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Situating Taiwanese Identities:
Social Transformations, Young People and Television Drama

by

Ya-chien Huang

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
For the award of
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

April 2009

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the recent production and consumption of television dramas in Taiwan in the context of Taiwan’s complicated modern history, rapid social transitions, budding self-assertiveness and changing relationships with regional and global players. The detailed analysis in this subject matter contributes to wider debates in the media globalisation theory, reaffirming the continuing development of an East Asian cultural trading block and pointing to a formation of the distinctive regional popular culture that is more effective in shaping up the local production and consumption activities. The rising regional dynamism in Taiwan’s television drama production and consumption since the late 1990s has been encapsulated in this thesis in three main points:

1. The findings from detailed content analysis on programming schedules of seven locally-run channels has shown that regional programming is more integrated with local business while global programming (mostly American) has shifted to be produced and distributed single-handedly by the transnational media corporations.

2. The first-hand audience interviews revealed a subtle difference in young people’s viewing experiences of the global and the regional programming. Situated in a broader social context, their experience of the former has primarily crouched on a fantasy of liberal individualism while the latter provided a desirable template for emulation in everyday life.

3. The thesis also discussed the emergence of a new drama genre on Taiwanese television—Idol drama, which can be seen as the reactions to the widespread regional television deregulation, commercialisation and growing intra-regional cultural trade.
Its late development has also epitomised an inevitable negotiation of local characteristic with regional forces.

**Keywords:** Taiwan, Regionalisation, Globalisation, East Asian popular culture, Television dramas
Introduction

In Taiwan, three terms are used interchangeably by the media to describe young Taiwanese born after the 1970s: 'Generation Y', 'Xin-xin-ren-lei (Neo-neo human)' and 'six-grader and seven graders'. Generation Y is a notion adapted from Coupland's book, *Generation X*, which appeared in Mandarin translation in Taiwan in 1996. 'Generation Y' in Taiwan is often portrayed by the media as displaying greater convergence in life orientation with young people in other countries characterised by western modernities. 'Generation Y' has coexisted with another term 'Xin-xin-ren-lei', borrowed from the Japanese term 'Shin-jin-rei' (Neo-human). It was made popular through an advert slogan for tea drinks in 1985, referring to people born between 1975 and 1985. As a group, Xin-xin-ren-lei are seen to be more fashion-conscious, self-centred, rebellious against tradition, hedonistic, more materialistic, and enjoying a life style which advanced communication technologies play a central role. The latest label to capture the group characteristics of young Taiwanese is taken from a local book 'Reunion of the Fifth-graded' (Wu-nian-gi-de-tong-xue-hei). Published in 2000, the book initiated the media trend of dividing cohort groups by a ten-year period according to the Republic of China (ROC) calendar. The sixth-graders refers to Taiwanese born between year 60 and 69 in the ROC calendar (1971-1980 in the western calendar), and seventh-graders to those born between 70 and 79 in the ROC calendar (1981-1990 in the western calendar). Overlapping in time, the sixth-graders and the seventh-graders are seen to share similar lifestyle characteristics with the Generation Y and the Xin-xin-ren-lei.

These three terms—coincidentally coming from global, regional, and local origins—not only reflect attempts to characterise young Taiwanese's generational
experience in an era of hybrid cultural cosmopolitanism, they also highlighted the
texture of Taiwan’s contemporary cultural melange constructed out of American,
Japanese and Chinese/Taiwanese influences to different degrees and at different points
in time.

Since Taiwan embarked on a process of political democratisation in 1987, the
impact of this triangular engagement began to manifest itself ever more strongly in
many aspects of the everyday life. At the same time, extended integration into the
global economic system and rising power of several East Asian countries have further
complicated the narrative of Taiwan’s recent social history. It is precisely the interplay
between these cross-cutting forces that makes Taiwan an interesting site for the
observation of recent shifts in globalisation. By examining the production of television
fictions in Taiwan and their role in the lives of young people, this thesis aims to address
variations in the traditionally-recognised west(US)-led globalisation and unravel the
regional cultural economic dynamics in East Asia.

Power shifts between US-Japan in Taiwan

A convenient point to start discussing the relation between Taiwan and US is 1949
when Mao’s Communist regime assumed power in China and formed a new
government, People’s Republic of China (PRC), forcing Chiang Kai-shek and his
defeated Nationalist Army to flee to Taiwan. During the ensuing period of the Cold
War, Taiwan came to be regarded by the US as a geopolitical and ideological bastion of
anti-communism. Therefore, in 1950 at the outbreak of the Korean War, US president
Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to patrol in the Taiwan Strait to protect the island
from potential Communist’s attack. From 1949 to 1960, Taiwan also received $1400
million of aid for economic development and $2300 million for military defence from
the US (Chang, 1965). The aid was accompanied by substantial US instruction in nation building with American advisors stationing in Taiwan and Taiwanese officials trained in America.

In the following decades, Taiwan employed US advice to model itself on Japan’s schema for post-war recovery and pursued an export-oriented industrialisation strategy. Export-processing zones were set up with special tax incentives to attract overseas investment. The strategy was successful and Taiwan secured an international reputation as a world exporter, with the US providing the largest overseas market for Taiwan’s inexpensive consumer products until the late 1990s. Alongside political and economic power the US also exercised ‘soft power’ in Taiwan. Although the island was never under US occupation, contemporary Taiwanese society bears the strong imprint of US influence-- from the political and educational systems to the ubiquitous ‘American English’ language teaching schools and the same electronic usage of 110 voltages. Before the late 1980s, America was virtually the sole visible international player in providing popular culture for Taiwanese youth: Foreign television programmes were virtually all imported from America, and American-style bars, night discos, leisure clubs, offered excitement for fun-seeking ‘cool’ Taiwanese youth (Shaw, 1994). Even a large percentage of the overflowing counterfeited goods were copies of American movies, music, and designer brand clothing.

The post-war US aid and the bilateral business relationship were fundamental to Taiwan’s ‘economic miracle’. With the initial help from the US, Taiwan was able to establish a prosperous capitalist economy and develop its urban consumerism since the 1980s. However, this development of consumerism has not perpetuated America’s economic dominance over Taiwan’s socio-cultural life. Instead, it has claimed space from the US-led cold-war nation-building political agenda and given it
away to the consumer-oriented activities coupled by a wave of redefinition of political and social stereotypes. This was demonstrated by a revision of Taiwan’s cultural relationship with Japan—the former coloniser of Taiwan between 1895 and 1845—in recent decades and the ensuing mass importation of consumer-oriented Japanese popular culture.

The sudden emergence of Japanese popular cultural products and the chain effects it has had on the consumer culture has been one of the most prominent themes in Taiwan’s recent social history. More importantly, the craze for Japanese popular culture marked a shift from US cultural dominance to a trend of dual power sharing and resulted in complex hybridity evident across a number of sites. For example, we have seen McDonald’s, a world-recognised American institution, launching several promotional campaigns across Taiwan selling Hello Kitty, the popular Japanese cartoon figures, with its meals. Similarly, Taiwan’s television system— the particular focus of this thesis— offers another key arena in which to observe the complex recomposition of culture and identity.

Like many other developing countries in the post-war era, Taiwan’s television system begun in the 1960s with a commercial system modelled on the US. Imports in the earlier days were largely dominated by the US with subsidiary streams coming from Hong Kong in the 1980s. In the 1990s Taiwan’s television market underwent deregulation— a decision primarily triggered by US request for a more open market through which American media corporations could distribute their cultural products and advertising in larger quantities and with fewer restrictions. However, this opening up, although prompted by US-led media globalisation, also allowed other players to enter the competition, such as the advance of Japanese programming in the newly deregulated environment. More importantly, it was the input of Japanese programming
that has acted as the principle model for reproducing local cultural forms with numerous Japan-Taiwan hybrids being made. One emerging genre, Taiwanese Idol drama, which is a format adaptation from Japanese Trendy drama is such an example. As we shall see later on in the thesis, the development of this genre offers a good illustration of the need to challenge the centrality of the long-held West-Rest nexus in the literature on globalisation and to take regional dynamics fully into account.

Alongside these instances of intensified global and regional cultural influence we also see the rise of Taiwanese conscious. The political liberalization that followed the termination of Martial Law in 1987 unleashed an immense energy previously suppressed by dictatorial control over virtually all cultural and political institutions. In the post-Martial Law decades, challenges to patterns of submission to authorities, the eruption of repressed grievances, and the politics of recognition-- both domestically and internationally-- have raised critical questions about Taiwan’s status and the definition of what it means to be Taiwanese. The root of this rising Taiwanese conscious-- or the ‘identity crisis’ as some commentators see it-- is Taiwan’s ambiguous status in world politics and the unresolved issue of relations with China. Although a comprehensive discussion on Taiwan’s future relationship with the PRC is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to the argument presented here to highlight the ways in which the uncertainties have engendered an increasing desire to reinstate and assert Taiwanese-ness in the everyday life, including the media production and media consumption.

Taiwan’s complicated modern history, rapid social transitions, budding self-assertiveness and changing relationships with regional and global players form the essential contexts for the detailed empirical analysis presented in this thesis which examines the recent production and consumption of television dramas in Taiwan. The
detailed analysis in this subject matter also contributes to wider debates in media
globalisation theory, demonstrating how regional and local dynamism has successfully
created a synergy and reaffirmed the continuing development of regional cultural
trading block in East Asia.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is laid out in three main parts corresponding to interlocking themes of
globalization, regionalization and localization. Section one begins by revisiting the
shifts in the debate of media globalisation, highlighting current developments and the
importance of the dynamics underpinning regionalisation and (g)localization. Chapter 2 sketches recent regionalisation in East Asia, portraying the commonality between
nations and the increased convergence of lifestyles among the regional youth that has
underpinned the emergence of an East Asian popular culture. This regional perspective
is particularly important for this thesis firstly because Japan and China have long
played a major role in Taiwan's social history, and secondly because the regional flows
and borrowings have emerged as a major organising principle of television production
and consumption in an even more significant way.

Section two delineates the old and new boundaries both in the society and in the
television industry. Chapter 3 discusses Taiwan's social history, focusing on
post-Martial Law shifts in identity politics experienced by different generations and the
ways in which expanding consumerism has provided new identities for young people.
Chapter 4 recounts the development of television culture in Taiwan in the context of the
social transitions mentioned the previous chapter, linking social liberalisation, growing
consumerism and intensifying regionalisation with television deregulation,
commercialisation and the increasing presence of regional cultural products and models
in televisual output. Chapter 5 follows up by looking more specifically at the development of television fiction, highlighting the transitions in drama genres over time. Two significant trends in the current situation are identified; the multiplication of regional programming on local channels and the development of a youth-oriented genre heavily influenced by its regional counterpart: Japanese and Korean Trendy dramas. These developments, it is argued, point to the development of an increasing intra-regional cultural and economic arena and to the impact regional players have had on the (re)creation of Taiwanese-ness.

Section three examines the identity issue from the perspective of media consumption. Chapters 6 and Chapter 7 examines the reception of dramas from global and regional sources among young people and explores how they negotiate a sense of ‘self’ through their viewing experience. It is argued here that consuming American culture is closely related to a sense of ‘exotic realism’ based primarily on symbolic liberation and material fantasies, while the attraction of Japanese culture lies in its provision of an ‘operational realism’ that offers practicality and readiness to be assimilated into daily life.

Section four discusses the production and consumption of Taiwanese Idol drama in details. The concrete examples in Chapter 8 further illustrate and underpin the distinction between operational and exotic realism by presenting the reactions to two local format adaptations based on templates taken from Japanese television dramas and American series. The comparison shows that regional programming has not only presented fewer barriers for local consumption but has also provided more workable templates for local cultural production. However, regional influence has not been the only significant trend. Chapter 9 thus traces recent developments in the genre and its implications in relation to Taiwan’s television as well as the formation of the regional
popular culture. It affirms that although vigorous efforts at localization have led to the consolidation of a distinctively local style, this style at the same time, remains contained by intensified regionalisation and by the dynamics embedded within wider patterns of regional distribution and cooperation.
Chapter 1: After Imperialism

Core and peripheral

During the 1950s, one popular way to conceptualise the world followed two assumptions. First, it conceptualised the world within a modernisation narrative in which the underdeveloped 'rest' would be directed or incorporated by the more advanced West offering economic aid, policy guidance, and cultural values. Secondly, it explained the world's development as a process deeply rooted in the internationalization of capitalism, in which the developed West, or the 'core' countries, control the allocation of human and natural resources and deploy external forces--through multinational corporations, international commodity markets, foreign assistance, communications-- to dominate the economic activities of the underdeveloped 'peripheral' states. These relations of domination and subjection were seen as both structural and enduring since the patterns of interaction between the West and the Rest tended to reinforce and intensify prevailing patterns of inequality.

The mass media was regarded a key force in modernising the underdeveloped nations and a major instrument for transforming traditional habits and mindsets. Due to their ability to diffuse modern forms of social organizations and technology as well as liberal-democratic political ideals, the media were thought to 'stimulate the peasant to want to be a free holding farmer, the farmer's wife to want to stop bearing children, the farmer's daughter to wear a dress and adapt a change' (Lerner, 1963: 348).

Critical political economy scholars, such as Herbert Schiller, shared this same basic map of a world divided between core and periphery, the developed West and the developing rest, the First World and the Third World, but conceptualised the
globalization of the communication system as force for cultural imperialism rather than 'development'. In his path breaking book, Mass Communications and American Empire (1969) Schiller presented the US-led effort to globalise commercialised communication as a process of pursuing, protecting and fulfilling the commercial interests of large US multi-national corporations (MNCs) and transnational corporations (TNCs) in order to secure America's economic and military dominance. He argued that the American commercial broadcasting system assumes the leading role in the development of modern communication particularly as the emerging broadcasting systems in the developing world emulate or adopt an American commercial television system in conjunction with American programming infused with values of consumerism. This dissemination of the American commercial system, according to Schiller, leads to a process of cultural transformation and dependency. Consequently, the values of consumerism override transitional motivations and alternative patterns of value formation, and individuals are harnessed increasingly to a global system of communication and commodity production directed largely by the US. The more chilling predictions of the time pointed to a process of cultural homogenisation in which the new imperialism would substantially shape the nature of cultural production and consumption in the developing countries in the direction set by the dominators. In other words, the West as represented by the US would not only control the international media but would use it to champion its cultural and economic values, particularly individualism and consumerism.

This imperialist perspective was bolstered by certain features manifest in the first phase of post-war development: the adoption of communication models established in the advanced capitalist world, the transfer of metropolitan industrial-organizational arrangements and broadcasting norms, the penetration of Western media content
through advertising and audio-visual entertainment programming, and the one way flow of cultural production from the developed to the developing countries (Nordenstrend and Varis, 1974; Tunstall, 1977; Katz and Wedell, 1978).

Although subsequently subjected to a great deal of criticism, the central arguments in this theory of cultural imperialism had the merit of highlighting the fundamental ways in which the development of global communication was interwoven with the exercise of economic, military and political power, and expressed the acute constrains faced by the developing countries at the early stage of establishing their own systems (Thompson, 1995).

The imperialism theorists argued that cultural domination has not diminished with the end of the Cold War but has been extended in the 1990s. In his later writings Schiller recast cultural/media imperialism as no longer measured by a simple index of exposure to American television programming, but as ‘a subject of the general system of imperialism’ (1991:14) and better understood as ‘transnational corporate cultural domination’ (1991:15). He argues that the evidence for cultural domination lies in the acquisition and practice of American-style corporate systems, the increasing use of the English language and the commercial ideology behind cultural output. Moreover, he reaffirmed the central role of television in the global arena, arguing that its pivotal position had been reinforced by the new delivery systems provided by satellites and cable networks. This view was taken up by Herman and McChesney (1997) who reiterated the irreversibility of a global commercial media landscape controlled by the TNCs. In common with Schiller who sees the development of the global media system as a process of advancing the interests of the TNCs, they emphasized the links between the current global media market situation and the rise of a more integrated neo-liberal globalist economic system encouraged by US-led institutions of global capitalism and
the US government. The key nodes in their analysis are the world's largest media TNCs whose interests extends into multiple media sections, together with another three or four dozen firms filling out regional and niche markets. They argued that the development of cable and satellite technology has enabled the TNCs to penetrate new national markets. Time Warner, Disney and News Cooperation have established themselves as the 'holy trinity of the global media system', epitomising the so-called 'cable colonialists' who aggressively establish their presence in different editions in different new markets across Europe, Asia and Latin America (McChesney, 1998: 32).

**Forming new patterns**

One intrinsic shortcoming in the centre-peripheral configuration has been the presumption of continuing West/US dominance across time and space. Since the late 1980s, it has become more obvious that post-war US dominance would encounter growing competition from the expanding European Union and previously underperforming 'peripheral' countries such as Brazil, Russia, China, and India. Therefore, a more multi-centered 'new world map' composed of geo-cultural regions has emerged to replace the centre-peripheral model that was unable to accommodate the more recent developments. One of the seminal work of this time was Huntington's (1993) the *Clash of Civilisation and the Remaking of the World Order* in which he analysed the remaking of the world order by the reassertion of historically-rooted indigenous culture and institutions in (modernised) non-western societies. He argued the emerging post-Cold War world order will be reconfigured along cultural lines drawn by eight civilisations: Western, the Orthodox, Latin America, The Muslim, The Hindu, The Sinic, Japan and Sub-Saharan Africa and led by the leading core/states within each civilisation. He also observed the increasing prevalence of
'second-generation indigenization phenomenon' (1993:93) rooted in the revolts against previously promoted or imposed western values and led by groups whose confidence and power has been increased by the modernisation process. These movements, though largely anti-westernisation were not necessarily anti-modernisation, epitomising the move towards the construction of multiple variants of modernity that cannot any longer be subsumed under one dominant model of 'Modernity' originating from the West.

Meanwhile in the field of media and cultural studies, commentators also started to reflect on the new orders and patterns, finding the arguments of cultural imperialism inadequate both in theory and in reality. Through a more sophisticated understanding of the internal historical/political/social/cultural dynamics operating within and between the peripheral states, theorists discovered multiple flows of international television programming and the emergence and fortification of geo-linguistic markets.

As early as in 1984, Schement et al. (1984) proposed using a 'middle-range theory' midway between raw empiricism and grand theory to reformulate the debate of international television programming flow. They argued that this modified approach would prevent the danger of applying a single interpretation to diverse cases while at the same time identifying the common elements in the case studied. From this perspective they argued that international television programming flows should be seen as a dynamic process that cannot simply be explained by US-led market forces, but needs to be investigated through a series of interactive relationships among 'structural conditions' and 'catalytic actions'. The former refers to a series of 'relatively stable elements whose combination creates a predisposition toward specific necessity to the flow of television programmes' (1984:172), such as the constitution of potential target audiences, available technology, financial and political supports and a non-obstructive
legal climate. With the preconditions laid down by 'structure conditions' however, it is the 'catalytic actions', informed by 'the cognizance and judgment on the part of the initiators of the flows... and the logistics of the flows' (1984: 178) that drive the flow. By considering these two sets of factors, and taking the success of the Spanish International Network (SIN) in attracting audiences and becoming the fourth-largest commercial network in the US at the time, they posited a reverse flow of television programming—a seemingly 'reverse media imperialism' (1984: 171).

This middle-range approach was recalled a decade later by Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham (1998, 1996) in discussing the increasingly multifaceted television programming flow at a regional and national level assisted by the development of pan-regional satellite technology. They claimed that it is more useful to see global media markets as divided into a number of geo-linguistic regions each with their own internal dynamics as well as their global ties (1998:178). Building upon already existing centres of popular film production, such as the Hong Kong action film or the Hindi musical, the key geo-linguistic regions were identified as Latin America, the supra-national Chinese-speaking population, India and South Asia, and the Arab world. By examining the dynamic exchanges between peripheral television systems—an area that has historically been largely overlooked by media scholars, this intervention introduced a fresh momentum into the debate on international television programming flows.

Further evidence against 'one-way flows' and static dependency relationships came from studies on the changing media landscape in Latin America, which had previously been a major reference point for the theorization of cultural imperialism. Focusing on TV Globo, the predominant network in Brazil, Straubhaar (1984) argued that Brazilian television, which had relied strongly on American programming
suppliers and investors in the 50s and 60s, has gradually moved away from a dependency relationship since the early 1980s. Signs of declining dependency he argued, could be found in the diminishing volume of American programming imports, the break-up between the major American investor, Time-Life Corporation, and TV Globo, in 1971, and the successful localisation of American commercial management and programming. He pointed the way that TV Globo had successfully localised American management ideas to become a major exporter of programming and technical expertise to other countries in its own right, most evident in the flourishing global trade in popular telenovelas and shows de audiorio. He concluded that the structure of Brazilian television has shown increasing independence, and that factors once contributing to dependency may have changed to favour greater autonomy for Brazilian television broadcasters and programmers. Similarly, the transformation of 'the peripheral' television systems in Hong Kong, Mexico, India and Egypt have enabled programming from these production centres to register an increasing presence in world programming markets alongside American product. The emergence of these new regional producers and global exporters of audio-visual materials will erode the market share of American media corporations. Hence, although US products will still enjoy wide circulation and visibility in global media markets, they are expected to constitute a smaller proportion of the growing international market as alternative regional and national productions expand (Hoskins and McFadyen, 1991).

The success of production centred in key geo-linguistic markets is further supported by research on local audiences. Strabahhar (1991) has argued persuasively that the reach of global television in the national/local markets is in fact limited. Using notion of economic and cultural capital (based on education and family background) as
the key determinants of ‘class’, he notes that ‘class’ differences play a major role in structuring programme choices. As a result, while the internationalization of programme preferences is characteristic of the bourgeoisie, the elites, and the middle classes who are better educated, more cosmopolitan in outlook and with greater access to new media, the vast majority of the national/local audience, prefers nationally/locally and/or regionally produced material that is closer to and reinforce traditional identities based on ethnic, dialect/language/religious and other cultural elements. He also argued that media consumption can be seen as a site of cultural struggle where a variety of forms of power are exercised and that the rejection of imports from a global source by local audiences of lower social status can be read as a refusal to recognize the dominant ideologies encoded in those global programmes. Instead, he suggested, these audiences prefer national and regional content due to its ‘cultural proximity’, indirectly exerting pressure on local television industries and advertisers to produce more local programming and/or to source imports from within the same geo-linguistic region.

Although ‘cultural proximity’ has been widely deployed to explain why successful regional and local programming relegates US material to second choice (Strabahhar, 1997; Hoskins, Waterman and Rogers 1994), it is worth noting that the ‘power’ of culture cannot stand alone without taking economic and political conditions into account. Iwabuchi (2003, 2005), for example, has used the success of Japanese cultural products in East Asia in the 1990s to argue that the success of regional programming is facilitated by cultural affinity as much as improved political economic relationship between the source and the recipient countries. He has correctly pointed out that the large-scale consumption of Japanese cultural products in the region would not have been possible without the closing economic gap between Japan and other East Asian
countries and without concerns over Japan’s cultural legacy from the war years being diluted by changing political and economic situations in some East Asian societies.

Investigating the ‘Third space’

Following the forming of the new patterns, alternative views have emerged to argue that rather than focusing purely on the play of power relations, one should investigate the processes through ways in which global and local forces negotiate with one another and explore the local meanings behind the new possibilities generated in this process. Although there is, as yet, no clearly developed theoretical basis for this project essential elements are scattered across the discussions on globalization, hybridization and, to a certain extent, the in-depth audience research.

Glocalisation was modelled on the Japanese word, dochakuka, which originally meant adapting farming techniques to one’s own local condition. It has since been borrowed in the business world to refer to the localization of a product that has global reach (Robertson, 1995) and in social sciences to address the ways social categories and practices assume a local character despite being invented elsewhere in the global processes. Rather than perceiving ‘the global’ as the primary force in determining the terms and conditions in globalisation, Khnodker (2004) has noted that the process of ‘glocalisation’ has theoretically prioritized the role of local elements as a counterbalancing force in shaping outcomes.

Applying these views to the global media landscape, many have used the recent development of television formats and format adaptations to illustrate the practice of glocalisation at work. Formats and format adaptations generate programming based on a template which can be customized to fit local cultural specifications when traded in
different markets. The best known tradable formats operate in the areas of advertising, game shows, reality shows, and television dramas and deploy a range of adaptation techniques such as using local actors and actresses in transnational advertisements, employing local hosts and players in licensed television formats or, using local names for cities and characters in soap operas. Waisbord (2004: 359) has described this trend in the television programming trade as a shift from ‘wall-to-wall Dallas’ in the 1980s to ‘wall-to-wall format’ in the new millennium.

For some, the proliferation of formats and format adaptations points to a ‘victory’ of the national/local in its encounters with the global, forcing global players to accommodate to the growing cultural awareness in emerging markets since the 1990s. For others, however, this trend also needs to be understood as a strategy driven by the capitalist desire to maximize productivity, profit, and market share. Not only do the cosmetic and even casual incorporations of local elements often stay at the superficial level where the ‘mainstream’, as defined by market size, permeates, the process of production also represents a circuit in which global and local commercial television act upon each other in search for profit. In the process, format sellers— the global source— attempt to sell their product in as many local markets as possible while establishing links that may lead to co-production arrangements by trading extensive guidelines, including the experiences and records of shows in different countries and details of national variations. Format buyers—the national/local television companies—aim to capitalize on the novelty, efficiency, predictability and the track record of formats by adapting them for local consumption, sometimes with the extra benefit of bypassing domestic quota system on imports (as formats adaptations are usually treated as domestic programmes). In other words, local production needs to be seen not only in relation to ‘cultural diversity’ but also as business-oriented strategy to satisfy the rising
demand for low-cost, efficient and promising programming in the global commercialization of television.

Alongside glocalisation, another term, 'hybrid', has also been increasingly used in discussions of the globalisation process. Moving from a problematic concept imbued with an abusive nineteenth-century scientific-racist touch in colonial discourse to feelings of celebration and privilege in postcolonial studies, 'hybrid' now points to a changing perception of the space created by cultural in-betweenness and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference (Hoogvelt, 1997; Tomlinson, 1999: 145). Homi Bhabha (1996; 1994) in particular has lauded these indeterminate spaces and in-between subject-positions as locales for the disruption and displacement of hegemonic colonial narratives of cultural structures and practices. Describing this third space as a mode of articulation and a productive—not merely reflective—space that engenders new possibilities, he posits hybridity as the site where the 'cutting edge of translation and negotiation' can be staged.

'For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the "third Space", which enables other positions to emerge.' (Bhaha in Rutherford, 1990: 211)

Cross-cultural media consumption where reception of global (American) programming takes place against a set of local social relationships in many ways offers a site on which to observe the imaginative 'third space' in action. As the viewing experience bears rich materials for exploring the complex contestation between the local audience and the 'preferred readings' embedded in a given foreign (global) text, Many studies on cross-cultural audience reception have thus illustrated the different ways in which local audiences draw on their stock of cultural resources to negotiate global texts and incorporate them into their daily life, refuting the assumption of an
immediate imposed ideological effect arising from audience’s exposure to an ‘imperial’
text.

The two most often quoted audience studies in this area are Ang’s (1985) and
Liebes and Katz’s (1990) study of the reception of the American soap opera, Dallas.
For many like the ex-French Minister for Culture, Jack Lang, Dallas had become ‘the
symbol of American cultural imperialism’ (in Ang, 1985:2) in the 1980s. Not only had
it been sold to television system in 90 countries, the commercial images of lavish
settings, expensive clothes and the narrative of power and wealth had been widely
recognised as the core ideological property of the Dallas text, celebrating conspicuous
consumption. Ang did not primarily intend to address the issue of media/cultural
imperialism, nor were her respondents from Third World/peripheral countries, but her
empirical work underlined the naivety of the linear thinking informing imperialism
theory, which would infer that the grand design in Dallas has a mesmerizing effects on
its audience who would then be drawn into the consumption of the American dream and
American products. She found that her respondents were very well able to pose a
distance between the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional’ in their encounters with the ‘stylization’
in the text, and that the pleasure derived from the glamorous mise-en-scene overlapped
with a sense of escapism characterised by playful fantasy. Her respondents
demonstrated that one can enjoy Dallas but remain critical of the commercial and
stereotypical nature of the programme. She concluded that ‘enjoying Dallas does not
preclude a political or moral condemnation of its production context or its ideological
content’ (1985:92).

Compared to Ang’s relatively modest study in a single country, the Netherlands,
Libes and Katz’s research involved respondents from different ethnic backgrounds in
Israel, the US and Japan. This cross-cultural audience approach revealed that different
groups have different ways of making sense of the programme and different ways of
negotiating its symbolic content. For instance, while Israeli Arabs and Moroccan Jews
emphasized kinship relations, interpreting the motivations of characters primarily in
terms of the hierarchical order of the family and the continuity of the dynasty, Russian
émigrés paid relatively little attention to kinship relations and were more inclined to
interpret the characters' behaviour as manipulated by the producers of the programme.
This difference epitomises the way in which reception, far from being a one-way
transmission, is a creative encounter between a complex and structured symbolic form
and individuals who bring their own resources to bear on the activity of interpretation.
The process for meaning construction should therefore be looked at as a text-context
negotiation. Dallas's failure in Japan has cast a further doubt on the alleged linear
cause-effect relationship between the import of American television programming and
the internalisation of consumerist values. Research on the local reception of
transnational programming offers a practical exploration of the imaginative 'third
spaces' that allow audiences to move between and across subject positions and to
construct identities out of the combinations of resources offered by the text and their
grounded experience. We will return to the dynamics of this process when we come to
examine how young Taiwanese negotiate a variety of popular television fictions, some
imported from the US, some imported from Japan, and others produced locally. As we
shall see, extending the range of texts under consideration and placing audiences firmly
in the context that have shaped the cultural resources available to them, raises questions
that research focusing solely on a single text and offering only a thin description of the
social context of viewing has missed.
Conclusion

Revisiting the historical debates over the conceptualisation of the world and the pattern of transnational media flows enables one to identify important shifts in contemporary globalisation more clearly. It is now accepted that fixed binaries that imply two contradictory forces, such as West-rest, centre-peripheral, global-local, homogenisation-heterogenisation, and culture-economics, are no longer adequate to today’s world and discussion has moved on to analyse their intensifying conflation, emphasizing their mutual constitution and investigating their fundamental inseparability.

However, while celebrating the emergence of new interruptive and interrogative spaces, one should not lose sight of the manifest material power of (western) global capitalism (Dirlik, 1997; Tomlinson, 1999). Without this critical stance, the celebration of ‘cultural victory’ can easily succumb to the danger of overlooking the way in which hegemony is reproduced and refigured. It is therefore useful to follow Murdock (2004:19) in arguing that ‘analysis needs to start from the globalisation of capitalist imperatives and its shifting relations to state logics and go on to explore the variable and contradictory ways this process is reconstructing communication systems as industries, cultural formations and everyday resources’.

In the next few chapters of the thesis, I will use television drama production and consumption in Taiwan as a site to examine the shifts not only in patterns of globalisation but also in the terms through which they have been negotiated, placing particular emphasis on the resurgence of attempts to define the distinctiveness of Taiwanese identity. The discussion that follows starts by discussing the recent regionalisation of East Asia. This is followed by an account of the key socio-political
transformations in Taiwan, before focussing on young people’s day to day experiences with the dramas chosen for detailed analysis. It will be argued that intensified regionalisation has to some extent shifted the centre of cultural trade from the global to the regional level leading to the emergence of new cultural forms which offer novel opportunities for the negotiation of identity while at the same time generating new tensions.
Chapter 2 Regionalisation in Globalisation

Situating East Asia

As Curran and Park (2000) have pointed out, arguments in the globalisation debates that are grounded in the West-versus-the-Rest paradigm and largely based on an assumption of the primacy of Western, and particularly American, influence has two shortcomings. Firstly, it fails to distinguish the regional from the global, and therefore overlooks the interaction, rivalry and domination among non-western nations within geo-cultural regions. Secondly, it fails to take into consideration ‘the dialectics of modernity in its globalization’ (Dirlik, 2003: 289) and overlooks the ways non-western countries produce ‘alternative modernities’ (Appadurai, 1996). Meanwhile, a strong current of work focusing on regional dynamism and the idea of alternative modernity in globalisation has emerged since the 1990s (Sinclair, 1996; Huntington, 1993). While gathering strength into the new millennium globally, this trend has become particularly prominent in discussion of the current situation in East Asia (which is defined in this thesis as comprising Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore). I now elaborate on a few themes in this discourse.

Economic development and social changes in East Asia

Quite often the discussion begins with the region’s distinctive post-war history, and the fact that it shares neither the same memories of Western colonialism as much of the Third World, nor the political economic trajectories of the First World. Instead, it displays a distinctive development model building on strong state incentives and phenomenal economic achievement. The rapid economic growth which began in Japan in the 1950s, spread to the Asian Four Tigers (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and
Singapore), and has now moved on to China, demarcates these nations from the rest of the world and delineates a web of interlocking regional relationships in the form of cooperation, dialogue or contest.

Post-war Japan revived its economy with crucial US help and demonstrated a phenomenal growth as early as the 1960s. In the following decades, it not only became one of the world's largest economies but also provided the model of emulation and the source of skill transferral for the Four Tigers. With help from America and Britain, the heavily state-managed economy of the Four Tigers also experienced rapid growth. Between 1965 and 1996, the average annual growth of GNP in real terms for the world was 3.1 per cent, while South Korea grew at an annual average rate of 8.9 per cent, Taiwan at 8.7 per cent, Singapore at 8.3 per cent and Hong Kong at 7.5 per cent (Castells, 1998: 206; Wei, 2001: 103). From the 1960s to 1989, the share of total world trade held by the Four Tiger economies grew from 2 per cent to 10 per cent (Shibusawa et al., 1992:66), outperforming the modest growth of western European and American economies during the same period.

China, still ostensibly a Communist country, adopted an open door policy and introduced aspects of capitalist economies in 1979. It began by taking over the role of providing cheap manufacturing labour in the late 1980s when the Four Tigers began seeking to upgrade their industry. Between 1979 and 1999, the average GDP growth of China was 9.6 per cent. In the period 1992 to 1996, average annual growth even reached a staggering 12 per cent (Wei, 2001). Its 1.3 billion population not only provides immense manpower but also translates into an enormous emerging market for consumer products. Already the world’s fastest growing economy with an average annual GDP growth rate above 10 per cent, China poses an unprecedented challenge to what many see as America’s continuing global hegemony (Shenkar, 2006).
Table 1.1: Indicators of socio-economic development in East Asia in 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GDP per capita (US Dollar)</th>
<th>Consumer expenditure (US Billion)</th>
<th>Urban population in total population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>32,500</td>
<td>2,335</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>24,450</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>20,732</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>12,621</td>
<td>176.9</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>8,765</td>
<td>251.1</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>554.6</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oba and Chan-Olmsted (2005)

Although the West, America and Britain in particular, has played an indispensable part in stimulating economic growth, some scholars have argued that in their economic development these East Asian societies have seen greater overlapping and reactive ties with one another than with the West. The Flying Goose (FG) model proposed by the Japanese scholar Kaname Akamatsu to interpret the East Asian economic miracle is one of such example. In this model, Japan is cast in the role of the leading goose transmitting patterns of industrial development facilitated by pro-trade-oriented foreign direct investment (FDI) to the follower geese which then move up the development ladder in an orderly formation. Despite being criticized for failing to describe the internal complexities within each ‘goose economy’ and downplaying the role of the United States, this model does usefully highlight the perceived significance of the economic relations and similarities among these East Asian economies.

Another argument highlights the entrenched Confucian tradition in these societies as a fundamental force in their economic growth. The central thesis in this perspective is that Confucianism generates an inner-worldly asceticism that values and demands hard work, frugality, education, and the willing sacrifice of individual benefit for collective good. In this view, the East Asian economic miracle can be regarded as a result of the moral regeneration of Confucianism. Although Confucianism was also at
times accused of being the major impediment to social and economic development in the past, its revaluation has led to it being widely heralded as a strength for the alternative modernization in East Asia across the region.

More recently the regionalization argument has been further underpinned by a recent wave of ‘new regionalism’, focusing on the development of regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and financial security mechanisms. The rising economic power of China and the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s have contributed to the momentum of this process. Numerous proposals have been raised and studied in the beginning of the new millennium, aiming to institutionalise bilateral FTAs and accelerate trade between East Asian countries and between East Asian and Southeast Asian countries. One prominent feature in this development is the formation of the ‘ASEAN Plus Three’ (Japan, Korea, and China) as a framework for East Asian regional cooperation (Lee, Lloyd and Koo, 2002). This new formation can be interpreted as a sign of the waning participation of the US, who had actively engaged in earlier institutional arrangements such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Some commentators attributed the formation of the new axis of power to Asian countries’ search for home-grown defences against the wild swings in global money markets and to the escalating mistrust towards the US following its opposition to Japan’s proposal for the Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) to alleviate the Financial Crisis.

East Asian societies have also become increasingly linked to one another through the shared experience of rapid social transformation over the last decade. One visible change has been the growing number of consumption sites of localised ‘western modernity’ in urban areas, particularly in food, fashion and leisure activities. Since the 1990s, mushrooming McDonalds, Starbucks and western-style restaurants have spearheaded changes in dietary culture in different Asian cities. International consumer
brand names have appeared not only on local high streets but also between the pages of local versions of western fashion magazines. The numbers of discos, shopping malls, department stores, and convenience stores has grown with the formation of consumer societies to cater for 'the new rich' in the region. Even in a later-arriving economy like China, an emerging consumer culture has already substantially deviated from the official ideologically-laden tradition to become a familiar way of life among youth (see Harrison et al., 2005; Yang, 2004; Yan, 2000, Chua, 2000; Chen, 2000; Farrer, 2000; Watson, 1998).

The visibility of the western-style commercial culture in these societies, however, should not be mistaken for a linear westernisation. There are important differences in generational experience particularly among young people born into middle-class urban nuclear families. Others in the society, particularly the elder generations, regard vigorous participation in globalised consumerism as exemplars of lifestyles inscribed with 'Western decadence' that ultimately endangers one's essential Asian identities (Chua, 2000). This underlying tone of anxiety about anchoring one's identities in the face of changes is another significant feature of current regionalisation. Waves of identity-searching rhetoric since the 1990s--most famously underpinned by the promotion of 'Asian Values' and the state-sponsored Confucianism revival in China (Zhang, 1999; McLaren, 1998)-- have linked these societies together. Despite being mobilised by (authoritarian) governments to present essentialist definitions of the nominated 'civilisations', these identity-searching movements have reflected an eagerness to establish an 'alternative modernity' to account for the 'East Asian experience' and consolidate one's modern Asian identity to accommodate changes.

This process is reminiscent of the 'second-generation indigenization phenomenon' proposed by Huntington (1993:93) who argues that the revolt against
western values previously promoted or imposed through the development process is
gathering strength in modernised non-western societies as diverse civilisations try to
construct different versions of modernities which reconfigured along cultural lines
drawn by the core civilisations he delineates. A keynote in these discourses is the
redefinition of tradition through innovative actions to adapt to modern contexts. The
continual re-making of traditions is a major force underlining the diversity that
determines the multiple trajectories of modernity projects. Increasing discussion sees
‘modernity’ in its plural forms, placing more emphasis on spatial differences in its
development and challenging the equation of modernity processes with Westernisation
(Lee, 2006; Kaya, 2004, Gaonkar, 2001). This view is particularly useful in discussing
the current state of East Asian societies, which are represented as convincing examples
that Western capitalism and western modernity are not necessary set by default (Curran
and Park, 2000).

Despite no one denies that these societies are also characterised by internal
complexities: unevenly distributed wealth; antagonisms generated by the uneven
histories of global capitalism, colonialism and imperialism; different degrees of
imposed nation-state structures and regressive forms of nationalist identity politics. In
the current climate however, commentators are more inclined to attend to the
commonalities between contemporary East Asian societies. One noticeable
development has been the initiation of an academic publication of Inter-Asia Cultural
Studies in 2000, marking the emergence of a trans-border incentive to confront the lack
of ethnic and linguistic unity in this geographic space and seek collective cultural
experience.

Following this train of thoughts, I now use the emerging regional youth culture,
particularly in the area of television production and consumption, to illustrate the
regionalization argument. The emergence of regional youth culture is an interesting site not only for observing various economic, cultural and political dynamics but also important generational shifts. Discussion in this chapter also paves the way for the later discussions of recent developments in Taiwan’s television industry both in terms of its creative output and its audiences.

Emerging Regional Popular Culture in Globalisation

One of the most significant changes in the post 1990s East Asia has been the rise of alternative cultural products that have originated within the region— an economic development coupled with cultural underpinnings, or a cultural development coupled with economic underpinnings. This emergence of regionally-sourced cultural products has indicated a shift from ‘the dominant model of US market approval’, which tends to reduce the forces behind cultural globalization to global demands created either by domineering American supplies or supply adapted to rich American/western market demands, to a conceivable construction of an ‘East Asian popular culture’ (Chua, 2004) that promotes diversity at the global level as well as greater ‘homogenisation’ at the regional level by extending the national ‘imagined community’ across political borders.

For example, in the post-1990s, the ‘J pop’ (Japanese-pop) singer, Namie Amuro has built a huge fan base in Asia without touring in the US. Millions of teenagers in Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei and Singapore covet the latest fashion from Tokyo, most of which never make it to New York. Japanese lifestyle magazines are smuggled by unauthorised distributors across Asia as soon as they appear on the newsstands in Tokyo. None of them has launched an American edition. Channel V, Star TV’s music channel has upped J-pop coverage on its northern beam which spans the Greater China
A pan-Asian film region is also in formation. In addition to Hollywood-made Asian films such as *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, and *Memoir of the Gaishia*, authentic home-grown films like *The Ring* (Japan) and *Shiri* (Korea) are also gaining recognitions among regional youth. Promoting this development behind the scene are organisations like the *Asian Film Market*, an annual event aiming to coordinate business activities ranging from financing, production, post-production, sales, and talent management across Asian countries. Since 2006, the event has hosted official programme such as *Star Summit Asia* and *Co-production PRO* designed to encourage talent exchanges across the Asian film industry and provide an innovative hub for film industry professionals across Asia to promote and pitch their projects. For instance, in 2007, Japan's Avex Group Holdings and South Korea's SM Entertainment have used the occasion to outline their concept of 'Asian Dream Teams', which aims to assemble groups of pan-Asian producers, investors and talent on a project-by-project basis to produce 'All-Asia Hits'. A prototype of this emerging co-production model was seen in a 2007's film, *Secret*, which features and the loves of a young boy in musical school. With Japan's entertainment giant, *Avex*, providing capital, the film was produced by Bill Kong, prominent producer and scriptwriter in Hong Kong and directed and starred in by one of the most popular Taiwanese singers, Jay Chou, who has sold millions of music albums across the regional since 2001.

A similar regional system is also emerging around the small screen. A variable combination of political democratization, increased wealth and the advance of new communication technology have pushed changes in many regional television systems that historically had been integrally linked to state discourses on development, national
identity and cultural sovereignty. One of the most prominent impacts in this development has been the huge increase in cable and satellite television ownership in East Asian countries (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Penetration rates of cable and satellite television in different East Asian countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cable in 1991 (%)</th>
<th>Cable in 2001 (%)</th>
<th>Satellite in 2001 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>0.0 (Ban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>0.0 (Ban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>0.0 (Ban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oba and Chan-Olmsted (2005)

Arguably, the biggest winner from this development has been the cultural industries in the region. Although the relaxation of cable and satellite television ownership has opened up the domestic television market to international media organisations, it has also provided opportunities for numerous pan-Asian broadcasters and local television stations. Moreover, the emergence of more integrated regional youth and diasporic markets allows regional producers and distributors to sell to a larger audience base and receive higher revenue potential. This comparative advantage, historically enjoyed exclusively by the US media products, has now come to be shared by their Asian counterparts, just as Hoskins and McFayden (1991) more than a decade ago predicted. More programmes nowadays involve production, marketing and consumption mechanisms from more than one single East Asian country. Many productions have deliberately written in plots happening in various East Asian locations and shoot scenes accordingly. Juxtaposing directors, actors/actresses, locations and products from different nationalities in one production is no longer an unfamiliar practice.
This emerging regional popular culture is significantly underpinned by an increasingly converged lifestyles among regional youth and a growing desire to consume their common generational and regionally specific life experiences. Benefiting from the economic development, more young people in East Asia are provided with extensive care, education and material comfort, while at the same time expected to be competitive so as to continue the social class mobility initiated by the previous generations. The combination of increased material wealth and the hefty expectations imposed on urban youth has been an important topic dealt with in the regional cultural productions. In-depth audience studies on regional cultural products have pointed out that alongside the admiration of modern consumerism, themes in regional dramas relating to shared cultural heritage, life struggles, generational gaps, gender relationships and ways of expressing emotion have also played an important role in attracting the attention of the young people.

Moreover, these popular media objects/subjects that highlight similar aspirations and tensions faced by more and more youngsters in Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei and Singapore, is often welcomed and regarded as a facilitator of a new pan-regional social memory in a stark contrast to the bitter war-time memory and political hostility in previous decades. An interesting example is Pink Lady (Fenhong Nulang), produced by China International Television Corporation but directed by the Taiwanese director Wu Zueng-de and adapted from a Taiwanese comic series, Hot Ladies (Se nülang). The drama involved talents from China, Taiwan, and Japan, portraying the life of four urban Chinese women in their 20’s who live together in Shanghai. In some episodes the four women go to Japan, as one of them was assigned a development project on an amusement park and decided to visit Tokyo Disneyland to get inspiration. Upon their arrival, one of the four, Xiaoping, overwhelmed by the
The prosperity of the city, becomes separated from the other three women by the fast-moving street crowd. She goes into the police station for help and is referred to a handsome young Japanese police officer. Despite a mutually favourable first impression, they soon became frustrated as neither of them can speak the other’s language. In a sparkle of light, the Japanese police officer hands a pen and a piece of paper to Xiaoping, who suddenly realizes that they had forgotten that the Japanese and Mandarin languages share many similarities in writing characters. Consequently, although Japanese people cannot speak or understand oral Mandarin, they are able to read Mandarin characters to some extent. As Xiaoping writes down the name of her hotel in Mandarin characters, the situation is instantly clarified and connection established.

The scene plays out the subtle but close cultural ties between the Japanese and the Chinese and holds out the possibility of mutual understanding. In a subsequent episode, Xiaoping saves the officer’s life while he is trying to arrest two criminals in an accidental street shoot-out. Afterwards they start to see each other informally. Although speaking in completely different languages throughout the screen play, they have developed a special compassion for each other in a short period of time. The only word that they both understood is ‘love’ communicated in English and body language. Their fleeting encounter represents a special form of intimacy between the younger generations in the region embedded in cross-border flows of finance, personnel and talents.

Last but not least, the construction of a regional cultural identity is also sustained by a primarily regional-based imagined community formed through modern cable and satellite television and more frequently over the internet. A network of trans-Asian consumer communities has emerged to re-stratify audiences beyond national and
linguistic boundaries. The new stratification defines the audience not just by class and education, but also by taste culture and age—constituting an international youth culture (Sinclair et al, 1996). One interesting piece of evidence for this formation can be found in Darling-Wolf’s (2004) study of the online fan-forum of Kimura Takuya, a popular Japanese drama actor whose works have been widely circulated in the region since the 1990s. She argues that with more than 84 per cent of the registered members of the forum, Kimuka Takuya Alive, coming from East/SE Asia, this largely Asia-bounded ‘imagined community’ has helped to promote a strong pan-Asian cultural identification through the ways members from different Asian localities share and exchange news about Kimura Takuya.

Tension and Hierarchy in Regionalisation

Despite the increasing cross-border interchanges facilitated by the emerging regional popular culture enjoyed by youth, it should also be stressed that popular culture can also become a site for the display of parochialism and nationalism. Certainly the issue of how these popular culture consumer communities can percolate upwards to intervene in the international processes remains unconfirmed (Chua, 2006). It is also important to remember that these transnational (young) consumer communities exist alongside official international relations in a region where traces of colonial histories and Cold War antagonism remain. Thousands of women, mainly from Taiwan and South Korea who worked as sex slaves to ‘service’ Japanese soldiers during the War (the so-called Comfort women), are still campaigning for an official apology and compensation from the Japanese government. Regional governments, particularly China and Korea, continue to express deep concerns about Japan’s controversial revisions to history textbooks which explain the country’s actions during
the War as motivated by ‘self-preservation’ and a desire to liberate Asia from Western imperial control. On the terrain of popular culture Zhao Wei’s ‘Japanese Flag Incident’ provides a telling anecdote.

In 2001, a Chinese fashion magazine displayed a series of photo shoots of fashionable clothing. In one of them, Zhao Wei, a popular Chinese actress/singer, was pictured in a dress designed by Heatherette NYC’s Riche Rich, which resembled the Japanese Navy Flag (see picture 2.1). Although the writing on the dress differed from that on the actual flag, she was heavily criticized for being disrespectful to history and deeply upsetting her nation. Later in the year when she was invited to perform in a concert, a man mounted the stage and splashed liquid suspected to contain human waste on her. Her popularity has since dropped significantly. The traditional political tensions also surfaced in 2004 when the Japanese football team beat the Chinese team in the Asian Cup final hosted in Beijing. Chinese football fans jeered when the Japanese national anthem was played at the opening of the match and burned the Japanese flag after their team had lost. The small contingent of Japanese fans had to be bussed to safety as Chinese fans gathered outside the stadium.

What is also needs to be stressed is the persistence of uneven levels of production competency and flows of exchange among Asian countries (Chua, 2004, 2000). Japan, which has the longest history in the region of incorporating American cultural forms and adding indigenous characters in innovative and culturally-appropriate ways, continues to occupy the leading position in cultural production. Japan’s ability to finance expensive production and promotional activities puts its cultural industry in a dominant exporting position compared to a significantly lower level of cultural imports.
Picture 2.1: Chinese popular actress/singer, Zhao Wei, in the controversial dress

from other regional countries. Although some scholars have argued that Japan has no intention to establish Japanese-dominated spheres of influence in the region through these exports and that the inflow of Japanese popular culture in these local markets is mainly orchestrated by local businessmen (Otmazgin, 2007; Iwabuchi, 2003; Nakano, 2002), the imbalance still at times creates an impression of ‘Japanese invasion’ or ‘Japanization’ in the region especially when official exchanges are reinforced by ‘grey’ transactions.

Korea and Taiwan, remain the most (in)famous sites for copying or imitating Japan. However, after decades of ‘borrowing’ ideas from Japan and vigorously deploying ‘glocalisation’ strategies, both countries have shown ambitions to jettison their ‘second-tiered’ receiver’s positions. The recent ‘Korean Wave’ in the region has shown exactly that. Since the late 1990s, Korea has become a prominent regional producer and the only country that has managed a more equal exchange with Japan. For example, the emergence of Korean television dramas has seriously affected the amount of Japanese popular drama purchased in the region. Even in Taiwan, where Japanese popular culture has been most warmly welcomed, Korean dramas overtook Japanese dramas in 2002 in terms of both average daily broadcasting hours and total yearly broadcasting hours (Chen, 2004: 47). With the rising enthusiasm for the Korean Wave, the average price of Korean drama has risen accordingly from $600 in 2000 to $840 in 2001 with the most popular ones reaching as high as $4,046 (Kim, 2005; Shim, 2006).

Lately Taiwan has also begun producing exportable urban youth-oriented popular culture spearheaded by television dramas. While seeing relatively lower circulation in Japan and Korea, made-in-Taiwan popular culture has been particularly welcomed by young consumers in China and Hong Kong partly due to language affinity. At this
stage, China’s popular cultural products are still by large deemed conservative and unfashionable by regional youth. However, by acquiring production techniques from more advanced entertainment industries through co-productions, China is likely to join the panel of producers in shaping developments of the regional popular culture (Keane, 2006).

Conclusion

Although Japan still serves as the important innovator in the background, we are currently witnessing the formation of a more ‘multi-centered’ East Asian popular culture. The complicated interactions between different East Asian locations in this cultural traffic can be envisaged as a set of multi-tiered relationships as proposed by Hannerz (1992), who regards most localities as potentially both centre and periphery according to their relations to other localities at any particular time. As pointed out in this chapter, the growing intra-Asian cultural traffic in popular consumer-oriented culture has produced cross-cultural fertilization and inspired discussions on the emergence of an East Asian popular culture. Alongside celebrating the possibilities of greater mutual understanding, it also carries the weight of unresolved historic issues and visible structural imbalances. This regional perspective is helpful in discussing the production and consumption of television dramas in Taiwan, as it allows us to explore recent developments in the context of globalization without losing sight of the delicate relationships Taiwan holds with other regional players and their significance in Taiwan’s history and identity. Finally, this regional perspective also elucidates the increasing tight combination of culture and trade in television products, without subscribing to cultural imperialist visions of the American-style homogenization of the world culture.
Chapter 3: Taiwanese Society and Identity in Transition

From Formosa to Taiwan

European Occupation, Chinese Annexation

It is necessary to present a brief sketch of the island’s history in order to facilitate further discussion of contemporary Taiwanese society and its cultural production. Taiwan’s special cultural heritage is the result of unique historical factors shaped by interactions with several external forces. In pre-modern times, Taiwan was one of the early outposts through which westerners entered into East Asia. During the age of European maritime exploration it attracted particular attention because of its strategic location and natural resources. In 1544, Portuguese sailors arrived naming it ‘Iha Formosa’ (beautiful island); then came the Dutch in 1624 and the Spanish in 1628 who both occupied parts of northern and southern Taiwan as strategic business nodes.

The European occupations were not politically-driven and were relatively short lived compared to the Chinese. In 1644, the Manchu overthrew the Han-based Ming dynasty in Mainland China, establishing the Qing dynasty. A leading Ming loyalist, Zheng Cheng-gong (known in the West as Koxinga), retreated to Taiwan with his army. His army successfully forced out the Dutch and the Spanish, but was defeated by a Qing admiral in 1683. After Zheng’s fall, Taiwan was officially incorporated into the Qing territorial map, placing it under the jurisdiction of Fujian province. In the early period of Qing rule, Taiwan was seen as marginal and unimportant to the empire. However, in the mid-19 century after constant harassment from Japanese pirates and a short attack from the French in 1884,
Taiwan's status was reassessed. In 1885 it became a province in its own right and was assigned its first governor. It was widely felt that the islanders' 'frontier character' (Kerr, 1945: 82) made traditions less entrenched and eased the way for various modernisation experiments. Consequently Taiwan became one of the first provinces of Qing China to taste western modernisation with the construction of telegraph and rail links on the island in the late 19th century. However, signs of a progressive attitude also accelerated the activities of predatory foreign powers.

**Japanese Colonisation**

Japan was among various foreign powers who desired to occupy Taiwan as an administrative, economic and military outpost. After defeating the Qing in the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Japan demanded that Taiwan to be ceded to them as war compensation. The people in Taiwan however were not consulted about this change of sovereignty. Faced with becoming a colony the administration of the island swiftly declared a 'republic' on 23 May 1895 and prepared to resist the Japanese. This 'Republic of Taiwan' is sometimes identified as the first organised political action expressing a widespread sentiment in favour of independence (Hsiau, 2000), but it only survived for a few months. On 12th of October 1895, the Japanese declared the take-over completed and the island occupied. Sporadic resistance to Japanese rule continued for another seven years in the form of guerrilla attacks but made little impact on the new administration (Kerr, 1945).

Between 1895 and 1945, Taiwan was Japan's laboratory of colonial techniques. In pursuit of its dream of a 'Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere', Japan carried forward
the modernisation process developing the infrastructure and instituting land reform, aimed at developing Taiwan as an agricultural-oriented economy to supply food and natural resources for industrial development in Japan. Culturally, Japanese colonisation aimed to forge a sense of separate identity from China. No Chinese immigration was allowed and information from China was limited and censored. Furthermore, the Japanese launched a three-stage process of ‘Japanisation of the citizens’ (Huang-ming-hwa in Mandarin, Kominka in Japanese). The final stage, starting in 1937, aimed to naturalise the Taiwanese as Japanese. Islanders were required to adopt Japanese names, wear Japanese-style clothing, eat Japanese food, and follow Japanese social practices. Chinese customs were discouraged, Chinese films banned, and Chinese language schools closed. The policy was highly effective. By 1944, 70 to 80 per cent of the population could communicate in Japanese at a basic level. Even today Taiwan still has the third largest Japanese-speaking population in the world after Japan and South Korea (Chao, 2000; He, 2002; Iwabucchi, 2005:22).

As a result of this concerted push towards incorporation, many Taiwanese came to see themselves as Japanese—as true ‘imperial subjects’ rather than ‘colonial objects’ (Ching, 2001). This psychological transition was particularly evident among those born in the 1920s and 30s, the so-called ‘first Japanese language generation’, who had grown up with formal Japanese education, spoke fluent Japanese, and lived Japanese cultural practices. When WWII broke out, many from this generation voluntarily join the Japanese army alongside those recruited. An estimated 80,000 ‘Taiwan-born Japanese soldiers’ (Taiji riban bin) joined up among whom about quarter died and were placed in Japan’s
controversial war shrine, Yasukuni Jinja, alongside native born Japanese. Others who were too young for military service at the time recall their childhood as follows,

‘Whenever there was news of Japanese victory from the front line, the school allowed us to go home earlier as celebration. Everyone was happy. We waved little Japanese flags and ate Da-fu (literally means ‘plenty luck’, a typical Japanese cake filled with red bean paste for celebrations) on our way home’ (quoted in Li, 2004:19)

Ironically, many Taiwan-born Japanese soldiers were sent to fight against the Chinese in the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Consequently, the children who cheered the news of Japanese victories could well be celebrating the demise of their fellow Chinese. This irony has been best captured in the memory of a Taiwanese woman who served as a primary school teacher under Japanese colonisation. She recalled that on the day when the news of the Japanese defeat was announced, everyone in her school sank into a deep sense of desolation.

‘I was also overpowered by feelings of sadness and sorrow. When I returned home with red eyes, my granddad mildly reproached me, “silly girl, why red eyes? It was your fellow companions who have won.” His words came as a shock to me—someone who had grown up with Japanese education and Japanese culture. A thought, almost like an epiphany, suddenly ran over me that I was Chinese, not Japanese.’ (quoted in Li, 2004:19)

This twisted mismatching of ethnicity and nationality has fuelled a generational-specific collective memory among elder Taiwanese. However, little did they expect that the changes would continue for many decades to come, and that the complicated negotiation of Taiwanese identity had only just begun.
Early KMT governance

Chiang Kai-shek: Redefining Chinese Identity

Japan unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces in 1945 after atomic bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Allied powers mandated that Taiwan should be returned to China, which at the time had become the Republic of China ruled by Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintan (KMT) party. Forces were sent from the Mainland China soon after 1945 and the KMT general, Chen Yi, was assigned as the first governor to manage the take-over. Allied propaganda had built up high expectations of the new regime from China among the islanders, but they were soon disillusioned. Kerr (1965) describes the first few years of hand-over as follows,

‘The people [in Taiwan] anticipated sincerely and enthusiastically deliverance from the Japanese yoke. However, Chen Yi [the assigned KMT governor of Taiwan] and his henchmen ruthlessly, corruptly, and avariciously imposed their regime upon a happy and amenable population. [Chen’s] Army conducted themselves as conquerors. Secret police operated freely to intimidate and to facilitate exploitation by Central Government officials.’ (Kerr, 1965: v.)

Popular anger at the everyday corruption and disregard of the KMT forces finally came to a head in the ‘228 Incident’. On the 28th of February 1947 in Taipei city, some KMT policemen found a middle-aged Taiwanese woman peddling cigarettes without a license. The woman knelt down to beg for pardon but was physically injured in return. A male passer-by who intervened to help her was shot dead by the police. His death prompted a demonstration which was met with brutality from KMT officials. Petitioners and spectators were mown down by machine guns in front of the Governor General’s office. The ensuing conflict between KMT officials and Taiwanese protesters soon turned into
island-wide group violence between native Taiwanese and the new immigrants who had come with the KMT forces. On the orders of Governor Chen Yi, approved by KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, more KMT troops were despatched from Mainland China and tens of thousands of Taiwanese were killed in the ensuing conflict. A further 20,000 were rounded up, in particular scholars, lawyers, doctors, and local leaders. Most of these detainees allegedly died in the aftermath, in the co-called ‘March Slaughter’, decimating Taiwan’s urban intelligentsia.

In an effort to reduce Taiwanese hostility, the KMT government made ‘Japan’ the scapegoat for the 228 Incident, attributing the disharmony between the two groups to Japan’s colonial brainwashing which had led Taiwanese to think negatively of their fellow Chinese. The arrest and killing of the Taiwanese elite was hence justified as necessary to remove the residual poison of Japanese education (Lin, 1990). The governor Chen Yi was alleged to have said that ‘the Taiwanese were “slaves” of the Japanese, and would therefore have to complete re-Sinification before exercising full political-cultural rights’ (Winckler, 1994: 30). The 228 Incident marked a total breakdown in trust between the two groups, and sowed the seeds of hatred and psychological distinction. The Taiwanese living on the island before 1945 labelled the immigrants who arrived with the KMT and their descendents as ‘Mainlanders’ or ‘weishengren’, literally meaning ‘people from outside the province’. By contrast, they described themselves and their descendents as ‘indigenous Taiwanese’ or ‘benshengren’, meaning people from within the province. The majority of benshengren came to see the KMT as another colonial power, only worse than Japan, leading some commentators to regard the 228 Incident as an historical watershed, after which a strong modern Taiwanese consciousness was forged (Lin, 1996).
In the meantime, the civil war between Chiang Kai-shek’s KMT Nationalist army and Mao’s Communist army in China was escalating. In 1949, the Communists seized power and formed a new government—the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Chiang Kai-shek and his KMT government were forced to retreat to Taiwan, continuing the Republic of China in exile. The following fifty years of unbroken KMT rule in Taiwan can be roughly divided into three phases according to its leadership: the Chiang Kai-shek period (1949-1977), the Chiang Ching-kuo period (1978-1988), and the Lee Tung-hui period (1988-2000). The different backgrounds and life experiences of these three KMT presidents influenced not only their leadership style but also their cultural policy which in turn shaped the identity politics in Taiwanese society.

Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), a KMT commander who set out to continue the legacy of the Republican Revolution upon his arrival in Taiwan, felt compelled to define national identity for Taiwan in terms of race, language, and history. His idea of a nation, of course, was a ‘Chinese nation’. To prevent conflicts like the 228 Incident Martial Law was introduced in 1949 on the pretext of preventing Communist insurrection. To secure the dominance of Mainlander-based national imagery, freedom of speech, thought, publication and mobility was suppressed and access to information was substantially curtailed. The Mainlanders who had relocated to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek, although constituting only 15 percent of the population at the time, were assigned high positions in the government, police, military, education and the media. The cultural scene in Taiwan was fundamentally restructured. Virtually overnight the Mainlander elite re-established a Chinese-oriented discourse and community on the island, designating themselves as the initiators, executors and judges of the rules of the game (Tu, 1996).
The cultural policy in this period followed the political atmosphere and went through what Chun (1998:86) has termed 'cultural reunification' (1945-1967) and ‘cultural renaissance’ (1967-1977). 'Cultural reunification' focused on (re)establishing Chinese culture by purging the Japanese colonial legacy and suppressing indigenous Taiwanese identity. In the early KMT official discourses, Japan was associated solely with bloodshed and territorial occupation during the War, stressing in particular the Nanking Massacre and the subsequent Chungching Blitz on the mainland. Wartime films with underlying anti-Japanese messages were widely made, Japanese television programmes banned, and Japanese films restricted to five per annum (Wu, 1998). The attention given to Japanese colonisation in history textbooks was reduced to a few paragraphs and portrayed as follows,

"In the fifty-years of colonisation, the Taiwanese lived under the rule of a different people, discriminated in legal rights, exploited in economics; and the most saddening is the Japanese-implemented education which meant to fool one's identity. In those fifty years, guerrilla wars organised by the Taiwanese to revolt against Japanese ruling came one after the other. The total number was no less than forty times... After Japan admitted defeat, Taiwanese people were delighted. The [KMT] government sent military and administrative officials to Taiwan on the 25th of October in 1945 to accept Japan's surrender. This is the origin of Taiwan Restoration Day.' (quote from Junior High School History Volume III: 85-86)

Mandarin was designated the sole 'national language' (kuoyu) the year after Japanese left. Existing local dialects, Hokklo and Hakka, as well as the Japanese language were no longer used at any level of government administration or the state-sponsored media. Although there was no direct prohibition against the use of other dialects in film production, the KMT government restricted its circulation in other ways. For instance, the
Central Film Production Company, affiliated with the KMT, provided funding for films in Mandarin, and it was understood that these films would receive preferential treatment in the government-sponsored annual Golden Horse Prize competition. Characters in non-Mandarin speaking parts tended to portray criminals or those with low-status jobs, giving the impression that the inability to speak Mandarin defined one as vulgar, uneducated and perhaps not very bright (Dreyer, 2003). In school, pupils were penalised and punished for speaking dialects. This blatant suppression of political and linguistic localism became one focal point of protests in the following decades (Hughes, 1997).

For the indigenous community, the imposition of Mandarin constituted an act of political violence against both the language and its speakers (Chua, 2003). The generation who had received Japanese-language education before the KMT’s arrival found the abrupt policy change in language suddenly left them half-illiterate (Wang, 2005; Li, 2004; Tu, 1996). More importantly, the inability to speak Mandarin, together with lack of social connections within the new regime, prevented elite benshengren from competing on equal basis with Mainlanders. The result was a bifurcated stratification system with indigenous Taiwanese relying heavily on private assets outside of the state sector and mainlanders controlling the levers of the state, the military and much of the modern economic sector (Gold, 1996).

The new phase of ‘cultural renaissance’ was driven by the large-scale ‘Cultural Renaissance of Chinese Culture Movement’ (wenhua fuxing yundong)—initiated in part to counter the Cultural Revolution in Mao’s China. The main principle of the movement was to ‘invoke, resuscitate and reinvent [Chinese] tradition for the purpose of legitimatizing its
own vision of modern society' (Chun 1995: 51). To this end, children born after 1949 were taught in school that Taiwan had been incorporated into Imperial China for 1500 years, and traditional Chinese ethics, ancient Chinese history and geography made up thick volumes of textbooks. Outside the classroom, essay and oratory contests on topics pertaining to Chinese culture were regularly held as were peer-sponsored study sessions to discuss current speeches and writings. The main roads in the capital were named after places in Mainland China, such as Beijing East Road and Nanjing West Road. In short, the island was designed as a miniature China. To ensure that people in Taiwan shared one dominant national identity, the state acted as a national enterprise in constructing a total cultural system designed to guarantee conformity to the political order and to regulate standards of everyday behaviour.

Besides the Chinese-oriented ideology underpinning nation building in this early period, American aid and influence also played an important role. Politically, Chiang's new regime in Taiwan was seen as an implacable opposition to communism and the natural ideological ally of the US, while its geopolitical position made it a central strategic concern. For instance, with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 US president Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to protect Taiwan from possible Communist attack. In 1954, the US signed the *Taiwan Relations Act*, consolidating American material support including weapon sales to ensure sufficient defence capability. Economically, Taiwan received substantial US help. From 1949 to 1960, US aided Taiwan with $1400 million for economic development and $2300 million for military defence (Chang, 1965). From 1951 to 1965, much of the aid granted was used to improve Taiwan's infrastructure and the agricultural sector with American advisors stationing on the island and Taiwanese sent to
America for education. In the following decades, Taiwan employed US advice to model itself on Japan and developed an export-oriented industrial strategy. Export-processing zones were set up with special tax incentives to attract overseas investment. Consequently Taiwan secured an international reputation as a world exporter, with the US constituting the largest overseas market for its inexpensive consumer products until the late 1990s.

American political and economic power was often accompanied by the exercise of `soft power'. Although the island has never been under direct US occupation, contemporary Taiwanese society bears various hallmarks of US influence, from the political and educational system and the ubiquitous `American English' language teaching schools to the shared electronic usage of 110 voltages. During the 1960s, Taiwan was to serve as a leisure site for members of the American Air-force on holiday. The Chung-san North Road district in Taipei was the most marketed leisure space for the US military forces. Western style bars and pubs can still be found there today. Chen (2000:172) described the resulting `Americanisation' in Taiwan as follows,

"America" has since been the meta-referent point against which things Taiwanese are placed, measured, legitimated, or contested. This cultural imaginary continues to operate profoundly, as a routinised unconscious, in the daily life of the people in Taiwan.

For more educated youngsters in the 1960s and 1970s then, the imaginary image of the western modernity was strongly mediated through American popular cultural artefacts and later the American anti-war movement, the hippies and drugs. The consumption of American popular culture counted as one's cultural capital (Chen, 2001) as well as one indicator of ethnicity and social class in the early KMT period. While Japanese objects
were associated with an indigenous—often rural and working-class—Taiwanese identity, American popular culture was coveted and largely linked to urbanity with higher ruling class status (Wu, 1998).

Official American political support however suffered disruption in the 1970s, when the international community started to reconsider its relationship with the ‘two Chinas’. The key switch happened when Taiwan (the Republic of China) withdrew from the United Nation in 1972 upon the People’s Republic of China’s entry. A few years later, in 1978, the US formalised relations with People’s Republic of China and ended diplomatic ties with Taiwan. However, trade relations and informal communications continued, and the US remained the biggest export destination for Taiwan until the late 1990s. Moreover, as we will see later on, American cultural influence has not only continued but became generalised and normalised as cultural imports have become more diversified with the rising economic power of Taiwanese society. This ubiquity has led some commentators to argue that American influence is now so entrenched in the living environment that people in Taiwan are not even aware of ‘Americanisation’ (Chen, 2001). Overall there is little doubt that bilateral business relationships coupled with the volume of post-war US aid played a fundamental role in Taiwan’s ‘economic miracle’. At the same time, the US remains the most crucial guarantor of Taiwan’s security and political stability as long as China continues to regards Taiwan as a renegade province.

Chiang Ching-kuo: Economic development against political setbacks

Chiang Ching-kuo (1910–1988) succeeded his father, Chiang Kai-shek, as President, but unlike his father, he had spent almost half of his life time in Taiwan. He played an
important role in the transition of Taiwanese identity in two ways. Firstly, as the KMT's dream of returning to power in Mainland China was severely frustrated by the PRC's new legal standing in the international community, Chiang Ching-kuo recognised the need to incorporate the benshengren elite into the party if the KMT wished to stay on the island for a longer term. He therefore initiated the first wave of indigenisation of the KMT, assigning many benshengren to office. Secondly, in order to reduce the domestic tensions generated by political setbacks, the KMT government opted to develop Taiwan's economy at full speed. In the following years, Taiwan's economic miracle occupied the centre of public discourse, overwhelming political talk with celebrations of economic success. Taiwan's average GDP demonstrated a huge improvement from $145 in the 1940s to $8,982 in the 1980s. At the same time, rising consumption power, global economic contraction, and pressure from the US contributed to the opening-up of the domestic market to wider foreign investment which resulted in the inflow of vast quantities of imported goods, and western advertising agencies (Yang, 2004; Chen, 2001; Gold, 1988). The Japanese co-owned department store, Sogo, the American fast-food giant, McDonald's, and European high couture enterprise, Luis Vuitton, were among many international brands that landed in Taiwan in the 1980s. Other statistical indicators also pointed to an emerging middle-class lifestyle on the island. By 1985, television ownership stood at 92.31 per cent, refrigerator ownership at 96.67 per cent, and telephone ownership at 82.12 percent (Directorate-General of Budget, 1994).

The positive progress of Taiwan's economy was a major ideological weapon that the KMT's political propaganda machine mobilised to construct a negative image of the Chinese Communists. People in China were portrayed as poor and deprived. Illustrations
of Chinese Communists as skinny skeletons near to starvation stared out of school textbooks. Posters and banners alerting citizens to the possible danger of communist infiltrators on the streets successfully stigmatized the Communist regime. However, this stigmatization also created an ambivalent and problematic identification with Chinese-ness for many young Taiwanese growing up with Taiwan’s economic prosperity. The portrayal of the desperation of the Chinese people reached another climax in the early days after Taiwanese government lifted bans on visiting China in 1988. These visits, originally intended to remind islanders of their Chinese identity and soothe the political tension between the two sides, sometimes turned out to consolidate identification of the mutual difference, although not necessarily at the expense of dissipating one’s self-identity as Chinese (Li, 2002; Wu, 1998). Although the economic reforms instituted since 1978 had improved living standards in China, the completely different socio-economic history led to a sizable gap not only in material wellbeing but also in attitudes towards work, religion and personal relationships.

Nonetheless, Taiwan’s economic success and an increased level of affluence fuelled increasing demands for wider democracy and freedom (Chen, 2001; Chun, 1998). In response, in 1987, Chiang Ching-kuo sanctioned the legal existence of opposition parties, among which Taiwan’s most influential opposition party, the benshengren-dominated Democratic Progress Party (DPP) finally gained legal status. This move was rapidly followed by the lifting of strict censorship over the press and the ending of Martial Law in the same year. The lifting of Martial Law has been widely considered one of the most significant historic landmarks in contemporary Taiwanese history as it ushered in unprecedented changes in lifestyles and identity politics in the following decades.

Lee Tung-hui: Taiwanese conscious

Political liberalization unleashed energy previously suppressed by dictatorial control over virtually all cultural and political institutions. In the post-Martial Law decades, challenges to patterns of submission to authority, the eruption of repressed grievances and the politics of recognition, both domestically and internationally, have raised critical questions about Taiwan’s status and the definition of what it means to be Taiwanese.

The sticking point of this Taiwanese conscious, or the identity crisis as some might call it, is rooted in Taiwan’s ambiguous status in world politics as a result of the unresolved sovereignty issue with China. Despite operating under a separate regime since 1949 and vigorously contributing to the world economy, Taiwan, a de facto nation, has not been recognised by most official bodies in the international community. Attempts to register with international organisations as an independent entity and moves to gain political exposure internationally are continually frustrated by the PRC. The accumulation of these political setbacks has generated the urgent outcry for recognition and the desire for an independent identity in an affluent Taiwan.

One of the most drastic changes can be found in the dialectic process through which people debate and negotiate an ‘authentic’ Taiwanese identity, or Taiwanese identities. The voices advocating replacing the old ‘Republic of China’ label with Taiwan’s distinctiveness have shifted from an outlawed, subversive position to the mainstream. Previously suppressed indigenous culture and identity, and the Japanese legacy have seen a huge revival. These transformations, described by Wu (1998), demonstrated that the
KMT’s goal of constructing a Chinese nation in Taiwan has at best achieved limited success. In the following sections we will elaborate on these transformations.

It is worth mentioning the role played by Lee Tung-hui as a national leader in these transformations. Lee (1923-) is the first president from a benshengren background. Although subsequently joined the KMT during the political indigenization process, he shared similar earlier life experience to those ‘first Japanese language generation’ who grew up as Japanese; became Chinese; but remained Taiwanese in heart and soul. This feeling was expressed in one of Lee’s books, *Teachings from Lee Tung-hui School* (Lee-tung-hui-xue-xiao-de-jiao-huei)’ which he co-authored with a right-wing Japanese writer Kobayashi Yoshinori:

‘I was Japanese before the age of 22. My name was 岩理政男. As Japanese, I have received formal Japanese education. Although I have also received Chinese-language education later on, and have studied in the United States, it was the Japanese ethics and Japanese culture that influenced me the most—things that I acquired under the Japanese governance.’ (Lee and Yoshinori, 2001:65)

Ruptured life experience has arguably led Lee’s identification with the KMT and Chinese nationalism to be relatively sporadic and superficial as described by many commentators. Instead, his political thought focused on (re)constructing a distinctive Taiwanese identity and redefining Taiwan’s sovereignty. Supporting his political thoughts was a series of policy changes. For instance, in 1991, the government finally relinquished its claim to be the legitimate government of all China, and declared that it only represented the peoples of Taiwan and the offshore island. Hence the new term ‘Republic of China on Taiwan (ROCOT)’ was forged. It was on this more restricted basis of sovereignty that other nations were invited to recognize Taiwan diplomatically and to treat the government of the
ROCOT as a distinct political entity. Lee also famously advocated ‘a special state-to-state relationship’ to explain the situation between Taiwan and China in a 1994’s interview with Deutsche Welle, blatantly refusing the possibility of ‘one country, two systems’ as preferred by the Beijing government in handling the Taiwan issue. Eschewing the long-held ‘One China Principle’, his interpretation of Taiwan’s status significantly moved towards a ‘One China, One Taiwan’ basis. Taking up this new political principle, Lee’s government embarked on ‘pragmatic and flexible diplomacy (wushi waijiao)’, spearheaded by Taiwan’s yearly campaign to re-enter the United Nations as a separate member launched in 1994. Although this initiative has so far not met with success, the dynamics of these policies marked a new dimension in Taiwan’s assertiveness and in the growing distance from the ‘Chinese motherland’ (Shambaugh, 1996). In parallel with Taiwan’s struggle for international recognition, Lee steered another wave of indigenisation within the KMT. Increasing numbers of benshengren were promoted while elder Mainlander officials were sidelined. Some criticised him for fracturing the party, some praised him for rejuvenating the KMT in the process of democratisation. Controversy was never far away from Lee.

Lee was also known for his outspokenness and determination to enfranchising the citizens to elect their government at all levels. Thus, in 1996 he pushed for Taiwan’s first presidential election and was subsequently voted to be Taiwan’s first elected president. Lee’s victory, although continued the rule of the KMT, was perceived, both inside and outside the island, as a sign of a rising Taiwanese nationalism rather than a continuation of the older KMT’s Chinese nationalism. The election was widely seen as a major step forward in constructing Taiwan’s functioning democracy, but one which was unwelcome.
to the watchful eyes of the PRC leadership. In an alleged attempt to swing the public opinion during the election the Beijing government launched large-scale military exercises and missile tests around Taiwan. It took the US government to dispatch warships into the Taiwan Straits to defuse the situation. However, this military show of force backfired on the image of the PRC among the Taiwanese, leading to a sudden growth of a civic national identity among the people of Taiwan. In Lin’s (2002) study of over 1045 residents after the election, 62 per cent of respondents reckoned that China’s military action weakened people’s willingness for reunification, and 88 per cent said their choice had not be influenced by the military tension. Polls conducted since 1996 have shown that the proportion of people defining themselves as ‘Taiwanese’ has steadily increased, seriously eroding the percentage regarding themselves as Chinese. A survey by the United News in October 2004, for example, found that 62 percent of respondents said they were Taiwanese, the highest level recorded by the newspaper since it began asking the question in 1989 when only 16 percent said they were Taiwanese. By comparison, those identifying themselves as ‘Chinese’ dropped to 19 per cent from a high of 52 per cent in 1989 (Pan, 2004).

Researching Taiwan’s Past

Accompanying the rising Taiwanese consciousness in politics was the growing volume of research and publication on Taiwan’s culture and history. One after another, local communities and non-governmental organisations set up foundations and libraries to preserve Taiwanese culture and historical documents. The most famous of these included the Wusanglien Taiwan History Preservation Foundation (Wusanlien Taiwan shlliao
jijienhuei), which in 1993 began to publish *Taiwan Historical Data Research* (Taiwan shiliao yanjiou), the first professional journal expressly devoted to researching Taiwan's history and culture. In 1994, the Cilin Wenjiao Foundation, another non-governmental organisation, established a sizeable library for the purpose of research on Taiwan. Parallel efforts in the government sector included the setting up of the Institute of Taiwan History in 1993 under the auspices of Academia Sinica, the highest level research centre in Taiwan.

The desire to explore the past was also evident in the resurgence of scholarly interest. In the higher education system before the 1990s, less than 15 per cent of completed master theses in history focused on Taiwan. In the early half of the 1990s, this percentage increased to 25 and jumping to 35 in the later half. In the publishing industry, books relating to Taiwanese studies have increased at a rate higher than any other subject. Before 1987, new releases in Taiwanese studies ranged from 20 to 30 volumes each year; by 1995 they had reached 450 (Wang, 2005). In order to present a more comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of Taiwanese history and culture, a variety of approaches, including oral histories, have been adopted. By incorporating the views and experiences of the elder benshengren Taiwanese, for the first time, a different and often competing, narrative has emerged to challenge the earlier KMT-engineered history (Lu, 2002; Chen, 2003).

With the unearthing of new historical data, the public demand in post-Martial Law Taiwan for revisions to the history textbooks used in schools mounted. The reformists argued that the texts employed at high school level have been used to perpetuate the ideology of first-generation weishengren (mainlander KMT members) and had failed to represent the changing socio-political realities experienced by the younger generations. In
response to these criticisms, in 1997, a series titled 'Getting to Know Taiwan', comprising three individual volumes on history, society and geography, was incorporated into the compulsory curriculum for first-year junior high school students to balance existing textbooks. Those born in 1984 (The year of 73 in the Republic of China calendar) were the first group of pupils to be taught from the new textbooks in high school. These volumes represented a newly-forged Taiwanese identity, based on a break from the KMT-engineered Chinese past and a (re)definition of one's sense of self as symbolically rooted in Taiwan's soil (ben-tu-hua). Appearances of the use 'Chinese' were reduced; and new terms like 'Taiwanese Spirit (Taiwan jin-shen)' and 'Taiwanese Soul (Taiwan huen)' introduced.

Another related aspect of this new identity was the revision of the historical relationship with Japan. The old image of 'Japan', which revolved around wartime enmity, was superseded by a more positive image in the newly-edited textbooks. The term 'Japanese colonisation' was replaced with 'Japanese governance'. New materials on how the Japanese had enforced primary education, cultivated punctuality, improved public sanitation and abolished socially-backward customs have been added, while the space given to Japan's exploitation of Taiwan's resources and anti-Japanese coups has been reduced.

These changes have inevitably caused intensive controversy. Wang (2005) pointed out that in the first three months following the introduction of the new textbooks, 341 pieces of news and commentary appeared in the four main national newspapers, making it one of the most heated media debates of the time. Li Qing-hua, a second generation
Mainlander member of parliament whose father once served as the head of the Executive
Yuan, championed the opposition to the new version, claiming that ‘Getting to Know
Taiwan’ was an attempt to tamper with history and pave the way for Taiwan’s
independence.

The continuing row over the writing of national history, or national histories,
epitomises the conflicting national imaginations over Taiwan’s past, present and future, as
sustained by two ideologically-opposed social groups. Although it is beyond the scope of
this chapter to judge the objectivity of the new textbooks’ contents, it is argued here that
their appearance points to both a transfer of power from Mainlander to indigenous groups
and a shift in the construction of Japan in Taiwan’s social memory. The official revisionist
history has arguably been one factor that has created a less hostile social context for the
reception of Japanese culture among the younger generations.

Refashioning the Hokklo Language

Another prominent indicator of the changing identity politics in post-Martial Law
Taiwan is the revival of the Hokklo language. This is commonly referred to as ‘Tai yu’ in
Taiwan, meaning the Taiwanese language, rather than Hokklo, a name that links it to the
dialect of Fujian, a southern province of China. For many Taiwan nationalists (who
advocate Taiwan’s independence), Hokklo has become both a political resource that can
be deployed as the ‘ethno-national’ language of the island and an emotive icon around
which anti-KMT sentiments can be organised and harnessed. Thus, the most vehement
Taiwan nationalists will speak no other language in Taiwan than Hokklo, although those
who aspire to state power have little choice but to compromise and speak both Mandarin
and Hokklo in their public presentations. However, their Mandarin has often carried an
accent influenced by Hokklo, forming a distinctive variant known as ‘Taiwan’s Mandarin’
(Taiwan Kuo-yu).

The Hokklo language has also started to be increasingly deployed in the terrain of
popular culture, as the market of Hokklo speakers has developed. The elder Hokklo singer,
Yeh Qi-tien, known as ‘the Singing King of Formosa’, was able to appeal to enough fans to
vote him into the parliament twice, in 1993 and 1999. Nor is this support for the language
as a marker of identity confined to the older generation. Young singers such as Lin Chiang
and Wu Bai have been in the vanguard of experimenting with producing contemporary
Hokklo songs in the rock-n-roll style. Their albums, Marching Forward (1990), Spring
Breeze Young Brother (1992) and Branches and Lonely Birds (1998) initiated a trend
among young people to consume popular music in Hokklo. In prime time television, a new
genre of drama, hsiang-tu (literally meaning rural and soil) which uses mainly Hokklo has
emerged and become dominant across much of the 1990s. (I shall return to this genre in
chapter 5 when I look more closely at developments in popular television fiction.) Many
television commercials also used Hokklo, or Taiwan’s Mandarin, to attach positive
feelings of being in tune with the ‘authentic local spirit’ to the commodity being promoted.

These various popular cultural artefacts have not only helped extend the reach of
Hokklo from politics to daily life, they have also transformed the language’s image from
associations with the vulgar uneducated working-class to a fashionable identity accessory.
The history of the language’s former political suppression has helped mobilise it as a prime
representation of Taiwanese nationalism, rescuing it from the threat of total erasure (Chua,
2003). In 2002, Hokklo along with other local dialects, Hakka and Aborigine were incorporated into compulsory school education, co-existing with Mandarin in common usage among residents in Taiwan, particularly in the younger generations. Its' accommodation with Mandarin had led to much switching and mixing of codes between the two languages. This mixed usage both in sounds and in writing has been a distinctive feature of Taiwan in contrast to other international Chinese-speaking communities such as the Chinese populations in Singapore, Malaysia and many southern China provinces.

Consumer society and youthful identities (I)

Expansion of the middle-class lifestyle

The above examples only reveal a tip of the iceberg in the sea changes in identity politics during the first ten years after Martial law was abandoned. Other key shifts were propelled by the growing middle-class and the formation of a consumer society.

Despite the imbalance in distributing political resources between the two social groups, state-led education and a stringent grading system for college entrance operated in a non discriminatory way. This hugely assisted the break down of earlier ethnic and linguistic barriers and contributed to a relatively equitable income distribution (Tu, 1996; Werner, 1985). The ways in which the children of farmers and workers were often able to move upward in the social structure was characteristic of the dynamism and high social mobility of Taiwan's rapid development. (Gold, 1998; Hsiao, 1989) During the late 1980s, many made huge fortunes speculating on the stock market, real estate and currency, constituting examples of what Erik Olin Wright has termed 'contradictory class locations' in the Taiwanese context (Sheu, 1994). This rapid increase in wealth coupled with
higher-levels of education led 50 per cent of the general public to identify themselves as ‘middle class’ in a government survey in 1985 (Chang, 1993). Regardless of the adequacy of the standard employed by the self-claimed middle-class, a middle-class lifestyle was clearly emerging and mobilised as a reference point for the population at large in the media.

One key defining feature of this lifestyle is consumerism. A number of signals since the late 1980s have pointed to the growth of Taiwan’s consumer society. In 1988 output from the service sector exceeded 50 per cent of total GNP. Household spending on education and leisure consumption tripled, from 5.45 per cent in 1961 to 16.26 per cent in 1991 (Chen, 2001). Credit cards, introduced in 1990, expanded rapidly with 2.5 million in circulation (for a total population of 20 million people) by 1995 (Hwang, 1995). The space allocated to commercial purposes expanded to service growing consumer demand. One of the most telling stories is the rapid growth of convenience stores. Initially developed under the cooperation between the local food company, President, and the American company, Southland Corporation, this innovation in retailing started with a modest chain of 14 shops in 1979. By 1992 there were 4,000 (Bureau of Employment and Vocational Training, 2005). The desire for extended mobility of individuals and goods was also reflected in the unprecedented growth in personal automobile ownership and overseas travel after the lifting of Martial Law. Between 1982 and 1992, household ownership of automobiles increased from 13.33 per cent to 56 per cent (Chen, 2001).
Young Women: ‘Pink Collar’ Life Styles

Young single women born after the late 1970s were widely seen to be among the most robust consumers. Increasing access to higher education, wider employment opportunities and prolonged single-hood supported a lifestyle distinctly different from previous generations. The number of women entering higher education has continued to increase since 1970s and the historic gap between the proportion of males and females taking up higher education closed. In 2003, in the age group 20-29, the numbers of women entering higher education outstripped males (Budget Accounting and Statistics Executive Yuan, 2003). With better education, the percentage of women in employment rose. From 1994 to 2004, the sharpest increase happened among women with university qualifications: from 19.7 per cent to 35.0 percent (Budget Accounting and Statistics Executive Yuan, 2005). Compared to previous generations of women whose lack of educational and financial resources had seriously limited their development in other areas, young Taiwanese women are provided with better chances. The proportion of single women in the age group 20-24 rose from 63.9 per cent in 1983 to 88.1 per cent in 2003. In the next age group, 25-29, the increase was even more dramatic: from 18.4 per cent to 56.9 per cent over the same twenty year period (Budget Accounting and Statistics Executive Yuan, 2003).

This transition in women’s lives is profoundly shaped by the development of Taiwan’s consumer society. One noticeable piece of evidence lies in the emergence of ‘pink-collar’ (fenling) culture. In contrast to the social meaning given to ‘pink-collar’ in the western context, often associated with women of lower education with less well-paid jobs (see Mastracci, 2004; Howe, 1978), ‘pink-collar’ in the Taiwanese context refers to young female professionals who have benefited from recent developments and who work in well
regarded and fashionable professions. In some cases, the terms 'pink collar' and 'white-collar women' are interchangeable, except that 'pink' implies more dynamism, cosmopolitism and creativity. Consequently, 'pink-collar' has become the favoured prefix for many services and commodities designed to allure young women. Some property developers launched projects like 'pink-ladies favourite', appealing to the needs of single career women and stressing security, class, and fitness. Several five-star hotels in Taipei also started to offer specially tailored pink-collared packages, promoting the idea of staying in the hotel a few nights per month in order to relax and be pampered.

Young women are increasingly represented in the commercial media as a privileged group who can/should spend by themselves and for themselves through commodities that symbolise elegance, individuality, independence, and personal freedom. In 1995, the first local female-oriented credit card, the Tai-hsin Bank Rose Card, was launched. Associating the card with self-control, its television promotional campaign portrayed young women in various roles, from arty photographer to contented mother, stressing their ability to choose their role, develop their potentials, and enjoy their lives with the new-found financial underpinnings. This image was also promoted by the international (western) magazines that launched local editions in Taiwan the 1990s. These included *ELLE* (published since 1991), *Marie Claire* (started in 1993), and *Vogue* (published since 1996). They encouraged women to embrace a life politics focusing on individuality, self-actualization and linking one’s self and body to global communications systems. As the editor of the Taiwanese edition of *Cosmopolitan*, which debuted in 1992, put it, the magazine aimed to serve women 'who desire to actualise their potentials' and women 'who love men, children and themselves' (*Cosmopolitan* May 1992:8 in Yang, 2004: 132).
The Hybrid Cultural Scene

Another trend that became prominent alongside the formation of a consumer culture was the consolidation of foreign material and cultural influences in everyday life. As the economy opened up to foreign investment, foreign symbols, practices, languages, habits, and ways of thinking became an important part of the generational memories of many urban young people. McDonald's, once a novelty decoration in the city for the older generation, is now a familiar site for meeting friends, eating out, holding birthday parties, and even studying for exams for urban youth. The number of McDonald's rose from one in 1984 to 337 in 2001. In 1989, a McDonald in Taichung, a city in central Taiwan, established a record by holding 681 children's birthday parties in one month. In 1990, another McDonald in Kaohsiung, a city in southern Taiwan, established a record of serving 1389 customers in an hour, a rate of more than 23 customers per minute (McDonald's Taiwan Website, 2006). By 1994, Taiwan, just over one-eighth the size of California, had already become the ninth largest overseas market for McDonald's and displayed the highest growth among the overseas markets (Hu, 2002). Consuming English-language films in the cinema, which used to be a badge for owning high cultural capital in the old days, has become objects of mass consumption among young Taiwanese in the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, with domestic production in the doldrums, the box-office dominance of Hollywood films left the young generation with virtually no effective choice in cinemas.

The long-lasting American cultural dominance in shaping Taiwan's consumer/youth culture was however challenged by Japanese popular culture since the 1990s. Japanese cultural influence in Taiwanese society, although suppressed in the early KMT period, never completely vaporised. In language, many Japanese expressions were incorporated
and indigenized into Mandarin and/or Hokklo, becoming different from standard Japanese either in orthography or pronunciation. For example, the modern Mandarin term ‘便當’ [bian-dang], meaning meal box, was forged by borrowing the sound of the Japanese word for meal box [ben-toh], and matching it with appropriate Mandarin characters. ‘便當’ is thus a hybrid that exists neither in standard Mandarin nor in standard Japanese. In architecture, many buildings at the heart of Taiwanese government administration have been in continuous use from the Japanese era, including The Presidential Hall in Taipei. Once called the Office of the Taiwan Government-General Imperial Japan, it was built at the turn of the last century in the same style as the Tokyo train station and the Cultural Museum of Kyoto City. Constructed during the same period as those Western-style historic buildings in Japan and serving as a symbolic extension of Japan’s post-Meiji Westernisation, it remained the tallest building in Taiwan from the 1920s to 1970s (Wu, 1998). Other examples include the current Executive Yuan which succeeded the former Taipei City Government, The Legislative Yuan which was the former prestigious Third Girl's High School Dormitory; and the Examination Yuan which was the Taipei Syui Administrative Office. In sport, baseball was introduced during the Japanese period, remaining the most popular sport in Taiwan until today. Many talented players were cultivated during the Japanese era, and as a result, the baseball jargon commonly used by Taiwanese coaches and players of the older generation is Japanised. Pitcher is often pronounced as ‘picchah’, catcher as ‘kyacchah’, and homerun as ‘homuran’.

These cultural references to Japan had been intentionally ignored for decades, in a process described by Wu (1998) as ‘official amnesia’. For elder benshengren who
considered the Japanese better rulers than the KMT, this amnesia constituted the same
oxence as suppressing their indigenous cultural identity. Therefore, in the post-Martial
Law context where the government’s power in controlling people’s thoughts and deeds
continued to wane and benshengren identity continued to rise, these feelings towards Japan
also saw a huge revival. Buried Japanese cultural legacies, including those swept under the
carpet, coupled with those that accompanied heavy Japanese investment during economic
take-off, and those played up by recent commercial cultural activities, suddenly broke the
silence and been widely disseminated in the public conscious in the 1990s.

Since the 1990s, Japanese cultural imports in Taiwan have focused on
consumer-oriented mass culture and its images of a non-western modernity (Drake, 1999).
After the lifting of the long standing ban on Japanese cultural products in 1993, Japanese
films, music, and television programmes have been imported into Taiwan in bulk, sparking
large-scale consumption in associated areas of merchandising such as clothing, fashion,
food, and toys.

As young Taiwanese have become increasingly affluent compared with their
forebears and further removed from acrimonious wartime memories and social
suppression, consuming ‘Japan’ has become primarily the pursuit of an alternative,
approachable modernity, a rather depoliticised enjoyment that cuts across ethnic and class
divisions. One can argue that the symbolic construction of Japanese-ness in the minds of
young Taiwanese in the 1990s has shifted from the Presidential Palace built in the period of
Japanese colonisation to the Japanese-invested department store, Shin-Kong Mitsukoshi,
which was the tallest building in Taipei from 1993 to 2003.
A market for Japanese language and lifestyle products quickly emerged. Western fast-food restaurants in Taiwan like McDonald’s, famous for pursuing glocalisation, was quick to capitalise on this latest trend. Eager to match their products to names and images that evoke Japanese-ness, McDonald’s in Taiwan launched a promotional campaign, for its new ‘Hello Kitty Meal’ in the summer 1999 (see picture 3.3 and 3.4). A total of 250,000 sets of stuffed Hello Kitties, a well-know cartoon figure created by the Japanese company Sanrio, could be purchased with any meal for an additional NT. 99 dollars (about three US dollars, or two pounds sterling). The Kitties were so popular that people had to queue before the restaurants opened. In the first ninety minutes of this promotion, 200,000 Kitties were sold. Eventually when the supply of Kitties was about to run out a young man got into a fight with an eighty year-old man who allegedly try to jump the queue to buy Kitties for his grandchildren. The ensuing ‘Hello Kitty Stampede in Taiwan’ became a famous anecdote that punctuated Taiwan’s social history in the late 1990s.

The unprecedented consumption of Japanese popular cultural artefacts led to a new term ‘Ha-ri’, literally meaning ‘Crazy about Japan’, being coined by the female writer, A-xing (pen named Ha-ri-xing-zi) in 1996. This term was later widely used in the media in Taiwan and Japan to describe a social phenomenon in which youngsters become infatuated with Japanese popular culture. Born into a Taiwanese working class family in 1970, A-xing published more than ten paperbacks on her passion towards Japanese culture, and was nicknamed ‘Ha-ri Bishop’ by the media. In her controversial book Good Morning Japan (Zao-An-Ri-Ban), she described her extreme preference and indulgence in everything Japanese. In 1998, she published a second book, I Have Contracted Ha-ri Symptom (Wo-de-le-ha-ri-zheng), which opened as follows,
Picture 3.1: Poster of a McDonald's Hello Kitty campaign launched in 2004.

Source: picture taken by the author in Taipei in 2004
Picture 3.2: ‘Consuming Japan’ has become a popular consumer activity since the 1990s. Pictures of local advertisements for Japanese style breakfast and ‘Japanese and Korean Food Week’. The political meaning of the Japanese national flag has been appropriated by the current promotional culture.

Source: picture taken by the author in Taipei in 2004
The so-called Ha-ri includes: if eat, one has to eat Japanese food; if view, one has to watch Japanese trendy drama and read books in Japanese; if listen, one has to listen to Japanese music; if buy, one has to choose thing made in Japan; if speak, one has to speak in Japanese or talk about things relating to Japan. If going shopping, one has to go to Japanese-invested department store. One has to be drenched in a sea of Japanese things at all time, otherwise feeling unwell...If you feel like a Japanese living in Taiwan, then do not doubt, you have contracted the Ha-ri symptom.' (Ha-ri-xing-zi, 1998)

In 1997, a leading weekly magazine in Taiwan featured an article titled ‘Watch Out! Your Kids are Becoming Japanese’, in which Ha-ri youngsters was given the name, ‘Ha-ri-zhu’ literally meaning ‘Japan-phile tribe’. (The Journalist, April 13-19, 1997 in Iwabucchi, 2005: 22). Although there is little research explicitly comparing this phenomenon to the English-language discourse which refers to subcultural groups as ‘tribes’, the term implies similar sentiments of blurring boundaries and loose forces in organisation. Unlike the Taiwanese elder generations, whose consumption of Japan is closely related to their ethnic background and cohort memories, the young Ha-ri-zhu reflects a blurring of this ethnic formation while exhibiting what Maffesoli (1996: 98) describes as ‘a certain ambience, a state of mind’, ‘preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form’. Although never having lived through Japanese colonisation, many young Ha-ri-zhu have romantically imagined they ‘are’ Japanese or were Japanese in their previous life (Lee and He, 2003).

The Second Post-Martial Law Period (1999-)
A New Inclusive Taiwanese Identity

The vehement identity politics that emerged in the first decade after the ending of Martial Law pushed the issue of subjectivity to the centre of public attention. As Harvard philosopher Tu Weiming (1996) rightly points out, self identity in Taiwan is no longer the
exclusive property of speculative thought among the educated elite, but a general litmus test for self-definition, ethnic consciousness, political loyalty and self-orientation.

This ongoing search for self-definition became all the more evident in the late 1990s. However, with the changing demographics of the nation, the definition of ‘who is Taiwanese’ has again been re-negotiated. Three elements are particularly pertinent to this process. Firstly, in comparison to the first generation of Mainlanders, younger Taiwanese are either born and/or bred on the island. This different life experience has affected their self-identification. According to Corcuff (2002: 169) young Taiwanese are much more likely to think themselves as ‘Taiwanese’ and less likely to identify themselves as Mainlander and/or Chinese, than previous generations (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Mainlander's Self-Ascription in a Two Possibility Choice in 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainlander born in China between 1945-1949</th>
<th>Mainlander (weishengren)</th>
<th>Taiwanese</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other answers (i.e. Chinese)</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainlander born in Taiwan between 1945-1967</th>
<th>Mainlander (weishengren)</th>
<th>Taiwanese</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other answers (i.e. Chinese)</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainlander born in Taiwan between 1968-1981</th>
<th>Mainlander (weishengren)</th>
<th>Taiwanese</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other answers (i.e. Chinese)</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corcuff (2002)

Having lived side by side with one another in an increasingly liberated society and grown up challenging previously-imposed political ideologies, many of the younger generation have crossed the rigid ethnic fault lines and developed their own way of relating to conceptualisations of Taiwanese-ness. The acclaimed film Taiwanese director,
Ho Hsiao-hsien, is a good example. Born in the Guangtung province in China in 1947, Ho is a typical instance of a second generation Mainlander who has carried virtually no memory of his birthplace in China. Growing up in Taiwan, he has devoted his keen observation, aesthetic philosophy, and emotional reflection, to making films about the transitions in Taiwanese society. Many have exuded the warmth and the nostalgic memory of Taiwan that one would expect from a benshengren director. His internationally acclaimed film, *City of Sadness* (Beiqing Chengshi, 1989), vividly portrayed the pathos that the Taiwanese endured during the early stages of KMT rule—a subject matter one would normally expect from an indigenous Taiwanese director.

Secondly, intermarriage between Mainlanders and indigenous Taiwanese over the past few decades has also helped produce a group of second or third generation whose mixed identities are difficult to infer from their family background. Moreover in recent decades, marriages involving a foreign spouse, mostly women from Southeast Asian and the PRC, has also surged dramatically. According to the Ministry of the Interior (2006), the newborn babies from foreign spouses (including Mainland Chinese) have accounted for 12.46 per cent of the national total, pointing to the formation of another distinct cohort in the next generation.

As a consequence of these changes, a more recent identity politics has focused on abandoning established group distinctions and developing a progressive multicultural society. This new politics was well-encapsulated by the idea of ‘New Taiwanese’ (Hsin Taiwanren) deployed in Taipei’s mayoral election in 1998. The winning candidate Ma Ying-jiou, a second generation Mainlander, appealed to his voters by identifying himself
as a ‘New Taiwanese’ in the sense that ‘he eats Taiwan’s rice and drinks Taiwan’s water’. This concept significantly rewrote the definition of ‘who is Taiwanese’: no longer marked by the time of one’s arrival on the island, but by an organic concept that linked one’s identity to the soil of Taiwan. It stressed the similarities between different ethnic and social groups, emphasising the shared spatial co-existence and the mutual consumption of the island’s resources. Similar appeals mobilised around the notion of cooperation for the love of the soil of Taiwan have been seen in many subsequent political slogans and campaigns. In 2004, the former president Chen Shui-bian reiterated this sentiment of breaking down ethnic and social divisions in his inaugural speech:

‘Hundreds of years ago, our ancestor crossed the black water and found themselves a safe haven in Taiwan. No matter earlier or later immigrants, despite coming from different places, using different dialects, or even having different dreams, they have all settled and stayed ever since... No matter whether one is aborigine, new immigrants, diasporas, spouses of foreign origin, or those immigrant workers sweltering under the sun, they all have made an indispensable contribution to this soil [of Taiwan], and become an indispensable part of the new family of Taiwan... Inequality and suppression of some groups existed in the past under the authoritarian regime. But we should know that apart from those in power, the majority of people from all groups were equally victims... The repercussion of the 228 Incidents and the White Terror was indiscriminate of ethnicity. It was the fault of those who abused their power, not the prosecution initiated by ethnic groups... None of the ethnic groups need to carry the historical burden. In today's Taiwan, no matter whether one was born in Guangtung (a province of China) or Taitung (a province of Taiwan); no matter whether one's mother comes from Vietnam or Tainan (a province of Taiwan), one is entitled to the same social status and dignity.’ (Office of the President, Republic of China Taiwan, 2004)

This speech marked the official promotion of an image of Taiwan which hosts multi-cultural groups, moving the new identity politics towards integration and a shared destiny. If a nation is, in Benedict Anderson’s often-repeated phrase, an imagined community, it is possible for it to be unimagined and re-imagined.
Changing images of the PRC

However, just as the new Taiwanese identity often defines itself against the KMT-style Chinese label, China’s rising economic and political importance in the region have triggered a counter trend that appeals to blur the distinction between Chinese and Taiwanese in the name of pragmatism. In the deregulated media environment more positive portrayals of the PRC has also emerged especially the Beijing government, after Jiang Zemin, seemed to have adopted a more heart-and-mind approach in handling many cross-strait issues. In the wake of the passing of the Anti-Secession Law, which provides the legal standing for PRC to deploy military forces on Taiwan when necessary, on March 14th 2005 for example, the Beijing government invited KMT party leaders to visit China under the auspices of ‘A Trip for Peace’ (Heping zhilu) and the proposed granting of tax-free status to Taiwanese fruit imports. This latter gesture was thought to be an attempt to ‘bribe’ indigenous Taiwanese farmers who historically constitute the largest percentage of supporters for Taiwan’s independence. In August 2005, another friendly gesture from the PRC government, the gift to Taipei Zoo of two pandas, also sparked polarised opinions in Taiwan.

More relevantly, increased economic and cultural exchanges have continued and become grounded in the everyday experience of population movements. More than half a million Taiwanese now live and work in China, over four million Taiwanese tourists visited Mainland China in 2007, and about five thousands young Taiwanese now choose to pursue higher degrees in prestigious Chinese universities. This number is considered high as degrees gained in China are still not recognised by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan.
The high volume of movement by these temporarily ‘dislocated’ Taiwanese eventually has impacted on government policies. One signal of a shift was the launch of direct commercial flights between China and Taiwan in 2005 during the Chinese New Year period when dispersed family members traditionally get together. These direct flights, the first since 1949, were one of many instances pointing to political principles being traded against cultural and economic convenience. Although Taiwan’s government still holds to the policy of the three ‘no-s’ : no direct mail, no direct flights and no direct shipping between the two sides, over the last two years, the Chinese-New-Year direct flights have seen an expansion both in flight numbers and the permitted period.

More importantly, for these Taiwanese tourists, businessmen and students, today’s PRC is no longer a land ruled by the Cold-War Communist party nor a land of the utopian past to be restored. Rather it is a place full of curiosity and more relevantly, a source for mass consumption and economic opportunities. The Taiwanese people, in common with the Americans, the Germans, and the British, are embracing the PRC for its cheap labour, huge market and developing potentials. According to one Taiwanese businessman in China,

‘I do not agree with either reunification or independence. You know, if we declare independence, we can never make money in China...You know, being a businessman puts me in a very difficult position...Today the fact is that our best business opportunities are in China. A successful businessman has to be pragmatic...Reunification can promise good business opportunities and profit, lots of money. Businessmen have no nationality. Only money talks. Business rules. If Taiwan declares independence, the Communists will cut off the business.’ (quotes from Li, 2005:115)

This businessman speaks to a new reality in which a distinctive Taiwanese identity creates dilemmas for practical business concerns. In a language of business characterised by a
growing economic pragmatism, the surging Taiwanese conscious has no choice but be compromised. In 2006, exports to the PRC had grown to $813 billion, accounting for 39.8 per cent of Taiwan's total exports and creating a $569 billion trade surplus (Ministry of Economic Affairs R.O.C., 2007). The majority of Taiwanese industries, including the cultural industries, have now either invested in China or regarded China as their primary overseas market. The important of PRC as an indispensable market for various Taiwanese industries has caused a definite impact on the media output as we shall discuss in the later chapters.

Consumer society and youthful identities (II)

The shifts in Taiwan's cultural identity are inextricably linked to the growth of a consumer society. The means of consumption have been modernised in tune with the global trend. Credit card ownership and spending have both seen further significant growth. By 2003, an estimated 70 million credit cards had been issued, of which 37.9 million were in circulation. For an island of 23 million people, this equates to more than five credit cards per household, a figure that had approximately doubled in three years (Finance Supervisory Commission Executive Yuan, 2004). Commercial space has also surged in the new millennium. Shopping malls have seen rapid growth. Twelve new ones were opened between 1999 and 2005, replacing traditional department stores, becoming new urban attractions and stretching consumer space both horizontally and vertically. Taipei 101, the tallest building in the world at the time of writing, has stood at the centre of Taipei's new commercial Hsin-yi district since 2003 and hosts numerous top range domestic and international brand names. Living Mall (Jing-hwa City), opening in 2004, is
the largest shopping complex in South-East Asia and operates 24 hours a day to facilitate round-the-clock consumption.

One noticeable change on the terrain of consumption has been a more diverse consumer choice with American and Japanese products being joined by Korean ones. Following the increasing import of Korean films and television dramas in the late 1990s, the consumption of Korean popular culture has gradually built up in Taiwan. Korean cosmetics products, for example, which were virtually unheard of before early 2000 now provide dozens of brands. Hsu (2006:133) pointed out that the amount spent on importing Korean cosmetic products jumped 157.4 per cent from 2004 to 2005 alone. Brands such as MISSHA and THE FACE SHOP, endorsed by Korean television celebrities, have seen the greatest growth with 60 and 42 shops respectively opening across Taiwan in such a short period. Tied in with Korea's new modern image and savvy promotional operations, the Korean Wave in Taiwan needs to be understood in the broader context of increasing regionalisation and the formation of a young consumer generation who have come to dominate cultural tastes and patterns. Confirming the argument that subcultures are 'characterised by fluid boundaries and floating membership' in modern consumer society (Bennett, 1999:600), many young Taiwanese have acted as if 'Korea is the new Japan in the 2000s' and have swiftly incorporated Korean popular culture into their consumption repertoire. 'Ha-han-zhu', literally meaning Korean-phile tribe, has attracted widespread public attention, co-existing with, or in some cases succeeding' the Ha-ri-zhu in the past few years.
Alongside the inflow of popular cultural artefacts of different foreign origins, a homegrown cultural trend described as the New Taike and focused on cultural indigenisation has also jostled for public attention. The term ‘Taike’, literally meaning Taiwanese guest, originated as a pejorative word coined decades ago by the Mainlander group to characterise indigenous Taiwanese in the early KMT period. It associated indigenous Taiwanese and many of their habits with connotations such as poverty, working-class, and the farcical social behaviour. However, in today’s ‘New Taike’ culture, these negative associations have been subverted and refashioned into a new popular formation. (Jennings, 2006; Momphard, 2005; Huang, 2005). One can grasp the transition of meanings in recent New Taike culture through the interpretation of this imaginary scenario,

‘A [young] woman walks into a 7-Eleven wearing plastic slippers, jeans under a short skirt, an ‘Abibas’ shirt and her motorcyle helmet. She purchases a bottle of rice wine, several cans of Vitali, and a pack of Long Life cigarettes, gets on the back of a scooter already occupied by three and rides away’ (Momphard, 2005)

This scene starts from a women walking into one of the ubiquitous convenience stores which have began to crop up on every street corner from the 1990s, an environment that typifies Taiwan’s vibrant 24-hour- consumerism. The woman, moreover, is not from the elder generation who had been through economic adversity, but has grown up with the legacy left by decades of socio-economic development and has come to employ consumption as a way to fulfil one’s need for self-definition. What soon catches our attention is her ‘insensitive’ fashion style—a (mis)matched dress code that used to be a target for Mainlanders wanting to pour scorn on indigenous Taiwanese taste. However, this clashing wardrobe has now become a distinct style to supporters of New Taike who wear it
with new-found confidence. Their preference for a collaged fashion, some argue, reflects
Taiwan’s cultural distinctiveness which derives from a colonial past combined with recent
development in consumer culture. Her ‘Adbibas’ shirt, for instance, references the heyday of Taiwan’s rampant pirate culture in the 1980s, and a time when Taiwanese youngster’s yearned for foreign brands but could only afford low-quality fakes. Yet this deliberate misspelling of Adidas now goes beyond the superficial yearning for a foreign modernity and is used as an intentional fashion statement which addresses Taiwan’s bitter past with an ostensible sense of individuality.

Plastic slippers also carry strong symbolic meaning. They were once the day-to-day footwear for working class people living in the countryside before Taiwan’s economic take-off and signalled an inability to afford ‘fully-covered’ modern leather shoes. They have now been redeemed by New Taike as the comfortable and ‘cool’ choice to demonstrate a sense of Taiwanese-ness that is tied to the island’s human geography. The purchase of rice wine, as opposed to imported alcoholic drinks, Vitali as opposed to Coca Cola, and Long Life cigarettes as opposed to Marlboro, are again signs of preferring local equivalents. These local brands are singled out because they have a history of being popular among elder Taiwanese in less urbanised areas at a time when there were few if any foreign imports. However, thanks to the successful retro-marketing by urban agencies, they have been embraced by some urban youngsters as a new sub-cultural capital. Finally, the over-loaded motor scooter ridden by some youngsters as a fun act that shows close-knitted friendship and youthful rebellion against rules has also shed its old image of being the transportation solution common among families that cannot afford four wheels.
My interpretation of the constructed scene has largely presented the discourse of New Taike as a culture of playful subversion of old stereotypes in order to reclaim one’s indigenous identity. The leading lifestyle magazines, *Eslite Reader*, published by Taiwan’s elite bookshop chain, *Eslite*, also pointed out that New Taike culture is in part a result of the commercial packaging of the surging Taiwanese conscious and that exploration of how it shapes a sense of self and modes of individualism must not overlook an array of economic factors. The magazine argued that corresponding to the U-turn in identity politics in the post-Martial Law environment, lifestyles marketed on appeals to the power of naming one’s indigenous identity have quickly emerged. ‘Lifestyle’, as Chaney (1996) argues, describes the sensibilities employed by the individual in choosing certain commodities and patterns of consumption and in articulating these cultural resources as modes of personal expression. Therefore, New Taike’s lifestyle has become increasingly hinged upon active consumer choices in reflecting a self-constructed notion of identity, instead of a way of life locked in and determined by ethnicity-based class (Chiang, 2005). By comparison to the previous generations who defended their Taiwanese-ness through vehement struggles over national history, language, and political power, the young New Taike generation resorts to specific consumption of symbolic goods and cultural products.

However, the historical complexity behind ‘Taike’ makes it difficult to completely sidestep the problem of past prejudice. While some embrace Taike as an expression of cultural indigenisation, others still see the term as offensive and are reluctant to be associated with it. The older generation especially is more inclined to see the New Taike trend as a way to express the hidden and unresolved issue in the socio-economic structure,
while the younger generations is more likely to deploy it as a sign of breaking-away from the old ethnically-related class division.

In the latest development of Taike culture, there is also a move from debating old cultural stereotypes to establishing a new creative self (Taiwanese)-style that can incorporate the New Taiwanese in globalisation. As the popular singer Wu Bai, a publicly-recognised Taike representative, explains,

'What I am more concerned about is a new thinking and a new identification in art...If there is a so-called “Taike style”, then it means a brand new experience that follows Taiwan’s pace, like Hong Kong and Korean films which have their own tempo. If we can naturally develop a specific “Taiwanese tempo”, a tempo that belongs to ourselves, then we have found a counterbalancing force in globalisation.' (quote in Wang, 2005)

In this conception, it is the forces of globalisation, rather than the internal ethnic politics, that are positioned as the imaginary ‘others’ opposing a distinct local identity. This sentiment lamenting the loss/lack of local identity has found popular expression.

One of the best-known examples is ‘Taike Song’ performed by an award-winning local band, Liou Jia, in 2004. This song has since been performed at various large-scale local concerts and been chosen as the theme for the television commercial for Taiwan Beer, a significant material symbol of the New Taike. Condemning people who worship foreign culture or are highly influenced by it, the lyrics stress the urgency of cementing one’s Taiwanese identity at a time when increasing contact with other cultures threatens it. Another recent example came from the 2005 Taike Rock Concert, where the famous local singer MC Hotdog sang a song titled ‘Here Comes the Korean Wave (Hanliu laixi)’, which contained lyrics critical of Bae Yong-jun, one of the most popular Korean actors in
Taiwan. Partly these interventions are commercially driven and designed to strengthen young consumer's consumption of local artists, themselves included. At the same time however, they have opened up an alternative discourse which defends Taiwanese identity with a definition that moves away from the historically rooted ethnic battle between the indigenous Taiwanese (benshengren) and the Mainlander. This is reflected in the mixed ethnicity of leading Taike singers and composers. Some, including members of the Liu Jia band, could not speak fluent Hokklo; some are third generation Mainlanders, and others are of mixed ethnic background (like MC Hotdog). For them, and for many others in the younger generations, what appears more at stake is arguably the search for a unique position that will assert a distinctive Taiwanese-ness in the face of rampant foreign cultural inflows in the intensified process of globalisation.

Conclusion

In the decades after the Martial Law was abandoned, the unprecedented foreign cultural input coupled with the liberation of socio-political life has led to drastic social changes as well as cries for a new order. Against these shifting grounds, one central issue in social debates has been a constant and urgent search for a coherent national identity, or identities. With old values being challenged and new ones still under construction, the post-Martial Law decades are often described as an era of identity crisis for the Taiwanese people. For young people, in the 1990s onwards, consumption of foreign cultures has become one important source of cultural identity that fills the void left by weakened state influence. The emergence of the Ha-ri-zhu provided one point of identification. However, for the majority of the young people whose cohort experience of being a modern Taiwanese involves a greater engagement with and a better access to international society,
the new cosmopolitanism did not necessarily entail a rejection of one’s Taiwanese-ness. On the contrary, it was more likely to enable multiple, or multilayered, identities through mixing-and-matching cultural consumption to produce a perception of individuality.
Chapter 4: The Transformation of Taiwanese Television

With Taiwan's economic take-off television experienced rapid growth. By 1972, a survey of daily media consumption conducted in two central villages discovered that television had become the most popular medium, overtaking both newspapers and radio (Hsu, 1978: 12). While one can infer the medium's importance from its wide availability, it is the various roles it has played--as government ideological tool, mouthpiece for commercial interests, and public forum within an emerging civil society--that make it a particularly fertile vantage point from which one can observe social changes and generational identity formation in Taiwan. In this chapter, I will argue this point through examining the process in which the KMT's monopoly over the three terrestrial channels was increasingly challenged by the political opposition and social liberalisation accompanied by economic development. As a result, we have witnessed a concerted shift from state management to marketisation which ushered in two major changes in the structure of the television system: commercialisation and globalisation, in the post Martial Law Taiwan. As we shall see later on, the first was driven by the rise of commercial cable channels, the second by the relaxation of controls on programme imports. However, contrary to many predictions made at the time, these developments did not lead to the consolidation of Anglo-American cultural power. Rather, as original research undertaken for this thesis confirms, they paved the way for a new, regionally based, system of programme flows, borrowings, and influences.
KMT Domination: TTV, CTV and CTS

Taiwanese television came into being in the 1960s. From the outset the three original terrestrial stations: Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV, since 1962), China Television Company (CTV, since 1969), and China Television System (CTS, since 1971), all emulated the American commercial system. Alternative models were not considered partly because the national economy was too impoverished to finance a non-commercial system, and partly because the ruling party, KMT, intended to create a free enterprise image to attract moral support from the international community. However, Taiwan’s capitalism, being state-capitalism, did not totally follow a free-market mechanism. The social structure at the time was based on a ‘triple alliance of the government, the ruling party, and the military’ (Lee, 2000:125). This triple alliance also applied to the ownership and censorship of Taiwan’s television system. Up to 1992, TTV was owned by a coalition of six government banks (48.95 per cent), together with several Japanese companies (Fuji, Hitachi, NEC and Toshiba, 19.58 per cent), and domestic private investors (31.07 per cent). Two thirds (66.2 per cent) of CTV was in the hands of BCC, the largest radio station owned by the KMT, and several KMT-affiliated enterprises, including Cheng-chung Publisher, Central Daily News, the Central Motion Picture Company and the Hwa-Shia Investment Company. The remaining shares were owned by private radio stations and investors. The majority of CTS’s capital (76.0 per cent), was controlled by the Ministry of Defence and the military-affiliated enterprises, with the Ministry of Education holding another 10.4 per cent. Only a small fraction (13.5 per cent) was in the hands of private investors (Chang, 2000; Chin, 1995; Sun, 1992). Even after decades of reform and restructuring, the involvement of state agencies is still substantial (see table 4.1).
Table 4.1: Ownership Structure of Taiwan’s Three Terrestrial Stations

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>NTD. 2.6 billion</td>
<td>NTD 3.1 billion</td>
<td>NTD. 2 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Structure</td>
<td>Enterprise: 34.8%</td>
<td>Individual: 35.5%</td>
<td>Public Corp.: 38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State banks: 25.8%</td>
<td>KMT-affiliated Enterprise:</td>
<td>Defence Ministry: 26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese: 20%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>Enterprise &amp; Individuals &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KMT party reinvestment: 10.5%</td>
<td>CTS employees: 25.1%</td>
<td>CTS employees: 25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual: 8.2%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>Education Ministry: 9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The government’s Broadcasting and Television Law in 1982 re-emphasised that television’s primary purpose was to be of political service and that the three terrestrial television stations had to be supervised by the Government Information Office (GIO), a subdivision under the Executive Yuan and thus under the jurisdiction of Taiwan’s Premier. Under Martial Law, the GIO worked hand in hand with the Taiwan Garrison Command (TGC) and the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). The former was a military agency cooperating with an elaborate internal security and police system. The latter was an arm of the KMT. Many KMT officials and TGC cadres were simply transferred to the GIO (Rawnsley, 2001; Chang, 2000).

The double-filter of ownership structures and the censorship system kept television discourses in line with the will of the government. In common with many developing countries with one party states, the purpose of ‘television’ and the mission of the medium was soon identified as a means of supporting the KMT government’s control over the nation in the name of developing the national economy and ensuring social stabilisation. Under these circumstances, the three existing stations had to operate under the KMT’s political guidelines. The political pressure was so powerful at times that market logics were overruled.
The choice of broadcast language illustrates this situation. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Mandarin Chinese was made the only official language in order to generate a shared ‘Chinese’ identity soon after KMT’s relocation to Taiwan. The two local languages, Hokklo (Taiwanese) and Hakka, although spoken by over 80 per cent of the population at the time, were discouraged during the early period of KMT governance. Nevertheless, commercial pressures to maximise audiences ensured that Hokklo programming was not uncommon in the first stage of the industry’s development. Therefore, until the early 1970s, the majority of television drama produced was still in Hokklo (Kao, 2005).

However, the 1970s saw a switch in international diplomatic recognition from the KMT to Mao’s Communist regime. In October 1971, Resolution 2758 was passed by the UN General Assembly expelling the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek and replacing the Chinese seat on the Security Council with delegates from the PRC. Soon afterwards, major countries, including Italy (in 1971), Japan (in 1972), United Kingdom (in 1972) and United States (in 1979), severed their official ties with Taiwan. This huge diplomatic setback forced the KMT to recognise that its stay on the island was likely to be prolonged, compelling the party to tighten up of the language policy in the media in order to consolidate its rule. Consequently, as Rawnsley (2001:41) has pointed out, the percentages of Taiwanese (Hokklo) programming fell sharply after 1972, dipping below 10 per cent of the total in the mid-1980s and 1990s (see Table 4.2).

One major casualty of this political language policy were the ‘folk puppet shows’ (bu-dai-xi), a form of serial drama migrated to Taiwan from southern China with the earlier Han settlers classified as indigenous Taiwanese, or benshengren, in
later political discourse. Congruent with the dialect spoken by this group, folk puppet shows were conducted solely in Hokklo. In the early KMT period, the popularity of these shows reached a peak in 1971 when TTV broadcast *A Fighter from the Yu Region* (*Yu-zhou-da-ru-xia*), which allegedly attracted a rating of 96 per cent. However, in 1973, the KMT government accused ‘dialects’ of creating barriers to integration and ordered all puppet shows to be performed in Mandarin Chinese. As the use of the linguistic twists in Hokklo played a crucial role in the genre’s originality, its popularity plummeted once it switched to Mandarin. In 1974, the government went further and banned puppet shows on television on the grounds that they were interrupting daily work routine (Chen 2007, Lin 2001).

Table 4.2: Percentages of programming in Taiwanese (Hokklo) from 1970 to 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>8.05%</td>
<td>8%*</td>
<td>9%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rawnsley (2001)

**Political Contestation: The Creation of FTV and PTS**

Ten years after the lifting of Martial Law and driven by a strong political motive to replace the KMT’s de facto monopoly with a duopoly at the disposal of two largest political parties on the island, a fourth terrestrial channel, Formosa Television (hereafter FTV) was established. The DPP activists, who had long used underground stations to disseminate their political messages, had identified the establishment of a terrestrial station as one of their goals aimed at breaking the KMT’s imposition of its political ideology and its promotion of Chineseness through the mainstream media.
After being rejected by the GIO in applying for license to operate a television station in 1987 and again in 1989, DPP politicians seized the opportunity when the GIO announced the release of a new island-wide commercial television franchise in 1994. They organised press conferences and public hearings to spell out the reasons why they thought the DPP deserved to be awarded a national channel. They, also appealed to the US government through the Formosian Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), an effective Taiwan lobby group based in Washington (FTV communication, 1996 in Rawnsley, 2003). These tactics played an important role and the DPP-backed Formosa Television (FTV) beat two other competitors, Harvest Television (HTV) and Asian Pacific Television (APTV), in the selection process, despite the fact that the latter had close ties with some KMT officials (Lei, 1994).

FTV officially began broadcasting in June 1997 with a programming policy promoting Hokklo and preferring terms which imply Taiwan’s independent status. These included ‘China and Taiwan’ instead of ‘cross-strait’, ‘PRC’ instead of ‘Chinese Mainland’, and ‘Taiwan’ instead of ‘Republic of China’. FTV also produced a series of documentaries and dramas focusing on Taiwan’s native culture, history, geography, and on political and social scandals that had been considered taboo under Martial Law. The station’s talk shows are also considered more provocative than the other three terrestrial channels, debating sensitive issues such as ‘Should Taiwan enter the United Nations?’ and ‘Should the Taiwan Independence Party Constitution be amended?’ According to Tung-jung Tsai, the chairman of FTV’s board of governors, who is also a DPP member of parliament with an outspoken independent attitude, FTV’s highest principle is to promote Taiwanese nationalism.
'We shall not allow any colleague to use FTV to champion Chinese nationalism. All the programmes and news provided by FTV must be produced under the principle of Taiwanese nationalism.' (Tsai, 1997 quote in Rawnsley, 2003:159)

FTV's overt political project deepened concerns about political manipulation and commercial competition in Taiwan's television system, prompting an urgent call for a specially-mandated, non-commercially driven, and public-oriented broadcasting service. While many of the world's renowned public broadcasting services are under intensified political and commercial pressure and in decline, Taiwan, in contrast, has officially launched its public television service.

Taiwan's Public Broadcasting Station (hereafter PTS), the fifth terrestrial channel, only came into being in 1998. Although the idea of public broadcasting was initiated by the late Prime Minister Mr. Sun Yun-hsuan in 1980, under Martial Law, the actual practice of 'public broadcasting' could only be realised by borrowing time slots from the three existing terrestrial channels. As a consequence not only was public broadcasting output allocated to off-peak slots, the three terrestrial channels also sought permission to show advertisement before and after these programme inserts to make up for the 'losses' incurred. They could also cancel or reschedule public broadcasting programming whenever they deemed it necessary (Chin, 1995).

Even in the post-Martial Law period, the lack of political will left the realization of PTS largely in the hands of the concerned citizens. In 1993, a non-official 'Public Television Preparatory Committee' was formed by people within the cultural elite, laying out the raison d'être for public television and pushing the Law of PTS into legislation. In 1996, the 'Public Media Speeding-up Alliance' was formed to rally for the adoption of the Law mandating PTS after its second reading had ended up unfinished in the Legislative Yuan. In the same year, the Alliance launched 'Save
Public Television Activities' to battle against a proposal raised in the Legislative Yuan to terminate the preparatory work for PTS.

This relentless fighting and struggle finally paid off in 1998. The Law of PTS was passed and an independent official station established. In recent years, further proposals, supported most strongly by academics and media observation groups, have been studied to examine the possibility and practicality of transforming TTV and CTS into public broadcasting stations so as to create a more extensive system of public broadcasting in Taiwan. By so doing, it is hoped that favouritism to both government and commercial business can be reduced.

Commercialisation: The Rise of Cable and Satellite television

Despite of the launch of the two additional terrestrial television stations, it is arguably the rise of cable and satellite television in the 1990s that has ushered Taiwan's television industry into another era and fundamentally changed its outlook.

Originally used as a means to enhance signal reception in rural areas in the late 1960s, cable television took another turn in the late 1970s with the improvement of the national economy and simmering underground political dissent. Connected through VCRs, cheap coaxial cable, and crude transmission equipment, cable services were installed illegally to offer alternative entertainment and disseminate political ideologies. Operating outside of the legal framework, these earlier cable stations were collectively known as 'Channel Four' (disitai).

The DPP's political struggle played an important role in speeding-up the development of cable television in Taiwan. As we noted earlier, DPP, as the largest
opposition party at the time, were keen to set up a television station as their official political platform. Before this goal was achieved, DPP politicians had sought solutions underground on numerous occasions. In late 1989, they used smuggled television transmission equipment to establish the ‘Green Television Station’, which broadcast a two-hour programme to promote DPP candidates prior to the local elections. They tried to buy time from the regional satellite broadcaster, AsiaSat, but was refused. AsiaSat declared that it would not do business with those unable to obtain approval from their own government (Chin, 1997). Unrelenting, they established a loosely-organised Democracy Cable Network (Mintsu tai) on 28th February 1990, consisting of twenty-something small stations. Co-production centres were set up to unify the content in their political programmes so as to increase their influence. Other video and satellite programming was also carried for fear that monotonous political programming would deter viewers. In reaction, the KMT launched a large-scale crackdown, but its effort was mostly in vain due to the difficulty of locating highly mobile cable transmitters.

Parallel to DPP’s political incentive was the growing public dissatisfaction with the three existing terrestrial channels for their failure to provide sufficient and impartial information. (Media Partners Asia Ltd, 2003). In post-Martial Law Taiwan where a civil society began to form, more and more people were turning to cable television for alternatives. This initial spurt in demand coincided with a key technological development: satellite-delivered programming services and the use of converter boxes. In the late 1980s many households in Taiwan started to erect satellite dishes to receive signal spillage from Japan’s NHK, Hong Kong-based STAR TV, and others. These disks were nicknamed ‘little ear’ or ‘middle ear’ depending on the
size. Subscriptions soared rapidly. By 1990 total satellite viewership had reached an estimated 1.2 millions and an estimated one in 49 households had a satellite disc (Lee, 2000).

Despite mounting popular demand on the island, what finally pushed the Taiwanese government to institutionalize the cable industry was, ironically, pressure from outside. In 1992, the US threatened sanctions if the Taiwanese government did not crack down on the black market that was infringing American film copyrights, including the unauthorised distribution by illegal cable and satellite operators. To regulate the industry, the Taiwanese government responded by sanctioning the status quo and legalizing cable stations on the basis of issuing licenses (Chiu and Chan-Olmsted, 1999; Lee, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2001). In 1993, the Cable Act was passed. In 1999, it was further revised and renamed the Cable Audio and Television Broadcasting Law (CAT Law). At the same time, the GIO also passed the Satellite Audio and Television Broadcasting Law (SAT Law), which provided a legal basis for direct-to-home satellite operators to enter the market. Both the CAT Law and the SAT Law effectively heralded the deregulation of the cross-ownership rules governing cable and telephony and modestly loosened the restrictions on foreign investment.

In line with Taiwan’s entry into the World Trade Organization in 2002, the GIO further relaxed restrictions on foreign investment in the telecommunications sector. The cap on direct foreign investment in the cable television industry was raised to 49 per cent, and to as high as 60 per cent for combined direct and indirect holdings by foreign funds. In 2003, another attempt to accommodate the rapid development of broadband and digital media by the GIO saw the merging of the Radio and Television Broadcasting Law, the CAT Law, and the SAT Law into a single Three-in-One Bill,
which was designed to provide a more coherent legislative structure and promote
greater convergence between media and telecommunication. The *Three-in-One Bill*
also established, for the first time, a professional, objective, and independent
regulatory body, the *National Communications and Broadcasting Commission*
(NCC), to supervise Taiwan’s media environment and to balance the demands of new
technology and consumer needs.

**Internationalisation and Intensified Commercialisation**

After decades of contestation and change, the contemporary ecology of the
Taiwanese television system has continued to be shaped by a combination of
technological innovation and commercialisation.

Taiwan’s cable penetration is now among the highest in the world, reaching an
average of 80 per cent island-wide with 89 per cent in major cities such as Taipei and
Kaohsiung, and around 67 per cent in the peripheral areas such as Kinmen and
Taitung (Republic of China Television Year Book, 2004). Most operators offer an
attractive and affordable package of more than 80 channels for a monthly subscription
fee between $8 and $10. The success of cable services has had two major impacts.
Firstly it has meant declining ratings and reduced advertising revenues for existing
terrestrial stations. Secondly, it has opened up a major new market for foreign
programming and capital. Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 detail the decline in both average
and prime time ratings for terrestrial television since 1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial*</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4: Average prime-time 19:00-20:59 ratings of terrestrial and cable television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial*</td>
<td>22.69</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>19.32</td>
<td>18.62</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>16.54</td>
<td>17.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Average prime-time 21:00-22:59 ratings of terrestrial and cable television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cable</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>9.31</td>
<td>9.22</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>9.39</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>12.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Terrestrial stations here does not include PTS

Source: Liu (2002)

Discerning observers will have noticed that the above rating figures are comparatively lower than those of other countries. High penetration rates of cable and satellite in the Taiwanese household but with little use of premium rate programme packaging, pay-per-view and a-la-carte services has led to a dispersed audience who self select different viewing menus from the basic package of over 80 channels. The fragmented nature of viewership can be illustrated by the rating figures for a recent Korean historical drama, *Daejanggeum*, part of the recent Korean Wave, which has been broadcast by several television stations in different geographic locations throughout Asia. While the drama topped the rating charts in Korean, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the rating figure for Taiwan is a mere 6 per cent as against over 50 per cent in Korean and Hong Kong (Ying, 2005).

The tilting ratings balance between terrestrial and cable television has directly affected the distribution of advertising revenue. Figures in Table 4.6 and 4.7 clearly show that not only has the amount of advertising revenue going to terrestrial stations declined, but so has their market share. From 1996 to 2001, although the total
advertising revenue in television broadcasting has increased slightly, withdraw of custom from terrestrial stations has meant that cable channels have absorbed most of the surplus.

Table 4.6: Advertising revenue of terrestrial and cable television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial* (NTD. billion)</td>
<td>18.28</td>
<td>18.87 (+3.2%)</td>
<td>22.14 (+17.3%)</td>
<td>17.68 (-20.1%)</td>
<td>13.00 (-26.4%)</td>
<td>11.56 (-11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable (NTD. billion)</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>6.87 (+12.9%)</td>
<td>12.70 (+86.5%)</td>
<td>14.56 (+14.7%)</td>
<td>17.67 (+21.4%)</td>
<td>16.14 (-8.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Terrestrial stations here does not include PTS

Table 4.7: Market share of terrestrial and cable television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial TV</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>21.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable TV</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>30.54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Terrestrial stations here does not include PTS

Source: Liu (2002)

The second major consequence of cable television’s increasing success has been a sudden upsurge in foreign channels and programming. In 2004, Taiwan’s cable system hosted 93 channels operated by 60 domestic companies, and 43 channels offered by 20 offshore transnational companies (Republic of China Television Year Book, 2004). Table 4.8 and 4.9 list the transnational channels operated by offshore companies. Among these 43 channels, the US-based ones have played a dominant role. The only other major player is Japan which effectively controls only one major channel, NHK, with co-investments in two others, TTV and JET.
### Table 4.8: Transnational media companies and their cable channels in Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transnational Company</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Programme type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News Cooperation (US)</td>
<td>STAR Movie</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAR Movies</td>
<td>Foreign movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Geographic</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAR World</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAR Chinese Channel</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Channel V</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESPN</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STAR Sports</td>
<td>Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adventure One</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox Entertainment</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sony Picture Entertainment Corporation (US)</td>
<td>AXN</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animax</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOL Time Warner (US)</td>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HBO Signature</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HBO Family</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HBO Hits</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cinemax</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cartoon Network</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN International</td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TNT</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Walt Disney Group (US)</td>
<td>Disney channel</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viacom (US)</td>
<td>MTV</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nickelodeon Channel</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Communications Inc. (US)</td>
<td>Animal Planet</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discovery Science</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel and Living</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc. (US)</td>
<td>MGM Channel</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomberg Television (US)</td>
<td>Bloomberg</td>
<td>Financial News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Electric NBC (US)</td>
<td>CNBC Asia</td>
<td>Financial News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Choice (US)</td>
<td>Music Choice</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Track (US)</td>
<td>Sound Track</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.9: Channels offered by non-US based offshore companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Programme Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHK (Japan)</td>
<td>NHK World</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVB (HK)</td>
<td>TVB 8</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea International Broadcasting Foundation (Korea)</td>
<td>Arirang TV</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Television (Vietnam)</td>
<td>VTV-4</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV5 MONDE (French)</td>
<td>TV5</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Corp (Singapore)</td>
<td>ChannelNews Asia</td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsche Welle (German)</td>
<td>Deutsche Welle</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled by author

Faced with the need for an extra 339,000-hour-per-year of programming and severely stretched local production resources (Government Information Office, 1995), the GIO mandated that domestically-produced programming only has to account for 20 per cent of the total airtime on channels run by local cable system operators (Cable Television Broadcasting Law 36). Compared to the 70 per cent target specified in the Broadcasting and Television Law that applies to terrestrial television and radio channels, the Cable Television Broadcasting Law is markedly more import-friendly. The shortfall in local production capacity coupled with the 80 per cent ‘window’ has prompted many local cable channels to fill their schedules with large quantities of foreign programming (Chen, 2004; Wu, 1991). Consequently, the substantial number of transnational channels coupled with the percentage of foreign programming on local cable channels have given Taiwan’s cable television a highly cosmopolitan look reflecting Taiwan’s historical engagement with and political-economic position between the US and Japan.

For some commentators, deregulation has reinforced commercialisation and revived the spectre of economic/cultural colonisation due to many newly-developed
relationships between transnational power, technology, and local capital (Feng, 1995; Lee, 2000). In some early predictions, the growing popularity of satellite and cable television in Taiwan and elsewhere in Asia was seen as providing a powerful new channel for western cultural imperialism, and opening the way for a cultural invasion by foreign, mostly the US, television programming (Deodhar, 1995).

The research evidence in this thesis has however encouraged a more sanguine attitude to the prospect presented by the combination of new technology and deregulation. First of all, the figure of 43 channels provided by offshore companies is misleading. For a basic monthly subscription, it is likely that only 18 channels on average are effectively carried by the cable system operator in the designated area. Secondly, ratings figures have shown a mixed fortune for local and transnational television. Some foreign channels, particularly HBO, enjoy popularity arguably among younger generations, while some local channels are also highly competitive (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10: 2001 Top 10 Frequently Viewed Cable channels in Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Programme type</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TVBS</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Taiwan (ERA) &amp; HK (TVB) joint venture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>San-li Taiwan</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>San-li City</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>GTV General</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ETTV News</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>TVBS-N</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>National Geographic</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further, the orientation of some foreign channels often limits their attempts to reach out to the audience both in width and in depth. Since January 2005 government policy has required cable system operators to designate channel numbers 1 to 25 to services which broadcast programming suitable for family viewing and benefiting the public good. The rest of the channels have also been grouped according to their programming properties. Although varying slightly between regional channel operators, the new channel line-up reflects the increase in market segmentation with different groupings suiting different audience needs (see Table 4.11). One obvious effect of this new configuration is that viewers can now tune into their favourite channels with a fixed channel code, and avoid channels that do not interest them. Another outcome arguably has been that the overall reach of transnational channels has been largely confined to the three groupings of ‘Family/Cartoon/Documentary’, ‘Foreign film’ and ‘Sport and Music’. In other areas, including ‘Drama’, transnational channels have a much weaker representation.

Table 4.11: Channel Line-up and channel grouping in northern Taiwan in September 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel Code</th>
<th>Programme type</th>
<th>Transnational Channels in the grouping (channel code)</th>
<th>Percentages of transnational channels in the group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02-17</td>
<td>Terrestrial/public good/community</td>
<td>CNN (5)</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>Family/Cartoon/Documentary</td>
<td>National Geographic(18), Discovery (19), Discovery Travel (21), Animal Planet (22),</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Investigating Programme Imports

In addition to the above-mentioned three points, a major problem in inferring western domination in the Taiwanese case arises from the high cross-over of cable channel ownership and programming, which poses real difficulties in defining a channel as either transnational or local. Strategies of ‘glocalisation’ in business circles has taught many transnational channels to set up Asia-based headquarters to broadcast programming that takes material from the local context, while locally-owned channels are using the generous imports quota to broadcast large quantities of foreign programming as it is sometimes more profitable show imports than producing self-made programming. More problematic to discerning media researchers is the increasing difficulty of identifying the geographical origin of a programme at a time when cultural borrowing, co-production and format circulation
have become common practices in the industry. As a consequence, using the ownership of channels as the sole indicator of the foreign/local ratio in televisual output can cause inherent inaccuracy.

To compile a more accurate picture of the relative importance of different programme sources, we need to examine the broadcast schedules. In pursuit of this aim, I conducted a content analysis of the output of seven major channels. Five of these, TTV, CTV, CTS, FTV, PTS, are terrestrial channels, the other two, GTV General, and San-li Taiwan are the most popular general cable channels run by local companies according to the 2001's Gallup Survey mentioned earlier. The analysis covered two representative weeks in 2004: the second week of July and the final week in October. Each programme was coded according to five variables: programme type, origin, hybridity, broadcast time and length. (A fuller description of the coding categories can be found in Appendix 1) The analysis aimed to address the overall ratio of global, regional, and local programming on the channels examined and their detailed characteristics, as well as the hybrid programming and its relationship to global and the regional flows.

Overall the results strongly confirmed the importance of taking account of television regionalisation alongside globalisation. The regional programming outnumbered Anglo-US import on both the Taiwanese terrestrial channels and one of the most popular locally-run cable channels examined.

As Table 4.12 shows, three out of five terrestrial channels: TTV, CTV, FTV broadcast no programmes from the US and other English-speaking countries during the monitoring period. TTV and CTV used their import quota solely on programmes
from Japan, Korea, and to a lesser degree on China/Hong Kong, while FTV imported only from Japan. CTS too imported mainly from these three regional sources with only 2.2 per cent of its total coming from the US. Interestingly the exception to this pattern was PTS, with 20.1 per cent of programming originating in the US and other English-speaking countries and only 1.8 per cent from Japan.

Due to the relaxation on imports granted by the government, the overall percentage of foreign programming on cable services continued to be much higher than on terrestrial channels. During the four-week research period, 50.2 per cent of the total programming on GTV was imported but again with regional programming dominating. Japanese programming accounted for 43.5 per cent of GTV’s total output, Korean for 5.3 per cent and Chinese/HK for 1.4 per cent. In a stark contrast, Sanli offered an example of a cable channel dedicating itself to promoting local identity. During the research period, all the programmes on Sanli were locally produced, and many were in the Taiwanese dialect rather than in Mandarin.

Table 4.12: Distribution of overall programming by geographical origin (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>FTV</th>
<th>GTV</th>
<th>Sanli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American/other English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/HK</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Distribution of overall programme by geographical origin (in minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>FTV</th>
<th>GTV</th>
<th>Sanli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>18135</td>
<td>15570</td>
<td>15165</td>
<td>15625</td>
<td>16875</td>
<td>8340</td>
<td>20220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American/other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>3540</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the types of imported programming, Table 4.14 shows that most of them fell within the broad categories of entertainment, including drama, cartoons, and sports. Only PTS showed a wider diversity of imported programming genres. Moreover, the findings revealed that Japanese programming was mainly concentrated in cartoons and sport, while Korea programming specialised in dramas. This provides empirical confirmation of the recent trend which has seen Korean Idol drama replacing Japanese Trendy drama and becoming a more popular choice of imports for general channels, a decision encouraged by its comparatively cheap price. Although the popularity of the Korean Wave has reduced the visibility of Japanese Trendy drama, the latter was still the staple offering on several locally-owned Japanese programming channels. The moderate amount of American programming on the study channels appeared mostly in the form of popular series.

Table 4.14: Distribution of imported programmes by programme type and geographical origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>FTV</th>
<th>GTV</th>
<th>Sanli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American/other English</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Series</td>
<td>Various**</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Cartoon (93.3%)</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>Cartoon (97.6%)</td>
<td>Soap opera</td>
<td>Idol drama (66.6%)</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports (7.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sports (2.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cartoon (20.0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Idol drama</td>
<td>Idol drama</td>
<td>Idol</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Idol</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Turning from the overall schedules to focus solely on prime-time, one finds a much higher percentage of imported programming. The first noticeable feature was a sharp increase in the percentage of Japanese programming, though the figure varied considerably across channels from 7.6 per cent on FTV to as high as 40.8 per cent on CTS and 46.1 per cent on GTV. The other significant increase was in the percentage of Korean programming during prime time. In contrast, there was a slight drop in American and Chinese/HK programming during prime time compared to their percentages in overall programming. The second noticeable feature was marked association of particular countries with particular programme types. Japanese programming during prime time was exclusively cartoons, Korean programming was oriented around youth drama, China/HK programming focused on historical dramas, and American programming was dominated by series.

Overall, the results from the content analysis of programme schedules pointed to different concerns from previous studies of Taiwan's television, which have mainly focused on transnational channels. While past research has directed attention to the inflow of American programming and the threat of cultural imperialism, the content analysis presented here shows that on key local channels American programming

**Including Series (10.2), Documentary Historical events (17.3), Documentary Nature (4.1), Documentary Science (2.0), Documentary General Issues (9.2), Debate no audience (1.0), Lifestyle Home (4.1), Cartoon (43.9), and Movies (8.2).**
played only a minor role. The summary statistics below presented in Table 4.17 show that if we exclude PTS (which as we have seen is the single major exception to the general pattern of regionalisation revealed by the study), Japan accounts for the largest portion of programming imports during the studying period, followed by Korea, and that US is relegated to fourth place behind China/HK.

Table 4.15: Distribution of Prime Time Programming by Geographical Origin (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>FTV</th>
<th>GTV</th>
<th>Sanli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American and other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/HK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16: Prime time imported programme type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>FTV</th>
<th>GTV</th>
<th>Sanli</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American/other</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Series</td>
<td>Various**</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Idol drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Idol drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Idol drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/HK</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Historical drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Including Documentary Historical events (25), Documentary Science (5), Documentary General Issues (5), Lifestyle Home (10), Cartoon (35).

Table 4.17: Distribution of Total broadcasting time occupied by imported programming (minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Overall total Excl. PTS</th>
<th>Prime Time total Excl. PTS</th>
<th>Overall total Incl. PTS</th>
<th>Prime Time total Incl. PTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American/other English</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>4180</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>9535</td>
<td>4380</td>
<td>10075</td>
<td>4380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>3990</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>3990</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/HK</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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While these findings do not necessarily mean that the total amount of American programming circulating within the Taiwanese television system has decreased, they do suggest that the distribution of American programming has arguably been left to the US-based transnational channels, such as HBO. The new regulation of channel groupings further reinforces the image of US popular entertainment as a niche market based around US popular films and television. Moreover, while Japan continues to be the major source for cartoons and sports, its dominance in drama has been affected by the emergence of Korean (K) drama. This pattern confirms Chen's (2004) research details the shift in drama imports from J-drama to K-drama in recent years (see Table 4.18).

### Table 4.18: Average broadcasting time per day occupied by Japanese and Korean drama (hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese drama</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>21.13</td>
<td>20.63</td>
<td>14.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean drama</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>17.63</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chen (2004)

**Hybrid programming**

In much existing work on television flows to Taiwan, discussion of the influence and imagery of American and Japanese programmes has been limited to an analysis of imported programming. This focus has missed the ways in which they have been assimilated into the practice of local production, generating various forms of hybrid. In parallel with the strategy deployed by transnational channels to 'domesticate' their foreign content, hybrid programming here refers to locally-produced programming incorporating foreign elements by using foreign actor/actresses, hiring foreign hosts, re-editing foreign footage, adapting foreign formats, or copying existing foreign programmes. Although not a novelty practice, hybrid programming is worth further
research because it reveals the latent influence of foreign programming on the local televisual production and the different role played by the American and Japanese programming.

Liu and Chen (2004) has pointed out that American programming is usually taken by local producers as a model for news programmes, game shows, and political talk shows, while Japanese programming provides templates for entertainment shows and dramas. For instance, in the 1970s, a CTV news programme called 60 Minutes employed a format that copied the celebrated American news programme of the same title. More recently, a TTV news programme, Something to Ask (You Hua Yao Wen), featuring senior journalists discussing public issues was thought to have borrowed heavily from the American news programme, Meet the Press. Other instances of format copying include a TVBS call-in programme, 2100 All the People Talk, which first aired in 1994. Representatives from major political parties were invited to debate on 'the issue of the day' while the audience called in to contribute their opinions. Although it was difficult to identify one particular American news programme as its source, the host Lee Tao was seen to act and dress like CNN’s Larry King.

Another important strand of US format adaptation has been quiz and game shows. Adapted by Taiwanese producers since the 1980s, Anglo-American quiz shows have received mixed responses from the local audience. While TTV’s Super Millionaire has been successful, others like STAR’s Wise Men Survive, based on a licensed format of BBC’s The Weakest Link, did not appear to be the right formula for Taiwanese audiences, arguably due to its somewhat serious atmosphere and the host's abstruse questions.
In the case of Japan, the colonial legacy coupled with cultural proximity has enabled Japanese programming ideas to be assimilated more easily in Taiwan (Liu and Chen, 2004). Concentrating on variety shows and other audience participation shows, adaptations from Japanese entertainment programming have been ubiquitous. An early CTS's audience participation show, *Every Fight is A Victory* (*Bai Zhan Bai Sheng*) offered a typical example. The show consisted of a series of physical challenges which were performed in the form of competition among several teams. Its format was licensed from *Takeshi Castle* produced by Japan's Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS). The basic 'know how' and template was provided by TBS, but ideas for different forms of competition among the players originated from Taiwanese producers. The show was so popular that it lasted for eight years spanning across the 1980s and 1990s. A more recent CTS's popular variety show *Super Sunday* (*Chao Ji Xing Ji Tian*) also had part of its structure licensed from Japan. One of its segment called *Super Compare* (*Chao Ji Bi Yi Bi*), in which five to six participants used only body language to express a phrase for the next person to guess, was a format adaptation from its Japanese original.

However, the sources of hybrid programming are often difficult to identify, as producers do not always acknowledge where they have taken ideas from and often blend textual elements borrowed from different foreign productions together. Moreover, some formats which were first imported decades ago have become a convention that their foreign origins are overlooked. For instance, news formats which mimicked western news formats with a solitary anchor are now widely perceived as local programmes, and so are the martial arts dramas (*Wuxia Ju*) which were imported from Hong Kong in the 1980s. Therefore, in this thesis the label hybrid
programming is only applied to formats which have been recently incorporated into local production and where the imported elements and 'borrowings' are clearly traceable. Using this definition Table 4.19 details the hybrid programmes included in the programme schedules of the seven channels selected for study.

Table 4.19: Hybrid programming on the channels examined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local &amp; US/other English</th>
<th>TTV</th>
<th>CTV</th>
<th>CTS</th>
<th>PTS</th>
<th>GTV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local &amp; Japanese English</td>
<td>Super Millionaire 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Summer Vacation Flower</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Idol Dramas (Proposal Solicitor/Mijiale's Dance/Bodyguards' Sprint/Falling in Love with Rich Girl)</td>
<td>4 Idol Dramas (Women have to be Rich/My Secret Garden/My Secret Garden II/Original Summer)</td>
<td>4 Idol Dramas (Western Street Boy/Mars/Wedding Gown from Heaven/Star Wish/Love of Purple Vine/Infatuation with Hurricane)</td>
<td>6 Idol Dramas</td>
<td>2 Idol Dramas (Fighting Fish II/Spicy Teacher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local &amp; Korean</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Chef Jiang</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local &amp; China/ HK</td>
<td>Who Will Win Today</td>
<td>Historical Drama: (Princess Swap)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Historical drama: (Golden Lock) Soap opera: (She is from the Sea)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the study period, the hybrid combination of local and Anglo-American elements was manifest in TTV's 'Super Millionaire' and PTS's 'Summer Vacation Flower'. The former was a quiz show derived from the British-originated format of 'Who wants to be a Millionaire' that specified how to choose contestants and the escalation of prize money with the number of questions answered correctly. Recently however quiz show formats have been generated by other producers from within the region rather than being derived from Anglo-American models. 'Who Will Win Today' on TTV for example, was originated by Mr. Tsai He-ping, a Singaporean working in Hong Kong, and is said to be more in tune with the collectivist sensibilities of Asian audiences. The format only invites viewers to guess the winner and to call in to join the prize draw. It also allows contestants to swap points with one another. The format has been widely exported not only to Taiwan but also to Shanghai, Hong Kong and Thailand. In Taiwan, the programme emphasised local-specific knowledge, gaining a reputation of being the interactive programme that enables the audience to increase their general knowledge about Taiwan while attempting to win substantial sums.

PTS's children's studio show, 'Summer Vacation Flower', demonstrates another way of fusing local and global content. Constantly shifting between local and foreign footage, the show uses puppets to narrate dubbed foreign documentary inserts on children's daily lives in different countries. The creation of the programme is said to be part of an effort to counter the dominance of Japanese cartoons in Taiwan, and to develop a more international perspective among Taiwanese pupils. However, it is an one-off. Hybrid operations of this kind are generally rare on Taiwanese television.
Hybrid programming involving Japanese-ness appears more diversified in form. The most important instances, and those most relevant to this thesis, are the locally-produced dramas adapted from the format of Japanese Trendy dramas. Collectively known as ‘Taiwanese Idol Drama’, this new genre has copied the production techniques, marketing strategies, and the subject matter in Japanese Trendy dramas, although the degree of hybridity varies within the Idol drama genre. CTS’s Mars for instance, is a production based directly on a Japanese popular manga, while GTV’s Spicy Teacher is based on a local script with a strong resemblance to a popular J-drama, Teacher GTO. Japanese Trendy drama was thought to be a more suitable template than US mini-series and sitcoms whose higher production costs and style of expressing humour and making fun of others do not play as well in Taiwan.

Besides the content of programmes, hybridity also extends to presentation, particularly in the use of Japanese hosts in local programmes. Senda Aisa, the host of the entertainment show Fun Fan Run, is an example. Born in Japan, she joined the girl group, Sunday Girls, co-funded by Taiwanese and Japanese record companies at the age of 17. Although speaking Mandarin with a Japanese accent, she successfully launched her television career in Taiwan in 2001. This type of hybridity is also used in the only Korea-Taiwan example in the researched period, the locally-produced cooking programme on CTS, Chef Jiang. The host, Mr. Jiang, is a member of the Korean diaspora and demonstrates various Korean dishes in the programme.

Hybrid programming with Chinese/HK elements is limited to the co-production of historical dramas and occasionally soap operas. Involving actors from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, these historical dramas are also released on different channels
across the region’s Mandarin television channels. CTV’s *Princess Swap* is one such example.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of programme schedules reported here was undertaken to provide basic empirical data on foreign imports and influences on major local channels a decade after the launch of deregulation. In contrast to previous studies which have concentrated on assessing the degree of US/western dominance on the local television system, the analysis here shifts the focus to study popular locally-owned channels. The findings here show a minimum US-import on these channels but substantial amounts of imports and influences from within the region. This regional influence is particularly prominent in the genre of cartoon and youth dramas, supporting the formation of an inchoate regional popular culture. In addition to the emergence of Korean drama, which exemplifies the creation of a new cultural conveyor belt disseminating Japanese inspired materials to the rest in the region, the recent breakthrough in local drama production heralded by the advent of Taiwanese Idol drama also points to a deeper level of assimilation of Japanese style and highlights the strength of cultural regionalisation alongside globalisation. The next chapter examines the development of Taiwanese popular drama in more detail and looks particularly into its role in young people’s life and their identities.
Chapter 5: Taiwanese Drama and Regional Culture

Locally-produced television dramas

Locally-produced television drama in Taiwan started with *Return to the Hug* on TTV in 1962. In common with most popular dramas of the time it was a series. At this early stage, most parts were played by non-professional actors, stage performers, movie stars and radio broadcasters due to the shortage of funding and commercial revenue (Tsai, 2002).

In 1969, with the setting up of CTV, the telenovela format was introduced from Japan, showing the country's early influence. The first, *Jin Jin*, was broadcast daily for 30 minutes on CTV and generated huge interest from the public. Since then telenovelas have become a staple of television schedules as well as an important source of revenue for local television stations. In the 1970s, when colour television sets became widely affordable, watching prime time telenovelas became an evening ritual among many Taiwanese households. The ratings of telenovelas at the time often reached as high as 40 to 50 per cent, partly because the three terrestrial television companies had adjusted broadcasting schedules to fit the lifestyle of the industrialising Taiwanese society and partly because of increases in the costs of participating in other forms of entertainment (Lu, 1998). The television industry grew so successfully that in 1974, *Bodyguard* (*Baobiao*), a telenovelas produced by CTS, set a record of 256 episodes and was sold to Hong Kong and other Southeast Asian countries where substantial Chinese-speaking diasporas resided.

In the 1980s, the landscape of Taiwanese television drama already presented a more diversified outlook both in genres and subject matters. It experienced the impact
of imported programming for the first time with a martial arts telenovela, *Chu Liou Shiang*, from Hong Kong. Broadcast in April 1982, *Chu Liou Shiang*, both the title and the name of the main character who used his fists to defy and defeat figures of social injustice, ignited an island-wide craze for this new genre. Not only did the handsome Hong Kong lead actor become a household name in Taiwan, in the following decades Hong Kong martial art telenovelas influenced the style of Taiwanese television dramas and opened up a new phase of television production with increasing inter-Asia inputs (Tsai, 2002). Although the government banned the screening of Hong Kong telenovelas in 1984 on the grounds of protecting local drama productions, programming from Hong Kong continued to be disseminated via VCR and referenced by Taiwanese television producers. A good example illustrating the legacy of dramas from Hong Kong in those days was the remarkable locally-produced martial arts telenovela, *The Empress (Yi-dai-nu-huang, 1985 CTS)*. Based on the life of the one and only female empress in the Chinese history, it set a record rating of 51.7 per cent (Television Yearly Report of Republic of China, 1987). The government ban was rescinded after television deregulation in 1993 but dramas from Hong Kong have not prompted the same enthusiasm that greeted their initial arrivals.

Another important strand of local prime time telenovelas in the 1980s featured romantic encounters and heterosexual relationships between good looking, well-dressed characters from wealthy backgrounds. One important source for these productions were the novels of a local female writer pen-named Chiung-yao. Between 1986 and 2003, 22 of her novels were adapted into prime-time television dramas (see Chiung-yao Official Website, 2006). Most are situated against the background of the Ching dynasty, 1930s' China, and 1970s' Taiwan. Only one, *An Ephemeral Dream (Yi-lien-yu-meng)*, broadcast in 1996 was based on a contemporary story taking place
in the 1990s. Chiung-yao's dramas are also famous for using poetic lines and exaggerated emotional outbursts to emphasize conflicts and social class clashes.

In the 1990s, the loosening of government control gave television producers freedom to tackle a wider range of topics in their works, and for the first time they could and would use television drama as a site to represent political and social issues. A distinctive new genre commonly known in Taiwan as ‘hsiang-tu’ dramas was born. Between April 1995 and March 1997, 26 hsing-tu dramas of varied lengths were produced and screened across the three terrestrial networks (i.e. TTV, CTV, CTS). Of these, 14 were broadcast in the most expensive local prime time slot (Tsai, 2000: 179).

Aside from generic themes such as love affairs, revenge, and family conflicts, this genre had two distinguishing characteristics. Firstly, they echoed the mounting interest in researching and revealing Taiwan’s past, especially previously suppressed social memories, in the 1990s. Aiming to cater for the general mood in the society, many hsiang-tu drama productions intentionally assumed a nostalgic stance in portraying stories set against historical backgrounds that had particular significance for the discussion of Taiwanese identity, such as the Japanese colonisation and early KMT governance. Among these various time frames, the period of early KMT governance was the most popular. Once a political taboo, the social cleavages during the Martial Law period became popular raw material for mass television. The production, *Love (Ai*, 1990 CTS), widely held to be the first hsiang-tu drama for example, depicted social tensions between the Mainlanders and the indigenous community and juxtaposed Mandarin with Hokklo in screen dialogue to encapsulate their different identities. Another famous hsiang-tu drama, *Mr. Bian and Miss Zhen* (referring to the former Taiwanese president Chen Shuei-bian and his wife), broadcast in 2000, offered an idealised version of his real life struggles. Born into a peasant
benshengren family in the late 1940s, Chen's political career symbolised the history of the island from the KMT's suppression to the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism. The huge contrast between his past and current position, provided a provocative image of potential social mobility for the rural population and the working class. Secondly, hsiang-tu dramas, to a degree, reflected the power transferral in the 1990s when the benshengren group gradually became 'the mainstream' in the construction of Taiwanese cultural identities. The mixed use of Hokklo and 'Taiwanese Mandarin' in screen conversation, as opposed to standard Mandarin, clearly indicated the benshengren group was the targeted audience. In stark contrast to earlier days when Hokklo was banned and 'Taiwanese Mandarin' stigmatised in the media, hsiang-tu drama has staged a reversal of fortune in the relationships between language and social power. This change was most keenly-felt among the first benshengren generation, some of whom only speak Hokklo. As noted earlier, when most programmes were designated by the KMT government to be broadcast in Mandarin, their choice was highly restricted to afternoon Hokklo news and early evening Hokklo folk drama (ge-zai-xi). For them, the Hokklo-speaking hsiang-tu drama marked a belated recognition of their interest and existence that had been sacrificed for political television. For the second benshengren generation, having grown up with Mandarin education at school and Hokklo at home, employing Hokklo in conversation is usually more of a political choice rather than a necessity. The use of Hokklo in hsiang-tu drama, to them, has more meaning in redeeming their cultural roots and identity.

There is no doubt that the post-martial law liberalised political climate has offered a broad context that has accommodated and encouraged the production and reception of hsiang-tu dramas, which is often described as 'the most locally favoured
type of television programme representing an exclusive sense of Taiwan in transition’ (Tsai, 2000: 179). However, the combination of increased programming from abroad and evolving identity politics has presented new challenges. In response, many recent hsiang-tu drama productions have adjusted to accommodate market shifts depicting stories in more contemporary backgrounds and moving into urban settings. While modernising the storylines, hsiang-tu drama has maintained its social realist style when portraying human relationships and ideological localism/nationalism. This has helped to retain most of its loyal following in transition, securing its continuing place as a popular genre for prime time television. The two television stations, FTV and San-li Taiwan, remain committed to producing hsiang-tu dramas and continue to achieve high rankings in many audience surveys.

The Re-Turn to Japan and the Rise of Korea

In addition to shifts in locally-produced drama, the post-1990s deregulated television environment also witnessed a more substantial inflow of imported regional drama, most noticeably to date the ones from Japan and Korea.

Compared to cultural imports from other countries, Japanese imports in Taiwan have never been based on a simple economic calculation. They also carry complex political concerns. As we saw in Chapter 3, the legacy of Japanese imperialism affected the export of its culture to Taiwan for much of the post-war period. The KMT government elaborated on the necessity of banning Japanese cultural products as follows (Su, 1999). First, fifty-years of Japanese colonisation had left an older-generation of native Taiwanese fluent in Japanese but unable to speak Mandarin. Continuing Japanese cultural imports, they argued, hindered their willingness to practice their Mandarin. Secondly, in 1972 when the Japanese
government established its official diplomatic ties with the PRC, angry protesters vandalised a local cinema which was showing a Japanese film *Youth Fire*. Japanese films were then outlawed in order to prevent social disorder. Thirdly, further importation of Japanese cultural products was seen to worsen the existing trade deficit, as Taiwan already relied heavily on the importation of industrial skills and machinery from Japan. Finally, it was argued, the fact that Japanese media companies had been co-investing and co-producing films, television programmes and books in the PRC since 1973 made their cultural products susceptible to communist ideologies which can easily penetrate Taiwan once imported. Based on these reasons, only scarce Japanese cultural products were allowed to be imported legally, and those allowed in still had to follow stringent regulations, including dubbing into Mandarin and avoiding any images and social practices indicative of Japanese culture. Local programmes shot in Japan were also required to avoid any use of the Japanese language, kimonos, and to avoid hiring Japanese actors (He, 2002).

These efforts did not block the inflow of Japanese cultural products entirely however. Japan’s Fuji TV has invested in Taiwan’s TTV since its inception, and used to pay NT.150,000 dollars monthly in exchange of two hours broadcasting time everyday. Although the programming, largely limited to animations that were perceived to be purged of ‘the Japanese smell’, had to go through severe censorship and be dubbed into Mandarin. Nevertheless, this window of display enabled Japanese cartoons and toys to be part of entrenched childhood memories for many Taiwanese pupils. The affordability and availability of VCR technology in the late 1980s further frustrated government effort in cracking down on the circulation of Japanese programming. Pirate videos, underground cable channels and illegal satellite all carried generous amounts of Japanese programming. In a 1984 research on video
viewing habits among Taiwanese households, Japanese programming occupied five places in the list of the top ten most watched genres, including Japanese detective films/dramas (No. 1), Japanese romantic films/dramas (No. 2), Japanese period dramas (No. 3), Japanese social realism films/dramas (No. 8), and Japanese horror films/drama (No. 10) (Zhao, 2000). This situation where Japanese programming was disallowed on official channels but was vigorously traded outside of government control created a so-called ‘dual structure’ of distribution (Luo, 1995).

The distribution of Japanese cultural product became more rampant in the early 1990s when satellite television started to emerge in the living rooms of urban Taiwanese families to fulfil the growing appetite for entertainment and imagination. In 1992 the pan-Asia satellite channel, STAR TV, broadcast five youth-oriented Japanese ‘Trendy dramas’: *Tokyo Elevator Girl, The Choice of Adult, Mystery of A Young Lady, Powerful Young Wife*, and *Care Home*. At the time, when availability of satellite and cable television were still relatively low compared to nowadays, being able to receive and watch Japanese dramas was effectively a label of being urban chic and generated numerous topics in social discussion.

Legal distribution of Japanese cultural products finally arrived as a result of television deregulation in 1993. With satellite and cable television freely screening Japanese programmes, banning Japanese programming on terrestrial channels became unsustainable and was therefore lifted. Consequently in 1994, CTV broadcast a Japanese soap opera *Ah-Hsin* (Oshin in Japanese). Ah-Hsin was the name of the female leading character, and the series portrayed her life from childhood to old age, a period coinciding with Japanese colonisation in Taiwan and the Second World War. Her life was full of frustrations and difficulties, but she managed to overcome them with optimism and perseverance. Many older native Taiwanese found echoes of their
own past in *Ah-Hsin* and approved of the Japanese virtues and morals she represented. The drama received a high rating and was rescheduled to start from 8pm, becoming the first foreign series to be broadcast on the so-called ‘Golden 8 O’clock Slot’. Interestingly however, the subtle and intricate emotions that *Ah-Hsin* stirred up in the Taiwanese audience prompted the authorities to intervene and reschedule it to 9pm (Liao, 2000).

Meanwhile, different genres of Japanese drama were also imported after deregulation, including period dramas, Da-he dramas, soap operas, and Trendy dramas. Among these Trendy drama has achieved the widest reach and become the epicentre of the subsequent Ha-ri phenomenon. STAR’s earlier success prompted an unprecedented business interest in purchasing and broadcasting Japanese dramas among other local television companies (Lee and Chen, 1998). A group of five to six channels (depending on the region and system operators) are currently dedicated to broadcasting Japanese programming, and other channels have inserted some popular Japanese programmes into their schedules from time to time. As Lee (1998) has pointed out, Japanese trendy drama landed on Taiwan via satellite but soon travelled from niche market good to mass consumption commodity.

The arrival of Japanese Trendy drama coincided with rising demand for more entertainment from the young people. More importantly it has enhanced the further commercialisation of Taiwan’s deregulated television, leading to a trend in television drama to focus on youth-oriented consumption in order to gain high ratings. In the following years, this trend was reinforced by the rising popularity of Korean television dramas in the region.
In 2000 a newly-established cable channel GTV initiated the import of Korean dramas into Taiwan, partly as a strategy to establish a distinctive market niche for the channel and partly due to the cost-effectiveness of Korean dramas. The first Korean drama on Taiwanese small screen was *Sparks*, a romantic story marketed as the 'love troubles of four men and women who struggle to attain true love' (Mee, 2005). Its popularity in Taiwan elevated its leading Korean actors, Cha In Pyo and Lee Young Ae, to household names and established a benchmark for subsequent imports from Korea. Indebted to Japanese Trendy dramas for their substance and technique, Korean dramas have similarly articulated the tastes of the young generation in the vanguard of the new consumerism. Following the footsteps of Japanese dramas, it is often argued that they have also capitalised on a shared yearning for an East Asian modernity characterized by the intricacy of human relationships in a rapidly evolving urban culture.

To these cultural positives, Korean drama also had a very substantial economic advantage in their early years, as they were traded at a quarter of the price of Japanese dramas, and a tenth of the price of those from Hong Kong (Kim, 2005). This was a powerful incentive. Following GTV's lead, Videoland, a channel which had until then specialized in Japanese dramas, shifted loyalty to Korean dramas. Terrestrial channels such as FTV, CTV, and cable channels such as Power TV, E-Phil, also begun airing them. As a result Taiwan became a major export market for Korean television. According to statistics from Korean's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in 2001, about one in five of South Korea's broadcast programmes exported to Asia went to Taiwan (Kim, 2005). Local actors however were not so welcoming. In 2002, the transmission of the Korean production, *Glass Slipper*, on the terrestrial station
TTV prompted the Artists and Performers Union to call for the station to show more cultural responsibility and broadcast more locally-produced programming.

The popularity of Japanese and Korean commercial dramas among local youth and their wide availability for appropriation has rendered US cultural products the second choice when it comes to programming import for local channels. Moreover, the revaluation of Japan and the rise of Korea in the development of regional commercial dramas are central to the emergence of Taiwanese Idol drama which will be explored in the later part of this thesis. In order to properly contextualise this new genre however, we need to trace its development regionally in more detail.

Popular Drama and Regional Culture

The Story of Japanese Trendy Drama

As we have argued, the increasing political and economic interactions in the East Asia region since the 1990s provided a sympathetic environment for the emergence of a regional popular culture focused on the affluent young generation. The production, distribution and consumption of Japanese Trendy drama provides one of the first and most fertile sites for observing this process at work.

Trendy dramas have been the most influential Japanese popular cultural export in the region in the 1990s. As the name suggests, it is a genre that takes material from current Japanese society to reflect social trends. Starting in Japan around 1986, its emergence coincided with the economic peak before the bubble economy, tackling issues encountered by a young Japanese generation who were enjoying economic prosperity within an urban habitat. Targeted at a young audience, particularly young women, these dramas usually featured love stories of characters living in cosy small
apartments, well-dressed in designer clothes, and socialising in expensive, usually Western, social surroundings (Chua, 2006; Zhao, 2000; Gu, 1999; Chiu, 2002). *Tokyo Love Story* (1991) and *101 Marriage Proposals* (1991) were the two classic productions of this genre and were later exported to many regional markets. Although the social settings of Trendy dramas became less extravagant after the bursting of the economic bubble, the basic idea of picturing young people's daily life in the highly-developed modern city remained.

In contrast to globally-circulated Japanese films, animations and computer games, the consumption of Japanese Trendy drama is an exclusively Asian phenomenon and signals important trends in the recent development of regionalisation. Not only does it document a transition in the political attitude towards Japan and its cultural products, which had previously been considered negatively or banned, it also reflects the improved economic conditions in the region evident in the formation of consumer societies and the widespread new media technologies.

For a long time, the export of Japanese cultural products in Asia had not gone far beyond cartoons, computer games, and other *Mu-kokuseki*, a Japanese term meaning the 'erasure of racial or ethnic characteristics and any context which would embed the characters in a particular culture or country' (Iwabuchi, 2002:2). The reasons behind this promotion of 'cultural odorlessness' in Japan's cultural exports to Asia is complicated. Firstly, Japan has historically emphasized the uniqueness of its people and been uninterested in non-Japanese 'becoming' Japanese through consuming Japan (Hannerz, 1989). Secondly, Japan's imperialist history in the East Asian region has left its cultural legacy at risk of causing offence in formerly occupied territories. Therefore, the disguise and suspension of Japanese-ness have been thought of as the rule of thumb in distributing Japanese (cultural) products in East Asia.
This ambivalent attitude--a combination of an imperialist mentality and anti-imperialist apprehension between Japan and its Asian neighbours--can be traced back to the *Meiji Restoration* in Japan's modern history. The arrival of General Perry and the US navy forcibly ended Japan's seclusion and led to the signing of the unequal *Kanagawa Treaty* in 1854. Japan realized that the country had fallen behind the Western powers technologically and needed to industrialize in order to defend and maintain its autonomy. Thus in 1868, Emperor Meiji embarked on a series of social, economic, and military reforms which successfully transformed Japan into a modern nation and marked out a different destiny from its Asian neighbours in the following decades. At the height of Meiji period, a Japanese slogan, 'Datsua nyuo', meaning 'escape Asia, enter the West', was widely employed to promote Japan's ambitions to become an imperial power through de-Asianization. In this narrative, 'the West' played the role of the modern 'Other', while 'Asia' reflected the 'backwardness' of Japan's un-modernised past. In the modern Japanese national identity, 'Asia' and 'Japan' were viewed as two entities, two poles in an asymmetrical triad between 'Asia', the 'West'. Even in the pan-Asianism discourse at the time, 'Japan' in the Japanese mental maps was geographically located in 'Asia' but rose above it (Iwabuchi, 2002). This mentality was further strengthened after Japan tasted the fruits of transformation and emerged victorious in the Sino-Japanese War in 1885 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. The two conflicts led to Japan's colonization of Taiwan (1895-1945) and Korea (1910-1945), leaving it as the only non-western colonial power in the late 19th century. In an effort to consolidate its emerging empire, Japan attempted to create a Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. To fulfil this ambition, it waged the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and rampaged through Southeast Asia during the Second World War until its eventual defeat. This history has been at the root for the enmity towards Japan among many elderly in Asia.
Japan's imperialist dream came to a halt in 1945, but it rekindled its sense of superiority in the post-war period with its phenomenal economic development and remained distant from its Asian neighbours. Although initially presenting itself as a weakened victim of the war, Japan re-emerged as a model capitalist country and a bulwark against communism in Asia. With crucial American contributions to a series of nation-rebuilding and financial restructuring initiatives, Japan's economy soon recovered to pre-war levels and experienced a boom in its 'Golden Sixties' with an average annual growth of ten per cent. Throughout the 1970s, Japan had the world's second largest gross national product—just behind the United States and ranked first among major industrial nations in GNP per capita in 1990.

However, in the 1990s, Japan's economy started to show signs of stagnation, while other East Asian states, most noticeably the Asian Four Tigers, continued to experience high economic growth and assumed a greater significance in the changing post-Cold War geopolitical landscape. These turns prompted a revision of the old perception of Asia-Japan-West relations in the construction of Japan's national/cultural identity and underpinned Japan's so-called 'return to Asia', an 'Asia' that was no longer an underdeveloped area available for Japan's 'civilizing' mission.

Yet, this tilt in the balance within the national imagination alone was not enough to trigger the considerable increase in Japan's cultural export in the region. At the time, Hong Kong and Singapore were the only two locations in East Asia that permitted the broadcasting of Japanese dramas (beginning in 1970 and 1982 respectively). South Korea and Taiwan still strictly limited the official circulation of Japanese cultural products and China's media market was tightly-controlled by the government. As a result, the market for Japanese popular culture in Asia was small,
with 6.9 million people in Hong Kong and only 3.2 million in Singapore. Therefore, for many Japanese companies, East Asia did not provide enough financial incentives for a labour-intensive overseas distribution process, including the enormous time invested in obtaining copyrights from multiple owners in the Japanese system, seeking a local licensee and dubbing/subtitling programmes into local languages (Iwabuchi, 2001: 140). Faced with these obstacles, many Japanese artists and companies concentrated on the wealthy domestic market which was often large enough to recoup the production costs (Nakano, 2002; Iwabuchi, 2000).

It was the change in government policies towards the domestic television industry coupled with increasing market competition that gave the strong push for the further dissemination of Japanese Trendy dramas. In the 1990s, as a result of democratization and practical concerns with accommodating growing media globalization, governments in Korea and Taiwan lifted the restrictions previously imposed on Japanese cultural imports. The normalization of diplomatic ties in 1965 had permitted political and economic exchanges between Korea and Japan but Korea banned the importation of Japanese cultural products until 1998, although (as in Taiwan) Japanese culture was often disseminated through unofficial and underground channels. Indeed, Japanese popular culture had been copied, plagiarized and reproduced in Korean products to such a degree that Kim (2002:4) suggested that Japanese culture had already established deep roots in the emotional structures of Koreans. In the 1990s, the dissemination of Japanese culture intensified after some Korean households were able to receive signal spillage from the Japanese NHK satellite and with the spread of the Internet since 1997, both of which opened up alternative channels for Koreans to consume Japanese popular culture (Park, 2005). These developments in new communication technologies made it difficult to maintain
the official ban, and the South Korean government embarked on a four-stage policy which allowed Japanese cultural products to be imported from 1998, with the *Joint Declaration of the New 21st Century Korea-Japan Partnership*. The first stage allowed films, videos, and comics to be imported, followed by the second stage in 1999 allowing Japanese music concerts, a third stage in 2000 allowing recorded music, computer and video games. The fourth stage, which includes television programmes, was finally introduced in 2004 (Kim, 2006; Park, 2005).

As mentioned previously, the Taiwanese government had officially placed strict restrictions on the importation of Japanese cultural products before 1993, with the exception of 'odorless' cartoons. However, similar to the situation in South Korea, Japanese cultural products were 'smuggled' in by the back door, particularly through pirate videos. In the early 1990s, as we have noted, a sea-change in Taiwanese identity politics had its ripple effect in translating the image of Japan from a war enemy and exploitative colonizer to an early modernity engineer and friendly neighbour. Alongside this complicated domestic struggle over identity politics, television deregulation enforced under pressure from the US also contributed to the lifting of the restrictions. Since then, Taiwan has been the most receptive market for Japanese cultural products in Asia (I will explore the reception of Japanese cultural products in Taiwan in later chapters).

The removal of legal obstacles has not only allowed the dissemination of a wide-range of Japanese cultural products but also greatly enlarged the market for Japanese products with South Korea's 48 million population and Taiwan's 23 million. In both these markets, rapid economic development since the 1970s has seen them closing the economic gap with Japan and an increasing number in the younger generations who are ready to embrace the wealthy and independent lifestyle.
represented in Japanese Trendy dramas. Iwabuchi (2002) has argued that the textual organisation, from plots to settings, offers its Asian audiences the 'sweet scent' of being both modern and East Asian. For the non-Japanese young Asian audience, depictions in Japanese Trendy dramas have, at different levels, echoed their own life experience, while also allowing them to vicariously participate in the advanced capitalist consumer modernity of the regional economic leader.

The global players, led by Murdoch's STAR TV, soon discovered the potential of this market segment. In the attempt to maximize profits from the latest developments of cable and satellite television, STAR TV initiated the broadcast of Japanese Trendy drama across the region. Subsequently, local television networks also fought for popular Japanese programming to fill up their programming schedules. Nakano (2002) described this situation as an irony in which the distribution of Japanese programming and the alleged forces of 'Japanisation' had less to do with the active promotion and imposition of Japanese companies, and much more to do with global and local agents' responding to the demands and opportunities created by new technology and market competition within a context of intensifying media globalisation. Chan (1996, 1994) has argued that this initial move by STAR TV, operating in tandem with the growing economic integration among Asian nations, has laid the basis for a new regional identity mediated through popularised singers, artists, film stars, news anchors and youth culture. In his opinion, although STAR's broadcast of Japanese Trendy dramas was initially a glocalisation strategy aimed at revenue expansion through cost-effective programming, the dissemination of Japanese Trendy drama has engendered economic and cultural phenomenon which significantly advanced the creation of a regional popular culture.
As a result of these shifts, in the 1990s Asia became the number one destination for Japan’s television content exports. Official figure from Japan Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications showed that in 1995 Japanese private broadcasters directed 47.3 per cent of their exports to Asia compared with 25.7 per cent to North America. However, this official figure only accounted for the tip of the iceberg. Alternative modes of circulation, such as the use unauthorised VCD duplication and online peer-to-peer sharing, have accounted for a vast additional network of hidden distribution and offered access to Japanese cultural products outside of the orbit or control of Japanese companies. Nakano (2002) has used the recent popularity of Japanese programming in Hong Kong and China to tell a compelling story which directs attention not only to corporate-led cultural flows, but also the perspectives of unforeseen consumers and unauthorized intermediaries. Hu (2005) also pointed out that the rampant unauthorised distribution could be seen a reaction from regional young fans, who have been dissatisfied with the relatively sluggish official distribution of Japanese Trendy drama to other Asian systems and who have been eager to pursue a time-space compression to ‘catch up’ with Japan.

The Korean Wave

Although never traditionally a powerhouse of popular culture in Asia, Korea by the late 1990s had emerged as what Chen (2000) calls a ‘sub-empire’, taking advantage of the possibilities opened up by the insatiable appetite for alternative entertainment after economic advancement and media liberalisation across Asia.

Korea was liberated from Japanese colonisation after 1945, but was soon afterwards caught up in the Korean War between 1950 and 1953 which destroyed most production facilities and killed about one million soldiers and civilians. The
substantial American aid kickstarted South Korea’s economic development. It was estimated that from 1953 to 1960, foreign aid financed more than 70 percent of total imports, and contributed approximately 95 per cent of foreign savings (Collins and Park, 1989: 167; Kim and Roemer, 1979). In 1962, the Park Chung Hee government launched the First Five-Year Economic Development Plan which helped to transform the economy initially from an agriculture base to light industry and consumer products and then to heavy industry in the 1970s and 1980s.

Famous for incorporating elements of both state capitalism and free enterprise, South Korea’s economy was dominated by a group of ‘chaebol’, large private conglomerates, and supported by a significant number of public corporations in areas such as iron and steel, utilities, communications, fertilizers, chemicals, and other heavy industries. The government combined a policy of import substitution with an export-led approach. Policy planners selected a group of strategic industries to back, including electronics, shipbuilding, and automobiles, and nurtured them by making the importation of rival goods difficult. When the new industry was on its feet, the government worked to create good conditions for the country to pursue exports. Incentives included the reduction of corporate and private income taxes for exporters, tariff exemptions for raw materials imported for export production, business tax exemptions, and accelerated depreciation allowances. The rapid economic growth of the late 1980s was boosted by the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. The economy rapidly became mature during the 1990s with an exponential growth rate, and is often referred to as the ‘Miracle of the Han River’. Although it was one of the countries most affected by the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s, the economy recovered quickly.
Despite having a rapidly developing economy with a high percentage of exports, Korean cultural production was historically confined to its domestic market. However, since the late 1980s, the Korean government began to recognise the added value in cultural products from the Hollywood film industry and embarked on a series of reforms designed to strengthen the Korean cinema. With the slogan 'Learning from Hollywood', sophisticated business practices, such as audience research, marketing and reviews, were adopted. In 1995, the state enforced The Motion Picture Promotion Law to provide tax breaks for film studios, and established the School of Film and Multimedia at the Korean National University of Arts with the intention of training filmmakers in using cutting edge media technologies (Shim, 2006, 2002). Most famously, it set up screen quotas which required local theatres to screen Korean movies for at least 146 days in a year. Despite continuing pressure from American trade negotiators to abolish these quotas, the screening policy remained. These powerful interventions from the Korean state, not limited to those mentioned above, has led Ryoo (2005) to argue that although 'the demise of state' in this era of globalization remains a possibility, it is not a likelihood in South Korea whose distinctive historical path of economic and cultural development has brought state power and global capital into a close alliance.

The various policy initiatives have achieved their goals. The Korean film industry has shown significant improvement both in quality and quantity. A number of Korean movies have since won awards at prestigious film festivals around the world. The number of Korean films exported also jumped from 14 in 1993 to 164 in 2003. The revival of Korean cinema has successfully demonstrated that it is possible to regenerate a domestic cultural industry through state assistance and negotiation with the global/regional influences in the process of globalisation.
More recently however, it is Korean television drama that exerts the greater impact on regional media consumers at the level of everyday life. Korea’s television industry started in the 1960s with two public broadcasters, the Korean Broadcast System (KBS) and the Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) and one state-operated Educational Broadcasting System (EBS). This triangular dominance was broken in 1991, when the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), a commercial broadcasting company, entered the market and the research company Media Service Korea introduced new rating technology. These two events marked a significant transition in Korean television as it became more concerned with commercial competition and began to actively emulate Japanese network programmes, which were widely considered as an efficient recipe for ratings success (Lee, 2004a, 2004b). As a result, during the 1990s, 46 entertainment shows were reported to have plagiarised their Japanese counterparts, leading many to complain that there was little difference between the two nation’s television culture (Lee, 2004: 40). Faced with soaring criticism of blatant plagiarism, many Korean television producers turned to purchasing programme formats from Japan and converting them into locally-produced programmes. One example was the ‘Korean trendy drama’ a hybrid genre derived from Japanese Trendy drama (Lee, 2003; 2004a; 2004b). Jealousy (1992), which is now regarded as the first Korean trendy drama, was suspected of copying Japan’s Tokyo Love Story due to the similarities in both substance and technique: the young, beautiful and fashion-conscious cast, the dynamic storyline, easily-to-relate-to subject matter, contemporary urban background, and consummate production skills.

Reflecting the love and lives of affluent urban Koreans, many subsequent Korean Trendy dramas also capitalized on romantic images geared towards the tastes
of the young generation and storylines portraying intricate human relationship against the rapidly evolving East Asian society. This feature gave Korean dramas a similar competitive advantage in regional markets to those which had given Japanese Trendy drama its original edge over American productions. Researchers (Cho, 2005; Kim, 2005; Heo, 2002) found that the images of fashionable looking actors/actresses and modernized social environment in Korean dramas are especially attractive to youngsters in countries like China and Vietnam, where a certain standard of living has been reached through continuous economic growth but a matching 'alternative' culture is still in waiting. The social situations and cultural settings represented in Korean Trendy dramas arguably offer both an attainable lifestyle model for young Chinese and Vietnamese to pursue and provide an enticing but relevant glimpse of alternative possibilities.

With that in mind, one should not overlook the proactive effort from the Korean state and the Korean cultural industry in promoting and disseminating Korean television dramas overseas. Unlike Japan's initial nonchalance, the Korean state played an important part facilitating regional distribution. As Kim (2006) has pointed out, the term 'Korean Wave' (hanliu in Mandarin, hanryu in Japanese, and hallyu in Korean), a commonly used phrase to describe the wide popularity of Korean popular culture abroad, was derived from a CD masterminded by the South Korean Culture and Tourism Ministry in 1997 when China's state-run CCTV screened a Korean television drama, What is Love All About. The CD, a compilation of Mandarin songs performed by famous South Korean singers, was produced to attract the Chinese audience while helping the branding of Korean popular cultural exports in China. In addition, the Korean government also mobilized experts stationed in various neighbouring countries to gather information on cultural trends and set up permanent
consultative bodies with national governments. Other examples of government’s efforts to actively promote Korean cultural products can be found on the official website of the Korean National Tourism Organisation, where the cultural substance of Korean Wave is fused with the economic activity of tourism. On the site, a section is constantly dedicated to the Korean Wave with compiled descriptions about locations where famous titles were filmed. Successful dramas like Autumn in My Heart and Winter Sonata, are believed to have brought in 130,000 tourists from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand (Park in Shim, 2006). Consequently, the influence of these television dramas is thought to have rippled outwards and cultivated a better cultural image of Korea in East Asia (Shim, 2006; Kim, 2005).

More importantly, the assistance from the state has enabled Korean drama to be traded at a low price. Especially after the Asian financial crisis, buyers in the region have preferred Korean dramas which were, as we noted earlier, available at a quarter of the price of Japanese dramas (Kim, 2005). The price strategy was particularly effective with newer or smaller television stations in the region, many of which used cheaper imported Korean dramas to fill up their schedule and establish their market niche—in a similar way to STAR TV’s earlier deployment of Japanese Trendy drama to compete for viewership. In this view, the popularity of the Korean dramas regionally is yet another form of business collusion between the Korean state and local industry and skilful marketing campaigns deployed by the latter are also at heart of the commercial success of the Korean Wave abroad (Shim, 2006).

With all the factors combined, Korean television dramas have travelled rapidly and successfully, provoking more demand for Korean films, music, and fashion in many East Asian markets. In Taiwan for example, before the arrival of Korean popular culture, the image of Korea/Korean was often reduced to dictatorship,
vehement nationalism, violent tendencies and male-centrism. This perception was aggravated by South Korea’s decision to cut political ties with Taiwan in 1990 and by the devastating impact of the Asia Financial crisis in 1997. However, these negative images took a sharp turn as the consumption of image-laden, fashion-conscious, and well-marketed Korean cultural texts became popular among young Taiwanese. A ‘new’ image of Korea as chic was constructed around the selective importation of films, popular music, clothing, cosmetic brands, cuisine, and news on Korean stars.

Even in Japan, allegedly the most difficult market for other regional cultural products to enter, the import of Korean popular cultural products has almost doubled since 1998. The data recorded by the Korea Foundation for Asian Culture Exchange (KOFACE) shows that by August 2005, 60 Korean television dramas have been broadcast on channels in Japan, including terrestrial, cable and satellite channels (in Kim, 2006). Further statistics from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism show that in 2001 South Korea television programme exports to Asia comprised 64.3 per cent of total cultural exports worth of $12.3 millions. Of these, 20.1% went to Taiwan, 9.7% went to Japan, 9.4% to Hong Kong, 7.9% to Singapore, and 2.8% to Vietnam. That figure tripled to $37.5 millions in 2003.
Chapter 6 Encountering America: Exotic Realism

Ambivalence towards American cultural products

As we noted in Chapter 3, America's political power has long left a hallmark on Taiwanese society, including on the terrain of popular culture. Compared to the political ban on Japanese films and television programmes, American popular culture was not seen as problematic by the ruling KMT and began to pour into Taiwan particularly through the American air-force radio station (AFNT) that aired American pop music. In the early days, such music was a major site of consumption when leisure choices were restricted, and American popular culture was virtually the sole international source for Taiwanese youth before the 1980s. In addition to music and television programmes, American-style bars, discos, and leisure clubs, offered excitement for fun-seeking 'cool' Taiwanese youth, most of whom came from more educated and privilege backgrounds and understood some English (Shaw, 1994). The majority of the Taiwanese people at the time, were however unlikely to participate due to the language barrier and cost.

Decades later with the transformation of Taiwanese economy and society, popular culture from the US, although no longer enjoying the same sole dominant position as before, still constitutes a major source of entertainment for Taiwanese young people. Moreover, economic development and extended education has given a large number of urban youth the social capital to consume American popular culture. Consequently in today's Taiwanese society, consuming US cultural imports have been transformed from an elite pastime to a mass activity among younger generations. American television is no exception.
As we saw in Chapter 4, in the deregulated market, US-based transnational channel operators have entered Taiwan’s domestic market employing different localisation and marketing strategies, and several of them have won significant viewership. HBO, for example, has been voted the most popular cable channel for a number of consecutive years since 2001. In the survey I conducted of over 612 urban young Taiwanese, 78.9 per cent of respondents had watched a popular US television series at least once in the past 12 months (please see Appendix B for more details on the questionnaire). Among these, 63.9 per cent had consumed a US television series at least once a month, and 46.5 per cent had first watched US television series before the age of twelve. Cable and satellite were the most used channels for consumption: with about two-thirds of respondents watching US series in this way. The fact that only five per cent of viewers reportedly watched using traditional terrestrial channels reflected the situation where terrestrial channels have largely shifted to source their imports from regional countries rather than the US (as we have seen from the content analysis in reported in chapter 4).

In common with the situation in many countries, urban youth are the most enthusiastic consumers of US programming. However, their enthusiasm needs to be kept in perspective, not least because of the moral criticism from the conservatives who fear that western-style liberal individualism will divert the local population away from ‘traditional’ vales and undermine social cohesion. Unlike other authoritarian states in East Asia, concerns of this kind in post-Martial Law Taiwan are less a matter of government orchestrated ideological propaganda and more a common reaction towards the perceived ‘cultural-damage’ done by foreign content. Despite the lack of official backing, such worries remain prominent and are often expressed in media commentary, family education and social pressure. Wrapped in this wider social
context where tradition lingers and still plays an important part in setting parameter for everyday life, young people's foreign media consumption, particularly of programmes from the West, involves a continually reworked process of confronting and negotiating 'tradition'. What is interesting to researchers, therefore, is the ways in which their experience of global texts is shaped by their struggle to define their young identity against these shifting grounds.

As US television often represents both coveted democratic values for some and a source of perceived 'moral challenge' for others in more conservative societies, any one-sided black-and-white reading of Western/American popular cultural products would risk glossing over the complex character of local reception and demographic difference. One way to make sense of the simultaneous attraction and repulsion is to think of it as a kind of 'screen tourism'. The notion of 'screen tourism' implies that the media consumption is a time and space segment outside of mundane everyday life where 'the exotic' indulges (young) viewers in temporary and vicarious fantasy. It also suggests an ambiguous mediated media experience which allows many young Taiwanese to express symbolic resistance to lingering tradition, social pressure and the fulfilment of familial duties. What it does not suggest however is a linear causal-effect model that argues for a sudden switch of belief system and behavioural codes among viewers. This underlying dynamic characterises much consumption of US popular culture in Taiwan today and encapsulates the locally-specific reception of global distributed television programming.
Case Study: Consuming *Sex and the City* in Taiwan

**Rationale and practice**

I will now offer an exploration of these dynamics through a case study of the popular American series, *Sex and the City* (hereafter abbreviated to SATC). Set in New York, SATC portrays the loves and lives of four white female professionals: Carrie Bradshaw (journalist/writer), Samantha Jones (PR executive and sexual libertine), Miranda Hobbs (corporate lawyer and relationship cynic), and Charlotte York (art gallery manager and romantic optimist). All are in their mid-thirties and earning considerable salaries that allow them to buy brand name clothing and lead an exuberant social life. Whenever they come together, they recount their romantic encounters and debate a wide range of personal topics from marriage, pregnancy, and commitment, to their partners' preferences in bed. Resembling an anthropological quest to discover the meaning of human relationships spiced up with unabashed fashion consumption and candid representations of contemporary female sexuality and friendship, SATC has often been held up as one of the two major successes—the other being *Friends*—that typify global popular television in the 1990s.

The deregulated television system in Taiwan and the high household penetration of cable and satellite services—the distribution channel that SATC initially relied on—paved the way for its rapid and extensive visibility. Added to which, the programme was carried by Home Box Office (HBO), one of the few American-owned services to rank highly in the rating chart in Taiwan. The series was launched in April 1999 and broadcast weekly on Saturday night from 11 pm on HBO Asia/Taiwan (see Appendix E for detailed broadcast schedule on HBO Asia/Taiwan). Up till 2005, the six seasons of the series have been shown on HBO as well as two other cable
channels, Super TV (from Jan, Nov 2001, from Dec 2002, from Jan 2005) and Jet TV (from Mar 2004 till July 2005). Taking these three channels together SATC was available almost continuously on cable television from 1999 to 2005.

The programme was selected as a case study for two main reasons. Firstly, it lasted for six years so that rather than being a transient one-off or seasonal fad, it had time to make a sustained impression and impact in the public memory. Secondly, its content and style of representation and the controversy it provoked offers a particularly illuminating instance of the conflicts between traditional (gender) values and the emerging lifestyles offered by modernisation and consumerism. This tension is an important focus when it comes to investigating the cross-cultural consumption of a global (American) cultural product. I now elaborate on this viewpoint by way of two main arguments.

Firstly, by making women’s sex and sexuality the centre of a mass-oriented entertainment show, SATC has clearly defied traditional Confucian gender politics which operates with a strict dichotomy between private and public space. The rule of thumb in Confucian ethics holds that displays of ‘sex’, while perfectly acceptable in one’s private bedroom, are entirely inappropriate in the public domain, including television (Duan, 1993). Although as a result of media globalisation, SATC has managed to break through the curtain of state regulation on cultural imports, as we shall see in later analysis it is not uncommon to find young women’s enjoyment of the programme in tension with the traditional idea of social desirability. Yet, it is exactly these ‘tensions’ that characterised the local-specific consumption of transnational television and allowed the audience (and the researcher) to explore the negotiation of identity, with lines drawn between past and present, global and local, acceptance and refusal, fantasy and reality.
Secondly, by representing glamourised images of single women and excessive consumerism, SATC shifts the emphasis from depictions of ‘virtuous wives and good mothers’ (xiangqi liangmu), a prominent theme in Taiwanese local dramas in the 1990s, towards single childless urban women. Although young women’s increasing visibility as highly-educated young professionals and consumers has triggered new gender representations in niche advertisements, changes have been slower to be reflected in mainstream television dramas targeted at a wider audience. As we saw in Chapter 5 most prime-time (hsiang-tu) dramas were still casting women as model ‘mothers’, ‘daughters’, ‘daughter-in-laws’, or sometimes ‘concubines’, despite presenting them as strong and admirable characters. Similarly, the other major local genre, the ‘flower series’, displayed female characters through their associations with the symbolic meaning of flowers, beautiful, frail, transient, vulnerable, and needing to be taken care of. Again, representations of young women in the ‘flower series’ were similar to those in the ‘Chiung-yao series’, both of which have been heavily criticised by young viewers for victimising female characters as troubled and weak-minded individuals in relationships. Compared with these local productions at the time—most of which failed to capture the changing social economic position of young women (Tsai, 1999), SATC offered a fertile arena for testing gender values. It is therefore no surprise to learn that AC Nielsen, the prominent market rating agency in Taiwan, reported that young women aged between 24 and 35 constituted the largest audience demographic for SATC in 2005. A localised adaptation, Matured Women’s Diary (shounuyuwang riji, Taipei, 2003) was later produced, similarly aiming to reach out to a generation of young women who are better educated, more affluent, fashion conscious, assertive, and enjoy the westernized lifestyles (Huang, 2008). We will take a closer look at this production and its reception when we consider locally based dramas in Chapter 8.
In exploring the responses and viewing experiences of young Taiwanese women, I draw on a series of personal interviews and an analysis of postings about the programme on a leading internet discussion forum. I met with 19 Taiwanese female university students between June to August 2004 for interview (see Appendix for interview question and respondent details), and monitored postings on a bulletin board site (BBS) called Ptt until November 2005. BBS is a text-only internet system highly popular among Taiwanese young people. Most BBS sites are hosted by universities for non-profitable and non-commercial use. Most sites contain dozens to thousands discussion forums where registered users communicate by posting articles or short messages. As pointed out by some interviewees, 'logging on to BBS forum' has replaced traditional face-to-face exchange to become a more popular way of discussing their viewing experience. Ptt is one of the largest and most influential BBS sites in northern Taiwan with around 6000 discussion forums. The total number of its registered users, together with its sister site Ptt 2, has reached 600,000 in 2005.

For the young urbanites particularly, BBS sites have provided an effective and constant opportunity to be linked to the imagined community formed around the programme. Protected by a pseudo-identity, one can assume personae of one's own creation with little need to worry about the possible consequences of exposing oneself. The virtual identity allows one to express his/her genuine feelings and life experiences with lesser degrees of embarrassment and impression making. In the process of gathering these BBS postings, I was impressed by the sheer volume of traffic and the richness and liveliness of their anecdotes. The postings I gathered are from the discussion forum, 'Sex and the City', which is placed under the category 'Entertainment-TV-TV Series'. There were 3,563 postings by 1st of November 2005, with the first dating back to 10 of July 2001. Postings were selected for analysis both
quantitatively and qualitatively. They had to be in a discussion thread which generated more than 10 responses from different users. Also, the topic of the discussion thread had to fall within the scope of my research questions: viewer's gender, storyline, characters, and format adaptations (see Appendix F for posting details). I also placed my request advertisement on the board on 24 of June 2004 (posting number 1864), asking local females who had watched SATC continuously to participate in my interview. This method of recruitment had the advantage of targeting a relevant population and being inexpensive. However, it also had the drawback of limiting the sample to those who use the internet and those who have visited the discussion forum during the time of recruitment. The interviews were conducted in Taiwan during June and July 2004.

**Tension and Temptation**

The evidence I collected not only confirmed television consumption as a valued activity in young women's everyday lives but also exposed the power relationships that surrounded it. Some women were 'nagged', 'warned off' or 'deterred from' watching SATC and others had their viewing experiences 'sabotaged' by parents and boyfriends to a certain degree. In 17 BBS postings relating to viewing experiences, only four regarded it as 'disturbance-free'. Instances of interference included verbal denunciation (criticising the programme) and/or physical deterrence (changing the channel).

‘When my father saw my mother and I watching SATC, he would complain “again, you are watching this no-class third-rate programme,” and my boyfriend said “SATC is just grumpy women after having sex, and having sex after being grumpy”. I did not have time to explain to them. I just asked them to leave me alone. I needed to concentrate.’ (sby, 11of Feb, 2003)
Sometimes I wanted to watch TV at the same time as my dad. He would let me watch SATC for a while, and whenever the series started to get sexual, he would immediately change the channel. Usually there is not much left in an episode. It is really annoying!

(julypit, 26 of Aug 2004)

These male efforts to devalue and trivialise women's viewing experience point to the persistence of embedded gender codes and asymmetrical power relationships within the household. In both the above instances, fathers emerged as dominant domestic figures, exercising judgement and scrutiny over (young) women's private leisure choices. One way to interpret these paternal sanctions is to see them as reactions to feelings that their traditional right to 'manage' and 'safeguard' women's sexuality and bodies is being challenged or threatened. The tensions surrounding young women's viewing of SATC in a domestic setting are underpinned by wider frictions between an established patriarchal tradition and new, western-styled conceptions, of an emancipatory gender politics.

Similar accounts of tension also emerged in the interviews. A fairly 'westernised' respondent described how she began watching SATC:

'I started watching when I was in high school. I felt lonely because I was the only one in class who watched it. When I discussed it with my friends, they said I shouldn't watch the programme as such, for the girls need to have a “pure mind”. I also had to watch it in secret at home. If my mum found out, I would have been nagged. At the time I envied the characters in SATC, because they can choose the way they like to live.' (Interview with S8)

This respondent, S8, had been to New York as a one-year exchange student and had since run a website selling tampons. Confident and liberal as she might appear from the outside, she nonetheless felt the need to conceal her viewing from her family to save unwanted embarrassment and tension. For the same reason, other interviewees devised strategies to avoid possible confrontation. Some resorted to watching the
programme on DVD or as an internet download; some voluntarily changed channels back and forth depending on what was being shown or who was around; some watched it on another television in a separate room, and others only watched when they were alone in the house. This tendency towards ‘discrete viewing’ appeared to be more common for young women who lived at home, and pointed to the way that the traditional dichotomy in addressing sex behaviour and discourses was sustained by the institution of ‘family’ (for women who lived on campus, their viewing experiences were often staged as a group activity with other young women).

The negotiations engaged in by these young women, although seemingly voluntary, have effectively transformed the practice of watching SATC from a public, communal, activity to a privatised individual experience, demonstrating how individual media consumption was embedded in and over-determined by dynamics in play within a broader socio-cultural context. One indication of how powerfully these dynamics frame viewing is provided by the subtitle, ‘not suitable for family viewing’, carried in the opening scene when SATC was broadcast on HBO Taiwan. Replacing the more usual screen announcement ‘not suitable for children under 15 or 18’, the wording implied that the basis of the exclusion evoked here was the social context rather than simply age.

However, women’s interrupted viewing practices should not be taken as signs of them being dominated subjects. On the contrary, although their viewing experiences were often shaped by their positioning within a set of power relationships, the fact that they continued watching was, in itself, an act of contestation. Moreover, their accounts of using DVD, internet downloads, personal computers and sometimes a second television in the household indicate that the spread of new communication technologies has extended their repertoire of strategies for evading male surveillance.
and exercising personal viewing choice in ways that had rarely been available to previous generations.

Underneath the viewing strategies described by these young university women I interviewed is however an intensified struggle for greater autonomy within an often circumscribed and policed personal sphere. This struggle also offers an entry point into a further exploration of the ways my respondents constructed interpretations of SATC. The following analysis of their interpretations starts from Fiske’s (1989:4) argument that ‘the activation of the meaning potential of a text can occur only in the social and cultural relationship into which it enters. The social relationship of a text occurs at the moment of reading as they are inserted into the everyday lives of the readers’. By situating responses of these young women in the context of their struggle to (re)invent and adapt a sense of self against shifting grounds in a rapidly modernising Taiwan, it emerged that the western-style individualism inscribed in SATC has become a general theme around which meanings were constructed. I now elaborate on this point.

**Exotic Realism: Negotiating Western-style Individualism**

Western-style individualism is the essential precondition for the attitudes and behaviour displayed in SATC, and is the theme around which many of my interviewers recounted their viewing experience. Not only were the parents of the main characters conveniently omitted from the script, other authority figures were also largely absent. The SATC women on screen have become a potent source of images of the prototypical free agents living in a cosmopolitan modern city, a topic that Taiwanese television had very seldom addressed until then.
Episodes demonstrating how the characters freely exercised personal choice were chosen by many interviewees to illustrate their idea of the central message of the series. For instance, when Carrie decided to relocate from New York to Paris to follow a boyfriend who she had been in a relationship with for less than a year she did not discuss her plan with anyone apart from the other three women at their usual brunch gathering. Despite their apprehension she stood tenaciously behind her plan and eventually moved to Paris. In a similar fashion, when Charlotte suddenly decided to convert to Judaism for her second husband, who was a Jew, all she did was ‘just do it’. Also, Miranda’s accidental pregnancy from a one-night-stand with her ex-boyfriend and her ensuing single-parenthood was represented with little backlash and with the minimum of difficulties. Miranda coped by hiring helpers and negotiating terms with the newborn’s father.

On these occasions, major life decisions, such as moving/settling abroad, commitment to a different religion, and having children were made primarily based on individual lifestyle preference without consultation with parents or other senior figures. Although appearing drastically different from the daily experience of the young women I talked to, these scenes played a central role in structuring the meaning they gave to their viewing experience. When asked to summarise the central narrative (or the message) of the series, some interviewees put it:

‘[SATC] is about how women should love themselves. Choose what you want, and don’t make yourself miserable. Don’t make yourself miserable for men, family members, or your friends. Do what you want to do...after SATC, I have learnt that the characters choose what they want and live well, even if they made wrong choices sometimes...I think this series has accompanied me to “grow up”. I didn’t think seriously about what I want before. I just tried hard to pass exams after exams and to get good grades. Only when I started watching in my third year in senior high school did I start to think about making choices for my own life.’ (interview with S8)
‘I like Miranda the most. I think she is very independent and has a successful career...She is so successful at her job while at the same time bringing up her son single-handedly. She does not depend on men. She only depends on men when she needs a sperm for producing a child. She can do everything else on her own....The message SATC threw at me was the importance to be economically independent, so that one can live on without depending on the parents or husband. I have never felt so strongly about that before.' (interview with S5)

‘SATC is about four single women with different personalities, all in their 30s, who earn well, and are all unmarried. The story is about their relentless search for true love after reaching their 30th...but because of living in a different culture, they are luckier than us. Their family won’t push them to get married although they are single in their mid-30s. Imagine how the relatives will look at us and gossip about us during the Chinese New Year if we were in the same shoes! ’ (Interview with S9)

Interpretations of this kind point to young Taiwanese women’s desire to take control of their own lives within a social, economic and psychological space where traditional gender roles, familial responsibilities, academic achievements, western feminism and global consumerism are continually jostling for attention and supremacy.

Similar dynamics are replayed in other responses which interpreted the series through the prism of representations of women’s single status. The accounts of the young women who identified the constant search for true love as the central dynamic of the narrative were often coupled by a ‘fear of spinsterhood’ stemming primarily from worries about external reproach rather than their own preferences or needs. As they repeatedly returned to the tension between the social pressures towards marriage in Taiwanese society and the satisfactions of the single-by-choice lifestyle portrayed in SATC, they tended to construct interpretations around the celebration of female singleton and one’s freedom to stay in control of the pursuit of Mr. Right on one’s own terms, rather than seeing SATC as a series resembling ‘the modern female angst syndrome’ centring on the ticking of the biological clock and the fear of aging taking
them out of the marriage market as described by some western feminist critics (Orenstein, 2003). Arguably, the background pressures from society and family led respondents to romanticise the searching process in SATC as a quest for a woman’s ‘right’ to lead a contented and carefree single life without suffering the backlash of censure. Some interviewees, like S12, while not entirely rejecting marriage, had become increasingly sceptical of its conventional construction and rationale.

‘SATC is about “are women destined to look for true love”? I started to think is there such thing as “true love” and that is remaining single a sin? What if we don’t find true love before 30? I am already 25 and I have been thinking what does age means to me?’ (interview with S12)

These shifts in perception, however small they might be, provide important clues to the processes through which challenges to existing values and thinking were generated out of the interactions between social contexts and media texts, geographical places and imaginative spaces. Following this thread it was not surprising to learn that almost unanimously among interviewees, marriage-obsessed Charlotte was considered the least interesting character. When asked to comment on the four characters, the interviewees in general perceived Charlotte’s beliefs and behaviour as ‘familiar’ but ridiculously old-fashioned. By advocating feminine gender roles closest to the good mother and virtuous wife, she offered little novelty and reinforced the capitulation to traditional expectations for the young Taiwanese women. In contrast, it was the ‘choice politics’ represented by the other three characters, particularly in the almost caricatured portrayal of Samantha, that set the tone for the construction of pleasure in their responses.

Compared to the other three, Samantha, the sophisticated woman who enjoyed everything without strings attached, was interpreted by Taiwanese young women as a
source of a virtually unattainable autonomy powered by an uncompromising individuality. A BBS discussion thread titled 'We all love Samantha' generated a high volume of responses, including some unashamedly admiring:

'Does anyone like Samantha like me? I think she is very “true”, so I like her. I envy her because I think she lives her life true to herself. (icecherry, Mar 30 2003)

Others, though were more ambivalent;

'I like her too. The most important thing is to be brave in pursuing what one wants regardless of other's opinion. This is really a difficult thing to do, especially in an environment like Taiwan.' (xchair, Apr 3 2003)

As this second comment suggests, the social and psychological distance between Samantha and themselves has reflected their real life dilemmas in breaking free from embedded social constraints despite of their advantaged economic and cultural background. This ambivalent admiration towards Samantha's character, however, hinted a negotiation process in action. The increasing contact with representations of alternative, more individualised, lifestyles has, on the one hand, inspired the young Taiwanese women to resist constructions around traditional identity markers, while on the other hand, making it more difficult for them to form stable, manageable and satisfying lives.

Other more specific expressions of admiration towards Samantha were rooted in her repudiating the shame of being single and sexually active in defiance of the bourgeois codes that used to be demanded of middle-class women. In one case, where the interviewee declined to be recorded, she explained how SATC had acted as an emotional crutch which had helped her to pursue a lifestyle that others in her social circle had, drawing on traditional Taiwanese standards, labelled as 'promiscuous'. She only agreed to be interviewed because she wanted to talk to someone who would
not judge her. According to her, on occasions when she could not find such a person in time, she resorted to watching SATC. She insisted that watching the programme, especially the character of Samantha, gave her a sense of confirmation, and sometimes comfort, in her conviction that women are entitled to own their sexuality and to act upon it. As noted earlier, although local women’s movements have started to address female sex and sexuality since the mid-1990s, the reach and the impact of these efforts has been asymmetrical. Her case again pointed to a situation where, for many young university-educated females-- typecast as ‘good girls’, development surrounding the issue of sexuality have often been overlooked, marginalised, or even lambasted compared to issues of intellectual acquisition and future career ambition.

For the rest of my interviewees, this relative silence contributed to an ambivalence towards Samantha’s sexual freedom and a culturally-specific reception which saw consuming SATC as a chance to negotiate and explore desire and sexuality imaginatively.

‘In Taiwan people tend to suppress their sexuality. But it [SATC] can inspire your fantasy......I have the feeling of having a conversation with the television......I might look like Charlotte from the outside, but I am more like Samantha or Carrie deep down. Yet I dare not express the real me. Maybe it has something to do with the clash between the imposed morality from the outside and my inner self. They [SATC characters] did the things I dare not to do. It is cathartic’. (Interview with S3)

By dramatising choices that had not featured widely in mainstream public culture before, SATC provided symbolic resources through which young women could redraw their understanding of existing sex-related boundaries and their personal desires. Although not necessarily prompting behavioural changes, the time these young women spent alone with SATC created a field of possibilities in which they could work through the contradictions between their conventional cultural upbringing
and the more liberal and individualistic values inscribed in transnational television and in the emerging generational culture of choice and consumption.

However, despite of their pleasure and fandom it would be unwise to suggest that young Taiwanese women would happily change their belief and behaviour overnight. Rather, what often underpinned their responses was a particular understanding of the series' status as a foreign reality that could best be viewed from a safety distance. Apart from the obvious visual effect triggered by the physical difference between the characters and the viewers, the cultural difference between Taiwanese and American society arguably suspended the applicability of the television text to these text of young women's lives. The ability to differentiate between viewers, text and characters, rather than confirm of the 'sameness', was particularly obvious with my interviewees whose education and social position allowed/expected them to produce a fuller evaluation and analysis. In a way, the stereotypical/expected cultural discrepancy between America and Taiwan can be described almost like the subtitling mechanism which translated the original text while also creating a 'double text' that required a reflexive reading. Reflexive moments destroyed the unity between the (local) viewers and the (foreign) text, resulting in a ruptured identification and sense of applicability. As one interviewee summed up by saying:

'I will consciously maintain a distance when watching, reminding myself that is a New York situation...Although the drama presents its self in a trivial and relaxed an easy-to-relate-to sort of way, I still remember that I have an oriental face. I can relate to the central messages, such as promoting female autonomy to a degree, but I cannot imagine having such a relaxed attitude about sex and sexuality in my life.' (interview with S9)
Conclusion

One important point one should bear in mind while reading the analysis in this case study is young women's generational-specific experience marked by increasing contact with global capitalism and greater freedom. In this view, Taiwanese young women are often thought of as the generation which embodies the process of 'individualisation' in late or reflexive modernity outlined in the works of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1994, 2000). Young women, according to the theory, now live in a world where many established identity markers (here family influence) are declining in importance and where they are now required to construct identities by learning to be independent and self-reliant. However, many researches on Taiwanese young women have also indicated that entrenched traditional values and strong family ties have proved more resilient than theories of de-traditionalisation might suggest. Their 'open process' of self construction is often played out in part via the exercise of consumer choice in the global market, but remains shaped by the larger complex of social forces that constrain as well enable agency.

Related to this point is the observation of the ways in which these women negotiated an 'exotic' and 'fictional' American text into their everyday life. The work of Ang (1985) on how Dutch viewers responded to the American soap opera, Dallas, has similarly addressed the negotiation process viewers experienced in such cases. Ang concluded that the field of tension between the fictional and the real plays an important part of viewing pleasure, and that the viewers' involvement was constructed in a constant movement between the identification with (at the connotative level) and distancing from the fictional textual world (at the denotative level). This tendency of identification oscillation was also found in Taiwanese young female's viewing experience of SATC. However, Ang's analysis, following the
cultural industry theorists' critique on the ideology of mass culture, argued for a transposition of 'Dallas' to a symbol of the America mass cultural industry and regarded it as intellectually 'problematic' or 'embarrassing' for the viewers. This ideological-laden interpretation from the heyday of cultural imperialism theory however does not fully apply to my research. As we have seen in the case of young Taiwanese women's viewing of SATC, its 'American-ness' has more often triggered a sense of ambivalence which I described as 'exotic realism'. This type of realism focuses on how one vicariously appreciates the text as an exotic object at a safe distance and constantly being ambivalent about the default distance as a necessity. In other words, American-ness does not necessary lead to critical ideological debate or alienation, although it is more likely to be the case for older generations, but more to do with a playful reception of exotic images and fantasies in one's mundane daily life. What 'America' stands for in this cross-cultural reception is no longer merely a debate of ideological effect, but a complicated attraction mixed with tantalising images of freedom and liberation.

In this vein, we can understand how SATC provided a discursive space where young women reflected on aspects of gender dilemmas and positioning in the society, and where there appropriation of the programme was enmeshed with the (re)production of their gender identity as modern young women. Their consumption of SATC further exemplified the role that 'American popular culture' often plays in the construction of youthful identity among urban Taiwanese. On the one hand, American-style freedom and liberation have been useful in their imaginative negotiations between embedded and the emerging values. On the other, it has not been fully applicable in the field of everyday life where intensified power in different forms is exercised.
Chapter 7 Consuming Japan: Operational Realism

The contestation over Japan's role in Taiwan's modern history, although primarily masterminded by the elder generation, also arguably contributed to creating a less hostile social context for the reception of Japanese culture among the younger generations. The findings from the survey I conducted of over 612 Taiwanese students aged between 13 and 24 indicated that as many as 66.6 per cent had watched Japanese Trendy drama in the last twelve months. This percentage increased to 75.6 per cent in the age group 18-24. The findings also suggested that there is a trend in which more and more young people are consuming Japanese Trendy dramas at an earlier age, with 40.4 per cent of respondents in the age group 13 to 18 saying that they had first watched these dramas before the age of twelve, compared to 12.7 per cent in the age group 18 to 24.

As we noted earlier, the abolition of the ban on Japanese cultural imports has allowed Japanese programming to move from underground status to a legitimate daily encounter since the early 1990s. This change has generated immense scholarly concern (see Nakano, 2002; Tzeng, 2001; Lin, 2001, Zhao, 2000; Su, 1999; Tsai, 1999; Lin and Chen, 1998). However, these authors tend to focus on the sales or a snapshot of the individual's consumption of Japanese cultural products and overlook the ways in which 'Japan' and the meanings it embodies operate as a generational identity construct in the Taiwanese context. With this in mind, it is argued here that affection towards Japan/Japanese culture cannot merely be explained through savvy marketing campaign. It also needs to be examined in the context of the broader identity movement and social transition in Taiwan.
Depoliticised consumption of Japan among young Taiwanese

Before discussing in detail the meaning of consuming in Japan among young Taiwanese, it is important to note that different life experiences have rendered different meanings of consuming ‘Japan’ for different Taiwanese generations. Often dubbed by the Taiwanese media as the ‘eldest Ha-ri-zhu’, former president Lee Tung-hui stood as an example of adoring Japan among the older generation in Taiwan. Born in 1923, he shared similar experience with many indigenous Taiwanese of his generation. Growing up under Japanese colonisation, they learnt Japanese language and Japanese culture as Japanese citizens. It is common to hear people from this generation sing traditional Japanese songs at private gatherings or on public occasions after the lifting of Martial Law. Their consumption of Japan was usually mixed with a deep nostalgia and admiration for ‘colonial modernity’, which is described by Wu (1994) as a term bearing two seemingly contradictory discourses of colonial exploitation and colonial construction. However, for many benshengren from this generation, the latter gradually surpassed the former towards the end of colonisation, and the Japanese regime came to be identified more as an architect of modernity than an exploitative coloniser. Ching (2001) attributes this to a psychological defence mechanism which transforms one’s ‘colonised sense of inferiority’ into identification with the ‘coloniser’s modernity’. This symbolic field of Japan among this generation was also described by Yoshinori Kobayashi in his controversial book, *Taiwan Critique (Taiwan-luen)*. He wrote:

‘Compared with these Taiwanese people, Japanese born after the War understand very little of Japan. After all, who are the Japanese?...The false images of democracy created in Japan under foreign forces have produced groups after groups of hollow-hearted Japanese. Japan’s history is however frozen on the island of Taiwan, surviving until today.’ (quoted in Yoshinori, 2001:10)
Although his argument was criticised for bearing the imprint of a right-wing nationalist political agenda, he has rightly observed the way Japan has been consumed by many in this generation, especially those who later became successful political and business figures in Taiwan.

For those who followed directly from this generation, 'adoring Japan' was more likely to be an emotional outlet for their political frustration towards the early KMT governance. As Japanese colonisation and the 228 Incident were the political taboos encapsulating contrasting memories and operating to sustain the distinctive identities of the two main immigrant groups in Taiwan, subsequently the anger derived from these two histories converged in a shared aversion towards the KMT among many indigenous Taiwanese. One respondent I met in Taipei told me that:

'When my dad was a university student, he used to live on campus in one of those university accommodations. He said he used to deliberately leave the windows widely open when playing Japanese music/songs. Sometimes he would face the speakers to the outside square and turned up the volume a bit. He said he did it because he wanted to be in defiance to the KMT's ideology.' (Interview with J13)

Her father was born in 1949 with an indigenous background. According to her, he was often told by his parents and grandparents about the virtues of the Japanese colonisation, and that the Japanese was tidier and fairer compared with the KMT and the Mainlanders. Although he did not directly suffer the pain of the 228 Incident, he grew up under the authoritarian KMT regime and experienced the peak of the 'White Terror' in the 1950s to 1960s. As a young man, he was deeply saddened by the KMT's suppression on indigenous cultural identity. However, wise enough not to openly protest against the government under Martial Law, he resorted to the symbolic rebellion of 'listening to loud Japanese music' and developed a passion for learning Japanese. At a time when Japanese cultural products were highly restricted, he
purchased Japanese books, magazines and music from underground sources. According to her, these purchases were partly for the purpose of learning Japanese, but more importantly, they were concrete gestures of support for the underground sources that defied the KMT's ban on Japanese cultural products.

However, as the society has slowly come to terms with the essential difference between different immigrant groups in response to the pragmatic needs in everyday life has gradually softened group stereotypes, consequently many symbols once marking separate group identities and memories have become inapplicable to the young generation, including the meanings that 'Japan' represented for the elder generations. The older generation's consumption of Japan either in the form of admiring colonial modernity or symbolic anti-government protests is now obsolete. In post-Martial Law Taiwan, the declining power of the state machine, the volatile domestic identity politics, and the formation of a consumer society has created a different social context within which the young generations can forge new links between consuming Japan and their self-conceptions.

In my field research findings, one prominent feature of the young generation's consumption of Japan in contemporary Taiwanese society is that it is now much less of an indication of either their family background or political beliefs. A less clean-cut relationship between young people's social background, political beliefs, and feelings towards Japan seems to have emerged. Among the 20 self-identified fans of Japanese Trendy drama I interviewed in the summer 2004 and 2005, four were from Mainlander backgrounds, seven from intermarriages, and nine from indigenous families. Also, six of them identified their political stance as KMT supporters, four as DPP supporters while the remainder claimed to have no political inclination (see Appendix D for interviewee details). Although in some cases, young people's passion
towards Japanese culture has been influenced by family members since childhood, it
generally does not have a direct political agenda behind it.

For the younger generation, the stereotypical images of Japan are no longer
derived solely from political propaganda focusing on the acrimonious war-time
hatred. Instead, as beneficiaries of Taiwan’s economic development and the
formation of a consumer society, the young generation are more likely to relate to
Japan through sanitized consumer sites such as department stores, fashion magazines,
fast-food chains, technological products, Japanese Trendy dramas, and their own
experience of visiting modern Japan. For them, consuming Japan is often a game, a
pursuit of fashion, and a way to affirm Taiwan’s improved economic condition.

Compared with the older generation who lived under Japanese colonisation and
embraced Japan through practicing its traditional ethics and learning its language and
history, young people relate to Japan mostly through consuming media artefacts and
fashion commodities. The latter are often regarded as ‘superficial’ (Chiou, 1999) and
have been seen as signalling a ‘waning affection for Japan’ by the Japanese scholar
Iwabuchi (2002:122). In their eyes, young Taiwanese’s affection towards
Japan/Japanese culture is primarily based on a material relationship and a pursuit of
image that involves neither a deeper understanding of Japan nor indispensable
emotional ties with the country. This focus on material consumption and image of
modernity is exemplified by two famous Taiwanese television presenters and
actresses, the SOS Sisters. In an interview with a Japanese NHK programme
investigating the Ha-ri phenomenon in Taiwan, they explained their reason for
adoring Japan by saying,
‘...because Japan is a very modem country; even toilets in Japan are modern. The toilet in Japan gives out warm water and is equipped with sound-minimising devise to avoid embarrassment’ (quoted from He, 2002: 56).

The *SOS Sisters*, are not alone. A young woman I interviewed in Taipei summed up her understanding of Japan,

‘I do not possess any deeper understanding of Japanese history or literature...however, I know a little about Japanese everyday life, such as the things they use, the way they talk, the difference between male and female speech. I learnt them from watching Japanese Trendy dramas...I have not found any Japanese literature that I like. I don't even like Junichi Watanabe (one of the best-selling Japanese writer in Taiwan). I cannot make more than three pages when reading his books. As to politics, I don't even want to know about Taiwan's politics, let alone the one in Japan. As to history of Japan, I only know the bits mentioned in textbooks learnt in school. Apart from Japanese Trendy drama and Japanese food, I do not have particular preference towards Japanese culture.' (interview with J5)

The findings of the survey I conducted of over 612 Taiwanese students aged 13 to 24 in 2005 echoed this tendency. The results showed that the respondents were mostly exposed to Japanese culture through media products, fashion and tourist information, and were not interested in exploring the deeper levels of Japanese culture represented by its history, literature and current political economic situation (see graph 7.1). A similar pattern emerged when respondents were classified by their frequency of consuming Japanese Trendy dramas (see graph 7.2). In other words, the consumption of Japanese Trendy dramas does not seem to have an obvious effect in promoting the acquisition of interest in the deeper aspects of Japanese culture.

Graph7.1: Exposure to different aspects of Japan in different gender and age group

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One can gain a further insight into the de-politicised trend of consuming Japan from a number of in-depth interviews I conducted. For instance, J2, a young Taiwanese woman born in 1985, is a third generation Mainlander and politically identified herself as a KMT supporter. She started watching Japanese Trendy drama in primary school. According to her, consuming Japanese Trendy drama has nothing to do with one's political feelings towards Japan. Although not altogether happy with the way the Japanese government glosses over its wartime cruelty, she thinks that what Japan did in Taiwan or China is now history locked in another generation, and that her interest in Japanese Trendy dramas and Japanese fashion should be separated from those political issues. However, having a KMT veteran grandfather from her...
mother's side, she admitted that she has to deal with her mother's complaints such as 'your grandfather had fought bitterly with the Japanese, and I don't understand why you want to watch “these little Japanese stuff”’. Her experience revealed that although family background and political belief can, at times, trigger small variations in individual consumption experiences, they are no longer major determinants affecting preferences towards Japanese cultural products. It might therefore be reasonable to suggest that young people, regardless of background or political belief, have become equally likely to consume Japanese cultural products so long as they provide the 'right' kind of youthful images and consumer identities.

More interestingly, her contact with and knowledge about Japan is rooted firmly in the realm of popular culture. She is currently taking Japanese language lessons three hours a week at the university to help her read Japanese fashion magazines and watch Japanese Trendy dramas. The Japanese literature she had read were all spin-off story scripts of Trendy dramas. Despite her frequent engagement with Japanese popular culture, she admits that she is not particularly interested in knowing about Japan’s history, politics or economic situations in depth. Her understanding of core Japanese values was primarily drawn from the most readily available images and anecdotes in popular culture:

'...The Samurai spirit is an ultimate core of the Japanese culture. It means the determination of taking responsibility for any wrongdoings. For example, one would shave head to show one's remorse... like when Takashi Kashiwabara (a famous Japanese actor in Trendy drama) committed drunk driving, he shaved his head and formally apologised to the public. When one SMAP (a popular Japanese boy band) member was caught insulting the police by trying to drive into a police woman, he was frozen by his be company for one year—not even able to attend the ten year anniversary concert of the band. When Abe Natsumi (a famous Japanese actress in Trendy drama) was caught for plagiarism, she vowed that she will never be engaged in similar publication. It is things like these that showed the Samurai spirit—taking responsibility and admit mistakes.' (interview with J2)
While the elder generation who lived under Japanese colonisation would possibly associate the samurai spirit with Japan’s defeat in the War and serving in the Japanese army during the War, young Taiwanese tend to understand it through the interpretation of current Japanese showbiz news. The same subject but with shifts in interpretation has encapsulated not only the changing relationship to Japan across generations but also the changing image of a symbolic Japan in the structure of feeling of the Taiwanese society.

**Template for emulation**

In recognising these shifts over time and the different process of selective memory and interpretation, one cannot help but ask how far reaching is the consumption of Japan and what are the meanings of consuming Japan among today’s young generation? Are Japanese cultural products simply one of many consumer choices offered on the market for Taiwanese youth? I want to suggest that the de-politicised consumption of Japanese culture among the young population still carries a historically specific meaning, which is related to the two major post-Martial Law developments that today’s Taiwanese youth are embedded in, the intensified desire to define and anchor one’s Taiwanese identity and the expansion of the consumer society.

One example can be drawn from the way the term ‘Ha-ri’ was forged. As we noted in an earlier chapter, ‘Ha-ri’ is widely used in media and literature to describe frantic and excessive consumption of Japanese popular culture. However, it is intriguing to note that the term would not have existed had there not been a rising Taiwanese identity and a revival of the native Taiwanese dialect, Hokklo. The democratization process and the hsiang-tu wave (searching for the native roots) in the
1990s transformed Hokklo into a fashionable political language. Many new expressions, including Ha-ri, have since been coined by matching Hokklo pronunciations with Mandarin writing (‘Ha’ in Hokklo means to covet or desire something, and ‘ri’ means Japan in Mandarin). Therefore, the term itself references both the rise of Taiwanese native identity and an internationally-connected consumer culture. It partly explains why Taiwan is the most receptive market for Japanese cultural products in East Asia and reminds us once again of the need to situate discussion of ways in which young Taiwanese consume Japanese cultural products alongside observation on wider social transitions in Taiwan. The loss of this thread can lead to an over-simplification of young people’s consumption motives and behaviour which can then be easily mistaken as signals of an identity crisis.

So how can we best understand young Taiwanese’s consumption of Japanese popular culture? One main theme that emerged from the interview confirmed that Japanese popular cultural artefacts produced a sense of ‘operational realism’, a feeling described by Iwabuchi (2005) as a version of modernity that can be immediately translated into something ready for use. Unlike Iwabuchi, however, it is equally important to notice the ways in which ‘operational realism’ is constructed and negotiated by local youth, rather than starting from and ending up with the political economic power of Japanese cultural products.

‘I watch Japanese Trendy dramas because they are likely to touch on the emotional side deep down in your heart—unlike the hsiang-tu dramas on FTV. I personally do not like hsiang-tu dramas. Hsiang-tu dramas are repetitious: you see elder people being sent to hospital everyday, people crying everyday, people having car accidents everyday and so on. Japanese Trendy dramas, in comparison, use a delicate way to represent human relationship and life attitudes.’ (interview with J13)
This remark points to the way ‘operational realism’ operates through comparison with local productions oriented towards tradition. Nostalgic hsiang-tu dramas, Chiung-yao series and historical dramas, although well-received among elder audience, have failed to grapple with the excitement and imagination for young Taiwanese and thus appeared out of sync with young people’s changing lifestyles in a fast-growing consumerist society. This deficiency in locally-produced drama in Taiwan’s newly-deregulated market coupled with the lack of locally-produced dramas addressing issues faced by the young people in the rapidly modernising cities contributed to young people’s attraction to Japanese trendy drama. In a climate of emerging identity politics that promoted ‘multiculturalism’ towards the late 1990s, hsiang-tu drama which focuses on Taiwan’s past and carried a heavy political message no longer generated the same level of interest as it had at the beginning of the 1990s. Added to which, hsiang-tu drama’s extended storylines which often continue for as long as a year faced problems in engaging the attention of young Taiwanese who live in fast-moving surroundings and are constantly confronted with changes in technology, fashion, ideas, and trends. Considering hsiang-tu dramas passé, and unfashionable, and tired of their sluggish tempo and retrospective narrative, many young people started to turn to imported dramas for a sense of being-in-the-present.

In stark contrast to locally-produced dramas at the time, the compact Japanese Trendy dramas represented a (life)style more in tune with young people’s aspirations and aesthetic expectations. They portrayed ordinary student life, modernised city scenes, fashionable make-up and clothing, and offered candid representations of emotions, and the novel representation of young women’s gender roles. According to my interviewees, stories that featured a group of young high school students training to dance a water ballet, or an optimistic young disabled librarian, or university
students facing life challenges after graduation are far more engaging than the traditional repertoire of Taiwanese dramas which monotonously depicts the power struggles and crises in a traditional family-oriented framework. In addition, most Japanese Trendy dramas only consist of 12 to 15 broadcasting hours (i.e. 5-10 episodes) and are thus compelled to have accelerated plot development. This feature not only epitomises Japan’s efficient, fast-evolving cutting-edge media and fashion industry, but is also an important source of their attraction. In Taiwan, this fast tempo has been further speeded up by television channel operators who have often scheduled Japanese Trendy drama on a daily basis, rather than on a weekly basis as is the norm in Japan.

Operation realism is also constructed against other foreign cultural products such as American series. The sense of recognition and relevance to everyday problems offered by Trendy dramas was further underlined by their contrast with the ‘exotic realism’ offered by Western cultural products. The cultural proximity carried by physique and similar value systems between Taiwan and Japan has also helped audiences get further involved with programming from geo-cultural/geo-linguistic markets (Straubhaar, 1996, 1991; Sinclare et. al.; 1996). This view was confirmed by my respondents. As one interviewee put it:

‘Japanese dramas to me are like Japanese blue jeans. Their styles are cut out to cater for us East Asians; whereas American jeans often need to be taken up three inches in order to fit nicely.’ (interview with J11).

The meaning of her jeans analogy is two fold. Firstly, it clearly addressed the important relationship between sharing similar physical features and creating a sense of attraction between the consumer and the consumed. This common-sense matter-of-fact relationship between Japan and its ‘Asian others’ can be seen as a
misrecognition and misidentification where personal and national identities are destabilised and conflated by the likeness of the bodily signs. The absence or invisibility of ‘otherness’ posits a moment where a deferral between seeing and knowing, perceiving and conceiving is enacted and where difference would be suspended and displaced (Ching, 1998). Secondly, the physical resemblance displayed by Japanese actors has opened up not only a convenient imaginative space for emotional identification but, more importantly a practical possibility of transposing to real life situations. This is partly why many young females have come to enjoy Japanese Trendy dramas. The fashionable images offered in Japanese dramas provide ready made templates that they can reproduce on themselves. Another interviewee expressed this relation as follows,

‘I also like the fashion in Japanese Trendy drama. It is like reading Japanese women’s magazine on television. Although I also read those western women’s magazine, but the things they introduce are usually too expensive. Despite there are expensive things in Japanese magazines too, you can always find similar stuff and similar style in Taiwan. Also, I would definitely reference on Japan when it comes to make-up. Western looks are completely different to us, while Japanese have similar skin texture and physical features.’ (interview with J18)

However, physical resemblance is only part of the explanation for Taiwanese viewers’ the sense of ‘being able to apply’ and the reason why Japanese Trendy dramas has an edge over other competitors in the market. There is also the ‘situational familiarity’ resulting from shared experience and environment of a similar modernised present. One of my interviewees explained her preference to Japanese Trendy drama as follows,

‘Japanese Trendy dramas are closer to our life. I did not realise this until I entered high schools and started having relationships. Japanese Trendy dramas often touched me. I have edited those touching lines into my signature files on the bbs. Scenes like preparing for entrance exams, studying at high school or university while juggling with a part-time job, girls gathering
together trying to get rid of emotional blues, and the words they say to cheer each other up, romantic at times, are very familiar. I can empathise the kind of pressure from school studies, from family, and from the office politics faced by the protagonists. Some of them still live with their parents, just like me/us. Japanese society after all is similar to Taiwan.... American series are funny but pose some distance. Although scenes in Friends and Sex and the City look nice, and I also yearn for that kind of life, but they are not close to my life experience, and I don't feel it is my own life.' (interview with J5)

The cultural familiarity embedded in the text has helped the young Taiwanese audience to invest a deeper emotional identification in Trendy dramas than in American series. Feelings of empathy and a 'ready-to happen-ness' mark the relationship between the audience and the Japanese drama text. Iwabuchi (1999:196) has described this relationship and the recognition of similar paths to modernity as the 'sweet scent' of becoming culturally modern in (East) Asia, and a common experience of sharing a non-western modernity that western cultural products fail to offer.

For young Taiwanese women, the sense of operational realism in Japanese Trendy drama has a particularly strong appeal. Mainstream locally-produced drama at the time largely failed to represent their changing political and economic environment while foreign series (like Sex and the City) tended to offer an exotic fantasy that was not altogether suitable for emulation in everyday practice. Targeted mainly at females aged between 13 and 25 in Japan, Trendy dramas focused particularly on portraying young women as elegant urban professionals and emotionally-strong characters. (Iwabuchi, 1998), and offered a readily accessible version of the modern young women for their Taiwanese counterparts to identify with. It is therefore not surprising to learn that in Taiwan, females aged between 15 and 25 constituted the most responsive audience group (Su, 1999).
Negotiated Simultaneity

With this general process of recognising a shared East Asian modernity in mind, I want now to focus on the more complicated process of self-other negotiation. It is in this process that one gets a deeper insight into how Taiwanese youth meaningfully construct the 'sweet scent' not only of their distinct Asian-ness in globalisation but also define themselves in relation to other Asians. This process also demonstrates that the 'sweet scent' is as much 'a dynamic process of becoming' (Iwabuchi, 2005) as a static essentialist state of being embedded in history.

This thread of thought can be traced back to Taiwan's recapitulation of Japan's footsteps in economic development. Taiwan historically depended heavily on Japan for machinery, skills and investment. To this day, a serious trading deficit with Japan remains, and imports from Japan are eight times larger than they were twenty years ago, rising from $3.2 billion to $25.9 billion in 2001 (Government Information Office, 2002:78-79). Taking over Japan's export-oriented manufacturing role in the 1970s, Taiwan also established an economic miracle in the 1980s. Subsequently Taiwan worked towards decreasing its reliance on producing labour-intensive goods and turning towards skill-intensive technological and electronic production. Part of this industrial upgrading relied heavily on earlier deals for original equipment manufacture (OEM) and own-design and manufacture (ODM) with Japanese companies. For example, Cal-Comp of Taiwan was the world's largest producer of calculators and fax machines in 1991. Although virtually unknown in the West, Cal-Comp produced roughly 80 per cent of Japanese Casio calculators under OEM (Cowley, 1991:25).
Due to the similar development pattern and the disproportionate dependence on Japan, a local saying had it that ‘Taiwan is the Japan of twenty/ten years ago’, and ‘whichever is fashionable in Japan will eventually come to Taiwan’. In other words, historically Taiwan used to be perceived as lagging behind Japan by one or two decades. However, with Taiwan’s continuous economic development and Japan’s economic stagnation since the 1990s, this historical perception has gradually come under challenge by young Taiwanese. In the late 1990s when Japanese popular culture in Taiwan peaked, young people started to use the description of ‘you look Japanese’ to compliment peers who appeared to be affluent, pretty, and at the cutting-edge of fashion. This ‘being able to look Japanese’ also presupposed a precondition of catching up with Japan. Despite the remaining uneven economic and cultural flows between the two countries, the closing gap between Japan and Taiwan is keenly felt by the younger generation. In my interviews with the local youth, when asked whether or not they agree with the saying ‘Taiwan is the Japan twenty/ten years ago’, one dismissed it as an outdated exaggeration and reckoned the gap is about one year. Other responses varied from six months to a season’s difference, while one argued that there is now no gap.

This closing gap can also be perceived in everyday purchasing preferences. While interviewees unanimously displayed a positive inclination to buy things ‘made-in-Japan’, they also pointed out that some Taiwanese products have also caught up in quality. High-tech home-grown electronic products are often mentioned in this respect. Domestic electronic products brands like ACER, ASUS, BNQ which have progressed in research and development and started own-brand manufacture (OBM) were mentioned in the interviews as symbols of Taiwan’s new-found economic strength and confidence. On occasions, one could almost sense that coming
one step closer to Japan is a taken as a sign that Taiwan was superior to other developing or developed Asian countries, such as China and Korea, in the race.

Although Japan is still regarded as a more advanced modernity and the leader of regional fashion, Taiwan’s developed urban consumerism, expanding middle class, changing role of women in society and advancement of communication technologies have not gone unnoticed. These aspects of social transition in Taiwanese society have made Taiwanese youth’s consumption of Japan arguably unique in terms of their ability to demand simultaneity with the fashion trends in the Japanese society. In Taiwan, it is not difficult to find advertisements that advocate a symbolic sense of being able to live in the same temporality with Japan. This tendency is also revealed in the experience of watching Japanese Trendy dramas. One interviewee stated,

‘I watch Trendy drama wherever there is a new production coming out. I watch these dramas though many channels not just from the television, because sometimes Taiwanese television company won’t buy the broadcasting right of certain dramas, and it usually takes a long time. So I watch from the internet too. There are people who know Japanese and translate the text. In this way, my pace is in sync with the ones in Japan’ (interview with J6)

‘I watch the latest Japanese Trendy drama to get a sense of what is going on in Japan and what is fashionable. The Japanese are still a season ahead. If I find something I really like, I can try to order from some Japanese magazines. Or, I can always go to Japan for a few days to buy it.

It is not so far from here and the airline companies often have promotion tickets to Japan.’ (interview with J7)

The rapid and wide spread of internet technology, the thickening links with media industries in Japan, frequent air travel to Japan, and the improved financial situation have all facilitated Taiwanese young people’s active consuming of Japan. In 2005, the Japanese government finally offered tourists with Taiwanese passports 90 days visa exemption in recognition of the fact that Taiwanese tourists have accounted for the second largest tourist group in Japan. Numerous paperback bestsellers written
by local Japanese Trendy drama fans, such as *Encounter Japanese Trendy dramas in Tokyo: the revelation of famous spots in 90 Japanese Trendy dramas*, *Tokyo Fresh Journey: fresh documentation of locations in Japanese Trendy dramas* and *Tokyo Nice Day: romantic documentation of Japanese Trendy drama locations* are evidence of how swiftly Taiwanese young people have transformed vicarious televisual practice into actual lived-through experience. Demanding syncopation with Japan has made their consumption distinctively different not only from the yearning for a ‘colonial modernity’ (as with some elder Taiwanese), but also from the pure symbolic image consumption and desire to achieve a distant ‘future development goal’ as in some Asian countries where large-scale economic development has only taken place more recently. (see picture 7.1)

However, this demand for equality of speed should not be interpreted as blind imitation of the ‘powerful’ and the ‘imperial’. There is also another side to their consumption of Japanese culture. It is not uncommon to find a negotiated reading of what they receive in their viewing experience. This practice is accounted for by Lin (1996) who has argued that Taiwanese identity, over decades of negotiation and struggle, has finally found its subjectivity, consolidated its content, and moved beyond defining itself in relation to either China or the Japan. My interviewees offered a number of examples of selectivity and negotiation rooted in a celebration of Taiwanese uniqueness. In this view,

‘Taiwan follows fashion trends in Japan mostly. But it is done selectively. For instance, the ‘109 High School Girl’ trend did not take off in Taiwan. Those girls look awkward with dye blond hairs and purposely tanned skin. They look like they have not showered for days. It is far off from what we can accept in Taiwan.’ (interview with J2)

‘I think the fashion in Taiwan is deeply influenced by Japan, but not quite copied in the same way. In Japan, young people blindly follow one seasonal style to its full. If red is the colour of
Picture 7.1: A banner outside of an electronic shop in Taipei. It read: ‘2004 different brands of LCD televisions on display at the same pace as in Japan.

Source: Picture taken by the author in Taipei in 2004
the season, everyone on the street will wear things in red. If you do not follow the trend, you will be considered as non-mainstream and out of fashion. You need to update all the time. Taiwan is not quite like that. We have a more diversified approach. One would not be repulsed for being "unfashionable". After all, Japan is only part of the foreign cultural influence Taiwan received. There are other influences from other countries too. We are more multi-cultural in Taiwan." (interview with J11)

In the next chapter we will explore how this sense of becoming Taiwanese helps organise young people’s responses to domestically produced dramas that offer home-grown images of modernity in motion.

Conclusion

Discussion in this chapter allows us to avoid rushing to superficial judgements about alleged Japanese cultural imperialism in Taiwan and to piece together a more nuanced picture of the local meanings generated in the course of consuming transnational Japanese culture. It is argued that the translation of ‘Japan’, its dramas, consumer goods and social practices, into the everyday modern Taiwanese experience and the demand to live in the same temporarity have emerged alongside the reconstruction of political identity. Although it is undeniable that consumption of Trendy dramas and the imitation of fashionable Japanese styles is a major feature of the young generation’s cultural practice, their appreciation involves a back-and-forth process of debate and negotiation with the meaning and positioning of themselves in relation to Japan and other Asians.

What Japan offers is a success model for the Taiwanese to adapt and negotiate in order to sharpen their edge in the global marketplace. In many ways, Japan has played this role throughout Taiwan’s economic development and has continued to do so in many cultural sectors. In the following chapter, I will use the emergence of Taiwanese
Idol Drama, a genre borrowing its basic form from Japanese Trendy Drama, to further explore the idea of 'operational realism', through which the Taiwanese television industry has reworked the Japanese model to strengthen its global competitiveness and underpin the pursuit of a distinctive Taiwanese character.
Chapter 8 Looking Overseas: Negotiating being Taiwanese

Meteor Garden: Filling the gap and pursuing Japan

Introduction

As the society progressed to the second post-Martial Law period, hsiang-tu drama’s ideologically-laden images became less attractive to many urban young people and too culturally-specific to have high commercial potential in the increasingly intensified regional programming trade. Although some hsiang-tu dramas have been exported to other Mandarin-speaking markets, overseas audiences’ lack of knowledge about Taiwan’s modern history usually leads to the dismissal of the political messages inscribed in the text and produces relatively lower ratings than screenings of Japanese and Korean Trendy dramas. Although hsiang-tu dramas on FTV and Sanli still enjoyed high ratings in Taiwan among the older generations, television producers in Taiwan have started to look for alternative ways to prosper in the deregulated markets both domestically and regionally at a time when the growing regional programming trade was opening up new opportunities. Not surprisingly, they started by looking into ways of reinventing regional Trendy dramas, as these imports had enjoyed commercial success and delineated a market ready for the local versions that answered to the generational-specific experience of young Taiwanese.

Local producers, Fang Jiarui and Angie Cia, were certainly of this opinion. Influenced by the success of Japanese Trendy dramas in Taiwan, they soon decided to take the plunge and experiment with incorporating Japanese manga and the programme format into local drama production. At the time however, dramas featuring romance among young people had not been thought of as a convincing
replacement for the existing mainstream drama format in Taiwan. Therefore their idea was considered risky and dismissed by the company they had been working for. In response they quit their jobs, co-founded an independent production company, Comi Ruizi, and sought support from the terrestrial station, CTS, for their first project, Meteor Garden (hereafter MG) based on a purchased script derived from the Japanese manga, Hana Yori Dango. Adapting from manga, rather than creating a script from scratch, had the double advantage of saving time and benefiting from the already established manga readership. The choice of manga for adaptation was carefully calculated. According to my phone interview with Sueng Hsin-ying, a scriptwriter who once worked with Fang Jiarui, sales figures were a major consideration. Hana Yori Dango (literally meaning boys prettier than flowers), written by Yoko Kamio and launched in Japan in 1992, had sold between 100,000 and 150,000 per volume in Taiwan.

MG depicts a poor but smart young woman named Shancai (Makino Tsukushi), whose parents insist on sending her to an elite university, Yingde College, in the hope that she will blend into high society. The storyline revolves around her encounter with a gang of four spoiled and handsome young men known as F4 in the university. The F4 group (meaning Flower Four), is made up of Daomingsi (name in the manga: Doumyyouji Tsukasa), Lei (Hanazawa Rui), Ximen (Nishikada Soujirou), and Meizhou (Mimasaka Akira). As the sons of successful first generation entrepreneurs, they are youthful, restless, and live a luxurious lifestyle. In contrast, coming from an ordinary background, Shancai increasingly finds herself at odds with others in school. She particularly dislikes F4 in the earlier episodes because of their rudeness and petulance. One day she lashes out at them after seeing her best friend being verbally insulted by Daomingsi. In response, F4 begin to bully her, isolating her from other
students, and even trying to buy her into surrender. However, she refuses to capitulate and declares war on them. Her bravery and courage finally wins their respect and friendship with Daomingsi, the leader of the F4 gang, falling in love with her. However, Daomingsi’s mother, Daomingfong strongly objects to their relationship and is too snobbish to let her son be attracted to a woman from a humble background. Daomingfong is keen to arrange a marriage with the daughter of another entrepreneur, so that she can form a stronger business alliance. The later episodes concentrate on how she abuses her power and money in an attempt to destroy the relationship between Daomingsi and Shancai, and how they fight back to pursue the life and love they desire.

Once obtained the licensed script, the team was however faced with the difficulty of finding suitable actor/actresses to play the four main roles was a difficulty however, partly because most famous actors/actresses at the time were either typecast or were too old for the roles and partly because of the restrained budget. The producers thus decided to recruit new faces through a public audition. The audition attracted thousands, but only one was chosen, or none in a strict sense. The young man selected, Vic Zhou, had tagged along with a friend to the audition but unintentionally stole the thunder outside of the audition room. The other three recruits included a former model recommended by his modelling agency, and two young men discovered by accident, one while he exercised in the gymnasium, the other in a restaurant where he waited on tables in Taipei (Pomfret, 2002). All four boys lacked substantial acting experience, and were primarily selected for their appearance: all in their mid-twenties, six foot tall, well-built, and handsome. This emphasis on image in the creation of F4 pointed to a tendency in cultural production to focus increasingly on aesthetics and lifestyle. Their emergence has also exposed a talent gap to
accommodate the shift towards image-oriented production in the increasingly commercialised television environment.

Unsure about the market reaction to new faces and following Trendy drama’s broadcast pattern in Japan (i.e. weekly), CTS started screening MG at the weekends between 9 pm to 10:30pm in April 2001. Achieving an average rating of two per cent for the first few episodes, the ratings soon picked up and peaked at eight per cent, beating other dramas on TTV and CTV—two terrestrial channels famous for investing huge sums of money on the casts and settings of their drama productions (United Newspaper, 25/11/2001). As Table 8.1 shows, the highest ratings were among teenagers (aged 11-19), followed by the age group 20-24. Due to its popularity and other production concerns, MG was rescheduled to be shown in the weekdays’ golden eight o’clock slot in July 2001, becoming the first locally-produced drama focusing on young people to be allocated that premium slice of prime time. It is therefore often argued that MG marked the starting point of Taiwanese Idol Drama because of its timing, its popularity and the ripple effect it has caused on local television drama production.

Table 8.1: Rating of MG in Taiwan from May to June in 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (yrs)</th>
<th>Rating (%)</th>
<th>Age (yrs)</th>
<th>Rating (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All People</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>5.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>65 above</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Once MG had demonstrated success, a production system based on purchasing Japanese popular manga scripts for adaptation was established. In less than two years'
time, this system generated 12 productions, mostly by Fang Jiarui’s Comi, and Angie Cai’s Comi Ruizhi (See Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: Taiwanese Dramas based on Japanese Manga Script from April 2001 to May 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drama Title</th>
<th>Broadcasting Channel</th>
<th>Broadcasting Time</th>
<th>Production Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meteor Garden</td>
<td>CTS, Dong-Fong</td>
<td>Apr 2001</td>
<td>Comi Ruizhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Aristocrat</td>
<td>CTS, Dong Fong</td>
<td>Aug 2001</td>
<td>Comi Ruizhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peach Girl</td>
<td>CTS, Dong Fong</td>
<td>Oct 2001</td>
<td>Comi Ruizhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn-around of an Ugly Lady</td>
<td>CTS, Long Xiang</td>
<td>Oct 2001</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scars of Deep Love</td>
<td>CTS, Dong Fong</td>
<td>Nov 2001</td>
<td>Comi Ruizhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmalade boy</td>
<td>CTS, Dong Fong</td>
<td>Dec 2001</td>
<td>Comi Ruizhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come to My House</td>
<td>CTV, Dong Fong</td>
<td>Feb 2002</td>
<td>Comi*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Dream</td>
<td>CTS</td>
<td>Mar 2002</td>
<td>Comi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black White Movie House</td>
<td>CTS</td>
<td>Mar 2002</td>
<td>Comi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The White Book of Love</td>
<td>CTV, STAR Chinese</td>
<td>Apr 2002</td>
<td>STAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi! Office Lady</td>
<td>CTV</td>
<td>Mar 2003</td>
<td>Comi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of The Rose</td>
<td>TTV</td>
<td>May 2003</td>
<td>Comi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to different opinions at work, Feng and Cai have split, with the former setting up another production company, Comi, and Cai running Comi Ruizhi.

Visual images: Simulating a Japan-style consumerism

These productions initiated a new genre commonly known in the media as ‘Idol drama’, marking a shift in subject matter from history in period dramas and rural families in politically contextualised hsiang-tu dramas to the lives and loves of good-looking and consumer-oriented urban youngsters. This transition is made clear
through intentionally-constructed visual images that foreground beautiful people, beautiful clothes, and glamorous urban settings.

Blending fashionable settings and commodities with an attractive young cast had been a key feature of teen dramas elsewhere, but before MG Taiwan’s drama productions had rarely considered style and fashion as major selling points, partly because of the large percentage of retrospective storylines in local productions and partly because a widespread consumer culture and a suitable political atmosphere only started to mature in the late 80s. Throughout most of the 1990s, although the economic situation had matured, mainstream commercial drama was still largely preoccupied with engaging with identity politics and a strong sense of nostalgia and tradition. Consequently, the representations of young people’s lifestyles, aspirations, and subcultures had been sidelined. This ‘annihilation’ of their emerging experiences and interests was only started to be addressed until the proven rating success of the imported Japanese Trendy dramas, particularly the first few classic examples such as Tokyo Love Story (1992, Fuji TV) and 101 Offers of Marriage (101 Kaime no Purpo zu, 1992, Fuji TV). Produced before Japan’s economic bubble burst, these earlier imports showcased a Japanese society with extravagant affluence with young Japanese living in expensive flats and socialising in western-style restaurants and bars and set the tone for the overall reception of the genre in Taiwan.

MG was conceived against this background and made to cater for the market delineated by the Japanese Trendy dramas. Copying the strategy of Japanese Trendy drama, MG also represented the vibrant urban consumer culture and addressed the desires of the Taiwan’s younger generation who had grown up with Taiwan’s socio-economic development. More importantly, by modelling itself on Japanese Trendy drama and manga, MG also revealed the accumulation of Japanese influence
in shaping both Taiwan’s youthful consumer identity and popular television production. One can argue that MG was produced after the height of Taiwan’s Ha-ri phenomenon to simulate a Japanese-style advanced consumerism and aimed at a generation whose feelings towards Japan were much less marked by historical enmity or worship and more by a recent influence on fashion and taste. This argument can be elaborated through the following three examples.

Firstly, MG was arguably the first locally-made drama that consciously equipped its cast with fashionable clothes, accessories, and hairstyles with a high impact. Not only was the physical appearance of the key cast members privileged over their acting skill and experience in the selection process, the bodies of the F4 members were consciously employed as a locus of consumption and display. The youthful aesthetics and lifestyle represented by F4 was clearly tied in with the large-scale revival of Japanese (popular) culture in 1990s’ Taiwan discussed in previous chapters. F4’s style was strongly reminiscent of Japanese Trendy drama actors popular in Taiwan, such as Takuya Kimura and Takenouchi Yotaka (see picture 8.1).

The air-brushed, shoulder-length, brown-tinted hairstyle, in particular, has been one the most recognisable Japanese influences. Chapatsu, a Japanese word literally meaning brown hair, is a way of bleaching and/or dying one’s hair widely found among Japanese youth. Originally only practiced by high school girls, this style, according to website, Wikipedia, has become widely accepted in Japan since the mid-1990s and was added to Kojien, the publicly-recognised standard Japanese dictionary, in 1998. Although interpretations as to why hair-dying is so rampant in Japan range from displaying individuality to conformity to the latest fashion, some young people I interviewed in Taiwan attributed this phenomenon to Japan.
Picture 8.1: Japanese popular TV actors/singers: Takuya Kimura (left) and Takenouchi Yotaka (right)

Picture 8.2: Similar style in F4 in MG

Source: CTS website
adoration of western culture dating back to the first wave of westernization and modernization during the Meiji Restoration, suggesting that Japanese people not only want to borrow western culture but are also obsessed with a western look.

With the increasing cultural borrowing from Japan in post-Martial Law Taiwan, dying hair, once prohibited in most high schools across the island and often associated with problematic street youth, became a freely-adopted fashion in the late 1990s and was particularly endorsed by the young Ha-ri-zhu. So much so that the former Vice President Annette Lu, once famously referred to the Ha-ri-zhu as those ‘who dyed their hair into crazy red’. However, it is probably reasonable to argue that young Taiwanese Ha-ri-zhu’s desire to change their hair colour was more an expression of their aspiring for ‘Japan’, rather than the west. It was not a desire to look western, but to adopt Japanese chic. For many young people, Japan’s economic slump did not seem to affect its position as a regional economic and fashion leader. Its continuing role as a cultural leader and intermediary of western culture is illustrated by my second example, the social phenomenon of ‘logo mania’ among middle-class Taiwanese. This theme was accentuated in the first episode of the series.

In the opening scene, the heroine Shancai was seen struggling to push her mini-motorcycle which had just broken down after a small hill. Cars behind her hooted their horns before getting to pass. A Mercedes Benz suddenly stopped besides her. A woman of a similar age emerges from the passenger seat. She was not a stranger, but a classmate.

Female Classmate: Shancai, your rubbish motorcycle has broken down again. When are you going to dump this rubbish? Look at you, dirt your hands every morning because of this piece of junk metal. Come on, take the tissue from me to wipe your hands.

(Shancai, stood in her helmet, speechless, slowly accepting the tissue)
Female Classmate: By the way, the tissue case is from Gucci. Don’t forget to return the case once you have finished. (Sigh) Our university would have been down in the World Guinness Book with every student driving to campus, if it weren’t for you.

Getting back into the car, this anonymous female classmate took us to the second scene, where she met her best friend on campus after the long summer vocation. They then start enumerating their brand name accessories from a Prada bag to a leather Burberry coat, a limited edition diamond necklace and finally a luxurious nose job from Beverly Hills. Other brand name goods and product symbols also acquired a dominant position in the first 45 minute episode. Five brands: Prada, Gucci, LV, Chanel, and Paul Smith were mentioned in the script while eight others, BMW car, Benz cars, Mazda sports cars, Prada shoulder bags, Gucci tissue cases, Coca Cola, and Lacoste jumpers were given prominent visual references. These scenes have portray the trend among rich young Taiwanese women whose period between teenage-hood and marriage is well known for being a window of unlimited consumption constrained only by financial circumstances. Without involvement in major items such as property and unburdened with familial concerns, rich young Taiwanese are able to freely spend on themselves and construct identity through consumption.

Although Taiwan’s socio-economic development since the 1970s provides the general context for the brand-name consumption featured in MG, Japan’s particular influence in shaping consumption behaviour and fashion taste should not be overlooked. It is not an accident that the major logos featured in the first episode were primarily the European brands that had been the main players in Japan’s ‘logomania’ since the 1980s.

Before the economic bubble burst, Japan’s post-war economic development created a phenomenal rise in GNP and average income. In 1988, for example, Japan’s
GNP had amounted to $23,400 (more than the US’s $19,800 of the same year), and the average income in Japan was 18 per cent higher than in the US. Chang (2004) has argued that the consolidated prosperity and the ability to overtake America have contributed to a shift in fashion consumption in Japan. Wealthy Japanese started turning to a European mode of fashion consumption stressing the trinity of quality, brand, and taste, ditching an American mode characterized by mass production and mass consumption. A preference for European super logos was believed to indicate a superior spiritual and mental capacity that might transcend the simple mode of material(ist) consumption.

Luxurious European super logos became the most desirable commodities for the Japanese youth and more affluent Japanese. The BMW, for example, was nicknamed ‘Roppongi Corona’ (Roppongi being a rich neighbourhood in Tokyo, and Corona a middle-range model of Toyota car). Many college students would aim to buy one with earnings from a part-time job or a loan from the bank. The term indicates the attractive mixture of wealthy status symbol and the mass affordability of the super logo among young people in Japan (Hoshino 1992: 5). They also became one of the trademarks for a ‘(pseudo) aristocratic consumerism’ characterised by some young office ladies in Tokyo. Hanako, a popular fashion magazine, nicknamed these young women who created their own ‘aristocratic’ identities through their dedicated acquisition of European super logos such as LV, Chanel, Tiffany, Hermes as ‘Miss Hanako.’ Together with ‘Roppongi Corona’, ‘Miss Hanako’ demonstrated the convergence of aristocratic sensibility and middle class identity among Japanese younger generations.

Chang (2004) also argued that the transition in fashion consumption from the 1960s’ American mode to the 1980s’ European mode can also be attributed to Japan’s modern history. She traced the development of Louis Vuitton, a European superlogo,
in Japan to illustrate the 'nostalgic re-invention of the Europeanized Japan' at the peak of interaction between European and Japanese cultures at the turn of the 19th century. According to her research, Louis Vuitton, was founded and ascended to its top status at this exact pivotal moment when Europe ardently incorporated Japanese aesthetic tastes into its own cultural creations. The classic monogram of LV-- the four petals and two diamonds-- was designed under the influence of Japanese art in Europe, and consequently taken by the Japanese as 'the perfect mix of French and Japanese art' in the late 19th century (Chang, 2004:227). This historical and psychological formation has given a 'surplus value' to the European superlogo, which embodies Japan's glorious past and feelings of pride.

If Japan’s logo mania is nostalgic for its own glorious past, the popularity of European brand names in Taiwan is arguably directly related to the emergence of fashion consciousness and the formation of the consumer society under strong Japanese influence. The aura of super logos in Taiwan’s cultural imagination is conditioned by a double imagination of ‘imitating Japan’s imitation of Europe’. In the early years when few retailers were selling imported international brand-name commodities in Taiwan, the local rich were urged to go to Japan to shop for luxury goods. For the older generation who received a Japanese education, the information gathered from Japanese (fashion) magazines also performed an important role. As Taiwan’s consumer society gathered momentum at the end of the 1970s, fashion and brand consciousness were enhanced by the permission to import international brand goods, the opening of international tourism and, finally, direct access to fashion information through the local editions of international magazines. However, even in contemporary Taiwan where fashion trends are virtually synchronized with the world, information on fashion from Japan still performs a prominent role. For years the
Japanese bi-weekly Non-no has been the most popular magazine for young teenage girls in Taiwan. First introduced at the end of the 70s it started to enjoy its present popularity in the 80s, and has been the top-selling magazine in Taiwan’s big chain-bookstores ever since. Roughly 100,000 copies are imported to Taiwan every month (Iwabuchi 1998: 28-29). This ubiquitous promotion of the latest fashions from Japan has effectively mediated the simultaneity of international trends among young Taiwanese.

It is worth noting that unlike many dramas where the appearance of brands involves a series of product placement deal, those mentioned in MG, apart from Coca Cola, were inserted into the narrative voluntarily to reflect young people’s material aspirations. Being the first locally-made Idol drama, MG was considered an audacious experiment rather than a promising production. This uncertainly about its commercial potential also helps to account for the low level of interest from major local companies in striking product placement deals. Added to which, most international high-couture companies were generally reluctant to associate their products with petulant teenagers. Although product placement deals have become more common in later Idol dramas since the commercial success of MG, most are promoting local brands, with only a few exceptions such as international beverages and mobile phone makers. Without the commercial underpinning of product placement deals, the insertion of brand name consumer goods can best be explained by an intention to simulate the pleasures of a luxurious lifestyle of affluence and cosmopolitanism for a young Taiwanese generation immersed in a consumer oriented culture.

Alongside an image landscape highly indebted to Japan, MG has also opened up the practice of marketing television drama actors in the real world following Japan’s footprint. As the name ‘Idol drama’ suggests, manufacturing young good-looking
'idols' is a focal point of these productions. Central to this is the practice of 'idol management' which can be traced back to the famous Japanese agency, *Johnny and Associates*. Founded by Johnny Kitagawa in the early 1980s, *Johnny and Associates* remains the undisputed leader when it comes to the creation and promotion of young male idol stars. Its professionalism in systematically grooming potential male aspirants in a highly inter-textual media environment has contributed to the manufacture of the regional craze for young Japanese artists, such as Kimura Takuya and the group SMAP he belongs to.

Following Japanese practice in manufacturing and promoting 'idols', one of the producers of *MG*, Angie Cai, steered F4 into other sectors of the entertainment industry. Soon after the drama had finished, she arranged for the record company EMI to release an album featuring F4 as talented singers, followed by numerous commercials in the media and sold-out concerts in many Asian locations. Images of F4 also featured prominently on a range of spin-off commodities from books and photo collections to posters. Through intensive media exposure and mass-oriented commodities, F4 have become household names and fashion icons in Taiwan as well as countries which have imported the series. Although inexperienced as performers in drama or artists in music, F4 have suddenly risen to be the most popular Taiwanese showbiz stars both domestically and regionally, providing a classic example of how actors can be developed into a source of multi-dimensional marketing capital in context of an increasing commercialised television system and a rising regional programming trade trend. In recognition of the success of this marketing initiative, in 2001 Angie Cai was selected by the American magazine, *Business Week*, as one of most influential figures in the issue titled, ‘Stars of Asia: Leaders of the Forefront of Change’. The cross-over of artists into different entertainment sectors is not an
altogether new practice, as many Hong Kong-based actors who were popular in Taiwan in the 1980s moved between music, film and television. The apex of this trend was the emergence of the ‘Four Super Kings (shidatienwang)’. Made up of four Hong Kong-based artists headed by Andy Liou they dominated the adolescent memories of young Taiwanese born in the late 1970s. However, there is a significant difference. These earlier Hong Kong artists usually underwent strict training before making their names and established their ‘idol’ status through years of experience and a collection of works, whereas the recent F4 phenomenon-- centred on four first-time actors out of one television drama-- was primarily based on the exercise of media power emulating the successful marketing strategy of Japanese Trendy drama idols in Taiwan.

Taiwanese Idol dramas in the Regional Programming Trade

*MG* has been exported to thirteen regional and global markets, establishing a record in Taiwan’s television history. The series has been popular in both Mandarin-speaking and non-Mandarin-speaking markets in East Asia, finding its major audience among females aged between 15 and 24. In Tienjin province in China, ratings for this group reached as high as 23.4 per cent, followed by the 19.9 per cent in Indonesia, and 12.7 per cent in Singapore (AC Nielson, 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Rating (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Asia Television</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Indosiar</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>CANNEL 8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Chuangching</td>
<td>Chuengching 4 City</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Wuhan</td>
<td>Hubei Station</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Fuzhou</td>
<td>Fujian Station</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China/Tianjin</td>
<td>Tianjin T1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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The popularity of *MG* has inevitably attracted attention from media critics and academic researchers keen to explain the programme’s success in their respective local milieu.

In 2003 *MG* was broadcast in the Philippines by ABS-CBN, attracting ten million viewers plus thousands of downloads of the ring tone. Cruz (2003) reckoned that cultural proximity and physical resemblance were at the heart of ‘*Meteor mania*’ in the Philippines, where imports had been dominated by Spanish-language soaps led by Marimar and Maria del Barrio. In comparison the characters in *MG* looked more local and were more able to open up imaginary spaces for the Filipino audience to transpose the fictional milieu to their own context. Since the broadcast of *MG*, demand for Taiwanese Idol dramas in the country has soared. The rival network, GMA-7, swiftly acquired three other Taiwanese Idol dramas: *Lavender*, *Poor Aristocrat*, and *MVP Valentine*, leading to a new word ‘Chinovela’ being coined to refer to Mandarin-speaking urban dramas. The Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism (2003) argued that the term signals a change in the market, and that the arrival of more Chinovela could in the future offset the ‘West is best’ mindset long-held by Filipino programmers (Cruz, 2003).

Similarly, Thomas (2004) who studied the reception of regional popular culture in urban Vietnam argued that it points to a hierarchical power order in East/Southeast Asia, in which the Four Asian Tigers serve as models for ‘the-next-step’ development in Vietnam. Underpinned by the physical similarities across Asia, the images of prosperity and sophistication in regional Trendy/Idol dramas can easily engender a longing for a richer consumer world, for technical expertise and creativity, and for societies that foster these elements. *MG*’s textual world coded with fashion and extravagance, including trendy sports cars, the latest mobile phones, distinct
hairstyles, estate property, and exclusive boating holidays, gives concrete form to these values. The consumer products and images of material affluence it presents simultaneously offers a landscape that resonates with audiences in the developed part of Asia and provides an aspiration for less well-off Asians.

In China, Meteor mania was marked by the contest for power between commercial interests, popular demand and party orthodoxy. After censors cut three-hundred minutes of the series including scenes of fistfights and boys shouting at teachers, MG secured approval from China’s State Administration of Radio, Film and Television at the beginning of 2002. Meanwhile, the F4 album, Meteor Rain, also won permission from the Ministry of Culture to be sold in China. The drama was launched on a number of stations in small to medium-sized cities. The major cities like Beijing and Shanghai hesitated as they were forced to adhere to a more conservative ideological line. Nevertheless, many Chinese young people gained access from the illegal satellite dishes and the internet, as well as pirate CDs and DVDs. The drama was an instant success with this market segment. Sony reported to have sold 500,000 copies of the Meteor Rain album within five months, while an estimated 5 million pirated versions flooded the market (Pomfret, 2002).

However, on 8th of March 2002, the Chinese government suddenly announced a ban on screening MG, accusing it of encouraging youth to pursue a materialistic lifestyle. It was also reported that conflicting interests within China’s increasingly commercialised television industry were another cause— if not the main cause— behind the official ban. A Washington Post article claimed that the ban was related to resentment from China’s main television station, Central Television (CCTV), which lobbied against the series. According to the article, CCTV had been angered because the regional/local stations were making substantial profits by airing MG, and also
because F4 declined an invitation to perform in CCTV’s annual Spring Festival variety show watched by an estimated 800 million Chinese (Pomfret, 2002).

The ban enraged Chinese young fans. Within the next 24 hours, more than 70,000 Chinese internet users logged on to the website, NetEase, to discuss the government’s decision. Most of them urged the authorities to lift the ban while watching continued through pirate DVDs/VCDs. Further evidence of popular taste defying state propaganda appeared when, in the capital Beijing, where the ban had been issued, the script of the television series was printed as a paperback weeks after the ban, while pirate VCDs sold secretly under the counter or on street corners (Bezlova, 2002). Overall, the enthusiasm for MG in China has pointed to the complexities of the country’s turn to commercialism highlighting the multi-layered struggles between regional and metropolitan stations, between the authorities and popular taste, and between legal and black markets.

Japan, traditionally the most difficult market for non-Japanese regional popular cultural products to enter, tells a different story. MG has first debuted on Japan’s regional satellite (commonly known as BS), commercial satellite (commonly known as CS), and commercial internet Video on Demand network (VOD) in 2002. However given the relatively low reach of cable and satellite television in Japan (about 20 to 30 per cent), the programme’s impact was limited until the series finally screened on the national network, Nippon Television Network (NTV), in October 2003 with a promotional advertisement slogan ‘counter-import’ (Liberty Times, 28/09/2003). In 2005, another national network, TBS, decided to reclaim the ‘birth right’ of MG, launching a Japanese version with Japanese actors based on the same manga.
MG’s entry also opened the gate for other Taiwanese Idol dramas in Japan, many of which were adapted from Japanese manga. Mars (Zhan-shen), adapted from Fuyumi Souryou’s manga Mars and starring Vic Zhou (who played Lei in MG) and Big S (who played Shancai in MG) for example, was also aired in Japan through regional satellite channels in 2005. The number of Taiwanese Idol dramas shown in Japan increased from one (i.e. MG) in 2003 to four in 2005, and to 26 in the first half of 2006 (Liou, 2006: 24-25). F4 also cemented its fan base in Japan when in January 2007 two of its members were featured on the cover of Junon, a popular Japanese magazine packed with Japanese showbiz celebrities (Liberty Times, 29/11/2006). Although these imports were limited compared to the larger demand for Korean drama in Japan, some optimistic Japanese media saw them as a sign of a new trend, ‘Tai-liu’, literally meaning ‘Taiwanese Wave’.

However, compared to other East Asian markets, Japanese market reaction is still considered generally subdued. Sueng (2004) has pointed out that imported Taiwanese Idol dramas— with the exception of MG, are primarily used to fill the gaps on regional or local satellite channels. Even MG, the only Taiwanese Idol drama so far to be broadcast on Japan’s national network, was placed in the 1am slot by NTV. This marginalised screening practice has undermined the optimism of Taiwanese wave and prompted some to comment that ‘Taiwanese wave’ was just a transient fad, with many Japanese television stations buying Taiwanese Idol dramas to ‘reference’ the adaptation skills, with no intention of airing them (United Newspaper, 06/08/2006).

**Local Reception: desperate for an identity**

If the different regional reactions to MG reflect the political, social, economic and cultural variations between individual markets, the question emerges: What does
MG mean to Taiwanese youth? How do they perceive a local television drama with such heavy Japanese influence that consequently created a regional frenzy? To address this question, a few themes that emerged from the interview and questionnaire I conducted during 2004 and 2005 are worth further comment.

To begin with, whereas in many regional markets the heated fandom centred mostly on the faces, bodies and styles of the central characters, F4, my interviewees in Taiwan seemed relatively lukewarm about their appearance and the fashions displayed. Instead, they offset F4's handsome looks by criticising their acting skills. Many regarded F4 as a product of media hype and a symptom of television's growing commercialisation in which looks and images were gaining precedence over substance. Similarly, while youngsters in other regional markets were thought to be attracted by the representation of fashion and images of modernity in MG, young Taiwanese seemed relatively indifferent to this textual aspect. In the survey I conducted for this thesis, 26.7% of respondents disagreed that MG has projected a desirable image of fashion and modernity, while the majority (51.67%) expressed a neutral opinion.

My interviewees' higher educational level might have contributed to this critical (intellectual) evaluation of the production, but what underpins the support for MG among Taiwanese youth, I would argue, is more significantly a complicated process of negotiating Taiwan's position in the rapidly changing political and economic landscape of the region, and what characterised their feelings was a desire for a unique Taiwanese style. Against the increasingly domination of cultural exports from Japan and Korea and the growing power of China, the emergence of MG, a production that follows the familiar practice of copying/borrowing/modifying Japanese models to manufacture a local success has played an important role in confirming Taiwan's
elevation to a second-tiered position in the historical perception of a three-tiered Asia (i.e. Japan, Taiwan and the other Asian Tigers, followed by Mainland China and the rest of Southeast Asia).

"In terms of the creative industry... I know copying is not a good thing, but copying can also bring progress and breakthrough. Taiwanese Idol drama is a good example, although I think Idol dramas made in Taiwan are still behind those of Japan, as Taiwan has its own limitations in budgets, actor training and in physical geography. After all, Japan has a domestic market of one billion people, and its entertainment industry started before us. So this is inevitable.... It is a consequence of different development trajectory. Similarly, [entertainment programmes in] Mainland China now copies a lot from Taiwan. I remember hearing songs praising Chairman Mao last year when I was in China.... This demonstrates how the process of modernisation is in relation to the development of entertainment and popular culture." (interview with J9)

"Although many people think MG is trying to copy Japanese Trendy dramas, I think the production itself is still a break through in Taiwan's media industry....I think F4 are fantastic, almost classic, for their popularity in Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand. I feel proud to see MG on Thai television subtitled in Thai language during my graduate visit to the country. I also heard that the drama was broadcast in Japan, and was quite well received." (interview with J19)

"Taiwanese Idol drama borrows a lot from Japanese Trendy drama in the technique of dealing with emotional issues and using material symbolism. But basically I still think they are different. Japanese Trendy drama, at least in my mind, is still irreplaceable. However, I am also excited about the development of Taiwanese Idol dramas. I am excited about the Meteor mania and F4 craze in Southeast Asia. I think the entertainment industry symbolises the level of cultural development and living standard of a country. Therefore, Taiwan’s ability to produce good programmes should in turn nourish Taiwan’s image abroad." (interview with J3)

From these interview excerpts we can see that my respondents’ interest in MG has less to do with its reception within the island and more to with its achievement of record profits through regional sales and its stimulation of ‘a cultural desire for Taiwan’ overseas. This was confirmed when the interviewees, although occasionally critical towards the plots and the performance of the actors, unanimously gave their unreserved support to MG’s ventures into other Asian markets. For a younger generation living in the era of rising confidence in proclaiming one’s Taiwanese
identity, this unprecedented overseas exposure has symbolically compensated for Taiwan's lack of political recognition in the international community. Moreover, the drama's popularity, particularly in those third-tiered Asian countries, could be seen as a demonstration of Taiwan's 'soft power', which had hitherto been rarely felt or non-existent. Inextricably blended into the text, local elements such as the Taiwanese accent, Taiwanese lifestyle, and local scenic spots have effectively been promoted and well-received among the regional audience. National Chung Cheng University, for instance, where most of the campus scenes take place, has now become a famous site of romantic encounters. Just as many Taiwanese tourists undertook 'pilgrimages' to locations repetitively appearing in Japanese and Korean Trendy dramas, Japanese and other Asian tourists now come to Taiwan to relive the Meteor experience. In recognition of this, F4 has been chosen as spokesmen for Taiwan's tourism in a recent government-sponsored project.

Beneath this sense of optimism and regional recognition however there was also an anxiety and ambivalence around the convention of copying the Japanese. While celebrating MG as an example of Taiwan's cultural success in the region, many young people did not feel that the drama has adequately represented the quintessential cultural elements in contemporary Taiwanese society due to the heavy Japanese influence in the production. In the questionnaire survey, as high as 45.2 per cent of the respondents felt that MG had been successful in localising a Japanese manga to appear more relevant to Taiwanese daily experience, but at the same time, they felt that the localising effect and the hybrid nature of the drama had caused awkward feelings. Another 28.2 per cent felt that MG had failed in adapting to the local situation and therefore did not fit their daily experience. Only 18.2 per cent felt that
the drama has successfully related to the Taiwanese context, and provided them with something easily identified with.

One obvious textual feature that produced feelings of awkwardness was the use of half-Japanese-half-Taiwanese names for the characters. These were generated by shortening the full Japanese name in the manga or by adding a common Taiwanese surname as a prefix. According to director Tsai, a complete renaming would have been inappropriate and risked losing the original flavour so he and the production team finally settled for a hybrid solution (Tsai in Gao, 2005:67). Despite his reasoning, using Taiwanese actors to play characters with half-Japanese-half-Taiwanese names has not always been well-received and can easily backfire as distasteful identity confusion. One interviewee expressly pinpointed the pseudo-Japanese names of characters and places as the most negative aspect of the production.

Other awkward textual aspects often noted by respondents included the sight of student’s lockers in school, Japanese-styled interior design, and the bullying scenes involving Shancai. The latter, in particular, was considered as a typically Japanese (high school) phenomenon and unlikely to happen in Taiwan. Similar bullying plots among high school students are portrayed in God, Please Give Me More Time, another widely-circulated Japanese Trendy drama in Taiwan. These scenes in which the students gang up against Shancai under the direction of F4, representing the authority of the higher class in the peer group, were interpreted by some interviewees as a morbid sense of conformity and a result of class discrimination in Japanese society. In comparison, acting collectively on instruction and class distinctions were considered much less acceptable in Taiwan.
These feelings of awkwardness reveal a sub-note of ambivalence towards Japanese influence among the younger generation in today’s Taiwan, where the contest for Taiwanese identity has become increasingly relevant in daily life as a part of post-Martial Law identity politics. This sentiment was repeatedly raised in the interviews when interviews expressed their hopes for future Taiwanese Idol drama productions.

‘I hope Taiwanese Idol drama will be more and more successful in the future and develop a different style from the Japanese. After all Japanese culture and Taiwanese culture are still different.’ (interview with J6)

‘I have not seen too many other Taiwanese Idol dramas apart from MG, but as far as I know, many of them are trying to imitate Japanese Trendy drama. Although some people might be attracted to this kind of constructed atmosphere, I don’t like this feeling of imitation. I think Taiwan’s production should have something unique to itself. Television drama is also a form of art; therefore should not all look the same.’ (interview with J5)

‘Japanese Trendy drama, Korean Trendy drama and American series have all developed their own style. Only Taiwan, still lacks a genre or a style which makes we go “Yes, that is us!” We are always imitating others. I hope that Taiwan can develop a distinctive style to itself. It is like learning calligraphy, imitating the master style (lin-mo) at the beginning and outperform the master in the end (chu-shi)’. (interview with J7)

*Mature Women’s Diary: Dysfunctional Exotic Realism*

**Introduction**

Following my investigation of young Taiwanese women’s reactions to the American series, SATC, in Chapter 6, this section explores SATC’s influence on local drama production and use it to infer the general reaction towards translating the US style into the local context.
Historically speaking, sourcing from American sitcoms and series has been a rare practice in Taiwan due to the high production costs and the limited pool of talented scriptwriters. Many also argued that the differences in cultural background between East and West make the format difficult to translate (Liu and Chen, 2004:65). Unusually however, in Taiwan’s intensified commercial television, the basic format of SATC has generated a localised adaptation titled *Mature Women’s Diary* (*Shounu yuwang riji*, here after *MWD*). This local version nonetheless is not a format adaptation in a strict sense as it has borrowed and copied ideas from SATC without paying fees to SATC’s creator, HBO. Freed from the contractual constraints often imposed by formal format deals the local producer has been able to take elements from SATC and re-arrange them in ways that deemed fit into their own production specification.

Like SATC, the story of MWD centred on the romantic relationships and lives of four urban young women: Ai-lian, Mei-ching, Yang-nian, and A-pan, except that in the Taiwanese version the characters were cast as twenty-somethings, almost ten years younger than their SATC counterparts. Like Carrie, Ai-lian, the narrator, writes a relationship/romance column for a fashion magazine. In order to forget a hurtful relationship she had established in New York, she decided to leave for Taipei where she found a new lover, Lu-hung. Mei-ching, is a music teacher and a cellist in an orchestra. She, like Charlotte, represents traditional womanhood and upholds a romanticised version of relationships and marriage. Abiding by traditional gender values, she remains a virgin and dresses herself in a more conservative style than the other three characters. In early episodes, she voices traditional values and hopes for a better future with her lover, a versatile conductor of the orchestra. Later in the series, however, she becomes disillusioned as her lover turns out to be married for years.
Yang-nian is a highly-regarded middle-manager in an investment company, excelling in calculating profitability from business mergers. Echoing the sensibility and cynicism of Miranda, she is tough and thinks of herself as a strong feminist who does not bank on either marriage or a loving relationship. A-pan, the composite of Samantha, runs a restaurant called Sassy Girl (later on reopened as Desire Garden). She is sensual and talks about sex openly. She attracts men on various occasions but always ends the relationship abruptly.

Co-produced between the terrestrial station, CTS, and the cable station, ETTV, MWD contained only 22 episodes and featured four young and slim actresses best described as 'Idol drama generation actors' with pretty faces but limited past acting experiences (see picture 8.2). The four women had previously worked mainly on music, advertisements, modelling, or other short-lived Idol dramas. In the earlier part of the series, the flow of each episode clearly parallels the organisation of SATC with the four women gathering to exchange their news about their lives followed by Ai-lian's sitting at her laptop, typing in a question extracted from their conversation. The narrative then moves on to the depiction of their individual lives and ends up with a comment narrated by Ai-lian. However, this parallel gradually disappeared as the production moved away from the series format to the cliff-hanging endings at the end of each episode as used in most Idol dramas.

CTS started to screen MWD from August 2003 on Sundays, while ETTV screened the second-run shortly after. In several newspaper reports (United newspaper, 23/08/2003; 03/09/2003), the producer, Pei-hua Wang, proclaimed that sex and desire have become important issues in contemporary women's lives and are now widely-acceptable among the local television audience. In part to fulfil her
Picture 8.2: Promotional shoot of MWD mimicking the line-up of HBO's SATC with Taipei's skyline in the background.

Source: ETTV website
abiding interest in making a trilogy to explore the lives of modern Taiwanese women, she pledged that, MWD, with its focus on modern Taiwanese women's sex and sexuality, would mark a breakthrough in local drama history and stand out from others in the existing repertoire which had been portraying relationships with in-laws and family from a vantage point rooted in traditional morality. She openly acknowledged the inspiration offered by SATC, which, in her opinion, provided a blueprint for MWD in representing the liberal attitudes and independent lifestyle of young urban Taiwanese women. Prior to its actual screening, MWD had often been hyped as 'the most open-minded serial drama in the history of Taiwan's terrestrial television' (United Newspaper, 08/08/2003) and more often as 'the Taiwanese version of Sex and the City' by the media.

Visual Imagery: transposing SATC to Taipei 2003

In addition to showcasing beautiful people, beautiful clothes and beautiful urban settings, MWD also followed Taiwanese Idol drama in addressing the lifestyles and aspirations of young Taiwanese (more specifically, in this case, Taiwanese young women). However, following SATC, the representations of these issues in MWD were arguably more oriented to the sensibilities generated by Taiwan's increasing opening-up to the west and its active participation in globalisation since the beginning of the economic take-off in the 1970s. This sensibility can be found in the depiction of the four characters' fashionable career choices, which have been made possible largely by Taiwan's economic development and the local women's movement influenced by western feminism. Ai-lian's job as a fashion magazine writer both in New York and in Taipei implies a link to the distribution of the local versions of international women's magazines that have prospered in Taiwan since the early 1990s. Mei-ching's role as a
music teacher and her expertise in playing cello indicates a strong association with western high culture in shaping urban taste among Taiwanese young women. The western cultural footprint in the contemporary Taiwanese society is also evident in the representation of Yang-nian's job in the investment company where employers dress in western-style business suits, use modern technological office equipment, and deploy marketing and advertising strategies that were introduced to Taiwan in the 1980s to transform the domestic industry from mass manufacturing to serviced-based. Her office, moreover, is located in Taipei's newly developed hsin-yi district, where the Warner Brother cinema complex, international couture shops, and Taipei 101 (currently the tallest building in the world) are also located. Shots of shining skyscrapers, vibrant commercial areas, a newly-finished subway system, and shuttling yellow taxis not only evoke strong connotations of New York but also an image of Taipei as a dynamic global city. Finally, A-pan's self-managed bar/restaurant showcases the hybrid food culture in Taipei. Serving cocktails and improvised western dishes, her restaurant is one of the many generic places in Taipei that cater for a fashionable young clientele whose social life is increasingly conducted in western-style restaurants and cocktail bars.

What further reflected the western influences was the characters' glamorous public personae and the dramatised lifestyles that spoke directly to the generational-specific pink-collared sensibility described in Chapter 3. In many ways, the pink-collared lifestyle illustrates an aspect of western influence in its emphasis on 'individualisation' through which young women are increasingly deemed capable of making their own choices and identities, as many limitations are thought to be lifted. Often represented in the commercial media as a new privileged social class-- as in the newly minted term 'pink-collared new aristocrat'--the young women mark a
generational shift in their possession of better education, financial resources and a self-reliant cosmopolitan identity. Underpinned by delayed marital/familial commitment and influenced by spiralling consumerism, the emergence of the pink-collar employee is often seen as indicating a general valorisation of the individualism and hedonism allegedly carried by western-style modernity.

This pink-collar mentality and lifestyle has been fully expressed in MWD. In common with SATC's characters, the four women in MWD all live in their own flats. Well-decorated with modern furnishings and lighting, these are the ultimate personal spaces from where interference from 'tradition', particularly in the form of parental control and familial duty, has been largely evicted. There is also very little reference to the character's family members and backgrounds in MWD. The women are thus freer to behave in ways that might have been considered inappropriate by the older generation, including hosting (different) boyfriends to stay overnight in their flats and returning home late after parties for single girls. This freedom was only briefly interrupted in one episode in which A-pan's mother moved in with her while considering whether to divorce her father. A-pan, although accepted her mother's stay, was uncomfortable about the interruption to her social life. Her uneasiness about her mother's sudden 'intrusion' into her personal space was comically portrayed in a scene where she discovered that her mother had tactfully replaced her masturbating toy in the draw with an innocent plastic robot. To A-pan's relief, her mother was soon reconciled with her father and moved back to the family home. In the rest of the series, the older generations have withdrawn to make space for the friendships and consumption of the young women.

Although having different opinions on relationship issues, the four main characters are bound together by shared consumption practices. Although not being
able to top the brand avalanche as in SATC, these four women are well-dressed to project a youthful and fashionable image. This is made particularly clear in the opening scene of the series where the four women were seen happily weighed down by oversized carrying bags from designer shops. Apart from product placement deals from local clothing and shoes brands, it also featured Louis Vuitton several times in the story. Yet again, the LV brand was added to enhance the fashionable image and local female’s passion for superlogos, rather than a contractual commercial exchange with the French brand.

In addition, their daily schedules are topped by visiting beauty salons, spas and body massages, attending gymnasium for fitness training, and socialising in western-style or Japanese-style restaurants, all with an overt agenda aimed at increasing their physical attractiveness in the search for possible romance. Being young, pretty and open-minded, the four women enjoy unexpected romance in a modern city, although graphic sexual scenes are left to the imagination. These depictions of young women’s life foreground the excitement and allure of the pursuit of personal pleasure and individual achievement, while relegating the idea of traditionally-approved womanhood as measured by marriage and childbearing to the background.

Local reception: The fine line between tiger and dog

The attempt to represent a more liberal lifestyle and facet of female sexuality has made MWD a target of controversy. Since its screening, opinions expressed in major Taiwanese newspapers have been largely skeptical and critical. An article titled ‘Producer Scorns Tradition, Competing with Sex and the City’ lambasted MWD as culturally insensitive, arguing that since ‘sex’ is far from an appropriate topic to be highlighted in local dramas, MWD was bound to cause nothing but embarrassment
especially when watched with the family (United Newspaper, 23/08/2003). Interestingly, this article was placed together with others which criticized the exploitation of the female body as a prime example of the ‘ratings Viagra’ evident in recent Taiwan’s television culture and pointed out that several entertainment shows had been penalized for doing so. Another newspaper article dismissed MWD as an inappropriate copy which, in a local idiom, ‘wanted to emulate a tiger but turned out to be a dog’. It argued that the different social contexts of American and Taiwan supported different gender values, and that mismatching a Taiwanese context with a set of American values only led to a detrimental farce. In delineating what was appropriate in Taiwan, the article argued that the exemplar of true modern Taiwanese women should not ‘fall in love at first sight, involve in one night stand or affairs outside of relationship’ but should instead ‘love for the moment and break up with dignity.’ There is, the article argued, ‘no need to cook for the sake of cooking, but cook for pleasure. Be fashionable, quick and take a more active role in pursuing one’s sexuality within reason’ (China Times, 19/10/2003). Other commentators also argued that MWD’s appropriation of SATC’s representation of relationships, complicated and promiscuous by the traditional Taiwanese standards, can be a turn-off for local audiences due to the different cultural backgrounds between Taiwan and the US. This flurry of critical responses coupled with the mediocre ratings of the series—about 1.53 per cent as surveyed by AC Nielson—were arguably the two main reasons behind the producer’s later announcement that in a possible forthcoming series, the four characters would not have affairs outside of stable relationships, and would have fixed partners and even consider getting married (United Newspaper, 21/09/2003).

The relatively harsh media commentary on MWD offers interesting comparisons to the way SATC was discussed. Although not all commentary on SATC in Taiwan was
positive, the series was often granted a special dispensation to represent 'western individualism and promiscuous relationships' because of its foreign status. Spatial and cultural distance rendered those representations excusable, amusing, and even valid as a peep into another very different culture. In contrast, as the commentary quoted above indicates, borrowing ideas from SATC and incorporating them into a local production played by famous local actresses generated complicated feelings in which the conflicts caused by mobilising more liberated western gender values within a Taiwanese social context were exposed. It also highlighted a public urge to draw boundaries between what is foreign (American) and what is Taiwanese; or between a fantasy-based exotic realism and real life practice.

The relative unpopularity of MWD among young university females echoed these anxieties. As figure 8.1 shows, in the survey I conducted, while 66.7 per cent of university female who have ever watched SATC expressed positive feelings about the programme (i.e I am a fan, or I like the programme), only 21.3 per cent of those who had watched MWD felt so. On the other hand, more than one third of respondents expressed negative responses (i.e. I dislike or I strongly dislike the programme) to MWD. Such discrepancies in satisfaction raises interesting question about the relationships between texts and contexts in drama adaptation, as they run counter to

Graph 8.1: Degree of satisfaction towards MWD and SATC among local university females
the widespread belief in transnational television studies that the localised version, being more in tune with local life experiences, is likely to generate greater satisfaction and emotional investment.

The example of *MWD* however demonstrates that a text can no longer be discussed on its own but need to be considered with its predecessors in the adaptation chain. Comparisons and references to *SATC* were again a central theme in my interviews with local young women about their viewing experience of *MWD*. Many interviewees who were initially driven by curiosity to see what a local version of *SATC* would look like soon felt disillusioned largely because their viewing experience was overshadowed by their previous engagement with *SATC*. Interviewees like S2 felt compelled to compare every scene of the two productions. She ridiculed *MWD* for transposing a recurring scene in which *SATC*’s Carrie writes the column at her laptop to Ai-lian’s typing in Mandarin characters.

‘It [*MWD*] copies *SATC* so explicitly......writing at the laptop, but typing in Chinese. The font has to be magnified to 30 so that the camera can catch what she is writing. My god...does any columnist work like that?’ (interview with S12)

Responses like this highlight how clumsy literal attempts to transpose original elements into a local context can undermine credibility and led to perceptions of the ‘copycat caught red-handed’ or a ‘failed copy’. Others attributed the deficiencies of the local version to an inherent ‘failure’ based on the cultural difference between America and Taiwan where language was a key indicator,

‘The whole feeling is different when it [*SATC*] is in English. The situation is so amusing when it is in English. I can experience something I cannot experience from this very interesting angle......Chinese is not suitable for talking about sex. It [sex] sounds natural in English and French, but not in Chinese. If you translate ‘Sex and the City’ literally into Chinese, it sounds
like a porn novel. This is the limit of language. The same sentence sounds so differently in different languages.' (Interview with S2)

Language is often referred to as the soul of a culture. As pointed out before, displaying or discussing sex in public discourses in Taiwan remains a social embarrassment, and 'sex and sexuality' remains a topic rarely covered in mass-oriented television dramas. This has led to the perception that Mandarin is a conservative language and only a 'limited' means of expressing sex-related situations. Therefore, for many Taiwanese viewers, juxtaposing Mandarin with sexually-explicit content, as seen in MWD, created feelings of disharmony and awkwardness between the text and the means of its delivery.

The comparison between representations of material consumption was another area that triggered young women’s disappointment with MWD. Despite its eagerness to appear fashionable and up-to-the minute and to reflect modern pink-collar-hood in Taiwan, MWD was constrained by its available budget and resources. As most product placement deals in Idol drama at this time were signed with local sponsors, the representation of fashion in MWD was constructed largely around the products available from local companies. Two of the main costume sponsors, for example, were 'So-Nice' and 'Copine Copine'. Being no strangers to the local audience, these two brands have shops located in major department stores and on main streets, retailing reasonably priced clothing at between $25 to $90 pounds per piece. The programme’s main sponsor for footwear was Miss Sofi, a local brand which is located in major department stores and on city commercial streets, specialising in shoes priced under the $90 mark.

Although featuring these local brands in MWD offered accessibility and affordability, they also detonated feelings of inferiority when compared to the latest
superlogo fashions from Monolo Blanik, D&G, Gucci, Prada used in SATC. Interviewees like S1 belittled MWD as the ‘blue-collar version of SATC’, while others dismissed the programme as a budget-tight production with poor quality compared to glamorous world of SATC which feels like a mini-Hollywood film.

‘Lee’s [who plays Ai-lian in MWD] hair cannot do with too much change. Unlike in SATC, I heard that they spend 6000 dollars on Carrie’s hairdo each time. It is totally different level. Also, Lee likes to buy shoes like Carrie. But her shoes are not brand name. Like Miss Sofi, is just a brand for middle-range-priced shoes. Even I can go there and buy a pair too.’ (interview with S14)

‘There are not as many beautiful outfits, nor as many glamorous social occasions in MWD...If I hadn’t seen SATC, I would have thought MWD is okay. But by comparison, MWD is pathetic.’ (interview with S7)

On the surface, their displeasure with MWD points to an aspect of viewing experience that is strongly structured by the unequal production resources between the global and local television industry. Nonetheless, beneath these comments is an indication that urban young women in Taiwan have developed a discerning cosmopolitan taste that goes hand-in-hand with the developing consumerism and globalisation in the society. Instead of being satisfied with the ordinary, familiar local products and brands identified with Taiwan’s middle-classness, they demand more aspirational western brand names. Replacing those international superlogos and glamorous New York locations of SATC with commodities and locations that young women can easily relate to terminated the viewing pleasures mediated through elements of ‘fantasy’ and ‘exoticism’. However, the same interviewees also argued that due to the combination of different physical features and different socially acceptable dress code, the clothes in SATC probably would not have suited the characters in MWD anyway even if they had been the same. This further comment reminds us of the relatively well-received superlogos in MG and Japan’s role as a bridgehead in
introducing and appropriating Western consumer goods for Asian use. Without Japan’s mediating role, the direct transposition from American to Taiwan can be deemed awkward. It also seems that unlike Japanese Trendy drama which more often offers a blueprint for emulation in daily life the American series and its inscribed style is better appreciated from a distance rather than being translated into the real life circumstances of contemporary Taiwan.

Maintaining this ‘distance’ is important, since it makes room for a sense of Taiwanese-ness to emerge and to be defended.

‘SATC is attractive because of its American style. It makes you feel good absorbing something different. But MWD is neither American nor Taiwanese. You feel it is in-between.’ (interview with S7)

‘I think it is the problem of self-identity. MWD copies too much from SATC, and doesn’t have local characteristics. Obviously lack of creativity! I think MWD should try to emphasis more on the Eastern philosophy in representing modern hetrosexual relationship.’ (interview with S9)

‘......to shoot a Sex and the City that belongs to Taiwan itself means having the humour that Taiwanese will understand. Character and storyline shouldn’t copy SATC......For example, it doesn’t have to be four women to start with, and doesn’t have to be a columnist. For example, SATC is writing about New York, and a Taiwanese version should try to portray Taipei. Make the audience feel something that truly belongs to us!’ (Natacha wrote on 24 Aug 2003)

Many interviewees accounted for their disappointment with MWD by pointing to the ‘neither this, nor that’ in-between-ness of the production. The local phrase, ‘with an intention to draw a tiger that turned out to be a dog’, was again quoted frequently to describe this in-between awkwardness. In their opinion, the hybrid nature of MWD not only generated an unwelcome ambiguity it also cut across their search for self identity and authenticity. Some interviewees argued that they might have felt more positively about MWD if it hadn’t been an adaptation, while others claimed that the show’s failure should hopefully teach Taiwanese producers a lesson so that they will be more
dedicated to make original and creative programmes. Behind these comments on the programme’s ‘identity crisis’, one can again feel the recurrent yearning for a self-definition among young Taiwanese. This apparent yearning is arguably underpinned by the pursuit of individuality in modern consumerism experienced by young Taiwanese, and throws up new questions for the local producers to figure out. In the next chapter, I will discuss the more recent development in Taiwanese idol drama and the ways in which the genre has negotiated its regional influence to gain further recognition from the local audiences and to survive the fierce competition.
Chapter 9: Defining Taiwanese

Localising the regional and regionalizing the local

Regional formation and formats

The commercial success of Meteor Garden prompted a number of local producers to undertake similar compact serial dramas targeted at urban young consumers. These dramas have formed a distinctive genre known as 'Taiwanese Idol Drama' among the Mandarin-speaking population. Like their Japanese and Korean counterparts, many have become huge local and regional hits, generating fan clubs and chain consumption around spin-off commodities. In the following years the genre experienced a boom with more than 62 productions being made, broadcast, and rebroadcast between 2001 and March 2004 (Geng, 2004:2). The number is still on the rise. As a consequence, Taiwanese Idol drama has caught up with hsiang-tu drama to become Taiwan’s primary focus for television fiction production, but with the extra commercial edge of selling well in overseas markets in recent years.

The significance of the advance of Taiwanese Idol drama can be discussed in two contexts. Firstly, it supports the argument that we are currently witnessing the formation of a regional popular culture through intensified intra-regional cultural trade and borrowing. Its emergence—together with other drama productions in East Asia—has found resonance in the burgeoning studies on 'television formats'. However, compared to the laborious legally binding deals behind format programming in the West, 'formats' in East Asia are more slippery to define and copyright issues are often neglected. As discussed earlier, Korean drama and Taiwanese Idol dramas allegedly copied heavily from Japanese Trendy drama in response to programming demands after
television deregulation, but often did not pay fees to the Japanese creator apart from a few cases of script purchase. Particularly in Taiwan, where most television productions faces constraints, on budgets, talent and time, it is easier to ‘borrow ideas’ from Japanese programmes and financially more viable to ‘borrow’ than ‘buy’. Nor is the regional format trade limited to drama productions, with Japanese entertainment shows also being copied widely in other East Asia locations. Therefore, it is probably more appropriate to think of situation in East Asia as ‘format circulation’ rather than ‘format trade’.

The lack of concrete binding business deals benefiting format creators however does not mean a shortage of rivalry among regional cultural industries. On the contrary, there has been a persistently asymmetric flow of ideas within the region. As Chua (2004) pointed out, Japan, at the moment, remains the leaders in production and continues to set the keynote character in the formation of a regional popular culture—echoing its historical image as the leading goose in the region’s economic development. Its consumption of cultural products from other East Asian countries—although on a slight increase—remains relatively minor compared to other East Asian’s consumption of Japan.

Despite being heavily influenced by Japan, Korean cultural products have grown more popular in the regional media space since the late 1990s. Lately the industry, with strong government backing, has launched several co-productions with Japanese and Chinese companies. As a consequence it manages a more balanced exchange with Japan compared to other regional industries. Hong Kong and Taiwan at the moment are often perceived as occupying an ‘in-between’ position in regional cultural production, while playing a predominant role in providing for the Mandarin-speaking markets. However since Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, Taiwan has assumed its role
as the strategic cultural broker and efficient distributor between Japanese popular culture and Mandarin-speaking markets. Digesting Japanese innovations, Taiwanese popular cultural products ride on the advantages of language proximity in entering other Mandarin-speaking regional markets. Mainland China, in particular, has become Taiwan’s most important overseas market lately and a transposition of Idol dramas in China is emerging. Taiwan’s unique cultural bridgehead role can be found in other entertainment genres. A Taiwanese dating programme, *Special Man and Women* (Fe-chang-nan-nu), based on a format of group dating has since spawned a series of dating programmes in China. However, few have noticed that the format was originally created in Japan (Keane, 2002). These developments seem to bear out the earlier argument put forward by Tu (1994) who surmised that the rise of the ‘peripheral’ Confucian civilisations such as Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore would come to set the economic and cultural agenda for the ‘centre’, the PRC.

However, this earlier prediction arguably tells only the first half of the story and the current hierarchy in the production circuit of the region’s popular culture could see some shifts with China’s rapid growth in almost every aspect. In recent years, in the move towards commercialisation and amid the intensified regional programming trade, one can sense that China’s television is increasingly dissatisfied with only exporting its reputable historical and period dramas and is keen to diversify the genres for export (Keane, 2006). Numerous ‘Chinese Idol drama’ or ‘Inland Idol drama’ have been produced under cooperation agreements between China-Taiwan, China-Korea, and China-Japan. These deals has seen the regional systems providing actors, directors and script-writers bringing with them the experience of making contemporary commercial urban dramas and injecting new momentum into the Chinese television industry.
Some have regarded the emergence of light-hearted and interpersonal entertainments as a sign of China’s catching-up in developing its creative industry and a more accommodating relationship between the state and the entertainment-oriented media. China’s ambition in fast-tracking this development can also be perceived in the launch of the China International TV Corporation (CITVC)--a subsidiary of China Central Television (CCTV) in February 2005. It has since operated as an important platform for a market-driven business model that capitalised on the light-hearted commercial Trendy dramas and entertainment shows under cooperation deals with other regional players.

The rise of China on the world stage has provided a space for imaginative cultural developments in a range of fields. As far as the television industry is concerned, one has seen a situation where an expanding urban consumer culture coupled with receding political control has not only provided a market for many regional entertainment-based cultural products but also changed the face of face domestic production. Although at this point of time, many regional young viewers are still yet to be convinced that ‘made-in-China’ programming can provide cutting-edge fashionable and glamorous images, one should not underestimate its long-term potential and its huge domestic market which offers an important negotiation chips with regional competitors.

Developing local characteristics

Secondly, its emergence reflected the intensifying commercial competition both within Taiwan’s deregulated television and in the region’s revitalised cultural trade. Partly initiated as an attempt to cater for the need to define Taiwanese-ness for a generation born into the post-Martial Law identity politics and maturing consumerism, it ultimately represented the crossroads where regional and local cultural economic
dynamics met one another, epitomising the interaction between regional television economics and the national culture in today's globalisation.

As with most 'glocalisation' practices, Taiwanese Idol drama has gradually negotiated the regionalisation of the original model and developed a more distinctive local style. Firstly the industry has significantly reduced its dependency on Japanese manga, although the practice of adapting from this source continues. Dramas based on ‘original’ local scripts are thought to be better able to represent local life and thus more likely to appeal to the local audience. As argued in the previous chapters, with the younger generation's growing desire to define who they are and what to identify with, representing an ‘authentic’ Taiwanese experience has become more relevant in today's cultural production. Even Comi Ruizhi, the production company which prides itself on its innovative adaptations from Japanese manga, has begun to incorporate and encourage local scripts into their production repertoire and run a nationwide competition for creative script writings with prize money equivalent to $30,000 since 2004.

TTV was the first television station to broadcast Idol drama based on a local script. In July 2001, it broadcast *Kiss of the Toast Guy (Tusinan zhi wen)*, which tackled the aspirations and dilemmas of young Taiwanese, such as the pressure of passing university entrance examinations, from a realistic angle. The producer, Wang Juen, who abandoned a proposal to adapt another Japanese manga, *Poor Aristocrat*, was reported to have decided to take a chance and saw this as an opportunity to encourage home-grown Idol dramas. The resulting production attracted generally positive responses and was extended from the original 15 episodes to 18 episodes (Chao, 2005a). According to its script writer, Qi Xi-lin, it aimed to reflect the ways Taiwanese young people live and talk. It was so successful that even a Japanese
manga company has shown interest in adapting it into manga (Liberty Times, 30/07/2001).

However, it is important not to overlook the economic incentive behind this transition. Using locally-produced scripts saves the lengthy process of gaining legal consent from Japanese manga publishers and allows the process of shooting and script writing to be carried out simultaneously (Kao, 2005, Liu and Chen, 2004). The flexibility this allows is particularly important since in a small domestic market like Taiwan where production budgets are fairly limited, producers are more inclined to adjust the number of episodes, the weight of characters, and the plot development to please, and on occasions to appease, the audience.

In this view, Taiwanese Idol drama is also a by-product of the intensifying commercialisation of television in response to several economic calculations. One outcome of the calculation has been the emergence of a coproduction model between terrestrial and cable television stations. Under this model, a drama can secure more funds and benefit from increased publicity. In 2001, Sanli network and TTV initiated the first co-production between television stations. The drama, Lavender, was shown on TTV in December 2001, while at the same time, Sanli Taiwan broadcast promotional trailers for two minutes before and after its 8pm prime time drama. The strategy was aimed in part at promoting Lavender for TTV and in part advertising the drama’s later screening on Sanli City (Chao, 2005b). The production was considered a commercial success with an average rating above 4 per cent and was subsequently exported to other Asian countries. One year after Lavender, TTV and Sanli produced another commercial success, MVP Valentine, with its ratings breaking 5 per cent (Sanli website, 2006), followed by Prince Turning Frog (hereafter PTF) which broke the rating record long held by MG with an average rating of 7.09 per cent (Liberty Times, 228
20/07/2005). FTP has also been exported to other overseas regional markets since September 2005, such as Channel 8 in Singapore, the AEC pay Channel Astro in Malaysia, and An-huei Television Station in China. Shortly after PTF, TTV and Sanli launched another two dramas: *Love Magic Hairdresser* (2006) and *Smile Pasta* (2006). Both productions achieved new rating records at the screening of their first episode: 4.19 per cent for the former and 5.42 per cent for the latter (TTV Press and Publicity, 2006).

However, these rating success stories cannot be attributed solely to the newly established co-production model. The increasing use of locally-produced scripts has also allowed more elements of family, elder generation, and rural locality to be crafted into storyline in an attempt to expand beyond the niche youth market for Idol drama and reach a more broadly-based audience. PTF illustrates this trend. In contrast to most Idol dramas that take place in cosmopolitan urban milieu, PTF divided its sets between urban locales and a fishing village in southern Taiwan. It also placed more weight on characters from the older generation and cast them in a comic and positive light. The result of this mixing of new and old textual elements has seen PTF moving closer to the style of some recent hsiang-tu dramas which have rejuvenated their storylines by adding more young characters and have enjoyed a wide following among the elderly and audiences outside of the capital (I will return to this point in the later case study).

The practice of product placement and modern marketing has also reached maturation in Idol drama over the years. The genre now provides a perfect venue to showcase local brands as well as international consumer products. Although this practice has demonstrated unprecedented commercialisation in television dramas, it does not mean that commercialised television culture is bound to serve the American
commercial interests as argued by some imperialism theorists. One can also argue that cross-regional Idol drama has allowed more intensive exposure of local and regional brands and commodities.

Moreover, a significant ‘product’ featured in the Idol drama is the ‘idols’ themselves whose presence on screen is a defining feature of the genre. Underpinned by increasing talent agency activities in discovering, training and making young aspirants into future stars under the influence of Japanese showbiz, a new generation of home-grown young actors and actresses has been created, vying for attention and market shares with popular foreign ‘idols’. One of the most telling stories comes from the Jungiery Star Office, set up in 2000 by Taiwanese businessman, Sun De-rong. With an operational model that strongly resembles the famous Japanese agency, Johnny’s, Jungiery Star Office attempts to systematically groom local wannabes into multi-talented entertainment artists for both the local and the regional markets. The first boy group it produced, 5566, was launched in 2001. The group name stands for its five members and the six entertainment areas they are actively participating in: music, television drama, advertisement, stage plays, and television entertainment show hosts. Other groups produced by Jungiery Star Office included the 183 Club and the 7 Flowers. All three groups have since clinched lucrative deals and established fan base in the region.

These shifts in Idol drama production have marked important shifts in the development of Taiwan’s television industry, one of which being the tendency of an increasingly conflation between culture and economy. The cultural aspect of Idol drama representing the young generation’s yearning for recognition against regional and global influences is at the same time shaped by commercial industrial practices, some of which derive from regional and global sources. Similarly, the late localisation
of storylines is driven not only by the intention to reinforce the representation of local lifestyles on television but also by the pursuit of a larger market. One result however is the reduced dependency on Japan. The way Taiwanese Idol drama developing into a distinctive local style to accommodate domestic resources and market conditions--both in terms of its textual world and its industrial practice--has pointed to the fluidity of the space where complicated flows of genres and production skills in the region do not always proceed in linear lines.

**Case Study: Sanli Network and Prince Turning Frog**

**Sanli Network**

It is worthwhile to take a look at the Sanli network, which epitomises how a local television network emerging from deregulation successfully encapsulating local culture as a branding strategy and developing itself in relation to intensifying commercialisation and the rising regional programming trade. Its commercial operation follows the policy of 'enhancing local flavour to stand out from the rest on the global stage' (Wang, 2005:78) and demonstrates the increasingly congruence of culture and economy in today's television industry.

Its business begun in 1983, specialising in selling blank VCRs and imported video programming (Sanli website, 2006). Its flagship product, 'restaurant show videos', a live talk show hosted by a middle-aged comedian started in 1985 and was distributed to restaurants across rural areas. Most performances were in the local dialect, Hokklo, to cater for older indigenous Taiwanese. After television deregulation, the company carried on targeting this indigenous market by establishing the channel, Sanli Taiwan, which offers most programming in Hokklo and focuses on
the culture, history and geography of Taiwan. It is thus not surprising that most of its fiction production has been hsiang-tu dramas focusing on stories based around the life struggles of indigenous Taiwanese. One good example was its millennium production, *The President Chen and His Wife (A-bian-yu-a-jan)*, which was based on the life story of the first DPP president and his wife.

Self-identified as a station with a mission to promote localism, it has gained enormous popularity in the post-Martial Law era with the resurgence of nativism and Taiwanese consciousness. Sanli Taiwan was especially successful in southern Taiwan (GIO, 2005) where the native Taiwanese population congregate and the degree of urbanisation is relatively low compared to the north. In 1995, the company expanded and initiated another channel, Sanli City, which targeted younger audiences through self-made programming in Mandarin. Both channels have invested considerably in programme production, becoming an exception to the normal pattern where many stations buy and promote cheaper programming from regional/global sources to compete and survive. As the content analysis on programming schedules shows in chapter 4, all the programming on Sanli Taiwan was self-made. However its commitment to locally-produced nativism-centred programming, Sanli network has adopted modern satellite technology and marketing strategy to cope with the changing environment. This is particularly evident in Sanli’s recent move in producing Taiwanese Idol dramas.

Facing the intensifying regional programming trade and the formation of the Idol drama market, Sanli began producing Idol dramas in 2001 and initiated the cooperation model with terrestrial television stations. From the eight Idol dramas produced by Sanli between 2001 and 2004, one can clearly see a new pattern of commercial practices, including the diversification of spin-off products and public
promotion events, synergy with other sectors and overseas broadcasting rights sales (see Table 9.1). The overseas sales in particular have opened up new frontiers and brought an important new stream of revenue to the station. The production, *Lavender*, has been sold to Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia Thailand, Vietnam, New Zealand, Australia and North America, while the other seven in the table have been sold to all the countries mentioned above except for Japan and Korea.

Table 9.1: Commercial practice of Sanli’s Idol drama produced between 2001 and 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Idol Drama (production year)</th>
<th>Spin-off Commodities</th>
<th>Public Promotion Event</th>
<th>Synergy with other industries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MVP Valentine (2002)</td>
<td>VCD, DVD, Soundtrack, Mobile phone accessories, Novel, Photo collection, Cards</td>
<td>ConcertPress conference and signing Basketball games</td>
<td>Terrestrial TV, Department Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Street Youth (2003)</td>
<td>VCD, DVD, Soundtrack, Manga, Novel, Crystal tear necklaces, T-shirt, Carrier bag, Street Youth Doll, Diary, Mobile phone pay premium services</td>
<td>SigningConcertTexting-in Prize draw Online</td>
<td>Terrestrial TV, The Internet (<a href="http://www.her4men.com.tw">www.her4men.com.tw</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% Senorita (2003)</td>
<td>VCD, DVD, Novel, Doll, Accessories, Mobile phone pay services</td>
<td>SigningConcertTexting-in Prize draw</td>
<td>Terrestrial TV, Ebay, Gold Accessory retailer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online auction demonstration</td>
<td>Terrestrial TV, Yahoo Taiwan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCD, DVD, Manga, Photo frame, Mobile phone accessories, Stationary set, Toy bear, Mobile phone pay premium services</td>
<td>Signing, Concert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCD, DVD, Soundtrack, Photo collection, Puzzle, Manga, 'Idol cards, Mobile phone pay premium services, Novel, Bracelets, Necklaces, Designer mugs</td>
<td>Press conference Fashion show at sneak preview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Representing Tensions in Modern Taiwan: Frog Turning Prince

After a few years trying to work out a successful formula, in 2005 Sanli City finally broke the long-held rating record held by MG with *Frog Turing Prince (FTP)*, a drama, as noted above, co-produced with TTV (see pictures 9.1). In addition to the proven commercial practices behind the production, its success came from its novel textual elements. It worked with the same basic textual elements other Idol dramas -romance between young people and a young beautiful cast)- centring on the romance between four young characters. Hao is a CEO in a hotel consortium, Senwell, who has assumed control of the company from his father at a young age. He is conceited and cares for little else but the family business. His fiance, Yunxi, is an orphan adopted by his family from a young age who has grown up as a ‘child-daughter-in-law (tungyangxi)’. The ‘child-daughter-in-law’ is a custom carried over from the old Taiwanese tradition, where rich families adopted young girls in a form of pre-arranged marriage to their young sons, hoping that the girls will become committed to the sons in the future and grow emotionally attached to the adopted
family. Hao and Yunxi's best friend, Qian, is the son of another founder of Senwell. However, his father died in a gas accident and his mother fell into a vegetative state when he was little. Thus, he spent most of his childhood with Hao's family and works as a manager in Senwell. In a stark contrast, Tienyu is a young woman growing up in the fishing village. Her father owns a small hostel at the heart of the village, while her stepmother runs a grocery shop. Her modest family background and financial constraints frustrate her social life on many occasions. Therefore, she wishes that one day she will marry a rich man, although at heart she is by no means a sophisticated money-seeker.

Although the central narrative of PTF centres around the familiar topics of romance and young people's affluent lifestyles, the script distinguishes itself from many of its predecessors in trying to confront issues generated by Taiwan's encounter with modernity and the dilemmas surrounding the pursuit of happiness among the Taiwanese younger generation.

The struggle with modernity constitutes an underlying narrative which starts from a development project in the fishing village. Co-invested between Hao's Senwell and another international company, the project involved demolishing the fishing village in order to make room for a modern holiday resort. Compared to Hao's Senwell, which operated in a modern western management style and was backed by millions in foreign investment, the villagers have nothing more than their houses and the land passed down from previous generations. Tienyu's father was in a particularly bad situation, as he had mortgaged a huge sum from Senwell in the hope to regenerate the area and improve the business of his guesthouse single-handedly. However,
Picture 9.1: A DVD cover of PTF. It features titles in mandarin, English and Japanese, implying targeted regional consumers.

Picture 9.2: Dedicated San-li website selling spin-off merchandise of PTF. Products range from casual T-shirt to the novel based on the storyline.
business acumen and modern management skills, his attempts failed miserably. His inability to pay back the money prompted the acceleration of the development project and the confiscation of his guesthouse, which has been a local landmark and a source of jobs for many local employees. Determined to stop the project, Tienyu’s father tried kneeling, begging and even a suicide attempt. However, without modern negotiation skills, he and his ‘traditional’ ways of asking for a favour did nothing to change the situation. Hao’s company became even more determined to proceed at full speed.

In a twist of fate however, Hao was accidentally hit by Tienyu in a car accident. Terrified and afraid of getting into trouble, Tienyu decided to drag him home instead of taking him to the hospital. When Hao finally regained consciousness, he had lost part of his memory and cannot remember his real identity. Tienyu then kept him in the fishing village which he had wanted to destroy. Living in the village without a high position or wealth, he was transformed into a kind and caring person. Eventually he fell in love with both Tienyu and the village community. At the same time, despite of Hao’s absence, others continued the development project. They manipulated the media to blame Tienyu’s father while publicising Senwell’s good will in assisting the villagers to find a new place to live. In the following scenes, angry villagers surrounded the guesthouse and egged Tienyu’s father out of frustration. These victims of the development project remind the audiences of the continued existence of a disadvantaged rural group whose lives and benefits have been sacrificed behind Taiwan’s glamorous modern facade. These scenes play out the conflict of interest at the heart of the darker side of Taiwan’s rapid development that had seldom been dealt with by previous Idol dramas. A similar theme has been tackled again however, in the subsequent TTV and Sanli co-production, Magic Hairdresser, which contrasts the
prosperity of a modern hair saloon with the shrinking business of a traditional ‘family hairdresser’. Unfamiliar with the latest colouring and perming techniques, these old-time self-taught ‘family hairdressers’ working from their own living rooms have gradually been phased out. In today’s Taiwan where the fashion-conscious younger generation turn to the well-decorated brand-name chain hair saloons to receive professional treatment, ‘family hairdressers’ are increasingly relegated to historical memory.

However, the conflict of interests between traditional and modern ways of life—the fishing village as against the Senwell international cooperation—is resolved in favour of the former. Hao tried to save the guesthouse and the village because of his admiration for Tienyu. Although he had lost part of his memory, his knowledge and experience in the modern business world has conveniently stayed with him. He advised Tienyu to oppose the development project on the basis of environment protection, highlighting the dire consequence of the project for the natural environment. Moreover, through researching the habitats of the village, he discovers an endangered flower species, Rhododendron Hyperythrum, growing in the vicinity. To maintain an environmental-friendly corporate image both within the island and in the world, Senwell was forced to temporarily freeze the development project.

In a way, one can argue that what has saved the village is not the discovery of an endangered species but the intervention of a public relation mechanism associated with modern consumerism. Contemporary Taiwan has been highly influenced by western-led marketing thinking, and now finds itself caught in its contradictions, where a company’s image created by media spin is at the same time subject to restrictions set in motion by the very same manipulation. The series’ narrative also reminded us that Taiwan’s early and rapid industrialisation has been built at the
expenses of the environment and that the nation now faces the problem of balancing
development and preservation. Environmental issues have risen rapidly up the
political agenda in recent years in part because several natural disasters, particularly
earthquakes and typhoons, have caused unprecedented damage to the island, and in
part because the growing nativism consciousness has often appealed to the love of the
soil-- in its broadest environmental sense-- as a way of embracing one's
Taiwanese-ness.

As well as the gripping representation of the tensions in Taiwanese society
generated by the modernisation process, another underlying narrative that distinguish
PTF from many previous Idol drama is the (re)discovery of the importance of family
in contemporary Taiwanese society. Unlike earlier Idol drama productions (including
MG and MWD), where the role of the family is omitted, sidelined or deliberately
portrayed as an obstacle, PTF has tried to re-address the role of 'family' in the lives of
young Taiwanese who have appeared somehow more independent in deciding their
own course of actions in today's society.

The young characters in PTF, apart from Qian, live with their families instead of
living alone or sharing expensive apartments with their peers. Hao, despite being the
CEO of an international hotel consortium, lives with his parents and Yunxi in a
spacious house. Located in the urban residential area and with its members being
educated and restrained in their emotions, his family represents the upper middle-class
in Taiwan. Rules and responsibilities structure their domestic life from daily dinner
routines at the table to pre-arranged marriage with a child-daughter-in-law. Another
leading character, Tienyu, also lives with her family in a house combined with a
grocery shop from which they make their living. In the drama, they represent the more
rural working class family where hierarchy is less distinctive in the household and
family members express their feelings aloud without much political correctness. The close ties to the family in daily life also appear in their work spheres. Hao and Qian's position as the high-rank company manager is directly inherited from their family. The main duty of Yunxi, the child-daughter-in-law, is to taking care of Hao's parents and undertaking household errands. Tienyu helps run the grocery shop in the front room of the house, delivering food orders and bottled gas to their customers. In each case, their family is represented as having exerted a certain degree of influence both on their work space and private space.

Moreover, PTF follows hsiang-tu drama in depicting the 'family' as a (harmonious) social and economic unit, rather than highlighting generational conflicts and differences. Unlike some other Idol dramas where friendship between the young characters outweighs their relationships with the family members, in PTF the conflict of interests happens more often among the friends, while family members are represented as a source of support and unity in times of difficulty. This is particularly evident when Tienyu's family stick together to fight Hao's Senwell in saving the fishing village and their hostel, and on occasions where the family is portrayed to offer a refuge to console life difficulties and setbacks in romantic relationships for the young characters. This more central role given to the 'family' and the shift in its interpretation suggests that the genre has been further localised by taking account of audience sections beyond young people and incorporating features of other popular local genres particularly hsiang-tu drama. The emphasis on 'family' in the series has been a prominent feature of the hsiang-tu dramas, which have historically been Sanli TV's most successful genre productions, particularly among the older generation. However, for the younger audience, the accentuated position of the family is arguably identified less with traditional Confucian filial piety but more with the feelings of emptiness in a
world of material affluence. This point is played out forcefully in the life of one of the
main characters, Qian. He is the only young character who lives alone in an expensive
flat in the city. His father, who died when he was a young boy, left him with a high
position in the company. Despite living on a handsome salary and leading a wealthy
lifestyle, he is often assailed by a deep sense of emptiness. His individualistic lifestyle
is presented more as an expression of loneliness, rather than of a desired freedom. He
is initially attracted to Tienyu because of her personality and a happy family life
—something he keeps looking for throughout the series.

In one episode, he paid Tienyu to show him the ambiance of a warm family life.
Tienyu took him home to have dinner with her mother and brother. Qian was
mesmerised by the bantering they threw at each other at the dinner table and the way
they share their happiness and misery in everyday life. Despite the lack of expensive
furniture, Tienyu’s home was the place where Qian felt ‘at home’. In stark contrast,
Tienyu was startled by the opulence in Qian’s flat, and was even more surprised to
find that almost everything in the flat came as a single number: one mug, one pair of
slippers, one dining set and so on. Qian’s search for a family was punctuated by pangs
of loneliness. This feeling intensified when he realised that Hao’s father had been
behind the gas accident which killed his father. The scandal not only broke their
friendship but also forced Hao to step down from the CEO position. Qian succeeded
him as CEO. Despite having more assets under his name, he felt even lonelier than
before. One night in a fury, he got drunk. On his way home across a park, a little girl
who was peddling flowers asked him if he wanted to buy any. Grabbing the little girl,
Qian pulled out all the notes from his wallet, and desperately pleaded her to share the
joy with him by saying the word ‘congratulations’. The little girl, shocked, ran away
immediately.
Qian's desperation reflects the tension set in motion by the displacement of traditional family by the individualism and self creation of today's Taiwanese society. His angst in the world of material affluence and the fragility in his friendships with other young people counterbalance the conventional storylines in Idol drama which celebrates friendship as a perfect substitute for family relationship.
Conclusion

Taiwan's historical engagement with the US, Japan and China has rendered its recent development distinctive within the globalisation processes. In order to examine the locally-specific variation in globalisation, this thesis has foreground television drama production and consumption against the complexity of Taiwanese society.

The original data presented here, from the content analysis of programming schedules to in-depth interviews with young Taiwanese, aims to highlight an interesting regional dynamic in the deregulated environment. Increased economic and cultural activities in the region underpinned by rising consumerism and living standard has enabled regional programming to be widely circulated and better integrated with the televisual output of major local channels, whereas American (global) programming has become more exclusively distributed by the US companies. This contrast between regional and global programming is further reflected in the ways in which they are consumed by Taiwanese youth. While regarding American programmes as excitingly exotic, urban youth tends to see Japanese programming as a more suitable template for emulation in everyday life. These threads of cultural regionalisation were followed by a compelling example: the emergence of Taiwanese Idol drama. This new genre not only localises the format of Japanese Trendy drama but plays a major role in defining Taiwan's position in the emerging popular culture of the region.

This thesis contributes to a wider debate on globalisation by providing detailed case studies in support of the formation of a distinctive East Asian popular culture—a development that has elucidates a 'third space' where familiar binaries, such as 'West and Rest', global and local, cultural homogenisation and heterogenisation, collapse into one another. The demonstration of this 'third space' is particularly obvious in the
ways in which regional trendy/idol dramas mobilise shared cultural elements while absorbing the commercial model of global television. In addition, discussions of East Asian popular culture have marked a crucial and timely conceptual shift in thinking about today's globalisation, adjusting the vantage point from a 'global centre' historically represented by America towards a more decentred geo-cultural region(s). Echoing the history of East Asian states negotiating western modernity in their development, this empowered regional popular culture now appears to have matured sufficiently to compete with the global centre in different regional localities.

Another contribution of this thesis has been the observations made on the relationships between unsettled Taiwanese identity(ies) and the media production. Political and economic changes since the late 1980s have triggered a resurgence of indigenous Taiwanese culture, revaluation of Japanese cultural legacy, and more recently the changing relationship with China. All of these manifest not only in the changing governmental policies but also in the media representations. Both the hsiang-tu drama throughout the 1990s and the commercially-oriented Idol dramas are underpinned by an overarching narrative of political and socio-economic transitions, shifting relationships with other regional players, and the evolving self-conceptions among young Taiwanese.

At the time of writing, this identity dilemma is far from resolved and continues to be shaped and re-shaped by the changing power balance both regionally and globally. Recent signs have indicated growing tensions between the pursuit of a distinctive Taiwaneseness and the pursuit of China's huge market. In the 2008 presidential election, the KMT, the party which is more inclined to take an accommodating line towards China, has successfully returned to power in a landslide victory. This development has been supported by many businesses which see identity
politics as a hurdle for further economic advancement into China and have blamed the former DPP government for inflexible policy towards closer ties with China. In these debates, voices promoting a better relationship with the PRC often rub uneasily against the legacy left by 1990s’ Taiwanese identity politics. The rising China and the increasing demand to revise the so-called cross-strait relationship have also affected the drama production in Taiwan. With China now constituting the largest export market for Taiwanese Idol drama, it is becoming more evident that future productions will see more juxtaposition of young and fashionably-dressed Chinese and Taiwanese actors, and that more Idol dramas will take place in China’s cosmopolitan cities partly to engage the Chinese audience. These trends reflect a situation where attempts to represent a distinctive local experience cannot help but make compromises to secure wider regional distribution. Consequently, the difference between young Taiwanese and Chinese are blurred and blended together by the encompassing idea of a regional youth culture against highly anesthetised settings.

As with all research however, this thesis also intends to throw up questions and issues that merit further investigation. Firstly, although Japan and Korean have so far taken the leading role in producing and directing the emerging East Asian popular culture, the rising Chinese consumer market and China’s ambition in developing its creative industries is bound to stir the existing power structure. One would expect the television systems of greater China (China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) to build on the advantage of language affinity and develop into a strong cultural force in the region in the near future. However, this claim will have to be backed by future studies that look in detail at the underlying economic mechanisms and cultural styles in these exchanges. Secondly, although the need to examine the consumption of programming originating from peripheral centres has been increasingly addressed in recent studies it
remains a relatively under-developed field compared to the work on the reception of American productions. To fill this gap, future research could usefully investigate the consumption of Taiwanese Idol drama in different regional localities. Whereas the genre triggers a resounding desire for defining and promoting Taiwan's uniqueness in today's regionalisation/globalisation, it is bound to produce different meanings for viewers elsewhere. For instance, the historical relationship between Taiwan and China has produced ambiguity for young Chinese consumers in deciding the 'nationality' of Taiwanese popular culture. Some attempt to square this circle by describing it as 'not foreign but with a distance'. This ambiguity promotes a sense of ambivalence and is likely to elicit complicated feelings that differ from those generated by the consumption of Japanese and Korean dramas, which are more obviously 'foreign'. This delicate difference, however, is crucial to understanding the reception of a cultural product, and offers an intriguing starting point for in-depth audience research on Chinese young people's consumption of Taiwanese Idol drama. At this relative early stage of the formation of a regional popular culture, I believe the outcome of such research will add valuable insights not only to theorizing around its construction but more generally to understanding the changing political-economic landscape of the region.
Appendix A: Coding Frame for Analysis of Imported Television Programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Programme Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Programme Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Local (Taiwanese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>China/Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not available</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taiwanese and English-speaking countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Taiwanese and Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Taiwanese and Chinese/Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Taiwanese and Korean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Code Broadcasting Time**

1  Daytime television 06:00-17:00
2  Primetime television 17:00-23:00*
3  Night time television 23:00-6:00
4  Taiwanese and Korean

*The slot between 20:00 to 21:00 in particular is considered the most crucial and lucrative during prime time television. It is therefore nicknamed in the industry the 'Golden Eight O'clock Slot'. Both major terrestrial networks and local cable channels have always reserved this slot exclusively to dramas in local languages.

**Code Programme Length**

1  Less than 30 minutes
2  30 minutes
3  30-60 minutes
4  60 minutes
5  60-120 minutes
6  More than 120 minutes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Programme Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Programme Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Programme Type</th>
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<td>(no</td>
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<td>Entertainm</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with audience</td>
<td></td>
<td>ent</td>
</tr>
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<td>Idol drama</td>
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<td>Life discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with audience</td>
<td></td>
<td>with audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Soap opera</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Call-in shows</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Overseas travel</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Hsiang-tu drama</td>
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<td>Inland travel</td>
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<td>Celebrity</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Folk drama</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Stage drama</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Movies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>interview/performance</td>
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<td>Home</td>
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<td>Consumer</td>
<td>43 Quiz show</td>
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<td>Self</td>
<td>44 Reality show</td>
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<td>45 Magic show</td>
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<td>Stock</td>
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<td>Docu Event</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>47 Life event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Historical event/people</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>48 Talk show</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Current Taiwan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>49 Variety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Nature</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Taiwanese language</td>
<td>50 Film/fashion review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Science</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td>51 Computer game show</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 General topics</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Puppet show</td>
<td>99 Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Questionnaire

To empirically examine the general consumption habit and the subtle difference between the consumption of regional and global cultural products among Taiwanese youth, I have conducted a survey among 612 Taiwanese students age between 13 and 24. The respondents are students from Hai-shan High School and Tangkun University in Taipei County. Questionnaires were distributed through contacts in both locations. The gender and age make-up of respondents are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School</strong> (13-18 yr.)</td>
<td>215 (35.1%)</td>
<td>167 (27.3%)</td>
<td>382 (62.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University</strong> (18-24 yr.)</td>
<td>102 (16.7%)</td>
<td>128 (20.9%)</td>
<td>230 (37.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>317 (51.8%)</td>
<td>295 (48.2%)</td>
<td>612 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This questionnaire contains 24 questions about your media consumption habit. Please answer about the questions to the best of your knowledge. Some questions allow more than one answer. Please place a tick (‘V’) in the square boxes in front of the answer category. The data collected from you will only be used for academic purposes and will not be passed on to any third parties for commercial purposes.

Are you...?
- □ Male
- □ Female
1. In the last 12 months, would you say you have watched Japanese Trendy dramas...?
   - Daily
   - Weekly
   - Monthly
   - Yearly
   - Never → Go to Question 8

2. In the last 12 months, which of the following is the main source from which you use to watch Japanese Trendy dramas?
   - VCD or/and DVD
   - Internet download
   - Cable television stations (e.g. JET)
   - Terrestrial television stations (e.g. CTV)
   - Video tapes (including for academic purposes)
   - Others

3. When did you first start watching Japanese trendy dramas?
   - During or before primary school
   - During junior high school (13-15 years old)
   - During senior high school (16-18 years old)
   - During university years (19-24 years old)

4. What is/was the main reason for you to tune in a Japanese trendy drama? (Choose maximum 11 codes)
   - Storyline
   - Cast
   - Music
   - Settings
   - Cultural proximity
   - Physical proximity
   - Interest in and expect to learn Japanese culture and language
   - Expect to join social discussions
   - Broadcasting time fits personal lifestyle
   - No other choices available

251
5. Has Japanese trendy drama (e.g., settings, fashions) projected a coveted version of social situation and modernity for you?
   - Yes, very much so
   - Yes
   - So-so
   - No
   - No, absolutely not

6. Apart from Japanese trendy dramas, what other dramas do you watch on a regular basis? (Choose maximum 6 codes)
   - English
   - Korean trendy drama
   - Taiwanese idol drama
   - Other Taiwanese soap operas
   - Chinese/Hong Kong dramas
   - Hsiang-tu dramas
   - None of above

7. How often do you find the plot in Japanese trendy drama reflect your real life situations?
   - Always
   - Usually
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

8. Which of the following category about Japan are you familiar with or trying to acquire knowledge about? (Choose maximum 10 codes)
   - Japanese
   - Other media products (e.g., manga, film, music)
9. In the last 12 months, would you say you have watched English/US TV series ...?
   - Daily
   - Weekly
   - Monthly
   - Yearly
   - Never → Go to Question 17

10. In the last 12 months, which of the following is the main source from which you use to watch English/US TV series?
   - VCD or/and DVD
   - Internet download
   - Cable television stations (e.g. HBO)
   - Terrestrial television stations (e.g. CTV)
   - Video tapes (including for academic purposes)
   - Others

11. When did you first start watching English/US TV series?
   - During or before primary school
   - During junior high school (13-15 years old)
   - During senior high school (16-18 years old)
   - During university years (19-24 years old)

12. What is/was the main reason for you to tune in a English/US TV series? (Choose)
13. **Has English/US TV series (e.g. settings, fashions) projected a coveted version of social situation and modernity for you?**

- Yes, very much so
- Yes
- So-so
- No
- No, absolutely not

14. **How often do you find the social situations in English/US TV series reflect your real life experience?**

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

15. **For instance, how would you rate the English/US TV series, *Sex and the City*?**

- I like it very much
- I like it
- So-So
- I dislike it
13. I dislike it very much
14. Do know. Never watched the programme

16. Apart from English/US TV series, what other dramas do you watch on a regular basis? (choose maximum 6 codes)
   - Japanese trendy drama
   - Korean trendy drama
   - Taiwanese idol drama
   - Other Taiwanese soap operas
   - Chinese/Hong Kong dramas
   - Hsiang-tu dramas
   - None of above

17. Which of the following category about America are you familiar with or trying to acquire knowledge about? (Choose maximum 10 codes)
   - English language
   - Other media products (e.g. manga, film, music)
   - Fashion
   - Travel/Tourism
   - Interior design
   - Social custom
   - History
   - Literature
   - Current political and economic situation
   - Others (Please describe ........................................)
   - None of above

18. In your opinion, do you think Taiwanese idol drama is a format adaptation evolved from Japanese trendy dramas?
   - Yes, very much so
   - Yes
   - So-so
   - No
19. In your opinion, do you think *Meteor Garden* starred by F4 and Big S marks the beginning of Taiwanese idol drama?

- Yes, very much so
- Yes
- So-so
- No
- No, absolutely not

20. Which of the following best describes your feeling towards *Meteor Garden*?

- I like it very much
- I like it
- So-So
- I dislike it
- I dislike it very much
- Don't know. Never watched the programme

21. Which of the following best describes your feeling towards *Meteor Garden II*?

- I like it very much
- I like it
- So-So
- I dislike it
- I dislike it very much
- Don't know. Never watched the programme

22. Which of the following best describes the adaptation effort of *Meteor Garden*?

- It appears to be in tune with the social situations in Taiwan; therefore easier to be accepted.
- Although appearing to be in tune with the local social situation, it is somehow awkward.
- It does not resonate with the local situation, and remains like a Japanese manga.
- Others (please describe.................................................................................)

23. There are dozen of Taiwanese idol dramas produced each year, and *Mature Women's*
Diary is one of them. Which of the following best describes your feeling towards *Mature Women's Diary*?

- I like it very much
- I like it
- So-so
- I dislike it
- I dislike it very much
- Don’t know. Never watched the programme

24. Has Taiwanese idol dramas (e.g. settings, fashions) projected a coveted version of social situation and modernity for non-Taiwanese audience?

- I like it very much
- I like it
- So-so
- I dislike it
- I dislike it very much
- Don’t know. Never watched the programme

The End

Thanks very much for your help.
Appendix C: Semi-structured interviewing schedules

Sex and the City v.s Mature Women’s Diary

SATC
(self introduction and ask for respondents’ age and occupation)
> Please describe when did you start watching the programme
> How far in the series have you watched→why do you keep watching?
> Please describe where/when and whom with do you watch the programme→ Why do you choose to watch in this way?
> Would you watch the programme with family members? If no, why not?
> Please describe the basic story line both series.
> Please describe one or two scenes of the series that you remember most clearly.
> What do you think this programme is about?
> What impression of America/ American lifestyle you gain from watching SATC?
> How does this/that compare to your real life experience?
> What would your family and friend say about that lifestyle?→ What would your family or friend way if you were to live the kind of life portrayed in SATC?
> Do you think the life portrayed in SATC is real?
> Who is your favourite character and why?
> Who do you identify with and why?
> Would you like to visit/ live in New York after watching the show?
> Would you like to live the same/similar kind of life as main characters in SATC?
> Has the series made any impact on your life?→ If yes, how and why?

Mature Women’s Diary
> Please describe when did you start watching the programme
> How far in the series have you watched→why do you keep watching?
> Please describe where/when and whom with do you watch the programme→ Why do you choose to watch in this way?
> Would you watch the programme with family members? If no, why not?
> Please describe the basic story line both series.
> Please describe one or two scenes of the series that you remember most clearly.
> What do you think this programme is about?
> What impression of Taiwanese society do you gain from watching MWD?
> How does this/that compare to your real life experience?
What would your family and friend say about that lifestyle?

Do you think the life portrayed in MWD is real?

Who is your favourite character and why?

Who do you identify with and why?

Would people like to visit/live in Taipei after watching the show?

Would you like to live the same/similar kind of life as main characters in MWD?

Has the series made any impact on your life?

Japanese Trendy dramas v.s. Meteor Garden

Japanese Trendy dramas

(self introduction and ask interviewees' age and occupation. Also ask interviewees to write on paper 10 Japanese Trendy dramas that they have seen in the past.)

Please describe how did you get into the habit of watching Japanese Trendy dramas?

What kind of attraction does J-drama pose (i.e. why do you keep watching)?

Please use one J-drama as an example to describe your experience with watching/receiving J-drama.

Have these drama had any impact on your life? (i.e how do you find yourself 'use' J-dramas in your daily life?)

How do Japanese dramas compare to American series and local dramas?

Would you say that Japan is an Asian country?

Do you speak Japanese?

Have you been to Japan?

Do you like to buy things made-in-Japan?

Would you call yourself a Ha-ri-zhu?

What do you think of the Ha-ri-zhu?

Does anyone in your family speak Japanese? If yes, who and why?

Does anyone in your family consume/or encourage you to consume Japanese cultural products?

What is your ethnic-family background?

How would you describe your political attitude (in relation to the political party)?

What is your opinion on Japanese colonization on Taiwan and its wartime military operation in Asia/Southeast Asia?

Do you agree with the local saying that ‘Taiwan is the Japan 20 years ago’?
Meteor Garden

> Please describe when did you start watching the programme
> How far in the series have you watched→ why do you keep watching?
> Please describe the basic storyline?
> What do you think the programme is about?
> Does MG remind you of /resemble your own life?
> What impression of contemporary Taiwanese society you gain from watching MG?
> We know that F4 has created a stir in many markets, how would you interpret the fandom?
> Do you know why the characters all have a semi-Japanese name?
> Apart from the names, are there any other bits of Japanese-ness in MG?
> How do you feel about the Japanese-ness in MG?
> Have you read the MG manga?→ Do you read a lot of manga?
> Do you like Japanese fashion/culture in general?
> How is MG comparing to other local soap opera?
> How is MG comparing to other Japanese idol drama?
> How is MG comparing to other American serials/sitcoms/ soap?
### Appendix D: Notes on the interviewees

**SATC v.s. MWD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes on viewing history</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1 29/06/04</td>
<td>Started from the beginning of 2004. Bought DVD from season 1-6, and finished them in one go. Watching reviews from TV occasionally. (source: DVD/TV)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 29/06/04</td>
<td>Started from third year at university, because other friends were crazy about the series. Have seen all the 6 seasons. (source: Internet downloads)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>translator/ editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3 29/06/04</td>
<td>Started in university. Currently watching occasionally. (source: TV)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>University graduate, looking for jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4 30/06/04</td>
<td>Started from 2004. Accidentally tuned into SATC. Currently watching two-three times a week from TV. (source: TV)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5 01/07/04</td>
<td>Firstly watching from university accommodation intranet. Later on watching from TV. Haven't seen season 6. (source: Internet/ tv)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6 03/07/04</td>
<td>Started in high school by accidentally tuning into SATC. Haven't seen season 6, yet known about the ending. (source: TV) interviewee refused to be recorded</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>University student/ part time nursery assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7 04/07/04</td>
<td>Started last year by accidentally tuning into SATC. Have completed season 1-3 from DVD, season 4 from TV. Haven't seen season 5 and 6, only knew about the ending. (Source: TV/DVD)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8 05/07/04</td>
<td>Started in high school. Have been to New York in 2003. Haven't seen season 6, yet known about the ending. (source: TV)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9 06/07/04</td>
<td>Started in university from TV. Haven't seen season 6, yet known about the ending. (source:TV)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>graduate student (had worked for 1 year before)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10 06/07/04</td>
<td>Started last year. Watch quite frequently. Have not seen</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seasons 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Have watched</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S11</td>
<td>09/07/04</td>
<td>On and off</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S12</td>
<td>09/07/04</td>
<td>With repeats</td>
<td>TV/Int/DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S13</td>
<td>10/07/04</td>
<td>Since high school</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S14</td>
<td>12/07/04</td>
<td>Season 1-5</td>
<td>TV/DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S15</td>
<td>15/07/04</td>
<td>Dedicated to</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S16</td>
<td>15/07/04</td>
<td>Dedicated to</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S17</td>
<td>16/07/04</td>
<td>Hooked since</td>
<td>TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S18</td>
<td>20/07/04</td>
<td>Watching on</td>
<td>TV/DVD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S19</td>
<td>20/07/04</td>
<td>Vigorously</td>
<td>TV/DVD/Internet</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Japanese Trendy dramas v.s. Meteor Garden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Time</th>
<th>Notes on family background</th>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J1 11/07/05</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Media Studies/University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J2 11/07/05</td>
<td>Weishengren</td>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Media Studies/University student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J3 12/07/05</td>
<td>Benshenren</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Education/University Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J4 13/07/05</td>
<td>Weishengren</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Male. Research assistant in Mechanical engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J5</td>
<td>13/07/05</td>
<td>Benshenren</td>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J6</td>
<td>16/07/05</td>
<td>Benshengren</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J7</td>
<td>19/07/05</td>
<td>Benshengren</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J8</td>
<td>19/07/05</td>
<td>Benshengren</td>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J9</td>
<td>22/07/05</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J10</td>
<td>22/07/05</td>
<td>Benshengren</td>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J11</td>
<td>06/08/04</td>
<td>Benshengren</td>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J12</td>
<td>09/08/04</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J13</td>
<td>09/08/04</td>
<td>Benshenren</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J14</td>
<td>10/08/04</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J15</td>
<td>12/08/04</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J16</td>
<td>15/08/04</td>
<td>Benshenren</td>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J17</td>
<td>15/08/04</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J18</td>
<td>16/08/04</td>
<td>Weishengren</td>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J19</td>
<td>16/08/04</td>
<td>Weishengren</td>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J20</td>
<td>20/08/04</td>
<td>Intermarriage</td>
<td>DPP</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix E: Sex and the City screening period on HBO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season/Episode</th>
<th>First Run</th>
<th>Second Run</th>
<th>Third Run</th>
<th>Fourth Run</th>
<th>Intensive Review</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Episode 1 to 13</td>
<td>19/04/1999</td>
<td>12/05/00</td>
<td>14/05/00</td>
<td>16/05/00</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~</td>
<td>9/06/00</td>
<td>11/06/00</td>
<td>13/06/00</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Episode 14 to 30</td>
<td>29/07/00</td>
<td>03/08/00</td>
<td>03/04/01</td>
<td>29/03/02</td>
<td>Marathon: 07/05/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~</td>
<td>18/11/00</td>
<td>23/11/00</td>
<td>26/03/02</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Episode 31 to 48</td>
<td>19/06/01</td>
<td>23/06/01</td>
<td>26/03/02</td>
<td>03/05/02</td>
<td>Marathon: 07/05/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~</td>
<td>09/10/01</td>
<td>13/10/01</td>
<td>29/03/02</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Episode 49 to 66</td>
<td>14/05/02</td>
<td>18/05/02</td>
<td>14/01/03</td>
<td>17/01/03</td>
<td>Marathon: 12/05/03~18/05/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~</td>
<td>18/05/02</td>
<td>14/01/03</td>
<td>17/01/03</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Episode 67 to 74</td>
<td>14/10/03</td>
<td>18/10/03</td>
<td>16/07/04</td>
<td>18/07/04</td>
<td>Marathon: 10/08/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~</td>
<td>29/11/03</td>
<td>06/08/04</td>
<td>08/08/04</td>
<td>Special Review: 02/09/04~30/09/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Episode 75 to 93</td>
<td>17/08/04</td>
<td>21/08/04</td>
<td>06/11/04~01/01/05</td>
<td>Only Episode 86-93</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>~</td>
<td>28/12/04</td>
<td>01/01/05</td>
<td>30/12/04</td>
<td>~</td>
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</table>
### Appendix F: PTT discussion threads on Sex and the City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Topic thread (theme)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Post dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>What do men see in SATC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18/06/03~22/06/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is watching?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05/03/05~09/03/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyline</td>
<td>Is SATC real?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19/05/03~10/06/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>About the ending</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25/02/04~27/02/04</td>
</tr>
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<td>Conflicts between the four characters</td>
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<td>04/12/04~09/12/04</td>
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<td>Does Party Queen need to die?</td>
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<td>16/12/04~21/12/04</td>
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<td>Characters</td>
<td>Selfishness in Carrie</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14/11/03~19/11/03</td>
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<td>We all love Samantha</td>
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<td>30/03/03~14/04/03</td>
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<td>Format Adaptation</td>
<td>About Mature Women's Diary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24/08/03~28/08/03</td>
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<td>Anyone watching Desperate Housewives?</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>08/07/05~15/09/05</td>
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Source: Ptt/Entertainment/TV/TV Series/Sex n the City, compiled by the author.
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