Musical Identity in Asian School Education:

Between universal musical grammar and local identity

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Introduction

The phenomenon of cultural globalisation can be observed virtually everywhere in our life. In Asian countries, it often appears as the adoption of and adaptation to western culture, which is considered to be the global standard. This aspect of globalisation is mentioned by many scholars, using terms such as 'convergence' or 'universalisation' of culture (Featherstone, 1997; Robertson, 1992). However, the adoption of western culture is not the only aspect of cultural globalisation. There is a symptom that is often called 'divergence' or 'particularisation' of culture, which is understood as a counter-action against the convergence or universalisation. Asian countries' attempts to maintain some particularity about their cultures is an example of such a symptom. An expected outcome of these contrasting features of globalisation is some sort of hybridisation of culture. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the state is involved in the convergence, divergence and hybridisation of culture through its educational policy. For this purpose, the paper focuses on school music education in Japan and other selected Asian countries.

1. Booming Asian Pops as a Phenomenon of Globalisation of Musical Culture

The recent development of media technology has accelerated the globalisation of musical culture. A symptom of the convergence of musical culture as its consequence can be found in the growing popularity of western-style pop music among Asian youth. Researchers in Asian countries have pointed out that the kind of music their youth like to listen to most is western-style pop music, with lyrics written in their own languages (Xie, Li and Zhao, 2006; Ho, 2002; Maryprasith, 1999; Shiobara and Ishii, 2006; Shah, 2006).

According to a report on middle school students' cultural life in the People's Republic of China (PRC) published by the Study Group for "Social and Cultural Life and Ethics Education in the Middle Schools" (1990), 76.9 percent of the 234 students

surveyed frequently listened to modern popular music programs, while only 12.3 percent listened frequently to national and ethnic music. According to the report, popular singers from Hong Kong and Taiwan and their songs are particularly popular among the students. Another survey of Hong Kong secondary school students' preferences of music shows that the top four types of music they like are: Cantopop, Western pop, Japanese pop and Mandarin pop (Ho, 2002). Such pop music "has essentially one single, homogenised sound" and "is easily available on radio, television, and videotape" (Campbell, 1995: 41).

In Thailand and Malaysia as well, the popularity of western-style pop music with lyrics in a local language is growing. According to Maryprasith, "modern Thai popular music in the style of rock has been prominent since the eighties" and most of such Thai popular music "has been Westernised to an extent that almost nothing of Thai-ness remains except the Thai language used in its lyrics" (Maryprasith, 1999: 71). In Malaysia, youth of three major ethnic groups, Malay, Tamil and Chinese, have a preference for pop music of their ethnicity (Shah, 2006). Among them, Malay pops is musically the same as western pops and the difference may be the ethnic background of the composers and the language used for the lyrics. Two other types of pop music have slightly different musical scales from western pop music, but the difference is not significant (Shah, 2006).

The author recently conducted a survey of Japanese university students' musical preferences, and found that the situation is more or less the same in Japan: music they listen to in their private life is predominantly western-style Japanese pop music that can hardly be distinguished from western pop music in terms of sound (Ishii, 2008).

Western-style pop music is thus penetrating into youth culture in these Asian countries and seems to lead to the convergence of musical cultures at the ultimate stage of the penetration. However, despite students' musical culture in their private life, musical culture they learn at school as official knowledge is not at all overwhelmingly western-style pops. They learn western-style music, but the pieces they learn are often music for children composed by local composers, who had been trained in western classical music. Western folk songs and western classical music are also included in textbooks. Traditional music of their countries is taught, although it is presented in western-style notation. Western-style pops seems to be carefully avoided or limited in the selection. Thus, musical culture that school education in these Asian countries is aiming to develop among their youth is not directly reflecting cultural globalisation penetrating into young people's taste of music, but various intentions of policy makers and teachers are involved.

2. Western Musical Theory as the Universal Musical Grammar

One common feature in state music education policies of Japan, the PRC, Taiwan,

the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Thailand and Malaysia is the emphasis on students' acquisition of the universal musical grammar, which is western-style notation. This indeed is the mainstream of musical concepts taught at schools in these Asian countries and for this purpose, western classical and folk music, rather than pop music, has been considered to be the authentic teaching materials.

School music education policy in Japan typically shows such an intention. In Japan, the acquisition of western-style notation has been promoted from the very beginning of its modern school system in the late 19th century as an important component of the state's modernisation project. This policy was succeeded, or even strengthened, after the defeat in World War II, when western classical music was considered the ultimate goal of music education in Japan. After a few decades, western classical music itself is no longer the ultimate goal of school music education, but western-style notation has confirmed its status as the basis of music education. It is considered to be the universal musical grammar that Japanese children must acquire in order to understand *any* music of the world, including traditional Japanese music.

Music education in South Korea and Taiwan, which were under Japanese control before World War II, was directly influenced by Japanese music education policy (Go, 2004) and the influence still remains. In the music textbooks of South Korea and Taiwan, western-style notation is regarded as the universal basis of music education. Besides the explanation of western musical theory, western folk songs are provided as singing materials and western classical pieces are introduced as appreciation materials(1) in Korean textbooks. Taiwanese textbooks include western folk songs, along with folk songs of Taiwanese and Chinese ethnic groups, both of which are written in western-style notation. In these countries, the majority of the pieces in the textbooks are those composed by local composers based on western musical theory.(2)

Music education in the PRC was also influenced by Japanese music education in the pre-World War II period (Tajima, 1996), but after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, it altered its course towards anti-western culture, including the status of music education. Music education was not regarded important until the end of 1970s when the government changed its policy to recognise music as an important subject in school education (Takeshi et al., 2002). In 1982, the number of western musical pieces approved by the government was still very limited, but in the textbooks published during the early to mid 1990s, western-style notation and western musical instruments were adopted (Nomura and Nakayama, 1997). Music education in the lower grades begins with pieces in traditional Chinese scales, then, the number of pieces composed in western scales increases in the upper grades (Nomura and Nakayama, 1997). In the primary and secondary school experimental textbooks published in 2001 and 2004, even the pieces in traditional Chinese scales are presented in the form of western-style notation, despite that, in some textbooks, the numbered notation system was used instead of five line staff notation to represent

pitch.[3]

The Malaysian music education curriculum has also adopted western-style notation and requires teaching of western musical instruments, keyboards in particular. In textbooks, locally composed western-style music is the mainstream.[4]

Even in Thailand, which has constantly emphasised Thai music in school education, Maryprasith's study of Bangkok secondary schools reveals that it is the western-style of notation that two thirds of students learn at school, and in listening and theory, western music also plays a significant role (Maryprasith, 1999: 148). Since many Thai teachers have found western classical music too difficult to teach, they tend to choose western popular music as teaching materials. This choice of western popular music as teaching materials is, however, the second best choice for teachers because they admit that there are more important musical values in western classical music (Maryprasith, 1999). Indeed the western pieces found in textbooks include folk songs and relatively simple classical pieces composed by western composers such as Foster and Dvorak.[5]

In these countries, it is not only western musical pieces that are presented in western-style notation but also locally composed pieces. Furthermore, even when traditional pieces are introduced, it is usually the western-style notation that is used to present them. The implication is that western-style notation and theory are considered by policy makers in these Asian countries to be the universal musical grammar that can transmit musical messages beyond cultural boundaries and must be learned by their youth. For this purpose, whether the pieces used as teaching materials are western or local is not important as long as they are useful to teach western theory and notation.

3. Emphasis on Cultural Particularity in Music Education Policy

Another common intention found in music education policies in Asia is the transmission of traditional musical culture through school education. Tanaka et al. (2006) have pointed out that some Asian countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan, share this intention in their educational policies. The same intention also exists in educational policies of South Korea and the PRC. How they are actually trying to promote the transmission varies as follows.

Thailand is the country that emphasises their own cultural heritage in school music education the most. Maryprasith (1999) has clarified that about half of the secondary school music teachers in Bangkok have been trained in Thai music and music teachers tend to choose Thai musical pieces when they teach singing and instrument playing. The emphasis on Thai music can also be found in the five textbooks the author analysed, which were published in 1987, 1988 and 1991. The contents for the first year pupils are mainly Thai traditional dancing and musical instruments in various regions and in the lower secondary school textbooks, about half of the contents

contained traditional elements.

The emphasis on national traditional music may not be as strong as Thai musical policy, but policies of Malaysia, the Philippines and the PRC also attach importance to teaching traditional music of various ethnic groups in each respective country as well.

In Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan, where musical culture in general has already been quite westernised, there is a struggle to reintroduce non-western identity of traditional Chinese, Korean or Japanese music. While the reintroduction of Chinese and Japanese identities, in the sense of non-western musical identity, is the priority before local diversity in Hong Kong and Japanese music education, Taiwanese localisation policy includes both the emphasis on non-western identity and diverse local identities. Teaching traditional Chinese music as a counteraction to the westernisation of musical culture is encouraged in the policy and at the same time, Chinese music is treated as one of the musical cultures of diverse local ethnic groups. In South Korea, the emphasis at the policy level is the inclusion of traditional musical elements and not particular musical pieces (Murao, Go, Park, 2003), but at the implementation level, local diversity seems to be taken into consideration. Textbooks include a number of Korean folk songs and traditional musical pieces from various regions.

How the emphasis on traditional local music is supposed to be practised also varies by country. Firstly, it is often taught through listening and singing, and the emphasis appears in the inclusion of traditional pieces in teaching materials. For example, in the primary school curriculum of the PRC in 1997, thirty-two pieces out of 143 pieces in appreciation materials are traditional music and those of ethnic minorities are also included (Nomura and Nakayama, 1997). In South Korea, as the result of the emphasis on Korean musical elements as musical concepts to be learned, more than thirty percent of the contents of textbooks and teacher's guidebooks are Korean traditional music (Murao, Go and Park, 2005). In Taiwan, localisation policy is reflected in "the music teaching materials, mainly singing and music appreciation materials (Tanaka et al., 2006)."

Besides listening and singing, secondary schools in Malaysia and Japan must give students an opportunity to play, or at least experience, traditional musical instruments. Schools in Thailand also provide students with opportunities to play traditional instruments. In the PRC, the playing of instruments by students is not required, but music teachers must learn one traditional musical instrument in addition to western instruments.

In the aforementioned countries, states' intentions to transmit traditional musical culture to youth through public education can be understood as an attempt to maintain local musical identity and resist convergence into western musical culture. However, although the particular musical culture that each country asserts differs, the phenomenon of self-asserting cultural particularity is common to the policies of these Asian countries. In that sense, self-assertion of cultural particularity is also a sign of

convergence of values.

4. Compromise

As discussed so far, music education policies of some Asian countries intentionally include two contrasting aspects of globalisation. On one hand, they are attempting to make their youth familiar with western musical theory and its notation system as a universal musical grammar, so that they can participate in the global interaction of musical messages. On the other hand, they are trying to develop students' national identity by making them familiar with traditional local musical culture. This mission is, however, quite demanding. The students' acquisition of a universal musical grammar is important, but if it is overemphasised and uses western pieces as teaching materials, young people will not develop their identity in local music. Furthermore, it is obviously impossible for all teachers to be satisfactorily trained in all types of music and musical instruments, including those of local ethnic minorities.

Teachers in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan are relatively well trained in western classical music, but not in their own traditional music. Japan has experienced a failure to introduce traditional local music into school music education. It attempted to reintroduce traditional nursery rhymes into primary music education in the 1970s and had to give up the policy because of teachers' reluctance to teach them. Teachers in contemporary Hong Kong and Taiwan are facing a similar difficulty and are given in-service training for this purpose (Tanaka et al., 2006). Even in the PRC, where western music was adopted in education rather recently and one Chinese instrument is compulsory for music teacher trainees, Chinese instruments are less popular among these trainees, when compared to the piano. Besides, these trainees learn just one traditional instrument and only as a secondary instrument. This is far from sufficient to teach the music of 56 domestic ethnic groups.

A reverse case can be observed in Thailand, where many teachers have been trained in Thai music, but not in western music. Such teachers feel uncomfortable to teach western musical instruments (Maryprasith, 1999).

In Malaysia and the Philippines, not many teachers have proper training in teaching music in the first place, since the subject of music is not considered a serious subject in these countries. Malaysian teachers of other subjects are recruited to have short-term in-service training so that they can function as music teachers (Ghazali and McPherson, 2006). The situation is no better in the Philippines, where teachers of other subjects might be asked to teach music if they can play a musical instrument.

The above examples indicate that it is unrealistic that one teacher teaches diverse musical cultures on his/her own. Indeed, despite the emphasis on traditional music in policy, what is actually done in many countries is teaching traditional music only as appreciation materials. In countries where more than appreciation is required, some device must be invented. In Malaysia where playing traditional instruments is

required at secondary schools, music courses are offered at a limited number of schools that are capable of doing so. Japan has a similar requirement, but *the Course of Study* carefully avoids the expression to "play" the musical instruments and uses "experience" instead. In Thailand, teachers are given freedom to choose their own teaching materials.

With the emphasis on traditional music not satisfactorily implemented, some Asian countries seem to have found an alternative way to maintain national identity in music education and this has become the mainstream of teaching materials. The alternative way is to assert national or ethnic identity through the nationality or ethnicity of composers and the language used for lyrics. The sound is basically western, but some local flavour can also be added. The transition of the proportion of musical pieces in Japanese music textbooks shows this process of compromise well.

Reflecting the emphasis on western classical music after World War II, in the junior high school textbooks authorised in 1950, 45 out of 72 pieces were western classics, 16 were western folk songs and folk music, seven were Japanese composers' works based on western musical theory, three were western pieces just introduced as "foreign piece" and only one piece was traditional Japanese music. During the attempt to reintroduce traditional nursery rhymes into music education in the 1960s and the 1970s, the number of traditional Japanese pieces increased to ten and some more pieces for appreciation, while the number of western classical pieces decreased. In the 1961 textbooks, 63 (of which 16 are appreciation materials) out of 139 pieces (of which 19 are appreciation materials) were western classical music. In the 1973 textbooks, 37 (of which 11 are appreciation materials) out of 121 pieces (of which 17 are appreciation materials) were western classical music. The numbers of western-style pieces composed by Japanese composers were 22 in both 1961 and 1973. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the proportion of western classical pieces in the total number of materials continued to decrease to become six in the 2001 textbooks, while those composed by Japanese composers increased to 48 (of which 4 are appreciation materials) out of 95 pieces (of which 21 are appreciation materials) (Ishii, 2004).

A similar tendency can be found in the textbooks of the PRC and Malaysia, both of which seriously started to establish the subject of music in school education in the 1980s (Takeshi et al., 2002; Ghazali and McPherson, 2006). According to Tobe (2000), in the textbooks published in Shanghai between 1997 and 1999, the majority of the teaching materials are works by Chinese composers, except for the sixth grade of primary school. In singing materials for lower grades, these pieces are written in Chinese scales, but in the upper grades, the number of pieces using western scales increases. In appreciation materials, 60 out of 143 pieces are pieces composed by Chinese composers in the western-style (Nomura and Nakayama, 1997). In Malaysian primary and junior high school textbooks for the Malay, the mainstream is also pieces composed by Malay composers based on western musical theory. The textbooks of Taiwan and South Korea also include significant numbers of locally

composed western-style pieces.

The contents of music lessons by Thai teachers are not bound by pieces in textbooks, but Maryprasith (1999) has researched what kind of materials are actually used by secondary school teachers in Bangkok. As mentioned earlier, Thai music education policy has emphasised national tradition and many teachers are trained in Thai music. For these reasons, the type of music that is most often used in music lessons is Thai music. However, it should be noted that they also answer that Thai classical music is too difficult for them to teach and they prefer to use Thai popular music in their classes. Since Maryprasith's research explains that some types of modern Thai popular music have developed under the influence of western music, it is most likely that teachers include westernised Thai music in their teaching materials. The implication is that some of the 'Thai' musical pieces used by Thai teachers are not much different from the Japanese or Chinese music composed by Japanese or Chinese composers based on western musical theory.

Conclusion

In the Asian countries analysed in this paper, the state has been influenced by the process of globalisation as well as attempted to influence the process by intervening in it through school music education policy. On one hand, it is promoting globalisation of musical culture by teaching young people western musical theory and notation as the musical elements they should learn, and on the other hand, it is resisting total convergence to western musical culture by asserting traditional musical culture in the curriculum. In order to make the above two aspects compatible, the Asian countries have invented a genre of music for educational purposes, while carefully avoiding, or limiting western-style pop music that is not considered suitable for either of the above purposes.

Despite such efforts, globalisation of western-style pop musical culture promoted by the music industry is steadily progressing among Asian youth. Which of these aspects will influence young people most and what kind of musical identity they will develop when they have grown up are interesting themes for future study.

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Notes:

(1) Appreciation materials are primarily meant to be listened, understood and felt and not to be actually performed by students.

(2) Based on the author's analysis of Taiwanese and South Korean textbooks.

(3) For this analysis, the textbooks published by People's Education Press were used.
(4) For this analysis, the Malaysian primary school textbooks published in the 1987, 1988 and 1990 and a secondary school textbook published in 1998 were used. These textbooks were published by the Ministry of Education.
(5) Based on the author's analysis of five Thai secondary school textbooks.

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概要

アジアの学校教育における音楽的アイデンティティー
ー普遍的音楽原理と地域的アイデンティティーの間でー

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文化のグローバル化の影響は我々の生活のあらゆるところに見出すことができる。アジアの国々では、それはしばしばグローバルな標準だと考えられている西洋文化の採用とそれに対する適応として現れる。グローバル化のこの側面は文化の収斂あるいは普遍化といった表現で述べられるが、文化のグローバル化は決してこの側面のみから成り立つわけではない。これに対抗するかたちで文化の発散、あるいは特殊化という現象も存在する。何らかの形で自分たちの文化の特徴を維持しようというアジアの国々の試みは、このような現象の一例である。グローバル化におけるこれらの対照的な特徴が生み出すのは、文化の混成である。本稿の目的は、この文化の収斂、発散、混成に国家がどのように関わっているかを探ることである。この目的のために、本稿は日本およびその他のいくつかのアジアの国々における学校音楽教育政策に焦点をあてる。

本稿でとりあげるアジアの国々の音楽教育政策においては、音楽文化の収斂の側面として西洋の記譜法と音楽理論を採用していること、発散の側面として各国の伝統音楽の伝承を主張していること、そして混成あるいは妥協の側面として、自民族の作曲家によって作られ、その言語の歌詞をもつ、西洋音楽理論に基づいた教科書音楽が広く教えられていることが、共通の現象として見られる。

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