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The “ Sleeper ” Status of Southeast Asian Animation

Animation in Southeast Asia is a “ sleeper ”; it exists in the shadows of Japanese *anime* and Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, and Indian outsourced work, but primes itself for a major thrust into regional and global markets. Already, countries of the region have contracted much overseas work that used to go to East Asia, and increasingly, they have become conduits for the showing of American and Japanese animation. More importantly (and of more lasting relevance to the region), domestic animation production is on an upswing, gaining the attention of governments (especially, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore) willing to pump funds into the medium and audiences looking for new local stories.

This article delves into the history, trends, and issues of animation in the six countries where production is known to exist — Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, and Malaysia, with a view of showing how the region is emerging as a major producer of and market for filmic cartoons.

Vietnam — Grandparent of Region’s Animation

Although other Southeast Asian countries had animation earlier, Vietnam has had the longest sustained history of production. On November 9, 1959, the North Vietnam Ministry of Culture founded Hanoi Cartoon Studio (also Vietnamese Cartoon Studio), assigning Le Minh Hien as manager. Earlier, he and Truong Qua had been sent to study at Moscow’s Soyuzmultfilm in preparation for establishing an animation presence in Vietnam. Upon their return, they trained colleagues and together made *What the Fox Deserves* (1960),

described by historian Giannalberto Bendazzi as “an allegory on the necessity of working together to defeat the enemies.”¹

Over the years, most Vietnamese animators were trained at the Hanoi Cartoon Studio, although a few were sent to East Berlin, Moscow, and Czechoslovakia.²

The amount of animation that came out of the studio was formidable after the first year that yielded only one. During the war (1961-1975), an average of five titles were made annually, increased to eight to ten after 1975. Through 1998, the Hanoi Cartoon Studio had released 260 titles, usually of two types — initially overtly propagandistic stories and then, after the war, classic children’s tales.

In the thick of the war, typical themes were those of *The Kitty* (1966, directed by Ngo Manh Lan), which depicted a kitten who successfully organizes against an army of invading rats, and *The Talking Blackbird* (1967), the story of a Vietnamese boy and his blackbird companion who together defeat the Americans. The same year, the studio’s first color film, *Carved in the Rock* (Truong Qua and Nguyen Yen), appeared, a story of three generations of partisans.

Very adverse wartime conditions made filmmaking difficult in Vietnam. For a time, much of the studio’s operations moved to the mountain areas of Vinh Phu and Hoa Binh for security purposes, but filming continued in Hanoi bomb shelters as the capital was the only place with a steady supply of electricity.³

In more recent years, Hanoi Cartoon Studio has concentrated on short films (7-24 minutes), using cel, puppet, and cutout techniques, and moralistic fables. An executive with Australia’s Energee Entertainment, Gerry Travers, who has worked with the studio, described its operations as,

primarily geared to producing one man films. This is his story and his film, and [the filmmaker] has two or three colleagues [he will work with]. They’ll write the script and do the whole thing, and that’s it. They sort of make it up as they go along.⁴

Harvey Deneroff sensed that Vietnamese animators somewhat went their own way, not much influenced by the country’s French colonial heritage or animation training provided in Eastern Europe. He said,

Rather, they seem to reflect indigenous and even Chinese styles, especially when it comes to their cutout films; this is not really surprising, given the sophistication of the cutout animation in China.... The Vietnamese films, though, lack the rich detail and styling seen in the best Chinese films and often tend to be on the crude side....

Given the limited resources provided to them, it is perhaps not surprising that Le Minh Hien and Truong Qua chose to use a more casual style, which also more closely resembled Vietnamese visual styling.⁵

As with most countries of Southeast Asia, Vietnam became a haven for overseas animation studios beginning in 1991, with the involvement of Hanoi Cartoon Studio. Factors contributing to this change of emphasis were the collapse of its donor nation (Soviet Union), a subsequent shift to a more capitalist economy, the re-establishment of diplomatic and trade relationships with the U.S., and the linkup with the Internet, thus lowering communication costs. The first such overseas production facility was set up by the Japanese in Long An, followed by one established by French company Pixibox in 1994, and throughout the mid-1990s, others of American, Korean (Hahn Shin), Filipino (Philippine Animation Studio Inc.), German (Hahn Film), and Australian origins. In 1997-1998, Australia's Energee Entertainment struck a deal whereby Hanoi Cartoon Studio would become its overseas facility and would grant Energee distribution rights to its full catalogue of animation. Creative aspects, such as compositing, modeling, and rendering of images, that used to be done with high levels of skill in Vietnam, are retained in Paris, San Francisco, or Sydney. Vietnamese artists are now sent to Australia for training or are imbued with the "European philosophy" brought to the Hanoi studio every three or four months by visits from Parisian heads of Pixibox. Most offshore studios exist in Ho Chi Minh City. The growth of such facilities may be related, according to Aghion and Merson,⁶ to the linguistic and cultural legacy of French colonialism, the high artistic skills of Vietnamese, and American involvement in Vietnam. But more likely reasons are related to Vietnam's seeking out Western investment and the animation industries of various countries searching for inexpensive, stable labor pools. One overseas animation official estimated costs of completing animation projects were 30 percent less than if done in his company's home studio in San Francisco.⁷

Indonesia — Exemplar of Overseas Production Impact

Animation in Indonesia is indicative of the importance of offshore production in the region. In 1992, cartoonist/ animator Dwi Koendoro said that if he stretched the definition of animator, there might be 15-20 in the country, and that he could recall only three other studios in Indonesia besides his Citra Audivistama — the governmental Pusat Produksi Film Negara (PPFN) and the privately-owned Anima Indah (closed in 1976) and Komodo, which lasted about six months.⁸

Less than a decade later, on the occasion of the inaugural Indonesian Animation Film Festival, organizer of the fest, Gotot Prakoso, claimed about 250 animation studios, with thousands of employees, functioned in Jakarta and Bogor. He said the boom started four years earlier when Indonesian television networks began commissioning series, and Japanese producers handed out ink-and-paint assignments to local studios.⁹ The festival, meant to increase awareness of the range and quality of local animation, drew more than 9,400 people and featured 161 titles.

Citra Audivistama (launched in 1986) and its founder-director Koendoro figured prominently in animation's gaining a toehold in Indonesia, recruiting and training for the profession through on-site training and workshops in conjunction with PAKARTI (cartoonists association) and *HumOr* [sic] magazine. Koendoro said getting young people to choose animation as a career was not a simple task in the early 1990s because of a number of difficulties, especially a lack of confidence in local animation production by both multinational and Indonesian businesses.¹⁰

As with the rest of Southeast Asia, Indonesian animation has had to contend with strong influxes of Japanese anime and American cartoons,¹¹ both of which are likely to have eaten into the domestic market and influenced styles, formats, and stories of Indonesian animation. Perhaps these influences were evident in the winning works at the above-mentioned first Indonesian Animation Festival — *Da Pupu* (director, Wahyu Aditya), about a dead swan brought back to life by robots, and *Keong Kecil dan Rumahnya*, "a TV show in the vein of 'A Bug's Life' based on a local fable."¹² Disney's presence in Indonesia expanded considerably in mid-2002 when ABC Cable Networks Group launched a Disney Channel, first in English with later dubbing into Bahasa Indonesian, and capable of reaching 70 percent of pay television homes.

Thailand — Energized by Government

As South Korea has become an animation powerhouse in East Asia and India in South Asia, Thailand in 2004 was on the verge of attaining a similar status among Southeast Asia countries. The impetus, like in Korea, is the government, which announced in January 2004, that over the course of five years, it planned to expand multimedia and animation into an 80 billion baht (\$2 billion) industry. Information and Communications Technology Minister Surapong Suebwonglee said short-term goals included joint agreements with the private sector to produce animated movies of “world-class content with a Thai brand name.”¹³ Other plans in the works are setting up Thailand pavilions at many animation and multimedia shows abroad, establishing digital content courses, providing facilities for the government’s “GoodNet” project (a low-cost, broadband Internet service meant to provide access to and learning of digital content), increasing the labor pool in animation and multimedia from under 1,000 to 25,000 people over five years, and giving tax privileges to animation and multimedia houses.

Support for the plan emanates from the state-run Software Industry Promotion Agency (SIPA), which, in March 2004, signed a one billion baht (US\$25 million) deal with seven Thai animation firms to co-produce ten projects. SIPA planned to invest 30 million baht (US\$750,000) in each project, dispensing the funds to Imagimax Animation and Design Studio, Thomas Ideas, Kantana Group, CyberPlanet Interactive, Chiang Mai Digital Works, and two unnamed Thai companies. Kantana was granted 400 million baht (US\$10 million) to produce the cartoon feature *Kan Kluy*; Imagimax used its allotment to develop a 3-D cartoon and a movie.¹⁴ To bring attention to animation, the Thai government also sponsored two festivals, Thai Anima 2003 — The First International Animation Festival, in January 2003, and Thailand Animation Multimedia, a year later.¹⁵

A look at the Thai Anima 2003 catalogue gives an indication of the quantity and range of animation in Thailand: 35 films were in competition, ranging from 46 seconds to 6½ minutes, and including a variety of types and techniques. Another 19 films were listed as best animation works in competition for the Payut Ngaokrachang award, 1997-2001; also included were 21 music videos using animation and 14 other animated works of 2002-2003 as part of a Thai Showcase. Twelve of the latter, most in the three to eight minute range except for five that exceeded ten minutes, were released in a two-year span, 2001-2003.¹⁶

Besides Imagimax and Kantana, Imagine Design Co. has also been active in recent years, producing television animation fare such as *Chao Jook* and *Kaew*. *Chao Jook* started in 1996 as a mascot used as an interlude between programs. The 20-second spots are based on Thai plays for children. *Chao Jook* has been part of an animation short emphasizing Thai culture. *Kaew*, a 15-minute program begun in 2003, was adapted from a popular story, "Adventures of Mistress Kaew," which first appeared in 1978 in a special edition of *Satree-Sarn* magazine.

Other companies producing animation are Anya Animation Co., Ltd., Appreciate Entertainment Co., Ltd., Broadcast Thai Television Co., Ltd., Cartooniverse Co., Ltd., Chaiyo Productions Co., Ltd., Comgraph Co., Ltd., Fantasy Town Co., Ltd., Kwankaewsarabuntoeng Co., Ltd., Sirin Thai Seramies Co., Ltd., Thai Wang Film Productions, Vithita Animation Co., Ltd., and World Story Co., Ltd.

For much of its history, Thai animation sputtered along, with little to boast about, save for the achievements of Payut Ngaokrachang. Although animation in Thailand started with a blockmaker, Saney Klaykleun, who in 1945, was commissioned by the government to make a one-minute campaign piece, it was Payut who advanced the profession almost single-handedly. Payut did his first work, the 12-minute *Haed Mahasajan* (The Miracle Incident), in 1955, basing it on a gag cartoon he drew for *Lakmuang* newspaper. He wrote the script, drew and painted the pictures on used X-ray film, and filmed the whole project with a second-hand 16-mm camera he adapted.¹⁷ Payut continued doing animated shorts and then in 1976, embarked upon animating the story of a character, Sud Sakorn, from a famous, early 19th Century Thai literary work. The tale was a feast of rich colors and incongruous adventures which, after more than two years, Payut managed to put onto 82 minutes of film, creating Thailand's first and to this day, only feature-length animation, *The Adventure of Sud Sakorn*. Completion of the work came at great costs, with Payut depleting his personal funds and damaging his eyesight.¹⁸

Payut has continued to campaign for the advancement of animation, through training generations of young animators, helping in the planning of Thai Anima 2003, conceptualizing an animation association, and prodding government and other entities to support animation.

The payoffs were slow in coming. Writing as late as 1996, animator Chalida Uabumrungjit said she found it difficult

to take animation in Thailand very seriously. What we see are just brief fillers inserted after one television show and before the next one. The reality is that Thai animation survives only in a very limited area, being restricted to children's programmes and commercials.¹⁹

Until the government initiative in 2003-2004, not much interest was expressed for animation by officialdom, the public, or the business community. Any interest in local animation by major investors was stymied by their ignorance of the possibilities of the art form and unwillingness to put money into a field where production costs drastically outstripped sales and where a quick turnaround of capital did not exist.²⁰

A small breakthrough occurred in the late 1980s as Thailand began doing animation for foreign clients. Leading in this area was Thai Wang Film, started in 1989 as a subsidiary of Taiwan's Wang Film Productions. The company grew to more than 300 employees in 12 departments. Thais were not involved in the creative process or the managerial side at Thai Wang.²¹ Another offshore animation company was Kantana, begun in 1987 doing subcontracting for Japan's Toei. In 1994, Kantana began to make Thai animation with *Twin Witches*, Thai television's first cartoon series.²²

Singapore — The Newest Newcomer

Animation came to Singapore in the 1990s during the government's efforts to attract foreign investment to engineer its drive to become Asia's media hub. Virtually nothing existed before K. Subramaniam (Subra) set up Animata in 1990, initially to produce commercials and educational materials and eventually other fare, including Singapore's first animated feature, *The Life of the Buddha* (1995),²³ and a series built around the character Hardy Driftwood, used to promote conservation among children.²⁴

Other studios were opened shortly after, such as 25 Frames, VHQ, ID Imaging, Garman Animation, Animasia, and UTV. The latter two were offshoots of international companies interested in establishing/servicing markets outside Singapore, but with different twists.

Animasia, established in 1995 by the multinational Wuthelam Group, had a work schedule of 70 percent overseas production and 30 percent Singapore television commercials. Company officials were keen to garner an international audience using international/generic

characters.²⁵ UTV International, which also came to Singapore in 1995, and produces offshore animation, aimed to create local characters and situations to be marketed worldwide.²⁶ UTV produced the first Singapore-based cartoon, *Jo Kilat* (1998), featuring the antics of a group of Malay, Chinese, and Indian boys.

Animators find it difficult to create indigenous stories and characters as Singaporean cultural traits are just beginning to be defined. As a result, some animation produced in Singapore has a wider Asian appeal, an example being *King Monk* (1998), an updated character based on the Monkey God from ancient Indian literature. *King Monk* was also important because it was in 3-D and jointly produced by media companies from Japan, India, and Singapore.²⁷

Factors that accounted for the growing awareness of animation in the 1990s were the comeback of Disney features, which were being shown in Singapore, as well as the increased exposure to Japanese *anime* (from 2-4 hours weekly on Television Corporation of Singapore in the early 1990s to 12-15 hours in 2000),²⁸ special effects in blockbuster movies, and animated commercials, and a proliferation of multimedia CD-ROMs and other inexpensive software.²⁹

Knowing they could not compete with other Asian countries in providing inexpensive labor pools for overseas production, using traditional painting on cels techniques, Singaporean animators turned to digital ink and paint, capitalizing on the country's supply of highly-computer literate people and capability to invest in high-priced equipment.

As in a few other Asian countries, the government, mainly through the Economic Development Board (EDB), lent a hand in furthering animation by helping set up animation training programs, combining local companies with international counterparts to co-produce and distribute for the overseas market, and enticing a number of foreign firms to set up studios in Singapore.³⁰ EDB heavily invested in the establishment of training programs at Nanyang Polytechnic Institute (1996, a 3-year diploma course in digital media design), Ngee Ann Polytechnic (with a digital effects studio), and Temasek Polytechnic (media design, animation).³¹ Temasek personnel, with support of the National Arts Council, founded the first Animation Fiesta in 1996, a biennial event that has showcased Singaporean animation.³²

Common with other parts of Southeast Asia, Singapore must contend with the ever-encroaching influence of *anime* and the problem of, more often than not, executing someone else's (overseas

studios) ideas. A result, again persistent throughout Asia, is that although the Singaporean animation industry possesses high execution (technology) skills, it is seriously lacking in the creative (storytelling) realm.

Philippines — Trying for a Life of its Own

For nearly two decades, the Philippines was among the major Asian producers of overseas animation, with studios such as Burbank, Fil-Cartoons, and Philippine Animation Studio Inc. (pasi) cranking out millions of hours of work for foreign studios. Cheap labor was the main attraction, but others were the Filipinos' mastery of English, an American-oriented culture, and high-level artistic skills.

Burbank Animation Inc. was Manila's first producer/exporter of animation, started in 1983 by Burbank Australia. The company thrived for a few years, benefiting from Philippine government tax incentives and servicing the local advertising market, but faded in the late 1980s because of competition from other studios, chiefly Fil-Cartoons. According to Kevin Roper, Burbank Manila animation director, 1983-1986, Burbank had negotiated to sell out to Marvel Comics but the deal fell through.³³ Then, Burbank's fate was sealed by the creation in 1987 of Fil-Cartoons, which had what Burbank wanted but could not attain — entry into the American market. Fil-Cartoons, owned by Hanna-Barbera, was actually established to service Turner Broadcasting System Saturday morning programming in the U.S.³⁴

Of the three major overseas producers, only pasi survives. Established in 1990, it is owned by Malaysian-based tycoon Ananda Krishnan as part of his Measat-Astro. Pasi also ran into hard times in the late 1990s, but was able to hang on, by moving from fee-for-service work to co-productions, closing its Vietnam branch, turning itself into an artist-run studio with staff co-investments, and producing local animation, including the first Filipino animated TV series.³⁵

At the dawn of the new millennium, Philippine overseas animation production was in the doldrums, partly because the demand for cartoons diminished worldwide, and because China and India, with cheaper labor and/or digital know-how, became important producers. Philippine studios have tried to stay afloat by lowering rates or expanding to include 3D and pre- and post-production work. With encouragement from a governmental department, the

industry formed an Animation Council to showcase the entire industry.³⁶

Domestic animation has existed since at least 1941, when it was used for special effects in the film *Ibong Adarna* (The Adarna Bird); some animation was also used in advertising during World War II.³⁷ Father of Philippine comics Antonio Velasquez said he was paid to write an animation script about his famous character Kenkoy in 1946, but the project was abandoned.³⁸ Two other comics cartoonists dipped into animation in 1952-1953, Larry Alcala with his 8 mm. short of a girl jumping rope and a boy playing with a yoyo,³⁹ and Jose Zaballa Santos who did the 2-minute *Juan Tamad*. Although Alcala said animation was too expensive to have a life in the Philippines,⁴⁰ he continued in the field, doing animated commercials for Universal Promotions in 1956, experimenting in animation for titling of TV programs in the 1960s, and starting a film animation course at University of the Philippines in 1972.⁴¹ Santos' nephew, Nonoy Marcelo, also a newspaper and comic book cartoonist, worked in animation at the government's National Media Production Center beginning in 1977-1978. He said he did three full-length animation films on Philippine history, adding,

All were edited on pneumatic tapes, shot in 35 mm. And I did five-minute animated shorts — 12 of those. Ely Matawaran and other cartoonists worked with me. Before, I had taken an animation course in New York City.

For two years, 1977-1978, NMPC was a security blanket [against arrest for doing critical Marcos cartoons in the press]. I rented a house and I tapped all known animators, and we were commissioned to do animation in three months for NMPC.⁴²

Among works credited to Marcelo were *Annie Batungbakal*, the Ilocano epic *Blag ni Lamang* (Life of Lamang), the Marcos rewrite of history *Tadhana* (Destiny), and *Da Real Macoy*, a life story of Marcos.⁴³

Ironically, it was the dreadful Marcos regime that advanced animation, the type useful in propagandizing for the presidency and its pet projects. In addition to Marcelo's efforts in these directions, other animators did works to encourage Filipinos to be self-reliant and to teach children a sense of national identity (through the children's TV show *Batibot*⁴⁴). Providing recognition for animators was the annual short film and video festival begun in 1982 by the

Experimental Cinema of the Philippines, a body founded by the president's wife Imelda and once headed by his daughter Imee. Some outstanding talents blossomed at the inaugural festival, including the brothers Mike and Juan Alcazaren and their clay animation, *Hari* (King, 1982), depicting a power struggle among various creatures for the crown. Much of their work, and that of others, satirized the political and social order of the Philippines.⁴⁶ In the 1990s, Philippine animation topics moved away from an emphasis on great historical events to everyday issues and identities. Among these were Tita Rosel's *Anong Trabaho ng Nanay Mo?* (1995, What Is Your Mother's Job?), about a mother working as a housewife; Ellen Ramos' *Sa Kabila ng Bulkan* (The Other Side of the Volcano), dealing with displaced people in the Pinatubo volcano area, and Kris Layug's *Mr. Klean* (1995), on commercialism.⁴⁷

Although foreign animation, especially from U.S. and Japan, has dominated Philippine big and small screens, it has met resistance at various times from government censors. In the late 1970s, President Ferdinand Marcos personally intervened to ban all robot (Japanese) cartoons on television because of "their harmful influence on children."⁴⁸ Again in 1995, the government's head censor pledged to rid television cartoons of violence, citing *Batman*, *The Simpsons*, and *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, among others.⁴⁹

Malaysia — Trends of Localization

As with the Philippines, Malaysia first used animation in movie titles about 1946. Responsible for much of the country's early animation were Australian Gillie Potter, who with photographic equipment left behind by British soldiers, started Filem Negara, and in the 1960s, its Animation Unit,⁵⁰ and A. Xavier, who as head of Filem Negara's Animation Unit in 1970-1971, recruited many artists and designers to do animation. In 1978, Filem Negara made the first entertainment short, *Hikayat Sang Kancil* (The Story of Mousedeer). The studio was especially prolific in 1984-1985, churning out four additional mousedeer shorts, plus *The Clever Crow* and *The Greedy Lion*, all simple, humorous, educational, and satirical animal fables.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, at least a dozen major animation companies appeared, producing mostly domestic, but also a small amount of foreign-originated work. A few factors accounted for this accelerated growth. For one thing, humor and satire had become publically popular in Malaysia, due in large part to a

plethora of humor magazines, starting with *Gila-Gila* (Mad about *Mad*) in 1978.⁵¹ The magazines also provided story ideas and personnel for animation; Ujang's *Usop Sontorian*, Jaafar Taib's *Jungle Jokes*, and Lat's *Kampung Boy* all were adapted to television animation from their original magazine versions. Malaysia's advertising boom was also a key factor; by the end of the century, about 1,065 animated advertisements were made yearly by Malaysian animation houses. Also important was the emergence of new television channels after privatization of broadcasting; these stations, eager for locally-made entertainment, welcomed animation. Of course, governmental concerns about foreign cartoons, made much more available via satellite television, prompted more local production. Supporting local cartoons that promote Malaysian culture and positive values and denouncing Western and Japanese animation as negative, brutal, propagandistic, and unhealthy, the government offered contracts for the production of suitable series and assured them television outlets.⁵²

The results were a number of significant advancements in Malaysian animation during the past decade — the first full-length animated feature, *Silat Legenda* (1998, director Hassan Muthalib),⁵³ and subsequently another, *Mann Spider* (2001, director Ahmad Sean); an award-winning television series, *Kampung Boy* (1999, Mohd. Nor Khalid), which won a special prize at Annecy 1999;⁵⁴ co-production ventures, including *Kampung Boy* (Malaysia-based Astro, U.S.-based Matinee, and Philippine Animation Studio Inc.) and *Tian Ji* (Malaysia's Persistence of Vision and two British companies);⁵⁵ the first Malaysian animated superhero, *Keluang Man* (1998); some training opportunities,⁵⁶ and an emphasis on local stories and characters.

All four major themes of Malaysian animation (folktales, scenes of daily life, fantasy, and superhero adventures),⁵⁷ feature localness. The most popular, folktales (usually made by Filem Negara or/and Hassan Muthalib), snugly fit the Malaysian scene and fulfill the government's call to create a national identity, while scenes of daily life are usually filmic adaptations of humor magazine stories or gags, themselves of local origins. For example, Ujang's *Usop Sontorian* revolves around the artist's strip character Usop and his Chinese and Indian friends as they go about daily life in a Malaysian village, and Lat's *Kampung Boy*, an extension of his cartoon novel of the same name, depicts Lat's experiences as a village boy in the 1950s and 1960s. Even though fantasy and superhero animated cartoons have plots and situations universally

common to these genres, they are given stylistic and textual traits that distinguish them as Malaysian.

Regional Tendencies

Work-for-Hire — As labor became more expensive in East Asia in the 1990s, overseas animation production began spilling into Southeast Asia. In some cases, e.g. Philippines, the work moved out almost as quickly as it came in. The impacts left behind included, a shift of emphasis from original, domestic stories to the telling of other countries' stories for them (as in Vietnam); the introduction of a more mechanized, assembly line type of production, sometimes at the price of quality and creativity, and an enlightenment of officialdom and the public of the importance of animation.

Government Involvement — Some governments recognized the economic potential of animation as an export and began to release funds for its further development and to work for its advancement as a profession. The Vietnam government from the outset supported animation, but in more recent years, so have the authorities in Thailand and Singapore, and to a lesser degree, Philippines.

Co-Productions — As has happened in East Asia, some animation industries of Southeast Asia have seen the need for and benefits of doing co-productions — intra-country, regional, or globally. Some Malaysian, Philippine, and Vietnamese companies have already gone that route.

Dominance of Foreign Animation — Foreign animation takes up much screen time all over Asia. A mid-1990s' survey of Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, India, and Sri Lanka found that the combined number of annual hours devoted to foreign animation was 82,163, compared to 11,313 domestic. Much of the foreign animation enters the region through multinational TV broadcasters STAR TV, TNT, BBC, Cartoon Network, Disney, etc.⁵⁸ These and other companies compete furiously for the cartoon markets of Southeast Asia, launching customized cablecasts as Disney Channel did in the Philippines in 1998,⁵⁹ providing a separate feed for Southeast Asia as Disney did in 1995⁶⁰ and TNT/Cartoon Network in 1997,⁶¹ or creating content specific to the region as Disney Channel Asia did in 2003, by producing a series based on popular Southeast Asian folktales, each from a different country.⁶²

Japanese *anime* is so popular in Asia that AXN's Animax Asia in 2004, started a 24-hour exclusively *anime* channel.

Nourishing of Domestic Animation — Simultaneously with this augmented presence of foreign animation is an effort to create popular local stories, characters, and styles, visible as it never has been before (except in Vietnam) throughout the region.

A combination of some of these trends bodes well in awakening parts of Southeast Asian animation that lay dormant for years and in acknowledging parts that played the role of a "sleeper."

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