative evaluations of Japan and the Japanese on the part of the general audience than did other respondents, but their fear is not supported by the data.

Both Japanese and Caucasian “Shogun” characters were among “most” and “least” admired by all samples, and both were perceived in terms of complexity of character and motivation, with a few possible exceptions. Catholics, however, seemed to form a distinct bipolar evaluation pattern regarding the missionaries.

Respondents saw Japan as both a “recipient” and a “donor” culture, with many suggesting that Western attitudes kept it from being as much of a donor as it should have been. Language was seen as an important, but not all-important, factor in intercultural communication. Suicide and “violence” were very salient to many respondents, but often appear to have been accepted or understood in context.

Open-ended questions, asking what was learned, memorable, and (in the expanded surveys) difficult to understand elicited awareness of cultural values, problems and benefits of intercultural communication, or historical and sociopolitical information. To be sure, a few learned historical or linguistic “misinformation,” but that seems to have been very trivial in the context of the overall intercultural learning experience reported.

Interestingly, the small number of strongly negative respondents often volunteered the information that “Shogun” reinforced existing anti-Japanese beliefs. Standard measures of ethnocentrism did not seem to discriminate well among the respondents, but
indirect indicators might have.

“Shogun’s” utility for intercultural communication also seems to be strongly related to its perceived entertainment quality, although many non-Japanese respondents indicated a preference for the novel.

The “Viewer’s Guide” appears to have been used and valued for understanding the program and Japanese culture, but less so for helping Americans understand American culture by comparison. If the final analysis supports the latter statement, it would be especially regrettable because both the “Viewer’s Guide” and the Smith edited booklet on “Shogun” provide valuable bases for self-understanding.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings was not part of the survey at all, but about it. The response to a long, complex, hastily produced and unattractive questionnaire was an encouragingly high 30 to 40% without any follow-up calls or mailings. We received many calls, messages, and inquiries asking for copies of the results, checking to make sure that no “deadline” for returning the form had been missed, whether respondents could ask someone for help writing English, and a wide variety of marginal comments which will be analyzed. It is clear that the audiences, in Seattle and Honolulu at least, found “Shogun” to be a unique and significant events about which they wanted to express themselves.

The “Shogun Learning Package” : Turning Entertainment into Education

Arnold Feingold
Art World, Incorporated

Months before “Shogun” aired on NBC, there was talk in the academic world of the 12-hour film on feudal Japan based on James Clavell’s popular novel. Furthermore, it was known that the Japanese spoken throughout the 12 hours of prime-time television would not be translated.

Many educators, academics, and journalists agreed: “Shogun” would fail. Paramount and NBC were overrating the American intellect and tolerance for a high-powered, esoteric story of 17th century Japan, a country that many Americans could not even locate on a map.

Arts Worlds, Inc., a Chicago-based non-profit organization for international cultural and educational exchange had just been involved in developing and managing a 5-city American tour of Japanese sculpture. In their trips to Japan, and in talking with Americans throughout the 3-year project, two things became apparent: (1) Americans are intrigued by Japan, especially “The Ways” of Japan, and (2) Most Americans did not have any real information about Japan, its people, history or culture.

During this period, Linda Adelman, Executive Director of Arts Worlds, was a consultant to the Chicago Board of Education for reading. Chicago students, like students in other large urban areas, had low reading scores and were watching approximately 2 to 3 hours of television each day.

The premise became this: Nearly 100 million people may be watching the television production of “Shogun.” They will watch each episode, and expend great amounts of energy, time and concentration. Yet, when the series is over, where do the enthusiasm, the energy, the questions go? Simple. They usually go nowhere. They dissipate. The local news may come on next, and most of the educational merit that “Shogun” could have is untapped. Thus, the journey into Japan will end for most with “Shogun.” The question became obvious: How do you turn entertainment into education?

Certainly there were organizations that produce “viewer’s guides” for television shows. The intent of the “Shogun Learning Package” however, was not to reinvent the wheel, or even to improve the wheel. Because the impact of the film could be so strong, the “Shogun Learning Package” needed to be powerful.

First, it needed to be written for and distributed directly to the viewer, not only to educators, civic leaders, and libraries. Second, the learning package should be written by specialists in that particular field, in this case, Japanese studies professionals. The viewer should have access to solid academic reading, not superficial and oversimplified jargon or platitudes. And finally, it must contain an extensive list of resources for further study, at both the primer and higher levels.

Arnold Feingold, President of Art Worlds, identified three distinct objectives:

1) To utilize the home-viewing of “Shogun” as a catapult for in-depth discussions of Japan’s history, culture, trade and economics. Toward this end, academics were selected to write “Focus Reports” on specific areas of Japanese life. Each “Focus Report” was written as two essays. An example is “Focus Report #5: Rulers and Leaders of Japan.” One essay is on rulers and leaders in the 17th century. The second is on rulers and leaders in the 20th century.

2) To capitalize on “Shogun” as a high motivational device to get the viewer’s to read. To achieve this, portions of the actual script were reprinted and each night an extensive list of resources for further
THE SHOGUN LEARNING PACKAGE

Historical Setting
Jackson Bailey

Focus Report 1: The Samurai, Then and Now
David Plath

Focus Report 2: Religion, Then and Now
David Plath

Focus Report 3: Marriage and Family, Then and Now
Bradford Simcock

Focus Report 4: Trade and Economics, Then and Now
James L. Huffman

Focus Report 5: Rulers and Leaders, Then and Now
Chester J. Pach, Jr. and Ronald Toby

Focus Report 6: Political Systems, Then and Now
Harry Harootunian

Will Adams
Cynthia Herrup

General Resources for Further Study

reading was provided. (Script reading of television shows is a proven and successful device for critical reading skills.)

(3) To disseminate the learning package to as wide an audience as possible. To achieve this, it was felt that the most powerful means of communications must be tapped: the newspaper.

To achieve these objectives, Arnold Feingold and Linda Adelman set up a network for the production and distribution of the “Shogun Learning Package.” They talked to Chicago school administrators who were quite interested in providing their students with “hands-on” material that would be useful in both social studies and reading. Next, a list of academics was drawn up. They would write the Focus Reports on specific aspects of Japanese life. Finally, the Chicago Tribune was approached. What they were asked to do was something that had never been done before: to publish a 16 page special section that had been written and produced by an outside educational agency, Art Worlds, Inc. After considerable discussion, they were willing to take the chance, a chance that new ground would be broken in educational mass communications.

New ground was broken and it worked. The results of coalescing the needs and interests of academic specialists, newspaper editors, and local school administrators into this simple coherent “package” were more than gratifying. In addition to the 900,000 copies distributed as a special insert in a regular edition of the Chicago Tribune, eleven other newspapers throughout the country published the material. These newspapers included the New York Daily News, The Boston Globe, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The San Francisco Chronicle, and the Houston Chronicle. Many of the newspapers decided to serialize the material instead of publishing it as an insert.

Total readership of the package was about 15 million. Also, the package was distributed to every public high school student in Chicago. Arts Worlds, Inc. was deluged with calls and letters from places ranging from Maine to Hawaii, asking for copies to be used from everything from elementary schools to university curricula. Even Johnny Carson used the “Shogun Learning Package” in his “Everything You Want To Know About Japan Is In This Learning Package” routine.

What started out as a project to provide material to Chicago students and Chicago Tribune readers evolved into a national project that many feel changed the face of academic mass communications.
Episode 2

Focus Report 2: Religion

... and now

Focus Report 3: Marriage and Family

... and now
LEARNING FROM SHOGUN

Henry D. Smith II
Associate Professor of History
University of California, Santa Barbara

Like most academic specialists of Japan, I first approached the novel SHOGUN with a chip on my shoulder. I scanned every page for anachronisms in the depiction of manners, ferreted out every hint of ethnic stereotyping, and leaped on every error in James Clavell’s rather reckless handling of the Japanese language. Exhausted and indignant after two hundred pages of such antagonistic scrutiny, I put the novel aside as yet another sad chapter in the history of Western misunderstanding of Japan.

It was only the insistent and often intelligent queries of my students, many of whom were led by SHOGUN to take a serious interest in Japanese history, that led me to take a fresh look at Clavell’s novel, to read it with a more generous attitude and with particular attention to its educational uses. I read the novel to the end, still occasionally irked by obvious errors, but increasingly drawn to what I came to see as the central theme of the story: cross-cultural learning. I decided to put SHOGUN to the test in the classroom, and conducted a course in the spring quarter of 1980 on Japanese history in the century 1650-1750, using SHOGUN as a starting point.

An opportune grant from the Association of Asian Studies next enabled me to organize a small conference in mid-May, 1980, on “Dealing with SHOGUN,” attended by Japan specialists from a variety of disciplines (anthropology, history, literature, and religion) and with a common interest in the significance of SHOGUN for educators. Papers from the conference were edited by myself over the summer and published in October as LEARNING FROM SHOGUN: JAPANESE HISTORY AND WESTERN FANTASY (published by the Program in Asian Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, and available at $4.00 per copy [postage included] from “Shogun,” The Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017). The shift in title from “dealing with” to “learning from” was indicative of my growing feeling that it was of little profit to maintain an antagonistic attitude towards SHOGUN. An interview with James Clavell in May 1980 particularly encouraged a tolerant approach, since I became convinced that he was a well-meaning writer with some serious things to say about the Western understanding of Japan.

The approach of LEARNING FROM SHOGUN differs in important respects from that of the NBC “Viewer’s Guide.” Most obviously, we dealt with the novel rather than the film, and it is important to realize the differences between the two. I have treated this issue briefly in a hasty (and, in retrospect, unnecessarily peevish) postscript to Learning from Shogun; let me simply state my general feeling that the TV miniseries was a far less effective vehicle than the novel for getting across the central idea that the West may have something to learn from Japan.

Indeed, the process of converting Clavell’s novel to film is a story which should be of considerable interest to anthropologists, since it involved many of the same cross-cultural conflicts which are the theme of the novel itself: the big difference is that most of those involved in the film production (particularly writer Eric Bercovici and director Jerry London) were apparently far less willing cross-cultural learners than Clavell’s original Blackthorne. For a fascinating document about this process, see THE MAKING OF JAMES CLAVELL’S SHOGUN (Delta Books, 1980), a remarkably candid chronicle of stubborn American ethnocentrism.

LEARNING FROM SHOGUN also differs from the NBC “Viewer’s Guide” in another important respect. In general, the “Viewer’s Guide” implicitly accepts Shogun as a wholly “realistic” and accurate rendering of “Japan,” and tends at the same time to eschew any distinction between Japan of the 17th century and Japan today. This may be an acceptable approach at a very basic level, particularly in dealing with an audience with no previous exposure to Japanese culture at all. But certainly for those actively involved in teaching about Japan (the assumed audience of LEARNING FROM SHOGUN), we felt that a considerably more complex understanding of Shogun is called for (as should become quickly apparent to anyone who actually tries to answer the many provocative questions posed in the “Viewer’s Guide”). For one thing, we placed considerable emphasis on historical change, trying to counter any impression that Japan is a timeless entity, or that all Japanese today are closet samurai. Where possible, we also insisted on an appreciation of the internal diversity of Japanese culture, particularly among class lines, thereby moderating a temptation to overgeneralize about “the” Japanese.

But perhaps our most consistent theme was that SHOGUN should be viewed not as a matter-of-fact depiction of Japan, but rather as an ideological statement, a specific product of late twentieth century American culture by a man with reasons for writing that go well beyond the evident urge to tell a good tale or make a fast buck. Indeed, it would seem to me that the greatest fascination of SHOGUN for anthropologists would lie precisely in the relationship between Japanese culture and Western fantasy.

It helps to understand, for example, that James Clavell is the sixth Anglo-Saxon writer over a period of a century to turn the story of William Adams (1564-1620) into fiction, and that he was thus
Part I: The Fantasy
James Clavell and the Legend of the British Samurai
Henry Smith
Japan, Jawpen, and the Attractions of an Opposite
David Plath
Shogun as an Introduction to Cross-Cultural Learning
Elgin Heinz

Part II: The History
Blackthorne’s England
Sandra Piercy
Trade and Diplomacy in the Era of Shogun
Ronald Toby
The Struggle for the Shogunate
Henry Smith
Hosokawa Gracia: A Model for Mariko
Chieko Mulhern

Part III: The Meeting of Cultures
Death and Karma in the World of Shogun
William LaFleur
Learning Japanese with Blackthorne
Susan Matsoff
The Paradoxes of the Japanese Samurai
Henry Smith
Consorts and Courtesans: The Women of Shogun
Henry Smith
Raw Fish and a Hot Bath: Dilemmas of Daily Life
Henry Smith
Who’s Who in Shogun

Glossary
For Further Reading

drawing on a long tradition of themes and imagery closely linked with the history of British imperialism in Asia (see Chapter 1 of LEARNING FROM SHOGUN.) David Plath, an anthropologist from the University of Illinois, has gone even further than this specific historical legacy to suggest that in fact SHOGUN is not about Japan at all, but about “Jawpen,” a “cultural opposite” which “is made up of traditional Japanese parts, but invented and assumed here in the West for domestic consumption” (Chapter 2, LEARNING FROM SHOGUN).

Alternatively, SHOGUN can be understood as an example of a specific literary genre, as proposed in a provocative review by Michael Arlen (“Upriver in Samurai Country,” The New Yorker, Oct. 6, 1980). Arlen interprets SHOGUN as a characteristically Anglo-Saxon “captive story,” in which the Puritan hero is captured by dark-skinned savages and compelled to undergo a sort of spiritual trial in the wilderness. In the specific case of James Clavell, however, there is a much more direct “captive” theme at work, the author’s own personal experience as a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese for over three years of his life. In a sense, SHOGUN is Clavell’s personal reliving of his prison experience at the level of myth and fantasy.

But the appeal of SHOGUN to its American audience goes well beyond the latent lure of the captivity theme and its overtones of machismo. It is rather as an extended sermon on two themes that the novel takes on its greatest significance: these themes are death with dignity and sex without guilt. What makes SHOGUN unique both as a Will Adams novel and as a captivity story is that the hero is really an anti-hero, who in the end discovers that his own value system, far from being reinforced through his trials, is in fact less valid than that of the Japanese (or Jawpenese?). Clavell, both in the novel and in conversation, makes it clear that he sees Western attitudes to death and sex as peculiar perversions enforced by institutional Christianity. In contrast, the Japanese are idealized as holding attitudes which are more “sensible” and “natural” than those in the West.

So while Shogun is certainly of use as a descriptive introduction to a different culture, its greatest significance both as a cultural phenomenon and as an educational text lies rather in the prescriptive realm, and any use made of the novel by educators should certainly bear in mind the many and subtle differences between Clavell’s Japan and whatever we may mean by the “real” Japan.
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NOTICES . . .

CONFERENCE ON THE FOLK CULTURE OF THE BRONX

A multi-disciplinary conference on the Folk Culture of the Bronx will take place on May 16-17, 1981, at Lehman College, Bronx, NY. Anthropoligists, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, historians, and cultural geographers will explore how such activities and forms as play, music, dance, storytelling, ritual, vernacular, architecture, and foodways express the relationship between people and place. This focus on symbolic expressions will provide an entry point for addressing the larger issues of what constitutes "place" to the inhabitants of a large, rapidly changing, multi-ethnic urban region such as the Bronx. The conference will feature videotapes. Interested scholars are invited to submit proposals for 15 minute presentations. The proposals should be 500 words, deadline is January 10, 1981. Papers addressing the issues of the conference are solicited, whether or not they are based on field research in the Bronx. Contact: Barbro Klein, Conference Co-director, 301 East 47th Street, New York, NY 10017. Telephone: (212) 753-7634. The conference is sponsored by the New York City Chapter of the New York Folklore Society and the "City and the Humanities Program" at Lehman College. It is made possible through the generosity of the New York Council for the Humanities.

In preparation for this conference on the Folk Culture of the Bronx, the New York City Chapter of the New York Folklore Society is seeking people who have been actively documenting life in the Bronx through photography. Photos can range from professional prints to family snapshots, of any period, past or present. Interested photographers should contact Barbro Klein at the above address. Please call or write before sending any photographs.

SAVICOM at the IUAES

The SAVICOM Board of Directors unanimously approved the following motion:

It is resolved that the SAVICOM Board of Directors act as a committee to participate in the planning of the Visual Anthropology meetings at the 1983 International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and that Carroll Williams and Jay Ruby represent the Committee and attend the Intercongress in Amsterdam (the planning meeting for 1983).

NEW ELECTION PROCEDURE

At the meeting of the SAVICOM Board of Directors held in Washington, DC on 5 December 1980 the following motion was made and unanimously approved:

As of the 1981 elections, the SAVICOM Board of Directors will propose a slate of nominees for election to the office which will be published in the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER prior to the annual meeting. Further nominations will be solicited from the membership by mail or at the annual meeting. The election will be held at the annual meeting.
RESULTS OF THE RECENT ELECTION TO OFFICES IN SAVICOM

The results of the mail ballot for election to office in SAVICOM have now been tabulated. The following individuals are the current officers of SAVICOM (newly elected officers are indicated by bold face type):

PRESIDENT: Carroll Williams (1981-1983)
Jerald Davis (1980-1982)
Steve Feld (1980-1982)
Larry Gross (1980-1982)
Beryl Bellman (1980-1982)
Margaret Blackman (1980-1982)
Karl Heider (1978-1981)
David McDougall (1978-1981)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTURE ISSUES

In forthcoming issues of the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER there will be a discussion of a variety of issues and topics of importance to the readers of the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER. I will be organizing some of the presentations but I would like to encourage others to organize presentations on issues or topics that they see as important. Readers may suggest topics to me that they wish treated, they may suggest the names of individuals who should be contacted to provide an essay or a set of essays on a particular topic, or they may provide essays individually or as a member of a group organized to write a set of essays on various aspects of a particular topic.

Some of the topics that I think are important to be treated in forthcoming issues of the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER are:

1. Ethnographic Film Festivals: Directions and Evaluations
2. Museum Uses of Visual Anthropology
3. The Use of Historical Photographs in Anthropology
4. Archives in the U.S.

If you are interested in contributing to one of the above discussions or if you wish to write an essay (2 to 6 typewritten, double-spaced pages) individually or as a member of a group of individuals, please write to me immediately concerning your interests.

Jack R. Rollwagen

BOARD REQUESTS VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY PROGRAM EDITOR

Due to the continuing mishandling of sessions devoted to the Anthropology of Visual Communication at all annual meetings of the AAA, the SAVICOM Board of Directors unanimously approved the following motion:

It is resolved that the SAVICOM Board of Directors request that the AAA Executive Board create a position for a Visual Anthropology Program Editor for the annual meetings. Said editor shall be co-equal with the other program editors in deciding on the final program.

As past program editors have consistently failed to understand the special problems involved in the use and presentation of visual materials, the Board has asked President Carroll Williams to present the motion to the AAA Executive Board.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The SAVICOM NEWSLETTER is published three times a year: fall, winter, and spring. Subscriptions to the NEWSLETTER may be through either of two means:

1. Membership in the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communications (SAVICOM). Membership is U.S. $18.00 per year. For this amount, members receive a subscription to the journal STUDIES IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION and a subscription to the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER as well as other benefits of membership.

2. Subscription specifically for the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER. Subscription to the NEWSLETTER is U.S. $5.00 per year.

Inquiries concerning membership in the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communications or concerning subscriptions to the SAVICOM NEWSLETTER should be sent to the American Anthropological Association, 1703 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009. Payment should accompany any order. Checks should be payable to the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication.
Mass Media and the Anthropology of Visual Communications: The Case of the Television Production of James Clavell’s SHOGUN and Some Related Works