

## A Political Aspect of the Korean Wave in Taiwan\*

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Studies of the Korean Wave in Taiwan have construed the genesis of the Wave as either accidental, evitable, or taken it for granted. Problematising the genesis of the Korean Wave in Taiwan, the paper proposes to see it as the product of social and political forces pertaining to a specific moment of history of Taiwan. Other than deeming the genesis categorically as a cultural instance, it argues that the Wave is in effect the production manufactured at the convergence of social political changes at a historical moment unprecedented in Taiwan history. To respond to the new social and political conditions, the Korean Wave is deliberately appropriated as the extension of social institution and political control for the purpose of prolonging class interests of the traditional rulers. By means of mammoth circulation and transmission of print media and television broadcast, the Wave is immediately called into being and captivates a throng of Taiwanese audience. In return, the overwhelming popularity of Korean TV dramas is capitalized on politically besides socially and culturally in order to meet new needs. Resiting the Korean Wave in Taiwan in the social and political processes at the specific moment of Taiwan history, its genesis is thereby complicated and overdetermined on top of the advanced and promised drama qualities and productions. Inevitably a limited view, however, the paper is hoped to provide an alternative aspect to the studies of the Korean Wave either in Taiwan or other regions.

*Keywords:* Korean TV dramas, product, social and political processes, media in question, intension, television, mammoth

### **Prelude: Questioning the Genesis of the Korean Wave in Taiwan<sup>1</sup>**

In Taiwan, studies of the Korean Wave have seldom questioned its genesis: The emergence of the Korean Wave in Taiwan has been taken for granted<sup>2</sup> since its nascent popularity in around late 2000.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the emergence of the Korean Wave in Taiwan is problematic once it is examined not only in terms of the Wave per se<sup>4</sup> but, in particular, in terms of the historical moment of Taiwan where the Wave was situated. Indeed, the importation of Korean TV dramas to Taiwan began as early as in the 1990s, yet, throughout the decade of the 1990s, very few of them invoked observable or distinguishable social reverberations. In other words, during the said period, there had been no distinctive signs of its popularity that would provide the material condition for a

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<sup>1</sup> The Korean Wave in Taiwan is predominantly initiated by Korean TV dramas. Thus, the Korean Wave referred to throughout the paper specifies Korean TV dramas rather than other forms of Korean popular culture.

<sup>2</sup> The notion, also the term, “take for granted” is inspired by and adopted from Roger Silverstone (Silverstone, 1994, p. 3).

<sup>3</sup> There are no Taiwan studies of the Korean Wave in Taiwan found in disagreement with the view.

<sup>4</sup> The generally held view in Taiwan, either by academic studies or by the social majority, is that the sweeping popularity of Korean TV dramas since late 2000 is of course the result of the advanced quality and production of the dramas.

possibility of the genesis of Korean TV dramas to form a “wave”, a nationwide and invincible adoration for and social collective fascination with the Korean TV dramas, which would immediately captivate the whole island in the adjoining new millennium.

If we keep track of the television history of Taiwan of trading in Korean TV dramas, the history shows that the cable network Star TV had televised masses of Korean dramas from 1993 on; since 1996, dozens of Korean dramas were being purchased and broadcast on the Pili Network (Wu, 2002, p. 3). Commonly regarded as the TV station which initiated the Korean Wave in Taiwan, the Gala Television (GTV) indeed started broadcasting Korean TV dramas in late 1999. However, none of the Korean dramas these channels transmitted had noticeable, let alone high, TV ratings, indicating that they only appealed to a very minimum of Taiwanese audiences in the last decade of the twentieth century. The apathy of Taiwanese audiences toward Korean TV dramas throughout the 1990s characterized the social condition of little possibility for a sweeping and nationwide wave of collective craze for Korean TV dramas in the ensuing ages. Henceforth, it is obscure and problematic that the Taiwan society appeared immediately and readily fascinated by the charm of the Korean TV dramas in subsequent months and years as soon as the new millennium descended. Questions concerning the Wave’s genesis thereby arise: How was the collective fascination for the Korean dramas made possible by the mushroom of Taiwanese audiences after late 2000? How did the Korean Wave germinate the boom of Taiwanese fans within such brevity of years? Above all, was the Korean Wave categorically a cultural instance that its genesis in the new millennium ought to be taken for granted in terms of advanced qualities and promised productions of Korean dramas as soon as they were imported to Taiwan? Or, were there any social, political, and historical determinations at the advent of the new millennium on Taiwan that had had the genesis not only socially and culturally but historically and politically overdetermined?

In her study of the relation between the rise of the Korean Wave and the media environment in Taiwan, Lin Lih-Yuan provides a material analysis of the local media infrastructure upon how the rise of Korean TV dramas in the early 21st century was made possible (Lin, 2006). She points out that, impacted by Western capitals’ preying on foreign markets during the 1980s, in particular the U.S. and the U.K.’s target at Asian markets, the incumbent Taiwanese government had but to cater to the hegemony of the powers by yielding to the importation of their cultural commodities. Among them, the U.S. government imposed exceptional pressure upon Taiwanese government to create a multi-channel media environment in order to accommodate massive and legal consumptions of American cultural products in Taiwan and to keep the pirated uses of them at bay. As a result of the construction of such a multi-channel media environment, there were over 80 cable TV channels by late 1990s (Lin, 2006, p. 135-6). Henceforth, the media environment of television channels in Taiwan was extremely competitive, and margins of profits for each channel were critically narrow. To maximize profits in such a highly competitive media environment, Taiwanese channel proprietors then appealed to low-cost Korean TV dramas; hence, an overwhelming number of Korean TV dramas were televised by a host of TV channels in Taiwan. In consequence, Taiwanese audience was exposed to the flooding of transmission of Korean TV dramas as they turned on home television sets. Lin argues that it was conditioned primarily upon the multi-channel media circumstance that when the Korean drama “Firework” of a particularly advanced quality was broadcast on GTV in July 2000, a large Taiwanese population was immediately drawn to it and the Korean Wave in Taiwan thus took shape followingly and then gradually engulfed the country (Lin, 2006, p. 138).

Lin's proposition of the multi-channel media infrastructure, constructed since the 1980s in the age of neo-liberalism and globalization, gives a domestic and historical contour of the material and structural bases without which the Korean Wave would not have been made possible in late 2000. However, it is through this structural and historical delineation that the contradiction or inconsistency, internal to the rising of the Korean Wave in Taiwan, is simultaneously unearthed. The problematic emerges as one inquiries into why the Korean Wave did not come about during the 1990s but until late 2000. That is to say, there is the contradiction in terms of the timing of the genesis of the Korean Wave if we compare its emergence in Taiwan to that in other Asian regions. Studies of the Korean Wave in Asia by Chua Beng-huat and Koichi Iwabuchi and Doobo Shim identify that the Korean Wave was initiated in China in 1996 and spread to Vietnam in 1997 (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2007; Shim, 2007). Chua and Iwabuchi specify that the emergence of the Korean Wave in Asia was the confluence of effects of 1997 Asian Financial Crisis as South Korea attempted to save national economy by massively producing low-cost cultural products, while other crisis-stricken Asian nations were conversely looking for inexpensive cultural products in the process of recovery from economic debris (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2007, p. 4). Shim may represent the perspective of most South Korean scholars who hold the view that "the Korean Wave...started in China with the broadcast of *What Is Love All About...*In 1997..." (Shim, 2007, p. 15). Starting in China, the wave then swiftly conquered Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Above all, Vietnam particularly consumed Korean TV dramas in stunning volume, which accounted for 56% of total imported foreign programs in 1998 (Shim, 2007, p. 25). It is here that the contradiction and discordance is manifested: While Shim states that the Korean Wave arrived in Taiwan in around 1997 to 1998, studies by Taiwanese scholars have concluded that the Korean Wave in Taiwan did not emerge until late 2000. According to Chua and Iwabuchi's research specifying that the Korean Wave swept eastern Asia after 1997 economic crisis, it is hence questionable why Taiwan was not affected in the meanwhile but until almost three years later. How does one comprehend the absurdity and discordance of the Korean Wave in Taiwan?

### **Identifying the Intention**

What has constituted the Korean Wave in Taiwan is by no means absurdity and discordance. To comprehend its genesis and formation in the first place, the notion of "intension" by Raymond Williams is congenial and instrumental.

To illuminate the physical operational forces of the invention of television in Britain, Raymond Williams proposes in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* that the study of television be conducted pertaining to the social and political processes where it emerges and how it is used, other than seeing it solely as the consequence of a series of technological innovations and military or commercial applications (Williams, 2003). Williams argues that the inventions of new communication technology, be they the press, photograph, radio stations, newspapers, television and so forth, are in effects extensions of social institutions and political control (Williams, 2003, p. 16). In the wake of the transition of contemporary world situation alongside of its effects on domestic British society after the first and second world wars, he illuminates the transformed social and political conditions of Britain where new institutions of the social and the political are called forth to meet new needs for hegemonic apparatus of ruling groups as a result of debilitation of traditional institutions such as churches and schools for social teaching and control in the U. K. (Williams, 2003, p. 14). Williams reminds his contemporaries that it is at the convergence of these social, political, and historical, along with technological, commercial, and military, transitions and determinations that the television is invented. Through articulating the

invention of television to the social and political process, Williams argues that television should be construed as a modern mode of social institution (Williams, 2003, pp. 14-5) and state apparatus (Williams, 2003, p. 28) rather than deeming it merely as the medium or agency for information and communication, the conventional mode of television studies that have insulated operations and applications of television from “a whole of social and cultural process” (Williams, 2003, p. 122). In order to denote in television broadcast implications of state hegemony and social control, “therefore all the real social and political process” (Williams, 2003, p. 122), Williams propounds to inquiry into the “intension” of the broadcast, to question “Who says what, how, to whom, with what effects and for what purpose” (Williams, 2003, p. 122). By virtue of probing into the real intensions behind the uses of television through raising and probing these questions, the “interested agency” and “ruling class” can be further recognized and characterized (Williams, 2003, pp. 122-124). The invention of television, alongside with innovations of medium for social communication, will thereby be hardly seen as “accidental”, “inevitable” (Williams, 2003, p. 122) or taken as granted.

Through problematising the invention of television, the social, political, and even institutional complications that effect television’s invention and the underlying intention are thus able to be laid out. According to Williams, the invention of television should not be deemed as a technological development or studied its effects and symptoms merely. Urging to site the social and political processes of television’s invention with regard to the intention underlined, Williams highlights that “the new technology is itself a product of a particular system, and will be developed as an apparently autonomous process of innovation only to the extent that we fail to identify and challenge its real agencies” (Williams, 2003, p. 140). Here, what is important to note is that to regard the television as a product of social system is far from suggesting that its emergence excludes generations of inventions and developments of technologies ahead of it such as electricity, telegraphy, motion pictures, etc., as have been accentuated in *Television* (Williams, 2003, p. 7). However, the creation of television at the historical moment after World War II would not be materialized if it did not coincide with the interests of ruling and controlling the British society by traditional ruling classes or agencies. The interrelationship of the invention of television and the interested groups can hardly be identified or even challenged without regard to the processes and intentions involved in inventing television. More importantly, this identification of the intension and the interested structure plays the role of challenging the real agencies. Therefore, the challenge will not be achieved if studies of television are not conducted within those of the processes of the social and political history.

To question the genesis of the Korean Wave in Taiwan here is neither to cast skepticism on if ever the Korea Wave actually existed, nor does it try to imply that the qualities of Korean TV dramas don’t accord with its phenomenal popularity in Taiwan. In those years when the Korean Wave hit the island, there was indeed a legion of Taiwanese audience who appeared fervently captivated by the charm and glamour that Korean TV dramas have guaranteed. However, the genesis of the Wave begets skepticism as soon as the social and political processes, in particular in terms of the specific historical moment at which it was invoked, are sited and the intension of the Wave investigated. In other words, the Korean Wave in Taiwan is in effect “a product of a particular system”, just as Williams’ manifestation of the invention of television of the U.K., which is manufactured at the convergence of the social and political interests of the real agencies and the ruling groups in Taiwan society. That is to say, that the emergence of the Korean Wave in Taiwan in late 2000 was conditioned possible results less from its advanced program qualities, which had already been attested to since

mid 1990s in other Asian regions, than from its accordance with the interests of the ruling groups or agencies of Taiwan at the specific historical moment, which was in transition not only to a new millennium but to a new political power. The intention of producing the Wave is to extend the social and political control over the Taiwan society, which in return creates the Korean Wave to become the product of the social and political forces. Therefore, the genesis of the Korean Wave in Taiwan will not be accounted for if it is not studied in situ in the social and political processes of Taiwan history. Through delving into the history along the line of social and political processes, the intention, apparatus and purposes that have conjured up and formed the Korean Wave in Taiwan will then be able to be illustrated and its intention identified.

### **The Post-War History of Taiwan and the Media in Question<sup>5</sup>**

In the aftermath of the end of World War II on the mainland China, the two domestic political parties, the Chinese Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party pitted against each other in the civil war from 1945 on. As soon as the Chinese Communist Party swept to total victory and established the People's Republic of China in 1949, the KMT regime, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, retreated to Taiwan and had since ruled the island under authoritarian dictatorship according to the Constitution of the Republic of China, adopted in December, 1947, when the party was still headquartered on the mainland (Tien, 1989, pp. 1-4). On the launch of the KMT regime on Taiwan in 1949, Chiang Kai-shek implemented the imposition of martial law for 38 years, which was not abolished until 1987, a year before the demise of the incumbent President Chiang Ching-kuo, the heir and the elder son of Chiang Kai-shek. After the lifting of martial law in 1988, Taiwan continued the manoeuvres for deepening democracy and fostering freedom in every dimension of the society in addition to limited political reforms propelled by Chiang Ching-kuo in previous ages.

During the reign of Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo from 1949 to 1988, the KMT as a political party in effect had a virtual monopoly of state power on the island, whose control and surveillance permeated every corner of the Taiwan society and the people during the reign. Tien Hung Mao describes the party-state reign as that

The party completely monopolizes power within the government, the armed forces, and the police force. In theory at least, the government carries out policies made by the party leaders. The vast majority of government officials and bureaucrats are party members, and the police members are party members. At times distinction between the party and the government blur. (Tien, 1989, p. 71)

Of the state apparatus by the party-state regime, the media partake of one of the operational institutions and functionaries. During the reign of the KMT party-state, both the electronic and printed media served as agents for enunciating state policy and safeguarding party interests. According to Tien's study of the era prior to 1988, the electronic media were surpassingly monopolized and operated by the party state. As for the printed media that included newspapers and periodicals, none of them were out of the control of the party or the state.<sup>6</sup> In particular, of the 31 newspapers circulating in Taiwan society by 1987, only two of them were not owned by

<sup>5</sup> The definition of "the media in question" in the paper is in line with that of Louise Althusser in his elaboration on the Ideological State Apparatus with the expansion when the repressive state loses state power in an adjustment to Taiwan's condition.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed historical study of the KMT party-state and its control of Taiwan newspapers since its landing on Taiwan, see Lū (2008).

the KMT or without very close affiliation to the party-state backers. By 1985, there were 33 broadcasting networks and 177 radio stations owned either by the party state or its affiliated institutions or groups.<sup>7</sup> In consequence, with an increase in educated population and the accumulation of wealth of the people, the transmission and circulation of messages and information by the media in question “reaches virtually every household” and subsequently exerts sway on every member in the households (Tien, 1989, p. 196).

Among the media in question, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, two privately owned newspaper agencies in Taiwan, have persisted the publication and circulation since the 1950s to date, crossing over periods of implementation and abolition of the martial law since their inception to varied phases of political transitions and media reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. In the study of Taiwan media during the ruling of the KMT party state, Tien Huan Mao indicates that publishers of both newspapers are members of the KMT Central Standing Committee; both maintain varied yet intimate affiliation to the KMT and the party-state, as the owner of the *China Times* is more considered as reformist and that of the *United Daily News* more as conservative (Tien, 1989, p. 198). Lin offers a further in-depth delineation of how the two newspapers have sustained popularity in the market for decades and have abode their publications through those hard times of the enforcement of martial law and the strict censorship of rights of speech by the party state. She proposes to comprehend the ruling apparatus of the KMT party-state along the lines of the notion of “patron-client relationship” (Lin, 2000). In the patron-client relationship, the KMT party-state plays the patron who monopolizes the aggregation of national resources and dominates the distribution. Clients have to abide by the decree of the relationship by propagating state policies and by promulgating party-state ideology in order to buttress the stability of the authoritarian regime. In return, the clients, to wit, the two newspapers in question, are allowed franchise channels for the circulation of the papers in the market and thus guaranteed competitive edges and market profits. Consequently, the two newspapers burgeoned to become the most popular papers since the 1960s whose sold copies in total surmounted those of the totality of other newspapers.<sup>8</sup> Championed by the patron-client relationship, the popularity and prosperity of the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* endured well into the 1990s and the threshold of 21st century. By the end of 2000, the two newspapers were still two of the three best selling newspapers in Taiwan. The aggregate of the daily sales of the two newspapers could reach over 1 million copies, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the overall newspaper consumption.<sup>9</sup> By May 2003 as the new Hong Kong-invested print press, the *Apple Daily*, was founded and threatened to devour the majority of their readership, the two newspapers in totality still had the largest daily circulation in Taiwan.<sup>10</sup> Although the aggregate of readership of the two newspapers fell below that of top two newspapers after late 2003, their leverage and power of speech did not come to a diminution but was transformed to be exerted through television transmission, which turned out to be more penetrating and omnipresent in terms of the permeation and circulation of news and information.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, among the 177 radio stations, the most influential and biggest one, the Broadcasting Corporation of China (BCC), has been on the air since then to the present whose popularity and influence has been persistent and significant.

<sup>8</sup> Lū Tong-hi documents how other newspapers of the time that didn't abide by the patron-client relationship failed to survive in the market (Lū, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> The two newspapers have been refusing to publicize their sold volume. The figure of over one million is a rough estimation calculated from Hsu Jung-hua's data. He points out that by 2006, the top three newspapers are sold about 1.8 million copies. Owing to the fact the sales of newspapers are declining annually in Taiwan, the figure should be bigger than in 2006. See Hsu (2007, p. 79).

<sup>10</sup> See Tables 4-6 in Hsu's research (2007, p. 84).

### The Historical Moment of Year 2000

On March 18th 2000, Taiwan held the 10th-term President and Vice-president Election of the Republic of China, also the second direct presidential election in the post-war history of Taiwan. The election campaigns were historically intense yet, relatively peaceful, but the result of the election was surprising: The opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) defeated the long-time ruling KMT and won the presidential election. In spite of a few days of uproar by KMT supporters at large at the election night for the unexpected outcome, the transfer of state power from the KMT to the DPP was halcyon and successful. The transfer of state power indicates that the new ruling DPP took over not only the presidential seat but state power and the overall national institutions, which had been in the hands of the KMT for nearly six decades. Emphatically, for the first time in the history of post-war Taiwan, the KMT lost the state power and all the state apparatus of the island. In a newly developing country such as Taiwan that has been acquiring its social and political system predominantly from the U.S. after WWII, the ensuing undertaking for the KMT as a political party was of course to retrieve the state power in the next presidential selection.

Indeed, early in the 1997, there have been several Korean pop music groups making their debut promotion in Taiwan along with the importation of Korean TV dramas.<sup>11</sup> By that time, Korean pop culture has shown its advanced qualities and potential charm; likewise, they didn't appeal to a distinctive number of Taiwanese audiences just like the Korean TV dramas at the same period. As having been noted, it was not until late 2000 when the Korean TV drama "The Spark" fascinated a host of Taiwanese viewers, whose popularity soon propelled the formation "the Korean Wave" in Taiwan in ensuing years, that Korean pop culture had lured a significant number of fans and viewers. Prior to the success of the "Spark", the Korean pop culture plus TV dramas was far from magnetic in Taiwan society.

In the wake of the presidential election result in mid-March, 2000, there were exquisite changes taking place in the media in question. They might have occurred in the first place in the increase of news reports of Korean TV dramas in the two newspapers in question.<sup>12</sup> In light of the *China Times*, the number of news reports of Korean TV dramas for each year from 1996<sup>13</sup> to 1999 is minimal. In 1996 and 1997, there are only two and one pieces of news of the Korean TV dramas respectively throughout each respective year from 1 January to 31 December. From 1997 to 1999, the number remains under 10 for each respective year throughout. However, it is noteworthy that the number increases drastically to 20 pieces in 2000. In particular, the increase in news reports doesn't develop evenly in the year. A month by month survey shows that the first news reports of Korean TV dramas appears in March, the second in May, the third in July. In August and September, there are two and one news reports respectively. Abruptly, in October, the number grows to five; in December alone, there are six reports of Korean dramas, outnumbering the aggregate of news reports of the first five months of the year. It is also from the latter half of 2000 on that the number of news reports of Korea TV dramas sets off. In 2001, the figure precipitately jumps to 165, more than eight times the number of 2000. In 2002, the sum bounced to 378, signifying that readers of the paper are exposed to news reports of Korean TV dramas on an

<sup>11</sup> Pop music groups such as Clon, S. E. S., H.O.T.

<sup>12</sup> See Table 1. Because of the limitation of paper space, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* not only refer to the newspaper itself but also other news agencies of the same news group in the table and in the paper.

<sup>13</sup> This is the year the Korean Wave was formed in China.

everyday basis throughout the year. In 2003 and 2004, the number falls slightly to around 270.<sup>14</sup> In 2005, it is arresting that the number mounts up to 427 pieces by a drastic addition of 200 news pieces more than last year.<sup>15</sup> However, in the following two years after 2005, the number shows a trend of slowly sliding down. In 2006, the figure drops to less than 230. The number keeps falling that in 2008, there are only 99 pieces of news throughout the year. By 2010, there has been no abrupt or dramatic spike in the news number of Korean TV dramas as had been during the Korean Wave.

A similar pattern of the ascent and descent of news reports of Korean TV dramas appears in the *United Daily News* during the same span of years, yet whose number is even larger. From 1996 to 1999, the totality of news reports of each year stays under 20 on average. Just like the *China Times*, in 2000 the number obtrusively hikes up to 145. A month by month survey also shows that the figure does not increase distinctively until former half of the year goes by. In the first 6 months of 2000, there are merely 53 pieces of news of Korean TV dramas in total; yet in the latter half of the same year, the sum rises up to 90. In 2001, the number even sharply climbs to 994, from which year on daily lives of readers of the newspaper are replete with news of Korean TV dramas. In 2002, the figure reaches over 1,000 for the first time since the importation of Korean TV dramas in mid 90s. Analogous to the *China Times*, again, while there is more or less decrease in 2003 and 2004, the number suddenly jumps to the record high of 1,296 in 2005. Following the pattern of the *China Times*, the number dwindles annually since 2007 to 2010, after which period there are no longer drastic increase of news reports of Korean TV dramas taking place in the two newspapers to date.

On the other hand, as the quantity of news reports substantially augments from 2000 on, contents of the reports alter along the way in these newspapers. Before 2000, news reports in both newspapers of Korean dramas are prone to program advertisements and commodity promotions. Since 2000, overtones of these news reports are carried with compliments of the charm of Korean TV drama stars and superb qualities of Korean TV dramas, in particular since “The Spark”. For example, amid the eight reports of 1999 related to Korean TV drama in the *China Times*, no specific one characterizes the glamour of Korean TV dramas and stars. However, among the increased coverage of Korean TV dramas after March 2000, a surpassing majority of these reports highlights individual glamour of drama stars; in the ensuing years during the Wave, unreserved laudation of qualities of these dramas is clearly expressed in each news piece. Prior to its wane around 2006 and 2007, no negative news reports or criticisms of Korean TV dramas and stars are detected in the news coverage in the two newspapers.<sup>16</sup> In consequence, the material effects of the dramatic increase in quantities and qualities in the coverage of Korean TV dramas since 2000 generates intangible yet mighty aftermath. With this apparatus of the day-after-day ingratiation and promulgation of Korean TV dramas, which has created a social environment and public circumstance crammed with prodigious and mammoth but only positive news reportage of Korean TV dramas and stars, readers of the two newspapers cannot avoid but are, piece by piece and news by news, convinced of the tremendously glamorous qualities and guaranteed productions of Korean TV dramas. As a

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<sup>14</sup> In March 2004, the 11th-term President and Vice-president Election was held and the incumbent DPP president was reelected by unprecedented tiny margin. The scope of protest against the result by KMT supporters at large was far larger than in 2000.

<sup>15</sup> In May 2004, the classic *Dae Jang-Geum* (also *Jewel in the Palace*) was screened in Taiwan and immediately spellbound the entire island. This might have also amplified the number of news reports in the newspapers for the substantial profits the type of coverage brought to the newspapers. When *Dae Jang-Geum* was rebroadcast in 2005 in Taiwan, the rating was still successfully high. Thus, the period between 2004 and 2005 might be the apex of the Korean Wave in Taiwan.

<sup>16</sup> For example, in the *China Times* in November 2008, a news report discourages the viewing of Korean TV dramas and criticizes the plots are clichéd. This mode of rhetoric is never seen before 2008 (*China Times*, 9 November 2008).

certain amount of readers of the two newspapers under the circumstance does begin watching Korean TV dramas and hence become fans or regular viewers, the effects of the increased viewership are sufficient for the two newspapers to advance to claim in their newspapers that popularity of Korea TV dramas is surging. In return, this type of news coverage draws in more viewers of Korean TV dramas who are swayed under the circumstances. To operate in this manner for a period of time, it may take not long to attract other social members in a larger volume than readers of the two newspapers to start watching Korean TV dramas. Eventually, a significant number of Taiwanese viewers do become fans or regular viewers of the Korean TV dramas, and by this stage the Korean Wave does come into materiality; that is to say, “the Birth of the Korean Wave” is at this moment a reality.

Apart from the abrupt increase in news reports of Korean TV dramas since 2000 in both newspapers, the decrease of news number since around 2006 and 2007 and the recession of the Korean Wave over the same span may have coincided with current social or political events. As the triumph of the DPP candidate in the 2004 presidential election was assured, the strife over the retrieval of state power against the ruling party by the opposition party hereby had to be kept on. Since early 2006, a movement charging the incumbent president with venalities and corruptions gradually took its strength that solicited participants not only from fields in politics, academia, and intelligencia, but also from those in the entertainment and TV industries. Consequently, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* were occupied prodigiously by news reports of the movement, which accordingly squeezed out space for news coverage of Korean dramas. The movement reached its climax around late 2006 and 2007, in which period the number of reports of Korea TV dramas was seen a distinctive downfall in both newspapers. Since 2007, the number of reports of the Korean TV dramas had been unable to rebound because of the booming of campaign news for the upcoming presidential election in 2008. These may account for the decrease in the number of news reports in the two newspapers after 2006, and may also be the cause of the obscure dissolution of the Korean Wave around 2006 or 2007 after its record climax in 2005.

### **Synchronous Broadcast of 24-Hour TV News Channels**

On top of the augmented dissemination by the newspapers in question of news reports of Korean TV dramas, cable TV channels of Taiwan may have been the agencies that had generated far more penetrating and far-flung influences and effects of invoking the Korean Wave in Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> Propelled predominantly by the U.S. and the U.K. under the banner of neo-liberalism and globalization, Taiwan legalized the establishment of cable TV channels and ushered in the era of multi-channel environment since early 1990s (Lin, 2006). By August 2000, there were over one hundred cable TV channels; among them, more than 10 channels were news channels which broadcast news 24 hours every day.<sup>18</sup> In Taiwan, news reports televised in these channels are tantamount to those covered in print newspapers. Owing to very limited domestic market and over-competitive media environment, Taiwan news TV channels appropriate most of the news subjects for broadcast from print newspapers. News subjects Taiwanese readers read in print newspapers appear not more different in the 24-hour news channels. Furthermore, if these 24-hour news channels intend to highlight specific news events, or if there is no other more important news instances overriding previous ones, the same news or news of

<sup>17</sup> For the pervasiveness and dailiness of television, see Williams (2003) and Silverstone (1994).

<sup>18</sup> For the number of channels and the colossal broadcast, see *Common Wealth* (1 March 2004). In addition to the 24-hour news channels, there have been over ten drama channels televising Korean dramas with tremendous hours since late 90s (Lin, 2006, p. 136).

similar subjects will repeat from day to evening or even to night, recurring at nearly every news hour or news section all day long. Thereby, as the news pieces of Korean TV dramas insinuating appreciation of their promising qualities and productions in the reportage proliferate, so does the aggregate of TV broadcast in these news channels. As the number of news reports of Korean TV dramas multiplies in the newspapers in question, the totality of transmission of them through TV news channels and the scope of the leverage in effect procreate in an immeasurable volume.

As a result, Taiwan people who don't read newspapers in question but acquire information from televisions are synchronously exposed to colossal transmission of TV news advertising the superb qualities of Korean TV dramas. The corollary of the mammoth TV broadcast may be that a certain number of these news channel viewers turn to start watching Korean TV dramas, and consequently even a sum of them become one more new group of fans and regular viewers hereafter. Owing to the far larger number of TV viewers of Taiwan than newspapers readership, by this stage the number of Taiwan people who hence start to watch Korean TV dramas might have multiplied prodigiously.<sup>19</sup> By the stage, watching Korean TV dramas in Taiwan might not only be a entertainment; one of the popular social activity of Taiwan people by then, or perhaps since then, was to exchange what Korean TV dramas they were recently watching.<sup>20</sup>

### **Capitalizing on the Korean Wave**

Since early 1960s, the economy of four small or developing regions in East Asia—Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore—progressed at such an impressive pace that as the high-speed economic growth persisted into the 1980s, the four regions caught international attention and were thus tagged as “the Four Little Dragons” (Erza, 1991). Among them, Taiwan has been in constant comparison with South Korea in terms of close affinities as nation-states and in industrial structure. In particular, since the 1980s when the economic achievement of Taiwan had been lauded as “the Economic Miracle”, the KMT cashed in on the celebration and indoctrinated the general Taiwanese, through social institutions and through media in question, that the economic miracle was the testament to the success of the part-state's ruling.<sup>21</sup> In late 1990s as the economy of South Korea was smitten in the Asian Economic Crisis, the incumbent KMT regime made no haste to cash in on the South Korea adversity to continue the propaganda of its mastery in tackling the crisis and sustaining domestic economic prosperity. In reverse, this propagation strengthened not only the convictions of the general Taiwanese on the prominence of KMT's ruling but also invented the impression that economic edges of South Korea had been falling even farther behind Taiwan in the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis.

Since 2001 as the popularity of Korean TV dramas was gaining its strength at an unprecedented speed, it might simultaneously have metamorphosed latently beyond being categorically a social or cultural instance. After the 911 attack in 2001, the economy of Taiwan slumped to an unwonted stagnation. While the ruling DPP blamed the attack as the cause of the global and domestic economic downturn, the KMT made a commercial film as the innuendo to excoriate the DPP regime's incompetence to triumph the economic challenge.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For the decrease in newspaper readership and increase in TV viewership, see Hsu (2007, pp. 67-71).

<sup>20</sup> Tsai Ing-wen, the first female chairman of the DPP in 2008 and also the first female presidential candidate of the same party and Taiwan history in 2012, expresses herself that while she was approached and invited to run for the chairmanship in 2008, she was watching Korean TV drama. I see this as the strategy for an accidental political leader to make immediate and intimate connections to the potentially large number of Taiwanese fans and viewers of Korean TV dramas. See Tsai (2011, p. 166).

<sup>21</sup> In the least, in the conventional history education of high schools in Taiwan, the economic success of Taiwan since the 1960s has been in explicit reference to the ruling of the KMT party-state of the same time.

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=up147ig5fOs>.

Roughly after the 911 attack and the economic mire, the KMT started to take the governing of the DPP down the peg for being unable to sustain the economic achievements bequeathed by the KMT. It was also around the release of the film that such public opinion in Taiwan society that the economy of South Korea was reviving vigorously started to burgeon. Newspapers in question and TV channels that had not used to cover much positive news of Korean economy now orchestrated the narrative strategy in news reporting. As the Korean Wave was in full swing 2001, it was not only the number of news reports of Korean TV dramas that multiplied, but compliments of the swift rejuvenation of Korean economy from the economic crisis of the 1997. The rhetoric strategy of the news coverage evolved in the following years to begin emphasizing not only that the revival of South Korean economy was almighty but that its rapid development was at the corner of overriding the economy of Taiwan. What was contrasted was the given news coverage of present Taiwan economy. In opposition to the dynamic momentum Korea economy was portrayed in the media, Taiwan economy was reported to be recessing rapidly at a frightening pace under the ruling of the DPP.

As the Korean Wave enthralled more and more Taiwanese people after late 2000, it grew all the more hands down to convince them of such precipitant conversion in economic advantages between Taiwan and South Korea. Since the inception of the Korean Wave, reportage in the media in question had endeavored to intimate that the KMT was the only mighty party in Taiwan that could bring affluence and well-being back to the people of Taiwan; the DPP regime, out of inexperience in state affairs in the first place, would only exacerbate the post-war economic success achieved by the KMT. A testimony to the ideological interpellation is the campaign video in 2007 for upcoming presidential election in 2008 starring a native Korean businessman.<sup>23</sup> The Korean businessman uses fluent Korean, Mandarin and English interchangeably and emphasizes how much he has worried about the irredeemable economic regression under the rookie ruling of the DPP party. By the time the film was released, South Korea has embodied economic success and advanced national power owing to the popularity and glamour of Korean TV dramas; to use Korean in the film, together with the use of English, renders the Korean businessman's anxiety not only convincing but urgent.

### Conclusion

It may need to stress once again that Korean TV dramas did receive substantial popularity in Taiwan because of its advanced qualities and promised productions which are in effect the underpinnings of the emergence of the Korean Wave in Taiwan. During those years when the Korean Wave hit Taiwan, it did create an island wide fad and summoned a significant number of fans, for whom Korean dramas have become fixtures above other options as they turn on home televisions, even years after the Wave has recessed. Yet, its precipitate ascendant and anonymous dissolution in Taiwan in juxtaposition with its abrupt sweeping popularity may at the outset have been complicated with and overdetermined by local history, culture and society, all having been intertwined with synchronous political events, other than being regarded as "accidental", "evitable" or taken for granted, as Raymond Williams and Roger Silverstone have given heed to. Unavoidably the paper can afford only very limited aspect of the Korean Wave in Taiwan. It may reckon on more aspects to demonstrate the contradictions or inconsistencies either in light of the Korean Wave or other cultural instances.

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<sup>23</sup> See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=9B22RH3Yj6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9B22RH3Yj6U).

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## Appendix A

*Number of News Reports in Newspaper Groups of the China Times and the United Daily News, 1996-2010*

Year	the China Times	the United Daily News
1996	2	8
1997	1	12
1998	5	19
1999	8	21
2000	20	145
2001	165	994
2002	378	1196
2003	268	667
2004	267	819
2005	427	1296
2006	225	989
2007	155	264
2008	99	280
2009	125	311
2010	201	283

Source: Data banks of the China Times Group and The United Daily News Group.

Note: Overseas newspapers of the China Times Group and the United Daily News Group are excluded from the survey.