



TCS LOUPE

POP CULTURES

OF CHINA,

JAPAN AND

KOREA



LECTURE

THREE

Why Do I
Enjoy CJK
Cultural
Contents?

December 20,
2014

Dialogue by
CJK Pop Culture
Fans

LECTURE SUMMARY

Why Do I Enjoy CJK Cultural Contents? :

Pop Culture Fan Dialogue

Overview

The third TCS LOUPE was organized by the Popular Culture fans of China, Japan and Korea with the title 'Why do I enjoy CJK cultural contents'. Their presentations featured different points of appeal which three countries' Popular Cultures have for overseas fans, based on their life experiences. Presentations and following discussions among the presenters and with the audience demonstrated the potential of Popular Culture as a motive to understand other cultures and societies.

Presentation 1.




Korean Drama Consumption of the Chinese Television Viewers

By WU Chang Xue

It was the early 1990s when Chinese viewers were able to enjoy Korean drama. *What is Love* was the first Korean drama that made a big hit throughout the country, scoring the 6 % of the viewer ratings. This is significant because the

program of 1 % or more ratings is considered to be successful in China. *Autumn Fairy Tale* released in 2002 was another popular drama enjoyed especially by the people in their 20s and 30s. The year 2005 was an epoch-making period when *Jewel in the Palace* gained great popularity along with the 1st stage of the Korean Wave boom. Korean drama reached new heights in China 2014 thanks to the mega-hit drama *A Lover from the Star*.

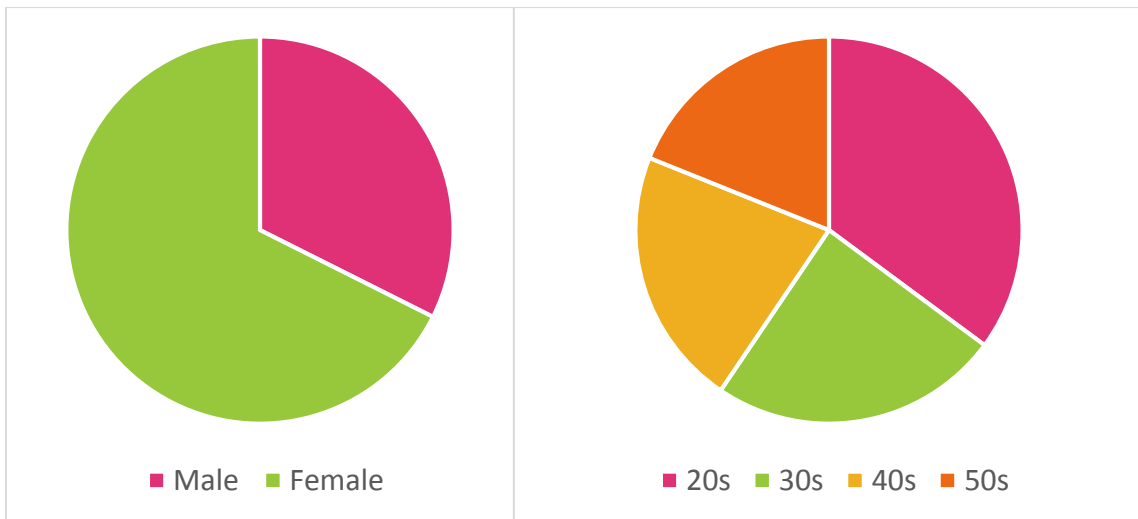
Table 1. History of Popular Korean Dramas in China

<p><i>What is Love</i> (Korea: 1991~92/ China: 1997)</p>	<p><i>Autumn Fairy Tale</i> (Korea: 2000/ China: 2002)</p>
 <p><MBC></p>	 <p><KBS></p>
<p><i>Jewel in the Palace</i> (Korea: 2003~04/ China: 2005)</p>	<p><i>A Lover from the Star</i> (Korea: 2014/ China: 2014)</p>
 <p><MBC></p>	 <p><SBS></p>

Over the last 20 years, Korean dramas have been aired through expanded channels encompassing the central television network of CCTV, local television networks, and internet. The speed of the drama's release has also increased, taking the advantage of the immediacy of the online medium.

According to the study on the drama consumption of the Chinese television viewers (2013), 30 % of the viewers preferred Korean drama among 60 % of which were women. Most of the viewers enjoyed watching romance and family drama. Whereas the viewers in their 20s and 30s showed great interests in the theatrical sceneries, fashions and makeups, ones in their 40s and 50s find the story intriguing. Viewers fond of Korean drama often enjoy K-drama tour which features visits to historical sites appeared in dramas, and join fan meetings of their favorite celebrities.

Chart 1 & 2. Gender (Left) and Age (Right) of the Korean Drama Viewers in China



There are two contrasting perspectives in regard to the Korean Popular Culture consumption. The ones favorable to Korean Popular Culture are de-nationalistic and market-oriented; they consider Korean popular culture as one of many pastime options. On the other hand, those who are not favorable to Korean Popular Culture tend to be nationalistic and production-oriented; they think that imprudent introduction of Korean Popular Culture may be a harm to the development of the Chinese cultural industry. Both perspectives demonstrate Chinese people's interest in Korean Popular Culture, and the cultural exchange between China and Korea will be continued amongst the circulation of these two different perspectives.

Presentation 2.

The Reason I Enjoy Japanese Popular Culture

By KIM Hye Young

Korean Popular Culture is now on a boom and many Korean people like the nation's fancy celebrities. On contrast, I like SMAP, one of Japan's popular idol groups formed by Johnny & Associates whose name stands for 'Sport Music Assemble People'. SMAP currently consists of 5 members of NAKAI Masahiro, KIMURA Takuya, INAGAKI Goro, KUSANAGI Tsuyoshi, and KATORI Shingo. The group has taken unusual career path different from their predecessors; it debuted

in 1988 when Japan's music industry was suffering from the collapse of the bubble economy. SMAP thus slowly gained popularity through variety shows, and established friendly image of 'an idol who does anything'. The group has now become the nation's idol whose appearance in drama and films guarantees high viewers rating and who has mobilized 10 million people to their concerts (figure in 2010) over the last 20 years, selling 20 million copies of their albums.

I came across the group through the dramas of KIMURA and KATORI including *Pride and Flower Shop without a Rose*. I especially went deep into benevolent, trustful SHIOMI Eiji of *Flower Shop without a Rose* played by KATORI and the drama became the most memorable piece in my life. I started to watch the variety show *SMAPXSMAP* to know more about the SMAP members. The group does a variety of activities in the show; not only do the members emcee the show, but also play games, cook, perform in comedy sketches, sing and dance. I like SMAP because it constantly transforms itself, broadening the scope of its activities into different fields.

While staying in Japan for a year and enjoying many SMAP related activities, I was surprised to know the differences in Korean and Japanese fan cultures. Korean fan culture can be characterized as 'tribute culture'; fans donate money and participate in voluntary activities in the name of their favorite star to express their love. Japanese fan culture on the other hand can be defined as 'supporter culture'; fans support the idol's growth even before the debut. At the concert, Korean fans take pictures by telephoto lens and sing along with the performers (so-called 'Crowd Singing'). On contrast, Japanese fans shake uchiwa (fans with the images of their favorite member and personal messages to him/her) and attentively

listens to the songs. Whereas Korean fans buy concert ticket openly through online, Japanese fans who support the idol groups of Johnny & Associates win the ticket by lottery.

Table 2. Fan Cultures of Korea and Japan

	Korea	Japan
Feature	Tribute Culture	Supporter Culture
Must-bring items to a concert	Telephoto lens	Uchiwa
Purpose of going to a concert	Concert for participation (crowd singing)	Concert for listening
Application Process for a concert	Buying ticket openly through online	(for Johnnys & Associates) Registered fans to an official fan club are eligible for the lottery

People may find odd about me, a grown-up dedicating one's time in an idol fandom. However, I think that there is no such thing as 'ideal pastime' which people must enjoy at certain stages of their life. Cultural life is a way of living that fully appreciates modern culture and has no limitation to its contents. Thus I believe everybody can freely enjoy what they like as long as it does not bother others.

People often ask me why I prefer Japanese idol to Korean one. I want to ask in return whether there is a limitation to cultures one can enjoy. In fact, language and cultural learning are the biggest achievements of liking foreign celebrities.

Thanks to SMAP, I am now working with Japanese companies. I also have a future dream to go to SMAP's concert with my children once I get married.

Presentation 3.

The Reason I Became a Super Junior Fan

By FUKUNAGA Tomoyo

It has been 10 months since I came to Korea to learn the language. It is Super Junior who motivated me to learn Korean. It is a male idol group formed by SM Entertainment, currently consisting of 11 members of Leeteuk, Heechul, Yesung, Kangin, Shindong, Sungmin, Eunhyuk, Donghae, Siwon, Ryeowook, and Kyuhyun. I like Ryeowook the most because of his charming voice.

I came to know the group thanks to my older sister who loves K-pop. Among many Korean music videos that I have watched with my sister, I particularly liked those of Super Junior. I have fallen for the group's charm after going to their annual world concert tour called *Super Show*. I especially found members' singing and talking in their native language very attractive, which inspired me to come to Korea for the language study in order to understand more about my favorite idol.

Compared to the 'out of reach' Japanese idols who do not reveal much of their private lives, Super Junior is like 'a next door neighbor' whose members openly show their private and family lives to the public. Whereas Japanese idols do not

show themselves in their plain clothes in a public space, K-pop idols often display themselves in their plain clothes especially at the airport (so-called *Airport Fashion*). K-pop songs are also distinguished from J-pop; the repetitive lyrics as in *Sorry Sorry* are easy to remember and the direct expression of love instigates the feeling of being in love.

At the concert, Japanese idols usually greet the audience by saying ‘please enjoy (watching our performances and listening to music)’. On contrast, Korean idols emphasize more participation by saying ‘let’s have fun together’. Lastly, Korean idols have voluntary fan clubs with unique names, as in Elf (Super Junior), Soshi World (Girl’s Generation) and Cassiopeia (Dong Bang Shin Ki or TVXQ).

Table 3. Difference between Japanese and Korean Idols

	Japan	Korea
Feature	Out of reach -separation of public and private life -no display of plain clothes	A next door neighbor -openly talk about one’s private and family life -display oneself in plain clothes
Music	-Indirect way of expressing love	-Repetitive lyrics -Direct way of expressing love
Concert	-concert for listening (‘Please enjoy’)	-participatory concert (‘Let’s have fun together’)
Fan Club	(for Johnnys & Associates) Official club made by the company	Voluntary club made by fans earning recognition as the official club

Compared to the early 2000s, the heyday of the Korean Wave boom in Japan, there are not much chance to encounter K-pop idols in Japan’s major television

channels. Japanese general public thus do not know much about K-pop idols in detail, and consider the fans as a fringe group. Yet I enjoy introducing Super Junior to the people around me by watching related DVDs and going to a concert together.

In Korea, I am currently enjoying different fan activities including the participation at the recording of the music broadcast where fans sometimes chat with the members in a break time. I want to participate in as many activities as possible while staying in Korea, including musicals where I can enjoy my favorite celebrity's singing voice at a close distance.

Discussions among Panelists and with the Floor

1. How would you feel and respond, if your favorite celebrity makes controversial remarks or behavior about your country?

Kim: About the controversial wartime drama, some people argue that ‘a fiction is a fiction, not the true history’. Yet it is difficult to separate the two considering the big influence of culture on people’s perception of society and history. People must fully recognize that culture is part of an important channel to understand one country. Thus, we need to carefully consider whether it is alright to romanticize some controversial historical memories albeit it is just a small part of the whole story of the drama and doubt whether there are people who really buy into such narrative.

Fukunaga: People’s perceptions are largely influenced by what they have learned through education and media. I remember what Super Junior said at the Japan concert in 2012; Korea and Japan are close yet distant neighbors, but at this time, the two countries are closer than ever. Based on the acknowledgement on historical and political disputes between the two countries, the members hoped for the improvement of the bilateral relations. By crossing the border of different countries, celebrities can serve as a bridge that connects different countries.

2. What is the impact of cultural exchange on the trilateral relations?

Wu: Although it is difficult to deny the link between politics and culture, it is not desirable to exploit culture to serve the political interest. Being free from the political considerations, culture must provide a platform for vibrant communication and exchanges. It is crucial to ensure different opinions to be circulated freely within such platform to enhance the trilateral relationship.

Kim: Thanks to SMAP, I came to know more about Japan and Japanese people, which resulted in overcoming the biases toward Japanese society. It is true that culture and politics are connected to one another but I strongly doubt about the stereotypical notion in Korea that identifies ‘interest in Japanese culture’ with ‘Japanese collaborators’. More vibrant cultural exchanges among the three countries will contribute to the positive future trilateral relations.

Fukunaga: Cultural exchange plays a huge role in the trilateral relations as witnessed from the decline of the Japanese tourists to Korea after the break-up of Dong Bang Shin Ki. There are many foreign friends in my language institute who came to Korea because of their interest in Korean Popular Culture. I also encounter many Koreans who wish to learn Japanese because they like anime and J-pop idols. Through the trilateral cultural exchange, I hope the three countries discover better ways to move forward together.

3. Both Korean and Japanese panelists explained that they like SMAP and Super Junior because ‘they feel friendly toward those idols’. Why do the two panelists point out the same reason for liking the idols of the opposite nation?

Kim: I think it is due to the difference in the perception toward celebrities. Once they get really famous, Korean celebrities do not wish to tear down their existing image as cool, fancy beings. On the other hand, Japanese idols like SMAP often take risks to play ludicrous roles that challenge their image as a popular celebrity.

Fukunaga: I have also watched SMAP's program in Japan and their appearance in variety shows at first were very fresh. Yet Japanese idols consider broadcasting as part of their job and clearly separate it from their private lives. It is why I was so stunned when Super Junior openly showed their private and family lives at a television show. I have found their warm-heartedness through their lives reflected on the television.

LECTURE THREE AT A GLANCE

Trends of CJK Fans in Enjoying Popular Cultures of the Three Countries

Country	Topic	Feature
China	Chinese Viewers' Consumption of Korean Dramas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Situation: 30 % of the Chinese viewers prefers Korean drama among 60 % of which are women- Reason: theatrical sceneries, fashions and makeups (viewers in their 20s & 30s) / intriguing story (40s & 50s)- Activities: K-drama tour, fan meeting
Korea	The Reason I Like Japanese Idol SMAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Motive: Getting to know the individual group members through their dramas and the whole group through its regular variety show, SMAPXSMAP- Reason: Group on constant transformation by broadening the scope of its activities into different fields- Activities: Japanese language learning + going to a concert
Japan	They Reason I Like Korean Idol Super Junior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Motive: Watching music videos with the older sister who had an interest in K-pop- Reason: feeling of friendliness demonstrated by the opening up of one's private and family life on television- Activities: Korean language learning + going to a concert, music broadcast, musical, etc.



The third TCS LOUPE was organized by the ordinary citizens of the three countries who have keen interests in Popular Cultures of the three countries. Special thanks to Mr. Wu Chang Xue (China), Ms. Kim Hye Young (ROK), and Ms. Fukunaga Tomoyo (Japan).

Edited and Translated by: Soo Young YANG