

Asian Creative Counter-Flows: To Market...To Market from the Periphery to the Centre¹

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt and hope to provide a realisation that Asia has finally managed to join the ranks of global media players and take on the mantle of being recognised as one of the cultural/media capitals of the world. This paper is also a coming out of Asian creativity and puts Asia at the epicentre, not at the global peripherals and thus marking a sure track towards sharing a piece of the lucrative global media marketplace. This spatial metaphor also reminds us all that Asia was once peripheral economy in the global content industry receiving a one-way flow of creative products from global media leaders such as US-Western Europe and non-Western cultural capitals in Latin-America as well as cultural content for the diaspora market. This one way flow has for decades fuelled the economy of the leading media exporters, injecting about USD 2,250 billion into their economies, creating 29.5 million jobs (UNESCO yearly report, 2015).

¹ This article is adapted from the keynote speech presented in the Communication and Changing Society International Conference in corporation with the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Thammasat University and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya. The Conference was held at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand on 21 July 2017.

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Having established that, what then created the imbalance, the stance of the late starter which could have launched the creative industries in the Asian highly cultural everyday lives much sooner. Everybody love to point to the wicked West but perhaps it is easier looking into our historical baggage to provide a contributing factor to the late start-up and entry in the global media marketplace while other spatial leaders maintained their economic lead in the global entertainment and media industries (E&M) industries.

Having said that, one needs to pause and reflect at what could possibly made non-starters or late bloomers of this open air cultural life of Asia.

Theoretical Perspectives on Culture and Profit

Scholars often speak of the four eras of global colonisation (McPhail, 2010; Iwabuchi, 2008; Boyd-Barret, 2000; Tehranian, 1999; Golding and Harris, 1997) of western powers in the world including Asia. The first trend in empire building began with the militarism of the Greco-Roman empire in BC-1000 AD, followed by the Christian colonialism in 1000-1600 in their effort to expand territory from Europe to North Africa to the Middle East. By 1095, after a series of Crusades lasting for about 200 years, the Christian empire acquired lands in Middle East and western civilization became the dominant hegemonic power.

The next stage of expansion was led by the merchant class beginning from 1600-1950, lasting to the 20th century. Economically, this was the most profitable era, untold profits in the form of exploitation of cheap labour and raw resource. Appropriation of bounty by European traders was quickly reciprocated by exporting to the peripheral lands of Africa, Asia and the Carribean. The era of the merchantile colonisation was succeeded by the final perfecting touch of the electronic colonisation (EC) phase from 1950 to the current global configuration of technology (Appadurai, 1990) and convergence of the media.