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East Asian Response to the Globalization of Culture

Perceptional Change and Cultural Policy

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This chapter focuses on East Asia's responses to a particular aspect of globalization, namely the globalization of culture. While that response is manifested in many ways, consideration is given mainly to the cultural policies of national governments.

Changes in East Asian perceptions of culture from the late nineteenth century onward will first be examined and compared. How these perceptional changes were articulated in the cultural policies of various government bodies in selected East Asian states is then discussed. At the end of the chapter, the effectiveness and durability of state subsidization of culture and other cultural policies is briefly explored. See Sohail Inayatullah's Further Thoughts, "Asian Values and Generational Challenges to Confucian Norms," on page 329.

East Asian Understanding of Culture in the Age of Modernization

Culture has been used to denote various concepts. In general, scholars divide the notion of culture into either a broad or a narrow sense. In the broad sense, culture is defined as a "patterned way of life," which includes shared social practices such as language, family norms, ethics, religious practices, institutions, and manners.[1] The narrow sense of culture usually refers to "the expression of internal emotion and aesthetic expression of mind or thoughts." Culture in the narrow sense often is what is called "art" in that it refers to creative products that stimulate and entertain humans. The narrow sense thus includes both what is called "low" (or popular) culture and "high" culture.

Culture in both meanings is not static. It develops through interaction with other cultures. Most of the aspects of any single culture may have a long history of many hundreds to thousands of years prior to their incorporation into any specific culture. As Tyler Cowen notes,

> If we consider the book, paper comes from the Chinese, the Western alphabet comes from the Phoenicians, the page numbers come from the Arabs and ultimately the Indians, and printing has a heritage through Gutenberg, a German, as well as through the Chinese and Koreans. The core manuscripts of antiquity were preserved by Islamic civilization and, to a lesser extent, by Irish monks.[2]

East Asia also developed its own civilization through frequent cultural exchanges with the outside world. China played an important role and had many opportunities to interact with foreign civilizations. Land and sea routes (particularly the Silk Roads) made great contributions to the development of world culture by facilitating interchange between East and West. Through these trade routes, ancient Chinese culture was introduced to the Western world. Likewise, the religious and philosophical concepts of Islamic and Western civilization were transmitted to East Asia as well as China. As a consequence, East Asia became a region of diversity in which each country has its own highly hybridized culture: a combination of Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam, Christianity, and local traditions.[3] If the notion of globalization is equated with hybridization rather than homogenization, then East Asia is a much more globalized region than Europe or America, where the Christian tradition is predominant.

The Wave of "Civilization and Enlightenment"

The process of cultural exchange in the premodern era was reciprocal, and the diffusion of foreign culture in society was slow and steady in terms of intensity and speed. Thus East Asians had enough time to accommodate and modify foreign culture in accord with their needs and local traditions. However, ever since the Industrial Revolution, the development of modern transportation and communication such as steamships, railroads, and the telegraph brought a great increase in interaction among people and countries. More significantly, the rise of Western powers and their encroachment into East Asia in the late nineteenth century brought dramatic changes in the East Asian perception of culture.

After a series of unequal treaties with the West and the threat of colonization, East Asian leaders began to believe that assimilation into Western culture was an urgent task. In order to achieve this goal, East Asia had to adopt Western values, ideologies, and institutions while abandoning local traditions, in order to be accepted by the Western powers. It was also a period in which the global wave of "civilization and enlightenment" began to permeate East Asia along with Western imperialism, while the notion of "nation" and "national culture" also came into being. East Asian intellectuals and reformists realized that "awakening the nation" and reinvigorating "national culture" was important to unify and mobilize the masses against Western imperialism.[4] They attempted to define the

"nation" based on ethnicity and sought to find their own independent national identity. It was in this milieu that a new notion of "national culture" appeared for the first time in East Asia. This phenomenon is well observed in Meiji-era Japan. Tomooka, Kanno, and Kobayashi state,

> The origin of cultural policy in Japan can be traced to the beginning of the modern nation-state in 1868, when the country's new leaders were faced with the problems of assimilating and adapting to Western influence after the Meiji Restoration. Like many other non-Western countries during that period, the Japanese saw Western culture as a reference point for evaluating their own culture. Since Japan was eager to emulate Western modernized countries, the government's industrial policy focused on rapid modernization, and cultural policy was formed and transformed in accordance with this goal. In a sense, the Japanese government's orientation toward culture at that time was based on the goal of promoting national integration and improving the international reputation of the nation.[5]

Nationalistic historians throughout East Asia tried to emphasize their unique national culture and sought to renew their national history based on genealogical charts. This period also observed public campaigns to use local vernacular scripts (e.g., Korean *hangūl*) and other cultural symbols (national flags).[6] With the exception of Japan, however, East Asian countries' attempts to build a "national culture" in the late nineteenth century evaporated due to colonization. Nonetheless, the sense of "national identity" and "national culture" was preserved by the local nationalists and provided major momentum for national independence movements in many countries in East Asia.

Postcolonial Era and Culture in Establishing Nationhood

Through the long experience of colonialism and the process of Westernization, East Asian societies came to realize that their own traditions had been eliminated, damaged, or distorted. Hence the recovery of traditions and the establishment of national culture with modernization became a nationwide business in many East Asian countries in the postcolonial era. With this recognition, the governments in East Asia attempted to renew their cultural heritage and to rediscover national culture. Accordingly, state influence and intervention into cultural domains was overwhelming. Governments made conscious efforts to support the revitalization, preservation, and strengthening of national culture and identity.

At the ministerial level, many East Asian states established a Ministry of Culture or similar institution in order to accomplish the goal of national unity. In South Korea, for instance, the Office of Cultural Assets was installed under the

auspices of the Ministry of Culture, which designates selected persons as intangible cultural assets because of their contribution to the maintenance of national culture. Government support for both tangible and intangible cultural assets, in many cases, was in the form of patronage. In addition, a considerable amount of money was spent in support of museums, national parks, libraries, national archives, tangible and intangible cultural properties, and protection of the national environment and endangered species.[7]

Several countries in Southeast Asia show a similar pattern to that of Korea. Jennifer Lindsay writes,

> The new postcolonial Southeast Asian nations with government portfolios specifically set up for culture indicates the importance placed on culture in establishing nationhood. From the outset, culture was identified as a state-directed tool of national identity. In Indonesia, where the debate about cultural heritage and national identity had been raging long before independence, the government department for culture was established immediately in 1945. In Malaysia, the first full agency for culture at the ministerial level was established in 1964, seven years after independence. . . . In the case of Thailand, the only non-postcolonial nation among those discussed here, the government agency for culture (Department of Fine Arts) was established in 1933 as part of the new system when the absolute monarchy was overthrown, with an emphasis not on the creation of something new, but on turning into public property a cultural heritage that was previously attached to the institution of the monarchy. In 1942, this department became the Bureau for Culture, and was upgraded to a ministry in 1952.[8]

Post-colonial Chinese cultural policy is also primarily based on the perception of "cultural heritage" and "national culture." As Mao Zedong pointed out, "China's long feudal society created a splendid ancient Culture. In inheriting the Culture, discarding the feudalist dross and selecting the democratic essential is the necessary condition for developing a new national Culture and improving the nation's self-confidence."[9]

Unlike other East Asian neighboring states, government intervention in culture in postwar Japan was relatively weak. Tomooka, Kanno, and Kobayashi interpret the reason in the following way.

> Cultural policy in the postwar period was slow to develop, in part because of the history of government control of the arts and culture that began in the Meiji period and intensified during the years prior to World War II and during the war itself. Performing arts and the media were regulated and cultural activities were used to mobilize the public for the war effort. Since the Japanese term for

cultural policy before 1945 could be interpreted as "control of culture," the use of the term was avoided . . . and it was difficult to support the arts on a national level.[10]

In regard to the foreign cultural influx, East Asian governments have attempted to "control the types of channels and types of content that enter and leave their territory."[11] Nonetheless, each East Asian government has managed the influx differently depending on the origin of the culture and has selectively controlled it within the scope that it does not undermine the political and social stability of the nation. In sum, the basic direction of East Asian cultural policy in the postcolonial era was based on the notion of "revitalizing cultural heritages" and "rebuilding national culture and identity." As a result, the cultural policies of East Asia reflected these basic directions systematically under the process of establishing nationhood. East Asian governments made great effort to promote, preserve, and protect the cultural values and assets of the nation, while also attempting tightly to manage foreign cultural influx. These two basic directions of cultural policy continued up until the late 1980s.

The Global Tsunami of "Neoliberal Capitalism"

Since the late 1980s, East Asian perceptions of culture have begun to shift once again and have been greatly influenced by the new global wave of neoliberalism.[12] Neoliberalism has so profoundly influenced East Asia that the notion has expanded into all aspects of society. Adapting to globalization has become the primary direction of all areas of governmental policy.

In the area of culture, the new digital technology and the revolution of communication devices "has made cultural exchanges continuous at a planetary level with unprecedented rapidity and amplitude."[13] One conspicuous feature under these circumstances in the cultural domain is the commercialization of culture and the emergence of a cultural industry.[14] Since the early 1990s, cultural industries worldwide have grown rapidly and cultural markets are becoming increasingly global, with the development of new information technologies and the diffusion of worldwide deregulatory policies.[15] These new environments caused drastic change in the perception of culture, and East Asian governments began to undertake very different cultural policies based on new notions and technologies. Those East Asian governments that earlier opted for the notion of "nationhood," which has aimed to revitalize national cultures, shifted to the new approach. In this basic response toward the new wave of globalization, culture came to be acknowledged as a consumer commodity. More significantly, cultural policies started to relate closely to industrial policies. Consequently, there began to be a focus on how to protect domestic cultural markets and industries from power-

ful foreign cultural products, as well as on how to increase the competitiveness of domestic cultural products and industries.[16] Culture, which once was treated as a "state-directed tool of national identity," now has reached the point of being considered an essential component of the economy.

South Korea is on the cutting edge of this recognition. There, various support plans for the development of domestic cultural products and industries began to be proposed at the institutional level in the mid-1990s. The Cultural Industry Bureau was created in 1994 within the Ministry of Culture and Sports. The South Korean government began to recognize that "the cultural industry is an important sector providing an infrastructure to the society and therefore care should be taken at the government level."[17] According to the *White Paper on Cultural Policies* (2001), released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism,[18] several policy initiatives (mainly regarding the features of the cultural industry and the necessity of policy intervention) have repeatedly been proposed. This includes "the establishment of an organization to manage and coordinate the cultural industry, the necessity of gaining support for the cultural industry through public funding, a policy catering to the new-media industry, and the development of domestic culture."[19]

The emergence of the Hanryu (lit. "Korean Wave") phenomenon[20] in the late 1990s further encouraged the South Korean government to become involved in the cultural sector via a commercial approach. The Korean National Tourism Organization attempts to use Hanryu as a marketing strategy in tourism by trying to "promote active and continuous marketing to maintain Hanryu fever."[21] According to a high government official in the Korea Culture and Contents Agency (KOCCA) under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in order to "secure well-qualified personnel in related fields and educating them to be professionals, KOCCA has drawn up a comprehensive plan to cultivate specialized human resources, and has put it into action to produce experts with creativity and practical skills, which is the core infrastructure of the culture content industry." He also said that "within 10 years, the cultural content industry will grow to be the leading industry of the country."[22] South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun recently announced that "his administration would exert efforts to turn the nation into one of the world's five major cultural industry powers within five years." Moreover, Roh asserted, "I will also present various policies and institutional devices to promote the arts and Korea's traditional culture, which form the basis of cultural industries."[23]

Elsewhere in East Asia, in spite of its open-door policy since the late 1970s, Chinese communist leaders have persistently stressed the concept of a unique Chinese socialistic spiritual culture. They believe that "popular culture under the socialist market system should always be in the faithful service of the people, and that it should not follow the way of the capitalistic popular culture in the

Western countries."[24] Western popular culture (American culture in particular) is considered the evil side of capitalism and Westernization.

The new global trend of neoliberal capitalism and the commercialization of culture, however, have considerably changed the perception of Chinese party leaders. Chinese premier Wen Jiabao stated that "the people's intellectual and cultural needs are constantly increasing along with the economic development and social progress in China, so the government must attach greater importance to cultural development." Wen also said in his report on the work of the government, delivered at the opening of the Second Session of the Tenth National People's Congress, "[W]e should promote the reform of the system and innovation of the mechanisms of the cultural industry, give more support to non-profit cultural undertakings, and improve our policy for the cultural industry to give a greater role to the market and ensure the simultaneous development of cultural undertakings and the cultural industry."[25]

Given this acknowledgment, the Chinese government rigorously encourages the domestic development of cultural commodities by formulating a development strategy at the national level. The government, for instance, "encouraged the formation of large corporate groups in the print media sector by merging several newspapers in 1998 in order to prepare for the challenge of the foreign media after China's entry into the WTO. Similar strategies were adopted in the publishing, movie, television, and fast food industries during 1998 and 1999."[26] According to the *Beijing Times*, "[F]or the first time, the Chinese government included the cultural industry in its five-year economic and social development plan which outlined a clear strategy for the boosting of the industry."[27] Newspapers also offered comments by an expert in the Chinese cultural industry sector: "China's emerging cultural industry should be growing more rapidly in order to meet the challenges arising from China's access to the World Trade Organization."[28] In sum, the cultural policy of China in the late 1990s became closely related to economic rationale and national industry.

The Singapore government seems to have had the earliest and the most aggressive plan for development of the cultural industry since the early 1990s. The study of the cultural policy of Singapore by Kwok and Low shows how Singaporean policy makers understand cultural globalization and perceive it economically. They state,

> One key to understanding the thrust of cultural policy in the 1990s is that policy makers had by then come to appreciate the economic value of the arts. . . . For example, under the leadership of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, a number of key agencies, namely the Economic Development Board, the Trade and Industry Board, and the Singapore Tourism Board "facilitate the introduction of galleries, dealers, and value-added, export-ready products and productions into

the business community, publicizing events at home and abroad, structuring tax incentives and promoting investment" (*Strait Times,* April 1, 1998). . . . In a word, Singapore's cultural policy has everything to do with staying on top as a focal node in the late-capitalist world system of the new millennium.[29]

The Malaysian government also recognizes that culture is important to economic development. The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism was established to make the cultural industry one of the nation's pivotal industries. The Malaysian government made a special effort to promote the film industry by passing the National Film Policy in 1997. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Culture, "[I]t aims to raise the standard of Malaysian films in terms of their aesthetics, quality and the industry to international standards. Among its objectives is to create the catalyst for the development of the Malaysian film industry."[30]

As far as the foreign influx of culture is concerned, East Asian governments have taken different approaches and strategies into account, notably the readiness of the market and industry, origin of cultural products, and potential impact on political and social systems.[31] East Asian states used to intervene heavily against the influx of certain foreign cultural products by controlling the degree and speed of the cultural market opening. This approach is closely related to protectionism. While regulations and controls in certain areas were put into place in order to protect vulnerable domestic industries, at the same time states focused on how to increase the competitiveness of domestic industries.[32] This approach is a typical industrial policy for embryonic industrial development that has been utilized by many East Asian countries. Some East Asian governments are still applying such policies in the area of culture.

However, this protectionist approach is also being challenged by the wind of neoliberal globalization.[33] The process of globalization is significantly alleviating and eliminating systematic governmental regulations on the circulation of capital, goods, services, and cultures. The series of international negotiations on free trade agreements and the rapid development of information and communications technology (which has radically lessened transaction costs) are two driving forces that have facilitated this process. At the last round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks[34] and at the Doha development agenda of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, it was discussed whether cultural products should be included in free trade agreements.[35] This suggests that the commercialization of culture and the free flow of cultural products has become a hot issue in international trade negotiations. At the same time, the development of new digital communications technology and broadcasting of mass media enables the rapid increase of the transmission of cultural products (computer software and games, electronic books and magazines, and digital films and music files) across borders through computer networks. With respect to the process,

"the capacity of national governments to control the dissemination of culture within their borders had been greatly diminished."[36] These are two major global issues that continue to press East Asian states to open their markets and societies to the world.

A Lesson from Japanese Cultural Policy?

Unlike other East Asian countries, Japan does not have any specific cultural policy or cultural industrial policy at an institutional level to deal with cultural globalization or the production of popular culture. As Tomooka, Kanno, and Kobayashi have observed, "Japanese cultural policies are still focused on high culture and have not supported popular culture and the culture industries seriously."[37] Nevertheless, Japanese pop culture and cultural products have been vigorously produced and exported to overseas markets.[38] Japanese cultural products have not only exercised dominant power in Asia, but "Japanese cultural products are now appreciated even by major Western countries."[39] Japanese cartoons are broadcasted in European countries such as Italy and France and in the United States. Japanese TV animation and its derivative products are prevalent all over the world. Douglas McGray describes the influence of Japanese cultural power as follows: "Japan's global cultural influence has quietly grown. From pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and animation to cuisine, Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic one."[40]

Japanese cultural products and cultural industry are among the most recognizable in the global cultural market in terms of quality and quantity. Nonetheless, the government has not led the development of the Japanese cultural industry. More significantly, the competitiveness of Japanese cultural products in the global market has not been achieved by government intervention. Rather, it was developed by the private sector and attained its global competitiveness without government guidance. Tomooka, Kanno, and Kobayashi describe this phenomenon as "ironic" in that "Japanese popular culture, which has been neglected by government policymakers, has been produced and exported very successfully by Japanese cultural industries (producers)." It is, however, too parsimonious to refer to the phenomenon as "ironic." Questions then arise as to why the Japanese government did not (or could not) become involved in the cultural industry, unlike other industrial sectors. Why there have been different orientations to the cultural industry in Japan is a complex question that needs a full-scale study. Nonetheless, it might be assumed that the Japanese policy makers recognized that those kinds of efforts would be in vain. They probably concluded that state intervention in culture would be doubtful in terms of effectiveness and durability because of the unique nature of popular culture. If this is so, are there certain

kinds of unique market networks or structures that are deeply embedded in cultural markets that are quite different from those of other conventional industrial sectors? The Japanese case may provide a warning to those East Asian governments who are actively involved in promoting their cultural industry.

Concluding Thoughts

East Asia developed its own civilization through frequent cultural exchanges with the outside world. Among other things, the development of new technology played an important role in this process. Following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, East Asia was obsessed for nearly a century with the notion that its "national culture" must be kept pure and protected from foreign contamination, no matter the cost. Just as the global wave of "civilization and enlightenment" did in the late nineteenth century, the new global wave of "neoliberal capitalism" in the late twentieth century drastically changed the perception of culture so that many East Asian states began to perceive it in terms of the capitalist world system: the commercialization of culture. Just as the inventions of paper, the compass, the printing press, and the galleon greatly contributed to cultural exchange among regions in the premodern era, and just as the steamship, railroad, and electronic communications devices had done so in the early modern era, so have the new digital technologies and the revolution of communications devices caused a radical shift in the East Asian perception of culture. Global cultures and new technologies have constantly changed East Asian perceptions of culture, and the perceptional change has often been expressed through cultural policies. As a result, the impetuses of East Asian cultural policies since the late nineteenth century have been deeply rooted in then-contemporary global ideology, value, and technologies.

From the viewpoint of fairness and globalization, cultural exchange between East and West was reciprocal at least up until the mid-nineteenth century. Cultural globalization since the Meiji Restoration has been largely from West to East and thus is an unfair, abnormal, and quite unusual phenomenon when we reflect on the long history of humankind.

If we believe that cultural globalization should not be mere homogenization and the domination of one culture over all others, then the West has not fully enjoyed the benefits of globalization, while East Asia has savored the diverse choices of the global cultural menu.

An Indian friend studying in Hawai'i recently said something very interesting. According to him, there seem to be more people interested in yoga in the United States than in India. It is quite true that some Americans have learned to enjoy Asian culture. As the aesthetic values, artistic creativity, and cultural output of Asia rise rapidly, Japanese animation, Chinese and Indian cinema, and

Korean soap operas and electronic games, among many other things, are becoming popular in the United States. In this respect, perhaps the globalization of culture has just begun in the United States (or has returned to past patterns of reciprocity). This would be an important step toward the fair and genuine globalization of culture. The resurgence of Asian culture will further this process. The future of cultural globalization, therefore, should be fairer, reciprocal, and hybridized, rather than unfair, one way, and homogenized. This certainly is our preferred future.

Further Thoughts

Asian Values and Generational Challenges to Confucian Norms

Sohail Inayatullah

At one time, "Asian values" meant a concern for a slower time, a concern for spiritual factors, a concern for community. "Asian values" were thus trumpeted as that which was nonnegotiable in economic development. Indeed, with the rise of Japan, there was interest in seeing if there was an Asian ethic (similar to the "Protestant ethic" in the West) that could explain Far Eastern capitalism. But while there is an economic dimension to Asian values, generally "Asian-ness" is seen as existing in counterpoint to the secularism, crass commercialization, and sexualization of the West.

However, in recent times, Asian values have also been used as a defense for all sorts of human rights abuses. Asian values have moved from being an ethical framework for day-to-day behavior to becoming a political instrument used against the West and indeed against Asia itself. Former Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia, for example, played the Asian values card in his brutal sacking of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. Mahathir claimed that Ibrahim had to be stripped of his position because he was allegedly a homosexual.

To protect his own local capitalism cronies, Mahathir again evoked Asian values, that is, "we must protect our own." And yet while billionaires were protected from the Asian financial crisis, small shopkeepers were not. The Association of Southeast Asian Nation's (ASEAN) defense of Burma also has been based on "Asian values." (ASEAN criticized Burma's human rights record in the summer of 2003 in one of the organization's rare moments of boldness.) Asians are different and thus have different politics.

While there is certainly some truth to cultural differences focusing on a slower time and long-term relationship building, destruction of the environment, injustice toward the poor, and torture of unpopular individuals (to mention a few actions committed in the name of Asian values) should not and cannot be tolerated.