

Chapter 4:

Conclusion

Popular culture has become an integral part of identity creating, as cultural expressions are both references of identity as well as references to create identity. Popular culture thus serves as cultural documents for the many narratives to be taken and interpreted as one will. Subcultures also serve as cultural documents, but in addition to that, it holds the capability to provide a forum for those outside the popular majority as we can see with an underground subculture creating their very own infrastructure to work out of.

As it can be bought and sold, popular culture is in constant flux as is the subculture that precedes the mainstream. Where ever popular culture moves, there's always a counter move within the subculture (and visa versa) as they react to one another in a constant battle to redefine cultural boundaries.

A subculture works to expand mainstream boundaries, reconstructing it to become more inclusive to the gamut of cultural expression, but will never be able to completely do so as there will always be those peripheral to the expanding realm of social acceptance- just as "interpreters" of modern innovations will never be able to completely engulf the Thai nation with modernization as there will always be factors outside the center of polity that keep the process in perpetual motion.

Without subcultures there is no filter to translate, analyze or interpret the many aspects of change. The significance and value of a subculture is thus its ability to create a space leading popular culture to realign itself in a position to preserve and carry its historic lineage of identity preventing cultural values from being replaced and engulfed within the hands of hegemony or modernization.

When the process is visualized, the spectrum of cultural expression from the far left to the far right (far underground to far mainstream) becomes defined and it is only then that one can decipher the actual spot where the infrastructure of the mainstream (the power of perpetuating force) can be used to maintain a stable form of communication that illustrates ideologies conducive to tolerance, adaptation and change- attributes that bind communities together healthy with variety.

As Bangkok's cosmopolitan atmosphere grows with influences from other cultures, languages and forms of expression, the local community cultivates along with it. Music is a universal language that speaks to people through structure, sounds and lyrics each of which have origins (influences) from lineages through the local environment and social settings.

The different ways and styles music incorporates sound, lyrics and structure illustrate to us ideologies, philosophies, and sentiments of the particular artist/musician creating it. Each musician's form of "release" tells us the stories, pains, wonderment and joys of life, and it is through other people's joys and woes of life, that perspectives of one's own life can be influenced, enlightened and possibly changed.

Even if some of these songs are about nothing but bubble gum, the style and structures of these songs are in the least a celebration of this new infrastructure born out

of a subculture's own individual interpretation of the changing society. In the words of Apartment Khunpa, "We are the sounds of the sexy underground and we are gonna rule this town."*

The music subculture of Bangkok has now become a concrete part of a shared society belonging to not only their predecessors, parents, friends, government, and the kings of past, but also most importantly, to themselves.

* Apartment Khunpa. "Bangkok Love Story," (CD). Hualumpong Riddim. 2003.