

Creativity and Hybridism of Cultures in a Globalizing World The Re-Production-cum-Consumption of Asian Local Idiosyncrasies

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We are moving into a new modernity full of creativities, creative cultures and the industrialization of cultural products and services! By highlighting the process and impact of the en-culturalization of, and for, the narration of specific geo-national experience/identity through new media choreography of motion pictures, our paper attempts to draw the contours of Asian cultural landscape, that the transnationalization of new media and global production of media culture have been associated with the development of multiculturalism, diversification and hybridization.

Thanks to information and communication technologies (ICT), film, TV, video game and media are becoming the embodiment of not just economic values, but also as the process of cultural re-production in terms of cross-border exchanges and hybridism. This paper debates from a perspective that seeks to articulate cultural analysis and political economy of the globalization of new media. By examining the recent rise of media consumerism in Asia, we argue that media production in market place has been often partially misunderstood as merely for profit-making and the building of (the Western) hegemony. After an introduction on the rise of media consumerism in Asia, this paper examines the local representations as mediated by cultural industries, particularly the film production of *Sayuri-Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005), in Part 2. It follows in Part 3 by a critical discussion on the processes of the transnationalization of new media and the mediated cultural artefacts. It ends with critical remarks on cultural hybridity between/among cultures, as re-presented in and beyond new media and geo-territorial spaces.

Key Words : Creativity, Cultural Industries, Information Society, Cultural Hybridity

1. The Industrialization of Asian Cultural Idiosyncrasies

The importance and economic strategic values of creative cultures are critical for socio-economic, as well as ecological, development, as rightly highlighted by recent UNCTAD report (2008) on global creative economy:

Creativity is found in all societies and countries-

rich or poor, large or small, advanced or developing. The word "creativity" is associated with originality, imagination, inspiration, ingenuity and inventiveness. It is an inner characteristic of individuals to be imaginative and express ideas; associated with knowledge, these ideas are the essence of intellectual capital. Similarly, every society has its stock of intangible cultural capital articulated by people's identity and values.

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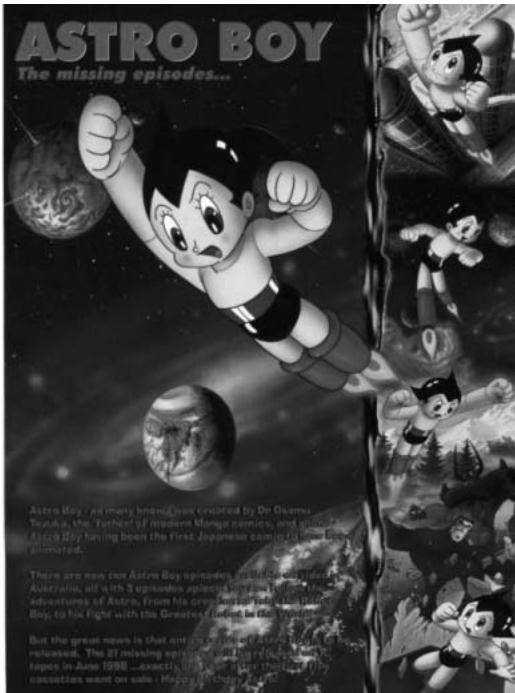
Civilizations since time immemorial have been aware of these concepts. However, the twenty-first century has seen a growing understanding of the interface between creativity, culture and economics, the rationale behind the emerging concept of the “creative economy”. (UNCTAD 2008, p.3)

Since the second half of last century, creativity and the commodification (as products and services tradable in the market) of it are more than obvious: Japanese animations by Osamu Tezuka (Fig.1) and the more recent ones by Hayao Miyazaki (Fig.2), side-by-side with the characters of Hello-Kitty (Fig.3) and the Pokemon.... Hong Kong’s Kung-Fu / Triad movies from 1970s: Bruce Lee’s Kung Fu, Jackie Chan’s Kung-Fu comedy, John Woo’s triad chivalry action film, and Stephan Chow’s computer-graphic enhanced Shaolin Soccer comedy; Taiwan’s Edward Yang and Hau Hsiao-Hsien; and Ang

Lee’s (from Taiwan) Crouching Tiger–Hidden Dragon (Columbia Pictures, 2000), and the recent ‘Korean wave’ in film and music (Leong 2003, Shim 2006)....All these represent a new regime of cultural industries and the industrialization of cultural products and services. Popular cultural productions made in Asia and/or made by Asian producers, available in various forms of media and channels, are important not just in terms of their competitiveness with their Western (foreign) counterparts in global market place, but also they represent their own identity and idiosyncrasies for creativity on their way (s) to modernization.

For the animations by Takezuka and Miyazaki, they have reflections on social and environmentalism regarding social future, respectively; whereas the Hello-Kitty, matching many elements of Japanese culture, displays the simplicity and a strange allure that invites individual representation (Richardson 2004).

Fig. 1: Astro Boy by Osamu Tezuka



(Source: <http://routt.net/Gelfing/manga/astroboy.html>)

<http://ja-f.tezuka.co.jp/home.html>

Fig. 2: Hayao Miyazaki's Animation

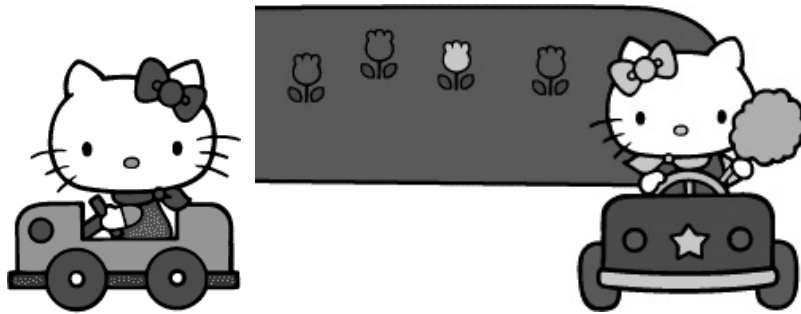
Howl's Moving Castle

ハウルの動く城

(Hauru no Ugoku Shiro)



(Source: <http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/howl/>)

Fig. 3: Hello Kitty (Sanrio Characters)

(Source: <http://www.sanrio.co.jp/game/welcome.html>)

Thanks to Asian economic miracle, people in the Asia's newly industrializing economies (NIEs) can enjoy better quality of life, with an increasing appetite for leisure and cultural consumption (Chua, Ed. 2000; Mathew and Lui, Ed. 2002). More specific, the increasing demands for cultural products are nurturing the emergence of popular culture: pop music and other mediated cultural experience with mass media like cinemas, TV and radio, and more recently the use of MP3 and iPod for multimedia enjoyment.

Though motion pictures shown in cinemas have a long history, the recent development of film industry has been attempting to capture, or to couple with other means of multi-media services, as the main content provider for leisure and entertainment. But compared with other media presentations of visual art, film industry is a large scale teamwork production with high capital, labor and technologies intensive inputs, usually attached with movie stars and celebrities, and more recently, it has been making more special multi-media effects with computer animation; all these make the production cost (and the financing of film production) increase substantially beyond the reach of single producer (Germann 2005).

In addition, to distribute or release a film, it is a tortuous process which is following mostly the outdated network of mass audience based cinemas in the region. It is a one-to-many targeting exercise. The redundancy of is that one single film to cater many audiences in the regional or global network within a specific (two weeks) time frame for screening and the extended lead time for production limit the flexibility, as well as the adaptability, of film production.

Despite these structural limitations, film industry is still the powerhouse for entertaining and leisure

activities, as it captures most of the investment for the mediated cultural reproduction, visual stories, as well as the imagination of creative artists and professionals.

In the following sections, we will examine the role of film industry, vis-à-vis new media, in shaping cultural landscape in the informational age.

2. Cultural and Media Industrialization in Advanced Capitalism

Making money in the new media age requires more than capital and wealth-in-reserve: despite its world class expertise, media guru like Steven Spielberg and his capital financing in making blockbusters, in December 2005, DreamWorks, Hollywood's youngest studio, sold itself to Viacom. It made some money, but could not afford to keep its over billion-dollar investment in films (*The Economist*, 19. January 2006).

Film production in 21st Century has to be globally financed and more importantly, globally marketed and released. With the exception of US sluggish cinema market (Fig.4), worldwide box office was \$25.24 billion in 2004, representing a 24% increase over 2003's box office of \$20.34 billion. Strong growth in Europe/Middle East/Africa (+53%) and Asia Pacific (+44%) contributed to the overall worldwide increase (Fig.5). In the same vain, worldwide admissions were up 10.5% in 2004, for a total of 9.56 billion (versus 8.65 billion in 2003, Fig.6), when US admissions were down 2.4% in 2004, for a total of 1.54 billion, compared to 1.57 billion in 2003 (Fig.7, see MPAA 2005)

Fig. 4: US Box Office

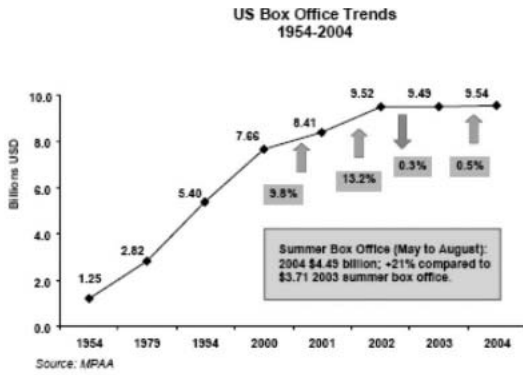


Fig. 6: Worldwide Cinema Admission

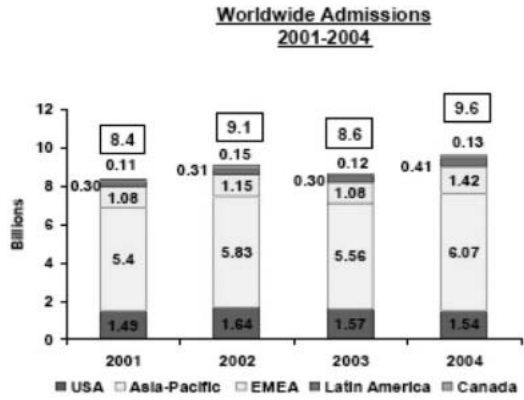


Fig. 5: Worldwide Film Industry: Box Office

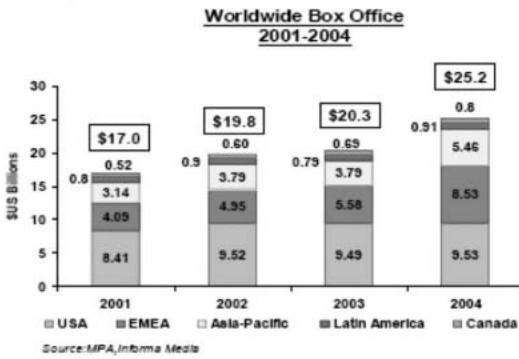
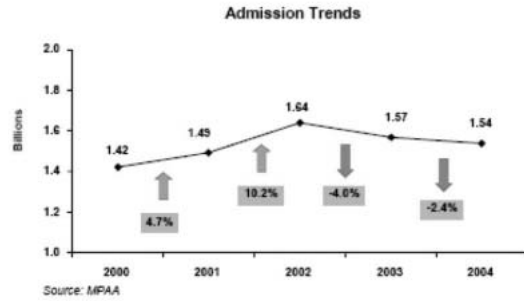


Fig. 7: US Cinema Admission Trend



Contradictory to the calling for more competition and economic liberalization in a globalizing world, cultural and media industries have been consolidating to a handful of major global players for content provision. One of the major changes for communication and media industries in last few years is the concentration of control (cross-)over the ownership, production and delivery channels, through mergers and acquisitions—this is one of the key features for the first decade of 21st Century information age! Hence, the coupling of media content (news, films, TV shows) with media distribution (TV or radio networks, cable, Internet services and alike) further reinforces the control of global media oligarchies over the audience, as they use their sales and network power to champion their way into personal spaces (through your iPod, MP3 and/or mobile phone).

2.1 The Mediated (Mis-) Presentation: *Memoirs of a Geisha*?

The Hollywood blockbuster *Memoirs of a Geisha* (*Sayuri*, as it markets in Japan) is an indeed a global production of movie.² Yet, it has been controversial, heavily criticised in China and Japan before, during and even after it released (McCurry 2004, 2005). It based on Arthur Golden's (1997) novel, which sold more than four million copies in English and was translated into 32 languages, but the book came under fire in Japan, where many people resented equating high-end geishas - who practice centuries-old tradition of entertaining men - with prostitutes. This is in addition to the lawsuit from one of the main informants, Mineko Iwasaki, who claimed the author had used her name without permission and that his book was riddled with factual inaccuracies and defamatory remarks about her private life. *Sayuri*, the 115-minutes film (DVD version: 145 minutes) is produced by Steven Spielberg and is directed by Rob Marshall. *Sayuri* was filmed mostly in California with minimal shooting in Japan. It tells the story of Sayuri Nitta, the cast is played by Zhang Ziyi (a mainland Chinese young actress), the daughter of a fisherman who is sold to a geisha teahouse and rises to the top of her profession. The two other lead female roles were also given to the Chinese actress Gong Li and the ethnic Chinese Malaysian Michelle Yeoh. The Japanese actor Ken Watanabe who acted in the Last Samurai plays the man with whom Sayuri falls in love with, in addition to other casting played

by Japanese: Koji Yakusho, Youki Kudoh, and Kaori Momoi (see Fig.8, 9).

Fig. 8: *Sayuri – Memoirs of a Geisha* – Billboard in Japan



(Source: <http://www.helloziyi.us/Galleries/sayuri-billboard.htm>)

Fig. 9: Three Chinese Geisha



Zhang Ziyi, Michelle Yeoh and Gong Li
(Source: <http://www.ziyifilms.com/zpost/data/532/20three-geisha-hq2.jpg>)

In spite of its world premiere was held at Tokyo Ryogoku Kokugikan (Japanese Sumo Gymnasium) on 29.November 2005, aiming to marketing to Japanese at large with an atmosphere created before

2 Office Website of the film: Sony Pictures: <http://www.sonypictures.com/movies/memoirsofageisha/>; and DreamWorks: <http://www.dreamworksfansite.com/geisha/>

and during the premiere as if Japanese society welcomed such movie, then the movie released in theatres around the world the next day, it drew much controversies for media critics and heated discussions in both Chinese and Japanese 'virtual chat-room'. At the very least, Japanese respond to this film somewhat lukewarm: the first weekend after its debut, Japanese box office data ranked this film only the fourth place, and the film though survived but the record was far from satisfactory.

According to the media reportage noted by Justin McCurry (2005): the criticism in Japan centres on director Rob Marshall's casting of Chinese actors as geisha. "We should boycott this film and send a clear message to Hollywood. Why on earth have they made a film making fun of the Japanese, when they cannot get by without us?" says one Japanese blogger. Other Critics point to trailers that show the demure geisha of 1930s Kyoto dancing on stage "as if they were in a Los Angeles strip show". But Japanese criticism was restrained when compared with the abusive condemnation on Zhang Ziyi by her compatriots, angered by her involvement in a film about China's former colonial ruler. "She's sold her soul and betrayed her country," a Chinese blogger wrote. "Hacking her to death would not be good enough."

Since December 2005, the Chinese government has been delaying, or not granting the permission for, the release of the *Geisha* film in China, because the inflammable aspects of the film: the use of Chinese actresses to portray Japanese geisha (prostitute as portrayed by the film and misunderstood by non-Japanese and Chinese) is controversial and has sparked public anger, given the tensions between Chinese and Japanese governments over the Yasukuni shrine visits by Junichiro Koizumi, the Japanese Prime Minister, and the March-April 2005 anti-Japanese demonstrations in China (Barboza 2006; Jacques 2005). In February 2006, the Chinese official announced the indefinitely delay of the release of the film, a ban order indeed, as the negative social response reflected on various Chinese media, amid fears it could spark a public backlash as 'geisha' had been seen as prostitutes, and government officials were therefore worried that the three Chinese actresses' portrayals could evoke memories of Japanese wartime aggression towards mainland women (New24.com, 2.February 2006). In spite of, perhaps because of, the official ban, pirated VCD or DVD copies of the film were available in China (Wang and Zhu 2003).

The *Sayuri-Memoirs of a Geisha* is a representative case for global production of film,

as well as a reproduction of cultural images and artefacts. It based on an American novel, with in-depth interviews and oral histories from geisha community in Kyoto, international financing (film budget: US\$85 million) and media technologies under the SONY-Columbia Motion Pictures, topped with Asian (Chinese and Japanese in particular) casting but without 'white' movie stars. And because of the controversies around this cultural mis-representation project as perceived by many Japanese, those in Gion district in Kyoto (the locality where geisha practice), the Gion's geisha establishments have refused the cameras access, the actual shooting of the film (September 2004 to January 2005) was in the San Francisco Bay, replacing the Sea of Japan, and Ventura in Southern California housed an entire district meticulously re-created Japanese town of Kyoto, and the Yamashiro Restaurant in Hollywood served as a Kyoto Gion teahouse (Thompson, n.d.).

2.2. The Falling-Out of the Mediated Cultural Representations

One American film critic highlights the lack of cultural sensitivity of the global production, if not a pro-American, superficial trivialization of socio-cultural sentiments:

Cultural sensitivity is a difficult road to maneuver under any circumstances, so it's likely the film version of Arthur Golden's bestselling novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, would have been criticized no matter how it had been produced. Still, it's hard not to wince a little at a film made by white Americans that purports to offer an inner glimpse into an ancient Japanese tradition. Director Rob Marshall (Chicago) brings *Geisha* to the big screen as a simplistic, broad epic that offers a perspective on Asian culture that's both condescending and naïve. It wants to appear knowledgeable to mainstream audiences, but all it does is reveal its own lack of sophistication.... On the surface, everything looks great, but looks just below, and it all falls apart. (Bell 2005).

With a lukewarm response in Japanese film market and a ban in the mainland China, the *Geisha* project is a failure for SONY-Columbia Motion Pictures, in addition to the mixed, if not unfavourable film reviews, even in non-Asian media. Even worse is the inadequate appreciation of the cultural specificity and sensitivity on the *Geisha*'s (her ambiguous) social class and gender positioning, for both the film production and the critical film reviews thereafter. The whole subject matter of cultural

specificity (class position and gender) has not been mentioned nor presented in the film (a representation of cultural praxis), nor by the critics outside Japan, as most of the controversies centred around, or wrongly identifying, *Geisha* as the Asian counterpart of (Western) prostitute; this can be shown by the following review (though it has some valid points):

It's fitting, though, for the dialogue to be inauthentic, since the meticulously crafted sets look like a Disneyland version of Japan, and the story ultimately fetishizes a practice that, however elegant it claims to be, victimizes and subjugates women. The auction of Sayuri's virginity, one of the central events of the film, is treated as a momentous and joyous event, and her relationship with the much older Chairman is based on a thoroughly creepy power dynamic, especially since they first meet when the young geisha-to-be is only 9 years old. While geishas are portrayed as more respectable than common prostitutes, they are nevertheless the product of a society that places women in a subservient and largely powerless position. Glorifying this system without question is a tacit endorsement of sexual inequality, no matter how pretty it looks (Bell 2005).

Undoubtedly, the representation of Giesha subculture in a mediated way, by global financing and media technologies, is again a remarking of the theme-park like fantasy, as put up by another film critic:

While an air of remorse is perhaps the right tone for the death of any subculture, the world of the film is so narrow that pre-occupation Japan looks like a feudal Disneyland, where everybody knew their place and the cherry blossoms were always falling. It's hard to say which is more troubling, the fact that the filmmakers present this fantasy as truth, or the fact that they seem to pine so much for it (Barsanti 2005).

Two aspects of the characterization of global film industry can be discussed here. First, the *Geisha* controversies for cultural activism in China and Japan highlight the differential, if not confrontation, perspectives over their (versus other's) identity as mediated through motion pictures-in this respect, Robertson's (1997) notion on the differential anchorage and interpretation of national-societal cultures regarding significant others (and/or enemies) is valid. Like other popular culture for entertainment purpose (for consumers) and profit-making (for producers), filming industry demonstrates how intertwined the presentation of artistic works (with fictitious imaginations) and their interpretation and

feeling of local people (or the concerning parties)—and how global view and local social fabrics from which they are constituted.

Second, the particularities of filming industry, as shown by the casting and fictitious story-line, with a corresponding cultural connotation, can be recognized in the transnational cultural representation process for the localness that contributes to its formation and development. This process is inter-negotiated with the global-local audience for the mediated yet shared interpretation; and in the complex mixing of format, style and content within motion pictures.

3. Global Mediated Cultural Tensions and their Mis-Representation

The processes of transnationalization of new media, cross-cultural representations and the mediated cultural artefacts in/from export and hosting localities can be demonstrated in the recent 'Korean wave'. The success of South Korean movie and TV drama series in Asia though largely a positive result of the reengineering of the film making machinery, with timely governmental intervention, business interests and the availability of media professionals and good management, it has been heavily also dependent on the hosting countries' favourable socio-economic and political conditions, with the emergence of people's curiosity about (North-South) Korean culture and the shift of consumers' taste. Perhaps, the hosting countries socio-economic conditions are important in shaping the acceptance of the mediated representation of the foreign 'local idiosyncrasies'.

3.1 Cultural Industries' driven Hybridity: Similarity or Uniqueness?

Cultural industries are characterised by a distinctive set of production and distribution relations, pooling of capital with a good network of human expertise and marketing catchments. They are also represented by their output of commercialised, unique or branded, products with a high aesthetic orientation and symbolic content, reflecting "the tendency in modern capitalism for cultural production to be increasingly commodified, while commodities themselves become increasingly invested with symbolic value" (Scott, 2000: 3). For film production, the geo-spatial clustering of the production functions in certain localities, say, Hollywood in the Southern California is juxtaposing and the geo-spatial fixity anchoring upon the real story-line (s), and eventually

to attach with a network of film distribution across different socio-spatial localities.

In spite of their systematic differentiation that the production side can never fully comprehend the dynamics and sentiments of the receiving ends, attempts should be made to facilitate the communication between the producers and audience-but given the mega scale and logistic impossibility for the self-referential production team, and there is no 'take-2' after the finishing the film production, the incompatibility between the global project (for profit making) and the local (as consumers for leisure and entertainment but at the same time as culture bearers-Japanese and Chinese) social agency.

The thick sophisticated, context specific elaboration of the story might not be the best strategy for million-dollar film making project, as this might step over the cultural (taboo) mine fields, in the landscape full of socio-cultural and religious fault-lines, within or between different cultural groups –the *Sayuri* case confirms this. Perhaps a more cultural sensitive approach of global film making is back-to-the-field, local communities, as demonstrated by the success of Korean film making or, to the futuristic guess about the past as produced by Hong Kong director Wong Kar-Wai's *2046* (2004; Fig.10).

Fig. 10: WONG Kar-Wai's 2046



(Source: http://pserve.club.fr/2046_aff3.jpg)

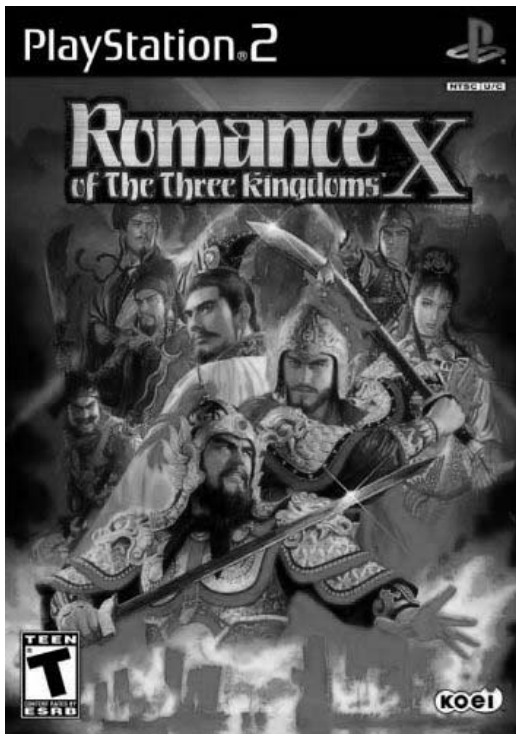
Referring to South Korean government's interventionist approach for cultural industries since the mid-1990s, Jin (2006) observed rightly that Korean film industry has been developing its national capacity, in terms of scale, media technologies and expertise, themes and stories which are compatible to the experience of the producing teams (casting and the natural bondage between the story-line and socio-cultural logic), to compete with their counterparts in Hollywood.

3.2. Differential Hybridity as a Regime of Global Cultural Production?

During the production of motion pictures and distribution process for marketing, the film as a multi-media choreography of life experience brings in the imagined and real encounters for cultural difference, and distancing, across time and space. In the process of filming, and by default, the making or remaking cultural (re-)presentation in, and out of, the media in a globalizing world is in actuality facilitating the hybridity of cultures, unlike the preservation of national heritage or preserving indigenous culture to its pure form (Tomlinson, 1999). The real question is what form and how the hybridity should be structured, and under what terms (producer's imagination or creativity, at the expense of authenticity and social norm?)

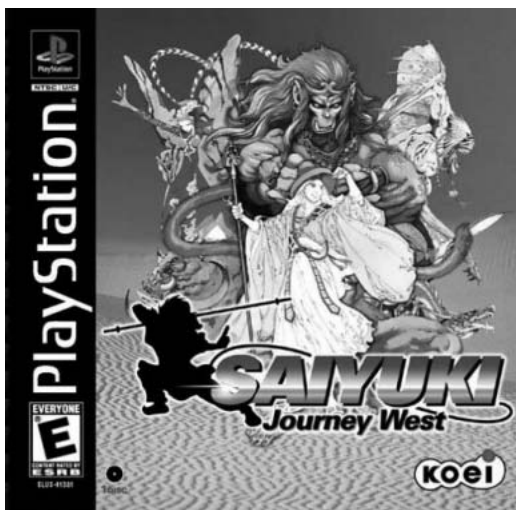
Compared with the aged industrial organization of film industry, the production of video games is more dynamics, flexible, adaptive and tailor-made to consumer demands, with frequent upgrading of the game versions. This is especially true for the growing spread of pan-Asian culture that transnational culture can spread out many directions, with nomadism between the West and the East, as well as within the Asian region (Consalvo 2006). The Chinese legends of 'Three Kingdoms' (Fig.11) and Journey West - Saiyuki (Fig.12) have been successful hybrid into Japanese mode of video-interactive game.

**Fig. 11: Video Game ‘Three Kingdom’
(Sino-Japanese Hybridity)**



(Source: <http://images.amazon.com/images/P/B00082ZQWW.01.LZZZZZZZ.jpg>)

**Fig. 12: Video Games – Journey West Sayuki
(Sino-Japanese Hybridity)**



(Source: <http://images.amazon.com/images/P/B00005ME8O.01.LZZZZZZZ.jpg>)

Here, the extent of the hybridity varies across different media for the (re-) presentation of culture should be stressed. Perhaps, popular culture is more ready for the hybridization process, whereas the more articulated presentation, like film, is yet to be hybridized without the loss of cultural purity / correctness as seen by local people. For comparison, video game industry is a relatively high hybrid form. The hybridity in the video game case is: to encompass two types of fusion: the melding of business and culture, as well as a convergence between Japanese and US interests in these areas. Just like different national identities have been mixed in the hybrid, so too the realms of business and culture are converging in novel ways (Consalvo 2006, p.120).

3.3. Global Reproduction-cum-Representation of “Orientalism”?

Like the prejudice of ‘Orientalist scholar’, outsider-film makers tend to make explicit their claim about the originality (a form of creative expression?) at the expense of cultural authenticity and validity, or implicitly use the seven digits budget to top-up their project with the best available costumes, animations or as in the *Sayuri* project, the recreation of the Geisha district-resembling that of Gion in Kyoto. This logic of global film makers is similar to what Edward Said (1983) has shown that, despite differences in appearance, the *Other* reminded a blind spot on their *epistemological map*. I think there is equivalence between the Orientalists and global film makers that:

To specialise in a culture and produce monographs on it does not automatically yield an understanding of that culture. At times the lack of empathy and dehumanisation of the Other were latent and camouflaged in the arduous work the Orientalists undertook in editing, classifying and translating Arabic texts. There is no reason to belittle these contributions. However, Said draws our attention to the larger picture: where such scholarly works are embedded and how they are used not to fathom the culture of others but to dominate them. Said points out how Orientalism is a branch of knowledge maintained and supported as part of a colonial policy, not as a component of a humanist vision. Thus the motivation itself is suspect. Orientalist works, *grosso modo*, confirmed biases and created certain negative images of the so-called Orient, Arabs and Islamic peoples (Ghazoul 2004: 124).

Making cultural sensitive motion pictures by the oligopoly of seven big Hollywood studios is a daunting, if not failing or impossible, task. Yet, the most terrible form of cultural reproduction under the global oligarchy could be the further cultural misunderstanding and that, shaping the likeliness of cultural clash.

3.4. The Mediated Hybridism: Changing Cultural Landscape in Asia

Creativity for cultural industries needs the nurturing of an open and free society at local level. For cultural reproduction in various media and be readily available to the general public, there are yet different regimes for broadcasting-communication in Asia, ranging from open to semi-closure, which are mirroring the extent of the nation state's interests (for censorship). For instance, in spite of its national goal for speeding up the modernization process with advanced and state-of-the-art ICT application, China has a strategic position with a selective closure for global media, in spite of its WTO membership, that the government requires an advanced domestic media system that is controllable for ideological purposes, leading to political and social stability. Once established, the media infrastructure essentially creates a centralized portal in which propaganda strategically promotes nation-building programs under the banner of national identity, contributing to maintenance of social harmony. In short, the Chinese regime is uneasily positioned against the context of its dynamic economic growth (Lai, 2005; Weber 2005: 798).

The Singaporean state's relationship with ICT is an uneasy one. Despite its fervent promotion of the Internet and attaching an "e" to virtually all aspects of Singaporean life--as in e-banking, e-commerce, e-government, e-homes, e-politicking and e-political campaign, the use of the new media (Internet and mobile phone) is still regulated with the state's terms.

In Malaysia, most forms of media are tightly controlled through broadcasters and newspapers hold licenses, which can be revoked at any time if 'undesirable' reports or photographs are published; whilst in Japan, in spite of its high-tech based society, the regulatory framework for new media and the cultural industries is still too rigid for advancing its impact on global level.

Comparatively speaking, South Korea and Taiwan represent a relatively liberal regime of regulation over new media and the contents they carry. This is might be attributed to a liberalizing regime of political governance and the political activism at the societal level. In spite of the different regimes of control over new media in Asia, each regulatory regime suffers

from some difficulties. The dynamism of economic development and the volatility of new media and the wired/wireless communication, as in the case of China, are incompatible with a straitjacket of nation state's control. In other words, the effectiveness of censorship is questionable and the control itself constitutes barriers for national economic development (Lai 2004).

4. Cultural Hybridity or Multi-Culturalism in a Globalizing World?

Thanks to nomadic movements of people, the East Asian culture(s) has been historically hybrid naturally in some form(s), Buddhist praxis, Confucian ideas, and Chinese language(s) are not unidirectional but interaction and exchanges with reciprocity, like the modern Chinese is enhanced by the modern Japanese (in borrowing and translating new foreign words) to comprehend Western concepts....

But what the present globalization regime shapes in the remaking and reproduction of cultural representations, aided by the new media, is the hybridity of Asian cultures under a non-Asian processing, as highlighted in our case study of *Sayuri (Geisha)*. External forces demonstrated by high-tech media and global financing, achieving global production and consumption purpose per se, shape and reformulate a new form of 'alienated' hybridity; resulting in high-tech and high priced media production with low relevance for cultural specificity (and purity?). For instance, the average cost for the production of 'Blockbuster' film was US\$98 million in 2004, this includes US\$63.6 million in negative costs (movie stars and production cost) and US\$34.4 million in print and advertising (p&a) costs. The strong p&a money power drive out competition from other smaller production or there is no network for the smaller producers to distribute their film (MPAA 2005, Germann 2005, p.95). But the new media might provide alternative platform and spaces for small (non-marketable) productions available for the public, this is recently also strengthened by the emergence of local film and media festivals, over 600 in 2005, as recorded by the British Council (2006) and one of the obvious candidate is 10-year old Pusan film festival (<http://www.piff.org/>).

On the other hand, new media, the internet and mobile communication (the case of YouTube and MySpace) in particular, threaten not just the old media of film production and delivery, as shown in the 7% decrease of the Hollywood box office in 2005 than in 2004 and the slowing growth DVD sales, but also challenging the satellite and cable systems

of companies such as News Corporation and Time Warner (*The Economist*, 19 January 2006).

Given the advanced application of ICT towards ubiquitous communication network, all producers and firms in the cultural industries will face with uncertainties over the impacts of new constellation of ICT such as high definition TV, interactive TV, mobile phone TV and the convergence of wired and wireless, satellite and terrestrial TV, film, multi-media and users-generated- contents at large, and the mergers of content and conduit agencies, which would enable programs of choice to be downloaded at will in any order. Therefore it is impossible to predict the future with any certainty, making investment decisions for cultural images and media production increasingly risky.

It has been rightly argued that the local should not be seen in distinction to the global, but that instead both are mutually constitutive—the process of glocalization (Robertson 1995). At this historical conjuncture, five different yet inter-related aspects of this new epoch of cultural hybrid representation can be highlighted here.

First, the organising and orchestration process for cultural reproduction is no longer a place nor national specific, it transcends in a global space of communication -- representations to a wider global/regional/local spaces; and the dynamics of such endeavours are derived from global capitalism. Digital capitalism is one of such characterisations for the new

epoch of development. How to nurture multiculturalism and socio-cultural diversity is an imminent challenge for sustainability of cultures and their reproduction.

Second, perhaps it is more contextual specific for Sino-Japanese hybridity on the story of *Sayuri-Geisha*; the important distinction between 'local' and 'alien/foreign' though can be systematically blurred or transcended through an advanced techno-financing global media production regime with new faces (Chinese actresses) and English (as *lingua franca*), new locality (in California), resulting in a world class film production; but for the audiences at their cultural milieu, the essence and logics of the 'local experiences the local' (for both Chinese and Japanese) are in place: they cannot accept their local experience (for Japanese) or fellow women (for Chinese) to be represented in a hybrid form, undermining their socio-cultural ideas and ideals.

Third, the point of sale or delivery of the film and the demands of local people (as well as the government) still shape the destiny of the cultural products as they travel around the world. But as the film making is highly organized and in large team work, the final version of the film is less likely to alter much at the point-of-sale (in cinemas)—this creates the problem for film making if producing agency has not been sensitive to local response; our case study on the *Geisha* film underscores such problem. In strong contrasting to the localization or the customization strategy of many video games or software products, the formula

Fig. 13: *Internal Affairs I, II, III* (2002,2003,2003 Hong Kong, by Andrew Lau)



(Source: <http://www.kfccinema.com/reviews/drama/internalaffairs/internalcover.jpg>
and <http://www.internalaffairs.com/>)

for successful global transfer of products to different localities, by making modifications on the story lines (the ending or epilogue) for such variables as culture, language, gender or ethnicity, is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the US\$85million *Geisha* project—yet, it should be point out that, to be marketable in mainland China, Asian (Hong Kong, the famous trilogy movie since 2002: *Internal Affairs I,II and III*, Fig.13) film productions have changed the name, story-line, characters and the epilogue of the film to suit the ‘taste’ of local people and authority --- perhaps this is one of signatures of Asian cultural landscape!

Fourth, movie industry is no longer a single medium enterprise with one output, namely, film, that you only view and consume the movie in cinema, but it becomes available in many forms: VCD, DVD, and video clips available for on-demand downloadable unto mobile device like PDA and phone (Sylvers 2006). But the new media has exacerbated the problem of multiple re-presentation of culture(s), they create a variety of channels, decentralized networks, through which the differences in terms of the interpretations and images of culture(s) can be exchanged, debated and re-interpreted with ubiquitous information flow. Transnational media corporations are more visible to more people and more closely scrutinized than they ever were in the past; and at the same time, they are more exposed to the socio-cultural (correct?) risk that their representation of “alien” cultures and

religions (Asian, European, American or Islamic)—the recent Islamic communities protests against the Danish cartoon highlights such reactionary forces against the global project for the selective hybridity (*The Economist*, 9.February 2006).

Fifth, the global hybridism becomes a major move towards creative industrialization of cultures at various geo-social scales, with multi-disciplinary approaches towards creativity enhancement—for economic, ecological and social developmental goals; this has been confirmed by recent UNCTAD report (see, Fig.14, 15 and 16). The further integration of multi-disciplines for creativity is more than obvious, and this will be the new world we are engaging.

Last but not least, the oppositional forces at the local (regional or national) level are more than ever to be reactive and mobilized in the struggles with the globalizing forces, using various forms of protests within and beyond the cyberspace of the Internet and mobile communication. Our case study of Sayuri also points towards some of the difficulties faced by global producers in making local people (Chinese and Japanese in this case) to accept the mediated story lines, nor as consumers, to spending their money to vote for the mega project for the reproduction of the local idiosyncrasies. To conclude, the local interpretation and reproduction of culture in the informational age still counts, as the authenticity, collective memory and history of the local is the foundation for sustainable culturing of humanity—people will defend them!

Fig. 14: Evolution of World Exports of Creative Goods & Services 1996-2005

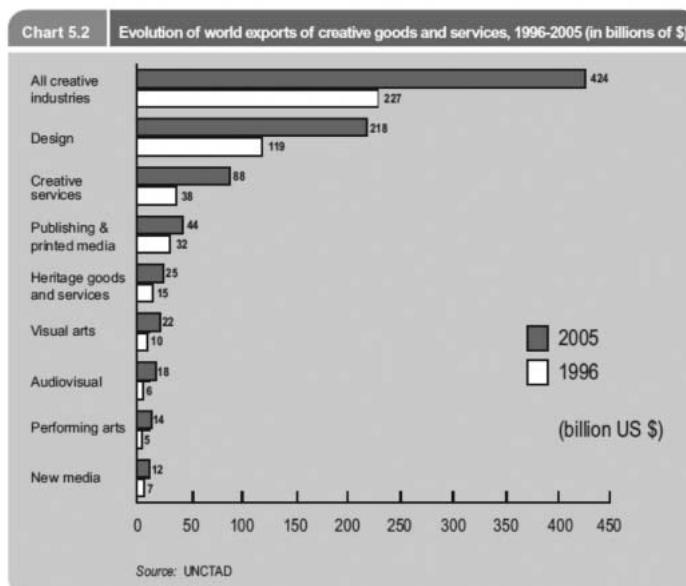


Fig. 15: Creative Goods: Exports, by Economic Group and Region, 2000 - 2005

Economic group and region	Value (in millions of \$)		Change (%)
	2000	2005	2000-2005
Worldwide	228,695	335,494	47
Developed economies	136,643	194,445	42
Europe	99,201	149,825	51
United States	20,703	25,544	23
Japan	4,803	5,547	15
Canada	10,413	11,377	9
Developing economies	89,827	136,231	52
Asia-South, Eastern, Southeastern	79,316	119,839	51
China	28,474	61,360	115
Western Asia	2,747	5,947	116
Latin America and Caribbean	6,769	8,641	28
Africa	973	1,775	82
LDCs	648	211	-67
SIDS	133	153	15
Economies in transition	2,226	4,818	116

Source: UNCTAD.

Fig. 16: Creative Goods: Top 20 Exporters Worldwide, 1996 and 2005

Rank 2005	Exporter	Value (in millions of \$)		Rank	Market share %	Growth rate %
		2005	1996	1996	2005	2000-2005
1	China	61,360	18,428	3	18.3	17.6
2	Italy	28,008	23,654	2	8.3	5.9
3	China, SAR of Hong Kong	27,677	24,391	1	8.2	0.8
4	United States	25,544	17,529	4	7.6	3.6
5	Germany	24,763	13,976	5	7.4	14.2
6	United Kingdom	19,030	12,439	6	5.7	9.8
7	France	17,706	12,368	7	5.3	8.6
8	Canada	11,377	9,312	8	3.4	1.7
9	Belgium (1)	9,343	–	–	2.8	–
10	Spain	9,138	5,988	9	2.7	8.1
11	India	8,155	2,382	16	2.4	21.1
12	Netherlands	7,250	5,235	10	2.2	9.7
13	Switzerland	6,053	4,501	11	1.8	9.1
14	Japan	5,547	3,618	12	1.7	1.8
15	Turkey	5,081	1,763	20	1.5	18.3
16	Austria	4,883	2,355	17	1.5	11.1
17	Thailand (2)	4,323	–	–	1.3	5.1
18	Mexico	4,271	2,693	15	1.3	0.5
19	Poland	4,215	1,602	21	1.3	18.2
20	Denmark	3,449	2,341	19	1.0	8.5

Source: UNCTAD.

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