Foreign Is No Longer Foreign: Globalization, Hollywood and Asian Film Industries

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I. Introduction

In this article, I aim to examine the recent close relationships between Hollywood and Asian film industries in the context of globalization and how this development affects Hollywood's global hegemony and Asian film industries vis—à—vis this hegemony. My interest in this topic stems from the Korean film industry's changing relationships with Hollywood. For a long time, the Korean film industry seemed to be locked in the binary opposition to Hollywood. In the late 1980s, Hollywood studios pressed the Korean government to allow direct distribution of foreign films. As this would open up the hitherto regulated Korean film market, the Korean film

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industry fiercely resisted this demand, denouncing what was considered as "cultural invasion" (Darlin 1989). Nevertheless, Hollywood films came to dominate the Korean market in the 1990s. However, not satisfied with this, in the late 1990s studios demanded the elimination of the screen quota that required the mandatory screening of Korean films for 146 days a year. As the screen quota was seen as a measure that sustained the Korean film industry amid the onslaught from Hollywood films, this demand flared up again the Korean film industry's confrontation with Hollywood.

For most of this time, the Korean film industry underwent a serious decline. It seemed to be typical of a local film industry embattled and driven to near extinction by Hollywood's domination. Yet, this situation suddenly changed in the late 1990s when several Korean films performed well at the box office. Moreover, one Korean film after another came to dominate the box office since then, and Korean films' market share improved dramatically from 15.9% in 1993 to over 50% a decade later. In short, the hopeful sign of resurgence in the late 1990s turned into a genuine boom of the Korean film industry. With these developments, the Korean film industry's conflict—ridden relationships with Hollywood also underwent changes. While one—way traffic from the U.S. to Korea long characterized film trade between the two countries, Hollywood studios have come to distribute Korean films in Korea and outside, and several Korean actors have been debuting in Hollywood. As a result, they now seem to share mutual interest as much as antagonism.

Given the long antagonistic relationships between Hollywood and the Korean film industry, I have come to be interested in their new-found intimacy and the responses to this phenomenon in Korea. For example, considering the longstanding confrontation between the Korean film industry and Hollywood as well as the latter's global domination, the

success of the Korean film industry was initially framed in terms of local resistance or challenge to Hollywood's hegemony. This view of Hollywood and the Korean film industry opposing each other has now largely given way to what seems to be uncritical celebration of their recent closeness as an indication of global recognition of Korean films and stars. These responses, despite their difference, are in fact similar in their nationalistic stance, taking pride in the achievement of the Korean film industry. Still, Hollywood's recent turn to the Korean film industry as well as Korea's sanguine response to this represents a sudden reversal of their long confrontational relationships and the attending binary view of domination and resistance. This fact alone, not to mention the implications of this emerging closeness, requires a close and critical scrutiny into this development. Moreover, while Hollywood has similarly embraced Asian films and talent, not much effort has been made in Korea to understand the case of the Korean film industry in conjunction with this broader context.

In this article, I thus aim to critically examine Hollywood's recent turn to Korean films and stars in the broader context of its embrace of Asian film industries. I attempt to examine what has led to this condition and how this is affecting both Hollywood and Asian film industries and reshaping their relationships. Following Christina Klein (2004a), I examine this phenomenon as an instance of Hollywood's globalization and integration with Asian film industries. I aim to delve into how best to understand the implications of this development for Hollywood's domination and local Asian film industries. In this regard, I am interested in showing what Annabelle Sreberny terms as "the global in the local, the local in the global," or "the dynamic tension between the global and the local and the shifting terrains they encompass" (2000: 97). I am also interested in pointing out the inadequacy of the binary view that sees Hollywood and local Asian film industries in opposition to each other. I intend to show how the notions of clear—cut domination and resistance are increasingly difficult to maintain, while also acknowledging the need for a critical perspective on their new—found intimacy.

In order to explain the recent closeness between Hollywood and Asian film industries, I first examine how Hollywood's global domination has been affecting the filmmaking in Hollywood and how this condition has led to Hollywood's interest in Asia. In this context, the article looks at some of the prominent examples of Hollywood's integration with Asian film industries. It examines the inflow of Asian elements to Hollywood such as Asian talent working in Hollywood and Hollywood's remake of Asian films. It then examines Hollywood's strategy of going local in Asia, i.e., the growing practice of producing and distributing Asian—language films. In the final section, I examine implications of these developments for both Hollywood's global hegemony and Asian film industries vis—à—vis this hegemony. I especially pay attention to the contradictory, uneven and unpredictable ways in which these developments affect Hollywood and Asian film industries.

Several studies examined Hollywood's globalization and its implications for local film industries. Yet, they mainly focused on Europe as Hollywood's biggest regional export market (Wasko 1994; Miller *et al.* 2001) and Hollywood's relationships with Asian film industries had to be inferred from the European experiences. Thus, studies more specific to Hollywood's operations in Asia are much needed and this article attempts to provide one such study.

II. The Rise of Global Hollywood and Asia

One of the fundamental factors that have drawn Hollywood to Asia is

the growing importance of global markets. Even though Hollywood operated globally for most of its history and overseas markets generated a sizeable portion of its revenue-30% of its total box office income in the late 1910s, which increased to as high as 50% thereafter (Balnaves, Donald and Donald 2001: 34-35)-overseas markets were long viewed secondary to the domestic market. Yet, this came to change in the late 1990s when Hollywood's global operation reached new heights with *Titanic*. It grossed an unprecedented \$1.2 billion abroad, twice its U.S. revenue (Hirschberg 2004). Now, overseas markets are no longer considered a secondary, but the primary source of revenue (Staiger 2002). Most Hollywood blockbusters earn over 50% of their box office receipts abroad. According Anthony Marcholy, executive vice president of Buena Vista International, when production decision is made, it is "a bit assumed" that foreign revenue will be greater than domestic return (Groves 2005). In this light, the recent dissolution of UIP that distributed Universal, Paramount and MGM/UA films abroad was seen as an indication that foreign revenue was too important to share with competitors. Moreover, the prominence of overseas markets is not likely to diminish any time soon, as they have been growing faster than the U.S. market. While the American box office grew 17% between 2000 and 2005, the worldwide revenue increased 46% during the same period (Holson 2006b).

Overseas markets have become particularly vital to Hollywood due to the increasing production costs. As Hollywood studios have focused on the production of special effects-laden blockbusters, production costs have skyrocketed. Production and marketing budgets increased from an average of \$14 million in 1980 to \$102 million by 2003 (Klein 2004a: 367), and it is not hard to find some blockbusters with over \$200 million production costs. Given this, even while producers recuperate their production costs in the U.S., true profits are possible with international markets. Thus, Jack Valenti, former chairman of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), flatly acknowledged that "We'd be dead without the international marketplace" (Bromley 2002: 39). As a result, playability at foreign box offices has become a crucial consideration in production decision. According to Peter Bart, an editor of *Variety* and former executive at Paramount, "nobody in their right mind running a studio would make one of these incredibly expensive films...until they had convinced themselves that it would play well overseas." Similarly pointing out the magnitude of foreign markets in production decision, Nicolas Meyer, president of Lionsgate International, thus commented, "Everything about the movie business today is about the global market" (Booth 2006).

This context has far-reaching implications for content and styles of English-language films Hollywood studios produce. Language and cultural differences are frequently cited as one of the biggest barriers to the export of media content. Accordingly, it is suggested that Hollywood films should not be "too American-culture-specific" so as not to jeopardize their exportability (Grove 1997). In fact, studios have been focusing on the production of films that can travel well internationally; blockbusters with special effects, computer-generated images and the least possible dialogues, animations, big star films and physical comedies. In addition, they increasingly give up the age-old practice of premiering films in the U.S., instead introducing them first to international audience. Actors are also chosen based on their global appeal. For example, Liv Tyler's popularity in Japan, Hollywood's biggest foreign market by country, was said to help her win the leading role in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Foroohar 2002). Conversely, studios embrace international cast in an attempt to increase their films' global appeal. According to Dan Glickman, MPAA chairman and president, "the economics is such that if we want to encourage these international audiences for our movies, we recognize we

have to include international talent" and "take advantage of talent from all over the world, wherever it exists" (Gentile 2007).

The net outcome of these developments is a series of "formulaic blockbusters that feature beefed-up spectacle, dumbed-down dialogue, actors chosen for their international appeal, and little genuinely American cultural specificity" (Klein 2004b). Klein thus argues that Hollywood, by following profits, is making films increasingly for international audience and turning into an export industry (2003). At the same time, Hollywood absorbs international elements to enhance its exportability, while the leading studios, as part of transnational entities often owned by non-Americans, aspire to be not so much American as global. As a result, it is argued that many of Hollywood films, despite the seeming Americanness, are no longer just American, but multinational in their styles and content (Rosenbaum 2002). Given this, according to Jeff Berg, head of the international talent agency ICM, what Hollywood evokes is "less a specific place than a metaphor", not necessarily "a specific country of origin, national sensibility or even a mother tongue" but a "set of expectation", such as "high production quality and global appeal" (Foroohar 2002). As the brand name that sells best in global markets, what defines a Hollywood film is the conformity to this expectation (Keil 2001). In sum, the growing importance of foreign markets to its coffer has made Hollywood and its films less American and more denationalized and globalized than ever before.

The economic logic that has globalized Hollywood has lately drawn it to Asia. While Japan has been the major foreign market for Hollywood films, Asia have long been overshadowed by Europe due to its limited market. Yet, economic growth, coupled with the increase in multiplexes and other media outlets that earlier contributed to the expansion of European markets, has turned Asia into the fastest growing region, and Hollywood has been seeking to open up Asian markets through trade liberalization. Thus, Asia is estimated to comprise 60% of Hollywood's box office revenue by 2015 (Miller *et al.* 2001: 8). Hollywood's attention has been particularly fixed on China, and India to a lesser extent, whose huge population and rising economic muscle promise enormous potential. As in other regions, Hollywood has established a dominant presence in most of Asian markets. While Hollywood films represent a fraction of the total number of films screened each year in China due to the government regulation, they take a disproportionate share of box office revenue (Jihong and Kraus 2002: 424). Likewise in India where Bollywood, as the country's thriving film industry is called, has long dominated the local market, Hollywood films are gaining a foothold. For example, *007 Casino Royale* set a new record for a foreign film by making \$3.2 million in the opening weekend, an 87% increase from the previous record set by *Spider-Man 2* (McNary 2006).

A familiar corollary to Hollywood's domination has been the decline of local film industries, which has long been the major source of the charge against "American" cultural imperialism. However, Hollywood juggernaut crushing local film industries has not proved to be a perennial condition. Instead, Hollywood has been increasingly facing the competition from local film industries. The sign of the change to come was first noticed in television industries of Europe. Back in 1998, Ken Lemberger, an executive at Columbia TriStar Motion Picture Group, noted that "Over the past 10 years, local TV product has become far more popular in Europe, and now film is undergoing the same process... Our assessment is that the market for local—language and local culture films is growing, and will grow substantially over the next 10 to 20 years" (Carver 1998). In the past several years, Asian media industries have gone through similar experiences of the rising demand for local content and the increase in its

market share.

The Korean film industry represents the foremost case of the decline and the subsequent resurgence of local film industries in Asia. Not long after the market liberalization at the pressure from Hollywood in the late 1980, Hollywood films came to dominate the Korean market. Korean films' market share plummeted to the alarmingly low 13.9% in 1993 and the film industry remained in decline for most of the 1990s. Yet, all of sudden, this changed in 1999 when a Korean film, Shiri, not only topped the local box office, but overtook *Titanic* as the highest grossing film in Korea. In that year, the market share for Korean films rose from 25.1% in 1998 to 39.7% (Korean Film Council 2006: 35). As other Korean films followed this success, their market share further increased to over 50% since then, demonstrating that the sudden outburst in 1999 was not a mere accident. This change found its parallel in the shifting preferences of local audience. According to the survey done by the Korean Film Council, 21.6% of respondents expressed preference for Korean films in 1999 as opposed to 54.2% for American films. In 2003, the figure increased to 52.1% for Korean films, while it dropped to 36.2% for American titles (2004: 19). Reflecting this change, while Hollywood subsidiaries once dominated the local distribution market, Korean distributors, with their lineup of both Korean and foreign films, have come to vie for the top position.

While remarkable, Korea is not an isolated case. Other Asian countries similarly experienced the resurgence of local films. In Thailand, local films such as Nang Nak in 1999, Bang Ra Jan in 2000, and Suriyothai in 2001 dominated the box office and accounted for about 30% of the local market in 2001, the highest share in 20 years (Klein 2004a: 369). Reflecting the vibrant local activities, around 60 local films were scheduled for release in 2003, a steep rise from 8 films in 2000, 15 in 2001 and 23 in 2002 (Rosenberg 2001; Chaiworaporn 2003). In Hong Kong, the local film industry, after years of downturn, took nearly 50% of box office receipts in 2001 (Kan 2002). Even in Japan that has been a significant overseas market for Hollywood films, the local film industry remains vibrant with local films such as *Spirited Away* and *Bayside Shakedown 2* topping the box office in 2001 and 2003 respectively. In addition, the number of local films that earned over \$10 million at the box office, a measure for domestic success, increased from 18 films in 2003 to 23 in 2004 (Groves 2004). In 2006, aided by investment from television networks, their market share was expected to reach 50% for the first time since 1985 (Paquet 2006).

Booming local film industries by no means indicate the end to Hollywood's supremacy. While local industries produce culturally tuned films, they continue to rely on Hollywood for what it does best, special effect-driven blockbusters. In addition, the boom in local films has contributed to drawing more people to theaters to see local as well as Hollywood films. Yet, the popularity of local films has meant that Hollywood's share grows slowly. For example, admissions for Korean films increased from 21 million in 1999 to 84 million in 2005, while they increased from 33 million to 58 million for foreign films during the same period. Besides, the strength of Korean films has affected the play dates of Hollywood films and often squeezed out mid-sized Hollywood films, if not heavily marketed blockbusters. Amid the exceptionally strong box office performance of Korean films in early 2004, a marketer at a Hollywood subsidiary in Korea thus grumbled that "at the rate we're doing, we'll need a quota to protect foreign films" (Kim 2004). While this was proved to be exaggerated, it certainly showed a reversal of Hollywood's previous position of unchallenged domination in Korea.

III. Hollywood Embraces Asian Film Industries

It is in this context that Hollywood has turned to Asian film industries to take advantage of the growing importance of Asian markets and to cope with the competition from Asian film industries. Hollywood has pursued two strategies simultaneously; pulling Asian talent and films to Hollywood and going local in Asia. First, the growing Asian influence and presence is arguably one of the most visible recent trends in Hollywood. This is the most evident in the increasing number of Asians working in the Tinseltown. Despite Hollywood's long embrace of foreign, mostly European, talent, its receptivity to Asian talent is relatively new as much as it is unprecedented. Like international cast, the embrace of Asian talent makes good economic sense, enabling Hollywood to take advantage of Asian star power to broaden its films' appeal in local and regional markets in Asia. Many of Asians working in Hollywood honed their skills in Hong Kong, once a cinema powerhouse in East Asia that posed serious competition to Hollywood films in the region. Yet, amid political and economic uncertainty accompanying Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the local film industry lost much of its vigor. In this context, Hollywood bought out its competitor by grabbing its talent (Jenkins 2004: 131).

One such example is director John Woo. After working on numerous films in Hong Kong and making his name known throughout East Asia, he debuted in Hollywood in 1993 with *Hard Target* and brought his dazzling action scenes to films such as Face/Off and Mission Impossible II. He was soon followed by other directors from Hong Kong such as Peter Chan and Ronny Yu. Asian stars also made their way to Hollywood. Jackie Chan, after the modest success of a dubbed version of Cantonese-language film Rumble in the Bronx in 1996, has starred in several Hollywood films (Klein 2004a: 365). He was joined by Chow Yun-fat, Michelle Yeoh, and Jet Li from Hong Kong, and Zhang Ziyi and Gong Li from China. According to Klein, as Hollywood relies on spectacle to sell its films globally, it is especially drawn to a particular kind of spectacle from Hong Kong, i.e., martial arts. For example, Jackie Chan's Hollywood films have capitalized on his brand of martial—art action comedy that made him popular in East Asia, even while modifying it to suit the established mode of storytelling in Hollywood films (2004a: 365–6). Likewise, Jet Li's Hollywood films made extensive use of his command of martial arts. Hong Kong martial arts choreographer, Yuen Wo Ping, was also hired to direct action sequences in *The Matrix* and other Hollywood films.

More recently, several Korean stars have debuted or are preparing their debut in Hollywood, an apparent nod to the boom of the Korean film industry and the new-found marketability of Korean stars in East Asia. Following Korean films' boom from the late 1990s, their export revenue soared dramatically. Most of this has been generated by East Asia, especially Japan. Around the same time, Korean soap opera and music came to enjoy huge popularity in East Asia, a phenomenon dubbed as the Korean Wave in the region. As a result, some of Korean stars have been catapulted to pan—Asian stardom and cast in regionally co—produced films. Based on this regional recognition, they are stepping up to Hollywood. For example, Korean stars such as Chang Tong—gŏn (*Laundry Warrior*), Chŏng Chi—hun (aka Rain, *Speed Racer* and *Ninja Assassin*), and Yi Byŏng—hŏn (*G.I. Joe*) have been cast in English—language films produced by Hollywood producers. All of them gained their regional fame through their appearance in Korean soap opera.

In addition to Asian talent, more and more Asian films have been distributed in the U.S. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, directed by Ang Lee and co-produced by Sony's Columbia Pictures and Edko Films, accomplished an unprecedented commercial and critical success, becoming

the highest grossing foreign-language film in the U.S. and winning the Best Foreign Picture in the 2001 Academy Awards. *Hero*, Chinese martial arts film directed by Zhang Yimou and distributed in the U.S. by Miramax in 2004, was another box office success. Independent distributor Magnolia also capitalized on Americans' fascination with Asian martial arts films, distributing Ong Bak: The Thai Warrior in 2005. Asian films often get distributed in the U.S. following their success at local and regional markets as in the case of Lagaan, an Indian box office champ, and Kung Fu Hustle, a pan-Asian hit from Hong Kong. Likewise, dozens of Korean films, mostly box office hits, have been distributed in the U.S. for the limited release. As a recent phenomenon, this indicates their changed status. Yet, the box office success in U.S. has eluded them thus far.

Another prominent trend testifying Hollywood's interest in Asian films is Hollywood's remake of several Asian films. Remaking foreign films is nothing new to Hollywood, as it has long been importing marketable ideas. Yet, what is notable about Hollywood's remake interest in Asian films is the intensity of this development within a short period of time. Hollywood's fascination with Asian remakes was triggered by the spectacular success of *The Ring* in 2002, remake of a 1998 Japanese horror film Ringu. In 2001, DreamWorks purchased remake rights to the original film for \$1.3 million, which paid off greatly. The Ring opened as the box office number one in the U.S, pulling \$129 million. It even made more money than the original in Japan, earning \$8.3 million in its first two weeks compared to \$6.6 million made by the original (Friend 2003: 41). According to Hamish McAlpine, the founder of Tartan Films that has been distributing Asian horror films for several years in Britain and the U.S., "the success of *The Ring* made every producer who didn't have an Asian movie remake on the slate look as though he wasn't doing his job" (Clarke 2004).

While it is widely agreed that the original was far better and scarier than the remake, the success of *The Ring* ignited the remake fervor in Hollywood. *The Grudge*, remake of another Japanese horror film *Ju-on*, was put into production following *The Ring*'s success (Derakhshani 2006), while its own impressive box office result further highlighted the attractiveness of Asian remakes. Reflecting the boom, Korean films have been particularly in demand. Miramax first purchased in 2001 the remake right to a Korean gangster comedy *My Wife Is a Gangster*, reportedly after watching it even without English subtitles (Friend 2003: 44). Since then, remake rights to scores of Korean films have been sold to various Hollywood producers. As Roy Lee, a key figure in brokering remake sales of Asian films including *Ringu* and *Ju-on*, said of the sudden recognition Korean films garnered since the sale of *My Wife Is a Gangster*, It's like 0 to 60 in one year (Chute 2003).

Remakes have opened up the opportunity for Asian directors to work in Hollywood. Hideo Nakata, director of Ringu, was brought in to direct the sequel to $The\ Ring$ and $The\ Eye$, a remake of 2002 Hong Kong/Thai horror film. Takashi Shimizu, director of Ju-on, was hired to direct $The\ Grudge$, Hollywood remake of Ju-on. Korean director An Pyong-gi was likewise courted to direct Hollywood remake of his own film, Phone. Danny and Oxide Pang, directors of the original $The\ Eye$, also debuted in Hollywood, directing horror film $The\ Messengers$ in 2007.

According to Klein, Hollywood's attraction to remaking Asian films lies in their mix of familiarity and difference. In order to make translation possible, these films should be familiar—familiarity often conceived in terms of Asian films' catching up with Hollywood—and relatable, not too specific and/or local. At the same time, as Hollywood is looking for new ideas, it is drawn to particular ways of portraying the familiar. For example, while American horror films often rely on quick physical shock

often through special effects, their Asian counterparts slowly build up horror through storylines revolving around vengeful ghosts or spirits (Arnold 2005).

As Gary Xu points out, remaking Asian films reveals an assumption that what has been successful in Asia could also work in the U.S., the reversal of the commonly-held view of the direction of cultural flows (2005). At the same time, Hollywood, in its search for familiarity and difference, has also imported localized versions of its own styles and narratives (Klein 2004a: 368). For example, while *The Departed* was based on Hong Kong gangster film *Infernal Affairs*, it is also said that the latter had the feel of Hollywood film *Heat* (Clarke 2004). This, along with the influx of Asian films and talent, shows the multidirectional and circular nature of global cultural flows, as global culture does not unidirectionally flow from Hollywood but flows in as well (Jenkins 2004).

While pulling Asian films and talent to eastwards, Hollywood has also been pursuing the strategy of going local in Asia amid the growing popularity of local Asian films. For example, Hollywood studios have been distributing Asian films for local and regional markets, thus profiting from the resurgence of Asian film industries. Warner Bros. Pictures distributed a local romantic comedy Turn Left, Turn Right in China and Zhang Yimou's House of Flying Daggers in Japan. Twentieth Century Fox released Hero in seven Asian markets in 2002 (Groves 2004). Disney has had a close relationship with well-known Japanese animation director Miyazaki Hayao, internationally distributing his films such as Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away, and Howl's Moving Castle. With the boom in Korean films, Hollywood studios also began to distribute Korean films. In this regard, the transformation of UIP Korea is symptomatic of the changing strategy of studios. It was once seen as a symbol of Hollywood invasion of Korea, as it was the first Hollywood subsidiary to directly distribute Hollywood films

in the country in the late 1980s. It also handled Hollywood films only. Yet, in 2005 it reportedly paid \$7 million for Japanese distribution rights to *April Snow*—starring Pae Yong—jun who became immensely popular in Japan following his appearance in Korean soap opera, *Winter Sonata*—at its pre—production stage (Russell 2005).

Another strategy of going local is local—language production. While production—the practice of shooting films locations—represents the globalization of film production in Hollywood, studios have also pursued localization strategy through the production of local-language films. Local-language production provides studios several advantages. First, this, along with the distribution of local films, is Hollywood's strategy to cope with local competition and to take advantage of the expanding markets for local films by localizing its products. In this regard, it represents an instance of what Roland Robertson terms as global localization or "glocalization" (1995). In addition, while relatively inexpensive to produce, local-language production provides studios more films to fill their costly global distribution channels and a chance to spot foreign talent (LaPorte 2004). It enables studios to benefit from production subsidies and favorable tax provisions from local governments and to avoid import restrictions and screen quotas. Besides, one studio executive terms local-language production as "a defense mechanism," as "pouring money into a territory's local pictures dissipates the amount of anti-U.S. feeling" (Carver 1998).

While Europe has been the major site of Hollywood's local—language production, Asia is emerging as a new locus. Sony Pictures has made the biggest investment in local—language production in East Asia through Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, the Hong Kong—based subsidiary created in 1998. In China, Sony (co)produced *Not One Less* in 1999, *The Road Home* in 2001, both directed by Zhang Yimou, *Big Shot's Funeral* in

2001 and Cell Phone in 2003, both directed by Feng Xiaogang. In Hong Kong, it co-produced Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Time and Tide, So Close, Kung Fu Hustle and Jet Li's action film Fearless. It produced Double Vision in Taiwan and Saawariya in India (Dawtrey and Gray 2006; Holson 2006a). Warner Bros. Pictures has also been active in local-language production, which it sees as the linchpin of its global growth strategy (Foroohar 2002). It co-produced a Japanese-language film Catch a Wave in 2005 (Kilday 2005). In the same year, it became the first Hollywood studio to form a partnership in China with an aim to produce and distribute films and TV programs exclusively for the local Chinese market. In Korea, New Line Cinema, part of Time Warner, co-produced a local-language film, Shadowless Sword. Twentieth Century Fox likewise co-produced an Indian film. The Namesake.

These films enjoyed varying degrees of commercial success. While Shadowless Sword was totally ignored at the Korean box office, Big Shot's Funeral, Cell Phone and Double Vision were major hits in their local market and embraced as local films by audiences who took pride in their beating of Hollywood films (Klein 2004a: 374). Ultimately, studios seek a cross-cultural hit like Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, whose success was credited for having fueled studios' investments in local-language production (LaPorte 2004). Ironically, with their increased local involvement, studios have come to compete with local films they produced and/or distributed (Dawtrey and Grey 2006). For example, studios experienced a 7% drop in the overseas box office revenue in 2001 amid improved performance of local films, a significant number of which were released and often financed by the studios themselves (Dawtrey 2002). Many of local—language films were also released in the U.S. and globally. In fact, Asian films that did well at the U.S. box office such as *Crouching* Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Kung Fu Hustle, Fearless, The Namesake are the

ones co-produced and/or released by studios. Given this, the increased presence of Asian films and talent in the U.S. should be also seen in conjunction with Hollywood's involvement in the local-language production in Asia.

IV. Global Hollywood and Asian Film Industries

Occurring amid the rising importance of global/Asian markets to Hollywood-itself the outcome of Hollywood's growing reliance on foreign revenue, i.e., the globalization of audience—and the heightened competition from Asian film industries, the above developments have brought Hollywood and Asian film industries closer to each other and integrated them more than ever before. As such, they are an instance of how Hollywood's globalization affects its relationships with Asian film industries. At the same time, these developments have globalized and denationalized Hollywood as well as Asian film industries in diverse ways. For example, Hollywood's embrace of Asian films and talent has further contributed to the globalization of the filmmaking in Hollywood from within. Its strategy of going local in Asia by producing and distributing and distributing Asian-language films has globalized Hollywood from without. At the same time, Asian films and talent go transnational and filmmaking in Asia is more globalized¹⁾ as a result of these developments. Thus, Hollywood's globalization has also led to the globalization and denationalization of Asian film industries to varying degrees.

How are we to understand these developments? What do they tell us

¹⁾ Hollywood's production of Asian-language films can globalize their finance only. In other instances, this can lead the casting of foreign (Hollywood) actors in Asian films as in the case of in Donald Sutherland in *Big Shot's Funeral*.

about Hollywood's global hegemony and Asian film industries' relationship to this? In Korea, Hollywood's interest in Korean stars and films welcome as the sign of the global recognition of Korean films and stars. Korea is not unique in this sanguine response. For example, the nominations of film personnel from Japan, Britain, and Mexico in the 2007 Academy Awards were met with euphoria in these countries (Whyte 2007). Yet, if these examples can be seen as the instance of the global recognition as in Korea, they also signal Hollywood's global hegemony and serve to strengthen it. The supposed global recognition—itself made possible through Hollywood's global distribution channels—is often nothing other than the nod from Hollywood, which indicates Hollywood's power as the ultimate seal of the achievement and approval. Besides, as noted above, the embrace of Asian talents foremost means good business to Hollywood. Speed Racer, despite its disappointing box office record worldwide, did better in Korea largely due to the publicity generated by the appearance of Korean actor Chong Chi—hun in the film.²⁾

As seen before, the production of Asian films gives Hollywood studios several advantages. Likewise, remaking Asian films is an expedient way to get fully market-tested ideas with proven box office records and built-in audience, enabling Hollywood to take advantage of current success and vitality of Asian films. Yet, unlike remakes of American films or TV series, few Americans are aware of the existence of Asian originals when they watch the American remakes and Hollywood producers do not have to risk being compared with Asian originals (Xu 2005). In fact, Hollywood studios often acquire the U.S. distribution as well as remake rights to original films and then send them straight to video (as DreamWorks did with Ringu, a strategy which McAlpine of Tartan Films described as "an

²⁾ The film made 43 million in the U.S. and \$50 million internationally. In Korea, it made \$5 million, the second highest figure internationally. The box office outcome was obtained from www.boxofficemojo.com.

insurance policy"), thus eliminating the source of possible competition and comparison (Singer 2004). Chris Doyle, a well-known cinematographer of Hong Kong, is critical of Hollywood's remake of Asian films from another perspective. He points out that "Asian society is moving ahead at full throttle, so you just go ahead and try to catch up. But this is also like a hostile takeover. I think it prefigures a talent grab" (Clarke 2004).

In addition, Hollywood's distribution of Asian films does not simply mean the avenue for the global recognition, as this process is not without problems. For example, foreign films are usually confined to the art—house circuit. Yet, Korean films, mostly commercial in nature but not the martial—art type, do not easily fit into the art—house exposure.³⁾ *Hero* was exceptional in this regard, as it enjoyed the wide release like other Hollywood films. Still, Miramax put off its U.S. release for a year and a half, despite the film's commercial success outside the U.S. It also demanded Zhang Yimou to cut the film by 18 minutes and dub it in English given Americans' alleged dislike for subtitles (Klein 2004c).

Given this, the rise of global Hollywood and its close integration with Asian film industries should not be uncritically celebrated. What the above instances indicate is the ways in which Hollywood's hegemony operates and is upheld in the context of globalization, which echoes Stuart Hall's conception of "global mass culture". According to Hall, global mass culture represents a "peculiar form of homogenization," which does not suppress local cultural differences, but wants to "recognize and absorb those differences" and "operate through them" (1991: 28). In a similar fashion, the above developments indicate that Hollywood does not merely dominate local film industries but also attempts to incorporate these industries and

³⁾ Nor do Korean films fit into the martial—art category. Given this, it is not so surprising that a low-budget and art-house film, *Spring, Summer, Fall, WinterSpring*, has become the highest grossing Korean film in the U.S., garnering \$2.3 million at the box office.

their activities within its overarching hegemony and operates through them. In other words, Asian film industries have become a constitutive part of Hollywood's global hegemony. As a result, Hollywood now has a stake in the presence of vibrant local film industries in Asia. One studio executive puts, "We're very active in coproductions and acquisitions, so we want to see strong local industries" (Groves 2002). Klein thus notes that the decline in the market share of Asian films is cause for concern rather than celebration for studios (2004a: 373).

Yet, while studios may be concerned with the health of Asian film industries, there is a real possibility that Asian film industries are being reshaped according to Hollywood's interest and allotted into what Miller et al. term a "New International Division of Cultural Labor" organized and administered by Hollywood (2001; 2005). For example, given the limited access for foreign films to the U.S. market, the sale of remake rights is one of the easiest ways to enter it. In this context, some filmmakers and producers in Asia are so keen to take advantage of Hollywood's remake interest that they send Roy Lee, the "remake man," subtitled videotapes of their films even before they are completed or released (Friend 2003: 44). Xu thus argues that many East Asian film industries "have a built-in 'remaking mentality,' which self consciously measures the films against Hollywood standard and actively exercises self-censorship" (2005). In addition, with Hollywood's growing practices of runaway production, 31 countries set up national film commissions from 1990 to 1998 that often aimed to attract runaway production. Miller et al. note the irony that these commissions, while "mostly built on policy responses to external cultural domination, make that domination possible by commodifying locations as industrial setting of sites and services" (2005: 138).

Given this, it is tempting to dismiss Hollywood's globalization and integration with Asian film industries as another instance of Hollywood's

"cultural imperialism." However, while these developments need to be seen critically, they distribute gains and losses within as well as among these industries in highly uneven and complicated ways that make it difficult to talk about one-way domination. As seen above, Hollywood's globalization of audience has created its own vulnerability, leading it to increasingly make films for global audience. Accordingly, Jenkins argues, Hollywood does not simply rule global markets, but is "being shaped for them" (2004: 115). While this certainly benefits studios financially, this gain is not shared by all. For example, David Kipen points out one perverse outcome of this "offshoring" of audience. Wondering who is now making films for Americans, he argues that one of the biggest losers of "cultural imperialism" is the American audience (2004: 120). Similarly, even though runaway production enables studios to take advantage of cheaper labor, lax union regulations and/or generous tax breaks in other countries, there has been the growing concern among the L.A.-based unions for the loss of (especially low-end) jobs in film and media industries.

What could be seen as Hollywood's strategies of domination can also lead to unintended outcomes. For example, noting that Zhang Yimou funded his big-budget film *Hero* by pre-selling the North American distribution rights to Miramax, Klein argues that Hollywood's involvement with local film industries can become a survival strategy of these industries (2004a: 375-76). Peichi Chung also shows that the incorporation into Hollywood's distribution and exhibition channels has enabled the economic success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, while this success benefits Hollywood as well (2007).

In a similar fashion, the advance of Korean talent and films to Hollywood is not just the outcome of the latter's appropriation of the boom of the Korean film industry. It has been also actively pursued by Korean media companies as a strategy of going global. Hollywood's remake of

Asian films, while providing marketable ideas to Hollywood producers, also contributed to expanding the availability of Asian originals, thus their financial life, at the ancillary market in the U.S. (Graham 2005). In particular, the sales of remake rights provided the Korean film industry a much-needed additional source of revenue amid rising production costs. Moreover, the Korean film industry did not simply remain satisfied as a provider of ideas to Hollywood. Faced with the need to expand export markets due to the production cost hike and the limited access to the U.S. market for foreign films, several Korean companies have been seeking to enter the American market by making English-language films for American audience. For example, CJ Entertainment, Korea's leading media giant, not only co-financed Hollywood film August Rush, but is producing its first English-language film, West 32nd. LJ Films is also co-producing English-language film, The Julia Project, with Focus Features.

The global circulation of Hollywood films is also marked by complexities and unpredictability, as this can not only lead to its global domination but also undermine its power by inviting the process of localization. According to Klein, many of Asian films that dominated local box office appropriated styles and production values of Hollywood films (2004a: 377), as local producers emulated them in their effort to win back audience from Hollywood films. A case in point is *Shiri*. It not only boasted production values and special effects comparable to Hollywood blockbusters, popularizing "Korean-style blockbuster," but also challenged Hollywood's domination in Korea. Given this, Julian Stringer argues that one outcome of globalization has been the active reconstruction of blockbusters outside the U.S. as a generic category (2002). This by no means signals the retreat of Hollywood's hegemony. Instead, it indicates Hollywood's power as a global producer of the "templates"-not only stories and styles of films but the industrial practices and values, setting the "frame" for global cultural production (Gitlin 2002: 182; Morley and Robinson 1995: 223–24). Hegemony thus lies in forms, not in contents (Wilk 1995). Yet, as an executive at Twentieth Century Fox says, Hollywood's increased local involvement shows that the "template for popular culture comes from Hollywood, but the interest is becoming more local" (Holson 2006a).

At the same time, localizing Hollywood has led to the globalization of local film industries in varying degrees, as this most often means weaving local themes with Hollywood-style spectacle and production values. Or we may say, with the adoption of hegemonic forms, the way local films are local is becoming "very international" (Sndergaard 2003: 102). Yet, as in the case of Hollywood, globalization has unevenly affected local film industries. For example, small independent films have been squeezed out in Korea amid Korean as well as Hollywood blockbusters' domination of the box office. Thus, there has been concern that cultural diversity is in danger in Korea. This situation is ironic. Yet, while in the past Hollywood alone was seen as the antithesis to cultural diversity, now Korean blockbusters, as much as their Hollywood counterparts, are responsible for undermining it. In addition, even though localizing blockbusters has helped to reclaim the market from Hollywood films, this is not an unconditional boon to the Korean film industry. The pursuit of Hollywood production values and special effects has driven up the production costs of Korean films, which threatens profitability of Korean films despite their box office success.

In sum, Hollywood's globalization and its integration with Asian film industries have affected and transformed both Hollywood and Asian film industries in complicated and often unforeseen ways, if not in equal degrees. In many ways, Hollywood's turn to Asian film industries has strengthened its global hegemony. Yet, this tells only part of the story, although dominant and more conspicuous one. As Hollywood seeks to

incorporate Asian films and sustain its global hegemony through this, this can unintentionally help and stimulate the growth and activities of Asian film industries. In addition, as Asian film industries have become a constitutive part of its global hegemony, Hollywood is now concerned with the performance of Asian film industries if for no other reason than its continued strength. At the same time, Asian film industries do not simply acquiesce to Hollywood's hegemony. Nor do they necessarily resist it. Instead, they are seeking to take advantage of Hollywood's globalization for their own interest (Klein 2004: 371) and to stake out their place in the international cultural order.

V. Conclusion

In this article, I have examined the recent close relationships between Hollywood and Asian film industries as an instance of Hollywood's globalization and its integration with Asian film industries. I have looked at the context in which this has occurred and the implications of this development for Hollywood's global hegemony and Asian film industries.

In examining the new-found intimacy between Hollywood and Asian film industries. I have attempted to challenge the view that sees these industries as separated and bounded entities. Instead, what was once considered foreign no longer simply remains foreign for both Hollywood and Asian film industries. Hollywood makes films increasingly for global markets and produces local-language films that are embraced as local. Asian film industries are incorporated into Hollywood production, distribution and exhibition channels. In addition, they localize Hollywood conventions and, as in the case of the Korean film industry, attempt to make English-language films for American consumption. What this has entailed is the localization/Asianization of Hollywood and the globalization/Hollywoodization of Asian film industries. As the global becomes local and the local becomes global, the global and the local, instead of being mutually antagonistic and exclusive, are mutually constitutive of each other.

In addition, I have attempted to challenge the view that positions Hollywood and local film industries are seen in opposition to each other by looking at how their recent encounter defies the familiar binary of Hollywood's domination and local Asian film industries' resistance (or acquiescence) to this domination. If Hollywood's recent turn to Asian film industries enables its global hegemony, I have also looked at how Asian film industries respond to and attempt to take advantage of this development in diverse ways. I have highlighted complicated dynamics involved in this process by showing how gains and losses were distributed within and between Hollywood and Asian industries in uneven and unpredictable manners. This shows how the process of the globalization and integration of Hollywood and Asian film industries has complicated and reconfigured any clear-cut notions of domination and resistance. Instead of binary opposition, this, together with the localization/Asianization of Hollywood and globalization/Hollywoodization of Asian film industries, indicates the interactions and interdependency, however limited and lopsided, between Hollywood and Asian film industries.

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Abstract

Foreign Is No Longer Foreign: Globalization, Hollywood and Asian Film Industries

Jungsuk Joo

This article aims to critically examine Hollywood's recent interest in Asian film industries and how this is affecting both Hollywood and Asian film industries and reshaping their relationships. It first examines what has led to Hollywood's turn to Asian film industries. In this context, the article looks at the inflow of Asian elements to Hollywood and Hollywood's strategy of going local in Asia. It then examines implications of these developments. It especially pays attention to how these developments bring together and reshuffle the global and the local. It also challenges the binary view that sees Hollywood and local film industries in opposition to each other by looking at the contradictory, uneven and unpredictable ways in which these developments affect Hollywood and Asian film industries.

Key words: Hollywood, Asian film industries, globalization, local—language production

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논문접수일: 2009. 10. 25 심사완료일 : 2009. 11. 10

게재확정일: 2009. 12. 14

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