



Resistance and Integration: A Comparative Study of the Cultural Politics of Popular Music in Asian University Fine Arts Courses

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SUMMARY: *This study aims to deeply analyze the cultural politics of popular music in university fine arts courses in Asia. Through comparative research methods, this study conducts a comprehensive exploration of the popular music fine arts courses in universities across different regions of Asia. The research findings show that the popular music fine arts courses in universities in East Asia demonstrate strong cultural resistance in terms of musical style innovation and lyrics content expression, while those in Southeast Asia are more significant in terms of ideological integration and commercialization integration. This difference stems from the uniqueness of the social and cultural environment in different regions and the different perceptions of mainstream culture by students. This study provides important references for the optimization and development of popular music fine arts courses in Asian universities, and helps to further promote in-depth research on university fine arts courses in the cultural politics aspect.*

KEYWORDS: *Popular Music; Asian Universities; Fine Arts Courses; Cultural Politics; Resistance and Integration*

1 Introduction

In the contemporary higher education system, fine arts courses as an important way to cultivate students' aesthetic literacy and cultural identity have gradually received widespread attention. Especially in universities across different regions of Asia, the content and form of fine arts courses show a diversified development trend. Popular music, as a cultural phenomenon with extensive social influence, not only reflects the values and psychological states of contemporary youth but also becomes an important component of university fine arts courses. However, although the application of popular music in university fine arts courses has gradually become widespread, research on its cultural politics aspect is still insufficient. Especially in the context of Asian universities, how popular music reflects the dual characteristics of resistance and integration in fine arts courses has not been fully addressed. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by using comparative research methods to analyze the cultural politics of popular music fine arts courses in Asian universities, revealing the characteristics and patterns of cultural politics in different Asian university popular music fine arts courses. Specifically, the study will focus on how popular music manifests the dual characteristics of resistance and integration in university fine arts courses and analyze the social and cultural factors behind it.

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2 Overview of Popular Music Aesthetic Education Courses in Asian Universities

2.1 Course Settings of Popular Music Aesthetic Education in Different Regions of Asia

2.1.1 East Asia Region

In the design and implementation of popular music aesthetic education courses in universities in East Asia, distinct regional characteristics and educational goals are evident. Taking China as an example, the "Popular Music Performance" course, as an important part of public art education, is endowed with the significant mission of achieving the goals of ideological education and aesthetic education [5]. By breaking through the boundaries of traditional singing styles and genres, this course not only broadens students' musical horizons but also integrates socialist core values into the teaching content through modular construction of the curriculum system. Meanwhile, Japanese universities place more emphasis on the combination of popular music and traditional cultural elements, emphasizing the cultivation of students' understanding and expression abilities of diverse cultures during the learning process. As an example, there are some universities that include classical pieces of J-pop (Japanese pop music) literature to help the students discover how modern popular music can be integrated with traditional harmony systems, which will improve their aesthetic literacy and cultural identity. The popular music aesthetic education classes in the Korean universities are practical and innovative, particularly when it comes to the globalization of K-pop (Korean pop music), numerous classes seek to develop internationally competitive music performers, with the emphasis on the overall training of popular music creation, performance, and marketing skills. The courses are varied in form such as popular music composition, dance choreography, and multimedia production to be able to address the individualized development needs of the students and offer the high quality artistic talents to the society.

2.1.2 Southeast Asia Region

The character that can be found in the context of popular music aesthetic education courses in universities in Southeast Asia is more varied and open. Popular music can be seen as a part of cultural inheritance and social communication, and universities in countries like Thailand and Malaysia typically value it as a significant means of developing the cross-cultural communication skills of students. As another example, Thai universities popular music courses may incorporate local music genres, e.g. Mor Lam (Mor Lam music) to research how traditional and modern popular music styles can be integrated. This course setting does not only assist students in learning more about their culture but also makes them engaged in the innovation of popular music. Since the population in Malaysia is multi-ethnic, the popular music aesthetic education courses at universities have greater focus on the integration and expression of different cultures. As one example, certain courses will focus on the relationship between Malay traditional music Dondang Sayang and Western popular music genres, where students are encouraged to convey their own feelings and cultural identity by creating pieces based on the social reality. In addition, universities in Southeast Asia also actively introduce international popular music resources, through cooperation with music education institutions in Europe, Asia, and other regions, holding popular music workshops and academic seminars, further enriching the course content and improving the teaching quality. This open course design not only promotes regional music cultural exchanges but also provides students with a broader international perspective.

2.2 The Position and Role of Pop Music in the Fine Arts Curriculum of Asian Universities

Pop music plays an indispensable role in the fine arts curriculum of Asian universities, and its unique position and role are manifested in multiple aspects [7]. As an art form that is closely related to the lives of the general public, pop music can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and participation enthusiasm, thereby improving the teaching effect of the fine arts curriculum. For example, in the public art courses of Chinese universities, pop music is widely used in moral education and fine arts education. By selecting excellent works with positive social values, it guides students to form correct aesthetic and value concepts [5]. Pop music also has obvious advantages in cultivating students' ability to understand diverse cultures. In Southeast Asia, universities combine local music elements with international pop music to help students recognize the commonalities and differences between different cultures, thereby enhancing their cultural inclusiveness and innovative consciousness. Moreover, pop music also plays an important role in promoting students' individual development and the cultivation of social responsibility. Research shows that the lyrics of pop music are rich in content, covering various themes such as love, friendship, family, and social charity. These contents not only can evoke students' emotional resonance but also guide them to pay attention to social reality issues, thereby enhancing their social responsibility and civic consciousness. In conclusion, pop music is not only an important part of art education in Asian universities but also an effective way to achieve the goal of comprehensive quality education [7].

3 Cultural Resistance of Pop Music in Asian University Fine Arts Courses

3.1 Forms of Resistance

Pop music, as a subcultural form, exhibits rich cultural resistance characteristics in Asian university fine arts courses. This resistance is primarily manifested in the innovation of musical styles. Asian university students, by integrating diverse cultural elements with local musical traditions, create unique styles of pop music to express themselves and resist the homogenization tendency of mainstream culture. For instance, the hip-hop music styles shown in shows like "China Hip-Hop" and "The New Generation of Rap" not only absorb the core elements of Western hip-hop culture but also incorporate Chinese cultural symbols such as dialects and ethnic instruments, thus forming a music form with distinct regional characteristics [2, 4]. Such innovation is not merely an artistic statement but a provocation and dismantling of the mainstream culture domination by the youth. By adopting various kinds of music, students seek to step out of the conventional aesthetic paradigm and build their culture.

Furthermore, the content of lyrics becomes an important carrier of pop music's resistance to mainstream culture. Asian university students use lyrics to express their attitudes towards social phenomena, revealing the contradictions and problems hidden beneath the surface harmony, thereby demonstrating the depth and breadth of cultural resistance. For example, PGONE's "H.M.E" uses intense "diss" techniques to criticize the hypocrisy of the entertainment industry, while GAI incorporates Chinese traditional values in his works, attempting to redefine the meaning of hip-hop culture. These lyrics often have strong emotional color and social critical consciousness, reflecting the dissatisfaction and reflection of young people towards reality. To more intuitively summarize the constituent dimensions of the cultural resistance of pop music, it can be expressed as:

$$R = \alpha F_s + \beta F_c + \gamma F_l \quad (1)$$

Among them, R represents the intensity of cultural resistance, F_s represents the degree of musical style innovation, F_c represents the intensity of social criticism in lyrics, and F_l represents the degree of embedding of local cultural symbols. α , β , and γ are the corresponding weight coefficients for each dimension. The given formula has been largely applied to show how the style innovation, critical expression, and local writing are interrelated in pop music. It is important to note that such an expression is not just a rebellious deed but rather a cultural phenomenon that depends on a particular historical framework. The aim of it is to encourage the society to reconsider the conventional beliefs and bring about the diversification of societal culture.

3.2 Reasons for Resistance

The factors that influence the cultural resistance of the popular music in the art education programs of the Asian universities can be discussed in two points: the social cultural context and the requirements of the students. In the context of the social cultural environment, globalization and the fast pace of information technology have facilitated the ability of the youth to obtain cultural resources of various countries and regions, which allows them to have a wealth of inspiration and means of creativity and expression [11]. Nevertheless, simultaneously, the mainstream culture is imposing more and more pressure on the subcultures to integrate into it, particularly in terms of ideology and commercialism [13]. As an illustration, the mainstream media refers to rap culture as negative or marginal, thus undermining its significance of resistance. Such outer pressure causes the students of Asian universities to actively reflect their identity through creating music, preserving the independence and specificity of the subcultures.

In terms of the needs of the students themselves, the cultural resistance of popular music is also related to the quest of recognition of identity and self-actualization among youths. College students in modern society are challenged with complex and dynamic social contexts and personal growth issues. They have to let out their internal anxiety and confusion in some way. Popular music can be viewed as a direct and extremely contagious mode of art and it offers a stage where students can share their emotions and opinions. Simultaneously, involvement in popular music creation turns into one of the major social activities that assist students to discover a feeling of belonging within the group and develop a common cultural identity. An illustration: most students in Asian universities create bands or attend music festivals, which not only develops their artistic skills but also increases their overall cohesiveness as a group. The joint effect of this internal motivation and external pressure contributes to the promotion of the cultural resistance phenomenon of popular music as a part of the cultural heritage of art education programs offered at Asian universities.

4 Cultural Incorporation of Pop Music in Art Education Courses in Asian Universities

4.1 Methods of Incorporation

As a form of subculture, the cultural incorporation of pop music in art education courses in Asian universities is mainly achieved through two methods: ideology and commercialization. Ideological incorporation mainly relies on the guidance and definition of popular music culture by mainstream media and educational institutions, so as to conform to the values of the ruling

class. For instance, during the peak period of the hit show "Chinese Hip Hop", the works of singer PGONE were criticized by mainstream media such as the People's Daily for their lyrics containing negative content, and were labeled as "lacking substance and lacking morality" [1]. This way of redefining subculture through "labeling" not only weakened its resistance but also gradually marginalized it, eventually integrating it into the framework of mainstream culture [9]. Additionally, educational institutions play a significant role in the selection and interpretation of popular music in the art education curriculum. By promoting or rejecting specific musical works or styles, educational institutions can shape students' perception of popular music and guide their values towards the mainstream direction.

Commercialization integration is the process of transforming elements of popular music into commodities and integrating them into the cultural industry. This process causes popular music to lose some of its cultural specificity and become part of consumerism. For example, symbols such as dreadlocks, earrings, and exaggerated clothing in rap culture, which were once important markers of its subcultural identity, were lost of their original cultural connotations under the impetus of commercialization [3]. At the same time, the industrial development of popular music also promotes its integration with other cultural forms, creating more universal cultural products. To more intuitively illustrate the mechanism of popular music culture integration, the intensity of integration can be expressed as:

$$C = \alpha I + \beta M \quad (2)$$

Among them, C represents the cultural integration intensity, I represents the degree of ideological guidance, M represents the degree of commercialization penetration, α and β are corresponding weight coefficients. This formula is mainly used to summarize the joint influence of ideological discipline and commercial logic on the characteristics of popular music subculture. This commercialization integration not only changes the cultural attributes of popular music but also has a profound impact on its status in the art education curriculum of universities. When students come into contact with these commodified musical elements, they tend to accept their superficial entertainment value more easily and overlook the possible critical meanings behind them [14].

4.2 The Impact of Cultural Integration

Cultural integration has had various impacts on the development direction of popular music aesthetic education courses in Asian universities and students' cultural cognition. Ideological integration has led to a more conservative presentation of popular music in aesthetic education courses. To conform to mainstream values, many critically or controversial music works are excluded from the course content, replaced by screened and modified "safe" works. Though such an inclination assists in sustaining the social stability, it also constrains the ability of students to perceive and express the concept of multiculturalism. The commercialization integration has led to the popularity of music in aesthetic education programs to be viewed more like a consumer object instead of being treated as a cultural phenomenon. Learners usually pay attention to the commercial popularity and trend of music without much consideration of its social context and cultural meaning that lies beneath it [3].

Moreover, cultural integration has influenced the level of identification among students with their cultural identity. Being under the impact of ideological integration, students can slowly adopt the mainstream culture meaning of popular music, which leads to a reduction of their feeling of connection to subcultures. With the effects of commercialization integration, students can focus on the outward appearance of music, including clothing and hairstyles, and overlook the inner cultural worth of music. The tendency not only has the potential to homogenize

subcultures but also put students in the consumerism trap depriving them of cultural diversity sensitivity [14]. Hence, what should be done to strike the resistance and integration in aesthetic education courses, directing children towards the understanding that popular music has cultural relevance without being fully taken over by the mainstream culture has become the acute issue to address.

5 Comparative Study of Cultural Politics of Popular Music Education in Different Asian Universities

5.1 Comparison of Resistance and Integration Degrees

Asian universities have shown significant differences in terms of cultural and political representations when it comes to popular music. Universities from East Asia, including China, Japan, and South Korea, work under the influence of the Confucian culture, where educational institutions tend to emphasize collectivism and social harmony in their curriculum. Popular music in the aesthetic education course at these institutions tends to lack the resistance factor compared to other regions. For instance, popular music courses offered at Chinese universities are often tailored towards reflecting the mainstream ideologies of the country [14]. The themes chosen by the students often adhere to social norms during both the creation and performance process. Thus, it becomes less likely for music to be utilized as a means of resistance for subcultures. On the other hand, universities in Southeast Asia display a higher form of resistance. Countries such as Thailand and Malaysia promote the expression of personal feelings and social criticism in their music, especially in controversial areas such as immigration and culture.

In addition, there is evidence of significant differences among the regions regarding the level of integration. As for East Asia, the involvement of mainstream media and educational establishments in popular music culture plays an important part. Popular music gets involved in the system of mainstream culture through ideological and commercial integration. Thus, in Korean universities, popular music lessons are usually tightly integrated into the cultural industry, which results in speedy commodification of students' works. Commercial integration contributes not only to increasing the popularity of popular music culture but also leads to the loss of its cultural specificity [3]. In contrast, in Southeast Asian countries, due to the intricacy of religious beliefs and cultural diversity, integration occurs at a much slower pace. Thus, Thai universities apply more local cultural resources in popular music education. It means that the works produced by students are strongly culturally specific and resistant to assimilation with mainstream culture [14].

However, a close analysis of the factors leading to such differences is necessary. The urbanization and socio-economic development witnessed in East Asia, which is quite significant, contribute to the stronger ability of the dominant culture to incorporate subcultures and thus result in a harsher integration process. On the other hand, due to the heterogeneous cultural environment and relative looseness of the social system in Southeast Asia, the space for the continuation and development of subcultures becomes larger, thus maintaining a balance between the processes of resistance and integration [14]. Regional differences in education policy and development of the culture also influence significantly the role of pop music in aesthetics education programs.

5.2 Cultural Political Patterns Differences

Regarding higher education institutions in Asia, popular music can be seen to be an important part of aesthetic education, whereby each region has its own unique cultural-political features. It is evident that the East Asian universities are greatly impacted by the Confucian cultural traditions, which are largely characterized by collectivist educational systems. Therefore, resistance against popular music in this context can be considered minimal because, in Chinese universities, for instance, students usually create and perform popular music based on themes that comply with the mainstream ideals of society [14]. On the other hand, popular music taught in the universities of Southeast Asia emphasizes self-expression and social criticism, where students use music as a means to discuss social and cultural issues.

There are also regional differences in the degree of integration. The guiding role of mainstream media and educational institutions in East Asia is stronger, and ideological integration and commercialization integration are more obvious. For example, popular music courses in Korean universities often combine with the cultural industry, and students' works are more likely to be transformed into commercial products, thereby weakening their original cultural specificity [3]. In Southeast Asia, due to a more diverse cultural structure, popular music courses rely more on local cultural resources, and students' works often retain a stronger regional characteristic [14]. To summarize this regional difference, it can be expressed as:

$$P = \alpha F_r + \beta F_c + \gamma F_s \quad (3)$$

Among them, P represents the intensity of cultural political expression, F_r represents the degree of cultural resistance, F_c represents the degree of cultural integration, and F_s represents the degree of support from the social cultural environment. The differences in educational policies, cultural industry models, and social structures in different regions jointly influence the cultural political presentation of popular music in aesthetic education courses in universities.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Study

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the resistance and incorporation phenomena of cultural politics in popular music education courses in Asian universities, revealing the unique characteristics and significant differences in the practice of popular music culture among different regions of universities. The research shows that universities in East Asia, such as China, Japan, and South Korea, place greater emphasis on the innovation of music styles and the social expression of lyrics content in their popular music education courses, demonstrating a strong tendency of cultural resistance. In contrast, universities in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand and Malaysia, are more influenced by mainstream ideology and commercialization, and the incorporation of popular music elements into the cultural industry is more common [14]. The disparity is also due to the diversity in the social and cultural backgrounds, as well as the numerous roles that popular music plays in the education system, such as acting as a means of expression for students and being an important instrument of culture [12].

In addition, the findings show that resistance and assimilation do not work independently but are interconnected. For instance, in some universities in East Asia, students express their resistance using unique musical styles, but at the same time, some elements of these styles are also incorporated by the mass media and educational institutions, thus creating a new cultural

and political paradigm [6, 11]. This paradigm provides an interesting view of the place of popular music in the curriculum of education and necessitates more research on how it works internally.

6.2 Insights and Recommendations

Based on the above discussion about empirical findings, there are several suggestions for the popular music education course program design of Asian universities. First, universities are expected to perfect the design of their curricula and incorporate the cultural and political aspects of popular music into the teaching process to ensure that students understand the relation between music and society [3]. At the same time, teachers are supposed to find a balanced point between resistance and conformity, allowing students to express themselves and think critically about musical work, but also showing the rational side of the mainstream values [8, 11]. Moreover, universities can increase cooperation between regions by organizing international exchanges or joint research projects to promote experience and cultural dialogues among universities from different regions, which would diversify the curriculum content and its forms [14].

With regard to commercialized popular music integration, universities can establish a flexible assessment system to avoid overemphasis on the market value, as well as the cultural specificity of music pieces [3, 14]. This measure helps protect the uniqueness of students' creations and provides a guarantee for the sustainable development of popular music in the education curriculum.

6.3 Research Prospects

However, despite the fact that the research has led to some findings concerning the comparative analysis of cultural politics in popular music education programs among Asian universities, there exist some issues that need improvement in future studies using the method used here. In particular, the current study has been carried out for East Asia and Southeast Asia only; hence, not all the Asian regions like South Asia and Central Asia have been taken into consideration. Therefore, in future, further generalization is expected regarding the topic under investigation.

This study mainly focuses on the manifestations and influencing factors of resistance and incorporation and has insufficient exploration of specific cultural political mechanisms. For example, how mainstream media and educational institutions achieve incorporation through ideological guidance, and the dynamic process of students constructing resistance discourse through music creation, require further in-depth research [6, 10]. Additionally, with the acceleration of globalization and technological development, the influence of digital platforms on the cultural dissemination of popular music is increasingly significant, and this emerging field provides a broad space for future research [14]. In conclusion, by continuously expanding the scope of research and deepening theoretical exploration, future studies will be able to more comprehensively reveal the cultural and political significance as well as practical value of popular music in the aesthetic education courses of Asian universities.

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