

CHAPTER 3

Transnational Flows of Popular Culture in Vietnamese Society

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain what kinds of music were produced in Vietnam before K-pop before and during the Socialist regime, to put into context popular culture in Vietnam, as well as explore the opinions of people in society as a whole about K-pop. I will then discuss K-pop in relation to national, regional and global issues, and also discuss Korean popular music as a national, transnational and regional product. Although it is made and circulated as a Korean product, the various foreign influences that have created it contribute to its transnationality; as a regional product which contains Asian sentiments and values with which many Asians can identify. The purpose here is to examine the practice of dance covers, based on the backgrounds and motivations of the study groups and why they were formed, plus to understand the social activities that take place and social space created among young people.

3.2 Vietnamese Popular Music (V-pop) and Global Popular Music throughout Vietnam's History

3.2.1 Vietnamese Popular Music since the early 1930s

In this chapter, I will explore the originw of Vietnamese popular music¹, the different Vietnamese popular music genres, as well as the music's development overtime.

Nineteenth century Vietnam was forcibly and irresistibly influenced by French colonization. (Gibbs 1998). During the decade 1920 to 1930, national literacy, or

¹ Popular culture is distinguished from culture in general by its accessibility. The word 'popular' comes from the Latin word 'populace', meaning 'people'; something that is available to everybody regardless of race, class or income. One signifier of pop culture is that it is inexpensive, so that everyone can afford it, though the key is not always affordability, but availability. (www.scholarscorner.com 1994).

quoc ngu (the romanization of spoken Vietnamese) became popular (Marr 1981: 142-189). This was a remarkable decade, when Vietnam finally broke out from its traditional, Confucian roots to embrace the Western world through new ritual practices such as the cutting of hair or wearing Western clothes (Pham 1989). Neil Jamieson describes a new emerging social class in Vietnamese society at that time, as "a social force wielding innovative kinds of influence based on new and modern skills... In urban centers during the 1930s, especially in Hanoi, there was a sudden and self-conscious rush to replace the old with the new, to Westernize, to be modern" (Neil 1993: 100-101). This turning point set the scene for "pre-war music" (music before the Vietnam War) - the first Vietnamese popular music to be created.

The first attempt at indigenizing Western-style popular songs into Vietnamese song lyrics first occurred in the mid-1930s through a movement named '*bai ta theo dieu tay*' (our words following Western melodies), which are nowadays called 'parody songs' and which have a meaning sometimes totally different from the French originals (Gibbs 1997). At that time, listening to this new music was a symbol of high fashion in cities and was popular among the upper, well educated and middle classes. Those songs became popular all over the country, but especially in Hanoi around 1938 (Doan 1984).

In the 1940s, there was a strong movement in support of patriotic songs which were firstly and mostly modeled on French military band music, to accompany marches (Gibbs 1998). This movement was also promoted by The Vietnamese Communist Party, as proved a valuable source of propaganda for the revolution. This movement was rooted in 1926, when "The International" music elements were translated into Vietnamese music, so that by 1930 The Communist Party was using original revolutionary songs within their organization (Dao 1984: 103). This was the context for *Nhac Do* or Red Music; the communist revolutionary music (*nhạc cách mạng*), a genre established in Vietnam (Cannon 2008). These songs made a strong impression at the time among patriotically minded young people yearning for their country's independence. For example, the song named *Tieng Goi Thanh Nien* ('Call of the Youth'), composed by Luu Huu Phuoc, became the National Anthem of the future South Vietnam, while the song named *Tien Quan Ca* ('Onward Soldiers') by Van Cao,

in 1945 became the National Anthem of North Vietnam (Nhac si Sang tac Viet nam 1986:125).

After 1954, the country was split into two very different regimes; one the communist Socialist Republic of Vietnam or North Vietnam, and the other the Republic of Vietnam or South Vietnam. As the country divided, so the *tien chien* movement also separated into two parts, with some composers in the South, and others remaining in the North. Most of the northerners followed The Communist Party and wrote songs to strengthen the revolution, while southerners continued to write romantic songs (Gibbs 1998). After the country was reunited in 1975, popular music still continued to be divided into two parts: resident and overseas music (Gibbs 1998).

Table 3.1 History of Vietnamese Popular Music

Popular Music Type	Pre-war Music	Red Music	Yellow Music	Green Music	Green Music with Korean Dance
Period	1920s/1930s-1954: Originated in Ha Noi; after 1954 in the South	1940s-1954; 1954-1975; after 1975 in the north	From the 1960s to 1975 in the South	From the 1960s to present, in the south; 1990s to present in the north also	Around 2010+ with the development of K-pop cover dance

Table 3.1 (continued)

Popular Music Type	Pre-war Music	Red Music	Yellow Music	Green Music	Green Music with Korean Dance
Description	Origins of Vietnamese popular song; romantic and lyrical songs, following French music	Normally and in the beginning, modeled after marches and French military band music	Based on the Tango, Bolevo, Rumba and ballads	Based on contemporary Western and American music, such as rock and roll, pop and rap	Based on underground music ² . Normally with rap in the middle or at the end

After the Vietnam War in 1975, overseas Vietnamese (from the former South) produced their own music called ‘yellow music’ and ‘green music’ as a rejection of their homeland music under the Communist regime, and this gave them a voice through which to speak out. They engaged in their own form of highly distinct. hybrid music by appropriating dominant Western popular cultural forms (1995-1999) (Cunning & Nguyen 1999). This overseas music was produced in Southern California, Sydney and Bristone for the Viet Kieu (the overseas Vietnamese) (Cunningham & Nguyen1999).

²**Underground music** comprises musical genres beyond mainstream culture. Any song that is not being legally commercialized is considered underground. Such music may tend to express common ideals, such as a high regard for sincerity and intimacy, and freedom of creative expression, as opposed to the highly formulaic composition of commercial music. It also appreciates artistic individuality as opposed to conformity within current mainstream trends.

Somehow, the lyrics of Vietnamese songs (pre-war music) or *nhac tien chien* have something in common with yellow and green music, in the sense that they talk about romantic love, the personal emotions experienced by in-love couples, while ‘red music’ and patriotic songs talk about a love for the country, or the beautiful landscapes to be found in the countryside, cities or hometowns, with love between people merged with a love for the nation.

However, new modern V-pop songs, as ‘green music’, are more modern in terms of the language used (mixing Vietnamese lyrics with rap in English), and the strong beats and fast rhythms of Western music (rap, hiphop, pop ballads and sometimes rock), which are popular underground music among the young people and teenagers. Moreover, both romantic Vietnamese songs from the pre-war music genre, or ‘yellow songs’ in the South and ‘Hai Ngoai’ or the patriotic songs of ‘red music’ in the North in wartime do not feature much in this trend, as the movements and dancing are in modern time. Also the songs tend to be used to illustrate the dance routines, which are sometimes not related to the meaning of the lyrics. In other words, the artistic performance is placed above the music itself, which is why the lyrics are very simple to understand and are not appreciated by the older generation. This ‘younger’ music puts all these things together: dance and fashion/style, and never one on its own, and the young audience expects the artists to be able to do all those things by themselves.

Table 3.2 Examples of Vietnamese Popular Songs

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
A song of a “Pre-war Music”	Ngoai hien giot mua thu thanh thot roi.	Outside on the veranda, the autumn rain is gently falling.
	Troi lang u buon may hat hieu	The somber sky is quiet, suspended

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
<p>“Giot Mua Thu” (Spring water drops) by Dang The Phong and Bui Cong Ky (1939)</p>	<p>ngung troi.</p> <p>Nghe gio thoang mo ho trong mua thu, ai khoc ai than ho.</p> <p>Vai con chim non chiem chiep keu tren canh nhu nhu troi xanh: "Gio ngung di. Mua buon chi cho coi long lam ly."</p> <p>Hon thu toi noi day reo buon lay.</p> <p>Long vang muon be khong liep che gio ve. Ai nuc no thuong doi chau buong mau, duong the bao la sau.</p> <p>Nguoi mong may tan cho gio hieu hieu lanh. May ngo troi xanh. Chac gi vui. Mua con roi bao kiek sau ta nguoi.</p> <p>Gio xa xoi van ve, mua chang mu le the. Den bao nam nua troi? Vo chong Ngau khoc vi thu?</p>	<p>clouds are scattered.</p> <p>Amidst the muffled wind blowing past in the autumn rain, who's crying? Who's grieving?</p> <p>A couple of young birds chirp from the branch as if auguring blue skies: "Stop wind, why bring sad rain to a plaintive heart?"</p> <p>Autumn's spirit arrives, announcing the sadness it brings along.</p> <p>Feelings empty on all sides, for there's no screen to block the returning wind. Who's sobbing, lamenting life; teardrops rushing down?</p> <p>The world's immeasurably sad. We hope the clouds will scatter bringing sweet gentle breezes. The clouds open-up to blue sky</p> <p>Could such happiness be? The rain continues to fall, how many more</p>

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
		incarnations until this melancholy subsides? The distant wind still returns the unyielding rain, which spreads its gloom. Oh sky, for how many more years will tears pour from the sky because of autumn?
A song of a “Red Music” "Tiến quân ca" (Onward Soldiers) by Văn Cao (1945) became the National Anthem	Đoàn quân Việt Nam đi. Chung lòng cứu quốc. Bước chân dồn vang trên đường gập ghềnh xa. Cờ in máu chiến thắng mang hồn nước. Súng ngoài xa chen khúc quân hành ca. Đường vinh quang xây xác quân thù, Thắng gian lao cùng nhau lập chiến khu. Vì nhân dân chiến đấu không ngừng, Tiến mau ra sa trường. Tiến lên. Cùng tiến lên. Nước non Việt Nam ta vững bền. ***	Soldiers of Vietnam, we go forward, With the one will to save our Fatherland. Our hurried steps are sounding on the long and arduous road. Our flag, red with the blood of victory, bears the spirit of our country. The distant rumbling of the guns mingles with our marching song. The path to glory passes over the bodies of our foes. Overcoming all hardships, together we build our resistance bases. Ceaselessly for the people's cause we struggle. Hastening to the battle field! Forward! All together advancing! Our Vietnam is strong

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
	<p>Đoàn quân Việt Nam đi. Sao vàng phấp phới. Dắt giống nòi quê hương qua nơi lầm than.</p> <p>Cùng chung sức phấn đấu xây đời mới, Đứng đều lên gông xích ta đập tan.</p> <p>Từ bao lâu ta nuốt căm hờn, Quyết hy sinh đời ta tươi thắm hơn. Vì nhân dân chiến đấu không ngừng. Tiến mau ra sa trường, Tiến lên. Cùng tiến lên. Nước non Việt Nam ta vững bền.</p>	<p>eternal. ***</p> <p>Soldiers of Vietnam, we go forward, The gold star of our flag in the wind. Leading our people, our native land, out of misery and suffering.</p> <p>Let us join our efforts in the fight for the building of a new life. Let us stand up and break our chains.</p> <p>For too long have we swallowed our hatred; Let us keep ready for all sacrifices and our life will be radiant. Ceaselessly for the people's cause we struggle. Hastening to the battlefield! Forward! All together advancing! Our Vietnam is strong and eternal.</p>
<p>A song of a “Yellow Music”</p> <p>“Anh cho em mua</p>	<p>Anh cho em mùa xuân, nụ hoa vàng mới nở, chiều đông nào nhưng nhớ.</p> <p>Đường lao xao lá đầy, chân bước mòn vỉa phố, mắt buồn vin ngọn</p>	<p>You give me the spring, newly hatched yellow flower buds, An unforgettable winter's afternoon crunch.</p> <p>Leaves on the street, a street of</p>

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
<p>xuan” (I give to you the Spring) by Nguyen Hien (1962)</p>	<p>cây.</p> <p>Anh cho em mùa xuân, mùa xuân này tất cả, lộc non vừa trẩy lá. Lời thơ thương cõi đời, bày chim lùa vật nặng trong khói chiều chơi vời.</p> <p>Đất mẹ đầy cỏ lúa, đồng xanh xa mấy mùa. Ngoài đê điều căng gió, thoảng câu hò đôi lứa...</p> <p>Trong xóm vang chuông chùa, trắng sáng soi liếp dừa. Con sông dài mấy nhánh, cát trắng bờ quê xưa. ***</p> <p>Anh cho em mùa xuân, trẻ nô đùa khắp trời. Niềm yêu đời phơi phới. Bàn tay thơm sữa ngọt, giải đất hiên chim hót, mái nhà xinh kề nhau...</p>	<p>wear foot steps, sad eyes on the treetops.</p> <p>You give me the spring, this spring all, both premature leaf buds pilgrimage. The poetic lyrics for granted heavy lure birds in lonely smoke afternoon.</p> <p>Rice and grassy mother land, green fields few seasons away. In addition to wind stress dyke, sometimes couples lullabies...</p> <p>In the village temple abell rang, the moon illuminated the wooden coconut. The longest river, the white sand shores of ancient countryside. ***</p> <p>You give me the spring, children frolicking around the sun. A sentiment of breezy love life, hand fragrant sweet milk, strip gentle birdsong, beautiful roofs adjacent...</p> <p>Give me spring flowers on a small</p>

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
	Anh cho em mùa xuân, đường hoa vào phố nhỏ, nhạc chan hòa đây đó. Tình yêu non nước này, bài thơ còn xao xuyến rung nắng vàng ban mai. Anh cho em mùa xuân Nhạc thơ tràn muôn lối.	town road, musical harmony here and there. Love for our country, restless poems also vibration morning sunshine. Give me spring. Music spills, cite poetry.
A song of “Green Music” “Yeu Nu” (Devil) in 2011	Ngàn ánh mắt đang nhìn theo bước chân em. Rực lên dáng em yêu kiều từ phía xa. Niềm kiêu hãnh riêng mình em quá xa hoa. Liệu anh có xứng đáng là một nửa của em. Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy?	A thousand eyes are looking at my steps. Flaming my charming steps far away. My luxury. If you deserve to be my part of mine) Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy Ahhhh ia ahhhh ahhhh ahhhh Dare you be mah boy?
A song of “Green Music” with K-	Chiều hoàng hôn buông đang dần phai Cô đơn lang thang trôi qua hết tháng ngày dài Khi trong thâm tâm ta luôn biết chẳng có ai kề sát vai mỗi khi buồn vui đau đón gì.	The afternoon sunset was fading away. The loneliness is going on in a long unfinished days. Deep inside my heart I know there is no one left for me; whenever I am happy or

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
pop dance “Tìm” (Found) by Min from St.319 (2013)	<p>Cuộc đời đã cho tôi niềm tin Nhưng đôi khi mang luôn đi hết chẳng giữ gì. Lặng thầm nhìn về một hình bóng đã xa rồi, đã xa rồi Để mình tôi lạnh đôi môi nhạt nhòa thôi.</p> <p>Bridge : Rồi một mùa thu đã dần qua Đông đến cùng ta. Mang những lạnh giá Vì một người ra đi vội vã để tôi đi tìm Trong đêm tôi vẫn đi tìm</p> <p>Chorus : Tìm hoài để thấy thấy để để thấy được tình yêu ấy ấy Mãi vẫn mãi luôn còn trong tim này những ký ức ấy vẫn trong tim này.</p> <p>Dù lòng vẫn biết biết biết vẫn biết ai chẳng hề nhớ nhớ nhớ nhớ đến yêu thương bao giờ Nhưng con tim ấy vẫn luôn mong chờ</p>	<p>painful. Life has brought back to me the belief, but sometimes it just brings them all. Silently looking back to a shadow, far away, far away, leave me alone, cold and faded.</p> <p>Bridge: And as fall gradually passes and a winter comes to me, brings cold. Because a hurry person leaves so I am looking in the night I'm still looking for.</p> <p>Chorus: Find nostalgia to see, to see, to see that love is forever Forever was always there in my heart the memories that remain in my heart.</p> <p>Although my heart still knows, knows, knows, knows who still did not remember, remember, remember, remember. But the memory still exists in my mind.</p>

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
	<p>Rap : Just wanna say : I'm sorry Baby gal I made you hurt Nơi chúng mình dựng xây, chẳng còn gì Lâu dài đó đổ nát mah gal Bao năm yêu rót rơi trên sàn Em vút bỏ ra đi Tìm một nơi mơ màng Em đã giữ điều gì trong những nghĩ suy Why u dun talk to me ?!</p> <p>Khi những ngôi sao trên trời trò chuyện cùng em mỗi đêm Em gom khúc ca ưu phiền lệ nhòa mình em trong bóng đêm.</p> <p>Rap: 2 chúng ta chỉ học cách đổ lỗi Anh và em trở nên nóng vội Để chuyện tình úa tàn, và lòng người ngỡ ngàng Nhìn từng giây bề bàng trôi wa khẽ khàng.</p> <p>Bridge : Rồi một mùa thu đã dần qua Đông đến cùng ta Mang những lạnh giá Vì một người ra đi vội vã để tôi đi tìm Trong đêm tôi vẫn đi tìm.</p>	<p>Rap : Just wanna say : I'm sorry baby-gal I made you hurt. Where we split up, had nothing left. The castle of love has been collapsed. How many years of love, you left it on the floor. What you still remain? Why u dun talk to me?!</p> <p>When the stars in the sky talk to me every night I collected sorrow songs in the darkness of my soul.</p> <p>Rap: We only learn to blame to each others. You and me became impatient, make our romance withered. Looking back quietly.</p> <p>Bridge: And as fall gradually passes over and a winter comes to me, brings cold. Because a hurry person leaves so I am looking in the night I'm still looking for.</p>

Table 3.2 (continued)

Examples of Vietnamese popular music	Vietnamese Lyrics	English Lyrics
	<p>Chorus : Tìm hoài để thấy thấy để để thấy được tình yêu ấy ấy Mãi vẫn mãi luôn còn trong tim này những ký ức ấy vẫn trong tim này. Dù lòng vẫn biết biết biết vẫn biết ai chẳng hề nhớ nhớ nhớ nhớ đến yêu thương bao giờ Nhưng con tim ấy vẫn luôn mong chờ.</p> <p>Bridge : Chờ một cuộc tình đã mất từ lâu Chờ một kỉ niệm đã lỡ nhạt màu Còn lại điều gì khi kí ức đã vỡ tan Eh yeah</p> <p>Từng ngày từng ngày trống vắng quanh hiu (Từng ngày từng ngày trống vắng quanh hiu) Lòng còn ngập tràn mênh mang nỗi nhớ (Lòng còn ngập tràn nỗi nhớ thật nhiều) Để rồi vẫn thấy luôn chờ vơ ta với ta Eh yeah eh yeah</p>	<p>Chorus: Find nostalgia to see to see, to see, that love is forever, forever was always there in my heart the memories that remain in my heart.</p> <p>Although my heart still knows, knows, knows knows who still did not remember, remember, remember remember. But the memory still exists in my mind.</p> <p>Bridge: Wait a long-lost love. Wait a faded memories have missed. What the Left has shattered memories Eh yeah</p> <p>Each day every day around the gloomy emptiness (Each day each day around the gloomy emptiness) heart was filled with immense nostalgia (heart was filled with so much nostalgia). For salvation is found, derelict is always with me, Eh eh yeah yeah</p>

3.2.2 Transnational Media Flows in Vietnam Before and After Doi Moi

In this section, I will talk about how different media flows have impacted upon Vietnam from a globalization perspective. Moreover, the purpose of this section is also to examine the wave of Korean cultural products to have emerged as a counter to Vietnamese media flows. However, in Vietnamese society, this ‘Korean Wave’, which includes K-pop, is considered to be only for the teenagers who are young and materialistic, who love music without meaning. In this first part, I will explore different opinions and controversial dialogues from both the older and younger generations, as K-pop has become popular among Vietnamese young people plus its impacts on their lifestyles and tastes.

The transnationalization of commodified popular culture has generated an intra-Asian search for a common frame of reference for cultural emulation and social praxis. Transnational media consumption articulates “a new social and communicative space” in which people can positively and reflexively rethink their own cultures and those of others (Gillespie 1995: 106). It brings about a sense of a common modern experience and blurs the cultural boundaries (Buell 1994).

I will explore the different globalization forces occurring globally across many disciplines, to explain the concept of globalization from different approaches. The first approach views globalization as the result of cultural imperialism; promoting globalization has allowed the USA to defeat weaker national and cultural identities (Shim 2006). In the second view, globalization is understood as an outcome of the modernity project (Giddens 1990), while in the third approach, discourses are used to identify cultural hybridity and power relations between the periphery and the center from the perspective of post-colonial criticism (Kraidy 2002). However, I focus upon a media centered definition of globalization. The internet and the increasing number of satellites in orbit have not only accelerated the flow of popular culture, but also multiplied the centers of production that contribute to that flow (Tomlinson 1997). Iwabuchi further complicates the issue of globalization, saying it is a “centering” process. The increasing emphasis on the decentralization of global cultural power does not mean there are no longer dominant centers. The suppliers of transnational cultural

products and “form” which make creative local hybridization possible are still limited to a small number of centers (Iwabuchi 2002: 44).

I will show the desire the Vietnamese have to consume different flows. According to Iwabuchi, in non-Western countries, the USA has long been closely associated with images of modernity (2002). Whenever US popular culture is consumed, people vicariously satisfy a yearning for the American way of life, and appropriate the images of romance, freedom and affluence associated with it (Iwabuchi 2002). However, as Richard Wilk argues, globalization involves “structures of common difference”, meaning that the system of global culture also accepts the difference instead of suppressing it (1995). Therefore, the transnational cultural power here doesn’t necessarily mean the straightforward embodiment and recognition of one culture’s superiority over another, but can be defined as the capacity of a culture to produce symbolic images and meanings which bring about the common and difference (Lull 1995). Continuing this idea, Daisy Kim in 2012 talked about the “community of desire” in her thesis about K-pop consumption in Vietnam. Hallyu in general and K-pop in particular, has provided a symbolic site of neo-liberalism’s success at modernizing Asian cosmopolitanism, because Vietnam is processing its structural shift towards a capitalist neo-liberal economy as well (Kim 2012, Shim 2006, Iwabuchi 2002).

I will illustrate in more detail about different flows into Vietnam from the perspective of an insider. My father was born in 1959. After the Vietnam War, in 1975, his generation got to know about Western pop artists, such as ABBA, The Beatles and Modern Talking from the national radio stations without any understanding of the lyrics being sung. I was born in 1988, two years after Doi Moi, and I learned about *Hai Ngoai* music while I was at elementary school. *Hai Ngoai* (overseas) music represents a nostalgic desire on the part of the Vietnamese diaspora to go back to the old days of South Vietnam, while they are living in Western countries such as the USA, France and Canada. *Hai Ngoai* music was first made for Viet Kieu people who left the country, due to conflicting ideologies, after the Vietnam War ended in 1975.

However, after the war and after Doi Moi, then due to the poor standard of entertainment (most Vietnamese music at that time was still old style, from the war

when it was used as Viet Minh propaganda, or songs describing the beauty of the country and Ha Noi (the capital, where I was born) via both national TV channels and *loa Phường* (district public radio). Many Vietnamese living in Vietnam (especially big cities); however, tried to consume different music products made by Vietnamese overseas, using video tapes at that time. The most famous overseas music company at that time was 'Thuy Nga Paris'³. This company released both old Vietnamese diasporic songs from the South of Vietnam (Saigon) during the war time, parodies of US/UK-pop songs, parodies of Hong Kong and some original English language songs (Cunningham & Nguyen 1999). An example of a case of the influence of Hong Kong music on Hai Ngoai is the song 'Caravan of life' by Don Ho (a male singer from Hai Ngoai). The song performance is based on a well-known Chinese song, but with the lyrics translated into Vietnamese for the performance, which is a story of the oppression of the Nepalese; totally different from the original song content. A typical example of the influence of US/UK music in Hai Ngoai is Linda Trang Dai (a female singer from Hai Ngoai) modeling herself on Madonna. She is an example of a Vietnamese woman who hybridizes Western rock, pop and rap. However, according to Thomas Mandy, compared to Hong Kong musical influences, US/UK cultural influences are almost insignificant in Vietnamese-Australian households (one of the Hai Ngoai communities) (1996).

The melodies for the song 'Hotel California' from the USA, and many others, were actually copied from Hong Kong and Chinese songs into Vietnamese by the overseas Vietnamese living in Western countries, and these products remain a vivid memory from when I first listened to them at around eight or nine years-old, because the videos and songs were recorded many times by my parents, uncles and older relatives. Sometimes, the meanings of the songs in Vietnamese were totally different from the originals; for example, a song taken from the song 'Child' by Tokyo Square. Therefore, it could be said that I know about foreign music from *Hai Ngoai* rather than the original versions.

³ Thuy Nga Production is the largest and most successful music company in Hai Ngoai, particularly in the USA since 1980s, with their products including live shows, CDs, audio cassettes and karaoke discs. The founder and leader of Thuy Nga is To Van Lai, a university psychology professor who wants to bring Vietnamese traditional folk together with contemporary Vietnamese music, and also using popular world pop music such as rock and pop (Cunningham & Nguyen 1999).

There is a general desire to consume modern, global music, and when at secondary school and high school, I remember my brothers' generation and my own being attracted a lot to US/UK-pop (referred to as Western-led American pop music), with famous names such as MLTR, Boyzone, The Backstreet Boys and Britney Spears appearing in the 1990s as illegal, cheap CDs and DVDs imported from China and shown on National TV Channel VTV3. After that, Korean cultural flow became popular in Vietnam around the late 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s.

Vietnamese Government policies in relation to foreign cultural products and music have changed gradually since 1989. While foreign culture and music, and pop music in particular, was considered a threat to the regime prior to 1989, after this time the Ministry of Culture in Vietnam set-about correcting the disorganized publishing, and distribution activities; reorganizing them in order to improve the cultural and spiritual life of the people. The Ministry stated: "Prohibit performing and disseminating performance in any situation, such as disseminating videos, displaying film videos ... in any public places such as theatres, district cultural houses, clubs, parks, schools, offices, hotels, restaurants, gas stations... and any public transportation of videos having contents accordingly: (1) reactionary debauched music/songs; (2) negative "lyrical romantic" songs created in enemy occupied territory from 1946 to 1975; (3) songs, videos and films made by reactionary debauched negative Hai Ngoai/overseas Vietnamese, sent illegally to our country; (4) songs made by Vietnamese authors but that go against our revolution."

After 10 years, these policies have changed to become more open, with videoa seen as a positive way to learn more from the world, as follows, "the Government encourages the production, export, import and dissemination of, and business in those CDs and DVDs of a high quality, to meet the needs of the entertainment and cultural activities of people; to open and exchange cultures with other countries", a passage cited from the Ministry of Culture and Information (55/1999) about regulations on the production, export, import and dissemination of, and business in CDs, VCDs and DVDs regarding cultural performances and music. The government still imposes limitations on music from the South composed before 1975. Recently, in 2012, the Decree on Arts

Performances by the Prime Minister (77/2012) was issued, in which the Government sets out policies which aim to “(a) encourage Vietnamese individuals and organizations to participate in art performances... according to the law.” From what has been proposed, one can see a change in term of the policies and ideology emanating from the Government, the aim being to adapt with the new, current conditions.

Korea opened its markets in 1987 (Lee 2013), and this coincided with Vietnam opening its markets in 1986 for the first time since the Vietnam War. Since that time, both countries have been much more exposed to foreign cultures and music. At the same time the standard of living has been rising. If in Korea, a lot of Koreans bought satellite TV and could receive Japanese television (Lee 2013), in Vietnam, urban families were receiving cultural products from video tapes. Therefore, Vietnamese were becoming much more aware of global trends. However, in South Korea, the music started to change faster because since the 1990s, a lot of people who had studied in the US returned to South Korea to contribute to the Korean entertainment industry (Lee 2013). This group of people together with some foreigners who got in touch closely with hip hop and pop producers in the US started working as music producers or music video directors in South Korea (Leung 2012).

In addition to K-pop, Korea has a lot of advantages when offering its products in Vietnam, meaning Koreans have invested heavily in a number of sectors, such as real estate, finance and textiles, and have expanded their businesses to cover the entertainment sectors also (satellite TV firms, shopping malls etc), with technology as a key target. In 2013, South Korea invested in approximately 3,400 projects in Vietnam, with a total registered capital of \$25.73 billion, ranking fourth among nations and regions investing in Vietnam. Well known companies investing include LG Electronics (LGE), Samsung, Kumho, Lotte, Keosan Vina Electronics, Heasung Teach and Sung Gwang, among others (www.tuoitrenews.vn 2013). In general, the Korean Wave can be seen as one of the reasons for the improved relationships between Vietnam and Korea in recent years (Shim 2006).

Talking about the Vietnamese Government’s attitude as Korean culture has influenced Vietnam, Thomas Mandy in 2004 argued that the enjoyment of East Asian

(specifically Korean) cultural productions in Vietnam is maybe viewed as a way in which people resist and negotiate with the regime due to this new post-communist media revolution. Moreover, there is also a competition in the domestic music market for external cultural influences, because the State realizes that local programs do not meet the needs of consumers. However, this represents a rich and creative area for Vietnamese artists to move into; to develop new themes, from the old nationalistic and patriotic theme (based on war and propaganda songs), to a new material pop culture (Thomas 2004).

The reason Vietnamese consumers have greater choice in terms of consuming international cultural products is because the country has opened its markets and entered the world economy. According to the World Bank, the GDP of Vietnam in the three years from 1985 to 1987 rose from 14,094,688,428 US\$, to 26,336,617,864 US\$ and on to 36,658,108,169 US\$ respectively, and after Doi Moi in 1986, GDP was almost double that of the previous year (www.Worldbank.org 2014a). After that, the Vietnamese economy gradually and stably increased, and in 2013 the country's GDP was 171,391,820,360 US\$, almost seven times that in 1986, and high enough to rank Vietnam as a lower-middle income country (www.worldbank.org 2014a). Vietnam's poverty rate has also dropped, from almost 60% in the 1990s, to under 10% today (www.worldbank.org 2014b). However, there is a paradox with respect to Vietnamese Government policies, for on the one hand there is a fear of losing a grip on the ideology of the regime, while on the other hand, the Government wants to open-up and compete on the world stage (Nguyen-Vo 2008).

In the meantime, the older generation's opinion of K-pop is relatively negative. In one online Vietnamese newspaper, a mother revealed her concerns about her children, who are fanatical fans of K-pop:

"If there is any information about a band, or a Korean singer has plans to perform in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh city, there will be an extremely strong undercurrent of excitement among young people and children, who will use any method to get a ticket to see their idols. Soon, one Korean girl band, 2NE1, will perform in Hanoi, and my daughter has asked for a ticket. When the performance comes closer to the actual date, her attitude and determination will go as far as threatening to quit school if she cannot see the band. I asked a lot of students waiting outside the Korean show, "Why

do you love K-pop bands like this". One fan said, "If I can get to Korea once, I will die without regret. For me Korea is paradise." For me, this is painful to hear; my national pride is hurt so much". (Accessed June 12 www.vietbao.vn 2013)

In response to what the older generation has expressed, as above, young people consuming K-pop have also expressed their views as to why they like K-pop so much. The main reason is that the nation's own pop music is not attractive enough for them, and they feel they are living in a time in which they want to open space on the internet and have more choice; to choose the most suitable music for their tastes. As one fan said:

"The problem is when Hallyu wave develops everywhere in the world, no one will have a negative thought about that... No country has published a critical article about Hallyu wave negatively affecting young people. But why, in Vietnam, so they criticize? The Vietnamese perspective on Korea is too negative... On many pages of the 'Vietsub' online website opened by young Vietnamese, you can see that, besides Korean movies, drama and music, they also have zone for Japanese, Thai, Chinese, US and UK films and music. The fact is that youth-led Korean music or the Korean style is not superficial; the young people want something new, they want to break out of the old ways, to learn about cultures outside... In fact, people now have a new concept called the 'global citizen', due to the development of the internet, and the development of new cultures, especially Hallyu wave and Korean Wave..." (Interview with Thao, female, born in 1988, a fan of St.319 2014).

"I am a K-pop fan, a fan of 2NE1, Big Bang and YG Entertainment... Did you ever find out why your daughters love them so much? 1. South Korea's entertainment industry is developing very much! It is affecting not only Vietnam, but the entire world. Eastern cultures have little in common; they catch trends and audience tastes and of course they have won sympathy, 2. The entertainment industry in our country is not competitive; please look and compare... I am a fan and according to you and many other people, I am a "crazy fan"! I'm prepared to go to Ho Chi Minh City to see Big Bang, the band I long to see even once in my lifetime... You should ask yourself first: 'Why do Vietnamese singers not attract young people?' It is your responsibility to answer this. For me, the phrase 'meet one day, die satisfies', is not about living and dying, but really means: In this life, we must see the people who we have a lot of feelings for..." (Ziu's Facebook-female-born in 1992-a dancer of YG Lovers Crew 2012).

The mother of Ziu, a dancer from YG Lovers Crew, said:

“I do not know about Korean music. She (her daughter dances for the YG lovers Crew) said that this dance (K-pop dance) gathers all people together. I think it is her skill area, so I have no idea at all. I feel comfortable with her dancing with friends and performing at shows...she has studied hard at school. From primary school to high school, she was always a good student and participated in many school activities, and now is a student of the University of Industrial Fine Art. She has also participated in school activities. She has a good personality and is dynamic, so when she dances in a group, I let her go” (Interview with Pham Minh Chau - born in 1957; a female retired worker - in 2013).

Therefore, in the minds of young Vietnamese, they consume cultural products mainly according to their own tastes, regardless of the products' nationalities. Moreover, the cultural tastes which the young people are living and experiencing have changed to reflect the advanced standards of living and cultural modernity they are experiencing. Before Doi Moi, it was only propaganda music that dominated the Vietnamese music scene; however, now young people are concerned with the quality of cultural products, such as their refinement, creativity, individuality and diversity. Therefore, Vietnamese nationalism has surged, suggesting an alternative globalization process is developing among the younger generation in terms of its identity.

The globalization of media and popular culture can be connected to national and regional concepts. As argued by Featherstone and Robertson, globalization can be a good motivation for local people to rediscover their local identity, which has been eroded due to Western- modernization over recent decades (Featherstone 1993; Robertson 1995). So, instead of considering globalization (which is now both from the West and the East) as a threat to Vietnamese national culture, the globalization of K-pop in this sense may be considered a process that enhances the idea of valuing national or local culture, due to its force and pressure in terms of the nation's musical development. In this sense, Vietnamese young people's reproduction of K-pop cover videos has given to them a stronger hold over their nationhood. There is a strong motivation among the young that they need to reformulate, rebuilt from a sense of being new Vietnamese from both US/UK-pop contents and K-pop contents borrow and remake it into a new form of Vietnamese pop music.

3.3 Asianization: Consumption and Reproduction

In this section, I will show how K-pop cover music has expanded the range of identities people use to think of themselves beyond the nation. In my view, this practice does not simply represent resistance to the state, but also the fact that international dance contests and the globally available YouTube channel have become unprecedentedly available in Vietnam, providing a ways for young Vietnamese people to break-out and become part of the globalized world. This development needs to be looked at from the perspective of technology and youth culture.

The term “Asianization” was coined by Iwabuchi in 2002, and the terms “Asian values” and “Asia sentiments” by Chua in 2004, as a means to counter to Western hegemony and Western cultural influences in Asian societies. Moreover, Asianization represents the new flows of cultural products within the East Asian region. The growing trans-Asian cultural flow that has emerged since the 1990s, and the alliances developed within it, have decentered or reversed, and recentered the previous direction of globalization (Iwabuchi 2002). After the drama of the Asian economic crisis, there was an Asian economic miracle, and since then, an emergence of popular Asianization and Asian dialogues whose main feature has not been Asia values or traditional culture, but capitalist popular culture. However, I borrow the term “Asianization” to highlight that the reproduction created by young Vietnamese people is not only to be a part of Asia and learn from role Korean role models while consuming Korean cultural flows, or to help shape the idea that Asians are living in the same, imagined transnational space but to accumulate and strengthen their own cultural capitals. Although it is not a new trend, it should be recognized as a different type of global flow, one in which “Asianness” is emphasized, and one that is affected by the accelerated speed of the cultural movement through new technologies (Iwabuchi 2002).

The growing active circulation of popular culture has in many ways served to create a more unified Asia. Because it partly contributes to the creation of a collective regional cultural identity which can be understood as a new kind of consumer culture, constructing Asia as a unified group (Sung 2008). The rise of the regional circulation of popular culture in East Asia was once led by Japan; it set the industry standard and was

the major production and export center in the early 1990s, according to Iwabuchi (2002). This popular cultural flow showed new Asianization in contemporary Japan as the product of constructing cultural similarity with the rest of Asia through popular culture and urban consumption (2002). However, by the early 2000s, Japan faced increased competition from the aggressive export of similar products from South Korea, where the government had targeted the export of Korean popular culture as a new economic initiative, after the 1997 Asian regional financial crisis (Sung 2008).

In the Vietnamese case, because of the growth in advanced technologies, fast internet speeds and cable/satellite, since the 1990s (The Enemies of Internet n.d.), people in Vietnam, and especially the young, who are main internet users (around 95% are those between 15 and 24 and live in urban Vietnam; Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) access the internet (Cimigo 2011). I would argue that the internet has raised the speed of cultural flows and created new kinds of globalization. In this process of proliferation, consumers can enjoy increasingly diverse choices regarding what they watch or listen to.

“I and St.319 often listen to and enjoy both K-pop and US/UK-pop, because they are the two kinds of music which dominate the world music market...” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St..319 fan club 2014).

“The music taste of young people today is very diverse; there are many genres, many more international genres. Due to technology and the internet, the integration of cultural exchange is obvious. I like both, but I feel I am closer to South Korea music” (Interview with Tommy, male, born in 1991, a dance member of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

“Because each entertainment industry has its own strengths and weaknesses, when I listen to many genres and approach more music styles, I will select good points from each to learn from them. So Korean music and American music also affect my lifestyle, but I see this as no problem; I feel comfortable because when I change, it is merely make-up, such as a way of speaking. Of course, when I meet older people, my communication is still pure Vietnamese, so I think it does not affect me so much, just a little bit of my style and manner” (Interview with Zoie, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of St.319 2014).

I also argue that Korean cultural products are closer in a style sense to Vietnamese young people rather than Western products. Straubhaar proposed that

audiences are becoming more comfortable with receiving products from countries they share proximate cultures with instead of merely importing pure characterization of domain popular culture from Western countries (1991). To continue with this idea, Iwabuchi has provided the term “coevalness” (2002: 154), suggesting that non-Western feel it is impossible to catch up with Western US led cultural domination, due to the development gaps of politics, economics, technologies and culture. In a similar case, Straubhaar (1991: 56) found that the audience’s search for “cultural promixity” in television programs reveals “a preference first for national material, and, when they that cannot be filled in certain genres, a tendency to look next to regional productions...” Rather than copy the US style directly; therefore, young Vietnamese people have chosen to copy K-pop - which has some of the US elements - to bridge the gaps:

“I think our style is more American than K-pop. When we do K-pop covers, we think we are more American. I started with Hip Hop, but the YG Lovers started with K-pop, and in this way K-pop represents Asia. Actually, YG artists write the music, and it is based on R&B and jazz, but to be as good as Americans I think there is a long way to go. Maybe because they are Asian groups who like Hip Hop and the American style, bans such as Big Bang and 2NE1 are like role model dance groups for us. They are also Asian, but they love the American style” (Interview with Nhat-Anh, male, born in 1991, the leader of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

The beneficial aspects of K-pop in Vietnamese context is not merely found in the common, historical experience of the non-West and in traditional values. K-pop that features contemporary urban culture in South Korea is also thought to present a new possibility for promoting cultural dialogue between young Koreans and young Vietnamese consumers. Through the K-pop cover format, it can be seen that Vietnamese youth are encouraged to experience cultural resonance and immediacy. Vietnamese consumers used to enjoy good quality music products from America, but recently have done so from South Korea. The probable reason for is that K-pop is a skillful hybridization of Western culture and Japanese popular culture (Lee 2013). However, this form of pop culture has recently been indigenized in Vietnam, to create V-pop, and to attain a higher quality than in the current, local pop scene.

Moreover, the style, fashion and dance produced by Korean artists are also easier for young Vietnamese people to adapt to during their everyday lives, meaning

they can copy the style. The value of K-pop does not necessarily lie in the distinctive singing ability of the artists but the closing of the gap between professionals and amateurs, which is different from the Western pop system. Instead of being a dominant cultural form (like American popular culture), K-pop and its entertainment industry “have tried to exploit and produce [a] desire among the people to be members of the middle class in a modern capitalist society” (Iwabuchi 2002:103).

“...if you watch Korean music...it is very nice, very teenage; well-suited to the song content. US music has a very strong choreography. US artists can sing and dance Hip Hop perfectly, and it is also very physical. But here, K-pop is gentle dance; it is very close to young people, and even if people do not know how to dance, they still can follow the acts. The K-pop videos are very easy to cover, because they have dance clips, to guide the fans; usually just a one shot clip and no edition, meaning one can track the movement very easily” (Interview with Nhat-Anh, male, born in 1991, the leader of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

“If one watched lots of videos of our group and compared them with other cover dance groups, you would see that each group, each person, each local community, each different country represents this form of dance in different ways... I feel is very interesting because the culture of Asia is already developing, spreading to the world” (Interview with Zoie, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of St.319 2014).

“I myself prefer American to the South Korean style. Actually, the music that originates from South Korea is also partly influenced by American music, because America is at the forefront of the genre. There are quite a lot of young people who like to listen to US/UK music, but also like to dance to K-pop acts such as my own group (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

In developing K-pop, the Korean entertainment industry itself also had to emulate and appropriate American pop contents (Shim 2006). The popularity of Korean pop culture has to do with the emergence of a new global consumer group, which “chooses” its cultures based on individual preferences and orientations, rather than nationality. Vietnamese people’s openness and motivation to accept foreign cultures, through the development of fan clubs, and their motivation to be a part of this global society, have made Vietnam one of the biggest importers of Korean products. Being involved in this circulation, Vietnam also has some potential to be one of providers of future Asian cultural flows.

Indeed, the export of Korean popular culture to other parts of Asia is interlinked with that of Korean consumer commodities and department stores. The clothing, hairstyles and attitudes of highly “Westernized” Asian celebrities, are much more stimulating to Asian viewers than those of American stars (Iwabuchi 2002: 104). What they embody is neither “American” nor “traditional Asian”, but something new in between. The specificities or authenticity of local cultures are to be found “a posteriori not a priori, according to local consequences not local origins” (Miller 1992: 181). Young Vietnamese people’s freedom of choice; to receive global cultural flows, coexists with the unambiguously centralized control of the production and distribution system. While most consumers do not personally feel the global forces that structure their everyday lives, these forces are nonetheless structurally and analytically real.

“Young Vietnamese males also follow the Korean style (fashions and manner), because they know that girls like Korean men, so they also want to create an image similar to South Korean men; to become more beautiful in the eyes of the girls. I have learned a lot from Korean culture, such as the influence of Korean art; I then learn how to demonstrate my own way, dress style and change of my appearance” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

“The style of group members is also affected very much by South Korea. From hair and dress to clothes. Every day, they dress in a comfortable style, a Hip Hop style” (Interview with Tommy, male, born in 1991, a dance member of YG Lovers Crew 2014).

“For example, Korean culture is a very respectful, so that when we see the idols, they are very friendly. Young people are learning from them to be more sociable and more polite. We learn a lot from their culture; we are learning from the hard work of the Korean artists. They work hard, very hard, and keep their image fairly regulated and clear. They do not have so many scandals, such as in the US or among Western European artists” (Interview with Ziu, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of YGLC 2013).

Directly copied through observation, Korean songs, dance, hairstyles and clothing have become popular among young people in Vietnam; they have even changed their names to foreign sounding English and Korean names. For example, some group members have Korean names, such as “Min” from St.319 and “Sal Park” from YGLC, while others have English names, such as “Zoie” and “Ethan” from St.319, and “Tommy” and “Jemmy Lucas” from YGLC. However, this is no different from the way Koreans have copied Western music and technology, and Japanese styles. . The

imitation of Korean pop among the young Vietnamese can be considered a national hybrid identity, highlighting the fact that skillful hybridization is not unique to South Korea, as in the past, but is quite common among subordinated nations, including Vietnam (see Appadurai 1996). Similarly, Saeki Keishi (1998:26 cited in Iwabuchi 2002) argued that “Asian modernity should not be regarded as a stage of the teleological civilization evolution. It might be characterized by the greediness to absorb anything universal, irrespective of its origin, in a twinkling and to assimilate and hybridize various foreign things with its own “culture” according to the yardstick of convenience and pleasure.”

“I and St.319 often listen to K-pop and US/UK-pop, because these two kinds of music dominate the world music market. Korean music affects young people more because of the dress style and hairstyles; the acting and eye-catching choreography, so it is able to influence and attract the young” (Interview with Kevin, male, born in 1996, the leader of St.319 fan club 2014).

“About our dance members’ nicknames; in fact we did not use English at the very beginning, but foreign YT users abroad commented that if we used Vietnamese names, it would be difficult for them to remember, because many of us have very long names with tones. As a result, later we decided to use English names” (Interview with Zoie, female, born in 1992, a dance leader of St.319 2014).

The stress on involvement in the local production process of Vietnamese young people indicates that the Vietnamese pop industry is trying to engage with both the global (Western and Asia) and local media industry. Cultural borrowing, appropriation, hybridization and indigenization are quite common practices within global cultural flows everywhere, as a tool for development. They even represent a good sign for cultural industries among developing countries such as Vietnam; to develop its own cultural industry by borrowing exotic elements and to emerge in the music and entertainment world. According to Iwabuchi’s argument in 2002 “at least from a marketing perspective, seems to realize that Japan is not the final stop of transnational cultural flows in Asian countries”, because “the Japanese know-how of producing pop idols is applicable to other Asian countries” (2002: 99).

3.4 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, before K-pop, there were a lot of foreign music influences in Vietnam, those which entered the Vietnamese popular music scene based on different colors over various historical periods. Vietnamese popular music was originally produced during the French colonial period. During the Vietnam War, the most popular form of music was 'red music' in the North, while after the war, Hai Ngoai music came back to the motherland in the form of 'green' and 'yellow' music. Foreign music from the US/UK and Hong Kong, with more modern and youthful melodies, also entered Vietnam. After Doi Moi in Vietnam, people were also looking for more entertaining music/pop materials, and government policies had to adjust to satisfy people's needs. It is these conditions that allowed 'green music' to develop, the music of the young people.

It should also be noted here that what the recent popularity of K-pop in Vietnam suggests; however, not only due to the existence of structural diversity, but also due to the interactivity and creativity of young Vietnamese people, through their consumption of popular culture. K-pop dance (Asianization/Koreanization) among the young Vietnamese is one examples of how contemporary Vietnam wishes to be seen as modern, within Asia and across the world.