

bands choose to stay within a subculture, co-optation seems inevitable in the sense that their stylistic devices get expropriated as ornaments by the Company's own dominant products.

The above account of the Hungarian pop music industry has managed to grasp some of its most fundamental features. Similar to Adorno's mass culture critique, the argu-

ment is based upon the assumption of an over-determinate structure of relationships. This has prevented the author from viewing the recent changes and reforms of the music business as part of an all-pervasive, even if slow, process of decomposing a monolithic-bureaucratic institutional system (for a more detailed account, see Szemere, 1985).

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## Popular Music in Taiwan

GEORGETTE WANG

The recent concern over the imbalanced international flow of cultural products such as films, television programs, and news from developed to developing nations has fed the

apprehension that imported popular music may have socialized audiences with alien values and ethics. While the concept of cultural imperialism itself began to face challenges in the late 1970s, suspicion over the socializing effect of imported music lingers on with little evidence to either prove or disprove it. This brief essay takes Taiwan as a case study and examines its development of

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*Ms. Wang is Professor of Journalism, National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan.*

popular music with special attention to Western influence.

Young Tsu-jun, a popular music singer herself, pointed out that in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, popular music in Taiwan was largely made in America. A 1975 analysis showed that the preference pattern of local popular music lovers bore a striking similarity to that of the United States.

In the late 1960s, a television program titled *The Golden Song Award* sponsored by a record company, brought local popular music production to life. Many youngsters for the first time turned their attention to their own songs. But the novelty of *The Golden Song Award* did not last very long; in the early 1970s the quality of songs went down and the program eventually disappeared from the television screen.

The real turning point came in the late 1970s when Taiwan broke diplomatic relations with the United States and encountered a severe setback in international politics. One day at a college popular music concert, a student went on stage and posed a serious question to the audience: "Where is OUR song?" This move shocked many at the scene, but soon there was an awareness of the long term domination of Western popular music in Taiwan. The desire to be culturally independent sharply rose with the need to be politically independent.

Soon the movement of campus folk songs followed. In the beginning, it was but the work of a few amateur students. But before long their voices were heard outside of college campuses and they became new national idols. The reasons for this sudden success were not hard to identify. For a long time, locally produced popular songs had been favorites mainly of the elderly and less-educated public. But the melody and lyrics of campus folk songs are more refined and properly geared to the prevailing mood of the young audience. The well-known "Heir of the Dragon," for example, contains the following lyrics:

A Dragon lies in the ancient east,  
China is its name;  
A people live in the ancient east,

They are the descendants of the dragon;  
Grown up at the foot of the dragon,  
Still I am the heir of the dragon;  
With dark hair, dark eyes and yellow skin,  
Forever I am the heir of the dragon.

However, not all of the campus folk songs are highly nationalistic; some, like the "Chicken Farm," are extremely lively and down-to-earth, while others like "The River of Lost Memory" have a poetic touch. Success of the campus folk songs brought fame to the singers and tremendous profit to the music industry. But when the movement became commercialized, the original aggressive flavor subsided and gradually a new generation of popular music emerged.

As described in the *Publications Almanac* (1984, p. 781), this new generation of popular music features a "combination of Western and Chinese popular music with sometimes a Japanese touch to it." With it came the free use of instruments—including classical Chinese and Western—and the quick rise of a few rock stars with distinct characteristics.

The medical student turned singer, Lo Ta-yo, for example, is known not only by the rhythm and tempo of his songs, the costume he wears (invariably black), but most of all by a critical attitude demonstrated in the lyrics. In a song titled, "Tamsui River," he wrote:

That year we sat by the Tamsui River,  
Saw the garbage of Taipei city drifting away,  
Smoke rises from far away places,  
So that is the fireworks of our garbage dump.

In terms of lyrics, Lo is possibly the only one who sings to the conscience of his listeners. But in melody, he is like many others who can hardly deny the influence of Western popular music.

In a survey of 34 musicians based in the Taipei area conducted by the author in February 1985, respondents were asked to name the musician that they personally believed was most influential on their musical taste. Sixteen failed to come up with an answer. Of the 18 who did, 16 named up to three local persons, while 3 (16%) mentioned U.S. and British musicians.

When it came to musicians whom they do not personally know, 28 respondents were able to provide 57 names. As many would have predicted, the majority (46%) of those mentioned were Americans, with British musicians ranking second (16%); Chinese (12%) and Japanese (11%) were the third and fourth largest group mentioned. Others noted were French, German, Russian and Australian musicians. Since the answer does not limit itself by either time or space, musicians so named included masters such as Huang Twu, Rachmaninov, Ravel, as well as present-day popular singers, for example, Michael Jackson, Olivia Newton John and the Carpenters.

The influence of Western music becomes more pronounced when respondents name the group or musicians who most influenced them. Of the 29 who answered the question, 18 (62%) named someone they did not personally know of a different nationality; for example, the BeeGees, Bach, Barbara Streisand, Men at Work, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, and so forth. Eight (23%) named someone they knew of the same nationality, mostly singers from Taiwan with an international reputation in South East Asia. When it came to nationality, Americans constituted the largest group (mentioned by 11), Chinese second (mentioned by 9), and British musicians third (4).

This Western influence on popular music may be bothersome to social elites, but those in the music industry are primarily interested in market preference. According to the statistics compiled by the Taiwan Recording Industry's Union (*Publications Almanac*, 1984, p. 776), at present over 40 recording companies have a studio and production unit.

Among the 11 with investments over \$125,000, 2 are subsidiaries of multinationals, two have some shares held by foreign investors, and the rest are owned by local businesses.

A review of the sales records shows unstable growth since the 1970s. Although the total sales amount in dollars has increased over five times in 12 years, the number of records and audio tapes sold reached a high of 4,200,000 in the late 1970s, at the peak of the campus folk song movement. After that sales began a drastic fall to an all time low of 2,150,000 in 1982. Sales picked up again in 1983, but it is not sure for how long the upward trend will continue.

As to Western popular music, there are four companies which regularly import masters from abroad and produce albums locally. For example, the largest one, Himalaya, has a contract with CBS and brings out an average of 200 albums a year. The total number of albums produced in this way by the four companies is estimated around 400.

In a survey conducted by the National Chengchi University in 1982, 64.3% of the 300 respondents mentioned Chinese popular songs as their preferred music type. Chinese folk songs were the second-most popular, while foreign popular music came in third. The figure in itself may not tell much, since most of the local musicians are under Western influence. But if cultural exchange is inevitable in this age of information, then maybe these developments in popular music in Taiwan represent the stand taken by many Third World nations today: striving to keep a cultural identity while seeking progress through opening doors to the West.

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