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To cite this article: Koichi Iwabuchi (2010) Globalization, East Asian media cultures and their publics, Asian Journal of Communication, 20:2, 197-212, DOI: [10.1080/01292981003693385](https://doi.org/10.1080/01292981003693385)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292981003693385>



Published online: 10 May 2010.



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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Globalization, East Asian media cultures and their publics

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(Received 8 December 2009; final version received 19 January 2010)

In the last two decades, media and cultural globalization has reached another level of development and penetration. While various (national) media markets have been penetrated and integrated by the powerful missionaries of global media culture such as News Corporation, Disney and Time Warner, the development of East Asian media cultural production and inter-Asian media co-production, circulation and consumption has become no less conspicuous. On the one hand, these developments have highlighted the de-Westernized patterns of cultural production, circulation and connection in, from and within the region. However, on the other, it is still questionable if these developments have eventually challenged uneven transnational media cultural flows and have truthfully promoted dialogic connections among people of various places, as they reproduce hierarchy, unevenness and marginalization. This article will critically review how the rise of Asian media culture production and inter-Asian connections fails to serve wider public interests locally, nationally and transnationally, especially in terms of the promotion of uneven globalization process in which the logic of market has deeply governed the production, circulation and consumption of media culture. Given that the states are supporting the activities of transnational media culture industries, it is imperative for researchers to examine more rigorously the unevenness, inequality and marginalization in the inter-Asian mass culture network, and to collaborate transnationally with various social actors so as to advance inter-Asian media culture connections in more democratic and dialogic ways.

Keywords: media globalization; inter-Asian connection; decentered power structures; dialogue and unevenness; ‘inter-nationalism’; publicness of media culture

Introduction

Watching Korean TV dramas, listening to Chinese pop music, reading Japanese comic books and enjoying internationally co-produced Asian films are now part of the mundane landscape of East Asian cities. Younger generations might take it for granted, but it was something unconceivable just 20 years ago. While inter-Asian media culture connections have a longer history, the changes and developments that we have witnessed since early 1990s are really drastic. The last two decades after the end of the Cold War has been marked by significant development of globalization processes. Cross-border mobility of capital, people and commodity has been further intensified by the penetration of neo-liberalism marketization, and the amplification

of international ethno-flows of labor, immigrants and tourists. No less important is the progression of media and cultural globalization. While the development of digital communication technologies has de-centered and individualized the media uses, it also has lent itself to the penetration and integration of the worldwide media markets by the powerful missionaries of global media culture such as News Corporation, Disney and Time Warner. Cultural globalization does not just mean the spread of the same products of Western (mostly American) origin all over the world through these media conglomerates. Furthermore, the rise of media culture production capacity outside the US has become conspicuous, of which East Asia displays a most dynamic example. Advanced capacity in producing media cultures such as TV, films and popular music in East Asia has also activated regional co-production, intraregional circulation and consumption of media cultures. Media cultures from other parts of East Asia are finding unprecedented acceptance in the region, leading to the formation of new connections among people as well as media culture industries.

These developments highlight de-Westernized patterns of cultural production, circulation and consumption and thus have attracted many researchers including myself into examining what is going on. Indeed, many studies have been done in terms of de-Westernization (Curran & Park, 2000; Erni & Chua, 2005), the rise of Chinese media cultures and markets (Curtin, 2007; Fung, 2008; Zhao, 2008), Korean Wave phenomena (Cho, 2005; Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Shim, 2006), the popularity of Japanese media cultures (Allison, 2006; Tobin, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2002, 2004), cultural adaptation and formatting (Moran & Keane, 2004) and regional cultural flows and connectivities (Berry, Mackintosh, & Liscutin, 2009; Chua, 2004; Iwabuchi, Muecke, & Thomas, 2004; Kim, 2008). These works contribute to enriching hitherto West-centered media and cultural studies in the English-language world by seriously attending to East Asian and inter-Asian media cultural dynamic under globalization processes.

Rather than just appraising what has been achieved by the studies of East Asian and inter-Asian media cultures, this article also critically reviews what has been not achieved with an aim to gauge whether and how the rise of East Asian media culture production and inter-Asian connection serves wider public interests: locally, nationally and transnationally. While the recent development has given rise to de-Americanized patterns of media culture productions and consumption and has considerably facilitated mutual understanding among people in the region, it is still debatable whether and how these developments fundamentally challenge uneven media cultural globalization, what sort of cross-border dialogues are promoted, and whether and how they encourage socio-culturally marginalized voices expressed, heard and shared in a mediated public space. This article is interested in the examination of the promotion of uneven globalization process in which the marketization governs the production, circulation and consumption of media culture and growing inter-nationalism in which dominant media cultures of each nation are circulating, marketed and mutually consumed, in tandem with states' increasing interest in the uses of media culture for national interests. It is necessary, I would suggest, to research more than before on the issues of unevenness, inequality and marginalization to engage with a normative question of how to further advance the development of inter-Asian media culture production and connections in more democratic and dialogic ways.

Rise of East Asian media cultures and inter-Asian connections

One of the contentious issues that the rise of East Asian media cultures highlights is whether and how it de-Westernizes or de-Americanizes media culture production and circulation and challenges and/or reconfigures global cultural power relations. Globalization processes have enhanced media culture production capacities of various non-Western actors. This testifies to the relative decline of the supremacy of American media cultures and questions the credence of the Western cultural imperialism thesis. Although American media cultures are still well-received in many parts of the world, and their scale of transnational reach is by far the most prevailing, the popularity of American media cultures has been decreasing in East Asia with the development of local media culture production, which tends to be more receptive. The shift of media policy discourses of East Asian governments from the protection of the populace from Western cultural invasion to the promotion of domestic media culture production to counter it, which was witnessed in the late 1990s (Wang, 1996), also reflected the ascendancy of local media cultures.

East Asian media cultures are not just well-received domestically. They have crossed the national boundaries as well, especially to other parts of East Asia. This is suggestive of another trend of media globalization that regional connections are enhanced in such a way as to bypass the command of Euro-American media culture production and distribution. Furthermore, inter-Asian promotion and co-production of media cultures has become commonplace with the growing collaboration and close partnerships among media culture industries in the region with the aim of pursuing international marketing and joint ventures spanning transnational markets, as a term such as 'Asiawood' indicates (*Newsweek Asia*, 'The birth of Asiawood', 21 May 2001). Indeed so many films have been co-produced within East Asia, such as three-language films like *Seven Swords* (Hong Kong/China/Korea) which was produced in Cantonese, Mandarin and Korean; a US\$35 million budget film, *Promise* (China/Korea/Japan); *Daisy* (Korea/Hong Kong with a Japanese music director); a trilogy horror film *Three* (Korea/Hong Kong/Thailand) and its sequel *Three ... Extremes* (Hong Kong/Japan/Korea), to mention just a few (see Jin & Lee, 2007). East Asian markets have become increasingly synchronized and producers, directors, actors as well as capital from around the region have been engaged in various creative activities that transcend national borders.

East Asian media cultures have long hybridized in local elements while absorbing American cultural influences, but cultural fusion among East Asian media culture has come to be generated too. Remaking of successful TV dramas and films from other parts of East Asia has been frequently done, especially between Japanese, Korean, Hong Kong and Taiwanese media texts, and Japanese comic series are often adapted for TV dramas and films outside Japan. In this process, the resulting texts dexterously blend in a variety of local elements, far from being mere imitations of original works. One of the most prominent examples is Taiwan's TV drama series, *Liuxing Huayuan* (Meteor Garden), which shows the creative localization of Japanese media culture in Taiwan and its intriguing transnational voyage that follows. It is based on a Japanese comic series about high-school students' lives, *Hana yori dango*. At the time there was no Japanese TV drama series based on the comic series, but Taiwan producers skillfully adopted it to drama form on their own initiative in 2001. While the drama takes up the Japanese character names as they are, including the name of the idol group of four main male characters, F4, the story is reconstructed in Taiwanese university

settings, featuring Taiwanese idols and original theme songs. The program has been phenomenally popular not just in Taiwan but also in various parts of East Asia. The drama was also well-received by audiences in Japan and a Japanese TV station belatedly produced a Japanese version of the drama series in 2005 and 2007, which were also well-received outside Japan. Finally, a Korean version of the drama series was produced in 2008.

In the studies of cultural globalization, the West and the Rest tend to be equated with the global and the local, respectively, and, even in the discussion of cultural hybridization, the Rest is supposed only to imitate, appropriate and/or hybridize the West, no matter how actively producing local media cultures in the process. While East Asian media culture cannot be free from American influences, this intriguing dynamic process of inter-Asian cultural fusion and intertextual reworking urges us to go beyond the view of Westernization or Americanization of the world.

Another related significant issue of inter-Asian media culture circulation is concerned with how people in many parts of the region are connected through media culture consumption. One argues that it might engender an East Asian identity (Chua, 2004), while others discuss how the region works effectively to mediate between the national/local and the global in terms of the operation of capital (Ching, 2000; Sinclair, 2007). Another crucial question is how inter-Asian circulation of media cultures promotes people's mutual understanding and self-reflexive dialogues in a transnational scope.

Media culture plays a significant role in constructing the national public. Many studies have shown how the mass media such as film, radio and TV have constructed imagined communities and the public sphere on a national level. However, as media cultures of various places regularly cross the national boundaries, people have now much wider repertoire for reflecting on their own lives and socio-political issues, though the national mass media are still the most powerful in this respect. The practice of transnational media consumption is most elucidated by migrants and diasporas' consumption of media culture coming from 'home' but those national audiences who have never moved to other countries are also actively watching and listening to border-crossing media cultures. In East Asia too, the consumption of media cultures such as TV dramas and films from other parts of the region has become more commonplace in the last 20 years. For most parts, this was something which the producers were not conscious of and did not expect in the production process, since media cultures are produced chiefly for the national audiences. However, media cultures have transcended the national boundaries to reach unforeseen audiences via free-to-air channels, cable and satellite channels, pirated VCD and DVD and Internet sites. Furthermore, increasing numbers of media cultures are produced and internationally co-produced to target those international audiences. Inter-Asian media culture circulation has come to gain a significant weight as it has given a wide range of resources for people's public engagement in everyday life.

People's participation in the public realm via the media is not just limited to a Habermasian public sphere in which people equally partake in rational deliberation about significant socio-political issues. Emotion and affection are also vital to people's participation in and belonging to society and the consumption of media cultures plays a significant part in constituting the cultural public sphere, which McGuigan (2005, p. 435) defines as 'the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication'. It

‘provides vehicles for thought and feeling, for imagination and disputatious argument, which are not necessarily of inherent merit but may be of some consequence’ (McGuigan, 2005, p. 435). Indeed, the personal is always political and everyday mundane meaning construction through media consumption is an indispensable part of the public participation (Livingstone, 2005).

Many studies have shown that inter-Asian media culture consumption has brought about new kinds of cross-border relationships, mutual understanding and self-reflexivity about people’s own society and culture on a large scale that has never been observed before (e.g. Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Iwabuchi, 2002, 2004; Kim, 2008). The mutual consumption of media culture has created an opportunity in which the understanding of other society and culture dramatically deepens and improves, and the socio-cultural issues and concerns are sympathetically appreciated and shared by many people in the regions. The sympathetic watching of Japanese or Korean TV dramas has encouraged the audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Japan and Korea to have a fresh view on their own societies, gender relations and social lives of the young through the perception and appreciation of spatio-temporal distance/proximity of other East Asian modernities (e.g. Iwabuchi, 2002; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2008; Leung, 2004; Nakano & Wu, 2002). Although the sense of nostalgia, which is often evoked by the consumption of media culture from other Asian countries, might reproduce Orientalist views of other Asians as not-quite-modern-as-us by equating ‘their’ present with ‘our’ past, nostalgia also works to evoke a self-reflexive thinking (Iwabuchi, 2002, 2008a). In my study, the somewhat nostalgic consumption of Hong Kong or Korean media cultures in Japan has even destabilized a historically-constituted belief in Japan’s superiority over the rest of Asia; thinking which, while accepting that the country belongs geographically and culturally to Asia, makes a distinction between Japan and Asia (Iwabuchi, 2002, 2008). Furthermore, the consumption of media cultures has also triggered extra post-text activities. No small number of people eventually visit other Asian cities, meet people there, start learning local languages and join transnational Internet fan communities (Hu, 2005). In the case of the Korean Wave in Japan, many (mostly female) audiences even started re-learning Japan’s colonial history.

Inter-Asian media culture connections thus work as a great opportunity for many people to critically review the state of their own culture, society and historical relationship with other parts of Asia. The mediated encounter with other Asian modernities may make people in East Asia realize that they now inhabit the same developmental time zone as other parts of East Asia. They mutually appreciate how common experiences of modernization, urbanization, Westernization and globalization are similarly and differently represented in other East Asian contexts. This displays a great possibility of cross-national dialogues engendered by media culture flows. Media cultures have connected East Asia in new, dialogic manners: dialogic, not in the sense of actually meeting in person to talk to each other, but in the sense of rethinking one’s own life, society and culture as well as socio-historically constructed relations and perceptions with others, critically and self-reflexively, via mediated cultures.

Glocal marketization of media cultures

While the rise of East Asian media cultures demonstrates that it is no longer persuasive to understand the structure of global cultural power as bipartite domination, with

one-way transfers and influences of media culture from the center (West) to the periphery (Rest), this does not however mean the disappearance of power structures in the global media culture production and circulation. The rise of East Asian media culture needs to be considered in the context in which cultural power has become decentralized, dispersed and interpenetrated by the transnational alliance of media culture industries. Cross-border partnership and cooperation among media culture industries involving non-Western players are being driven forward, with America as a pivotal presence, but in such a way as to go beyond the West–Rest paradigm or a straightforward notion of Western cultural hegemony over the non-West. Here, a crucial question is whether global power relations are fundamentally challenged and transformed, and whose voices and which issues are not included in the transnational cultural conversation as the marketization of media cultures is moving forward.

McGuigan (2009) argues how ‘cool capitalism’, which gives priority to individual consumer sovereignty in a profound marketization logic, is capable of subtly taking in its critique to promote further commercialization. Flexibility of capital is, to put it more extensively, discerned in such a way as to absorb subversive and opposing challenges for its own benefit. This is shown by the marketing strategy of media culture industries that subtly combines globalization and localization, homogenization and heterogenization, and decentering and recentering. These seemingly opposing forces are actually working simultaneously in a mutually constitutive manner and such processes are subtly exploited by media culture industries as the business buzzword ‘glocalization’ shows (Robertson, 1995). The new configuration of cultural power exploits the locally-specific meaning construction process in a globally-tailored manner.

Globally-disseminated cultural products and images are, as suggested earlier, reworked through a process of hybridization in each locality. While this process gives rise to the diversification of media cultural repertoires in many parts of the world, this increase in cultural diversity is being governed by the logic of capital and organized within the context of globalization (Hannerz, 1996). Globalization does not destroy cultural differences but rather brings about a ‘peculiar form of homogenization’ while fostering them (Hall, 1991). With the advancement of globalization, a series of cultural formats such as genre, narrative style, visual representation, digitalized special effects, marketing technique, and the idea of coolness through which various differences can be adjusted have been disseminated, shared and deployed by media culture industries. Many of them are attributed to the global spread of American media culture (Morley & Robins, 1995) and thus one could say that ‘America’ has become a base format that regulates the process of media culture production around the world. It can be argued then that what is happening is less de-Americanization than late Americanization. However, while it is incongruous to deny the enormity of American cultural influences, it is too simplistic to straightforwardly equate globalization with Americanization or American cultural imperialism. As demonstrated by the prevalence of the television format business and film remaking, many examples of which are not of American origin, various media culture industries of Europe and Asia are now actively joining the glocalizing enterprise and jointly exploiting late Americanization. Transnational media corporations are seeking to raise their profits by tailoring globally adoptable formats to every corner of the world while promoting cultural diversity in every market. The world is becoming more diverse through standardization and more standardized through diversification under the marketization of media cultures.

Inter-Asian media culture circulations are not free from this transnational alliance of media culture industries. As exemplified by STAR TV, owned by News Corporation, and MTV Asia, global media giants are penetrating regional media flows by deploying localization strategies in tandem with local partners. Made-in-Asia global cultures are not immune to the dominance of the transnational alliance centered on America, either. Hollywood's distribution networks are indispensable to make the Pokémon animation series and films (distributed by Warner Bros.) and the anime films of Hayao Miyazaki (distributed by Disney) a global culture. Moreover, the Pokémon anime series and movies that audiences around the world enjoy have been 'Americanized', a process that involves removing some of their 'Japaneseness' to make them more acceptable to global audiences from the perspective of American producers (see Allison, 2006; Tobin, 2004).

More recently, Hollywood has been accommodating itself with the rise of Asian media culture production and markets so as to make its products more internationally-oriented. Hollywood has been actively incorporating the strength of East Asian media cultures through the employment of directors and actors such as John Woo, Ang Lee, Jackie Chan, Zhang Ziyi and Lee Byung-hun, and the remaking of Japanese, Korean and Hong Kong films such as *The Grudge*, *Shall We Dance*, *Infernal Affairs* and *My Sassy Girl*. Hollywood also actively (co)produces and distributes Asia-related films such as *Hero*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Kung Fu Hustle*, *The Last Samurai* and *Memoirs of a Geisha*. In addition, the Hollywood studios are now actively producing 'Asian' media cultures by setting up local branches in prosperous Asian cities. It could be argued that Hollywood's embracing of Asia shows uneven power relations between the US and Asia, since 'Asian' contents need to be modified to the taste and style of Hollywood for which Western markets are still the most significant even though its target audiences are becoming more global than before, and because Orientalist stereotypical images of Asia are represented even in those films. However, let me reiterate here, while America still occupies a central position, the power relations in the global cultural economy has become more entangled than a Manichean picture of West-Asia or America-China.¹ Hollywood production capacity, system and format are becoming ubiquitous and constitutive in the producing of 'original' national media cultures in East Asia and inter-Asian media culture circulation. But this also means the shifting nature of 'America' too, in which 'Asia' has come to occupy a significant part and Asian actors in turn are actively and complicitly exploiting the opportunity to reach global markets. In this context, it is highly dubious that the rise of Asian media cultures fundamentally challenges the existing global cultural power configuration, which is governed by transnational media culture industries of developed countries.

Copyright and labor as the site of power operation

Globalization theories, which discuss how active hybridization and localization processes are bringing about unexpected outcomes in the local, are often attacked for their optimistic construction of the myth of global interconnectivity by neglecting the unevenness in the political economy of the media culture production process in favor of agency of audiences and social actors at the receiving end (e.g. Hafez, 2007; Sparks, 2007). While these critiques tend to over-exaggerate the argument they try to refute, the point is well taken that more attention needs to be paid to the political economy of media culture production, which highlights the structural unevenness and

domination. Hesmondhalgh (2008) disapproves of the kind of argument that globalization is unidirectional but nevertheless connecting the world in a complex manner, for it 'somehow downplays inequality, exploitation and injustice' (p. 96). While criticizing the argument of cultural imperialism in its simplified account of meaning construction process, Hesmondhalgh proposes to analyze the copyright monopoly by media culture industries as the neo-liberalism operation of imperialism. Copyright and intellectual property is the most important source of profit for media culture industries, as is the case with the brand manufacturing sector (Klein, 2000). Hesmondhalgh (2008) argues that the neo-liberalism marketization of media culture is strengthening the view of culture as property, which raises a serious question about the ideas of cultural creativity and cultural commons. Creativity is shifting from a 'social and collective' one to individualization, which is eventually monopolized by media culture industries with the support of the state regulation.

Though it is open to question if such a conception of culture as property is 'Western' as Hesmondhalgh states, Euro-American-based transnational corporations certainly work hard to institutionalize it in the world. However Asian media culture industries too actively collaborate with them. Since late 1990s, the policing over copyright infringement has become much tighter in East Asian cities, and this has a serious implication in the inter-Asian media culture circulation. The comprehensive picture of the circulation and consumption of TV dramas, films and popular music in East Asian markets cannot be captured solely by the examination of the formal business and distributional route. Pirated VCD and DVD and the Internet are actually the main media for promoting their circulation. Through surprisingly swift subtitling in Chinese, Korean and other languages, audiences worldwide enjoy many East Asian TV dramas just a few days after they are first broadcast. Unofficial circulation of media cultures has been developed precisely because media culture industries in East Asia were not much interested in overseas audiences, as suggested earlier. The indifference of media culture industries has led to them being left out in the transnationalization of TV dramas, which is promoted not just by the underground political economy but also by neglected fans' guerrilla activities (Hu, 2005).

Fans' creative activities on the translation of, commenting on and conversation about media texts engender an unofficial globalization from below (Hu, 2004, 2005; Pang 2006, 2009). Through the (illegitimate) repackaging, East Asian TV dramas facilitate new transnational cultural connections and gain public significance outside the original country of production. The ownership of cheap VCD and DVD copies and the watching of dramas on Internet sites have brought about new patterns of media consumption, new forms of cultural creativity and new kinds of transnational affective communities. It highlights grassroots practices of copying, distributing and sharing of media culture, which seriously question the dominant system of 'the global governance of symbol production and consumption' (Hesmondhalgh, 2008) based on the privatization of culture as property (Hu, 2005; Pang, 2009). While the right of the producers needs to be protected, whether the corporate-driven dominant discourse of copyrights, with the increasing weight of its neo-liberalism mode of creativity and ownership of culture, takes seriously the issues of publicness of media culture in terms of cultural commons, sharing and creativity is dubious.

It is also deeply questionable if the policing of copyright infringement would really benefit all producers and workers. Another important issue raised by the copyright monopoly is the international exploitation of cultural labor. The high concentration of

media ownership in the hands of a few global companies and their monopoly of intellectual property has accompanied the new international division of cultural labor (Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell, & Wang, 2005). While the headquarters of media culture industries are located in global cities of wealthier countries, the production process is highly decentered as the corporations are desperately seeking cheap labor in outsourcing basic work. This is not just occurring to Hollywood but also to cultural production within East Asia. Working conditions of animation subcontractors in Japan are infamously poor, but the exploitation of cultural labor has become not just a domestic issue but a transnational one. Japanese animation companies have long subcontracted the basic work of animation production to other parts of Asia. It used to be to Korea and Taiwan but, as the labor cost has increased there, it is gradually shifting to other cheaper locations such as China. Those workers work hard with long labor hours for low wages, and the situation is even getting worse with the advancement of media globalization (see Yoon, 2009).

While it is expected that promotion of creative industries would benefit all creators by improving their working conditions, giving more job opportunities and encouraging cultural creativity to flourish, however, as Otsuka and Osawa (2005) point out regarding the animation industries, without fundamentally changing the existing structure of profit-taking through the monopoly of distribution and copyright by global media culture industries, the issue of uneven profit distribution would not be substantially improved. As global media conglomerates' oligopolistic control over intellectual property and copyrights has become a significant part of global cultural domination, whether and how the profits and benefits of the development of media culture industries actually return to media-factory workers, both domestically and internationally, is an imperative matter for public discussion.

Inter-Asia mass culture network and banal inter-nationalism

The development of inter-Asian cultural public spheres also raises a question of the politics of inclusion and exclusion. While we cannot neatly generalize the division between people in terms of place of residence, class, gender and ethnicity, inter-Asian media circulation has brought about not just cross-boundary connections but also cross-boundary disparity, divisions, antagonism and marginalization in various overlapping ways. Most fundamentally, the disparity in the material accessibility to media culture has not gone away in Asian regions. Internet usage in *Key indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2009*, which was issued by the Asian Development Bank, shows the fact that just 16 countries out of 47 have an Internet usage rate of more than 20% and the number becomes 10 if we exclude the Oceanic countries and Pacific islands. Although the development of the Internet and cheap DVDs has encouraged a wider public consumption of various media culture from many parts of the world, tremendous numbers of places and people do not yet enjoy even limited access to the media culture circulation due to economic restraints.

A related crucial question is what kind of media culture is encouraged to circulate and be mutually consumed. Media culture globalization is promoted by transnational alliance of media culture industries, most of which are based in a small number of industrialized countries and their profits are enjoyed largely within those national borders (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). Similarly, the activation of inter-Asian media culture circulation has engendered a new international hierarchy with the rise

of subcenters such as Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Bangkok and Shanghai among which transnational partnerships and joint projects are facilitated. While these are driven above all by the force of marketization, in which capital acts freely beyond the confines of the national boundaries, this development has brought about the establishment of an inter-Asian mass culture network, in which nationally dominant media cultures are mutually promoted and consumed.

The kind of media texts that media culture industries promote to circulate in East Asia are mostly commercially and ideologically hegemonic ones in each country and thus tend not to attend well to unprofitable and socio-culturally marginalized differences within the nation (except those of tokenized multicultural commodities). Although the digital communication technologies have diversified grassroots cultural expressions and mediated cross-border connections including those among marginalized people and activists working for them, we still need to ask what kinds of mutual understanding are predominantly promoted through which media texts and whose voices and which issues are *not* included and/or shared in the emerging inter-Asian cultural public sphere. This question is related to the lacuna in the studies of inter-Asian media culture connections, which tend not to critically attend to the politics of representation. For example, when I conducted audience research on the Korean TV drama series *Winter Sonata* in Japan, or the Japanese TV drama series *Tokyo Love Story* in Taiwan, the attention was paid more to how audiences positively interpret the gender relations and love romances that are represented in the TV dramas from other Asian societies to self-critically reflect on their own lives and societies (see Iwabuchi, 2002, 2008a). This is still a relevant research question in the studies of inter-Asian media culture consumption, but what is missing in this investigation is the critical analysis of the drama representations and the cross-examination of what kinds of representation of gender relations, for example, are traversing the boundaries in East Asia, and what are not. The issues of representation are covered up by researchers' attention to audiences' self-reflexive consumption. While the critical studies of queer cultures, ethnic minorities and migrants in the media representation have been much conducted in the national context, these are not yet well explored in the studies of inter-Asian media culture connections. More rigorous analyses will need to be done to examine whether and how transnationally consumed texts in East Asia do justice to the cultural differences, inequality and marginalization of each nation in terms of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, region, class and migration/diasporas.

This point is related to the resilience of the national framework, which has been engendered by the development of inter-national governance of culture. Here I put the hyphen between the 'inter' and 'national' to highlight the reworking and strengthening of the national in tandem with the intensification of cross-border media culture flows (Hannerz, 1996). The development of inter-nationalism is facilitated by the trend that 'the national' functions as one of the most marketable and significant local units, as a unit of commercialized and standardized cultural diversity in the globalization process. National cultural specificity is increasingly expressed and constituted more and more through global mass culture formats, as suggested earlier, and this has been accompanied by the institutionalization of what Urry (2003) calls 'global screen', through which national cultures from many parts of the world are exhibited, introduced, contrasted and made to compete with each other while being mutually consumed, appreciated and compared in the inter-national arena. In the last twenty years or so, there has been a substantial increase in such opportunities as sports

spectacles, film festivals and various cultural exhibitions, and inter-Asian media culture flows do not elude the inter-national governance of culture. Sreberny-Mohammadi's (1991) argument, made twenty years ago, that the framework of the nation-state, both as a spatially-controlled entity and as a discursively-articulated geography, is highly relevant to the analysis of media globalization is even more pressing now.

In this context, the development of inter-Asian media culture connections not just facilitates a self-reflexive review of self-other relations but reproduces the exclusive conception of the nation. Inter-nationalism gets along with nationalism. On the one hand, it takes the form of antagonistic nationalism. Recent Indonesian condemnation of a Malaysian tourism campaign in terms of the ownership of Bali dance culture and Chinese criticism of the distortion of historical representation in the Korean drama series *Jumong*² shows the increasing role which media culture plays in the disputes over the ownership of national culture and historical narrative. Especially pertinent is the dispute over historical issues regarding Japanese colonialism in Asia, which still has a strong downside for the inter-Asian dialogue. In China and Korea, many people still think of Japan negatively due to unresolved historical issues. The Japanese government argues for the necessity of using media culture to smooth out the anti-Japanese sentiment in East Asia, believing that media culture is expected to improve the image of Japan and that Korean youth who consume Japanese media culture tend to feel more empathy with Japan. However, even though mediated cultural exchange may improve the image of the nation, it does not eradicate the history and memory of colonialism. Even those who love to consume Japanese media culture would consider historical issues separately and critically (Iwabuchi, forthcoming). This attitude is a sensible engagement with the present and the past, but an inter-Asian media culture circulation is occasionally taken in by the nationalistic anti-Japanese movement in China and Korea as well as by the reactive nationalistic discourse against China and Korea in Japan. A prominent example is the popularity of anti-Korea books in manga form in Japan. One popular book is titled 'anti-Korean Wave' but its actual content is actually not so much about the critique of Korean media cultures but more about a strong renunciation of Korean nationalism against Japan and those Koreans resident in Japan who allegedly support it. This shows how a growing mediated interconnect-edness under globalization has reactionarily evoked the sense of national pride and belonging (see Liscutin, 2009).

Nationalism that is provoked by the rise of inter-nationalism also takes a banal form. Billig (1995) argues that the permeation of national feeling is more often than not facilitated and displayed by a mundane, banal practice. This kind of an ordinary sense of national belonging is further promoted by the rise of inter-nationalism in which the nation is conceived as the unit of the global cultural encounter. The increase in the encounter with people, goods and media cultures from many parts of the world promotes a propensity that when one discusses international mobility, encounter and connection, one is apt to implicitly assume the cardinal existence of the delimited national cultural boundaries to come across. Such conception of the nation as organic cultural entity endorses and is endorsed by the contesting claims of essential cultural ownership as mentioned above, and fails to bear in mind that national boundaries are discursively drawn in such a way as to suppress various socio-cultural differences within and disavow their existence as constitutive of the nation.

This is shown when we examine how an inter-national media culture encounter overwhelms and suppresses local multicultural politics; the ways in which banal inter-nationalism further marginalizes nationally marginalized voices, while publicly highlighting them in a particular manner. The above-mentioned case of an anti-Korean Wave book in Japan suggests an awkward muddling of Korea and resident Koreans in Japan, most of whom were born and raised there. But this confusion also occurs in an approving consumption of the Korean Wave. Elsewhere I analyzed how the Korean Wave had impinged on the social recognition of resident Koreans who have long been suffering from discrimination as ethnic minorities in Japan (Iwabuchi, 2008a). Eventually the improvement in the image of Korea due to the popularity of Korean media cultures accompanies that of resident Koreans in Japan. The Korean Wave thus empowers no small number of resident Koreans in terms of cultivating a hopeful will to live as a citizen of Korean descent in Japan. Japanese mass media, including TV drama series, also began dealing with their voices and existence more often than before. However, the enhancement of the images of resident Koreans in the public space is achieved within an inter-national framework, at the expense of not recognizing them as citizens constitutive of Japanese society. While the advance of the media culture connection between the two countries re-highlights the demarcation of Japan–Korea national cultural borders to be traversed in an affirmative manner, the stress on inter-national cultural exchange between the two countries tends to make the complication of the in-betweenness and multiple belongings that resident Koreans have experienced and negotiated in Japanese society overlooked. Historically constituted discrimination and identity distress that many resident Koreans have been experiencing in Japan have not been well comprehended.³ Moreover, the positive reception of the Korean Wave tends to make the existence and difference of resident Koreans effortlessly conflated with and understood through the culture and people of the present Korea, making them perceived and represented as ‘Korean nationals living in Japan’. Thus the rise of the Korean Wave in Japan underscores anew the recognition of resident Koreans ‘in but not of Japan’. These considerations highlight the way in which inter-national media culture connections are implicated in the multicultural and postcolonial questions and the national politics of inclusion and exclusion of the ethnic minorities.

Engaging the publicness of inter-Asian media culture connections

As the marketization and privatization of media cultures has been intensifying, the notion of publicness gains a renewed significance in the study of media culture globalization. It is imperative to put to the fore a normative research question of critically appraising the publicness of media culture connections and their uses for democratic purposes.

This is especially pressing now that marketized inter-nationalism is also actively moved forward by the states’ cultural policy to promote the production and export of national media cultures. Culture has extended its role to other spheres and become a useful resource for various social actors, including marginalized people and NGOs, to pursue their own political and economic interests (Yuidice, 2003), but what is even more salient is the alliance of the states and (transnational) media culture industries. For the states, media culture has come to be regarded as important politically to enhance ‘soft power’ and ‘cultural diplomacy’, and economically for attracting global

capital and developing creative industries. In East Asia, the best known example is the Korean government's policy to sell Korean media culture, which contributed to the development of the Korean Wave (Shim, 2006). Likewise, many national governments in East Asia such as Japan, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and India are also eager to pursue this kind of policy. They appoint pop icons and idols as cultural ambassadors and authenticate national cuisine overseas (Iwabuchi, forthcoming). The problem of the national branding policy lies in its ideological closure over imperative issues of globalization, since it limits the public discussion about the promotion of media culture to a narrow scope of national interests in the international arena at the expense of the engagement with wider public concerns. The states' active backing of market-oriented globalization hinders rather than promotes the public discussion about the crucial issues of media cultural globalization (see Iwabuchi, forthcoming).

In this context, we need to examine even more rigorously the publicness of media culture and inter-Asian connections. One crucial issue is concerned with equality and openness of access. Economic disparity in Internet accessibility, the international division of new cultural labor, corporate domination of copyright, and commons of media culture are all relevant. The right to express one's view and the right for difference to be respected and understood need to be guaranteed. This also involves the politics of listening across difference (Dreher, 2009), so that no one is put in a 'private' situation in which his/her place in the public space is deprived as their voices are not attended or responded to (Arendt, 1958/1998). These issues are further related to a more difficult question of sharedness. How various emergent issues of media culture that have been generated by market-oriented globalization can be shared and conversed about by various people across borders is rather a challenging task.

The consideration of the publicness of media culture needs to have a scope that goes beyond the national boundaries, since neo-liberalism's cannibalization of the publicness is not just a national matter. It is often argued that while the nation is still important as a local unit of administration and regulation for the public good, the national framework is too big and too small to handle the complex matters of transnational flows of capital, media and people in our age, as Seyla Benhabib argues:

The nation-state is, on the one hand, too small to deal with the economic, ecological, immunological, and informational problems created by a more interdependent environment; on the other hand, it is too large to contain the aspiration of identity-drive social and regionalist movements. Under these conditions, territoriality is fast becoming an anachronistic delimitation of material functions and cultural identities. (Benhabib, 2002, p. 180)

What is required is not post-nationalism, which tends to unconvincingly refute the significance of the national framework, but a 'de-national' perspective with the recognition that the state and the national still matter but we need to move our focus on 'the transformation of the national' to engage with transnational and intra-national issues (Sassen, 2005).

Given that state cultural policy is not well engaged with and even moving further away from social democratization, we researchers should consider seriously how to further advance the dialogic and participative potential of media culture connections across various divides with the aim to construct an inclusive society at various levels: locally, nationally, regionally and globally. This requires us not just to critically study media culture connections in East Asia but also to pursue the active role of

coordinating the dialogues of various social subjects such as the governments, the mass media, activists, NGO/NPOs and all citizens for the pursuit of a more democratic use of culture. It seems to be time for researchers to be more actively engaged with the institutionalization of a critical perspective in society. Towards this goal, a rigorous and critical research on the publicness of inter-Asian media culture connections is essential.

Notes

1. For example, it can be argued that those who are most offended by the continuing Orientalist representations in Japan-related Hollywood films such as *Memoir of a Geisha* and *Lost in Translation* are less people in Japan than ethnic minorities of Japanese/Asian descent in the Western countries such as Asian Americans. See Iwabuchi (2008b).
2. I thank an anonymous reviewer for reminding me of this.
3. It should be noted that the improvement of image has only been happening to that of South Korea. The demonizing of North Korea due to the abduction issue has been occurring simultaneously with the positive reception of the Korean Wave. There has been a considerable bashing against North Korea and those resident Koreans who identify themselves with North Korea.

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