

H-Pop as the Face of a New Taiwan

By Tyler Nickerson

Humanities and Arts Course Sequence:

CN2543 Intermediate Chinese III B-Term 2013

CN2544 Intermediate Chinese IV C-Term 2014

CN3541 Advanced Intermediate Chinese I D-Term 2014

HI3343 Topics in Asian History B-Term 2014

HU3900 Inquiry Seminar: Asian History D-Term 2015

Presented to: Haihong Li

Department of Humanities & Arts

D-Term 2015

HUA3900

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The Humanities & Arts Requirement

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Worcester, Massachusetts

An Introduction

Ever since its formation during the early twentieth century, the Democratic region of Taiwan has struggled to establish its national identity. Long acting a “melting pot” of various cultures, Taiwan has pulled influence from Japan, South Korea, and the United States to create a fragmented culture that is hardly unique, making it near impossible for the Taiwanese population to share a national vision. That is, with the exception of music. Today, Taiwanese pop and hip-hop musicians are finding new and innovative ways to mix the traditional music of ancient China with the modern sounds of the West. However, despite Taiwan’s mix of cultures and values, these musicians are the first to infuse these cultures into a new form of music that is strictly unique to Taiwan. Through this “hybridized” sound, Taiwanese pop musicians are rapidly becoming a rising force that have the potential to drive Taiwanese nationalism. This force can be directly attributed to Taiwan’s largely Western culture, as well as the immense influence these musicians exert on the Taiwanese and Chinese youth. In this paper, the implications of this influence will be explored, beginning with a careful analysis of the nationalistic qualities of this new form of music, then examining the infiltration of Western music into Taiwan via Japanese and Korean influence. Lastly, the influence of these musicians will be addressed, leading to speculation as to what the outcome of this new wave of C-pop may be and how, and if, this new sound may be able to act as the face of Taiwanese nationalism.

H-Pop as a National Music

In order to understand the underlying nationalism of the Taiwanese music scene, it is important to first understand the inherent relationship between nationalism and music. Nationalism is conveyed through music via a specific medium, a medium referred to as national music. Almost as dated as music itself, the concept of national music has long been used to describe music that is distinctly specific to a certain nation or group of individuals. One of

the more artistic forms of nationalism, national music seldomly exists outside the nation in which it was created, and is often grouped under a genre entirely of its own. For example, Koreans perform the pop variation *trot*, while Germans breed a form of folk music described as *volksmusik*. In a 1909 paper published in *The North American Review*, American music critic Reginald De Koven addressed these cultural artifacts. In an effort to provide a much more concrete definition of national music, De Koven refers to national music as “music which, appertaining to a nation or tribe whose individual emotions and passions it expresses, exhibits certain peculiarities more or less characteristic, which distinguish it from the music of any other nation or tribe.”¹ This form of music often acts as a strong identifier for nations, and is often interpreted by bordering nations as a signifier of national identity. An example of the implications of national music can be seen in Korea, where the South Koreans would transmit trot music across the border promote South Korean nationhood, claiming the music acted as a “powerful psychological weapon targeting the oppressed in the North.”² In Taiwan, national music did not exist for many years. This is primarily due to the multitude of cultures that cropped up in Taiwan during the majority of the twentieth century, cultures which derived themselves primarily from Taiwan’s own turbulent history. However, as we will discuss, Taiwanese artists have spent the past decade brewing a new form of “hybridized” Taiwanese music. This music, which we will refer to as h-pop (hybridized pop), combines the instruments of traditional China with the electro-pop elements of the modern West.

H-pop falls under two categories. First and foremost, h-pop falls under De Koven’s definition of national music. Not coincidentally, the leaders in this wave of h-pop are descendants of Taiwan, suggesting that h-pop is a Taiwanese invention. Additionally, many artists of the genre, as well as their respective music critics, address their personal belief that this style of music has never been attempted before.³⁴ The second category under which

¹Koven, Reginald De. "Nationalism in Music." *The North American Review* 189.640 (1909): 386-96. JSTOR. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

²"Trot Music Is S.Korea’s Best Propaganda Weapon." *The Chosun Ilbo*. N.p., 30 Dec. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

³Interview by Lorraine Hahn and Leehom Wang. *Talk Asia*. CNN. 16 June 2006. Television. Transcript.

⁴Chow, Yiu Fai, and Jeroen De Kloet. "Blowing in the China Wind: Engagements with Chineseness in

this new genre falls is referred to as expressive isomorphism. According to Israeli educator Motti Regev, expressive isomorphism can be described as “the process through which national uniqueness is standardized so that expressive culture of various different nations, or of prominent social sectors within them, comes to consist of similar expressive forms and stylistic elements.”⁵ Although similar to the concept of national music, expressive isomorphism focuses on the influence of national music rather than its inherent uniqueness. Taiwan in particular fits this category very well, on the account that China has reportedly followed Taiwanese music trends for the past several years, thus proving the influence of such music.⁶ Motti also mentions how, in addition to the prevalence of expressive isomorphism in modern society, recent variations of national music have taken on a much more electronic pop feel, as opposed to the pseudo-classical national music of previous years:

“Nationhood has been re-calibrated to the electric, electronic and amplified aesthetic of pop-rock sonic idioms. National pop-rock has become a prevalent expression of cultural uniqueness, for some sectors of national societies, if not for the nation at large”⁷

This too fits the case of Taiwan, due to the primary electronic/pop/hip-hop influences found in much of its modern music. Motti uses the case of culture-specific hip-hop artists to further illustrate this idea of modern nationalist music, claiming how hip-hop in France promotes an image of “Frenchness”, while hip-hop among African Americans promotes the image of “Blackness”.⁸ Yet, it is interesting to note that this does not seem to be the case for Taiwan, for there does not seem to be a widespread promotion of “Taiwanese-ness” through any musical channel. As mentioned earlier, this is most likely due to the lack of national

Hong Kong’s Music Videos." *Visual Anthropology* 24.1-2 (2010): 68. Web.

⁵Regev, M. "Pop-Rock Music as Expressive Isomorphism: Blurring the National, the Exotic, and the Cosmopolitan in Popular Music." *American Behavioral Scientist* 20.10 (2011): 3. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

⁶Moskowitz, Marc L. "Mandopop Under Siege." *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations*. Honolulu: U of Hawai’i, 2010. 105. Print.

⁷Regev, Motti. "Ethno-National Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism Made from Within." *Cultural Sociology* 1.3 (2007): 317-41. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

⁸Regev, M. "Pop-Rock Music as Expressive Isomorphism: Blurring the National, the Exotic, and the Cosmopolitan in Popular Music." *American Behavioral Scientist* 20.10 (2011): 10-11. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.

identity that currently exists in the region. A byproduct of Taiwanese history, this cultural fragmentation currently acts as the leading factor barring Taiwan from self-identifying, and must be addressed by the Taiwanese music industry moving forward. However, before a solution to can be proposed to resolve this issue, the source of the issue must addressed. In the next section, we will see exactly how this fragmentation occurred by exploring the entry of Western music into Taiwan. This is to be done to provide a framework by which to asses the difficulties surrounding the advocacy of h-pop, as well as to analyze the foundations of h-pop and how Western music played into its development.

The Musical Westernization of Taiwan

Since its formation in the early twentieth-century, Taiwan has become known for its unique mixture of cultural practices and artifacts. Pulling influence from its Asian neighbors, Taiwan incorporates everything from Japanese manga to American rap into its popular culture.⁹ ¹⁰ In order to discover the origins of h-pop, as well as why its origins also act as a hinderance to its nationalist uses, we must turn to the rich cultural history that produced this slur of cultural influences. In particular, we are to examine the musical aspects of Taiwan's history. Although the influx of Western music in Taiwan did not spawn nationalistic tendencies for much of the twentieth century, it created the foundation on which those tendencies could be built. As author Bi-juan Chen's wrote in his 1995 book *Taiwan Xinyinyueshi*, or *A History of New Music in Taiwan*, Western music first entered Taiwan via three distinct groups: Christian missionaries, Japanese educators, and Taiwanese musicians.¹¹ In this section, we will address each group individually, in order to distinguish the origins of h-pop as a genre, as well as to to notice the widespread cultural implications these foreign entities had on the

⁹Tseng, Chi-Shoung, and Chin Chia Tsai. "The Exclusion and Inclusion of Japanese Manga in Taiwan: A Historic Narratology of Culture Image Expression." *The Global Studies Journal* 3.1 (2010): 183-202. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

¹⁰Woodman, Georg. "Popular Culture." *Cultural Shock-taiwan: Cow Mentality, Rubber Slipper Fashion in Binlang Country*. S.l.: Xlibris, 2010. 106. Print.

¹¹Chen, Bi-juan. *Taiwan Xinyinyueshi*. N.p.: Leyun Publishing House, 1995. 47-49. Print.

Taiwanese people.

Missionaries In Taiwan

Christian missionaries were the first to reach the Taiwanese mainland, arriving alongside the Spanish and Dutch during the seventeenth century. During that time, the island was still referred to as Formosa, and music was used as a tool to preach and maintain a religious following. However, although the missionaries provided one of Taiwan's first introductions to Western sound, the Christian music performed by these missionaries did not have very large cultural implications at the time. Author Hui-Shan Chen attributes this limited spread to two causes:

*"Firstly, there was not enough time for a foreign civilized culture to take root on the island. Twenty years after they expelled the Spanish, the Dutch themselves were also forced to leave, and their departure in 1662, resulted in the nearly complete cessation of Western influence on local communities. Secondly, the new regime, the Han Chinese government led by Ming Dynasty loyalist Koxinga... brought a policy of exclusion into practice in which Western culture, including music, was suppressed."*¹²

What Chen fails to address is the fact that, although the influence of the Christian missionaries may not have been widespread, their presence in Taiwan was a crucial turning point in the island's Westernization. The arrival of missionaries in the region introduced the population to Western values, allowing the Taiwanese to grow open to Western thought. In 1858, the Treaty of Tientsin once again allowed missionary activity in Taiwan. Sparking the "birth of new music" in Taiwan, the spread of Western music saw a significant increase during this time. New music curriculums teaching Western theory began to appear in schools, and

¹²Chen, Hui-Shan. "CHANGING TENDENCY OF WESTERN MUSIC TRADITION IN TAIWAN." *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56.3 (2009): 291. JSTOR. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

Western worship hymns and songs began to regain popularity in churches.¹³ Yet despite the resurgence of religious music, it was not until the Japanese occupation of 1895 that additional genres of Western music began to appear in Taiwan.

The Japanese Occupation (1895 - 1945)

In 1895, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed, a treaty which both ended the First Sino-Japanese War and ceded the Taiwanese strait to the Japanese. Thus began a fifty year occupation of the island, ending in 1945. During this time, immigrant educators and scholars began to infiltrate the region, spreading Japanese teachings and curriculums. In the years following up to the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, many Japanese officials had traveled to the United States and Europe to study foreign teaching practices. In particular, the Japanese drew inspiration from the teaching methodologies surrounding Western music education and soon incorporated many of those methodologies into the education reforms of the Meiji period (1868 - 1912).¹⁴ The resulting music curriculums seemed to reflect the values of modern h-pop, mixing Western musical styles with traditions Japanese instruments. As described by author Angela Lee:

*"The song books were not only based on Western folk song melodies; the compilers also adapted traditional Japanese songs, Western folk song melodies with Japanese poetry, and new songs based on traditional Japanese instruments: the koto (zither) and shakuhachi (end-blown flute)."*¹⁵

This brand of music education had already become a customary practice in Japan, started during the 1870s. As a result, many of Taiwan's Japanese musicians were previously educated under this new system and thus played and taught music of Western influence. In 1946,

¹³Chen, Hui-Shan. "CHANGING TENDENCY OF WESTERN MUSIC TRADITION IN TAIWAN." *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56.3 (2009): 291. JSTOR. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

¹⁴Lee, Angela Hao-Chun. "The Influence of Japanese Music Education in Taiwan during the Japanese Protectorate." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 23.2 (2002): 108-116. JSTOR. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

¹⁵Ibid.

only a year after the Japanese left Taiwan, Western music departments began to appear in Taiwanese schools. In addition, official music textbooks were published and programs were established to allow gifted music students to study overseas.¹⁶

Perhaps one of the largest contributing factors to the development of h-pop, the Japanese occupation was the first influx of foreign music to propose the hybridization of sounds across cultures. However, during this time, musical hybridization did not stir nationalism among the Taiwanese communities as it does today. The reason for this is rather simple. The Japanese, as well as Taiwan's other influencers, used their own breed of nationalism to promote a national identity that was not Taiwanese. For example, many of the songs described above used lyrics that intentionally provoked Japanese nationalism among the Taiwanese youth. The Japanese often promoted songs corresponding to Japanese holidays or traditional Japanese anthems, such as the "Empire Day" hymn:

"The Land of the Rising Sun is the best country in the world.

The main pillar of the country is the Emperor.

*We revere the Imperial Reign with happiness."*¹⁷

This trend in national music, as well as the Japanese oppression of Taiwanese culture, discouraged the Taiwanese from pursuing their own national identity. As a result, Taiwanese showed no signs of nationalist pride. This changed in 1945, when the Japanese returned Taiwan to China, liberating the Taiwanese and allowing their cultures to grow and expand. As we will see next, after the Korean War began, the increased Western presence in the area only furthered the spread of Western music in the area. For the first time, Western music was allowed to thrive in Taiwan without moderation or justification, resulting in trends of association similar to those seen among the Taiwanese youth today.

¹⁶Chen, Hui-Shan. "CHANGING TENDENCY OF WESTERN MUSIC TRADITION IN TAIWAN." *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56.3 (2009): 292-293. JSTOR. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

¹⁷Chao, Hui-Hsuan. "MUSICAL TAIWAN UNDER JAPANESE COLONIAL RULE: A HISTORICAL AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION." Diss. U of Michigan, 2009. Print.

Cold-War Era Taiwan

As Asia entered the Cold War Era, Taiwan began to receive its musical influences not from bordering nations, but from the West directly. In 1950, the Korean War broke out between the Northern and Southern states, and suddenly East Asia began to see a tremendous influx of American soldiers. It is during this time that Taiwanese musicians, a product of both the Japanese occupation and the ongoing war, began to emerge. During the short-lived conflict in Korea, both Taiwan and South Korea welcomed their Western visitors with open arms. 'US camp show pop' became popular in Korean war camps, where Korean musicians would learn Western music to perform for the soldiers. In Taiwan, musicians would play at clubs that catered to Western visitors and businessmen.¹⁸ Money-driven and raised on Japanese musical ideologies, these groups of musicians set out to appeal to select audiences in order to ensure popularity, as well as secure a steady income. As a result, Western music became a popular genre within Taiwanese musical communities.

Similar to today, Western music also became popular among the Taiwanese youth. According to Hyunjoon & Tung-hung, the popularity of this new *liuxingyinyue* (literally 'hit-music') could be attributed with its tendency to reflect the current modern sounds of Taiwan.

*“Anglophone music was the most favored form of music by the urban youngsters because its rhythms resonated with the lively urban lifestyles of consumption, and its musical performances symbolized the modernized soundscape of Taiwan that proliferated across many cities in the US in popular music since the mid-1950s.”*¹⁹

In addition, hybridized Taiwanese music began to emerge as well, mixing Japanese songs with Taiwanese lyrics and creating the foundation for the cross-cultural music seen in Taiwan today.²⁰ However, the resurgence of Western music was fairly limited during its time in

¹⁸Hyunjoon, Shin, and Ho Tung-Hung. "Translation of 'America' during the Early Cold War Period: A Comparative Study on the History of Popular Music in South Korea and Taiwan." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 10.1 (2009): 89-94. Web. 7 Apr. 2015.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

Taiwan. Following the political uprisings surrounding 1947's February 28th Incident, the KMT had enforced a strict martial law and cultural censorship. The KMT suppressed freedom of speech, deeming all suspicious individuals as 'subversive' and placing them under arrest.

Similar to the case with the Japanese occupation, Taiwan did not see any rise in nationalism or the development of h-pop during this time. In fact, nationalism was still practically nonexistent in Taiwan. In this particular instance, the direct influx of Western music proved to be too-short lived to assimilate with the culture and was restricted to Japanese/Taiwanese and Chinese/Taiwanese hybridizations. Additionally, Taiwan's population still consisted of primarily Han Chinese and Japanese immigrants, resulting in few musical artists who identified with the modern Taiwanese identity. Taiwan's identity vulnerabilities were exploited at every opportunity by the Chinese in an effort to ensure that Taiwan remained under their control. A solidified identity would only help Taiwan's chances of achieving independence. These efforts evolved from the newly developed relations between Taiwan and the U.S. following the Korean War, after the U.S. began supplying Taiwan with arms.²¹ In order for Taiwanese nationality to even begin to flourish, a new generation of Taiwanese would need to emerge. This new generation, which we will refer to as *Generation-T*, would need to consist of individuals who identified and were raised as Taiwanese, as opposed to Chinese or Japanese. As we will see in the next section, the h-pop movement was produced by the musical artists of this generation. We will also take into account how the westernization of Taiwan contributed to the development of the h-pop performed by these artists.

H-Pop and Generation-T

Between the years 1970 and 1999, Taiwan saw the rise of *Generation-T*, a generation of Taiwanese youth who were raised to identify as Taiwanese as opposed to the nationalities of

²¹Ong, Russell. *China's Security Interests in the Post-Cold War Era*. Richmond: Curzon, 2002. 106-08. Print.

their ancestors.²² From this generation, a number of Taiwan's most successful h-pop artists grew. For the purposes of this paper, we will examine in detail the case studies of Chang Hui-Mei (A-mei) and Wang Leehom. Each a byproduct of the Taiwanese Westernization of the twentieth century, these two musicians have made played a prominent role in defining Taiwanese identity and have the potential to initiate a surge of Taiwanese nationalism that the region has not seen since its beginnings. Chang was selected due to her involvement in politics surrounding Taiwanese nationalism, while Wang was selected due to his pseudo-nationalist lyrics. In this section, we will look at how each artist is in some way a member of *Generation-T*, while also examining how each embraces nationalist ideologies. In the next section, we will discuss how this music may provide a sense of identity for the Taiwanese community. On a side note, it should be taken into account that in 1987, only years before these h-pop artists began to enter the mainstream, KMT martial law was lifted in Taiwan.²³ Most likely, without the lifting of these laws, these artists would have not reached the level of notoriety that they did. In fact, the more plausible case is that their musical stylings would have been hastily oppressed or banned, and all efforts to enter the Taiwanese mainstream would have been abandoned. With this said, we can begin to assess these artists.

A-mei

One of the most prominent case studies in regards to the influence of *Generation-T* on the development of h-pop is that of Chang Hui-Mei. Known professionally as A-mei, Chang was born and raised in the eastern Taiwan county of Taitung as a member of the aborigine Puyuma clan. The daughter of a clan chief, Chang was born a tribal princess and spent much of her childhood surrounded by the ethnic music and chants of the Puyuma people.²⁴ In interviews, Chang has claimed that during her childhood, she spent much of her time

²²Corcuff, Stéphane. "Taiwan's 'Mainlanders': New Taiwanese?" *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002. 186. Print.

²³Huang, Tai-lin. "White Terror Exhibit Unveils Part of the Truth." *Taipei Times*. N.p., 20 May 2005. Web. 09 Apr. 2015.

²⁴Beech, Hannah. "Asian Heroes - Amei: Both Sides Now." *TIME*. N.p., 29 Apr. 2002. Web. 07 May 2015.

listening to the English songs that would play on the television. These claims demonstrate just how far Taiwan's westernization had reached, illustrating a case in which the aborigine tribes of the region were able to adopt western music via the use of modern technology. Chang drew upon this principle, hybridizing the sounds she heard on the television with the sounds of her tribe to create her own variation of the h-pop genre. One of her most notable songs from this category is her 1996 hit, "Sisters".²⁵ Since then, Chang has exerted tremendous influence over her fans and currently maintains a large following of listeners from both Taiwan and China. In 2015, tickets to her Taipei show of ten thousand guests sold out in just twelve minutes.²⁶

However, Chang's distinguishing feature stems from her nationalist devotion to her village. Chang has long been a proud representative of the Puyuma people, demonstrating the nationalist mindset often found in members of *Generation-T*. The artist demonstrated this nationalism in 2014, when she returned home to hold a concert for her county in a rice field. At the event, she stated that "Taitung is very beautiful, and I will tell the world proudly and confidently that I'm from Taitung."²⁷ Yet, although this nationalism would make it very easy for Chang to embrace h-pop's nationalist connotations, such advocacy would also prove to be extremely risky. Due to the political tensions between mainland China and Taiwan regarding Taiwan's independence, any advocacy towards Taiwanese identity or independence would result in immediate action on China's part.

This became apparent following the inauguration of pro-independence Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian in 2000, where Chang had been asked to sing the Taiwanese national anthem.²⁸ Shortly after her performance, China deemed her an advocator for Taiwanese independence and banned her throughout the mainland, a ban that lasted for well over one

²⁵Beech, Hannah. "Asian Heroes - A-mei: Both Sides Now." *TIME*. N.p., 29 Apr. 2002. Web. 07 May 2015.

²⁶"A-mei Ticket Dystopia." *Pollstar*. N.p., 2 Feb. 2015. Web. 07 May 2015.

²⁷Cheng, Sabine, and Y. F. Low. "A-mei Performs in Taitung Rice Field." *Focus Taiwan*. N.p., 1 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 May 2015.

²⁸"The Muzzling of A-mei." *Newsweek*. N.p., 14 Jan. 2001. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

year.²⁹ Thus presented the largest hurdle in the emergence of h-pop as a nationalist medium. China has long counted on Taiwan's lack of a national identity in order to bar the region from independence, and if a h-pop artist were to provide the Taiwanese with a sense of self-identity, he or she would be banned in the country. If such a ban were to occur long-term, the ban would eventually result in the loss of album sales and half of the artist's target market. Such an event almost occurred during the ban of A-mei, in which student protestors resulted in the cancellation of one of Chang's shows, claiming that a pro-independence artist should not be making money in China.³⁰ Due to this fear, many artists keep out of politics surrounding the fight for Taiwanese independence and show reluctance regarding the advocacy of Taiwanese identity. Chang happens to be one of these artists, stating in a 2011 CNN interview:

*"I've never had any political preference. Throughout my musical life, or just my life in general, I've never felt the urge to be a political spokesperson. I only strive to do my job and, in doing so, I have to carry out my contract as a singer. To be honest, the [inaugural performance] had huge implications. I shouldered all the pressure and the rumors on my own, but trust me, professional artists don't want to complicate their lives."*³¹

Another artist who has since voiced a similar opinion is Jay Chou, who also carries a large fanbase in both Taiwan and mainland China.³² Yet, some artists still continue to incorporate nationalist qualities into their music despite these fears. As we will discover next, one of these artists happen to be the American-born Taiwanese artist Wang Leehom, who writes in advocacy for the blending of Eastern and Western cultures. Through his own unique h-

²⁹Chan, Jerry, and Gavin Phipps. "Mainland China Bans Taiwan's A-mei For Anthem Performance." *Billboard* 17 June 2000: 71. Web.

³⁰Bedford, Olwen, and Guangguo Huang. "Expanding Taiwanese Consciousness." *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy: The Social Psychology of Taiwan's 2004 Elections*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 99. Print.

³¹"Interview with Taiwanese Aboriginal Pop Star, A-mei." Interview by Anjali Rao and Hui-Mei Chang. *Talk Asia*. CNN. 18 May 2011. Television. Transcript.

³²Fung, Anthony Y. H. "Western Style, Chinese Pop: Jay Chou's Rap and Hip-Hop in China." *Asian Music* 39.1 (2007): 75. Web.

pop sub-genre which he refers to simply as “chinked out”, Wang promotes Asian nationalism through the encouragement and advocacy of Chinese and Taiwanese culture.

Wang Leehom

A unique case in the realm of h-pop, Wang Leehom was born and raised outside of Taiwan. Now notorious for his hybridized pop and hip-hop, Wang was born in Rochester, New York to two Taiwanese immigrants, both descendants of mainland China. Yet, although raised in the United States, Wang still falls under *Generation-T* due to his lack of association with his origins in mainland China. For years Wang chose to identify himself with the American identity. During an Oxford Union address, he addressed this matter, stating that, while often associating himself with Americans growing up, he could not escape the fact that he was still in fact part of Taiwanese minority in New York.³³

Unlike A-mei, Wang is unique in the sense that he was never influenced by westernized music of Taiwan, but rather was influenced by western music directly. In other words, he gained his knowledge of western artists by simply residing in the United States. In interviews, Wang has often named Stevie Wonder and Prince, among others, as the artists who have influenced him the most.³⁴ Also unique about Wang’s case is his inspiration to produce h-pop. While A-mei incorporated tribal elements into her music out of national pride, Wang introduced traditional Chinese instruments into his music out of pure interest in his heritage. The Society of Asian Music describes his motivation is that of “ someone who has returned to his ‘roots’ as opposed to a foreigner making music in China.”³⁵

Wang refers to his h-pop sub-genre as “chinked-out”. The first major release to demonstrate this new genre was 2004’s *Shangri-La*, which incorporated the tribal music and instruments of many ethnic groups residing in the remote regions of the Chinese mainland. Upon its release, *Shangri-La* sold over 2 million copies across Asia and was deemed one of the

³³Wang, Leehom. The Oxford Union. Oxford, England. 8 May 2015. Address.

³⁴Interview by Lorraine Hahn and Leehom Wang. *Talk Asia*. CNN. 16 June 2006. Television. Transcript.

³⁵Chen, Boxi. "The Expression of Chineseness and Americanness in Chinese Popular Music: A Comparison of ABC Pop Stars Wang Leehom and Vanness Wu." *Asian Music* 43.2 (2012): 71-87. Web.

top ten selling Mandarin albums of 2005.³⁶ Wang's follow-up "chinked-out" album, *Heroes of Earth*, sold even more than the previous album, selling over 3 million copies across Asia, thus further illustrating the vast popularity of Wang's h-pop variation. During an interview with CNN in 2006, Wang used *Shangri-La* to discuss this new style of music:

*"...the "chinked out" style is a school of hip hop- that's the way I like to think of it - that incorporates Chinese elements and sounds. Uh, I started it off in my last album called Shangri-La. And this album incorporated the music of ethnic minorities, in China, in Tibet, in Mongolia, Shenzhen. There's 50 some odd - some people say 54, 55 different ethnic minorities - tribal music. It's a - beautiful and original to Chinese culture."*³⁷

Through this music, Wang attempts to convey cross-cultural messages of unity and nationalism. In 2000, Wang released a remix of "Longde Zhuanren (Descendants of the Dragon)", a classic Taiwanese pop song originally written to "[express] frustration towards the U.S.'s decision to break diplomatic ties with the Republic of China":³⁸

*"In the ancient East there is a group of people
They're all descendants of the dragon
I grew dragon feet to be a descendant of the dragon
Black eyes, black hair, yellow skin.
Always and forever a descendant of the dragon."*³⁹

While primarily discussing the *waishengren* population, or the immigrant population from mainland China, Wang's rendition demonstrated his openness to singing about nationalist ideals. His reluctance to perform a song which advocates for Taiwanese nationalism instead

³⁶"Gold Disc Award Criteria." *IFPIHK*. N.p., 2005. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.

³⁷Interview by Lorraine Hahn and Leehom Wang. *Talk Asia*. CNN. 16 June 2006. Television. Transcript.

³⁸Lee, Lorin A. "Singing Sinophone: A Case Study of Teresa Teng, Leehom Wang, and Jay Chou." Thesis. University of Texas at Austin, 2012. Print.

³⁹Translated using Yandex.Translate by Tyler Nickerson

of Chinese nationalism is most likely derived from fears similar to A-mei's, regarding the loss in record sales. However, more recent lyrics seem to describe more Taiwanese ideals, such as the acceptance of Western culture. 2011's "Huo Li Quan Kai (Open Fire)" acts as a prime example in this regard:

*"You say Lady Gaga,
I say why should we fear her?
...do not bow down to her."*⁴⁰

One of the United States' most successful musical artists, Lady Gaga is used as a representation of Western music culture and thought. Wang uses Lady Gaga to encourage the listener to not be intimidated by the West, but rather recognize that the West should be accepted and assimilated with Chinese culture. Such a statement encapsulates Taiwanese identity, which draws upon the fact that Taiwan has historically accepted and merged Western music with its own culture. As a result, this verse is used to promote Taiwanese ideologies. As the song continues, Wang enters an English portion, where he addresses the recent surge in Taiwanese and Chinese pop musicians:

*"So many accusations
Of an Asian invasion
Here they come a pointing fingers at me.
...even if they blame us,
Try to frame us,
But nobody can shame us.
I'm a sing this next verse in Chinese."*

In this verse, Wang seems to be very self aware of Taiwan's current circumstances regarding the rise in h-pop and the popularization of western music in Asia. He deliberately uses the

⁴⁰Translated using Yandex.Translate and MDBG by Tyler Nickerson.

term “us” in order to imply national unity. While whether or not his implications lie in Chinese or Taiwanese unity is not entirely clear, it is hinted at that he is referring to all Asian communities as a whole, due to his mention of an “Asian invasion” at the beginning of the verse. Songs such as “Huo Li Quan Kai” not only demonstrate Wang’s self awareness, but also the pride he takes in his heritage. The closing line of “I’m a sing this next verse in Chinese” suggests that Wang wishes express his origins, not sacrificing himself to the English-driven pop music scene of Taiwan. As a result, it can be asserted that Wang, like A-mei, is a child of *Generation-T* and is indeed capable of advocating for Taiwanese nationalism.

The Future of H-Pop

In turning to the future of Taiwanese nationalism, it is difficult to fully asses the outcome of h-pop as nationalist genre. As we have seen, the h-pop genre can be classified as both national music and expressive isomorphism. H-pop distinguishes itself from other genres due to its unique mix of Eastern and Western lyrics, instruments, and styles. Much like Taiwan itself, Taiwanese musical artists act as melting pots, blending together these cultures to create a sound that is truly their own. It is for this reason that years of Japanese and Chinese immigrants did not mix these sounds in the same manner that modern musicians do. In order to be compelled to hybridize musical styles, one must be raised in a hybridized environment, a benefit which only those of *Generation-T* seemed to have. The Eastern side of the h-pop equation derives itself from those artists who were raised to identify with Chinese culture, while the Western side derives itself from the rise of Western music in Taiwan over the past several decades.

However, regardless as to whether this means h-pop fully distinguishes Taiwan from its Asian neighbors, it may not ever be allowed to gain full recognition throughout China as such a medium. As previously stated, China has relied on Taiwan’s identity crisis for years, and any proposed resolutions to that crisis will result in backlash against the entity

who suggested the solution. In the case of h-pop artists, the advocacy of Taiwan's identity through music would result in a nationwide ban in China and potentially neighboring regions, thus severely damaging the careers and reputations of those advocates.

In an ideal situation, Taiwanese artists would need to initiate a h-pop nationalist movement long enough to stir a full-bodied nationalist movement in Taiwan. After a small war, presumably with backing from the United States, Taiwan would become its own nation. It would be during this time that h-pop could further be used to solidify a national identity while the Taiwanese people learned to strive as an independent nation. However, such a situation is not only implausible, but relatively impossible given the current status of global foreign relations. Firstly, as mentioned, Taiwanese artists would very rarely ever put their careers at risk in the name of nationalism due to the aforementioned reasons. Even if a few did agree to such a substantial career shift, the chance that enough artists would join the movement to make a significant impact is almost nonexistent. Secondly, the U.S. would never agree to back a region that would put its current relations with China at risk. The United States currently relies too heavily on U.S.-China trade relations to enter a conflict with China. If trade with China were to stop, rations would begin to appear in the U.S. and inflation would occur, potentially leading to a second Great Depression. Thirdly, even if a war were to occur with China, the likelihood that the conflict would confirm Taiwan's independence is still very small. As a result, the possibility that h-pop emerges as a nationalist tool in the foreseeable future is relatively slim. In conclusion, it can be stated that, although h-pop may appear to be the face of a new Taiwan, there is no guarantee that its face will ever see the light of day.

References

- [1] "A-mei Ticket Dystopia." *Pollstar*. N.p., 2 Feb. 2015. Web. 07 May 2015.
- [2] "Gold Disc Award Criteria." *IFPIHK*. N.p., 2005. Web. 9 Apr. 2015.
- [3] "Interview with Taiwanese Aboriginal Pop Star, A-mei." Interview by Anjali Rao and Hui-Mei Chang. *Talk Asia*. CNN. 18 May 2011. Television. Transcript.
- [4] "The Muzzling of A-mei." *Newsweek*. N.p., 14 Jan. 2001. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.
- [5] "Trot Music Is S.Korea's Best Propaganda Weapon." *The Chosun Ilbo*. N.p., 30 Dec. 2010. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.
- [6] Beech, Hannah. "Asian Heroes - A-mei: Both Sides Now." *TIME*. N.p., 29 Apr. 2002. Web. 07 May 2015.
- [7] Bedford, Olwen, and Guangguo Huang. "Expanding Taiwanese Consciousness." *Taiwanese Identity and Democracy: The Social Psychology of Taiwan's 2004 Elections*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 99. Print.
- [8] Chan, Jerry, and Gavin Phipps. "Mainland China Bans Taiwan's A-mei For Anthem Performance." *Billboard* 17 June 2000: 71. Web.
- [9] Chao, Hui-Hsuan. "MUSICAL TAIWAN UNDER JAPANESE COLONIAL RULE: A HISTORICAL AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION." Diss. U of Michigan, 2009. Print.
- [10] Chen, Bi-juan. *Taiwan Xinyinyueshi*. N.p.: Leyun Publishing House, 1995. 47-49. Print.
- [11] Chen, Boxi. "The Expression of Chineseness and Americanness in Chinese Popular Music: A Comparison of ABC Pop Stars Wang Leehom and Vanness Wu." *Asian Music* 43.2 (2012): 71-87. Web.

- [12] Chen, Hui-Shan. "CHANGING TENDENCY OF WESTERN MUSIC TRADITION IN TAIWAN." *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56.3 (2009): 287-98. JSTOR. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.
- [13] Cheng, Sabine, and Y. F. Low. "A-mei Performs in Taitung Rice Field." *Focus Taiwan*. N.p., 1 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 May 2015.
- [14] Chow, Yiu Fai, and Jeroen De Kloet. "Blowing in the China Wind: Engagements with Chineseness in Hong Kong's Music Videos." *Visual Anthropology* 24.1-2 (2010): 59-76. Web.
- [15] Corcuff, Stéphane. "Taiwan's 'Mainlanders': New Taiwanese?" *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002. Print.
- [16] Fung, Anthony Y. H. "Western Style, Chinese Pop: Jay Chou's Rap and Hip-Hop in China." *Asian Music* 39.1 (2007): 69-80. Web.
- [17] Huang, Tai-lin. "White Terror Exhibit Unveils Part of the Truth." *Taipei Times*. N.p., 20 May 2005. Web. 09 Apr. 2015.
- [18] Hyunjoon, Shin, and Ho Tung-Hung. "Translation of 'America' during the Early Cold War Period: A Comparative Study on the History of Popular Music in South Korea and Taiwan." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 10.1 (2009): 83-102. Web. 7 Apr. 2015.
- [19] Interview by Lorraine Hahn and Leehom Wang. *Talk Asia*. CNN. 16 June 2006. Television. Transcript.
- [20] Koven, Reginald De. "Nationalism in Music." *The North American Review* 189.640 (1909): 386-96. JSTOR. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- [21] Lee, Angela Hao-Chun. "The Influence of Japanese Music Education in Taiwan during the Japanese Protectorate." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 23.2 (2002): 106-18. JSTOR. Web. 07 Apr. 2015.

- [22] Lee, Lorin A. "Singing Sinophone: A Case Study of Teresa Teng, Leehom Wang, and Jay Chou." Thesis. University of Texas at Austin, 2012. Print.
- [23] Moskowitz, Marc L. "Mandopop Under Seige." *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations*. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i, 2010. 105. Print.
- [24] Ong, Russell. *China's Security Interests in the Post-Cold War Era*. Richmond: Curzon, 2002. 106-08. Print.
- [25] Regev, Motti. "Ethno-National Pop-Rock Music: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism Made from Within." *Cultural Sociology* 1.3 (2007): 317-41. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.
- [26] Regev, Motti. "Pop-Rock Music as Expressive Isomorphism: Blurring the National, the Exotic, and the Cosmopolitan in Popular Music." *American Behavioral Scientist* 20.10 (2011): 1-16. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
- [27] Tseng, Chi-Shoung, and Chin Chia Tsai. "The Exclusion and Inclusion of Japanese Manga in Taiwan: A Historic Narratology of Culture Image Expression." *The Global Studies Journal* 3.1 (2010): 183-202. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.
- [28] Wang, Leehom. The Oxford Union. Oxford, England. 8 May 2015. Address.
- [29] Woodman, Georg. "Popular Culture." *Cultural Shock-taiwan: Cow Mentality, Rubber Slipper Fashion in Binlang Country*. S.l.: Xlibris, 2010. 106. Print.