

**Transnational Media Consumption
and Cultural Negotiations:
Taiwanese Youth Look at Japanese and South Korean
Television Dramas**

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own

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Abstract

The viewing of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas in Taiwan represents an opportunity to explore foreign media popularity as a cultural phenomenon. In addition, we can also examine the relationship between youth audiences and their construction of a sense of collective social identity in relation to their cultural 'others'. This thesis examines how Japanese and South Korean TV dramas are incorporated into the lives and cultural practices of young people in Taiwan by looking at the varying degrees and levels of acceptance they enjoy, as well as the different purposes these dramas are used for. In addition, this thesis investigates the process of modern nation-building and the (re)construction of 'local' Taiwanese cultures in the context of transnational cultural flows. It focuses on how Taiwanese youth construct their own interpretations of national identity in the space which lies between the traditional Chinese national/cultural identity imposed in the pre-1987 period, and the new world of free media which heralds different models of identity emerging from the regional flows of cultural goods.

Methods of data collection include: distribution of a questionnaire (278 in total) which was designed to give a general understanding of the consumption of both Japanese and Korean TV dramas. This was then followed by four group discussions with secondary school students and ten one-to-one interviews with university students. In this fashion the research investigates at a concrete level the cultural consumption of Japanese and Korean 'trendy dramas' (television dramas) and examines the ways in which young Taiwanese audiences utilise their new transnational cultural resources in order to construct a Taiwanese cultural identity that is orientated towards a specifically East Asian context. Although this work attempts to understand the ideas young Taiwanese have about national and cultural identity within the context of regional popular culture flows – focusing on the reception of Japanese and Korean popular TV dramas during late 1990s and early 2000s – it also demonstrates the way in which local, regional and global cultural flows contribute toward the production of a critical transcultural identity.

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Introduction

First there was the “Japanophile” (*Hari-zu*),¹ then there was the “Korean Wave”² (*Hanliu* in Chinese; *Hallyu* in Korean): Japanese and South Korean popular culture have taken most East Asian countries by storm since the early and late 1990s respectively. These regional cultural flows and their popularity amongst young Asians have attracted everyone’s attention, including politicians, historians, local media reporters and cultural critics. In the early 90s, Japanese popular media products, such as TV programmes, fashion magazines, animations (*anime/manga*), video games, films and pop idols have been enthusiastically consumed by Asian youths and have created a particular regional cultural and social field of consumption (see Ho and Lee 2002, Kim 2008, Iwabuchi 2002, 2004, Lee 2003).

After the financial crisis in 1997, South Korean media/cultural producers employed a specific mass distribution marketing strategy in many Asian countries, by presenting their media products as almost as good – if cheaper – than their Japanese counterparts. Since then their media products have thrived in Asian countries and other parts of the world (see Chua 2008, Shim 2006). Meanwhile, these regional cultural flows and their popularity amongst younger generations have raised some concerns from local commentators ranging from media figures and politicians to scholars. Issues that have been discussed include cultural imperialism (Japan as a former coloniser and economic regional superior), cultural proximity (e.g. a common geo-cultural region and Asian modernity), postcolonial sentiment and mimicry, to media commercialisation and asymmetrical flows. Among these media/cultural product flows, Japanese modern dramas, also known as “Japanese Idol/Trendy Dramas” are often considered as the initiator of this particular regional popular culture circulation, and South Korean (hereafter Korean) TV dramas, a relative latecomer, have also followed suit. After the lifting of martial law³ in 1987, which led

¹ This term is generally understood as someone who is infatuated with anything Japanese and is commonly used in a Taiwanese media and social context. The term was originally coined by Hari Singzi (1996) in *Good Morning! Japan* to express her great enthusiasm for Japanese culture, language, history, lifestyle and so on.

² ‘Korean wave’ refers to the success of South Korean cultural/media products in Asia since the late 1990s.

³ The introduction of martial law and other related laws combined to create an extraordinary legal system in the ROC. In the period after World War II, martial law was declared in Taiwan on three

to media deregulation and commercialisation in the early 1990s, media industries and Taiwanese youth became part of this regional media flow, not as distributors themselves but as receivers.

Early research carried out by the ICFP (International Communication Flow Project, 2001) demonstrated that, in terms of both number of Japanese programmes (194) and number of hours (3,848) exported to Asian countries, Taiwan was the lead consumer. Previous research conducted by the Japanese scholar Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) in the late 1990s also suggested that Taiwanese people are the most enthusiastic external audience for Japanese popular culture. In terms of Korean TV dramas, they gained popularity amongst a Taiwanese audience from 2001 (Kim 2005) and it is arguable that local media industries also play an important role in contributing to this success. The San-Li, GTV28, ETTV and Wei-Lai television stations are amongst the most frequently viewed cable channels by Taiwanese audiences (see Gallup Taiwan, INC, 2001) and these channels have devoted several hours a day to air Korean TV dramas since 2000⁴. Despite the well established popularity of Japanese and South Korean media products in Taiwan and East-Asian countries, there is still rather limited empirical research carried out in the field, in particular relating to the comparative study of these two regional sources of TV dramas and their young audiences⁵.

The historical connections, geographical proximity and cultural traditions of these three nations suggest a common cultural ground for the reception of TV dramas (which often depict a more locally based “reality”). Therefore the concept of ‘cultural similarity’ or ‘like us but different’ is often used here to investigate their popularity in this research. In my opinion this approach only partially explains the situation and

separate occasions; after the February 28 Incident in 1947, on December 10, 1947 and on May 19, 1949. In the third instance, martial law remained in place for 38 years, until it was lifted on July 15, 1987 (Encyclopaedia of Taiwan). Available from: <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/en/content?ID=3861>. Further readings see, ‘Taiwan ends 4 decades of martial law’ in New York Times (15th July, 1987) Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/15/world/taiwan-ends-4-decades-of-martial-law.html>; ‘Taiwan ends martial law after 38 years but...no dancing in the streets’ in Taiwan Communique, September, 1987. Available from: <http://www.taiwandc.org/twcom/tc31-int.pdf>

⁴ Due to the high volume of broadcast Korean TV dramas over the years, GTV28 has recently been urged by the NCC (National Communication Commission) to air more than 12.5 % of locally produced programmes in order to renew its licence for the following year (28/10/2011, *United Newspaper* online version).

⁵ Apart from Leung’s conference paper (2004) *An Asian formula? Comparative reading of Japanese and Korean TV dramas* and Ko’s (2004) paper at the same conference (13th JAMCO Online International Symposium), *From “Hari” to Hanliu*, there has been a lack of empirical research and comparative study of both TV dramas’ reception amongst youth audience of one nation in the region.

overlooks the more complicated cultural and social implications of young people's desire and ability to negotiate the cultural information which they receive via regional popular cultural products. Thus, I argue for a comparative approach to the study of the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and its relation to Taiwanese youth's patterns of cultural consumption and identification. This would allow the development of a valuable empirical case study based on a de-centred globalised media studies, which would also facilitate insight into the cultural logic of regionalisation.

Comparing the reception of these two regional TV dramas, allows us to ask to what extent the notion of 'cultural proximity' interweaves with local, regional and global contexts. Furthermore, are TV dramas that are locally produced necessarily more acceptable and emotionally connected to, and culturally more understandable by, the local audience than those which are foreign-made? Looking at the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan, I suggest that we should also take into account these questions: "Who are the audience?", "How do audience members articulate the foreign TV programmes' content?" and "To what extent are these foreign programmes used as another cultural resource by young Taiwanese audiences in the process of social change and cultural identification?" This research, focusing on the case of Taiwan, challenges Western-focused media research within the discourse of cultural globalisation and suggests that only by further examination of the regional popular cultural interaction will we be able to get a better picture of transnational audiences' TV reception and its implications in the field of media studies.

This thesis aims to answer the following questions: first, what is transnational media consumption within a more regionally-based context? What and how do geographical closeness, cultural proximity (e.g. Sinclair 1999, Straubhaar 1991), historical connection (e.g. past colonial experience, see Leo Ching 2000a), 'Asian modernity' and youth consumer culture (e.g. Chua 2000) play in the process of media reception and cultural consumption? Second, and focussing on the case of Taiwan, I question why and how Japanese and/or South Korean TV dramas have gained in popularity among young Taiwanese audiences? What does this social and cultural phenomenon

mean to young Taiwanese and how are their perceptions of Japan and South Korea affected by their media reception and popular culture consumption over the years?

The first part of this thesis explores young Taiwanese people's everyday experience of Japanese and South Korean pop culture, with a particular focus on youth TV dramas (Idol/Trendy dramas) and how these TV dramas' reception, cultural appropriation, comparison and active audience combine to formulate cross-cultural media influence. It argues for a more comparative approach to audience reception and intra-Asian media studies in the age of globalisation. This is in order to understand the complex and active links between the young audience and regional popular culture flows, thereby moving beyond commonplace models of Western domination and local resistance. I shall further discuss this issue in the second section of Chapter 2. In addition, during the empirical research on how Japanese and South Korean TV dramas are consumed, articulated and negotiated amongst university and secondary school students in everyday life, this thesis encountered another dimension of media reception and cultural referencing within the ever-changing political discourse of nation-building and education reforms on the island, which led to the second part of the discussion in this thesis. This is concerned with the dramatic social and political changes that have taken place since the early 1990s, and focuses on regional media flow and Taiwanese youth's transnational cultural participation within a specific socio-political context which is above all the *search* for a national identity. The second part of the thesis aims to contribute to the study of the relationship between youth regional (e.g. geo-cultural regions) popular TV dramas' reception and national cultural identification, and how this dynamic relationship generates different levels of social recognition and political awareness in relation to its on-going national transformation and cultural reconstruction (e.g. cultural localisation and education reforms).

The core of the argument I will put forward is that Taiwan youth transnational media consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas not only shapes their cultural taste and practice in everyday life but also generates different layers of political recognition and cultural identification on the island. Japanese and Korean TV dramas and their pop culture as 'cultural others' have become a form of "everydayness" embedded in young daily life. Ultimately, this transnational negotiation and

appropriation of regional popular culture has underlined how the politics of Taiwanese identity always implies a rearrangement of relations of cultural identification locally, regionally and globally. In other words, young Taiwanese people's reception of regional popular TV dramas suggests that a constant negotiation and repositioning in relation to the concept of Taiwanese identity has become a daily affair on the island.

Political transition and education reform in Taiwan in the 1990s

What is a nation? What is Taiwan? Chang Hui-Chung and Rich Holt suggest that 'Taiwan manifests itself as a geographical location, but not a nation; it reflects physical reality, but not necessarily national identification. Taiwanese identity must be defined through the lens of "Chinese-ness"' (2007, p. 137). According to Mark Harrison's observations (2006), the publication of secondary school textbooks called *Renshi Taiwan* (Understanding/Knowing Taiwan) in 1997, offered a relatively politically and culturally acceptable Taiwanese historiography: Aboriginal, Dutch, *Zheng Chenggong* (Ming Dynasty), *Qing* Dynasty, Japanese and Republican. The island had undergone a series of colonisations and shifts of political power. This has resulted in a level of anxiety and complexity in terms of the recent identity formation of the "Taiwanese" since 1987. As Lu Hsin-Yi's powerful quotation from *The Economist* suggests, 'if Taiwan is a person, Freud might well have been interested in the case' (2002, p. 2). The search for an "authentic" Taiwanese identity, and the negotiation of its multi-polar Chinese, Japanese, or Taiwanese elements, as well as the absence of "nation" status and international political recognition, remains a central issue on the island. The definitions of Taiwanese identity or consciousness include deliberate distancing from historical and cultural ties with China; reinforcing its "positive" colonial links with Japan, and reinventing and reconnecting with its locality. Moreover, the attempt to combine regional and global influences suggests that "being" Taiwanese is at the same time "becoming" Taiwanese for younger generations.

In 1998 the Taiwanese president, Lee Teng-Hui, suggested the phrase "New Taiwanese", as a slogan for Ma Ying-jeou's campaign to become Taipei City mayor:

Today, all of us who have grown up and lived together on this land, are Taiwanese. No matter whether we are aboriginal, or came hundreds of years ago or in the last few decades, we are all masters of Taiwan. We have all contributed to the development of Taiwan to now, and we all have a responsibility to Taiwan's future. The bigger problem is how to transform our love of Taiwan and our feeling towards our compatriots into specific action. This is the mission of every "New Taiwanese" (*Taiwan de zhuzhang* [Taiwan's Position], 1999, p. 264).

The main purpose in creating the concept of the "New Taiwanese" at the time was to reconcile the conflict between *benshengren* (identified as "natives of Taiwan", or "Taiwan inhabitants") and *waishengren* (post-1949 mainland refugees, or "Mainlanders"), and to integrate *yuanzhumin* (Taiwanese aborigines). *Benshengren*, in a broader definition, consist of two groups of Han Chinese who speak Chinese dialects – Minnan or Hakka – and who migrated to the island pre-1945. *Waishengren* refer to Chinese people who followed Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan after the Chinese Nationalist Party lost the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and all their descendants born in Taiwan. *Yuanzhumin* are the earliest inhabitants on the island, and during KMT rule they were forced to adopt Han Chinese customs. In Allen Chun's 'Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity' article, he argues that 'the recent emergence of a Taiwanese consciousness that sees itself as a resistance to Chinese cultural hegemony can be seen as a direct consequence of a cluster of discursive spaces that served to reify such dualistic conceptions' (1996a, p. 132). Arguably, "New Taiwanese", the representation of the people in Taiwan as a symbolically bonded set of aboriginal groups, *bensheng ren* and *waisheng ren* – creates a sense of community, a singular collectivity, and therefore a national place called "Taiwan".

The reformation of the national education system in the early 1990s (mainly concentrated on secondary school textbooks) added the *Renshi Taiwan* (Understanding/Knowing Taiwan) textbooks to the school curriculum in 1997, which was proposed to promote the concepts of localisation, internationalisation, and normalisation of Taiwan. The goal was *lizu Taiwan, xiong-hual dalu, fangyan shjie* which Daniel Lynch translated (2004, p. 515) as "establish themselves on Taiwan, have concern for the mainland, and open their eyes to the world". Nevertheless, according to Mark Harrison:

Although the *Understanding Taiwan* textbooks are a key example of the legitimisation of Taiwanese identity by the state, they also legitimise precisely the same appeal to a Taiwanese nationhood made by many commentators, academics, and politicians in the 1990s. The identity debates through the 1990s narrated a teleology of national realisation through the notion of an identity crisis, invoking an assumed nation by writing as if a Taiwanese nation were waiting for its realisation and fulfilment. Therefore, the basis of Taiwanese national identity in the post-martial law period is its very contestability (2006, p. 196).

The definition and construction of a “new” Taiwanese identity and consciousness is considered simultaneously by looking backwards and forwards, what Bhabha (1990, p. 297) calls ‘a sense of double time.’ A political interpretation of time from the distant past to the present is clearly future-oriented, not simply a retracing of the past. Furthermore, Harrison argues that:

Taiwanese identity is not naturalized or commonsensical. Its urgency and unease, the way it continues to be invested with emotion even in the every day by many Taiwanese people, reflects its contestation and its disturbed boundaries, both within Taiwanese society and in Taiwan’s relations with its “others”: China, the rest of Asia, or the West (2006, pp. 162-163).

The unsettled political ideology and power shifts, the reformation of the education curriculum, the promotion of “native” languages (mother tongues linked to ones’ ethnic group, such as Hakka, Minnan and the several aboriginal languages), and the intensive transnational cultural flows, leave young people in present-day Taiwan constantly debating not only their sense of belonging but also the idea of “What does ‘Taiwan’ mean?” “What makes Taiwan?”

Megan Morris (1992) characterises the nation-state as a “workable context”, an articulation of regional and global flows. “The national” is not to be conceived of in terms of an authentic, primordial identity, nor is it to be theorized in isolation from regional and global articulations of power and culture (cited in Wiley 2004, p. 89). Arguably, the notions of re-inscription and relocation of Taiwanese local culture emerge out of national political power shifts and merely survive in the face of global contestation. To be Taiwanese, now, is to be implicated in local, national, regional and global spaces and being Taiwanese is about managing the political, cultural and social transitions in everyday life. Instead of viewing the nation as a certain kind of

place that is determined by, or resistant to, outside forces, we can see it as an articulated context composed of these forces. In the face of these circumstances, this thesis asks, how do Taiwanese young people deal with the continuous, unsettling political and cultural transitions around them, and what kind of role do transnational TV programmes play in this process, in particular?

Structure of the thesis

Initially, this thesis sets out to examine the relationship between the reception of regional TV dramas and youth transnational cultural consumption, drawing on Ang's notion of the 'pleasure of recognition' (1985, p. 20) and Iwabuchi's 'sense of social and cultural articulation associated with the pleasure of text' (2002, pp. 133-135). It seems fair to assume that the cultural consumption of foreign TV dramas which depict day-to-day life would have a deep impact on the Taiwanese young audience's understanding of their own society. Based on this presumption, I initially expected to witness these young people actively consuming popular cultural products from either Japan or South Korea or both, and also showing a wide range of knowledge about both Japanese and Korean society and way of life.

However, during my fieldwork I realised my assumption was overly simplistic and I had possibly overlooked the complexity of young people's cultural consumption of foreign TV dramas (which also included reflection and negotiation), particularly in relation to their daily "embeddedness" within a larger political, social and economic context. Indeed, the Taiwanese national anxiety over its status as an independent nation and the constant struggle for recognition within the international community consciously "erases" its cultural relationship with mainland China, and has constantly challenged young people to (re)negotiate their sense of being or becoming "Taiwanese". Sequentially, I reflect on the outcomes of data collection and interviews in relation to the notion of "Taiwaneseness" and the political discourse of cultural identification. The second part of this thesis is designed to further explore whether this recognition develops into a particular mode of identity formation or cultural identification and challenges one's own sense of national cultural identity. At the same time, how the students negotiate or incorporate "otherness" into their everyday lives will also be discussed in the second part of this thesis.

Chapter 1 discusses the methods, data-collection techniques and the analytical approach to empirical data. It will also explain why this thesis has been divided into two parts to apprehend the complexity of regional media culture flows and its implications in the recognition of cultural identity in Taiwan. In so doing, I argue that transnational media consumption amongst young people is not limited by the daily practice of consumer culture or transnational cultural imagery, as early research suggested. Rather, through the comparative reading of both regional TV dramas and different levels of popular cultural acceptance among different audience groups in Taiwan, the outcomes of this empirical research have shaped the second part of this thesis. Thus, I will discuss how Taiwanese youth actively integrate foreign cultural elements and local socio-political transformations as a way of constructing and positioning a sense of Taiwanese consciousness, all in an age of intense regional popular culture and media flows at the beginning of the 21st century.

My research subject is predominantly a young audience, although Korean TV dramas do attract a strong audience of middle-aged women in Taiwan. My research focus is on the consumption of transnational media products through youth culture, focusing particularly on TV dramas and the possible cultural identification with “others,” all within the context of recent nation-building processes in Taiwan. My choice of subject is, therefore, concentrated on secondary school and university students.

The groups of choice also allow the advantage of understanding the possible contrasts between different younger generations, especially in relation to their cultural and national identifications. Methods of data collection involved the distribution of a questionnaire which was designed to obtain a general understanding about the consumption of both Japanese and Korean TV dramas. This was then followed by group discussions or one-to-one interviews, which function as an important way to diagnose and record youth perceptions, thoughts and actions in relation to the foreign TV dramas.

Chapter 2 consists of literature reviews relevant to the first part of the thesis. It is divided into two sections. The first section discusses Western media studies’ cross-cultural readings of soap operas/TV dramas (Allen 1995, Ang 1985, Katz and Liebes 1990), and focuses on transnational audience reception and meaning-making in

relation to the notion of symbolic cultural consumption and transnational cultural identification (see Gillespie 1995, Miller 1994). The second section of the chapter reviews trans-regional popular media consumption amongst youths in East Asian countries with a particular focus on the popularity of so-called “Trendy/Idol dramas” (Iwabuchi 2002, Chua 2004). In addition this examines how Taiwanese youth audiences consume “Japanese Idol/Trendy Dramas” in relation to cultural symbolic consumption, and the pleasures, images and dreams this generates. In turn this leads us to question to what extent this transnational television consumption has added different cultural ingredients in terms of youth cultural identification and social imagination given issues of cultural proximity and hybridisation (Lee 2003, Yu-ling Su 1999). Equally important is the rise of the so-called “Korean Wave” phenomenon since the early 2000s, and its popularity in relation to Asian modernity and traditional Confucian values (see Leung 2004, p. 3) and the similarities and differences between Japanese and Korean TV dramas. In so doing, I propose a comparative studies-based model in which trans-regional media reception moves beyond a “local TV dramas vs. foreign TV dramas” paradigm or the notion of cultural similarity vs. ‘cultural discount’. Thus, I have explored these regional TV drama flows as a social and cultural phenomena through an integrative framework which draws on transnational/trans-regional media studies, media consumption and everyday life studies. This will illustrate the dynamic interaction between external cultural resources and local cultural practice.

Chapters 3 and 4 are based on empirical research related to the initial research project. Chapter 3 traces university students as they (re)interpret Japanese and Korean TV dramas and as they become more conscious of the programmes’ genre and contents. These chapters ask why they are in favour of one over the other and how the cultural consumption of “Japaneseness” has shifted from object consumption to “abstract meaning” which is reproduced outside of Japan and translated from its original source. The university viewer’s narrative sentimental reflexivity on regional TV dramas contents (arguably, Japanese ones) coincides with Iwabuchi’s ‘a story about us’ (2005, p. 24) and Ang’s ‘pleasure of recognition’ (1985, p. 20). The narrative reading and emotional connection with the characters’ story generate a shared sense of a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1977, p. 128). In other words, it suggests a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation,

and is clearly articulated in particular artistic forms and conventions (*ibid.*, pp. 132-133). Nonetheless, I will argue that the students' reception of regional TV dramas is not limited to emotional connections or pure entertainment, but rather it becomes a way of formulating perceptions of Japan and Korea in a more complicated social, political and cultural sense. After analysing university students' reception of both foreign TV dramas and their cultural practices in daily life, which encompass their narrative-sentimental reflexivity, I discuss how the consumption of TV drama' by-products, such as soundtracks, posters, original comic books and novels which represent a particular cultural symbolism for their consumers, has changed over time. To conclude, I argue that university students' preference for Japanese TV dramas is closely related to their perceptions of both countries and their reception habits, and also examine to what extent TV dramas reinforce their cultural misconceptions.

In Chapter 4 I delineate university and secondary school students' different methods of textual interpretation and consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in terms of their textual interpretations, the influence of programme merchandising and the diverse range of emotional connections to the programmes. This is outlined in direct relation to the students' particular social and educational status. In addition, my research demonstrates that the place and space of secondary students' television viewing is rather different from that of university students. Different programmes often involve different family members as viewers (Morley 1986). The viewing of TV dramas in most Taiwanese families often involves the mother, elderly family members and young teenagers, whereas most university students are more likely to watch programmes on their own. Occasionally, for secondary school students, relevant discussions in relation to the content of these programmes will be raised during the process of watching. Japanese animations were not part of my initial research; however, when I conducted research with secondary school students their interest in Japanese animations was constantly on display. In contrast to the idea of Japanese animation as 'culturally odourless' products (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 27), Heng Su's (1999) research shows that the consumption of Japanese animations and their by-products has created their own – to borrow Lee's term – 'Japanised cultural consumption space' (Lee 2003, p. 48). Based on secondary school students' responses, it has been suggested that their consumption of Japanese animations (and by-products) not only displays the awareness of the products of origin – hence, that

they are not culturally odourless – but also often shows their in-depth knowledge and positive perception of the productions concerned.

Chapter 5 is a literature review corresponding to the second part of the thesis. It maps out the theoretical background of national and cultural identity which paves the way for the discussion of the modern construction and (re)invention of Taiwanese identity and its ambivalence. Using Benedict Anderson's notion of 'nation as imagined political community' (1991, p. 6) and Anthony Smith's (1999) emphasis on the importance of myths and memories of the nation, I explore how these two contrasting approaches somehow match two opposing Taiwanese political parties' (Democratic Progressive Party, DPP and Chinese Nationalist Party, *Kuomintang*, KMT) ideologies. I also discuss the recent political construction of Taiwan as an (independent) country since the lifting of martial law in 1987, looking at notions such as the (re)connection and search for a Taiwanese local cultural consciousness (e.g. the *bentuhua* movement). Focusing on Homi K. Bhabha's (1990) concept of narrating the nation and the 'third space' (1988, p. 21) in relation to national culture, I aim to explore the absence of Taiwanese subjectivity and the "politics of identity" in Taiwan within the fields of post-colonial approaches with a particular focus on cultural hybridity as a cultural logic of globalisation (see Kraidy 2005). In the last section of the chapter I will briefly outline recent debates about national and cultural identity and the decline of the nation-state in the age of globalisation.

Chapters 6 and 7 are the second part of the main body of the thesis based on the empirical research. Chapter 6 discusses how by "making sense" of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan, university students come to recognise the cultural difference or similarity between these three countries as a way of negotiating and articulating their perspective on Taiwan as a nation, and how it reflects on their cultural positioning and subjectivity, which forms one of the key elements in the development of the national idea in Taiwan. In this chapter I also investigate how, through the process of recognising difference and similarity of the foreign culture that is being represented on screen, university students become active cultural observers. By comparing the cultural consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst younger generations, this study moves beyond the concept of cultural proximity, cultural imperialism and nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991, p. 6);

instead it argues that in the construction of national and cultural identity in Taiwan, both foreign TV dramas have provided a cultural ‘third space’⁶ (Bhabha 1988, p. 21) for young people to negotiate and translate their sense of belonging and ways of identification. Moreover, the temporality of negotiation, articulation and translation of transnational media cultures also suggest generational cultural identification difference as well as youth self-reflexivity and cultural repositioning in relation to the nation-building project in Taiwan. The formation of youth cultural identity in Taiwan appears to not only be a specific project but it also questions the concept of nation, national consciousness and cultural identity which should not be seen from a binary perspective, such as past/present, here/there, or tradition/invention, but as something “in-between”, to be constantly negotiated and translated.

Chapter 7 explores how the reformation of the education system and curriculum – e.g. ‘Understanding Taiwan’ (*Renshi Taiwan*) textbooks and the search for national and cultural identity in Taiwan since the late 1990s – suggest that secondary school students, who are affected by these reforms, articulate and negotiate their ideas of Taiwanese identity by incorporating this influence based on their textbook knowledge. All of this is taking place in an age of intensive transnational cultural flows. For instance, some have declared that being Taiwanese is to have “Taiwanese spirit” (*Taiwan jingshen*) and some believe being Taiwanese is to know one’s community history and to celebrate local folk culture and customs. The complexity of “Taiwanisation” and the *bentuhua* (localisation/indigenisation/nativisation) movement, which emphasises the notion of locality and a sense of community has, to a certain extent, provoked local differences since the late 1990s. Within this socio-political context, I suggest that regional popular culture consumption, which can be referred to as ‘referential cultural others’, has formulated and reinforced secondary school students’ perception of the cultural difference between north and south in Taiwan. To put it bluntly, those who easily accept and consume foreign culture (e.g. Japanese, Korean and/or American popular culture) have been perceived as not identifying with Taiwan, and lacking Taiwanese spirit (*Taiwan jingshen*) by young teenagers from the south. This chapter also shows that an analysis of the political discourse of Taiwanisation and youth consumption of regional popular culture in

⁶ ‘The intervention of the Third Space, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code’ (Bhabha, 1988, p. 21).

everyday life suggests the need for further exploration of the meaning of regional cultural flows in relation to national identification, social formation and cultural transformation.

Chapter 8 concludes that the complexity and ambivalence of national identity for Taiwanese youth is influenced by and reflected in their reception of Japanese and Korean popular culture, in this case TV dramas (Idol/Trendy Dramas). Diverse cultural experience and viewing practices reveal that young Taiwanese audiences construct their personal narratives and the structure of their cultural imagery as a result of different levels of identification with “sameness” and “otherness”. The ability of these young audiences to negotiate, appropriate and contest their ideas of Taiwanese national and cultural identity under the influence of foreign popular cultural products indicate that “mimicking” regional (mainly Japanese and South Korean) popular cultures serves to fill a void: the absence of a clearly defined Taiwanese identity.

Popular Japanese and South Korean television dramas have opened up a cultural space for alternative forms of agency by situating their cultural practices in the recognisable reality of young Taiwanese people’s lives. Hence, the perspectives of making and translating Taiwanese identity since the lifting of martial law in 1987 will remain incomplete until the influence of foreign TV programmes are taken into consideration. I believe that the modern construction of a nation in Taiwan and its cultural identity in the context of regional popular cultural flows has provided the younger generation in Taiwan with a ‘third cultural space’ where they can articulate, negotiate and translate in relation to their social and cultural status, and self-consciously create a sense of “Taiwaneseness.” On the basis of these quantitative and qualitative opinion surveys, and in conjunction with my further research, I conclude that for the younger generation in Taiwan the meaning of “being” and/or “becoming” Taiwanese is inevitably caught up in the triple pull of the local (Taiwanisation), the regional (intra-East Asian cultural flows) and the transnational (globalisation) movements.

Chapter 1

Reception and cultural consumption: Researching young people's experience of regional TV dramas

Introduction

In the David Buckingham edited book *Reading Audiences: Young People and the Media* he points out that 'the media play a significant role in young people's relationships with their families and their peers, and in the process by which their identities come to be formed' (1993, p. 5). Nonetheless, he also stresses that instead of seeking evidence of media effects, one should 'investigate the ways in which young people use and make sense of the media in the context of their lived social experiences' (ibid., p. 6). The media, to him, are not to be seen as 'a powerful source of dominant ideologies', but as a 'symbolic resource' which young people use in making sense of their experiences, in relating to others and in organising their daily lives (ibid., p. 13). In his review of research on young people and media as these relate to the concept of 'power', Buckingham also argues that:

Power is not something which can be identified in the abstract, or appropriated according to some generalised theoretical equation. On the contrary, it is very much an empirical issue, that needs to be addressed in relation to specific audiences, specific media and specific social contexts of use (ibid., p. 14).

It is with this objective in view that this thesis is based largely on field research-based questionnaires, relatively small-scale group and individual interviews, and on the detailed analysis of written or spoken data. In many instances, Taiwanese young audiences' comparative reading of two different imported media resources from the region (Japan and South Korea in this case) contributes not only to the study of youth culture and media, but also provides much needed empirical research data on young people's transnational media use within the larger context of their social activities and experiences.

This chapter looks at the process through which the fieldwork was carried out and discusses the techniques of data collection – questionnaires and in-depth interviews/group discussions. I will also demonstrate the advantages and limitations of this research method and argue the importance of comparative reading in the field

of audience research and transnational TV consumption. Furthermore, reflecting on the process and outcomes of data collection, I shall explain why and how this research project is presented in two separate parts. Part 1 focuses on transnational media consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and their cultural appropriation in young people's everyday life. Part 2 discusses the role of Japanese and Korean TV dramas as cultural others in relation to the (trans)formation of a sense of national and cultural identity in Taiwan.

Methods of data collection and limitations

a. *Questionnaire design and distributions*

My research began with the design and delivery of a questionnaire⁷ which was carried out between 2003 and 2005. The questionnaire was intended to investigate many aspects of audience relations to Japanese and Korean TV dramas, how the reception of foreign programmes might vary, and furthermore to explore how the modes of reception have been shaped – at least in part – by the cultural practices and social conventions within the local contexts.

According to Bourdieu, quantitative survey methods are ideally suited to the purposes of establishing broad patterns of media consumption and taste, particularly if used in conjunction with more qualitative methods (cited in Gillespie 1995, p. 52). In order to add reliability and validity to the information the combining of quantitative and qualitative approaches has been employed in this thesis. Questionnaires as a quantitative method may suggest questions suitable for further investigation through means of in-depth qualitative methods. A quantitative survey (questionnaire) was carried out before the in-depth interview and a small group discussion was held. Questionnaires were self-completed by 276 students from different gender and age groups (distributed in the classrooms and divided into three groups: junior secondary, senior secondary, and college and university students). *Closed-ended* questions were designed as the basic framework for the questions in the questionnaire. Arguably, the

⁷ A sample questionnaire is included in Appendix 1.

closed-ended questions are easy to “answer” therefore they tend to cut down non-responses (Ruane 2005, p. 131). As my research subjects are teenagers and young adult audiences whom I located via educational institutions, closed-ended questions can encourage students’ quick and easy responses within a limited time. The age range was made consistent by using three groups based upon the educational institutions they attended: junior secondary school (13-15); senior secondary school (16-18), (two age groups which I have categorised as secondary school students in my empirical chapters) and university students (19-22) (although some mature students from university are over 22 years old, but not older than 25 – in this case I still consider them as belonging to a ‘young adult’ audience).

The questionnaire sample consists of 276 Taiwanese young people who are studying in secondary schools (118) and universities (158). To explore the wider range of the reception and consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas among young people, the content of the close-ended questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section 1, *Media reception of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas*, consisted of twelve questions which are designed to investigate the respondents’ general reception of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas, including hours watching per week, viewing experience, medium used, level of engagement while viewing and motivation of programme choice, and so on. The aim of this section is to obtain general knowledge of Taiwanese youth TV reception which also provides the opportunity to statistically evaluate the actual viewing participation of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst young audiences.

Section 2, *Consumer behaviour and the consumption of idol dramas by-products*, consists of three questions concerning their consumption of related commodities and programme by-products. The questions are based on early scholarly debates and research on the relationship between media and consumption. According to Don Slater (1997), consumption is a cultural processing, a *meaningful activity*, and the consumer culture is formed by the pattern of cultural production. This section is therefore designed to inquire into what sort of programme related commodities are most likely to be purchased and what ‘cultural symbolic’ meaning they carry for the consumers.

Section 3, *General knowledge and cultural recognition of Japan and South Korea*, is based on five questions relating to respondents' understanding and recognition of Japan and South Korea as nations (such as national status, lifestyle, culture and languages) and their personal desire to live in or visit these two countries. This section aims to examine the notion of cultural proximity and geo-cultural regions in terms of youths' perspectives on, and knowledge of, both nations to tease out their self-reflexive response to the last question of this section: 'Do you categorise yourself as Japanophile/Koreanophile?', which proved to be valuable as an opening question during the interview and group discussion.

Closed-ended questions were used as the basic framework the questions posed in this research, but in order to ascertain the youths' opinions of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan and test their willingness to engage in further research, three open-ended questions were included in Section 4, *Comparative readings on Japanese and Korean idol dramas*. In this section respondents were able to further express their opinion on their personal viewing experience of Japanese and Korean TV dramas, their reasons for programme preference and critical response in terms of production quality, contents desirability and so forth.

In addition, at the end of the questionnaire I asked the respondents who might be willing to take part in further group discussions or interviews to leave their contact phone number or e-mail address. In this way I was able to have two discussion groups of junior secondary school students, each with a group of seven and eight participants; two discussion groups of senior secondary school students, each with groups of three and six participants; and nine individual university interviewees (two of them via e-mail correspondence).

Overall, drawing on the results of the questionnaire, one of the advantages was to be able to use some part of the responses to formulate questions before I conducted my interview and group discussion. For instance, secondary school students are more likely to watch TV dramas with family members (47.2%) in comparison with university students (29.5%) in a multiple choice of viewing companionship (Section 1, Question 4). Thus, during my group discussion with secondary school students, the power dynamic in the living room (i.e. who gets to decide what programme to watch)

and the content-related discussion on during the family viewing time illustrates that teenagers' reading of TV dramas is less about self-reflexivity but is rather a means of social and cultural formation through discussion and negotiation among family members which I will further discuss in Chapter 4, Section 2.

Numeric results of the questionnaire from university students and secondary school students are presented in Appendices 3 and 4 respectively. The comments made at the end of open-ended questions will be cited anonymously throughout the thesis. In general discussion groups with secondary school students were only held once, and each lasted about one hour and a half. The individual interviews with university students each lasted approximately forty-five minutes, apart from the two which were completed via email correspondence. Both one-to-one interviews and group discussions were recorded by tape recorder or mini disc during the session. The first names and ages of the interviewees and group discussion participants are listed in Appendix 2.

b. *One-to-one interview with university students*

The original plan was that from the questionnaire respondents I would seek out around 4-6 students in each group to participate in the group discussion. Why groups? One of the main reasons is that focus group interviews 'allow the researcher to observe how audiences make sense of media *through conversation* and interaction with each other' (Hansen, 1988, p. 258). Earlier research has suggested amongst young audiences transnational TV dramas function as daily gossip or as fashion guides (see, Gillespie, 1995, Iwabuchi, 2001, Miller, 1995). Therefore I was hoping the group discussion would create a sense of the daily conversational atmosphere amongst peers in order to generate detailed and complex data about how young people interpret, negotiate, appropriate and use media content. However, with the university students I failed to accomplish this due to the fact that most of the respondents were either too busy with their schedule or preferred a one-to-one interview. Therefore, the small discussion groups were only held with junior and senior secondary school students (each divided into two groups).

Most interviews were conducted at fast food restaurants or cafés, a less formal setting which made the interviews feel more like a friendly conversation. The advantage of this kind of setting is that the interviewee feels more relaxed and more inclined to discuss their viewing experience and how they appropriate these dramas in a more self-reflexive manner and without self-consciousness or worrying that their ‘guilty-pleasure’ will be interpreted or labelled as “Japanophile” or “Koreanophile”, given that the local media often associate these terms with manic and irrational fan behaviour. I had a number of key questions in mind when I set out for these in-depth interviews, such as: “Can you talk about your viewing experience of Japanese and Korean TV dramas?”; “Do you have any preference for either TV programme?”; “What cultural and social elements do you find interesting or disapprove of while viewing the programmes?”; and “Any favourite drama and why?” Because I had chosen to apply a comparative approach and investigate the transnational reading of these two regional TV dramas amongst young people in Taiwan, the aim of these questions was to get a better understanding of what cultural role these two regional TV dramas played in the young adult audiences’ daily lives and how they interacted with regional media flows in relation to their social formations. In retrospect, I was assuming a stable understanding of what being Taiwanese was.

Interviews with university students were conducted in a rather straightforward and pleasant fashion. However, I also realised that during our conversations, university students often see themselves as people who are not being influenced by regional popular flows and TV drama consumption, but instead, were expressing their concerns regarding how teenagers are being overwhelmed by regional popular culture and media products. I will further discuss their comments and their political and cultural implications within the discourse of Taiwan’s national and cultural construction in Chapter 6, Section 1.

c. Group discussion with secondary school students

Initially my approach to group discussion with secondary school students was not very different from university students apart from those which were conducted in the classroom or a common room on campus. I had almost the same set of questions which I used to conduct my interviews with university students. Not long after, various difficulties were encountered in the course of carrying out this project. Therefore I had to respond flexibly and self-reflexively, adjusting my way of interviewing or handling the discussion group accordingly throughout my research. For instance, with junior secondary school students I had to encourage them to speak their own mind most of the time; it happened several times that once someone stated his/her opinion, others would just follow and add “I think so, too”. In this instance, I would suggest that young audience readings of TV programmes not only respond to the programme itself but also to others’ reading of the programme during group discussions.

Another unexpected outcome from the group discussion was the fascination with Japanese animation and Korean cuisine, which I did not anticipate. Japanese animation, despite being categorised as ‘culturally odourless’ by the Japanese scholar Koichi Iwabuchi (2001, p. 55), has historical and cultural roots in Taiwan since the late 1970s and has been consumed enthusiastically by both male and female students (see Chen 2005, Shiraishi 2000, Heng Su 1999, Yu-ling Su 1999). According to Heng Su’s (1999) research, in late 1990s Japanese animations (cartoons) were the most popular foreign programmes in Taiwan: almost 42.7 per cent of his respondents watched Japanese programmes regularly. I will further elaborate on this particular cultural consumption and its possible connection to viewing Japan as a creative country, and how it formulates youth’s positive perception of Japanese TV dramas in Chapter 4, Section 3.

The growing consumption of Korean cuisine was due to the massive success of the Korean period drama, *Dae Jang-geum* (Jewel in the Palace)⁸ which was broadcasted

⁸ *Dae-Jang-geum* first aired on MBC in South Korea from September 2003 to March 2004. The story was based on the real historical figure Jang-geum, who became the first head physician to the King in the patriarchal Confucian society of the Chosun Dynasty of Korea in the mid-sixteenth century. The

in Taiwan in May 2004 and achieved six per cent in the ratings, a surprising figure for a foreign programme in Taiwan (Kim, 2009, p. 739). This popularity has led to the burgeoning number of Korean restaurants in Taiwan and a *Dae Jang-geum*-inspired cookbook was published in 2005. I visited one of local Korean restaurants during my field work in 2005, and noticed that not only is the *Dae Jang-geum* book displayed in the restaurant, but one is also offered a *Dae Jang-geum* special set menu. However, due to the lack of sufficient evidence from my field work, I decided not to discuss this particular cultural phenomenon in this thesis further.

d. *Limitations and challenges*

Reflecting on my method of data collection and manner of conducting fieldwork, I realised that while my research was focused on cross-cultural comparative readings of regional TV dramas amongst Taiwanese youth and their transnational media consumption and cultural practice in everyday life, there may have been some absent voices. In the collection of my data, notably at university level, I may have possibly excluded groups of young people who do not participate in the higher education system. This can lead to a possible criticism regarding the issue of class and questions such as “who represents Taiwanese youth?,” and was my group of choice already leaning toward those who had access to the subject material and who were also more likely to give me “intellectual” responses. Indeed, when I set out to conduct the research with limited networking, time and financial support, I believed that my research choices were the best possible way to collect enough data samples, as well as facilitating follow-up group discussions and interviews. Thus this thesis, to an extent, only represents a specific group of Taiwanese youth and within a specific social context of use. Nonetheless, I still believe this thesis maintains its importance in terms of understanding the role transnational TV dramas play in Taiwanese local youths’ (university and secondary school students) everyday lives.

Arguably, when the questionnaires were completed in the classrooms, this allowed for a quicker turnaround in terms of data collection and produced higher response rates than postal questionnaires. Therefore, through friends of mine who teach in

main story is that Jang-geum enters the royal palace at the age of 10 and dedicated herself to learning how to cook based on the philosophy that the goal of cooking is to foster the recipient’s good health and happiness (Sujeong Kim, 2009, p. 739-740).

junior/senior secondary schools and universities I went to schools and asked the students to fill in the questionnaire when the class had just begun. It takes between fifteen to twenty minutes to complete the six-page questionnaire. All the questionnaires were carried out in classrooms. The advantage of this method of data collection is that respondents were in a quieter environment and they could concentrate on the questions, and also could raise queries if they were unclear about the questions. However, there is also the risk that they might discuss their “answers” with peers (particularly among junior secondary students), in order to compose a “correct” answer or so as not to feel left out.

In addition, one of the possible imbalances in the data collection is that due to a lack of networks I was only able to base my research groups on junior and senior secondary schools in the south of Taiwan (which may be considered rural areas and quite different from the so-called metropolitan city of Taipei), and university students in Taipei. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) believes that when he conducted audience research in Taiwan, Japanese TV dramas were considered as attracting more young people who live in metropolitan areas than those who live outside. Nevertheless, my questionnaire shows that most respondents had access to and view both Japanese and Korean TV dramas. Due to the fact that I did not conduct research in Taipei-based secondary schools, it will be impossible for me to compare the possible differences between regions regarding the consumption and reception of foreign programmes. Yet, it is also difficult and problematic to define those students who are from urban areas and who are from rural locales: for instance, the university students who study in Taipei can be originally from rural areas. However, I would suggest that this topic needs further research in terms of transnational media consumption in relation to geographical variations and individual responses which are mediated and limited by cultural taste and social structure.

Unexpected turns:

From youth transnational media consumption to cultural referential positioning

David Morley argues that ‘We do need always to be prepared for the possibility that our research trajectories will take us to destinations which we had not anticipated’

(Morley and Brunson 1999, p. 198). Fascinated by the popularity of Japanese and South Korean popular culture amongst Taiwanese young people in the 1990s and 2000s respectively, I started my research project by choosing to focus on TV dramas for several reasons. First, the melodrama/soap opera/*telenovela* is often considered as a highly “local” audience-based programme due to its content and often understood as closely depicting a local way of life thus providing opportunities for common cultural understandings. Second, and in contrast to the early research on cross-cultural reading of one particular programme – *Dallas* – this was defined as closely depicting an ‘American way of life’ and perceived as a form of Western (American) media imperialism by its foreign audience. My study is to examine the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas to provide a more comparative reading of foreign TV dramas and their cultural implications in an East-Asian context. Thirdly, I aim to explore how Raymond Williams’s notions of ‘culture as a whole way of life’ (1977, p. 13) and ‘culture as a structure of feeling’ (ibid., p. 128) are depicted in Japanese and Korean TV dramas and embedded in the youth’s everyday life practices, and how the intimacy of transnational TV dramas viewing is not just personal but can also be cultural. In other words, TV drama viewing is not limited to individual emotional connection and pleasure of recognition via different means of cultural articulation with texts. Rather, foreign TV drama viewing and transnational imagination should be seen as a dynamic and contested field of cultural practice and negotiation.

However, over the years this project has evolved into a wider socio-political investigation of transnational media reception and consumption, in particular in its relation to youth cultural identification and nation-building in Taiwan. This is partly due to Taiwan’s unique situation, namely its historical connection with Japan, shifts in its political ideology and its attempts at national modernisation in the context of regionalisation and globalisation, as well as a sense of “Taiwanese-ness” which involves both inward searching and outward borrowing. In the process of my research I have encountered young people of different generations who have grown up in specific social, cultural and political contexts which have shaped their sense of collective sensibility and “national” awareness in relation to cross-culture consumption of regional TV dramas which show various forms of negotiation and contestation.

For instance, university students are more likely to express a sense of anxiety regarding the popularity of Japanese and Korean popular culture in Taiwan, particularly in relation to the formation of Taiwanese identity, during interviews, even when they often regard young people's consumption of regional TV dramas as a form of entertainment. Conversely, secondary students are more "relaxed" on the issue of identity, often showing their assertion of "being Taiwanese" by referencing school textbooks and interpreting their Taiwanese identity by emphasising the notion of locality or so-called "Taiwanese grass-roots culture". In this sense, younger viewers' cultural readings of transnational TV dramas are the result of the articulation of different experiences of educational reforms, as well as ongoing political transitions and local cultural formations in Taiwanese. I will further elaborate on this in Chapter 7.

As part of a generation who witnessed dramatic political, economic, social and media changes in Taiwanese society since the early 1990s, I was anxious about, but also excited by the political transformation in society in the age of globalisation and regional cultural flows. My perspective was simply that of an observer of youth reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and what I was hoping to achieve in this project was to explore what this cultural phenomenon meant and how it was experienced through various means of commodity consumption and cultural appropriation. It was from this viewpoint that I conducted my research with the younger generation, and I often found myself astounded by young viewers' cultural knowledge of Japan and South Korea as well as their points of view on the "building" of Taiwanese identity and Taiwan as a nation in general. The comparative reading of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst young people is not merely a transnational media experience which simply reflects on individual preference for dramatic texts and sentimental connections. Regional popular TV dramas also function as a form of alternative cultural reference amongst youths in terms of making sense of what Taiwanese identity is and also offer an opportunity to reflect on how Taiwan as a nation can be "re-imagined" in modern times.

In the process of conducting my research the issue of Taiwanese identity in terms of its daily social and cultural experience and practice has gradually been incorporated into my discussion with Taiwanese youth in relation to the popularity of Japanese and

Korean TV dramas. Throughout the research, in group discussions and interviews with both secondary school and university students, the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas was ascribed to the fact that ‘we do not have our own identity and culture’. However, when I asked what was meant by “our own identity and culture”, sometimes I found myself having to further explain to most of the secondary school students what national/cultural identity or what Taiwanese identity might be in order to carry on the discussion. Therefore, what I offered them was an outline of concepts that I have interpreted from Western scholars, combined with my own understanding. Certainly, there is a potential danger that their interpretations of those identities could lean towards mine, moreover, I might have inadvertently “inserted” something into their minds that they had never been aware of, or considered, before. However, in order to carry on the discussion, I was, to a certain extent, like a teacher who tries to give them examples or ideas about what national/cultural identities are. Indeed, such distinct differences (such as age, educational background, etc.) and the power relations between the researcher and respondents would often turn interviews or discussions into a Q&A format. Although the students may not deliberately try to give me the “correct” answer, however, their responses to the concepts of national/cultural identities are very much based on their school textbooks. For example, they constantly refer to the “Taiwanese” language (in this case, Minnanese) or local festivals and customs which they used to define as their Taiwanese national and cultural identity. This is partly because the language policy was biased towards Mandarin and it was the only official medium of communication in school during the postwar period. Speaking Minnanese in school was treated as a “sin” and might lead to punishment (Ou, 1995, cited in Law 2002). At the beginning of political liberalisation and reconstruction of local grassroots culture in Taiwan after the lifting of martial law in 1987, speaking Minnanese (Taiwanese, *Tai yu*) was considered as an important political statement and signifier of being Taiwanese. Politicians, for example, make particular efforts to address the general public in “Taiwanese” during election campaign speeches.

Being one of the generation that learnt everything about mainland China at school (at least throughout elementary and secondary education), and who has been haunted by the confusion of who I am – Taiwanese, Chinese, both, neither – it occurred to me that the school curriculum reforms in the late 1990s, played an influential role in the

construction of so-called “Taiwanese consciousness”. This also goes some way to explaining why, when I ask university students (most of whom had finished secondary education around the late 1990s) about their understanding of the concept of national/cultural identity in Taiwan, they responded that there is certainly a national and cultural identity in Taiwan but it is “blurred”. Furthermore, there is also a self-awareness that, as the last generation before education reform, they feel they have got caught up in something “in-between” (i.e. that they are Chinese and/or Taiwanese). Hence, I realised that it is necessary to address the important issue of reform of the educational system in Taiwan and its implications in terms of youth transnational media consumption and cultural identification. How different are the views between university and secondary school students in the construction of the idea of national identity and what does it mean to be a Taiwanese under the influence of education reforms in Taiwan? And in what way is the consumption of regional TV dramas and their cultural elements negotiated and appropriated by a young audience in the process of developing a Taiwanese identity?

To give an interesting example, a friend who teaches in an elementary school asked her students one day what they thought about the current President of the Republic of China (ROC), and none of them knew what ‘ROC’ stood for. My friend explained that the Republic of China means Taiwan, and the students responded to this by saying that “if that is so just say Taiwan. Why do you even use the term Republic of China in the first place?” My friend was shocked by the response from her students, for to her, ROC has always signified Taiwan and she assumed that her students had the same understanding. To a certain extent, this demonstrates that reform of the educational system (i.e. Taiwanisation) has constructed a different understanding of the concept of Taiwan as a nation and the national identity in Taiwan between different generations. How does it feel, we might therefore ask, to live in a society that has gone through a political transformation from “Chinese” to “Taiwanese” in approximately one generation? Moreover, how has the redefinition of “national” identity through educational reform and the flow of globalisation/regionalisation constructed youth national/cultural identities?

Before I conducted my field work, the initial aim of this project was to see how regional popular TV dramas were negotiated and made meaningful amongst young

people in their everyday lives. My assumption was that this cultural negotiation is appropriated and reproduced by use of particular cultural commodities and image consumption, as suggested by earlier studies (see Garcia Canclini 1995, Lee 2003, Miller 1994, Yu-ling Su 1999). This assumption led me to see regional TV dramas as a powerful cultural symbolic resource and to adopt a questionnaire design which was intended to provide statistical evidence and an indication of youth consumer behaviour and its cultural implications. However, when I started analysing the data, I realised that a young person might not be as keen a consumer of Japanese and Korean popular commodities or TV dramas by-products as previous research suggested. For instance, almost 56.3 per cent of university students and 45.8 per cent of secondary school students never purchase any TV drama by-products (for further detail, see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 Section 2, Question 1). One of the possible explanations is that the role of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has become less significant in terms of the symbolic cultural resources which young people use in experiencing a sense of Asian modernisation and transnational cultural imaginary.

Hence, I started to question what role regional TV dramas played amongst young people. Has my questionnaire design completely missed the point? Is the outcome of the questionnaire an indication that Japanese and Korean TV dramas have become irrelevant to youth cultural consumption and everyday life practices? My answer is that one should further examine these regional TV dramas on their own terms as a particular social and cultural phenomenon and also examine their implications in relation to the concept of the audience as acting as cultural observers and executors in modern times. In other words, one should question what young audiences *make* of the popularity of these regional TV dramas, given that my research has shown that 77.8 and 73.7 per cent respectively of university and secondary schools students had experience of watching both regional TV dramas in the past.

Some researchers argue that discovering *how* audiences make sense of the media message is not easily done through survey research. Rather, in order to get a better picture of *how* or *why* this audience-media relationship works, more qualitative methods should be employed (Hansen et al. 1998, p. 257), such as participant observation (see Hobson 1982, Morley 1986), or by ethnographic research on television audiences (see Lull 1990). Despite the fact that my research is about

television drama reception, there are some distinctive features due to the fact that the genre and format of these regional TV dramas are different from soap operas or *telenovelas*, as they often end in 13 episodes (Japanese trendy dramas) and between 20-50 episodes (Korean modern dramas). In this sense, the relationship between a TV drama and its audience is relatively “temporary” in comparison to early research on soap operas (e.g. *Dallas*, *Coronation Street*). Therefore the possibility of generating a deeper understanding of how the audience makes sense of the media message via participant observation in this case is less available. I employed semi-structured individual interviews and group discussions as a qualitative way to “talk” about young audience’s transnational TV drama viewing experiences and how they use TV dramas as a cultural resource in their everyday lives.

The “talking” method allowed me to identify a pattern among my interviewees and group participants, where they displayed concern about the “cultural invasion” of Japanese and Korean TV dramas. This is by no means an indication that they do not enjoy the programmes themselves, but it is closely related to their daily experience of on-going cultural localisation, political transformation (e.g. Taiwanisation) and education reform over the years, which I did not anticipate before I conducted my fieldwork. Unpacking this result, I realised that my research demonstrates how the young audience and transnational media research often closely relate to their personal narrative reflexivity and cultural negotiation in everyday life via comparative viewings of regional TV dramas. More importantly, it uncovers another aspect of youth cultural interpretations of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in relation to the notion of cultural identification in Taiwan. These regional TV dramas are used by young people to work alongside their sense of being Taiwanese and differentiate cultural similarities and differences within the region’s political and historical context.

Whereas I initially sought to examine the relationship between youth and transnational TV drama reception in relation to local cultural appropriation and consumer culture, I ended up realising that young viewers have incorporated regional TV dramas into their structure of meaning-making and use them to redefine local cultural practices and identities. Thus, I have provided provisional answers which are informed by group discussions and in-depth interviews sensitive to how young

people's transnational television reception changes have become integrated in specific cultural forms and practices, and under specific political and historical circumstances over the years, as outlined in Chapters 6 and 7. In doing so, I can only hope that my empirical obstacles could be turned into analytical insights by studying the role of transnational media in young people's cultural negotiations in everyday life, and in the process outlining how this negotiation has transformed into more complicated levels of cultural appropriation, negotiation and identification in the age of regional media cultural flows. Filtering through this "problematic" material not only questions what I have possibly overlooked in the realm of my research practice but also challenges me to overcome this difficulty as part of the process of my intellectual exploration and development.

Stumbling through my research method: On "working" and "walking" through the material

Admittedly, I began my research design aiming to explore what the possible media effects of the consumption of regional popular TV dramas on the young Taiwanese audience are with questions such as to what extent is the early concept of 'pleasure of recognition' still relevant to the viewing of TV dramas. In addition to this I asked how the cultural consumption of regional TV dramas related to youth consumer behaviours and cross-cultural identification; and how and why the notion of 'cultural proximity' is often associated with the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan. Young Taiwanese as a given generation are highly exposed to transnational media flows as well as being affected by drastic political, social, educational and cultural changes in Taiwan since the late 1990s, particularly in regard to how the space between the "nationalisation" and "transnationalisation" of Taiwan is negotiated. However, within a media reception and cultural consumption framework, the questionnaire I designed and the interviews and group discussions I conducted during my fieldwork soon presented their development as a more challenging and diverse task.

Here, I have borrowed from John Ellis's (2000) concept of working through which is used to make sense of the ways in which television and its audience is related to the wider world of individual and cultural experience. This was a useful technique during

and after my fieldwork with young people in Taiwan, as my research subjects were divided into two different groups based on educational background – university and secondary school – and their cultural and individual experience is rather different from one another. How do I take age and social differences and sensitivities into account in terms of approaching the method? Later on, and in relation to data analysis, this was a learning process which also led to a more nuanced study of the audience’s transnational reception of TV dramas in an East Asian context.

In the early stages of reviewing my questionnaire data, I came to realise that although most of the young audiences have experience of viewing both Japanese and Korean TV dramas (university students 77.8 per cent and secondary school students 73.7 per cent), the hours of viewing are rather limited. 76.5 per cent of university students spent less than 3 hours per week watching Japanese TV dramas and 80.3 per cent Korean TV dramas. A similar situation applies to secondary school students, with 83.3 per cent spending less than three hours per week watching Japanese TV dramas and 84.7 per cent on Korean TV dramas. Simply by looking at the numbers it might be interpreted that the consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has relatively limited influence on young people’s everyday lives. However, it was when I conducted my one-to-one interviews and group discussions with university and secondary school students respectively that I captured the “additional” role of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in relation to their understandings and making sense of “What is Taiwan and what does it mean to be Taiwanese?” Our conversations and discussions on the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan, on the one hand, often led to concern or anxiety about the lack of a unique Taiwanese identity among the young participants. On the other, the consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is often used as an alternative choice or sometimes as a defensive mechanism during the discussion of Taiwan’s ambiguous relationship with, and attitude towards, mainland China, particularly in terms of its historical connection, cultural identification and political estrangement. In response to my interview/group discussion question: “how and why the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas becomes the daily cultural practice in Taiwanese society” (which is a following up question from “why do you enjoy watching those regional TV dramas?”) The topic of (a lack of) Taiwanese cultural identity or Taiwanese consciousness (*Taiwan yishi*) came up during individual interviews with university students and group discussions

with secondary school participants on several different occasions. Despite the fact that there is no clear indication of what facilitates the popularity of regional TV dramas in Taiwan, young participants (university students in particular) often make a quick comment on the historical connection between Japan and Taiwan as well as the fact that “Taiwan lacks its own identity, that is why we accept foreign culture so easily” (Female, 16, group discussion).

The conversation amongst secondary school students appeared to be more complicated. Some say they do not understand what national identity means when others mentioned it, some had ambiguous attitudes about what Taiwanese identity is while others were more confident in showing their understanding. In this instance, I argue that young audiences’ used their viewing of Japanese and Korean TV dramas, not only to reflect upon their personal life experience and gain sense of the ‘pleasure of recognition’ (Ang, 1985, p. 20), but they also used comparative readings of both TV dramas as a means of cultural referencing and reflexively positioning Taiwanese identity in a wider social and political context. Hence, the question arises as to how effective questionnaire collections and interviews are as a measurement of audience reception of TV dramas. This case has demonstrated that the result of young audiences’ reception of regional TV dramas inevitably meant stronger regional cultural influence, more complex and diverse audience reception and consumption of transnational media content, and a shift to a more socially embedded and multi-culturally articulate young audience. In order to understand the contemporary audience reception of media, it is important to take into consideration transnational media flows and their broader implications in relation to cultural exchange and borrowing as well as how these are situated within the processes of cultural and social transformation.

Youth consumption of Japanese and Korean popular TV dramas, therefore, needs to be located in a social, cultural and political context which is complicated by its unique historical trajectory and the current political use of “localisation” and “globalisation” as a means of constructing Taiwan’s national cultural identity. In other words, the significance of the unexpected outcomes from the research data is partly due to the recognition of the regional popular culture flows and the interpretation and appropriation of media contents as a means of self-reflexive

understanding and formation of social changes amongst the young generation. Therefore this thesis has developed into two different parts in relation to the discussion of transnational media consumption. Part 2 examines the cultural consumption of regional TV dramas in a wider setting, in order to encompass the political changes, including the construction of “Taiwanese” identity and the impact of educational reforms in the mid-1990s.

My attempt has been to acknowledge and address these questions via a cultural approach to audience reception and media studies as well as its relation to its wider political and social setting. As a result, this thesis can be thought of as a media studies research project which starts with a Taiwanese young audience’s reception and comparative readings of regional popular TV dramas, and then develops into a more complex project in relation to the construction of Taiwanese identity based on a body of empirical evidence.

PART ONE

Young People and Regional Media Consumption

Chapter 2

Transnational media consumption: Audience reception studies and cultural appropriation in consumer society

Introduction

Chapter 2 is the first part of the literature review of the thesis, and corresponds with the empirical research in chapters 3 and 4. This chapter reviews studies of cross-cultural readings of soap operas/TV dramas, and focuses on one of the main dimensions of reception studies: audiences' meaning-making and interpretation in everyday life. I intervene in the debate about the existing relationship between the audience's cultural recognition and media reception, by suggesting that this relationship has shifted from and moved beyond the notion of the 'pleasure of recognition' (Ang 1985, p. 20, Yu-ling Su 1999) to share a sense of social and cultural similarity which is associated with the pleasure of text (Iwabuchi 2002, pp. 133-135). In other words, audience reception of and meaning-making in transnational TV dramas is perceived as a form of continual cultural contestation and negotiation which is often associated with the audience's sense of recognition of, and articulation with, texts in a particular way. And doing so we understand how these interactions shape audiences' cultural subjectivity and explore different dimensions of narrative-audience relationship in the age of global media flows. Furthermore, I examine in what ways, and how this sense of articulation and association with the text has been reproduced and assimilated through the symbolic consumption of material objects in the consumer society.

I will briefly outline the historical development of reception studies and audience research and I shall position my project as an envisaging of how young audiences perceive, interpret and appropriate transnational TV programmes (here, TV dramas). These programmes not only associate with an inner emotional level at the particular moment of recognition but also in the course of everyday life practices. Then I shall

re-visit and evaluate some of the approaches employed by media researchers on transnational TV viewing and textual readings in relation to the pleasure of recognition (Ang 1985), referential readings or critical readings (Katz and Liebes 1990) and the notions of cultural proximity and articulation (Iwabuchi 2002). My aim here is to argue that the audience's viewing of transnational soap opera/TV drama has shifted from passive emotional connection or a means of social activity of escapism to a more "active" meaning-making and cultural practice outside the living room. This argument also leads to the final part of the literature review, which deals with the concept of symbolic consumption and consumer culture. This part investigates in what way the content, images, and by-products of transnational TV dramas are actively appropriated by the audience via objects consumed in everyday life and how this imaginative pleasure is reproduced and fulfilled.

Overall, Section 1 of this chapter allows us to have a general understanding of foreign television genres and texts as well as their relationship to the local audience. It also discusses in what way notions of pleasure of recognition, emotional realism and transnational imaginative pleasure might be applied during the process of the audience's cultural articulations and meaning-making. However, I would also argue that concepts such as the pleasure of recognition or cultural proximity cannot fully explain youth audience transnational media reception because it often overlooks the complex levels of meaning-making in relation to one's social status and cultural practice in local everyday life. In media studies, Matt Briggs argues that 'meaning-making is always "embedded" in a cultural context formed by historical events and processes, discourses, politics as well as moralities and identities, it would also be a mistake to see the television audience as a homogenous mass' (2010, pp. 8-9). More importantly, I would add that meaning-making is also embedded in cultural and social transformation generated by the on-going political events, social movements, cultural activities as well as individual everyday life. Hence the relationship between the young audience's meaning-making and their transnational television viewing experience within the discourse of everyday life is much in need of further exploration.

The main aim of this thesis is to convey Taiwanese youths' experience of transnational media reception of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas and its

cultural implication within the process of nation-building in the age of globalisation. Examining the East-Asian regional popular cultural/media flows since the 1990s and “regional” scholars’ (i.e. Iwabuchi 2001, 2002, 2004, Chua 2004, 2006, Kim 2008, Lee 2003) views based on their empirical research evidence can provide me with an important entry point in assessing the case of Taiwan. Section 2 discusses the flows of regional (East Asia) popular TV dramas in relation to cultural globalisation and “Asian identity”. In this section, I illustrate the cultural phenomenon of the popularity of Japanese and South Korean popular culture in the region, mainly focusing on the debates about the popularity of so-called “Trendy/Idol Dramas”. I would suggest that transnational television reception has added different cultural ingredients in terms of youth cultural consumption and social imagination within the context of a sense of being ‘culturally proximate’ (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 135) and being part of an Asian modernity (Chua 2000). Second, instead of looking at single regional cultural products in Taiwan, I choose to compare two regional TV dramas which are imported from Japan and South Korea. Thus, in the last part of this section, I trace the distribution and circulation of Japanese and South Korean media/cultural products, and their reception and consumption in Taiwan.

Whilst engaging with theoretical debates in transnational media and audience studies, and examining the regional popular cultural flows and its political and cultural implications in the age of globalisation, my overall aim is to understand how Taiwanese young people deal with media change and make sense of their everyday lives and identities in relation to transnational cultural consumption of TV dramas. In addition I examine how the process of media consumption is mediated by different generations and appropriated into their social and cultural understanding of others. Thus I propose a more comparative reception study in this thesis, focusing on the cross-cultural reception of both Japanese and Korean TV dramas and comparing them with the reception of local TV dramas in Taiwan. In doing so, the first part of thesis not only explores the various textual readings of foreign TV dramas amongst different audience groups but also provides a more complete approach in examining the transnational media consumption which I will further discuss in chapters 3 and 4, based on my empirical research.

Audience studies and transnational media reception, consumption and cultural appropriation in consumer society

a. Reception study and audience research from a socio-cultural perspective

The dynamic relationship between TV viewing and the audience's reading of texts has been reassessed frequently according to the ways in which it contributes to different understandings of the audience and the role of television in everyday life. This section looks at the historical trajectories of audience reception studies and its importance in understanding viewers' readings of different television programmes and genres. Based on the theoretical framework of reception analysis and media consumption, I want to situate my audience research within the field of study focussing on the relationship between the audience's textual interpretations, media consumption and cultural practice in everyday life.

According to Pertti Alasuutari's (1999) division, reception studies and audience research has expanded into three generations. The first generation dates back to Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model which involves a shift from a technical to a semiotic approach to the media's message. A message was no longer understood as some kind of package or "injection" to the audience, but is dependent on how the audience decodes these messages. As a result, the role of the audience has acquired a central place in media studies. The second generation is *audience ethnography* which was influenced by the first generation of research by taking an ethnographic turn in empirical audience studies. It also known as qualitative audience reception studies, focusing on analysing programmes and its reception among a particular audience by conducting in-depth interviews with its viewers or through participant observation. This was enthusiastically practised by several scholars (e.g. Morley 1980, Katz and Liebes 1990, Lull 1990). Their findings at the time were an important indication of the role of television as a social resource for conversation, where television is used for reflecting and reproducing power relations in family life, which later led to research on the social use of television and other media (see Silverstone 1994). The third generation, which Alasuutari suggests we are currently in, is a *constructionist view* which argues that the audience and media should be seen from a discursive or constructionist perspective (1999, pp. 2-8). In other words, it is a study of audience

interpretations and uses of media text as well as the cultural place of the media in the contemporary world. This generation's approach to the idea of audience, according to his observation, is that 'there isn't really such a thing as the "audience" out there; one must bear in mind that audience is, most of all, a discursive construct produced by a particular analytic gaze' (ibid., p. 6). The main concerns in this generation included a 'rethinking of the place of the media in everyday life, the concept of "audience" and along with that, the place of media research itself in the whole picture' (ibid.). He proposes three key elements of third generation reception studies: 'an increasing reflexivity, a move from audience psychology to sociology, and a development towards addressing a whole "media culture"' (ibid., p. 9) in the field of mass communication studies. The notion of reflexivity not only applies to the audience, but also to the researcher in relation to different aspects of media policy, media use or discursive practices. This change from a psychological to a sociological perspective of audience studies and the emphasis on an audience's viewing and reading of text is not only associated with the individual's inner emotional level, but also with a broader social and political context. Hence, the study of 'media cultures' treating the media, programmes and messages as part of social reality – media as a cultural form is embedded in everyday life (ibid., pp. 9-17). By and large, a relatively contemporary reception studies approach has shifted its attention from the audience's individual (active) text reading towards a more comprehensive research methodology on the process of audience viewing and text reading from a sociological perspective.

Reception analysis may well have been developed (or at least been widely quoted) from Hall's encoding/decoding model. However, as David Morley points out, the problem is that 'Hall's original model tends to blur together questions of recognition, comprehension, interpretation and response' (1992, p. 21). In a sense, traditional audience reception research tends to finish within an inner emotional level and at that particular moment of response ignores the follow-up external behaviour in everyday life. In a similar vein, Grossberg argues that reception should be seen as one field of 'the complex and contradictory terrain, the multi-dimensional context, within which people live out their everyday lives' (1988, p. 25). Thus, the relationship between television and audiences is not just a matter of negotiation between texts and audiences but also the possibility for structuring social relationships, identities and desires through the process of television consumption (Ang 1996, p. 51). These

arguments have alerted us to ‘the importance of not reducing reception to an individualised, essentially psychological process, but conceptualised it as a deeply politicised, cultural one’ (ibid., 137). David Morley’s (1992) emphasis on the need to integrate the analysis of the broader questions of *ideology*, *power* and *politics* (as a vertical dimension of communications which he borrowed from Hall) with the analysis of the *consumption*, *use* and *function* of television in everyday life (as a horizontal dimension), underlines the important shift in the relationship between audience and media in the field of reception studies. This theoretical framework, in my view, is a crucial approach to understanding the role of the media in relation to “power” and “taste” in everyday life. This is close to Douglas Kellner’s proposal that ‘media cultural studies’ analyses the complex relations between texts, audiences, media industries, politics, and the socio-historical context in specific conjunctures (1995, p. 37). Both scholars point out that by situating reception analysis within a broader socio-political framework and the discourse of everyday life, the audience reception and interpretation of the media text model can contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between audiences and their use of media in general. In addition, the critical media and cultural approach does not discredit the importance of the audience’s role but also acknowledges the existing social infrastructure and political ideology. By the same token, Ien Ang suggests that an important way of understanding audience activity is to consider the ‘embeddedness’ of ‘audience activity’ in a network of ongoing cultural practices and relationships (1996, p. 42). She insists that ‘what matters is not the certainty of knowledge about audiences, but an ongoing critical and intellectual engagement with the multifarious ways in which we constitute ourselves through media consumption’ (ibid., p. 52). By and large, all these arguments avoid falling into the simple-minded cultural populism trap and also indicate the continuously changing interaction between media and audience in contemporary society.

Previous approaches in reception studies commonly assumed that cultural practices as well as individual acts of interpretation are relatively autonomous in relation to political, cultural and economic structures. It is accepted that viewers use elements of their shared social knowledge to determine the relative quality and significance of a programme. This approach was partly developed from the *Uses and Gratifications* model. It considers audiences as empowered active individuals who can intervene in

media in terms of consumption, decoding and social use (Jensen and Rosengren 1990). In other words, how television is used and attended to by the audience in their daily life has provided fabric to the idea that receivers construct different meanings according to their experience. For instance, Fiske's (1987) (in)famous celebration of the semiotic power audiences have in creating their own meanings and pleasure has been widely interpreted as a confirmation of the liberal pluralist paradise. However, as Morley fairly argues, texts remain 'structured in dominance' by the preferred reading; that is, the meaning which producers encoded and which they want the audience to receive. He argues that 'the power of viewers to reinterpret meaning is hardly equivalent to the discursive power of centralised media institutions to construct the texts which the viewer then interprets, and to imagine otherwise is simply foolish' (1997, p. 125). Supported by Ang's insight into the notion of 'active audience' which should be understood not as an example of 'audience freedom', but as a moment of cultural struggle, an ongoing struggle over meaning and pleasure which is central to the fabric(ation) of everyday life (1996, p. 43). As she famously puts it: while the 'audience may be active, in [a] myriad [of] ways, in using and interpreting media...it would be utterly out of perspective to cheerfully equate "active" with "powerful"' (Ang 1990, p. 247).

Rather, 'what matter[s] is how the idea of activeness' is articulated with a more general theory of social agency and power' (Ang 1996, p. 41). In other words, the interaction between text and audience is articulated and mediated within a predetermined social and cultural structure. Thus the audience's reading of the texts is often limited. In a more recent take on studying audience, Jenny Kitzinger usefully suggests:

There is no need to go further than simply documenting the various ways in which people 'decode' or 'resist' messages to identify the origin of such diverse readings and reflect upon why they matter. Rather than seeing these patterns of evidence as 'consumer sovereignty', we should examine how they are shaped by their socio-political context, including by the conduct of people's social interchange (2004, p. 189).

To sum up, a reformed audience research can reveal how people are actually using cultural texts and what sort of effects these texts are having on everyday life. Therefore, by combining questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews/group

discussions as a data collection method and applying this to reception studies, this thesis provides important data-based media cultural research on how young audiences receive and interact with transnational media texts and formulate their cultural consumption of media.

b. *Meaning-making and transnational viewing of TV dramas in everyday cultural practice*

In this section, I revisit audience use of transnational media products in relation to the social formation of identity within local contexts in the past. Meaning-making and the interpretation of media texts are often seen as closely associated with individual socio-cultural experience in everyday life. In the age of globalisation, media flows have been one of the most predominant cultural flows not only in terms of distribution, production and dissemination of information and image, but also as a daily cultural practice in most countries (see Appadurai 1996, Chapter 2, Featherstone 1990, 1995). Due to the nature of my thesis topic I want to focus here on examining cross-cultural receptions of soap operas in relation to political perception, social (trans)formation and cultural appropriation. In doing so my emphasis is that in the past the study of audiences' meaning-making was largely a socially determined practice and seen as way of resistance to foreign media products. In addition, this form of interpretation often conveniently celebrates the notion of "active audience" and ignores the shortcomings of active readings, mainly, that it does not necessarily guarantee a resistance to media texts. Therefore, in my research, I examine to what extent different regional TV dramas (here, Japanese and Korean) allow for the meanings of text to be "actively" interpreted by local Taiwanese audiences and how the process of textual interpretation, media consumption and cultural appropriation is contested and negotiated amongst different young audience groups.

Transnational viewing of TV dramas (soap operas, *telenovelas*, and TV series) has been one of the most popular and common cultural practices amongst audiences. In the late 1980s, the cross-cultural readings of *Dallas* were well documented based on empirical research by scholars such as Ien Ang (1985) and Liebes and Katz (1990). In the 1990s, despite the dominant force of American TV programmes in transnational media flows, there were several important empirical studies on transnational TV viewings. Minu Lee and Chong Heup Cho (1990), for example, looked at how

Korean women living in the United States shared a pleasure in viewing Korean soap operas, which gave them a sense of connection with “home.” In London, Marie Gillespie (1995) conducted ethnographic research with young Punjabis, looking at how a migrant or diasporic community experiences transnational TV consumption and how television (such as Australian *Neighbours* and the Indian version of *Mahabharata*) is central to the formation and transformation of identity within this group.

In the 1990s, media cultural studies scholars argue that the relationship between audience and media is often not linear, ideological, contradictory or predetermined by encoding and decoding, but rather it is the interactive link between audience, text, and context (see Ang 1996, Jensen and Rosengren 1990, Kellner 1995, Morley 1992, 1996, 1997). Within a larger context of media globalisation and consumption, how audiences use imported media content often requires what Matt Briggs calls a ‘modality of response’:

Meanings are generated in response to audiences’ embeddedness, to their wider cultural experiences and practices, the range of everyday routines which the media are an essential part of, and uses to which television is put (2010, p. 13).

Hence, influenced by early cultural studies, reception analysis refers to the media message as culturally and commonly coded discourses, and regards audiences as agents of meaning production. In general, ‘reception analysis has intensified our interest in the ways in which people actively and creatively make their own meanings and create their own culture, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them’ (Ang 1996, p. 136). However, ‘a *cultural* approach to reception’, according to Ang, can ‘address the differentiated meanings and significance of specific reception patterns in articulating more general cultural negotiations and contestations’ (ibid., p. 137). In other words, it is not about audience meaning-making but rather about what is *meaningful* to the audience within a particular socio-cultural context.

In Ang’s (1985) earlier research on watching *Dallas* in the Netherlands, she argues that under different social and cultural circumstances, audiences’ “pleasure of

recognition” and interpretation of media text is formulated and expressed sometimes in contradiction to the original texts or characters but often acknowledged as such (i.e. emotional realism). The idea of ‘emotional realism’, as she famously put it, is a ‘tragic structure of feeling’, a profound and melodramatic recognition of life’s emotions (ibid., p. 44). Hence, by pointing out the importance of understanding the inter-relation between media text (soap opera), fantasy/reality and its audiences within different socio-cultural contexts, to me, Ang’s approach within the field of reception studies provides a useful insight in analysing the domestic audience reception of foreign television programmes in terms of cultural imaginary as well as self-identification and reflexivity. I will further discuss the notion of “pleasure of recognition” in terms of TV genre choice and textual reading and examine if it is still a valid argument in young audience’ consumption of transnational TV dramas in the next section.

In the field of cross-cultural reading of television programmes (here, *Dallas*), according to Liebes and Katz (1990), the process of negotiation between the viewer and the foreign programme involves selection and a transformed appropriation of the message such as a form of domestication and familiarisation. The aim of their research was to compare cultural differences and differential positioning in relation to the text; to understand the dynamics by which viewers from different cultural backgrounds situate themselves in relation to the narratives of the programmes; and also to understand how those differences could be identified in terms of discrete sets of social-psychological relationships (cited in Silverstone 1994, p. 149). Generally speaking, Liebes and Katz suggest domestic audiences’ reception of foreign programmes can be divided into two different camps: ‘referential readings’ which are more emotionally involving, and ‘critical readings’ which are more cognitive. Nonetheless both are ‘pleasurable’ (with the exceptional case of Japan) (1990, p. 100). In the case of Japan, they proposed several explanations: Japanese viewers regarded *Dallas* as incompatible with their values and tastes; inconsistencies in the storyline and viewers’ own sense of their inability to become emotionally involved with the programme (ibid., pp. 131-138). Hence, rather than simply implying the notion of cultural imperialism, they argue that programmes like *Dallas* deserve serious attention because they reveal something about the ways in which a programme of this type is used, often quite creatively, by viewers in very different social circumstances

(ibid., p. 155). Their studies of the relationship between foreign popular TV programmes and domestic audiences have provided an important empirical reference point and alternative analytical tool in the field of reception studies. Following their approaches, one of my aims here is to re-examine this type of cross-cultural reading of TV programmes. By posing questions at the moment when young audiences become more “familiarised” with foreign popular TV programmes, in the age of transnational media systems, we come to understand how they consume, (re)interpret and appropriate those “foreign” cultural elements in their daily lives? We can also ask to what extent foreign television programmes have become a critical experience and cultural imaginative practice for domestic young audiences in the process of self-identification and reflexivity?

In the context of recent Asian media and audience studies debates, Koichi Iwabuchi suggests that in the field of transnational regional cultural flow and consumption

Transnational cultural power does not necessarily mean the straightforward embodiment and recognition of one culture’s superiority over another but can be defined as capacity of a culture to produce symbolic images and meanings which appeal to the senses, emotions, and thoughts of the self and others (2002, p. 133).

Both Ien Ang and Iwabuchi emphasise the notion of ‘articulation’, although in different ways. Through examining the concept of pleasure of recognition, Ang suggests that audiences express their experience at a more emotional level: a ‘structure of feeling’ which is often tragic (1985, p. 44). This sense of articulation can be defined as more in tune with a personal interpretation of what is “real” and “fantasy” which operates as a mean of “escapism” or “attachment” for the audience, accordingly. Iwabuchi, on the other hand, examines the notion of cultural proximity in relation to Japanese transnational cultural power in the East-Asian region in the 1990s. He argues that one should ask ‘under which historical conjuncture does the idea of cultural similarity become associated with the pleasure of a text’ (2002, p. 133). For Iwabuchi, ‘cultural proximity is not something “out there.” It is articulated when audiences subjectively identify it in a specific program and context’ (ibid., pp. 133-134). It can be seen from the above empirical research that in terms of transnational viewing of soap operas and TV dramas it has become evident that the

cultural consumption of foreign TV programmes amongst domestic audiences is not only about textual reading/story retelling or the ‘pleasure of recognition’ but more importantly how they appropriate the narrative and position themselves in relation to cultural “others” in daily social practice.

However, their research focus was limited to one particular programme (*Dallas*; *Tokyo Love Story*) and one particular audience group. Ang (1985) mainly analyses fans’ responses, while Iwabuchi’s (2002) research was restricted to young female audiences as well as placing the reception of TV dramas within the binary dichotomy of East (Japan) vs. West (America). While Liebes and Katz (1990) emphasise the cultural process of negotiation between viewers and foreign TV programmes in terms of domestication and familiarisation of narrative, their research excluded an important element of the domestic media industry. To a certain extent it justifies the active audience theory regarding their ability to make divergent and resistant interpretations of the storyline based on their different cultural backgrounds. This thesis investigates young Taiwanese audiences’ reception of regional TV dramas as a form of cultural and social practice within the context of Asian modernisation, and in doing so it aims to avoid reducing youth popular culture to a subculture or indeed seeing the local audience as an active agent in resisting imported media content. Instead, by looking at the media consumption of regional TV dramas as a form of cultural practice and a social phenomenon which is closely interwoven with the local young audience’s everyday lives, I choose to use a comparative approach to better understand the relation between youth transnational viewing experiences and narrative appropriation, and the role of different regional TV dramas in general.

c. Audiences’ narrative-reflexivity: soap operas and pleasures of text

In this section, I examine earlier research on the relationship between TV genres and audience reception, and in particular I explore the notion of the ‘pleasure of recognition’ in soap opera (Ang, 1985). In so doing, I shall use this concept as the entry point to understand the relation between soap opera and its audience’s emotional engagement and meaning-making. I will further argue that the audience’s experience of soap opera/TV drama viewing in everyday life cannot be assumed to constitute a passive emotional connection and expression. Rather, it should be seen as

a means of creating the reflexivity of different audience groups (e.g. Korean women, Kim 2004), as articulated by the individuals' social status and cultural backgrounds by dialectical process. It is with this understanding in mind that my research on youth comparative reading of regional popular TV dramas in Taiwan is not about the content analysis of a particular programme or concerned with the foreign popular media's influence on local youngsters per se. Rather, my focus is to understand the popularity of regional TV dramas in Taiwan as a cultural phenomenon and social reality, which will be analysed in relation to the youth viewing experience of this particular genre and their cultural appropriation of it in everyday life.

Arguably audience research has shifted from being concerned with interpretation of specific television programmes to the study of patterns of engagement with materials of different types or genres. Cultural theorists, who have paved the way for its application in reception analysis have firmly established the concept of *pleasure* as an important concept. What is crucial is that we can begin to understand how particular genres of material offer certain audience groups particular pleasure in a specific social context. As Livingstone rightly states, genre expectations may not only help account for the approach audiences use with texts from particular genres but it also helps account for discrepancies between actual and predicted readings (1991, pp. 293-297). The concept of pleasure has been applied to reception analysis, and John Corner (1991) has based his understanding on three notions: *meaning*, *genre* and *context* by locating them within the wider 'influence/interpretation' question. This divides media between being an agency of *public knowledge* and of *popular culture* projects. According to him, the *public knowledge* project is concerned mainly with the investigation of factual media, broadcasting and the press, and the ways in which they inform or produce 'knowledge' in the reader. The *popular culture* project, conversely, focuses on fictional or 'entertainment' texts, and is concerned with the 'imaginative pleasure' offered to readers by such texts. To him, 'the characteristic properties of text-viewers relations in fiction television are primarily to do with *imaginative pleasure*, particularly the pleasure of dramatic circumstance and of character' (ibid., p. 276). Corner's suggestion concerning the relationship between audience imaginative pleasure and dramatic elements in fictional TV programmes as a way of examining audience reception of particular TV genre and contents, to a certain extent underlines that the audience demonstrates different layers of TV reception and predetermined

expectation of media texts. Nonetheless, his statement is also problematic because he conveniently links the pleasure effect to the elements of the 'unreal' (i.e. dramatic) and hence this only occurs at the moment of reception within a specific time and space. It also fails to explain the complex process of audience association with the programme in terms of individual negotiation with the text which is formulated by various socio-cultural experiences.

Moreover, Corner's division has been challenged by several scholars such as Ann Gray (1999, pp. 23-24) who argues that this distinction has fallen into the 'new audience studies' and a 'gendered division' paradigm. Barbara O'Connor and Elisabeth Klaus (2000), on the other hand, argue for the possibility of bridging the gap between these two projects in an effort to link pleasure to the concept of hegemony and ideology. To an extent, I agree with John Corner's division when it comes to the process of viewing and interpretation but not in terms of gender division (which Gray has criticised). However his critique, I would suggest, of viewers' genre expectations can be applied to how the local audience constructs comparative readings of regional television programmes based on their presumptions and cultural knowledge of two nations. As Feuer rightly suggests, the meanings of programmes for viewers are influenced, even manipulated, by the genres they are fitted into (cited in Fiske 1987, p. 111). To this extent, when viewers choose a certain TV programme they tend to situate themselves in a particular mood and manner of meaning-making to fit it into specific social contexts of use. For example, when audiences watch TV news they expect to gain certain knowledge from the text; on the contrary, when audiences watch soap operas they are more relaxed and more cathartically and emotionally involved in the texts. Certainly the nature of pleasure between these two genres is rather different. In textually analytical terms, the sources of pleasure that specific genres offer to their audiences are linked to the genres' textual characteristics and their intertextual possibilities (Fiske 1987, pp. 111-117). The relationship between different genre, the degree of involvement, the textual interpretation and the question of pleasure is intertwined. Hence, my approach in this thesis will be based on the concept of the 'imaginative pleasure' of TV drama viewing, with the aim of understanding why and how this pleasure is transformed and constructed by young audiences in relation to their daily cultural practice.

Ien Ang's earlier research, *Watching Dallas*, on the pleasure that a specific audience group experienced famously applied Pierre Bourdieu's critique of *taste* in 'The aristocracy of culture' suggesting that:

Popular pleasure is characterised by an immediate emotional or sensual involvement in the object of pleasure. What matters is the possibility of identifying oneself with it in some way or other, to integrate it into everyday life. In other words popular pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure of recognition (1985, p. 20).

Following this statement she asks the question: 'what do *Dallas*-lovers recognise in *Dallas*?' Clearly, one part of that identification for women audiences was that soap operas give expression to gender contradictions and provide an escape from patriarchy. Soap operas clearly work on a level of empirical realism (especially UK soap operas), however this realism is not only of an empirical kind. The stories can be recognised as both realistic and fantastical at an emotional level: as Ang puts it, 'what is recognised as real is not knowledge of the world, but a subjective experience of the world: a "structure of feeling"' (ibid., p. 45). To a certain extent, this sort of identification with desire is similar to what Richard Dyer labels 'utopianism' (1992, p. 18). He argues that entertainment does not offer 'models of the utopian world' but offers its consumers the possibility of *experiencing* 'what utopia would *feel like* rather than how it would be organised' (ibid.). Furthermore, I would argue that the idea of the "real" can be interpreted in two ways in the context of soap operas and TV dramas. It can mean "authentic" and it can also signify that context/narrative reflect a reality as constituted by everyday life experience.

There is a similar finding in scholarship on the reception of Japanese TV drama in Taiwan, which was carried out by Koichi Iwabuchi in the late 1990s. This highlighted how Taiwanese audiences refer to the content of Japanese TV Dramas as a "story about us" or "our" stories (Iwabuchi 2002, pp. 146-157). When Taiwanese young female audiences refer to the content of TV programmes as their "stories" they not only compare them to their everyday life but also to the life that they maybe looking for. Hence, the pleasure of watching Japanese TV drama is a pleasure of making meaning or sense of their lives. In addition, in accounting for their pleasure in watching soap operas, viewers distinguish between fantasy (fiction) and escapism

(reality) (Ang 1985, Livingstone 1988). Nonetheless, the pleasure of soap opera is problematic, for it includes not only the pleasure of escapism and various emotional experiences, but also the pleasure of recognition and the validation of one's own everyday experiences (see Fiske 1987, Livingstone 1991). Therefore the "pleasure" of watching soap opera is continuously shifting back and forth between the reality and fantasy. Furthermore, the pleasure occurs not just at the particular viewing moment but also has the possibility of being tested and verified in real life afterwards. This leads us to questions such as how this pleasure fulfilment can be achieved through related commodity consumption? Hence, the process of television viewing is not just simply a textual reading or decoding but more importantly it is a process of recognition, comprehension, interpretation and negotiation which links back to the larger socio-historical context and cultural background.

From this point of view Livingstone is led to suggest that 'Maybe we can conceive of television effects broadly as the ways in which television constructs, prioritises, undermines, or elaborates the interpretative frameworks with which the viewer makes sense, not only of television, but also of everyday life' (1991, p. 303). For example, why is the relationship between soap opera and everyday life so intimate? One of the reasons is because regular viewers build up substantial relationships with the characters over the years. Soap operas are long-running TV programmes (especially in UK) and therefore audiences get more and more involved with those characters whom they have been watching over the course of ten or twenty years. Consequently, British audiences are not just the viewers but "become friends" closely identified with these TV characters. Therefore, the pleasure of viewing no longer consists of just simply enjoying watching TV but rather seeing and gossiping about what happened to "imaginary" neighbours or friends on the screen in their everyday life. This pleasure of recognition and the feeling of a sense of intimacy with the characters from soap operas has developed over a long period of viewing time, and has become part of everyday practice.

However, Japanese and Korean TV dramas tell different stories, unlike American teen dramas such as *Dawson's Creek* or Australian soap operas like *Home and Away*. Japanese and Korean TV dramas run to between 12 and 20 episodes, no matter how popular they are (occasionally, with special editions or sequels). Here, I mainly refer

to what is called “modern” TV drama in Japan and South Korea, as there are also period dramas (30-50 episodes) and family dramas (100+ episodes) regularly produced in South Korea⁹. How youth audiences interpret and understand the content and gain pleasure from these programmes is different from Western research findings about soap operas. It seems that the “stories about us” also apply on different levels and need to be further explored and differentiated. For instance, previous research about the pleasure of identification, and recognition in soap operas seems more “passive” in nature and the audiences’ “inner” functions, whether psychological or social, were considered more important in Western-based research. What I mean by “passive” is that the viewers envy, desire or long for those ways of life (particularly those seen as glamorous or as constituting an escape from patriarchy) which they cannot have in real life or a public narrative creates the space for a private emotional reaction (see Ang 1985, p. 49, Geraghty 1991, pp. 40-51). The consumption of foreign TV dramas and the “activity” of the young television audience is the focus of this thesis, which is different from previous research which mainly discusses the relationship between women and soap opera. My questions, therefore, focus on these aspects: Do young audiences tend to fulfil their imaginative pleasure and desire in a more materialistic approach?; What role does the foreign TV drama play in mediating youth’s taste, lifestyle and culture in contemporary consumer society?; How do young people formulate their sense of cultural identification and social formation in the recognition of cultural otherness that is represented on the TV screen? In Chapters 3 and 4, I examine how different levels of pleasure of recognition, cultural appropriation and social articulation are associated with the consumption of regional TV dramas. In doing so I try to intervene in some existing debates on the media reception and cultural consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and how they relate to young audiences’ self-reflexivity, the notion of cultural proximity and Asian modernity, all in relation to their daily experience and social formation.

According to Roger Silverstone the study of media consumption in modern society can be categorised by four themes: commodification, symbolisation, articulation and globalisation/fragmentation (1994, p. 107). In terms of television’s role in articulating those dynamics he further suggests: ‘One can certainly argue that television does

⁹ For further reference: <http://www.koreandrama.org>

indeed provide in its programmes, through its narratives, its genres, and its rhetorics, one way in which the logics of commodity culture are articulated with the concerns, values and meanings of everyday life' (ibid.).

One of the important findings concerning teenagers' reception of American TV programmes in Daniel Miller's article, 'The consumption of soap opera: *The Young and the Restless* and mass consumption in Trinidad' (1994), suggested that the reception of soap operas has evolved since young people have more money to fulfil the desires and dreams derived from viewing TV programmes (such as those concerning fashion). This observation can also be extended to the relationship between individuals and society. By the same token, Liebes and Katz (1990) underline different cultural readings, not as evidence an absence of effects, but rather as being likely to validate or reinforce the different perspectives of the viewers in the age of transnational media systems. The variance in audience reception research seems to move toward a rather different stage in the debate. Therefore, in the transnational reading of TV programmes in terms of cultural identification and consumption one should avoid simply dividing the field into two opposite camps: on the one hand, homogenisation and on the other, the fragmentation and disintegration of cultures and tastes (see Featherstone 1991). Rather one should further explore how the television audience, through the consumption of foreign TV programmes and their related products, fulfils their own desires and examine what mode of consumption leads to the fulfilment of dreams, imagination and pleasure. In so doing we can then understand how young audiences use television in the course of their everyday life in terms of the formation and transformation of their social relationships with foreign cultures.

This also raises issues around the topic of "otherness" in the age of the transnational media system and the rise of regional popular culture flows, which is this thesis's starting point. Hence, it can be thought of as a more comprehensive study of audience reception that is complicated and informed by local social interactions, cultural consumption practices and cultural exchanges in the age of transnational cultural flows. In other words, the study of cross-cultural readings of TV dramas and audience meaning-making needs to be situated within a broader socio-cultural discourse. It also needs to be more sensitive to individual interactions with the texts as well as narrative

reflexivity during the process of cultural appropriation and social formation.

d. *Consumer society and transnational media consumption in everyday life*

As I mentioned in the previous section, early research on the relationship between texts and the audience is often associated with the notion of the ‘structure of feeling’, reality and fantasy, imaginative pleasure, and the different ways in which lives have been imagined. However, there has been a lack of follow-up research into how the audience integrates these feelings and elements of imagination into everyday routines and practices. Given the desire to experience in reality what has been imagined, in the age of affluent hedonistic consumerism the audience has different “active” ways of relating to TV texts, images and meanings. Early research on the popularity of ‘Japanese Trendy Drama’ in East Asian countries is often associated with how the drama represented an urban or ‘aesthetic’ way of life (see Yu-ling Su 1999, p. 133, Iwabuchi 2004, p. 9). The important factor in the promotion of the ‘aestheticisation of everyday life’ (Featherstone 1991, p. 47) is the proliferation of *images*, according to Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998, p. 87). This section discusses the relationship between youths, popular media reception and consumer culture in relation to the consumption of sign values and symbolic economy. Drawing on these discussions, I want to examine to what extent Taiwanese youths’ transnational TV reception and cultural consumption shapes their identification with the foreign TV narratives and characters and how they materialise the notion of an ‘imaginative pleasure’ and way of life. This will be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Within the discipline of media studies, debates about the effects of the consumption of television, film, fiction and related forms continue unabated. In these arguments it is the audience’s consumption of symbols and meanings in media messages which are brought into central focus. However, we need to take one step further in order to try and understand the audience as consumer, the process of TV consumption and the patterns of ‘symbolic consumption’ in everyday life, all of which may be influenced by the media messages and social context. Therefore, we need to try and understand how young audiences, through media reception, determine a role for themselves within consumer societies.

From *The Consumer Society* through to his later writings, Baudrillard (1998) emphasises the endless reduplication of signs, images and simulations through the media, erasing the distinction between the image and reality. He argues that the overwhelming flood of signs and images that pushes us beyond the social are usually taken from the media, such as television, rock videos and MTV. This, together with a wide range of symbolic goods and experiences produced by the culture industries, inevitably mean that these relationships are stronger than ever in consumer societies. The relationship between media and consumption, according to Andy Ruddock, is that 'media give symbolic clues to the audience on how to position themselves in consumer culture [and] acts of consumption provide examples of how mediated meanings become actualised' (2001, p. 166). In a sense consumption has been theorised to the point where it embraces all forms of social activity. Hence, it is as important to understand the connections between media and everyday life at the same time as one investigates the cultural meanings in relation to the concept of symbolic consumption.

Arguably, the images in television often connect to a way of life for the audience due to the congestion of commodities on screen which create a certain type of stylish life. Earlier research on media effects or reception analysis was more focused on the "degree" of direct effect and therefore it always led to debates about the power of the text or/and the power of the audience. However, merely measuring how much effect media messages can cause is a rather limited perspective. What I am concerned with is how media can be used as an informational tool for audiences, because to a certain degree we are aware that the media has an influence on its audience; what we do not know is how particular audiences can be influenced by, respond to, or use the information they obtain from the media and how they might carry on practically everyday life within various political, cultural, economic and social situations. As Denis McQuail observes: 'Media use can ... be seen to be both limited and motivated by complex and interacting forces in society and in the personal biography of the individual. This is a sobering thought for those who hope to explain as well as describe patterns of audience behaviour' (1987, p. 136).

The key issue is not so much whether an audience is active or not but rather how the activity is significant or makes a difference. Many commentators, therefore, have

suggested that television offers the possibility for truly active engagement which involves great pleasure and even transcendence (see Silverstone 1994, p. 154). Moreover, theories of pleasure or of fantasy are one route to an exploration of that potential.

Quite often the pleasure of viewing TV is seen as the pleasure of meaning-making, celebrating what 'specific genres offer to their audiences are linked to the genres' textual characteristics and their intertextual possibilities' (Klaus and O'Connor 2000, p. 375), which I have discussed in the previous two sections. Nevertheless, what has been neglected is how the audience contextualise and materialise the 'structure of feeling' or 'pleasure of recognition' in everyday life. Thus I would argue the role TV dramas play in how audiences connect with their personal lives is often linked to emotional connections. It is therefore important to examine how audiences, through the reception of the texts, images and the consumption of goods, create their own fantasy worlds which may have been captured by TV programmes.

With the rise of commercial TV stations, Graham Murdock and Peter Golding (1995) have developed the concept of 'television economics', which indicate the ways in which programmes generate profit by developing by-products such as books, videos, soundtracks and so on. Therefore the whole "package" of TV consumption and everyday life has become more complete and integrated in the age of consumer culture. Hence the audience's cultural practices associated with TV content in everyday life are no longer confined to emotional involvement but also comprise material and solid contact. For instance, modern Japanese TV drama is categorised as 'Trendy drama' (also known as 'Idol drama') in Taiwan, as this type of drama was produced as a "packaged" commercial product featuring original elements, such as a high-profile theme song, pop idols, and romantic settings that flag certain products (commodity-signs) (Iwabuchi 2002, Yu-ling Su 1999). Therefore in the process of viewing foreign TV programmes, audiences are not merely reading or making meanings from the content and plot but they are also consuming the additional symbols and images inscribed within these texts. The cultural consumption of media has grown more complicated and fragmented in the age of globalisation (although some might argue that it has instead become homogenised). Thus one cannot ignore the importance of the role of media as a cultural reference point and how audiences

fulfil their desires and imaginative pleasures through different forms of appropriation and interpretation.

According to Jean Baudrillard (1970/1998), commodities consist of two different values, first the 'use value of things': the value which is based on the quality, function and usefulness of goods, providing actual benefits and needs to consumers; second, the sign-value: the images of things which operates through advertising, the media, displays and performances create the romantic, fantastic and aesthetic fabric to consumers in daily life. Don Slater argues, following Baudrillard:

We no longer consume products but rather signs, and indeed the system of signs: what we buy in and through the consumer good is the social place it maps out in relation to all the other commodity signs in the system. The value of goods no longer arises from their use or even from their abstract economic exchange: rather, it is their sign-value that defines them (1997, p. 199).

This is similar to what Bourdieu says about taste, where it 'functions as a sort of social orientation, a "sense of one's place", guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position' (1987, p. 466).

It can be seen from the above arguments that the notion of consumption has shifted from a materialistic approach to a 1990s focus on its cultural implications, after which the concepts of modernity and modernisation were reconsidered and reformulated. One account of mass cultural theories of consumerism argues that 'consumer culture comprises systems of signs or codes which determine the meanings of all goods for all people (generally through advertising) and indeed "constitute" the people themselves through their positioning within discourses' (Slater 1997, p. 143). The overabundance of commodity-signs in consumer society together with the development of technology, especially the mass media, means the reproduction of signs, images and pictures has blurred the distance between the imaginary and the real. The output of goods has become the production of 'sign-value' leading to the problem of consumption making a distinction between a "real" or "false" image, not the system of needs.

According to Ubonrat Siriyuvasak's research on the consumption of J-pop (Japanese popular culture) and K-pop (Korean popular culture) in Thailand, Thai youths deliberately articulate cultural practices that would differentiate them from other social classes (2004, p. 178). In a sense, the link between the consumption of commodities and TV dramas can be understood as a different yet similar means of fulfilling one's desires or dreams, thus making sense of their conscious choices which they had formed in their daily lives. Consequently, looking at the consumption of Japanese 'Trendy Dramas' and fashionable commodities in Taiwan in the late 1980s and the early 1990s from the perspective of symbolic consumption indicates that consuming behaviour is not only economic behaviour. Yu-ling Su, in her (1999) dissertation 'Romance Fiction and Imaginary Reality: Reading Japanese Trendy Drama Socially', she points out that the culture and the way of life portrayed by Japanese TV dramas have been widely accepted and practised by Taiwanese audiences. According to her research, Taiwanese young people do not just consume Japanese goods but also the abstract meaning and cultural values which the TV dramas portray. In other words, it is the cultural consumption of meanings, images and signs which constitute what Featherstone describes as the general 'aestheticisation of everyday life' (1991, pp. 67-68). Previous research states that through the consumption of Japanese magazines, music, comic books, novels, commodities and even foods, Taiwanese consumers believe that they are experiencing a Japanese way of life as portrayed by the Japanese TV programmes. Hence, Su argues that when Taiwanese young audiences are watching Japanese Trendy Dramas they not only receive the content but also the additional signs and images, and through consuming behaviours fulfil certain imaginative pleasures.

To summarise, in a postmodern society consuming is not only the activity of being fascinated by, or the use of, things, it also involves the formation of a self-image during the progress of an individual life. Featherstone (1991) points out that consumer culture involves self-expression, self-development and personal transformation. The social activities that surround it offer opportunities for young people to actively and collectively construct their own social identities. In earlier research, the media are seen not as a powerful source of dominant ideologies, but as a 'symbolic resource' which young people use in making sense of their experiences, in relating to others and in organising their daily lives (Buckingham 1993, p. 13). Hence,

it is important to question what role transnational media programmes play in producing those dreams and desires which lead to the process of symbolic consumption and appropriation in the formation of the transnational cultural imagination in consumer society. This process also involves how young audiences weave regional TV dramas into their local daily experience, thus allowing us to reflect on their social formation and cultural identification or differentiation. In addition, this thesis explores further the concepts of ‘cultural proximity’ (Straubhaar 1991, La Pastina and Straubhaar 2005), the notion of ‘Asian modernity’ (Iwabuchi 2004) and the ‘cultural image bank’ (Chua 2000), all in relation to the Taiwanese audience reception of Japan and Korean TV dramas. Based on a body of empirical research this thesis will contribute to our understanding of the cultural complexities of television genres and texts and their relationship to their audience in the age of transnational media flows.

The flows of regional (East Asia) popular TV dramas: From cultural globalisation to ‘Asian identity’?

a. Popular consumption of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas in East/Southeast Asia: From Hari-zu (Japanophile) to Hanliu (Korean Wave)

It is arguable that television dramas (i.e. soap operas, *telenovelas*) have often been understood and mostly articulated within – not outside – the nation. This does not mean that TV dramas could not cross national boundaries. Instead, they are more likely to succeed in doing so and in more limited and culturally specific ways: some scholars have characterised this process as becoming ‘culturally proximate’ (see Iwabuchi 2001, p. 54, Iwabuchi 2002, pp. 130-135). Koichi Iwabuchi consistently argues that ‘the perception of cultural proximity...needs to be understood less as the manifestation of given cultural attributes and values than the dynamic process of *becoming*’ (2004, p. 42 *my emphasis*). In other words, in the process of transnational television reception, cultural negotiation and social (trans)formation, the role of audience is central to the discussion, particularly in terms of the subject’s articulation and identification with a particular programme and context. According to Iwabuchi (2004) in recent East Asian popular media/cultural flows, the notion of cultural proximity in the consumption of Japanese TV dramas has been articulated positively

via Asian modernisation, Americanisation and globalisation.

Previous research has suggested that elements of cultural proximity, the return to an Asia/Asian identity policy, together with the rise of geo-cultural markets and consumer culture are making the intra-Asian cultural flow more active than ever. However, this does not necessarily suggest that the inter-regional cultural flow is equal, since most of these countries are still on the receiving end (Japan and South Korea are dominant forces in the region). Some of these nations react to this intra-Asian cultural flow from a more positive perspective, seeing it as an opportunity to create a new pan-Asia cultural identity, thus forming a buttress against Western cultural imperialism (e.g. Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand). Most of these countries are also aware that media liberalisation in the age of globalisation has forced the television industry landscape to change rapidly. However, apart from Koichi Iwabuchi's analysis of the cross-culture audience reception of the regional cultural flow in the late 1990s, most debates have focused on the issues of political (e.g. imperialism, cultural colonisation) and economic (media industries and regulations) impacts which have overlooked youth cultural and media reception of TV dramas and their implications for everyday life.

What I am proposing here is that by examining regional popular cultural flows within the discourse of political relations, the historically specific moment and media liberalisation in relation to the globalisation and Asian modernisation, one can begin to unpack the complexity of the youth audience's reception of regional popular dramas rather than merely seeing it as the pleasure of recognition or youth subculture. Part 1 of the thesis explores, from the point of view of university and secondary students, to what extent the elements of pleasure of recognition, cultural proximity and the return to an Asia/Asian identity and consumer culture are interwoven into their reception of the programmes, if at all.

Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham's (1996, p. 8) notion of a 'geolinguistic region' of audiovisual production flows, such as Mexico and Brazil in Latin America and Egypt in the Arab world captures the increasing complexity of international television flows, while Hesmondhalgh (2002, p. 19) revises it as the 'geocultural market.' He argues that the concept of the geocultural is more suitable than geolinguistic in terms of

categorising regional cultural flows as language is only one of a number of potential cultural connections between places and peoples. Cultural connections can work across enormous distances that transcend geographical proximity. In my opinion, the notion of geocultural markets can be one explanation as to why intra-Asia popular cultural flow has become so profoundly active since the 1990s. This is because, despite the lack of linguistic commonality, the popular reception of regional TV dramas is often perceived as the consequence of sharing cultural similarities and a sense of modernisation (see Ching 2000b, Chua 2000, 2004, 2006, Iwabuchi 2002, 2004, Chua and Iwabuchi 2008).

However, Japanese popular culture products have more or less dominated East/Southeast Asian markets throughout the 90s, although there was some resistance from local governments, such as those in Taiwan and South Korea (Hong and Hsu 1999). Even though the consumption of Japanese popular cultural products may lead to another form of “cultural colonisation” or cultural imperialism, this sense of feeling threatened by a former coloniser has little impact on younger generation. Today, most of Asia’s youth has never experienced that former period of colonisation and therefore Japanese popular culture is just something new, more advanced, superior, something they can identify with and, at the same time, easily consumed. On the other hand, the sudden popularity of Korean popular culture products in Asia is so prominent that in Taiwan it is called *Hanliu*, the literal meaning of which is “cold wave/current”, because the Chinese pronunciation of “cold” and “Korea” sounds the same. Therefore, *Hanliu* has been used to indicate the popularity of Korean TV dramas, pop music, food, fashion styles and so on. As Jessica Kim, vice president for *MTV Network Asian*, announced in *Time Asia* magazine, ‘Korea is like the next epicentre of pop culture in Asia, it’s the next Japan’¹⁰.

The prospect of South Korea overtaking the Japanese popular culture industry in Asian pop markets has become possible and more apparent in the recent years due to South Korea’s booming cultural industry and government involvement. According to Lee, Scott and Kim:

¹⁰ *Time Asia*, 29 July 2002 online issue, accessed <http://www.time.com/time/world/article>

Hallyu has spurred travel to Korea. The Korea National Tourism Organisation (KNTO) reported that approximately 3 million *Hallyu* induced tourists visited Korea as of November 2004. Many cultural commentators in Korea attribute such a sudden influx of East Asian tourists to the dramatic success of TV dramas (e.g., *Winter Sonata* and *Great Jang-Geum*) and an avid interest in *Hallyu* actors and actresses (2008, p. 811).

Korean TV dramas have become so popular in East Asia that organised tours bring TV drama fans to their filming locations in South Korea. For instance, according to an online survey carried out by the Korean government, Seoul ranks as the most popular Asian city for tourists, followed by the TV dramas' shooting locations¹¹. The "Korean Wave" has swept across much of Asia since the early 2000s. For example, in Thailand, Korean TV dramas are scheduled regularly on television and enjoy a high viewing rate; in Singapore, Korean TV dramas are scoring higher viewing rates than Japanese dramas in 2002 (Dator and Seo 2004); in Japan, *Winter Sonata* was first shown on NHK in 2003 and due to popular request rebroadcast in 2004 (Chua 2006). That is to say inter-regional TV dramas' consumption has become a cultural and social norm since the 2000s amongst most East Asian countries, with South Korea gradually dominating most cultural and media industries owing to its government's specific attempts and efforts.

Several assumptions have been made about the popularity of Korean popular culture in East/Southeast Asia by Dator and Seo (2004, pp. 31-36). Firstly, the phenomenon could be seen as nothing more than a passing fad since Japanese popular culture has passed its high point and pop culture promoters and vendors are constantly in search of new material. Korean media products are also considered as the cheaper option when compared to Japanese counterparts, and for the foreign media industry the combination of economic benefits and culturally "exotic" (i.e. different from Japan) elements have provided the opportunity for Korean popular culture to shine. Secondly, a convergence of Pan-Asian culture, as the sociologist Habib Khondker argues 'is kind of a pan-Asianism. You can look for alternative cultures, not necessarily European or American' (cited in Dator and Seo 2004, p. 33). In this case, family values, the concept of "pure" love, Confucian values and conservatism can be cited as the distinguishing cultural elements of Japanese and Korean TV dramas when

¹¹ <http://www.knto.ot.kr/eng/hallyu/hallyysurvey.html>

compared to Western ones. Thirdly, the South Korean government believes that the success of media products not only boosts the economy, but also strengthens its international image. It is the government's involvement which promotes popular cultural products, including for instance, a funding policy designed to boost the film industry, the appointment of an award-winning film director as Minister of Culture and Tourism (ibid., p. 34) and it was also suggested that the Korean Government Information Agency has actively prompted Korean TV dramas throughout the Middle East which started from August 2004¹².

In addition, it is made clear from Dator and Seo's argument that 'Korea may be the first nation *consciously* to recognise, and, more importantly, then to form official policy and take action towards, becoming a dream society of icons and aesthetic experience' (ibid., p. 36). They use the term 'a dream society of icons and aesthetic experience' to reference five futuristic theories: Ernest Sternberg's (1999) idea of 'the economy of icons' which proposes that the driving force of newer economy is not information but image; Rolf Jensen's (1999) notion of 'the dream society' where societies are mediated by pictures; Joseph Pin and James Gilmore's (1999) assertion of 'the experience economy' that recognises 'experiences as a distinct economic offering [providing] key future economic growth' and Virginia Postel's (2003) comments on 'the substance of style' and the rise of aesthetic value in economic life (cited in Dator and Seo 2004, pp. 34-35). In other words, what Dator and Seo argue is that Korean government leaders, to some extent, recognise that the 'dream economy of icons and aesthetic experience' is the wave of the future (ibid.).

President Roh said in *Digital Times* (2004), 'the 21st century is the age of knowledge and the creative mind. A powerful cultural nation will become an economically strong nation' (cited in Dator and Seo 2004, p. 37). Although the assumption is still open to further debate there is no doubt that the South Korean Government certainly plays an important role in promoting the "Korean Wave" in the age of global cultural flows. Since the 1990s, Japan and South Korea are considered major players in exporting their popular cultural products to other Asian countries in the region. This intense

¹² Under the agreement between KBS and ERTU, the Egyptian broadcast station received the dramas free of charge and the Government Information Agency produced the Arabic subtitles (Asian Film Foundation, <http://www.asianfilm.org/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=34>).

intra-regional cultural and media flows has made an 'East-Asian identity' imaginable (Chua 2006, p. 35) amongst the younger generation. The popularity of Japanese and Korean media/popular products in East and Southeast Asia – in contrast to Western ones to an extent – can be explained as the natural outcome of the latest phase of modernisation in Asian countries. Whether one can assume that the East Asian popular cultural flow is an indication of de-Westernisation remains to be seen. Nevertheless, this cultural phenomenon has challenged the notion of cultural globalisation.

While the US remains the most important global player exporting media products to most Asian countries, the growing inter-penetration of media markets and products in Asian countries suggests a new order of complexity within the global television market (see Berry et al. 2009, Iwabuchi 2002, 2004, Kim 2007, 2008). The deregulation of television in most Asian countries in the early 1990s led to a proliferation of domestic television production companies across the region, which in turn led to the emergence of regional markets based on geo-linguistic affinities and similarities, for instance, the so-called 'Chinese speaking' media market, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. The transnational flow of media products such as pop music, television dramas, light entertainment programmes between those countries suggests that language plays a primary role in facilitating audience reception, and the profitability of TV stations and the music industry (Chua 2004).

The so-called *regionalisation* strategies have been viewed as another way of resisting globalisation/Americanisation/Westernisation. It has become perceptible that the composition of the region does not simply depend on geographical, economic and political elements, but also includes a common sense of psychological and cultural familiarity. According to Eric Ma and Joseph Chan 'regionalisation of Asian television refers to the flow of Asian produced programmes and the exchanges of expertise within the Asian region; it also refers to the production and distribution of programmes which are tailor-made for regional audiences' (1996, p. 53).

In most East Asian countries, it is becoming evident that local, national and regional media markets are emerging with Japan and South Korea as the dominant forces. In

contrast to previous research, which was heavily based on the popularity of American TV programmes (e.g. *Dallas*, *Dynasty*) in the rest of world and how this imposed a homogenised ideology on its audience, recent research on trans-regional cultural flow challenges the concept of the West and the rest in part as well as suggesting the importance of the booming media markets in East Asian countries.

Moreover, if Asian regionalism has been, more often than not, articulated on *cultural* grounds rather than *economic* or *political* grounds, as Leo Ching (2000b) proposes, then this explains perhaps why the intra-Asian TV drama flows are becoming increasingly evident as the result of the dynamics of audience preference rather than the cultural content of Western media. Ching suggests that ‘A theory of culture, in this case *regional culture*, is not “about” culture/regional culture per se, but about the concepts that culture generates, concepts that are themselves related in more or less complex ways to other concepts associated with other practices’ (ibid., p. 249).

The notion of culture as generating the possibility of imagining an Asian identity has been a dominant political and theoretical approach to understanding regional integration in contrast to the European and North American power blocs. This assumption is arguably based on so-called traditional values and the shared sense of morality in creating a regional identity. However, as Japanese politician Ishihara Shintaro (1994) points out:

If the so-called high culture girded the unity of Asia in the era of high imperialism, it is mass culture in its intra-regional formation, that substantiates Asianism in the postcolonial present: the popularity of ‘Japanese’ mass culture (such as melodrama, animation, pop music, etc) signals ‘commonality’ and ‘resonance’ within Asia today (cited in Ching 2000b, p. 234).

What he suggests is that within the region, the consumption of Japanese popular culture, to a certain extent creates a common ground for young people to form and transform their sense of being Asian. In a similar vein, in the article ‘The Asianisation of Asia’, Washington bureau chief of the *Asahi Shimbun* (Asahi Newspaper) Yoichi Funabashi argues that ‘regional awareness in Asia does not derive from reactive attitudes. Asia’s “Asianisation” is paradoxically the result of the globalisation of its economy and media’ (1993, p. 79). Therefore the contemporary search for a new

Asian identity, according to Ching, Ishihara and Funabashi, is predominantly affirmative and forward-thinking, not reactionary or nostalgic. Then the questions that direct this research project are: what is this future-oriented assumption based on? Who is leading the way? How are the intra-Asia popular cultural flows perceived as an important dynamic force in the construction of a new Asian identity? Moreover, how has the trend of cultural regionalisation altered the media industry in Taiwan (e.g. through Taiwanese idol drama) and changed the consumption of material production and taste amongst young people thus far? I will elaborate these issues in Chapters 3 and 4 based on my field research amongst university and secondary school students in Taiwan between 2003 and 2005.

In my view, the notion of forward-looking sentiment in searching for a sense of modern collective cultural identification amongst Asian youngsters according to Ien Ang (2004) is similar to what Iwabuchi suggests as a sense of becoming ‘culturally proximate’ (Iwabuchi 2001, p. 54, Iwabuchi 2002, Chapter 4), an observation based on his research on the popularity of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan. Thus it is important to note that countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore went through a very rapid modernisation process in the past few decades and young people in the 1990s were among the first generation faced with the task of figuring out how to be truly modern in a modernised Asian context. Ang stresses the argument in conjunction with the Singaporean sociologist Beng Huat Chua’s (2000) perception that:

Youth in Asia, as in other parts of the world, draw from an “image bank” that is internationalised through popular mass media. The reference point in the imaginary is, therefore, a globalised image of youth rather than local cultural images. It is the global rather than the local that provides their identity as “youth” (cited in Ang 2004, p. 306).

Ang argues that youth in Asia may draw from several ‘image banks’, both international and local but their main reference point may not be some generic ‘globalised image of youth’ (ibid.). Instead they choose a more culturally specific and inspirable image, represented by the cultural image of Tokyo or even Seoul – the regionalised image of youth.

Since the early 1990s, the idea of the “New Asia” and “New Asianism” have been raised as a political issue in Japan, such as in the famous book, *The Japan That Can Say No* (1991) by Shintaro Ishihara and Aiko Morita. Ishihara and Morita argue that a return to and the re-creation of an Asian identity has been considered a necessity. Notably in the 1990s the relationship between Japan and other Asian countries became a central issue of discussion within Japan. The following introduction to an exhibition on *manga* (animation and comic books) from various Asian countries by the Japan Foundation Asia Centre in Tokyo explained how Japan takes the shared feeling and common concerns for granted:

Taking into consideration that we modern citizens of Asia today live *in a time of shared feelings and common concerns*, Asia Centre has organised this comic exhibition as a channel of communication among our Asian youth for better comprehending and appreciating the circumstances of each other’s societies and daily living (cited in Gossman 2001, p. 4 *my emphasis*).

In its opening statement, it acknowledges the popularity of Japanese popular cultural flows in Asia as well as its importance in the construction of an Asian identity amongst youngsters. The distribution and popularity of *manga* and *anime* (Japanese animated films) products may be considered as a means of improving communication and sharing cultural commonality between youth in Asia, according to the Japan Foundation. Within the notion of Asian values in the attempt to regionalise political and economic alliances in combination with a shared historical background and cultural imagery, it seems that East Asian countries are aiming to follow the European paradigm. Consequently, the intra-Asian cultural flows are seen as being as lively as ever.

As opposed to previous research that emphasises the popularity of *manga* and *anime* in the global scale, my focus is to look at the popular phenomenon of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas in Taiwan. Why TV dramas? As I mentioned in the introduction, in the field of media research on the reception of TV dramas (such as soap operas, *telenovelas* and TV series) there is not much attention to the significant popularity of foreign TV dramas locally. Liebes and Katz suggest on the basis of their cross-cultural readings of *Dallas* that the value of foreign TV programmes such as *Dallas* comes from viewers’ negotiation with the programme (e.g. referential readings

and/or critical readings), often intertwined with their various social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and therefore ‘the actual interaction between the programme and its viewer must be studied’ (1990, p. 4). The approach in my thesis is different from earlier research which examined the popularity of one particular TV programme via a different approach such as audience research, content analysis and the study of effects. My intervention is that the relationship between the popular consumption of regional TV programmes and its audience needs to be examined as a common form of cultural practice as well as a social phenomenon and in doing so we can move toward a general theory of transnational reception studies based on these efforts.

d. Japanese and Korean TV dramas as a social and cultural phenomenon in Taiwan since the 1990s

1. Distribution and Circulation

This section outlines the socio-cultural phenomenon of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and its implications in terms of media products distribution and circulation in Taiwan. The section highlights how the local media, cable television stations and the circulation of pirated VCDs (Video Compact Disc)¹³ have played an important role in facilitating and generating audience taste during the process of media globalisation and commercialisation in the early 1990s. Despite my research focus on young audience’s comparative reading of regional TV dramas, I also want to point out that different media uses can potentially create a different sense of imaginative pleasure by formulating different cultural dimensions of viewing experience and narrative reflexivity. For instance, the use of VCDs is considered as a more desirable viewing experience and created a sense of private space amongst secondary school students (although most of the time they do not have the luxury to create this private space) which I will elaborate further in Chapter 4.

Over the years, there have been serious concerns about the heavy dependence on foreign programmes in Taiwan (Hong and Hsu 1999). According to Hwang (1996), since Taiwan’s Cable Television Act was enacted in 1993, the penetration rate of

¹³ Typically, the VCDs will be sold in sets of eight to twelve, with each set featuring ten to twelve episodes from a single three-month season of weekly broadcasts of a particular TV drama (Hu, 2004, p. 210)

cable television has increased rapidly and reached a record high of 71 per cent in 1995, compared to only 19 per cent in 1991. The main reason for cable operators to broadcast foreign programmes instead of domestic ones was the lack of financial resources. Moreover, the high profits made by TV companies through the broadcasting (and re-broadcasting) of foreign programmes also give them a good reason to follow this pattern. As Iwabuchi also points out:

One of the most important factors in the increasing presence of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan - as evidenced by the recent rise of Japanese television programmes there - is the fact that Japanese culture industries have not actively promoted them. Rather, there has been a strong local initiative as local companies have grabbed business opportunities to sell Japanese TV programmes during the process of media globalisation in Taiwan (2001, p. 59).

Thus owing to local media industry demands, the dissemination of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan was the outcome of television companies purchasing cheap foreign productions in order to gain maximum economic profits.

The amount of Japanese programming on Taiwan's cable TV increased significantly after the lifting of the long-standing ban on importing Japanese audio-visual products in 1992 and the new Cable Television Act in 1993. The media commercialisation in Taiwan has led cable operators to schedule more of what the competition perceives as successful (such as Japanese and Hong Kong TV dramas) than counter it with different types of programmes. According to research carried out by the ICFP (International Communication Flow Project, 2001) on the number of Japanese programmes (194) and the number of hours (3,848) exported to Asian countries, Taiwan holds the first place. Almost all variety programmes that have been popular in Japan are being broadcast on some channels in Taiwan. Research conducted by Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) in the late nineties also suggests that Taiwanese people are the most enthusiastic consumers of Japanese popular culture: over seventy cable channels continuously look for new content to fill airtime, and five of these cable channels broadcast Japanese dramas and variety shows around the clock.

The most popular genre of Japanese TV programmes in Taiwan, according to rating surveys, is the TV drama. Amongst these, the so-called "Trendy Drama" (or post-trendy drama) which targets the younger generation has made a significant impact in

many places as well as in Taiwan (Iwabuchi 2002, pp. 122-124). Japanese Trendy Drama is also recognised as an established genre, called Japanese Idol Drama in Taiwan, which was named by Star TV group when it started the “Japanese Idol Drama Hour” in 1992. The title suggests that Star TV has used the strategy of promoting young Japanese idols to attract Taiwanese audiences (see Iwabuchi 2002, Yu-ling Su 1999). I will come back to this point to demonstrate how the images of those idols have been generally present and how this strategy coincides with the production system of trendy dramas in Japan.

Following the success of the Japanese, Korean TV dramas experienced an unexpected wave in Taiwan around the late 1990s. Korean programmes are however different from the Japanese case, as there is no Korean cable channel in Taiwan, and most Korean TV dramas rely on local cable stations to be broadcast. In recent years, three terrestrial stations, TTV, CTV and CTS also broadcast two to three Korean TV dramas on a daily basis. San-Li, GTV28, ETTV, TVBS-G and Wei-Lai are amongst the most frequently viewed cable channels by Taiwanese audiences (see Gallup Taiwan, INC, 2001) and these are the channels that frequently broadcast Korean TV dramas. GTV28 and Wei-Lai are both drama-centred channels that since 2000 devote several hours a day to air Korean TV dramas regardless of the limited availability of the programmes on Korean television stations. Due to its Korean-focused programming over the years, the NCC (National Communication Commission) has recently ordered GTV28 to broadcast more than 12.5 per cent locally-produced programmes in order to renew its licence for the following year (28/12/2011, *United Online Newspaper*).

The popular phenomenon of Japanese and Korean media products and pop culture in Taiwan also owed much to local media promotion, such as daily newspaper columns and entertainment news coverage on various cable channels. This phenomenon corresponds to McManus’s (1994) theory of market-driven journalism, i.e. that the media make every effort to catch the attention of the audience, and a larger audience will bring in more advertisers, therefore more profit. For instance, based on the popularity of Japanese Trendy/Idol Dramas, the tabloid dailies soon started a massive coverage of Japanese popular culture such as fashion styles, foods, cosmetics, the stars’ daily life and travel information. Entertainment news on television stations also

widely cover information about the Japanese stars' activities, pop music, and the latest drama release (Iwabuchi 2002, pp. 114-115, M.-t. Lee 2004, p. 133). Thus, it is fair to say that the relevant inter-media institutions such as newspapers and television stations also play influential roles in the construction of the newly created imagined community of the so-called "Japanophile" (*hari-zu*). Furthermore, Japanese television fans have gradually developed into Japanese culture fans in a more thorough and full-scale manner in terms of their daily life and cultural practices. For instance, relevant books have been published describing modern Japanese way(s) of life; the authors are devoted fans of Japanese TV dramas and popular culture (such as, tourism, fashion guides, food) (Huang 2011, pp. 10-11). To borrow Livingstone and Bovill's term, these authors have transformed themselves from 'passive spectators to active performers' (cited in M.-t. Lee 2004, p. 134). It has also been suggested in local newspapers that when the Korean TV dramas gradually gained popularity in Taiwan, the same kind of market promoting strategy was actively applied.

Arguably, the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas owes a lot to the fever that was generated by the local media, especially in the case of Taiwan. Local journalists asked if the sudden popularity of Korean TV dramas was actually created and over-exaggerated by Taiwanese local media. The distribution and circulation of regional popular media productions is driven by the local liberal media market's greed in the case of Taiwan and penetrated into various aspects of local daily life activities, cultural appropriations and social formations. It is with this observation, instead of analysing cross-cultural readings of one particular TV drama (i.e. *Dallas*), that I argue for the importance of examining the popularity of regional TV drama as a phenomenon encompassing the changes of local political, social, cultural and economic elements, as well as the asymmetrical flows of regional media commodities.

Another unique circumstance in terms of the early distribution and circulation of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan is pirated VCDs. It is a public secret that apart from watching TV dramas on television, pirated VCDs¹⁴ sales was the other major way of circulation of Japanese TV dramas during 1990s as it can be as cheap as £3.00 for a complete series. As Ming-tsung Lee (2004) and Yu-ling Su (1999) observed, Japanese

¹⁴ For further information about the production and circulation of pirated VCDs in Chinese networking see Kelly Hu (2004).

TV dramas have created their own cultural flows and consumer space in Taiwan. The function of VCDs is believed to liberate viewers from restrictive broadcasting schedules. With VCDs, the audience can be freed from the slavery of time and they can therefore easily indulge themselves in the dramas without any interruption, potentially finishing a whole drama series in one viewing session. Consequently, the audiences own the drama and can view it repeatedly if they like, and such possession of the text lets fans gaze more closely and chew over the plot and dialogue over and over again. In contrast to earlier research, television viewing (especially soap operas) is easily disrupted and not one hundred per cent focused, hence the influence on the audience is sometimes regarded as limited (see Fiske 1989). The degree of viewers' involvement with media texts and messages while watching TV dramas in VCDs format thus deserves careful examination in terms of personal viewing space and the intimacy of narrative reflexivity. Based on the outcomes of my questionnaires and interviews/group discussions the use of VCDs was arguably more common practice amongst university rather than secondary school students. However, due to the fact that I did not conduct audience ethnography research I could only tentatively propose that the use of VCDs amongst university students deepened individual sentimental connections and narrative reflexivity, which are closely associated with the individual's life experience – a notion I will develop further in Chapter 3.

2. TV Genre and Early Reception

This section illustrates the genre of Japanese and Korean TV dramas, and looks at how and why the narrative and format of this genre is considered by some scholars as crucial explanations of why these dramas attract young viewers in Taiwan and the rest of the Asian region. Their research on specific TV viewing experiences suggests that these regional dramas depict the ideas of Asian modernisation and an urban/atheistic way of life providing several 'image banks' and a sense of cultural intimacy (Ang 2004, pp. 306-307) which regional youth desire. Their research contributes an important message: that one should begin to pay more attention to local/regional and regional/global connections; nonetheless, they often place the audience within an Asian camp with their own traditions and values that are different from the West but at the same time modernised. What is lacking in this field is a more comparative reading of these two regional TV dramas based on empirical audience research. In

doing so my argument is that the notions of cultural proximity and geocultural region only partly explain the popular consumption of regional media products. Rather, local young audience's comparative readings of two different regional TV dramas would suggest a more dynamic and complex process of transnational media reception, cultural appropriation and social formation.

Early research suggests that Japanese trendy drama is believed to be famous for the glamorous representation of urban youth. Some based their arguments on how the audiences encounter the characters in the TV drama repeatedly and over a longer period of time when they are more prepared to imagine and enter into the spaces of Japanese culture. For instance, Koichi Iwabuchi (2004, p. 9) points out that the productions of Japanese trendy drama at an early stage (during the late 1980s) were generally understood according to their depictions of stylish urban lifestyles and trendy nightspots, designer clothes and accessories, sets with chic interior designs, and the latest pop music, all of which clearly reflected the then prevailing highly materialistic consumerism Japanese young people enjoyed under the so-called bubble economy. Therefore, the dramas' narratives at the time were considered rather vacuous and superficial until 1991 when *Tokyo Love Story* aired. This programme gained significant popularity and the storyline was considered more sophisticated; some consider it as the beginning of 'post-trendy drama' in Japan (see Toru 2004, pp. 69-86). Although the narratives of this particular genre were considered as unrealistic at the time, Japanese trendy dramas as media commodities have cleverly combined three important elements of the postmodern mediascape: '*the image, the imagined and the imaginary*' (Appadurai 1996, p. 31, *original emphasis*). The portrayal of luxurious lifestyle, beautiful settings, pop idols and the pursuit of individuality and love in modern consumer society are all elements that direct its audience to the notion of what Appadurai described as '*the imagination as a social practice*' (*ibid.*, *original emphasis*).

In addition, it invites young audiences to gaze at and imagine contemporary Japanese society and culture, which they have been interpreting, leading to a vigorous cultural identification with Japan, which will ultimately affect Asian youth identity as a whole. The early success of Japanese trendy dramas amongst a young female audience in Taiwan coincided with the initial audience target groups designed by Japanese TV

producers Ota Toru from Fuji TV, one of the pioneers of this genre. His idea was based on a simple heterosexual desire – the desire to be admired by a young woman. He therefore deliberately included the notions of fashion, music and trendy places where young Japanese young women would want to go on a date (Toru 2004, p. 70). The important elements in the storyline often involve the young individual's life experience as well as their cultural practices and social reality in modern Japanese society. Much to Toru's own surprise, when (post)Japanese trendy dramas became a cultural sensation in most East Asian countries (ibid., p. 69) what he had achieved was that cultural imagination itself became a social fact and the key component of the new global economic and cultural order. Thus, Japanese trendy dramas in the 1990s were a successful story of selling the narrative and genre to young audiences in the region by constructing a transnational imaginary landscape in their desire for a modernisation that smacks of traditions.

In terms of modern Korean TV dramas, according to Dong-Hoo Lee's observation (2004) in the 1990s Japanese dramas became the inspiration of many Korean producers to take up the newest trends in television production. Despite being criticised for imitating Japanese trendy dramas, Korean TV producers also creatively appropriated and transformed Japanese TV dramas into their own productions. The so-called Confucian values and conservatism are the two main points that have been raised to distinguish between Japanese and Korean TV dramas (see Ko 2004a, Leung 2004). Unlike Japanese TV dramas in which the urbanity and individual happiness are key themes (in a way, neglecting the real world), familial relationships are an integral part of Korean TV drama texts. According to Leung (2004), this also explains why Korean TV dramas are generally more popular and accepted than Japanese ones in mainland China, and the reason why Japanese dramas are criticised by some mainland Chinese audiences as too Westernised (i.e. not traditional). By the same token, she suggests that perhaps this is one of the great elements that Korean TV dramas offer to their Asian neighbours: the hybridisation of nostalgia, romance, pure love, but also commodified idolatry in an exotic setting which Japanese TV dramas somehow lack.

As she argues, the consumption of Japanese dramas is partly due to the audience's need for inspiration and appropriation, and Korean dramas might be similarly

favoured by audiences in less modernised areas (such as in China, Indonesia, Vietnam). Hence, to an extent, they have made the 'economically determined' cultural hierarchy even more visible (Leung, 2004, n.p.). In a way, Leung is not wrong in suggesting that the preference for and the consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is very much related to domestic viewers' taste, their historical past and political context (for example, mainland Chinese audiences). However, she oversimplified and overlooked the more complicated historical and political issues between Japan, China and South Korea, as well as local media coverage and systems which are tightly controlled by local governments (in the case of China). For instance, according to Sujeong Kim's research on social discourse on a Korean TV drama in local newspaper reports, the success of Korean TV drama *Dae Jang-geun* in China is facilitated and manipulated by various local media (2009, p. 750). It is therefore important to take into consideration the role of local media in generating the popularity of foreign TV programmes as well as to understand the cultural and social characteristics of the society itself in relation to a transnational pop cultural acceptance and appropriation.

Arguably, the similarities of context reception and cultural consumption between Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan have been widely accepted as: urban appeal, beautiful settings and music, romance, the idol effect and melodrama (see Iwabuchi 2002, Lee and Ho 2002, 2003). According to Yu-fen Ko (2004b), there are five aspects of the popularity of Korean TV dramas in Taiwan: first, a hierarchy that has been drawn whereby Japan is at the higher end of modern culture, and Korea at the lower; so Korean cultural and economic status more closely resembles that of Taiwan. Second, Korean TV dramas are more family-oriented, therefore more suitable for family viewing (or attracting a wider range of age groups). Third, the 'struggle over tradition and controversial female characters are appealing to a younger audience. Korean TV dramas usually explore the conflicts between Confucian tradition and social modernity which the younger (mostly female) audience can easily relate to. The fourth dimension is the difference in narrative structures between Japanese and Korean TV dramas. In terms of length, Korean TV dramas occupy a middle ground compared to Japanese and Taiwanese TV dramas: the Japanese idol dramas are well-structured and run between twelve to fifteen episodes, with each storyline clear and well defined; the Taiwanese local dramas are tediously

long, some might suggest, with series lasting for forty episodes or even a hundred, if the ratings are high. In terms of content, the Korean TV dramas are considered more realistic because they contain both idol-oriented and family-oriented values. Finally, even though both feature combined packaging of idol stars and commodities to promote their dramas, Korean TV dramas rely more on internet promotion at the early stage of their general popularity.

To sum up, early research has suggested that there are similarities but also distinguishing elements between Japanese and Korean TV dramas in terms of understanding Taiwanese audience reception and consumption of both types of TV drama. However, more importantly, what needs to be addressed and explored is the field of media studies and youth daily cultural practice and social formation within intense intra-regional consumption of television dramas. The dynamic interaction between external cultural influence and local cultural practices is one of the key aspects of this thesis; as Roger Rouse argues ‘the transnational has not so much displaced the national as resituated it and thus reworked its meanings’ (1995, p. 380). The popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan has created a social and cultural phenomenon which cannot be explained without examining how they have been appropriated by local young audiences. Following Thompson’s definition, ‘to appropriate a message is to take hold of its meaningful content and make it one’s own’ (1995, p. 42), this thesis analyses how young audiences appropriate and assimilate the message from regional TV dramas and incorporate it into their lives – ‘a process that sometimes takes place effortlessly, and sometimes involves deliberate application’ (ibid.). Following this insight and based on my research data, Chapters 3 and 4 investigate the complex process of Taiwanese youths’ comparative readings of regional TV dramas, including a sense of narrative self-reflexivity, programme choices, social justification, cultural appropriation, individual negotiation and identification in the formation of cultural knowledge of others and transnational social imaginary.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on audience research. In doing so I have employed a historical retrospective on the definition of reception analysis to map out different aspects of TV drama viewing and its implications for the notion of the pleasure of recognition, narrative reflexivity, cross-cultural readings, meaning-making and symbolic cultural consumption. I have also sought to respond to the various ways of cross-cultural reading of soap opera/TV dramas in conjunction with individual perception, cultural sectors and socio-political reality. The arguments made in this chapter so far constitute an alternative approach to the examination of audience reception of transnational TV dramas, that is: transnational media reception as daily social practice amongst local (young) people is a dynamic process of cultural negotiation and appropriation. The notion of ‘cultural proximity’ or ‘cultural discount’ (Hoskins and Mirus 1988) has its importance in analysing local audience’s reception of foreign TV dramas. Nonetheless it needs to be considered in conjunction with different aspects of social reality (e.g. local media industry, modernisation) and cultural sensibility (e.g. colonial past).

In view of East Asian popular cultural/media product flows since the 1990s, as Ien Ang (2004) rightly argues, there is no such thing as a monolithic Asian modernity, especially not at the level of everyday culture and experience. Therefore the existing cultural distance can be the discounted factor for the consumption of media products of cultural neighbours. For instance, the Japanese TV dramas are better received in Taiwan and Hong Kong compared to China as the content of Japanese TV dramas is often criticised by mainland Chinese audiences for being too Westernised (Leung 2004). Hence, the intertwined perception of cultural similarity and difference between TV dramas is articulated in each locality. This image of “a way of life” or “structure of feeling” can both be shared and not shared by Asian youth, to borrow Ang’s and Stratton’s argument that ‘we have come to live in a world where all the cultures are both (like) “us” and (not like) “us” (1996, p. 24).

Still, there are a lot questions that need an answer. Yu-Fen Ko has pointed out at least three concerns about the popularity of Japanese popular culture within Taiwanese

cultural contexts that need further discussion. Firstly, *why Japan is, culturally, considered more threatening* than other foreign popular cultures (such as America or South Korea); secondly, *why the, arguably, more familiar Japanese culture has become the target of criticism* and finally, how the audience defined Japanese dramas as more “real” which goes beyond their *own experiential and operational reality* (2004b, pp. 119-120, *original emphasis*). Moreover, the popularity of Korean TV dramas and popular music amongst young Taiwanese in recent years also suggests the other possible dimension of understanding the rise of intra-Asian cultural flows and its interaction in the construction of regional identity. The dynamic of popular cultural flows, focusing on TV dramas which depict the “way of life” as a platform to experience and practise transnational culture across the nation, has become an important resource for the young to construct their sense of identity both culturally and socially.

Part 1 of this thesis encompasses Chapters 3 and 4 which are based on research on Taiwanese university and secondary schools students’ transnational media and cultural consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas respectively. Building on the insights of ‘pleasure of recognition’ (Ang, 1985, p. 20) and ‘story about us’ (Iwabuchi, 2005, p.24) in the field of cross-cultural readings of soap opera/TV dramas, in Chapter 3 I will argue that university students’ narrative-sentimental reflexivity in relation to Japanese and Korean TV dramas’ contents is not restricted to either emotional connections or pure entertainment values. Rather, regional TV dramas as an alternative cultural reference with a sense of cultural familiarity is actively incorporated into university students’ daily experience and formulated at different levels of cultural articulation based on their comparative readings of Japanese and Korean TV dramas. In addition, employing the notion of consumer culture and symbolic cultural consumption in relation to audience’s reception, I will point out that cultural consumption of Japanese TV dramas and its by-products may not necessarily suggest the longing for a “Japanese way of life”. Instead, the symbolic cultural meaning of Japanese TV dramas has been translated and represented as an aesthetic way of living, which becomes tangible for everyone in everyday life and relevant sign-commodities have been reproduced in local media industries and cultural markets.

In Chapter 4, I will demonstrate the different ways of cross-cultural readings of Japanese and Korean TV dramas between university and secondary school students, building on the notion of meaning-making and sentimental connection which is closely associated with individual socio-cultural experience. In doing so, I suggest that one shall not take local audiences' transnational reading or meaning-making of the programmes as one position but rather focus on how it generates the difference within the local cultures of a specific audience group. Additionally, I will discuss how the way "TV dramas talk" as a means of social formation and cultural confrontation takes place in teenage audiences and their family members during TV drama viewing. In the last section, I will discuss the popularity of Japanese animation amongst teenagers which challenges the idea of 'culturally odourless' (Iwabuchi 1999) Japanese media products and the possible connection to perceiving Japan as a creative country.

Chapter 3

A comparative reading of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas amongst University students

Introduction

Chapter 3 corresponds to the research project which was originally envisaged and the data which I collected, and it brings into the discussion university students' reception and consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan. It focuses in particular on the university students' reception of both foreign TV dramas and their cultural practice in daily life, and encompasses their narrative-sentimental reflexivity and the consumption of TV dramas' by-products which represent a particular symbolic social meaning for its consumers; university students' preference for Japanese TV dramas in relation to their perceptions of both countries; and to what extent TV dramas reinforce cultural misconceptions.

In the first section, I intervene in existing debates on the context of the consumption of Japanese and/or Korean TV dramas in East Asia (including the case of Taiwan) and how they relate to young audiences' self-reflexivity in relation to their daily experiences and cultural practice. I explore how the different levels of cultural appropriations and articulations that are associated with the consumption of regional TV dramas have been perceived and negotiated by university audiences. Based on the analysis of these data, I argue that university audiences identify with the intensity in terms of transcultural resonance and imagination at the site of regional media consumption. Moreover, it shows that the incorporation of their daily viewing experience of regional TV dramas also generates an alternative understanding of the linkages between national, regional and transnational consumption in relation to modern cultural practice and identification amongst the young. My one-to-one interview results demonstrated that in the process of regional TV dramas consumption, university viewers' narrative-sentimental reflexivity in relation to TV context is to a certain extent similar to Iwabuchi's approach of 'a story about us' (2005, p. 24) or

Ang's 'pleasure of recognition' (1985, p. 20). Nonetheless, I would argue that young people's reception of regional TV dramas is neither limited to emotional connections nor pure entertainment values; more often than not they are very comfortable applying their conceptions or opinions about these two countries in terms of way of life, culture or social morale based on their knowledge obtained in the viewing of programmes over the years. In other words, regional TV dramas are not simply perceived as popular cultural products but are instead important cultural resources and references amongst young Taiwanese adults.

In the second section I discuss why the preference for Japanese TV dramas has been an overwhelming phenomenon amongst university students, suggesting that the elements of TV genre and familiarity, cultural proximity, national perception, idols preference and language learning purposes have all contributed to the popularity of Japanese TV dramas under different circumstances. All these elements indicate that university students' choice of regional TV programmes are often closely related to their personal desire (e.g. emotional connection) and taste (e.g. lifestyle) as well as a sense of connection and familiarity with Japanese pop culture and as a nation. However, one should not readily assume that these sentiments of familiarity and "like us but different" in relation to the popularity of Japanese TV dramas amongst university student is a predetermined condition due to the colonial past and a primordial cultural similarity between the two nations. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) has rightly argued that the notion of cultural proximity should be seen as a dynamic process in examining the popularity of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan, which provides important insight in terms of local young audience's reception and cultural consumption of foreign TV dramas. Nonetheless, his emphasis on agency (i.e. Taiwan youth) in examining transnational media consumption has overlooked the role of structure (i.e. the local media system and cultural industry) which, I would argue, systematically reproduces and disseminates cultural commodities that cultivate the desire and taste for a sense of "Japaneseness" amongst young consumers. The media's (re)creation – or (re)appropriation – of Japaneseness has become a neutral and rather invisible cultural component in everyday life and hence encounters no resistance in Taiwan. In light of this, I would argue that it is also important to recognise the marketing strategies and cultivation of the audience's tastes deployed by the local media and cultural industry which I will further elaborate in this chapter.

In the third section I investigate how the concept of Japanese TV dramas has had a symbolic cultural meaning or a particular “cultural odour” which has been integrated and translated into the local media industry, and how and to what extent university students’ own adaptation of Japaneseness has corresponded to the local media’s marketing strategy. In contrast to the notion of ‘Japanese culturally “odourless” commodities, such as animation and computer games, as questioned by the Japanese scholar Koichi Iwabuchi (2002, pp. 24-35), I would argue that the popularity of Japanese TV dramas, modern Japanese literature (e.g. Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana) and original screenplays have accelerated a deeper sense of Japanese ‘cultural “fragrance”’ (ibid., p. 31) in modern Taiwanese society. This cultural phenomenon also challenges the notion of the relationship between “localisation” of global culture (i.e. "glocalisation", see Robertson 1995) and limited foreign influence at the local level. Rather I would argue that a transnational audience’s appropriation and negotiation within a local context does not necessarily suggest the negation of the “foreign odour” of media products. Often the elements of authenticity, originality and exoticism associated with the idea of being different are what young consumers search for in the age of globalisation. Hence, local media and cultural industries willingly and consciously reproduce culturally symbolic values and meaning that associate with a sense of Japaneseness (e.g. sophistication, modernisation). In Taiwan’s case, this also suggests that the imposition of cultural hegemony does not always happen from outside but also from within.

What’s on Offer?: Differences and similarities between readings of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas

There have been a number of studies on the reception of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas in East and Southeast Asia. For instance, Iwabuchi (2004) has edited a book in English, *Feeling Asian Modernities*, which brings together a wide range of studies on the transnational consumption of Japanese TV dramas in the East Asian region. Analysis of the reception of South Korean TV dramas and films (also known as the Korean Wave) can be found in Chua Beng Huat and Koichi Iwabuchi’s (2008) co-edited book, *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the general reception of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas

amongst young audiences (and/or middle-aged women) has become a social and cultural phenomenon in Taiwanese society and most East Asian countries. Their impact on youngsters and their cultural practices, ranging from fashion sense, language learning, travelling aspirations and the application of emotional connections in their life experience in Taiwan, is one of the main issues that I wish to address. In doing so, I suggest that the consumption of foreign TV programmes needs to be taken into consideration when we examine the relationship between the young generations' cultural identification and negotiation within the context of cultural otherness which they encounter on a daily basis in Taiwan.

Since the 1990s, it has become commonplace to emphasise the importance of the consumption of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan. Amongst the 158 questionnaires that I collected from university students between 2003 and 2005, 93.0 per cent have experienced viewing Japanese TV dramas. Within the last decade, researchers have raised several serious concerns surrounding the formation of youth cultural identification. It has been suggested, for instance, that they are developing a 'transnational identity with Japan' (Lee & Chen cited in Ko 2004b, p. 110), or undergoing a possible 'cultural Japanisation' (Chiou 2002, pp. 58-63) or even that they are in the process of experiencing another 'inner colonisation' (Ho and Lee 2002, pp. 44-46). One previous research project that took a particular interest in examining the popularity of Japanese TV dramas and their young female audience in Taiwan was conducted by Koichi Iwabuchi in the late 1990s. Iwabuchi's research compared the Taiwanese audiences' preference and perception of the Japanese TV drama, *Tokyo Love Story*, and the American drama, *Beverly Hills 90210*, and argued that Japanese TV dramas were better received amongst younger audiences in Taiwan. Iwabuchi concluded that there were several reasons for this preference: 1) Taiwanese audiences' emotional involvement in Japanese dramas is fostered by a perceived cultural similarity between Japan and Taiwan; 2) that the love relationship is expressed more delicately and elegantly in Japanese TV dramas; and 3) the reputed subtlety of the Japanese programmes that led the Taiwanese to frequently lament the poor quality of their local dramas (2002, pp. 148-150). While Iwabuchi was conducting his audience research in Taiwan, Korean TV dramas were not yet in competition with Japanese TV dramas. Therefore he focused on Japanese, American and Taiwanese local TV dramas to compare to audience preferences and their perception. The cultural differences

between the “West” and the “East” were constantly raised, and after the interviewees compared Japanese to American TV dramas, the outcome was that Taiwanese audiences are much more culturally and emotionally connected to Japanese TV dramas than to American ones. In this instance, the notion of “cultural proximity” does play a part in the popularity of Japanese TV dramas. However, he also points out that one should not simply consider it as the sole explanation of the popular consumption of Japanese TV programmes: rather one needs to ask ‘under which historical conjuncture does the idea of cultural similarity becomes associated with the pleasure of text’ (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 133). His approach is mainly situated within the context of how young Asian audiences consume Asian media products in relation to historical connections from the past and in the context of the current “Asian modernisation” movement which provides an important insight into modern East Asian regional popular cultural flows and their implications. His early research also suggests one important reality – asymmetrical relationships between Japan and the rest of Asian countries on the ebbs and flows of regional popular culture (with Japan as a dominant force in the market) which have been challenged by the so-called “Korean Wave” since the early 2000s.

Given the undeniable evidence of the rising popularity of Korean TV dramas in East Asia since early 2000s, in my questionnaires 81.6 per cent students confirmed that they have experienced viewing of Korean TV dramas. Unlike the work of Iwabuchi, however, this chapter examines the audience consumption and reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst the young in Taiwan, and in doing so, suggests that the consumption of foreign/regional TV programmes is not necessarily dominated by cultural proximity or limited by cultural difference; rather it is about audience cultural positionality and self-reflexivity in relation to their personal experience as well as their perception of cultural “others”. The comparative readings of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst student viewers from my questionnaire and interview results demonstrate that the attractiveness of Japanese TV dramas can sometimes associate with audiences’ familiarity with the genre, pop idols, and language: in other words, they are used to it. In terms of Korean TV dramas, on the other hand, although they do find some cultural similarity, they feel that their level of emotional involvement is lessened or more distant in comparison with Japanese TV programmes. In some cases, some students consider the format and storyline of Korean TV dramas

similar to Taiwan local dramas, which make them less desirable. From this perspective, the notion of familiarity of TV genres and contents can work both ways regarding the audience's taste and choice of programmes. I will further elaborate and investigate this issue in the section *It is an obvious choice: university student's preference for Japanese TV dramas* later in this chapter.

In general, university students' perception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas was based on how and which TV dramas they watched and to what extent they found recognition and cultural reflection in these. They often recalled their first encounter with Japanese and/or Korean TV dramas during the interview; they vividly remembered the title of the TV drama, the story line, the names of the protagonists and the reasons they found it interesting or distasteful. Jia-ling, a 21-year-old female interviewee, recalls that her first encounter with Japanese TV dramas was *Tokyo Cinderella Story* when she was 13 years old. Wan-yi, a 20-year-old female student, states that she was deeply attracted to the Korean TV drama, *All about Eve*, when she first came across the programme and since then has been more interested in Korean TV dramas than Japanese ones.

On the other hand, Yi-jun, a 22-year-old female interviewee relates her viewing experience of Japanese TV dramas when she was in junior secondary school and vividly recalled the drama, *Terms of a Witch* (Majo no Joken, 1999) and, subsequently, the Korean TV drama, *Autumn Story* (2001), showing no particular preference for either Japanese or Korean TV dramas. University students do not consider viewing foreign TV dramas as an important daily activity, but they would normally tune in to check what is on offer (if there is a new programme showing) and then decide whether they follow the story or not. Most of my informants (in their early 20s when I conducted my research between 2003 and 2005) first encountered Japanese TV dramas when they were at junior secondary school (13-15 years old), with the exposure to Korean TV dramas occurring later.

The popularity and high viewing rate of Korean TV dramas in Taiwan since the early 2000s firmly underlines its arrival and possibly signals the decline of Japanese TV dramas. Overall and during my research I have come to the conclusion that students of this age group have an extensive knowledge of Japanese and Korean TV dramas

but also show concern about the popularity of those imported TV programmes and pop cultures amongst youngsters. Responses from questionnaires include answers such as ‘over-idealised those foreign idols and imitated other’s culture without a sense of realisation of one’s own culture’; ‘plastic surgery becomes an acceptable social norm just as in South Korea’; ‘cultural confusion, social morale and values are under challenge, and so forth. In this instance while distancing themselves from younger audiences, university students often cautiously protest against teenagers’ so-called inappropriate behaviours (e.g. Japanophile/Koreanophile) and interpret such behaviour as “cultural imperialism” and “media effects”. Hence university students have “subjectively” implicated others’ viewing of these two regional TV dramas or the popularity of regional TV dramas and popular culture as a form of cultural invasion, which can lead to negative social impacts on Taiwanese youth. In Taiwan, the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas constitute several different dimensions of cultural appropriation, practice and social implications which reinforce the young adult audiences’ ambiguous attitude towards the notion of national and cultural identities in Taiwan

I asked the students to state the differences and similarities between Japanese and Korean TV dramas at the end of the (open-ended) questionnaires to establish a general understanding of the consumption of TV dramas in Taiwan. Most of them responded with varied answers. The ideas and opinions on these two types of TV dramas are diverse but they also share some similarities. They can be roughly divided into the following categories: 1) the (un)realistic qualities, 2) the diversity of the content and high quality TV productions, 3) idol effects, 4) the representation of their cultural difference and ways of life, and 5) the professional shooting skill, the dazzling scenery and well-written dialogues and plots. In this instance, my findings do not show much of a difference from that of Iwabuchi’s research on the reception of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan in the late 1990s mentioned earlier. Arguably, the popularity of soap opera/ TV dramas often requires a sense of local and cultural intimacy from its audience. Over the years university viewers’ transnational viewing experience however suggests that the notion of ‘cultural discount’ (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988) has been integrated into their viewing practice. Having said that, I do not wish to suggest that there is no difference in the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in terms of pleasure of recognition, social articulation and cultural

appropriation, but rather that the regional TV dramas as a particular genre and a cultural medium across national borders and transcending cultural difference have cultivated a specific yet common cultural ground in modern Taiwanese society.

Unlike Iwabuchi's research, a comparison of university students' responses to Japanese, Korean and sometimes Taiwanese TV dramas suggests that the awareness and appreciation of the diversity of Japanese TV dramas is shown to be much more explicit than in previous research. My questionnaire and interview results manifested five aspects of Japanese and Korean TV dramas that drew common attention from university students. In each case the responses were somewhat similar to Iwabuchi's suggestions (2002, pp. 146-151, 2005, p. 25) concerning the popularity of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan in the late 1990s, with emphasis on how young (female) viewers associate "realism" with cultural similarities between Japan and Taiwan, Asian modernisation and so on but with some differences. As regards the first aspect, *(un)realistic elements*, I suggest that the notion of "realistic" often identifies with "close to the heart" amongst university students, maintaining the pattern noted in Ang's earlier research on 'emotional realism' or 'tragic structure of feeling' (1985, p. 20) but the idea of realistic elements is not limited by emotional involvement for university students. It also ranges from the character of the hero or heroine in the dramas, the dialogue, acting skills and the storyline. For the second aspect, *(diversity of) content*, my findings show that in terms of the genre and its audience's tastes the love relationship or romantic element is not a dominant factor in the popularity of Japanese TV dramas as others previously suggested. The viewing and reading of Japanese Idol Drama amongst university students do demonstrate greater awareness and appreciation of the diversity of content such as sensitive social issues or taboos which were addressed in the programmes. In the case of the third aspect, *idol effects*, my findings do confirm Iwabuchi's (2002) and Chua's (2000) earlier research that suggests that the presence of pop idols often generates youth popular consumption of regional TV dramas and its by-products. Nevertheless, my fieldwork shows more complex and somehow more rational consumer behaviour from young Taiwanese audiences and also the limitation of idol effects on different media products. The fourth aspect, the elements of *cultural representation* in the programmes, can be divided into three different programme reading behaviours from the young audience: content format, modernisation versus traditionalism and cultural comparison between

Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. In the case of the final aspect, *professional shooting skills and language preference*, I will demonstrate that young audiences pay great attention to the quality of production and are in thrall to the scenery depicted in the programmes, which draws their attention to regional TV dramas.

a. *Transnational consumption of “realism”: TV dramas as cultural representations of social reality*

In my questionnaire, around 82 per cent and 75.5 per cent of university students consider the contents of the TV dramas very important indicators of their motivation to view Japanese and Korean TV dramas respectively. In this regard, they often refer to the realistic elements of the storylines, and although it is very subjective to define what realistic is, it is one of the ideas most mentioned in the questionnaires and during the interviews. Some students state that Japanese TV dramas are more realistic or “close to the heart” in comparison to Korean TV dramas and the term realistic is used as an essential element when citing their preference for Japanese TV dramas. The notion of (un)realistic qualities can be assumed and interpreted in different forms, such as the character of the hero or heroine in dramas, the dialogue, the storyline and so forth. For instance, one female student stated in the questionnaire that “Japanese TV dramas are more realistic whilst Korean ones are too fairytale-like”; another stated that “The storyline of Korean TV dramas are all in typical Cinderella format, Japanese TV dramas are more interesting with varied storylines or sometimes, serious social issues”. Yan-chi, a 19-year-old female student who self-identifies as a “Japanophile”, mentions: ‘Japanese TV dramas are more realistic and reflect on the society we live in, whereas in Korean TV dramas, the characters often suddenly suffer from incurable illnesses and have a tragic ending. I don’t like it’.

However, some informants have completely opposite views; one female student stated in the questionnaire that ‘Japanese TV dramas are so unrealistic, the dialogues would not take place between normal people and the storyline seems to be pretty unreasonable. Korean dramas reflect real life better’. Similarly, two female students suggest that ‘Japanese TV dramas are too dreamy and unreal’. These comments demonstrate how audiences have a very different reading of Japanese and Korean TV dramas based on their experiences and interpretation, so what is real for one can be

totally unreal for someone else.

In some cases, the realistic elements do not concern some students as much as others, as their interest is drawn to the quality of the television productions, shooting skills of the director, scenery, location, fashion style and acting abilities. For instance, a twenty-one-year-old male student mentioned in the questionnaire that ‘Korean and Taiwanese TV dramas are similar, not very creative, [whereas] Japanese TV dramas are more original and the shooting skills are much better’. Moreover, 69.6 per cent and 57.8 per cent of students pay great attention to actors’ acting skills while watching Japanese and Korean TV dramas.

Earlier research also suggests that Taiwan’s younger generation’s favouring of Japanese products as highly desirable social behaviour is due to the cultural perception of Japan as a frontier of modernised society amongst Asian countries (Lee and Ho 2002, p. 29). Hence, information such as the latest fashion trends (cosmetics, designer clothes and accessories), pop music, urban lifestyles, culinary culture and so on which are often depicted and represented in this type of TV drama attracts and fulfils young audiences’ expectations of cultural modernity. My research demonstrates a similar outcome: around 70.3 per cent and 62.1 per cent consider that watching Japanese and Korean TV dramas respectively is a common way of obtaining the latest and most desirable information from both and/or either countries. To a certain extent, university audiences act as distant critics, regarding TV-watching as a form of entertainment or even as educational, rationalising their reception of programmes as a way to understand and improve their daily lives. I will elaborate on this in more detail when discussing the fifth category – how professional shooting skills, dazzling scenery and well-written dialogues and plots capture young audiences’ imagination and endow those locations with particular cultural symbolic meanings, to the extent that even though these young audiences have never been to the places shown in the TV dramas, they can still feel a sense of familiarity and connection.

b. Audience reception: “Diversity” in format and content

The second category is the diversity of the content and its quality which illustrates one of the main differences in university audience’s perceptions of Japanese and

Korean TV dramas. According to Iwabuchi's early research conducted in Taiwan between 1996 and 1997, Japanese idol dramas are favoured by young (aged 13-25), and female (aged 26-35) audiences. One of the main attractions is their storyline (2002, p. 141). His finding suggests that Japanese dramas are diverse in terms of storylines, setting and topics, ranging from urban love stories to family dramas by way of detective series, but those that become popular in Taiwan are stories about younger people's loves and lives in an urban setting (Iwabuchi 2001, p. 63, 2002, p. 143). My findings display similar perceptions for university students in terms of Japanese TV drama viewing but not exclusively in the case of the depiction of love relationships or urban lifestyles.

In the questionnaires, around 85.7 per cent and 73.7 per cent of students consider themselves as paying a certain degree of attention to the storylines and plots of Japanese and Korean TV dramas respectively. Most of them assert that Japanese TV dramas are of better quality than Korean TV dramas (or Taiwanese TV dramas), whereby the phrases "delicate"¹⁵, "better quality", "new and original" and "interesting storyline" are often linked to Japanese ones. In particular, the 'diversification' of Japanese TV dramas is frequently appreciated by the young adult. Most students believe that Korean TV dramas have a formulaic storyline – a "Cinderella syndrome", surrounded with stories of love (often unrequited) and relationships that lead to tragic endings. Others suggest that Korean TV dramas are quite similar to Taiwanese ones: "boring", "conservative", "normal", "slow-paced" and "exaggerated". In contrast, Japanese TV dramas have a great diversity in terms of social reality and they not only often show a typical love story, but also depict social taboos and issues such as love relationships between high school teachers and students, or issues that concern minorities like disabled people and immigrants and so forth. During an interview, Jialing pointed out:

In Japanese TV dramas, some concepts and narratives can be controversial. However, the way they have been represented mean it is not weird or difficult to accept the ideas. Instead the storyline makes you think that there is always hope for life or provides a certain understanding of those social problems. To me, it is very inspirational and that is why I think Korean TV dramas cannot compete with Japanese ones (age 21, Female).

¹⁵ "Delicate" is often used in Chinese when something is well-produced, elegant and very precise.

A 26-year-old male student stated in the questionnaire: 'Japanese TV dramas are more stimulating and focus on a sense of realism in relation to life; Korean TV dramas are more sentimental and expressions of social moral values'. Another 21-year-old male student suggested that: 'You can find many varied storylines in Japanese TV dramas whereas Korean TV dramas are similar to Taiwanese local dramas, more standardised.' In this instance, young audiences believe that Japanese TV dramas reflect their life expectations better, seeing Japan as a modernised country, more creative, diverse and aspirational whereas South Korea has somehow remained conservative, old-fashioned and less intriguing.

This difference between Japanese and Korean TV dramas' contents also corresponds to the outcome of their viewing habits. According to the questionnaires more than 74.7 per cent (with 43.5 per cent well aware) of students declared that they were aware of who the screenwriter is during the viewing of Japanese TV dramas, whilst those who watch Korean ones are less aware, with 65.4 per cent aware and 34.5 per cent well aware. The high percentage of interest shown in Japanese TV drama screenwriters can be partly explained by the popularity of modern Japanese literature and original screenplays in Taiwan. For instance, famous Japanese Trendy Drama screenwriters such as Kitagawa Eriko, whose works include a series of well-received Trendy Dramas¹⁶ dating back to the early 1990s, have gained a great reputation and celebrity status amongst young female fans. Overall, the fact that 106 out of 158 university students expounded their opinions regarding the difference (and few similarities) between Japanese and Korean TV dramas in the questionnaires suggests that the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has not only provided entertainment value to a young audience, but also another form of common cultural reference insofar as the consumption of foreign popular media products is concerned.

¹⁶ Such as *Love White Paper* (1993), *Tell Me You Love Me* (1995), *Long Vacation* (1996), *Overtime* (1999), *Beautiful life* (2000), *Love story* (2001), and *Orange Days* (2004) just to name a few. All these dramas enjoyed a great success while broadcasting in Taiwan along with their original soundtracks and screenplay

c. The attraction and impact of idols: image consumption and its limitations

This section examines the so-called “idol effect”. Ota Toru, a Japanese television drama producer at Fuji TV, admits that:

In a Japanese drama’s production process, casting comes first, even before scriptwriting ... We try to book these actors according to their popularity in that moment, and about six months before the broadcast of the drama, we start thinking of their role and the story (2004, pp. 75-76).

For many people in Taiwan, according to Iwabuchi (2001), one of the attractions of viewing Japanese dramas is that they feature good-looking Japanese idols. The most important format of Japanese Trendy dramas and Korean TV dramas features young, good-looking actors and actresses (sometimes well-known pop-idols), and these celebrities are the main attraction for Taiwanese youngsters. Around 68.7 per cent and 50.3 per cent university students admitted that “idols/actors attraction” is one of their most important motivations in choosing and viewing Japanese and Korean TV programmes respectively. This “idol attraction” effect indicates that 65.2 per cent and 54.7 per cent of respondents take notice of an actors’ appearance, while around 82.4 per cent and 72.7 per cent have a general awareness of actors’ reputations and popularity in Japanese and Korean TV dramas. One female student stated in the questionnaire: ‘I think both Japanese and Korean actors are good-looking but Korean actors often have plastic surgery, so female actors often look alike’. Another female student said: ‘I like to follow the make-up and fashion trends in both TV dramas, and I think those actors/actresses are better looking and better actors/actresses than the Taiwanese ones’. The images, the acting skills and the popularity of actors and actresses in the TV programmes, in this sense, are considered as the programmes’ attractions and sometimes as an indication of the difference between these two regional TV dramas and local productions.

The local media tend to label those audiences who might be in favour of foreign stars as “Japanophile” or “Koreanophile”, particularly fans of male idol groups: for instance, Japanese male pop groups such as SMAP, Kinki Kids, and ALASHI, or Korean boy-bands like H.O.T, Shinhwa, TVXQ (*Tong Vfeng Xien Qi*), and Super junior. The cultural image of Japanese and Korean idols circulated and was well

received amongst young Taiwanese. Despite this so-called “idol effect” on the audience, it seems that this effect only works in a rather limited range of media products, mainly dramas and pop songs. Occasionally the idol effect does not guarantee a great success amongst the young Taiwanese audience. For instance, Japanese and Korean movies may have the most well-known and popular actors and/or actresses as protagonists, but they do not necessarily attract large audiences to the cinema. Examples include the box office failure of the Korean movie *Untold Scandal* (2004), despite starring one of Asia’s most popular actors, Bae Yong-joon, whose TV drama, *Winter Sonata*, was a hit in most Asian countries. It is fair to argue that the notion of idol effect might have an impact on young audiences and fans, but this relationship is often embedded within a particular media genre or image. It also suggests that ‘idol dramas’ are a well-cultivated genre for the young Asian audience market which facilitates its popularity in the region yet is limited particularly in the cultural and media-consuming space.

d. The transnational cultural gaze and the consumption of cultural otherness

The fourth category analysed here is “the representation of its own cultures; different yet somehow familiar”. The notion of cultural proximity or similarity is often considered in relation to the common flow of regional TV programmes, including language (see for example *telenovelas* in the Latin American ‘cultural-linguistic market’ (Sinclair 1999), or in the case of East Asia, sharing of contemporary modernity (Chua 2000, 2004). For example, some students believe that Korean TV dramas, both in terms of genre and structure, are similar to Japanese ones. One female student asserted in the questionnaire that: ‘Both programmes are the same, because sometimes when I tune in to watch, I cannot tell the difference between the Japanese and the Korean drama’. Another female student stated in the questionnaire that ‘in terms of content, Korean TV dramas are a copycat of Japanese ones’. Some believe that the Korean TV industry uses the same marketing and promotional strategy as the Japanese. A 22-year-old male student stated in the questionnaire that ‘Both TV dramas have been as well-represented and packaged as the good quality foreign TV dramas in Taiwan, especially after the success of Japanese TV dramas. Many Asian countries try to use the same format. Korean TV producers just add a different flavour’.

However, many also believe that those TV dramas are a true representation of the cultures and ways of life of each country. Around 54.4 per cent and 46.5 per cent of university students take a great interest in cultural representation in the storyline of Japanese and Korean TV dramas respectively, which suggests that the university audience typically recognises the cultural differences between the two countries, or at least they seem to confidently have thought about it. In the questionnaire, one female student simply stated ‘their cultural difference is quite obvious’, while another female student mentioned, ‘I think the cultural difference (between these two countries) becomes very obvious in dramas – (South) Korea is more conservative and traditional whereas Japan is more modernised and westernised’. In a similar comment, one female student noted in the questionnaire that ‘there might be some similarities in terms of storylines; however the idiosyncrasy in the plots can be very different because of the nationality and characters’. Furthermore, one male student pointed out in the questionnaire that ‘Japanese people are more polite, with good manners, whereas Koreans can be very stubborn and rude’.

Pei-xin had a similar response, showing a rather positive perspective and affection toward Japanese youth culture in the interview:

You know, Japanese young people are very independent and romantic, they celebrate Valentine’s Day and girls will make chocolate for the boys they like. If the affection is mutual, then one month later (14th March) the boy will give a present to the girl and this is very much reflected on the TV dramas. On the contrary, Korean people are a lot more reserved in terms of expressing gestures of love (age 22, Female).

Similarly, Yi-jun suggested that:

Japan is more modernised and advanced in terms of lifestyle, Korea is more or less similar to or behind Taiwan (in terms of modernisation). So I think the dramas are very different between these two countries. Younger people prefer Japanese dramas whereas middle-aged women are more likely to stick with Korean ones (age 22, Female).

From these various comments, it seems that many young university audiences in Taiwan have rather extensive knowledge of Japanese and Korean popular youth cultures and their way of life based on watching TV dramas. Nonetheless whether

those comments are culturally and objectively accurate or otherwise, they reflect the fact that many individuals have their own opinions about these two foreign TV dramas, and to a certain extent, the cultures of these two countries. By comparing Japanese and Korean TV dramas, university students develop their opinions about these two countries in relation to the cultural and social situations in Taiwan. In this sense, the reception and consumption of foreign TV dramas provides a platform for university students to negotiate the cultural difference amongst the three countries and translate those elements that help situate their cultural recognition of others. I will discuss this further in Chapter 6 which focuses on how university students negotiate their idea of Taiwanese identity in relation to their appropriation of the idea of cultural globalisation and regionalisation as form of cultural configuration.

e. Audience as TV critic?: Elements of modernisation and professionalism in regional TV drama productions

The fifth category I address are the professional shooting skills, the filming location and language acquisition, to which many believe that regional TV dramas owe their particular popularity in Taiwan. Respectively 62.5 per cent and 57.2 per cent of students take an interest in the scenery/filming locations while viewing Japanese and Korean TV dramas where the most popular and well-known settings amongst a young Taiwanese audience would be the Tokyo Tower and Rainbow Bridge (both located in Tokyo). In the case of Korea, although this may be less obvious, many university students believe that the shooting and directing skills of TV dramas are of excellent quality (in comparison with Taiwanese TV dramas). They often refer to the term 'aesthetic shooting skill'. For example, a 26-year-old female student noted that 'In terms of TV dramas' style, Japanese and Korean ones look beautiful and attractive, because the shooting skills are excellent and aesthetic, despite the fact that sometimes the storyline can be boring and typical but because of the scenery, I would still watch them. Also it makes you want to visit the country.'

My findings also suggest that the appreciation of professional shooting skills in combination with the romantic narrative associated with certain locations amongst the young adult audience has facilitated regional tourism (see Lee 2003, pp. 42-73, Ming-tsung Lee 2004, pp. 129-154). Around 82.3 per cent and 56.4 per cent of university

students show great desire to travel to Japan and South Korea and some also showed the intention during the interviews to visit particular shooting sites from TV dramas.

Some of those questioned were more interested in the dialogue. Nearly 68.7 per cent and 57.2 per cent of university students took an interest in the dialogues during the viewing of the TV dramas. One female student declared that, ‘According to my friend’s comment, the dialogues in Japanese TV dramas are “quieter” and Korean ones are “noisier” and high pitched so rather unpleasant’. A few suggested that the bad quality of dubbing is another annoying issue, especially in the Korean ones. Certainly, the dubbing is not the original format of these two types of TV dramas. Typically Japanese TV dramas would have been dubbed into Chinese as well. A particularly negative view of the dubbing quality in Korean TV dramas was highlighted several times in the questionnaires. Most of the Japanese and Korean TV dramas broadcast in Taiwan are either dubbed and/or subtitled, as the TV companies want to attract more housewives to watch the programmes. They assume therefore that dubbing is a better idea than broadcasting in the original language.

According to my 2005 interview with Xiao, a staff member at GTV station, TV stations believe that housewives cannot sit in front of the TV watching subtitled programmes all of the time, therefore dubbing would make it a lot easier for them to follow the story. However, university students, who either live away from home or watch TV dramas alone or with friends, appreciate the dramas a lot more when they are broadcast in the original language with subtitles. My findings also indicate the different ways of consuming Japanese and Korean TV dramas between younger audiences and middle-aged housewives. University students watch with a sense of purpose, such as language learning, fulfilling their curiosity in foreign cultures or ways of life. This provides a sense of cultural originality in TV series to a certain extent and therefore encourages the young audience to participate in transnational cultural experiences. Such patterns of consumption undoubtedly emphasise cultural particularity and originality and suggest that youths crave a distinct “Japaneseness” or “Koreanness” in TV dramas. In this instance, the language barrier when viewing foreign TV dramas becomes an attraction and motivation and the element of otherness is therefore celebrated by the local young audience.

Overall, Japanese and Korean TV dramas have become social and cultural phenomenon in modern Taiwanese society, which suggests that it has become a daily experience that younger generations negotiate and translate into a sense of “otherness” via the consumption of popular culture. As Tim Edensor suggests in his book *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*:

The incorporation of otherness into everyday life generates an intersubjective understanding of the linkages between people, spaces and things, though not one that is always articulated through discourse and representation. It acts to epistemologically and ontologically install things and people in place (2002, p. 34).

Acknowledging the similarities and differences between Japanese and Korean TV dramas enables or reinforces university students’ subjective preference for either or neither of the nations. The process of cultural consumption of foreign TV dramas amongst university students overcomes territorial distance yet reinforces their sense of cultural identification with Taiwan. More importantly, by recognising cultural differences, university students are able to construct their sense of understanding of what is Taiwan and Taiwanese culture within the cultural space of Japan and South Korea. In Chapter 6 I will further explore how Japanese and Korean TV dramas as “cultural others” become primary cultural resources and references for university students to situate their sense of cultural belonging.

“It is an obvious choice”: University students’ preference for Japanese TV dramas

According to Koichi Iwabuchi’s research in the early 2000s, the young Taiwanese audience favours Japanese TV dramas over American or Taiwanese ones. This is because the audience found them “easier to relate to”. Arguably, when Taiwanese TV companies began to legally import Japanese TV programmes from the early 1990s onwards there was a lack of TV dramas produced specifically for younger audiences; Taiwanese TV dramas are more family-oriented and aimed primarily at housewives (2002, p. 143). Therefore, the Japanese idol dramas almost instantly became the greatest hits amongst youngsters; furthermore, everything with a “Japanese odour/aura” was represented as something desirable and trendy in Taiwanese society.

From music, fashion, popular culture to food, Taiwanese youth indulged themselves in this abundant ‘image bank’ (Kellner 1995, p. 257) to travel through ‘time’ and ‘space’ in a dynamic of ‘becoming’, according to Iwabuchi (2002, p. 143). He rightly points out that regardless of the actual historical relationship between Taiwan and Japan, ironically, young people there regard modern Japanese cultural products with admiration:

Historically overdetermined by Japanese colonisation, under simultaneously homogenising and heterogenising forces of modernisation, Americanisation, and globalisation, all these elements interact in a complicated dynamic to articulate the cultural resonance of Japanese TV dramas for some Taiwanese viewers who synchronously, contemporaneously, and self-reflexively experienced “Asian modernity” in late-twenty-century East-Asia (ibid., p. 156).

This is not the first time ‘becoming Japanese’ has been discussed in the historical context of Taiwan. Leo Ching argues in his book *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation*:

Unlike the Koreans, who vehemently detested and tenaciously opposed the Japanese and their colonial occupation, the Taiwanese are said to have retained a fairly positive image of the Japanese and recollected approvingly the virtues of Japanese rule. If the Koreans speak of oppression and resistance, the Taiwanese speak of modernisation and development. This diametrically opposed view of Japan and its colonial rule, despite substantial documentation of resistance and collaboration in *both* colonies, remains the “commonsense” and “plebeian” understanding of the difference between Korean national character and the neo-colonial psychology of Taiwanese nativism (2001, p. 8).

The notion of cultural proximity between Taiwan and Japan and the fear of cultural Japanisation demonstrate that the historical connection has complicated the discussion of youth consumption of Japanese-produced mass culture. On the one hand, young people express the desire for modernisation and an inspirational way of life, and Japanese popular culture somehow fulfils this desire. On the other hand, within the context of the construction of Taiwanese identity, particularly in relation to the movement of nativisation, the cultural legacy of colonialism in Taiwan serves as an assertion of its cultural significance and differentiation from that of the *Kuomintang*’s (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party) imposition of Chinese culture. The integration of ‘cultural (not so) otherness’ marks an important cultural politics of post-martial law Taiwan, hence the youth consumption of Japanese popular cultural products is a way

to fulfil the ‘fantasy to participate in the globalisation of consumerist culture and the fantasy to create an independent Taiwanese nation’ (Ching 2000a, p. 764). Thus, by analysing the reasons given by the university students for preferring Japanese TV dramas in general, we should be able to understand to what extent the concept of cultural familiarity can, in certain circumstances, facilitate audience interpretation of the Japanese way of life and Japan as a nation as they are represented in TV dramas. Therefore, I argue that this form of desire is not so much about becoming Japanese but rather about making sense of how to become Taiwanese, which I will discuss further in Chapter 6.

When Japanese idol dramas dominated no other foreign TV dramas were in a position to compete until the late 1990s, when Korean TV dramas became better known and more widely distributed by Taiwanese TV stations. Naturally, the popularity of Japanese idol dramas was affected and showed signs of decline, particularly for TV stations that had invested in Japanese dramas. According to local news reports, Korean TV dramas are now more widely circulated and distributed than Japanese ones in Taiwan. Between several different TV stations, they spent a startling total amount of roughly around £3,750,000 annually to purchase Korean TV dramas in 2005 (Xiao, personal interview, 2005), and more than seven channels broadcast Korean TV dramas in prime time nowadays (Taiwan Yahoo, Television schedule, 2005). The local TV stations’ profit-making concerns and promotional strategies have shifted their imported programmes in favour of Korean TV dramas. However, what do university students really think about Japanese and Korean TV dramas and what are the reasons they choose one over the other? How do they relate to one another in terms of cultural practice and life experience?

In the questionnaires 76 university students state that they prefer Japanese TV dramas in comparison with 16 who favour Korean ones (23 like both, 35 no preference and 7 dislike both). According to my findings, there are several reasons why most university students are in favour of Japanese TV dramas, some of which refer back to the previous section concerning their perception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas’ contents and genres. Most university students have more knowledge about, and prior engagement with Japanese TV dramas than with Korean ones, and therefore the number of outcomes and opinions indicating why they favour one over the other is

not equally adjusted. Based on the questionnaire responses, the reasons for those in favour of Japanese TV dramas can be divided roughly into five reasons: 1) language acquisition, 2) idols preference, 3) familiarity with content and genre, 4) national preference (cultural familiarity), and 5) better production quality. To a certain extent, the overall outcomes do not display a significant difference between that of Iwabuchi (2002) and that of other researchers (see Lee and Ho 2002, pp. 30-32, Y.-I. Su 1999). Nevertheless, my research focuses on a comparison of the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan which has not been done before. Hence by comparing these two regional TV dramas, this project provides a new insight into regional cultural flows as a form of socio-cultural intervention which is articulated and negotiated by the younger generation in Taiwan.

Firstly, they are motivated by the acquisition of language skills; some of my informants are Japanese studies majors, a few in Korean studies, hence Japanese TV dramas are one of the important resources for them to practise their language skills. There is, however, still some dubbing used in Japanese TV dramas while they are broadcast but most are broadcast in the original language with subtitles, especially those in VCD format. Therefore students consider it a rather useful and somehow more “authentic” way of viewing programmes. Overall, 81 students consider language learning as an important motivation for them to watch Japanese TV dramas. A 22-year-old female student noted that ‘because I am studying Japanese, therefore, by watching all those TV dramas, my language skills will not only improve but I will also understand their way of life, society and culture better’. Another 21-year-old male student stated: ‘Mainly for the purpose of language, besides, I am used to Japanese TV dramas’. In a similar response a 23-year-old male student wrote: ‘I prefer Japanese TV dramas because I watched them when I was young, also I am quite interested in the language itself’. A 19-year-old female student noted that ‘[most] Korean TV dramas are dubbed and sounds really artificial’; a 23-year-old female student simply stated that ‘Japanese sounds better than Korean’ while another 20-year-old female student said that she is ‘not used to listening to Korean or dubbing (which is in Chinese)’. Many authors have argued that in order to sell TV programmes (especially TV dramas) to foreign countries, language is one of the main concerns, which explains, for instance, the popularity of *telenovelas* in South American countries (e.g. Cunningham et al. 1996, Straubhaar 1991). In contrast to

these research projects, in the case of the Taiwanese audience, it seems that young audiences enjoy the TV dramas more when they are broadcast in the original language. It is therefore evident that the notion of authenticity or originality is more important than “being localised” when it comes to the consumption of foreign TV programmes amongst the young adult audience in Taiwan. The language barrier becomes another form of attraction and television viewing has become more purposeful and educational for younger generations.

Secondly, the observation that university students favour Japanese idols/actors corresponds to the promotional strategy of the Taiwanese TV stations, which relies heavily on the ‘idol effect’. This strategy has created a notion of “Japanese stardom” amongst teenagers and “fan” effects of Japanese TV drama, which has popularised Japanese culture, music and fashion industries since the 1990s. One of my interviewees, Pei-xin admitted that:

I like this male group (*Kinki Kids*) so much that any performance they are involved in I would follow, such as their music albums, concerts, TV dramas, even the books they published. I also join their Taiwan-based fan club. So I met up with people from this club sometimes, we would exchange the latest information about *Kinki Kids*. I know some of the fans would organise a tour to Japan to see their concert and buy all the by-products from the concert. I have never been though, it’s too expensive for me ... (age 22, Female)

A 20-year-old female student stated that ‘I like Kimura Takuya¹⁷ a lot, so prefer Japanese TV dramas and would like to learn Japanese so that I can read the latest news about him in Japanese’. One female student believed that ‘because Japanese actors are natural beauties unlike most Korean female actors who might have plastic surgery, they all look quite the same to me’. A few of the questionnaire responses just simply stated that ‘I like Japanese idols’ or ‘I know most of the Japanese actors but not Korean ones’ or ‘More familiar with Japanese TV dramas and actors, Korean [actors] all look the same because of plastic surgery’. Regardless of whether it is true that certain Korean actors and actresses have plastic surgery, some university students dislike Korean TV dramas for this reason. This suggests that in the consumption of this particular genre of foreign TV dramas (i.e. idol dramas or trendy dramas), the

¹⁷ Kimura Takuya is one of the most well-known Japanese pop stars in Asia; he is a member of a boy-band called ‘SMAP’.

actors' appearance and familiarity can be a decisive factor in the audience's preference. The celebrity attraction certainly helps to sell foreign TV dramas to the young Asian market, and it also coincides with the marketing strategies which are employed by Japanese TV production companies which are targeted at a specific local, young female audience.

Thirdly there is a sense of familiarity with Japanese contents and genres. As I mentioned earlier, this age group of students started watching Japanese TV dramas when they were in junior secondary school (13-15 years old), and Korean TV dramas about three to four years later. Many students who favour Japanese TV dramas simply declare as much in the questionnaires: they are more familiar with or used to the Japanese drama genre. Yi-jun explained:

I started to watch while I was a kid as a result I am much more familiar with the (Japanese) genre and can understand the plots better. To me, Japanese TV dramas are more sophisticated, storylines are more unique not standardised. For instance, sometimes they touched on social issues and so on. In a way, I have certain expectations for Japanese TV dramas (age 22, Female).

Wei-ren, a 22-year-old male student noted that he was:

'[m]ore familiar with the storylines and ... acting technique in Japanese TV dramas, so [I am] not bothered with Korean TV dramas, since [I do not] really spend much time watching TV programmes anyway'.

As Ya-wen, a 21-year-old female interviewee pointed out:

Japanese idol dramas often have around 12 episodes and the pace is quick but Korean ones often have longer episodes similar to Taiwanese local TV dramas. Besides, I can buy those programmes in VCDs format quite cheaply and watch it in one go. Anyway, I think I am just more used to watching Japanese idol dramas.

Overall this familiarity with Japanese idol dramas amongst university students has influenced their viewing choices. In this instance, after more than a decade of dissemination of Japanese popular culture and TV entertainment programmes in Taiwan, Japanese TV dramas have established their genre and have created expectations amongst the Taiwanese audience. Thus, considering the decline of

Japanese idol dramas' popularity, they are still regularly broadcast on at least two channels during prime time and sustain a solid number of viewers.

The fourth justification is the national perception and admiration of Japan. The notion of "cultural proximity" can be explained under certain circumstances as one main reason for the popularity of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan. Taiwan was colonised by Japan for fifty years¹⁸ and cultural homogenisation was carried out at the time (see Ching 2001, Chapters 1-3) and it seems that the Taiwanese people were never short of experience or encounters with Japan's influences. South Korea is to a certain extent as foreign as other countries for most Taiwanese people until recently. Despite the fact that most university students admit not to have much knowledge of the Japanese modern political situation and current affairs (only 25.4 per cent consider themselves to have good knowledge of the country), nearly 56.9 per cent show admiration and 51.5 per cent have a good impression of the nation itself. By comparison 13.6 per cent consider themselves to have good knowledge of South Korea, only 28.5 per cent show their admiration and 25.5 per cent have a good impression of the country. University students' cultural preference and positive impressions of Japan do not necessarily suggest it is closely related to their choice of TV dramas. Indeed what it demonstrates is that the incorporation of TV dramas as a way of understanding Japan as a nation has been a common cultural practice amongst university students. As Iwabuchi (2002, 2004) suggests, the idea of cultural proximity can be used partly to explain intra-Asia popular cultural flows, which is why the notion of becoming culturally proximate is a possible explanation for the preference of young audiences for Japanese TV dramas. Ying-rong said that:

I prefer Japanese TV dramas, partly for language reasons. In comparison with Korean TV dramas which often have a tragic format, Japanese ones have diverse subjects. I do not have a good impression of Korea because of the 2002 Football World Cup incidents, the way they did whatever it took to win the match. It is very annoying. There are some Korean students at my college; they are often very loud and noisy so with those bad impressions I kind of boycott the Korean TV dramas (age 22, Female).

One male informant stated that 'I am more interested in Japanese culture and prefer Japanese people. For what Korean people have done in most of sports events, I have

¹⁸ Between 1895-1945 Taiwan was colonised by Japan.

no comment'. Another male student noted that 'Korea is not as advanced as Japan and maybe even less modernised than Taiwan. So there is no point in watching their dramas since there is nothing to learn'. Few students believed that the Japanese way of thinking is similar to the Taiwanese. To some extent, some university students still have a stereotypical understanding of South Korea as a nation, which reflects their choice of TV dramas. The negative comments about South Korea from university students suggest, on the one hand, the stereotype or misconception of South Korea as a nation due to their personal experience and media encounters which influence their programme choices. On the other hand, it also indicates that through the TV dramas they watch, audiences construct their cultural preference as a way to articulate or even reinforce their perceptions of other nations.

The fifth commonly stated reason is that the production of Japanese TV dramas is of better quality. In general, most university students consider that Japanese TV dramas have better qualities, which informs their programme preferences, with Japanese dramas being described using popular phrases such as "elegance", "quick-paced", "diverse", "fashionable" and so forth. One female student suggested that Japanese TV dramas have "splendid plots, representation of society, unique contexts and variation of action, [so] Japanese TV dramas are better quality, more enjoyable and desirable". Another 22-year-old male student noted that "Japanese TV dramas are more creative and use more colloquial language". A 20-year-old male student who spends an average of 7-9 hours per week watching Japanese TV dramas stated that "I think Korean TV dramas are similar to Taiwanese ones; you can easily predict the outcome, so I am not interested in watching Korean TV dramas". The comments also connect to their depiction of Japan as a more advanced and modernised country yet with a hint of sophistication and originality in its media productions that catches university students' attention and imagination and is highly appreciated. Overall, the preference for Japanese TV dramas has been an overwhelming phenomenon amongst university students and suggests that Japanese TV dramas provide Taiwanese young audience with several desirable cultural forms and resources.

To sum up, university students' preference for Japanese TV dramas intertwines with several possible dimensions from an audience point of view. The quality and content of Japanese TV dramas stand out as a desirable choice in comparison to Korean

and/or Taiwanese productions. The reception of TV dramas aside, most university students demonstrate a general admiration and preference for the Japanese way of life, cultural customs and language. For instance, out of a total of 158 students, 117 show their desire to travel to Japan, 114 would like to learn Japanese as a second language and 76 would seriously consider living in Japan. In this regard, Japanese TV dramas have not only depicted a modern way of life that young audiences aspire to, they also feed into the youth's own distant imagination of Japan as a nation. A nation they might never have been to but somehow have a vivid memory of and an abstract personal sentimental connection to which is facilitated by the consumption of Japanese TV dramas; a sentiment expressed by Jia-ling during the interview:

I have never been to Japan, my imagination (idea) of Japan is mainly via the reception of Japanese TV dramas, travel books and the remains of Japanese colonial architecture in Taiwan, such as shrines. So I would like to go to Japan one day, searching for this wonderful *memory* that I have in my mind (age 21, Female, *my emphasis*).

Jia-ling's desire to search for memory, in this sense, is an 'imagined nostalgia' to borrow Appadurai's term (1996, p. 77); a nostalgia without actual living memory but through the pleasure of recognition with TV dramas and cultural representation of (Japanese) national images which is associated with the viewer's personal imaginings. The reception of foreign TV programmes in relation to transnational cultural practice and consumption of commodities has been discussed by several Asian scholars in the past. In the next section, I examine those debates based on my research data and also suggest that the Japanese TV by-products are not as actively consumed amongst young audiences as previous research assumed, but rather the sense of Japanese "odour" that has been disseminated and simulated by local cultural industries.

Japanese TV dramas and the sense of "Japaneseness": The consumption of symbolic cultural meanings and commodities

Much of the previous research on the impact of Japanese popular culture on the Taiwanese youth from 1990s, such as TV dramas, animations, pop music, fashion styles, expresses much concern with respect to the so-called "Japanophiles" (*Hari-zu*) who indulge in Japanese popular commodities in order to live "the Japanese way of

life”. Drawing on the postmodern dimension of consumption, the consumption of commodities (such as soundtracks, original comic books, novels, clothes) related to Japanese TV dramas is often believed by the researchers to carry a specific meaning which is portrayed in the content of dramas (Lin 2000, Y.-I. Su 1999). However, based on the outcomes of my questionnaires, almost 65 per cent of this group of university students have never purchased any products directly related to these TV dramas. And even if they do, the primary motivation was musical preference (68.9 per cent) and the quality of the products (61.3 per cent). While it was previously believed that Japanese TV dramas sell the whole package of products this has not been necessarily the case in my research. However, this does not necessarily suggest that Japanese TV dramas do not have any impact on the consumption of the idea of Japaneseness. What we need to consider is which concept of Japanese TV dramas is actually provided for and represented, and what Japanese TV dramas create outside their actual intertextual patterns which in turn interact with the local cultural practices and communities of everyday life. How does the term “Japanese Trendy Dramas” become culturally meaningful and generated by the local media/cultural industry? How do these images become a distant “collective memory” amongst youth in Taiwan? The standpoint of the reception of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwanese society is essentially a re-orientation from production to consumption – or from the depiction of Japanese lifestyles – to the practices of everyday life.

In Heng Su’s article (1999), ‘All Things Japanese - Children’s TV Viewing and Spending on Imported Cultural Goods in Taiwan’, the researcher targeted children of 10-15 years old in the Taipei metropolitan area. The findings demonstrate that viewing Japanese animation and viewers’ preferences for animation are significantly related to the attitudes and purchasing behaviour of young Taiwanese viewers. According to Su’s research:

Fifty-two per cent of respondents’ purchasing behaviour was inspired by the interesting and stylish design of the products. Every anime production has at least a couple of CDs on the market—a soundtrack album and the theme songs. Some also publish comic books simultaneously. Forty per cent were attracted by the content or theme songs of the animation. Popular characters of animation also motivate thirty-two per cent of school children to buy them (ibid., p. 72).

His research outcome contrasts with that of Iwabuchi's (1999), who argues that Japanese pop cultural products (i.e. the three C's: comics/cartoons, consumer technologies and computer games) are 'culturally odourless' (p. 178) in an attempt to neutralise audiences' potential psychological resistance as a result of Japan's imperialist past.

In the case of regional TV drama's consumption, Xiao-ming Hao and Leng-leng Teh (2004) suggest that those who watch more Japanese TV programmes and consume more Japanese TV drama VCDs tend to consider Japanese as cool, elegant and not stupid. Those who spend more time with Japanese media are more likely to buy Japanese products, imitate their idols' dressing styles either in the dramas or as pop idols and are motivated to learn the Japanese language. Based on one of their findings, Hao and Teh argue that:

Media audiences are more likely to see the Japanese in positive but superficial stereotypical ways, but *consumers* of Japanese popular cultural products, especially the games, are more likely to see the Japanese in some negative albeit superficial stereotypical ways (ibid., p. 31, *my emphasis*).

Their findings on the consumption of Japanese TV dramas (as media audience) and cultural products (as consumers) seem to suggest a contradictory perception of Japan as a nation amongst young Singaporeans. One of several possible explanations is that:

Media are more likely to exert a stronger effect in branding products than popular cultural products such as video games or flash cards because images presented by the media are seen as more realistic. For the same reason, exposure to the Japanese media also tends to have stronger effects than the consumption of popular cultural products in creating idols for the youngsters (ibid., pp. 30-31).

Although in the article, Hao and Teh did not clearly state that the reception of Japanese TV programmes has led to a better conception of Japan as a nation, to a certain extent they do suggest that Japanese TV programmes somehow portray the right cultural images and represent Japan as a desirable modern society that inspired young Singaporeans.

Both articles demonstrate that viewing Japanese TV programmes (either cartoons or TV dramas) has a certain level of influence on young people in relation to the purchase of Japanese products in Taiwan and Singapore. It seems fair to assume therefore that the *audience* of Japanese TV programmes is quite likely to become *consumers* of Japanese commodities. However, is this the way it really happens? Do audiences buy the *products* which they see on the programmes and then *interpret* the meaning of a particular product so that it in turn fulfils and expresses their feeling about real society?

In order to interpret the meanings and narratives associated with any consumer commodity we need to pay close attention to the specificities of the place and period in which that commodity is consumed. The concept of ‘symbolic consumption’ was being used incessantly during early research findings into the popularity of Japanese Trendy Dramas and the consumption of its by-products (Y.-l. Su 1999, p. 135). Here, the notion of ‘symbolic consumption’ is close to Jean Baudrillard’s definition (2001) of sign-value, the images of things which through advertising, the media, displays and performances create the romantic, fantastic and aesthetic fabric of consumers in their daily life. For instance, fashion style, soundtracks, original novels, comic books and VCDs were employed as the industrial strategy for the promotion of Japanese Trendy Dramas in Taiwan. Initially, the production of Japanese Trendy Dramas was recognised as highly youth-oriented and depicting various kinds of consumerist trends which attracted large numbers of young Japanese female viewers at the height of the bubble economy (Toru 2004). According to Andre Jansson, ‘[a] good illustration of industrially encoded intertextuality is the *product placement*, which is essentially a strategy of positioning a branded product within a desirable media context, trying to strengthen the image of the product’ (2002, p. 19). In particular, the linkage between the product and media text, ‘the image, or the “aura” of the commodity contributes to the perceived characteristics of people and place in the film or TV programmes’ (ibid., pp. 19-20). Therefore, earlier research projects about the impact of Japanese Trendy Dramas on Taiwanese youth frequently argue that although the *product placement* in the TV dramas may not be intentionally encoded by the producer, it certainly functions as a cultural resource to allow young audiences in Taiwan and East Asian countries to reproduce a sense of youth cultural identification and to fulfil their desire for modernity (Chua 2000, p. 16, Lee and Ho 2002, pp. 38-39).

Nicholas Abercrombie suggests in his study of the relationship between authority and consumer society that:

If images are at the centre of modern consumption and of the producer-consumer relationship, then the control of their meaning is similarly central to the distribution of authority in that relationship... Producers try to commodify meaning, that is to try to make images and symbols into things which can be sold or bought. Consumers, on the other hand, try to give their own, new, meanings to the commodities and services that they buy (1994, p. 51).

By the same token, Jansson points out that ‘the meaning of a particular act of consumption emerges to a great extent via the connotative link between the consumed object and the media-generated-image - like one text related to another’ (2002, p. 19). Moreover, as Yu-ling Su argues (1999), the format of Japanese popular culture is highly concentrated on the re/presentation of the images of Japan or the feeling of Japaneseness. However, what is this feeling or sense of Japaneseness? What “odour” or “aura” do young Taiwanese audience “sniff” which then becomes a concept or ideal that young consumers buy into? On the one hand, according to Koichi Iwabuchi’s primary observation:

The recent popularity of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan suggests that “Japanese odour” does have the potential to sell. ... This “Japaneseness” is quite different from Japanese traditional culture, the beauty of which was discovered by “the west”. “Japaneseness” with which modernised “Asia” finds resonance in Japanese TV dramas has more to do with a Japanese modernity which is not just a response to western modernity...popular culture, reminds Japan and ‘Asia’ alike of cultural similarities ... The ascent of Japanese dramas is closely associated with the scent of a modernity in Asia that Japanese dramas embody (2001, pp. 55-56).

On the other hand, Su (1999) argues that from comic books, anime to trendy dramas and their by-products, all these Japanese cultural products share the same system of signs and meaning. The meanings of Japanese popular culture and products are no longer just a matter of consumption but to an increasing extent used as sources for the expression of youth cultural identification and taste in Taiwan. A combination of these three statements seems to confirm the rise of an ‘image culture’, which Jansson defines as ‘the interaction between *cultural products*, *cultural communities* and *cultural practices*’ (2002, p. 8 original italics) in relation to three transitory processes

of producing and consuming images: ‘*culturalisation, mediatisation and simulation*’ (ibid., p. 12 *original emphasis*). The notion of image culture or image bank¹⁹ from cultural globalisation and an intensified regional cultural flows perspective both suggest that the consumption of cultural commodities is not merely the act of consuming but rather a process of integration, negotiation and cultural appropriation.

I argue that the use of the phrase “Japanese Idol/Trendy Dramas” creates certain images and feelings that are often depicted in TV dramas. These images and feelings are rarely described or written about in relation to a particular drama. As different consumers have their own different favourite Japanese Trendy Dramas, what they buy into is the concept and the “atmosphere” that the phrase implies. As Jia-ling pointed out:

The difference between Japanese and Korean TV dramas is that Japanese TV dramas often give you a sense of “belief” or “faith” – something that you can incorporate into your life. Whether it is about personal love life or choice, e.g. what is happiness or what you are searching for in a relationship, or the difficulties that you encounter in your life. To me, some Japanese TV dramas can really encourage you and give you a sense of direction (age 21, Female).

Yi-jun responded similarly by saying that:

Those characters in Japanese TV dramas often give me a sense of courage, even though they might not be from the best background or lack support. Somehow, they still manage to survive or turn the situation around (age 22, Female).

From this perspective foreign TV dramas provide a cultural imaginary space that is not grounded in place and traditions but in a combination of imagined and “semi-realistic” place. This was translated by local youth to articulate their sense of temporal-synchronous collective cultural identification in modern society, conceived of as a general experience rather than a national one.

As I mentioned before, the impressions of Japanese TV dramas have often been referred to as “elegant”, “sophisticated”, and “romantic”. Therefore, the idea of

¹⁹ The concept of ‘image bank’ which is mentioned in Chapter 2, according to Chua (2000, p. 16), is when youth in Asia draw from an image bank to construct their sense of youth identity within the cultural globalization context.

buying certain products which are closely related to the TV dramas is not only part of the symbolic consumption of certain products but is also a way of life, a representation of cultural capital and taste. What has been more frequently used by, and to intertwine with Japanese TV dramas is an “odour”, a kind of imaginary semiotic representation that it created. In other words, the reception of Japanese TV dramas is not only the process that provides and reinforces image culture but also connects the realm of cultural industry in Taiwan. What is particularly interesting to note regarding the promotion of content is that the term “Japanese TV dramas” is often used as a representation of the romantic and desirable, a form of cultural ‘imaginary appropriation’ (Lee and Ho 2002, p. 22). This is a general assumption concerning images, ideas and atmosphere in Japanese TV dramas rather than a critique of specific programmes. The promotion of new music albums, for example, often includes notes on the CD cover that “there is the romantic odour or aura of Japanese TV dramas pervading the atmosphere”. For instance, in 2005 the promotion of Taiwanese singer Chi-jin Chen’s song, *The meaning of travelling*, focused on selling the graceful tune of the song which is infused with “Japanese Idol Dramas’ taste of love”. Likewise, travel agents promote Japanese honeymoon package trips indicating a specific location, such as Oadiba (located in Tokyo) which often appears in the TV dramas that are portrayed as a romantic location. There is also the frequently used phrase “Japanese Idol Drama” frequently found on fiction book covers, such as *When love encounters Japanese TV dramas* (Renata, 2000). In a similar situation, after a series of romantic Korean TV dramas (such as *Winter Sonata*, *Lovers in Paris*) was well received in Taiwan, this cultural marketing strategy trend has been promoted by local media industries and travel agencies. During my research, it was a less significant approach and phenomenon and therefore I only focus on this discussion in relation to Japanese TV dramas.

The consumption of Japanese commodities is often overly simplified by researchers who relate it to a high level of exposure to Japanese TV dramas and equate this with the desire to own Japanese products. However, what has been neglected is that the definition of Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama is not merely being decoded as TV drama but is being re-encoded as desirable cultural consumption and a way of life. Therefore I suggest that the audiences’ cultural knowledge of the Japanese Trendy Drama has made this particular TV genre not just an entertainment programme or an object of

promotion but also a vocabulary with specific cultural meaning, or a code word, and a promotion in itself within Taiwanese society. The concept of Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama has gained importance as a form of cultural reference among Taiwanese youth and its contribution to the development and maintenance of particular cultural communities. This phrase, which signifies romanticism, desirability and sophistication has accumulated meaning over the years and has been maintained, even after the decline of Japanese trendy dramas from the early 2000s when Korean TV programmes successfully gained recognition in Taiwan. The phrase Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama became a generally understood message with a symbolic cultural meaning as well as a common emotional resonance. As indicated in the section comparing the difference between these two types of regional TV dramas, many of my informants expressed their points of view on the differences, for example the complaint the Japanese being more sophisticated than Korean programmes; Japanese TV dramas being more realistic with greater diversity in their contents; better structure; featuring relatively more attractive idols and so forth. There are also some negative opinions about Japanese Idol/Trendy Dramas, such as that the storylines are superficial and family values and traditional sentiments are often absent. However, overall most university students have largely positive views and feelings towards Japanese Trendy Drama regardless of how many programmes they have actually watched. As I stated earlier, many advertising and promotional strategies for cultural products (sometimes food and drink as well) constantly associate their wares with Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama in modern Taiwan. Hence the symbolic consumption and circulation of Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama is a matter of taste, status or semiotics rather than just a TV show. Youth consumption of Japanese popular culture as a means to demonstrate their socio-cultural status also reflects the emptiness of cultural subjectivities amongst young generations in Taiwan. A lack of a definite Taiwanese popular culture field is apparent in this instance.

By and large, the prominence of design, packaging and advertising of Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama in Taiwan has exposed youth to a certain image of everyday life in Japan, and various kinds of media texts provide audiences/consumers with images of goods and services that might be acquired and incorporated as meaningful components of their expressive style. As Jansson puts it, ‘consumers often have a quite extensive knowledge of the meanings of things before they actually acquire

them' (2002, p. 14). It is indisputable that those Japanese popular cultural commodities have established their own consumer markets in Taiwan, and that these now permeate consumption in social contexts as well. Although it would be naïve to believe that the consumption of Japanese commodities in Taiwan or the consumption behaviour of young people is manipulated by Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama, without doubt Japanese Idol/Trendy Drama does play a significant role in the proliferation of Japanese popular culture and products in Taiwanese society. The representations of modern Japanese society in dramas have encouraged local young audiences to actively engage with different forms of transnational cultural practices and experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas (mainly Idol/Trendy Dramas) amongst university students to demonstrate the cultural consumption of these two regional TV dramas in terms of the audience's programme preference and general reading of the drama's narrative, the sense of personal emotional connection with dramas, and their perceptions of both countries. These dimensions are connected to their choice of programmes and reinforce their cultural misconceptions to a certain extent. This is different from previous researchers' emphasis on the notion of 'pleasure of recognition' and 'cultural proximity' to explain the modern imaginary appropriation of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan (Ho and Lee 2002, pp. 15-49) or the desire of 'becoming culturally proximate' and 'a sense of coevalness' with modern Japan (Iwabuchi 2002). As I have shown in this chapter, university students' reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has developed into more complicated ways of viewing and reading, such as paying attention to details of TV drama production, ranging from the quality of the screenplay and camera work to the relative merits of acting skills. The viewers' experience of transnational TV dramas and popular cultural products also intertwines with the notion of Asian modernisation and the construction of a sense of Taiwanese identity. In this analysis, university students' transnational consumption of TV dramas and cultural appropriation should therefore be seen as more than simply a common audience study of the relationship between media culture and young people. Regional media

consumption in this case should not be seen just as a powerful source of dominant ideologies but rather as an alternative cultural symbolic resource which is often negotiated and re/appropriated by local young audiences. My intervention is neither from a perspective emphasising Western versus Eastern cultural difference nor a historical, colonial perspective on the sentiments that drive the reception of foreign TV dramas. Rather, I argue that young university students, after many years of regional TV drama viewing experience, have developed their own way of appropriating Japanese and Korean TV dramas, and the cultural perceptions of both countries encourage them to take a reflexive distance from their own life and stimulate their awareness of cultural differences and/or similarities between Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

By articulating my data in relation to previous research, I have been able to demonstrate how the university students that I surveyed and interviewed are able to actively incorporate these transnational TV dramas into their daily lives and use them as a resource in the construction of their own sense of Taiwanese identity. Making this connection between the transnational consumption of popular culture and national cultural identity will set the scene for the main topic of discussion in Chapter 6. There we will explore in more detail the relationship between cultural identity and popular culture. As Martin-Barbero has argued in the Latin American context ‘understanding the process of mass communication implies recognising the rearticulations of symbolic boundaries and how these new boundaries confirm the value and power of collective identities’ (1993, p. 26). The transnational expansion of communications, which weakens local traditions, has produced a world folklore or, as Renato Ortiz calls it, an ‘international-popular culture’:

communities of consumers are organised less and less according to national differences, and above all among the younger generations, they define their cultural practices in terms of homogenised information and styles that can be received by audiences in different societies independently of their political, religious, or national backgrounds’ (cited in Garcia Canclini 1997, p. 11).

To understand the notion of Taiwanese identity we therefore need to think about the nature of the nation and national identity and to ask how it is mediated by youth consumption of foreign TV dramas as a way to negotiate young people’s sense of belonging and articulate their cultural identification.

Chapter 4

A comparative reading of secondary school students' reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas

Introduction

This chapter is based on the analysis of one hundred and eighteen questionnaire responses and four group discussions which I conducted amongst secondary school students on different occasions between 2003 and 2005. My findings suggest that the viewing pleasure of foreign TV dramas in terms of cultural practice amongst secondary school students is sometimes limited by their life experience. This particular group often has less sentimental connection and emotional involvement compared to university students. Moreover, social activities amongst teenage audiences such as television viewing with the family can yield a more self-reflexive social attitude, incorporating familial socio-cultural changes through interaction with and the exploration of imagined identity within the media space of television. Japanese and Korean TV dramas are both representations of imported programmes in Taiwan, in which local young audiences bring their own cultural context to bear on the content and read them accordingly (c.f. Chua 2004, pp. 211-212). However one should not take local audiences' reading or meaning-making as one fixed position but rather consider how it generates difference within the local cultures of a specific audience group.

The first section illustrates the general reception and consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst secondary school students. It focuses in particular on a comparison between university and secondary school students in terms of textual interpretations, the influence of programme merchandising, and the diverse range of emotional connections to the programmes in relation to the students' own social and educational status. In doing so, I argue that different young generational audience groups and their "making-sense" of narratives in the consumption of foreign TV dramas not only intertwines with their social and cultural status but also represents a possible generational cultural difference.

The second section demonstrates that the place and space of television viewing amongst secondary students has proved to be rather different from that of university students. Different programmes often involve different family members as viewers (Morley 1986). The viewing of TV dramas in most Taiwanese families often involves the mother, elderly family members and young teenagers. Occasionally, relevant discussions in relation to the contents of these programmes are raised while watching. Television viewing for most secondary students is considered a family activity during or after the evening meal. Nevertheless, the young also demonstrate a desire for a personal viewing space, especially where Japanese or Korean TV dramas are concerned. Unlike university students, secondary school students' viewing time and space is limited and confined within the household, hence their reception of local or foreign TV dramas can sometimes become more of an immediate cultural interpretation and interaction with family members in comparison with university students. From this perspective, teenagers' reading of TV dramas is less about self-reflexivity than on "TV dramas talks" as a means of social and cultural formation through discussion and negotiation among family members.

In the third section I will discuss the distribution and consumption of Japanese animation in Taiwan in the context of their historical-cultural roots and image appropriation by the Taiwanese creative industry. I explore the reasons why Japanese animation is popular with secondary school students and the possible connection with an understanding of Japan as a creative country. Although Japanese animation was not part of my initial research subject, when I conducted my research with secondary school students their interest in Japanese cartoons was constantly on display. Some junior secondary school students in the age range between thirteen and fifteen years old admitted to spending more time watching Japanese cartoons than TV dramas. In contrast to the idea of Japanese animations as 'culturally odourless' products (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 27), Heng Su's (1999) research shows that the consumption of Japanese cartoons and related production has created its own, to borrow Lee's term, 'Japanised cultural consumption space' in Taiwan (Lee 2003, p. 48). Therefore it is important to examine to what extent the popularity of Japanese animation amongst teenagers facilitates their positive perception of Japanese TV dramas.

Differences in the consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas

My four group discussions with secondary school students indicate that their heavy study schedule and almost daily examination practice at schools meant that most of the students have limited time to watch television, especially during school terms.²⁰ The young interviewees from secondary schools mention that they do not get to watch television as much as they wish, either because of time restrictions imposed by their parents or because they do not have the power to access the remote control. Most of the time they simply follow whatever other family members are watching – in most of the cases mothers or grandparents make this choice. Yu-ya, a junior secondary student, explained to me:

Oh, I rarely watch either Japanese or Korean TV dramas because my mother does not allow me to watch them. She often watches local traditional Taiwanese TV dramas²¹, so I just watch whatever programme she is watching at the time (age 13, Female).

A similar response came from Ying-hong, a 13-year-old boy, who said ‘Most of the time I watch local traditional Taiwanese TV dramas with my parents but occasionally, I watch Japanese or Korean TV dramas on my own’. Yuan-xuan, a senior secondary student who showed great interest in Japanese TV dramas and culture during the group interview states:

I do not like local traditional Taiwanese TV dramas and [I think] they are for old people but because my grandmother likes them, the rest of my family members watch the programme with her (age 17, Female).

Since most secondary school students still live at home²² it is no surprise that the so-called ‘politics of the living room’ (Cubitt cited in Morley 1986, p. 19) have a certain impact on programme choice and exposure, which I will explore further in the second section of the chapter.

²⁰ During term time, normally secondary school students will be at school from seven-thirty in the morning until four in the afternoon and right after that some will attend after-school.

²¹ Most local traditional TV dramas (*bentu ju* similar to soap opera) are broadcast between 7 and 9pm during weekdays. Students normally get to watch a bit of TV during that time slot after dinner before they go back to their studies in preparation for examinations the next day, or to bed.

²² A few of the students study outside their hometown, which means that they live in school accommodation away from the parents.

In contrast most university students who live alone or share a flat with their friends can generally choose what to watch and where. These students can even watch programmes in VCD format or on their computer in their individual room. Nevertheless, all secondary school students who I interviewed have some experience of watching both Japanese and Korean TV dramas. Similarly to university students, many of them express a certain degree of knowledge/opinion about Japanese and Korean TV dramas and rather positive perceptions of these two types of dramas in comparison to Taiwanese-made TV programmes. The common impressions are that these TV dramas offer a greater diversity of content; higher production values; a clearer representation of cultural difference and ways of life; and the celebrity status of the actors. However this does not necessarily suggest that there is a similar degree of participation in the consumption and interpretation of Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst these two different audience groups.

In terms of their general readings of content some secondary school students state that Japanese TV dramas are more interesting and diverse than Korean ones, whereas others believe that Korean ones are more romantic or funnier. A few boys admitted that they do not take much of interest in reading the plots or storylines of these dramas. However, like most university students the teenagers believe that Japanese and Korean TV dramas are better, regardless of whether the content is interesting to them or not. Based on the open-ended questions in the last section of the questionnaire common responses from teenaged audiences included: “Taiwanese dramas are boring, often you can predict the ending or they are just copycats of Japanese or/and Korean TV dramas”; “The acting skills and storyline are not good”; or “Taiwanese TV programmes often look ‘cheap’”. These statements highlight a fundamental question, namely what makes the young audience think so highly of both imported dramas compared to Taiwanese dramas? TV dramas (soap operas, *telenovelas*, and melodramas) are supposedly often viewed as a genre which depicts domestic life, and has a closer sentimental value and feeling for the local audience compared to other imported dramas. Yet, the young audiences still show a greater interest in and appreciation of foreign TV dramas (e.g. a few state that they prefer American TV dramas) to local ones. One of the reasons is that those programmes have been consciously promoted by local TV companies to target a young audience according to my interview with Xiao, who is a member of staff of the Korean TV

Programmes Importation Section at Taiwan GALA TV station in 2005. She points out that:

Each year the company purchases a certain amount of Korean TV dramas and programmes. Some dramas are considered more ‘modern’ and seen as similar to Japanese Trendy Dramas. We target teenagers as the main audience group and therefore we tend to broadcast them during summer and winter vacation if the timing is not too far off from the original broadcasting time in South Korea. In terms of genre, some of them are closer to Taiwan local TV dramas with more “traditional values” or “comedy elements” – these dramas often run up to 50 or 100 episodes. In this case, our audience target is middle-aged housewives. Overall, the station’s strategy aims to establish the GALA drama channel as a Korean TV dramas channel (Interview conducted in 2005).

As noted previously, the popularity of Japanese Trendy Drama in Taiwan owes a lot to the promotional strategies employed by Channel V in the early 1990s. This means that Japanese and Korean TV dramas do not merely function as entertainment programmes for youngsters, but also represent cultural products that surpass the home-grown Taiwanese product in some sense. The meaning of Japan or South Korea has been commodified and marketed by the local media to be purchased and consumed by a Taiwanese audience. There is a lack of confidence in local cultural commodities perhaps because of this level of marketing manipulation. The resultant general distrust of or distaste for local Taiwanese cultural commodities is an issue that needs to be explored further.

In spite of the fact that young Taiwanese teenagers might feel a sense of ‘coevalness’ with Japanese culture or lifestyle (Iwabuchi 2002, p. 154) Japan is often represented as a more advanced and modernised nation; a nation to aspire to and fantasise about. As Yu-ling Su (1999, pp. 132-133) points out, before Japanese TV dramas began broadcasting legally in Taiwan in 1991 it was not difficult to find evidence that Taiwanese society was under the influence of Japanese popular culture since the 1970s – through pop songs, images of young pop idols and comic books. Equally, the older generation who have a vivid experience or memories of Japanese colonisation often demonstrated a preference for a “Made in Japan” outlook. One example is the high regard for anything electrical that is made in Japan, from televisions, cameras and refrigerators to rice cookers.

The responses to the questionnaires and group discussions from secondary school students reveal that younger audiences have become accustomed to both Japanese and Korean TV dramas. This is in contrast to university students who had much earlier access to Japanese TV dramas in the early 1990s and only later to Korean TV dramas. Most secondary school students have had equal opportunities to access foreign TV dramas on Taiwanese television stations. In my research, most university students appreciated Japanese TV dramas to a greater degree than Korean TV dramas but this preference is less apparent amongst secondary school students. This noticeable difference between university and teenage audiences indicates that the reception of foreign TV dramas is to a certain extent pre-determined by the audiences' expectation of genres and their viewing habits. For instance, university students often refer to their preference for Japanese TV dramas compared to Korean TV dramas due to their being 'more familiar with' or 'used to' the genre. In the case of the secondary school students 'familiarity' with a particular TV genre was hardly mentioned. Rather, during group discussions some boys considered Korean TV dramas more interesting because the plots were funnier or the 'snowy scenery' looks beautiful. To some of them the popularity of Korean and Japanese TV dramas is an example of the social and cultural importance of foreign entertainment programmes that can now be easily accessed in Taiwanese society. Typical statements in the questionnaires that illustrate this point are that 'Japanese and Korean cultural products, packaged food and restaurants are everywhere in Taiwan', 'They are popular, everyone is watching them' or 'Their storylines are better than Taiwanese ones'. To teenage audiences the popularity of Japanese and Korean media and cultural products is about their high accessibility and the dissemination of cultural information such as lifestyle, TV dramas and commodities. This interpretation of these socio-cultural phenomena in their daily life means that teenagers see regional cultural and media flows as a norm in modern Taiwanese society.

Nonetheless, these foreign TV programmes may be part of their daily life but hold less significant cultural meanings or emotional implications for teenagers than for most university students. Says Zhi-wei:

I watch Japanese and Korean TV dramas very occasionally; my family do not take much interest in either dramas or countries. To me, when we talk about Korea, it is the food that interests me more than anything else (age 13, Male).

Wei-ren responds in similar fashion:

I watch both Japanese and Korean TV dramas but do not have a particular interest in either, I prefer Taiwanese idol dramas. I do not have much interest or knowledge about either countries but I do like Japanese playstation games (age 14, Male).

Thus it is evident that the young audience's reception of foreign TV dramas is not only associated with their social and cultural status but also more often than not with the programmes' availability and the marketing strategy employed by the local media industry. Hence teenagers' consumption of regional popular culture and commodities should not simply be generalised on the basis of the notion of 'cultural proximity' or 'postcoloniality'.

Teenage audiences' cultural appreciation of foreign TV dramas also represents a more materialist approach (with an emphasis on cuisine, music CDs, idols posters) and less of an emotional attachment to storylines or TV characters. It is characterised by a relative lack of interest in forms of cultural appropriation (for instance only 41.5 per cent showed an interest in learning Japanese and 26.2 per cent in learning Korean) in comparison with university students (72.1 per cent and 46.8 per cent respectively). In terms of the "idols effect," secondary school students demonstrate their affections for their idols in a much more materialistic and enthusiastic way than university students. Based on the evidence of the questionnaires and group discussions, secondary school students are more likely to spend money on buying CDs, posters, comic books, original novels and fashion items related to their idols (35.5 per cent), favourite programmes (37.3 per cent) and theme songs (e.g. sound tacks) (62.6 per cent). Wen-ling, a 16-year-old senior secondary school girl, openly admitted that 'because I am a fan of *Kinki Kids*²³ whenever they have new TV dramas or songs released I will watch and buy them'. Qiao-zu, a junior secondary student says:

My first Japanese trendy drama is *God, Please Give Me More Time*, because I really like Fukada Kyōko and Kaneshiro Takeshi²⁴. I think she is very cute and he is very good looking and that is why I chose to watch the programme. Gradually, I enjoy the storyline more (age 13, Female).

²³ A male group who made their debut in 1997 under Johnnys & Associates, Inc., a talent agency that trains and promotes groups of male idols in Japan. They are relatively popular among Taiwanese young girls.

²⁴ Kaneshiro Takeshi (金城武) is half Japanese and half Taiwanese and grew up in Taiwan.

Fang-ling, a 17-year-old devoted female fan of Japanese TV dramas confesses that:

I am addicted to this drama called *Hero*²⁵, I bought the sound track and watch every single episode, and will watch again when it reruns on the television, I really like both actor and actress.

Jia-ling, a 13-year-old girl who generally enjoys watching Korean TV dramas more, says that “I really like *Lovers in Paris*²⁶, Park Shin-yang is very attractive and a good actor, too. Often, I would buy the sound tracks of the TV dramas that I enjoy watching”. Jia-ling shyly admits that she is a big fan of Korean heartthrob actor, Bae Yong-joon²⁷: “I watched all the TV dramas with him as protagonist, such as *Hotelier*, *Winter Sonata* and would watch them over and over again even after they have been rebroadcast several times”.

Devotion to such idols is a common socio-cultural practice amongst youngsters. Branded as “Japanophile” or “Koreanophile” it is frequently frowned upon by some Taiwanese media and cultural critics. Nevertheless, their transnational cultural admiration for the idols is often invoked as a representation of individual cultural differentiation vis-à-vis their peer groups and forms a sense of individual collective-identification with people who share the same affection for the same idol.

In general, this great appeal of idols does not just apply to Japanese and Korean TV programmes; most secondary students also show an interest in Taiwanese Idol Dramas especially where idols are involved, even if they exhibit a general distaste for these dramas during group discussions. Junior secondary school students take more of an interest in and appreciate local idol dramas more than senior secondary and university students. Xin-hua a 14-year-old girl says:

I do not watch Japanese and Korean TV dramas that much; I prefer Taiwanese Idol Dramas. I watch *For the Roses' Sake*²⁸ (starring Taiwan female idol group S.H.E and two male models) because I like S.H.E.

²⁵ *Hero*, starring Kimura Takuya and Takao Matsu, first aired on the Fuji TV station in Japan in 2001.

²⁶ *Lovers in Paris* was first broadcast on SBS in 2004. In January 2005, the leading characters, Park Shin Yang and Kim Jung Eun were on a promotional tour to Taiwan. The programme broke the previous viewing record held by *Winter Sonata*, according to the GTV station.

²⁷ Bae Yong-Jun is best known as the protagonist in *Winter Sonata* (Winter Love Story).

²⁸ *For the Roses' Sake* (also known as 薔薇之戀) was first broadcast on TTV from 25 May 2003 to 23 November 2003. The series won the Most Popular Drama of the Year at the 2004 Golden Bell Awards in Taiwan. The drama was based on a Japanese *josei* manga series (*Bara no Tame Ni*).

Jia-ling, who enjoys watching Korean TV dramas also mentions her favourite Taiwanese Idol Dramas: “I like *Mars*²⁹, because the male protagonist is good looking and the storyline is not bad”. Mong-xian a 13-year-old boy notes: “I like *The Outsiders*³⁰, it has fighting and violent scenes which I quite enjoy”; a similar response from Wei-ren:

I like *Westside Story*³¹, the storyline is good and interesting; it feels real because it is about teenagers³². Japanese and Korean TV dramas are all about romance or love relationship which is kind of boring to watch (age 14, Male).

In contrast to junior secondary school students, senior students still show disappointment in Taiwanese Idol Dramas. Xiao-han, a 16-year-old girl simply says “I do not like Taiwanese young actors or pop idols” and for Xiao-han the attraction of idol dramas (either local or regional) is closely related to the notion of “idol effects”. Indeed, the young audience frequently regard local idol dramas as unoriginal. Fang-ling, a seventeen-year old girl, comments that ‘Taiwanese Idol Dramas often lack creativity; often they just borrow ideas from Japanese TV dramas’. Chun-han, a seventeen year old girl, also says that “The storyline is more or less the same in all Taiwanese idol dramas, the production is very bad and unattractive. They are unoriginal and just copy each other”. Another disappointment concerns the quality of local production and the lack of exotic locations. For example, Wen-ling, a 16-year-old girl, states, that “the locations are not good, all based in Taiwan, there is no major financial investment and storyline and actors are no good”. Overall, the impression given of Taiwanese Idol Dramas is rather mixed and relatively negative for these teenager audiences (mainly senior secondary students). Nonetheless, Taiwanese Idol Dramas are increasingly attracting a younger audience which believes that local production depicts the realities of daily life better than Japanese and Korean TV dramas. Certainly, they find the plots more comprehensible.

²⁹ *Mars* (also known as 戰神) was first broadcast on CTS from 31st July 2004. The series won the Most Popular Drama of the Year 2005 at the Golden Bell Awards in Taiwan. The drama was based on a Japanese *shojo* manga series (*Mars*).

³⁰ *The Outsiders* (also known as 鬥魚) was first broadcast on GTV from 2 April 2004 to October 2004. The series was based on an internet love story.

³¹ *Westside Story* (also known as 西街少年) was first broadcast on CTS from 21 September 2003 to 8 January 2004. It starred Taiwanese popular boys group, 5566.

³² The age range of the characters in this drama is between 16 and 20 years old.

Taiwanese Idol Dramas are largely a hybrid programme format encompassing various cultural elements. They star Taiwanese actors (sometimes combining actors from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and China), often with a storyline based on a Japanese *manga* series with theme songs performed by local musicians. These types of drama tend not to contain many explicit local cultural elements.

Taiwanese Idol Dramas from the outset were custom-made to attract young teenage audiences. Arguably, the first successful Taiwan-made idol drama is *Meteor Garden*,³³ which is based on a Japanese comic book entitled *Hana yori dango* (Boys before Flowers). It focuses on the lives of privileged school students and it was produced by Comic Ritz International Production with Zhi-ping Chai as producer and Yue-xun Cai as director in 2001. The series is tailored to target a young Taiwanese audience, through its use of a combination of the Japanese TV genres, comic books, idol effects (good-looking actors)³⁴ and other recognisable Japanese elements, such as Japanese character names (with some alterations) pronounced in Mandarin. Later on, this type of hybrid drama³⁵ was produced and appeared on Taiwanese television channels as a regular genre in its own right.

Describing the popularity of *Meteor Garden* in Taiwan and most East Asian countries, Hsiu-Chuang Deppman states that

Taiwanese idol dramas like *Meteor Garden* combine two interrelated genres in Japanese TV programme: “trendy dramas” and “post-trendy dramas.” The former focus on ‘depictions of stylish urban lifestyles and trendy nightspots abundant with extravagant designer clothes and accessories, sets with the chic interiors designs, and the latest pop music, all of which clearly reflected the then prevailing highly materialistic consumerism Japanese young people enjoyed under the so-called bubble economy’ (Iwabuchi, 2004: 9). The “post-trendy dramas”, on the other hand, give more weight to plot development, ‘sympathetically depicting young people’s yearnings for love, friendship, work and dreams’ (Iwabuchi, 2004: 10), even though trendy consumerism is still vital to the sub-genres’ success (2009, p. 92).

³³ It was first broadcast on CTS channel in April 2001. *Meteor Garden 2* was produced in 2002.

³⁴ The main four male characters are known as *F4* (Flowers 4) who later became a successful phenomenon in Taiwan and other East-Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, China, Philippines and Thailand.

³⁵ A few examples are *Mars*, *It started with a kiss*, *For the Rose’s Sake*.

Arguably, *Meteor Garden* was the first Taiwanese idol drama that was exported to and was well received in most Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, Korea and Japan³⁶. According to Hafez:

The mark of cultural globalisation, rather than the transfer of cultural goods through import and export, is its influence on the indigenous entertainment industry, which it stimulates, generating new variations on form and style. In short, globalisation ushers in comprehensive modernisation (2007, p. 97).

The success of Taiwanese idol dramas in other countries demonstrates that the cultural meaning of idols has gained a general attraction amongst young Asians when consuming TV dramas. As Chua rightly suggests, the term “idols” has come to characterise a specific segment of popular cultural products (2004, p. 203) in East Asian media markets. The consumption of “idols” has become a social phenomenon and the audience’s “gaze” is not merely one of admiration but also incorporates the desire to assimilate their idols. This assimilation is visible through different levels of involvement, for example mimicking their fashion styles, the purchasing of sentimental objects depicted in the TV programmes, and learning the languages. Although some might argue that this idol effect is rather shallow in relation to a sense of transnational cultural sharing or identification, it nevertheless indicates that this type of TV genre has created a unique media and cultural consumption field amongst young Asian audiences. The main attractions of East Asian idol dramas, as Deppman suggests, are ‘trend-setting representations of how young East Asian urbanities skilfully consume, fashion, and capitalise on the materiality of their new “glocal” culture’ (2009, p. 93).

The (un)realistic qualities of content are scarcely mentioned amongst young teenagers, and some of them state that they prefer Korean TV dramas over Japanese dramas, either because Korean TV dramas are “funnier”,³⁷ or because they cannot understand the Japanese TV dramas. Some of them note in the questionnaire that “Korean TV dramas are more exciting and vigorous; Japanese ones are rigid and boring” or “Japanese pop music is easy to listen to”. Despite the question’s focus on their preference for regional TV dramas, it is not unusual for respondents to mention

³⁶ It was first broadcast on the SKY channel in 2003 in Japan. In 2005, Japanese TV station TBS remade the show, which was then broadcast on Taiwan’s Wei-Lai TV station in July 2006.

³⁷ There are two well received Korean long-series TV dramas (similar to soap operas) in Taiwan, called 男生女生向前看 (Non Stop) and 順風婦產科 (Soonpoong Clinic). Both are comedies.

their interest in other popular media products, such as pop music/theme songs in the programmes or cartoons. I shall return to the case of popular consumption of cartoons and its possible implications for the perception of Japanese popular products later in this chapter.

The primary concerns (categorised as important or very important in the questionnaire) of teenage audiences in their programme choices are: “storyline” (44.4 per cent in Japanese dramas and 46.3 per cent in Korean ones); “entertainment value” (30.3 per cent in Japanese and 27.8 per cent in Korean); and “fun and kill time” (31.3 per cent in Japanese and 27.8 per cent in Korean). The remaining reasons given such as “obtaining fashion information”, “releasing emotional pressure”, “gaining new acknowledge” and “learning language” are all considered to be less important and not relevant to their programme choices. In the group discussion, female senior secondary school students Chun-han and Yuan-xuan both mention that they usually get home at around seven in the evening and still have to prepare for examinations the following day although they usually get a bit more time to watch TV programmes during winter and summer vacations. Japanese and Korean TV dramas are still not necessarily their first choice; rather, it depends on the family’s choice.

In view of such responses, it can be suggested that the daily lives of secondary school students revolve around study and family rather than issues of individual space and growth into adulthood. Therefore Japanese TV dramas which often depict urban lifestyles, professional skills and office romance fail to attract these teenagers. Hence their possible emotional involvement and lifestyle connection with the programmes are weaker among most secondary school students than for university students. In the field of audience reception research, it is accepted that viewers use elements of their shared social knowledge to determine the relative quality and significance of a programme. In accounting for teenage audiences’ pleasure in watching foreign TV dramas we witness a distinction between light comedy and romantic elements (interesting (female students)/boring (male students)). This highlights a different focus from earlier research on soap opera with its emphasis on fantasy (fiction) and escapism (reality) (Ang 1985, Livingstone 1991). The attraction of ‘realistic’ or ‘fantasy’ elements may still be relevant, however, for a younger audience in Taiwan, in particular in the choice of foreign TV programmes, viewing preference is often

shaped by personal tastes and socio-cultural sensibility and therefore cultural appropriation takes a variety of forms.

When making sense of the information offered in foreign TV dramas and applying it to their own everyday life experience, the ability and sensibility of secondary school students to adopt information is generally more limited than that of university students. Indeed, their appreciation of foreign cultures is often reduced to simple food referents with *Kimchi* (pickled cabbage) standing in for Korea and *Ramen* (noodles) indicating Japan. The consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas by university students has a more dynamic and purposeful realisation in their daily lives. Examples of this influence include language learning, self-reflexivity in relation to their social life and individual collective-identification. The resulting deeper cultural understanding of “others” through imaginary appropriation and transcultural consumption is circumscribed by personal life experience. The notion of ‘a community of sentiment’ – a group that begins to imagine and feel things together’ because of the conditions of collective reading via *mediascapes*’ (Appadurai 1996, p. 8) – is challenged by transcultural consumption of TV dramas which is often confined within the viewers’ particular socio-cultural parameters. For instance, Jia-ling, a junior secondary female student, who prefers Korean over Japanese TV dramas and is a devoted fan of Bae Yong-joon (she states that she watches all the Korean TV drama series starring Bae Yong-joon broadcast in Taiwan), claims that:

I have never bought anything related to Bae Yong-joon, I still prefer Taiwanese pop idols. I do not consider myself as *Ha-Ri zu* (Japanophile) or *Ha-Han zu* (Koreanophile). Whenever I save enough money I would rather buy CDs of my favourite Taiwanese pop idol (basically, I have all the collections). But I would like to know more about (South) Korea as a country, and I am especially interested in their food. I would like to learn the language and visit the county, because I like Korean TV dramas (age 13, Female).

In this case, Jia-ling who enjoys watching Korean TV drama neither shows much of an emotional connection to the drama’s storylines or self-reflexivity in relation to the narrative. Nor does she spend money purchasing foreign idol-related commodities. Instead, her transcultural consumption of Korean TV drama is closely related to its culinary culture. A similar response is given by Yan-xiu a junior secondary student:

I like *Winter Sonata*, because both male and female protagonists are good looking and the storyline is very interesting and quite realistic unlike those of

Japanese and Taiwanese ones. I never buy any programme related by-products though, although I quite enjoy trying out their food such as *Kimchi* or check if any Korean food products can be found in the local store (age 13, Female).

Although both students have a level of general knowledge of and a preference for foreign TV drama viewing, they do not form a community of sentiment through their collective reading of the TV programmes. Rather, as consumers they are more actively engaged with foreign culinary culture and consider the TV programmes as a cultural representation of their countries of origin.

Living room culture: Teenagers' interaction with family members and social formation

Television viewing is a common activity in most families and early research has established that it is not just an individualised activity but more commonly a social one, conducted within the context of the family as a set of social relations (Lull, 1990; Morley, 1986; Silverstone, 1994). Although most families in Taiwan have more than one TV set in the household, television viewing is still very much considered a family activity. Different TV programmes are commonly aimed at different family members, and because most secondary school students in Taiwan are at school until the late afternoon they only get to watch television in the late afternoons and evenings. During prime-time (7-9pm), several television stations screen a diverse range of TV drama which includes: Taiwanese local dramas, Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Hong Kong TV dramas. It is therefore not surprising that most secondary school students watch TV dramas with their mother or grandparents, although sometimes fathers join in too. Apart from Yu-ya's case, which I mentioned earlier, Ying-hong, a junior secondary boy, also claims:

I don't get to watch Japanese or Korean TV dramas when I am watching television with my parents, they often watch local dramas. But sometimes I would watch Japanese or Korean TV dramas alone (age 13).

Although most secondary students have experience (although some have relatively limited access) of watching Japanese and Korean TV dramas, many of them also admitted that most of the time it is up to parents or older family members to decide which programme to watch. However, the reception of Japanese and Korean TV

dramas is not always limited by the accessibility of TV viewing; the circulation of both TV dramas also greatly relies on the general distribution in VCD³⁸ and DVD formats and as these formats are inexpensive, young audiences can easily purchase them or borrow them from their peers. The outcome of my questionnaire³⁹ suggests that VCDs or DVDs is the second (69 out of 158) and third (26 out of 118) most common way to view Japanese and Korean TV dramas amongst university and secondary school students respectively.

Arguably, Korean in contrast to Japanese TV dramas, attract more middle-age female audiences in Taiwan, which is also partly reflected in the preference of secondary students when asked to choose between these two types of TV drama. Yu-ling a senior secondary student says:

I prefer Korean TV dramas, especially comedy ones, because I am more familiar with the genre, I have watched them with my family since I was a kid. With Japanese TV dramas, I need to watch from episode one; otherwise, I find it hard to make sense of the rest of episodes, therefore I do not watch Japanese ones much (age 17, Female).

In the questionnaire, 47.2 per cent indicate that family members are present during teenagers' viewing time while 41.5 per cent watch the programmes on their own. In addition, during my group discussion with secondary school students, when I asked who they normally watch television with at home, most replied with their mother or grandparents. It seems that due to the popularity of Korean TV dramas among middle-aged women and housewives, most secondary students develop their preference for and familiarity with this genre in the process of watching the programmes with their mothers. Having said that, it is not uncommon for students to watch Japanese and Korean TV dramas alone and to develop their own preferences. During school term time, most students have limited spare time to watch television and are often burdened with a heavy homework load or constant examinations. Despite this the general consumption of both TV dramas is prevalent, especially during winter and summer holidays⁴⁰. Moreover, students such as Jia-ling, Mong-

³⁸ In general, pirated VCDs can cost as little as £4-5 for whole box sets (c.f. Hu, 2004, p. 205-226).

³⁹ Q. 3: What is your main medium for viewing Japanese and Korean TV dramas? (Please tick all applicable), main medium is Cable/ Satellite TV.

⁴⁰ As I mentioned earlier, in my interview with member of staff Miss Xiao from GALA TV station she states that most Taiwanese television stations (or at least its GALA Korean TV dramas channel's marketing strategic plan) deliberately choose more 'student audience' oriented programme to broadcast

xian, Jia-ying, Wei-rong and Wen-ling all stated during the group discussions that they prefer to watch Japanese or Korean TV dramas alone if possible. The reason given for choosing one form of TV drama over another is varied but the desire to watch it alone is common. Reasons such as: 'it is more relaxing without parents asking you why you are watching those foreign TV dramas' or 'most of time it's about a love story so it feels strange watching the programme in the presence of parents or grandparents' or 'my parents sometimes get annoyed because I am into Japanese pop idols, they think it is a distraction from my studies'. The desire for personal viewing space amongst secondary school students indicates that the reception of foreign TV dramas is still considered as more of an individual preference among younger audiences in Taiwan.

In general, television viewing is considered primarily as a family activity amongst secondary school students and the content often provides topics for conversation or discussion during the viewing or commercial breaks. Such topics can vary from socio-political issues to traditional family values or generational differences. Yuan-xuan says:

My family often watches Taiwanese local TV dramas because my grandparents generally quite enjoy them, although sometimes they would criticise the content as being too politically oriented or biased, especially during an election campaign season. They think that particular programmes try to promote certain candidates⁴¹, and my father would say 'oh, it's all messed up' but he still likes watching them (age 17, Female).

She continues:

But sometimes when we watch foreign television programmes together and when it comes to issues of conventional family values, such as, when Western youths do not live with their parents or send them to a care centre or retirement house, my parents then ask me whether I would take care of them in a similar fashion when they get old?

during winter and summer vacations in order have higher successful viewing rate. Moreover, the promotional strategy often involves inviting the protagonists of the show to visit Taiwan during vacation periods so that students have more free time to 'chase' after their idols.

⁴¹ Here she refers to the Formosa Television (FTV) which is acknowledged as pro-DPP and the Taiwan Independence Television Company, which has an established reputation for producing Taiwanese local drama. The content of those programmes is considered as representative of daily life by the general public. Another characteristic is that Taiwanese or a local colloquial dialect is used throughout the programme.

Yuan-xuan stated during the group discussion that “I am more than happy to take care of my parents because it is an obligation and it is also a traditional Taiwanese family value which is very different from foreign countries”.

Yuan-xuan’s family members, although they feel uneasy about the local soap operas content and occasional biased political views, continue to watch these programmes. Thus the young people’s awareness of political socialisation and a sense of local engagement is invoked by traditional local TV dramas and the process of negotiating the issue is practised by family members within the domestic viewing space. On the other hand, in the case of Yuan-xuan’s perception of foreign dramas, the issues that are raised often surround the difference between Eastern and Western culture, traditional social values, and parental expectations. Foreign TV dramas (in particular Western ones) invoke and sometimes reinforce generational and family moral conflicts. Furthermore Yuan-xuan’s self-reflexivity suggests that she feels obliged to look after her parents but also believes that this is how Taiwanese culture is distinctive. The interactions within the space of family viewing of TV dramas are often more immediate and dynamic; therefore young audiences are constantly negotiating and articulating their sense of cultural identification and national consciousness.

The media sometimes afford powerful resources for counter-identity that the young can project against parental wishes and desires. As Schuerkens points out:

Even in the field of the family, which is one of the most important places of cultural reproduction and transmission of traditions, external influences appear due to processes of globalisation: a transgenerational continuity of attitudes, representations and desires is thus more and more undermined (2003, p. 216).

Watching foreign TV programmes in the case of Yuan-xuan’s family is not merely a form of media consumption but it also provides an understanding of possible areas of conflict between parents and children around the ideas of traditional family and cultural values in modern society. To conclude with Appadurai’s argument:

The sort of transgenerational stability of knowledge that was presupposed in most theories of enculturation can no longer be assumed ... family relationships can become volatile, new commodity patterns are negotiated, debts and obligation are recalibrated (1996, pp. 43-44).

Because of the complex entanglement of modern society and traditional values and the daily engagement with various cultural resources both national and transnational, analysing Taiwan young's socio-cultural interaction within the family viewing space is a useful way of gaining insight into their contemporary negotiation of social identification and a sense of cultural belonging.

Cultural consumption of Japanese cartoons: The perception of a nation and the meaning of cultural “odourlessness”

When I conducted my research amongst secondary school students, I found that both male and female students show more interest in discussing Japanese cartoons than TV dramas. This influence is vital to our understanding of TV consumption in Taiwan as most Taiwanese children have grown up watching Japanese cartoons since the late 1970s. According to Heng Su's research (1999) Japanese cartoons were the most popular foreign programmes in Taiwan in the late 1990s: almost 42.7 per cent of his respondents watched Japanese programmes regularly. In Taiwan there is a wide variety of cartoons, most of which are broadcast between 4 and 6pm in order to suit elementary children's free time between after school and evening meals. Common cartoon themes include science fiction adventures and romance. Before the mid-1980s contact with Japanese mass culture was kept to a minimum in Taiwan; Japanese songs, publications and TV programmes were officially banned. However from the late 1970s Taiwanese children were able to access Mandarin-dubbed Japanese cartoons such as *Doraemon*⁴² and *Candy Candy*⁴³ through local television channels. During the 1990s numerous animation programmes (e.g. *Sailor Moon*, *Dragon Ball*, *Detective Conan*, *Slam Dunk*) were imported from Japan and today many Japanese cartoons are broadcast daily on television channels in Taiwan.

Doraemon is considered a timeless cartoon in Taiwan and has been highly popular since it was first imported during the late 1970s (Shiraishi 2000, p. 303). The cartoon

⁴² The series is about a robotic cat named *Doraemon*, who travels back in time from the 22nd century to aid a schoolboy, Nobita Nobi.

⁴³ *Candy Candy* first appeared in a prose novel by famed Japanese writer Kyoko Mizuki in April 1975 and illustrated by Yumiko Igarashi. The cartoon series was dubbed in Mandarin and broadcasted by CTS in 1979 and re-ran five times between 1981 and 1989. (see, <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki>; Shirashi (2000) 'Doraemon goes abroad').

is now recognised inter-generationally. Just as I watched it as a child, so does my nine-year-old nephew who has been a devoted *Doraemon* fan since he was four, and is a member of the latest generation to culturally consume this Japanese product. Everything he uses has *Doraemon*'s image, from toys, stationery, bags, socks, underwear to pillow cases, and he often calls himself *Doraemon*. He might not know that *Doraemon* is a Japanese cartoon yet and the pronunciation of Do-ra-e-mon does not mean anything literally in Chinese. As Japanese scholar Shiraishi states in the article 'Doraemon goes abroad', '*Doraemon* has become a *virtual family member* for many Japanese, and most children and young adults can quickly produce a sketch of the robot cat upon request' (2000, p. 288 *my emphasis*). For many Taiwanese children and young teenagers, *Doraemon* not only crosses cultural boundaries and travels through time and space to their homeland but it is also their earliest encounter with Japanese popular culture. Cartoon-related products such as comic books, stationery, stuffed dolls and other accessories are widely distributed in shops and widely consumed in Taiwan. This reinforces the popularity of these favourite and famous characters in the programmes amongst the young.

Leo Ching discusses the relationship between popular culture and imagined regional community using the popularity of *Doraemon* as an example. He suggests that:

The popularity of *Doraemon* among Asian youth has been attributed to a similar allegorisation from the national to the regional. Sakurai Tetsuo, for instance, argues that *Doraemon* has provided for children a haven from the increasing 'storm of [the] controlled education and examination system,' a storm that has engulfed even the youngest of Japanese children since the 1970s. [...] Sakurai argues that *Doraemon*, which he erroneously claims is shown only in Asia, has tremendous appeal to children in Asia precisely because these countries are going through rapid economic industrialisation and facing immense social competition reminiscent of conditions prevalent in Japan two decades ago. Thus *Doraemon* as a sociocultural allegory is not relevant only to Japan, but applies well throughout the Asian region, providing a refuge for children who feel buffeted by the educational demands of accelerated Asian economies (2000b, p. 250).

Ching is right to suggest that the children's consumption of Japanese cartoons is closely related to their sociocultural context (namely, escape from intensive educational demands). However he fails to elaborate further the implications of the young viewers' recognition of the cultural sensibilities and the uniqueness of Japanese animation. For instance, according to Su:

The extent of viewing Japanese cartoons and viewers' preferences for animation are significantly related to the attitudes and purchasing behavior of young Taiwanese viewers. The same variables can also be used as predicting factors for a positive opinion about Japan in general (1999, p. 77).

Some might argue that Japanese cartoons and comic books are often regarded as products that are relatively autonomous from the cultural images of their country of origin (e.g. cultural odourlessness) and do not attempt to sell Japanese culture or way of life (see Iwabuchi 2002, Iwabuchi 2007). However, according to my research Japan has come to be regarded by Taiwanese teenage audiences as an artistic country with advanced technology that produces cartoons with delicate images and interesting texts. Chun-Han, a senior high school girl, said during the group discussion:

Japanese cartoons and comic books are so much better than Taiwanese ones, their skills and special effects are excellent; Taiwanese ones are too simplified and skills fall far behind. You know, in Japan they work in small groups, each individual in charge of different parts of the project (age 17, Female).

I was astonished by the extent of her knowledge of the Japanese animation industry.⁴⁴ In a different group discussion, Qiao-zu's comments on Japanese cartoons showed another kind of appreciation among the young:

Japanese people are brilliant, for instance, *Doraemon* has been broadcasting for a long time but still every time there are new storylines and different elements; hence you do not get tired of it (age 13, Female).

At least five of my respondents emphasised that they watch a fair amount of Japanese cartoons and often buy the paraphernalia and comic books. The storylines and characters of Japanese cartoons are a major attraction for a young Taiwanese audience (ages 7 to 15). The content provides many sub-genres such as cyberpunk, science fiction, animals, fantasy worlds, romance, or detective stories. According to McCarthy (1993), Japanese animations are 'generally aimed at appealing to either boys or girls; stories for girls normally contain as much action and adventure as those for boys, while those for boys often have strong, positive female characters as well as the expected young heroes'(cited in Heng Su 1999, p. 64). The strong characterisation of protagonists can also be found in various Japanese TV dramas. For

⁴⁴ Although, 'in 1980, [the] Japanese animation industry set up studios in Taipei and Seoul and by the middle of the 1980s, 50 per cent of all animation programmes broadcast in Japan were made overseas, where artistic talent was available at lower wages than in Japan' (Shiraishi, 2000, p. 300).

instance, the first major successful Japanese idol drama, *Tokyo Love Story* featured a strong-minded and modern female character who was an inspiration for young female Taiwanese audiences in the early 1990s.⁴⁵

Based on the above comments, the general assumption is that these cultural products made in Japan are considered more delicate and up-to-date and their style has been absorbed by Taiwanese youth, generating in turn a positive perception of Japan as a nation. The consumption of Japanese cartoons amongst junior secondary school students has developed from an early childhood enjoyment to the recognition and appreciation of, and admiration for the creativity and artistic ability of the Japanese creative industries. Early research on the popular consumption of Japanese TV dramas has argued that the deep-rooted preference for Japanese cultural productions in Taiwanese society has been defined as a postcolonial sentiment and nostalgia for the colonial past. This idea partly explains why the idea of being ‘cultural proximate’ (Iwabuchi 2001, 2002) with Japan was positively used as way to celebrate Taiwan’s own unique political, historical and cultural experience. The cultural meanings and representations of the images inscribed in these products have created a specific cultural attraction for Taiwanese youth in the present. As Su and Chen point out, although US cartoons were also available on the Disney and Cartoon Network satellite channels in Taiwan, Japanese cartoons remained the most popular and frequently watched. They also suggest that both culture and generational proximity have lured young audiences to Japanese programmes (2000, p. 229). Their research shows that the popularity of Japanese cartoons declined with older age groups; nevertheless, it is evident in my research that the younger generations still favour Japanese popular cultural products such as TV dramas, music and fashion.

Yu-ling Su (1999, p. 135) points out that Japanese popular culture has a high condensation of “images alliances” products, from comic books, cartoons to idol dramas and their by-products, which all share the *same set of image signs*. Through textual reading and recontextualisation, the consumption of Japanese popular culture has created its own consumer space, consisting of an abundance of images and cultural codes. In a similar vein, Chiu argues that ‘Japanese animation, manga (comic books) together with anime merchandise was not only meant to construct a

⁴⁵ For further reference, see Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) pp. 122-157.

cute mass-merchandise image, but also created an image alliance to increase young people's consuming desires' (cited in Yu-ling Su 1999, p. 62 my emphasis). To put it in Baudrillard's terms:

In order to become an object of consumption, the object must become sign; that is, in some way it must become external to a relation that is now only signifies, a-signed *arbitrarily* and non-coherently to this concrete relation, yet obtaining it coherence, and consequently its meaning, from an abstract and systematic relation to all other object-signs. It is in this way that it becomes "personalised," and enters in the series, etc: it is never consumed in its materiality, but in its difference (2001, p. 25).

Hence consumption is no longer just a material practice, but a 'virtual totality of all objects and messages presently constituted in a more or less coherent discourse' (ibid.). The concept of cuteness (*kawaii*) has been an important element of Japanese popular culture, ranging from pop idols, animation, fashion sense, stuffed toys (e.g. *Hello Kitty*). This cultural significance has been translated into daily cultural practice amongst young Taiwanese consumers. Research on the consumption of *Hello Kitty* has been conducted by several scholars from different perspectives. Yu-fen Ko argues in her article 'Consuming differences: "Hello Kitty" and the identity crisis in Taiwan' that 'Hello Kitty is a commodity from the capitalist mode of production, but that fact doesn't mean that the Kitty fans are necessarily alienated and obscured colonised objects' (2003, p. 186). According to Ko, 'Hello Kitty was ranked the third most popular figure in Taiwan in 1999⁴⁶' (ibid., p. 176). Anthropologist Brain J. McVeigh comments that 'in Japan "cuteness" operates symbolically as a daily aesthetic and qualifies as a standard attribute, rather than as a mere fad' (Mcveigh 2000, p. 230), while Larissa Hjorth explores the relation between cuteness and mobile technology (*keitai*) culture in Japan, focusing in particular on the sexual and gender reappropriations and identifications between *kawaii* and *keitai* consumer spaces (2003, pp. 158-179). Japanese animation, TV dramas, comic books and stuffed dolls all represent different signs and carry different meanings for their consumers but they are also a set of images that convey cultural distinction. Consumption certainly does not necessarily lead to identity and consuming popular cultural commodities from Japan does not necessarily mean that young Taiwanese have a special identification with Japanese culture. Nevertheless, the symbolic meaning of Japan still carries

⁴⁶ According to Ko's research, more than 1.78 million *Hello Kitty* sets were purchased with meals when McDonald's offered a *Hello Kitty* meal deal in the early 2000s (2003, p. 176).

weight among the younger generation in comparison to the relative unfamiliarity of South Korean culture. It is therefore important to question further, to what extent the social familiarity, cultural proximity and consumption habits lead to the acceptance of a certain cultural narrative and how this cultural acceptance is then translated and experienced.

Conclusion

Nowadays there are at least six Korean and four Japanese TV dramas broadcast daily in Taiwan on various television channels.⁴⁷ It is fair to say that both Japanese and Korean TV dramas have become significant cultural resources in Taiwan, especially amongst younger audiences. A series of Japanese and Korean popular cultural products, culinary tastes and lifestyles have been successfully if unconsciously embedded in Taiwanese society through experience and practice. “Otherness” has become ordinary fare and while everyone has a local life, the ways people make sense of the world are now increasingly interpenetrated by ideas and clues from many diverse settings. As Bennett rightly points out:

Images, information and products provided by the media and cultural industries become resources for use by individuals in the negotiation of the everyday, a process that involves the construction and articulation of reflexive identities and the carving out of habitable spaces (2005, p. 70).

In a similar vein, according to Kim (2007, Kim 2008), TV dramas are often seen as a source of aspiration and reflexivity in transnational society and globalised dramas can serve this function of extending the space for reflexivity.

Meanwhile, due to the popularity of Japanese Idol Dramas amongst the young since the late 1990s, Taiwanese television companies have started to pay more attention to their younger market, targeting idol dramas at young audiences both in Taiwan and abroad. Although Taiwanese idol dramas are better received amongst secondary school students than university students, the hybrid form of Taiwanese idol dramas has nevertheless also led to them being steadily established in East/Southeast Asia

⁴⁷ This information is based on more recent TV drama broadcasting schedules on the Yahoo Taiwan web site, accessed 12/11/2009.

countries, including South Korea and Japan. The transnational flow of TV dramas between most East Asian countries has created what Iwabuchi described “familiar differences” and “bizarre similarities” which interconnect on multiple levels within the dynamics of unequal global cultural encounters and which are engendering a complex perception of cultural distance’ (2007, p. 74).

Over the past few years, it has become evident that Japanese and Korean TV dramas provide an abundant reservoir of symbolic forms and practices that can be appropriated and orchestrated as a cultural resource in Taiwan. The cultural trajectories for this generation emerge at the intersections of national identity and institutionalised ideology, education reforms and the practice of globalisation, modernisation and hybridisation through media consumption. If print media were instrumental in summoning up the ‘imagined community’ of the nation (Anderson 1991) then electronic media now contributes to our understanding of an ‘imagined social reality’ (Barker and Andre 1996, p. 36). The “advanced” Japanese lifestyle and Korea’s combination of traditional and modern living illustrated through TV dramas have become a source of inspiration and confrontation for young Taiwanese audiences as they search for a distinct cultural identity.

According to Straubhaar and Viscasillas’s research in the Dominican Republic (1991), viewers’ general opinions of countries seem related to their preference for broadcasts from those countries. Thus the emergence of pro-Japanese sentiment among younger Taiwanese audiences seems inevitable. The continued appreciation of Japanese cartoons and comic books amongst junior secondary students and children can be seen as evidence that Japanese culture already has deep roots in the emotional structure of Taiwanese society. Arguably, the cultural distance between Taiwan and Japan or the rest of East Asia has reduced and invoked the possibility of re-creating a political fantasy of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.⁴⁸ It would be naïve to jump to this conclusion immediately: the political difficulties between Taiwan and China, the power and historical conflict between Japan and China, and the post-colonial trauma of Japan and South Korea cannot be ignored. However as long as popular cultures are enthusiastically consumed by younger generations with a

⁴⁸ The original concept was created by Japan Foreign Minister Arita Hachiro on 29th June, 1940 (see Gordon, William. "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." March 2000; William Theodore De Bary (2008) Sources of East Asian Tradition: The modern period, p. 622).

lessened sense of historical conflict between East Asian countries and this generation is able to reflect upon the new definitions of cultural identity in the age of deterritorialisation and regionalisation, the possibility of an imagined 'Asian cultural community' remains.

My research also suggests that the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has certainly enhanced and transformed audiences' text reading and socio-cultural knowledge of others. This process also facilitates certain types of TV genre that emphasise a hybrid format yet with a sense of a local cultural element which is deliberately designed to cater to the taste of modern young audiences. The consumption of foreign TV programmes and its cultural implications and practices by university and secondary school students also outlines the importance of not reducing audience studies to a generalised individual's interactions with texts, but to conceptualise it as a multi-layered act of (cultural) interpretations and negotiations. Ien Ang argues that 'a more thoroughly *cultural* approach to reception [is to] address the differentiated meaning and significance of specific reception patterns in articulating more general cultural negotiations and contestations' (1996, p. 137). Hence it is also important to understand how regional media flows and popular cultural consumption changes become integrated into specific cultural forms and practices under specific historical and political circumstances.

Examining the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas from the perspective of youth transnational consumption and cultural practice in Taiwan has demonstrated the possible generational differences and multi-layered cultural articulations with cultural others in Taiwanese society. This therefore challenges the concept of 'cultural proximity' (Straubhaar 1991) when examining audience reception of foreign TV dramas or cultural products. This sense of 'coevalness' or 'becoming culturally proximate' (Iwabuchi 2001, pp. 54-74, Iwabuchi 2002, Chapter 4) often fails to explain a society's construction of its own cultural consciousness and identification. I argue that the appropriation of foreign popular culture is a manifestation of the constant struggle to negotiate the forces of cultural proximity and assimilation in relation to cultural identity which is the burden of contemporary Taiwanese youth.

During my discussion with secondary school students of their reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and their popularity, several unexpected responses and

perceptions of the issue of cultural imperialism and Taiwanese identity have led me to further explore the relationship between youth transnational popular cultural consumption and the construction of Taiwanese national cultural identity. It appears that their readings do not simply reflect the content itself but rather their negotiation and interpretation of their viewing experience and their (non-)preference for regional TV dramas is a way of making sense of what Taiwan is and why it is important to be Taiwanese. Having said that, I do not wish to suggest that secondary school students have a clear idea and vision of what national identity meant. What is most intriguing are their assertions or confidence about what Taiwanese identity is and their attitudes towards the relation between Taiwan, China, Japan and South Korea. From their responses, I get a better sense of their understanding of national identity as more based on the political and social discourse of “Taiwanisation/localisation” and a sense of local community, which was imposed and reconstructed through the educational curriculum during the period of the early 2000s while the pro-independence political party (DPP) was in power. Based on these unexpected outcomes, I will further explore how secondary school students negotiate the concept of “Taiwanese identity” or “being Taiwanese” within the context of regional popular cultural flows and national educational reforms in Chapter 7.

PART TWO

Regional Popular Culture and Taiwanese Identity

Literature Review II:

Chapter 5

Taiwan: Conceptualising the Nation

The reason why Japanese and Korean TV dramas and pop culture are popular (in Taiwan) is because we do not have our own identity and culture.

(Male, 22, questionnaire)

Taiwan lacks its own identity that is why we accept foreign culture so easily.

(Female, 16, group discussion)

Pretext

As I have explained in Chapter 1, initially this thesis set out to explore young audiences comparative readings of Japanese and South Korean popular TV dramas in Taiwan. However, during my fieldwork the idea of Taiwanese ‘identity’ (*rentong*), ‘consciousness’ (*yishi*) and ‘spirit’ (*jingshen*) were mentioned on several occasions during discussions about the popularity of regional TV dramas in Taiwan amongst university and secondary school students. To a certain degree, the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has been interpreted by young people as a form of “cultural invasion” one made possible due to the impression that Taiwan does not have its own culture. The notion of the pleasure of recognition (see Ang 1985) combined with a sense of social and cultural articulation associated with the pleasure of the text (Iwabuchi 2002) cannot fully explain the role of regional TV drama flows and its implications in the wider political and social context, particularly in the case of the young audiences’ consumption of regional TV dramas. My research outcomes derived from questionnaires, group discussions and interviews have suggested another interpretation of the media reception and cultural consumption of regional TV dramas, especially in relation to the construction of a sense of “Taiwanese-ness” and Taiwanese identity by these young audiences. It indicates that media and cultural research on youth consumption of these TV dramas in Taiwan yields another field of investigation due to radical political transformations, social changes, education reforms and the construction of the “Taiwan as a nation” movement since the 1990s.

Arguably, with the government's policy of emphasising the political discourse involved in the (re)construction of Taiwanese identity, the current popularity of regional TV dramas amongst the younger generation has reflected young people's feelings what Tain-Dow Lee and Hwei-Wen Ho call 'an "emptiness" of cultural subjectivities' (2003, p. 15). Lee and Ho's approach, I would argue, was due to the fact that the field of youth popular culture has been long overlooked or ignored by the government both pre and post-martial law. In the 1970s and 1980s American pop music, movies and TV series were the major imported entertainment media products consumed by highly educated middle class urban young people (see Yeh 2005). In the 1990s the popularity of Japanese pop culture and mass media productions suggested that 'Taiwanese youths indeed negotiate and translate their cultural identities through repeated gazing, imagining, and travelling "Japan"' (Lee 2003, p. 43), and in the 2000s Korean pop culture and TV dramas became another popular sensation amongst Taiwanese people (Kim 2007, p. 144, Yang 2008, pp. 209-213). Having suggested the possible absence of local youth popular culture, I do not wish to underestimate its local pop music and film industry which has developed since the late 1980s (e.g. Mandarin pop songs, *Tai-kar* music). Nonetheless, the popularity of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas, pop music and films in the past decade and notably since the liberalisation of the media industry is striking. On the one hand, this reflects the "emptiness" or absence of a local popular culture which young people can relate to. On the other hand, it shows how, due to a lack of any common ground for consolidating a sense of Taiwanese culture, young people often express a so-called "identity crisis" in relation to their experience and appropriation of regional popular cultural flows in modern Taiwanese society.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I focused on the reception and consumption of regional TV dramas amongst university and secondary school students respectively, thus providing an insight into how young audiences in Taiwan perceive a modern ideal way of life. I also explored the manner in which, through a variety of transnational media and cultural appropriations, negotiations and articulations these young audiences developed their own sense of cultural recognition and self-reflexivity. In the last section of my questionnaire, I asked students "In your opinion, do you think the consumption of Japanese and Korean pop culture can lead to any potential impact on the younger generations in Taiwan?" Most of those who responded to the question

displayed rather negative thoughts, for instance citing the threat of cultural imperialism, the loss of a sense of national identity, and so forth. However, during some of my interviews, it was revealed that due to the popular phenomenon of Japanese and Korean cultural products in Taiwan, university students actively question “What is Taiwanese identity?,” and they are more aware of the issues of intra-regional cultural difference and similarity.

Therefore, the second part of this thesis further explores questions of national identity, cultural nationalism and the relationship between regional popular culture and local youth cultural identification, focusing on popular foreign television programmes (from Japan and South Korea), and everyday life in the formation of a national imagination amongst youngsters in Taiwan, all within the context of globalisation and regional popular cultural flows.

This chapter reviews the conceptual literature appropriate to these topics by placing them in the context of Taiwan’s modern history. This history shapes the particular phenomena this thesis examines and is the political and social reality in which they have developed. Owing to Taiwan’s peculiar geo-political history, and particularly its entanglement with mainland China, the urge to create a sense of Taiwanese identity after the democratic transition in the mid-1980s has generated several conflicts within its territory and amongst its people. It is nothing new that people have more than one identity or nationality. In the case of Taiwan, however, the reinterpretation of what being Chinese and/or Taiwanese means in relation to national and cultural identity has been a central element of contention in the island’s daily experience. According to Tu (1996), the *problematik* of cultural identity in Taiwan is important not only to intellectuals but – through the mass media – to the public as well. He believes that ‘The question of where Taiwan is going is intertwined with complex issues of what it has been, what it is now, what it ought to be and what it can really become’ (ibid., p. 1116). In other words, through the construction of Taiwanese consciousness, political and cultural identity has become an important point of reference for the self-definition, ethnic consciousness, political loyalty and life orientation which most people in modern Taiwanese society have to engage with. These observations accord with the findings of my thesis, where both secondary school students and university students responded to the opportunity to make open-ended comments by relating the

popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and pop culture to issues of Taiwanese cultural identity. Their responses reveal interesting insights on postcolonial narratives; they also offer a powerful illustration of the agency of cultural discourse in making a distinctive political community and generating a sense of collective recognition, namely a concept of Taiwanese-ness.

Introduction

Modern Taiwan's self-conscious nation-building project took shape after the lifting of martial law in 1987, as a means of creating a distinction, not only from the KMT government's (Nationalist Party of China also known as *Kuomintang*) political ideology, but also disavowing the myth of "unified China." This attempt has provoked the more immediate question which asks whether Taiwan is part of the Chinese nation-state or a nation in its own right. These oppositional approaches roughly correspond to two major political parties and ideologies (KMT vs. DPP) in Taiwan. A pronounced exploration of local culture and identity has been many years as people have struggled to articulate a sense of Taiwanese consciousness. We can cite as evidence here socio-political movements such as the Community Construction Movement (*shequ zongti yingzao*) in 1993; the promotion of the discourse of a 'community of shared fate' (*shengming gongtong ti*) in 1995, through to more radical enunciations of the 'new Taiwanese' movement in 1998. These developments occurred when the KMT party led by Lee Teng-Hui, which did not encourage strong sense of Taiwan as an independent nation, was still power. Nevertheless, by emphasising the concept of local community or "locality" (see Appadurai 1996) with which people can identify with these movements created a sense of belonging and enabled local people to see Taiwan as the "homeland." During the post-martial law era, the KMT government's attempt to reconcile the principle of a single China with the rise of Taiwanese consciousness has, ironically, paved the way for the success of the DPP party and Chen Shui-bian's election to the presidency in 2000.

According to Bi-yu Chang (2004), when the DPP party came to power in 2000, the discourse of Taiwanese subjectivity had already taken shape and grown. However, in contrast to the KMT's emphasis of a China-centric ideology and Taiwan's cultural links with China, Chen Shui-bian and the DPP government have systematically

adopted a cultural and educational ‘de-sinicisation’ policy and focused on a ‘Taiwan-centric’ policy (Cabestan 2005, p. 39, Chang 2004, p. 40). Moreover, the DPP government’s ‘Taiwan-centric’ policy, to a certain extent, has intertwined with post-Japanese colonial sentiment and nostalgia. According to Leo Ching’s argument:

There is the desire for Japanese colonialism in the formation of an oppositional political identity. (Japanese colonialism has induced, the argument goes, a historical rupture that enabled the dis-identification from Mainland China and the construction of a uniquely Taiwanese subjectivity) (2000a, p. 764).

For Taiwanese nationalists, Taiwan’s specific historical path (emphasising the 50 years of Japanese colonisation), constitutes a unique Taiwanese consciousness (*Taiwan yishi*) and Taiwanese identity (*Taiwan rentong*) which alienate any connection with the Chinese identity that the KMT had promoted previously. The concept of the nation as an ‘imagined political community’ (Anderson, 1991), consisting of nationalism, a sense of nationhood, a unique ‘cultural subjectivity’ and so forth, has, in the case of Taiwan, proved to be less straightforward and remains to be defined.

Apart from its intricate historical, cultural, geo-political and ethnic relations with mainland China, other difficulties that Taiwan faced included lack of recognition as an independent nation in the international community, as well as its previous complex colonial experience which has also added another peculiar variable when conceptualising national and cultural identity in Taiwan. In recent debates on the terms of its postcoloniality, Leo Ching has acknowledged that:

The definition and periodisation of postcolonialism in Taiwan is contentious. The ruling Kuomintang (KMT) government considers 1945, the year of Japan’s defeat, as the beginning of Taiwan’s decolonisation and hence of its postcoloniality. But the so-called Taiwanese – those of Minnan and Hakka ethnicity- refer to 1987, the year martial law was lifted, as the beginning of postcoloniality in Taiwan (2000a, p. 785, note 3, see also Liao 1999, pp. 199-211).

Terms such as ‘internal colonisation’ (Chiu, 1995, cited in Liao 1999, p. 201), or ‘quasi-colonial society’ (Harrison 2009, p. 54) in relation to the KMT government’s fifty year regime in Taiwan (1947-1987) have been suggested. Indeed, the question is posed as to whether one should consider that, before the democratisation of the

island, Taiwan had in fact experienced a ‘double colonisation’. According to Fang-ming Chang, a major force in Taiwanese studies:

It is only after 1989, the year Lee Teng-hui assumed presidency, that Taiwan finally entered its postcolonial phase. However, due to the 50 years of Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945) and another 50 years of the “second colonisation” by the KMT (1945-1987), Taiwanese suffers a great deal from the loss of language and the loss of memory (cited in Liao 1999, p. 207).

Thus, did the KMT regime liberate Taiwanese people from Japanese colonial brutality or does it represent merely another conquest from overseas?

Given this confused and contested political discursive space, in this chapter I examine the discourses of national identity and nationalism using Anderson’s (1991) notion of the ‘imagined political community’ and Anthony Smith’s (1999) approach to the ‘myths and memories of the nation.’ In so doing, I seek to illustrate the historical entanglement between mainland China and Taiwan, highlighting the notion of the cultural Chineseness-building project in postwar Taiwan, which was carefully and systematically carried out by the regime between 1945 and the late 1980s. I also examine the recent political construction of Taiwan as an (independent) nation since the lifting of martial law in 1987, looking at political discourses such as the (re)connecting and searching for Taiwanese local cultural consciousness. Moreover, I explore the absence of Taiwanese subjectivity and the concept of the politics of identity in Taiwan within the fields of post-colonialism and cultural hybridisation, focusing on Homi Bhabha’s ‘narrating the nation’ and his concept of the ‘third space’ in relation to the idea of globality. According to Bhabha’s definition:

The intervention of the *Third Space*, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code (1988, p. 21, *my emphasis*).

From a postcolonial perspective, within the discourse of global cultural flows, I found that the term ‘third space’ is most relevant when understanding the process of narrating a sense of Taiwanese consciousness and rediscovering its grassroots culture in the advent of a changing political landscape since the late 1980s. That is to say, the openness and instability in the construction of national and cultural identity in Taiwan means that its cultural position at the present time, as well as its reference to the past

as well as to the future in relation to cultural identification, results in an inherent ambivalence during moments of interpretation and negotiation.

In Anderson's (1991) conceptualisation of the nation as an imagined community, national identity is a particular mode made possible by underlining historical continuities, suggesting future destinies as well as making itself geographically and spatially conceivable. Paradoxically, in my opinion, this serves as a crucial concept with which to comprehend the abstract notion of Chinese identity as well as a modern sense of "Taiwaneseness". Section 1 discusses two major components which underline the understanding of Taiwanese national consciousness in this thesis. In so doing, I wish to suggest that Anderson's attempt to denaturalise the nation and his central contention that 'print-language is what invents nationalism, not a particular language per se' (ibid., p. 134) and that it constitutes a 'sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of nation' (ibid., p. 26), has provided an alternative understanding of Taiwan's nation-building project in relation to its others and colonisers: China and Japan. Japan as a former coloniser has, bizarrely, become an important "modern" political and cultural indicator, one deployed by the pro-independence political party and its grassroots activists as a way to emphasise Taiwan's historical and cultural distinction from mainland China (see Lu 2002, p. 16-23). For instance, since 1994 Taiwan has followed a similar path to that of Japan in promoting its local revitalisation and community-building movements. Intellectuals and state officials frequently use Japan as a reference point for the construction of a Taiwanese local grassroots social and cultural movement (ibid., p. 23). To a certain extent, the younger generations' perception of Japan as a "positive other" and its cultural influence was evident in the nation-building project in Taiwan in the 1990s. It is therefore important to understand how young people weave Japanese culture into their understanding of Taiwanese identity and their sense of Taiwan as a nation. And what role do Japanese popular cultures (here, TV dramas) play in mediating the political ambivalence (or tension), historical memories and cultural connections between two countries. Added to this we might ask how this helps constitute the discursive conditions of Taiwanese identity? I will examine these issues in terms of university students' cultural consumption and interpretations of the popularity of regional TV dramas in Chapter 6.

Section 2 will examine Taiwan's depiction of itself as the guardian of "traditional" Chinese culture under the KMT regime in terms of Smith's (1999) the notion of a 'nation of memories and myth'. This necessitates a discussion of the authority of statements about shared values as embodied in language, ethnicity, and custom, as well as shared myths (memories) encoded as genres of knowledge, such as history, ideology and beliefs. Smith's approach to the construction of the nation often stresses the importance of historical sentiments and aspirations, such as memories, myths, traditions, rituals, symbols, ceremonials, artefacts etc. and provides another opportunity to understand different aspects of nationalist ideology and language, as well as national identity in relation to the rediscovery and reinterpretation of a communal past. He suggests that nationalism often involves 'the nation depicted as one great family, the members as brothers and sisters of the motherland or fatherland, speaking their mother tongue' (1991a, p. 79). From this perspective, a sense of Chineseness which was (re)created under the KMT regime in Taiwan suggests that all Chinese people are 'descendants of the Dragon' or the 'children of the Yellow Emperor', and unified by a single origin myth. This shared sacredness in the formation of Chinese identity which attempts to transcend ethnic identities and political reality cannot be overlooked when we discuss cultural nationalism and traditional cultures in postwar Taiwan. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the old phrase 'descendants of the Dragon' has been gradually replaced as well as challenged by the new enunciation of the "Children of the Sweet Potato" or "Son of Taiwan", both of which have featured in recent Taiwanese political and cultural debates. The shape of the island of Taiwan is considered by some to closely resemble a sweet potato, in addition to which after the war most people did not have enough money for rice and sweet potato was used widely as a food supplement. The political innovation of "Sweet Potato" also functions as a signifier of grassroots culture in Taiwan.

In Section 3, I outline recent debates about national and cultural identity and the decline of the nation state in the age of globalisation. Globalisation in relation to the modern nation-state has been appeared in a variety of ways including, for instance, David Harvey's (1989) notion of 'time-space compression'; Anthony Giddens' (1990) idea of 'time-space distanciation' or Appadurai's (1996) 'deterritorialisation'. All of these underline the discontinuity, fragmentation and dislocation involved in forming a sense of the nation. In the midst of a self-conscious nation-building project

it is important to acknowledge that how the use of the language of globalisation and the simultaneous emphasis on the local Taiwanese search for a national and cultural identity has created not just a field of tension, but also a hybrid mode of identification in Taiwan.

To summarise, drawing on Anderson, Smith and Bhabha's approaches to the nation enables us to recognise different mobilisations of the idea of community and identity, thereby apprehending the ambiguities and limitations of Taiwanese identity. Furthermore, by questioning the (un)importance of a sense of place, rootedness and belonging in relation to 'imagined community' and cultural identity in the world of global cultural flows, I suggest that, in the eyes of the younger Taiwanese generation, the notion of "being" Taiwanese is as critical as "becoming", namely that it is a continuous process of negotiation. This is manifested in the way they respond to Japanese and Korean TV dramas. In Chapter 6, I discuss how university students draw attention to the notion of "foreignness" and how that in turn calibrates their own sense of political self-awareness, thus enhancing their ability to translate cultural difference and similarity which also invokes their sense of being/becoming Taiwanese. In Chapter 7, I demonstrate that secondary school students often apply the cultural practice of "locality" (festivals, culinary habits) and textbook knowledge ("Taiwanese spirit," "Taiwan consciousness") to interpret and articulate their sense of being Taiwanese.

The nation as an imagined political community: How and what do we "imagine" in Taiwan?

In Benedict Anderson's influential book, *Imagined Communities* (1991), he argued that no nation is essential and all are constructed through a process of collective imagining. This form of collective imagination is made possible by the production of 'print capitalism', for instance newspapers and popular literature (such as novels, plays and poems). The imaginary elements of nationality and national identity has been discussed in relation to media studies by scholars such as Philip Schlesinger (1987), who focuses on (mis)conceptions of national identity. Meanwhile John Tomlinson (1991) argues against the notion of cultural imperialism. One crucial point is that they both suggest a sense of 'imaginary belonging', whether it is bound up

with the specific social space of the nation-state (Schlesinger 1987, p. 249) or as a means to 'imagine a community' to which they belong (Tomlinson 1991, p. 81). Anderson's approach has offered a useful starting point to understand why identification with the rather abstract notion of "a nation" becomes possible in postwar Taiwan and how this has been deployed in the (re)construction of Taiwan as a nation since the late 1980s.

Drawing on this conceptualisation, in this section I examine how Taiwan's postwar nation-building project as undertaken by the KMT has positioned the country as a political unity constructed on the notion of Chinese cultural nationalism, not only as an 'imagined' entity, but also an 'invented' one. My intention here is to understand what national and cultural identity means to a country which in the past designated itself as the only legal representative of the entire Chinese community. I argue that this sense of nationhood and "Chineseness" was politically manipulated and culturally constructed which made it imaginable and available to its populace via fixing a vernacular language as the national language (i.e. Mandarin), mass education and media control.

Anderson argues that nation as imagined political community is imagined 'as both inherently limited and sovereign' (1991, p.6). He claims that the nation is an imagined community limited by territorial boundaries and offering certain freedoms to its nationals regarding the sovereign power of the nation state. He famously suggests that 'it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (ibid.). In this respect, political communities are not distinguished by social reality but rather by their own ways of national collective imagination. The idea that the nation is created in the imagination means that it is the contingent result of social and political processes and practices. This approach provides an important reference point to understand the early construction of Chinese consciousness in postwar Taiwan which was fostered by an "invented" political ideology (i.e. the KMT's), thereby making "reunification" imaginable. This sense of community, nevertheless, does not represent itself as a nation but instead as a temporary political and military bastion, a floating island. I would argue that the notion of "imagining from distance" and "imagining without

territorial connection” have an explanatory importance in understanding the abstract sense of nationhood and nationalism evident in KMT-dominated postwar Taiwan.

A critical and historical view of the nation as socially constructed suggests that the formation of national consciousness within a particular space has been shaped by several different manoeuvres and as an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983); as an imagined community (Anderson 1991). To this we can add that it can also be seen as an outcome of industrialisation linked to a centralised political, educational and linguistically unified entity (Gellner 1983) as well as a communal historical-sentimental past, cultivated by myths, rituals, symbols, traditions and so on (Smith 1995, Smith 1999). Given these frameworks, a sense of ‘nation-ness’ involving a shared homeland results in the emergence of national identity as a by-product, that is as an object to be politically and culturally constructed. Such approaches demonstrate how ‘the nation itself is the unit of analysis’ (Wiley 2004, p. 82) as well as drawing attention to ‘how a national culture is continually redeveloped and the contours of national identity chronically redrawn’ (Schlesinger 1987, p. 250). The modern concept of a nation and its relevance to nationalism, nationality and national identity, therefore, has to be considered in terms of ‘workable texts’, that is whether it is invented, imagined, mediated and/or narrated (Wiley, 2004, p. 82). In other words, viewing the postmodern nation-building project as a non-essentialist construction allows the gap left by the national cultural space to be elaborated and negotiated.

To provide a more adequate interpretation of the anomaly of nationalism has been one of Anderson’s intentions in *Imagined Communities*. He acknowledges that

Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse. In contrast to the immense influence that nationalism has exerted on the modern world, plausible theory about it is conspicuously meagre (1991, p. 3).

Anderson also suggests that ‘nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – *it came into being*’ (ibid., p. 12, *my emphasis*). Additionally, he argues that nationality or nation-ness as well as nationalism are ‘cultural artefacts of a particular kind’, which involve the notion of invention and imagination as a basic social transformation that constitute a nation. By

the same token, reflecting on Ernest Renan's essay 'What is a nation?', Mark Harrison believes that Renan 'systematically refutes theories that locate the nation in any essential characteristic, such as race, kinship, language, or geography, and suggests instead that national identity is fundamentally an idea' (2006, p. 26). Both Renan and Anderson's general position suggest that the nation is a modern phenomenon, and the construction of a national identity and nationalism is not historically predetermined but rather a process of continual reconstruction and negotiation. Therefore, they remind us of the need to map the transformation of lived experience and subjectivity, which needs to be taken seriously in the context of socio-political and economic-cultural changes.

On the one hand, present-day Taiwan is a democracy and a polity with a sense of nationhood and is recognised as such by the international community. The constant threat of military invasion and the deliberate constraints Taiwan is forced to operate under on the international stage by mainland China have, to a certain extent, strengthened people's desire to claim independence as a nation. On the other hand, there is the historical and cultural connection; the "being Chinese" sentiment and a recent increased economic dependence on the mainland which means that anti-independence oppositional voices remain. There is no consensus in Taiwan regarding the composition of the nation or the relationship between political institutions and cultural identity. Rather there is a consistent nationalist impulse and anxiety to fit the political together with the cultural, whether by changing political institutions to fit cultural and linguistic communities, or by changing culture and identity to fit political institutions. The notion of a divided and ambiguous form of national identity and nationalism in Taiwan has continually tormented people on the island, and it makes the process of nation-building even more complicated and uncertain.

In the matter of constructing "new" national identities, the central approach of Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) to the 'invention of tradition' in forming a sense of unbroken continuity also suggests that

The ideology of nation, state or movement is not what have actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularised and institutionalised by these whose function it is to do so (Hobsbawm 1983, p. 13).

Therefore, in the process of constructing a nation, the innovation of national cultures, the representation of traditions and reinterpretation of histories to a certain extent sided inevitably with the dominant political power. The politicisation of the nation in this instance is apparent. Given this I wish to use the idea of the construction of a national consciousness in relation to political ideologies, historicised memories and cultural continuities as a point of entry for a critical reflection on the modern nation-building project in Taiwan. Thus, the question is how (un)important is it to invoke the ideology of nationalist language and the idea of a “national” history given the increasing “sameness” of commodified modern life in order to build a nation? Is it possible for people to identify politically with one nation and culturally with its “others” (i.e. China, Japan or South Korea)? How important is it for someone to recognise Taiwan’s nationhood as well as having a sense of “cultural subjectivity” (*wenhua zhutixing*) in order to form a sense of common solidarity and as an escape from a so-called ‘identity crisis’? And in what way have regional popular culture flows and youth transnational media consumption and cultural appropriation intertwined with the construction of cultural identity in Taiwan and the idea of “being Taiwanese”?

For Anderson (1991) the idea of the nation as an imagined political community does not only depend on continued acts of imagination for its existence. He also emphasises the connection between the nation, nation state and national culture. In historical terms, there was little question that “China” – *Zhong Guo* – was a term that represented a nation, a culture and an ‘ancestral homeland’ (*Zu Guo*) to most of the people on the island of Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo’s governments (1949-1988). In postwar Taiwan, nationalism (namely the formation of a Chinese national identity) is an extreme case of cultural consciousness claiming to be based on the existence of discrete traits, beliefs or customs that have been aligned with hard and fast geopolitical boundaries or actually existing groups of people (see Chun 1994, Chun 1996b). However, imagining a Chinese nation state combining complex sentiments and modes of promoting self-identification – a sense of “Chineseness” – has since collapsed under a series of challenges, both political and cultural, in Taiwan. The reconstruction of a sense of Taiwanese consciousness and the construction of a localised national culture (e.g. grassroots culture) in post-martial law Taiwan, deliberately reconnects the meaning of home and belonging to its absent

locality and cultural traditions, thus creating a ‘split consciousness’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 244) amongst Taiwanese people. According to Bhabha:

Splitting is a form of enunciatory, intellectual uncertainty and anxiety that stems from the fact that disavowal is not merely a principle of negation or elision; it is a strategy for articulating contradictory and coeval statements of belief (ibid., p. 132).

It is the process of splitting that allows the attempt to disarticulate the voice of authority. I have found Bhabha’s concept of ‘split consciousness’ a particularly useful insight into the political, cultural and social discourse surrounding the construction of national and cultural identity in Taiwan after the lifting of martial law. This can be seen in the attempts at writing Taiwan as a nation, the ambivalent social awareness of a sense of “Chineseness” and the growing receptiveness to a cultural temporality intertwined with nativisation (localisation) and transnational encounters. The absence of any consensus regarding national identity and the selectiveness of cultural identifications with China is, in this regard, a Taiwanese example of Bhabha’s ‘neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*’ (ibid., p. 219, *original emphasis*). It is the ambivalence of cultural nationalism and the nation state and its implications given the context of constructing Taiwanese identity in relation to regional popular culture flows that I will explore in the second part of this thesis.

The construction of a modern nation or nation state relies heavily on the dissemination of national consciousness and social imagination, as I briefly mentioned earlier. One of Anderson’s central contentions is that ‘Print-language is what invents nationalism, not *a* particular language per se’ (1991, p. 134). He suggests that ‘the important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities and building in effect *particular solidarities*’ (Anderson, 1991, p. 133, *original emphasis*). The construction of a national consciousness within a national territorial space is enabled by the circulation of printed materials which create a ‘unified field of exchange’ in which the consumers of print could ‘imagine’ the simultaneity of events across territorial space and the discourse within it. In Philip Schlesinger’s words, it represents ‘the sense of nationhood as one looks outward from within, therefore, the position is quite centrally about the constitution of national identity’ (1987, p. 247), that is, how nationhood is made available to people and how this experience forms a so-called sense of national identity (Tomlinson 1991).

Reviewing the relationship between cultural imperialism and the nation state John Tomlinson summarises Anderson's definition of a nation as follows:

National identity is a particular style of 'imagining the community' made possible by and also, in a sense, required by the processes of social modernity: secular rationalism, a calendrical perception of time, capitalist-driven technological development, mass literacy and mass communications, political democratisation, the modern nation-state. All these features combined in complex ways to promote identification with the nation as the dominant form of cultural identity (1991, p. 83).

It is within this context that Tomlinson questions strongly the idea of cultural imperialism. He argues that the notion of 'national identity is a highly mediated imaginary belonging which, in a sense, replaced earlier forms of cultural belonging' (ibid.). Namely, national identity is not place bounded or culturally predetermined. He further emphasises the point that:

National identities are not cultural belongings rooted in deep quasi-national attachments to a homeland, but, rather, complex cultural constructions that have arisen in specific historical conditions. There is a 'lived reality' of national identity, but it is a reality lived in representations – not in direct communal solidarity (ibid., p. 84).

This argument provides a conceptualisation of national identity as a progressive and contingent experience interacting with modern daily life, and therefore constantly under challenge by various modern developments. According to Tomlinson, the formation of national identities can be, and often is, influenced by the modernisation of media and communication systems demonstrating that 'national identity is a highly mediated imaginary belonging' (ibid., p. 83). Moreover, its popular imagination and cultural practice are often not passively, but rather actively, engaged with different elements which people encounter and appropriate. Following on from Anderson's 'imagined community,' which was made possible by advances in the means of communication, Tomlinson is able to argue against a conceptualisation of cultural imperialism which was predominately rooted in the idea of a fixed national culture.

However, the emphasis in Anderson's book is on national novels and newspapers, which inevitably suggests that the illiterate populace were excluded from the narratives in the construction of a national consciousness. In this sense, the use of print-language reinforces class divisions and also suggests that the writing of national

consciousness was something in which only the privileged few participated. The origins of national consciousness and nationalism, arguably, were not collective political identification or national destiny but rather a concept that was imagined and represented by an educated minority. The idea of national consciousness was therefore only imagined by those who had access to the narratives via various means of communication. I am not suggesting that the idea of national consciousness has to be imagined as a whole within a community, but rather I am more interested in investigating how people integrate and negotiate their concepts of nation, nationality, nationalism and cultural identity through various communication systems and interaction with diverse media contents.

As Anderson more explicitly acknowledged in subsequent work, modern electronic media, such as television, can have an even more powerful influence than print media in the formation of nationalism, which includes the possibility of ‘long-distance nationalism’. To him, ‘television makes it possible to communicate instantaneously the same images and symbols through different languages, even to the barely literate and the very young’ (2001, p. 42). In this account, modern cultural imagination can depart from “traditional” societies because of a complex of technological and representational changes, such as transnational media flows and the internet. However, this form of transnational cultural imagination and consumption in relation to national identity, one may argue, is temporal, fragmentary and shallow and therefore difficult to sustain (Smith 1990a, 1990b, 1995). I will elaborate further on Smith’s argument in the following section, focusing particularly on his questions about the idea of cultural globalisation in relation to national identity.

The formation of national consciousness, following Walter Benjamin’s notion of ‘a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present’, which Anderson calls ‘homogeneous empty time’ (1991, p. 24), is ‘the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history’ (ibid., p. 26). The nation is imagined as a community through time, with its own past, present and future destiny; it is imagined across space, embracing the inhabitants of a particular territory. Print capitalism also creates a mode of temporality or ‘meanwhile’ which is measured by clock and calendar and the

vision of the modern nation can be imagined with this transformation. However, the concept of ‘temporality’, according to Bhabha’s interpretations:

is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy - and an apparatus of power – that produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or ‘cultural difference’ that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation (1990, p. 292).

Bhabha criticises Anderson’s concept of ‘homogeneous empty time’ in which the idea of historical linear representation is imposed from above by a colonial state. Instead he proposes ‘a temporality of representation that moves between cultural formations and social processes without a ‘centred’ causal logic’ (ibid., p. 293). Based on this perspective he argues that ‘Such an apprehension of the ‘double and split’ time of national representation leads us to question the homogeneous and horizontal view familiarly associated with it’ (ibid., p. 295). To Bhabha, the importance of thinking of ‘double-time’ or ‘temporality’ in the context of a historical event is that it allows us to question the ‘fixity’ of national time-space and thus opening up the possibility of a transcendent tendency of dialectical contradiction which he calls a ‘third space’ (1988, pp. 20-22, 1994, pp. 36-38, 1990, p. 297). In this respect, the writing of a nation should not to be considered as fixed. Following Bhabha, we should consider the notion of nation in relation to time and space:

In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation (1990, p. 297).

Furthermore, he views the nation as a narrative in which ‘the people as an a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory ‘present’ marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign’ (ibid., p. 299). In his discussion of national discourse and the national fidelities of individuals, Bhabha distinguishes between pedagogical narratives – identity makers expressed in the ‘official’ discourses of a state apparatus; and performative narratives – the ways in which official discourses are negotiated in daily life. It is in this contested field of nation-making and identity construction in the case of Taiwan, that Bhabha’s approach allows more than the simple connection of

political changes (such as, the lifting of martial law or official acknowledgment of the 2-28 Incident⁴⁹) to the “emergence” of identity; it helps to develop an understanding of both the continuities and complex changes that have occurred since the late 1980s (Harrison 2006, p. 170). Another useful element is the emphasis on the individual performance of identity which is drawn on and interrupted by reference points established in a nation’s pedagogical narratives.

By paying attention to Anderson’s notion of ‘homogeneous, empty time’, one can begin to understand the notion of nationness and collective identities in relation to ‘timelessness’; ‘outside history’ is in fact a form of what Bhabha calls ‘time-lag – a temporal break in representation’ (1992,p. 59, 1994, p. 245). This mode displaces Anderson’s homogeneous temporality of the modern nation: ‘the non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens *up a cultural space – a third space* – where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 218, *my emphasis*). Furthermore, Anderson’s interpretation of time also echoes his other important argument that the historical process of nation-building often involves a deliberately political exercise of ‘memory and forgetting’ (1991, Chapter 11). He suggests that:

Awareness of being embedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of ‘forgetting’ the experience of this continuity – product of the ruptures of the late eighteenth century – engenders the need for a narrative of ‘identity’ (ibid., p. 205).

In other words, a sense of national collectivity and connectivity is a product of the simultaneous (dis)association of past and present – a temporality of time – a ‘meanwhile’ which according to Bhabha’s interpretation means that:

Anderson’s notion of ‘meanwhile’ is cut across by the ghostly simultaneity of a temporality of doubling and repetition, to be obliged to forget – in the construction of the national present – is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that performs the problematic totalisation of the national will (1990, p. 310).

⁴⁹ The 2-28 Massacre also called 2-28 Incident by Kuomintang (KMT), was an anti-government uprising in Taiwan that began on February 27, 1947 which was violently suppressed by the KMT-led Republic of China government and resulted in the massacre of numerous civilians, beginning on February 28. The subject was officially taboo for decades. On the anniversary of the event in 1995, President Lee Teng-hui addressed the subject publicly, a first for a Taiwanese head of state.

In the case of Taiwan, it is in the political act of “collective amnesia” in the formation of a nation in relation to its past that the problematic identification of people becomes more explicit. This is particularly relevant when the meaning of “meanwhile” is disturbed by various articulations such as postcolonial nostalgic sentiment (in the case of Taiwan, fifty years of Japanese colonisation); radical socio-political changes (lifting of martial law in 1987, first oppositional political party-DPP in 1986); or rediscovering and regenerating absent historical memories (such as the 2-28 Incident in 1947). To me, the conjuncture of these ruptures not only destabilised the sense of Chinese identity but also a “meanwhile” sense of Taiwanese identity. The notion of Taiwanese identity as a collective cultural identity and “imagined community” as a political reality is always in the process of coming into being. And therefore the sense of Taiwanese-ness is always open to be negotiated and contested by the state and agency.

To sum up, the virtue of Anderson’s approach to nations and nationalism is that it refutes, in Mark Harrison’s words, ‘the possibility of defining national identity in an essentialist way, as something that is immanent in the subjectivity of nationals, as, for example, a unique national character’ (2006, p. 26). Anderson’s discussion of nationalism suggests the notion of nation as ‘coming into being’ and ‘imagined’, which includes both political communities and their modes of representation in novels, plays and newspapers. His approach is a useful framework for an examination of the contemporary political situation in Taiwan, in particular the idea of ‘imagination’ and that ‘national identity is a highly mediated imaginary belonging’ (Tomlinson 1991, p. 63). For the KMT, this imagination is about ‘us as Chinese people’ acting to cultivate a unitary societal consciousness and thus reproduce the nation-state. During the postwar era, this idea focused on China as motherland, although few Taiwanese people had ever been there, and the people as ‘brothers and sisters by blood’ (*tong bao*) whom they cannot meet. For the DPP, this is about legitimating Taiwan as a nation and combining this with the trend of Taiwanisation by emphasising local cultural signification, historical colonial experience and the representation of social life and modernity which enables people to imagine that ‘Taiwan belongs to the Taiwanese’ (*Taiwan bixu shi Taiwanren de*).

Second, the contribution of Anderson's account of print-capitalism and the construction of a colloquial language is that the ideological dissemination on a large scale created the conditions where people could begin to think of themselves as a nation. One's recognition of a collective political identity and the possibility of a new form of imagined community is therefore not constrained by speaking a particular language and occupying particular territories but by the 'interplay between fatality, technology and capitalism' (1991, p. 43). Following this argument, old notions about national identities being embedded in a specific place or self-evidently belonging to particular cultures and societies seem to have been challenged and complicated by the vast, expanding transnational media cultural flows. In the case of Taiwan, the lifting of martial law, the process of political democratisation and the media liberalisation of the late 1980s and early 1990s have created an irrefutable presence of a national searching for a sense of collective political identity. The manifestation of nation-building desire among the Taiwanese population has occurred alongside irreducible political differences in the making of national culture, history and consciousness on the island and Anderson's approach can illuminate the modern construction of Taiwanese identity.

Third, Anderson's discussion of time – as a national temporality of 'meanwhile', an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time', permits 'transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar' (ibid., p. 24). This insight enables us to discriminate between the notion of historical linkage and memories as a prerequisite element of the nation-building project and the construction of nationness in the disjunctive forms of displacement and repetition of time in writing a nation. On the one hand, Anderson acknowledges that 'homogenous empty time and space' enables people to imagine and reproduce the idea of nation moving back and forwards without limit. On the other hand, he also recognises that the idea that a nation is actively constructed in the imagination means it is the contingent result of social and political processes. Hence, the question of whether to retrieve five thousand year old Chinese culture or four hundred year old Taiwanese history and culture in making sense of Taiwanese identity has paradoxically highlighted the ambiguities and peculiar situation in Taiwan.

British scholar Anthony D. Smith has criticised Anderson's conceptualisation of nation 'as a community narrated in a particular print language, which suggest that nation is a kind of modern 'text' and nationalism a form of political discourse, rather than an ideology' (1991b, pp. 361-363). He argues that Anderson's description of the nation is in danger of seeing that nation as it has been/is being 'narrated' by its devotees. He is also concerned that Anderson's approach is largely subjectivist: the nation as text to be deconstructed, a series of narratives or 'inventions of the imagination' (ibid., p. 361). Here Smith (mis)interprets Anderson's idea of 'imagination' as modern fantasy or pure invention and therefore he criticises Anderson's concept as 'ultimately denying the power of past (or received structures) to determine the products of human agency' (ibid., p. 364). This leads to an important question, namely in what sense can the notion of historical connections or cultural heritage create what he calls 'culture-specific' or 'a collective culture' in the modern reconstruction of a nation.

Myths and memories of the nation: The construction of "Chineseness" – Descendants of the Dragon?

In this section, I focus on Smith's approach to nation, national identity and nationalism, in which he often stresses the importance of historical sentiments and aspirations such as memories, myths, traditions, etc. in the formation of "nationness". In doing so I wish to discuss how these two different representative approaches to the study of national identity have awkwardly combined in the modern nation-building project in Taiwan and their referential importance in the questioning of the concept of national and cultural identity within the context of intra-Asian popular cultural flows and cultural practices.

Whereas Anderson extends our understandings of nationalism as 'coming into being', emphasising the instability of national identity, Smith claims that 'nationalism is a form of political archaeology' (1999, p. 176), emphasising that:

the ideology of nationalism prizes historical authenticity, because later generations of any particular community are formed in their collective life through the memories, myths and traditions of the community into which they are born and educated (Smith 1991b, p. 358).

Differing from Anderson, who contends that nation-states were uniquely the product of the post-eighteenth century transformations of society and consciousness, Smith (1995) argues that the construction of nationalism derives from the imperishability, durability and special traits of the national in myths, memories, values and symbols. He suggests that nationality is a much older phenomenon which although transformed by modern political and economic forces is more deeply rooted and enduring.

Additionally, according to Smith (1991a), a non-Western model or 'ethnic' conception of the nation is different from a Western model of nation which composes the historic territory, legal-political community and equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology. Thus, a nation was first and foremost a community of common descent. For Smith, a community is constructed by a sense of "togetherness", operating through kinship and inclusion. In this regard, nationalism is understood as those ideologies or beliefs which attribute a communality of experience (memory) to the members of a particular regional, ethnic or linguistic category. One famous old representation of common descent in Taiwan is a myth of a sacred origin symbol (e.g. Dragon). Myth in this sense is singular. For example, in the early 1970s there was a popular folk song, Descendants of Dragon written by Hou De-jian (1978), which can be seen as an expression of the myth of a sacred origin:

There was a dragon called China in the ancient East.
There was a group of people who were descendants of the dragon.
We grow up under one dragon's protection
Black eyes, dark hair, yellow skin we will always be descendants of the dragon

It is important to note that this myth of shared sacredness is a definition of the historical continuity of Chinese empires, which transcends ethnic identities and political realities. In post-war Taiwan, as Allen Chun (1994, 1995, 2000b) emphasises in several articles, the solidarity of the nation involved a devotion to a symbolic collectivity which surpasses territorial boundedness and the imagining of a community as one people, one culture, one blood and one family. In this sense, modern Taiwan's request for independence represents a threat to unification, because it is a rejection of that myth of a common destiny, a reunified China.

Smith's central contention is that national culture is a collective culture rooted in a territorially bounded place and sharing unique historical symbols, myths, memories

and traditions. It is also a way of constructing meanings which influence and organise both our actions and our conception of ourselves. In a similar vein, Walker Connor suggests that the 'nation-as-family' metaphor is not a rational feeling, but rather an emotive one; it is a bond beyond reason appealing 'not to the brain but to the blood' (1993, p. 384). From these perspectives, it is not surprising to hear the comments from some Chinese nationalists: Taiwan and China are supposed to share the same ancestry (blood), the same history, language and culture. Apart from political and historical connections this is one of the main reasons why China has proclaimed its rights to Taiwan on the grounds that 'the people of Taiwan are our kith and kin' (cited in Connor 1993, p. 381).

If the nation is, according to Connor, 'a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the sub-conscious conviction of its members, from all non-members' (ibid., p. 377), national consciousness is based on a perception of similarity and of difference such as the place you stay, the language you speak, the food you eat, your cultural heritage and religion. To be aware of or to be involved in groups one relies on the formation of a national identity shared by all members to establish congruence. The fundamental aspects of national identity can therefore be summarised as containing the consciousness and sentiments of 'a historic territory, or homeland, common myths and historic memories, a common, mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members and a common economy with territorial mobility for all members' (Smith 1991a, p. 14). In short, a national identity which comprises both cultural and political identity is made up of memories from the past and the living together within a fatherland or motherland. In this regard, the KMT government consistently maintained its role as the sole guardian of "traditional Chinese culture" in the post-war era, despite Taiwan not being territorially connected to China. Since the retreat of Chiang Kai-shek and his followers in 1949, Taiwan has been designated as the bastion from where to counterattack the Communist party in mainland China. Its historical, political and cultural continuity therefore remained closely intertwined with its "motherland" (*Zu Kuo*), China, under the KMT regime. And it is under this spell that the modern concept of Taiwanese consciousness or Taiwanese identity has been a complex issue for nationalists and other people on the island.

Arguably, national identity constitutes the relationship between the present configuration of a national collectivity and its past. Traditions and social memory are considered as imaginary, continual and selective. Their formation through cultural institutions and practices present a chronological chain of identity linking past and present. Smith believes that ‘there is a deeper reason for the drive to rediscover an ethnic past, or ‘ethno-history’. This is the need to reconstruct the modern nation and locate it in time and space on firm and authentic foundations’ (1999, p. 177). In this sense, national identity is constructed within a definite social time and space. In the construction of a national identity, shared feelings of primordial bonds of kinship and a perceived common “blood” are assimilated to a feeling of political community, ‘in other words, what we mean by national identity comprises both a cultural and a political identity’ (ibid., p. 99). However this form of identification neglects the notion of becoming, as Stuart Hall puts it:

cultural identities come from somewhere, [they] have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power (1990, p. 225).

Following Hall’s argument, my critique is that Smith (1991b) invokes the role of nationalism and of nationalists’ involvement in the rediscovery, reinterpretation and regeneration of the community in order to reproduce national identity or a sense of cultural intimacy. What binds the various classes and ethnicities together has limited the elements of the (re)construction of national identity within a historical time and space trajectory. Within such a framework, ‘nation-building’ becomes naturalized, a unifying discourse of ‘nation’, ‘peoples’, or authentic ‘folk’ traditions which is embedded in the myths of culture’s particularity (Bhabha 1994, pp. 162-173). In ‘The Question of Cultural Identity’, Stuart Hall mentions that ‘national identity seeks to unify them [its members] into one cultural identity, to represent them all as belonging to the same great national family’ (1992, p. 296). Therefore, he argues that when the implied unity was absent, the nation-state often tried to create it through a uniform national language, national history, and more often than not a mythologised version of identity (ibid.). Indeed, the enduring myth of a unified nation and a collective cultural identity rooted in historical, subjective and symbolic terms is highly problematic. It is problematic because it sees the nation as a readily available reference and ignores the fluid and complex processes involved in the construction of

culture and the invention of tradition, and their combined role in the production of the modern nation.

In post-war Taiwan, the concept of culture operates at many different levels of public discourse – such as through the feeling of moral consciousness, habits of custom, shared political ideology and historical trajectory. The process of nation-building under the KMT regime represented not only the construction of a sense of “Chineseness”, but of becoming “authentic” Chinese, a representation of originality, purity and continuity (Chun 1994). In this regard, the KMT government felt compelled to define national identity not only in terms of race, language and history but also in the way it attempted to invoke, resuscitate and reinvent tradition for the purpose of legitimising its own vision of the modern society. Nationalism or societal consciousness in this regard is close to Anthony Giddens’ definition, ‘cultural and psychological sentiments that feed upon the rootlessness of an everyday life in which what Geertz calls the “primordial sentiments” of social reproduction, [are] grounded in tradition’ (1981, p. 13). The idea of one nation, one party, one family and even one mind intertwined with an imaginary motherland underlies the mythical sentiment of unification which remained for many generations in Taiwan. Once this “oneness” has been challenged or even collapsed, the discourse of Chinese identity in Taiwan becomes a central contested field with many dimensions, but in particular in the construction of a sense of “Taiwanese-ness”, a sense of nationhood.

Plausibly, national culture allows ‘us’ to define ourselves against ‘them’ understood as those beyond the boundaries of the nation (see Hall 1992, pp. 292-293, Schlesinger 1987, p. 261, Smith 1991a, p. 61, Smith 1995, p. 114). Schlesinger also points out that:

National cultures are not just simple repositories of shared symbols to which the entire population stands in identical relation [but] rather [are] to be approached as sites of contestation in which competition over definitions takes place (1987, p. 260).

Hence, national cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions but also of symbols, ideology and representations; producing and constructing meanings which affect and establish both our actions and our conception of us (e.g. Hall 1992, Schlesinger 1987). Nevertheless Stuart Hall also suggests that ‘national identities are

not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to *representation*' (1992, p. 292), a set of meanings that people identify with. In a similar approach, as Bhikhu Parekh (1994) rightly suggests, there is no single and homogenous discourse of national identity but a multiplicity of discourses, sharing some aspects in common but differing in their logical structures and ways of defining, debating, representing and reconstructing national identities.

The old concept of reproduction of national identity is limited to the nation-state system in which territorial and legal-political factors are given. National identity acts, according to Smith (1991a), as a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture. For Smith, the attraction of national cultures as forms of social solidarity is that they are 'particular', 'time-bound and expressive' (1990b, p. 178). Therefore he argues that concepts of global culture are an empty and shallow threat to national cultures due to 'their lack of reference to language or history, their indifference to family tradition and religion, above all, their lack of a popular base' (1990a, p. 5). In contradiction to Smith's cultural nationalism approach, Bhabha views the nation as a narrative in which the national is both speaking to it and speaking it:

The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference where the claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address. We then have a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in *a double-time*; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as the continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process (1990, p. 297 *my emphasis*).

This argument suggests that the non-national also operates in this 'contested cultural territory'. The foreigner and foreignness are as much implicated in the inscription of a nation's narrative as the national. I have quoted Bhabha's 'The time of the nation' note at length here because his effort to suggest a liminal or in-between space of ambivalence in the narration of a nation allows people to go beyond the contained grid of fixed identities and binary oppositions, against Smith's proposition of a sense of historical continuity in the formation of collective cultural identity. This allows us

to further question how in the age of intense global and regional culture and media flows, the idea of a nation or national/cultural identity is no longer shaped or restricted by the territorial (space/place) and historical (time) connections. Rather this field is constantly contested and complicated by foreignness amongst young people.

In debates on national identity different kinds of complicated choices and confusing sentiments exist, and these are composed of the interlacing forces of historical burden and the open need to change this. However, as national cultures become more exposed to outside influences, it becomes difficult to preserve cultural identities intact, or to prevent them from becoming weakened through cultural bombardment and infiltration, especially within the contexts of globalisation, postmodernity, cultural imperialism and cultural hybridity.

Nostalgia and cultural hybridity: The construction of Taiwanese identity within the discourse of postcoloniality and globalisation

This section examines the debates about dynamic influences on the concepts of nation/nation-state and the definitions of national and cultural identities within the debate on cultural globalisation and hybridisation. The section argues that the constitution of the nation-building project in modern times has shifted away from a stress on the importance of ethnicity, nationhood and kinship towards an articulation of the populace's cultural positionality, self-reflexivity, and national subjectivity, which are all key elements in the development of national identity in modern society.

Anderson and Smith offer two representative approaches which demonstrate the idea of the nation as historically constructed and its dependence on hegemonic processes to forge a unified whole. The formation of national identity or a sense of belonging to an 'imagined political community' is situated within a defined territory and is governed by political pre-givens. However, the question of the annihilation of nationhood and fragmentation of identity looms as a determining issue in any discussion on both national and cultural identities in the age of globalisation. In this respect, globalisation refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-states which make up the modern world system. Within the context of national space, globalisation promotes the mutation of national identity

resulting from ‘the imposition of the conceptual grid of nationality on exchanges and interactions in the global arena’ (Cubitt 1998, p. 14).

Eric J. Hobsbawm made a rather adventurous prediction about the decline of nation-states in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, arguing that nations and nationalism are becoming irrelevant to ‘the new supranational restructuring of the globe’ (1990, p. 182). The future of nations and nation-states in the age of globalisation remains an area of open debate: some argue for the imminent demise of the nation and/or nation-states (Held 1989, pp. 191-204, Ohmae 1995, Jessop 1994, p. 274) while some insist on its immortality (Smith 1990a, pp. 6-12, 1995, chapters 1 and 4). The tension between globalisation and nation/nation-state is an ongoing phenomenon and remains an unsettled issue. This section will present these debates with a focus on cultural points of view and their relationship to the construction of nation/nation-states and national/cultural identities in the age of globalisation. The clash between the ideas of cultural rootlessness (as in cultural globalisation) and cultural rootedness (as in indigenisation/locale) suggests that the politics of identity is a constant struggling with a sense of “fear of” and “security” within political discourses that interweave with notions of hybridity and authenticity in the (re)construction of national cultures.

Arguably, globalisation retains some aspects of Western power domination but cultural identities everywhere are being relativised by the impact of ‘time-space compression’ (Harvey 1989). According to David Held, ‘nation-states were never as autonomous or as sovereign as they claimed to be’ (1992, p. 71). The processes of globalisation are diminishing differences and space between nations as well as fragmenting the imagined unity within those nations. The most distinctive contribution in this field may come from Arjun Appadurai in his five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, mediascaples and ideoscaples. He notes that ‘people, machinery, money, images and ideas now follow increasingly non-isomorphic paths’ (1996, p. 37). By the same token, Ulf Hannerz proposes four organisational frameworks for examining cultural processes: forms of life, market, state and movement (1992, pp. 46-52). He suggests that cultural meanings are socially organised and result from the varying combinations and flows of those frameworks, ‘these entanglements, involving often mutually contradictory tendencies, also keep the totality alive, shifting, continuously unstable’ (ibid., p. 51).

These aspects of globalisation in relation to the nation-state and the politics of identity also recall on Hall's (1991) three important observations: national identities are being washed away due to the growth of cultural homogenisation and 'the global post-modern'; they are being challenged by the particularistic forms of identity which provoke resistance to globalisation; and being replaced by 'hybrid' identities. To this extent, globalisation seems to generally erase the boundary between nation-states and separate national and cultural identities. This uncoupling of culture from bounded territories – locales, regions, nation-states – is characterised by Hall as 'the processes of globalisation, that form of relationship between a national cultural identity and a nation-state that is now beginning to disappear' (ibid., p. 22). He argues that national identity no longer enjoys its supremacy as the psychological identity that claims the extreme loyalty of the individual. Instead, it must compete with other identities in a free and open shopping mall of identities. I agree with most of these propositions in relation to the process of national cultural (trans)formation and identity recreation. However, what these arguments fail to consider is the case of a "state without nationhood" such as we found in Taiwan.

Granted, nationhood is never a pre-given condition or the sole means of self-identification with a nation. In this sense, national cultural identity has never been an always/already condition. The concept of globalisation may therefore also be regarded as a tool to mediate this ambivalent space, or in Bhabha's term – 'a space of "translation"', which is:

a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the Other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the 'moment' of politics. The challenge lies in conceiving of the 'time' of political action and understanding as opening up a space that can accept and regulate the differential structure of the moment of intervention without rushing to produce a dialectical unity of the social antagonism or contradiction (1988, pp. 10-11).

It is only with an attempt to acknowledge the historical transformations of political identity and to negotiate the contemporary socio-political situation that one can start to make sense of and articulate the sense of belonging and the meaning of collective identification in the modern nation. To me, the role of regional TV dramas may not necessarily have direct influence on youth's political identity formation. However, it

provides important referential cultural, social and political dimensions in terms of negotiating and articulating a sense of modern Taiwanese identity amongst the younger generations, which I will discuss further in Chapter 6 and 7.

The penetration of global cultural products and the concept of internationalisation have given Taiwan Independent nationalists a strong statement which deliberately articulates both the global and the national, with which to construct a new identity that can be differentiated from China both historically and culturally (c.f. Wang, 2000, p. 102). The concept of globalisation or internationalisation is regarded by the government and some scholars as a way to constitute modern Taiwanese culture alongside a reinforced local culture. Therefore, the reinvention of traditional cultures in Taiwan is inevitably intertwined with global culture or a 'third culture' in Mike Featherstone's words (1990, p. 259). Taiwanese intellectuals such as Qing-chu Yang (2004) appeal for a resolution of the crisis of Taiwan's identity:

Taiwan must internationalise, and internationalisation should be the direction for the cultural pluralism of every ethnicity on Taiwan. No matter if it is 'localism' or 'place-ism,' this is the way Taiwanese subjective consciousness must go. But without 'localism' or 'place-ism' from which to jump to internationalisation, is to be without a personal history or culture, and so be rootless (cited in Harrison 2009, p. 59).

Almost sharing the same anxiety, Wei-ming Tu suggests that the appropriation of 'cultural China' is an inescapable component in the making of Taiwanese cultural identity and comments:

The irony is that as nativisation has become a dominant discourse, imported cultural products, outgrowths of the ubiquitous transnational capitalism, have inadvertently formulated an alternative discourse. The combination of these two seemingly asymmetrical ideological trajectories creates a new cultural vortex; Taiwan is a fascinating place for research on 'glocalism' (an awkward coexistence of globalism and localism) (1996, p. 1122).

The concept of cultural glocalisation often refers to global culture being reshaped by local content. In this view locals still have their power either to resist or to appropriate such forces. Global cultures must be adjusted to local conditions because external cultural influences are meaningful only if they can be integrated with local social experience and cultural understandings. Or as Smith (1990a) argues, global culture cannot be sustained because of a lack of collective past. He believes that a global

culture without a perceived collective past has no popular resonance and without popular resonance no images and traditions will be maintained; therefore, a global culture is just a 'memory-less' and 'context-less' culture. Instead Smith insists that:

The central difficulty in any project to construct a global identity and hence a global culture, is that collective identity, like imagery and culture, is always historically specific because it is based on shared memories and a sense of continuity between generations (1995, p. 180).

In contrast, Appadurai (1996) argues that people are fascinated neither with 'originality' nor with 'tradition', but are actively constructing their own images and meanings of vernacular modernity at the receiving end. However, these arguments rest largely on the undiminished notion of "national tradition" or "local rooted" cultural identity, which can allow local actors to negotiate with global culture flows.

In other words, globalisation actually more explicitly exploits local differentiations, such as culture, way of life, social value, customs, and so on. It is therefore important to acknowledge that:

By understanding globalisation as both a process of material flows and a basis for meaningful localisation, one can [then] begin to see how different societies receive global flows while at the same time accommodating them within given social-political and cultural-ideological frameworks (Chun 1996a, p. 68).

In the case of Taiwan, what has been presented as a problematic issue is the political dislocation and upheaval in the construction of national and cultural identity throughout the country's history. For instance, the recent burgeoning movement of the reinstallation of its locality has produced bizarre political catchwords such as 'Richly cultivating Taiwan while reaching out to the world' (*shen-geng Taiwan buju quanqiu*) or 'Putting Taiwan's interest first, while maintaining global perspective' (*Taiwan youxian quanqui buju*) (cited in Morris 2005, abstract). Hence, the question becomes one of whether the government's obsession with incorporating the idea of globalisation into a nation-building project while insisting on constructing a "localised" or "indigenised" national consciousness and place-bound loyalty has in fact deepened the confusion amongst the Taiwanese populace.

The phenomenon of "cultural homogenisation" is a concept of uniformisation, a sort of global currency in which interchangeable but not necessarily equal identities

become detached, disembedded and translated from specific places, times, histories, and traditions. Indeed, the immediacy and intensity of global cultural confrontations challenge the continuity and the profundity of collective identities as well as the idea of the nation-state and of nationhood. However, Stuart Hall also rationally points out that on the one hand global differences are softened and consumed pleurably in certain regions and on the other hand, traditionalism is also keenly advocated in what he calls 'the final moment of the global post-modern' in which exotic cuisine and traditionalism coexist (1991, p. 33). Generally speaking, because of transnational cultures, a large number of people are in many dimensions more systematically and directly involved with more than one culture and effectively become so-called cultural hybrids.

What is "cultural hybridity"? Hall describes it as 'identity formations which cut across and intersect national frontiers' (1992, p. 310). Hybridity, from a postcolonial point of view, is according to Bhabha 'the "third space" which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom' (1990, p. 211).

The apparent distinction between concepts of cultural globalisation and cultural hybridisation is that one flattens cultural diversity (e.g. cultural homogenisation, cultural synchronisation) and reduces culture to the 'singular', whilst the latter highlights the 'mixtures' and 'discontinuities' of culture (see Appadurai 1996, chapter 2, Hannerz 1992, Hannerz 1996) which are appropriated through the encounter between the modern and the traditional in history. As an analytical framework, Robert J. Holton suggests that:

the hybridisation approach avoids the pitfalls of homogenisation and polarisation theory by drawing attention to the signification of interculturalism for cultural identity, as well as the syncretic historic-making of cultural forms, which social actors may subsequently come to regard as indigenous rather than partly borrowed or blended (1998, p. 184).

In the case of Taiwan, Taiwanese sociologist Horng-luen Wang argues that 'cosmopolitanism and global culture have played an important role in the making of a Taiwanese identity, as 'globalisation' or 'internationalisation' is now regarded by Taiwan Independent nationalists as constitutive of Taiwanese culture' (2000, p. 102).

Wang's comments on Heng-zhe Lin's book *Craving the Dream of Taiwanese Culture* (1989) suggest that Lin insisted that Taiwanese culture is characterised by a rich collection of "international colours" ranging from: Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and Dutch cultures, intertwined through complicated and fragmented historical legacies (Wang, 2000). In other words, the notion of cultural heterogeneity and hybridity rather than cultural homogeneity and authenticity are currently recognised as another defining characteristic of Taiwanese culture. Since 'hybridity' is a central term in some variants of globalisation theory, globalisation again is represented as a positive image in Taiwan. Whilst the Taiwanese tried to "rediscover" their traditional Taiwanese local culture based on parochialism and localism during the 1990s, they ironically syncretised globalism at the same time. Moreover, under certain political circumstances, globalisation has become recognised as the best strategy for building Taiwan into a nation or at least for maintaining its current nation-like status. Globalisation has been deeply and positively embedded in Taiwan both for political and cultural reasons. For instance, Shu-mei Shih argues that 'In the view of its domestic ethnic and political tensions, globalisation is also good for Taiwan' (2003, p. 146). She suggests that ex-president Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian's employing of the concept of 'New Taiwanese' 'relies heavily on the rhetoric of multicultural, multiethnic "new" Taiwan [that], is circulating precisely at the moment when Taiwan most wants to pursue globalisation. Hence globalisation appears inevitable for Taiwan for it gives something to everyone' (ibid.).

The nation- and identity-building project in Taiwan since the late 1980s has not only been challenged by the concepts of nationhood, national culture and the selectiveness of popular memory but also by the process of identity formation, which negotiates the possible global deconstruction of identity in theory as it self-consciously works to reconstruct a basis for Taiwanese identity. In regard to the importance of constructing of native Taiwanese consciousness, Angelina Yee argues that 'To many, the people of Taiwan have long been subjected to a succession of colonizers' myths that deny their existence and suppress their locality in subservience to a grand national narrative' (2001, p. 83). By the same token, Chiou (1994, p. 29) argues that the quest by the Taiwanese to find their native roots, to establish a Taiwanese consciousness, and an independent Taiwanese national identity has been an important part of the anti-KMT

political campaign as much as a resistance to Chinese cultural hegemony and political threats. The absence of a locally based cultural subjectivity has proved to be one of most urgent and challenging issues for Taiwanese nationalists to enforce the *bentuhua* movement since the 1990s (translated variously as: Taiwanisation, localisation, indigenisation, nativisation).

On the one hand, the deconstructing of pre-martial law nationhood (Chinese identity), the rewriting of “national” history and the revitalising of local cultures in order to create a unique sense of Taiwanese national and cultural identity since the 1990s has, to a certain extent, generated what Homi Bhabha suggests is ‘an instability of cultural signification’ (1990, p. 303). The historical trajectories and territorial boundedness in relation to cultural consciousness and identity-building remain important elements to articulate in this regard. This also reflects on Anderson’s notion of the nation as constructed and the temporality of cultures which makes Taiwan as a nation imaginable. Wei-ming Tu (1991) argues that although the ‘new Taiwanese culture’ has been enriched by Taiwan’s involvement with the West, rapid industrialisation and the search for Taiwan’s native roots, it is still part of ‘cultural China’. In his article ‘Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center’, Tu (1991) clearly falls for the very idea which the KMT government had deliberately espoused as the only authentic and legitimate guardian of “traditional Chinese culture”; he sees the relationship between China and Taiwan more of as one ‘filiation’ than ‘affiliation’, to borrow Edward W. Said’s term (1983, p. 23). In this instance, filiation refers to lines of descent in nature and affiliation refers to a process of identification through culture.

In fact, the phrase national identity did not gain popular recognition in Taiwan until the late 1980s, a period saturated with varied confrontations brought about by rapid political democratisation, media liberalisation and economic growth. Questions such as ‘What is cultural China?’; and ‘Why must Taiwanese culture be part of that culture?’ have been debated by the different sides of the cultural identification camps: China-oriented and Taiwan-oriented. The concept of cultural China is also used by those who are more inclined to retain the status quo, defining national (political) identity (as Taiwanese) and cultural identity as part of Chinese culture. In the series of Taiwanisation movements, the sense of ‘what we might become’ is just as

important as ‘who we actually were/are’, simultaneously looking forward and backwards in the rediscovering and rewriting of cultures and histories in order to make sense of, or to articulate with its long lost identity. Thus, the struggle of nation-building and identity-constructing in Taiwan since the late 1980s, involves a constant repositioning in relation to China as much as a simple redefinition and reinvention of an “original” local past.

This process often combines with the influence of globalisation which inevitably emphasises the ability of the subject’s ‘temporality of negotiation’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 26). According to Bhabha, ‘Cultural globality is figured in the in-between space of double-frames: its historical originality marked by a cognitive obscurity; its decentred “subject” signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent provisionality of the “present”’ (ibid., p. 216).

In this instance, he posits hybridity as such a form of liminal or in-between space where the ‘cutting edge of translation and negotiation’ (Bhabha 1988, p. 22) occurs and which he terms the third space. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford (1990, p. 211), Bhabha also suggests that the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive and not merely reflective condition, or a space that engenders new possibility. It is also an ‘interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative’ (1994) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity. To me, the concept of the third space is useful for analysing the displacement of hegemonic national narratives of cultural structures and practices in relation to postcolonial and cultural globalisation arguments. To end with a note from Homi Bhabha:

The challenge to modernity comes in redefining the signifying relation to disjunctive “present”: staging the past as *symbol*, myth, memory, history, the ancestral – but a past whose iterative value *as sign* reinscribes the “lessons of the past” into the very textuality of the present that determines both the identification with, and the interrogation of, modernity: what is the ‘we’ that defines the prerogative of my present? (ibid., p. 247, *original emphasis*)

Conclusion

Anderson and Smith both apply the critical-historical view in the construction of nations, nationalism and cultural identity, though their approaches to this process are rather different. The attractions of Anderson's account of the 'nation as imagined political community' is its connection of national identity with the processes of social modernity while superseding the essentialist elements promoted by nationalists, for instance, a unique national character. However, his approach focuses on cultural systems (such as religious communities and dynastic realms) and print capitalism (e.g. novels and newspapers) in the formation of nationalism bounded and imagined within national territory, which has, to a certain extent, been challenged in the context of globalisation and transnational flows. Smith argues that without the heritage of pre-modern ethnic ties, memories, myths, traditions, rituals, symbols and artefacts, etc., the construction of a nation is inconceivable, which has limited the idea of national identity and nationalism to historical bounds and cultural particularity. This approach has influenced his own view on globalisation; he attacks the concept of global culture (which he refers to as American culture) as empty and shallow (1990a, p. 5). In a way, Smith is not wrong in criticising the idea of a global culture, and globalisation did not demolish the nation-state; however, he neglects the fact that a negotiating space has been opened up within the state via the global context.

Nonetheless, cultural and national identity is more than just a sense of belonging. In the case of post-war Taiwan, 'cultural construction has been a complex process of writing, socialisation and politicisation in ways which have always been intricately tied to ongoing socio-political conditions' (Chun 1994, p. 68). For instance, the three phases of cultural movements in post-war Taiwan since the late 1940s were operated by the KMT government, focusing on the (re)writing of cultural articulation with "traditional Chinese cultures". Following political democratisation and economic growth, the lifting of martial law in 1987, media liberalisation in the early 1990s, the legacy of forty years KMT authoritarian rule on the island has gradually come to an end. The notion of Chinese identity has been greatly debated and challenged by politicians, scholars and the populace. The beginning of the deconstruction of Chinese identity brought out the deepest confusion, suffering and lost identity in which Chun (1994) suggests that mainland China was neither 'self' nor 'other' both

in terms of cultural and national identity and self-identification. If Taiwan had been “reborn” as a new state when the National Assembly elections were held in 1991 it may also be seen as the “death” of Chinese cultural and national identities. Has this moment even happened, or are we still uncertain and in the middle of the process? Globalisation has been recognised as the best strategy (or the way out) so far for some scholars and politicians in Taiwan in order to build Taiwan as a nation in a global context and celebrating the multicultural interactions to create a distance from Chinese culture. However, what needs to be considered more, apart from the rather bizarrely optimistic view about globalisation in the construction of new national and cultural identities in Taiwan, is youth’s cultural translation and negotiation in the context of transnational culture flows.

While the Taiwanese try to recover their own repressed and neglected histories and cultures, in the age of globalisation, inevitably they have to retell the story both from the bottom up and from the top down. Over the past twenty years, the Taiwanese have been trapped in the ambivalence of counter-identities of their own. It may be that for the first time the Taiwanese can represent their own lives, and begin to speak about their own communities even though they are still under the shadow of China. Particularly relevant to Bhabha’s postcolonial definition is that a series of community-making programmes and cultural localisation movements (*bentuhua*) have come into being since the 1990s which emphasise the concept of ‘locality’ and also suggest that a sense of nationhood and Taiwanese identity was discursively constructed and celebrated in the name of cultural difference. According to Bhabha, ‘cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of cultures as ‘knowledgeable’, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification’ (1988, p. 18, *original emphasis*). He further contests that the concept of cultural difference marks the establishment of new forms of meaning and strategies of identification through processes of negotiation where no discursive authority can be established without revealing the difference in and of itself. In the context of Taiwan’s revitalisation of local cultures one cannot ignore its colonial experience in particular under Japanese occupation.

To conclude, the debates about nation-building and the construction of national and cultural identities in Taiwan, to borrow Ien Ang’s view, are ‘a confrontation of the

past and the future, a tug of war between “identity” as essential being, locked in (in the image of) the past, and “identity” as open-ended becoming, invested in a future that remains to be struggled over’ (2000, p. 9). Therefore, the framework I have created for understanding the process of Taiwanese national and cultural building actively links concept of national consciousness and the notion of cultural imperialism and media influence, focusing on the socio-cultural phenomenon of youth popular consumption of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas. The second part of this thesis (Chapters 6 and 7) argues that the modern politics of identities should not be seen from an antagonistic perspective, such as past and present, here and there, or tradition and invention, but something in-between, a space to be constantly negotiated, articulated and translated.

Chapter 6 shall demonstrate that by acknowledging the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and regional popular culture flows, university students are actively identifying with cultural difference and similarity amongst the three nations, which constitutes their sense of cultural positionality. In other words, their recognition of Taiwanese cultural identity is derived as well as transformed through the process of their negotiation of a sense of “Otherness”, which is represented on the screen and which they encounter in everyday life. In Chapter 7, I shall illustrate how secondary school students as younger generations who underwent national education reforms and the introduction of “Understanding Taiwan” (*Renshi Taiwan*) textbooks have consolidated their sense of Taiwanese identity within the “Taiwanisation” discourse. The Chapter also focuses on the process of being as well as becoming Taiwanese as an inevitably hybrid product which is formed through the daily articulation with local grassroots culture and media consumption and negotiation with regional popular culture flows.

Chapter 6

“There is ‘Taiwanese identity’, but ...”: Negotiating and contesting national consciousness

Introduction

The first part of this thesis investigated and analysed the media reception and transnational cultural appropriation and consumption amongst university and secondary school students. Chapter 3 argued that university students’ reception of regional TV dramas is not reduced to either emotional connections or pure entertainment values. Regional TV dramas have rather become important cultural resources and references for young adults, influencing the development of their self-reflexivity and guiding their general social formation and modes of transnational cultural appropriation in everyday life. In addition, I pointed out that regional TV reception amongst secondary school students has less sentimental connection and emotional involvement than university students. I also discussed the manifestation of generational cultural identification differences between university and secondary school students in terms of the consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and its possible social implications. However, when I conducted my fieldwork amongst university and secondary schools students somehow the issue of ‘Taiwanese cultural identity’ was constantly mentioned when we discussed the popular consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas, pop music, idol groups and so on. Comments ranging from “Is Taiwan an independent country, I am not sure”, “What is cultural identity in Taiwan, if there is one?” to “Because we do not have (or lack) our own culture we accept others easily”. This rather unexpected yet crucial linkage made by university audiences between the popularity of regional TV dramas as a common social phenomenon and its implications for an ongoing nation-building project in Taiwan has shed a different light on the relationship between youth transnational media consumption and cultural identity in the field of media research.

Admittedly, I was at first concerned that my research findings do not “fit into” my initial research project. In the field of media and young audience research when studying the relationship between young people, popular culture and media reception, scholars often focus on its negative implication within a cultural imperialism or

cultural globalisation framework. This view includes a focus on young people's consumption behaviour and idol worshipping, which have often led to the formation of a hegemonic youth cultural identification. However, I do not wish to suggest that because university students are more actively self-reflecting or self-monitored in the reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas their resistance to the potential cultural homogenisation is therefore trouble free. Nor do I wish to suggest that we should return to celebrate the notions of autonomous readers and polysemy of texts in media and cultural studies. We should question to what extent young adult audiences' socio-political awareness and the debate on the current nation-state status has interwoven with their transnational media experience and negotiation, or how this experience has formulated different layers of interpretation during the process of the state's construction of national cultural identity in Taiwan.

Based on university students' responses this chapter draws attention to the concepts of 'cultural proximity', 'cultural imperialism', 'cultural hybridisation' and 'Taiwanese cultural localisation' in relation to the notion of the 'nation as a imagined political community' (Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983) within the context of regional popular cultural flows and globalisation. Questioning the idea of an antagonistic relationship between national identity and cultural hybridity, instead I suggest an approach based on the openness of cultural space – a 'third space' (Bhabha 1988) in modern society. According to Homi Bhabha 'the intervention of the Third Space, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code' (1988, p. 21). Focusing on Bhabha's notion of *negotiation* rather than *negation* in particular, I suggest that university students draw attention to the notion of "foreignness" through cultural negotiation, which informs their own national and cultural identity, and also their ability to articulate cultural difference and similarity to enrich their cultural diversity. I argue that "making sense" of Japanese and Korean TV dramas has come to be a way of exploring the question 'what is Taiwanese identity?' for university students, not only by recognising cultural difference or similarity but by negotiating and translating their concept of Taiwan's identity both politically and culturally. In the process of this temporality of negotiation, articulation and integration of regional cultural flows, young university

students constantly reposition their idea of Taiwan as a nation in relation to Japan and South Korea.

Thus I suggest that the reception and consumption of regional TV dramas amongst young Taiwanese audiences provides an insight into how young people perceive the modern ideal way of life through a series of transnational cultural appropriations, negotiations and articulations, which are facilitated and interrelated into their sense of cultural identification and self-reflexivity. Furthermore, I illustrate how young Taiwanese make sense of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas and how they come to recognise that cultural differences or similarities between these three countries provide a way to negotiate and articulate their perspective of Taiwan as a nation. This realisation also reflects their cultural positionality and subjectivity which forms one of the key elements in the development of the idea of “Taiwan as a nation” in the contemporary period.

This chapter demonstrates university students’ perceptions of youth media reception of regional TV dramas and cultural consumption of popular commodities, ranging from the fear of cultural invasion to the necessity of cultural mixing/blending in terms of the formation of modern Taiwanese identity. In addition, it focuses on how university students, through the rationalisation of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and mass culture, create a space for cultural imagination and intersection within the process of making sense of Taiwanese identity. Drawing on the concept of cultural hybridisation and ‘third space’, I shall discuss how university students are becoming active cultural observers through their transnational cultural practices (such as through tourism or student exchanges) in the process of recognition of difference and similarity of the foreign culture that is represented on the screen.

Japanese and Korean popular culture as other: Cultural homogenisation or appropriation?

This section discusses the notion of cultural homogenisation and cultural appropriation in terms of how the consumption of regional popular culture and TV dramas, according to university students, has created a sense of “identity crisis” (*rentong weiji*) in Taiwan. However, this sense of fear of foreign culture obliterating

Taiwan's culture is always a fear that other people (mainly referring to teenagers or fans) will be overwhelmed by it, but this worry never seems to concern the person actually articulating such fears.

In response to the last open-ended question in the questionnaire – “In your opinion, do you think the consumption of Japanese and Korean pop culture can lead to any potential impact on young generations in Taiwan?” – most students answered “Yes”, although most of them did not elaborate further. Forty-seven out of 158 university students gave further explanations. Most had a negative perception, such as their worries about ‘the loss of their “own” cultural identity’. Some are more concerned about the “twisted” social values amongst the younger generation especially those youngsters labelled “Japanophile” (*Hari zu*) and “Koreanophile” (*Hahan zu*). The overall impression among university students of the popularity of regional TV dramas and pop culture in Taiwan is that it has a negative impact on youth. Their sense of unease is closely associated with the notion of displacement, both political and cultural, which is manifested in the discourse of the politics of identity in Taiwan. That is to say, the regional cultural flows have inspired a sense of longing amongst younger Taiwanese: a desire to be modernised and globalised. Paradoxically, at the same time, these flows have reinforced the urge to search for a sense of belonging: to be Taiwanised.

For instance, the possible impacts on the idea of “cultural identification” (*wenhua rentong*) are often suggested and interpreted by university students as social value and moral judgment; language influence; the disappearance of one's own culture; the increasing popularity of plastic surgery (mainly referring to the influence from South Korea); and imitation of the Japanese and Korean ways of dress and behaviour. The questionnaires indicate that their general concern is closely related to the issue of Taiwanese *culture* which is identified by university students as something that we are in danger of losing or having replaced by others. Nonetheless, this sense of anxiety and displacement has also produced another form of desire in which young people believe that by appropriating regional or global languages or cultures one can improve Taiwan's international status.

Some show their concern about the pervasiveness of social and behavioural imitation (*mo fang*): “walk on the street, those young people you see just look like Japanese and

Korean”; “those *Japanophile* or *Koreanophile* are completely crazy, for me they are neither Taiwanese nor real Japanese or Korean”; and “young people mimicked their idols all the time, such as fashion, hair-style and way of speaking, it is rather silly”. The above comments show that some university students’ perception of the impacts of Japanese and Korean popular culture is mainly superficial, drawing on youth behavioural mimicking and negative association with the idea of fandom. In this sense, they distinguish themselves as a different type of audience or consumer of Japanese and Korean TV dramas, being more rational and not influenced by either of these two cultural commodities. University students’ critical response and distaste for the consumption of Japanese and Korean popular culture amongst youngsters interestingly suggests that there are perceptions of good or bad ways of transnational cultural appropriation. For instance, being a devoted fan is considered to be bad and pointless cultural imitation. They often consider this youth subculture phenomenon as a representation of negative and shallow cultural mimicking of foreign culture. Ironically, their perception of good ways of transnational cultural appropriation seemingly suggest a deeper level of cultural engagement; for instance through language learning and appreciation of their national spirit, cultural character, and authenticity as a means of progressing in modern-day Taiwan.

Others express fear of “cultural invasion”⁵⁰ (*wenhua ruqin*) and assimilation: “it is kind of like assimilation (*tonghua*), culture is gradually changing and influencing unobtrusively and imperceptibly”; “local culture will be dissolved”; “Taiwanese people often show their admiration for foreign cultures and easily adopt them, thereby neglecting their own culture or national character”; and “most people who watch Japanese and Korean TV dramas have a desire for or yearn for different ways of life, therefore they can develop a sense of identification with them”. From the above remarks, one can see that some university students contemplate the problem of identification and assimilation with foreign culture since it can lead to losing one’s own national cultural identity. A sense of cultural invasion grips university students’ imaginations causing them to perceive in Japanese and Korean pop culture and

⁵⁰ The term “cultural invasion” is most commonly implied by university students both in questionnaires and during interviews. Based on my interview discussions, I identify this term with Beltran’s definition, ‘cultural imperialism is a verifiable process of social influence by which a nation imposed on other countries its set of beliefs, values, knowledge and behavioural norms as well as its overall style of life’ (Beltran, 1978, p. 184 cited in Salwen, 1991, p. 29).

commodities the power to negate Taiwanese culture. In contrast, there are also some positive comments: “the motivation to learn about other languages and countries can also stimulate our own cultural capital”; and “the impact can be rather positive in terms of developing Taiwan as a modern and multicultural country”. Given that the construction of a modern nation or nation-state relies heavily on the dissemination of national consciousness and socio-cultural imagination, the media reception of regional popular culture and TV dramas has promoted a more complicated and unstable form of cultural identification. The tension between one’s own cultural identity and identification with cultural otherness also raises the question of whether it is cultural homogenisation or cultural hybridisation that matters in the construction of cultural identity. From this perspective, university students characterised the consumption of regional TV dramas as a form of cultural invasion or cultural mixing which has its importance in cultural formation and social recognition. Moreover, it can be said that the popularity of regional media flows and youth consumption of popular culture should not be simply explained as cultural proximity or the process of cultural modernisation pursued by a young audience. Rather, it is equally important to understand how the young audience makes sense of the notion of national cultural identity and how they envisage a nation in relation to cultural others in the age of globalisation and regionalisation.

Some university students suggest in the questionnaire that the popularity of regional popular culture can lead to the rejection of ones’ own culture: “the young are under the influence of Japanese and Korean popular cultures, even to the extent that they reject their own”; “the more they watch the more they will have doubts about national identity and nationalism”; and “young people cannot thoroughly experience and appreciate their own local culture”. This sense of cultural rejection concerns university students and it also expresses the reality of young people’s struggle to grasp just what Taiwanese identity might mean. As one student puts it well: “We all say we ‘love Taiwan’ but often without a sense of pride”. From this point of view, the daily exposure to different foreign cultures and the local appropriation of regional culture suggests not only a challenge to young people’s perception of Taiwanese identity but also a more complex form of cultural mediation.

Yi-jun stated in an interview:

[I think] due to the fact that Taiwan as a nation is lacking legitimate recognition in the international community, the general public doubt the idea of Taiwanese identity or Taiwan as a nation. For instance, a lot of people have adopted English or Japanese names in the workplace. However, I do think it is good thing that we started learning English as a second language in elementary school. In doing so our English standard will be much improved (age 22, Female).

Yi-jun's interpretation of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and youth consumption of regional popular products is that it makes no difference as to why a lot of Taiwanese are learning English at an early age or have English names. To her, it is a way to gain better international recognition and of presenting Taiwan as a modern, advanced and globalised nation. To draw out her point further, it is difficult to imagine "Taiwan as a nation" without giving way to the idea of "globalisation/regionalisation as a way of modernisation". The interaction between global/regional culture and local culture is, in this sense, mediated and negotiated by Yi-jun as a positive input in creating a modern Taiwan. The notion of cultural globalisation is then viewed as a process of positive cultural mixing and learning and perceived rather differently from the idea of cultural imperialism. Whereas some see the popularity of regional media commodities in Taiwan as a proof that we do not have culture or that it is under threat, others see the acceptance of them as an opportunity to create a "globalised" modern Taiwan. Thus, the popularity of regional popular culture and its relationship to a sense of Taiwanese identity is paradoxical, simultaneously constructive and undermining.

The government's nation-building has created a dynamic contested field (see Chang 2004, pp. 33-44, Wang 2000, Chun 2000a, Law 2004, pp. 253-277). In my opinion, university students' responses to the popularity of regional popular culture reflect this generation believes that adopting different foreign cultures is a way to mediate the ambivalent spaces between national subjective authenticity and cultural objective hybridity. For instance, one male student stated in the questionnaire that 'The government tries to emphasise the notion of nativisation (localisation) in the education system and attempts to reintroduce local culture (the *bentuhua* movement), nonetheless, the foreign cultural invasion has caused some confusion in terms of the formation of a sense of Taiwanese identity'. Another noted that 'as far as culture is

concerned, there is always a tendency for interweaving and merging with foreign culture, the important thing is to find the balance'. The meaning of foreign culture and its implications in this context is translated by university students as a way to formulate what cultural identity means in Taiwan and how we should selectively incorporate positive elements into our own. Their reactions to the consumption of regional popular culture and media reception of TV dramas can be explained as an important indication of how under the Taiwanisation paradigm, university students have accepted the meaning of cross-cultural media reception and the cultural logic of globalisation as a necessary nation-building strategy which can be used to fill Taiwan's national cultural void.

In another example which is more in tune with youth social behaviour, a female student writes that 'There are some good and bad points. For instance, if we appropriate Japanese polite behaviour (politeness) and fashion sense, it is good. But if we imitate the character or behaviour from certain dramas such as when young girls become prostitutes to fulfil their materialistic desires then it is rather bad'. To me, university students displayed the symptoms of cultural anxiety which they constantly negotiate between their social-moral understanding of regional popular culture influence and transnational cultural imagery and appropriation. They often explore the extent to which "we are similar yet different from each other" or pose the question "which nation is more developed or advanced than the other" as well as frequently categorising what is "good" or "bad" for other young people in terms of their behaviour and consumption of regional popular media products. It occurred to me that university students' reception of Japanese and South Korean popular culture in Taiwan over time is not simply about emotional connections and to be viewed as part of their daily practice of regional popular culture, but also inculcates a sense of socio-political recognition that they strongly associated with the regional cultural flows. Therefore, it is necessary to view arguments about the transnational TV reception as a form of cultural intervention. The critical, sometimes self-righteous responses of these students to the popularity of regional media in Taiwan invoke complex political issues and cultural sensitivities, themselves hinging upon the conceptualisation of national identity in Taiwan.

(Post)coloniality, modernity and locality: Taiwanese identity in the eyes of university students

As I discuss in Chapter 3, the notion of cultural otherness and similarity represented in regional TV dramas has generated a particular form of media consumption amongst university students. This section explores how the national construction of a sense of Taiwanese identity is negotiated and questioned amongst university students in relation to regional popular culture flows. I argue that in the recognition of transnational media reception and cultural consumption of TV dramas, university students' interpretations of the popular phenomenon of regional TV dramas also yield different understandings of the idea of "national identity" in Taiwan. The popular consumption of regional media and culture phenomenon generates different ways of social and cultural observation amongst university students. These ways enhance their awareness of the local historical past and current political discourse as the site of recognition and transformation of their understandings of Taiwanese identity.

Taiwanese scholar Guo-cheng Sung in his Chinese book *Postcolonial Discourse: From Fanon to Said* (2003) argues:

After the Second World War, Taiwan "skipped over" the historical process of decolonisation thanks to the supreme development of political and economic status which resulted in what I call Taiwan as a 'modernised post-colonial nation. It manifests itself, on the one hand, in cultural dependency and consumption; on the other, the lack of national self-respect in relation to the circulation of popular culture and the phenomena of the 'Japanese crazy tribe' among the youth. Hence, the Taiwanese are in favour of global products, and have high acceptability and toleration towards Western cultural industries. The concrete evidence of this postcoloniality is the excessive cultural consumerism and fragmentary mimicry of urban cultures (Preface, pp. 16-17, my translation).

He further suggests:

Taiwan's modernisation was conceived by its colonial experience (Japan) and imperialist hegemony (America), under 'dependent development'. A lot of Taiwanese have certain 'nostalgic' and 'infatuation' feelings towards both. Therefore, the idea of resisting cultural imperialism is always blurred and never urgent. Moreover, when globalisation is seen as a form of Americanisation around the world, the concept of globalisation is applied rather positively in Taiwan, as it represents advancement, modernisation, power and equality (ibid., p. 17, my translation)

The notion of cultural imperialism, globalisation and postcoloniality, according to Sung's observation, has been either neglected by or positively incorporated into modern national development within political and economic discourse in Taiwan. Thus the idea of national culture and nationalism has been purposely represented as either "Chinese", "Taiwanese" or 'hybrid' accordingly. One student writes in his questionnaire, "Taiwan is very culturally hybrid, any foreign cultural products can be easily accepted and consumed in Taiwan; moreover Japan and Korea are both *Orient (dong fang)*" (*my emphasis*). From this perspective, the ideas of cultural hybridisation and geo-cultural proximity are justified by university students in making sense of youth consumption of Japanese and Korean popular culture. Although this respondent believes Taiwan is a "culturally hybrid" country and therefore can accept foreign cultures relatively easily, it seems nonetheless that the level of "foreignness" is only acceptable within the context of regional cultural "similarity" – *we are all Oriental*.

When Japanese popular culture took Taiwanese society by storm in the early 1990s, apart from politicians and scholars warning that this is another form of "Japanese colonisation", most people had a rather 'nostalgic' feeling and a positive attitude towards Japan in comparison to China or South Korea (Deans 2002). A twenty-three year old female student, Jia-ling, who I interviewed in a Japanese fast-food restaurant said:

As a nation, I prefer Japan over South Korea, I have more positive feelings towards Japanese culture, people and things in general. I want to go there one day in search of *unforgettable memories* (age 21, Female, *my emphasis*).

What she means by 'unforgettable memories' here is certainly not based on the past colonial experience but rather a memory in the making through the consumption of Japanese TV dramas and cultural products. In this sense, the reception of Japanese TV dramas has provided her with a sense of transnational connection with Japan. She further stated that:

I enjoy reading Japanese travel magazines and watching Japanese TV programmes and therefore I have vivid images and cultural knowledge about Japan even though I have never been to the country. But one day I would like to go to see if Japan is just the way I imagine it would be. Japanese TV dramas (culture) have certainly impacted on me; it is very different from American culture, or other foreign culture for that matter. I think the level of memory connection is different.

When I asked her what she meant by “memory connection”? She replied, “I meant a historical connection, I am more familiar with the historical connection between Japan and Taiwan and therefore personally I am in favour of Japan in comparison to South Korea”. Jia-ling is an interesting example of, the way in which over the years, the popularity of Japanese TV dramas and cultural commodities has facilitated a sentiment of ‘nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory’ (Appadurai 1996, p. 78) even though in the tick box questionnaires she does not consider herself as an enthusiastic viewer of Japanese TV dramas. Yet when I interviewed her, she was able to provide a rather resourceful response about the genre of Japanese TV dramas and vividly reflected on her personal experience. In this instance, the modern transnational media reception and the consequence of postcoloniality somehow work together and facilitate her sense of shared sentiment and abstract connection, which she has never actual experienced in real life. In other words, Japanese TV dramas and their popular cultural products have created an imagined nostalgia which is close to what Fredric Jameson (1991) described as nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory, an “unforgettable memory” to use Jia-ling’s phrase to describe a memory that had never occurred in the first place.

Thus in the case of Jia-ling, her cultural identification is not simply either with Taiwan or Japan. The notion of postcoloniality, in this instance, has been modified by her, becoming a positive historical conjuncture which is facilitated by the modern consumption of Japanese TV dramas. In this regard, the interplay between Taiwanese postcoloniality and Japanese modernity formulate a sense of ‘connectivity’, which led to Jia-ling’s positive identification with Japan not just in terms of its cultural supremacy but also as a nation. As a result, the modern cultural imagination expressed in Japanese TV dramas has become part of the repertoire of everyday life which is consumed, appropriated and reproduced amongst university students in culturally and politically complex ways.

Another interviewee, Yi-jun, explicitly associated the term “strong nationalistic character” and “traditional value” with South Korea as a nation and ‘individualistic’ and ‘superior and modernised’ with Japan when we discussed her impression of the difference between these two regional TV dramas. It became obvious that her

viewing experience of these two regional TV dramas led her to construct personal perceptions of and comparison between these two nations rather than the TV dramas themselves. Hence, our conversation moved inexorably to questions concerns the nature of national identity. In response to my asking, what she thought about national and cultural identity in Taiwan, she responded:

I do believe that there is a national identity in Taiwan but a rather superficial one; the older generation have a stronger and solid sense of belonging and more tradition. Nowadays, the [traditional] social values and beliefs have vanished, and therefore we can easily accept and be influenced by foreign cultures (age 22, Female).

Such observations are repeated by Wan-yi, who said:

I think the concept of national or cultural identity is really *blurred* in Taiwan, because it is the result of the pan-politicisation movement (*fan-zhengzhi hua*) in the late 1980s and of manipulation by the government and political parties (age 20, Female, *my emphasis*).

The term ‘pan-politicisation’ is often used by local media, scholars, and cultural critics alike when suggesting that in post-martial law Taiwanese society people experience this politicisation of the everyday and of all identity-forming or confirming moments. In this context, Wan-yi’s association of ‘pan-politicisation’ and political manipulation with the construction of Taiwanese identity indicates how this generation has become alienated from such explicitly political acts. Arguably, in the late 1990s the DPP government adopted “Taiwanisation” as the ideology of nation-building in its bid to forge national and cultural identity and to deemphasise Taiwan’s cultural connection with ‘traditional Chinese cultures’ and historical and political entanglement with the ‘motherland’ – China. Hence the concept of “Taiwan as an independent nation” is a form of political enunciation and ideological discourse which is not grounded in “popular cultural sensibility”. The formation of a national culture is narrowly based on the emphasis on the alternative language (i.e. *Minnan*) and manipulated for political purposes. What I mean by a lack of “popular cultural sensibility” is that the government’s emphasis on grassroots culture and the notion of locality (e.g. a sense of “our” community) has had the result that the notion of culture is often politicised and institutionalised as a way of distinguishing between being Taiwanese or Chinese. This choice between opposite political poles of the local or the (Chinese) national has not suited the sensibilities of younger generations. Indeed, a

lack of definite self-positioning in cultural subjectification promotes an unstable ground for this generation, which is reflected in this case in Yi-jun and Wan-yi's sense of distrust and uncertainty about the notion of national and cultural identity.

When we discussed why Japanese and Korean TV dramas and popular culture are easily accepted in Taiwanese society, Wei-ren, a 22-year-old male student who majors in Japanese Studies says:

When I was child, I did not learn much about what is called 'Taiwanese culture' nowadays at school. I learnt things mainly about Chinese cultures. Therefore, for me Taiwanese culture is *blurred* and *rootless*. As a result, Taiwanese people are so easily influenced by foreign culture because Taiwanese people cannot find their own roots. Hence, in era of the cultural globalisation, we should try to *prevent* Taiwanese culture from being demolished (*my emphasis*).

Within the discourse of cultural nationalism, Wei-ren's sense of confusion is an example of this generation's anxiety about losing a sense of "national/cultural identity" which was constructed through Chinese *culture*⁵¹: but not yet becoming Taiwanese. Despite, his sense of "rootlessness" in the end he insists there is such a thing as a Taiwanese culture, which needs to be defended. This suggests that the nation-building project in modern Taiwan remains *culturally* bounded. In other words, Taiwanese culture is something that is already there and waiting to be (re)discovered.

The responses from the four university students (Jia-ling, Yi-jun, Wan-yi and Wei-ren), based on their reading of the popular consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan, should therefore not be simply considered as cultural fads or young consumers who buy into the idea of the Japanese or Korean way of life. Rather, we should further explore and examine why, and in what particular context, Japanese and Korean TV dramas become alternative popular cultural elements and references that university students articulated and how that articulation is relates to the process of Taiwanisation. Our investigations show that university students' general concerns and uncertainties, in particular in relation to the historical and cultural connection between Taiwan and China, are further complicated by the current

⁵¹ I have previously discussed how the concept of *culture* or the *cultural* operates at many levels of public discourse – such as through a feeling of moral consciousness, habits of custom, shared political ideology in Chapter 5, Section 2. For further detailed discussions, see also Chun (1994a).

popularity of regional TV dramas and cultural products. Their anxiety or confusion manifested itself in several different ways. For instance, Yi-jun's suggestion that traditional social values and beliefs are less solid amongst younger generations or in the comments of Wan-yi and Wei-ren, who both raised the issue that 'cultural identity is blurred in Taiwan' due to political manipulation and educational reform introduced in an attempt to construct a sense of Taiwanese national cultural identity.

To a certain extent then, their sense of confusion has roots in changes to the state educational system in postwar Taiwan (see Chapter 5). The political transition subsequent upon the 1987 lifting of martial law facilitated the education reforms that have taken place since the mid-1990s. According to Thompson, 'Education in Taiwan is a contested terrain, and is tied to debates over pedagogies and narratives of national identity' (2009, p. 194). Some suggest that the educational reforms of the 1990s have provided a clear picture of Taiwan as an independent country or at least one aiming for that goal. By and large, the 'Understanding/Knowing Taiwan' (*Renshi Taiwan*) textbook was created within the 'cultural localism' discourse: generating, for example, a romantic nostalgia for communities past (grassroots culture) and the Japanese colonial experience and embracing optimistic interpretations of today's globalism (see Mao and Chang 2005, Thompson 2009, pp. 182-197, Harrison 2006, pp. 194-197, Wang 2005, pp. 55-99).

However, the constant reform of the education system and the ever changing contents of school textbooks have led to some confusion, especially as the ideological vision motivating the curriculum is often closely related to whichever political party is in power.⁵² The idea of Taiwan having a new spiritual 'national' identity, without clearly recognised nationhood within and beyond its geographical borders, can be viewed as being as perplexing for students as the lessons emphasising preparations required for the recovery of the mainland China from the Communists were the students in the past (Law 2002). It is clear from the university students' responses that

⁵² In 1997, a new subject was added to the new junior secondary school curriculum "Understanding/Knowing Taiwan" (*Renshi Taiwan*). However, it was attacked for being full of errors and over-politicised, e.g. the deliberate omission of Japanese colonial suppression, editorial prejudice against aborigines and women and the attempt at de-sinicisation. In 2001, a brand new education system, the *Nine Grade Curriculum Alignment for Elementary and Junior High Education*, was launched, integrating the curriculum of elementary and junior-secondary schools. The *Renshi Taiwan* textbook was removed from the new curriculum. Instead, the content covering Taiwan was distributed across a range of subjects (B-y Chang, 2004, pp. 36-40).

although effective politicisation (Taiwanisation) and socialisation means that educational institutions can provide a substantial definition of national culture and identification, the words ‘blur’, ‘ambivalence’, ‘confused’, ‘ambiguous’ and ‘problematic’ were often applied when we discussed cultural and national identity. In short, far from being stable, cultural elements of national identity are increasingly contested, negotiated and subject to change in modern Taiwan.

The fact that national identity is contestable and problematic has been explored by many Western scholars (see Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983, Smith 1991a, 1999, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Anderson has noted that national identity is always used in the sense of its having ‘come into being’ (1991, p. 12). Gellner has defined it as an outcome of centralised political, educational and language unity via industrialisation; Hobsbawm and Ranger have underlined the notion of “invention” in the formation of national identity; while historical consciousness and sentiments which are territorially bounded and shared by a collective of individuals are emphasised by Smith. Thus, a sense of “nationness” as a shared place emerges as a by-product or as an object to be politically and culturally constructed. For instance, Japanese researcher Satoshi Ota (2006) points out that when he conducted his fieldwork in Taiwan, the problem of translation arose because the English word ‘identity’ is not easy to translate into Chinese. In Taiwanese academia, the term *rentong* is used as the translation of the word identity. However, *rentong* is initially closer in meaning to ‘agree with’ in Chinese. Ota considered that the term ‘Taiwanese consciousness’ (*Taiwan yishi*) might be better accepted by most Taiwanese people in order to grasp what Taiwanese identity might or could mean. Mark Harrison in his article ‘Where is Taiwanese identity?’ argues that ‘identity has become a key factor in the narrativisation of Taiwanese politics’ and furthermore ‘although much of [this scholarship] attempts to describe the historical, political and cultural processes by which the “rise of Taiwanese identity” is occurring, the act of description of identity slips into to becoming a statement of it’ (2005, p. 12). He also comments:

Despite the claims of nationalists, politicians, and scholars to make definitive statement about Taiwan, Taiwan-as-meaning is never fixed. Rather, as it is being continually named by the production of statements about it, Taiwan is always at the moment of coming into being (Harrison 2006, p. 6).

From this perspective, a negation of other identities occurs; we are not Taiwanese yet we are not Chinese either. The search for a unique Taiwanese identity can only begin when we can selectively eliminate this sense of Chineseness.

In my questionnaires, I used the term *rentong* (i.e. identity) but instead of referring to it as “Taiwanese identity”, (*Taiwan rentong*) I used ‘cultural/national identity in Taiwan’ (*wenhua/guojia rentong zai Taiwan*). Although the term “national/cultural identity” is subject to a lot of debate, I chose to use it for two reasons. Firstly, the overall acceptance of the term identity in Taiwanese academia explains the search for national/cultural identity in Taiwan. Secondly, the term suggests a sense of ‘self-identification’ (*rentong*) with Taiwan or/and China amongst the younger generation. Arguably, the political discourse on identity or identification has become a key factor in locating who is *benshengren* or *waishengren*⁵³ and narrating Taiwanese or Chinese identity. In other words, the public understanding of the concept of identity has been shaped into ‘which side do you agree with’. As I have detailed above, the political transformation and the social phenomenon of Taiwanisation or localisation (*bentuhua*) has been pursued by the government since the mid-1990s. In this context, the younger generations’ arbitrary enunciation of “we are Taiwanese” is, to me, the result of a political construction of national identity cultivated by educational reforms and informed, for better or worse, by the separation between *benshengren* (as us) and *waishengren* (as them) discourse. Therefore the concept of identity or identification has interchangeable elements and is always in the process of ‘becoming’ in Taiwan’s context.

In effect, national identity has been treated as a socio-political agenda. The anxiety about the search for Taiwanese identity amongst the younger generations who simultaneously embrace and consume globalisation and modernisation to varying degrees has proved to be an urgent social issue in Taiwan. With the government’s attempt to rewrite and reconstruct authentic and traditional Taiwanese histories and cultures at present, how do the young generations depict and imagine their cultural identification in relation to their experience of the consumption of foreign popular

⁵³ *Benshengren*, in effect, refers to two groups of Han Chinese who speak the Chinese dialects Minna or Hakka and migrated to the island pre-1945. *Waishengren*, is used to describe the mainland Chinese who followed Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan after the defeat of the Chinese Nationalist Party in 1949 and all their descendants born in Taiwan. *Yuanzhumin* refers to the original inhabitants of the island. During KMT rule they were forced to adopt Han Chinese customs.

cultures? And how might Japanese and Korean popular cultures (in this case, TV dramas) function in a mediated role in merging tradition with the modern to fulfil the younger generation's desire and formulate a sense of awareness of cultural difference and political reality? The following analysis will provide new insights into the role of transnational media productions and their additional cultural and social meanings as they are assessed and constructed by a young audience attempting to make sense of political and social changes in Taiwan.

University students as transnational cultural observers

In the previous section I discussed how university students interpreted and incorporated the social and cultural phenomenon of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in the context of the question “what Taiwanese identity is” and to an extent, how we lack one. To a certain degree, Taiwanese youth's consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas can be seen as the formation of a new type of cultural imaginary community that transcends territorial boundaries. However, this ‘cultural intimacy of TV drama’ (Ang 2004, pp. 303-309) shared by the young in modern East Asian societies through the consumption of popular cultural products does not necessarily form a ‘pan-East Asian identity’ or a sense of “Asianness”. Rather it is a process of recognition of difference and similarity with respect to the foreign culture that is represented on screen – a cultural space that young people appropriate, negotiate, articulate and sometimes integrate into their daily practices. This research suggests the existence of complex levels of cultural recognition and reflectivity during the process of transnational media consumption and appropriation amongst young people. It seems indispensable therefore to look at the issues of cultural nationalism and hybridisation within the context of the current state effort to reconstitute national consciousness around globalisation and regionalisation. For this reason, this section focuses on young adult audiences as cultural observers and how the concept of ‘transnational cultural imagery’ has been shaped by regional popular culture flows and media consumption since the early 2000s. I apply the concept of ‘cultural hybridisation’ and Homi Bhabha's definition of ‘third space’ to emphasise university students' transnational media consumption experience and their interpretations of this socio-cultural phenomenon. In so doing, I will suggest that their

sense of national identities, cultural positionalities and social practices are underpinned by their daily foreign culture encounters in Taiwan.

Arguably, post-martial law Taiwan was not formed on a model of territorial belonging, but was based upon the idea of the local community (*shequ zongti yingzao*) and Taiwanisation, yet at the same time there has been openness to globalisation and regional integration (see Sung 2003, Wang 2000, pp. 93-117). Hence the construction of Taiwaneseeness implies both the task of producing locality⁵⁴ and the notion of ‘cultural hybridisation’. According to Mark Harrison, ‘Taiwanese identity does not simply have a location and Taiwanese identity is as much nowhere as everywhere’ (2005, p. 10). In other words, Taiwan’s national consciousness is a highly mediated imaginary belonging which, in a sense, opens up a cultural space – a third space – where the negotiation of difference creates a sense of Taiwanese identity. From this perspective, it is important to explore how young Taiwanese incorporate their remembered past in their present sense of identity, and the role media consumption (in this case, Japanese and Korean TV dramas) plays in this process of cultural articulation and identification.

In some countries, such as Brazil and India, the *telenovelas*/soap operas became a prime vehicle for creating elements of a national culture and spreading them amongst local and regional audiences (see Porto 2011, pp. 53-69, Gokulsing 2004). In Taiwan, locally produced soap operas might have similar elements that provide various traditional Taiwanese values such as the vernacular language, family values, local community commitment, moral correctness, cultural parochialism and so on. However, the audience is made up mainly of the older generation (mostly female) for this type of TV drama (Lin 2000, pp. 86-93). Most young female adults are more in favour of Japanese or Korean TV dramas than local-made ones (Iwabuchi 2002, Chapter 4, Lin 2006) although there has been a recent rise in popularity of Taiwanese Idol Dramas amongst teenagers (AGB Nielsen, 2008). For most university students, Japanese and Korean TV dramas are primarily resources consumed through their adolescence and later adulthood. This first encounter with Japanese TV dramas dated

⁵⁴ The term ‘locality’ is close to Appadurai’s definition of ‘a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community’ (1996, p. 189).

back to when they were junior secondary school students, and a few years later for Korean ones. However, Wan-yi admits that:

I did not start watching Japanese TV dramas until I entered university. Because friends around me discussed them a lot, so I started to watch them and became quite interested in plots and storylines. I even bought some VCDs to catch up with those I missed (age 20, Female).

Based on his research with young female audiences in Taiwan, Koichi Iwabuchi suggests that ‘the popularity of Japanese TV dramas is best measured not by ratings but by their central role in the daily gossip of young people’ (2002, p. 142) My research has suggested that the intensity of daily discussions on Japanese (and Korean) TV dramas has declined based on the outcome of the questionnaires (around 47.4 per cent – Sometimes; 15.1 per cent – Often and 5 per cent – Always, see Appendix 3). Nonetheless many university students display a more “critical” attitude to youth popular consumption of these two regional TV dramas. For instance, either through questionnaires or interviews, university students often confidently point out what they like or dislike about Japanese and Korean TV dramas. Furthermore, they actively compare these two types of dramas in terms of different approaches, e.g. storyline, professional shooting skills, setting, acting and so on. Arguably, since the early and late 1990s Japanese and Korean TV dramas have settled nicely on Taiwanese TV channels and they are penetrating young people’s everyday lives. However, the idea of ‘TV dramas as daily gossip’ no longer adequately explains the media consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas, and the phenomenon has manifested itself in a more complicated fashion over the years. Thus, one needs to question the role which Japanese and Korean TV dramas play in the formation of youth cultural identification within Taiwan’s nation-building process and cultural localisation (*bentuhua*) movement. This should not be in terms of media effects or impacts but rather how university students incorporate the otherness into their everyday life, which in turn generates their sense of cultural and social belonging.

The consumption of foreign TV dramas certainly does not necessarily provide insights into what actual lives are like “over there”, considering the melodramatic content (e.g. kidnapping, baby switching, love affairs, etc.). Yan-chi, a twenty year old female exchange student at university in South Korea for one year, said:

Even though I study Korean language in the university and watched a fair amount of Korean TV dramas while I was in Taiwan, it still was a bit of cultural shock when I arrived in Seoul. I thought that the average living costs in Korea would be cheaper than in Taiwan, but in fact they were more expensive.⁵⁵ I also saw many Korean people spit on the streets and a lot homeless people wander around the tube stations (age 19, Female).

When I asked her ‘what was the most memorable experience when you were there?’, she replied:

the drinking culture; a lot of university students meet up at the pub for drinks after class, it seems a typical way to socialise with others which I found rather interesting and very different from university life we have in Taiwan.

After living in South Korea for one year, she recognised a certain degree of socio-cultural familiarity and difference. In this instance, Yan-chi’s early transnational TV viewing experience encouraged her to be an active cultural observer.

In another interesting perspective on the popularity of Korean TV dramas in Taiwan, Wang-wang⁵⁶ a 21-year-old male student, emphasises the changes in the general public’s attitude and perception towards Koreans or South Korea as a nation:

When I was in elementary school, because of my accent and my background sometimes I got bullied. Because at that time most people did not have much knowledge about South Korea as a country and in a way looked down on us. Nowadays, I can really feel the difference and how being able to speaking Korean is kind of trendy and being Chinese-Korean is more acceptable in Taiwanese society. I think our status as Chinese-Korean has much “improved” due to the popularity of Korean TV dramas and its cultural popular products in Taiwan.

Exposure to Korean and Japanese TV dramas has created an information resource to be appropriated and interpreted. Government discourses constructed around both tradition and modernity are navigated by young Taiwanese audiences in the light of reflexive interpretations of this resource. Ya-chi’s experience in Korea illustrates this complex mediation of cultural difference.

⁵⁵ Based on my interviews and from questionnaire responses (see Chapter 3), I conclude that many of them believe that Taiwan was more ‘advanced’ and ‘modernised’ than South Korea both culturally and economically. They also often categorised Taiwan as a nation ‘behind’ Japan but ‘ahead of’ Korea in terms of modernisation.

⁵⁶ Wang-wang is my informant’s nickname. His parents are both from Taiwan but had spent ten years in Seoul before moving back to Taiwan permanently. Wang-wang was born in Seoul and spent part of his childhood in South Korea, nonetheless, he did have most of his school education in Taiwan. He was in Grade 3 when his family moved back to Taiwan.

Many Taiwanese postcolonial studies scholars believe that Japanese culture has been deeply imbricated into everyday life even after the end of colonisation. It is not perceptible because to some extent it is already embodied within Taiwanese society (Chen 2000). When Japanese researcher Satoshi Ota conducted his research about Japanese popular culture in Taiwan, people often told him: “Oh, you can see *that* everywhere” (2006, p. 116, my emphasis). According to John Tomlinson, the idea of complex *connectivity* and global-spatial *proximity* is not the same thing. Rather, through the process of connectivity the sense of proximity can be elaborated. He views proximity as a primarily phenomenological issue that arises in people’s lived experience of globalisation as inherently local and embodied (1999, pp. 2-4). For instance, he points out how the relationship between air travel (as a means of connection) and a sense of global “closeness” (i.e. cultural proximity/intimacy) has falsely celebrated the idea of globalisation, which ignored the complicated interactions and uneven accessibility from the local level. Nonetheless, I find that both the terms connectivity and proximity are particularly useful in terms of understanding the relations between the audience’s “sentimental connectivity” and “cultural proximity” in the transnational media consumption of TV dramas. I would argue that a sense of connectivity indeed facilitated a notion of cultural proximity but more importantly one should also question: ‘Whose cultural connectivity and proximity?’ In other words, have we as Taiwanese culturally practised and inscribed Japanese beliefs, values, knowledge, behaviour norms as well as its overall style of life without noticing? For example, Wei-ren said during an interview:

I have been to Japan six times in the past three years. Although I visited several different cities, I went to Hokkaido three times alone. I like the climate and people there and feel a sense of *connection* and *familiarity* with the place when I am there. And also it corresponds closely to Japanese life as I imagine it. I think], Japanese TV dramas depict quite well what *real life* is in Japan (age 22, Male, *my emphasis*).

Thus these TV dramas can serve to confirm our own images of other nations (themselves obtained through media consumption). Wei-ren’s preference for the city of Hokkaido, also confirms that the media, as John B. Thompson suggests, have created:

a 'mediated worldliness': our sense of the world which lies beyond the sphere of our personal experience, and our sense of our place within this world, are increasingly shaped by mediated symbolic forms (1995, p. 34).

We know about places and times that we have not personally visited and such knowledge informs our subsequent encounters. In other ways, even though they do not occupy the place, it was like finding again, in one's imagination or memory, an already familiar idealised landscape. Wei-ren's sense of connection with the city of Hokkaido in Japan also warns us that the idea of "a place bounded sense of belonging" is under challenge from the disjuncture of global media flows (Appadurai 1996, chapter 2). His transnational imagination of Japan is close to 'deterritorised memory' (Martin-Barbero 1993, p. 27), which is highly mediated by media consumption (e.g. the way of life depicted in TV dramas).

The definition of 'deterritorised memory', according to Spanish-Colombian media scholar Jesus Martin-Barbero, 'is the appearance of cultures or subcultures *not linked to territorial memories*' (1993, p. 27, *original emphasis*) but bound to the transnational commercial media markets. He argues that:

In contrast with written cultures that are linked directly to languages and therefore to a territory, the cultures of images and music of television and video that produce new cultural communities [are] difficult to compare or understand in relation to a given territory. These are not only new cultures, but *youth cultures*, and are frequently accused of being antinational because they have no roots in a given territory. However, they are not so much antinational as they are a *new way of perceiving identity*. They are identities with shorter, more precarious time spans and a flexibility allowing them to bring together ingredients from different cultural worlds (ibid., *my emphasis*)

The dynamic interactions between youth and transnational media and the formation of youth culture and identification have mobilised and created a notion of cultural hybridisation (see Garcia Canclini 1995, 1997, Kraidy 2005, Chapter 1) across the territorial boundary, which activates social imagination. The fact that Japanese and Korean popular media/cultural products have become a key referential cultural element and social practice in everyday life in Taiwanese society suggests that the link between transnational media flows and the formation of cultural identification has become intensified and profoundly hybridised. And this relationship should also be looked at from the point of view of the construction of national and cultural

identity, which itself is highly imagined, mediated and negotiated, unruly, deterritorised and hybridised.

On the issues of “What is Taiwanese identity?” in relation to the cultural consumption of regional popular media products, Jia-ling stated in an interview that:

I believe that this sense of ‘cultural identity’ is (re)created in Taiwan, it is not permanent, [is] often fragmented and without a sense of solidity. Therefore, the appropriation of other cultures just another way of understanding ‘what is Taiwanese identity’. I think it has a positive impact on me. For example, I sometimes compare the difference between Japanese and Korean culture or American culture, I often find myself more drawn to Japanese culture, which gets me thinking why. But of course, it does not necessarily mean that I want to live in Japan or become Japanese (age 21, Female).

In this instance, Jia-ling’s interpretation of the relationship between cultural identity and foreign cultural influence is through reflexively self-applied knowledge. To her, the popularity of Japanese and Korean culture in Taiwan is a social phenomenon that developed out of transnational cultural entanglements and media flows. In her view, transnational media consumption has paved the way for rethinking what it means to be Taiwanese and what constitutes a sense of Taiwanese-ness proving that this meaning of being/becoming Taiwanese is always debatable and often fragmented on the island.

During my interview with Wan-Yi, she was rather reluctant to talk about the issue of ‘cultural identity’, but towards the end of our time together she suggested that:

I think the reason why Taiwanese people embrace the idea of globalisation or Japanese and Korean popular culture is because we often emphasise the idea of having an ‘international point of view.’ Personally, I think it is difficult to answer the question ‘what is Taiwanese cultural identity?’ To me it is something that the government tries to scrape/patch together (age 20, Female).

Wan-yi’s response highlights the problematic political construction of a sense of Taiwanese identity which has generated a new form of anxiety and precariousness amongst young generations since the 1990s. In other words, local political transitions in combination with the idealisation of globality in the attempt to formulate Taiwan as a hybrid and internationalised country gives the impression that cultural identification is always fragmented and subject to change. And it is from this perspective that the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and pop culture as

a socio-cultural phenomenon are often negotiated by local young adults in terms of making sense of cultural/national identity.

In a similar vein, Wei-ren adds:

Personally, I am quite disappointed and frustrated with the government and politicians. I think that they have not made any effort to develop Taiwanese (popular) culture. Besides I really do not think that university students talk or care about cultural identity in general. The consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is just part of youth popular culture. There are still many young people who are anti-Japan or anti-Korea in Taiwan. If you look on the internet, the political dispute between Japan and Korea is rather obvious as well. I think the important thing is that we need to learn and educate younger generations about Taiwanese identity itself (age 22, Male).

Wei-ren's comment is an illustrative example of how young people's sense of identity anxiety is made manifested by frustration with and distrust of government policy and lack of faith in the competence of politicians. Yet they still believe that the government should establish Taiwanese culture and identity to consolidate a sense of being Taiwanese. Furthermore, he rationally points out the political tension and historical entanglement amongst Taiwan, Japan and South Korea, which also suggests that despite the intra-Asian popular cultural flows and its popularity amongst young people in the region the idea of "pan-Asian identity" remains questionable and contested. The regional popular cultural/media flows might have inspired a sense of cultural intimacy and created a transnational collective cultural imagery amongst younger generations in East-Asian countries but this flow is neither symmetrical nor without resistance from the local level.

Based on the above responses, I would argue that the Taiwanese young adult's consumption of regional popular culture and commodities should not simply be considered as a form of disconnection between national identity and its local revitalisation through a community-building project. It should be considered through an analysis of the tensions between cultural similarity and difference, which are negotiated by young people in different ways. This appropriation of transnational cultural imaginary should not be explained merely as short span youth infatuation with foreign popular culture but as a more complex cultural articulation and embodiment which can be maintained in different contexts. Consequently, regional popular cultural flows may be understood as necessary elements that are integrated

into the process of the construction of cultural identity in Taiwan, which does not rule out the possibility of formulating a sense of national stability.

Following early research on the consumption of Japanese TV dramas and cultural indeterminacy, according to Taiwanese scholar Yu-fen Ko:

The criticism and debates concerning Japanese popular culture in Taiwan in many ways portray the anxieties circling around Taiwan's cultural imaginations...the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan in the past is surely traumatic, while today's Japanese culture, especially the television drama, ironically provides Taiwan with a blueprint of modernity. Thus, Taiwan's nationalistic imagination is torn – and born – between the haunting trauma from the past and the flattering modernity of the future (2004b, pp. 115-116).

In other words, with its cultures often suppressed or used as a political tool in Taiwan, the island marginalised its own political authority and consistently searched for hegemonic powers (America or Japan) in order to survive under the threat of China. As Yang rightly observed, the Taiwanese government views culture as central to identity politics which is rooted in the local community and the traditional way of life, and thus is seen as central to the formation of Taiwanese consciousness. This view of culture coincides with and is part of the *Bentuhua* (localisation/nativisation) movement of the early to mid-1990s (Yang 2008, p. 199). Within the context of this cultural movement and socio-political changes, university students are not only filled with anxiety about losing their “not so solid” identification as Taiwanese, but also anxious about engaging a new identity as “Asian citizens” when they are lured by Japanese and Korean popular cultures. The complex of subjectivities is evident in a variety of levels of media consumption. One student writes in her questionnaire: ‘Nowadays, Taiwan is in the process of cultural construction through its education system, and meanwhile the invasion of foreign popular cultures makes most of young generation really *confused*’ (*my emphasis*).

Conclusion

University students generally believe that the consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas have more negative than positive effects on the younger generations, which I suggest is partly because they contribute to the perception of cultural imperialism. For them, Japanese and Korean TV dramas function as ‘image banks’

not only for beliefs, values, knowledge and behavioural norms, but also as a way of life. More importantly their representations as regional cultural otherness can potentially threaten but at the same time enrich Taiwanese identity. Robertson's (1992) notion of 'glocalisation', how people in local settings translate global cultural flows, depends very much on the cultural and social background from which they come. What they generally believe is that a nation can avoid being culturally totalised or homogenised as long as they have a culture that is distinctly theirs. Nonetheless, Taiwanese national cultural development, "Taiwanisation" or "localisation/nativisation", has been guided by a multicultural conception that pursued integration of Taiwaneseess and globalisation and separation from Chineseness. Hence, we might ask once more is there a distinct Taiwanese culture? Maybe not, but to a certain extent what has happened to younger generation's identities is what Martin-Barbero famously defined as, 'the forging of identities ever less rooted in the past, more precarious and yet also more flexible, capable of amalgamating, of allowing to coexist within single subject, elements from highly diverse cultural universes' (2002, p. 639).

To conclude, I argue that the process of making sense of Japanese and Korean TV dramas comes to be a way of constructing an answer to the question 'What is Taiwanese identity?' for university students, not only by recognising cultural difference or similarity but by negotiating and translating their concept of Taiwan's identity both politically and culturally. In the process of this temporality of negotiation, articulation and integration of regional cultural flows, young university students constantly reposition their idea of Taiwan in relation to Japan and South Korea as nations.

Chapter 7

We have “Taiwan Jingshen”!:

Teenage audiences’ negotiation of regional popular TV dramas, education reforms and the reproduction of locality

Introduction

Chapter 6 discusses university students’ perceptions of regional popular culture flows and the popularity of media products in Taiwan as inescapable foreign cultural elements that are intertwined with the nation-building process. Their perceptions are often closely associated with concepts such as “cultural assimilation”, “cultural proximity” and “cultural Taiwanisation”, modernisation and globalisation. Some have more negative approaches than others, yet it is undeniable that regional popular culture is important for the formation of their daily life and the conceptualisation of others, whether this is positive admiration or negative. Their anxiety is often rooted in the relationship between the popularity of regional popular culture and how youth have been subjected to this foreign cultural “invasion” due to a lack of their own culture. For instance, the fear of Japan’s colonising soft power and/or younger generations drowning in the Korean wave is to them a sign that they are edging towards displacing local culture. In addition, university students displayed a sense of distrust and confusion about the notion of Taiwanese identity in terms of political enunciations and local cultural reinvention, and how this manifested itself in their negotiation of regional popular culture consumptions and appropriations.

Chapter 7 shows the outcome of four group discussions with secondary school students, in which the notion of national/cultural identity in Taiwan was semi-constructed in our discussion. The concept and definition of identity caused some confusion amongst students which I shall discuss and elaborate upon in the second section. It is necessary to emphasise that during my group discussions the follow up question was ‘why do you think Japan or South Korea as a nation is better than Taiwan?’. It was not my initial intention to discuss the concept of Taiwanese identity nor did I imply that regional popular culture consumption affects the idea of cultural identity in Taiwan. Nonetheless, the use of the term Taiwanese identity during the group discussion with secondary school students led me to an engagement with

education curriculum reforms and the reproduction of locality (*bentu wenhua/xiangtu wenxue*⁵⁷), which has been incorporated in school textbooks and extra-curricular activities since the late 1990s.

The young viewers whom I interviewed between 2003 and 2005 were still in the process of receiving formal education; therefore their understanding and interpretation of national and cultural identities often immediately referred to school textbooks (e.g. *Renshi Taiwan*). The new curriculum, ‘Understanding Taiwan’ (*Renshi Taiwan*), was introduced to junior secondary students from 1997 onwards. According to Wing-wah Law (2002, p. 35) there were four major differences with political and cultural identity policy under KMT rule. First, Taiwan is no longer described as peripheral to the Republic of China but as a political entity, the ‘ROC of Taiwan’ in, of and by itself. Second, the Taiwan government appeals for the construction of ethnic solidarity and the fostering of a common and shared identity, the ‘Taiwanese people’ (*Taiwan ren*) with ‘Taiwanese consciousness’ (*Taiwan yishi*), rather than Chinese. Third, the ‘Taiwan people’ are encouraged to further develop the ‘spirit’ (*jingshen*) or ‘soul’ (*hun*) of Taiwan, which is inherited from the attitudes and lifestyles of the ‘Taiwan people’ who have fought for their own independence against external powers for centuries. Fourth, ‘Taiwan people’ are described as ‘masters’ of their past and future (*ibid.*, p. 75).

For example, the notion of “Taiwan spirit” (*Taiwan jingshen*) was raised on different occasions in group discussions by participants to consolidate their understanding of being Taiwanese. It is worth highlighting also that this is the generation that went through the drastic political and educational transformation of Taiwan since the late 1990s. Based on the group discussion, I suggest that secondary school students have begun to view themselves in relation to a reconstructed sense of *place* (i.e. Taiwan as a nation/political polity) via the state education system, replacing the space of the polity, discourse and culture that was previously defined as the “Republic of China”. This became a starting point for my consideration of the reform of the educational system and school curriculum in combination with an emphasis on locality (i.e.

⁵⁷ According to Mark Harrison (2006, p. 145) ‘The term *xiangtu* that can be translated as “nativist” or literally “native soil” has been most fully elaborated in the debates associated with the nativist literature movement in the 1970s as *xiangtu wenxue* ... Another term, *bentu wenhua*, or “local culture,” is part of broader debates on Taiwanese identity and nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s around the transition to the democracy, the end of KMT rule, and the continuing threat of mainland China’.

grassroots culture) since the mid-1990s. This consideration also included the (re)discovery of Taiwanese-ness (as opposed to Chineseness⁵⁸), the construction of native Taiwanese consciousness (e.g. Taiwan *jingshen*) and how they are shaped through shared points of commonality in local culture (such as language, community spirit). Another key element is the grounding of Taiwanese-ness in the *Renshi Taiwan* textbook as an educational guideline in the process of narrating a sense of Taiwanese identity.

If the notion of Taiwanese identity is always subjective and relational as Mark Harrison suggests in *Legitimacy, meaning, and knowledge in the making of Taiwanese identity* (2006), it is within this political context that the younger generation often experience a sense of displacement. My review of regional popular culture flows and their implications for the local social formation of Taiwanese identity suggests that the younger generation's attempt to incorporate their desires for national independence with a transnational cultural identity into a new elucidation of Taiwanese consciousness is discussed more explicitly in third section.

The relationship between the state education system reforms and socio-political change in Taiwan can be examined by focusing on curriculum design and the introduction of the *Renshi Taiwan* textbooks to junior secondary schools in 1997. These reforms are significant for the formation of a sense of Taiwanese identity and what it means to be Taiwanese to young people, which will be the central discussion in this chapter. Overall this chapter explores the following questions: do regional popular media products challenge local youth's cultural and national identity formation, and what is the role of the education system in their affirmation of being or becoming Taiwanese? Can this process of self-reflexivity and cultural differentiation be seen as a more productive way by a consideration of transnational TV dramas? What possibilities does this create for the development of a sense of Taiwanese consciousness?

⁵⁸ According to Gungwu Wang 'the Chinese never had a concept of identity, only a concept of Chineseness, of being Chinese and of becoming un-Chinese' (1988, p. 1).

Transnational TV viewing and cultural impressions of its others: The (un)importance of modernisation and “Asianisation”

As I stated in Chapter 6, university students often perceive the popular consumption of regional TV dramas and pop culture in Taiwan as a foreign threat to Taiwanese youth’s cultural identity, leading to the destruction of local culture. University students recognise this crisis of identity, which is both cultural and national, as a reason why Japanese and Korean TV dramas are well received and widely consumed in Taiwan. The linkage between (the lack of) cultural identity and the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas made by university students suggests that identity as a problem or crisis is deeply rooted in modern Taiwanese society, becoming complicated further by regional popular culture flows. This section demonstrates how secondary school students respond to the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and the differences that they exhibit when compared with university students in terms of their engagement with regional TV dramas.

Taiwanese identity was not my initial research concern; rather my interest was in the reasons why young audiences like or dislike those regional TV dramas in terms of differences in content and elements of attraction in regional TV dramas and transnational viewing experiences. Yet the research participants inevitably discussed the term culture (*wenhua*) or local Taiwanese culture when referring to the cultural differences between the three nations. At the beginning of the group discussions comments on what young audiences found attractive or enjoyable elements from those TV dramas ranged from:

Japanese culture is more attractive, their cultural literacy (*wenhua suyang*) is more advanced, people are polite and sophisticated, have a good fashion sense and appearance (Yi-zhen, age 17, Female);

I am quite interested in the history of the Korean War and (South) Korea as a country in general. Their culture and tradition seems rather different from us. This sense of curiosity also gives me motivation to learn the Korean language so that I can understand this country better (Jia-ying, age 17, Female);

My first impression of the Korean people in terms of appearance is that most of their eyes are with single-edged eyelid. I want to know the country and its culture a bit more because I really like Korean TV dramas (Yu-ling, age 17, Female).

Their transnational viewing experience and overall cultural impression of Japan and Korea takes place at a comparative level, not only in terms of the dramas' content and production quality (discussed in Chapter 4) but also in relation to its appearance, cultural similarities/differences, ways of life, national characters and so forth. It is with this sense of "comparativeness" that some students begin to mention the term Taiwanese identity and culture difference between Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

In the discussion on cultural differentiation amongst these three nations some are more self-critical than others and less confident about their view of Taiwan as a nation and its reputation:

I don't think other countries have a good impression of Taiwan (Wen-ling, 16 Female)

I feel that Taiwanese people do not respect others. When I am watching Japanese TV dramas, I often feel that to a certain degree Taiwan can never achieve what Japan has accomplished as a nation (Yu-ling, 17, Female).

Despite the above comments being made separately during different group discussions, what they represent collectively is that young teenagers differentiate between Japan, Taiwan and South Korea in several respects. In the following comments, a pro-Japanese sentiment was still relatively recognisable amongst secondary school students:

Japanese culture is very attractive and modernised, they have better self-discipline, people are generally polite, have a good fashion sense and look cute (Jia-ying age 13, Female);

I like Japan and have a good impression of the country. I would like to visit the country and also learn the language, I think Japanese guys are cute although they are rather short (Wen-ling, age 16, Female);

I think products made in Japan are generally of better quality and more delicate than Taiwan-made. But not (South) Korea I think the country is less developed in comparison to Taiwan. When I watch Korean TV dramas it seems that they are *not really modernised* (Xiao-han, age 16, Female, *my emphasis*).

Overall the cultural affection toward Japan does not exclude a link to the reception of Japanese TV dramas or programmes; the younger generations often yearn for Japan-inspired *modernity* according to Ko's article 'The Desired form: Japanese idol dramas in Taiwan' (2004b). This yearning can be found in the audience's interpretation of

real settings and the reality of the TV dramas. This sense of reality or what I call the “representation of better reality” becomes a common form of cultural desire and practice amongst young generations in Taiwanese society. This ranges from language learning, visiting popular TV shooting/sight-seeing spots, pop culture consumption to culinary culture obsession (i.e. Japanese restaurants, supermarkets and department stores). The popularisation of these common cultural activities and practices by TV dramas and other media products discussed in Chapter 3 and 4 has become an important cultural referential resource for younger generations.

Despite the political transformation and economic growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the interpretation of local Taiwanese culture in relation to traditional Chinese culture has been left out of the public sphere, political discourse and the state education curriculum. It was not until the late 1990s that the recognition of local values, traditions and grassroots culture became deliberately inscribed into the school curriculum. The government has redefined the meanings attributed to the Taiwanese people (*Taiwan ren*) in the school curriculum by focusing on the learning of native or aboriginal languages and their cultures and histories. This reform occurred in parallel to the political power shifting from the KMT government to the DPP after the Presidential election in 2000. As Ho Wai-chung notes:

Localisation (or indigenisation or Taiwanisation) is a political term used within Taiwan to support the view of Taiwan as a unique place, rather than as solely an appendage to mainland China.... Localisation is also regarded as a way to de-sinicisation. In the political culture of Taiwan, de-sinicisation refers to a decrease in cultural ties with mainland China in favour of local Taiwanese culture. This involves the teaching of Taiwanese history, geography and culture from a local perspective, as well as promoting languages native to Taiwan, including Holo, Hakka and aboriginal languages (2007, p. 467).

Parallel to the Taiwanisation movement, the consumption of Japanese TV dramas generates another desired form of postcolonial mimicking amongst young audiences, ranging from cultural preference, nationality, quality of life, etc., which is arguably less obvious in the case of Korean dramas.⁵⁹ The idea of modernisation and its association with Japanese culture as desirable is represented in TV dramas and popular cultural products, suggesting that youth transnational viewing of regional TV

⁵⁹ The popularity of Korean popular culture and its cultural implications in the formation of youth cultural practice has gradually become more explicit since I conducted my research (see. H-m. Kim, 2005; S-y Sung, 2010).

drama and its cultural implications within the on-going nation-building project has generated a complex and contested field of cultural identification. In the course of searching for national and cultural roots in Taiwan within the context of regional popular culture flows, young Taiwanese are driven forward to discover, recognise and negotiate their understandings of Taiwanese consciousness and identification. From the point of view of rediscovering and embarking on a quest for a sense of Taiwanese-ness, one can conclude that Japan as a cultural other remains an important reference point in the imagination of Taiwan as a nation. To a certain extent, the modern transnational media consumption of Japanese culture amongst the younger generations echoes Phil Deans' point:

Taiwan is perhaps unique in Asia as the only country where the Japanese are regarded in a positive light by large sectors of the population of all generations... Furthermore, as younger Taiwanese attempt to establish an identity that is distinct from the preferred meaning of 'Chineseness' promoted by Beijing, pro-Japanese sentiment is used as a means of demonstrating difference (2002, p. 89)

This complexity of inspirations in the search for Taiwanese identity can also be found in the political discourse on pan-East Asian identity. For example, Chun-han's response to the popularity of regional TV dramas and the possibility of transregional cultural identity suggests that her sense of anxiety is informed by a conflict between locality cultivated by the local government and a desire for modernisation. She states:

I think that pan-Asian identity as a way of modernisation will create cultural conflicts (*wenhua chongji*) in Taiwan. For instance, the government wants to preserve some local elements and cultural traditions in order to attract tourists, but the general public might prefer a more modernised and better lifestyle. In this sense, it would create a certain degree of tension (age 17, Female).

Her comments indicate that locality and traditional values are less important for her than modernisation which in turn suggests that her understanding and feeling of the reality of being Taiwanese is contested within the global vs. local and modern vs. tradition debate. The connection she made between the popularity of regional TV dramas and their impact on local life is evidence of her ambivalence in her 'desire and anxiety for modernity' (Ko, 2004).

A similar remark is made by Yuan-xuan:

I think there is a possibility of 'pan East-Asian identity.' Nowadays the flow of information and communication products [occurs] without any territorial restriction. For instance, you can easily see another country's lifestyle and cultural similarity and difference on television programmes. In this sense, you have more knowledge about other countries and can understand each other better (age 17, Female).

Transnational media reception and the cultural image flows in everyday life play a crucial role in this respect. In contrast, Singaporean scholar Chua considers this question to be 'conceptually and substantively ambitious':

The process of individual identity formation is one of unending layering and interaction of cultural knowledge acquisition. In this constellation of inputs leisure activities, such as pop culture consumption, are for most people largely residual, engaged in only after the necessary routines of everyday life are done. Unlike other spheres of everyday life, such as family, formal education or work, there are no social institutions that can enforce compliance and payoffs in pop culture consumption. In addition, pop culture products are always short-lived (2006, p. 35).

For Chua, the relationship between the consumption of popular culture and its consumers is weak and temporary. Ironically he also points out that under certain circumstances popular culture can alter or interfere with personal relationships and perceptions of others. For instance, he believes that 'one cannot deny the possibility that many middle-aged Japanese women may have permanently changed their attitudes towards Koreans as a consequence of watching the Korean TV drama *Winter Sonata* and idolised its star, Bae Yong Joon' (Chua 2008, p. 109). Regional TV dramas in this perspective are seen as a cultural medium producing a sense of admiration for other nations (or a particular individual). This change of attitude or stereotype is often seen as irrational and often happens with a female or young audience. Thus it can be easily discredited as temporary or weak in terms of transnational cultural identification (also see Kim 2009). The experience of secondary school students with transnational media and cultural otherness as everydayness means that their regional TV drama viewing experience has been partly integrated into their formation of a sense of Taiwanese identity. Their cultural impressions of Japan and Korea have been cultivated by TV, pop music and idol group worship and have become gradually incorporated into their sense of their own national identity. To sum up, the identity dimension of the development of the national idea in Taiwan is

closely interwoven with regional popular culture flows and structured around the notions of modernisation, nationalism and cultural uniqueness. This process of cultural differentiation for the younger generation has gradually become inscribed into their sense of Taiwanese identity and what it means to have a cultural and national identity.

The Narration of Taiwanese-ness: Teenage audiences' translation of *Taiwan Jingshen* and the role of *Renshi Taiwan* textbooks

During my field research in 2003 and 2005 the construction of Taiwanese consciousness through educational reforms was reflected in secondary students' responses to and perception of the popularity of regional popular cultural commodities. The politics of identity formation in Taiwan in particular often appeared in either a self-consciously analytical approach or arbitrary enunciation (e.g. *Taiwan Jingshen* (Taiwan spirit); *Taiwan zhi guang* (Taiwan's glory)). Empirical analysis of how the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is experienced, interpreted and negotiated by young Taiwanese audiences, allow me to further explore the ways in which education reforms highlight cultural localisation and national anxiety in the process of Taiwanisation.

The introduction of *Renshi Taiwan* textbooks and the Taiwanisation of education provide a way of narrating a new collective identity and identification within Taiwan. This initiative was politically grounded in an assumption about the importance of territorial belonging (for example, the study of a geographic area begins with the villages or towns where students live), which is culturally reinvented and associated with vernacular (grassroots) culture. These seemingly authentic cultural forms and practices were suppressed and erased by the KMT government. This educational reform discourse was in many ways in direct opposition to the previous sinocentric curriculum (1949-1994) which mainly emphasised the teaching of Chinese history, geography and literature (see Mao and Chang 2005, Wang 2005, pp. 63-64, Hsiao 2000, pp. 58-64). This drastic change in the elementary and junior secondary school curriculum as well as the dynamic local political logic of the past two decades has stimulated a contestation of the notion of Taiwanese identity.

Through the inclusion of Taiwanisation and localisation in the school curriculum, secondary school students read the narrative of their own national identity in school textbooks and are encouraged to envision a future as a complete Taiwanese people through the abstract notions of “Taiwan spirit” or “Taiwan glory”, proposed by scholars, historians and politicians. This section illustrates how the secondary students affected by these education reforms articulate and integrate their ideas about Taiwanese national/cultural identity by incorporating school textbook knowledge (e.g. *Renshi Taiwan*) and the cultural practice of locality in an age of globalisation and intensive regional popular cultural flows.

During my group discussions with secondary students it emerged on several occasions that it was difficult to explain ‘what is national or cultural identity’ or ‘what are Taiwanese identities?’ On one occasion, when asked ‘What is identity (*rentong*)?’ when the term “Taiwanese cultural identity” (*Taiwan wenhua rentong*) was mentioned by others during the group discussion, Wen-ling (age 16, Female) continued without further explanation of the term: ‘a weak one means less ‘recognition’ (*rentong*)?’ I realised that on this particular occasion that she misunderstood *rentong* thinking it was a question whether other countries approve of Taiwan as a nation and how others perceive Taiwan.

In contrast to most university students, most secondary students found the concept of national and cultural identity difficult to understand. I often had to rephrase the questions I asked to entice a reflective response. This led to questions such as: ‘Can you think of anything that we have only in Taiwan in terms of culture or everyday life and nowhere else?’ or ‘Are you proud to be Taiwanese?’ To some these rephrasings might seem subjective and misleading. However, it can also lead to a recognition and understanding of the extent to which the narrative of the concept of nationality, Taiwanese identity or local and national cultures has been both performative and rooted in their references to school textbooks.

After the concept of identity had been established and understood by the students, my explanation of the term in the group discussion continued to be somewhat problematic. One example of this was evident in Yi-zhen’s response “To identify with Taiwan (*rentong* Taiwan) is having ‘*Taiwan jingshen*’ (Taiwan spirit/soul), because that’s what the textbook says. For instance, speaking Taiwanese”. Yi-zhen

reacted quickly to my questions: ‘When we talk about Taiwan as a nation what is the first thing that comes to mind?’ and ‘What defines Taiwan, in your opinion?’ Arguably, ‘*Taiwan jingshen*’ has been used as a political slogan during election campaigns or praised as an inspirational achievement individually or collectively in the public sphere and media coverage since the 1990s. According to Law (2002) the term *Jingshen* is an important ‘perceptual change’ introduced by the ruling DPP government (2000-2008) in the political and cultural identity of Taiwan. Law’s interpretation of the “spirit” or “soul” of Taiwan is based on the analysis of textbooks:

it is described as those who love openness; have a spirit for adventure; enjoy working hard; love equity and freedom; and pursue dignity in the international community, and do not bow down to the ‘threats through the mass media and military force’ from the PRC (ibid. p.75).

However, Yi-zhen’s understanding of “Taiwan spirit” or Taiwan cultural identity refers above all to the speaking of the Taiwanese language (i.e. *Hokkien/minnan*). “We are *Taiwanese*”: this also indicates that, through years of emphasis on speaking Taiwanese in the public political sphere and the search for Taiwanese identity and independence, not only the use of the *language* itself is significant but it also acts as a political enunciation. Therefore the modern construction of Taiwan and its narrative address not only draws attention to its language and historic events. It also attempts to construct an “imagined unity and a sense of pride”, hence the *Jingshen*.

Another often mentioned modern concept of Taiwanese cultural identity emerges through a localised focus on meaningful cultural artefacts and practices. Students are encouraged to master their knowledge of the local community through the study of geographical areas, famous local agricultural products, prestigious local ancestors, and such matters. General comments from the secondary students often relate and respond to the contents of textbooks and local cultural practices. As Law acknowledged, the change of ‘the role of the school curriculum is now reversed from suppressing to promoting ethnic cultures and identities as points of a new collective identity: “Taiwan people” with Taiwan as their ultimate homeland’ (2002, p. 61). In other words, the notion of homeland is redefined as Taiwan (i.e. no longer mainland China – a distant motherland) and creates a sense of collective belonging which is place-bound. The ideology and political discourse to be found in the reformed school curriculum and *Renshi Taiwan* textbooks therefore emphasise ideas of indigenous,

authentic Taiwanese local grassroots culture which was deliberately suppressed during the KMT regime. Chun-han, a senior secondary student, believes that Taiwanese cultural identity is certain and obvious:

I consider that the local culture has been positively approved, for instance, by the Taiwanese Puppet show (*budaixii*). Also I am more aware of aboriginal languages, dances, customs and clothes which are different from Han-Chinese cultures. However, Taiwanese industriousness and stamina has gradually disappeared under the influence of foreign cultures, such as America and Japan (age 17, Female).

She went on to make further distinctions between North and South Taiwan:

People in the North (*beibu ren*)⁶⁰ are more interested in Japanese and Korean popular cultures than people in the Southern part of Taiwan. I think North and South are very different in terms of language, accent and youth fashion sense; they are more interested in fashion but without good taste or appropriation.

Chun-han's statement, from a cultural self-identification perspective, manifests several layers of articulation and differentiation. By acknowledging the local culture and aboriginal cultures as unique Taiwanese culture, her impression of Taiwanese cultural identity is firmly rooted in the context of locality and a sense of community. Furthermore, this recognition of a sense of cultural belonging enhances her concern about losing this sense of Taiwanese cultural identity due to the foreign culture's influence. Therefore, in distinguishing the cultural difference between North and South, she shows a rather hostile attitude towards the consumption of Japanese and Korean popular culture and its appropriation in the North, which is very different from her appreciation of Southern (*Nanbu*) traditional culture and its strong grassroots.

Another interesting comment Chun-han made is that "people in the North" are more interested in Japanese and Korean popular culture. Hence people in the North and the South are rather different, both in terms of cultural difference (e.g. language, fashion taste) and easily swayed by other regional pop cultures (mainly referring to young people in Taipei). In this regard, the consumption or acceptance of regional pop culture becomes a cultural indicator for Chun-han to distinguish between the North and the South. She comments positively on the localisation (*bentuhua*) movement

⁶⁰ The term *beibu ren* often refers to people who live in Taipei.

(e.g. grassroots and aboriginal culture) and a sense of community as something Taiwanese, whilst feeling almost disgusted by how “people in the North” easily accept foreign culture and subject themselves to foreign influence.

Localisation (*bentuhua*) might have created a sense of Taiwanese identity and consciousness amongst youngsters via educational reforms and local community cultural practices over the years. Nevertheless it also seems to reinforce local differences on the island. The search for a more unified national identity in contemporary Taiwan is not only complicated by its political conflict, historical sentiment, cultural reinvention and more recent economic entanglement with China, but also by the popularity of regional popular culture flows. The educational reforms have generated political dispositions, economic survival anxieties, and ever shifting reference to cultural identifications amongst younger generations. All these elements have contributed to student audiences’ interpretations and perceptions of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas.

In contrast to Chun-han’s certainty, Yuan-xuan, a senior secondary student, posed the following question in response to Chun-han’s comment:

Is there a Taiwan cultural identity? I don’t know, to me all the textbooks are just for the purpose of passing examinations. We will probably have a Taiwanese history class in the third year⁶¹ because it is going to be part of university entrance exam (age 17, Female).

What she considered as a representation of Taiwanese culture is more closely related to her childhood experience and memories. She recalls:

I grew up in a village and there are memorial ceremonies for Gods/Ghosts in the temples on several occasions each year, a lot of local activities were held such as Taiwanese Puppets show (*budaixi*), Taiwanese Opera or folk customs (*gezaixi*). Also people outside the village would join the celebration; for me this is local Taiwanese culture (*zaidi Taiwan wenhua*).

On the one hand, Chun-han’s question ‘Is there a Taiwanese identity?’ can be read as a double indication of ‘What is Taiwanese identity?’ or ‘Do we have a sense of Taiwanese identity (i.e. being Taiwanese)?’ The meaning of Taiwanese identity is

⁶¹ Both Chun-han and Yuan-xuan are senior secondary students. The ‘Taiwanese history’ textbook was not included in Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum when it was first announced in 1998 and carried out in 2001. It is only later on that *Taiwanese History* became part of the History Curriculum Plan (see also A-c Hsiao 2000; F-c Wang, 2005).

always in a process of being as well as becoming and more often than not remains questionable. On the other hand, her reflection on “being Taiwanese” involves an inward-looking approach to historical traditions and folk culture practice, which are bound by a sense of place; a place that is constructed by the notion of *locale*. According to Appadurai, ‘Local knowledge is substantially about producing reliably local subjects as well as about producing reliably local neighbourhoods within which subjects can be recognised and organised’ (1996, p. 181). Chun-Han’s recognition and identification with the local community was constituted by what Appadurai called ‘a structure of feeling, a property of social life and an ideology of situated community’ (ibid., p. 189) and is practised in most rural places in Taiwan. The concept of “nativist consciousness” (*bentu yishi*) was promoted by local elite groups in the early 1990s and nourished in the school system⁶² through extra-curricular activities, and has gradually been incorporated in the curriculum by the government over the last decade. From the above statements, it became evident that younger generations in Taiwan are more aware of and identify with Taiwan’s histories, arts, literatures, local dialects and the nation’s contemporary developments as a result of the curriculum reforms.

As Taiwanese educational reform in the past two decades has oscillated between globalisation and localisation, it is important to consider how the conflict and inconsistency of textbooks in relation to the local national imaginary and international competition has transformed the younger generations’ concept of Taiwanese identity. Furthermore, this involves the implications of the way the *bentuhua* movement was incorporated in the first major school curriculum reform – the Indigenisation Curriculum (1994-1999) – in elementary and junior secondary school for the (re)invention of cultural identity and locality on the island. Arguably Taiwan’s state ideology and cultural policy has undergone a drastic transformation and reconnection since the late 1980s, including important education reforms since 1990. The re/definition of the territorial and social components of Taiwanese national identity in relation to mainland China has produced more Taiwan-centric, yet ambiguous, local elements as a counterpoint to transnational cultural flows (see Law, 2002a; Mao and

⁶² Also known as “Native education” (*xiangtu jiaoyu*), the preservation of local cultures and identities has been consolidated in the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum, which both the KMT and DPP have developed and gradually introduced into primary and junior secondary levels since 2001 (Law, 2004, pp. 263-264).

Chang, 2005). The public disputes over the *Renshi Taiwan* textbooks in 1997, involving politicians, academia and the general public, led to at least five press conferences and initiated four mass demonstrations (see Wang, 2005, p. 73). According to Harrison, ‘the controversy over Understanding Taiwan (*Renshi Taiwan*) has itself become a received component of Taiwan’s identity discourse, and stitched into the narrative fabric of Taiwanese identity’ (Harrison, 2006, p. 194). In other words, the invention (or reconnection, some might argue) of local Taiwanese culture represents an important means of enabling people to construct their sense of territorial belonging and Taiwanese identity, to know who we were/are.

Taiwanese scholar Yun-wen Yeh put forward a crucial argument about the notion of subjectivity in the development of the national idea in Taiwan:

Based on its historical trajectories, the diversification of Taiwanese culture has become evident, but this does not imply that Taiwan has its own “cultural subjectivity”⁶³ (*wenhua zhutixing*): a type of fundamental/dominant culture which is initiated by its own nation from within – the absence of cultural subjectivity. The notion of cultural subjectivity is the opposite of ‘Others.’ However, the transcultural developments in Taiwan society have indicated the lack of a Taiwanese cultural identity. Therefore foreign cultures can easily infiltrate Taiwanese society and coexist with local cultures (2005, p. 4 my translation).

I argue that the national education system reformation can be seen as an institutional definition of culture as bounded, tied specifically to place and essentially inward-looking, while foreign TV programmes are derived from a mediated illustrating culture as a ‘translocal learning process’ that stimulates creativity (Nederveen Pieterse 1994, p. 177) and are essentially outward-looking. TV dramas portray a way of life that compresses every aspect of life, culture, the geographical features of place, etc., which provides an imaginary reality to its audience without boundaries.

The impact of transnational cultural consumption (in particular TV series and pop music) on everyday life in East Asia since the 1990s has been discussed in various

⁶³ According to A-chin Hsiau, “cultural subjectivity” (*wen-hua chu-ti-hsing*) has been the catch word of Taiwanese nationalist intellectuals since the late 1980s. A great enthusiasm for “establishing the subjectivity of Taiwanese culture” or “creating subjective Taiwanese culture” formed the fourth element of the nationalist cultural discourse. The Chinese term *chu-ti-hsing* in this context derived mainly from the sense of the word “subject” as in Western idealist philosophy instead of grammar and political theory. In this usage subjectivity means the state of being, the thinking subject as the site of consciousness’ (2000, p. 108).

scholarly works (e.g. the edited book *Feeling Asian Modernity* by Iwabuchi, 2004), and *Media Consumption and everyday life in Asia* by Kim, 2008). The issues discussed generally concern matters like transnational TV reception; audience self-reflection and meaning-making within different social contexts. Consumer behaviour and its socio-cultural symbolic implications or regional consumption in relation to pan East-Asia identity are covered in these two edited books, looking at various degrees of youth engagement with regional popular cultural products. However, the discussion about youth consumption of foreign popular culture, particularly in so far as it is articulated with ideas about national identity, often limits the debate to the notion of cultural imperialism, a sense of identity displacement or as a mean of cultural hybridisation. I argue instead that the consumption of popular cultural commodities is only one form of cultural engagement and exchange amongst youngsters in Taiwanese society. The complicated interplay between democratisation, localisation and the pursuit of national identity in both education and wider Taiwanese society since the 1990s often provides significant immediate knowledge and vital references for the students' identification with the idea of nation and nationhood.

It is therefore important to examine the cultural contexts and political discourses which constrain and enable narration and interpretation of the educational curriculum in the 1990s and its relationship with youth's construction of a sense of national identity and belonging. Arguably, effective socialisation means that educational institutions can provide a substantial definition of national culture without collective confrontation from the student body. Moreover, social activities amongst the young, such as the incorporation of foreign TV dramas into local everyday life, have yielded an alternative form of cultural formation and identification.

Where is Taiwanese identity?: In the vortex of regional popular culture flows

Based on the discussion in the previous two sections, I suggest that most secondary school students have deepened their roots in Taiwan as a nation and their general knowledge and awareness of Taiwanese history and culture after the education reforms and the introduction of *Renshi Taiwan* textbooks in contrast to university

students' distrustful attitude towards the idea of Taiwanese identity. However, it is also evident that most of them still have a certain degree of anxiety about foreign cultural influence, particularly Japanese and Korean popular cultures. The impact of Japanese and Korean TV dramas on the cultural practices and cultural changes amongst the Taiwanese teenagers is noticeable and traceable, from lifestyle, youth fashion, the learning of foreign languages, to the discussion of traditional family values. For instance, the possible moral confrontation and the desire for reassurance between parents and children in relation to traditional family values in modern Taiwanese society has become part of 'living room culture' (Morley, 1986) through the reception of foreign TV programmes, as discussed in Chapter 4. This section suggests that regional popular cultural flows and transnational media consumption have stimulated the desirability of the construction of Taiwanese identity amongst secondary school students, which inevitably integrates a sense of cultural otherness and translates into political enunciation. This enunciation itself is an expression of a sense of Taiwanese consciousness.

The previous section discussed Yi-zhen's association of speaking Taiwanese with a strong sense of *Taiwan Jingshen*, Chun-Han's acknowledging multi-ethnic cultures and 'South and North cultural difference' to Yuan-xuan's personal childhood memory which is deeply rooted in the local community. To a certain extent their understandings of Taiwanese identity are very much part of the *Bentuhua* movement. The narrating of local culture has been regarded as a central element to the formation of Taiwanese identity in the mid-1990s. The Community Construction Movement (*shequ zongti yingzao*) supported by the KMT in 1995 and the political ideology of a "community of shared fate" (*shengming gongtong ti*) have formulated a sense of national solidarity which used land to locate Taiwanese consciousness. In these circumstances, younger generations in Taiwan are now capable of identifying their sense of cultural belonging. Meanwhile, their collective identity remains limited by the idea of territorial boundedness and ethnical separation.

The construction of national and cultural identity in post-martial law Taiwan (as well as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia), according to Hong Kong scholar Allen Chun (1996), has led to a nation 'where the spaces of everyday life are institutionally highly administered within reinvented local 'traditions' aimed at eliciting conformity from

the populations' (cited in Chua 2000, p. 16). Within this ambiguous cultural identification context and always in the process of narrating a nation, the prevalence of Japanese and Korean popular culture amongst the younger generation in Taiwan has added an additional cultural resource that can be used to complement their learning and understanding of Taiwan as a nation.

When I asked 'What do you think of the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan?' Zhi-wei, a junior secondary male student said:

I am worried that our culture will be replaced by Japanese culture because Japan is a powerful country. It is not a good thing being replaced (by others). It is better if Taiwan is an independent country; we need to distinguish the difference between Taiwan and China (age 13).

A key element of the process of identification especially in the case of national identity is the drawing of boundaries between self and other. In this instance, Zhi-wei's anxiety not only lies in the possible cultural threat from the other (i.e. Japan) on the outside but also in the uncertainty about self – 'What is Taiwan?' For him China represents a major threat to the idea of Taiwanese identity in comparison with the popular consumption of Japanese and Korean cultural products. Within the debate on cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991) in relation to cultural identity, I suggest that Zhi-wei's anxiety reflects on his lack of a sense of belonging, authenticity and local culture. Therefore he associates the popularity of Japanese culture as cultural replacement and invasion in Taiwanese society. In particular, he is concerned that 'Japan is a powerful country' and therefore poses more of a threat to Taiwan than South Korea. This also points to his awareness of the power dynamic between the three countries. He concludes that Taiwan needs to be recognised as an independent country to differentiate itself from China and he also indicates the increased need and desire to establish a distinctive version of Taiwanese identity which is motivated by the recognition of its cultural others. The meaning of this statement is twofold: firstly it signifies that the discourse of the Taiwanisation of Taiwan since the mid-1990s has promoted conscious awareness among young people on the island of the ambivalent relationship with China. China's military actions against Taiwan could potentially threaten the island's independence. Secondly, it raises the highly arguable question as to whether and how the popularity of Japanese popular culture generates national anxiety among young generations. The 'meaningfulness' of the Japanese programmes

is now relocated to ‘the horizon of relevance of the audience’s own cultural context’ (Chua, 2007, p. 128), as the role of the drama series is not just to provide entertainment but has become a significant sign of the need to be vigilant in relation to one’s cultural identification.

Conclusion

Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, the discussion on national and cultural identity in Taiwan amongst scholars, politicians and historians has always been based on a dichotomous approach (ROC vs. PRC, Taiwanese vs. mainland), which was represented in various forms and different levels of reinvention, disconnection and reproduction in the political, cultural and historical discourse. What has been constantly ignored and overlooked is the important connection between young people, popular culture and national identity in everyday life contexts.

This chapter indicates that secondary school students have a stronger and more solid belief in the definition of Taiwanese identity, which they often reference to school textbooks and associate with the notion of locality. Despite the focus on nation-building and identity construction, the education reforms emphasise the ways in which locality and identity have been shaped through the colonial past and in an historical and political context as well as its grounding in multiple ethnicities (such as aboriginal groups, Hoklo, Hakka etc.). It has become evident that regional popular culture flows since the 1990s have overlapped with the political transformation on the island and as a result the flow of culture and information was inevitably negotiated and integrated into the youth’s formation of modern Taiwanese identity.

This chapter also argues that the issue of Taiwanese identity should not be restricted to the choice between Taiwanese and/or Chinese identity. Instead the young generations’ national and cultural identification has been complicated by the consumption of regional popular culture, lifestyles and commodities as well as local socio-political changes on the island. The construction of national identity amongst younger generations is often shaped by the discourse on local identity politics and by state institutions (in this case, via the education reforms). It is then reconstituted not only in global consumer culture via the consumption of media but also in regional

cultural flows (exchanges), which are intensified by notions such as cultural proximity, similar but different, and cultural hybridisation as a means of national modernisation.

The term cultural subjectivity (*wenhua zhutixing*) might be an important catchword of Taiwanese nationalist intellectuals (Hsiao, 2000, p. 108). However, this enthusiasm for establishing the subjectivity of Taiwanese culture is reinvented and represented in the form of local heritage and the common local past rather than a common future or even a common present (Roche, 2000 cited in Edensor, 2002, p.17). Although it is accepted by the local young generations it is difficult for them to articulate and consume (apart from culinary products and festivals). This notion of Taiwanese culture is narrativised and constructed based on political ideology as a means to distance the primordial ties with China such as ethnicity and cultural heritage. This top-down “politicisation” of Taiwanese local culture over the years has failed to create a dialectical relationship between the young population and the government. In other words, Taiwanese culture is “localised”, “politicised” and even “internationalised” but never “popularised” as mass culture that young people can relate to and identify with in everyday life.

Arguably *Renshi Taiwan* textbook might have established the idea of Taiwanese consciousness amongst secondary school students, associating their knowledge and identification with the political and cultural meaning of “Taiwan as a nation” and “being Taiwanese”. Yet it is always a political enunciation, a self-conscious assertion, while also containing echoes of a sense of disconnection. Because of the complex relationship between the subjective enunciation and objective knowledge of identity, the consumption of Japanese and Korean popular culture has been used by young people to mediate this ambivalence. It is in this sense that younger generations do not have to limit themselves to the idea of a Taiwanese identity or sense of Taiwan’s distinctiveness by reference to textbooks or by claiming not to be Chinese. Rather the popular consumption of regional media products opens up endless possibilities for younger generations to engage in active dialogues and establish their sense of Taiwanese identity on their own.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This study has explored and examined the role of Taiwanese young people's experience of regional popular culture flows and their reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in their cultural appropriation and practice in daily life. It brought together the study of youth transnational media consumption and that of cultural appropriation, while contextualising the pleasure of recognition and cultural proximity, and assessing TV reception and the narrative negotiation process. A comparative reading of Japanese and Korean TV dramas was employed to comprehend the extent to which cultural similarity and familiarity are relevant to regional TV dramas, and how cultural proximity has been used in the process of building an emotional connection and culture-relational positioning within the context of 'geo-cultural regions' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). My empirical findings demonstrate that young Taiwanese audiences construct their personal narratives and the structure of cultural imagery as a result of different levels of identification with "sameness" and "otherness". In other words, they are always in a process of self-repositioning, which is interwoven with and formulated by their daily consumption of regional popular culture and media products.

This study contributes to the field of transnational media studies by presenting much needed empirical findings from a more regional context of media reception and by shedding light on their implications for the formation of cultural identification and social transformation. It emphasises that transnational cultural appropriation and articulation by young people should not be underplayed against the relatively overemphasised notion of cultural imperialism or cultural proximity in the study of transnational media flows. Rather, the complexity of their narrative-sentimental reflexivity and the various levels of their articulation with a sense of sameness and otherness suggest the 'temporality of negotiation' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 26) in transnational media consumption. This transnational cultural negotiation is close to Appadurai's (1996) proposition that people are fascinated neither with originality or tradition but are actively constructing their own images and meanings of vernacular modernity at the receiving end.

In order to understand how regional TV dramas are received and experienced and in what way they are appropriated in young people's everyday life, questionnaires were distributed in five educational institutions (secondary schools and universities), followed by in-depth interviews or small group discussions with voluntary participants. This combination of quantitative survey and qualitative approach helped map the general scale of transnational TV reception and cultural consumption habits amongst young people while acquiring much needed empirical findings on individual self-reflexive viewing experiences and social formation.

This research project answered the question originally asked, namely how Taiwanese young audiences experience regional TV drama flows in their daily lives. In addition, it also revealed another form of transnational media reception and cultural negotiation within Taiwan's unique political and social context, one that is inevitably intertwined with the on-going process of its nation-building project. This study has demonstrated that Taiwanese youth are experiencing the regional popular cultural flows as a possible alternative choice and a way of achieving modernisation in the construction of their sense of national and cultural identity.

A difference between my thesis and earlier research on local audience viewing experiences of a popular foreign TV drama/soap opera is an emphasis on its cross-culture reception and meaning-making of contents, which are often predetermined and articulated using an individual's social status and cultural background (see Ang, 1987, Katz and Liebes, 1990, Miller, 1994). This thesis is not about one single TV drama and its transnational audience reception. Instead I have attempted to make observations about Taiwanese young people's transnational viewing experiences and cultural appropriation of two different regional TV dramas, Japanese and Korean. I hoped to present a more comparative reading and complex vision of young audiences' reception of foreign TV programmes within an East Asian context. However, as argued in Chapter 1, this thesis has progressed into a wider socio-political understanding of transnational media reception and consumption, in particular in relation to youth cultural identification and nation-building in Taiwan. Hence a significant contribution of this study is to illuminate the role of transnational TV dramas and regional cultural flows as a possible cultural third space and its use in the formation of Taiwanese youth's sense of Taiwanese identity.

Having acknowledged the study's limitations and contributions, I shall briefly reiterate some of my findings, summarise the overall argument and suggest possible directions for further research.

East Asian regional popular cultural flows have been a steadily growing socio-cultural phenomenon since the late 1990s, ranging from pop music, pop idols, TV idol (trendy) dramas, fashion styles, games, animation and comic books, etc. Why did I choose to examine regional TV idol dramas in particular? Japanese Idol Dramas took young audiences by storm in Taiwan in the late 1990s and at the time this phenomenon was explained with reference to issues such as colonial experience, cultural proximity, historical connection, or Japan being represented as “a superior other” amongst Asian countries. However, these explanations are often associated with political, historical and sometimes economic points of view, which did not sufficiently account for the popularity of Korean TV dramas in Taiwan since the early 2000s.

As I highlighted in Chapter 2, in a departure from previous researchers' emphasis on the notions of colonial experience, colonial legacy, cultural proximity in the modern imaginary appropriation of Japanese TV dramas in Taiwan (Lee and Ho 2002, pp. 15-49), what is important here is the desire to become culturally proximate, and a sense of ‘coevalness’ with modern Japan (see Iwabuchi, 2002, Chapter 4). My intervention is neither devoted to a Western versus Eastern cultural difference perspective nor to the historical understanding of colonial sentiment in the reception of foreign TV dramas. Rather I argue that after many years of viewing regional TV dramas young people have developed their own way of appropriating Japanese and Korean TV dramas and developed their own cultural perceptions of both countries. This process of cultural negotiation facilitates their ability to take a reflexive distance from their own lives and stimulated their awareness of cultural difference and/or similarities amongst Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. In this sense, the consumption of foreign TV programmes and its cultural implications, as observed amongst university and secondary school students, also outlines the importance of not reducing audience studies to generalised individual interactions with texts. Rather we should conceptualise it as a multilayered act of interpretation, articulation and cultural negotiation.

Chapter 3 demonstrated that university students' narrative-sentimental reflexivity on Japanese TV dramas is similar to Iwabuchi's approach of 'a story about us' (2005, p. 24) and to Ang's notion of 'pleasure of recognition' (1985, p. 20). Japanese TV drama as a cultural other transcends national boundaries and cultural differences, which is actively translated by university students as a way of exploring their identities and adulthood, oscillating between a sense of "reality representation" and "romantic fantasy". Nonetheless, their 'cultural translation' (Gillespie, 1995, p. 207) of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is neither limited to emotional connections nor to pure entertainment value. They are often very confident in their application of (mis)perceptions and opinions about these two nations, such as their ways of life, cultures, traditions or social morale, based on knowledge obtained while viewing the programmes over the years. In doing so they also exhibited a sense of cultural discrimination against (or preference for) and misconceptions about these two nations. The Japanese way of life or "Japaneseness" is more positively adapted into university students' daily lives through conscious cultural consumption and appropriation (e.g. literature, lifestyle, language) than the Korean one. One of the key elements in the formation of this preference, according to university students' responses, is familiarity with the genre, plots, actors and textual forms of Japanese TV dramas. This finding raises questions for transnational audience reception research in two respects: first, have we overemphasised on the notion of culture (e.g. language, ethnicity, common sense) as predetermining the audiences' meaning-making of foreign media products? Second, in the field of *mediascapes* which provided large and complex repertoires of images and narrative (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35), it is necessary to take a cautious view of the overoptimistic approaches to the free flow of information and resources and question the different aspects of the audience's transnational media consumption in relation to cultural identification.

In Chapter Four I outlined the generational cultural differences in regional TV consumption between university and secondary schools students. This difference is demonstrated in content reading and cultural interpretation as well as emotional connection and self-reflectivity. I have argued that the notion of cultural proximity or the force of cultural assimilation, emphasised in earlier research, cannot fully explain the transnational reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan. Equally, I

suggest that the penetration of regional cultural forms into local cultures is a far more complex process than the cultural imperialism thesis allows for.

This thesis questions the ideas of cultural imperialism and cultural proximity as well as the concept of authenticity in relation to modern cultural identification within the context of the transnational media system. Earlier research conducted by Miller suggested that in the late 1980s, an American soap opera (*The Young and the Restless*) became a key instrument for forging a highly specific sense of Trinidadian culture, revealing the way in which the local can construct its syncretic, postmodern brand of cultural identity through the consumption of the global. As Daniel Miller usefully concludes, “‘authenticity’, if we still want to retain that word, has increasingly to be judged a posteriori not a priori, according to local consequences not local origins’ (cited in Ang, 1996, p.160). Japanese and Korean TV dramas in Taiwan on the one hand reinforce young people’s uncertain attitudes to the political definition of Taiwanese identity. On the other hand, they might encourage young people to integrate cultural otherness into their sense of modern Taiwanese culture as distinct from traditional Chinese culture. Hence, in the eyes of the young Taiwanese, the popularity of Japanese and Korean TV dramas and regional popular culture flows are alternative cultural resources. Young people’s different levels of engagement with and differentiation of regional popular cultures is one of the key cultural elements in the development of their sense of Taiwanese identity.

It would be naive to assume that their transnational cultural negotiation and appropriation is a collective effort and therefore suggests a unified Taiwanese identity amongst young generations. As highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7, generational differences in making sense of Taiwanese identity are especially pronounced. For instance, university and secondary school students have quite different understandings of Taiwan or Taiwanese identity. University students often exhibited ambiguous attitudes to the idea of Taiwanese identity while secondary school students showed a great deal of assertion in identifying themselves as Taiwanese.

The debate on “Who is Taiwanese?” and the discussion about the politics (or crisis) of identity in the public sphere has been an on-going and unresolved socio-political issue on the island. The political transition, social movements, economic development and media liberalisation in the early 1990s have created a dynamic and contested field

of national and cultural identification in Taiwan. Chapter 5 delineated the recent political construction of “Taiwan as an (independent) country” and the contrasting approaches adopted by the two major political parties, the DPP and the KMT. The concept of a nation was explored through Benedict Anderson’s notion of the ‘nation as imagined political community’ (1991, p. 6) and Anthony Smith’s (1999) emphasis on the importance of myth and memories of the nation. In addition, focusing on Bhabha’s (1990) concept of narrating the nation and the ‘third space’ (1988, p. 21) in relation to national culture, I discussed the absence of Taiwanese subjectivity and politics of identity through postcolonial approaches and cultural hybridity as a result of the cultural logic of globalisation (see Kraidy, 2005). Taiwanese identity is ‘a confrontation of the past and the future, a tug of war between “identity” as essential being, locked in (in the image of) the past, and “identity” as open-ended becoming, invested in a future that remains to be struggle over’ (Ang, 2000, p. 9). It is always in the process of becoming and being lost ‘*in-between*’, where the ‘cutting edge of translation and negotiation’ (Bhabha, 1988, p. 22) occurs. I highlighted this issue in Chapter 6 by looking closely at the way in which university students’ efforts to make sense of the popularity of regional TV dramas reinforced their awareness of national and cultural identity. This realisation also reflected their sense of cultural positionality and national subjectivity, which encouraged them to become active cultural observers in the age of transnational culture flows.

In contrast to university students’ approach to Taiwanese identity, the secondary school students’ political assertions and arbitrary enunciation of being Taiwanese (e.g. Taiwan spirit, Taiwan glory) is highly marked. My observations indicate that the Taiwanese identity they believe in was fabricated through the introduction of a series of *Renshi Taiwan* (Understanding Taiwan) textbooks in 1997, which I discussed in Chapter 7. In addition, the combination of the cultural *bentuhua* (localisation/nativisation/Taiwanisation) movement and educational reforms unexpectedly reinforced secondary school students’ perception of the cultural difference between the North and the South of Taiwan. In other words, the clash between one’s identification with local and foreign culture is used by secondary school students as an indication of being or not being Taiwanese.

Over the years, researchers have presented different conclusions in the analysis of regional popular cultural flows in East Asian countries, investigating the relationship between youth cultural identification and modern regional popular culture flows through the lens of scepticism, resistance or incorporation. Some believe that the consumption of Korean popular culture amongst youngsters has constructed a new image of South Korea in Taiwan (e.g. Sung, 2010), and others make a hopeful prediction about the possibility of a pan-Asian cultural identity (see Ching, 2000). According to my observations, the proliferation of regional popular culture flows intensified highly mediated transnational interactions with implications for the national formation and cultural construction in Taiwan. This thesis has provided an insight into how young people make sense of the idea of nationality and Taiwanese identity, which is articulated using new cultural resources and negotiated in a cultural third space. However, given that this study was conducted on a relatively small scale and only focused on the case of Taiwan, it would not be justified to assume that regional TV dramas and popular culture flows have generated a dynamic cultural third space amongst all East Asian countries.

There are several directions in which this research can be developed further, particularly regarding the changing markets of the cultural and media industry in East Asia which have generated an Asian audio-visual media industry, including film, *anime*, TV dramas, etc. This poses a question about the homogenisation of regional cultural productions in terms of genre, content, format and audience taste. Is media production designed to cater for an “Asian taste”? And what is this “Asian taste”? Or is it just a simulation of ‘culturally odourless’ (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 27) media products that cut across national boundaries without having any cultural impact on others? This also raises the question as to how and if young audiences actively construct their sense of cultural identity through the notion of regional cultural sameness and otherness and whether this affects the notion of cultural identity in a more profound way. These are just some of the issues that can be expanded on and developed further.

An exploration of the notion of a “story about us” and cultural proximity in the viewing of regional TV dramas highlighted the different levels of emotional engagement and cultural negotiation, articulation and translation amongst young people in Taiwan. These experiences and recognition have ultimately shaped their

idea of being, as well as becoming, Taiwanese at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Appendix 1: Sample Questionnaire

Request of Questionnaire for PhD Dissertation Writing

This dissertation examines the transnational viewing and consumption of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas in Taiwan. It focuses on young audience's media reception, consumer behaviour and cultural practice in relation to regional TV programmes within the context of the construction of national and cultural identity in Taiwan.

I will be very grateful if you could take your time to fill in this questionnaire. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

Profile :

Age: _____

Sex: Male Female

Education Background: Junior High Senior High College/ University
 Postgraduate

Monthly Allowance:

under TSD 500 TSD 501-1000 TSD 1001-2000
 TSD 2001-4000 TSD 4001-6000 TSD 6001-8000
 TSD 8001-10000 above TSD10000

*** Unless it states otherwise, all questions require a single answer***

Section One: Media reception of Japanese and South Korean TV dramas

1. How much time do you spend per week viewing the following television dramas programmes?

	Less than 1 hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	more than 10
Japanese dramas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Korean dramas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taiwan idol dramas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hong Kong dramas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American TV series	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taiwan local dramas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Do you have any experience viewing Japanese and Korean TV dramas?
- Both
 Only Japanese TV dramas
 Only Korean TV dramas
 Neither (please skip to Third Section on the questionnaire, Thank you)
3. What is your main medium for viewing Japanese and Korean TV dramas? (Please tick all applicable):
1. Terrestrial TV (Including FTV) 2. Cable/ Satellite TV
 3. VCDs / DVD 4. Video Tape
 5. Others : _____
4. In general, who else would be present during your television viewing? (Please tick all applicable):
1. Friends/Classmates 2. Family members
 3. Alone 4. Others : _____
5. Would you discuss the programme with others after viewing?
- 1.Never (0%) 2. Rare (25%) 3. Sometimes (50%)
 4.Often (75%) 5. Always (100%)
6. Do you fully engage with the programme during viewing?
1. Low engagement (under 25%) 2. Average (50%)
 3. Relatively high (75%) 4. High engagement (100%)
7. Do you normally watch from the first to the last episode of the programme?
- 1.Never (0%) 2. Rare (25%) 3.Sometimes (50%)
 4.Often (75%) 5. Always (100%)
8. Would you watch the programme again when it is rebroadcast?
- 1.Never (0%) 2. Rare (25%) 3. Sometimes (50%)
 4.Often (75%) 5. Always (100%)
9. Do you consider the viewing of Japanese and Korean TV dramas as important part of your daily life?
1. Only Japanese ones 2. Only Korean ones
 3. Both 4.Neither

10. Are you interested in the information in relation to Japanese and Korean TV dramas (e.g. culinary culture, fashion)?

1. Not at all 2. less than average 3. Average
 4. Interest 5. Very interest

11. What is your main motivation in the viewing of Japanese and Korean TV dramas: (Tick as Japanese ; as Korean)

	not important	not v/important	average	important	v/important
storyline	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
idols/actors	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
killing time	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
fashion information	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
emotional connection	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
new knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
favour the culture	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
Other : _____	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○

12. During your viewing or in terms of programme choice, how much attention do you pay in the following options:
(Tick as Japanese ; as Korean)

	no attention	no much	average	above average	focus
popularity of actors	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
acting skill	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
actor's appearance	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
fashion/style	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
storyline/content	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
dialogue/narrative	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
background scenery	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
culture/custom	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
screenwriter	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
director	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
others : _____	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○

Section Two: Consumer behaviour on the consumption of idol dramas by-products

1. How often do you purchase Japanese and Korean TV drama by-products? (Tick as Japanese ; as Korean)

	never	rare	sometimes	often	very often
idols' posters	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
idols' albums	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
TV soundtracks	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
original comic books	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
original novels	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
VCDs/ DVDs	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
Fashion clothes (depicted in the programmes)	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
commodities (depicted in the programmes)	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
others : _____	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○

2. On average how much do you spend on purchasing Japanese and Korean TV dramas by-products per month?

- under TSD 500
 TSD 501~1000
 TSD 1001~1500
 TSD1501~2000
 TSD 2001~2500
 above TSD 2500

3. What is your main motivation in the purchasing of Japanese and Korean TV dramas related commodities?

	not important	not v/important	average	important	v/important
practicality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
collection purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
memorial purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
fan of idols	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
favour of programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
favour of soundtracks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
pleasure of recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
self-expression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
fashionable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
quality of products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
others: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Three: Knowledge and recognition of Japanese and South Korean culture in general

Please state your opinions and knowledge in relation to Japanese and Korean lifestyle, culture, custom and so on in the following category:
(Tick as Japan; as South Korea)

	not well	not very well	average	well-enough	very well
In terms of					
national status (e.g. politics, economic, foreign policy)	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
historical attractions	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
people/character	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
lifestyle	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
festival celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
In terms of	despise	dislike	average	like	favour
nation	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
historical attractions	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
people character	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
lifestyle	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
culture	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
	no intention	low desire	average	desire	highly desire
visiting the country	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
making acquaintance	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
lives in Japan/Korea	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
	strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
good impression	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○
Japanophile/Koreanophile	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○	<input type="checkbox"/> /○

Section Four: Comparative reading on Japanese and Korean idol dramas

1. Do you think Japanese and Korean idol dramas are alike?

- Yes
 No
 Not sure

Please explain your opinions, if desired:

2. Which genre/programmes do you in favour?

Japanese Korean Both Neither

Please state you reasons: _____

3. In your opinion, do you think the consumption of Japanese and Korean pop culture can lead to any potential cultural impact on young generations in Taiwan?

Yes No Not sure

Please explain your opinions: _____

★ In attempt to further examine the audience consumption of Japanese and Korean TV drama, I would like to conduct interviews/group discussions. If you are willing to participate in these events please leave your name and contact details.

Name: _____ **Telephone number:** _____

Email: _____

Many thanks

Appendix 2: List of Interviewees

A. One to one interview with university students

Name	Age	Sex	Date	Place
Jia-ling	21	F	June, 2003	Restaurant, Taipei
Wan-yi	20	F	June, 2003	Cafe, Taipei
Yi-jun	22	F	July, 2003	Restaurant, Taipei
Yan-chi	19	F	July, 2003	email
Pei-xin	22	F	July, 2003	Cafe, Taipei
Ya-wen	21	F	January, 2005	Cafe, Taipei
Wei-ren	22	M	January, 2005	University, Taipei
Wang-wang	21	M	January, 2005	University, Taipei
Xin-hui	20	F	January, 2005	Phone
Ying-yan	21	F	January, 2005	Email

B. Group discussion with secondary school students

Group A: July 2003 (classroom, junior secondary school, Tainan)

Zhi-ying	13	M
Fang-ming	13	F
Yan-xiu	13	F
Jun-huang	13	M
Wei-zhi	13	M
Zhen-hua	13	F
Qiao-zu	13	F
Yu-ting	13	M

Group B: July 2003 (canteen, senior secondary school, Tainan)

Name	Age	Sex
Yuan-xuan	17	F
Wei-rong	16	F
Chun-han	17	F

Group C: February 2005 (classroom, private secondary school, Tainan)

Name	Age	Sex
Jia-ling	13	F
Mong-xian	13	M
Yu-ya	13	F
Ying-hong	13	M
Zhi-wei	13	M

Wei-ren	13	M
Xin-hua	13	F

Group D: February 2005 (classroom, private secondary school, Tainan)

Name	Age	Sex
Xiao-han	16	F
Wen-ling	16	F
Fang-ling	17	F
Yu-ling	17	F
Jia-ying	17	F
Yi-zhen	17	F

C. Interview with member of staff at Gala Television Station

Interviewee: Zu-Shun Xiao

Date: 20/01/2005

Place: at the TV station, then the café in Taipei

Appendix 3: Outcomes from questionnaire (given in numbers)

University students: 158

Male respondents: 33

Female respondents: 125

Section 1: Media reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas

Q. 1 hours/per week

	never	-1 hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	10+ hours
Japanese dramas	7	75	46	19	4	7
Korean dramas	15	93	34	13	3	1
Taiwan idol dramas	15	90	45	6	3	0
Hong Kong dramas	17	113	23	3	0	2
American TV series	13	75	52	11	2	8
Taiwan local dramas	15	103	18	7	3	2

Q. 2—Q. 4

	both	only Japanese	only Korean	neither
Viewing experience	123	24	6	6

	terrestrial	cable/satellite	VCDS/DVD	video tape	others
Viewing medium (multiple Response)	27	135	69	4	2

	Friends/housemate	family members	alone	others
Viewing companionship (multiple Response)	52	68	109	1

Q. 5—Q. 8

	never (0%)	rare(25%)	sometimes(50%)	often(75%)	always (100%)
Discussion after viewing	10	34	75	24	8

	low (-25%)	average (50%)	relative high (75%)	highly (75+%)
Engagement	9	72	56	15

	never(0%)	rare(25%)	sometimes(50%)	often(75%)	always (100%)
Watch whole programme (1 st to last episode)	11	33	53	48	9
Watch again when rebroadcast	10	60	75	7	0
Q. 9—Q. 10					
	only Japanese	only Korean	both	neither	
Importance on viewing the programmes	27	18	20	96	
	not interest(0%)	less than average(25%)	average(50%)	interest(75%)	v/interest(75%+)
Information related to the programmes	1	22	69	47	13

Q. 11 Viewing motivations (J: Japan; K: Korea)

	not important	not v/important	average	important	v/important
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
storyline/plots	5 // 9	4 // 9	17 // 14	63 // 51	56 // 48
idols/actors	5 // 11	11 // 16	30 // 37	67 // 46	34 // 21
entertainment	5 // 7	10 // 15	53 // 48	59 // 45	19 // 14
killing time	5 // 9	13 // 13	66 // 58	46 // 41	16 // 11
fashion info.	24 // 20	37 // 38	62 // 53	13 // 17	10 // 6
emotional connection	12 // 18	29 // 28	58 // 57	37 // 25	8 // 5
up-to-date knowledge	14 // 15	29 // 35	69 // 48	22 // 22	11 // 6
favour the culture	9 // 23	29 // 33	52 // 51	38 // 20	19 // 8
language learning	10 // 26	24 // 27	31 // 38	45 // 22	36 // 21

Q. 12 Viewing choices and focus point during viewing (J: Japan; K: Korea)

	no attention	low attention	average	focused	highly focused
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
popularity of actors	6 // 11	20 // 25	48 // 54	60 // 31	13 // 11
acting skill	4 // 10	5 // 9	35 // 37	66 // 51	35 // 26
actor's appearance	4 // 9	10 // 14	37 // 39	75 // 57	21 // 18
fashion style	4 // 7	11 // 13	48 // 48	58 // 46	26 // 18
storyline/plots	3 // 10	5 // 8	13 // 14	69 // 57	57 // 43
dialogue/narrative	1 // 9	7 // 11	38 // 36	74 // 54	27 // 21
scenery	2 // 9	7 // 10	46 // 40	67 // 57	25 // 18
culture/custom	2 // 8	10 // 12	55 // 50	57 // 45	23 // 16
screenwriter	9 // 15	28 // 31	46 // 43	36 // 28	28 // 18
director	21 // 26	47 // 43	55 // 46	14 // 9	10 // 7

Section 2: consumer behaviour - the consumption of idol dramas by-products

Q. 1 Products (J: Japan; K: Korea)

	never	rare	sometimes	often	very often
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J //
K					
idols' poster	95 // 99	30 // 25	16 // 9	5 // 3	1 // 1
idols' music albums	77 // 90	31 // 25	25 // 12	13 // 8	5 // 2
TV soundtracks	61 // 84	37 // 26	29 // 19	14 // 7	2 // 1
original comic books	91 // 110	30 // 24	18 // 8	6 // 0	2 // 0
original novels	92 // 106	29 // 20	20 // 8	2 // 0	2 // 1
VCDs/DVDs	86 // 99	25 // 20	18 // 13	16 // 2	4 // 3
fashion style (e.g. clothes)					
(depicted in the programmes)	95 // 101	32 // 20	18 // 15	4 // 1	0 // 0
commodities					
(depicted in the programmes)	95 // 98	33 // 26	17 // 9	2 // 3	1 // 1

Q. 2 Motivations/desirability

	not important	not v/important	average	important	very important
practicality	14	19	40	48	24
collection purpose	16	17	36	48	27
memorial purpose	22	14	33	55	23
fan of idols	23	20	34	53	15
favour of programmes	18	10	33	55	29
favour of soundtracks	10	8	27	66	34
pleasure of recognition	16	12	44	48	25
self-expression	26	37	60	17	5
fashionable	23	41	55	19	7
quality of products	11	14	31	55	34

Section 3: Knowledge and recognition of Japanese and South Korean culture

(J: Japan; K: Korea)

(knowledge)	not well	not v/well	average	well-enough	very well
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
In terms of					
national status					
(e.g. politics, economic, foreign policy)	4 // 22	22 // 38	91 // 67	35 // 18	5 // 2
historical attractions	4 // 22	31 // 53	88 // 55	26 // 16	6 // 1
people character	3 // 11	11 // 34	88 // 62	41 // 31	12 // 8
lifestyle	3 // 13	14 // 42	88 // 53	40 // 34	11 // 5
festival celebration	4 // 23	28 // 45	86 // 69	27 // 12	10 // 3

(attitude)	despise	dislike	average	like	favour
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
In terms of					
nation	4 // 9	4 // 14	60 // 82	74 // 38	16 // 4
historical attractions	2 // 5	3 // 11	72 // 91	67 // 37	14 // 5
people character	3 // 13	18 // 33	91 // 87	33 // 13	11 // 2
lifestyle	5 // 8	6 // 15	68 // 97	49 // 25	14 // 2
culture	2 // 7	3 // 12	81 // 98	54 // 25	18 // 3

	no intention	low desire	average	desire	highly desire
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
visiting the country	2 // 5	2 // 9	23 // 46	55 // 40	71 // 43
language learning	3 // 9	6 // 24	35 // 44	62 // 33	52 // 35
making acquaintance	2 // 4	1 // 11	47 // 55	65 // 42	41 // 34
live in Japan/Korea	4 // 12	17 // 31	59 // 60	45 // 27	31 // 15

	strongly disagree	disagree	average	agree	strongly
agree	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
good impression	2 // 9	11 // 22	63 // 77	61 // 29	20 // 8
Japanophile/ Koreanophile	43 // 50	36 // 36	43 // 43	23 // 11	7 // 5

Appendix 4: Outcomes from questionnaire (given in numbers)

Secondary school students: 118

Male respondents: 57

Female respondents: 61

Section 1: Media reception of Japanese and Korean TV dramas

Q. 1 hours/per week

	never	-1 hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	7-9 hours	10+ hours
Japanese dramas	14	82	17	2	2	1
Korean dramas	11	73	27	4	2	1
Taiwan idol dramas	10	54	37	9	5	3
Hong Kong dramas	12	86	14	5	1	0
American TV series	6	60	33	13	4	2
Taiwan local dramas	14	70	26	7	1	0

Q. 2—Q. 4

	both	only Japanese	only Korean	neither
Viewing experience	87	2	10	19

	terrestrial	cable/satellite	VCDS/DVD	video tape	others
Viewing medium (multiple Response)	39	71	26	4	3

	Friends/housemate	family members	alone	others
Viewing companionship (multiple Response)	16	67	59	0

Q. 5—Q. 8

	never (0%)	rare(25%)	sometimes(50%)	often(75%)	always (100%)
Discussion after viewing	7	31	40	17	6

	low (-25%)	average (50%)	relative high (75%)	highly(75+%)
Engagement	6	58	26	9

	never(0%)	rare(25%)	sometimes(50%)	often(75%)	always (100%)
Watch whole programme (1 st to last episode)	10	35	31	17	6

	never(0%)	rare(25%)	sometimes(50%)	often(75%)	always (100%)
Watch again when rebroadcast	14	33	39	15	1

Q. 9—Q. 10

	only Japanese	only Korean	both	neither
Importance on viewing the programmes	3	7	13	76
	not interest(0%)	less than average(25%)	average(50%)	interest(75%) v/interest(75%+)
Information related to the programmes	3	20	57	16 3

Q. 11 Viewing motivations (J: Japan; K: Korea)

	not important	not v/important	average	important	v/important
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
storyline/plots	9 // 7	9 // 11	36 // 34	29 // 27	15 // 28
idols/actors	8 // 7	17 // 18	41 // 46	24 // 16	8 // 10
entertainment	6 // 5	15 // 10	48 // 55	24 // 21	6 // 6
killing time	6 // 4	9 // 13	53 // 53	24 // 42	7 // 5
fashion info.	15 // 15	28 // 31	62 // 53	13 // 17	10 // 6
emotional connection	8 // 8	26 // 26	45 // 46	15 // 15	5 // 4
up-to-date knowledge	16 // 15	26 // 29	37 // 34	16 // 17	4 // 2
favour the culture	13 // 11	20 // 24	41 // 41	20 // 18	5 // 3
language learning	18 // 19	29 // 34	33 // 32	15 // 9	4 // 2

Q. 12 Viewing choices and focus point during viewing (J: Japan; K: Korea)

	no attention	low attention	average	focused	highly focused
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
popularity of actors	13 // 13	34 // 36	35 // 33	13 // 12	2 // 3
acting skill	9 // 8	14 // 15	39 // 37	32 // 31	5 // 6
actor's appearance	4 // 4	12 // 10	43 // 42	25 // 26	14 // 15
fashion style	5 // 4	11 // 13	42 // 42	32 // 31	8 // 7
storyline/plots	7 // 5	6 // 7	36 // 31	34 // 40	15 // 15
dialogue/narrative	7 // 4	10 // 11	41 // 43	32 // 30	8 // 9
scenery	7 // 3	7 // 10	46 // 40	26 // 24	12 // 14
culture/custom	10 // 7	22 // 23	35 // 39	20 // 19	11 // 9
screenwriter	26 // 22	20 // 18	34 // 38	13 // 14	5 // 4
director	34 // 31	33 // 32	27 // 28	4 // 6	0 // 0

Section 2: consumer behaviour – the consumption of idol dramas by-products

Q1. Products (J: Japan; K: Korea)

	never	rare	sometimes	often	very often
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
idols' poster	53 // 54	31 // 27	14 // 12	3 // 2	2 // 0
idols' music albums	48 // 48	26 // 27	22 // 20	6 // 1	2 // 1
TV soundtracks	51 // 51	26 // 25	18 // 16	6 // 3	1 // 2
original comic books	48 // 56	39 // 27	20 // 13	4 // 2	3 // 0
original novels	49 // 56	31 // 27	17 // 12	4 // 2	1 // 0
VCDs/DVDs	57 // 61	33 // 27	13 // 9	1 // 1	0 // 0
fashion style (e.g. clothes)					
(depicted in the programmes)	53 // 60	30 // 24	13 // 11	8 // 3	1 // 1
commodities					
(depicted in the programmes)	57 // 59	25 // 24	14 // 11	4 // 2	1 // 0

Q. 2 Motivations /desirability

	not important	not v/important	average	important	very important
practicality	15	18	35	22	10
collection purpose	16	14	22	39	9
memorial purpose	18	12	25	35	10
fan of idols	17	14	33	27	8
favour of programmes	15	12	35	30	7
favour of soundtracks	7	6	24	43	19
pleasure of recognition	14	12	36	32	5
self-expression	23	30	38	8	2
fashionable	21	16	39	18	6
quality of products	12	9	32	32	15

Section 3: Knowledge and recognition of Japanese and South Korean culture

(J: Japan; K: Korea)

(knowledge)	not well	not v/well	average	well-enough	very well
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
In terms of					
national status (e.g. politics, economic, foreign policy)	10 // 13	32 // 41	57 // 59	18 // 5	1 // 0
historical attractions	11 // 21	41 // 48	44 // 38	20 // 11	2 // 0
people character	7 // 10	36 // 42	57 // 55	15 // 9	3 // 1
lifestyle	4 // 9	31 // 39	59 // 55	20 // 14	3 // 0
festival celebration	7 // 12	41 // 50	50 // 46	19 // 10	1 // 0

(attitude)	despise	dislike	average	like	favour
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
In terms of					
nation	3 // 5	10 // 10	53 // 72	41 // 26	11 // 3
historical attractions	1 // 3	12 // 16	58 // 72	37 // 24	10 // 1
people character	1 // 4	12 // 24	83 // 78	15 // 11	7 // 0
lifestyle	0 // 1	13 // 25	75 // 75	22 // 16	7 // 0
culture	3 // 4	10 // 16	78 // 76	28 // 20	8 // 1

	no intention	low desire	average	desire	highly desire
	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
visiting the country	2 // 5	6 // 15	38 // 51	42 // 36	28 // 11
language learning	6 // 12	25 // 30	38 // 44	30 // 25	19 // 6
making acquaintance	3 // 6	26 // 28	50 // 57	21 // 20	17 // 7
live in Japan/Korea	6 // 9	25 // 31	48 // 58	20 // 17	17 // 2

	strongly disagree	disagree	average	agree	strongly
agree	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K	J // K
good impression	6 // 6	8 // 8	66 // 83	30 // 18	8 // 3
Japanophile/ Koreanophile	24 // 24	39 // 46	37 // 36	13 // 10	2 // 1

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(Original list from Fu-Chang Wang, 2005, p. 88-90) 'Why bother about school textbooks?' in Cultural, ethnic, and political nationalism in contemporary Taiwan (2005) edited by John Makeham and A-chin Hsiau

For further detail analysis on both volumes, please see 'Nation-building and curriculum reform in Hong Kong and Taiwan' by Christopher Hughes and Robert Stone in *The China Quarterly* (1999) p. 985-988,

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