

**THE GLOBAL AND THE VERNACULAR**

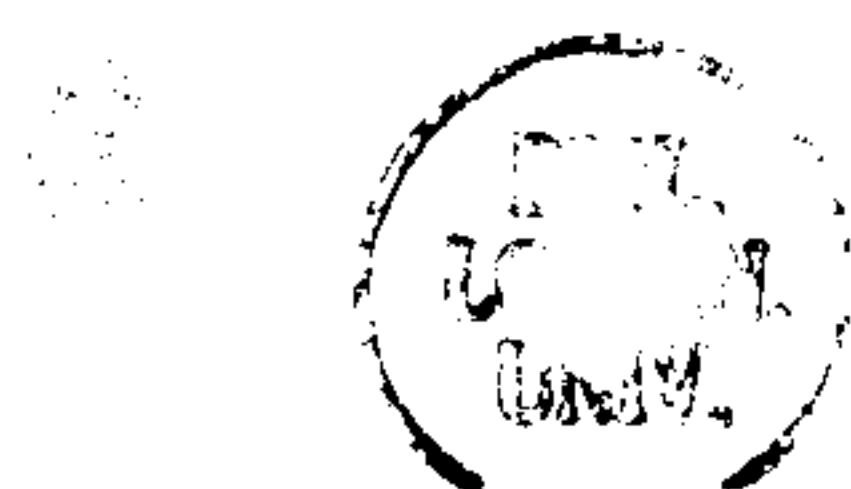
**THE APPROPRIATION OF TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL IMAGERY AND  
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN THE REALM OF  
CONTEMPORARY KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines theoretical debates about cultural appropriation and postmodern plurality and hybridity in the formation of cultural identities. This is approached here through a case study of how the multiplicity of national and cultural identities are constructed in the processes of appropriating transnational popular musics, within the Korean context. On the basis of data obtained by interviewing contemporary musicians and young music enthusiasts, the thesis investigates the appropriation of global pop, mainly western pop music, within the non-Western context. In Part One, which encompasses theoretical and methodological frameworks, Chapters 2 and 3 explore the recent discourse on cultural hybridity in post-colonial studies, and wider theories of popular music, identity and locality, from a global/transnational perspective. Methodological questions are discussed in Chapter 4. Part Two contains a case study: Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present an interview-based study of the contemporary Korean popular music scene, where various musicians and young music enthusiasts consume and rework imported musics from a variety of positions. Some musicians are concerned with national cultural identity and attempt to incorporate traditional Korean elements into Western musical genres; other musicians show a large degree of cosmopolitanism; and young hip hop music fans articulate their identities, through the contrasting and differentiated consumption of transnational musical products. The main themes here are the formation and transformation of Korean identities in popular music in contemporary Korea. Lastly, Chapter 8 contextualises the argument of the whole thesis and reviews its limitations within the context of recent debates on consumption and new citizenship.

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*To my parents*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Just as the globalizing process challenges the idea that cultures exist as hermetically sealed absolute units, to the Korean people at least, the issues of self-negation and reconstruction within an indigenous culture become crucial.<sup>1</sup> As a way of responding to the transnational connections of culture, Koreans, especially the younger generation, has started to accommodate global cultural forms and imagery. For example, Korean television today is saturated with variety shows devoted to Korean rap and hip-hop music and highly image-oriented and stylish foreign music videos. In this respect, there are rising concerns to do with the tension between a fixed national subjectivity and foreign cultural elements that in the end, produces a ‘co-existence’ among different subjectivities within the Korean society.

In this thesis, I examine the localization of what Hall calls ‘global postmodern culture’, in other words, the emergence of a shared transnational cultural imagery among Koreans since the 1990s, and highlight how the multiplicity and hybridity of cultural identities and Korean identities are constructed, in relation to the processes of appropriating transnational popular culture. Within the sphere of what I call a ‘global or transnational’ perspective, I focus on the realm of popular music in Korea, in particular on syncretic (or hybrid) and transnational music making practices of popular musicians, as well as local consumption of imported, mainly Western, popular music among the younger generation of music enthusiasts. Using empirical examples

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I will use ‘Korea’ as an abbreviation for ‘the Republic of Korea’ or ‘South Korea’.

based on the micro-sociological analysis of the Korean music scene, I demonstrate how contemporary Korean musics, which are almost indistinguishable from so-called 'transnational pop music', can be the ground for competing narratives of cultural identities and of the shifting notions of 'Koreanness'.

In effect, this musical hybridity mirrors the reality of Korea today, in which the traditional sense of nationhood and identification is challenged. The Korean people now more openly embrace new musical styles from abroad as if they were their own. From the Korean point of view, what results from their vigorous exposure to international styles and foreign genres is a use of various styles by local musicians and audiences who then create different forms and modes of identification. What really matters here is how the variety of cultural identities are organized and expressed, not the concern about losing 'Koreanness' as some Koreans may have. In other words, an 'and-and' identity matters rather than an 'either-or' identity. Focusing on the new syncretic forms of Korean music, such as Korean hip hop and Korean techno, thus, offers insight into how the multiplicity of cultural identities and Korean identities are constructed by various groups and individuals, with regard to the process of appropriating foreign sounds, from a variety of positions.

There have been different discourses about the relationship between music and sense of identification, community, and belonging throughout the history of popular music studies. With regard to theories of music and identity, I initially stress continuing tension between so-called 'reflection' and 'construction' theories of identity, and argue that musical experience simultaneously involves both expression/reflection *and*

construction, belonging *and* detachment. In this connection, I am concerned with this ‘ambivalence’ in musical experience. Music reception and musical practices can never simply entail a sense of self and community. Thus, this attribute of ambivalence in musical experience can provide some indications for a more general renewal of discussions about culture, identity and locality. It is in this context that I attempt to elucidate the dynamics and ambivalence of cultural and national identities present in the contemporary Korean music scene. After all, my aim in this thesis is to stress the variety of musical practices that point to the multiplicity and variety of cultural identities and Korean identities of those involved, in relation to the process of the appreciation, adaptation and appropriation of transnational pop, such as rap and hip hop music, within a non-Western country like Korea. In doing so I wish to contribute to debates about cosmopolitanism, internationalization, and the indigenization (or hybridisation) of culture all of which we find today among contemporary Korean popular musicians and participants.

In our age of translocal and transnational conjunctures and disjunctures, both performers and listeners in Korea have experienced feelings of ambivalence and detachment in the process of encountering foreign sounds and styles, which create for them a dilemma of how to articulate ‘Koreanness’. Korean appropriation of foreign sounds might be explained in terms of “‘ventriloquism’, or as an art of ‘borrowed/borrowing voice’”, which is presenting ‘ambiguity’, one voice in two bodies or two voices in one body (Hosokwa,2002:233). Within the Korean context, pluralised and hybrid identities have been formed at the interface of the global and local, marking the decline of naive notions of an essential cultural identity within bounded realms -

such as family, community, nation and race - as well as marking the beginning of new identity politics, that has to work through ambivalence and multiple inflections. This new notion of 'multi-faceted Korean identities', needs to be evaluated carefully alongside empirically situated accounts of vernacular culture, and the thesis aims to achieve this.

As a construct, the idea of 'Korea' has undergone many processes of transformation, and the idea of 'Koreanness', which has been constructed through different discourses throughout history, is now characterised by cultural variety, diversity and change. In this light, it is important to view cultural and national identity as in a constant state of negotiation and evolution on the one hand, and, on the other, to be sensitive to the political, historical and social context in which this process takes place. In this respect, we need a historical consideration of the cultural discourses that articulate a sense of self and national identity within the Korean context.

#### (A) Historical Formation of 'Koreanness' in Korean Culture

Korean society represents a case of highly compressed modernization and state-led capitalistic modernity. The result is that this 'compressed rush-to development' might be argued to have deprived Korean people of the capacity for self-reflection, especially the capacity for reflection on the dominant formation of subjectivity as '*kukmin*' (translated as a member of the state or a nationalistic state subject).<sup>2</sup> Korea's rapid economic development in a relatively short period of time was achieved by popular mobilization

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<sup>2</sup> See Cho Han, Hae Jeong (2000), 'You are entrapped in an imaginary well: the formation of subjectivity

and official nationalism - producing the uniform subjectivity of '*kukmin*', which suppressed the space for the variety of individual and collective identities.

Discourses on nationalism in Korea are historically connected to the national liberation during the Japanese colonization of Korea (1910-1945). Contemporary nationalism was constructed during the period of rapid socio-economic transformation after decolonization. Since the 1960s, nationalist discourse in Korea centred on economic growth-priority policies, and this ultimate goal of the development of the Korean economy resulted in reducing people to the status of '*kukmin*'. In the process of state-led modernization in Korea, people were forced to work harder to 'catch-up' with the advanced countries. In Korea, an essential Korean identity continues to be reproduced by the right wing 'conservatives', every time there is an economic crisis. For instance, when the Korean economy was deeply in trouble and needed a financial bailout by IMF in 1997, the notion of an authentic, pure and organic national identity, which had remained static throughout history, was incorporated into new national discourses to emphasize the idea of unity. Both the ruling neo-liberal and the traditional conservative blocs give support to this idea of unique 'Koreanness' as a useful way of encouraging Korean people to overcome this national crisis.

Clearly, until recently, the idea of 'homogenous' nation or national culture still had the power to mobilize at least part of the population in Korea. Even the left in the 1980s, which represented the long dissident tradition in Korea, hardly questioned the organic and essentialising nature of culture. These ideas were based on binary narratives,

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within compressed development', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol.1(1):49-69.

exemplified by notions of tradition versus modernity, and of the bounded national space versus intruding foreign influences. The Korean radicals drew on the notion of '*minjok*'<sup>3</sup> and used indigenous, traditional cultural forms, such as folk music and dance, as a powerful agency for political resistance against both the ruling bloc and the highly commodified culture of Korea within the colonial context. However, since the early 1990s, with the rise of popular culture and the emergence of a new generation of cultural tribes ('*shinsaedae*'), enormous social, spatial, and cognitive transformations appeared in the rapidly globalising Korean context. Thus the once secure image of a hegemonic national culture and a collective construction of a fixed individual or national identity has been undermined. Nowadays we can see the emergence of reflexive individuals, who treat culture as more like sets of heterogeneous practices, values, styles and identities, and who want to overcome their own inferiority complexes, derived from the pervasive workings of the 'colonial mindset'.<sup>4</sup> Many contemporary Koreans are beginning to reflect critically upon their senses of 'Koreanness' and to employ a wide range of cultural practices, norms and identities in multiple layers; to this extent, pluralised national and individual subjectivities are, increasingly, being constructed in contemporary Korean society.

#### (B) The Korean Appropriation of Transnational Sounds: The Multiplicity and Hybridity of Korean Identities

From this viewpoint, these emerging flexible and multiple identities challenge and

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<sup>3</sup> The term of '*minjok*' is almost interchangeable with that of nation, translated from German *Volk*. Many Koreans claim that their country is a single-*minjok* nation state.

<sup>4</sup> The notion of 'colonial' habitus or mindset, on the surface, denounces the imperial other, creating the idea of the purity of the self, yet beneath the surface contains ambivalent longings for the other's superior

destabilize the official and authoritarian version of nationalism, and provide an alternative political imagery and a variety of routes of identification, within the Korean context. Koreans are now acknowledging the existence of internal differences and starting to deconstruct the '*kukmin*', and to construct the multi-faceted identities that will enable them to coexist with forms of otherness and differentiated subjectivities. This alternative way of framing national and individual subjectivities makes it possible to avoid the tendency to define national cultural identity in terms of the binarism of ethnic inclusion and exclusion, and to better acknowledge the simultaneously local and trans-local nature of identity formation. In other words, the notion of 'Koreanness' in culture is now de-coupled from its former associations, and the importance of placing national cultural production in the context of global networks is increasingly recognized.

In recent years, the idea of multiplicity and hybridity has played an important part in the debate about Korean identity in culture, as cultural identity in Korea has increasingly come to be explained in terms of positive interactions between the global and the Korean vernacular. In this sense, my primary focus is on how Korean modes of appropriation of transnational hybrid pop music reveal the processes of the transformation of 'Koreanness' and how the subjects of (post) modern nation-states respond to the complexity and ambivalence of cultural products, ethnicities and identities. The analysis of transnational Korean pop musics, stemming from these multiple associations, thus allows us to raise questions about the syncretic and multi-layered nature of contemporary cultural identity within the new Korean context.

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culture. See Fanon (1961).

From this viewpoint, this thesis is concerned with an anti-essentialist perspective that challenges both the idea of ‘ethnic absolutism’ (in Gilroy’s terms) and an essentialised and fixed notion of culture and identity. In an attempt to show the multiplicity and temporality of cultural identities in Korea, I pay particular attention to a variety of musicians and audiences, who experience senses of Korean identities from differentiated positions. In the attempt to portray the new complexity in the formation of contemporary Korean identities, brought about by the transnational intersections, I draw on a ‘processual’ approach. This emphasis on process is intended to bring individuals or human activity back in to the analysis. Concepts such as cultural identity and tradition, for example, are continually negotiated, defined and redefined in the transactions between individuals. To this extent, I argue that the notion of contemporary Korean identity cannot be comprehended within the binary ‘either/or’ logic of cultural essentialism. Rather, it has to be approached through the analysis of the constant fluctuation between the new forms of syncretism and the continuing existence of bounded cultural traditions. My aim in this thesis is to explore the details of these processes. These complex processes are considered in this thesis through a detailed examination that combines theoretical analysis with empirically informed accounts of vernacular practices.

The central argument of this thesis is that senses of contemporary cultural and national identity have undergone significant transformations at the local level, in relation to positive interactions between the global/local. It is the nature of these transformations, in the Korean setting, which the thesis attempts to account for. Especially, drawing on transnational genres of Korean musics, I attempt to examine



Korean identity, in terms of the emergence of forms of 'internal hybridity', facilitated by external influences, such as global communication, and by the rearticulation of the 'international' in new ways in the local setting. In this respect, this thesis is an attempt to develop three different dimensions of analysis:

- ◆ First, to consider how contemporary musicians make their musical choices, and how they perceive their own role in terms of the construction of the concept of 'locality' or 'national cultural identity' in the Korean context.

- ◆ Second, to take into account how the material circumstances in Korea (the music industry, cultural policy, the characteristics of the population and communication networks etc.) affect the production of sounds in a specific place, whether they are syncretic or traditional forms.

- ◆ Lastly, to explore how audiences participate in the process of constructing (or reconstructing) Korean identities, through the consumption of a variety of globally available musical products. In particular, focusing on young music enthusiasts, I try to illustrate something of the pluralistic and also the confrontational nature of musical and stylistic meanings as these inform the daily lives of young people.

In order to investigate the above-mentioned issues, I conducted fieldwork in Korea over a 3-month period between July 2000 and September 2000, and a 4-month period between July 2001 and October 2001. The subjects of this fieldwork included a variety of musicians and professionals involved in the making of syncretic and hybrid popular music in contemporary Korea. These encompassed mainstream musicians, underground club musicians, the so-called world musicians who attempt to adapt indigenous musical traditions to new contexts, music producers, staff in record

companies, officers in the ministry of culture and tourism, and pop critics. I also interviewed audiences, in particular, young music fans of hip-hop and underground music societies on the internet, in order to illustrate the way in which they participate in the formation of individual and collective identities, through the consumption of certain musics and styles.

My case-study employs mainly qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured 'one to one' interviews, alongside an analysis of public documents, journalistic and statistical sources. I am aware that the researcher should be alert to the pitfalls of interview-based research, in so far as what interviewees say they do often differs from what they actually do. In this respect, I try not to treat the interviewees' talk simply as a screen through which to look inside their head (Alasuutari, 1999:15). Rather, I begin by studying the interview text – or transcriptions of conversations for that matter – in its own right. I thus wish to avoid a naïve reading of my transcripts of interviews or conversations. Therefore, in regarding the voices of my fieldwork participants as centrally significant to my analysis, I attempt to remain as faithful as possible to the fieldwork experience, while at the same time giving clear indications of where the interviewees' accounts of their experiences finish, and my own interpretations of them take over. In presenting the results of this fieldwork, rather than placing interviews and other materials in an 'Appendix' section, I have chosen to work these materials into the body of my own theoretical analysis.

Overall, through an empirical, or micro-level, analysis of the Korean music scene, I attempt to highlight the changing concepts of 'Koreanness' displayed among a

wide range of musicians, other professionals in music production and audiences. The key issue here is to explain and theorize how constantly shifting forms of cultural practices and of our sense of self and belonging, by blending 'rootedness' with transnational inclusion, can be enunciated, in the new Korean context. Put differently, from the vantage point of Korea, I hope to demonstrate the formation of 'new identities' as a product of the challenge which globalisation presents to the dominant regimes of representation, which have homogenized cultural, class and sexual difference within a unified notion of 'Koreanness'. These goals determine broad methodological guidelines for the research. Indeed, in discussing the formation and transformation of Korean identities this thesis is guided by my own sense of identity as Korean and by my own commitment to the engagement with vernacular practices of the contemporary Korean popular music scene. I attempt to analyze how the cultural dynamics of new identities, facilitated by a transnational encounter with the other, work in particular times and places, namely, in post-colonial Korea, with a 'critical self-reflexive' attitude. This approach embraces a reflexive consciousness of its own rhetoric.

**PART ONE**  
**THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL**  
**FRAMEWORK**

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORIZING CULTURAL IDENTITIES, LOCALITIES, AND POPULAR MUSIC WITHIN A GLOBAL/TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

#### (A) Introduction

Before I focus in detail on the practices of Korean musicians and audiences with regard to the formation and transformation of Korean identities present in transnational popular music of Korea, I attempt to contextualise my extended argument through an engagement with the most recent debates about culture, local identity and hybridity within post-modern/colonial cultural studies from a global/transnational perspective. In this chapter, I will explore a processual view on cultural identity as involving a constant process of change and transformation, drawing on authors who have contributed to a critical understanding of the dynamics of globalising processes and cultural identity. Thus, my starting point is the way in which theories of globalisation frame contemporary debates about culture, identity, and place.

#### (B) Globalisation and Local Identities

Globalisation, within academic discourses, was introduced as an idea suggesting that a world-space of cultural production and national representation was simultaneously becoming more globalized and more localized in everyday texture and composition. In other words, the globalising process can be characterised by two distinctive currents. On

the one hand, there is a tendency towards the international centralization of power around the dynamics of which reach across borders. On the other, there is an opposite tendency toward fragmentation into regions and more local autonomy permitting heterogeneity and complexity.

The global/local assemblage would, as an alternative agent of the 'world system', challenge models of domination of social formations of the modern nation-state. Regions and region-states increasingly transgress national borders and create special economic zones of uneven development as well as transcultural hybridity. The geopolitics of global cultural formations and local sites are shifting under the pressures of this new "spatial dialectic", between mobile processes of transnationalisation and strategies of localisation.<sup>1</sup> Wary of an endlessly binary opposition sustaining the dominant discourses of social science and political economy, I will approach global/local space as one that acknowledges the renewed social agency - with a spatial dialectic disordering the prior binarism of global and local. What makes this global/local dialectic significant is the emergence of a concern with the local as a site both of promise and predicament (Dirlik,1996).

In fact, elements of a postmodern consciousness serve as enabling conditions for a contemporary localism. Scepticism about modernist narratives for their denial of difference allows for localized consciousness, and points to the local as the site for working out "alternative public spheres"(in Dirlik's term). This is the promise that the

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<sup>1</sup> See Wilson, R & Dissanayake, W (1996) 'Introduction', in R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake,

local offers. The local, however, also indicates predicament when we see the local as an object of the operations of global capital. A counter-politics of the local, insofar as it is itself a result of the movement of global capital, is always open to commodification by the cultural-ideological apparatus of global capitalism. In other words, an idea of locality might be reduced to a mere mechanism for identity consumption.

In this sense, postmodern cultural criticism, it seems to me, fails to recognize this totality that is the creation of global capitalism. It is urgent, therefore, that postmodern criticism restores a sense of the structures of inequality and oppression and resistance to capital to “check its slide into political irrelevance upon the slippery slopes of a fluid narcissism” (Dirlik,1996:36). In short, I agree with Dirlik that the significant transformation within capitalism needs to be considered in any evaluation of the local as source of promise and predicament. What the ‘local’ implies in different contexts is highly uncertain. At this point, it is quite crucial to focus on ongoing processes and forces of globalisation that are disrupting local communities, nations, and regions into something else. In this regard, especially important is Giroux’s idea of “formative narratives” in terms of “unity in diversity” which is derivative of postmodern/postcolonial ‘politics of difference’. Giroux explains:

“The postmodern attack on totality and foundationalism is not without its draw-backs. While it rightly focuses on the importance of local narratives and rejects the notion that truth precedes the notion of representation, it also runs the risk of blurring the distinction betw-

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*Global/Local* (Duke University Press: Durham and London,1996), p.2.

een master narratives that are monocausal and formative narratives, that provide the basis for historically and relationally placing different groups or local narratives within some common project.”

(1992:54)

The relationship between the local and the global is ubiquitous in critical discourse and cultural studies. Žižek has suggested an understanding of this relationship in Hegelian terms: “each pole of the antagonism is inherent to its opposite”(1994:3). Žižek’s observation of the local/global relationship is consistent with that given by Hall; “what we call ‘the global’ is always composed of varieties of articulated particularities...The global is the self-presentation of the dominant particular” (1991a:67). In relation to this notion of the global as the local dominant, Hall goes on to argue:

“One of the things which happens when the nation-state begins to weaken is...that the response seems to go in two ways simultaneously. It goes above the nation-state and it goes below it...Global and local are the two faces of the same movement from one epoch of globalisation, the one which has been dominated by the nation-state, the national economies, the national cultural identities, to something new.”

(1991a:27)

From this perspective, what seems clear to me is that the global and local must not be regarded as dichotomies, and further “globalisation cannot proceed without learning to live with and working through difference” (1991b.:3). Hall rightly has proposed that local difference, as a contradictory terrain for the increase of global capital, is not only a site of integration but also a site of resistance; the terrain of the opening of history.



According to Hall, we can rediscover the revolutionary potential of the local through “the aesthetics of the hybrid, the aesthetics of the crossover, the aesthetics of the diaspora”(ibid.:38-9). In other words, we can reclaim the terrain of politics which we had thought was lost to globalisation. This is now immediately understood as identity politics. Hall’s alternative, hybrid ‘ethnicity’, understood as a counter-politics of the local in the new epoch of globalization, represents what has come to constitute a powerful mainstream in contemporary thinking, particularly in postcolonial studies. Hybrid ethnicity as a politics of the local is, however, not an unproblematic concept.<sup>2</sup> Here, we need to distinguish clearly between the interruptive juxtapositions which objectify hybridised ethnic and cultural differences and the violating ambivalence of racism.<sup>3</sup> The familiar feature of ethnic politics differs radically from the essentialising processes of public reification which characterize fixed cultural exclusions and subordination, namely, the politics of racism.

‘Racism’ is challenged by a contemporary stress on the inherently ambivalent nature of relations between racist and racialised, coloniser and colonised, in which “fear and desire double for one another and play across the structures of otherness”(Hall,1992:256). This seems to correspond with Fanon’s claim that “there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s

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<sup>2</sup> See Moreiras, A (1999) ‘Hybridity and double consciousness’, *Cultural Studies*, 13(3):385-388. He has explored the concept of hybridity both in its positive and critical senses.

<sup>3</sup> See Werbner, P (1997) ‘Essentialising essentialism, essentialising silence’, in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*(Zed Books:London &New Jersey). She reflects on such critical differences between racism and everyday ethnicity using Levinas’ contrasting terms of ‘reification’ and ‘objectification’ (Levinas,1987). According to Werbner, racism reifies and absolutises cultural difference while ethnic identities are

place”(1961:30). The ambivalence of racist (or colonial) *desire* is mirrored by the racialised subject’s dream of dispossessing and replacing his oppressor. In other words, the ambivalence of racism is characterized by “a continual fluctuation between attraction and repulsion”(Young, 1995:61). At this point, the danger of these claims arises: all is ambivalence, so ethnic sentiments are problematised, while racist motivations are exonerated in the same way. But the objectification of hybridised ethnic identity is different from the violent essentialising of racism (however ambivalent). Very generally, whereas racialised identities are fixed by a single dominant opposition, hybridised ethnic identities are performed through gestures of individual identification. Not all collective cultural representations and self-representations in the public sphere are essentialising in the same way. The highlighting of a particular ethnic identity, as against racial essence in the public sphere generates a field of relevant oppositional identities at a particular social scale.

Increasingly, collective objectification of ethnic identity has been related to notions of redistributive justice, in other words to political urgency in conformity with the particular circumstances of the marginal countries. This objectification of ethnic identity is not, unlike racist reifications, fixed and immutable. In contemporary, ethnically diverse nation-states there are continuous compacting pressures: on the one hand, to assert and embellish particular identities; on the other, to create broader, more cosmopolitan alliances. In this regard, Werbner presupposes the recognition of “unity in diversity” or “universal diversity” and further suggests that “political struggle does not

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highlighted pragmatically and objectified relationally and contingently.

have to be uniform or united, but must recognise continued differences of interest and positioning: otherwise any notion of solidarity would be inherently racist, sexist and classist”(1997:248; see also Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:197). Developing my argument from these lines of thinking, in this thesis I want to recover *performative* and *processual* dimensions of ethnicity or locality.

### (C) Debates on Cultural Hybridity in Post-Colonial Studies

In today’s globalised world, neither intellectual movements nor national cultures stay within geographic boundaries. What interests me most here is that the terrain of culture has emerged as a privileged site for transnational communication, organization, and mobilization at a time when institutions such as trade unions and political parties are locked into narrow minded national identities which seem to make those institutions powerless to confront the inequities and injustices on international level. From a postmodern perspective, it might seem self-evident that essentialising ideological movements need to be countered by building cross-cultural and multi-ethnic alliances. Here the constant tendencies are towards fragmentation, requiring a new form of self-consciously hybrid politics. In the case of identity politics, it was above all through the Foucauldian analysis of heterotopic spaces in relation to the complicity of knowledge systems, politics, and government that multiple resisting subjects appeared on the historical stage. Like the post-structuralist thought to which it is often indebted, postcolonial discourse seeks the conceptualisation of cultural politics.

Within this context, the most vigorous debates on the dynamics of cultural identity in contemporary culture have occurred within the field of post-colonial analysis. as Papastergiadis (1997) has argued, it is no coincidence that the most radical critics of cultural transformation in modernity have come from places that have experienced the extremities of social and psychic rupture by colonialism. Postcolonial theory is a result of the interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices. When colonised peoples had reason to express the tension which arises from this problematic and contested, but eventually dynamic and powerful mixture of imperial language and local practice, post-colonial theory came into being.

The post-colonial perspective can be seen as both an expression of globalization and an actual strategy, part of current cultural resistance to essentialised notions of 'official or oppositional nationalism' and a component of the contemporary politics of marginality. The contemporary discourses of cultural studies and post-colonial theory have embraced the supposed 'newness' of postmodern subjectivity along with the productive side of hybridity and described identity as being hybrid. Post-colonial studies, thus, is an ambitious field that foregrounds the racial and ethnic power dynamics of global cultural relations.

Principally, a crucial question for postcolonial studies is how one can account for the capacity of the subject in a postcolonial society to resist imperialism. In this research aiming at exploring the dynamics of national identity construction in a country like Korea as representing a marginal locality of the ex-colonised, it seems to be

indispensable to look at the issues of cultural hybridity and essentialism in relation to the theme of post-colonialism. This post-colonial perspective, which has been most influential since 1990 within cultural studies, has stressed the multiplicity and differentiability of identity through various versions of the concept of hybridity. To put it another way, what such a perspective suggests is that what is now needed is “a sense of the concrete and multiple identities which might be represented in a concept like *the global(ized) human*” which is “constructed by the processes of history and has not sprung directly from the fingertip of God” (Papastergiadis,1997:193).

Recent writings within postcolonial theory routinely cite the work of Hall, Bhabha, JanMohamed and Lloyd, and Spivak as authorising hybrid identities. Following this line of thought, I will look at how this theory of cultural hybridity can provide a crucial starting point for understanding the contemporary crisis of identity-in-culture, from the marginal point of view. At the broadest level of conceptual debate there seems to be a consensus over the utility of hybridity as an antidote to discourses of essentialist subjectivity.

According to Hall, cultural identity is always hybrid, but he also insists that the precise form of this hybridity will be determined by specific historical formations and cultural repertoires of enunciation (Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen,1996:502). The ‘hybridity’ in Hall’s term is integral to the Bakhtinian-Gramscian perspective that he draws on in his representations of social transformation. To understand Hall’s theorisation of ‘hybridity’ we need to look at the semiotics of culture. According to

Bakhtin's theory the mixture of language within a text becomes a means for critique and resistance to the monological language of authority and demonstrates a new level of linking the concept of hybridity to politics of representation.<sup>4</sup> This clearly creates a turning point in the debates on hybridity.

However, while there has been a greater appreciation of the subversive potential of language, the attention to difference within literary and critical theory has been mostly confined to an analysis of its products rather than an engagement with its processes. To overcome this limitation, Hall outlines the dynamic process of transformation. His representation of hybrid identities is always as unfinished and these hybrid identities which are coming into being are directed by the flows of an ongoing process, in other words a performative process. Moreover, according to Papastergiadis (1997), "the space is open for the process of reidentification and reterritorialisation of experiences previously deemed too marginal to be worthy of representation".<sup>5</sup> Hall examines this rearticulation of the symbolic order through the Gramscian theory of 'hegemony' and 'counter-politics' and suggests a three-pronged strategy of the margins in order to challenge the centre: first, an opposition to the given order; second, recovery of broken histories and the invention of appropriate narrative forms; third, the definition of a position and a language from which speech will continue (Hall,1991a:35).

Taking his cue from this anti-essentialist perspective on identity, Bhabha also

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<sup>4</sup> See Young (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory*, (London:Routledge), pp. 20-22.

<sup>5</sup> See Papastergiadis (1997) 'Tracing hybridity in theory', in P. Webner and T. Modood (eds) *Debating Cultural Hybridity*. (Zed Books:London & New York), p275. Hall presupposes that the history of the self

uses the concept of hybridity in order to expose the conflicts in colonial space and extends it to highlight the psychic processes of identification and the cultural practices of performance. According to Bhabha the colonial space is an agnostic space and the 'hybridity' with which colonised peoples cope with the imperial presence becomes an agency which represents these complex dynamics. By incorporating the Bakhtinian notion of the subversive and dialogical force of hybridity into the ambivalence in the colonial encounter, Bhabha (1994) suggests that hybridity is constructed out of the dual process of "displacement" and "correspondence" in the act of translation. It is in this tension that a 'third space' emerges which can effect forms of political change that go beyond antagonistic binarisms between coloniser and colonised.<sup>6</sup> Bhabha's attention to the process of identification requires a finer recognition of the strategy of negotiation. Above all, Bhabha's work is notable for on the one hand, the respect for cultural difference and on the other, its persistent critique of the epistemology and politics of cultural nationalism or cultural essentialism, which is what gives rise to his consistent elaboration of concept-metaphors such as the 'in-between', the 'hybrid' and the 'third space'.

However, Spivak criticises the Hall's and Bhabha's assumption that hybridity has occupied such an important place both in the Third World post-colonial arena and in the diasporic condition of minorities in the First World indiscriminately. She further questions whether or not the possibility exists for any recovery of a subaltern voice that is not a kind of essentialist fiction. The use of the term 'subaltern' by Spivak is evoked by

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is regarded "as composed always across the silence of the other"(1991:49).

the concept of minority status in the work of JanMohamed and Lloyd. By mapping how hybridity is diversely defined by these postcolonial theorists we realize that hybridity itself is not a stable concept in postcolonial theory at all.

Indeed, while hybridity seems to be a condition that is common to all those colonised people who have sharp memories of deprivation, the emphasis on hybridity and plural identities has raised new problems, that is to say, the issues of encounters in the process of identity formation. Thinking about process, we need to ask: what are the consequences of the process of hybridity for the margins whose historical memories have been damaged by the colonial encounter? How does a focus on hybridisation as process reveal the cleavage in the margins? These questions are central to Spivak(1993) in relation to the notion of 'subaltern'. She is relatively reluctant to embrace a mapping of post-colonials. She draws a sharp distinction between the diasporic communities in the First World and the subaltern in the Third World. The subaltern and the diasporic are incommensurable worlds, and projecting the concept of hybridity on to the former is not only misleading but also akin to providing an alibi for global exploitation.<sup>7</sup> Spivak, unlike Hall, does not presume that translation across cultural difference is always possible. Taking rural India as her example, she asserts that the question of understanding the Other is not confined to the linguistic problem of translation, for how you would translate a culture whose "responsibility-based ethical systems have been for centuries completely battered and compromised" into the Other culture's notion of civil society.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a critical comment on the assumption of Bhabha, see Werbner, P(1997).

<sup>7</sup> See Papastergiadis, 'Tracing hybridity in theory', p.274.

<sup>8</sup> Spivak, 'The Narratives of Multiculturalism', ICCCR lecture, University of Manchester, February 1995.



According to Spivak, there is no prior space that can advance a dialogue between the realities and experiences of the Indian subaltern and those of the West.

The ability to 'speak up' to the hegemonic forces which is the first stage for representation and negotiation is a step towards becoming an organic intellectual. Yet, for Spivak, the subaltern condition cannot even afford the privilege of its own 'organic intellectuals', and the subaltern experiences cannot be texts which are available for translation. In this sense, the intellectual must avoid constructing the subaltern as merely another unproblematic field of knowing so confining to the very form of representation ('text for knowledge'). At this point, she reminds us of the need for reflexivity over the precise position of who is speaking in place of the subaltern, because it's impossible for the subaltern to have a position from which to speak up.

The use of the term 'subaltern' by Spivak is provoked by the concept of 'minority' with which JanMohamed and Lloyd work in their book, *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (1990), in so far as both categories can be seen to represent political resistance, absolute exteriority, and exclusive difference.<sup>9</sup> The authors outline minority discourse as a way of speaking about minority cultures collectively and a task that is bound up with the role of the minority intellectual. Minority discourse implies a standpoint as well as a status. It necessarily evokes "a questioning or destruction of the concepts of identity and identification, the rejection of representations of developing

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Quoted by Papastergiadis, *ibid.*, p.276.

<sup>9</sup> See Moore-Gilbert, B, Stanton, G and Maley, W (eds) *Postcolonial Criticism* (Longman: London & New York, 1997).

autonomy and authenticity”(Lloyd,1990:381). In his contribution to *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, JanMohamed takes Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘three salient characteristics of minority literature’, that is ‘deterritorialization’, ‘political motivation’ and ‘collective values’.<sup>10</sup> The life of an individual becomes an example of the generic minority. Minority discourse has its roots in a Marxist critique of a perceived tendency in post-structuralist thought to minimize the effects of class. In short, it is consist of three key components: its attention to class, its insistence on a network rather than a hierarchy of differences, and its stress on pedagogical innovation.<sup>11</sup> JanMohamed and Lloyd presuppose that the study of minority cultures cannot be carried on “without at least a relevant knowledge of sociology, political theory, economics, and history; otherwise, the specifics of the struggles embodied in cultural forms remain invisible”(1990:11).

For JanMohamed and Lloyd, culture still remains a central concern, since for minorities culture is not regarded as a mere superstructure. But culture is regarded as a substitute for action rather than as a transformative and liberatory set of practices. Thus, they call for an activism that is both academic and communal. Minority discourse requires new forms of solidarity, which focus on diversity. As JanMohamed and Lloyd put it:

“It is a perpetual return of theory to the concrete given of domination, rather than the separation of culture as a discrete sphere, that militates against the reification of any dominated group’s experience as in some sense ‘privileged’.

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<sup>10</sup> JanMohamed, ‘Negating the Negation as a Form of Affirmation in Minority Discourse’, in A. R. JanMohamed and D. Lloyd (eds), *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1990), p.103.

Just as domination works by constant adjustment, so the strategies of the dominated must remain fluid in their objects as in their solidarity.”

(1990:15)

But one limitation of their argument here seems to be the assumption that the dominant is singular while minorities are plural. This critical minority discourse also raises a central question: whether to prioritize culture and the constructedness of minority status, as Dirlik and Wynter do, or to assert the significance of politics and experience the way JanMohamed and Lloyd seek to do. Like JanMohamed, Dirlik put stress on ‘lived experience’ or ‘praxis’ rather than theory. But, Dirlik has insisted on the necessity of recognition of some autonomy, even priority, to the question of culture in any meaningful liberating practice”.<sup>12</sup> Wynter also argues that minority discourse must be part of an “opening on to new cultural forms in the context of a post-Industrial, post-Western and truly global civilization” and warns of the risk of a “dictatorship of the Minoritat”.<sup>13</sup> If we read postcolonialism as a minority discourse, a more convincing caution will be the charge of ‘ethnocentrism’. Above all, the risk implicit in the assertion that ‘facts’ are something other than cultural constructs is the familiar one of essentialism or of insisting on infinite heterogeneity in the same way.

In recent postcolonial theory there is an awareness of class, but also of the liberatory capacity of teaching, writing, reading and theory, and a recognition both of the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>12</sup> See Dirlik, A, ‘Culturalism as Hegemonic Ideology and Liberating Practice’, in JanMohamed and Lloyd (eds), *ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>13</sup> Wynter, S(1990), ‘On Disenchanted Discourse: ‘Minority’ Literary Criticism and Beyond’, in JanMohamed and Lloyd (eds), *ibid.*, pp. 433-34, 461-2.

limits and the value of the traditional humanist project.<sup>14</sup> One way to orient postcolonialism would be to place it between Marxism and existentialism, because many of its practitioners combine political radicalism with a fundamental reconception of the self, in what Fanon called a stretching of Marxism, and others have termed a new humanism or a revolutionary psychology. Another approach would be to situate postcolonialism in the space between literary and cultural studies. The realm of this study should be characterized by an ‘in-betweenness’-between theory and practice, between literary and cultural studies, between Marxism and existentialism, between localism and universalism, between personal and public, between self and state.

Furthermore, the postcolonial study is preoccupied with ambivalence, hybridity and migrancy as a conceptual framework for understanding identity-in-culture. There is a division within postcolonialism between those who are happy with the emphasis on culture and literature and theory, and those who - though they may themselves be academics -see real politics as taking place outside the ‘teaching machine’. In other words, two apparently incompatible modes of cultural identity and political positioning exist. These, as Moore-Gilbert argues, reflect “the dilemma between respect for difference and the desire to stress points of connection and to make common cause” (1997:190). In terms of political orientation, postcolonialism, thus, can be marked as a site of radical contestation and contestatory radicalism.

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<sup>14</sup> See Moore-Gilbert, B, Stanton, G and Maley, W (eds) *Postcolonial Criticism*, p. 49

#### (D) The Post-colonial Study of Identity and Some Impediments

As has been shown above, the different conceptions of identity in fact run through postcolonial cultural history. As Hall has observed, through reconstitution of the epistemic and power/knowledge fields around the relations of globalisation and transculturation, the postcolonial has been able to become so sensitively attuned to “questions of hybridity, syncretism, of cultural undecidability and the complexities of diasporic identification which interrupt any ‘return’ to ethnically closed and centred original histories”(1996:250). In spite of its innumerable strengths, however, postcolonial theory as argued by the postcolonial border-crossers, has been criticised for certain limitations as a mode of cultural analysis even on its own ground of culture and colonialism. “Fashionable terms like hybridity”, in the local context, become something like “a *laissez-faire* pluralism”, Chen comments, in this sense, “if one follows *their* argument, imperialist cultural penetration is highly justifiable”(1996:53). This postcolonial perspective tends to approach cultural power almost entirely in terms of textuality and epistemology, and material conditions and the possibility of political practices oriented towards changing them are sidelined. In addition, Dirlik has criticised post-colonial perspective for a “culturalism” which is preoccupied with questions of identity and the subject and hence cannot explain “the world outside the subject” (1992:336). Within this context, a consideration of the relationship between postcolonialism and global capitalism is overlooked, “a politics of location takes precedence over politics informed by fixed categories”, and attention is shifted from national origin to subject position (ibid.).

In the postcolonial moment, the transverse, transnational, transcultural movements, which were always inscribed in the history of “colonisation”, emerge in new forms to disrupt the settled relations of domination and resistance inscribed in other ways of living and telling these stories. But, as Shohat (1992) argues, the anti-essentialist emphasis in post-colonial discourse sometimes define any attempt to recover a communal past as a form of idealisation, and often neglect its significance as a site of resistance and collective identity. Following this line of critiques of post-colonial studies, the formation of a postcolonial culture and society, in other words, the shaping of a ‘Global-postmodern hybrid subjectivity’, is politically at stake. In short, according to Chen, who expresses his scepticism about the empowering transformative potentiality of postcolonial discourse, “it (postcolonialism) in effect obscures the faces of a neo-colonial structure in the process of reconstructing global capitalism, and becomes the leading theory of the global hegemonic re-ordering”(1996:50).

These have been the cause of some bitter Marxist polemics against the post-colonial paradigm. Even one of its sympathetic proponents, Hall (1996) has described ‘post-colonial studies’ failure to consider the relationship between post-colonialism and global capitalism as neglecting the prominent role of commercial popular culture within systems of colonialism and neo-colonialism. In addition, from the point of view of the oppressed subject positions - aboriginals, workers, gays, lesbians and women – Chen (1996) has asserted that it is too early to celebrate a ‘post’-colonial era, because internal colonisation still operates. Moreover, as Ahmad(1992) insists, capital and its operations have been globalised, and the old centre/periphery model, on which some

theories of hybridity continue to rely in theorizing the 'in-between', has consequently ceased. The centre is just as heterogeneous and unstable, in terms of its class, gender and even ethnic identities, as the periphery. As a result, the matrices of oppositional alliance proposed in the discourse of hybridity have become potentially almost infinitely complex.

The appeal to anti-essentialist models of postcolonial identity also involves another difficulty. Are all 'fundamentalists' or 'separatists' to be criticized in the new dispensation that some theories of hybridity anticipate? Doctrines of hybridity do not pay sufficient attention to those who resist the concept they insist on. The celebration of hybridity seems to miss essential political points. Such factors have led many to look at the concept of "strategic essentialism" as proposed by Spivak as an 'intermediate' model of postcolonial identity. This raises crucial issues compared with some versions of both cultural nationalism and hybridity. In the first place, it allows a reassessment of cultural nationalism in a positive light, both as a corrective to cultural pluralism of hybridity thinking and as a coherent politics of resistance. In fact, we have to recognize that the discourses and politics of cultural nationalism in the non-Western countries were extremely effective in helping to end the era of formal colonialism. Further, while capital may be globalised in the neo-colonial era, "the centre still tends to operate politically through the medium of the nation state, or nation-state alliance".<sup>15</sup> To this extent cultural nationalism can still play an effective role in resistance to the dominant global order.

However, one of the paradoxes of cultural nationalism is that "directly

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<sup>15</sup> See Moore-Gilbert, B (1997) *Postcolonial Theory*, p.197.

oppositional or confrontational modes of decentring the centre might simultaneously recentre it".<sup>16</sup> There is even a pitfall that in certain instances the 'marginal' will become part of the 'centre'. Above all, the inference of the essentialist approach is to accept as inevitable the fragmentation of the postcolonial or minoritarian terrain into a series of competing social and cultural formations. If the differences between these various fragments are, indeed, essentially grounded, there can be little possibility of alliances which organize on the basis of class, gender and so forth.

Within this context, 'Strategic essentialism' offers a way of considering the importance or legitimacy of specific case histories focusing on different contexts of oppression, but at the same time it provides "the possibility of alliances in a 'war of position' in a way that cultural essentialism is reluctant to do"(Moore-Gilbert,1997:202). In this connection, a "perspectival/relational notion of subalternity" or critical minority discourse - as opposed to its essentialist counterpart, whereby the position of the subaltern could always be determined in advance out of some specific positivity - can provide a more fruitful approach.<sup>17</sup> However, what is sometimes over-looked by this idea of 'the war of position' is that the multiple identities and 'rainbow' alliances which such a strategy permits also offer a greater range of targets to the dominant. Obviously, discrimination and injustice operates across a wide range of domains, from class and gender to ethnicity and so on. Furthermore, in relation to the voluntaristic position-taking that this involves, there are some doubts about its political effectiveness.

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<sup>16</sup> See Derrida, J (1976) *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak, p.302.

<sup>17</sup> In relation to the concept of 'perspectival or relational subalternism', see Moreiras, A (1999) 'Hybridity and double consciousness'. Also I'm influenced by JanMohamed and Lloyd's concept of



According to Moreiras, “subalternity is the site, not just of negated identity, but also for a constant negation of identity positions: identities are always the product of the hegemonic relation... and therefore not an autonomous site for politics”(1999:377). Hybridity has also today developed into a key word associated to a large extent with hegemonic politics. For him, hybridity becomes “a reified notion as it assumes the performative role of naming a space ‘where disintegration is elevated to diversity and inequalities... are reduced to differences’”(ibid.). There are thus strong reasons to seek a critical alternative to hybridity thinking from a subalternist perspective or minority discourse. This viewpoint makes it possible to initiate a critique of the anti-essentialist functions of hybridity thinking and at the same time to retain a pragmatic political position.

Meanwhile, JanMohamed and Lloyd propose that “minorities, by virtue of their very social being, must begin from a position of objective ‘non-identity’ that is rooted in their economic and cultural marginalisation *vis-a-vis* the ‘West’”(1990:16). To be sure, the non-identity experienced by minorities is the persuasive reason that a rigorously critical minority discourse, in its positive transformation of the discourses emerging from that non-identity, does not merely fall back on the oppositional affirmation of an essential ethnic or gender identity. In critical minority discourse, “the abstract philosophical questions of essence and ethics are transformed into questions of practice; the only meaningful response to the question, ‘What is or ought to be?’, has to

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minority discourse. See JanMohamed and Lloyd, 1990.

be the question, ‘What is to be done?’”(ibid.). Identity (however multiple, momentary, strategic) is the base for political alliance and the most powerful political force moving in the third world context.

At this point, I have to clarify the perspective of my position. The question is what a properly postcolonial conception of identity or positioning is. Here I am deeply conscious that a choice between, or an attempted synthesis of, these different paradigms of postcolonial cultural identity and positioning, is perhaps equally unnecessary “if one applies an historical and differential perspective to the question of the heterogeneity of ‘the postcolonial’, as Moore-Gilbert suggests (1997:203). Because postcolonial histories, and their presents, are so varied, the particular circumstances of their own development must be considered. Consequently, a variety of interrelated models of identity, positionality and cultural/critical practice are both possible and necessary.

The theory of hybridity has clearly gained in popularity, at least in the world of high-culture commentators on popular culture and, of course, in academia. However, given both structural aspects and the concrete historical practices of subordinated subject positions, the hybridity thinking in postcolonial studies certainly reveals its limitations. Without self-conscious political identification, postcolonial analysis and research programmes might slide only into established academic practices. As Ahmad has suggested, hybridity fails to move beyond the momentary and the contingent. In the real world, political agency is “constituted, not in flux and displacement but in given historical locations” by having a coherent “sense of place, of belonging, of some stable

commitment to one's class or gender or nation"(1995:14-16).

Nevertheless, it does not mean that we can deny the enormous contributions which postcolonial studies has made. Post-colonial cultural discourses foreground questions of cultural and social identity, rather than direct struggle for political power. They are pragmatic and "seeking to change life but putting forth no single blueprint for the future"(Moore-Gilbert,1997:32). For as long as the concepts of purity and exclusivity have been central to an essentialised theory of identity, hybridity has served as "the organizing principle for international cultural initiatives and entered the programmes of local social movements", as Papastergiadis (1997:257) has stressed. In this regard, Clifford is right to insist that "setting up high standards for radical transformative agency or narrow definitions of 'real politics' will only cut off potential allies".<sup>18</sup>

Friedman is right to assert that identification is a practice situated in a specific social context, a set of conditions that determine the way in which subjects orient themselves in relation to a larger reality which they define in defining themselves"(1997:88). In any case, the capability of shifting from one identity to the next is seen as a performative phenomenon. In this sense, what is needed now is to develop a "processual" theory of hybridity to replace the current stress on contingent hybridity, a self-congratulatory discourse which leads nowhere, as Werbner(1997) has maintained.

The emphasis on 'process', as Hannerz has argued, is not to discern only

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<sup>18</sup> Clifford, J (1998) 'Mixed feeling', in P. Cheah and B. Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics*. (University of

change. But it is rather “a matter of destabilizing the privileged assumption of continuity and timelessness, to make reproduction and change in principle equally problematic” (1999:401). A more processual view on culture and identity helps dismiss the assumption of the unitary, integrated culture that is common to cultural fundamentalism. It could also be, on the other hand, that such a processual stance may help resist a kind of mystique of cultural difference and hybridity. In this regard, we must start from the understanding that neither nations nor the nation’s ethnic ‘margins’ are homogeneous: both are contested sites. Werbner goes on to argue that “a focus on hybridisation as process reveals the fissions in the margin: strategies of co-optation, resistance or genuine fusions divide the margins to create the crosscutting ties between centre and margin”(1997:22). This attention to processes challenges any conception of the nation as a cultural whole, mutating a single national subjectivity into hybridised cultural subjectivities which can operate as a bulwark against racism or any cultural essentialism.

In this chapter, I am concerned with post-colonial approach within contemporary cultural studies, and the attempt to critically apply it to a country like Korea as representing a marginal locality. Indeed, as Chen (1998) has noted, cultural studies is undergoing a critical phase of ‘internationalization’. Cultural studies in the Asian context, as an intellectual and internationalist project, has been formed by the postwar decolonization movement, and been a critical force to continue that tradition. I am concerned with and willing to engage in this current state of cultural studies as a pedagogical project. In other words, I side with Chen that “our research and discursive

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Minnesota Press: Minneapolis and London), p.368.

practices have to become the critical forces of that incomplete project of decolonization, at least to decolonize ourselves”(1998:29).

In fact, post-colonial discourse forces contemporary cultural studies to go back to colonial histories, to decenter itself and to engage in the decolonization movements such as “a new internationalist-localism project” (for details, see Chen, 1996:59). At this point, some crucial questions arise; what decolonization means in this historical situation; an essentialist return to a ‘pure’ origin? or a postcolonial celebration of hybridity? What are the possible alternatives? For Chen, the answer is what we might call ‘critical postcolonial studies’, which is politically charged. ‘Critical postcolonial studies’ must not simply attempt to attack capitalist neo-imperialism but also seek to cross the boundary lines of nationalist entrapment. He continues to claim that cultural studies has to be able to avoid the territorialization of subjective positions around the axis of the nation-state, if we literally want to abolish any form of colonization such as oppression and domination. This kind of non-statist position or ‘a new internationalist-localism’ seeks to investigate ‘global culture’ from locations identified with subordinate subject groups. There are numerous possible ways of articulating more progressive lines with post-national terms such as those grounded in subject positions and groups, and around their intersections: gender/sexuality, generation, class, race/ethnicity. Within this context, postcolonialism seeks, in short, to build transnational oppositional alliances. The post-colonial situation does not indicate “a past-oriented redemption, but a future-oriented unsettling of the settler’s colonization”(Chen,1996:45).

However, with this kind of cosmopolitanism, the nationalist turn also reveals itself in post-colonial studies. It is often argued that the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity, and the doubts and anxieties often created when cultural products transgress boundaries, are reasons why 'localism', or the desire to return home, becomes an important theme - regardless of whether the home is real or imaginary, syncretized or imitated. But, resistance that seeks to reclaim some 'authentic' local culture is, it seems to me, doomed to failure. This so-called 'authentic' local culture is daily interrupted by the global forces that seek to reconstitute it. Furthermore, the rise of nationalist sentiment today has not so much to do with the progressive post-war nationalism against imperialism (in opposition to imperialism) that formed throughout the Third World, but rather is "an internal unifying project to assert a stronger voice and a stronger share in the global formation of the super nation-state and capitalism"(Chen,1996:40). Overall, what I am trying to point out here is how we can deal with national culture without reproducing essentialism on an epistemological and political ground in our analysis. A space of cultural production and national representation is simultaneously becoming more globalized and more localized in everyday practices. In this light, my primary concern is how the subjects of (post)modern nation-states respond to such ambivalences of cultural products, ethnicities and identities. In concrete terms, I am concerned with Korean modes of response to global hybrid culture, with regard to the processes of reconstructing 'Koreanness'.

Cultures are not static, but dynamic: they continuously reform and reconstruct themselves through tensions, often marked by 'ambivalence' and

‘uncertainty’. We are not necessarily stuck forever with either our own cultures or those of our neighbours. Within this context, in drawing on the dynamics and complexities of identity construction in contemporary Korean culture, I attempt to explore the processual and performative dimensions of cultural hybridity from a marginal perspective. It is this cultural construction of identities as a site of struggle that is crucial for my purpose in this thesis, because there is evidence of this taking place in the Korean context.

In the following sections, I will focus on the study of popular music, in relation to issues of cultural identity. Further, as the conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of identity construction in transnational Korean popular music, I will outline the various trajectories of thought and traditions in which hybridity has been inserted within a postcolonial perspective.

#### (E) Music and Identity

With regard to the theorisation of music and identity, there are two competing models - so-called reflection and construction theories of identity. An older model of reflection theory argues that music reflects underlying social relations and structures. The problem of this model is to trace the links between a musical form or practice and its production and consumption by particular social groups. This ‘homology’ model has often been criticised for a deterministic mapping of the relation between social base and cultural superstructure, whether in Marxian or Durkheimian terms. It is accused of reifying fluid and processual dynamics in the formation of social and cultural identities. Conversely, a

new model has emerged based on these criticisms. It implies that music has a *formative* role in the construction, negotiation, and transformation of socio-cultural identities.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the academic study of popular music has been limited by the assumption that, as Frith comments, “the sounds somehow reflect or represent ‘a people’” (1996a: 269). What is at issue is homology, some sort of structural relationship between material and cultural forms. And, as Middleton (1990) argues, this structural homology is increasingly problematic when applied to the contemporary study of popular music in culture. Within this line of thinking, musical meaning is socially constructed and our musical pleasures are defined by our social circumstances. According to Middleton, many of these studies tend to see social identity as a pre-formed thing which music simply expresses. Moreover, if we apply this homology model to discussion of national cultural identity and music, what might be missing would be “a more subtle appreciation of the diversity contained *within* the nationalist music or discourse about music” (Wade, 1998:4). In such a homology model, the specificity of each practice is erased and the characteristics of ahistorical structures define the practice.

The move that Frith and Stokes suggest towards seeing music as constituting, rather than simply reflecting, identity would clearly work against such a tendency of structural homology, since the relationship between music and identity becomes more flexible and complicated. In relation to this, Frith claims:

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<sup>19</sup> See Stokes (1994), ‘Introduction: ethnicity, identity and music’, in M. Stokes (ed.), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*. And also see Frith, S(1996), ‘Music and identity’ in S.Hall and P. du Gay(eds), *Questions of*



“All the personal terms I have been using (identity, emotion, memory) are, of course, socially formed. But this is only part of the story. Pop tastes do not just derive from our socially constructed identities; they also help to shape them.”

(1996a:276)

What all music does, in the end, is “put into play a sense of identity that may or may not fit the way we are placed by other social forces”(ibid.:277). In relation to music and national cultural identity, my approach is to try to follow this sort of ‘social construction of reality thinking’ which informs much current writing on the relationships between ethnicity, place and identity (Jackson and Penrose,1993). From this point of view, as McCrone makes clear, “the question to ask is not how best cultural forms reflect an essential national identity, but how cultural forms actually help to construct and shape identity, or rather, identities”(1992:195).

Yet, this construction model of identity alone cannot generate the conceptual complexity adequate to the challenge of theorising music and identity, so there is a need to acknowledge that music can *both* construct new identities *and* reflect existing ones. In reality, the two perspectives are not contradictory. Cultural identities are not simply constructed in music; there are “prior identities that come to be embodied dynamically in musical cultures, which then also *form* the reproduction of those identities”(Born and Hesmondhalgh:26). In this light, I focus on ‘the mutual constitution’ of musical and social self that might allow for retention of insights from both perspectives, and that are



able to embrace less reductionist notions of how music may connect with, or be totally irrelevant to our sense of community and collectivity. In other words, music simultaneously involves reflection *and* construction, belonging *and* detachment, in relation to the formation and transformation of individual and collective identities.

Thus, the various allegiances, which the musicians of many hybrid (or syncretic) musics have exhibited through their music practices, and the various positionings, they have adopted in international markets, all point to the fact that “cultural identities are not *lodged* somewhere or in something but rather emerge from points of articulation” (Guilbault, 1997:41). As Guilbault has suggested, what has been at issue, is “the *relational* and *performative* aspect of identity through music by focusing on points of articulation in terms of the making and remaking of alliances between communities as the crucial processes within popular music” (ibid.).

Overall, we need a new focus for examining the processes by which national cultural identities are constituted and continually reformulating themselves. This new focus should be on what has been called ‘points of articulation and rearticulation’, rather than on fixed identity.<sup>20</sup> Here if we reject any notion of essential ethnicity or fixed identity, then we need to accept the contradictoriness and ambivalence of cultural, political and representational practices. If music is seen as constitutive of, as well as representing, social identities and positionings, then this opens up flexibility in grasping its representational role. This perspective will be my point of departure in this thesis,

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<sup>20</sup> See Clifford (1992); Frith (1996a); Middleton (1990).

from which I will examine the formation (or transformation) of 'Koreanness' in a world of highly hybridized pop music at the beginning of 21<sup>th</sup> century of Korea.

#### (1) The Globalisation Thesis in Popular Music

With regard to the cultural impacts of globalization in the local setting, the local's global orientation is pulling its cultural identity in contradictory directions; it is simultaneously to devalue and valorize traditional cultural forms. There is an extreme ambivalence about the past. On this point, we need to examine debates about globalisation, time-space processes, cultural imperialism, and cultural identity more thoroughly, in relation to syncretic or hybrid musics.

The neocolonialism characteristic of the experience of many peripheral nations is defined as 'cultural imperialism'. Recent arguments made by many academics regarding cultural imperialism assume that the structure of cultural production determines meaning. With regard to music, this argument of 'cultural imperialism' is often defined as the imposition of Anglo-American music on the periphery (non-Western countries), and the exploitation of national, culturally distinctive and often politically oppositional forms of 'roots' music by globally dominant Western market forces, recording industries and musicians. The studies of cultural imperialism have presented theoretical analyses on the nature and process of the destruction and homogenization of the non-western culture at the hands of the culture of the advanced capitalistic Western societies.

The studies of cultural imperialism may offer a good explanation of the production and distribution of cultural goods in a global system, or what Appadurai(1990) terms a “global cultural economy”: a single market determined by the needs of the core( Western industrialized countries plus Japan). But the major limitation of the cultural imperialism thesis is that it lacks a practical explanation of the cultural exchange in the peripheries and its nature. In this regard, some highlight the ‘globalisation’ thesis as an alternative to imperialism. For instance, Tomlinson(1991) has argued that globalisation is a far more incoherent and far less purposeful process, rooted more in interconnection and interdependency. The globalization perspective compels us to rethink the definition of ‘national’ or ‘local’ culture as a self-contained space. Those who identify cultural globalisation point to processes of cultural change occurring at both an interstate level and transcending the state-society unit. In the thesis of cultural imperialism, “cultural struggle among ruling and subaltern classes, mobilizing as a tool of social integration and oppression, and as a space of resistance”, is neglected, and “the content of the traditional and national culture is mistakenly seen as a fixed entity that must be preserved in its original forms” (Kang, 1998:1-2). In this connection, the cultural imperialism hypotheses have failed to explain the relationship between culture and power in the realm of nation-state, or the dynamic relationship of cultural formation of classes, while they have provided a useful explanation of the worldwide consumer culture in the framework of political economy, (Kang,1998).

In addition, in the process of actual consumption of Western culture in the non-Western countries, the cultural imperialism hypothesis overlooks the possibility of

resistant interpretation. It generally does not take into account the multiple interpretive strategies used by audiences in different cultures. Relative autonomy in the sphere of culture needs to be considered. Once rock is in the marketplace, recording companies do not control its use. Fans appropriate it for their own uses and give it their own meanings. For example, as Robin Balliger(1999) suggests in his research on Trinidad and Tobago which focuses on the popularity of American rhythm and blues ballads among young women, the adoption of foreign music like ‘ballads,’ (or ‘lovesongs’) was a way to protest against the dominant culture and policies blamed for increased suffering. Importantly, these foreign commercial musics have become meaningful for women in relation to domestic violence and social instability and they are a lifeline to get through bad times. Balliger’s research on ballads in Trinidad and Tobago illustrates how popular music marks new sites of meaning and identification. Meanings and uses of popular music are multiple and contested. In this sense, the production and consumption of music need to be examined in its particular place at any historical moment.

Within this context, a new relationship between the periphery and the centre(or the local and the global) has developed “in which the local should be seen as a fluid and relational space, constituted only in and through its relationship to the global”(Robins,1991). In terms of cultural aspects of globalisation, the global reality is defined clearly as a process of uncertain and mutually contradictory changes, and this has led to the validation of forms of hybridity that grow out of contested spaces produced at this intersection, offering a critical perspective on both sides of the periphery and the centre.

The theorization of hybridity is found particularly in the work of Homi Bhabha(1994). The term, 'hybridity' or 'hybridization' is based on transformation in nature. Bhabha views hybridity as the product of what he calls "cultural translation" and as an articulation between dominant and marginal discourses associated with diasporas and other forms of postcolonial cultural contact. Through the process of 'cultural translation,' hybrid subjects negotiate cultural difference in a constantly performative interaction between home and host. Bhabha's concept of hybridity opens up a "third space" for cultural strategies to become active forms of resistance to domination and marginalization (1994:5-9).<sup>21</sup>

Although there are some restrictions of the theorization of 'hybridity,' as in the case of concepts of cultural translation or syncretism, - for example, the problem of leaving aside the unequal structure of cultural production and distribution - the global/transnational framework can be understood as a challenge to existing over-simplified centre-periphery models. In terms of music, Frith(1991) argues that the cultural imperialist model - nation versus nation - must be replaced by a post-imperial model of an infinite number of local experiences of( and responses to) something globally shared. Thus, these local practices and musical idioms are increasingly important, not just in terms of providing expression for locality in music, but as agents of what Appadurai has called "repatriation of difference" which adapt homogenized global musical forms

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<sup>21</sup> With regard to this issue of 'hybridity', see also, Clifford & Marcus(1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*; Appiah, K.W.(1992); Werbner and Modood(1997); and many others.

into “heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty” (1990:16).

## (2) Debates on ‘World Music’ and Syncretism

“I wouldn’t want to define myself. But there are two ways I see myself. One is to appeal to my African audience and the second is to leave myself open to other influences and other cultures.”

Youssou N’Dour<sup>22</sup>

Problems of national cultural identity and of the relationship between First World and Third World can be identified frequently in ‘world music’. The phenomenon known as ‘world music’, which is often seen as a prominent musical indicator of globalization, is both a reflection and an agent of processes of musical and cultural interaction between widely disparate regions of the world.<sup>23</sup> The dynamics of world music, through issues such as representation and hybridization, create new, complex subject and political positions. As an academic label, world music offers an opportunity to explore both the limitations and the radical possibilities that such a music category might introduce.

Contemporary debates about world music can be characterized by a tension between two competing approaches. On the one hand, there is a long tradition of Marxist and neo-Marxist analyses of imperialism, in which culture and

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<sup>22</sup> Senegalese musician. In the Interview with Kwaku, Reggae commentator. Quoted by Taylor (1997:136).

<sup>23</sup> The term ‘world music’ refers here to any commercially available music of non-Western origin and circulation, as well as all musics of dominated ethnic minorities within the Western world. See Feld

media are seen to reflect inequalities in the economic and political spheres. According to Hutnyk (1996), world music as cultural capital in the global domain is an illuminating example of the workings of neo-colonialism that is characterized as a skillful deployment of the rhetoric of ethnicity and hybridity. In a similar vein, Sharma (1996) asserts that the recent major industry promotion and distribution of Asian artists such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (Pakistani Qawwali singer) or Bally Sagoo illustrate how particular cultural forms are articulated alongside the expansion of new consumer markets around the world. The 'new' politics of hybridity as manifest in the discourse of world music does not, according to Sharma, merely essentialise Asian culture, it further ignores highly differentiated racism and the exploitative relations of power between the overdeveloped West and the underdeveloped zones of capital. In this line of thinking, hybridization is no more than a tactic for the exploitation of cultural difference or 'otherness' and the late modern project of Western liberalism. Further, the paradigm of post-colonial theory in which the underlying assumption is that hybridity produces new and more progressive cultural formations is undermined as the guise of elite academic work at the expense of the 'Third World'.

On the other hand, one can also look at the world music phenomenon from another viewpoint and see this new music as a site "from which something begins its presencing" as Bhabha has proposed (1994:4-5). He explains:

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(1991:134).



“If the jargon of our times- postmodernity, postcoloniality, postfeminism- has any meaning at all, it does not lie in the popular use of the ‘post’ to indicate sequentiality...These terms that insistently gesture to the beyond, only embody its ‘restless and revisionary energy if they transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment.”

(1994:4)

In a related fashion, Clifford has focused on ‘hybrid cosmopolitan experience’ as much as on rooted, native ones:

“I’m not saying there are no locales or homes, that everyone is or should be traveling, or cosmopolitan, or deterritorialized...Rather, I’m trying to sketch a comparative cultural studies approach to specific histories, tactics, everyday practices of dwelling and traveling: traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling.”

(1992:108)

My initial question on the issue of meanings in ‘world music’ practices stemmed from my concern with the relationship between music and identity (or locality). For my own part, I would like to look at world music from the angle of post-colonial and postmodern perspectives. In this light, Hall’s assumption that “new ethnicity speaks from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position” echoes my perspective here (1992a:258). Questions of identity are a form of politics rather than an inheritance. As Clifford asserts, “cultural/political identity is a processual configuration of historically given elements-including race, culture, class, gender, and sexuality”(1992:116). Overall, what interests me most here is that the specificity and processes engaged in the construction of world music can

invite us to look at “new questions that acknowledge the complexity and fluidity of meanings involved in the act of constructing and rearticulating identities through music” (Guilbault,1997:32).

Hybridity or syncretism characterizes contemporary popular musics including world musics. Globalization is providing musicians all over the world with new ways of making hybrid sounds and hybrid selves, even though this cultural mixing is not a recent phenomenon. But, as Timothy(1997) notes, the ways in which musicians make hybrid sounds have at least partially changed from older modes of cultural interaction in modernity. This global/cultural mixing in ‘global postmodernism’ results in some new musics and subject positions. Instead of the straightforward wiping out of indigenous music making, as the cultural imperialism thesis has predicted, new popular musics and new manners of interpretations to musical practices are being made. For example, new music sounds as if they could be increasingly Anglo-American, but their languages and vocal styles are distinguished. As Timothy rightly points out, “old ones altered or maintained, sometimes museumized and sometimes lost altogether”, (1997:197). Similarly, Barrett has proposed that “it is essential to recognize that world music artists possess a sense of agency”(1996:246). The choices made as to which elements to borrow, change, or reject are a manifestation of local and national cultural preferences. In this sense, the essentialist understanding of hybrid world musics does not encompass either the process of producing music, nor its meaning in the ears of consumers, in other words, the complexities of reception.

In relation to the concepts of ‘appropriation’ and ‘authenticity’ on the world music scene, it is interesting to see that there is a different expectation among western musicians and musicians from the margins of the global economy. Some western musicians, such as Paul Simon and Peter Gabriel who collaborate with musicians from other parts of the world, are hardly described as makers of hybrids, and demands of authenticity are not made of them and their music. However, musicians from the rest of the world face constant pressure to be culturally ‘natural’ and ‘pure’- because of western demands for authenticity. At this point, it is worth questioning: Whose authenticity? Or whose hybridity? Michael Brooks who was Youssau N’Dour’s artistic advisor puts it this way:

“What’s exciting for me is that the band is right on the edge of establishing a personal music. It has Senegalese elements in it, and it also has pop elements in it...They are Africans making music, but you wouldn’t necessarily label it *African music*. It’s something altogether new.”

(Cullman, 1991:174)

On this point, thus, the question of ‘whose music?’ must be replaced by the assertion of ‘our music’ that is now being constructed in a specific context. Put differently, where music comes from is not an important issue anymore, in relation to music and individual and collective identities.

### (3) Transnational Popular Music and the Multiplicity of Cultural Identities

“Since the mid-nineteenth century a country’s music has become a political ideology by stressing national characteristics, appearing as a representative of the nation, and everywhere confirming the national principles...Yet music, more than any other artistic medium, expresses the national principle’s anti-nomies as well”.

Adorno (1976)

Most recent studies about processes of musical hybridization in the non-Western world have tended to adopt a ‘world music’ paradigm that often focuses on “the politics and aesthetics of the local as resilient articulations of opposition against Western hegemony”(Erlmann,1993:4). But this world music phenomenon tells us relatively little about the Korean case, for contemporary Korean popular music does not really fit the category of “world music.” According to Roberts (1992), ‘world music’ is not just another name for musical hybridization. Rather, it is more appropriate to define hybrid world musics as forms of ‘transnational popular music’- including, for instance, Algerian rai, Cameroonian bikutsi rock, Chinese disco, Korean hip-hop, etc.-, which rely on the idiosyncrasy of global music and fuse Anglo-American pop sensibility with preexisting local traditions. Nowadays, almost all countries’ popular musics are shaped by international influences and institutions, by multinational capital and technology, by global pop norms and values. The contemporary syncretic musics of Korea that will be discussed later in this thesis are indistinguishable from such transnational popular music.

In fact, the movement of musical styles and instruments across the world is

nothing new, as the tradition of diasporic African-American music itself suggests. As Keil notes, “American popular music has come to sound more and more like African popular music”(1966:45). With regard to the issue of music and hybridity, recent years have seen paradigm shifts in popular music studies away from a cultural imperialism paradigm towards theories of postcoloniality and globalisation. The very complexity of global musical-cultural flows has caused the abandonment of what was the dominant approach during the 1970s and 1980s - ‘acculturation’. The stress on both transnational cultural flows and deterritorialization in post-colonial cultural studies has influenced new discourses on musical hybridity and new kinds of musical objects.

Writers such as Slobin, Gilroy, and Lipsitz have focused on ‘diasporic’ or ‘hybrid’ music.<sup>24</sup> In relation to the concepts of musical dialogue and syncretism, Lipsitz (1994) shows optimism about musical hybridity. He has suggested a new kind of politics which “takes commodity culture for granted”, but which produces “an immanent critique of contemporary social relations”(ibid., p7, 12). For Lipsitz, post-colonial culture provokes the impossibility of any national identity incorporating the diverse elements that make up a nation into a unified totality. Post-colonial culture also shows the inadequacy of national ‘imagined communities’ in regulating and solving the explosive contradictions of global structures of economic, political, and cultural power. Within this context, new forms of domination also give rise to new forms of resistance. As Lipsitz puts it:

“Rather than viewing post-colonial culture as a product of the *absence*

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<sup>24</sup> Slobin (1993), *Subcultural Sounds*; Gilroy (1993), *The Black Atlantic*; Lipsitz (1994), *Dangerous*

of faith in yesterday's struggles for self-determination, it might be better to view it as product of the *presence* of new sensibilities uniquely suited for contesting the multinational nature of capital." (1994:20).

However, Lipsitz's optimism seems to be overdetermined by a kind of "internationalist class politics, ... as though there are no problematic essentialisms, or antagonisms, or nationalisms being expressed in these musical forms".<sup>25</sup> As another approach, Stokes analyses the rise of hybrid urban popular musics in Turkey and other Middle Eastern contexts in the 1980s in terms of three related conditions: economic liberalisation, the end of statist promotions of a unified national culture, and the increasing penetration of multinational capitalism. Yet this perspective, which tries to read these hybrid musics as embodiments of a new and effective cultural politics from the margins, as progressive ways of 'writing back' against the centre, seems to exaggerate their relative cultural power, and neglect the global and flexible industrial complex.

Meanwhile, writers such as Erlmann and Feld express a pessimistic opinion about the consequences of the intensified transnationalisation of music.<sup>26</sup> For Erlmann, influenced by Baudrillard's postmodern pessimism, hybrid world music is not a sign of resistance or opposition, but a postmodern pastiche which demonstrates the triumph of the culture of the simulacrum and "a new aesthetic form of the global imagination"(1996:467). Similarly, Feld deploys the history of 'pigmy pop' in Central

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*Crossroads.*

<sup>25</sup>Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000), 'Introduction: on its difference, representation, and appropriation in music', in *Western Music and Its Others*, p.22

<sup>26</sup> Erlmann, V(1996) 'The aesthetics of the global imagination: reflections on world music in the 1990s', *Public Culture* 8; Feld, S(1994) 'From schizophonia to schismogenesis', in C. Keil and S. Feld, *Music Grooves: Essays and Dialogues* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press).

Africa to understand what happens when sounds become split from their sources. And he concludes that there is the unequal power relations between the global corporations and the pigmy people, in spite of claims that we have already entered a new era of transnationalisation. This line of thought adds critical new dimensions to the politics of musical appropriation in an era of the celebration of hybridity. But, it also treats ‘the market’ as a homogeneous system and fails to differentiate the discourses and practices embodied by the industry’s own vague term ‘world music’.<sup>27</sup>

Then, how do we reconcile these contending models? I agree with Frith, who resists both pessimistic reading and more optimistic interpretation about transnational popular musics, when he proposes particularistic analyses of the ways in which music articulates identities in specific local contexts. For such micro-level practices can show the role of music in the proclamation of multi-faceted national and cultural identities ‘from below’. Obviously, the significance of transnational popular music derives from the lives and practices of musicians and participants and their formations of networks of activity. To put it briefly, in order to understand how transnational music is created and interpreted, we need to look at a set of interwoven vernacular and academic discourses, rather than to read off the meaning of cultural practices from musical forms.<sup>28</sup>

From this viewpoint, focusing on post-colonial discourses about ‘hybridity’ or ‘syncretism’, ‘appropriation’ or ‘localization’ within the Korean context, this thesis aims to explore transnational musics of Korea, and analyze them in their sociocultural

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<sup>27</sup> See Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000), p.23.

contexts, in relation to the formation and transformation of Korean identities. In Korea today, in a turbulent context of change and media development, mass-mediated and commercialized popular musics have developed. New styles, including derivative imitations of primarily Western pop or Japanese pop, as well as creative fusions blending indigenous traditions with diverse external influences from North America, Europe, and Latin America, have proliferated. Just as many peripheral countries borrowed models from outside, selectively adapting desired influences into their own distinctive styles and beliefs, to create a merging of the old and the new to varying degrees, contemporary popular musics in Korea have become a hybrid mix. But many Koreans still fear that westernization and commercialization gradually undermine national culture and cultural identity. Growing Western influence in many peripheral countries has recently become an important issue and in this respect, the case of Korea is not exceptional.

In fact, anyone who tries to search for an ideal “Korean Sound” will be disappointed with the contemporary popular music scene of Korea. But there is no doubt that imported musics are always appropriated and reinterpreted by local producers and audiences.<sup>29</sup> The question is whether within this context, as many postcolonialists claim, it is possible for local producers and audiences in Korea to challenge or destabilize the regime of Western, mostly American, commodified culture through their positive appropriation of these imported culture and styles, rather than merely imitating them.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>29</sup> There are many studies which illustrate indigenization of Western commodity and its culture in different societies. For example, Miller (1987), *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*; Wilk (1994), ‘Consumer goods as dialogue about development: colonial time and television time in Belize’, in J. Friedman (ed.) *Consumption and Identity*, Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers.



However, postcolonial concerns often appear to celebrate hybridity as an aim in itself, and many postmodernists and postcolonialists seem to try to find some positive appropriation, postmodern diversification and hybridization in the cultural formation in the border space within the centre, rather than the periphery. In this sense, thus, focusing on the micro-sociological analysis of local appropriation of transnational sounds in a marginal country like Korea, I will stress how contemporary Korean musics, which is quite indistinguishable from the so-called 'transnational popular music', can be the ground for competing narratives of syncretic and plural cultural identities and of shifting notions of 'Koreanness'.

## CHAPTER 3

### MODERNITY, NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POST-COLONIAL KOREA

#### (A) Introduction

The state as an exclusive unit of loyalty is being challenged and redefined in the “postmodern imperium of global media culture” which is characterized as migration and digitally-driven communications or the “less formal public spheres of the computer mediated communications” (Bhabha, 1999). In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, everywhere ethnic identities are being rediscovered and re-constructed with new claims mobilized, usually against alleged hegemonic and oppressive groups and communities. While cultural re-tribalisation is asserted in the face of globalisation and massive migration, at the same time split identities or multiple identities are becoming common, dual citizenships proliferate and a global network of shared symbols render cultural interchange justifiable.

This chapter deals with what the new forces of globalisation, that are now shaping our times, mean for nationalism and national identity in contemporary Korea. It is in this global context, I think, that we can begin to understand the emergence of both national and cosmopolitan identities in the realm of popular music in Korea. Recent debates on national identity and national culture in Korea have tended to focus on the issue of tradition, that is to say, the crisis of Korean national traditions and cultures. However, on this point, I want to take Homi Bhabha’s argument that “where once we

could believe in the comforts and continuities of *tradition*, today we must face the responsibilities of cultural *translation*” (original emphasis).<sup>1</sup> This responsibility means learning to listen to ‘others’ and calls for our recognition of other worlds - other cultures, other states, and other histories and traditions. The real challenges that I want to consider here are about confronting the retrospective, nostalgic and parochial sense of local attachment and identity and further to draw an ‘energetic cosmopolitanism’ in a certain locality – Korea.<sup>2</sup> Korea is a critical space where various social formations of modernity-the local, the national, the transnational- contend for domination, on a dynamic peninsula divided by the capitalist/communist binary that drove the cold war imaginary. It is this complexity that makes Korea a powerful case study in relation to the issues of tradition, modernity and national identity. On this account, a historical consideration of cultural discourses, which construct the experience of modernity and regulate national identity in Korea, needs to be examined.

#### (B) Korean Culture and the World: Encounters with Modernity

As the world grows economically and culturally more interdependent and transnational cultural flows increase, Korea has experienced an almost total social and cultural mobilization. The processes of political democratization and indigenization of Western modernity and values within a 5000-year old civilization are now working themselves out. A century ago, Koreans lived in a traditional East Asian cultural milieu primarily characterized by two religious traditions, Confucianism and Buddhism. Their society

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by K. Robins (1991), ‘Tradition and translation: national culture in its global context’, in J. Corner and S. Harvey (eds.), *Enterprise and Heritage*.

<sup>2</sup> Here I used Robins’ term ‘energetic cosmopolitanism’. Ibid., p.36.

was autonomous and agrarian. Outside observers referred to Korea as the 'hermit kingdom', and it could be agreed that Korea still suffers from a shortage of effort to inform the world of its own traditions and cultures.

As Korea opened its society to outside influences, often on the losing end of an unequal relationship, Koreans were obliged to accept and adjust to a new world order. In retrospect, it seems to have taken 100 years to understand the new socio-cultural order based on Western traditions, and the process of understanding is still continuing today. The variation between the East and the West is so great that the management of differences is quite difficult for Korea, but the country must undertake the hard task of transforming itself. Historically, Korea has been relatively homogeneous, both ethnically and culturally. The sharing of the East Asian Confucian world order with China and Japan has provided a framework for establishing relationships with each other. One world was the all-encompassing world of China, the other world, as seen by Koreans, was the 'barbaric' world. 'Isolationism' was the natural result of this xenophobic world perspective. As Korean society broke out of isolationism in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century these traditional worldviews had to be reconstructed. In the face of influx of Western culture, the cultural transformation has taken several generations, and is not yet complete.

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards the existing world order among East Asians was challenged by Western powers. Gradually, the cultural modification from isolationism to the establishment of ties with other countries, and from a China-centred to a Western-centred set of relationships has been established. In fact, Korea's first

official diplomatic contact with the outside world occurred in 1876 in relation to Japan. This was to be the beginning of Korea's 'external outlook' and in 1882, Korea established another official contact with the US, thus marking its first exposure to the Western-dominated world order understood as 'modernity'. The past 50 years have seen great efforts by Koreans to reconstruct their society and culture and identity. The basic directions of the internal structural changes in Korea have been from agriculture to commerce and industry; from rural to urban; from family-centred to individual-centred; and from hierarchical to egalitarian relationships. These various characteristics of change are intimately interrelated.

Tentatively we can divide modern Korean history into three stages: first, the opening-up of Korean society from 1876 until 1905; second the 1910-1945 colonial period under Japanese occupation; and third, the 1945-present 'post-liberation' or 'post-colonial' era. Each of these stages of socio-cultural context can be respectively defined as, 'Korea in East', 'Korea in transition' and 'Korea and the world' (Kang, 1983). To the Korean mind, Western civilization has long symbolized 'modernity'. Koreans saw an instrumental value in the Western lifestyles that they felt should be complemented by their Eastern way of thinking. Korean adaptation of the Western 'modernity', however, developed in a distorted way, since competition between China and Japan on the Korean peninsula, prohibited the opportunity for Koreans to 'accommodate' Western culture themselves.

At this point, the historical context in which Koreans encountered modernity needs to be explained. In the crucial transitional period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the

1940s, the Japanese colonial state in Korea brought in a harsh form of colonial rule, as well as imposed 'modernization'. As Lee, Kee Hyeung has claimed, "the great dislocation was violently staged by the colonizer, assisted by the willing comprador classes in Korea" (2000:198). The powerful and threatening other – Japanese colonialism – overwhelmed any local effort at the indigenization of the modern, which could have had a liberating potential, by challenging the traditional order. In the 1930s, nonetheless, the process of localization of modern forms and norms had started to penetrate deeply into the everyday space-time of colonial Korea and Koreans, as colonized subjects, had experienced a radically new configuration of everyday life, in which new cultural, popular forms and norms produced 'liberating (*iltal*) effects'. Yet, as Lee, Kee Hyeung goes on to argue, any potentially progressive elements in the new things, worldviews, social experiences and cultural practices that had awakened Koreans from the feudal order were gradually co-opted and regulated by the Japanese colonial power.

Meanwhile, the post-colonial period, through to the present, may be best described as, 'Korea in America'. American influence has been significant in Korea since World War II. Indeed, in Korea, the term, 'westernized' equates with 'Americanized'. Thus, in order to understand the highly complicated and contradictory reception and appropriation of Western culture in Korea, both factors, that is what might be called 'the colonial modernity' and the dominance of American culture, need to be taken into account. On this point, rather than defining 'modernity' narrowly, following Kim, Jin Song (1999), I regard modernity as the "particular conditions and patterns of everyday life" that emerged in Korea, which encompassed the transformations in daily

life wrought by the introduction of new modes of modern technological practices, consumerism, and cultural forms. These transformations involve changes in people's lived experiences, conduct and identification. In this regard, the concept of 'modernity' in the Korean context could be thought as a shorthand for whole series of broad cultural and symbolic transformations. In other words, 'modernity' in Korea needs to be considered in terms of two levels - the individual and institutional modernization

### (C) National Identity and Nationalism in Korea

In the previous section, I attempted to pay attention to a particular modernity of Korea by tracing it back to the beginning of the modernization of the country during the colonial period. In Korea, modernization was identified with 'westernization'. The desired result was one that creates a new set of values, which includes on the individual, new human relations. The yearning for modernization was so imperative that Koreans who blamed themselves for losing the nation were fully motivated to sever themselves from their own cultural heritage and traditions. Affected by the tide of imperialism and the subsequent colonization by Japan, traditional Korean identity was in crisis. It is from here that my current inquiry starts. When the colonized people had lost their traditional, communal space linked to the past, they had to create a new national identity. At this point, state-led nationalism stood as an important reference to that end.

In fact, national identity as the main form of collective identification is a complex construct composed of a number of interrelated elements- ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political etc. It signifies bonds of solidarity among

members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions. The question is, then, whatever the feelings of individuals and groups, how does national identity provide the dominant criterion of culture and identity?

#### (1) The Concepts of Nation and Identity in the Modern World

According to Smith (1991), the fundamental functions of national identity in the modern world are to “transcend oblivion through posterity; the restoration of collective dignity through an appeal to a golden age; the realization of fraternity through symbols, rites and ceremonies, which bind the living to the dead and fallen of the community”. In line with the dimensions listed above, we can divide these functions into ‘external’ and ‘internal’ objective consequences. The external functions are territorial, economic and political. Nations, first, define a social space and demarcate an historic territory that locates a community in time and space. Economically, nations authorize the quest for control over territorial resources. By defining the membership, boundaries and the resources, national identity provides the grounds for ideals of national sovereignty. Politically, national identity has become the main legitimation for social order and solidarity today.

National identities also fulfil more internal, intimate functions for individuals in communities. On this point, what interests me most is, as Smith has explained, that a sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world. It is “through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know ‘who we are’ in the contemporary world”(ibid.:17). This process of



self-identification and location, that is to say, the relationship between ‘the national self’ and ‘the individual’ is in many ways the key to national identity, but it is also the factor that has attracted most doubt and scepticism. Intellectual doubt is paralleled by moral condemnation. In the name of ‘national identity’ people have been willing to give up their own liberties and curtail those of others. For those who use identity claims to maintain power national identity can be yet another term for the maintenance of national security. Thus, the search for an acceptable definition of national identity is connected with the long-standing discourse about the relationship between the government and individual rights.

Monroe (1993) has suggested that definitions of national identity provide the community with a sense of who belongs and who is ruled out, what is the norm and who is the other. In a totalitarian society, this collective identity is rather evident. In modern democracies, questions of national identity are far more complicated: they are not tied to a strong single identity claim but at least in principle, are built on constant conflict, contest, and coalition. Changes in communications technology both enhance and destroy the power of the state to have an impact upon concepts of national identity. Now, more than before, the contest is both from within and without a state’s borders and new accounts of national identity emerge.

The nation-state and the national identity are specific forms of culture that emerged during the historical process of industrialization since the birth of modern capitalism. The approach proposed by Gellner (1983) shows that, in Kang Myung Koo’s summary, “national identity is not an actual subject but rather an ever-changing system

of representations”(1998:3). To put it another way, it demonstrates why a nation is possible and that a national identity is a cultural product of the process of history rather than being simply based on some ‘natural process’ or love for one’s nation. Anderson’s (1983) concept of the nation as an imagined community can be also understood as an attempt to explain the problem of the national identity and the origin of nationalism through the medium of language and mass communication media, especially newspapers.

Meanwhile, in the modernist idea of the nation it is nationalism that creates national identity, Gellner (1964:168) puts it succinctly: “it(nationalism) invents nations where they do not exist- but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on...”. Nations and nationalism are no more ‘invented’ than other kinds of culture, social organization or ideology. But “if nationalism is part of the “spirit of the age”, it is equally dependent on earlier motifs, visions and ideals”(Smith,1991:71). Thus, nations and nationalism cannot be understood simply as a political ideology but must be treated as cultural phenomena as well.

Nationalism, the ideology and movement, must be closely related to national identity, a multidimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism. Put this differently, nationalism can be understood as a form of culture - an ideology, a language, symbolism and consciousness - and legitimates every cultural configuration. According to Ignatieff (1993), as a cultural ideal, nationalism is the claim that while men and women have many identities, it is the nation which provides them with their primary form of belonging. There is the need to explore

nationalism as a form of culture and identity. Thus the need also to investigate Korean nationalism within this context.

## (2) Nationalism in the Korean Context: Some Complications

Nationalism takes its colour from its context. It is impossible to talk about nationalism without its historical and social context. Nationalist principles can have dangerous consequences in one place, and positive ones in another place. The works of Gellner and Anderson on the formation of nation and national identity can be interpreted as a criticism of western modernity or the western culture of capitalism. In the Korean context, we can also apply Gellner and Anderson's notions of nationalism and national identity as forms of western modernity to Korea. As Kang, Myung Ku (1998) maintains, it could be said that national identity or nationalism has been internalized as a form of modern phenomena in Korea because nationalism has integrated the policies of modernization, namely, values and knowledge of the western modernity via its own process of modernization since the 1960s. The capitalistic modernization project that Korean military regimes carried out demanded the sacrifice of Korean workers in the name of the nation. At this point in the argument, it is necessary to focus on the discursive form of Korean nationalism produced by the state during the period of rapid industrialization under consecutive military regimes (1961-1987).

The Korean state as a major agent of industrialization since the early 1960s has tried to use nationalism as a way to legitimize repression and exploitation of the populace throughout the process. Industrialization as a national project gained priority

in the postwar period of economic development. As Moon, Seung Sook (1998) has pointed out, the effectiveness of state nationalism in Korea depends upon the collective memory of Japanese colonization and the unique experience of the Korean War, as well as on popular recognition of neo-colonial aspects of the American military and strategic dominance in Korea and Korea's technological and economic dependence on the United States and Japan. Within this context, now I will draw on the discursive form of so-called 'official nationalism' dealing with Korean history and tradition in the larger historical and social context of Korean nationalism and Third World nationalism.

With the establishment of the Republic of Korea (1948), the postcolonial state adopted nationalism as an ideology of political legitimation and almost all regimes in Korea have tried to utilize popular nationalist sentiments in order to legitimize their authoritarian rule. This postcolonial state has adopted the 'triple goal' of modernizing the nation through capitalist industrialization, defending it against the Communist North, and establishing a national identity in the midst of the rapid socio-economic changes (Moon, 1995:36). In Korea after the end of World War II, the themes of 'self-reliant economy' and 'national character' have become nationalist concerns, which were often shared by other Third World elites. However, there is a dilemma: economic development inevitably involves cultural Westernization, which is at the same time perceived to be a threat to national identity. In this situation, the project of modernization concomitant with Westernization generates fertile grounds for traditionalism. In other words, the discursive form of official nationalism exemplifies the ways in which the state imagines the nation by invoking Korean history and tradition.

The history of nationalism in Korea can be characterized as a patriotic defense, followed by countless invasions of foreign countries including Japan. But this is not sufficient to establish the unique identity of Korea in a period of rapid modernization. The increasing influx of 'Western' values and attitudes in the process of aggressive industrialization, accompanied by rapid integration into the global market, has led to a popular concern for Korean identity. The growing public interest in the specificity of Korean identity is illustrated by the proliferation of popular publications in the form of fictions and essays on Korean culture, history, and identity since the mid-1970s. According to nationalist discourse, Korean tradition is defined as "what Korean people thought and think". Although Koreans change their appearance, "their real identity lies deep in their thinking or spirit, which is not to be affected by the Westernization of material life" (Moon,1998:46). In discussing 'Korean values' rooted in tradition, one of the official nationalist intellectuals, Han, Sung Jo (1980) argues that the Korean people have maintained their 'oneness' ever since the foundation of the nation by Tan'gun.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, traditional patterns of agrarian life have generated a strong sense of belonging to one's community. Han goes on to contend that "community consciousness" is an essence of Korean identity as opposed to the "Western identity" based on individualism.

What is noticeable in this emphasis on 'Korean community consciousness' is that it legitimized the lack of civic freedom under authoritarian regimes relying on the

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<sup>3</sup> *Paedal minjok*, the self-referential term for the Koreans, constructs their oneness. *Paedal* comes from the name of a tree in the Tan'gun myth. According to the myth, Tan'gun founded the Korean nation under the *Paedal* tree.

notion of history and tradition. In effect, the state tried to reinvent Korean tradition. This did not only make the Korean nation distinct from other nations, but it was also used to legitimize problems of democracy in terms of a so-called 'Korean style' of modernization rooted in Korean tradition. Official nationalism, produced exclusively by the military regimes, contains anti-democratic traditionalist elements and the hegemonic nature of the nationalist discourse on Korean history and tradition

As a result, if the concept of imagined community can be applied to the Korean context, the preservation of the traditional national culture has the effect of concealing the structural injustice and social contradictions that continue to exist in Korea through the idea of 'imagined nation,' which involves an oppressive rule of state power. There is the danger in this of the development of essentialist form of nationalism in respect of national culture and identity. In the light of this, it could be said that the notion of national culture and tradition has been used as mass mobilization and it has the limitation of failing to include democratic elements. Taking their cue from these arguments, some Korean researchers proposed the need for "open nationalism," and "civic nationalism," pointing out that the predominant forms of "democracy absent nationalism" would merely be used for preserving the existing authority by stimulating emotional forms of nationalism and the nation's closure to outside forces.<sup>4</sup>

However, in view of the peculiar formation of the Korean nation and its nationalism, it could not be concluded yet that the Korean nation is just an imagined

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<sup>4</sup> For more detailed discussion, see Kang, Myung Ku (1998), 'A Reconstruction of Cultural Imperialism Theories: Globalization and Nationalism', presented to *The Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Conference*, National Tsing-Hua Univ. Taiwan July 12-17.

community. Conceptually, 'nation' blends two sets of thoughts, one a 'Western', a more rational version of 'civic-territorial' nationalist ideology, the other an 'Eastern', more organic and 'ethnic-genealogical' version, in varying proportions in particular cases.<sup>5</sup> It is this very multidimensionality that might make nationalism or national identity flexible and persistent. The historical, political, and sociocultural context of development for much of the peripheral countries has been very different from that of the Western industrialized nations, with "decolonization" an important part of the agenda. From this point of view, Korean nationalism and national identity can be characterized as follows.<sup>6</sup> Firstly, the formation of Korean collective identity is the result of Korea's long history as a nation together with the existence of clear geographical boundaries and internally homogeneous ethnicity and language. And this collective orientation of identity has been formed in the experience of inter-regional conflicts and foreign invasion. Second, Korean nationalism has also included anti-dictatorial movements which criticized authoritarian regimes. Overall, in reviewing the historical circumstances of Korea, it can be shown that official nationalism has dominated the discourse of nationalism while at the same time other, more popular discourses of Korean nationalism have been used as a force for change to democracy.

In the post-Korean War era, as Choi, Chung Moo (1998) has noted, the power of the U.S. and its material representations were seductive and at the same time repulsive to many Koreans, who thus harboured a hidden sense of shame for their self-

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<sup>5</sup> On which, see Smith (1991), pP80-81.

<sup>6</sup> See, Song, K & Kang, M (1983) *Hanguk minjokjuui ron 2*( Discourse on Korean Nationalism 2), Seoul:Changbi Publishers ; Paik, N (1994), "*Pundansidae ui choegunjungse wa pundancheje ron*" (The Situation and discourse on the Division System), *Changjak gwa Bipyung*, Fall. They have demonstrated how the Korean state and Korean modernity differ from the historical development of western states.

contradictions, which were repressed by the totalizing discourse of anti-colonial nationalism. What matters here, it seems to me, is the so-called 'psyche of the colonized' in Fanon's term. This psyche creates a double-edged, paradoxical allegory of a postcolonial nation: "anti-colonial nationalism can be achieved only through the self-construction of the Other"(ibid.:23). Choi continues to argue that postcolonial subjectivity may be embodied in a wide range of cultural fields: rejection and longing, denial and conformity, resistance and complicity. The unifying impulse of nationalism demands moral purity, which often represses ambivalence about and contradictions in subjectivity and therefore leaves no room to negotiate. In fact, it is entirely common that human beings all have a multiplicity of collective identities- such as of a certain age group, of a certain class, certain profession, and gender etc.-, whose scope and intensity will vary with time and place. Thus, the totalizing discourse of decolonization should be reconsidered because it is destined to reproduce a totalizing colonial discourse and to hinder any kinds of otherness and differentiated subjectivities. "A decolonization discourse must be a subversive project aimed at dethroning the universalizing hegemonic discourse"(Choi, Chung Moo,1998.:28).

Today commodities of Western origin are beginning to replace Korean things and everyday life is marked by a confusing array of hybridity. Moreover any attempt to defend national culture and identity becomes less and less sustainable. Confronted now by fears of domination by the USA and multinational corporations in the new communications industries and changing cultural identities, there is an understandable concern to defend indigenous national cultures against the threat of cultural imperialism. In an industrial world characterised by a sense of the "ontological homelessness", as



Flow (1991) has maintained, the past appears to offer a sense of home and security.<sup>7</sup> This nostalgic logic seems to work in Korea nowadays offering Koreans the place of safety, *Heimat*. However, as Martin-Barbero (1988) has asserted, this is to define our indigenous culture as a kind of pre-existing “natural fact”. From this perspective, all the rest is contamination and loss of identity. In this chapter, the rejection of any such calls for ‘authenticity’ or ‘purity’ in the defence of ‘national culture’ or ‘national identity’ is the precondition of my active engagement with the ongoing processes of cultural reconfiguration in Korea.

#### (D) National Identity in its Global Context: The Cosmopolitan Project in Korea

In dealing with the threat of loss of the national culture and identities today, as has been seen above, the underlying logic of nationalistic sentiment to protect and revive the traditional national culture may run the risk of leading to forms of ‘essentialist ethno-nationalism’, being often used as a resource by reactionary forms of political mobilization. It is not an easy task for non-Western countries to restructure the national culture and nationalism as an affirmative force against the danger of the fundamental ethno-nationalism, for nationalism is often positioned in the center of resistance against neo-imperialistic expansion of the capitalist world system.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Second World War, new transnational forces have become so prominent: regional power blocs, transnational economic corporations and global

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<sup>7</sup> J. Flow (1991), ‘Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia’, October 57, Summer. p.136.

<sup>8</sup> In relation to this, Kang (1998) proposed ‘civic nationalism’ as a conceptual ground for a commitment to the ‘good’ form of national identity in a non-Western country like Korea.

telecommunications systems. Can this phenomenon of global interdependence underpin a cosmopolitan culture that transcends national limitations? As Robins (1991) has explained, globalization is about “the compression of time and space horizons and the creation of a world of instantaneity and depthlessness”. Global space is a space of flows, an electronic space, a decentred space, a space in which boundaries have become penetrable. Unlike previous forms of cultural imperialism, which were rooted in an ethnic lineage and place of origin, the new global culture is eclectic, indifferent to place and time. With respect to globalization, I am interested especially in the emergence of the concern with the local as a site of promise and with the social and ideological changes that have inspired a radical rethinking of the local over the last decade. On this point, I agree with Dirlik (1996) that there is a need to distinguish a “critical localism” from a “localism” or a “Third-Worldism” that is willing to overlook internal oppressions out of a preoccupation with capitalist or Eurocentric oppression. What this points to is a ‘critical localism’ which retains, in the evaluation of the past, the critical perspectives afforded by modernity. This localism excludes romantic nostalgia for communities past, hegemonic nationalist desire for a new kind of tradition (as with the so-called Confucian revival in East Asia), or historicism that would imprison the present in the past (ibid.:38). Inspired by Mohandas Gandhi’s approach that “cultures change through collective experiment”, Dirlik goes on to suggest that the contemporary local is itself a site of experimentation and ultimately the site for the global.

Globalization is profoundly transforming our apprehension of the world and new senses of both placed and placeless identity. “Continuity and historicity of identity are challenged by the immediacy and intensity of global cultural confrontations”

(Robins,1991:41). Within this context, the older sense of certainty and wholeness of Korean identity has also been called into question in a postmodern world of dissolving boundaries. Responding to global forces, protective strategies have been taken, concentrating on the conservation, rather than reinterpretation, of identities. Anxious and defensive efforts are now being devoted to reinforce 'traditional' or 'purified' cultural identities. Hence there is a plurality of national responses to the process of globalization. According to Featherstone, a wide range of different national cultural responses "continue in various ways to deform and reform, blend, syncretize, and transform the alleged master processes of modernity"(1996:58). As he goes on to argue, in the present phase, global culture can be characterized in a less totalistic sense as follows : Firstly, we can point to the existence of a global culture or 'third cultures' which has developed in ways which have become increasingly independent of nation-states. Secondly, global culture is a field in which all nation-states and collectivities compete with each other and attempt to draw boundaries between the self and the other. From this perspective, I agree with Featherstone that the changes taking place as a result of the current phase of globalization must be understood as reactions which seek to rediscover local identity and difference, all of which generate "a sense of the limits of the culturally unifying and integrating projects associated with Western modernity".(p.60).

At this point, the question, then, is to break the very logic of national identity itself. There have been two stances toward home and homelessness within contemporary debates about identity: ideas of home tend to go together with notions of primordial identity and ideas of "nomadism" with ideas of constructed identity or

hybridity.<sup>9</sup> Each of these two positions has a critique of the other. Nomadic thinkers generally defy the search for any fixed identity or homeland. Nomadism is explicitly the attitude of poststructuralists, cosmopolitans, and postmodernists generally. Here I need to clarify the perspective adopted, which lies between two extremes. National identity is a type of collective identity that emphasizes the role of myths of descent and historical memories. At the same time, such collectivities are doubly ‘historical’ in the sense that each such ethnic group is the product of specific historical forces and is therefore subject to historical change.

In reality, national identity is not necessarily always evident and may in fact be latent and seemingly non-existent in normal and peaceful conditions. It emerges as a response to the other. Along this line of thought, Schlesinger puts it in the following way:

“Identity is as much as about exclusion as it is about inclusion, and the critical factor for defining the ethnic group therefore becomes the social boundary which defines the group with respect to other groups...not the cultural reality within those borders.” (1987:235)

Within this context, identities are seen as being constituted in and through their relations to one another. Collective identity is seen as “a dynamic, emergent aspect of collective action”(ibid.:237). Thus, we can develop a dynamic view of identity, focusing on the ability of social groups continually to redefine their boundaries. Furthermore, we need to look at another dimension of the problem, that is to say, the psychic processes involved in the constitution and maintenance of identity and difference. If identity as

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<sup>9</sup> See John Durham Peters(1999), ‘Exile, nomadism, and diaspora’, in H. Naficy (ed.), *Home, Exile,*

differentiation is deemed as a constitutive dimension of self, then it is in part constructed by the way we see the other. The 'we-they' dynamic, in this view, is deeply embedded in human psychology. The defence of a given 'cultural identity' easily slips into essentialist ethno-nationalism or even racism. The question here is the relative power of different groups to define national identity. Viewed in this way, tradition is not a matter of a fixed or given set of beliefs or practices which are handed down, rather, it is very much "a matter of present-day politics, and of the way in which powerful institutions function to select particular values from the past, and to mobilise them in contemporary practices".<sup>10</sup> Through such a mechanism of cultural reproduction, a particular version of the collective memory, and thus a particular sense of national identity, is produced. National identity, as with other social phenomena of collective identity like class, generation, and gender, thus, exhibits both constancy and flux, depending on the purposes and distance of the researcher from the collective phenomenon in question. Any realistic account of national identity must, as Smith(1991) argues, eschew the concerns with fixity of cultural patterns in nature, on the one hand and strategic manipulability of ethnic sentiments, on the other.

Along this line of thought, against the ideal of *Heimat* as a sacred and secure place in Baruma's(1989) notion, Robins (1991) has proposed that another powerful motif of the contemporary world, that is, the experience of *diaspora* should be counterposed. Following Hall, he maintains that in the experience of migration, "boundaries are crossed; cultures are mingled; identities become blurred"(ibid.:42).

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*Homeland.*

<sup>10</sup> See D. Morley and K. Robins (1995), *Space of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*, quoting Wright (1985).

According to Hall, the diaspora experience is about “unsettling, recombination, hybridization and cut-and-mix” and “there can be no simple *return* or *recovery* of the ancestral past which is not reexperienced through the categories of the present”(1988:80). Braidotti also asserts that “it is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling.”(1994:5) In the context of increasing cultural globalization, the backward quest looking for *Heimat* is now regressive and the notion of distinct and ‘authentic’ national cultures is problematic. At this point, the lesson of diaspora is that “peoples and lands are not naturally and organically connected” (Peters,1999:38).<sup>11</sup>

In recent years, globalization, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism have become buzzwords in academia. “The thinking of global/local relations and the hybridity of knowledges” characterizes current intellectual concerns, especially among “marginal academic intellectuals,” who “have only the choice of opposition or complicity”(Bove,1996:382). This globalization perspective indicates the effort at the production of new thinking and new discourse. This effort obliges hybrid intellectuals or cosmopolitan intellectuals, to recognize “the misfit between their previously developed cultural capital tool and the new realities trying to emerge”(ibid.:383). In fact, the postmodern emphasis upon pastiche, dislocation, incoherence, and syncretism and cultural diversity occurred in colonial cities first. With regard to the question of the new sense of national cultural identity, hence, it is significant to look at the periphery or ex-colonial countries.

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<sup>11</sup> He quoted Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin (1993), ‘Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish

Contemporary critics of nationalism regard cosmopolitanism as an intellectual ethic and a political project or a style of practical consciousness that overcomes nationalist particularism.<sup>12</sup> In this connection, Ignatieff has argued, “cosmopolitans made a positive ethic out of cultural borrowing: in culture, exogamy was better than endogamy”(1993:7). According to Cheah, however, nationalism is not antithetical to cosmopolitanism and “cosmopolitanisms are in a conflictual embrace with the popular nationalisms that are imperative in the postcolonial South.”(1998:38) In a similar vein, Ignatieff also notes that “globalism in a post-imperial age only permits a post-nationalist consciousness for those cosmopolitans who are lucky enough to live in the wealthy West”. In this sense, “a cosmopolitan, post-nationalist spirit will always depend, in the end, on the capacity of nation states to provide security and civility for their citizens”(1993:9). Doreen Massey (1992) notes that the ‘new postmodern geography’ has certainly given rise to a variety of nostalgic and reactionary responses, accompanied by sentimentalized reconstructions of ‘authentic’ localized heritages, but this is not necessarily the case and that it is possible “for a sense of place to be progressive”. In this regard, Morley claims that “the idea of the possibility of community” or desire for roots is “a necessary prerequisite of any effective politics” from the point of view of the colonized periphery (1999:152). Thus, it is politically significant for us to “come to terms with the desire for belonging or roots, rather than simply to dismiss it as reactionary” and further “articulate a politics capable of constituting a ‘we’ which is not essentialist, fixed, separatist, derisive, defensive or exclusive”(ibid.:163).<sup>13</sup>

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Identity’. *Critical Inquiry* 19(summer):693-725.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion, see P. Cheah and B. Robbins (eds.)(1998), *Cosmopolitics*.

<sup>13</sup> W. Wheeler (1994), quoted by D. Morley (1999).

Consequently, instead of indulging in the binarism of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, now we should turn our critical focus to the conjunctual situation of specific communities and “the mutating global field of political, economic, and cultural forces in which nationalism and cosmopolitanism are invoked as practical discourses”(Cheah,1998:31). It is in this global context, I think, that we should understand the emergence of both national and cosmopolitan identities in Korea. And needless to say, because one’s identity is always multilayered and multiple, we also have to look at other dimensions than the national or ethnic in Korea. National identity for a contemporary Korean undergoes further complication if we think of Koreans as an ethnic group, which with a sizable diaspora already constitutes a multinational community of global reach.

The local, as Drink (1996) argues, is a product of the conjuncture of structures located in the same temporality but with different spatialities. This “conjunctural situation” also determines “the culture of the local, which is stripped of its reification by daily confrontation between different cultures”(ibid.:39). In this sense, a culture is better seen as a dynamic set of ‘ongoing processes’ and struggles that construct and reconstruct cultural materials. However, it does not mean that the past is not important. The past itself is redefined in the course of present activity. In these rapidly changing times, it is no longer possible to hold on to older senses of national identity and we should consider the national cultures in processual terms. In the light of this, being Korean is not what it was. ‘Koreanness’ has to change. Now it is a more complex issue, influenced by the forces of globalization. At the heart of contemporary



Korean culture is the question of articulating a national past or heritage and new forms of global culture such as a new cosmopolitanism.

As Robins has maintained, the new global context is recreating the sense of place or community in positive ways, inspiring an “energetic cosmopolitanism” in certain localities (1991:36). In an interview with Fredric Jameson, Paik, Nak Chung (1996) argues that it may be that today the powerful construction of a national culture is an act of internationalism rather than a withdrawal from the international situation. So if the Korean project is that of producing a ‘national culture,’ then the most important thing would be to think that such a ‘national culture’ or ‘national identity’ is being constructed as a present-day politics. As Paik continues to emphasize, the creation of national culture in this new sense is “a wholly new process” that is totally different from older forms of national culture, and further it is “the forging of a whole new one (national culture) in a whole new global situation, in which that act may have a special paradigmatic value.”(ibid.:367). Within this context, let me now conclude this section by quoting Dirlik’s argument:

“The dilemmas faced by conflicts against Euro-American and global capitalist oppression should not be avoided by premodern forms of oppression like ethnocentrism, which falls into affirmations of pre-Western ethnicities and spiritualities, without accounting for the problem of oppression in general, which has not been the monopoly of the West or of capitalism”.

(1996:38)

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Method is about “procedure” and methodology is about “the conceptual grounds for research”.<sup>1</sup> Method should not be separated from theory, which is frequently the case with ‘methodology’ in the social sciences. Methods can be adopted and adapted to realize methodological aims and should serve the aims of the research. This chapter, thus, addresses methodological issues and methodical procedure raised by both the theoretical framework of this thesis and case study, in other words, practical research in actual conditions. Section (A) discusses the conceptual and methodological tools for popular music analysis section (B) explains the general methodological orientation of the thesis and section (C) discusses more specific issues with regard to methods: respectively, the formulation of research questions, the case study, data collection, and questions of interpretation.

#### (A) Popular Music Analysis: Methodological Paradigm

Vast amounts of music are now heard at home, at work, in stations, cars, lifts, and shops. Music has become more or less ubiquitous. Explaining the nature, characteristics and effects of this omnipresent music is an interdisciplinary task, involving everything from political economy to semiotics and linguistics, not to mention sociology, media and cultural studies, anthropology, and musicology. However, in the realm of academic

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<sup>1</sup> See McGuigan, J (1997), ‘Introduction’ in J. McGuigan (ed.), *Cultural Methodologies*.

music studies, there has been a serious gap between what can be called the “musicological” and the “socio-cultural” approaches. This methodological gap has been the subject of much discussion and it is essential that we try to bridge this gulf.

In this regard, in this section I will first attempt a critique of methodological aspects of semiotically biased popular music analysis and then pinpoint analytical tools explaining the relations between musical structures and the larger context of sociocultural reality in which sounds occur. Moreover, I will trace an overall theory of music as a form of human communication, that is to say, as a form of affective communication that has so often been acknowledged in everyday discourse, but often neglected in studies of the media due to the apparent nonreferentiality of music. By communication I mean “a socially interactive and subjective process of reality construction through message making and interpretation.”(Feld, 1994:94)

Ever since popular music studies acquired an academic and institutional recognition, many journalists, musicologists and media scholars have been keenly interested in semiotic or interpretative, cultural and social theories relevant to music. This section aims to discuss the establishment of the so-called “synthetic approach” and “dialectical communications approach” as a conceptual and methodological basis for my own study of popular music and identity.

## (1) Synthesis of the Sociocultural Studies of Music and Semiotic-Interpretative

### Musicology

This section aims to consider how sociocultural studies of music can contribute to looking at the social and cultural constitution of music as a particular and irreducible form of human expression and knowledge. Specifically, I am concerned with bridging the methodological gap between semiotic musicology and larger sociocultural approach.<sup>2</sup>

My point of departure is some methodological problems of a semiotic musicology of the mass media. Until quite recently, musicology has ignored popular music as a field of serious study, focusing only on the traditional tools of musicology developed in relation to European art music of the classical period. The almost exclusive study of European art music alone in the realm of musicology is criticized as a formalist analysis as well as a mythological, supra social, and self-sufficient musical discourse. Obviously, according to Tagg, “the normative aesthetic straitjacket of the Baroque theory of affect, a sort of combination of feudal absolutist thought and rationalist curiosity, and its apparent tendency to regard itself as universally applicable”, makes it unsuitable for application to the study of popular music (2000:77). And it also seems to obstruct the development of multi-level theories of musical meaning.

Within this context, the sociology and semiology of music, in combination with ‘hermeneutics’ as an interpretative approach, appear as an alternative approach for the analysis of popular music. The transfer of structuralist and semiotic methodological frameworks, derived from linguistics, to the realm of music seemed to offer

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<sup>2</sup> Here I am mainly concerned with combining semiotic or interpretative approaches (Laing, Tagg, Bradby, Grossberg) and social and cultural homology (Hebdige, Shepherd and Wicke).

considerable possibilities for the understanding of musical messages.<sup>3</sup> However, these structuralist and semiotic approaches are also problematic. According to Tagg(1987), a limited number of particular musical codes (those used in European art music), which were developed during a particular period of one continent's history by particular sections of the population in a limited number of communication situations, have been used as musical evidence for the possible validity of generalised theories or metatheories of music as a symbolic system. Models constructed to explain the structure of denotative and cognitive verbal language can by no means be transplanted into the field of music with its connotative, associative-affective character of discourse.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, as Tagg goes on to point out, a great deal of formalism has permeated into the semiology of music, the extra-generic question of relationships between musical signifier and signified and between the musical object under analysis and society being regarded as subordinate to congeneric relations inside the musical object itself (2000:78). In short, it seems to me that many musicologists still treat musical symbols as though they were free from sociocultural contamination and they follow the linguistic formalist tradition of musicology.

Apart from these rather obvious points, musical-semiotic study cannot analyse popular music using only the traditional tools of musicology such as 'notational centrality' in which the score is treated as objectivisation of the "channel" between "emitter" and "receiver"(Eco,1976:33). In the analysis of popular music, notation, if

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<sup>3</sup> See Bernstein, L(1976), *The Unanswered Question*. (Cambridge,Mass.)

<sup>4</sup> See also Shepherd, J (1977), 'Media, social process and music,' and 'The 'meaning' of music,' in Shepherd *et al.*, *Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Languages*. pp7-124.

used at all, is never acknowledged as a satisfactory representation of a musical event and can only be used as a visual aid for the analyst and reader. Lastly, with regard to the issue of what music is communicating and how, semiotic approaches should be able to analyze communicational processes or transacted social meanings. However, for the semiotics of music - which is concerned with how signs signify- much activity seems to stress the taxonomy and form of sign types. This approach draws too much attention to 'form' and logical sign types rather than to the real worlds of users and their interpretations. Thus it ignores ambiguity, diversity, and lived meanings of signs. On this point, Geertz is right to insist that "exposing the structure of a work of art and accounting for its impact are not the same thing"(1983:118).

In contrast with the more traditional semiotic musicology, the emphasis of socio-cultural music analysis is on the social character of music, its variability through time and space, through historical and cultural settings, rejecting the assumption of the strictly non-referential and universal character of music. Such socio-cultural theories have become constitutive of a distinctive approach in the field of musical studies of which the determining characteristic was that it addressed music as an emergent property of social and cultural context. As Grenier (1989) notes, this approach radically contradicted the dominant view which asserted that art transcended the social and that music was autonomous-a romantic notion of 'music as music' or 'absolute music' that was reinforced by the production of European art music of the nineteenth century. However, Grenier goes on to argue that those who subscribed to this romantic assumption did perhaps admit that "foreign, non-European musics and popular and folk forms of European musics - namely, 'inferior genres'- had something to do with their

time and space”(p,134). In other words, those so-called inferior genres are restricted to historical and social settings and, thus, not transcendent.

Music can be defined relatively as a cultural or social product, an ever-changing phenomenon. Cultural and social attributes are then granted a new epistemological and theoretical status. This kind of a socio-cultural approach is conceived as a complex process of mediation, instead of some sort of deterministic mechanism and thus draws on ‘the constitutive heterogeneity of music’. In today’s socio-cultural discourses on music, the notion of difference as a relational term has become dominant and music is addressed as a specific signifying practice. Music does not simply reflect its social origins, but constitutes its own specificity either through its own representational or symbolic codes and conventions or through its own historical and social conditions of production.

In order to demonstrate the complementary nature of sociocultural and semiotic perspectives, Tagg(1987) suggests so-called “social semiotic” or “hermeneutic-semiotic” analysis which treats music as a symbolic system and encourages ‘synaesthetic’ thinking on the part of the analyst which helps escape from the prison of formalism. This social semiotic approach seems capable of putting musical analysis into a historical and social perspective and avoiding the pitfalls of sterile formalism and sweeping hermeneutics. However, hermeneutics is often the target of criticism because it degenerates into imaginative but false ‘reading between the lines’. Nevertheless, musical hermeneutics, an anti-formalist, subjective and interpretive approach, can make an important contribution to the analysis of popular music, if used together with other

musicological approaches. In this sense, as Tagg(2000) has suggested, instead of establishing such oppositions between extra-generic (referential, hermeneutic, multidisciplinary) and congeneric (non-referential, formalist, uni-disciplinary) approaches, it seems more appropriate to deal with these two lines of thinking as complementary rather than contradictory. It is desirable to examine information from the emitting and receiving ends of the musical communication with findings from the hermeneutic-semiotic view of the analysis object. To put it in different words, it is indisputable that a 'holistic approach' to the analysis of popular music is the only viable alternative, if one wishes to understand all the factors interacting with the conception, transmission, and reception of music.

Within the sphere of analysis, popular music studies have rightly insisted on the priority of meaning. The social semiotic or hermeneutic-semiotic approach has been trying to take into account actual pieces of music, their effects upon us, and the relationship between musical sound and its interpretation in the analysis of popular music. However, although this social semiotic approach gives us considerable insight into socioeconomic and cultural mechanisms affecting the 'emitter' and "receiver" of certain type of popular music, as Tagg points out, there is little explicit information about the nature of the "channel," the music itself (2000:75). In other words, he goes on to maintain that we know little about "the relations the music establishes between emitter and receiver" and "about how a musical message actually relates to the set of affective and associative concepts presumably shared by emitter and receiver" (ibid.). In a similar vein, Middleton(1990) also contends that there is a skepticism that sometimes insufficient attention has been paid to the sounds themselves - to the intramusical



structures of “the primary level of signification”. And further Middleton(2000) has proposed “a theory of gesture” which encompasses affective and cognitive aspects as well as kinetic ones. This theory of gesture is based on the fact that “how we feel and how we understand musical sounds is organized through processual shapes which seem to be analogous to physical gestures”(ibid.:105)<sup>5</sup>. Within this context, it seems to me that it is ultimately by studying ‘the sounding object’ that musicologists can contribute most to the social semiotic analysis of popular music.

Meanwhile, John Blacking(1982) highlights the importance of differences existing in both surface structures (sounds, rules of sound combinations, instruments, techniques etc.) and deep structures (social organization, cultural patterns, etc.). Blacking continues to argue that not only can members of distinct collectivities perceive a singular music quite differently, but also that, under similar conditions, different musical forms can be and are in fact produced. This two-way argument contradicts the idea of culture or society as a homogeneous context, and sets heterogeneity or diversity at the centre of any intercultural comparative study.

In the light of the above, I insist that what I would call ‘the syncretic perspective’ is based on the hypothesis that the heterogeneity of music is ascribable to the correlation between its musical and cultural and social components, that is text and context. After all, what I draw on here is a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of popular music, an approach based on a thorough study of “dialectical relations between the musical structure, its conception, production, transmission,

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<sup>5</sup> See also Coker, W(1972), *Music and Meaning*.

reception and its social meaning, uses and functions”(Tagg, 1987:284). In other words, I take the syncretic approach in order to assess carefully the macro-effects of musical meanings, integrated with a textual analysis. In this respect, Tagg is right to pinpoint that it is necessary to look to “the general sociocultural field of study of which *the artists, their music and its audience* are a small part”(1987: 292:my emphasis). This line of inquiry provides a methodological framework for my own study of music and national cultural identity in this thesis.

The main aim of the discussion presented here was to find ways of increasing our understanding of actual music around us and of how it works and affects us. In the next section, I draw on the idea of music as the “form of interhuman communication in which individually experienceable affective states and processes are conceived and transmitted as humanly organized non-verbal sound structures”(Tagg,2000:74). This also relates to Middleton’s critical comment on the social-semiotic approach as has been seen above. According to Tagg, music as form of communication should be capable of transmitting the affective identities, attitudes, and behavioural patterns of socially definable groups, a phenomenon observed in studies of subcultures.

## (2) A Dialectical Communications Approach

My focus here is on significant nonlinguistic areas of contemporary communication and the nature of the music communication process, in other words, the communicational process of musical meaning and interpretation explicitly perceived as social activity.

This so-called ‘communications approach’ will also form the methodological basis of this study. Here I wish to highlight some of the ways in which music, beyond simply being a form of aesthetic expression or commodity becomes an important medium of communication and a significant form of affective knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

What does music communicate, how does this communication process take place, and how is musical meaning invented and circulated? To answer all these questions I need to draw on Seeger’s argument. Seeger(1977) concerned himself with the potential distortions of music in verbal discourse about music. For Seeger, music is communication of “world view as the feeling of reality” while speech is the communication of “world view as the intellection of reality”. He further defined communication as “transmission of energy in a form”. Meanwhile, Feld(1994) redefined this notion of communication by moving it from a physicalistic exposition to a more social ground.

In pursuing this line of thought, I draw on Feld’s argument that communication is neither the idea nor the action but the ‘process’, and it is residing in “dialectic relations between form and content, stream and information, code and message, culture and behavior, production and reception, construction and interpretation”(1994:78). With regard to musical modes of communication, Feld emphasizes not only process but also meaning and interpretation. For Feld, communication is “an ongoing engagement in a process of interpreting symbolic forms which makes it possible to imagine meaningful activity as subjectively experienced by

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<sup>6</sup> See C. Seeger(1977), K. Negus(1996a) and S.Feld(1994)

other social actors”(ibid.:79).

Recently, semiotic analysis has also invoked the concept of ‘communication’.<sup>7</sup> Then, do semiotic approaches really analyze communicational processes or performed social meaning? Communicational analysis should be distinguished from logical or normative analysis that pursues typologies of signs and sign functions. The textual level of structural association or motifs do not necessarily fix a piece of music’s meaning. Within this context, I am concerned with the listening process rather than the score, or code per se. To put it another way, I wish to highlight the more specifically communicational processes of musical meaning and interpretation.

However, the ‘listening experience’ is not just the juxtaposition of a musical object and a listener. It is an entangling of “a dialectical object and a situated interlocutor”(Feld,1994:84). “Dialectical object” means here that a sound object or event can only be engaged through recognition of a simultaneous musical and extramusical reality. According to Feld, any musical object embodies and provokes interpretive tensions, in other words, one cannot encounter the object without making associations, and the character of the associations is mental and material, individual and social, formal and expressive. The musical object is as social as its listeners or producers. It exists through a code, and through processes of coding and decoding. Sounds are contextual and continually contextualizing.

In short, a description and a theory of the musical encounter must be

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<sup>7</sup> Especially, see Nattiez (1990) *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*

sensitive to the social character of the musical communication process. Furthermore, here I focus on music as an ‘affective’ form of interhuman communication and knowledge. In pursuing this line of thought, I highlight Grossberg’s (1992) argument that music operates at the intersection of the body and emotions, generating ‘affective’ alliances between people that in turn create the energy for social change. Personally, the tangible symptom of goose pimples and the evocation of memory of special places and moods are what my own relationship to music is really all about. In the light of this, music can be used to create a series of affective identities or “affective alliances” in Grossberg’s term. According to Negus (1996b), these alliances constitute ‘trans-regional’ spheres of communication that are outside of nation-state regimes and not reducible to the commercial marketing categories of the music business. According to Grossberg, such alliances, connected with the private politics of affective emotional communication, have the potential to exercise direct impact on politics and culture.

As indicated above, this intangible presence of music as a form of affective communication has often been neglected in studies of the media. Music is less dependent on language and is based on forms of affective expression and communication (antiphony, rhythm, timbre and paralinguistic vocal expressions etc.). A more nuanced approach to such affective communication might acknowledge that music is significantly different from other forms of mass communication, such as the newspaper, book and television broadcast. And as Paul Gilroy(1993a) has observed, an affective form of communication is not simply subjective, intuitive, and irrational, but generates forms of “counterrationality”, which in turn produce affiliations, alliances, and understanding among dispersed and diverse groups of people. Tracing the formation

of identities within the Black diaspora, Gilroy has made the important point in the context of his work that “music becomes vital at the point at which linguistic and semantic indeterminacy/polyphony arise amidst the protracted battle between masters, mistresses and slaves”(1993:75). Gilroy is right to insist that musical forms directly contribute to “intercultural conversations”. Within this context, it is clear that music can be a means of communication for reaching an understanding through dialogue with a unique and irreducible symbolic characteristics and with nonlinguistic images and sounds.

Overall, communication means a socially interactive and subjective process of reality construction through message making and interpretation. Communication is a dialectical process. As Feld(1994) notes, the dialectic between musical structure and extramusical history is central to the study of music in cross-cultural and symbolic perspective. On this point, I attempt to integrate music not only with mind, emotions and body, but also with the entire sociocultural field of which music is an inextricable part.

## (B) General Methodological Orientation

### (1) Towards a More Concrete ‘Anti-Essentialist’ Thinking in a More Applied Cultural Studies

In the past, the self-definition of cultural studies has tended to be resistant to academic legitimation, “seeing itself as part of an intellectual guerilla movement waging war on

the borders of official academia (McGuigan,1997:1). This romantic conception of cultural studies is now outdated. The institutionalization of cultural studies and ‘the cultural turn’ in the human sciences have changed the indeterminate status of cultural studies. Yet it still remains difficult to say what cultural studies corresponds to methodologically. Cultural studies is eclectic in terms of methodological orientation, drawing from across the humanities and social sciences.

In cultural theory, as Tulloch (1999) has described, we are at the moment between “a rock and a hard place”. Here the rock means what Silverman (1993) describes as a bureaucratic-technological society’s demand that “numbers talk,” and the hard place is posmodernism’s emphasis on the impossibility of scientific methodologies of quantification that “there is no innocent knowledge, no reality external to our own situated theorizing”(Tulloch,1999:138). The result of this latter position is a much greater emphasis on the ‘situated, constitutive self’ whether as ‘subject’ or ‘object’ of research. In other words, as Adam and Allan assert, postmodern cultural theory looks to “affirm the contextual and constitutive nature of culture” in opposition to the assumption that “something real exists in the world out there” independent of the observer(1995:xiii). Thus, according to Adam and Allan, “each one of us has to engage with the fluid ambiguities and uncertainties of tentative, ‘local’ stories or accounts”(ibid.:xv).

Lately cultural studies has been taken as synonymous with what we might call ‘politics of identity’, which centers on the evolving anti-essentialist critiques of ethnic, sexual, national and racial identities, especially the work of those poststructuralist

theorists who have articulated concepts of difference, of the subject and of a politics of location. Under the influence of a post modern/structuralist perspective, the toleration and understanding of 'difference' have shaped the rhetorical field of culture, requiring selection and judgement. However, this 'identity politics' is often criticized "as a retreat from real, materialist politics in favour of something more individualist and lifestyle-related" (McRobbie,1999:105). In this light, Golding and Ferguson argue that "the attention shown to the extension of an interdisciplinary field embracing colonialism and post-colonialism, race and ethnicity, popular culture and audience means that cultural studies work has lost sight of fundamental questions of structured inequality"(1997:xix). For the academic left, as McRobbie has pointed out, the materialist ethos which emerges from the unequal distribution of material resources takes precedence over that of recognition from the unequal politics of recognition.

In fact, what has come to define much media studies scholarship in a critical tradition today is a damaging dichotomy: the focus of political-economy on material structures, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the preoccupation of much of what is now 'cultural studies' with meaning or consumption, with little or no attention paid to their production and socio-economic conditions of cultural forms. With regard to the study of popular culture, we need to get a better handle on the complex relationship between ideal and material forces. Either emphasis by itself is incomplete. To challenge the values of the dominant class or race or gender in a society, we need to look not just at meanings themselves, but how they are made. Yet, asserting that a closer look at economics and production is needed is not to say that cultural studies should abandon its other concerns.



It is clear that the “anti-Es”(anti-essentialism, post-structuralism and psychoanalysis), which McRobbie (1999) has recently identified in cultural studies have achieved a position of methodological dominance. The most significant contribution of the paradigm of the “anti-Es” is the insistence that “there can be no true and authentic account, that the lives and identities being chronicled are necessarily partial, fluid, performed and constituted in the context of that particular ethnographic moment”(ibid.:89). With regard to this thesis, which aims to provide an analysis of the reconstruction of national cultural identity in the Korean context, what is specific to anti-essentialism as a mode of analysis is that identity does not automatically reflect a pre-existing material reality but constitutes a new reality instead. If the methodological framework of the ‘anti-Es’ helps us to move cultural studies on in this respect, then it is also important that this paradigm, too, is subjected to criticism. To adopt the ‘anti-Es’ uncritically as a methodological framework can run the risk making it a new kind of exclusivism. Indeed, the overwhelming impact of post-structuralism and psychoanalysis overlooked a possibility of the ‘three Es’, namely ‘empiricism’, ‘ethnography’ and the category of ‘experience’ as identified by McRobbie (1996).

According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), material and symbolic injustices are interwoven and the distinction between the material and the cultural must be reconceptualized, in particular, in a *Kulturgesellschaft*, Culture-Society with the breakdown of high and low culture.<sup>8</sup> Culture, as McRobbie(1999) maintains, has become the key issue for many governments, in relation to economic growth and

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<sup>8</sup> See Schwengell, H (1991), ‘British Enterprise Culture and German *Kulturgesellschaft*’, in R.Keat and

internal investment seeking global markets in this culture-society. However, economic considerations have been overlooked by many in cultural studies, concerned only to investigate the ideological nature of texts or the identity of a particular group with control over artistic production. The cultural product should be seen as the complex result of a variety of determining factors, including economic elements. What gets produced and performed and received by audiences is often determined by straightforward economic factors, especially in today's 'culture-society'. For instance, in the popular music industry, the repertoire of record companies is very seriously constrained by commercial considerations, which in effect limit innovations in the music, and standardise the selection of repertoire. On this point, it is worth noting Wolff's argument that "funding and financing cannot be taken for granted, and that the way in which these may fluctuate with general economic cycles or with political change can crucially affect the nature and even the existence of art" (1993:47).

Within this context, McRobbie is right to insist that what is now urgently required for cultural studies is a return to a more materialist or sociologist framework armed with the 'three Es'. She continues to argue, "we need to be able to do more than analyse texts, we need data, graphs, ethnographies, facts and figures"(1996:341). Although anti-essentialism in cultural studies recognizes the fluidity of categories within the field itself, it is also true that the absence of stress on concrete material reality has the effect of over-theorizing cultural analysis. This tendency make it difficult for media and cultural studies to participate in policy debates or practices of cultural production.

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N. Abercrombie (eds.), *Enterprise Culture*, pp136-51.

Hence, what we really need is more substantial empirical research in order to acquire a more appropriate analysis of text and meaning, the lives and identities being fluid, performed and constituted in the context of a particular ethnographic moment. In the end, a central issue I am concerned with in this thesis is that the ‘three Es’ should be reconceptualized in the light of the ‘anti-Es’. Further, a reconciliation of sorts between a post (structuralist/colonialist) perspective and the study of concrete material reality can lead to the emergence of a more applied or practical cultural analysis in the culture-society. To put it another way, the critical task now, it seems to me, is to draw on more sociological accounts and to move towards a concrete anti-essentialist thinking in a more applied cultural studies.

## (2) Performativity, Reflexivity, and Local Stories

The following quotations are about performing culture, performing one’s critique, performing one’s everyday situations, and researchers as storytellers.

“The source of textual meaning has been relocated in negotiation between readers, writers and texts. That has necessitated a theorisation of the subjects who read and write, first a deconstruction of the humanist knowing subject...It is now both a feminist and a poststructuralist/postmodernist catchcry, in some places, that one does not analyse texts, one rewrites them, one does not have an objective meta-language, one does not use a theory, one *performs* one’s critique...[But] I want to suggest that there are also seductions involved in allowing oneself to be positioned totally by the discourses and genres of rewriting and refusal of metalanguages, the seductions of an anti-science metaphysics.” (Threadgold, 1997:1-2)

“This contemporary cultural condition – postcolonial, postindustrial, postmodern, postcommunist – forms the historical backdrop for the urgency of rethinking the significance of ethnography, away from its status as realist knowledge in the direction of its quality as a form of storytelling, as narrative. This does not mean that descriptions cease to be more or less true; criteria such as accurate data gathering and careful inference making remain applicable...It does mean that our deeply partial position as storytellers...should be.. seriously confronted... The point is to see this ...as an inevitable state of affairs which circumscribe the...responsibility of the researcher/writer as a producer of descriptions which, as soon as they enter the uneven, power-laden field of social discourse, play their political roles as particular ways of seeing and organising an ever-elusive reality.” (Ang, 1996:75-6)

“In all the talk of local and global relations it has to be remembered that one never actually leaves the local...Rather it is the system of local contexts, their distributions and linkages, that creates a global field.” (Hirsch, 1998:223)

Threadgold’s and Ang’s insistence on performativity and reflexive storytelling, and yet at the same time their warnings against “the seductions of an anti-science metaphysics” and Hirsch’s focus on the significance of “local contexts”, offer my major methodological frame in this thesis. To put it another words, I am concerned with “the qualitatively precise and situated” analysis showing methodological rigour (Tulloch,1999:160).

According to Tulloch (1999), issues of reliability, validity and generalizability, have been thrown into crisis, after decades of ‘grounded’ qualitative research seemed successfully to have established these criteria. As Denzin and Lincoln maintain, reflexivity has become crucially important, as “writing and fieldwork blur into one another”(1998:21). In other words, there is a need to reflexively examine “how we

are temporally and spatially situated within the institutional dynamics of theoretical production”(Adam and Allan, 1995:xvi). In the absence of an ‘objective’ and ‘detached’ methodology, thus, “each one of us has to engage with the fluid ambiguities and uncertainties of tentative, *local* stories or accounts” (ibid.: xv). However, following Silverman, I try not to fall into “the romanticizing discourse of seeing the local, situated voice as simply ‘authentic representation of the ‘disadvantaged’”(993:6).

As Roach puts it:

“[Performance] embraces a much wider range of human behaviours. Such behaviours may include what Michel de Certeau calls ‘the practice of everyday life’ in which the role of the spectator expands into that of the participant. De Certeau’s ‘practice’ has itself enlarged into an open-ended category marked ‘performative’... ‘the performative... is a cultural act, a critical perspective, a political intervention” (1995:46).

This emphasis on ‘performance’ allows us to understand situations interactively and to think about culture as “an unfolding performative invention, instead of a reified system”(Conquergood, 1985, cited in Tulloch, 1999:5). Performance is situated in historical time and geographical space. This observation of ‘performativity as situational interaction’ is paralleled by the wider ‘ethnographic’ shift from viewing “the world as text” to “the world as performance”(ibid.). What this line of thinking attempts to pinpoint is “away from a reifying a textualism or a determinant globalism, towards the localized, situated ‘performing of one’s critique’” (ibid.:9). In other words, as Hughes-Freeland(1988:15) explains, “it is through narrational performance that we maintain conscious selves” and the understanding of performance takes our attention away from ‘texts’ to ‘embodied, situational performances’.

This thesis aims to draw on the significance of *constitutive locality* in framing the relationship between place and identity in the realm of the popular, with regard to the reconstruction of so-called ‘Koreanness’ in the global context. In this thesis, by ‘not leaving the local’, I want to show how people (musicians and audiences) perform identity from differentiated positions. Hence, this model of performance as situational social interaction, it seems to me, is useful to both affirm the importance of the ‘contextual and constitutive’ nature of culture and to maintain so-called ‘narrative knowledge’. In this research, following Hughes-Freeland, I emphasize that “aesthetic” performative events like film, television and music are, like everyday “ordinary” routines, “systematised and collated within particular performative local contexts”(1998:22). The everyday life that we focus on as research object in performance theory is not simply that of audiences in the way that dominated cultural studies in the 1980s, but includes the daily rhetorics of practice-as-performance of producers, musicians, audiences, marketers, and academics. In this light, I trace the very rich contexts, processes and dialogic interactions of these discourses of performance in the ‘everyday’ of media and cultural production as it is among audiences.

Overall, in terms of the methodological project of this thesis, I attempt to engage with recent critiques of lack of reflexivity in traditional qualitative research, as well as the rejection of the ‘anti-science metaphysics’ (in Threadgold’s term) in postmodern theory.

## (C) Methods

### (1) The Formulation of the Research Questions

Defining the aim of the study and research questions is probably the most important step to be taken in practical research. The key is to understand that research questions have “both *substance*, for example, what is my study about? and *form*, for example, am I asking a who, what, where, why or how question?” (Yin,1994:7). Within this context, the methods also should be adopted and adapted to realize the aims of the research.

My thesis aims to explore both theoretical debates about cultural appropriation, hybridity and postcolonial identity and to offer a case study analysing the processes through which national cultural identity is formed and transformed in the realm of popular music in the Korean context. My focus is especially on the constitutive or performative processes of identity formation. To put it another way, the research is designed to go some way towards developing a mode of analysis that can deal with discourses of ‘synthetic, multiple, and fluid cultural identities’ and the varieties of ‘rootedness, connectedness and de-territorialization’ in consideration of varying geo-political positions and situations. Probably the most important methodological question, which must be faced here, is how large-scale theory and the specific case study relate to each other in order to form a larger argument. I approach this question from a number of perspectives.

The research draws on four distinct aspects: first, how contemporary Korean musicians create their music and how they perceive their role with regard to the construction and reconstruction of 'Koreanness'. Secondly, how the material circumstances or various external factors in Korea (such as the music industry and cultural policy, etc.) affect the production of sounds in a specific place. Thirdly, how particular musical instruments and musical elements (such as rhythms, voices, and particular languages etc.) signify a symbolic sense of place and local identity. And lastly, how audiences, in particular young music fans, contribute to the process of forming the sense of place through multiple appropriation and consumption of globally available musical products.

In relation to the analysis of musicians and of their perception of 'national cultural identity, my focus is on the practices and vocabularies of musicians who feel that they are somehow capturing the essence of 'Koreanness' and reflecting this in their music as well as those who don't. But here the problem, which is often related to the pitfalls of interview-based research in general is that 'place-specific music', namely 'the Korean sound' might be explained through a series of ambiguous and often romantic quotes from musicians.

In this light, I attempt to add the so-called 'discourse' analysis to the empirical research. From a 'discourse-analytic' perspective, as Alasuutari points out, we need to treat the interviewees' talk as a text and to study the transcript of interview in its own right.<sup>9</sup> What frames, discourses are invoked, and what functions do they serve?

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<sup>9</sup> See Alasuutari, P (1999), 'Introduction' in *Rethinking the Media Audience*. (London:Sage)



Individuals' talk should be regarded as just topics among other topics. Interviewees' discourse is consequently disconnected from their day-to-day activities, relationships, and experiences. In other words, interviewees' talk is framed by discourse or 'structures of understanding' (in Hall's term) in society as well as social economic structures. Researcher should thus be aware of the discourses within which interviewees conceive of and talk about their experience. From this point of view, alongside face-to-face interviews with individuals, I draw on the public discourses and debates developed around the notion of 'Koreanness' in contemporary Korea, which may affect interviewees and their subject positions.

The subject of study involves a variety of musicians and participants in the making of syncretic Korean popular music of the 1990s - such as mainstream musicians, underground club musicians<sup>10</sup>, staff in record companies and critics. Audiences, in particular young music enthusiasts, consisting of such as hip hop and underground music societies on the internet, are also included as subjects of the research. These internet societies, as self-defined networks of interactive communication, are organized around particular interests or tastes. In order to get access to young members of these societies on the internet, who follow alternative styles of music as a way of setting themselves apart from those whose musical tastes are more mainstream, I make use of on-line interview. This is done because I believe that it can be a useful way of gaining information from young people of music societies on the internet. For young people in Korea, the internet is a significant medium of communication, creating "new possibilities for reciprocal bonding and collaboration" which were previously only

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<sup>10</sup> Since the middle of the 1990s, alternative style of musics, such as hip-hop, techno, and indie rock

associated with the sharing of a common locale (Slevin,2000:90).

However, this computer-mediated communication (CMC) brings into question the notion of face-to-face interaction that is related to the concept of 'representation'. The primacy of the face-to-face in qualitative methodology can be understood by reflecting upon the way in which researcher's production as an authoritative textual account has traditionally relied upon travel, experience and interaction.<sup>11</sup> The use of the Internet does not necessarily involve physical travel. But it does not mean that the relationship between researcher and readers is collapsed. This kind of engagement with mediated interaction adds a new dimension to the exploration of the use of medium for researcher. It is an adaptive methodology which sets out to suit itself to the conditions in which it finds itself. In this sense, I agree with Hine that "if we are happy enough that technologies are appropriated and interpreted differently in different contexts, why should we not be happy for ethnography to be similarly sensitive to its contexts of use?"(2000:66)

Overall, here I take the so-called 'grounded theory approach' which focuses on the integration of micro and macro levels of analysis. It seems to me that a working assumption of much social and cultural research is that 'macro' issues can be illuminated through the study of 'micro' contexts. Since I aim to develop 'grounded theory' about musical practices of musicians and transnational consumption of audiences in relation to the formation and transformation of national and cultural identity in the Korean context, I need to choose texts and interviewees whose

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genres started to flourish centering around unconventional club bands in downtown Seoul Korea.

<sup>11</sup> See Hine, C (2000), *Virtual Ethnography* (London: Sage), P.44.

differences would be theoretically productive and to integrate the analysis of microstructures of music, biography, the personal and the local with contemporary macro issues of the nation, history, cultural identity and the global.

I am concerned with the post-modern condition, which embodies a change in the experience and representation of place and explicates the identity crisis. As Harvey (1989) pointed out, place and placelessness, the particular and the universal, are part of the same process in the post-modern era. The globalisation of cultural forms has been accompanied by a localisation of cultural identity. In terms of popular music, transnational trends or styles are received, mediated and appropriated within a local context. The term 'transnational' is used to signal the fluidity with which ideas, objects, capital, and people now move across borders and boundaries. Scholars of transnational culture make reference to postmodern aesthetics, hybridity, displacement, decentering, and diaspora. Within this context, a major task is to delineate the processes and dynamics that transnationalism engenders with regard to cultural practices and identities in the peripheral context.

Furthermore, I am also interested in developing the work of those who have examined hegemonic contention between the colonizer and the colonized, between the core and periphery and between Europe and regions of the third world in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Peripheries do indeed respond in various ways to transnational flows from the center, in the process generating their own counterflows and reformulating what is handed to them. "Power centers define and peripheries constantly try to redefine the terms of the debate and thus gain control over

them”(Basch et al., 1994:27). In order to investigate hegemonic processes that are implicated in ethnic identification that emerges from cultural practices, we need ‘a global perspective’ and a sense of ‘the processual and historical’. As Gupta puts it:

“On the one side, we need to investigate processes of place making, of how feelings of belongings to an imagined community bind identity to spatial location...At the same time, we also need to situate those processes within a systematic development that reinscribes and reterritorializes space in the global political economy.”

(1992:62).

This global perspective includes conceptualizing nation-states and the global economy not as two different levels of analysis but as integrally related ones. Studying cultural practices in a specific nation-state, therefore, is studying part of the global cultural economy.

Finally, according to my theoretical foundation, individuals’ perceptions are constituted while at the same time they are reciprocally determined by a specific environment. In this connection, I approach the relationship between place and music in a case study in which I attempt to conceptualize ‘the Koreanness’ in the field of popular music as a complex mixture: a range of social, economic and political factors at the level of the national and international *reflected* in the music of Korean musicians, which in turn then helps to *construct* local identities. In other words, I want to draw on the significance of *constitutive locality* in framing the relationship between place and identity in the realm of popular music, which functions as a battlefield for the construction of national cultural identity in the Korean context.

## (2) Case Study as a Research Strategy

This thesis contains both large-scale theory and a specific case study. The ‘how’ of research (that is, methodology) should obviously be deliberated with reference to ‘what’ (the subject of research) and ‘why’ (the aim of research). In order to trace the above mentioned research question and theoretical argument, I offer now a brief account of my ‘case-study-as-research’ strategy employed in this study.

Although the case study is a distinctive form of empirical inquiry, many researchers have criticized it. Traditionally case studies have been considered to be ‘soft’ research and perhaps the greatest concern has been over the lack of rigor of case study research. Common complaints about case study research are as follows: first, it provides little basis for scientific generalization. ‘How can you generalize from a single case?’ is a frequently heard question. The short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions, and not to universals. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent “a sample”, and the investigator’s goal is to “expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (Yin,1994:10). A second frequent complaint is that case study research takes too long and results in unreadable documents. But this incorrectly confuses the case study strategy with a specific method of data collection, such as ethnography or qualitative research. Ethnographies usually require long periods of time in the field and focus on detailed, observational evidence. However, case study research is a form of inquiry that does not depend solely on

ethnographic or qualitative data.

According to Schramm(1971), “the essence of a case study... is that it tries to illuminate a ‘decision’ or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result”. Similarly, other topics can be listed, including ‘individuals,’ ‘organizations,’ and in particular, ‘processes’ of constructing identity with regard to the topic of this research. The case study is preferred, as Yin(1994) points out, when you deliberately want to cover “contextual conditions”- believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomena of study. Surveys, for example, can try to deal with phenomena, but their ability to investigate the context is extremely limited.

The case study inquiry “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis”(Yin,ibid.:13). To put it in other words, the case study is neither a data collection tactic nor merely a research design alone, but a research strategy which comprises an all-encompassing method. Case study research can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence and should not be confused with ‘qualitative research’(Van Maanen, 1988). Finally, case studies can include journalistic accounts. On this point, Yin is right to contend that “establishing the how and why of a complex human situation is a classic example of the use of the case studies, whether done by journalists or social scientists”(1994:16).

### (3) Data Collection –interviews

The aim of the case study is to examine music making-activities and the appropriation

and/or reception of transnational popular music, in relation to the process of construction of new senses of Koreanness within a global/transnational perspective. The main methods of research I employ in my study are in-depth, semi-structured 'one-to-one' interviews with musicians and participants in music production, and on-line interviews with audiences, mainly consisting of music clubs on the internet. With regard to issues of 'place-specific music' or the 'Korean sound', musicians are asked to consider if there was such a thing, and if so, what it was. Even if there isn't, I would argue, music may reflect aspects of the culture in which it is created, so how this process manifest itself.

These interviews are also complemented by comments made by such musicians in the press, statements about music related to the life histories of the individuals making them, public document, and journalistic materials often overlooked from an academic perspective. This research, which is based on interviews (where musicians, producers, participants in the music industry, critics, or audience members construct narratives about meaning) is subject to the dual critique that "(interview) talk is contextually situated narrative, that is, as such, 'text'; and that interview narratives are subject to the postmodern critique of a prior, unitary and originating self-consciousness which is dependent for its 'truth' on 'lived experience'" (Tulloch,1999:117). For my own part, rather than reading interview narratives and stories as the prior, unitary and originating 'truths' of self-consciousness, I examine them as local, context-bound utterances through which different voices and subjectivities are performed and negotiated. However, my own position is not radically postmodern. While I accept the notion that "speaking subjects are composed of

movements of difference, resistance and negotiations between multiple identities”, as Tulloch has claimed, I also examine “the ‘shared’ mental and cultural frames of speaking and performing subjects” as members of professional groups of musicians, subcultures, fandoms, and nations (ibid.).

Furthermore, I am happy to agree with Bourdieu, that although individuals and groups do not have fixed, objective existence, they all comprise variable mixtures of situation and position which make them unstable, possessing the potential for change<sup>12</sup>. For Bourdieu, individuals and groups artificially construct differences as part of their position-taking activity. Cultures are, therefore, “artificial objects deployed in position-taking rather than integral parts of intrinsically differentiated situations” (Robbins,2000:31). In this light, as Bourdieu argues, “an individual can deploy a cultural situation or position strategically to take a new social position”(ibid.:32). This also provides my initial methodological frame here.

I consider interviewing to be about far more than the collection of data. It is not about producing a series of standardized questions and asking these of a sample of people. Interviews are never simply opportunities for vocalizing beliefs and experience. Rather, according to Negus, “interviews are very specific social encounters between individuals which occur at particular times and places”(1999:10-11). As he goes on to argue, interviews are not about “extracting information or truths that are waiting to be revealed”, but “an active social encounter, through which knowledge of the world is produced via a process of exchange”(ibid.). Taking full account of the ways

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<sup>12</sup> See Robbins,D (2000), *Bourdieu and Culture*. (London: Sage Publications)



communication is organized by the contexts of this interaction is the first step towards “a non-naïve reading of transcripts of interviews or conversations”(Murdock,1997:188). In this light, Murdock is right to say that “ ‘if attention is not paid...to the conditions of production of a text, to the reception and interpretation of it by the researcher’, even the most ‘subjective’ sources of research material, such as personal narratives, are likely to produce a new kind of ‘objectivism’”(Melucci,1996:387 cited in Murdock,ibid.).

I use interviewing in an attempt to understand how individuals, that is musicians, participants within the music industry, critics and audiences perceive their role and participate in relation to the issue of music and national cultural identity. Throughout, my intended emphasis is on detailed interpretations of individuals’ perceptions. According to my theoretical perspective, as has been seen above, these perceptions are performed, while they are reciprocally determined by a specific context—the national and international environment. The greatest strength of the open-ended interview is its capacity to collect wide-ranging and contextual information which includes the lived experience and everyday reality of research subjects. Through individual interviews with, in particular, musicians, I have tried to gain more detailed information about their lives by covering micro and macro factors as related to their musical inspirations, the process of encoding (the mixing of selected pieces of musical materials), and consequently the various meanings of particular pieces of popular music and popular music *per se*.

Fieldwork is permeated with the conflict between what is theoretically desirable on the one hand and what is practically possible on the other. It is desirable to

ensure representativeness of interviewees, uniformity of interview procedures, adequate data collection across the range of topics to be explored, and so on. It is also necessary to interpret data and qualify conclusions in the light of how the data were obtained. In this light, the researcher has to adopt a 'pragmatic' approach to fieldwork. It is necessary to exploit the opportunities offered in the circumstances.

The nature of the relationship between researcher and researched in the process of fieldwork is a topic that has attracted a lot of comment and analysis. The researcher has to do more than follow rules and procedures. Interviewing skills have to be supported by considerable interpersonal sensitivity. It is often useful to attempt to establish a common ground with an interviewee and to achieve this in a natural and uncontrived manner. Stephenson and Greer (1981) assert that researchers must be alert to the problem of ignoring data because of the "ordinariness" of the contexts and conversations in which it arises. Blum(1952) calls this kind of interview "interview-conversation". This approach leads to a greater facility in obtaining information.

However, "the claim for research as the art of the possible and the plea for opportunism do not rule out the need for controlled, systematic methods and scientific rigour" (Buchanan et al, 1988:67). In other words, this "opportunistic" approach should not be taken to imply "anything goes" approach to data collection and should be put in context (ibid.). In this thesis, the ultimate goal is to gather empirical evidence on which theories concerning the process of formation and transformation of 'Koreanness' among musicians and audiences in the field of Korean popular music can be based. This goal determines broad methodological guidelines and constraints for the conduct of the

research.

#### (4) Data Analysis: Issues of Interpretation

One of the main problems with this interview-based research is that the researcher collecting data from and about 'subjects' or 'interviewees' has to confront the problems of representing them without distortion. In attempting to solve this problem, we have to acknowledge the impossibility of unmediated access to the thoughts and ideas of the individuals we have interviewed. The analyst's account is, necessarily, an interpretation. We study social life in which people already have their own ideas, concepts and theories about the world. Hence, in this thesis, I am not seeking to develop so-called 'objective' concepts which are independent of the world views of the people I have placed within my study. In this sense, the production of theories and concepts through social scientific or humanistic research inevitably involves a process of mediation or translation.

In recent debates concerning postmodernism (or poststructuralism), the central issue has been the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Among other commentators, Hartley(1987) and Ang(1989) have addressed the problems arising generally from the constructivist nature of any research project, and have warned against the dangers of failing to see that our data are products of the research process. From this point of view, as Ang argues, research is always a matter of interpreting, constructing, reality from a particular position, rather than a positivist project seeking a 'correct' scientific perspective. Marcus and Fischer(1986) have also referred to a crisis of representation. In these debates, the object of criticism is a form of

naïve empiricism which would remain insensitive to issues of reflexivity, instead presuming a transparency of representation. What matters here is ‘self-reflexivity’ about our role in speaking for our subjects. In fact, the object of our inquiry has to be understood in the same mode as the researcher’s own subjectivity. This is “the true meaning of validity in the qualitative zone” as Willis(1997:249) says. He goes on to argue that “we are still in need of a method which respects evidence, seeks corroboration and minimizes distortion, *but which is without rationalist natural-science-like pretence*”(ibid.).

Reflexive, qualitative methodology is usually predicated upon a constructivist or performative view of conceptualization that emphasizes the mutually constitutive nature of accounts and reality (Pels, 2000:3). In contrast with objectivist epistemology, reflexivity can allow “the progressive constitution of the concrete in relation to theory, not merely as an analytic protocol but as a dynamic, dialectical method” (Willis,1997:251). In this way, we must argue for the recognition of the reflexive relationship of researchers to their subjects. In other words, we have had to move away from “‘collecting fragmented data from a position socially outside of the activity observed’ towards a more hermeneutic, reflexive and often practical interest” (Shotter,1993:21, cited in Tulloch,1999:138).

This methodological reflexivity is also oriented towards the enhancement of objectivity and scientificity. For example, Harding (1991) draws attention to the notion of “strong objectivity” against “weak objectivity” of value-free and impartial science, which effectively disguises the self-interest of status - and power - seeking scientists

and incorrectly brackets larger social, economic and political variables. This notion of 'strong objectivity' is further nourished by Bourdieu's concept of 'strong' reflexivity, which aims at enhancing objectivity and scientificity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu insists that the reflexive sociology should not lead to sceptical relativism or nihilism, but rather to a stricter application of scientific method. From this point of view, intellectuals are not free-floating agents, who consider themselves exempt from all social constraints. Standpoints can only be fully understood by reference to the objective structural positions which determine and constrain them.

At this point, I must clarify the positioning of my observations. As researchers, we see ourselves dialectically as both observers and the observed. At the same time, those about whom we write are both the subjects of our inquiry and subjects who, in relation to their own varying motivations, change the world of our inquiry. We observe these actions and are influenced by them. In other words, our perceptions, whether we objectify them by identifying them as 'data' or as 'texts,' are influenced by our position in the world( Basch et al, 1994:16).

After all, we are, as has been mentioned earlier, positioned observers. As for me, I began as an observer, but once I began to speak and write about globalisation and hybrid and multiple identities in this research, I also have become a participant whose discourse about 'identity, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism', which offers a critique of essentialism and is inserted within intense political discussion about ways in which the dominant structure of culture and practice or current hegemonic constructions can be challenged. Here, we must acknowledge that, in qualitative social analysis, we need to

critique our position as observers, focusing on our role in the processes of social construction, domination, and resistance. To put it other words, as Morley and Silverstone point out, media researchers face the difficulty of finally specifying “who writes, about whom, and from what positions of knowledge and power”(1991:161).

Lastly, there is a question to be answered in relation to methodological issues: how far can the theory provide a plausible starting-point from which the case study can be understood? Or how far can the case study provide evidence of the theories for that matter? What matters here is how the empirical material relates to its theoretical framework. My underlying assumption is that ‘theoretical’ or ‘macro’ issues can be illuminated through ‘the case study material’ or the study of ‘micro’ contexts. In this respect, I draw on Massey’s insights on ‘locality studies’ in cultural geography. Massey (1991) rightly asserts that we should try to avoid the trap of equating the micro (or local) with the merely concrete and empirical, while equating the macro (or global) with the abstract or theoretical. Regarding this point, this research is designed to offer a full academic account of the new formation of the sense of place and identity in a peripheral country like Korea, integrating concrete case study material with theoretical analysis. I aim to produce a better theorization which more adequately addresses our contemporary situation through locality studies and to avoid the risk of “a form of methodological individualism which leaves one, ultimately, only able to tell particularized stories of infinite difference”(Morley,1997:127).

**PART TWO**

**VERNACULAR PRACTICES:**

**THE KOREAN APPROPRIATION OF TRANSNATIONAL SOUNDS**

## *General Introduction*

Part II (Chapter 5,6, and 7) is informed by empirical research of contemporary Korean popular music based on interviews with various musicians and young music enthusiasts. Here, I am concerned with how a ‘locality’, that is Korea, constructs (or reconstructs) its cultural identities in the processes of the appropriation of global culture. According to my theoretical foundation, cultural identity or the identity of place is not a fixed condition that individuals seek to preserve, but is constructed by particular groups at any given moment through positive interplay across different geographical places. In this connection, I attempt to approach the idea of ‘Koreanness’ in the realm of popular music as a complex mixture: a range of social, economic and political factors at the level of the national and international are *reflected* in the practices of Korean musicians and audiences, which in turn help to *construct* national identities. In other words, I attempt to highlight the idea of *constitutive, differentiated, and multiple* Korean identities present in the contemporary popular music scene of Korea.

‘Scene’ is a familiar term in popular music studies, but it has been generally used uncritically in the sense of subculture or community, implying geographical and historical stability and rootedness. Instead of using terms like ‘subculture’ and ‘community,’ as Cohen explains, some writers have preferred to use ‘scene,’ thereby “emphasizing the dynamic, shifting, and globally interconnected nature of musical activity” (1999:242). Along this line of thought, I focus on the idea of a ‘scene’ in order to shift emphasis from music as local culture to music as global, mobile culture. According to Cohen, scenes can be linked to “diasporas and to the movement of people,



music products, and sounds” (ibid.:244). In this thesis, I draw attention to the notion of a music ‘scene’ in terms of the fluid, cosmopolitan, transitory, and geographically dispersed nature of local music activity, not in the sense of static ‘scenery’. Considering a global/transnational perspective, the Korean music scene as a local culture should be approached as dynamic, shifting and globally interconnected.

In this thesis, with regard to the notion of ‘vernacular’, I draw attention to the work of Deleuze and Guattari. In their analysis of language in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari(1986) develop the concept of a ‘minor language’, which they draw from the texts of Franz Kafka. For Kafka, a Prague Jew writing in German, there was no wholly ‘native’ tongue: “Prague German is a deterritorialized language, appropriate for strange and minor uses”(1986:16-17). Deleuze and Guattari deliberately denounce territorialism and linguistic nationalism. A central issue I am concerned with in their work is this conception of a ‘minor’ literature as “a theorization of a potentially significant position for vernacular practice” (Potter,1995:66). The mode of power of the ‘minor’ language is that of “variance, deformation, and appropriation”; it does not acknowledge “the constant as a unit of value,” instead, it values the variant; “the ‘minor’ is a kind of anti-structure” and its speakers “perform an ongoing deconstruction of the major”(ibid.:68).

Within this context, as Deleuze and Guattari have noted, all major languages are in a continual state of “becoming-minor” through their production of variation. Certainly, Deleuze and Guattari have found a way to place the ‘minor’, and by extension the ‘minority’, in a place of honor. Yet, there is still danger of a

romanticization of the minor in their analysis. Responding to this, Potter develops his term of a “resistance vernacular” which is different from Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of ‘minor’. For Potter, such a language must take the further step of “deploying variance in order to deform and reposition the rules of *intelligibility* set up by the dominant language.” This is because “the vernacular is, by its very existence, an act of resistance to the *standard*” (1995:67-68). In this sense, it is significant to note that ‘major’ and ‘minor’ are not discrete, mutually exclusive, but rather they are two contending and overlapping modes of power.

To return to music, the question must be asked: in what way is this vernacular deformation deployed by musical practices in a specific locality like Korea, and what are the specific consequences of this deployment? Put simply, I attempt to approach the Korean music scene from the viewpoint of ‘the minority’ or ‘the vernacular’. The dominant ‘major’ has not simply been imposed in specific localities, as it might seem. Rather we need to look at the dynamics stimulated by the content of the dominant culture of the ‘major’ in any locality, and exploring this dynamics in the Korean context is my principle concern in this empirical research.

From this point of view, focusing on the issue of non-Western appropriation of transnational pop, I will highlight how contemporary Korean musicians make their musical choices responding to imported music, and how they perceive their role in terms of the formation and transformation of Korean identities. Here I attempt to highlight that the contemporary Korean popular music scene demonstrates coexisting trends of *indigenization* (or *hybridisation*) and *cosmopolitanism*, even if the definitions

of these terms are very subtle and not always clear. In terms of music, processes of ‘indigenization’ or ‘hybridization’ are characterized by “their continual enlistment of deeply rooted indigenous traditions, which it [music] remakes and adapts to new contexts”(Bilby,1999:258). On the other hand, ‘cosmopolitanism’ is notably characterized by its ongoing experimentation and incorporation of elements from imported genres, taking the opposite route to indigenization. According to Hannerz, cosmopolitanism can be defined as “a certain meta-cultural position, a willingness to engage with the Other”(1992:252).

The first dimension of analysis, that of the process of indigenization is discussed in Chapter 5, which focuses on the group of musicians who are concerned with indigenous style music that mobilises the traditional music of Korea, although they openly adapt foreign musical genres and influences. In Chapter 6 I move to the second dimension, and explore how the multiplicity and plurality of Korean identities are articulated in the processes of appropriating foreign sounds, focusing on the group of cosmopolitan musicians and participants (including music producers, record companies, policy-makers and critics) who facilitate transnational culture. Chapter 7 goes further in this aspect by discussing how young music audiences contribute to making and remaking of ‘Koreanness’ in culture, through the contrasting and differentiated consumption of globally available musical products, such as rap and hip hop music.

## CHAPTER 5

### INDIGENIZATION AND HYBRIDISATION IN CONTEMPORARY KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC: TRADITION, MODERNITY AND IDENTITY

#### (A) Introduction

In the name of progress and modernization, through colonization and global economic incorporation, the spread of Western influence over the past five centuries has resulted in producing a fear in many non-Western countries that modernization and westernization will gradually tend to undermine national culture and national identity. Thus, growing Western influence in many non-Western countries has been an important issue for a long time. In this regard, the case of Korea is not exceptional. On the basis of data obtained in my Korean fieldwork, Chapter 5 considers indigenizing or hybridizing trends that can be traced among musicians and participants in contemporary Korean music production, in relation to the issues of ‘tradition’, national identity, and ‘Korean sounds’. This Chapter concerns how musicians and participants interpret the influx of transnational music, mainly Anglo-American pop, in terms of the construction and reconstruction of Korean identities in culture. In this chapter, especially, I will focus on the layer of the so-called world musicians in Korea who while now seeking access to a wider range of music, also regard themselves as, at the same time, going back to their musical roots.

In the course of this chapter, I will also refer to other studies of musical hybridisation such as debates on ‘world music’ for our understanding of Korean music culture, which shows the large degree of cultural synthesis. My major aim here is to highlight how the Korean pop musicians, interviewed here, reject an ‘either/or’ choice between traditional Korean sounds and global musical styles, and how they exhibit their ‘multiple allegiances’ through their musical practices. For these musicians, ‘Koreanness’ is not the spontaneous reflection of given traditions. Thus, I will consider the issue of hybridisation or indigenization in contemporary Korean popular music, in relation to the processes of adapting traditions to new contexts and of establishing the multiplicity of contemporary Korean identities.

#### (B) Debates on ‘Korean Music’ and ‘National Music’: Historical Perspectives

In Korea, there have been attempts to establish the so-called ‘Korean sounds’ with a uniquely national cultural identity, which are most characteristically applied to Korean traditional music, by many musicologists since the late 1970s. They are not just interested in music itself but also in the issue of cultural identity articulated in music within the Korean context. In this connection, I will look at debates about the notions of ‘Korean music’ and ‘national music’ in Korea from a historical perspective, before exploring the contemporary Korean popular music scene.

After Korea opened its doors at the demand of Western countries in 1876, Occidental civilization and culture began to enter in earnest. All fields of Korean cultural production have undergone rapid changes since Western influences were

introduced. Those who were defined as ‘progressives’ approached Western culture and civilization with a positive attitude. In the field of music, Western-style music has also become the primary style of music in modern developing Korea since Protestant missionaries brought Western music along with the Christian Gospel in the late 1800s.

Although Korea has a rich musical history that can be traced back some 5000 years, the history of modern Korean music is not very long. It is said that the history of Korean popular music starts with ‘*changga*’, in particular, ‘*youhang* (=popular) *changga*’, which was released in the form of commercial albums in the early 1920s, during the period of Japanese colonization. *Changga*, the first Koreanized Western-style music, was a hymn-style song with secular words. At first, *changga* had developed as a form of campaign theme song promoted by the colonial government. Most of these songs articulated the admiration of advanced Western culture. While at the same time, so-called *youhang changga* developed in a different way. Its texts started to deal with romantic relationships and themes, which may tell us something about the universality of personal feelings. These advents of *youhang changga* meant that foreign-style music (Western-style as well as Japanese-style music) began to permeate the routine lives of Korean people which ‘*minyo*’ (folk song, in general) or traditional Korean music had dominated until then.<sup>1</sup>

Within this context, it could be said that Korean popular music originated with the ‘interruption’ of tradition in some way, from the very beginning. This also reveals the ways in which Korean popular music has been socially, culturally and

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<sup>1</sup> See, Lee, Young Mi (2000), *The History of Korean Popular Music* (in Korean)

aesthetically conditioned since the introduction of Western musical elements. The dominance of Western music culture is also reflected by the terminology utilized in Korea. There are generally two terms for music in Korea - '*umak*' and '*kukak*'. '*Umak*', which literally translates as 'musical sound', is used to refer to Western or Western-style music, and '*kukak*', to refer to 'traditional Korean music'. These terms provide evidence of the westernized musical mentality of the Korean people. The distinction shows that Koreans, unconsciously, have come to accept and think of Western and Western-style music as the universal form of music and traditional Korean music as a special type of music (Lee, Kang Sook, 1980:158). Whether intended or not, Koreans have become accustomed to Western and Western style music and have come to think of it as 'universal' music and thus, necessarily the music of contemporary Korea. A Korean musicologist, Roh, Dong Eun (1990) labeled the westernized musical mentality of Korean people as follows: teenagers are completely westernized; twenties, naturally; thirties, negotiably; forties and fifties, partially so.

Meanwhile, there has been reconsideration of the westernized music culture of Korea, in particular, in the realm of contemporary music since the late 1970s. A group of musicians and musicologists who were not satisfied with the existing Western-style contemporary Korean music had insisted that Korean music was under the internal colonization of Western music. They thought that this existing, Western-style contemporary music was not the proper music to represent Korea and that it was nothing but an imitation of Western music. They have subsequently made various efforts to establish a new form of contemporary Korean music with a uniquely Korean identity. Their efforts have been first labeled as '*hankuk umaknon*' (Discourse on

‘Korean Music’) and more recently ‘*minjok umaknon*’ (Discourse on ‘National Music’).<sup>2</sup>

This self-criticism concerning the musical situation of Korea began with ‘*hankuk umaknon*’ by the musicologist, Lee, Kang Suk in the late 1970s. Analyzing the so-called Korean art song, Lee, Kang Suk (1982) insisted on the necessity of the ‘correct’ concept of Korean music. In other words, he argued that to be a Korean art song in the true sense, it should be based upon traditional Korean mode, such as *pyongjo* or *kyemyonjo* that is different from Western pitch relationships and the equal-tempered scale system. Traditionally, Korean music has nothing to do with intervals based on an equal-tempered scale system. So, for Westerners, Korean melodies could often appear as being out of tune. Lee, Kang Suk goes on to argue that Western musical materials are not appropriate for creating Korean music and, that further, Western musical language cannot be the musical ‘mother tongue’ for Korean musicians. For that reason, he believes, the Korean musical ‘mother tongue’ should be based on traditional Korean music. As this discourse developed, its concerns moved from musical style and structure to the musical mentality of Korean people. Lee Kang-Suk links the westernized musical mentality of Korean people to extra-musical (i.e., political, economic and social) factors. This approach, which relates the problems of contemporary Korean music to the social and national problems of Korea, became the main topic of ‘*minjok umaknon*’ (Discourse on ‘National Music’).

This ‘*minjok umaknon*’ focuses on the analysis of the musical history of

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<sup>2</sup> See, Kwon, Oh Hyang (1992), ‘Cultural Identity through Music: A Socio-Aesthetic Analysis of



Korea. Within the 'National Music' discourse, musicologists insist that the social and historical context of Korea should first be accurately understood, in order to establish a contemporary Korean music with a cultural and national identity. Through many historical studies, Roh, Dong Eun (1990) traced the stream of movement toward 'national music'. He insists that non-Korean music, namely 'anti-national'(in his terms), and its supporting aesthetics have dominated the contemporary musical culture of Korea. With the political division of Korea in 1948, 'anti-national' music came under the political protection of the South Korean government until the 1990s when the civil government came to power.

Similarly, Song, Bang Song, as musicologist, has had a great interest in the independence of Korean musical culture and has attempted to explain the problems of Korean musical culture in relation to Korean history (1989: 181):

“If the concept of national music has historical meaning and is inseparable from the nationalism that grew out of the consciousness of resistance to a foreign power, Koreans have a greater need of a national music in defiance of Western music.”

In fact, the difficulties of creating a form of contemporary music with what could be identified as a distinctively Korean identity have been a constant issue. Koreans have tried not to lose their national identity in the process of importing new forms of culture since the introduction of Western music in the 1880s. According to Song, Bang Song, the concept of Korean music or Korean cultural identity is shifted with a change of the national situation. In this sense, he defines the task of forming contemporary 'Korean

music' as the synthesis of Western music and the creative inheritance of traditional Korean music(1988:233-35). It should also be an international music that has universality as well as Korean idiosyncrasy.

Overall, as Kwon Oh Hyang(1992) summarizes it, Korean musicologists seem to agree on a definition of contemporary Korean music with a national and cultural identity as follows. Firstly, 'Korean music' is the concept of a desirable music of Korea. It is not a description of presently existing music but rather a definition of the desired music of the future. Secondly, the idea of 'Korean music' is changed with space and time. It is not a fixed idea, but it goes through changes as the historical situation changes.

While these debates have primarily dealt with contemporary art music, it become evident that popular music can also contribute to the proclamation of contesting national cultural identities within the Korean context. Contemporary Korean popular music is in a transitional state - from its indiscriminating socio-aesthetic reception of imported Western music to the self-reflexive appropriation of foreign forms. In the following section, thus, I will focus on the musical practices of hybridisation in contemporary Korea, with regard to the construction (or reconstruction) of Korean identities

### (C) Processes of Indigenization and Hybridisation in a Globalizing Soundscape

#### (1) Going Back to the Traditions: Hybridity and Harmony

“There isn’t any combination of Western and Korean music whose roots are fundamentally different. There is just a harmony between them”

Kim Soo-chul<sup>3</sup>

“What sets worlds in motion is the interplay of differences, their attractions and repulsions. Life is plurality, death is uniformity. By suppressing differences and peculiarities, by eliminating different civilizations and cultures, progress weakens life and favors death.”

Octavio Paz (1967)<sup>4</sup>

As with nation-states today, Korea is largely the recipient of global discourses for which the concept of origin is becoming increasingly inappropriate. In this respect, I would support Miller when he argues that the notion of ‘authenticity’ has to be increasingly judged “*a posteriori* not *a priori*, according to local consequences not local origins” (1992:181). In terms of music, the current situation is well summarized by the Korean popular music critic Shin Hyun-joon:

“In fact, the history of Korean pop music is that of appropriating and transforming foreign music, while the influence of traditional music on Korean pop music was non-existent. It is hard to say that it was a history of a hybridization process of combining foreign factors onto a traditional background...I think the dominant thinking among young musicians nowadays is to follow the Japanese example, that is, to openly accommodate the latest trend and various techniques from the US and Europe and make them their own, rather than insisting on traditional music...The basic line of thinking is that Korean pop music is a reflection of the modernized contemporary

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *the Korea Herald*'s interview with Kim, 1 June 1998. Kim Soo-chul enjoyed popularity as a popular singer-composer from the late 70s to mid-80s. But since he took charge in the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics festival music as music director, he has been devoting his time and energy to experimentation with combining Korean and Western sounds in his music.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *The indigenous voice in world politics* (1993).

Korean sentiments and life pattern.”<sup>5</sup>

As this quotation suggests, the contemporary popular music of Korea shows a large degree of cosmopolitanism in relation to the present state of globalization and cultural synthesis. However, increasing cosmopolitanism and the process of transnationalism often play an important role in facilitating such processes of indigenization and hybridization. In response to, and sometimes in opposition to, this spiraling process of cultural globalization, some Korean musicians start to go back to the older, deeply-rooted indigenous tradition, which then, in turn, remakes and adapts to new contexts.

In Korea as well as other non-Western countries, there exists an on-going struggle between indigenous and imported, mostly Anglo-American, forms of music. For instance, Shin Joong Hyun, who is now in his early 60s, stunned the Korean pop music scene in 1962 when he formed his band ‘Add Four’(understood as the first Korean rock group) and performed his electric guitar playing at US Army clubs throughout Korea. Known as one of the godfathers of Korean rock, Shin as a singer-song writer and guitarist has been appraised for harmonizing the two rhythms, rock and Korean music, keeping the soft, eloquent and sorrowful minor scales of Korean music in the flow of rock’s explosive power and hard riffs. As he has explained:

“I was brought up under the influence of traditional folk music. Of course, I cannot deny that I was also a fanatic fan of Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Jimi Hendrix. However I want to do music that is essentially me, the kind of music that only I can do. Korean music is based on the kind of sentiments that only Koreans can feel and understand. No words can describe what it means to be Korean. You can only feel it... The kind of musical genres that we have today

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<sup>5</sup> Personal interview, 20 Aug 2000.

are definitely imported from overseas. But the moment music is made by Korean musicians through their creative adaptation, foreign music has become Korean, reeking of traditional Korean hot pepper and garlic...As rock'n'roll is enjoyed throughout the world, I have tried to graft it to typical Korean sounds, in a bid to help Korean music be better understood and loved globally. For me, music is a mirror which reflects a cultural identity. I will continue my efforts to generate such music, although many musicians who worked with me have turned to profitable and commercial music.”<sup>6</sup>

While there is no denying the significance of the changes stimulated worldwide by transnationalism in its various guises, there is also no denying that identities in many parts of the world continue to be constructed on historically-deep culturally-specific foundations, notwithstanding their drain from increasingly hybrid materials. There are some Korean musicians, including Shin, who believe that music forms a window on society and culture and that the music of a society should express its cultural identity. This set of ideas characterises the indigenizing and hybridizing trends. In this context, Korean characteristics and identity are regarded as pre-existing.

In terms of music, processes of indigenization or hybridization are marked by their continual enlistment of deeply rooted indigenous traditions, which contemporary music remakes and adapts to new contexts (Bilby,1999:258). Musicians of this perspective who are concerned with music and national cultural identity, attempt to incorporate the materials, techniques and idioms of traditional Korean music into their music. But they do not reject foreign musical elements and have even made attempts to express Korean characteristics with them. Meanwhile, they have a critical attitude toward the latest popular music in Korea, defining it as just imitating mostly

American commodified music. They criticize contemporary Korean music that there has been little interest in Korean traditional music, which might function as a resource for combining Korean and Western popular music and providing contemporary Korean music with Korean characteristics. With regard to the historic response to foreign musical influences, especially Anglo-American and Japanese music, they insist that local variations should express Korean native musical elements.

However, as Kim, Soo Chul's statement, quoted earlier, suggests, one particular problem here is that a radical discontinuity exists between Korean and Western music, which makes it difficult for Korean musicians to bring the two traditions together into something that is simultaneously both Korean and Western. In Korean musical tradition, there is no polyphony or harmony, as it is found in Western classical music. Korean music has nothing to do with Western pitch relationships and intervals based on the equal-tempered scale system. Thus, for Korean musicians who are concerned with combining foreign elements and native musical elements, the question of understanding Korean music-grammar, which is totally different from the Western one, takes precedence over all others. To quote Kim, Soo Chul, a Korean fusion musician, at length:

“In 1980, my friends and I formed a movie club to study each other's field. I took charge of the music field in the club. We planned to produce a movie, in which the theme was ‘Tal’(Korean traditional mask). The film was to be exhibited in the Junior Film Festival which was held in France. We needed the Korean traditional sound. While I was writing music for the movie, I felt the limits in my ability to handle Korean music. I was very ashamed and suffered from a kind of guilt. So

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<sup>6</sup> Personal interview, 16 Aug 2000.

I decided to learn Korean classical music properly and it took two or three years for me to get a grasp of Korean music... To use Korean classical music, I try to arrange the sound with a modern composition technique. Generally, such a method is called an 'introduction'. People think that such a sound is played by electronic music. This is not a good idea. It is never resolved through the simple 'introduction'. That is to say, Korean classical music is in a class of its own. Western music has its own class. That is why I learned Korean classical music and I perform it because I recognize its difference. I try to modernize the technique of Korean classical music' and create its sound through my original idea. For example, when I play Kayakum(Korean harp) with a guitar, then I must know the compositional technique of Kayakum. My method is to introduce this *harmonized* music." <sup>7</sup> (My emphasis)

The dominant tendency in contemporary Korean music is towards global pop. The primary illustration of this tendency is in the composition of new music, using Korean instruments played in a foreign style and in the creation of popular music in its many varied categories. Kim Soo Chul is one person who is considered to be at the top within that trend. He fuses Western and Asian music through the composition and arrangement of his works and Western style instrumentation. For composing he uses such instruments as synthesizers, electronic guitars, *taegum*(Korean-style transverse flute), *kayagum*(12-stringed zither) and *taepyongso*(Korean-style oboe with a conical, metal bell and a wooden pipe). Through his utilization of Korean instruments, Kim has attempted to create a memorably distinguishable Korean melody. And he has claimed that the sound of the *taepyongso* rhythm and the rhythm of the *Jajinmori* <sup>8</sup> and *Samulnori* <sup>9</sup> are well suited to the creation of popular music. For example, it is said that

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *the Hanyang Journal*, 25 December 1992. Downloaded from his official homepage on the internet, <http://www.kimsoo-chul.co.kr>

<sup>8</sup> It is the fastest rhythmic pattern of all traditional music in Korea. In the rhythmic pattern of *Jajinmori*, more than two occurrences of the rhythmic pattern require a single breath.

<sup>9</sup> *Samulnori*(*samul*=four instruments; *nori*=play) is the almost only 'modernized' traditional music genre

*Jajinmori*, which is the fastest one in Korean rhythmic pattern consisting of four beats with triple subdivision (12/8), can get on with Western four-beat rhythm system. Regarding his own music, Kim prefers to describe it as ‘harmonization’ of traditional Korean and contemporary Western music, rather than an ‘encounter’ or ‘mixture’. This reflects a point I shall make in the next section, in relation to the issues of tradition, hybridization, and the concurrence of multiple identities.

## (2) Where the East Meets the West: Joining the Global Interaction

According to Stokes, “the outside world is domesticated through music” and the domestication of musical difference is an essential process of musical ethnicity (1994:17). Popular music, with its capacity to cross borders, communicate across the globe, and symbolically embody cultural identities, has provided fertile ground for explorations of local/global interactions. Quoting Attali’s argument that music prefigures social history and that the forms of one era herald the social processes of the next (1985), Stokes suggests that “we might at least get the idea of how things could be from music”(ibid:24). On this account, academic treatments of indigenizing, hybridizing trends of popular music in the non-Western world, or on the periphery of the West, have tended to revolve around the overlapping concerns of mass media critics, opponents of cultural imperialism, and, more recently, theorists of postcolonialism.

Recent research on the present state of culture and globalisation contains term such as ‘hybridisation’ or ‘indigenization’ to describe the cultural interaction

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in Korea easily available in the international market. Later, I will look at this genre in more detail in



between the central and peripheral countries or intercultural encounter. The emphasis has been on how local cultures “talk back” to the centre/periphery relationships by refashioning foreign cultural forms and integrating them with locally rooted indigenous traditions (Hannerz,1992:261). In other words, in terms of music, global forces are promoting contrary effects, encouraging an ‘indigenization’ of popular music production and forms on the one hand, and new, transnational musics that transcend the restraints of boundaries. These phenomena have challenged traditional views in music scholarship of cultures as ‘pure ’ and ‘static’ structures, and have encouraged a complex series of international cultural exchanges and a wide range of discussions attempting to assign meaning to the new global order.

Indeed, the situation is more complex, including changing local tastes amidst societal transformation, and there still remains a constant tension in the complex patterns of global cultural interrelationships between homogenization and heterogenization. The process of transnationalism creates in every society “a sector of ‘cosmopolitan’ people (who facilitate global coherence) as opposed to ‘locals’ (who remain rooted in familiar sociocultural contexts)”(Lockard,1998:48). The result is two contrasting political axes that might be termed ‘localism’ and ‘globalism’. However, observers can find the evidence of both processes of homogenization and pluralism not being mutually exclusive. Global cultural interaction or transculturation constitutes a two-way process, in which elements of international popular styles become incorporated into national cultures, and indigenous influences contribute to the formation of new transnational styles.

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section (D) of this Chapter.

All over the world, new styles of music, including derivative imitations of Western pop and creative hybridisation, blending indigenous traditions with diverse external influences depending on the situation, are proliferating. Many fear that westernization and commercialization will gradually tend to undermine cultural diversity in popular music. A contemporary argument that this is clearly the case has been made by the American sociologist Ritzer(1993). Ritzer suggests that Western societies are being organized along lines similar to the fast food restaurant. He calls this ‘the McDonaldization of society’. The idea is that just as a hamburger in standardized McDonald’s restaurants will look and taste the same in New York, London or Japan, so Western societies are becoming increasingly rationalized and standardized. This process of rationalization can be applicable to pop music. From this perspective, the endless flow of U.S. and other Western cultural products results in the homogenization of culture eroding local cultures and values.

Yet today, it is generally accepted that the global flow of music, from the centre (understood mainly as the US) to the periphery has not necessarily been a negative process.<sup>10</sup> To quote Shin Jung Hyun once more:

“Western music, Japanese music ... Whatever...Let’em all come into Korea. There’s no need to be afraid of them. That’s how you get to compare yourself to others, and start thinking seriously what it means to be Korean. Don’t you think that actually tasting hamburgers is the way to realize that Kimchi is the right kind of food for Korean taste?”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See R. Garofalo (1993), ‘Whose world, what beat’, *The World of Music* 35(2):16-31.

<sup>11</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 16 Aug. 2000.

This interview extract provides an insight into the sort of reality in which, contrary to predictions, the influx of foreign music in the periphery has functioned as a ‘cross-cultural stimulus’ in the revitalisation of indigenous styles and “a process that expands, rather than decreases, the local musical horizons”(Pacini Hernandez,1993:64).

In Korea this phenomenon has become particularly evident in the last ten years, as a result of the development of democracy and opening of the internal market to imports. Ever since its inception, the Kim Dae Jung administration has been insisting on the importance of culture and its role in this era of globalisation in drawing a master plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which it expects to be a ‘century of culture’. A three-phased paradigm for cultural advancement has been proposed to accomplish the above-mentioned ambition: firstly, the proliferation of cultural creation, secondly, an ‘even’ distribution of culture towards people irrespective of their economic status, and lastly, the industrial utilization of creative work. On this point, we need to consider Ramond Williams’ use of culture as a term. According to Williams (1981), there are three categories in the definition of culture – that is, first, the ideal, in which culture is a state or general process of human perfection in terms of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. Second, culture is the works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity. Finally, third, culture is a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also institutions and ordinary behaviour. This is a ‘social’ definition of culture. It seems to me that any adequate use of culture as a term must include these three main kinds of definition. In this sense, Williams’ notion of culture as a broader inclusive democratic form is great of

importance in a pragmatic sense within the Korean context.

Among the notable cultural programs of the Korean government are the preservation and modernization of the nation's traditional and artistic legacies and the building of a 'strong cultural infrastructure' in Korean society. As Han Min-ho, Assistant Director of Public Information Office in Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Korea, has explained:

“Tradition does not just mean a stuffed cultural heritage from the past. Tradition changes over time, and is also made by us. This is the position of the government in implementing a policy on tradition that considers preservation, improvement, as well as modernization of our tradition...Culture should now be considered from an industrial aspect. In order for cultural commodities to attain international competitiveness, we have to be able to show something that's different from others.”<sup>12</sup>

Cultural policymakers in Korea appear to have been guided by market theory and profit-driven motives. They approach globalisation as an opportunity which can allow the periphery to gain access to the transnational cultural industry, promoting 'the local' in the world market. Culture, like tradition, changes and develops constantly, affecting and being affected by other cultures, especially in this so-called global age when the world is shrinking into one village. Whatever we do culturally now, we can no longer do alone and in isolation; we interact with others whether we like it or not. And this is the only way that contemporary culture can develop and acquire strength.

Music is a tradition in itself encompassing historicity and, at the same time,

continuity with the future. The concept of tradition in Korean and other equivalents in East Asian languages may usually be regarded as denoting to some extent, not only the past but also the future. As Kim Duk Soo, renowned traditional percussionist of Korea, commented on this point:

“The meaning of the word *jeontong* (tradition) in Korean is something passed down. If we cling too much to the conventions of traditional culture and arts, they can quickly become stiff, like something lifeless in a museum.”<sup>13</sup>

All the members of any generation are not identical, in either their reception or their transmission of tradition. On this point, It is worth noting that “traditions are always at work in the residues, additions, and modifications of human beings’ activities and there is no essential core that can be regarded as a constant core of cohesion”(Luke, 1996:116). Taking my cue from this observation, therefore, I would argue that traditions should not be regarded as being necessarily static and backward; instead they can be seen as very dynamic, contemporary, and forward-looking, because they are actively part of everyone’s daily life in the modern world. This issue of ‘tradition’ will be more thoroughly discussed later in this chapter.

The discussion is motivated by so-called world musicians in Korea who mobilise recognisably ‘Korean’ idioms and styles (especially aspects of traditional music) but who attempt to connect these with more international norms. When I interviewed Won Il, the leader of a unique percussion group known as ‘Puri’, and asked him to explain how he deals with Korean traditional music, he said:

“Korean music can be characterized by the word ‘*sigimsae*’ which refers to

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<sup>12</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 1 Sep. 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in *The Korea Herald*, 20 April 2001.

the movement of notes. It incorporates the unique vibration and tone color, ornamental notes of traditional Korean music. Because of my musical background as a Korean traditional drummer, *Piri* (Korean flute) player and composer, there is an aura of traditional Korean music even when I'm playing Western instruments... I believe my music is a means of communication with my contemporaries. The lifestyle of Koreans nowadays is different from that of the *Chosun* Dynasty. The mindset of the people has also changed. If we call traditional music 'music of the past', then modern music is in the process of being formed. For me, tradition continuously changes, and is right now in the process of being formed. So my musical goal is to make top-quality music that can be a part of Korean tradition after a 100 hundred years have lapsed." <sup>14</sup>

For a young and highly innovative musician like Won Il, who regards himself as a 'world musician' of Korea, simply preserving traditional Korean music has lost its significance as a project. Even though he specializes in every form of the traditional Korean percussion instrument, his style is far from being traditional. By borrowing various music styles, including rock'n'roll and other worldwide beats and rhythms, he strives to create a new wave of traditional music, suited to a younger generation and tries to create a new level of musical excellence regardless of cultural origins. The slogan 'without prejudice, open-minded', as he writes in the sleeve notes of his CD, seems to have been a guideline principle for his music throughout his career and has led his musical tendency to 'world music' genre.

However, in Korea, there are some cultural purists and essentialists who raise a howl of protest, as though any introduction of different cultural products into the country will ruin their own culture. Many Koreans, especially among the older

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<sup>14</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 15 July 2001.

generations, are still not so positive about imported music and insist that the younger generation is interested only in Korean imitations of 'foreign' music. Yet, when asked about the issue of appropriation of imported music and the status of traditional music in Korea, Jang Sa Ik, a central figure in today's Korean fusion music scene, responded with a hopeful view: <sup>15</sup>

"Nowadays T.V. show programs are for teenagers. The teenage generation asserts itself strongly. I cannot force them to accept the Korean traditional sound. But I'm very optimistic. Korean traditional music is currently in transition. And although it(traditional music) is not part of the musical mainstream for young Koreans, it will find a new place in Korean society and blend naturally with the music that young people are listening to, achieving a new acceptance. Above all, musicians have to make great efforts to achieve this acceptance and make the music a part of people's lives"

(Quoted in the Korea Herald, 23 March 2001)

As Guilbault notes, it has become evident today that "not only one given music is used to define an ethnic group and its identity"(1997:33). In Korea, artists like Jang have begun to identify themselves simultaneously with at least two or three different musical genres, from traditional Korean music to the latest U.S. pop genre. Jang explains that although he is not quite sure himself where his music is heading, he is keen to mix various styles of music together in a natural, unforced fashion, avoiding the awkwardness and uncomfortable sense of cultures clashing that can arise from some more self-conscious attempts at 'fusion' music.

By investigating these musicians' own perspectives on such questions of

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<sup>15</sup> Jang Sa Ik can most easily be described as a folk singer, but one who takes his inspiration from various styles of Korean traditional music, in particular *pansori*(understood as solo opera or dramatic folk song), as well as Korea's original pop music 'trot' and African-American music, such as gospel and soul.

tradition, the intermingling of local and global, and national identity, one can begin to see that processes of indigenization and hybridisation in the Korean context do not represent defensive reactions against the effects of globalization but illustrate coexisting tendencies toward cosmopolitan spirit which is defined as ‘a willingness to engage with other’. In a similar way, the recent roots movements do not seem to embrace the essentialist perspective that a deep essence of ‘Koreanness’, which is most characteristically applied to Korean traditional music, withstands historical change. The power of global culture can be instrumental in prising open the cultural sterility of overly essentialist notions of national culture and identity. Overall, the international music flow has stimulated interpretations from yet another perspective, that is, outside the centre/periphery model.

In the process of appropriating foreign music through hybridisation or indigenization, local traditional forms and their symbols may or may not be discarded. As Hannerz argues, “openness to foreign cultural influences need not involve only an impoverishment of local and national culture. It may give people access to technological and symbolic resources for dealing with their own ideas, managing their own culture, in new ways”(1987:555). On this account, the practices of indigenization and hybridisation centre on the active mediation of multifaceted and plural identities, which grow out of, and at the same time remain rooted in, contexts that are specifically Korean. In terms of music, both processes embrace foreign music and Korean traditional music, while trying not to compromise their integrity. What results from this hybridizing trend is a concurrent acceptance and use of several styles by local groups, who assign different meanings to different styles in terms of identification. There were harmony and



coexistence between contesting identities.

In interrogating theories of cultural hybridity, Clifford highlights that culture needs to be understood in terms of “travel” in a world of people in flux, and that we need to focus on hybrid experiences as much as on rooted, native ones (1992:101). Even if all forms of movement are not travelling in the same class, as Cunningham and Sinclair(2000) argue, it is worth noting that Clifford’s shifting of the concept of culture away from ‘roots’ and toward ‘routes’ provides “a more flexible way to deal with the many different kinds of *floating lives* that characterize our time”. From the Korean viewpoint, thus, the issue now lies not in the fear of ‘losing identity’ but in the ways that multiple identities are organized and expressed. It is within this context that popular musicians’ perceptions of ‘local appropriation’ and ‘hybridisation’ - which they tend to view primarily in positive terms, as a condition of forward motion, characterized by borrowing from diverse sources - must be understood.

#### (D) ‘World Music’ and A New Opportunity for Promoting Indigenous Musical Production

Most recent studies of new, hybrid forms of popular music outside the Euro-American mainstream have tended to focus on the phenomenon of ‘world music’ and on the pressures exerted by globalizing markets and the local responses these engender. The emergence in the early 1980s of an international market for ‘world beat,’ or ‘world music’, allowed a different focus on the international flow of music, from another

angle.<sup>16</sup> The international flow of music from the centre to the periphery has not necessarily been a one way process. Instead, there exists ‘interaction’ or ‘transculturation’ between global music and local and indigenous musics and this has become particularly evident in the phenomenon of world music. World music, described as a marketing term for the products of musical cross-fertilization between north ( the U.S. and Western Europe) and south ( primarily Africa and the Caribbean Basin), has permitted music from the periphery to gain access to the transnational industry, promoting ‘the local’ in the world market and eventually contributing to the development of new transnational styles (Guilbault,1993).

During the course of this section, I will examine the issue of indigenization and hybridisation in contemporary Korean music in relation to a world music paradigm. Musicians have started to consider the world music phenomenon as an opportunity for promoting local musical styles and reasserting local identities in the global cultural economy. However, there also might exist a countervailing force such as the commodification of indigenous culture or locality, which is about producing distinct place-identities or indigenous tradition in the eyes of the global tourists. For my own part, I believe that the phenomenon of ‘world music’ as both heterogeneous global marketing category and musical practice is worth noting, in order to understand the processes of indigenization or hybridization and the formation of the multiplicity of local identities.

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<sup>16</sup> A recent discussion, considering how ‘world music’ has developed, what it has included, and how it

## (1) The Position of Korean Music in the Global Market

In Korea, in a turbulent context of media development and globalization, mass-mediated and commercialized popular musics have developed and new styles proliferated, including derivative imitations of Western pop and creative fusions combining indigenous traditions with diverse external influences. Since the 1990s, some Korean musicians have begun to draw attention to the increased exposure of the population to diverse musics from the non-Western world made available by the 'world music' phenomenon. This phenomenon has begun to stimulate musical production in Korea, where audiences are now seeking access to a wider range of music, and musicians are going back to their musical roots as raw material for creative hybridization.

Yet, Korea still represents marginal locality in relation to both the current global music industry and the phenomenon known as 'world music'. In a very real sense, the music of South America, Africa and Asia is being mined as a raw resource in the global music scene: 'mbalax' from Senegal, Pakistan 'qawwali' and South African 'mbaquanga' and 'soweto' continue to be absorbed into the global music industry (Taylor, 1997). The Black diaspora has already acquainted the world with the sound of African music, particularly as picked up by the dominant strains of American pop music. In contrast, East Asian musical elements, with the possible exception of their subtle inclusion in Westernized popular music from Japan and some North American avant-garde jazz, have not become part of international mainstream music. Despite new, original combinations of indigenous-exogenous elements are being increasingly created

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has been marketed, appeared in *FolkRoots* 201(March 2000), written by Ian Anderson.

by the country's musicians today, the vast majority of Korean musicians have not been picked up by the global music industry.

The consumption of Korean music is, thus, limited almost entirely to a relatively small, clearly-bounded domestic market, despite a distinct genre called 'Korean dance music' has become popular outside Korea in places such as China and some countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>17</sup> On this point, we need to look at the economic dimension or the position of Korean popular music within national and international markets. The position of local music is largely determined by factors including the size of home market, the share occupied by local music within the domestic market, relative to that of music from abroad, and the importance of local music on the international music scene.<sup>18</sup>

According to the statistics issued by IFPI (the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry) in 1999, the overall value of world sales of recorded music was about \$ 38.5 billion. As can be seen below in Table 5-1, in regional terms, the IFPI figures in 1999 show that sales in North America (39.3%) were ahead of those in Europe (21.5%) and Asia including Japan(16.7%), which is the second largest national market for recorded music. And the Korean phonogram market was the third biggest following Japan and Taiwan in Asia, with a overall value of \$ 233m accounting for 1% of world total sales.

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<sup>17</sup> The increasing popularity of Korean dance music in some Asian countries will be explored in Chapter 6.

<sup>18</sup> Here, I have to acknowledge that my analysis of Korean music market is influenced by P. Rutten's article, 'Local popular music on national and international markets', *Cultural Studies*,5(3),1991:247-285.

With the globalization of information communication, multinational corporations (MNCs) have emerged as the new sovereigns of the international society, and the music industry is no exception to this phenomenon. Universal, Sony, BMG,

**<Table 5-1> Top 10 music markets in 1999**

	US \$(millions)	% of world total
1. USA	14,251	37.0
2. Japan	6,431	16.7
3. UK	2,909	7.5
4. Germany	2,833	7.3
5. France	1,983	5.1
6. Canada	884	2.3
7. Brazil	668	1.7
8. Australia	656	1.7
9. Spain	640	1.6
10. Mexico	626	1.6
	...	
21. Korea	233	1.0

**Source: IFPI)**

EMI, Warner are some of the most prominent MNC's of the music industry which hold a large share of the world music market. In addition, music made in the USA makes up 80% of the total record sales in the international music market. However, the Korean music record market exhibits a pattern that is rare to find anywhere else in the world music market. Contrary to what advocates of media imperialism might explain, homemade Korean music or 'local repertoire' has the largest share of the national record market. In the past, foreign, mainly Anglo-American pop music, marketed by multinational corporations, had a very strong share of the Korean music market. But, as

we entered the 1990's, the Korean *Gayo* (local repertoire) took the leading place in the national music market. As can be seen in Table 5-2, which depicts the ratio of sales according to repertoire, domestic music makes up 74 % of the Korean music market while foreign pop music only accounts for a relatively weak share.<sup>19</sup>

**<Table 5-2> Market shares for local repertoire within the Korean record market**

	1998	1999
Gayo(domestic music)	71%	74%
International pop music (foreign repertoire)	24%	22%
Classical music	5%	4%

**(Source: The Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Korea)**

Acknowledging the greater appeal to local audiences of national over international artists, *Music and Copyright*(May, 1998) reported that all of the major international record companies in Korea are now developing 'local repertoire rosters'. In almost every case, the greatest part of turnover and profit within the national market came from the local repertory. This rapid growth of domestic music can be explained in terms of the Korean government's cultural policy. In the early 1980's, the government issued a 'Guideline on Radio Broadcasting', which recommended the obligatory expansion of broadcasts of Korean popular music. Since then, foreign music,

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<sup>19</sup> However, IFPI calculated that the sales of local repertoire, Gayo to foreign pop music ratio in Korean music market reach approximately 44:39 in 1999. This under-represents the popularity of domestic music in Korea because local titles sell extremely well on the cheaper and often illegal MC format. In other words, an outdated mode of distribution of Korea militates against the exact estimation of the overall sales.

represented mostly by Anglo-American music, and which was relatively more popular, gradually started to lose ground, due to lack of exposure in the media and the public eye.

Meanwhile, according to the statistics issued by IFPI, in both France and Italy, local-repertoire has consistently taken the forefront in national music markets as the Korean case, and is estimated to make up 50% of each domestic music market in 1999. In the case of China, however, the sales of local repertoire to international pop music ratio in 1995 reached 51:46, which exhibited the relatively strong share of domestic music, but the ratio in 1999 fell to 45:55.

**<Table 5-3> Countries which have the relatively weak ratio of sales of local repertoire to international pop music in 1999**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Domestic Music</b>	<b>International pop music</b>	<b>Classical music</b>
<b>China</b>	45 %	55 %	
<b>Hong Kong</b>	45 %	46 %	8 %
<b>Malaysia</b>	15 %	83 %	3 %
<b>Philippine</b>	30 %	67 %	3 %
<b>Singapore</b>	29 %	65 %	7 %
<b>Chile</b>	16 %	78 %	6 %
<b>Peru</b>	21 %	50 %	1 %
<b>Argentina</b>	44 %	49 %	5 %

**(Source: IFPI, 2000)**

This phenomenon of foreign pop's relative growth in the national record market has become further accentuated in the so-called Third world countries such as Chile, Malaysia and Peru as we can see in Table 5-3. While Korea exhibits an unique trend in which the local repertoire constantly has the largest share of the domestic phonogram market, both Hong Kong and Singapore, which have a similar economic status to Korea, show the relatively weak share of domestic music in their respective national record markets.

Although domestic music makes up 74% of the internal market of Korea, this figure, however, does not tell us much about whether local repertoire possesses a unique Korean style distinct from Western pop, or whether local music plays a significant role on the international music scene. It would be too naïve to assume that the bulk of music of national origin shows a wholly affirmative feature sustaining a valuable cultural heritage or identity. 'Local repertoire' or 'homemade' music, thus, means music performed by Korean artists and written in Korean, and it does not refer to specific genres. In fact, contemporary Korean popular music is indistinguishable from such transnational popular genres as Chinese disco, French hip-hop, or Japanese goth to the extent to which they "rely on modern recording technologies, fusing Euro-American pop sensibility (reflected, for instance, in instrumentation and certain other musical elements) with preexisting local traditions"(Bilyby,1999:260). Overall, in terms of Rutten's (1991) typology, Korea might be categorized as a country with a small phonogram market, with a big share of local repertoire within the turnover of the national phonogram market, and having a relatively small, unimportant role with regard to the 'world music' phenomenon within the international music market.



In this context, there are now certain sections of the Korean music scene who have begun to realize that in today's world, what matters is not just the production of local sounds for local consumption, but the production of local sounds for the international market. As the domestic market of Korea has grown and diversified, competition has driven local musicians to seek new means of self-promotion inside Korea as well as in the international market. While some local musicians are redefining their identity symbols by choosing models from the outside, others are reconstructing their traditions to make them appeal to an international audience. This trend has triggered a new wave of musicians imbued with the idea of rediscovering indigenous culture. This is particularly evident within the so-called fusion or world musicians in Korea interviewed in this Chapter. These fusion musicians are now looking for ways to access the international market. To do so, they have to look for strategies that allow for appreciation of their music outside Korean borders. Their exposure to rap and rock is causing the younger Korean generation to adopt foreign musical genres and to find links of identification with them, though world musicians in Korea are going in the opposite direction. In other words, they are bringing back the best of traditional musics and blending it with foreign musical styles, in the hope of making it more meaningful to international listeners. However, this process of hybridisation has also raised debates on hybridity and authenticity, as will be examined in the following section.

## (2) Whose Hybridity? and Whose Authenticity?

Throughout the world, the massive international flow of global pop, mainly, Anglo-

American music is being countered by the production of hybrid music by local musicians. In this light, the relationship between national production and foreign imports also becomes a crucial theme within the Korean context. To understand how Korean musicians have incorporated foreign elements into traditional musical genres, we need to turn to the idea of 'Koreanness', as an internal identity symbol accepted as an 'authentic' Korean trademark. No matter how intermingled with imported elements, this Koreanness is always expected to emerge, so that the Korean element is never lost but rather reinforced. Terms like 'hybridization' and 'indigenization' have been used to highlight a 'musical exchange' or 'transculturation process,' whereas the local, traditional elements (usually from folk rather than elite traditions), though changed, can still be identified in the final product. We can interpret this process as an optimistic outlook. In other words, through this transnational process, elements of peripheral musical cultures are paid attention to and added to those of global music to keep the latter alive and appealing, as Wallis and Malm have claimed (1984).

However, the issues of authenticity and representation of hybrid music of the non-Western world in the West raise the question of exoticization and commercialization, in relation to the process of marketing hybrid music of non-Western countries. The exoticization of world music through packaging increases the mystique of the music to the Western consumer. There is some irony in the fact that commodification somehow redefines world music as a consumable item, which can be more attractive to the western audiences. Breaking into a wider market is important to musicians in peripheral countries as well as promoting their local cultural identities. In a get-rich-quick, profit-margin world, as Hunt argues (1993), tradition bows its head to

the new social context frequently in the name of innovation or experimentation. Local music interplays with the norms of global entertainment and a 'transnational pop aesthetic'.

According to Mitchell(1996), any claims of authenticity in local hybrid forms by musicians from non-Western countries are confronted with assertions of the hybridization as a result of their 'contamination' by Western technological and musical influences. However, for example, Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, and other western musicians who combine music from other parts of the world are hardly criticized as makers of hybrids even if their musics are as hybridized as musics from the peripheries. Demands of authenticity are not usually made of them and their music. In contrast, it is always 'natives' whose music is called a hybrid. Musicians from the margins of the global economy are always pressured by Western demands for authenticity.

On this point, following Taylor (1997), I would argue that these musicians, who face constant pressure from Westerners to remain musically premodern, are also moderns. In this regard, it is worth noting Youssou N'Dour from Senegal who is one of the few non-Western pop stars on the world music circuit. N'Dour, like many other world musicians, expresses the desire to make a new popular music that incorporates elements of indigenous traditional music alongside the use of local language. But N'Dour has to face criticism that his music attempts to achieve commercial success at the expense of his authentic *mbalax* music. Responding to this criticism, N'Dour explains his position: "In Dakar we hear many different recordings. We are open to these sounds. When people say my music is too Western, they must remember that we,

too, hear this music over here. We hear the African music with the modern”.<sup>20</sup>

For here, it is worth questioning; for whom hybridity? Or for whom authenticity? N’Dour seems to be concerned with becoming a global citizen and does this by showing that he can make cultural forms as (post)modern as the West’s. It is clear that hybrid music, mixed with some traditional sounds and instruments, is modern. In this sense, the classic discourse of the traditional/modern binary, which has dominated Western notions about the West and the rest, needs to shift.

### *Samul Nori*

In the Korean context, one of the examples in reference to issues of hybridisation and musical authenticity is provided by ‘SamulNori’ (=four-man percussion ensemble) which is the only genre of Korean music easily available in the international ‘world music’ market. In fact, a radical discontinuity between Korean and Western music as has been explained earlier in this chapter makes it difficult for Korean musicians to bring the two traditions together into something that is both Korean and Western. However, some musicians, in particular world musicians or crossover musicians in Korea as we have been looking at in this chapter, attempt to change this situation through creating a distinctive Korean style. In this light, ‘SamulNori’ demonstrates a re-interpretation of tradition, which accommodates demands made by changing lifestyle and increasing modernization on a dying tradition in Korea.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Wentz,, ‘Youssou N’Dour: is he shaking the tree or cutting it down?’, *RMM*, May/June

*Samulnori* is today the most popular and modernized ‘traditional’ music in Korea. ‘SamulNori’, as a new and contemporary musical genre, as the umbrella term for percussion bands, begun only in late 1970s (Chong,1986).<sup>21</sup> *Samulnori* (literally meaning ‘playing with four instruments’) is played on *kkwenggwari* and *ching* (small and large gongs) and *changgo* (double-headed hourglass drum) and *puk* (barrel drum) by a quartet of musicians. When it comes to *samulnori*’s evolution, the name Kim Duk-soo is upper most. In 1978, Kim formed his own ‘SamulNori’ troupe along with three other master musicians, who took ‘*pungmul*,’ the music of Korean farmers’ bands, and created its modern form known as ‘SamulNori’.<sup>22</sup> He opened a new era for Korea’s traditional music, which had been long neglected by the public who had lost interest in the rather wearisome and repetitive traditional music. Kim polished the primitive traditional beats and rhythms and added variations that fitted the taste of the people living in the modern age. As Kim, Duk Soo explained in an interview with the Korea Herald:

“I was brought up from an early age to be a traditional artist, but when I reached adolescence, Korean society was already experiencing rapid change. It was no longer a traditional society. I thought that if something wasn’t done to dress our traditional arts in new clothes, they were going to disappear...I have performed classical music, rap songs and crossover tunes based on the Korean traditional rhythms of *channgo*. Now I feel that I can show something of my own... I’m a firm believer in the development of *samulnori* and the need to find new ways to absorb influences from other traditions and styles of music, and to forge a

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1994, p.39, quoted in Taylor (1997), *Global Pop. World Music, World Markets*.

<sup>21</sup> Here we need to clarify the difference between capitalisation and italicisation of Korean words such as *samulnori* and ‘SamulNori’. The former indicates a genre name and the latter a proper noun for a specific group of performers, in particular Kim Duk Soo’s ‘SamulNori’.

<sup>22</sup>SamulNori musicians have identified themselves with two distinct old traditions of percussion bands, namely amateur rural bands (performing for entertainment for village rituals and for farming work teams) and itinerant travelling troupes, particularly *namsadang* (entertaining the common folk during the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910)).

new creative culture that is both traditional and modern.”<sup>23</sup>

Samulnori and most other genres of Korean music draw upon a set of recognizable and named rhythmic patterns (*changdan*, ‘length’). Identification of rhythmic patterns is completely obvious to those Koreans who have been nurtured on traditional music, but not so obvious to those who are foreign to this musical culture. Each rhythmic pattern may be realized in countless different ways, each specific realization being called a *karak*. While there is no specific core model for a particular pattern, as Provine (1998) explains, it is certainly possible to diverge somewhat from the accepted set of characteristics and later return to it, or even for a player to establish a model for a particular performance. Each performer develops a personal collection (or each band collects a common set) of realizations (*karak*) of the various rhythmic patterns, and a ‘piece’ of SamulNori music consists of a selection from the performers’ stock supply (pp66-7). It is part of the tradition that every piece changes over time. ‘Pieces’ are never fixed unless someone writes them down in notation. Flexibility and modification, thus, are part of the habit of this music, SamulNori. In other words, “it is important to the tradition to retain old flexible habits and procedures, rather than to maintain a fixed ‘authentic reproduction’ of a particular version”(ibid:68).

The dominant musical culture in Korea, a rapidly developing and increasingly international country, is Western music; traditional Korean music is a minority interest even on home soil. Many of the traditional contexts of music, both art and folk, have disappeared, and the survival of traditional music is increasingly dependent on its adaptability to the new environment. Historical evidence suggests that

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in *the Korea Herald*, 20 April 2001.

Korean traditional music has always had to adapt to meet changing circumstances, and flexibility is itself part of the tradition. On this account, SamulNori is a musical form that is rooted deeply in tradition but at the same time contemporary. SamulNori as a genre is considered “a welcome extension of tradition, but it is rarely perceived to be the tradition itself (by Koreans)”(Howard,1991:542).Thus, it is essentially a ‘new tradition’.<sup>24</sup>

However, SamulNori is often criticized by some as too complicated, too professional, and too far removed from the old. SamulNori is typically presented by four players who are seated indoors on a Western-style stage and who employ sophisticated modern conveniences such as theatrical lighting. The music itself becomes highly professionalized and virtuoso. Yet, such criticism sharply contrasts with SamulNori’s intentions. SamulNori musicians have attempted to play and develop music from an indigenous Korean tradition and they are “painfully aware that much of the art and history of Korea have been buried by years of foreign occupations and ‘Westernization’”.<sup>25</sup> It is because of its roots in the past that SamulNori has become established as a potent nationalistic symbol in today’s Korea. SamulNori compiled and revitalized rhythms of Korean folk music and created a new genre that can once again play an active role in the society. The percussive music of SamulNori has variously been used to demonstrate power and cohesion by students objecting to the government, by factory workers striking about conditions, and by the government itself presenting

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<sup>24</sup> Later in the section (E) of this Chapter, I’ll examine the growing debate in Korea on awareness of tradition with regard to the concepts of ‘tradition-maintenance’ and ‘tradition-construction’ in more detail.

<sup>25</sup> See Martin, A D., ‘For Korea Troupe, Key Number is 4’, *Los Angeles Times* (15 Jan 1985), quoted by Howard, K.D.(1991), ‘Samulnori: a re-interpretation of a Korean folk tradition for urban and international

Korean culture to foreign audiences. In this respect, traditions are chaotically received and used for various purposes throughout all the generations. They are approached from different points of view – from their own individual, political or socially defined positions. People do not see things in the same way. The point is that traditions are more actively constructed than passively received. In other words, tradition cannot be adequately understood without careful attention to the notion of ‘a living tradition’.

SamulNori’s nationalistic aims are also balanced by an international outlook. Extending themselves beyond their own culture, SamulNori musicians have created considerable collaborations with foreign artists. By the mid 1980s, especially Kim Duk-soo’s SamulNori had begun to produce albums, not only for domestic but also international distribution. They had begun to collaborate with jazz musicians, such as Herbie Hancock and a group called ‘Red Sun’. The saxophonist Wolfgang Puschnig, Shankar(double violin), Bill Lazwell(bass), and the jazz scat singer Linda Schrock formed a key partnership, and released a number of collaboration albums - such as ‘Red Sun/SamulNori’, ‘Red Sun/SamulNori: Then Comes the White Tiger’, and ‘Red Sun/SamulNori: Nanjang, A New Horizon’.<sup>26</sup> Although these CDs cannot be considered a success commercially, this collaboration had knock-on effects in the international arena for the Korean quartet. But Howard (2000) reveals his skeptical view on the collaboration between SamulNori and Red Sun that there was fusion and in effect the two traditions still remained separate(p.456). Howard goes on to argue that SamulNori remained SamulNori and the jazz musicians never really managed to develop significant

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audiences’, in *Tradition and its Future in Music: The Report of SIMS 1990 Osaka*.

<sup>26</sup> Amadeo Vienna, 841 222-1,1989(LP); reissued in Korea as Polygram, DZ-2433, 1997(CD)/ ECM,



improvisations.

In fact, SamulNori's international market presence has hardly developed since their early tours in the 1980s, except in relation to jazz collaboration. While many would consider jazz a medium able to absorb new musical ideas, there are some Korean musicians who would describe Korean traditional music as a closed system. However, as Provine(1998) argues, the most important aspect of SamulNori for Koreans is its distinctiveness as music, that it is uniquely and deeply Korean, both able to stand on its own two feet against foreign musical forces and to join foreign forms on an equal basis to create hybrid music with a dynamic and identifiably Korean component. In this regard, SamulNori musicians feel that to succeed in the contemporary world they must move in new directions. In other words, to increase the awareness of Korean music to 'world music' fans, there is the need for musicians to pursue new ways to absorb other styles of music and international trends, and create hybrid music.

The popularity of SamulNori is still meager when considered alongside the far better known *kodo* drummers from Japan. Often 'Korean music' is stocked under 'South East Asia' rather than 'East Asia' in record shops, reflecting a geographical ignorance. And compared to 'Japanese music' or 'Chinese music', 'Korean music' remains a minority interest. According to Howard(2000:457-8)), there are three reasons why this is so: first, a lot of Korean music is still too ethereal, too distant from Western norms in terms of melody and mode. Second, Korean music has never been marketed in a sustained way, which is different from the promotion of African and Caribbean music.

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München, ECM-1499, 1994 (CD)/ Synnara, NTC-4150, 1995(CD).

Third, the packaging of many Korean music CDs remains unattractive, giving little attention to sleeve notes.

For my own part, however, what really matters is the attitude of Korean musicians toward hybrid music. Compared to musicians of neighboring countries like Japan and China, for example, there are not many Korean musicians who are aware of the importance of producing the local sounds for the international market. In fact, although a new wave has emerged bringing new life into traditional Korean music in certain sections of the Korean music scene, the idea of ‘preservation’ and ‘authenticity’ is still influential within Korean musicians. In other words, for musicians who are concerned with the notion of authenticity, traditional music is perfect as it is and should be left alone by those musicians to go at their own pace – not pop musicians enforcing a change or hybrid. Yet, preserving traditional Korean music becomes losing its significance and endeavors to break out onto the world stage promoting a new wave of Korean traditional music have been made by some musicians, in particular fusion or world musicians in Korea. Just as African music sounds increasingly like American pop, so American pop sounds increasingly like African music. In this regard, some of Korean musicians have begun to realize that the worldly, outward-looking demeanor for creative collaboration and hybrid music is crucial.

### (3) World Music and Cultural Identities

“I know all the arguments concerning appropriation, but at the end of the day, providing you try and balance the exchange and allow for the promotion of the collaborating artist and their own music, rather than just taking, I feel very

comfortable with this idea of dialogue... So, given these parameters, more is gained than lost...It is possible now for artists from different cultures and countries to reach (at least) a limited audience worldwide.”

Peter Gabriel<sup>27</sup>

The growing interest in world music is a search for new sounds, musics, and musicians unpolluted by the market system of the late capitalist west. More than ever, world music is now providing raw material for the increasingly diverse and complex mix of music which has also tapped into the widespread use of digital sampling. With the advent of British rave culture and techno music in the 1990s, for example, often unidentified exotic ‘other’ sounds were combined with the high-powered and repetitive beat-per-minute ratios of dance music or the ambient electronic effects of trance music. As Spencer(1992) argues, if, in the late capitalist culture, consumers continue to define themselves by their tastes, perhaps, to be at the ‘cutting edge’ of contemporary taste, one must have increasingly individualized tastes, increasingly non-maintream tastes, increasingly eclectic or unusual tastes.

The hybridity seated in most world music, however, does not allow us to make an easy case for its coherence as a musical genre or category. Pop has at various times appropriated ‘other’ sounds from around the world. “Mainstream pop artists have never been reluctant to add ‘exotic’ touches to their music in order to cash in on a musical trend” (Goodwin and Gore, 1990:66). The borrowing of materials (instruments, scales, melodies, rhythmic patterns, performance practices, etc.) across fields (nations, genres, historical periods, etc.) is a constant in musical development as Van Der

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted by Brooman, T, ‘Peter Gabriel in Conversation’, *RMM* (September 1993), p.14.

Lee(1998:46) maintains. The main reason for the incorporation of new elements is the need for change and for new musical style. In this regard, in the area of contemporary global pop, the role played by world music influencing the transformation of the mainstream is an interesting one. Although the appropriation of non-Western music and collaboration have often been criticised as a 'exploitation for novelty', musicians, in particular, the mainstream pop musicians have constantly looked at the non-Western world for their musical resources.<sup>28</sup> For example, Paul Simon adopted 'el condo pasa' from a Peruvian folkson, and Brian Eno incorporated African beat into his music. For my own part, it is desirable that we can hear all these interesting and exotic musics from other parts of the world – Mongolia, Turkey, India, etc, as long as those people get the same monetary gain as the ones exposing/exploiting them.

World music is a battle field where "there is a constant tension among forces-profit versus musical integrity, technology versus tradition, rewards-that-inspire versus constraints-that-impede the creation of music" (Robinson *et al*, 1991:277). In a similar vein, the process of hybridizing is not one of absolute free choice but one of constant compromise between what might be desired creatively and what will be accepted commercially. The contradictions and possibilities are inherent in world music. The label 'world music' can be understood as just a commercial scam to develop new markets and to find new material, sounds and ideas in an area once referred to as 'ethnic music'. And the use of world music elements in the West might be regarded as corrupting and diluting of 'pure' traditions. Yet, as Van der Lee argues, "characteristic

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, most discussions of world music tend to be polarized around these issues of authenticity and appropriation. With regard to these debates, see, Feld (1994), 'Notes on world beat'; Goodwin and Gore (1990), 'World beat and the cultural imperialism debate'.

traits (of world music elements), diluted or not, may become an obvious and integrated part of Western popular music, most often influencing the mainstream. Perhaps hardly noticed as especially alien today, assimilated traits have often paved the way for later (more authentic) qualities” (ibid:61).

This cultural mixing results in some new musics, many of which sound increasingly Anglo-American. But it is equally true that the dynamics of hybridization, representation, and appropriation create new, complicated political and subject positions that shift frequently. In this regard, my initial inquiry about the meaning of ‘world music’ practices stems from my interest in the relation of music and identity. ‘World music’ stands in a kind of global/local dialectic. Local identities are nowadays, often produced as a sign of our sense of difference from the global. They are not a spontaneous expression of given local tradition. Vernacular forms of musical expression are constructed by means of a hybridization of local and global musical idioms. Consequently, the distinctiveness of particular national popular music can be preserved alongside a potential global accessibility. The world music phenomenon, both as marketing strategy and as a musical genre, has functioned as a positive form of cultural influence, providing momentum and inspiration for the indigenous musical production throughout the world. In the production of world music, different sounds are mobilized as a way of constructing and/or reconstructing multi-faceted local identities. On this account, the cultural consequences of the world music phenomenon can provide an insight into the formation and/or transformation of Korean identities present in contemporary Korean pop.

The global pop music scene today has been transformed by the struggle of the margins to come into representation. In this respect, I would argue that we need to look at world music and its new labelling as “a site from which something begins its presencing”(Guilbault,1997:32). As Guilbault goes on to argue, the complicating factor here is that many world musicians have exhibited “the multiple allegiances” through their musical practices. And the multitude of positions they have adopted, in various global markets, all point to the fact that cultural identities or subject positions are not lodged somewhere or in something but rather emerge from “points of articulation”(ibid:40). Points of articulation in the process of hybridization refer to how two or more practices are being shaped by and through each other. By focusing on points of articulation, in relation to the making of collaboration between communities as the crucial processes within hybrid music, we can acknowledge “the relational and performative aspect of identity through world music”(ibid:41).

#### (E) Tradition, Modernity and Identity in post-colonial Korea

The cultural context of contemporary life for much of the non-Western world has been very different from that of the Western industrialized nations, with ‘decolonization’ an important part of its agenda. As we shall see in this section, it is crucial that to some extent, the process of indigenization constitutes a form of ‘resistance’ and tradition serves as a form of ‘reflexive modernity’ in the Korean context. On this account, the quest for indigenization and hybridization requires coming to an understanding of those distinctive values embedded in a society’s own history, in other words historically grounded work.

### (1) Indigenization as a Form of Resistance and of Reflexive Modernity

In the Korean context, a process of indigenization or hybridisation might contribute to redefine and reaffirm its own culture and further function as a resource for critical commentary on Western modernity. As Erlmann asserts, the politics and aesthetics of the local can be regarded “as resilient articulations of opposition against Western hegemony”(1993:4). Yet the processes at work are complex. It is tempting to speculate that some of the musicians will perhaps attempt to help decolonizing people to discover their own musical roots, while simultaneously creating new musical hybrids. The current reality of local adaptation of Western culture in Korea, thus, must be analyzed on the basis of its own tradition, and of tradition re-evaluated in the context of modernity.

Korea is a country where foreigners are usually amazed about the state of the relationship between international and national music culture. It is quite common for an educated Korean to be attached to European classical music as closely as a Westerner of the same educational level. But it is also quite common for him or her not to be at all interested in the traditional culture and music of his or her homeland. How are we to interpret this fact? Traditional music is generally considered to be an old-fashioned, backward, and ‘past-oriented’ art forms by many Koreans. Most of the music courses at schools are for Western music, and almost no traditional Korean music is taught. And then, the very little traditional music which is accessible there is not taught by qualified teachers. Most Korean teachers have been trained only in Western music, so they cannot

teach traditional Korean music.

This is just one example which reflects the contemporary situation of music in Korean society. During the 1960-1970s, the modernization project became a national campaign. Korean society was comprised of dichotomous categories, that is, dual structures of urban/rural, the Western/the Korean, and modern/traditional. As modernization was defined as a transition from the latter to the former, tradition was regarded as a hindrance to the modern, and the past was neglected as much as the modern was sought.<sup>29</sup>

In reality, the modernization of Korea was largely the result of the hegemonic strategies of the United States as Kim Chingyun claims (1997: 181-3). With the emergence of the Third World since the 1980s, however, the awareness of its own time and space with regard to the process of modernization was fostered in Korea. Moreover, some Koreans wanted to accomplish modernization their 'own way'. Realizing that there were diverse paths for the achievement of modernization, any idea of the uniformity of the time and space of modernization was rejected and instead, modernity was understood as multiple and diverse. In response to such a Western-centered paradigm, the issue of indigenization began to appear in Korean academia and the distinctive national cultural tradition was highlighted as a potential basis for

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<sup>29</sup> In relation to this traditional modernization theory, see D. Lerner(1958), *The Passing of Traditional Society. Modernizing the Middle East*. (New York: The Free Press). Lerner develops a typology of transition, which is dualistic, in order to illuminate both the portraits and global movements of people they represent. In other words, he puts the Moderns on the one side – they are cosmopolitan, urban, literate, and seldom sacred – and the Traditionals on the other side – they are just the opposite. For him, the West first developed the social process – secularization, urbanization and industrialization – by which the modern state of mind came to prevail, and what the West is, in this sense, traditional society in the non-Western world seeks to become.



'relieving' some of the problems of modernization. This was not peculiar to Korea. The cultural context for much of the non-Western world has focused on the agenda of 'indigenization' or 'alternative modernity'. This agenda operated among Korean musicians, in particular, folk musicians of the *Minjung Movement* since the late 1970s.<sup>30</sup> This *minjung* ideology had a great impact on the arts. Among other things, it stressed native over foreign, mass over elite, and direct over abstract in the realm of cultural forms and values. Students and middle class urbanities became concerned to preserve an indigenous heritage. Counter-measures against cultural assimilation now focus on folk traditions within a 'culture of the masses' (*minjung munhwa*). In fact, musicians operate in a social context which is affecting their creativity. In return, their works become a rite or symbolic action, inevitably resulting in social consequences. Musicians have a role to play as active critics of society - as "guerrilla minstrels" (Lockard, 1998:265). In this role, popular music can serve as a critical commentary on the processes of modernization, including its resulting trials and problems.

According to Sasse (1991), the word *minjung* has its roots in a working-class culture, but the concept has, in recent times, through the *Minjung Cultural Movement*, also become linked to another Korean word, *minjok*, which is related to concepts of racial homogeneity and nationhood. For Sasse, this blurring of the boundaries between these concepts stems from a "process of psychological healing". This process of psychological healing is reflected in nationalistic attempts to establish notions of unique 'Koreanness'. Associated with this is the establishment of new perspectives on the

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<sup>30</sup> *Minjung* means simply 'the people' and 'masses' in Korean. However, it has taken on new connotations when used in relation to culture and politics. That is, the *minjung* are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated socio-culturally.

‘otherness’ of non-Koreans, with particular emphasis on the Japanese and the Americans. On this point, it is of some interest to examine the rise of ‘*nihonjinron*’ discourses in Japan. “*Nihonjinron* discourses are works of cultural nationalism concerned with the ostensible uniqueness of Japan”(Morley and Robins, 1995:164). They can actually be understood as a form of ‘reverse Orientalism’, based on “claims as to the selfish individualism, materialism, decadence and arrogance of Westerners (particularly Americans), and also on an explicit pride in Japanese racial purity, which has been contrasted with the allegedly debilitating consequences of American racial and ethnic heterogeneity”(ibid:165). Overall, the discourse of ‘*nihonjinron*’ stresses Japan’s difference from the West. In this sense, as Sakai argues, defining Japan’s identity in terms of deviations from the West is “nothing but the positing of Japan’s identity in Western terms, which in return establishes the centrality of the West as the universal point of reference”(1988:487).

In comparison to the *nihonjinron* discourse in Japan, the *minjung* cultural movement in Korea approached the issue of establishing unique ‘Koreanness’ in terms of the task of ‘decolonization’, although the *minjung* discourse also seems to stress the sense of Korean identity, which is dependent upon Others – particularly they are America and Japan. Jung, Tae Choon, a Korean folk singer, who since the 1980s has held an significant position in the history of the *minjung* movement, expressed this sense of purpose:<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Especially within the stream of social activism known as ‘the song movement’, the so-called *minjung* music took the form of popular songs for community singing at student demonstrations. This music favored by radical university students has incorporated protest lyrics into Korean folk music, partly as protest against the strong U.S. cultural influences in Korea. There were some *minjung* singers, *Kim Min-gi* in 1970s and *Jung Tae Choon* in 1980s who wrote some fine songs and had some major successes

“As a musician, I am always aware that I am a Korean. This is absolutely needed in order to self-inspect my music. As a musician, I feel the responsibility to develop a *musical mother tongue*, that is music with national identity. I want to express the true reality of my contemporaries in my lyrics, and re-enact ‘modernly’ the heritage of Korean traditional music in my music, thereby aesthetically developing the *musical mother tongue*.”<sup>32</sup> (My emphasis)

Folk musicians of Korea, during the politically unstable 1980s in particular, developed an obsession with ‘decolonizing the mind’, which sometimes meant abandoning the use of Western sensibilities and musical styles in favour of a simple and traditional style of music. According to Confucian thought, deep-seated in Korea as well as in China, history is extremely important as a justification for the value of any cultural artifact. If something can be shown to have a long inheritance, and to possess a historical legacy, then it is of great value. More importantly, the converse is also true: the newly created – whatever its intrinsic qualities – is not necessarily valued as highly as something old with an attendant legacy. Something that is old and belongs to the culture is proof enough of its value and its nativeness. In this sense, the very existence of a form like traditional music is in itself long-term proof of Koreanness-compelling evidence for those people (members of the *minjung* movement, for example) who wish to focus on the native as opposed to the imported. Overall, there was renewed awareness of the role of tradition in forming colonial as well as post-colonial modernity in Korea.

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beyond the agit-prop market.

<sup>32</sup> Phone interview, 7 Aug 2001.

(2) Overcoming Dualistic Analyses of Tradition/Modernity as an Identity-Creating Narrative: Towards their Coexistence

With postmodernism, globalization, and localization, concerns about issues such as nationalism, identity, and orientalism were regenerated in Korea in the 1990s. To try to grasp the notions of both tradition and modernity in particular contexts is now a popular perspective among intellectuals who are equipped to reflect on the import of the 'other' and its local appropriation. Within this context, I will look at the growing debate in Korea on awareness of tradition and identity, with regard to the concepts of 'tradition-maintenance' and 'the construction of new traditions' or 're-traditionalization'.

There are two scenarios concerning the extent to which our age has moved beyond tradition: The radical thesis, that is the 'detraditionalization' thesis on the one hand, and 'the coexistence thesis' on the other.<sup>33</sup> The concept of detradditionalization is based on dualistic analyses and 'either-or' frameworks of meaning with reference to tradition. As Adam points out, from the detradditionalization perspective, tradition implies something stable and self-evident, whilst temporality – the fact that tradition constitutes renewal at every moment of active reconstruction of past beliefs and commitments – is ignored. (1996:137). The best way to emphasize detradditionalization is to posit a comprehensively tradition-dominated past in opposition to a comprehensively post-traditional present/future. Detraditionalization is thus utilized as an explanatory tool for a world of increased contingency in which certainties are steadily shattered and everything seems to open to change and revision.

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<sup>33</sup> With regard to these debates on the concept of tradition, see Heelas, P, Lash, S, and P. Morris(eds),

In contrast, the best way to criticize the radical loss-of- tradition thesis is to argue that realm of “‘the traditional’ is not as tradition-dominated as might be supposed, that ‘the modern/post-modern’ is not as detraditionalized as might be claimed, and that detraditionalizing processes do not occur in isolation from other processes, namely those to do with tradition-maintenance, and the construction – or reconstruction – of traditional forms of life.”(Heelas, 1996:7) From this perspective of the coexistence thesis, Luke sees rightly, in my view that “traditions are no more than traces of practices, signs of belief, and images of continuity revealed in human throughout all the generations”(1996:116). The point of his argument is that traditions are always open to human agency and subject to some degree of questioning or revision. The traditional is always (re) interpreted in different ways in new contexts and society is internally pluralistic.

Accordingly, from the viewpoint of the coexistence thesis, ‘detraditionalization’ is regarded as taking its place *competing, interplaying, or together with* processes to do with ‘tradition-maintenance’, ‘re-traditionalization’ and ‘the construction of new traditions’. This echoes my perspective here. It’s a view also held by many so-called world musicians in Korea. To quote from Kim Soo Chul, Korean fusion musician, once more:

“Some people who, in particular, major in Korean classical music criticize me for my efforts to play a bridge role between our music and western music. Traditional music can be used in many ways. So such a criticism is not impor-

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*Detraditionalization*, 1996.

tant to me. If one teacher taught traditional music to three pupils, then among them, one might try to preserve its technique and theory, another might play the instrument and the third might try to transform and recreate it vigorously. All of these are important. Of course this is a simple example. I choose the third way and I have my own way to use Korean traditional music in an effective way. There is no doubt that what I am doing will stimulate an improvement in our traditional sound... To bring traditional Korean music closer to everyday life and the world's pop music scene is my life-long task.<sup>34</sup>

Over the past ten years, Kim has also undertaken an experiment to reform traditional instruments in order to adapt them to the new musical context. The first target was the *changgo*, an hourglass-shaped Korean drum. He made holes on one side of the drum to compare the sound with that of an untouched one. He found that the sound changes according to the size of the hole. Versatile in everything from pop and jazz to ballads, Kim said his experimentation with these instruments is part of his continuing search for better music, regardless of genre, time and space.

In order to legitimate the new forms and views there was a simultaneous re-creation, or re-construction, of the traditions of the past. The past (tradition) is thus re-invented or remembered to suit a current purpose. In the process of hybridisation of the contemporary Korean music, we might say, the 'construction of new Korean music' is indeed taking its place through the works of musicians like Kim, together with processes to do with 'traditional music-maintenance'. From this perspective, tradition was never totally fixed although not completely fluid. Instead, choice always existed and choices have always required selecting the traditions and adapting to the conditions of modernity.

On this point, I need to approach the notion of tradition by reference to the formation of identity. Tradition retains its significance in the modern world, particularly as a way of creating a sense of belonging. As Thompson describes, the sense of oneself and the sense of belonging are both shaped – to varying degrees – by the values, beliefs and forms of behaviour which are transmitted from the past (1996:93). If we accept the coexistence thesis with regard to the notion of tradition, we also need to reconsider the role of tradition as a way of creating national identity, which has also changed with the development of modern societies. Since the Enlightenment, the binary opposition of tradition and modernity remains fixed as “a primary identity-creating and meaning-generating story”(Luke,1996:109). Like the opposition of nature to culture, tradition is thus opposed to modernity. From their mutual antagonism, as Luke goes on to argue, the new identities and innovative meanings of ‘becoming modern’ are pushed against old identities and established meanings, which are pulling toward being traditional. However, this simplistic dualism must be scrutinized from the perspective of the coexistence thesis.

Evidence of individualizing – and therefore ‘detraditionalizing’ – tendencies in the past helps ground the coexistence thesis as a whole. As Heelas(1996:10) summarizes it, people are never purely ‘tradition-informed’ and neither are people purely autonomous. The person might live a contradictory life in which they move between the relatively traditionalized public life and the relatively detraditionalized or hybridized freedoms of the private realm. Thus, the coexistence thesis can be utilized

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<sup>34</sup> Quoted in *the Korea Herald*, 18 Aug 1995.

most when we attempt to explain how the person responds to culturally diverse modes of being. Interpenetration as a process seems to me to be the key issue for analysing traditional/modern in terms of the identity question. Therefore, “not the replacement of rationality, order and control by disorder, flux and contingency, but their simultaneous existence and their mutual implication need to become its focus”.(Adam,1996:146). Without denying that detraditionalization has taken place, therefore, the argument is that this has resulted the operation of *cultural contradictions* and *multi-layered identities*.

‘Kongmyong’ (which means resonance and a Korean group whose musical base is rooted in tradition, but has created works defying any categorization) is a good example to demonstrate a ‘re-creation’ which accommodates the demands made by changing lifestyle and increasing vitalization of dying traditions in Korea. As Choi Yun Sang, the 29 year-old leader of the group, explained:

“We don’t think our music belongs to any particular genre. We just make music the way we like it. ... I think *ironic* is the way we are making ourselves distinct from our predecessors in awakening the public to the beauty of traditional music. Most of all we don’t believe in sticking to certain formula and reject labeling our music as either traditional or modern. We try not to be bound up by any rule or convention. If someone comes up to us and says ‘hey, that is not the way you should play the instrument’, then ‘that is the way we do it,’ is how we respond... And what I’m doing isn’t actually fusion. Fusion’s about mixing two different elements together. All those elements which are in my music actually exist within me, so how can I fuse those elements? I can’t do that. That’s my music. That’s me as an individual.”<sup>35</sup> (My emphasis)

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in *The Korea Herald*, 20 August 2000.



Similarly, Beck (1992:12) argues that we need “ideas and theories that will allow us to conceive the new which is rolling over us in a new way, and allow us to live and act within it. At the same time we must retain good relations with the treasures of tradition”. These mutually connected and constitutive processes of detraditionalization and re-traditionalization define a new mode of detraditionalized identity, and at the same time construct a re-traditionalized model of the tradition that was to be ‘overcome’.

In short, the issue of indigenization or local adaptation is being raised, analyzed and processed in terms of how to transform traditional cultures(or identities) to respond to global changes within Korea’s own context. The dichotomy of the traditional/modern and the Korean/the other is unable to handle the multilayered complexities of our times. The movement towards indigenization, which we have encountered in this chapter, does not refer to the consecration of tradition. The fact that the processes of indigenization are accompanied by globalization must not be overlooked. As Hall contends, there are often instances when several identities are in play at the same time, in which case international music genres and styles come to share the space with native music(1997:59). Identities thus are necessarily expressed in a multi-layered fashion, so that we might assert what it is, for example, not only to be Korean but also to be young, to be woman and to be modern. In other words national identities have to share images with tradition, youth, modernity, and so forth. The result, as Magaldi maintains, is “an ‘and...and’ identity, rather than an ‘either...or’ identity”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See, Magaldi, C.(1999) ‘ Adopting imports: new images and alliances in Brazilian popular music of the 1990s’. *Popular Music* 18(3):309-29, p.313, quoting Sansone, L.(1996) ‘The local and the global in today’s Afro-Bahia’, in T.Salman (ed), *The Legacy of the Disinherited. Popular Culture in Latin*

The answer to the question of what contemporary Korean music should ultimately become is neither a simple one nor even a single one. The musicians' answers differ from one to the other, and thus their efforts to establish a new music with its own national cultural identity take on many forms. For many musicians, however, the option of 'maintaining' Korean music with cultural identity or 'adopting' modern styles does not present itself as an 'either/or' choice. The common idea of 'Koreanness' in the new global perspective is that identity and tradition never remain fixed and pure, and 'true' to their origins. Within this context, reflections upon the import of 'other' culture and achievement of the indigenization will perhaps eventually lead to the realization of a "global pluralism" or "pluralistic universalism" or "rooted cosmopolitanism" as I will discuss in detail in the following chapter.<sup>37</sup>

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*America: Modernity, Globalization, Hybridity and Authenticity.* .

<sup>37</sup> In relation to the issue of a 'global pluralism' or 'rooted cosmopolitanism', see, Albrow, M and E. King (eds.)(1990), *Globalization, Knowledge and Society*. London: Sage; M. Cohen(1992), 'Rooted cosmopolitanism', *Dissent*, Fall. Pp478-483.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**COSMOPOLITANISM AND TRANSNATIONAL POPULAR MUSIC**  
**IN KOREA**

(A) Introduction

The analysis of hybridisation and indigenization in contemporary Korean popular music presented in Chapter 5 has provided an insight into non-Western appropriation of global styles, which transcends a dichotomised perspective of global-local. However, this model of indigenization still tends to stress the importance of indigenous tradition in terms of the construction of Korean identities, although it recognizes that tradition is always open to revision. Defining ‘Koreanness’-in-culture with regard to its differences from Westernness is nothing more than the affirmation of the centrality of the West and of the West/the Rest paradigm.

In *Music at the Margins*, Robinson *et al.* (1991) outline four stages in the cultural exchange process concentrating on the viewpoint of peripheral musicians. In the first stage, ‘outside’ musical elements and forms reached peripheral musicians mainly via the core industry. Musicians initially reacted by listening to and absorbing new music. This is called the *imitation* stage (stage 1). They began to play new forms, a process that Nettl (1985) labeled *westernization* (stage 2) before entering the phase which is called *indigenization or hybridization*, a supranational process that Wallis and Malm (1984) termed *transculturation* (stage3). In this creative third stage, local contemporary music composers and performers seek to combine their own musical

traditions (usually from their folk, rather than their elite traditions) with Western sounds and forms into original musical statements, as demonstrated in Chapter 5. The resulting process is characterized as ‘a two way flow’. This provides an optimistic perspective and we can also interpret this stage as one in which elements of peripheral musical cultures are extracted and added to those of global music, to keep the latter alive and appealing in its home markets. A primary example in this respect is provided by the core market use of Jamaican reggae.

Stage 4 is characterized by *eclecticism*. This stage includes the practice of taking music from various parts of the world and marketing it to specialized consumers in an internationalized market. This pattern is exemplified by increasing fragmentation in global music genres and smaller production units within the core industry. Here I believe that the term cosmopolitanism characterizes this stage better, that is why I prefer its usage. This *cultural cosmopolitanism*, I insist, represents the immediate future of global popular music. The world is entering an era in which musicians combine musical elements from whatever region into uniquely creative syntheses at a much faster rate than ever before.

Korea may now be in the process of fluctuating between *indigenization* or *hybridization* (or the *transculturation* stage in Wallis and Malm’s term) and *cosmopolitanism*, even though the application of this kind of a linear progression necessarily oversimplifies vernacular practices in Korea. Within this context, in this chapter, I turn my attention to the so-called cosmopolitan aspirations among contemporary Korean musicians, who do not place much emphasis on the issue of

national and cultural identity in the process of appropriating foreign sounds. In other words, I will draw on the 'cosmopolitan' musicians, as I would categorize them, who do not ultimately pursue the positioning of their music in terms of indigenous Korean tradition. They are primarily concerned with building their own musical worlds and creating cosmopolitan music that has a universal appeal.

For these so-called cosmopolitan musicians, the production of a musical form of 'Koreanness' itself is not the ultimate goal. In practice, however, they often employ musical materials and techniques of traditional Korean music for creative experimentation and express Korean feelings and thoughts in the same way as musicians whose music making is in the stage of indigenization or hybridisation. Yet, this is their concern only as long as it contributes to the discovery of their identity for the purpose of the development of their unique musical world and helps them to express their own originality. In this cosmopolitan context, these musicians believe that Korean characteristics are inevitably manifested in music, even though they do not make a conscious effort to express them. Cosmopolitan musicians do not aim at creating specifically 'Korean music' but aim at creating 'their music'. In this chapter I will examine cosmopolitan musical practices with regard to the formation of new Korean identities present in contemporary transnational pop musics in Korea, such as Korean rap and hip-hop musics, focusing on the particularity of the social contexts in which their production occurs.

This study is guided by a commitment to the engagement with vernacular, as opposed to the global practices. In other words, focusing on the contemporary Korean

popular music scene and on the musicians themselves, I attempt to demonstrate that the rigid dualism between the local/global, national/foreign, original/imitative, and cultural essentialism/abstract cosmopolitanism is not relevant anymore when exploring the issue of appropriation of transnational sounds and of identity formation.

## (B) The Appropriation of Foreign Sounds: Transnational Korean Popular musics and Cosmopolitan Identities

### (1) Where You Live is Not as Important as What You Are

“I do not have any particular *Korean value*, except the fact that I grew up in Korea...Maybe I might always carry special Korean flavor in my music. But, I don't believe you have to try to be Korean in your work. Be free to express yourself, as long as it is good work. See Paik, Nam Joon.<sup>1</sup> He does not necessarily force himself to be Korean. He just does what he thinks is revealing in art. *Where you live is not as important as what you are.*”(my emphasis)<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, Korean musicians and audiences have been more openly appropriating foreign musical genres and styles as part of their own culture. Appropriations of foreign genres for the local market by native artists are proliferating, without causing any widespread ‘nationalistic’ prejudice against their foreign origins. For example, since the 1990s, Korean television and radio have been permeated by a variety of new synthetic genres such as Korean hip-hop, Korean techno-dance, pop ballads and Korean rock, that all borrow heavily from their international counterparts (especially Anglo-American

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<sup>1</sup> Korean-born, worldwide-known video artist.

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with Hahn, Dae Soo, 52 year-old modern folk-poetry artist who became known with the protest-liberation movement in the universities during the 1970s in Korea, Seoul, 29 July 2000.

musical styles of all kinds). All the popular local genres are constantly renewed by the ongoing influx of foreign elements. Some of these appropriations and vernacular practices seem to ignore the local identity and tradition in their musical forms, even though they often address local social issues. In this sense, it can be said that Korean popular musics are now in the process of de-nationalization.

The complex patterns of cultural flows today produce transnational cultures oriented beyond national boundaries. As Hannerz (1990:237) puts it:

“There is now a world culture, but we had better make sure that we understand what this means...The world culture is created through the increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory. These are all becoming sub-cultures, as it were, within the wider whole; cultures which are in important ways better understood in the context of their cultural surroundings than in isolation.”

The process of transnationalism creates a section of ‘cosmopolitan’ people who facilitate world culture. Within the Korean context, the increase in intercultural contact challenges the idea of a fixed national or cultural identity, and facilitates the creation of new subject positions and belongings.

Broadcast media can travel freely and reach into any home in any country, in this age of borderless communication. Almost 80 percent of South Koreans are urban dwellers and are heavy users of mass communication technologies such as the internet, cable TV, and satellite TV, etc. With the rapid development of, and easy access to, mass media technologies, in terms of record sales in 1997, Koreans became one of the most

receptive audiences among Asian countries to a huge variety of musical genres – from the music of rappers like Cypress Hill, alternative rockers Smashing Pumpkins, and soul singer Toni Braxton to US/Korean violinist Sarah Chang, to give a few examples.<sup>3</sup> Another reason why Korean audiences are receptive to musical styles of all kinds from abroad may be the country's relative ethnic homogeneity. This allows Koreans to freely choose and adapt foreign musics, without questioning their racial/ethnic origins. In this light, Korea, which is one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in the world (having no racial or linguistic minorities), paradoxically then has become an arena for cultural appropriation and transnational intersection.

The broadening of musical tastes has also been credited in part to the development of domestic music television, with strong local players such as KMTV and MNet (which carries MTV Asia's programming). Koreans themselves are perfectly well aware of the advantages of global products, while being alert to inequalities in terms of trade and the potential insensitivity of global marketing to the needs of small markets. Koreans and in particular, Korean youth form a cohesive group whose contemporary interests incline towards the global system, sometimes at the expense of local traditions. New musical styles from abroad are freely embraced as if they were their own and the older generation's concerns with resistance to Anglo-American music have become, in their own words, 'out of fashion.'

Now, the Korean people face a new situation in which selective acceptance of foreign cultures is up to their discretion, in relation to the formation (or

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<sup>3</sup> See 'South East Asia Report', *MBI*, May 1997.



transformation) of the nation's cultural identity. Koreans are called upon to take action to deal with the above matters from a transnational viewpoint. From the Korean perspective, artists have started to identify themselves with at least either three or four musical styles, from traditional drumming music like *samulnori*, to US rap and hip-hop, and European techno. In the Korean music scene, local audiences find it unproblematic to enjoy *bbhongjjhak*,<sup>4</sup> rap and rock on the same radio station. These days, popular musicians in Korea incline to undermine genre discourse in the orderly routines of mass marketing and to produce a new, mingled genre world, in which rap is mixed with dance or hip hop and *bbhongjjhak* etc. In parallel with this perspective, the new synthetic Korean musics are quite indistinguishable from so-called 'transnational popular music'.

Within this context, in our title quotation to this section, Hahn, Dae Soo, who moved to the US in the mid-1970s and calls himself a 'culturally mixed breed', notes that "where you live is not as important as what you are". Similarly, Gilroy has argued that "it ain't where you're from, it's where you're at"(1993a). Hahn's view of himself fits with Miller's argument that the notion of 'authenticity' or 'originality' is increasingly to be judged "a *posteriori* not a *priori*, according to local consequences not local origins" (1992:181). Hence, obviously, there is a degree of flexibility in the contemporary definitions of "Koreanness," as Koreans start to experience 'imports' as part of their own culture and to create Korean transnational pop musics.

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<sup>4</sup> The earliest Korean 'pop music', formed in the 1920s, shows Japanese influence. It incorporated sentimental lyrics, Western minor-key harmonies and instrumental adornments, and was known as '*bbongjjak*' or 'trot' which is an earlier forerunner of the Korean equivalent of Japanese 'enka'. Koreans often regard this genre, *bbongjjak* as representing the Korean sentiment and Korean melody based on unique rhythm of Korean language. And it is still immensely popular in Korea among the older

Appropriation and hybridization are becoming naturalised and familiar processes in the Korean understanding of global culture. As we live in a transnational era, the distinction between ‘national and foreign’ or ‘original and imitative’, in contemporary Korean popular music scene is neither useful nor relevant. A ‘national musical product’ now refers to the language used in the lyrics, not to the musical genre or style being performed. As Lee, Gi Yong, leader of the Korean indie rock band, ‘Huckleberry Finn’ explained:

“I’m sick of people who call our music Korean rock. Then, is there such a thing as ‘global rock’? My music represents myself. I write songs like I write a diary about my problems and me, and lost souls searching for something. I do not specifically try to implement ‘Koreanism’ in my music. But if I become an international rock star, people may call me ‘Korean star’, who knows? ...A good song is always a ‘good song’, no matter who wrote it or where it came from. ‘*Arirang*’ (=Korean folk song) is eternal and ‘Danny boy’ is eternal. Better be natural and write songs that have meaning for me and my surroundings, without thinking of the politics of origin. Nationality in music should be done away with. It’s me, the individual that counts. A human being, by himself is a universe. Music is done by music, thus those with an excellent mind come up with good music. For me, music is a means of expressing myself. And to express myself, I can appropriate whatever musical resources I want, be they Korean or foreign.”<sup>5</sup>

Lee sees himself as someone who has chosen a transnational or cosmopolitan position, situated at the birthplace of new transnational cultures. The new media technologies increasingly create a ‘global city’, so that cultural synthesis overreaches everyday life. Most societies can no longer be understood as self-contained, authentic, meaning-making communities, rather most cultures are partly derivative and mutually entangled

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generation.

in the complex interplay between the national and global. In this sense, the process of transnationalism now produces what Hannerz (1996) calls, “a global ecumene”, focusing on global cultural interaction.

In this reality, the old norms of nationhood and identity are broken down. Musical hybridity mirrors just the way we are, that is, the reality of Korea today. On this point, contemporary Korean music has provided one of the key contexts in which national cultural identities have been constructed, contested, and affirmed, moving along with the times and the people. From the Korean point of view, what results from their vigorous exposure to foreign musical genres is diverse uses of various styles by local musicians who then create different forms and modes of identification. Thus, what really matters here is how the multiplicity and plurality of identities are being organized and expressed, not the fear of losing national cultural identity.

However, there is always a fear among non-Western societies that the pop musics of the powerful Western nations might inevitably destroy the rich local musical traditions; that homogenization will replace diversity. For example, this fear has led the Korean government in the early 1980's, to impose restrictions on how much foreign music can be played on the radio. The government issued a ‘Guideline on Radio Broadcasting’, which recommended the obligatory expansion of Korean music broadcasts. Yet it can be convincingly argued that Korean popular music started out by absorbing foreign music. Korean ‘*Gayo*’ developed over a period of 80 years,

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<sup>5</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 20 August 2000.

intermingling with imported musics.<sup>6</sup> *Gayo*, according to Park Ae-kyung(2000), has a few distinct characteristics. First, *gayo* is a product of the modern society, and is different from the '*minyo*'(=traditional folk song) from the pre-modern times. Second, Korean popular music was first composed during the Japanese colonization period, and is distinct from traditional Korean music. For example, *pphongjjak*, which is regarded as a Korean traditional popular musical genre, was influenced by the Japanese 'anka' music, springing from 34 years of Japanese domination of Korea.

From the 1950's, with the end of the Japanese colonization period, the Western seven note musical scale started to be implemented into Korean popular music, where the traditional 'five note musical scale' had previously been the prevalent form. (Lee Young Mi., 2000:198). In the 1960's, music based on Western minor/major scales and ideas of harmony was prominent in the Korean popular music scene, in the form of 'easy listening' music. The evolution of Korean popular music until now has long involved the process of indigenizing popular music imported from the West, it is not simply a recent phenomenon. The phenomenon known as the 'Group Sounds' boom of the late 1960's, basically influenced by rock and blues bands such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix, was one example, and so was the 'pop ballad' of the 1980's, which is now the best selling genre in the Korean music industry. Foreign cultures have been continuously accommodated, throughout the development of Korean popular culture. This phenomenon of 'cultural appropriation' was of course, more prominent in the case of cultural products imported from countries that had a strong politico-economic influence on Korea, especially the United States. After the mid-

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<sup>6</sup> Korean popular music at large is being called *gayo*.

1990's, the orientation of the Korean pop music towards the US could be said to have reached its peak. Black music, such as hip-hop and rap music, which used to be a subculture of American popular music, and established itself as mainstream music in the 1990's, influenced Korean popular music heavily.

These 'appropriated' imported musics had their origins in the developed countries, and they acted as important means to satisfy the Korean people's desire for 'westernization'.<sup>7</sup> In the post-colonial era, the Koreans tended to look up to the West as a role model. For the most part, western culture is clearly identified in the economic periphery with 'First World' images of progress, technology, and modernity. According to Kim Nam Il (2000), every time Korean popular music moved on to another level, with the import of a new strand of foreign culture, the existing popular cultures were discarded as outmoded, including even those that had already been 'localized'.

However, a whole generation has now grown up in an affluent Korea, and these young people do not idolise the West in the same way. These days, home-grown musics and artists occupy the leading place in the Korean music market, which is no longer dominated by cover versions or subservient imitations of Western forms.<sup>8</sup> Further, Korean youth seem to believe that all pop music is the product of the assimilation and adaptation of other forms of music. These cultural manifestations are multi-faceted, because societies can use imported music and music technology for their own purposes. National cultures are not always damaged by the influx of foreign musical forms, as

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<sup>7</sup> See, Kim, Nam Il (2000), pp69-87.

<sup>8</sup> In relation to this issue of the position of domestic music in the Korean music market, see Chapter 5 (D).

cultural purists fear. These transitions and encounters have not always gone smoothly, but they have often been creative. As Shin Hyun Jun, the Korean music writer, remarked when talking about how the pressures which have been placed on Korean local artists by the expectations of cultural purists can be problematic:

“Doubts about the cultural identity of Korean popular music itself could reflect the western version of authenticity. For instance, look at Japan. Does Japanese music really possess a Japanese colour? This is not always the case. Instead of stressing Japanese colour, the Japanese pursued music that could appeal to an international audience. As a result, Kyu Sakamoto had a Billboard #1 already in the 60’s with ‘sukiyaki’, and have succeeded in securing a share of the American music market.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Said, one need to view the politics of culture within “overlapping territories” and “intertwined histories”(1993). It is now impossible to speak of Korean culture without understanding these “overlapping territories”. In this light, the key question becomes how to render explicit the multiple influences that resonate within a local or national context. In other words, the perspective that I attempt to develop in this study is concerned with exploring the formation of new, multifaceted national cultural identities’ and the complex and changing nature of social and cultural life in Korea.

## (2) Social Context, Authenticity, and Identity

The global presence of ‘Western’ cultural products is often criticized for spreading

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<sup>9</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 20 August 2002.

western values and lifestyles in a non-Western country like Korea, because it is difficult to embrace the former while ignoring or rejecting the latter. Can it be the case that instances of syncretism between national cultures and global cultural products lead to global homogenization, as some Korean nationalists and essentialists fear?

Many of the examples presented both in this and the previous chapter demonstrate that, while western musics are indeed spreading across the globe, there is nonetheless a significant amount of variation in the ways in which these musics are received by different peoples. When non-western peoples consume western cultural products, they do not necessarily “swallow them whole, symbolic values and all, but rather ‘season’ them according to their own tastes and customs”(Howes, 1996:182). In the process of appropriating foreign music, local traditional forms and their symbols may, or may not, be discarded. In fact, ‘Koreanness’, associated with traditional music, is no longer prevalent in contemporary Korean popular music. It might be said that there is no authenticity or originality in Korean pop music, at least stylistically. In other words, sound and instrumentation in home-made Korean pop music are not different from those of Western music and there is no clear sense in which the listener might easily recognize any of them as ‘Korean’, in the way that reggae, for example, is recognizable as Caribbean.

Since Korean pop music started around 1920s during the Japanese colonization period, it did not include traditional musical elements. As Paik Hyun Jin, leader of popular indie band, ‘Uuhboo Project Sound’ in Korea, explained:

“There are two main branches in Korean popular music-‘*pphongjjak*’ from Japanese influence, and rock/pop from American. Korean pop music is like a child without her parents. Thus, ‘Korean pop music’ is something that we have to make right now. It exists in its present-continuous form. Korean music that expresses Korean feelings, based on the cultural, political experiences of the contemporaries is what I would like to call Korean pop music, regardless of its form. In other words, wouldn’t music that expresses the everyday fatigue that the modern person feels be more in conformity with Korean sentiments and thus be called Korean music, rather than music that just appropriates traditional factors? For God’s sake, we have to admit the change of the times.”<sup>10</sup>

Since the dominant discourses about popular music and Korean identities are based on the critical analyses of the existing westernized music culture and commercialism of contemporary Korean popular music scene, the definitions of ‘Koreanness’ or ‘Korean cultural identity’ articulated in popular music are different among various musicians and intellectuals. Nevertheless, most of the musicians whom I interviewed seem to agree that Korean cultural identity attains a ‘present-continuous form’ rather than remaining fixed and true to its origin. Musical representation of national identities and popular music in itself cannot be detached from broader aspects of society and the ways in which socioeconomic change affects people and their positions. As this interview extract serves to illustrate, popular music with Korean identities does not just include an identifiably Korean musical style, but also to an expression of the people, a reflection of their feelings and sensibilities that can be shared with the contemporaries.

Similarly, when asked how ‘pop music with distinct Korean identities’ can be described, Lee, Dong Yeon, a cultural critic, responded:

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<sup>10</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 14 July 2001.



“Korean pop music cannot be defined by a particular genre or style. In other words, just like we cannot say that a certain kind of music is Korean because it borrows traditional musical rhythm or melody, we cannot say that a certain kind of music is not Korean because it is influenced by imported genres. Korean pop music is the kind of music that embodies a ‘Korean social context’, music that contains the contemporary social trend and mindset. The problem of identity should be looked upon not only from a musicological perspective, but also within the politico-economic context.”<sup>11</sup>

While there is no denying the large degree of changes wrought worldwide by transnationalism in its various guises, there is also no denying that identities in many parts of the world continue to be constructed upon historically-deep, culturally-specific foundations, though made from eclectic materials. In defining pop music by reference to Korean identity, the answer might depend on whether you look at its musical aspect or social aspect. From the former point of view, it is difficult to identify a distinctive genre or music that exhibits the characteristics which are traditionally Korean. From a social perspective, however, the answer is different.

At this point, we need to discuss the ways in which ‘social context’ affects cultural identity formulations. The notion of ‘social context’ utilized here refers to the socio-political circumstances and the immediate set of class, community, gender as well as cultures and discourses into which individual subjects place themselves. The relationship between self and society is viewed as a dynamic and integrated process, whereby identity formations work within, and contribute to, defined social realms of

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<sup>11</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 18 July 2000.

association (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This approach moves away from the search for 'essential' and 'fixed' identities, towards a perspective that sees national cultural identity as a multifaceted phenomenon that may change through time and place. Within this context, we need, on the one hand, to view cultural meanings and identities as in a constant state of negotiation and evolution, and on the other, to be sensitive to the social context in which these processes of negotiation and evolution take place. Put differently, we need to overcome enduring dualism between so-called reflection and construction theories, and instead to focus on the 'mutual establishment' of musical and social self, which can allow for retention of insights from both perspectives.

Meanwhile, when it comes to music, traditional sounds evoke nostalgia for an 'authenticity' or 'originality' which bears little relation to the social and political context of knowledge. Increasingly, issues of authenticity appear problematic, particularly from the vantage point of the periphery, since the focus on authenticity in musical discourses has served to exoticise non-Western musics. As Middleton has noted, "the primary motives for ethnomusicological exoticism...lie in value judgements about 'authenticity' in musical culture"(1990:146). On the whole, most discourses about authenticity have, at bottom, an assumption about an essential, real, actual, essence of identity. And this essence, in music, is "an assumption of original, untainted ways of musicking and sounding" (Trilling, 1969). In this sense, the adoption by non-Western musicians of international styles and musical genres, mostly derived from dominant cultures, has often been regarded as being inauthentic and imitative. When musicians from the non-Western world appropriate the music 'as is' and re-interpret it with the resources at hand, their performances are then often be seen as nothing but cheap

imitations (Magaldi, 1999).

In a similar vein, Taylor has argued that “the West, while it views its citizens as occupying many different subject positions, allows ‘natives’ only one, and it is whatever one the West wants at any particular moment” (1997:21). For example, the Westerners constantly make a demand that these non-Western musicians remain premodern, untainted, and thus musically ‘the same’ as they ever were. However, the problem here is that there are multiple subject positions available to people everywhere, in the ‘Third World’ as much as in the First, and multiple interpretations and constructions of those positions. Authenticity or originality in music cannot be explained by these old binary discourses and expectations. According to Taylor, Anglo-American musicians rarely make musics that are heard as hybrids, but instead are placed in more prestigious categories and praised as engaging ‘creative rebirth’, even if their musics are every bit as hybridized as musics from the peripheries. In the light of this, Dalpala, known as Korea’s first techno DJ, enthusiastically explains that:

“When I first came across techno music, I liked the feeling of the music. It was some kind of a post-modern feeling. The state of trance that is attained through a chaos of mixture of everything...Rave music is in some aspect like our traditional shamanistic performance of an exorcist. That’s why I get myself all the more engrossed in it...You can say that the code of Western pop music dominates the world. But western musicians are equally influenced by the various cultures and music of non-western countries. But is there anyone who argues with the Western musicians over their ‘originality’? In fact, the assertion of authenticity in hybrid Korean pop music, is largely a product of Western power politics. Let’s assume that the balance of power tips in favour of our side. Who would be saying anything about what kind of music we are making? In a broader sense, all music that is made in Korean and is enjoyed by the

Korean people is Korean, I think.”<sup>12</sup>

While western consumers often manifest a desire for ‘authenticity’ when consuming the products and images of other cultures, it is an idea of authenticity defined from a Western, and not a non-Western perspective. But this so-called ‘tourist gaze’, within the West, also occurs within the non-western countries. In other words, the authenticity of a culture and cultural identity is approached through the wishes of the West. Local peoples come to think of what is, in fact, a western-defined version of their culture as what is authentic.<sup>13</sup> For my own part, this phenomenon seems to reflect the fact that the colonized accepts the hegemonic position of the colonizer, which emphasises the danger of local musicians losing their cultural identity, as if there were no other options but to simply imitate, when they adapt foreign cultural forms.

As Frith (2000) suggests, in his overview of recent work on transnational popular musics, hybridity has been reinflected by popular music scholars as a new form of authenticity. In an era of globalisation, the synthetic nature of contemporary cultural identities is powerfully affirmed. The dynamics of incorporation, representation and appropriation has now begun to create complicated and ambivalent political and subject positions that shift frequently. In a similar vein, Hannerz (1996) claims that creativity is realized when boundaries are broken, creating a new synthesis or hybrid. But as Frith highlights, at the same time, we also need to look closely at the ways in which transnational music articulates synthetic identities in ‘specific local contexts’. In the

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<sup>12</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 21 August 2001.

<sup>13</sup> In postcolonial theory, especially, this appropriation of the ‘gaze’ of the colonizer by the colonized has been the subject of many debates. See Spivak, G.C.(1990) *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*.

following section, I will, therefore, look closely at how the multiplicity of ‘Korean identities’ are articulated in transnational Korean pop musics, such as rap and hip hop, focusing on their sociocultural contexts.

### (3) Korean Rap and Hip Hop & Vernacular Practices

As the consequences of the transnational interconnectedness of the world become increasingly clear, many cultural theorists question the conventional assumption of exploitation under western hegemony and the fear of losing cultural diversity in popular music. This section intends to show how Korean musicians appropriate imported genres - such as rap and hip hop - with regard to the construction (or reconstruction) of Korean identities. In other words, I want to explore how the multiplicity and plurality of national cultural identities are configured in the process of producing a variety of cultural mixtures.

As in the West, in the 1990s, Korea has seen the rise of rap and house and dance music. The emergence, in this past decade, of a new form of Korean pop music began with the appearance of Korea’s most famous rap group ‘*Seotaiji and the Boys*’ in the early 90s. Cult rapper *Seotaiji* brought the dance revolution to the Korean pop music scene. *Seotaiji and Boys*, a three-member rap group he formed in 1991, won a huge following among youth, by addressing issues such as national unification and Korea’s ‘soul-destroying’ school system. He became the founder of the Korean subculture, brought hip-hop beat, rap and dance into a mainstream scene previously dominated by ballad-like music, thus overcoming the barrier of the dominance of that genre. His songs

feature new forms of ‘harmony’ between oriental and western music, crossed with each other. Described by one critic as a “puzzling jumble of New Age songs,” his music achieved astounding sales, chiefly driven by the explosive demand among teenagers, longing for new musical styles.<sup>14</sup> Since this first rap star in Korean pop music scene successfully combined rap music with the Korean language, numerous rap-dance groups have appeared, rendering rap music one of the mainstreams of Korean popular music today.

With the beginning of the 1990’s, a discourse on the so-called ‘new generation (=shinsaedae) culture’ started to form in Korea, and the focus within the realm of popular music lay on rap, dance music and the ‘Seotaiji’ phenomenon as described above. The so-called ‘shinsaedae’, young Korean people, whose attitudes supposedly differ from those of previous generations, began to exploit alternative lifestyles and new cultural movements with a vigour previously unimagined since its 1990s. *Shinsaedae*, who have now grown up in an affluent Korea, do not admire the West the same way as the older generation did. These young Korean audiences started listening to home-produced music, rather than western music. Domestic music sales accounted for 74% of all music sales in the domestic market in 1999, as figures issued by the Recording Industry Association of Korea (RIAK) show. Korean popular music, generally referred to as *gayo*, which has been intermingled with imported sounds over a period of 80 years, is no longer dominated by cover versions or robotic imitations of Western music. Young Koreans believe that to accuse synthetic Korean pop music of not being original is to ignore the fact that all pop music is the product of the adaptation

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<sup>14</sup> See “Seotaiji hits”, *Dong-a ilbo*, 10 September 2000.

of other forms of music. Changes in Korea's rapidly developing society are dramatically altering the attitude of young people, faster than adults seem able to cope with. For *Shinsaedae* musicians, a transnational pop culture is freely embraced as if it were their own and where the music comes from does not matter to them anymore.

Rap music originated as an important musical means to express anger about the reality of the urban Black American ghettos, as well as a way of forming Black American identities. It rapidly spread throughout the world, via the commercial network and established itself as a part of the subculture of the world. In the meantime, a mass movement has grown out of this ghetto music culture, in which there are countless national and stylistic versions. In rap, in other words, we have a musical form which seems to spring effortlessly across national and genre-specific borders, and which exists in almost every language, taking on the most important musical styles from classic to jazz to rock. As Neumann suggests, rap music has become a "mouthpiece communicating the feelings of many youths around the world, and has taken the place of rock music, among other musics"(2000:62). Within this context, it is important to examine a plurality of 'vernacular' practices, to understand how rap and hip hop contains different meanings in different countries.

With regard to the meaning of the 'vernacular' or vernacular practice, it is worth noting Houston A Baker's definition, according to which "the *vernacular* in relation to human beings signals *a slave born on his master's estate*. In expressive terms, the vernacular indicates *arts native or peculiar to a particular country or locale*"(1984:2). In the light of this, the vernacular can function for its speakers as "a

badge of identity”. According to Potter, there is even a coherent linguistic situation that can be referred to as ‘vernacular’, despite differences of race, class, and historical circumstance:

“A language with a nation that exists outside of or against a nation, a culture whose condition is that of exile, wandering, and resistance to a dominant power”. (1995: 56)

Through the analysis of hip-hop as a vernacular artform, Potter continues to assert that the vernacular works as a “guerilla incursion”, which is similar to de Certeau’s phrase, a “tactics”. In other words, it “steals language, steals sounds, steals media spotlight, then slips away, regrouping at another unpredictable cultural site”(ibid.:70).

Meanwhile, whatever the elements of variance in a given vernacular, there are clearly two general classes of vernacular practices, classes whose difference is both a product and a producer of the postcolonial experience. According to Potter, on the one hand there are ‘hegemonic vernaculars’, such as the arbitrary status of the privileged ‘standard’ dialect of English. On the other hand there are what he would call ‘resistance vernaculars’, which are posed against ‘standardness’, appropriating and subverting the dominant vernacular’s claim to ‘standardness’. In fact, all cultures, in a sense, are part of the vernacular continuum. There is a power struggle at work in all vernacular practices. The resistance vernacular attempts to deform the order of things that the dominant vernacular highlights. In this light, Potter is right to argue that the vernacular is, by its very existence, an act of “resistance to the standard” and of “deformation of mastery”.



Recently, some of Korean young people have started to use rap and hip hop music as a way of expressing their identities. Given transnational and mobile cultural movements and appropriations, it is vital that hip hop itself not be read simply within the context of African-American cultures. Instead, the issue now revolves around hip-hop's tie with the tradition of "resistance vernacular" in Potter's terms. The following extract is taken from the 'Korea Herald', which interviewed 'The People Crew', a Korean hip hop group. To take one example:

Herald: Which artists do you guys listen to?

P.C.: We all have really different tastes, but the ones that inspire us are Notorious B.I.G., Big Pun, RUN DMC, Dr. Dre...just to name a few.

Herald: Can you explain Korean hip-hop culture?

P.C.: Hip-hop has taken off in Korea-not only in the music sense, but in fashion, life-style, and philosophy. Basically, we see hip-hop as a subculture of our society. Obviously we look to the West for inspiration, but we enculturate the U.S. influence into a uniquely Korean entity. As D (=producer and songwriter of P.C.) always says, "Hip hop doesn't make you, you make hip-hop." This is totally true. Hip hop is about expression and personalizing your experiences into a creative form.

Herald: How do you think Korean-style hip-hop differs from American hip-hop?

P.C.: Well, this is something that everyone asks us. Regarding rhymes, it's really simple. We can't rap about things we don't know, so basically, we rap about our social situation in Korea. But one thing that appears to be distinct in K-Hiphop is the existence of more melodies. There are so many differences between Korean-style and American-style rapping, but you really can't compare apples and oranges. Each has its own style that is unique and geographically and culturally specific in its content.

(The Korea Herald, 16 June 2000)

The situation of hip hop as a vernacular artform is unstable, centred around the impossibility of closure. "Like the toasters and sound-system DJs of ska and reggae, hip hop takes version as a verb, not a noun"(Hebdige:1987). Hip hop music as an act of

cultural appropriation continually reinvents itself and travels the globe. Even as it remains a global music, it is firmly rooted in the local and it is music about ‘where I’m at’. Thus, this proposes ‘a new kind of universality’, based on an assemblage of local and global elements. In other words, hip hop, along with other vernacular practices, needs to be seen “as part of a new structural order which is both local *and* global at the same time”(Potter, 1995:146).

Meanwhile, in relation to the question of the adoption of local elements or the attempt to produce a ‘Korean’ form of hip hop, in the Korean context there also appears ‘cultural purism to musical aesthetics’, which does not allow any contamination in the process of appropriating foreign genres. This tendency is prominent among some young Korean-American musicians, who started to invade the Korean pop music scene since the mid 1990s, the majority of which are second or third generations Korean-American emigrants. The growing influx of American-born and Korean-American musicians, who trained in the US and who have actively introduced hip hop from the US to the Korean pop music industry, seems to have contributed to this logic of dichotomy between appropriated copy and authentic original. As ‘Tasha’, a member of the Korean female hip hop duo, ‘Tashannie’, (who is a third generation Korean-American and raised in a family of a Korean mother and an African-American father) explained:

“We want to challenge the hip-hop culture of Korea which has vaguely established itself with the latest hipness. What we really want to do is *original* black hip-hop. Korean hip-hop is a lot lighter, faster, poppier like bubble gum, and we’re not really comfortable with that...The biggest diff-

erence between us and some of the other hip-hop groups in Korea is that we weren't born and raised here but in the USA. We have a really different attitude from some of the groups who were exposed to the bubble gum music here. Their music lacks the soulfulness and the spirit of authentic black hip-hop. Our sounds and the way we arrange them are not the same."

*(my emphasis)*<sup>15</sup>

This quotation provides an insight into the sort of 'cultural orthodoxy' articulated by some of Korean musicians, who value the appropriation of foreign objects without allowing their 'contamination' by local elements. When artists produce domesticated versions of foreign genres, they are regarded as inauthentic by these purists like Tasha. In part, this purist approach or orthodoxy about musical aesthetics owes much to an attempt on the part of the performers and the audience of the latest niche scenes in Korea to distinguish themselves from mainstream pop genres. On the whole, mainstream pop genres today in Korea tend to be heavily influenced by western styles, mixed in with some Korean features in the lyrics, rhythm, and melody. Lyrics, in particular, are crucial for Korean popular music, in order for it to become popular. In a reversal of the omnipresent syncretism in the mainstream, however, a 'purist niche' also exists in the contemporary Korean music scene.<sup>16</sup> This 'purism' or 'originality complex', as I would call it, again raises the question of how to theorize the relationship between hip hop and locale.

Just as Korean musicians tried to express Korean sentiments using Western instruments in the early 1900's, when Korean pop started to take shape, we still today

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<sup>15</sup> R. Wallace, 'Tashannie brings attitude to Korean pop', the *Korea herald*, 4 February 2000

<sup>16</sup> With regard to this issue of purism to musical aesthetics, I owe much to Hosokawa's study of Japanese salsa band, 'Orquesta de la Luz'. See his article "Salsa no tiene frontera: Orquesta de la Luz and the

appropriate imported music. As Lee, Woo Yong, a music writer and radio producer for a number of years, claimed when exploring the importance of language (=mother tongue) as a mechanism of change:

“It is hard to put Korean lyrics to orthodox black hip hop rhythm. Korean language has a sound all of its own. I believe language itself is music. That is why we came up with Korean hip-hop, by combining house beat (or rock beat) with Korean language, fitting most for a 4/4 rhythm. The moment music is made with Korean words, foreign music becomes Korean. And if you sing ‘Yesterday’ in Korean, it will sound like a completely different song... There are some Korean musicians who are ‘musical fundamentalists’, in that they regard an appropriation of the original as heresy. As a result, for them, imported music cannot be indigenized. There is no such thing as pure culture in the world. Korean pop musicians should bear in mind that all cultures are the products of appropriation and hybridization between foreign and endogenous cultures.”<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, there have been recurrent debates over imitation and authenticity in Korean hip hoppers. It is often said that rap music, as received in Korea, was simply appreciated as a form of sensational music and style, focusing on break dancing, oversized jeans, parkas, and baseball caps, rather than as a form of politicized music. In other words, Korean hip hop was portrayed as fakery, in contrast to the supposed authenticity of ‘message’ rap made in the ghetto. However, Korean rappers admit to a heavy ‘influence’ from outside sources, they started to focus on writing their own words in an attempt to make their performance meaningful in a local context. For Korean rappers, finding an appropriate way to write Korean words to a beat intimately tied to African-American oral poetics and alien to the Korean phonetic system became a priority. They

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globalization of popular music”, *Cultural Studies*, 13(3) 1999.

have tried to practice the techniques of ‘rhyming’ and ‘flow’ in their native language since the mid 1990s. Few Korean performers believe that English lyrics can represent Korean identities. In this light, the recognition of the significance of Korean language-rap by local performers provides a useful insight into the issue of the localisation of rap and hip hop music within the Korean context.

The idea of authenticity in hip hop is often associated with its function as a ethno-political expression. However, another significant characteristic of rap is the fluidity of associations it has engendered, since it broke free from its original socio-economic and ethnic context. Rap and hip hop music become a good example of ‘global’ local culture. As Middleton argues:

“In fact, there are always limits to appropriation; it can never be complete. Within cultural production in capitalist societies, musical objects, however integrated into particular social practices, always carry the marks of their (contradictory) origins and of other (real or potential) existences. And this then raises the whole question of how they relate to particular social locations.” (1990:140)

What Middleton offers here is a perspective which sees all musical practices are placed somewhere ‘in-between’ – this is to argue that we need to position music in the socio-historical context of a specific locality, in order to understand its meaning.

For young people in Korea, the consumption of Korean hip-hop that may itself be apolitical is still, nonetheless, an incipient political act of symbolic opposition. In other words, today the youth find rap music most entertaining and appealing, because

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<sup>17</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 19 August 2001.

it functions as a means of resisting and denying the dominant culture and customs of the older generation, which maintain the oppressive ethics of Confucianism.<sup>18</sup> Because of the high value that Korean society places on obtaining education, most Korean adolescents are expected by their parents to be focused only on getting into a good college. If they do well at the Scholastic Aptitude Test (which enables them to get into a college), their future is considered secured. If not, they are condemned to a lower socio-economic status for the rest of their lives. As Lee Seung Jeong, executive director of the Youth Culture & Education Department at the Seoul YMCA commented on this issue:

“It is similar to what occurred in Japan several decades ago. Korea is a very patriarchal and uniform society, teenagers don’t have much outlet for the stress connected with trying to enter universities, so pop culture and popular icons become their only means of escape.”<sup>19</sup>

Korean youth culture in the 1990s has taken on a new twist – a passion for dance such as break dancing or hip-hop dancing. Teenagers these days typically aspire to be dancers supporting a singer on stage. In Seoul’s *Taehangno* district, it is common to see groups of young people dancing on the streets with loud rap music blaring in the background. The emerging popularity of rap and dance among Korean youth offers a set of tropes through which transgressive ideologies and desires may have an outlet. The association with the new, imported music is personally pleasurable but also socially and politically expressive, even if not explicitly political. To quote from Won, Il, who is known as Korean world musician, once again:

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<sup>18</sup> I will scrutinize closely this issue of the appropriation of hip hop by Korean youth in Chapter 7.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in *JoongAng ilbo*, the Korean daily, 22 September 1999.

“The existence of diversity is the core of culture. To this end, a social atmosphere that tolerates the existence and statement of various interests is needed. However, one of the shortcomings of the Korean popular culture is the excessive commercialism and the lack of such diversity. Thus, in a society like Korea where Confucian culture still lingers on, the carefree statement of oneself, and the intentional resistance and denial of traditional things have a positive effect.”<sup>20</sup>

The perception of rap and hip hop by Korean youth as imported genres does not stop their acceptance as legitimate means of expression of identity. For the older generations of Koreans, however, the dissemination of US musical styles such as rap and hip hop, appears as a threat because they think that there is a danger of losing Korean cultural identity and values. It thus seems that the success of rap and hip hop has aggravated the generation gap, in terms of the question of identity.

According to Park, Ae Kyung (2000), another reason for the successful incorporation of the exogenous hip-hop and rap music into Korean music was the fact that these genres awakened the dormant tradition of ‘talking’ in music, which existed in the Korean society until the Middle Ages in the form of ‘*kasa*’.<sup>21</sup> Most of all, however, the significance of rap music, which thrust itself to the forefront to Korean popular music in the 1990’s, lies in the role as an important musical means for young people to express their feelings, and thus “undercutting and contesting the dominant cultural hegemony” or the norms of the older generation (Chambers, 1976:160). The Korean youth are making their statements by choosing identity symbols such as rap music and dance, although those cultural forms are imported from abroad. Overall, the adoption of

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<sup>20</sup> Personal interview, 15 July 2001.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Kasa’ is one of the Korean traditional musical forms, which shows a unique talking style of music, and

the presented foreign genres can be interpreted as positive additions to the choices available to contemporary Koreans for self-statement.

(4) Transnational Korean pop: Striving for a global audience.

In the 1990s local audiences in Korea were increasingly exposed to music from all over the world, particularly from the US. However, the Korean music record market now shows a pattern, contrary to what advocates of the cultural imperialism perspective might expect, according to which indigenous Korean music now has the largest share of the domestic market, accounting for around 74% of domestic sales in 1999. It is clear that, despite the widespread acceptance of many aspects of western culture, the typical Korean music listener has a much greater preference for music made by home-grown artists. The current state of the Korean music market follows neither the pattern of cultural imperialism nor of the concentration of multi-national record companies. The major international record companies (BMG, EMI, PolyGram, Sony, and Warner) still dominated about 35% of the Korean music market in 1996 but their influence had reduced by 1997. It is difficult to see how the strong position of domestic music could be significantly worn away now. Thus, acknowledging that local audiences prefer national to international artists, the multinational record companies are now starting to build a roster of 'national acts', in order to increase their market share in Korea.

When media imperialism becomes a secondary issue, the pragmatic aspect acquires growing weight in discussions of the transnational flow of music in Korea. For

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its 4/4 rhythm is regarded as the form of rhythm most fitting to the Korean language.



example, by allocating increased financial support for the pop music industry, in recent times, the Korean government demonstrated that it is becoming more aware of the potential of music in expanding the international market for Korean culture. And at the same time, the Korean government has also enlarged its open-door policy toward foreign culture. In particular, the Korean government has gradually lifted a ban on Japanese pop culture during the years 1998 to 2000. In fact, a ban on Japanese music in Korea had been in place since the end of the Second World War, due to the ongoing anti-Japanese sentiment there, following 35 years of Japanese annexation, from 1919 to 1945. Yet, the Korean attitude toward Japanese culture has changed to a more pragmatic one, and the Korean government has now started to treat the creative industries, like those of music and film, as a money-making ventures. Thus there has been the argument in favour of opening-up to Japanese pop music, as arguing that Korean pop music now has the competitive power against J-Pop which, in turn helps to strengthen the viability of K-Pop.

Indeed, the full-fledged growth of the Korean recording industry began in 1968, with the promulgation of the 'Music Law' and the opening of the first FM radio station. Radio penetration is particularly high in Korea, with more than 90% of households owning radios. With the rapid spread of radios, radio broadcasting became the principal medium for the commodification of music, thereby greatly contributing to the construction and growth of the music industry. Furthermore, the growing number of television sets also helped to bring about the qualitative growth of the music industry, rendering the record an industrial commodity. The Korean music market, which has now grown up to be the 20<sup>th</sup> biggest market in the world, shows some interesting

characteristics. First, domestic music, *gayo*, has achieved leading place in the Korean music market in the period since the 1980s. As has been explored in Chapter 5, in the early 1980's, a 'Guideline on Radio Broadcasting' was introduced by the Korean government, which recommended the obligatory expansion of 'home-made' music broadcasts. This is one of the reasons that *gayo*'s relative growth became further accentuated. Now the sales of domestic music to foreign pop ratio are reaching approximately 8:2 as we entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Secondly, the age of record buyers has dropped significantly, with teenagers emerging as the major consumers in the Korean music market. As a result of the changes in the social make-up of the country prompted by economic development, the commercial success of Korea's popular and youth culture is growing. Society is becoming more modern and less formal, and knowledge-based service industries, such as the media, are playing an important role in the national economy. Korea's demographics play a role in its vibrant youth culture. More than 20 % of Koreans are below the age of 15, compared with fewer than 15 % in Japan. This emergence of younger audiences as consumers in the domestic market is one of the reasons behind the diminishing share of foreign musics, in particular Anglo-American sounds, in the Korean music market. In other words, home-produced music, the so-called K-pop, has become so westernized as to obviate the need to listen to western pop, and now young people, who grew up in affluent and modern Korea, prefer instead to spend their money on domestic musics. Korean pop now reflects Western pop music on a virtually real-time basis. As Kim, Nam Il (2000) observes, it can be inferred from the trends in Korean pop since the 1990's that most of musical genres which succeed, in particular, in

the US succeed in Korea as well, after a time lapse of one or two years. For example, after the early 1990's, rap and hip-hop and dance music began to appear and gain a huge popularity in Korea. Especially, dance pop music, which could be said to be 'white music', gained popularity in the US in the form of 'boy bands' such as 'the Backstreet Boys'. In Korea too, numerous home-produced boy bands appeared, such as 'H.O.T', selling up to 1m units of their album released in 1997, rendering dance music the mainstream of Korean pop, alongside the genre of the ballad.

All in all, national acts have been prioritised and are responsible for around 74% of domestic sales in 1999. Does this success of 'local artists' reflect the erosion of the position of Anglo-American music in Korea? Regardless of the large market share of domestic music, the presence of foreign musics in Korea should not be overlooked. US pop music especially is still a great influence on Korean popular music, as has been seen above. In this sense, 'domestic' music means music performed by Korean artists, including Korean balladeers and Korean rock and rap groups. In other words, it does not refer to specific musical genres. Local musicians are relying more and more on foreign models, as well as on the internal 'articulations' of imported models. For example, many Korean groups or musicians identify with a certain foreign model, and this has an effect on marketing strategies. Subtitles like techno, rap, and hip-hop are becoming crucial for audiences reception. This is indicated in the following comments of a respondent, a 16 year-old high school student:

"At first I pick a genre, for example, hip-hop and then singers, even when I buy some local repertoire CDs. Because now hip-hop is a symbol of the freer expression of suppressed emotions among teenagers of Korea. I don't wanna be alie-

nated from that trend”.

In this light, the recording industry is attentive to these internal articulations and always ready to put new articulations into motion, if any sign of exhaustion of one style appears.

Certainly, Korean musicians are redefining their local styles, by choosing models from the outside, but at the same time they are looking for ways to make their music appeal to an international audience. Building on their domestic popularity, some Korean groups are aggressively making inroads into world markets. The success of artists such as Abba, Ace of Base, Scorpions, Julio Iglesias, Bjork, 2 Unlimited, to name a few, in scoring international hits, indicates that the world’s music markets are opening up to artists of all nationalities.<sup>22</sup> But the most potentially lucrative destination for Korean pop music is much closer to home – Asia. As Han, Se Min, director of SM Entertainment, the Korean record company, explained:

“It’s easier for us to get access to China, because Korea is so close and because of the two countries’ cultural links. Korean artists are Asian. They look the same and their music is easier for Chinese people to understand.”<sup>23</sup>

Leading the pack, are top Korean dance acts, such as ‘H.O.T’ and ‘Clon’, who are rocking the local pop music scenes in China and Taiwan, respectively. For example, Clon’s recent album sold over 320,000 copies in Taiwan. This result actually involves the second highest sales for a foreign album between 1998-1999 in Taiwan, following the ‘Titanic’ soundtrack by Celine Dion. Also, other manufactured ‘K-pop’ bands, such as SES and Shinwha, have also topped the charts in China and Cambodia,

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<sup>22</sup> See Negus (1999), *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, chap 7.

with 'catch' songs. As Han, Sang Soon, sales manger at Synara Music, the Seoul-based record company, said, when explaining how a distinct genre called 'Korean dance music' has been established and what made it appealing especially for an Asian audience:

“The concept of musical genre is not yet established in Korea. There’s still flexibility. The Korean music industry imbibes foreign influences like a sponge. Maybe that is the reason why Korean dance music is making ‘*Han Ryu*’ (=Korean wave) that is currently sweeping China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. Western music is reborn, so that it can appeal to Asian sentiments, once it enters the Korean music industry. Young Korean composers and producers who strive for high-quality dance music boldly incorporate the latest trends (hip -hop, Euro techno) and techniques (mixing, engineering techniques) from the US and the west and develop them on Korean soil. Thus, the Korean dance music genre has been elevated to top class, at least in Asia.”<sup>24</sup>

This trend, the so-called 'Korean wave', which is spreading Korean youth culture, - including films, television soap operas, animation, and computer games – throughout Asia, is “a symbol of Korean consumers’ fightback against western culture, which invaded Asia’s music and film industries in the 1980s”.<sup>25</sup> As a result, in Korea home-made films match Hollywood blockbusters in box office sales and western artists have only 20 % of the record market today. Korean music industries are keen to exploit this trend and to expand its market into neighbouring Asian markets. For example, as well as introducing these Korean musicians to China, SM plans to launch Chinese versions of its successful Korean bands, keeping the same name and style but,

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in A. Ward (2002) 'Seoul music strives for global audience', *Financial Times*, 8 February.

<sup>24</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 28 August 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Ward (2002), *Ibid.*

substituting local artists for their Korean counterparts. To quote Mr Han, director of SM, once again, “We will use Chinese talent to appeal to a Chinese audience, but meeting Korean production standards.”<sup>26</sup>

According to Koichi Iwabuchi (2000), globalisation or transnationalisation of media and popular culture is still based upon an assumption of the unbeatable western (American) domination and the arguments are focused on how the Rest resist, imitate or appropriate the West. Put in other terms, ‘global’ still tends to be exclusively associated with the West and a dynamic interaction among the non-Western countries has been seriously under-explored. In this way, the analysis of intra-regional flows of K-pop as has been explored above would highlight alternative patterns of transnationalisation of popular culture, by turning our attention to the transnational appeal of a non-Western mode of indigenized modernity for culturally and/or geographically neighbouring nations (Sinclair *et al.* 1996). According to Sinclair *et al.* (1996), under the de-centralising force of the globalisation process, in which local practices increasingly acquire another importance, the relative decline of American cultural power has brought about the capitalisation in intra-regional cultural flows with the emergence of regional media. And the intensification of intra-regional cultural flows is closely related with the meaning of ‘familiar difference’ associated with the way in which audiences are thought to enjoy popular cultural products from culturally similar nations.

While audiences in East Asia find pleasure through the consumption of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

popular music from Korea, some of Korean record buyers still regard western pop music as the 'authentic' item. But these doubts about the originality of Korean pop cannot be justified, since national boundaries disappear with the development of telecommunications technology, and cultural exchange is not a unilateral interaction anymore as I have examined throughout this chapter. Korean pop has as much right to be regarded as 'authentic' as that of any other country. Given the success of Korean dance music in Asia, it may not take long before Korean pop music acquires viability in the international market. At this point, as I would argue, the meaning of 'Koreanness', in appropriating the 'foreign' must be flexibly reconsidered, in light of the change of the times. Here I would like to illustrate two major points, focusing on Korean appropriations of Anglo-American music, in particular. Firstly, 'Koreanness' is no longer a central issue for contemporary Korean musicians who place much emphasis on cosmopolitan aspiration; and secondly, from the viewpoint of the periphery, foreign musics and their symbols are used and re-interpreted by local musicians in such a way as to articulate internal identities and differences.

In this light, the foreign origin of cultural forms does not stop local musicians identifying with those forms in their own way. While a diversity of transnational music practices continue to dominate the contemporary Korean popular music scene, it has become evident today that a wider range of imported musical genres and styles is now being understood as 'ours'. One important factor, stemming from these multiple associations with transnational music, is that identities are being expressed in a multi-layered fashion, so that symbols of Koreanness have to share their space with transnational symbols of youth and of modernity, and so forth. The result is

“an *and...and* identity, rather than an *either...or* identity”(Sansone (1996) as quoted in Magaldi, 1999:313).<sup>27</sup> Over all, there is a sense of movement and process and “a sense of fluidity of meanings involved in the act of constructing and re-articulating identities through music.”(Guilbault,1997:40).

### (C) Redefining ‘Koreanness’ in the Global Age

In the Korean context, there is a huge amount of effort, among musicians, to establish a new contemporary Korean popular music, with its own cultural identity and originality, which would take on many forms, as has been explored earlier in this chapter. Korean popular music is now “the product of the constantly reconfiguring processes that occur when displaced cultures selectively adapt to host cultures, intermingling and evolving to form regenerative new cultures”(Hall, 1995). Focusing on the musical practices of contemporary pop musicians, especially referred to in this chapter as cosmopolitan musicians, in Korea offers a useful insight into the construction of multiple and plural Korean identities in general. Korea has undergone many processes of transformation and its version of national identity has also changed. In other words, the idea of cultural identity in Korea has come in recent years to be explained in terms of an internal hybridity and in relation to external influences, such as the increasing tendency towards ‘globalising’ or ‘transnational’ economies and social processes. Globalisation is now providing musicians all over the world with new ways of making syncretic sounds and hybrid selves. From this transnational perspective, I am concerned with tracking a new

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<sup>27</sup> Here, I have to acknowledge that I was inspired by the model of Magaldi’s insightful article, ‘Adopting imports:new images and alliances in Brazilian popular music of the 1990s,’ even though the Korean situation is quite different from that of Brazil.



sense of 'place' or 'belonging', in other words the degree of cosmopolitanism which appears in the making of Korean pop.

#### (1) Transnational Encounters and New Notions of 'Place'

To a great many people, as Hannerz summarizes, the term 'globalisation' may mean: "a global homogenization in which particular ideas and practices spread throughout the world, mostly from the centers of the West, pushing other alternatives out of experience"(1996:24). However, now there is certainly something to this global homogenization scenario, and the sense of cultural loss. A growing number of voices encourage the active role of local actors in producing a variety of cultural mixtures. Many cultural theorists, who question the conventional assumption of cultural homogenization under an assumed Western hegemony, tend to regard 'the global and the local' not as opposites but as complementary categories. Doreen Massey, in her geographical discussion on the local/global identity of place, explains:

"When time-space compression is seen as disorientating, and as threatening to fracture personal identities then a recourse to place as a source of authenticity and stability may be one of the responses. But just as the notion of single coherent and stable identities has been questioned, so too could geographers work to undermine the exactly parallel claims which are made about the identity of place...The geography of social relations forces us to recognize our interconnectedness, and underscores the fact that both personal identity and the identity of those envelopes of space-time in which and between which we live and move are constructed precisely through that interconnectedness." (1994a:122)

Perhaps the main point in this is that the arrangements of personal interconnectedness between the local and the global are getting increasingly obscure. So many people now engage in transnational contacts that we can never be sure of in which “habitats of meaning”(in Hannerz’s term) can turn up. In the end, as Hannerz claims, “‘the local’ is an arena where various people’s habitats of meaning intersect, and where the global or what has been local somewhere else, also has some chance of making itself at home” (1996:28). At this intersection, “this year’s change is next year’s continuity. We may wonder, then, both what the place does to people, and what people do to the place” (ibid.).

On this point, it is crucial to disarticulate the idea of ‘home’ from ideas of stasis, nostalgia, privacy, and authenticity which, as Massey has argued, are then coded as female. Home does not exist a priori naturally but is a more open and dynamic concept that does not tie identity to static place. Home is, as Puar (1994) asserts, non-linear and neither an originary point to which we may return, nor an end point at which we will eventually arrive. Home then becomes “a series of cultural trades or compromises taking on some aspects of the new culture but retaining older cultural habits”(Wise, 2000:306). What I want to acquire from this approach is a dynamic and processual view of home and the fluidity of cultures and spaces. Within this context, the attachment to place is not natural though often presented as such. And what matters is how to distinguish one culture from another without either positing an essential identity to the people or culture. In recent years, ideas about nationhood, culture and identity have undergone important transformations, and the nature of these transformations of the current era, which relate to the depth and coherence of the transnational culture,

needs to be explained.

Within this context, we need to redefine the notion of 'Koreanness'. Put in other terms, it has to be understood in relation to the dynamics of a capitalist globalisation as these impact upon the strategies of local/national-cultural production emerging in Korea. Hahn, Dae Soo is a modern-folk rock musician who left Korea in the late 1970's for the USA, and has perceptively observed the changing times and tunes in his homeland. As he remarked when explaining the anti-essentialist notions that challenge a deep essence of 'Koreanness' that withstands historical change:

"I am definitely neither – a very confused person with dual or no identity. It is painful not to belong to any entity but it also helps to write songs about alienation - 'headless man' or 'wind & I' are good examples...I'm Korean, without doubt, but you know I lived in New York and it has affected my music-making. Where do I belong? I'm a cultural mixed breed...There is no particular *Korean gayo* today and it does not matter since there is no particular *American music*. All music from all over the world is *hybrid music*. Not only in Korea. Paul Simon used extensive African rhythm and chorus eight years ago and made a big hit. And Sting is presently getting a lot of help from his Middle Eastern friends and their melody. And how about reggae? Everyone uses that eternally sweet beat. The world is becoming a hybrid world with so many mixed marriages and global corporations. And music is only a small representation of what is going on at this point. It unavoidable!"<sup>28</sup>

This quotation renders an insight into the sort of reality today; varieties of transnational experiences of people which touch on issues of time, space, loyalty, culture and identity, and which are at odds with ordinary notions of the national. To use

Salman Rushdie's (1991:394) phrase, "hybridity, impurity, intermingling...a love-song to our mongrel selves" becomes a theme in the global discourse of culture and identity (Rushdie as quoted by Hannerz, 1996:86). If we consider Korean popular music within this broader context, we see that openness to transnational cultural influences does not impoverish local and national culture. Instead it gives the musician access to technological and symbolic resources for managing their own culture in new ways. This new technology and mode of musical production allows musicians to occupy different subject positions in a kind of simultaneity never before possible; they employ and deploy several at once.

To accept plural dimensions of identity is to agree to the principle of plural loyalties. In the present phase of globalisation, transnational ties to people and places proliferate and such ties entail a weakened personal involvement with the nation and national culture. The feeling of deep historical rootedness seems to be replaced by an equally intense experience of discontinuity. As Bourne argues, the notion of 'transnationality' refers to "a weaving back and forth with other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors and any movement which attempts to thwart weaving, or to dye the fabric any one color,... is false to this cosmopolitan vision"(Bourne as quoted by Cohen, 1992:482). This thinking points toward new concepts of nationality, of place. Here we find a multidimensional concept of national cultural identity and an important democratic principle – "the legitimacy of plural loyalties"(ibid.). In other words, the current of modern culture rises above the boundaries of national culture and thus the sense of 'Koreanness' should be reconsidered in relation to transnationality and

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<sup>28</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 29 July 2000.

cosmopolitanism.

## (2) Critical Cosmopolitanism

In line with the feature of globalisation and transnationalism listed above, we can find that, in the Korean context, there is a significant amount of trans-cultural activity, in particular, in the realm of popular music. Indeed, this transnational mobility contributes to breaking out of the confines of local tradition, thereby opening the way to unexplored territories. It is in this cosmopolitan spirit that Korean musicians have been joining the global interaction or intercultural synthesis, in the process creating new ways of musical expression and seeking a new consciousness of the contemporary world.

However, musicians involved here are not all 'cosmopolitan' in the same sense, although they express a more transnational musical desire. 'Cosmopolitanism' cannot be reduced to any single idea. In their great diversity, these outside linkages - such as cosmopolitanism and transnationality - have more varied characteristics nowadays. Because transnational experiences can be in large part a private and personal matter. In this sense, to quote from Jang, Young Kyu, a member of Korean indie rock band, 'Uuhboo Project Sound':

"Before being Korean, I am a musician. I write lyrics, compose songs for myself. I do it simply because I enjoy it. And it would be good to make money along the way. I am not really interested in such thing as 'Korean-ness'. We just play music that is 'Uuhboo'... We are more interested in musical experiments with new sounds from all over the world. It doesn't matter about the origin of sounds. Nation or nationality doesn't matter in

music-making. Just like the same car feels different according to the driver, the same music is different according to the individual musician... There is no denying that I'm influenced by this society and culture that I grew up in, at least unconsciously. Here my music isn't isolated. And I'm very happy I'm having a certain influences on my own people. But that's not the purpose ... Music is strictly an individualistic work. My music stands for myself and my problem.”<sup>29</sup>

In a similar vein to Jang, Park, Soo Young, who is a Korean-American singer/songwriter of American indie rock band, 'Seam', explained the lack of ethnic identities appears in Asian American musicians of USA, focusing on the idea of 'subjective autonomy', in the following terms:

“We have absorbed the fierce individualistic spirit of the United States in our years of growing up and going to school here. Even though most Asian Americans share a similar cultural background and upbringing, this does not preclude the Asian American indie rocker from perceiving him or herself as an individual only, and thus not responsible for answering to any cultural or ethnic ties beyond what music he or she is interested in... Perhaps some Asian American indie rockers have not realized the need to claim an identity for yourself an Asian or an Asian American outside of strong societal requirement of assimilation in this country(=USA), or are simply not inclined to do so due to personal preference.”<sup>30</sup>

In this era of increasing cultural contacts, a great number of Korean musicians, whether they live in Korean or not, started to claim for themselves more cosmopolitan positions that reject any national identity, preferring to ground themselves

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<sup>29</sup> Personal interview, Seoul, 5 September 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Kerwin So, 'The Asian American Indie Rock Scene', *Weiv* 2(10), downloaded from <http://www.weiv.co.kr/0210/0210c7e.htm>.

in an international domain, with the freedom to adopt any of a multiplicity of identities. But in actuality, there are a few problems with this global or transnational perspective. The core of these problems is that once we try to transcend our indigenous culture or the boundaries of the nation-state to engage mutually with different cultures, then what could our position be? Simply put, if globalisation and transnationalisation could pose a challenge to nationalism, then does this represent a challenge to all forms of nationalist sentiment and cultural identity? From the Korean viewpoint, when musicians established themselves as 'free individuals' or 'cosmopolitans', is it possible to escape from national ties or the responsibilities of society and history? In this regard, is it possible to guarantee that we, individuals are really free to think, or do we represent our mother culture? If we suppose that a 'free individual' or 'subjective autonomy' exists, then how do we orient ourselves?

In relation to the above, Sun Ge (2001) points out that this "internationalized" way of thinking might merely replace a previous unworkable Eurocentrism under the label of globalisation. On this point, we need to ask an unavoidable question; could this kind of subjective autonomy or this so-called anti-cultural essentialist thinking be an effective weapon to challenge cultural essentialism and nationalistic feeling? Would it be possible to constitute subjectivity and autonomy as a meaningful social institution in the age of globalization?

Perhaps these questions can only be answered in reference to some specific cultural context. In other words, a transnational contact with the other must be mediated internally within a culturally- specific, historically- deep context. As Sun Ge maintains,

- rightly, in my view - “the trans-cultural could not take place *between* cultures but only *within* a culture” and “only when a culture has internal doubts about its own autonomy can the birth of the trans-cultural then become possible” (2001:266, original emphasis). Along this line of thought, I would argue that cultural relativists or cosmopolitans could discover their subject positions only through the process of “internal mobility” or “critical self-reflection”. Put in other terms, it is in the process of ‘internal doubts’ about subjective autonomy that a new subject position or a cosmopolitan subjectivity becomes possible. All in all, the transnational or cosmopolitan position could refer to divided commitments, a multiplicity of roots and cultural identities, based on a ‘critical self-reflection’ and ‘inclusive’ attitude toward cultural differences.

Within the Korean context, when the notion of ‘transnationality’ or ‘cosmopolitanism’ become entangled with the globalisation process, the most pressing issue is seen as the collision between the position of cosmopolitanism and that of indigenization or hybridization. This issue has direct relevance to the dualistic mode of thinking characterized by ‘do we represent our local culture or be a free individual’ and ‘national or international’ as I examined the above. But this logic of the dualism or the zero-sum game – as we know it from colonialism, cultural imperialism, and etc. - loses its explanatory power. The process of globalisation goes hand in hand with ‘transnational inclusion’ which does not necessarily imply ‘rootlessness’. Cosmopolitanism is about inclusive distinctions, based on ‘the legitimacy of plural loyalties’.

Thus it is possible to “have both wings and roots – develop meaningful



affiliations without renouncing one's origins”(Beck,2001: 87). In a similar vein to this, in the words of Cohen, what is needed is “the fashioning of a dialectical concept of *rooted cosmopolitanism*”(1992:483, my emphasis). In this regard, as Beck rightly claims, only the plural-nation, nation-in-different, and nation-tolerant state, which “seeks to reconstitute its power at the intersection of global, regional, and local systems of governance”, can possibly overcome the dualism between national and international. The new state option of a cosmopolitan, namely an interactive and reflexive state, is emerging “wherever previously there was only the alternative of *either* national self-determination *or* submission to the authority of someone else's nation-state”(ibid.:88).

Lipsitz(1994) reminds us, “space and place still matter; the global processes that shape us have very different inflections in different places.”(1994:180). As Lipsitz goes on to argue, creative cosmopolitans in the future will require both local and global knowledge, demanding that we blend rootedness in specific cultures and traditions with competence at mobility and mixing. In fact, Lipsitz's comments seem to have validity in Korea where there is an evident tension between cosmopolitan and indigenizing or hybridizing trends in relation to music and identity. Although a large degree of cosmopolitanism appears in the realm of contemporary popular music in Korea, it does not necessarily imply losing sight of the national. Due to the westernized musical culture of Korea, as with most peripheral countries today, some of the musicians referred to as cosmopolitan musicians in this chapter agree to ‘going back’ to traditional Korean styles, taking the route of the so-called ‘strategic essentialism’, in an attempt at creative appropriation.

Even if the ideas of diaspora, flux, hybridity and cosmopolitanism offer us their promise of progressive 'post-national' styles, as Cheah points out, they fail to fit "the situations of the post-colonial South", for the inhabitants of the post-colonial South upholding a secure national culture remains their only effective defence strategy against the threat of the global economy (1998:296). As elaborated in the following comments of interviewee, Paik, Hyun Jin, another member of Korean indie rock band, 'Uuhboo Project Sound':

"I went out the other day to buy a pair of sneakers. I couldn't make up my mind between 'Nike', a foreign brand, and 'Pro-specs', a domestic brand. I preferred the style and quality of 'Nike'. Sneakers are just sneakers, I talked to myself, but I couldn't opt for it without hesitation. I belong to the generation that lived through the tumultuous 80's of student movement against military dictatorship, sponsored by American imperialism. Maybe, my hesitation was thus because of what little nationalistic feeling that was still left in me unconsciously... This might be the case when we see foreign musics... You want to do whatever you want to, express what you feel, and choose music wherever it comes from. But the reality does not easily allow you to ... This is the sad reality that the people of the peripheral countries still face, I reckon.<sup>31</sup>

This interview extract serves to remind us of the sort of reality, with regard to the issue of accommodation of foreign culture and identity within a non-Western context. In this respect, it is worth noting that "although we can all agree that cultural zones are far from unified homogenous spaces, this should not lead us to deny or unduly relativise the existence of borders".<sup>32</sup> In the end, as Morley (2000) suggests, there is nothing

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<sup>31</sup> Personal interview, 14 July 2001.

<sup>32</sup> P. Willemsen(1995), 'The national', in Devereux and Hillman (eds) *Field of Vision*, p.23, quoted in D. Morley(2000) *Home Territories*, pp241-242.

automatically “liberating” about crossing borders or crossover practices and hybrid forms. In a similar vein, there is no reason to assume that nationalist forms are always either reactionary or liberating. As Morley goes on to argue, quoting Clifford (1997), what matters here is the politics that is always conjunctural and the issue now is “who deploys nationality or transnationality, authenticity or hybridity against whom?”(2000: 240). In a similar vein, Ulrich Beck notes that “the adjective ‘national’ presumes self-determination. The cosmopolitan question is, self-determination – but against whom?”(2001:87) In the end, what really matters is that how can we co-exist, at the same time both equally and differently?

For historical reasons, - such as the impact of the West and the forced entry into modernity under the auspices of Japanese colonialism - nationalism in Korea was a weapon for countering colonialism for all progressive intellectuals. But these national sentiments, overemphasizing the distinctive nature of indigenous culture, often resulted in the basic dualism between a simplistic Westernization or internationalization and indigenization project. On this basis, we encounter a problem; how we should break down this rigid dualism between cultural universalism/particularism and East/West and find an alternative? Perhaps, we must direct our efforts on two aspects by opposing cultural essentialism while at the same time opposing a purely abstract cosmopolitan narrative.

From the Korean point of view, the frequent trans-cultural interchange facilitated by the process of globalisation did not bring about the extinction of indigenous culture but rather the opportunity of redefining it. In actuality, within this

process of redefining or reconstructing, national culture and identity were challenged. But, in the end, the possibility of reconstructing and critical self-reflection within national culture created a co-existence among different cultural subjectivities, instead of a collision between national identities and foreign cultural elements. In the space of cultural difference, autonomy of national culture will be scrutinized. At this point, what we hope to achieve is a 'constructed' cosmopolitanism, as I would say, based on 'critical self-reflection' or 'internal mobility' within a culture.

Overall, the ultimate value of the term 'cosmopolitan', to the Korean people is that it undermines the 'naturalness' of ethnic essentialisms with regard to culture and identity and further highlights 'cultural openness'. To put it in other words, cosmopolitanism suggests new notions of 'Koreanness', based on the principle of the legitimacy of plural identities and multiple belonging. In this light, in my view, such a perspective contributes to opening up a more complex and humane understanding of hybrid realities in the area of the transnational popular music in Korea today.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CULTURE, MUSIC AND IDENTITY**

#### **: THE CONSUMPTION OF TRANSNATIONAL POP AMONG YOUNG**

#### **PEOPLE IN KOREA**

##### **(A) Introduction**

Since the 1990s, the localization of ‘global postmodern culture’ (in Hall’s term), including the emergence of a shared transnational cultural imagery in the local, has undoubtedly provided the main impetus for studying the popular practices of young people in Korea. In this connection, the purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyse contemporary youth and music culture in Korea, in an attempt to understand the formation of multiple and hybrid cultural identities amongst Korean youth. To state it more concisely, my study of the way that young people construct a sense of place in their consumption of transnational pop in the Korean context is threefold: first, to critically evaluate some of accounts of youth culture and popular music that have been made by cultural and media theorists, as well as bringing a new perspective on youth culture and popular music; secondly, to explore local appropriations of transnational pop such as hip hop music in Korea, in which hip hop is reworked as a source of cultural and stylistic resources and appropriated as a significant form of cultural expression by young people; and finally, to consider the issue of the emergence of a shared transnational cultural imagery in the Korean setting with regard to the making and re-making of national cultural identities. This chapter will be mainly based on data collected through on-line interviews with young Korean music enthusiasts whose ages

ranged between the mid-teens to mid-twenties. The interviews were with 24 active young hip hop and underground music enthusiasts in Korea, (who are members of internet music societies - such as 'hip-hop house' and 'underworld') were conducted on the computer between July and September 2001.

## B) Studies of Youth Culture and Popular music from a Cultural Studies

### Perspective

With the advent of rock 'n' roll in the period following the end of the Second World War, "not only did the stylistic direction of popular music radically alter but it (popular music) also acquired a distinctly youth-oriented and oppositional stance" (Bennett, 2000:34). Since then music and style have gradually become important cultural resources for young people's lives in various ways, throughout the world, and the continuing significance of popular music as an aspect of youth culture has provided much of the debate about how to approach popular music's socio-cultural significance for youth. In other words, the relationship between music and style-centred youth cultures has become a major focus of interest in a range of subjects including sociology, cultural and media studies.

The first sustained research into post-war 'spectacular' style-centred youth culture and popular music, from a cultural studies perspective, was undertaken by the researchers of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1970s. It was the central hypothesis of the CCCS that music and style-based youth groups, such as teddy boys in the mid-1950s, skinheads in the late 1960s, and rastas and

reggae fans in the 1970s, served as “visual statements for pockets of working-class resistance to structural changes taking place in post-war British society” (Bennett, 2000:46). Especially in Britain, in the years following the Second World War, style-based youth cultures led to new explanations of youth culture as resistance, while maintaining a concern with the socio-economic conditions of the class position of young people. The CCCS adopted the term ‘subculture’ as a model of accounting for the style-centred youth cultures of post-war Britain, and approached the notion of youth cultures or ‘subcultures’ as a collective symbolic reactions of the youth, or rather working-class youth, to the conditions of class.<sup>1</sup>

For the most part, the idea of homology between particular youth subcultural styles and specific forms of music became a taken-for-granted assumption in the CCCS’ studies accounts of youth and their ‘style-centred resistance’. This concept of homology, however, was rejected by Hebdige (1979), in favour of ‘polysemy’ that relates to the way in which an object or text is seen to generate not one but a range of meanings. Taking the example of the ‘punk’ style, he argues that the radicalism of punk derives not from its construction of an alternative system of meanings, but from its questioning of the process through which meaning is constructed. For Hebdige, punk style illustrates a refusal of any final or complete coding and interpreting. A further criticism of the earlier CCCS work has also been its class-centred explanation of subcultures and subcultural style. Although the CCCS’s assertion proved to be a highly influential paradigm in post-war Britain, where working-class youth were at the centre of the new style-oriented youth culture, it is problematic to apply the same argument to later youth

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<sup>1</sup> The nature and function of youth subcultures and the notion of subcultural resistance in Britain are

cultures. In fact, as Clarke suggests, “most of the punk creations which are discussed (by Hebdige) were developed among the art-school avant-garde” rather than working class youth. (1981:86).

The association of youth subcultural groups with particular musical styles in a linear fashion, which became an orthodoxy in this brand of Cultural Studies, has recently begun to be questioned by subsequent analyses. In place of imposing a singular discourse on the stylistic sensibilities of youth and pop music, other useful paths for youth culture research are now required. In other words, there is a need to take account of polysemic reading of the subcultural significance of style, and the existence of local variations and different social contexts. In reality, much of the current interest in the ‘local’ stems from the globalisation process and its impact on nations and people around the world. It is now important to see the different local variations in youth’s response to music and style and to examine such localised occurrences of youth cultures outside the Anglo-American world, which have become central themes in cultural and media studies. Thus, in the attempt to find some answers to the problem of subcultural theory and offer an alternative perspective on popular music and youth culture in the Korean context, I will consider an analytical approach that is more sensitive to the specific ‘locality’ in relation to youth, music, style and identity.

### C) The New Politics of Youth Culture and Youth music: A Korean Perspective

In practice, as Redhead has suggested, the break-up of former theoretical traditions (or

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conceptualised in a number of different ways in the book, Hall(1976) *Resistance Through Rituals*.



master and meta-narratives) about the emancipatory potential of youth culture in the West was witnessed, and the myths of youth culture as resistance were all but exhausted, by the late 1980s (1990:25). As Frith (1986) argues, “‘youth’ is now just a marketing device and advertiser’s fiction; the myths that matter have different sources: American funk and hip hop, the archives of psychedelia and folk-rock” (Frith as quoted by Redhead, *ibid.*:26). While the youth cultural phenomena which had developed since the 1950s were once interpreted as potential for social opposition, today one constantly hears about the end of youth cultural rebellions. Indeed, are subcultures dead? Is it the case that a once ‘rebellious’ or ‘deviant’ youth culture has become conformist? There is no simple answer. It is the case, however, that the discourses and practices which constructed and positioned youth culture historically after the Second World War are now undergoing profound transformation.

Studies of youth culture are now rightly directed at the plurality of issues and circumstances that underline the politics of identity of contemporary youth cultures in different social contexts – such as the nature of consumption and its role in the formation of identity or local identity in a global context. Since punk in the mid-1980s, interest in subcultural theory in the West has declined and a number of youth theorists have begun to focus instead on the study of youth culture outside the western world. In this regard, during this section I will closely look at the changing meaning of pop and youth culture in the so-called ‘global’ era, focusing on a wider spectrum of meanings, attitudes and actions of young people themselves in the Korean context. Drawing on contemporary cultural material in Korea I will take issue with certain theorisations of postmodernism and popular music, which have tended to concentrate on the ‘splendid’

consumption represented by contemporary youth styles, and suggest an alternative mapping of the cultural politics of pop, youth culture and identity.

(1) The Narrative of ‘*Shinsedae*’ (the New Generation) and ‘Postmodern Resistance’

In recent years, the literature on media and cultural studies in Korea has begun to take the phenomenon of music-related youth subcultures seriously. It often deals with the so-called *Shinsedae* (New Generation) that involves their cultural interests and the unique qualities of the current lifestyle. In the early 1990s, the designation ‘New Generation’ (*Shinsedae*) was taken up, it supposedly described the accelerated changes in relationships between youth, music and society in Korea.<sup>2</sup> Since then, some Korean authors and marketing strategists have used this term. They apply it to young people who seem to deconstruct the current adult culture and whose practices are interpreted as showing political disinterest, egotistical individualism, lack of utopian ideals and rapid consumerism. Just as the end of youth cultural rebellions has been announced, (in other words, the revolt is seen as being taken over by the system in the West) are youth cultures as resistant also ‘dead’ in the non-Western countries like Korea?

In the West, we know that the youth industries have learned to market the language of rebellion. Pronouncements have been frequently made in the years since punk about the end of youth culture, the death of rock culture and the new conservative conformism of youth. In fact, as Redhead (1990) argues, rebellion and resistance were

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<sup>2</sup> The narrative of ‘*Shinsedae*’ is more or less equivalent to ‘Generation X’ in North America (the Douglas

replaced by material success, style culture and postmodernism. There is no longer a more or less homogeneous youth culture as there was in the 1960s and 1970s (i.e., hippies, punks), cultures in which the 'youth' were defined as a social category. Youth culture today manifests itself in the active acquisition of commercial cultural products such as music, fashion, film, television, video and computer games.

Yet, in the old Communist bloc and in the Third World, the image of Western youth subculture and the sounds of Western youth music are still often used to challenge state definitions of youth culture, as Ross and Rose(1994) have pointed out. The use of Western pop in non-Western countries can subvert the present established cultures assigned to youth. In the light of this, the category of youth can be considered not just a matter of generation, but it can also be approached from the international context. The profile of youth culture being rebellious has different uses in different local contexts, and it does not always correspond to what the youths desire to be or actually do. Though however provocatively or in a conformist manner the 'youth of today' may present themselves, we need to;

“take a look behind the colorful façade... it's rather all about clothing put on or taken off, about staging oneself, all of which transforms itself astonishingly quickly with the currents of fashion and style. These (elements) do not make access possible to the lives of teenagers...The external elements described here first begin 'to speak' and to say something about today's children and youth when we relate them to their situations and understand them as expressions of those situations.”

(Munchmeier, as quoted by Binas, 2000:134).

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Coupland novel, *Generation X: Stories for an Accelerating Culture*).

Too often we talk about 'youth' as transhistorical and being a timeless entity. The transformation in social system, which young people belong to, has naturally had an affect on what they think and do today. As argued by Munchmeier(op cit), it is not useful to see the concept of 'youth' or 'youth culture' as being separated from the specific social context and locality which young people may confront. In this respect, there has been an attempt to move away from Western-oriented subcultural theory as a focus for youth culture research. Therefore, I will consider the shifts in the cultural politics of youth music and youth culture in the Korean context through the *Shinsedae* phenomenon.

Into the middle of the 1990s, a number of cultural discourses on postmodern culture in Korea have gradually evolved into the formation of the emerging popular culture of *shinsedae*. At the same time, intellectual discourses on *shinsedae* have been incorporated into larger debates on the shifting nature and potential of cultural politics and the politics of everyday life in Korea. The reasons why this recently coined term, 'postmodernism' becomes a central concept in studies of contemporary youth culture and music are too numerous to spell out. It is, however, rather obvious that the prefix 'post' captures well the widely felt mood of transition in today's Korea. In fact, the narrative of *Shinsedae* (the New Generation), often regarded as the vanguard of postmodernism, derives from the new realities of culture and music in the 1990s in Korea. In this respect, youth culture can be deployed as a symbolic shorthand for large-scale socio-cultural transformations in the making in Korea - including new flexible and non-traditional sociality as well as emergent cultural formations. In the late 1980s, at the socio-economic level, Korea had achieved a high performing economy. As a result, its

standard of living had been radically improved, and a profound cultural, spatial and technological change had occurred in Korean society. Especially, among the youth and urban professionals in Korea, the fascination with Euro-American cultural products and styles, as well as highly consumption-oriented practices appeared. Yet, what is more interesting to me is that this highly commercialized youth culture in Korea also provides a space where often the rigid and normalizing regulative cultural norms and ideals are temporarily suspended, while more diverse, playful and tolerant kinds of cosmopolitan, individualistic and non-traditional conduct and styles are displayed, performed and mimicked (Project team, 1994; Lee Dong Yeon, 1997).

Our discussions of youth cultures in Korea would be incomplete if we failed to locate them within the social crisis of our time. The postmodern world brings changes that may both lead to crisis as well as opportunity. It has been said that post-modern consciousness arose “out of the disillusionment with the modern ideals felt by European intellectuals after World War I” (Klemm, 1986:19). The term postmodernism is supposed to represent this change. However, there have been two contrasting positions concerning postmodern discourse among Korean scholars and artists. On the one hand, some have claimed that postmodernism refers to a continuum of varied phenomena such as the radical ‘deconstruction’ of modernity, that is to say, the notions of the decentred subject and the decentralization of power. On the other hand, some groups of intellectuals, who are concerned with the capitalistic nature of Korean social formation, insist that postmodern discourse represents the economic and political strategy of neocolonialism or neo-conservatism, which in fact contributes to the perpetuation of the status quo rather than to facilitating any fundamental changes.

In this regard, it is necessary that anyone who discusses postmodernism, indicates in what sense he or she uses the word, and further looks at the specific context of a given society, which may have different historical trajectories towards modernity. The question, then, is how to provide concrete analysis of relations between cultural practices and their social consequences. In my own view, the postmodern is a condition that reveals a general shift in paradigm. Postmodernism is related to such characteristics as the penetration of capital, commodification and mass media, to all aspects of public and private life. Postmodern culture reflects these epistemological and material changes by “its celebration of difference, its exaltation of images, surfaces and simulacra, its eclectic mixing of high and low, and its denial of historicity, moral judgmentalism and sentimentality”(Manuel,1995:229). From this perspective, there is no absolute truth, only a postmodern pluralism, that is, the multiple voices of various interpretations and opinions, which are permissible.

In this sense, it seems to me clear that the postmodern trend has actually had a progressive impact on the spirit of the contemporary youth culture in Korea, although there has been strong and persistent scepticism about the ‘post’ phenomenon in Korea among some scholars.<sup>3</sup> The postmodern culture of Korea especially features the so-called *Shinsedae*(the New Generation) phenomenon and the emergence of the youth market. *Shinsedae*'s visions of the world are differentiated from those of the old

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<sup>3</sup> With regard to the discussion of postmodern culture in Korean society, see Myung Koo Kang(1999) ‘Postmodern consumer culture without postmodernity: Copying the crisis of signification’, *Cultural Studies* 13(1). In this article, through the analysis of Korean television advertisements, Kang criticizes Korea's postmodern tendency as a postmodern consumerism without the postmodern vision of the world, which attempts to overcome the contradictions of the modern.

generations and particularly from the modernist ideological meta-narrative. The New Generation's postmodern stance comes out evidently in its rhetoric, such as, the denunciation of any binary distinctions. According to Seo, Dong Jin, the ultimate purpose of this discussion of *Shinsedae* is to "analyze the power of all current social boundaries, limits, and categories, and to construct a method to deconstruct the hegemony of the status quo"(1994:29). As Seo goes on to insist, the term '*Shinsedae*' refers to a basically empty, undecided and undifferentiated social status (ibid. p.52). To put it in other words, the term is a social construction and thus the notion of the *Shinsedae* implies the repudiation of the idealist, nonempirical, and essentialist school of thought.

'Culture' today means the popular media oriented, commercial and entertainment-led culture, and such postmodern cultural ideas have become very powerful forces in the shaping of youth's life in Korea. In countries like Korea, where cultural trends are still under the influence of the West, like many other non-Western countries, postmodernism is also largely related to foreign cultural influences in the area of pop and youth cultures. In this connection, it is said that the detraditionalizing experiences of modernity in Korea are, in part, embodied in the circulation of transnational/translocal cultural aesthetics and images. These are reflected in the spectacular urbanities such as localized hip hop and techno music scene (Lee,2000).

Clearly, these postmodern trends appear in the artistic imagination of pop music. The simplest answer to the question 'what happened to music in this so-called postmodern era' would be that the modernist dichotomy of the authentic/inauthentic has

been deconstructed.<sup>4</sup> In other words, a whole series of new authenticities have indeed been produced, each being subjected to increasingly speedy change and transformation, as well as each corresponding to market segments. Since the early 1990s, various styles and labels have come and gone, also musicians have fused and sampled various styles and genres which they earlier did not go with. Contemporary dance musics such as house and techno, rap, and hip hop, whether they are created with serious intents or they are pure kitsch, all mark equally the aesthetic of contemporary popular music.

Within the Korean context, contemporary youth, the so-called *Shinsedae* have seized the most advanced forms of technology to present their experiences and aspirations to a wider world. They embrace new technologies such as samplers and create new syncretic popular musics and authenticities. The stylistic quality of bricolage that buttresses contemporary dance musics such as techno, rap and hip hop (which are the result of recent technological advances in the process of music production) allows for the borrowing and reworking of musical fragments from a variety of sources. Using the example of Korea, as one young hip hop enthusiast, who is a member of the internet music club, “hip hop house” in Korea, described the postmodern aesthetics of juxtaposition which appears in rap and hip hop:

“DJ Krush, who’s a world-renowned artist, brought freshness through his album that used a sampling of the Korean traditional instrument *daegum*. Such ‘turntablism’ is also being tried out in Korea. ‘Turntablism’ doesn’t discriminate musical genres or nationality. In this respect, imported music such as hip hop could be said to express Korean sentiments better by fusing with Korean traditional elements.”

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<sup>4</sup> For a stimulating debate on the reformulation of the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy, see L. Grossberg *et al.* (1988) *It’s a sin*. (Sydney : Power Publication).



As noted above, within the same song, traditional elements can coexist with modern or postmodern elements or styles, and they are woven into the fabric of the host genres-in this case, hip-hop. The new hybridised musical forms, like their senses of cultural identity, reflect multiple cultural orientations. *Shinsedae*, in favour of such syncretic musics, often self-consciously combine local traditions with the most contemporary cosmopolitan styles and attitudes, as illustrated by musical appropriation and rearticulation. They have marked inclinations towards postmodern attitudes and aesthetics, while at the same time retaining ties to the modern (and even pre-modern) cultural elements which coexist in Korean society. In reality, it has been said that Korean society is a mixture of premodern, feudal, modern, and postmodern elements - which results in a multi-layered and multi-faceted society.<sup>5</sup> The New Generation in such a society, thus, can only be multi-layered. All in all, the uses of postmodernist aesthetics can be seen “as strategy and ingredients in the construction and rearticulation of new sorts of meanings and identities” (Manuel,1995:230).

As mentioned above, postmodernism can be portrayed as a worldview that reflects the changing conditions through which different cultural stances coexist and interact. Related to this postmodern phenomenon is, as Manuel goes on to maintain, “the emergence of crisscrossing economic, demographic and media networks, the tendency for individuals and groups to form fragmented, multiple identities, and an unprecedented degree of cultural borrowing, appropriation and syncretic cross-fertilisation”(1995:228). From the viewpoint of globalization, some postmodernists and

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<sup>5</sup> See, Contemporary Cultural Studies Project Team (eds)(1994), *Chaos and Order: Theory of Shinsaedae*.

postcolonialists have begun to focus on the hybrid constitution of culture and the nature of co-existence in this hybrid culture. Within this context, foreign or imported cultural elements are always reinterpreted and retranslated by local consumers. For instance, among contemporary pop musicians and dance music enthusiasts in Korea, hip hop, reggae and Afro-American rhythms are often utilised purely for their embodied, abstract musical qualities, regardless of their extra-musical origins and associations.

Theorists of postmodern culture and postmodernism have justifiably emphasized the crisis in cultural and political authority of the West, that is to say, in the dominance of the Anglo-American popular culture (in the form of rock and pop). Not unexpectedly, the intermingling and cross-cultural transmission of cultural commodities is much more complex. Above all, the new postmodern discourse of popular culture is not so much 'authentic/synthetic', 'true/false' – privileging high culture over low culture in terms of musical or artistic authenticity as the modernist Adorno and the Frankfurt school would have it – but rather 'global/local'. The issue now lies in the nature of local appropriation of global cultural products and its role in the formation of identity within a specific context. On this point, it is very important to consider the issues of positive appropriations and the constitution of new subject positions within a peripheral country like Korea, rather than in the metropolitan centres of the West.

Within the Korean context, these postmodern paradigms are welcomed and studied by many politically active scholars, and utilized by radically oriented youths. For example, rap and hip hop blend postmodern aesthetics of pastiche and bricolage, stressing playful depthlessness and irony, within the modernist social-political protest (I

will discuss this issue in detail, in the latter part of this chapter). In the Korean context, postmodern musics such as rap and hip hop are now being used as a way of resisting the felt oppressions of particular cultural and authoritative institutions by youths. As a young hip hop devotee in her late teens explained to me:

“Just like hip hop music in the States started out as a means for the blacks to express their feelings of anger and resistance against the whites, it is only natural for unsatisfied teenagers like me to be attracted to such rebellious and liberating music. We long to escape even for a moment from our robotic lives that revolve around repressive exam-oriented school system and words of our authoritarian parent’s generation.”

Today’s youth culture proceeds from a different premise, and re-evaluates past orthodoxies on ‘rebellious’ or ‘deviant’ youth and music’s potential. While contemporary youth culture and youth music seem to just emphasize surface appearances and lack any kind of organized political movement, it could be argued that young people use their musical and stylistic preferences as a means of expressing themselves against the established culture of Korea. What the postmodern changes in youth culture means in Korea is significant not only on the cultural level but also on the socio-political. The postmodern narrative of *Shinsedae*, for instance, attempts to divide people vertically, according to older and newer generations. This attempted division is due to a major change in the perception of Korean society, where previously only the leftist and rightist divisions, caused by ideological-political conflicts, were the forms of attention.

As the Korean case shows, although *Shinsaedae* is being accused by some of an apathetic attitude toward politics, consumerism and hedonistic lifestyle, it also

launches a cultural critique of the older generation and of worn-out traditions. In the Korean context, as Shin, Kuk Won suggests, any movement that attempts to break away from the established order and structure, regardless of whether or not it may be called postmodern, has to be new and progressive indeed (1997:116). Here it is worth noting the idea of “a postmodern resistance as a critical deconstruction of tradition”(Foster as quoted by Redhead, 1990:94). As Redhead argues, it refers to a critique of both the official culture of modernism and the false promises of reactionary postmodernism. On this basis, some intellectuals’ classification of postmodernism as neo-conservatism, it seems to me, does not apply in Korea. In other words, postmodern-influenced youth and youth culture can justify the logic of radical activism to change social relationship and the politics of identity within the Korean context.

## (2) The New Politics of Music, Style and Youth: Not Yet the End of Youth Culture as Resistance

‘Authentic’ subcultures and ‘deviant’ youth styles, as Redhead(1990) argues, never fitted together as harmoniously as some CCCS theorists proclaimed. “‘Authentic’ subcultures were produced by subcultural theories, not the other way around”(ibid.: 25). Such a theory of youth culture is built upon a binary assumption: always distinguishing between authentic youth cultures and co-opted commercial cultures. In fact, the excessive focus on authentic subculture with regard to studies of young people and music derives from the rock-era’s way of conceiving the significance of popular music as a rebellious expression of youth from the 1950s to the 1970s. Although by the 1980s, the so-called rock ‘purity’ ideology was losing its political and cultural significance, the

excessive attention to spectacular and supposedly oppositional uses of popular music still dominates much discussion about contemporary youth cultures in Korea. For example, as the appeal of rap and hip hop to young music enthusiasts becomes evident in Korea, the discussion of whether hip hop culture or *Shinsaedae* (the New Generation) culture has countercultural potential, unmediated by the commercial interests of the culture industry, is up for grabs.

However, new musical styles currently proliferating among youths should not be approached as a simple testament to the existence of a new counter-culture. It would be a mistake to revive the idea that youth music is in itself radical and oppositional. Counter-cultural rock ideology and the 'folk purity' argument of the late 1960s cannot easily be applied to the glossy world of pop culture in the early twenty-first century global village. Put simply, "it is not a straightforward question of 'selling out', or of faded idealism" (Redhead, 1990:17). The various sounds themselves are not innately oppositional. In fact, too often we have talked about the meaning of 'youth' and resistance as a transhistorical and timeless entity, without realizing how little relevance those fixed notions hold for the new realities of the late 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium. In their embrace of commercial culture, instead of standing outside it, youth culture and youth music try to work through it, exploit the contradictions of contemporary life to create unpredictable possibilities for the future. In this sense, the notion of resistance in youth culture and music discourses needs to be theorised differently.

In this context, a number of youth theorists have begun to incorporate

'lifestyle' theory into studies of the cultural sensibilities of contemporary youth. According to Chaney, lifestyles are actively constructed by particular social groups to mark themselves off from the wider society, by establishing distinctive forms of collective identity (1996:51). In a similar spirit, moving away from the class-based interpretations of the CCCS, Chambers(1985) focuses on the importance of music and style as a form of creativity for young people; as a means of temporarily escaping, rather than reinforcing, one's class position. For my own part, the concept of lifestyle seems more relevant than 'subculture' as an analytical perspective for the study of youth culture and youth music in the Korean context, as it allows for the formation of distinct social and cultural practices of young people. As indicated in the following comments of an interviewee - a 20-year-old male college student and member of an internet underground music community, 'underworld':

"First I thought of hip hop, I would think of walking around in oversized clothes such as bellbottom jeans, sweatshirts with hoods and baseball caps and little brats that fool around with turntables and write graffiti on walls. Anyway the reason I first got attracted to hip hop was the clothes. Now I am totally engrossed in the music itself...Rap, hip hop, and techno all innately reek of the underground and anti-mainstream world in Korea today. It could be a foul smell to the older generation, but to teens it's a fragrant escape. But what is important is that it is not just liked for the music, but also for its style and visual image. In fact, the young people may be more interested in techno clubs than techno music, and in hip hop style clothes than hip hop music."

As this interview extract serves to illustrate, music alone does not make a youth culture; clothing style, greeting rituals and preferred places to meet, all belong to youth culture. In fact, hip hop culture involves dance, dress, language and 'wild style'

graffiti. At its core, it also involves an attitude. As Hebdige pointed out, hip hop helped to forge a sense of identity and pride within the black local community (1987:137). This hip hop attitude and culture then became available to other people who listened to the music. From the Korean perspective, youth music like hip-hop opens up entirely new ways of understanding how young people consume music. Rap and hip-hop are dress, rudeness, identity, excitement, and resistance – all of those things encapsulated in something called spectacular youth ‘style’. Visual styles and images of music are appropriated and realised by individuals, as aspects of consumer choice to be woven into a personal system of identity politics, and a deviant relationship to an older generation and the national dominant culture. These images define a particular relation to marginality and in particular to black culture. As Grossberg has argued, “there was no assumed identity between being black and being young, but there was ‘a structure of imaginary desire’ between them”(for example, the 1960s slogan, ‘student as nigger’)(1994:50). This may help to explain the unique relation between youth and African-American sounds and rhythms.

Furthermore, to use Grossberg’s phrase, hip hop defines a “politics of fun”(where fun is not the same thing as pleasure, nor is it a simple ahistorical experience). In privileging youth, hip hop transforms “a temporary and transitional identity into a culture of transition”(Grossberg, *ibid.*:51). Simply put, youth itself is defined by its rejection of boredom and its celebration of movement, change, newness, energy, that is, fun. And this celebration is inscribed upon the body – in dance, fashion, style and even the music itself. As a 16 year-old male hip hop enthusiast explained to me:

“Hip hop music is like a line that separates us from the older generation. It is good because it smashes the framework of the older generation such as ‘clothes should fit your body’, ‘pictures should be drawn on papers’, ‘music should have musical scales that are drawn on music sheets’. When I first got to know hip hop, it came as a refreshing shock. Isn’t it only natural for young people to be attracted to new things such as new music, new style and new culture?”

Young people in Korea began to utilise hip hop as a symbolic marker in their lifestyles and as ‘images of rebellion’ in their contemporary social lives. In other words, young people use the music to mark their new identities, opposed to the norms of their parents’ generation. As indicated in the above comments of the interviewee who fails to conform to accepted conventions of appearance such as dress, hip hop is used as a form of protest against the conservatism he encounters on the streets of Seoul. Although the generational dimension of youth culture is universal, by definition, in a society like Korea, where age is traditionally venerated, ‘youth’ as a term is particularly important in relation to a wide range of associations, such as ‘newness’, ‘change’ etc.

Today’s youth culture in Korea provides a dynamic example of late modern style cultures. The term ‘style culture’ represents extremely volatile affinities and identities and contradictory changes in production and consumption in culture industries such as popular music. This is indicative of a new form of so-called ‘post-subcultural’ youth. At this point, youth culture theory needs to concentrate on the complexity of the practices which made the particular nexus of music, youth and lifestyle today, and, put differently, to interrogate what they ‘actually do’ rather than to recycle past youth subculture mythology. Moreover, ‘lifestyle’ has become more readily associated with



the nature of consumption and its impact on the reconstruction of identity. As Chambers(1985) has suggested, the appeal of consumerism lay in the power that it gave the young to construct alternative lifestyles and identities.

However, there is an increasing criticism of hip hop culture in Korea in that it is rapidly becoming a 'style culture' and a marketing device rather than signifying as a new youth subculture. For instance, a 25 year-old college student, who is also a member of the internet music society, 'underworld', made the following observation:

"In Korea there's no such thing as so-called subcultures. In reality, most of the young people who belong to the economically disadvantaged class simply do not have the chance to develop a self-conscious interest in culture. On the other hand, the young people who belong to the middle class use hip hop culture as a means to show off, ostentatiously their taste for exotic culture...It would be more appropriate to dub hip hop culture as a community of the privileged few than a subculture."

In fact, it is obvious that hip hop as youth music does not attempt to challenge the political and economic conditions of Korea. It remains unanswered what kind of political change can or cannot emerge from this youth music and culture, although hip hop is often linked to images of alienated rebellion and black musical sources as living outside the privileged space of everyday life. Without some kind of collective political consciousness making an effort to redistribute wealth and power, youth culture and youth music may degenerate into a form of collaboration with, rather than critique of the established order.

To some degree, it is true that some local hip hoppers have maintained their

exclusive preferences for black U.S. music, as a marker of difference from what they consider to be the 'mainstream' youth of Korea. Among middle-class youth in Korea, hip hop culture no longer makes any reference to black 'consciousness'. In this respect, a cultural pessimism or political cynicism is the most likely pitfall for youth culture analysis of the kind some post-subcultural theorists have undertaken. As Redhead contends, though thousands of youth styles walk the street today in a highly individualistic extravaganza, they are frequently read, or interpreted, as lacking in any radical political potential (1990:32). In a similar vein, in his emphasis on the changing place of the music in contemporary youth culture, Frith has pointed out that "the young listen to more and more, and it means less and less. The old listen to less and less, but it means more and more. The young are materialists; music is as good as its functions. The old are idealists, in search...of epiphany"(1991:88).

In some ways, however, these pessimistic readings of the stylistic nuances of today's active youth cultures and youth musics stem from one-dimensional theorisation of youth culture in the past, which overemphasised the idea of authentic subcultures and overt rebellion, derived from rock and folk ideologies. One of the difficulties with this argument about 'folk purity' is that it stresses folk protest as a direct, unmediated, and therefore 'authentic' expression of real needs and feelings, which is then set against 'inauthentic' protest. Rap and hip hop, for instance, are sometimes excluded, sometimes included, on these grounds. Traditionally, revolutionary politics and oppositional art have been rooted in a belief whereby activists and artists attempt to stand outside their society in order to change it. But, instead of standing outside society, contemporary youth culture and youth music embrace the contradictions of today's life and suggest an

immanent critique rather than a direct resistance to the established society. On this point, I want to redefine the concepts of 'resistance' and 'political consciousness', focusing on an alternative mapping of the cultural politics of youth culture and youth music.

Indeed, when youth music does connect to political and social issues (for example Vietnam), as Grossberg has said, it is usually because political and economic realities have suddenly appeared within the everyday lives of its fans (1994:52). Then, as he goes on to argue, "if it (music) does not define resistance, it does at least offer a kind of 'empowerment', allowing people to navigate their own way through, and even to respond to, their lived context"(ibid.). Contrary to much popular music criticism based on literary theory, the issue of rebellion or resistance cannot be directly read from the lyrical correctness of songs. The notions of authenticity in youth culture and music discourse are not clear-cut. Songs about personal and every day life are now sensed as just as political as the stereotype of political pop. As Lipsitz has asserted, we'd better not dismiss youth culture simply because it has not yet produced an organized political movement (1994a:26). It is not that youth culture died since the 1980s, but rather that the subject of historical discourse with regard to the formation of youth culture is radically shifting. Although youth have not yet channeled their critiques into disciplined collective action, their culture contains great potential for the politics of tomorrow. To use Fanon's term, youth culture can be seen to articulate "the wisdom of the future"(1961:243).

According to Bennett, youth consume the cultural resources provided by the popular culture industries and use the prescribed meanings attached to such resources as

templates around which to construct their own forms of meaning and authenticity (2000:27). Simply put, today's cultural resources, such as popular music, which can be used as symbolic markers in the lifestyles of young people, assume a form of dual significance. As he continues to argue, on the one hand, they are recognisable as 'global commodities' which connect with common stylistic and aesthetic preferences of youth throughout the world, while on the other hand, their precise meanings become bound up with the 'local' within which they are appropriated (ibid.). It is within such complex relations across the local/global that the changing meaning and forms of popular music and youth culture are to be found, in the so-called 'post' era.

Within this context, the aspect of the local appropriation of global cultural resources is important in the study of youth culture, especially in a non-Western country like Korea. During the following section of this chapter, I will now explore how forms of transnational pop, such as hip hop, have been consumed and reworked by Korean youth as well as the question of constructing new identities and localities.

#### (D) Youth Culture, Hip hop and Identity in the Korean Context

##### (1) Music as Cultural Practices of Youth

With the help of particular forms of popular music, youth mark the boundaries separating them from other generations and other social groups, and therefore from other cultural views. Undoubtedly, a major stylistic resource for young people has been popular music. On this account, at the outset, I will look more closely at the significance

of its cultural impact upon contemporary youth cultures.

In general, youth cultures require a particular cultural system of symbols and signs, in other words, 'distinctions' and 'differences' which can be practiced towards others on the outside. In terms of its social use, music functions as an identification pattern, as a medium to try out certain life attitudes, that is, as a cultural practice of young people. When I asked what part music does play in his life, a male interviewee in his late teens replied that:

"Korea is a very patriarchal and uniform society, teenagers don't have much outlet for their stress. We're suffer from a school system that is solely oriented on a college entrance exam, and we're forced to be silent in front of authority. So popular music becomes our only exit...For most people, pop music is just a source of temporary entertainment. But for me, music has a lot more meaning. Music is a medium to express myself, my anger, my philosophy."

Clearly, for young people, music builds up differences, articulates identity or acts out emotionality, that is, fun, fearful, and frustrating, even in its exaggerated form. Popular music as a particular cultural form helps young people to channel problems with the self and with the conditions with which the self is confronted. In the light of this, it is crucial to examine how various musics are integral to youth's social and ideological formations. To understand the relations between youth cultures and popular music, we need to pose the question; how do youth's subcultural discourses position the music?

While simultaneously rethinking the class-based argument of the subcultural theorists, as Bradley(1992) suggested, we need to consider the role of popular music itself as a mode of youth expression. Musical taste can become a form of opposition

which dramatically cuts across class distinctions. Moreover, as Bradley goes on to suggest, youth culture is also involved in music-use beyond the youth culture, and acts as a cultural example for others to follow in their musical lives (ibid.:107). Following on from the study of Bradley, I will consider popular music as a cultural resource of youth expression and draw on its actual function for young people, as a way of marking themselves out from older generations and articulating identities within the Korean context. Here, musical practices are placed in the context of a complex set of relations with other cultural and social practices.

According to Thornton, “even the most political subcultures are also taste cultures”(1994:177). Given that the vast majority of contemporary youth cultures in Korea do not take up overt political projects, nor even constitute ‘subcultures’ in the more rigid sociological senses of the term, issues of ‘taste’ and ‘distinction’ deserve attention. Rather than just criticizing youth cultures as apolitical, this perspective actually gives close attention to the complex politics of youth culture, music and style. Musical taste and style are important components in youth cultural awareness, and there are subcultures out there defined primarily by forms of musical consumption. The term ‘underground’ or ‘alternative’ becomes the expression by which youth refers to subcultural things. Generally, underground crowds are attached to sounds. Underground fans define themselves most clearly by what they’re not – that is ‘mainstream’. Within the Korean context, this is clearly illustrated in the following account from a male college student and member of the internet underground music society, ‘Underworld’:

“Since I was in middle school, I was into underground music, especially indie rock such as industrial and punk music. My friends used to think I was weird

...I'm not so stupid as to play into the hands of mass media. I always buy albums produced by my favourite producers. I am interested in apocalyptic or fantastic sound. I am most interested in U.N.K.L.E or Mo'wax label albums. And I prefer UK-style indie pop to US-influenced mainstream pop music<sup>6</sup>... Things that are not mainstream and new are more sought after by the youth in Korea because of their freshness and subversive inference... Music is culture and culture should always be changing, I think. And newness generates shocks that advance culture."

Such fan-specific competencies, exemplified in the knowledge of this interviewee, are understood to be popular "cultural capital", to use Bourdieu's term. Through the acquisition of popular cultural capital, music devotees symbolically draw the line between themselves and those who have 'official' cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). In a similar vein, Thornton (1994) suggested that the main currency of the underground might be called 'subcultural capital', borrowed from Bourdieu's 'distinction' model. Yet, this notion of subcultural capital is different from Bourdieu's class-based cultural capital. For Thornton, whatever their class, the youth enjoy a momentary reprieve from "necessity". In other words, the youth are exempt from adult commitments to the accumulation of economic capital. They temporarily enjoy what Bourdieu argues is normally reserved for the bourgeoisie; that is, a "taste of liberty" or "luxury"(Thornton,1994:178).

More than fashionable or trendy, underground or alternative sounds and styles are regarded by young people as authentic and pitted against the mass-produced

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<sup>6</sup> In general, US popular music is more dominant and prevailing in the Korean music scene. This is, in part, due to the close cultural connections built between the US and that country since the Korean War of 1950. Moreover, the presence of several large US Army bases and AFKN, the radio and TV channel established to serve personnel of the US Army in Korea, have had a great impact on Korean popular culture and music.

and mass-consumed, and in particular, the mass media who “continually threaten to release their cultural knowledge to other social groups”(ibid.:179). However, the production of difference is an aspect of both the logic of the youth culture phenomena as well as the logic of the market. In fact, the desire for distinction and difference, and oppositional choices among the youth are increasingly channeled through the means of the media and the new consumer capitalism. Yet, while subcultural studies have tended to argue that youth subcultures are subversive until the very moment they are represented by the mass media, Thornton suggests that these kinds of taste cultures become politically relevant when they are framed as such (1994:184). In other words, media are crucial to the assembly, demarcation and distribution of ‘subcultural capital’ in youth music culture. In this respect, a subcultural capital becomes itself, in part, a phenomenon of the media.

For example, Korean youth music cultures are not anti-media. In Korea, a large percentage of young people obtain music information through radio and television music programmes, alongside two specialist cable music channels such as KMTV & Mnet. The Radio and TV still have a strong influence on the musical tastes of the Korean youth, although young people now increasingly get in touch with new waves of music from abroad through the internet. (In fact, internet music societies in Korea are also pretty much systematically organized and have played an important role in youth music culture). On this basis, young people have become target groups for music-oriented radio and TV programs. The Korean music industry is, thus, oriented towards the production of music that caters to the youth’s tastes, focusing on youth music such as dance music which has a higher possibility of commercial success. Even allowing for



the commercial nature of the music, today's Korean music industry is just too much intent on reaping immediate profits, resulting in the loss of diversity in music. Han, Sang Soon, who is a sales manager of the Korean record company, 'Synnara Music', brought to light the latent criticism on the commodity youth culture:

"We don't have an authentic youth music culture in Korea. In contrast to a fanzine which is formed by commercial influence and 'group psychology', the so-called 'mania culture', a continuous following regardless of the fad, is very weak among the young people...The music industry also has a tendency to have a sort of 'herd' instinct, rushing into one genre and not letting other genres develop for the purpose of economic profit."<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, this observation demonstrates the nature of the commodity society, which has always cultivated the desire for distinction among youth music cultures, and the cultural and aesthetic needs of teenagers that have become a decisive criteria in the musical production in the Korean context. Increasingly, this connection is hardly separable.

But the fact that music is constructed to maximize its profitability does not mean that its social effects and positive power are negligible. The protagonists of the new youth cultures have constantly attempted to bring out changes in the cultural self-understanding of popular music. In this sense, the advent of contemporary dance music forms, including techno, rap and hip hop, from the early 1990s onwards in Korea can be seen as a good example of changing attitudes towards popular music. Dance musics were significant in the way in which they thrust themselves to the forefront of the Korean popular music scene in the 1990's with unprecedented dance boom. Techno, rap

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<sup>7</sup> Personal interview, 16 September 2000.

and hip hop placed the dancing body in the center of contemporary youth culture. Now a new approach to music has begun to focus on its correspondences with the body or the physicality of the music. Although this physicality of music is frequently mediated commercially, its commercial status in no way diminishes its cultural impact.

In fact, the most powerful musical influence worldwide in the twentieth century has come from African-American musicians, whose cultural traditions celebrate physicality, without the mind-body split that has so dominated Western culture until recently. The growing popularity of hip hop and dance music among today's youth in Korea has brought the issue of 'the body' into the local pop music scene. The fact that music can so influence the body accounts for much of music's power. But its power is not restricted to the activity of dance. On the surface, the contemporary dance musics of Korea are not particularly oppositional or political. However, it seems to me that the music itself - especially as it intersects with the body and destabilizes accepted norms of subjectivity, gender and sexuality - is precisely where the politics of music often reside.(MaClary, 1994:32). Whatever African-American dance and music signified in its original contexts, they quickly came to be associated with forbidden bodily pleasures and potential social havoc in Korea. The Korea Herald quoted Park, Sang Hee, a music columnist as saying;

"The popularity of dance music today is due to too many years of suffering in our history and we finally have a generation that does not know the word, 'hunger'... Teenagers these days are not afraid of showing their desire and emotion. They are more impulsive and more willing to express themselves. Not surprisingly there is controversy over explicit sexuality abounds in the current pop music scene in Korea. It is inevitable that the majority of the rap and dance

music acts seek more and more provocative lyrics as well as dancing, to catch the changing tastes of young people in Korea.”<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Park Jin Young, known for his popular dance act and producing skills in Korea, got the hottest media spotlight recently. His sixth album, ‘Game’, released in June 2001, contains mostly lyrics about his liberal depiction of ‘sex’. Forty-nine civic groups, including several religious groups, issued an official statement that the appropriate authority should ban teens from buying Park’s album, which they say instigates disorderly sex among youth.

From the Korean vantagepoint, the connection with ‘physicality’ is one of the reasons why contemporary dance music has established itself as a youth culture; a youth culture which resists and denies the dominant cultural norm and customs of the older generation that embrace the repressive, Confucian morals of the Korean social system. Such changes in Korean youth music are in line with the changes, not only in popular culture but also in Korean society as a whole. In short, to assess dance music as though it were but one commodity among many is to fail to locate its bodily pleasures in progressive cultural politics within the Korean context. Therefore a kind of cynicism about bodily expression and the pleasures of youth music, with regard to the utopian euphoria of rebel rock in the previous years, needs to be replaced. Music’s power does not translate automatically into social and political power. But frequently, by virtue of the market and its profit-motivated attention to emergent tastes, music has broken out of established norms and “has participated as an active force in changing social formations -formations that Plato and his followers saw as the very core of the political”

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *The Korea Herald*, 3, September, 2000.

(MaClary,1994:34).

All in all, from the Korean viewpoint, as has been examined above, young people, including *Sinsaedae*(the New Generation) seem to use the music as an important resource for expressing generational difference and as a reinforcing element for individualization, in the face of a society fragmented by divisions of class and gender. Korean youth music has become a cultural space that is still being created and contested between young people, parents and commercial interests. Indeed, as Laclau and Mouffe state, “all values are values of opposition and are defined only by their difference” (1985:106). For young people, a process of ‘differentiation’ implies a sense of belonging or an ‘identification’ pattern, and popular music is an easily recognizable marker of self-identity. Although popular music is a part of commercial culture, it also comes to serve as a specific site for the creation of collective identity, particularly when it captures the attention and the engagement of people from many different social locations.

## (2) Hip Hop, Youth and New Identities in a Global Context

In our supposedly global era, the new transnational pop styles and images are being speedily created by transnational media networks, and more and more young people in Korea appropriate those globally available musical resources and their attendant styles within the context of a given locality. From the viewpoint of a non-Western country like Korea, the relationship between youth, music and identity needs to be defined by not only musical taste and knowledge of individuals, but also by locality and notions of

national cultural identity, which become intertwined with musical and stylistic sensibilities. In this respect, I want to consider the appropriation of transnational pop, in particular, hip hop, by young people, with regard to the new relationship between musical taste, style and local identity in the Korean context.

A considerable amount of rap and hip hop now increasingly consists of a specific development of the commodity form, and the global markets for rap and hip hop commodities grow ever wider. Cutting across national lines, hip hop enthusiasts often seem to possess the same sensibilities of commercially communicated style, musical taste and 'street-talk', irrespective of their location on the globe. But at the same time hip hop, can be characterized as multicentric, and as emphasizing spatial diversity, so that the role of the local becomes crucial, as a means of understanding how collective cultural meanings are inscribed in hip hop music.

According to Lull, "the foundations of cultural territory – ways of life, artifacts symbols, and contexts – are all open to new interpretations and understandings..Because culture is constructed and mobile, it is also synthetic and multiple"(1995:160). In a similar spirit, Thompson has argued, "the appropriation of media products is always a localized phenomenon...Messages are often transformed in the process of appropriation, as individuals adapt them to the contexts of everyday life"(1995,174). The role of the 'local' as "both a space in which youth cultures operate and a cultural frame of reference for the collective knowledge and sensibilities shared by youth cultural groups" is now crucial in the study of youth culture and youth music (Bennett,2000:33). On this basis, I will focus on how the specific locality of Korea

illustrates the dynamic interrelationship between local and global forces in the construction of cultural meanings and identities around transnational cultural commodities. Put concretely, the way that young people in Korea use and constitute a sense of place in their consumption of music, in particular, transnational pop such as hip hop, will be considered.

In fact, much research on globalisation has been concerned with redefining the local or the relationship between local and global processes. Within the existing literature on popular music and locality there are two main ways in which the term 'local' is applied. On the one hand, 'local' appears to be interchangeable with 'national', on the other hand, 'local' is used in the context of specific urban and rural settings. For my own part, I consider the term 'local' as denoting a focus upon national, with reference to global or transnational aspects of popular music production and consumption. And further, I use the 'local' as a 'contested' rather than 'fixed' space'. We need to challenge such perceptions of the local as an essentially uncontested territory, arguing instead that the local becomes a highly contested territory that is entangled with different forms of collective life and competing sensibilities.

### *Hip Hop as a 'Glocal' Culture*

According to Redhead, hip hop is perhaps the only youth subculture since punk to attain a worldwide status (1990:42). Among contemporary youth cultural forms, hip hop has attracted a great deal of interest from researchers. Outside the African-American and wider African-diasporic world, hip hop is being appropriated by different groups of

young people from very diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. In other words, hip hop enthusiasts attempt to rework and localize the hip hop style, so that it becomes a form of address that resonates with the nature of their own particular local circumstances.

The global popularity and the radical nature of hip hop culture – rap music, graffiti, break dancing, B Boy fashion etc. – comes less from its origins than from its uses. As Hebdige suggested, at the centre of the hip hop culture was audio tape and raw vinyl. For example, the hip hoppers “stole music off air and cut it up”. By doing this, they were breaking the law of copyright. But the cut ‘n’ mix attitude was based on the notion that no one owns a rhythm or a sound. “You just borrow it, use it and give it back to the people in a slightly different form”. Anyone can do a “version”, and it does not matter who created the original music in the first place (1987:141). In this way, as Gilroy (1993) argues, hip hop is not just a black cultural form, but becomes a global culture, its styles, musics and images crossing with a range of different national and regional sensibilities throughout the world and initiating a plurality of responses. To use Robertson’s term, hip hop becomes both a global and a local form, that is, an example of “glocal culture” (1995).

In fact, there is no doubt that the commercial packaging of hip hop as a global commodity has facilitated its easy access for young people in many different parts of the world. Within the Korean context, the increasing popularity of rap and hip hop music, as Suh, Byung Hoo pointed out, stems also in part from the close cultural connections built between the U.S.A and that country, since the mass emigration following the ‘Kwangju’ uprising of the early 1980s in Korea (1992). In other words,

the growing influx of Korean-American musicians, the second-generation immigrants, into the local pop music industry in the 1990s seems to have contributed to this phenomenon. In addition, as Suh continues to argue, the similarities between rap and traditional Korean *sasul* lyrics, which are recited to the accompaniment of drums, are also a good reason for boosting up the popularity of hip hop in Korea. This idea was echoed by a male hip hop fan in his late teen, as a member of the internet music society, 'hip hop house', explained:

“There’re a lot of aspects of hip hop that Koreans can become attracted to. For instance, like traditional Korean music, the music style emphasizes rhythm... Unlike most pop music nowadays that attaches great importance to catchy melodies and has the same old lyrics, hip hop music uses words from our everyday lives. It is more down to earth, and there are a lot of lyrics that you can identify with. Unlike trite Korean *Gayo*, which is mostly pathetic love songs, hip hop music acts like a spokesman for teenagers like me that lash out to the sound of its strong beat and our dissatisfaction with the established generation who just don’t understand us.”

As indicated in the previous comment, the things that appeal to young people about hip hop are mostly its powerful rhythm and rap. Rap, especially, a narrative form of vocal delivery that can be traced from African bardic traditions, is utilized as a medium for Korean youth to express their personal issues and local themes. Moreover, hip hop’s value as an expression of youth is rooted in the power of rap through which individuals can comment on the nature of their own day to day experiences. According to Beadle, rapping is the perfect “vehicle for pride and for anger, for asserting the self-worth of the community” among lower class young blacks in America, relying upon the ability to “talk in rhythm” (1993:85). From the Korean point of view, hip hop has also



provided a voice for the youth, who are seeking their own home place under the pressure of rigid political, social and educational systems. In other words, hip hop becomes a sphere of cultural expression and emancipation for young people, independent of the parental generation and the mainstream culture. In fact, there is the less strict correspondence between economic status (class) and the cultural expressions in Korea than in many European and American countries. Though an economic and educational disparity certainly affects Korean lifestyles, the class boundaries concerning hip hop as a cultural expression are generally blurred in Korea. On the surface, hip hop does not appear to be particularly political or oppositional in Korea. But, 'hip hop' in Korea, at least, does signify opposition to mainstream music practices, not just because the genre can still only be largely found on the minor labels, but because it emphasises the physicality of music, as I have already noted earlier. Hip hop refuses sentimental love ballads that highlight melody and song structure, which are largely defined historically by appreciation from lots of Korean musicians. Instead, rhythm and drum play a much more central role in hip hop. In the end, there is a link in this non-European music with speech, with the timbre of the living human voice and with rhythm.

Similarly, with regard to the issue of local appropriation of hip hop, another young male hip hop enthusiast in his early twenties gave the following account:

"Now hip hop is no longer foreign music. 'K-hip hop' emerged, rapping in Korean. If you have to rap in English, which nobody understands here in Korea, you'd better rap in the US. I think, the message is important as much as the rhythm in hip hop." The rapping should express candidly the emotions and thoughts of the rapper, and the person listening to the rap should be able to understand it. Of course, there are still a lot of limitations to the expression of the rapper's

thoughts and feelings in our rigid Confucian society, but if anything that can reflect the Korean situation it is K-hip hop. . . I prefer K-hip hop to the so-called original black hip hop. As one can see from the music of Drunken Tiger or CB Mass (who could be said to be the forerunners of Korean hip hop), the rap is more accentuated and there's a little bit of melody, making it not just beat. They are really cool. It's not we who have to adapt to hip hop. Isn't it more appropriate for hip hop to adjust to us."

In reality, rhyming was alien to Korean lyrics. However, this technical difficulty has been gradually overcome by those contemporary K-hip hop musicians who have learned by experience the techniques of rhyming and flow, two essentials of rap, in their native language. The years around the mid-1990s saw the widespread recognition of Korean-language rap. The simple fact of rapping in the Korean language seems to play a significant role in the process of the localisation of hip hop. Interestingly, over 90 % of hip hop and underground music enthusiasts whom I interviewed preferred Korean domestic music (*Gayo*) to foreign music. Korean *Gayo* has accommodated a lot of elements from imported music, so that there is virtually no difference in form, save for the fact that *Gayo* is written in Korean. Nevertheless, this could also be said to reflect the general trend of young Koreans to attach great importance to lyrics and language forging a common bonding of sentiments.

A number of young hip hop fans in Korea seem to reject the notion that hip hop can be understood only in terms of its African-American context. Instead, they try to appropriate it as a vehicle for the expression of issues that link more directly to their own mundane experiences. But at the same time, there are some other hip hop devotees who defend the essential 'blackness' of hip hop in the face of its commercialisation and mere imitations by local hip hoppers. When I asked a high school student and hip hop

enthusiast to comment on Korean hip hop, he replied:

“I don’t think there’s anything musically special about Korean hip hop apart from the language. To me it seems like a sloppy imitation. Instead of original black hip hop that signifies resistance and freedom, it’s only commercial ‘dance hip hop’ that caters to the taste of the teens which dominates the Korean popular music scene.

A copy of a copy of a copy. You might as well buy original music, rather than buy those imitation albums. Everybody, the musicians, the record people, are all geared to make fortunes for themselves.”

The Korean rap scene can be roughly divided into two subcategories: ‘dance rap’ and ‘hardcore hip hop’. It is the latter group that draws most apparently on African-American culture. Undoubtedly, the previous remark belongs to this category. There are some young hip hop fans in Korea who exhibit their attachment to the essential blackness of African-American hip hop. There is an analogy between the ‘oppositional values’ and African-American style of hip hop. In this sense then, the use of black music and style on the part of the Korean youth becomes, to use Chaney’s (1996) term, a particular form of “a reflexive lifestyle strategy”. Interestingly, this type of self-styled local hip hop elite, like this interviewee, who has an intimate understanding of hip hop’s black roots and a comprehensive knowledge of rap music, tend to utilize this form of local cultural capital as a criteria for what is good or bad rap. Put simply, such demonstrations of ‘black taste’ on the part of young Koreans enable them to manifest their difference from a fickle and commercial mainstream youth culture.

In brief, from the viewpoint of Korea, hip hop culture is now the site in which the local and the trans-local compete with each other in the construction of oppositional musical identities. As it has been examined above, there exist contrasting

attitudes towards the localisation of hip hop and different versions of hip hop among Korean youth. If we situate this diverse appropriation of hip hop in the context of the very real cultural struggles for identity and locality, the Korean hip hop scene can be seen to show that the local and the trans-local can co-exist in the process of consuming transnational cultural forms. On this point, we need to look more closely at the cultural reception of hip hop music by young people in Korea, in terms of the struggle for a new sense of identity and locality.

*The Identity Politics of Hip Hop: Plural Identities and Localities*

“It is now recognized that people have multiple identities, then the same point can be made in relation to places. Moreover, such multiple identities can be either, or both, a source of richness or a source of conflict.” (Massey, 1993:65)

As with all forms of identification, in marking difference from other types of cultural practices, hip hop offers those who engage in practices of consumption and production in a sense of identity, in other words, ‘subcultural awareness’. And while participants in the local hip hop scene find it necessary to articulate their difference from other sorts of music consumers, they are also conscious of belonging to a youth culture that extends beyond the boundaries of their own locality. As a male underground devotee in his early 20s explained to me:

“This is an era of individuality, musical taste of each individual should be diverse and different. Every generation has a different taste in music I think it is meaningless to obstinately look for Korean things in music when you can get in touch with music from all over the world through the Internet or satellite TV to your heart’s content. Be it American or Japanese music, if I like the music, then it

is good music. I am comfortable with listening to music from anywhere...Music is a universal language to all music lovers. For instance, punk started out in the US but caught on in the UK, in Korea it has evolved into a Korean version of punk. No matter what kind of music is imported, its form is more or less transformed, but the spirit of music doesn't change...anyway, there could be nationality in music, but no national boundaries."

A new politics of representation of identities has emerged that places the emphasis within the realm of taste, style and difference that is often not permeated by national or local identity. It is interesting to note that, in the above comments, the cosmopolitan orientation or spirit among young Koreans is increasingly evident in their cultural practices. The symbols and signs of an eclectic youth culture of the 1990s onwards in Korea bear witness, especially in their references to 'locality', to a longing for cosmopolitanism.

In this age of denationalizing culture, young people represent their identities through symbols borrowed from the outside. In fact, the heart of hip hop culture lies in its cut 'n' mix attitude. Hip hop has become almost the public language of urban youths, irrespective of their racial or national origin. Thus, argues Hebdige:

"Perhaps there is another nation being formed for the future beyond the boundaries of race. If that nation can't yet be visualised, then it can perhaps be heard in the rhythms of the airwaves, in the beat that binds together histories, cultures, new identities. the future is as blurred and as uncertain as the roots. It is as shapeless and as colourless as (hip hop) music itself." (1987:158)

In this sense, the appropriation of hip hop in Korea offers a new cognitive mapping in which transnational cultural resources and technology are used by young people in ways

that both inform their sense of self and also serve to reconstruct the local identity in which their identities operate. There are many young people who could be defined as ‘in-betweens’, ‘neither-nors’ and ‘either-ors’, out there in this era of transnational culture. Hip hop culture in Korea allows youths to get a sense of the plurality of practices that help constitute the identities of those involved. On this point, however, it is important to acknowledge that an ongoing process of indigenizing and reconstructing those symbols from the outside also *does* exist. This youth cultural formation of hip hop in Korea is not defined only by musical taste and knowledge; locality is also important as a point which intersects with taste in music.

At this point, we need to look at the discussion over ‘neo-tribalism’ in conjunction with locality or national identity. According to Maffesoli(1996), ‘neo-tribes’ are formed by a multitude of individual acts of self-identification, in order to differentiate themselves from other social groups in a given society. Neo-tribalism emerges from the notion that consumer culture contributes to the weakening of collective identity, and the term highlights the fact that consumer culture encourages the weakening of group identity, for instance, of class, gender and nation. But as Lury affirms, “belonging and self-identity are done together, simultaneously, although not always in the same way”, and what it is to belong to class, gender, race and age in contemporary society is not simply a matter of social positioning, but also “in part a particular kind of relation to self”(1996:255-6). While neo-tribalism can be taken as an element that weakens national identity or locality, there still remains the possibility of reconstructing locality inside of neo-tribes. To put it other words, if a multitude of neo-tribes is formed among young people in Korea, different group identities will be

produced inside of their locality, which will result in the creation of ‘plural localities’.

Within this context, hip hop music, which plays an important role in constituting a sense of group affinity among Korean youth against a mainstream culture, can be a vehicle for the discussion of subjects such as the advent of plural identities and the waning of fixed ‘Koreanness’. Indeed, in consuming hip hop as a transnational music style, the relationship between music and national cultural identity, rather than assuming a quintessentially fixed character, has been understood by Korean youth as a rather more loosely formulated sensibility. The same music and style will often produce not one but a variety of responses on the part of young people to the Korean situations in which they find themselves. As cultural differences increase among the youth, rather than having one fixed identity or locality, the youth have possibilities for constructing multiple identities, based on a choice of changing and diverse living styles. To some degree, notions of locality and national identity are in part, at least, a subjective matter. From the point of view of a Korean, in appropriating and reworking hip hop, young people construct new narratives – narratives that enable them to view the local according to their own criteria of how it can serve their own way of thinking and feeling.

In referring to the ‘local’, as Bennett argues, we are in effect speaking about a space that is crossed by a variety of different collective sensibilities, and further, such sensibilities also construct the local in particular ways (2000:66). In this regard, through the consumption and appropriation of hip hop, young people in Korea can negotiate aspects of the local, and at the same time they create new forms of localities or national identities that simultaneously draw upon the global and the local. They “are all

interpellated as members of discursive communities whose locations are multiple and even contradictory; simultaneously domesticated and internationalised, ...here and somewhere not placed, ...fans of 'The World' we are and are not in" (Berland, 1988:146).

#### (E) Youth as Consumers: Transnational Popular Culture, Consumption and Identities

In consumer societies today, we are encouraged to think of the youth as consumers and all their actions being regarded as consumption choices. In fact, consumption becomes the only arena left to us through which we might potentially create a relationship with the world. According to Gortz (1982), an identity constructed through consumption is far more empowering and controllable than one which is dependent upon a person's position within ever larger systems of production, over which they have little control. There is a clear preference for consumers to be able to autonomously employ their resources for the construction of their individual identities. Indeed, the advantage of consumption is that it is a relatively autonomous process of cultural identification. In this way, the nature and role of consumption become much more pertinent to studies of music and the contemporary youth culture in the Korean context. The connections between youth culture and consumer culture, however, should not lead us to believe that mere market motives entirely determine the range and scope of the cultural practices of youths. Instead, we need to recognize that there might exist the possibility of a progressive role for consumption on the part of young people, and that the power of consumer culture today can affect the reconstruction of personal and collective identity.



In reality, the concern for consumption is often criticized as being more transitory or superficial, with regard to its connection with 'style'. To put this differently, consumption is regarded as being against one of the fundamental principles of Western philosophy – the critique of 'superficiality', that is, a 'depth' of ontology, which opposed to the sense of surface or façade. However as Miller rightly observes:

“There is no reason why important issues of identity, and indeed of ontology, should not be conceptually located in both more transient and more surface oriented modes” (1995:25).

Equally problematic are the much more recent consumption studies that render the consumer as a kind of artist of popular culture, resulting in an explosion of celebratory 'identities'. Of course, there are cases where consumption can clearly be shown to have had positive consequences for the consumer, or even resistant ones. But we must not miss the key point that the consumer is, in general, more concerned with gaining access to resources than in using acts of consumption as some kind of 'resistance' (Miller,1995:29). Overall, the topic of consumption has become an arena for dialectical contradiction. On the one hand, consumption may be employed as central to the production of difference, as in the framing of individual and collective identities. At the same time consumption might appear as the key contemporary 'problem' causing inequality between individuals.

In the light of this, the need is for a more mature phase of consumption studies, setting aside such binary and romantic images of the good and the bad

consumer. The meanings of consumption are as varied as the cultural contexts from which consumers act. Thus, an alternative approach to contemporary consumption is to examine its meaning within a particular historical and social context. In this sense, consumption studies must be followed “as dialectic between the specificity of regions, groups and particular commodity forms on one hand, and the generality of global shifts in the political economy and contradictions of culture on the other”. (Miller,1995:34)

Usually, consumption is considered in terms of individuals, but in this chapter I am also concerned with the particular ways by which a ‘local’, that is Korea, constructs itself in the consumption of the ‘global’ or the imported cultural forms and media. During the course of this chapter, I have explored how local appropriation works in the context of an increasing tendency to consume ‘transnational’ cultural resources, by looking at consumption patterns of ‘hip hop’ culture among Korean young people. This local consumption of transnational music examined suggests that hip hop from the U.S. does not dictate the process of local consumption and does not eliminate transformative potential as a vehicle for the construction of identity and locality. Put simply, consumption stands for the diversity of the ‘locals’ that maintain their differences in the face of the homogenisation of the global economy.

From the perspective of consumption as objectification of the ‘local’, the increase in Korean youths listening to foreign sounds, in particular US hip hop, challenges the fixed idea of ‘Koreanness’ and demonstrates that local identities have been contested in Korea. As I have examined earlier, it is the very idea of hip hop as ‘foreign’ or ‘new’ that makes it attractive to young consumers. But the awareness of hip

hop as 'foreign' does not hamper its local refashioning within the Korean context, and therefore its acceptance as part of the Korean culture. As Orlove and Bauer noted, we can observe "a degree of flexibility in the definition of *foreignness* – and hence a similar degree of flexibility in the complementary notion of *nationalness*" (1997:13). Further, the subject preserves the possibility of various different associations, circulating among identities. In this respect, there exists the relative flexibility of identity and 'nationalness' in the Korean context, that give young people a certain breathing space in negotiating identities and localities.

On a larger scale, what is understood as 'national culture' now serves as the context of consumption or choice for what comes from outside. As Garcia-Canclini argues:

"The definition of a nation is given less at this stage by its territorial limits or its political history. It survives, rather, as an *interpretive community of consumers*, whose traditional – alimentary, linguistic- habits induce them to relate in a peculiar way with the objects and information that circulate in international networks" (2001:43).

Simultaneously, we find international communities of consumers – for example, youth and hip hop culture – that offer a sense of belonging, where national identities have faded. In other words, a 'transnational popular culture', with a collective memory made from fragments of different nations, has been created.

In short, although they continue to harbour a national memory, consumers are nevertheless capable of "reading the quotations of a multilocalised imaginary"

assembled by new transnational media technologies (Garcia-Canclini, 2001:44). In our study of the cultural consumption of transnational pop among young people in Korea, the opposition between one's own and that which is imported is no longer determined by the idea of 'national cultural identity', that is 'Koreanness'. Instead, there exists a differential affiliation with cultural subsystems with a different complexity and capacity for innovation. As a result of the construction of transnational symbolic systems, identities and localities are restructured in a specific locality like Korea. By engaging in transnational musical genres, Korean youth are now given the chance to participate in the global economy.

In this era of transnational popular culture, identities are transterritorial and multilinguistic. They are structured less by the logic of the state than by that of markets. In particular, in the younger generations, identities are organized less in keeping with historico-territorial symbols and those of national memory, and more in tune with transnational cultural imagery. Now, national identity among youth coexists with other forms of identification. The national culture is not extinguished, but it is continually renewed and reconstructed in the interaction with transnational cultural referents. New heterogeneous forms of belonging emerge, and their networks are interwoven with the circuits of consumption.

The acts of consuming transnational culture are personally pleasurable but also politically expressive, while not necessarily being of an explicit political motivation. As Garcia-Canclini (2001) has pointed out, these political actions, which elevate consumers to citizens, entail a conception of the market as not only a place for

the exchange of commodities, but as part of a more complex sociocultural interaction or collective appropriation that serves to become a resource of identification and collective mobilization. Some consumers want to be citizens. At this point, my concerns are thus compatible with studies on 'cultural citizenship' carried by Garcia-Canclini. I share the interest in opening up a state-designated notion of citizenship to more multicultural diversity. And further I agree with Garcia-Canclini that "the affirmation of difference should be joined with efforts to reform the state", not only for it to accept the development of diversity within society, but also for it to ensure "equal access to the resources brought by globalisation". (2001:21) To put it in another terms, this articulation of consumption and cultural citizenship requires "a relocation of the market within society, the imaginative reconquest of public spaces, and interest in the public"(ibid.:47).

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

I have examined the processes through which cultural identities and ‘nationalness’ are being constructed and reconstructed in the realm of popular music within the Korean context. In focusing on contemporary debates about globalisation and the massive transnational flow of culture, I have highlighted some of the problems of our unitary or bounded sense of culture and place, and the transformation of Korean identities in the process of appropriating international styles and foreign music. In other words, I have stressed that the increase in intercultural contact challenges the idea of a fixed ‘Koreanness’ or ‘Korean cultural identity’, and suggested that there is no essentialised and fixed correspondence between identities and places. Specific cultural identities are established and constructed at any given moment by various groups of people and individuals within and across places. It is in this context that I analyzed cultural and national identities in relation to all those individual musicians and young music enthusiasts who participate in the making and remaking of Korean identities in the Korean popular music scene.

In this Chapter, I summarise the thesis’s principal arguments and findings, considering the limits on what can be claimed from it and suggesting some possibilities for further research.

## (A) Summary of the Argument and Findings

### (1) Summary of Theoretical Framework

In Chapter 2, recent debates are explored to do with the issues of culture and identity, multi-faceted identities and hybridity within postmodern /postcolonial cultural studies. I locate my initial discussion within a global/transnational perspective, with particular attention being paid to those approaches that are related to popular music and locality, drawing on cultural appropriation of the transnational, mainly Western, musics. Chapter 3 goes further in this respect by discussing the questions of ‘nationalism’ and ‘national culture’ within the Korean context. Here ‘Koreanness’ was approached, not as being fixed and stabilized, but transformed into the multiplicity of cultural identities. In this sense, the identity of place or locality is constructed through positive interactions across places, and through an internal hybridity and external influences, such as the impact of transnational media and communication.

In my discussion of cultural identities I have stressed a postmodern/postcolonial perspective within the space of post-marxism, which Chen(1991) has called a critical zone ‘post(modern or colonial)-marxist cultural studies’. This is what I would call the ‘critical postmodern/ postcolonial’ approach, which is the first dimension of the theoretical analysis in this thesis. Post-Marxism suggests that what has been called the crisis of Marxism should be used as an opportunity to go back and deconstruct the Marxist canon (McRobbie,1992). Nowadays, what we have to expect is not the accelerating simplification of the class structure as predicted by Marx, but rather the development of a multiplicity of partial and fragmented identities. On a

theoretical level, Marxism was itself Euro-centric, but in effect, for at least a century now, it has become “part of the cultural subjectivity of intellectuals outside the centres”(Chen, 1998:7). The reason Marxism still survives is precisely due to its articulation with non-Western intellectual histories. The prefix, ‘post’ of post-marxism, like postcolonialism and postmodernism, challenges earlier legitimating narratives. The term, ‘post’ here is characterized “not as an epistemological break in the Althusserian/structuralist sense, but more on the analogy of what Gramsci called a movement of deconstruction-reconstruction or what Derrida, in a more deconstructive sense, calls a ‘double inscription’”(Hall,1996:254). To approach an understanding of the postmodern/postcolonial is thus to presume a questioning of, a loss of faith in, the project of modernity and to draw on “a spirit of pluralism, a heightened scepticism of traditional orthodoxies and finally a rejection of a view of the world as a universal totality”(Ahmed,1992:10). From this perspective, modernity is regarded as a Western project (Giddens,1990). Postmodernism is vastly more empowering for the non-Western World than the ideology of modernism, during which the non-Western World was always struggling to ‘catch-up’. In this connection, the term ‘postmodern’ is intertwined with the position of the postcolonial and ‘contramodernism’. This ‘critical postmodern /postcolonial’ perspective has been developed in this thesis, in relation to the analysis of the transformation of Korean identities-in-culture.

Another important dimension of analysis refers to ‘globalisation’ as a phenomenon and theoretical construct. The core idea of globalisation is introduced by certain authors (Massey,1991,1994; Robins, 1991; Tomlinson,1999) suggesting that the world is moving towards an interconnected and united space, which is increasingly



homogenous, but still with complexities and dynamics allowing diversity. The issue of globalisation can be approached from different angles - such as the economic, political or cultural implications of globalisation. In this thesis, debates about the globalisation process were analysed by focusing particularly on cultural aspects, in other words, the relationship between cultural identities and places, although those economic, political and cultural dimensions of globalisation are always interconnected. Globalisation has often been associated with the decline of consensual national identities, while new forms of multiple and hybrid identities and localities are replacing them. Globalisation theories lead us to redefine the traditional sense of the local that is approached as a self-contained world, often from a Western perspective, and to grasp the significance of different and ongoing global/local processes for contemporary culture.

From this perspective, I have applied the 'globalisation' discourse to the Korean case, in an attempt to illustrate the processes of the cultural appropriation of transnational pop music in reconstructing national identities outside the colonial perspective. This globalisation approach, it seems to me, provides a framework to challenge cultural fundamentalists or naïve nationalists that set up the relation of the non-Western and Western world as a binary structure of opposition. Globalisation represents not so much the end of national and colonialist struggles as a force through which these struggles are constantly re-articulated and re-placed (During,2000). In other words, the local is itself already global and, conversely, the global does not have to be set against the local and indigenous politics of self-determination. Accordingly, globalisation discourse has implications for my argument that new identities or localities are made and remade through their relations to the global and other localities,

out of their geographical boundaries, and that this particular way of addressing the local either has been or could be used by non-Western cultures, as a means of claiming their new positions in the global world. As a mode of analysis, we can say that globalisation discourse is closely interrelated to the first dimension of my theoretical framework, namely the ‘critical postmodern /postcolonial’ perspective.

(2) The Case Study of the Contemporary Korean Popular Music Scene: The Korean Appropriation of Global Sounds and the Making of New Korean Identities.

Part Two of the thesis was informed by empirical research, based on face-to-face interviews with professional musicians and participants in music production on the one hand, and on-line interviews with young music enthusiasts, such as members of hip-hop music societies on the internet, on the other hand. It analysed music-making practices and consumption styles in Korea, in terms of the transnational and global connections of music culture, cultural adaptation and the construction of new national identities.

In confronting the pressures of globalization, the issue of national-ethnic identity has emerged as a privileged problem, especially in a non-Western country like Korea. The globalising process, to contemporary Korean pop musicians at least, allows the ambivalent positions of ‘indigenization’ or ‘hybridisation’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’, with regard to the issues of cultural adaptation of transnational sounds, as examined in Chapter 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 was involved with the analysis of the indigenizing or hybridizing

trends which appear among some musicians in the contemporary Korean popular music scene. These musicians are conscious of their national cultural identity, and attempt to incorporate traditional Korean elements into Western musical idioms. The Korean pop musicians, interviewed here, reject an 'either/or' choice between the option of 'maintaining' Korean music with cultural identity or of 'adopting' global styles. For them, national cultural identities are not the spontaneous expression of given local traditions. In this connection I investigated critically, first, the notion of 'tradition' and, second, the 'world music phenomenon' as both heterogeneous global marketing categories and as musical practices, in relation to a sense of belonging. Focusing on the debates on 'tradition', within the Korean context, I went on to contextualise my argument within the 'co-existence' thesis: my argument is that detraditionalizing processes do not occur in isolation from other processes, namely those to do with 'tradition-maintenance' and 're-traditionalization' or 'the construction of new traditions' (Luke,1996). In this sense, I argued that the mutually constitutive process of detraditionalization/re-traditionalization is indeed taking place in the contemporary Korean music scene. Vernacular forms of musical expression are now constructed through processes of 'transcultural' hybridization, which have become particularly evident in the works of, especially, the so-called 'world musicians' of Korea.<sup>1</sup> On this point, I have highlighted the fact that these Korean musicians who are concerned with this two-way process of cultural interaction, exhibit their 'multiple allegiances' through their musical practices. From the Korean point of view, what really matters now is how multifaceted identities are being organized and expressed, as opposed to the fear of

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<sup>1</sup> The term, indigenization or hybridization that I used here describes cultural interaction or mixing between the centre and the periphery or the West and the non-West, focusing on complexity and reciprocity.

‘losing’ the Korean identity. Accordingly, having confirmed the value of my theoretical framework, related to the performative and constructive aspect of identity, this chapter suggested that cultures or peoples’ identities are not lodged somewhere (or ‘in’ something) but rather emerge from “points of articulation” (Guilbault, 1997).

Chapter 6 examines the sector of ‘cosmopolitan’ musicians in Korea, who are characterized by a lack of self-consciousness in terms of the issues of the tradition of music and ‘Koreanness’. Unlike musicians who take the position of hybridisation, as illustrated in Chapter 5, the group of musicians referred to as cosmopolitan musicians here do not make conscious efforts to employ indigenous musical idioms in the process of adapting foreign music. Korean pop music produced by these cosmopolitan artists, is in itself transnational and this transnational home-produced music, such as Korean hip-hop, Korean techno-dance and Korean rock, proliferates in the Korean domestic market, today. This transnational Korean pop is criticized by some people as lacking ‘Koreanness’ in its musical forms, although it often addresses local social issues. Within the transnational perspective, however, I argued that we need to rethink a fixed notion of ‘Koreanness’, or national cultural identity, which depends on the exclusion of all forms of otherness and its own internally coherent self-identity. My empirically-based study of Korean pop musicians suggested that new kinds of cultural identities are articulated in the process of transforming foreign sounds, and that transnational cultural influences allow musicians to employ and deploy different subject positions in a kind of simultaneity, which was never before possible. On this basis, I stressed that the transnational or cosmopolitan position could refer to divided commitments, the multiplicity of roots and plural dimensions of cultural identity, based on an ‘inclusive’

attitude toward cultural difference. Overall, discourses about contemporary Korean music raise questions about how we should break down the rigid dualism between universalism/particularism, West/East and abstract cosmopolitanism/cultural essentialism, and find a new cultural politics. Within this broader context, I went on to contextualise my argument within debates about ‘rooted’ or what I might call ‘constructed’ cosmopolitanism.<sup>2</sup> Cosmopolitanism does not necessarily imply ‘rootlessness’, and there is no denying that cultural identities continue to be constructed upon socio-culturally specific contexts, as well as from transnational influences.

Within the Korean context, when the notion of ‘transnationality’ or ‘cosmopolitanism’ becomes entangled within the globalisation process, the most pressing issue has been seen as the collision between those taking the position of cosmopolitanism and those taking that of indigenization or hybridisation. However, most musicians in Korea, whether referred to as cosmopolitan musicians or world musicians here, have openly adapted foreign musical genres and styles, as part of their own culture and without any ‘nationalistic’ prejudice against their foreign origins. In this respect, I have highlighted that both stances of indigenisation or hybridisation and cosmopolitanism share a basic assumption, namely that the transnational flow of music or openness to foreign culture does not necessarily lead to the extinction of national culture or cultural identity but the reconstruction of them within the Korean context.

In Chapter 7, I analysed contemporary youth and music culture in Korea, focusing on young Koreans’ consumption of transnational music, in particular hip hop

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<sup>2</sup> Here, I was inspired by Cohen’s (1992) notion of ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’.

music. The contrasting and differentiated musical experience among young people introduced in this chapter is presented as a way of addressing complex and tangled practices through which their sense of self and collective identities develops. Although local cultural studies scholars rightly capture highly consumption-oriented practices and the fascination with Euro-American cultural products and styles among *sinsaedae* (the New Generation) in Korea, one cannot fail to see that the Korean youth culture also provides a kind of transitional and inclusive site, where diverse and playful sorts of cosmopolitan, individualistic, and non-traditional styles, repertoires and conduct are performed. In the light of this, I stressed the need for understanding cultural identities and ‘Koreanness’, in relation to all those young people and the various groups of people that contribute to making and remaking the identity of places. And I also suggested that Koreans, in particular, young people have been delineating boundaries of places, and making new ways in which cultural identities are related to places, through the actual appropriation of imported cultural forms.

Here I explored the particular ways by which a ‘local’, that is Korean youth, constructs itself in the consumption of global cultural forms and media, within a revised version of debates about consumption. From the Korean viewpoint, this local consumption of transnational music, such as hip hop, displays a relative flexibility in its definition of ‘foreignness’ and hence a similar degree of flexibility in the notion of ‘Koreanness’, among young people. Put simply, I highlighted the fact that the consumption patterns of hip hop culture among Korean youth stand for cultural diversity, foreignness, a shared transnational cultural imagery, and temporary liberation from suffocating traditional cultural restraints, as well as a symbolic shorthand for large-scale

socio-cultural transformations, including emergent reformations of national cultural identity in Korea.

## (B) Concluding Remarks

### (1) Some Limitations and Recommendations

I took as my theoretical premise here a processual and anti-essentialist stance - much adopted in postmodern and postcolonial cultural studies - that may help avoid cultural fundamentalism, which naturalizes cultural persistence and timelessness and ideas of 'bounded' culture, and further may emphasize change (and exchange) in culture and identity, depending on individuals that participate in constructing and reconstructing cultural identities and localities. On this point, my own work 'is may be' subject to critique, in as much as it may have overly favoured this anti-essentialist perspective. In other words, my research on the increasing heterogeneity of Korean popular music as a globalized local site (where concerns on the practices of consumption, life styles, identities and, more importantly, the lived effects of culture and its changing role have risen especially among the younger generation of consumers since the 1990s), might be criticized for the romantic celebration of all such culture as 'resistance'. Similarly, it has often been argued - by Gitlin(1997) for instance - that postmodern and postcolonial cultural studies, which finds 'resistance' in the cultural terrain and rejects any form of binarism, is nothing more than a form of populism, which ignores the impacts of consumer culture and the material relations of power. In this sense, contemporary cultural struggles, especially those taken up by social movements organized around ethnicity, sexuality, gender and the politics of representation, become a symbol of

celebratory identity politics and political irresponsibility from the political vantage point of the left.

However, this criticism fails to understand how class is lived through race, ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation, and gender, by denying the autonomy and political significance of these social forces and movements in contemporary society.<sup>3</sup> It is too simple to define various cultural sites as either commodified or liberating. To do so is to ignore the complicated question of contextuality. All empirically-based case studies have their own particularities. Within the Korean context, the emerging interest in consumption, identity, sexuality and the politics of difference in the 1990s has challenged traditional left wing politics of the turbulent 1980s. This new movement has destabilized the once familiar notion of 'what is political'. In other words, this recent Korean version of the 'cultural turn' or the 'discursive turn' (and recent interest in Korea in various cultural sites, material cultures and new cultural tribes) encourage not just the spectacular and commercialized kind of popular culture in Korea, but also the alternative cultural sensibilities and transgressive potentials to transform the normative and often suffocating value system in Korea. Historically, in Korea, there was an imagined notion of a hermetically sealed culture, or a strong, organically bonded culture of people, territory and language. Although it lost considerable power during the 1990s, this relative homogeneity of cultural characteristics is still deployed as an excuse for an official homogenizing patriotic nationalism as well as other forms of authoritarian collectivism, such as patriarchal and Confucian discourses. These discourses were emphasised by the ruling bloc and neo-libertarians, during and after the financial crisis

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<sup>3</sup> See Hall (1992 &1996).



of November 1997 in Korea.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the deconstruction and intervention of essentialistic discourses about national culture, which draw on the radically changed social conditions of Korea, such as cultural diversity, political apathy, and consuming desires, can be seen as various counter-hegemonic forces for politically self-reflexive and progressive movements. Yet, to adopt the anti-essentialist critique of national identity in the Korean context of this research does not mean that any search for cultural identity, based on specific locality, is necessarily reactionary. I argue only that the Korean case is a site where my theoretical framework can be applied with progressive results.

A further possible limitation of my analysis of the transformation of Korean identities present in popular music is that I have approached the cultural significance of music mainly in terms of its role in the construction and reconstruction of particular narratives of the local. Thus, the issues of the technical details of musical texts themselves might be thought not to have been covered thoroughly in this thesis. In my discussion of the constructive and processual formation of cultural identities, I have highlighted how concepts such as cultural identities and localities are continually negotiated, defined and redefined in the interactions between individuals, and thus focused on a range of interviewees including musicians, music professionals and an audience who talk about their sense of 'place' or 'Koreanness'. From this perspective, a full musicological explanation of music was not required. To explain how particular musical instruments and musical elements, such as rhythms and voices, etc., signify a symbolic sense of place and local identity would have required a vast study, depending

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<sup>4</sup> See Lee, Kee Hyeung (2000)

on many musicological variables. However, every study must make such decisions on emphasis. In focusing on the sociological approach, rather than the musical text itself, I have viewed music as a human activity involving social practice, identities and collective practices. In this respect, my emphasis is on individuals who produce and consume music within specific social contexts, at specific times or historical moments. This focus on the microanalysis of the personal points to the processes through which the concept of local identity is socially and historically constructed, as well as to the possibilities for change inherent in these processes.

Finally, I should note another possible limitation of the thesis, which is related to my overall empirical orientation, relying, to a great extent, on interview material. I have focused on the practices and vocabularies of musicians, who might feel that they are somehow capturing ‘Koreanness’ and reflecting this in their music as well as those who don’t. My explanation of ‘the Korean sound’ or ‘Koreanness’ in music might thus reflect a series of vague and often mystical quotes from musicians who usually adopt intuitive romantic discourses. Obviously what people say they do often differs from what they actually do. In relation to this, I have attempted to mobilise a form of ‘discourse’ analysis in the interview-based study.<sup>5</sup> Namely, I have tried to approach the interviewees’ talk as a text and to study the interview text in its own right. In addition, I drew on not only interview material but also the public debates developed around the notion of ‘Koreanness’ in the 1990s and the comments made by such critics in the press and other journalistic sources. These have previously often been overlooked from an academic perspective. Within this context, I have aimed to generate ‘grounded

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<sup>5</sup> In relation to the notion of ‘discourse’ analysis, see Alasuutari (1999).

theory' which emphasizes the integration of 'macro' issues, such as discourses on the nation, cultural identity and transnationalism, and the 'micro' levels of analysis of musical practices and consumption of musicians and audiences.

## (2) Researching Korean Experience of Transnational Cultural Imagery: Towards a New Identity Politics

The spectacular explosion of cosmopolitan cultural aesthetics, transnational images and hybrid forms in the Korean popular music scene addressed in this thesis has been a key element of Korean experience since the 1990s. The dichotomy of the traditional/modern and the Korean/Western, which had been the basis of the modernization project in Korea during the 1960s and 70s, is now unable to cope with the multilayered complexities of the present state of globalisation. From the Korean vantage point, there has been an emerging interest in the de-essentialized or the de-nationalized cultural politics of identity and difference, which has challenged the traditional politics of the left. That leftist politics was centred on such issues as class, political democracy, and nationalism, during the 1980s. However, since the 1990s, emergent issues such as consumption, life styles, and identities have become increasingly politicized, and a diverse range of cultural criticism, especially cultural studies perspective, has flourished in Korea. The increasing attention to cultural politics in Korea has resulted in the development of an alternative political imagery and grammar, which has been merged with cultural diversity, consuming passion, and transnational cultural imagery across lines of race, nation, class and gender.

However, it would be wrong to imagine that the politics of culture and identity and the process of globalisation belong exclusively to critical thought. Lately, in Korea, there are popularly accepted ideas that globalisation means an intensification of competition between countries. In other words, within this line of thought, the contest between states is seen as unavoidable, and thus, the improvement of the nation's competitiveness is crucial for Korea to preserve its self-determination. These ideas have been reflected, especially, in policies of conservative and right-wing blocs and evolved into a discourse of cultural essentialism, focusing on the establishment of a 'unique' Koreanness.

At this point, one crucial question could be said to run through the course of this research. The rise of British post (colonial/modern)-marxist cultural studies as a pedagogical practice was an important step forward in explaining the diverse ways in which culture is related to power and how culture functions, both symbolically and institutionally as an educational, political, economic force in the Western context. Is it possible for this cultural studies perspective to function as a politically vigorous academic project within the Korean context?<sup>6</sup> In other words, in spite of the financial crisis in 1997 and the concurrent rise of neo-liberal and market-centred operating principles in Korea, can cultural researchers such as myself sustain this pedagogical project, rearticulating their works into more politically progressive and self-reflexive

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<sup>6</sup> These days, the study of culture has been dramatically transformed as issues of modernity and postmodernity have replaced the more familiar concepts of ideology and hegemony which fix cultural analysis firmly within the neo-Marxist field mapped out by Althusser and Gramsci from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Under the influence of postmodernism and postcolonialism, the toleration and understanding of 'difference' have shaped the rhetorical field of culture, and struggling over identity and identifications, namely, the politics of identity or recognition has become crucial in this so-called post-marxist cultural studies.

ways of doing cultural studies?

Cultural studies in the Asian context, as an intellectual and internationalist project, has been formed by the postwar decolonization movement and has been a critical force in continuing that tradition (Chen,1998). But at the same time, cultural studies researchers in Asia need to be aware of the danger of celebrating a regional identity based on the binarism of the West and the East. From this viewpoint, I have adopted Chen's term 'critical syncretism', which actively "interiorizes elements of others into the subjectivity of the self, moving beyond the boundaries and positions historically constructed by colonial power relations, patriarchy, capitalism, nationalistic xenophobia, etc."(Chen,ibid.:25). In drawing on the critical consciousness which this notion includes, I have discussed how 'critical syncretism' (or, as I would say, 'critical hybridity') can function as a possible cultural strategy for dismantling essentialism, and for dismantling the dominant institutional structures and cultures within the Korean context.

This process of dismantling, initiated by the forces of transnationalism, has already occurred, in the realm of popular music in Korea, and transnational music practices continue to dominate contemporary Korean popular music scene. This trans-cultural activity in Korea contributes to breaking out of the familiar expectations of 'Koreanness' in music, which assume that only traditional music can express national identity. The Korean popular music scene now operates in tension with, and is critical of, dominant notions of national cultural identity. In this light, I have stressed that the increasing tendency towards 'globalising' or 'transnational' cultural interaction in

Korea has provided musicians and audiences with new ways of making hybrid sounds and hybrid selves. It has thus created multiple and ambivalent subject positions and allegiances for those involved and addressed in this thesis. In other words, most of the musicians interviewed here, whether they are referred to as ‘cosmopolitan’ or ‘world’ musicians, have attempted to challenge a narrow definition of ‘Koreanness’ as well as residual and conservative norms within musical styles, in the process of appropriating transnational sounds. Music is a small representation of what is going on at this point. In this sense, within the Korean context, an intense experience of discontinuity seems to be replacing the feeling of deep historical rootedness.

The anti-essentialist definition of cultural identity and belongingness, which points to a cosmopolitan stance, can of course, be criticized as an uncritical ‘celebration’ of cultural hybridity and trans-cultural experience. However, although my research suggests that culture and identity are always in the process of transformation, and highlights the ‘multi-faceted’ cultural identities and ‘plural’ belongingness present in the contemporary Korean popular music scene, it is not my intention to privilege this multiplicity and temporality uncritically. Instead, I have attempted to stress how individuals and various groups, holding different positions contribute to the formation and transformation of Korean cultural identities. In particular, focusing on how musicians and audiences respond to transnational cultural influences, I have highlighted the very ambivalence and multiplicity of transnational musical experience as simultaneously involving fixedness *and* temporality, belonging *and* detachment.

Nowadays, in relation to debates over cultural differences and multiple

belongings in this global world, over the limits of uniformity as well as diversity, the notion of citizenship has become more significant in the realm of cultural studies scholarship.<sup>7</sup> Civic understanding of cultural identities and of cultural difference must be taken into account in order to consolidate the anti-essentialist approach to culture and identity, for the notion of citizenship can contribute to creating a balance between the variety of individual choices and civic responsibilities. Using this approach, further studies on the various strands of citizenship and consumption within the global context could be undertaken. Such analyses should have at least two aspects. First, these studies would need to take into consideration the shift from the citizen as a representative of public opinion, to the citizen as consumer. In order to establish the analytic relations between consumption and citizenship, we have to recognize that consumer behaviour is not just a private matter and also that citizenship is not reducible to a purely political issue. We need to understand ourselves both as citizens and consumers. Thus, in order to redefine citizenship, one needs to look at cultural consumption as an ensemble of practices, which shape the sphere of citizenship, as well as looking at consumption as a political practice. Such an approach can lead to a notion of ‘cultural citizenship’, which refers to both rights to equality of access as well as to rights to difference. Secondly, such studies need to approach the notion of ‘the public sphere’ on a global scale. Nowadays, citizenship operates on both national and international levels, in relation to the new cultural conditions of the transnational flow of culture and global consumption of the mass media. The public sphere is no longer limited to political action in any one national space. In this sense, the public sphere can be reconceptualized as a multicultural collectivity, because the sense of identity and belonging becomes, in many

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<sup>7</sup> With regard to this issue, see Garcia-Canclini (2000)’s theoretical work, *consumers and citizenship*.

contexts, ever less shaped by local and national loyalties and more and more formed at the interface of the local and global.

As a final point, although the notion of 'global citizenship' has gained some credibility since the 1990s, and the multiplicity of cultural identities and Korean identities are articulated in transnational musical experience in contemporary Korea, it is important to acknowledge that identities continue to be constructed at a particular historical moment, within a particular cultural context. There are not an infinite number of options for experiencing identity. For example, in the face of globalisation, in a marginal country like Korea, senses of tradition and the concept of a 'local sound' remain important for some musicians (like much of the music of Kim, Soo Chul or other so-called 'world musicians' introduced in Chapter 5). On the other hand, for other musicians (as in the case of Hahn, Dae Soo and many others referred to as cosmopolitan musicians presented in Chapter 6), 'Korean' music does not exist 'a priori', naturally but is a more open and dynamic concept that is not tied to a static place. Nevertheless, these musicians, who regard themselves as 'free individuals' or 'cosmopolitans', do not lose sight of the local. Rather they are sensitive to both local specificity and global context, in the process creating new forms of musical expression and seeking new subject positions. In fact, most of the Korean pop musicians, interviewed here, reject an 'either/or' choice between unique Korean sounds and transnational musical styles, and they exhibit their multiple allegiances through their syncretic musical practices. Thus, I have concluded that the local and the trans-local, or the national and the trans-national, co-exist within the contemporary Korean popular music scene, and new subject positions and cultural identities are created at the



intersection of local, regional and global contexts, between the periphery and the centre.

From this viewpoint, any transnational contact with the other must be seen as being mediated internally within a culturally/socially specific context. The Korean experience of transnational sounds and cultural imagery clearly demonstrates that the basic dualism between a simplistic internationalization/indigenization project, cultural universalism/particularism and East/West needs to be challenged. In this light, the transnational musical experience facilitated by globalisation produces new notions of 'Koreanness', based on the plurality and hybridity of identities and 'belongingness'. Thus within the Korean context, it becomes possible to "have both wings and roots – develop meaningful affiliations without renouncing one's origins" (Beck,2001:87).

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