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Globalization, Localization and Ethnic Identity in the Construction of Greek Cypriot Children's Musical Identities

Introduction

Are you talking about Cypriot songs? I listen to them on a radio channel on Sunday morning. There is a program about life in the countryside in Cyprus. You know these are village songs. I do not like them! You find them only in villages and old people sing them. You do not find them in Nicosia. Here we sing modern songs. Sometimes I sing them when I am in my room. I like their rhythm and words. I sing songs by ONE and Remos [Greek popular singers] (Kipros, 9 years old).

These words reveal some of the particularities of Greek Cypriot children's construction of musical identity. Observing them and talking to them provided me with interesting information about Greek-Cypriot children's musical worlds and helped me further understand musical identity construction in childhood. In addition, the complexities and conflicts that exist in the cultural context of the Republic of Cyprus are important parts in the enculturation processes of these children.

This paper is part of a PhD thesis that investigates the complex processes by which Cypriot children deal with musical ideologies as they seek to construct, articulate and maintain their musical identities in urban and rural contexts in the Republic of Cyprus. Initially this paper briefly discusses the cultural and theoretical framework relating to the concepts of globalization and localization. Then based on the children's expressed attitudes, the paper discusses urban children's musical perceptions in relation to their ethnic identity and global processes.

Cultural and theoretical framework

Cyprus, situated at the periphery of Europe, provides an interesting case study of musical identity construction. While the cultural binary oppositions of the West versus East and Traditional versus Modern define its national and cultural scene, Cyprus has a strong sense of national and historical culture due to its colonial past.

The recent history of the island has added more complexity to questions of identity. In short, there have been constitutional problems and inter-communal conflicts, a coup and a Turkish invasion (1974) leading to the present occupation of 37 % of the country's territory. Since then the two major ethnic communities living in Cyprus, namely the Greek Cypriot majority and the Turkish Cypriot minority, have grown apart having developed distinct cultural elements and two disparate strong separate national cultures.

In addition, the European orientations of the country have facilitated to a great extent the intrusion of westernization and more recently globalization processes in the construction of the cultural identities of the country. The West and Europe in particular have been the source of legitimacy for Cypriot modernity.¹ Whilst this symbolic importance is not uncommon in societies situated at the periphery of Europe,² Cyprus expresses these Eurocentric ideologies in a much stronger manner than elsewhere due to its political problem. As a full member of the European Union (May 2004), Cyprus aims to establish its credentials successfully as a westernized European country and thus to secure its cultural and national survival.

The effects of globalization³ have permeated the arena of media and popular music. The Greek world of Greece and Cyprus form a region where Greek popular music dominates the Cyprus context which is characterized by an absence of a local music industry and CD production facilities. In addition, major Greek private radio and TV stations have transplanted local ones in the country and broadcast solely Greek popular music. It also welcomes music from abroad, mainly Anglo-American global music. Such circumstances led to marginalization and inhibition of local musical cultures.

Finally indigenous musical cultures have been ›museumized‹, serving functional purposes such as a reassertion of origins relating to Greece and Europe and a national resistance ›to expel the ›Others‹ who threaten their national identity‹⁴. While the term localization implies a reaction to homogenizing forces and refers to the empowerment of local ones and the (re)emergence of local music cultures,⁵ Greek Cypriot society aims for preservation of the old forms and contents and thus localization on the national level is expressed by retaining the purity of traditions and avoiding acknowledging interactions with any ›unwanted‹ cultural elements.

Based on the general set of contexts outlined above, the paper investigates Greek Cypriot children's musical enculturation which involves complex musical discourses that are founded on fluid, ambiguous relationships of value within society⁶ and incorporate elements of

1 Vassos Argyrou, *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as a Symbolic Struggle*, Cambridge 1996.

2 See Paul Sant Cassia, ›Eroticising Discoveries and Extraordinary Experience: ›Traditional‹ Music, Modernity, and Nostalgia in Malta and Other Mediterranean Societies‹, in: *Ethnomusicology* 44/2 (2000), p. 281–301; Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece*, New York 1986; Kevin Robins, ›Interrupting Identities‹, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, London 1996.

3 See Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, London and New York 1996; see also Mike Featherstone, *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. London, Newbury Park and New Delhi 1990; and idem, *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi 1995.

4 Stuart Hall, ›The Question of Cultural Identity‹, in: *Modernity and its Futures*, ed. by Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew, Cambridge 1992, p. 295.

5 Wai-Chung Ho, ›Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music‹, in: *Popular Music* 22 (2003), p. 143–157.

6 Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, Hanover, NH 1993.

musical »heteroglossia«⁷. Here we note that ethnomusicological writings in general consider the term »musical enculturation« as the transmission of isolated bounded cultures and imply an »above to below« process of musical transmission to the children.⁸ In this sense music in childhood is not completely disconnected and »othered« from the adult musical world, but rather is a part of it. However imitation and reproductive activities are emphasized rather than the child's active proficiency in constructing and articulating musical meanings. In this study we consider the term »musical enculturation«⁹ as the process in which »children actively engage with the musical meanings and ideologies of the contemporary fluid and multilayered musical worlds they live in, by selecting and reselecting, interpreting and reinterpreting and ultimately construct their own understandings and expressions of who they are musically«¹⁰.

This ethnographic study investigates children's musical identities from their own point of view, their words and their musical behaviours.¹¹ The data analyzed here comes from the urban fieldwork among twelve children¹² aged nine to twelve during the years 2003/2004. The research uses: (a) unobtrusive non-participant observation in settings where children's musical identities acquire significance and where they determine and control their own participation in the musical process, such as the school classroom and yard, afternoon children's clubs, neighbourhood parks, and (b) tape recorded in-depth interviews and informal discussions with semi-structured and unstructured questions.

The following part of this paper briefly presents some of the study's findings, which concern the musical cultures that children refer to, namely, global popular music,¹³ Greek popular music,¹⁴ western classical music and Cypriot traditional music¹⁵.

Findings

Western Classical Music: The Respected but Distant »Other«

Although this culture is treated by Greek Cypriot society as the only highly esteemed European musical culture, it is distant from children's daily lives since children do not participate in this cultural form unless they are considered talented. School provides sporadic instances of such musical experiences while children receive almost no stimulation in their

7 See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, Austin, TX 1981; see also idem, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Austin, TX 1986.

8 See Avra Pieridou, *The Construction of Musical Identities by Greek Cypriot School Children*, unpublished PhD Diss. University of London 2006; see p. 66–72 for a discussion of the relevant literature.

9 Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*, Evanston, IL 1964.

10 Avra Pieridou, *The Construction*, p 18.

11 Joanna Glover, »Understanding Children's Musical Understanding«, in: *BJME* 7 (1990), p. 257–262.

12 We should clarify that the final number of urban children participated in this study's fieldwork was 26.

13 Timothy Taylor, *Global Pop*, New York 1997.

14 Kewin Dawe, »Between East and West. Contemporary Grooves in Greek Popular Music (c. 1990 to 2000)«, in: *Mediterranean Mosaics: Popular Music and Global Sounds*, ed. by Goffredo Plastino, New York and London 2003.

15 Pieris Zarmas, *Sources of Cypriot Folk Music*, Nicosia 1993.

enculturation environment. Thus, their responses showed ignorance because many of them do not find any use of this music in their lives, thus they do not include it in their social musical practices. Maria commented: »I am not interested in this kind of music. I have never listened to that music.« Ilias commented: »Do you mean the music of Beethoven and Mozart? Well we have CDs at home in a beautiful case but we rarely listen to them. We only listen to them during Christmas. I guess it's music you put on when you want to rest.« Elina commented: »It must be very special music because great composers wrote it and it exists for ever. I would like to go to concerts and listen to this music.«

Most of these children expressed positive attitudes about the delineations of classical music, thereby reproducing Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie class' ideological voice¹⁶ that this music is a valuable style because it possesses such properties as universality, complexity, originality and autonomy.¹⁷ However, they found it very difficult to negotiate its meaning since according to their words they lack the necessary knowledge and skills. As Mihalis noted: »We do not know anything about this music. My friend Maria attends piano lessons and she needs to practise many hours. She tried to teach me but I could only learn a few notes. I think it is difficult to learn to play this music.« In addition, Mihalis and Alexis noted: »Classical music was composed in the past and it is not in fashion any more. It used to be popular in the past. It is not popular now. We find it boring.«

The reasons for the dislike of this music were unfamiliarity and a lack of musical understanding. Children stereotyped this music as old, soft and boring while at the same time they respected it. Consequently, although Western classical music enters into children's musical practices as an »authoritative discourse«¹⁸, some children resist it, thus leading to a kind of discourse, the meaning of which is constantly shifting.

It is to be noted here that four of the twelve children, all of whom were girls, were taking instrumental classical music lessons. For them classical music is a familiar musical culture. They talked about it with an aura of superiority. As Alexia explicitly stated: »I prefer mostly classical music to modern music. I find it more important, so I spend most of my time listening and playing classical music. I listen to various composers, mostly Beethoven, and I play music by Bach.«

Their friends and classmates treated them as children with higher musical knowledge and this according to their words made them feel more superior. These children manipulate this music's delineations in order to construct a high status among their peers, and a westernized cultural identity. They know a musical tradition that is considered difficult to learn and to understand, a tradition that belongs only to the few who have the potential and the means to learn it.

Global and Greek popular music dominate these children's musical practices and models of popular music performances provide the frames in which these children's musical cultures develop.

16 Mikhail Bakhtin, »Discourse in the Novel«, in: *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 259–422.

17 Lucy Green, *Music on Deaf Ears*, Manchester, UK 1988.

18 See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 424.

Global Popular Music: The ›High Status‹ Musical Culture

The children explained that global popular music¹⁹ is the modern music that young people like. As Stavroulla explained: »These songs are in English and you listen to them on the CD player, on the radio and on television. It is the modern music that we children and young people prefer to listen to.« For these children this music is a most important one. As Areti explained: »It uses English language, which is much better, and it comes from abroad. So it is very special.« Almost all children find it meaningful, ›cool‹ and fashionable music with amazing dance movements. Elina firmly stated that: »If you want to be modern then you have to listen to this music. It is even more important if you can dance and sing the songs.«

To have an appreciation of this music and to include it in one's listening habits is perceived by the children as an expression of modern and smart musical behaviour. The children cannot, most of the time, understand the lyrics of these songs or be able to dance to them, but still they express preference particularly among their peers and they spend time listening to them. Conclusively this music occupies a high position in their musical cultures and it is the model with which other musical styles are compared.²⁰

Greek Popular Music: The Close Musical ›Self‹

The children are more intimately related with this music primarily due to language and rhythm familiarity and constant local media coverage. There is a continuum within contemporary Greek popular music with Greek-ness at one end and global characteristics at the other end. At the latter end, Greek language remains the crucial signifier of the original national identity. The children consider this globalized/westernized Greek popular music as modern and suitable for young people since, as they explained, it shares similar musical and contextual characteristics to global popular music. As Zanet explains: »Modern music is the music young people sing. It is the music of Hi-5, of ONE [Greek pop groups] of Vishie and Vandie, of Tsalikis [Greek pop artists]. This music is very different from the music adults listen to. This is our music that we listen to.« The children identified this type of music as their music. As Campbell (1998) argues, »for children, musical meaning is deeply related to function«²¹. Greek popular music appears to satisfy children's needs in a variety of ways in their everyday life and across different contexts primarily through consumption activities, and its status in Greek Cypriot children's musical world is highly valued.²²

The media also provides audiences with ample information about Greek popular singers' dress styles, presentations and even their personal lives, thus accentuating songs' delineation

19 For the purpose of this paper, this term refers primarily to Anglo-American popular/pop music that is internationally circulated. It includes a variety of musical styles. Media in Cyprus promote certain styles and singers that are best known at the time such as Shakira, Eminem and 50 Cent. The new era of global fusion indicates a richness and diversity of different cultures from all over the globe.

20 See Pieridou, *The Construction of Musical Identities*, p. 162–170, by Greek Cypriot school children.

21 Patricia Shehan Campbell, *Songs in Their Heads: Music and Its Meaning in Children's Lives*, Oxford 1998, p. 175.

22 See Pieridou, *The Construction of Musical Identities*, p. 165–170.

tions, which children consume. »Children being unable to reproduce inherent meanings adequately, focus almost exclusively on the delineated meanings that they can discuss among their peers, and present themselves as informants of these high musical cultures.«²³

Cypriot Musical Tradition: The Paradoxical Low Status ›Other‹

The children demonstrated lack of experience and adequate knowledge about Cypriot musical tradition and thus they discuss it referring to its negative and inferior delineations. Julie noted: »It is basically music that villagers [peasants] like. It is not like the modern music we know.« Alexis explained: »It doesn't sound like the music we listen today. I don't like it.«

The children's words show that they have little appreciation for this music as they relate it to the past and to the lives of provincial people who are considered to be ›backward‹ and of low status. Thus, as it has negative connotations, it does not aid the construction of their urban modern westernized musical selves. Children do not use this music in their social musical practices and they avoid performing this music at national school celebrations.

To construct their musical identities children draw on the various musical ›voices‹²⁴ available to them. Given the limited exposure they have to it, and considering the fact that although they might learn a few disconnected songs at school, they hardly ever hear it outside school, children have few if any opinions to draw upon as they try to construct their understanding of Cypriot music. Urban children's musical enculturation does not provide sufficient factual information to facilitate their participation in and musical understanding of Cypriot musical culture. Therefore they retain its negative delineations, reproduce urban society's ambiguous and contradictory musical ideologies, and set up boundaries against it.

Cypriot Music as the Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Cyprus

However, it is important to note that, as a result of the nationalistic ideologies and the empowerment of local forces due to the spread of tourism in the country, all children considered Cypriot music as an important part of Cyprus' heritage.²⁵ They all expressed the need to preserve it especially during interviews in school settings. The following example of a group interview with four boys demonstrates this issue.

George: Culture is our origins, our customs, our language, our religion like Greeks have. Our ancestors created this music in the past and we must know it so that we do not forget our culture.

Michalis: By singing only foreign songs the Cypriot songs will be forgotten and this should not happen because then we might forget who we are.

Konstantinos: Old Cypriot songs reveal our origins.

Alexis: I feel that we are obliged to know them.

George: These songs are old fashioned but if we have to know them then we have to do it.

23 See *ibid.*, p. 168. Also see Green, *Music on Deaf Ears*, regarding the delineated musical meaning.

24 See Bakhtin, »Discourse in the Novel«, p. 434.

25 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Ginbelt, »Theorizing Heritage«, in: *Ethnomusicology* 39/3 (1995), p. 367–380.

Children are imbued with the notion that culture is a concept situated in the past and that they have the moral responsibility to preserve it, even if they do not like it, thus they reflect society's contradictory attitudes on the matter.

Greek Cypriot Children's Musical Identities and Ethnic Identities

Spyrou²⁶ suggests that in the case of ethnicity in Cyprus we should draw our attention away from notions of ethnicity as fixed and permanent and redirect it towards its fluidity and situational character. In terms of relating national identity and culture De Vos provides an appropriate account: »It can be argued that for many people, national identity and subjective cultural identity cannot be distinguished, especially when ethnic identity and a national territorial identity have been united historically«²⁷. This can be said to apply specifically to Cyprus due to its geographical position and its political problem and the society's need to secure its national survival on the island in every way. Therefore its national expressions and social cultural practices cannot be understood outside the Eurocentric ideologies of the Greek Cypriot state and society. As Pieridou (2006)²⁸ concluded, the construction of Greek Cypriots' musical identity is often interrelated with the expression and articulation of their national identities. Children can be more or less Cypriots or Greeks which affects their musical selections. Their expressions depend on the expectations of the contexts children find themselves in. For example, in school settings, interviews with children reflected their obligation as Cypriots towards promoting Cypriot tradition where elsewhere they marginalize their ›Cypriot-ness' for constructing ›modern‹ musical identities.

Conclusion

In Cyprus there is a distinct ideological conflict between ›high‹ and ›low‹ music in relation to western/global and local music respectively. This distinction between high and low musical cultures describes something caused by different social activities and personal value judgments²⁹ and does not really concern the nature of the art object, or how it is produced, but it concerns different modes of perception. In this paper I have argued that Greek Cypriot children's social participation in different musical cultures is driven primarily by their perceptions of dominant westernized and nationalistic musical ideologies³⁰ and not by the object of music since they are mostly concerned with music's cultural and symbolic context. For example, they consider western classical music as a culture of higher value.

26 Spyros Spyrou, »Those on the Other Side: Ethnic Identity and Imagination in Greek Cypriot Children's Lives«, in: *Children and Anthropology Perspectives for the 21st Century*, ed. by Helen Schwartzman, Westport, CN and London 2001.

27 George De Vos, »Concepts of Ethnic Identity« in: *Ethnic Identity*, ed. by George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, London 1995 p. 5–22, here: p. 20.

28 See *ibid.*, p. 20.

29 Simon Frith, »Music and Identity«, in: *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Hall and Du Gay, p. 112–114.

30 For an extensive discussion on musical ideologies and their impact on musical participation see Lucy Green, »Ideology«, in: *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. by Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss, Malden, MA 1999, p. 5–17.

Similarly they accept the importance of Cypriot music as their cultural heritage based on ideological issues of nationalism while they reject it in a different context and sometimes in the same context by expressing ideologies of cultural inferiority due to its place of origin, language and status of performers. These children in their social musical practices often reproduce dominant popular music figures that media promotes and discuss their ›impressive‹ delineations as ways to construct socially acceptable musical identities. As a result, in social contexts they inhibit and reject their local musical cultures. Conclusively the Cyprus context suggests multiple, ambiguous and contradictory musical meanings leading to complex enculturation processes that show how many questions and conjectures there are yet to explore.

Deniza Popova (Berlin)

Nur bulgarische Großmütter wissen noch, wie man erwachsen wird!?

Zwei musikalische Welten, die kaum unterschiedlicher sein könnten, möchte ich einander gegenüberstellen, um zu fragen, wie man in der einen und in der anderen Welt den Übergang vom Kindsein zum Jugendlichen und zum Erwachsenen vollzieht. Von der alten musikalischen Welt der Großmütter und Großväter konnte ich Überreste in bulgarischen Dörfern finden (siehe Abbildung 1). In der Stadt wurde ich mit der musikalischen Welt der heute in Bulgarien sehr populären Rock- bzw. Punkband Kontrol (siehe Abbildung 2) konfrontiert.¹ Aus der Gegenüberstellung beider Welten erscheint die heutige Situation in Bulgarien wie ein Widerspruch, dem man nicht nur mit Toleranz, sondern sogar mit Akzeptanz begegnet. In der Dorfgemeinschaft war die Gruppenzugehörigkeit jedes Einzelnen auf traditionelle Weise festgelegt. Wenn beispielsweise Jungen oder Mädchen soweit herangereift waren, dass sie wie ein vollwertiges Mitglied der Gesellschaft an der alltäglichen Arbeit teilnehmen konnten, dann waren sie keine Kinder mehr. Alle Übergänge und Umbrüche im Leben waren daher ebenso vorhersehbar, wie die Art und Weise, wie sie geschehen werden. Integriert in dieses feste Gefüge, beispielsweise durch die Teilnahme an verschiedenen Ritualen, war es nicht schwer, die Wandlungen im Leben wie naturgegebene Gesetzmäßigkeiten zu vollziehen. So auch den Übergang vom Kindsein zum Jugendlichen und vom Jugendlichen zum heiratsfähigen Erwachsenen. Diese Übergänge gibt es nach wie vor.

1 Der Vortrag bezieht sich auf Feldforschungsmaterialien, die ich während meines Aufenthaltes in bulgarischen Dörfern im Sommer 2004 zusammengetragen habe und auf Interviews mit vier Musikern der Punkband Kontrol, die sich während ihrer Konzerttour 2004 durch Bulgarien in Plovdiv aufhielten.