

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KOREAN WAVE

In this chapter, the writer will describe how the Korean Wave emerged and started to become the most significant cultural phenomenon in early 1999. Moreover, the writer will describe the kinds of Korean Wave, such as television dramas, movies, popular music, foods, et cetera. The Korean Wave is known in terms of boosting in the popularity of Korean cultural products such as television dramas, movies, popular music, video games even to a lesser extent toward Korean fashion, food, tourism, and language.

The phenomenon of Korean Wave has been widespread in all circles of the world, especially for the youngsters. Most of them interested in television dramas, music, food, and fashion that originated from South Korea. As we know that the Korean Wave rapidly spread throughout the world, started to Asian countries such as China, Japan, Hongkong, and other Southeast Asian countries as well to the other continents such as America, Africa, and Europe.

A. The History of Korean Wave

South Korea passed the vortex of world history in the 20th century, even though Korean history has stretched back for 5000 years. As we know, the nation had suffered the colonialism from Japan for over 35 years in which Japan tried to Japanese Koreans. Tragically, in the 1950s, at the end of the colonialism, it was immediately followed by a civil war between South Korea and North Korea. South Korea must begin rebuilding its country shortly after the Korean War which has destroyed much of the country's economy, social

and infrastructure. South Korea began efforts to catch up with developed countries around the world. The culture was no exception to this.

In the name of globalization, South Korea has experienced bilateral pressure, mostly from the United States and multilateral pressure to open its markets in several sectors, such as movies and television programs since the 1980s. The dynamics of the global economy affect the formation of the Korea Inc. industry. While taking a defensive stance, the South Korean economy began to increase the commodification of media and cultural content and production, such as films, television programs, and so on (Chua Beng Huat, 2008). South Korea has long been accustomed to imports and open-minded towards foreign products. Elderly Koreans used to absorb the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Chinese traditions. Currently, South Korea started to permeate the style of living and the education of American, European philosophy, and Japanese modernity (Ministry of Culture, 2011).

During two wars both at home and another in Vietnam, soldiers from allied forces brought modern and fashionable cultures from the United States and other countries. South Koreans were hooked to imported music, such as lush ballads, American folks, rock, and so on. Local singers enthusiastically imitated the style and the song to rise to the popularity of the explosion of foreign adult contemporary music in South Korea. When South Koreans were able to buy free time and entertainment after decades of relentless industrialization at a rapid pace, in the 1980s more European and American pop culture flowed. The regulations regarding the import of foreign cultures became relaxed along with the democratization movement which began in the 1980s. Listening to different pop songs on the radio, such as European and American pop, watching American dramas on TV, and watching Hollywood and Hong Kong films in cinemas has become a trend in South Korea at that time.

However, everything started to change in the mid-1990s. Korean pop music flowing throughout the day on the radio, various genres and very high quality can defeat most of the different pop songs that are usually played on the radio. Meanwhile, record stores are full of excellent designed albums by South Korean artists. On behind, different albums that were only popular for the previous ten years will be given the pride of being thrown into the corner. Massive local artists pumped by the music industry. In less than a decade, Korean pop regained its home territory.

Uncounted cable TV channels, K- dramas are played 24 hours a day, and on weekends, theaters are full of people who come to watch Korean movies. The film attracted approximately 6 million viewers for the first time in the history of Korean cinema. Even the record continued to be broken until 2006, when other Korean films reached an incredible 13 million audiences, at that time it was equivalent to almost 30 percent of the population of the country. South Korea is one of the few countries that consume more cultural content produced locally than different content. South Korea is not the only country who starts enjoying Korean pop culture (Ministry of Culture, 2011).

1. The Emergence of the Korean Wave

Chinese government CCTV aired Korean drama *What is Love* in June 1997. It became the first Korean drama to be broadcast nationwide throughout China. Chinese audiences were attracted by the liberal attitudes and the likes of which they had never seen before, as well as the modern lifestyles of Koreans. It is because the Korean dramas are loyal to family-focused Confucian values, whereas the Western dramas emphasize more on the individualist values. Thus the Chinese audiences more prefer to choose Korean dramas. Moreover, they can easily be connected to Korean dramas.

Not only Korean dramas that have been successful throughout the world yet the Korean singers also started reaching the markets in Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong. The excellent appearance on the chart in East Asian countries, such as Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and also to Southeast Asia countries was gained by some idol groups, such as H.O.T., baby V.O.X., and the male duo clon. Huge fans gathered in their concerts, whereas Korean music trends are being covered by local radio. In this case, Korean Wave has the significant role for South Korea and its neighboring country because the Korean Wave served the bridge over the mutual distrust and disinterest that had persisted for a half-century since the Korean War among South Korea and China. One of the South Korean diplomats said that the Korean Wave was able to do it in less than a year, in contrast to diplomats who have tried for decades but have not produced results either. (Ministry of Culture, 2011).

2. *The Beginning of the Korean Wave in Japan*

While in Japan, the Korean Wave which showed just how much one drama could change popular attitudes also happened. In 2003, the Korean drama *Winter Sonata* was aired by one of the Japanese TV stations. The result is a cultural phenomenon that has never happened before. The drama, which told the story of a man and woman bound together by the fate of first love, received a surprising response from Japanese viewers, especially from middle-aged women. The main actors of the show, includes Bae Yong-joon, Choi Ji-woo, and Park Yong-ha became big starts in Japan at that time. Due to the love shown by his character in the drama, Bae, in particular, became a cultural phenomenon.

There is two evidence that showed the Japanese's enthusiast towards Korean dramas and Korean actors. Firstly, in April 2004, when Bae Yong-joon came to Japan, there were more than 4,500 Japanese women inundated to Tokyo's

Haneda Airport only for seeing their idol directly. Secondly, when a TV special made coverage of the Japanese prime minister's visit to North Korea, the station should not air an episode of the Korean drama *Winter Sonata*. As a result, over 3,000 phone calls were protesting the move to the NHK.

According to the Japanese entertainment magazine analyzed that there was something new in Japanese TV, the Yon-sama Syndrome shows that Korean male actor is romantic, polite yet know how to make a woman feels special and this a quite rare on Japanese TV. Even, there was something that Koreans could not understand, Kohari Susumu, a professor at Shizuoka University stated that there were even 50-year-old housewives who willing to immigrate to Korea. Indeed the Yon-sama Syndrome changed the Japanese's notions towards Korean people. Now, the Japanese looked Koreans are generous, respectful, and fashionable. (Ministry of Culture, 2011). Same as the drama that gained much support from the Japanese, the Korean groups also gained high appreciation as well. AERA, the current Japanese event argued that the Korean groups controlled the Japanese music market so-called "Korean invasion" and compared Korean pop or K-pop with the legendary British group the Beatles that already controlled the American music market in the 1960s.

3. *Korean Wave Goes Global*

In contrast to *Winter Sonata* and *What Is Love*, Korean drama, *Dae Jang Geum* provided the opportunities for a Korean drama to expand its popularity not only in Asia but also countries on other continents. *Dae Jang Geum* described the life story of an orphaned girl who became the chief doctor for the king. This drama depicted the real historical figure, and the filmmaker used Joseon Korea's backdrop in the 16th century. In 2004 after first airing in Taiwan, *Dae Jang Geum* gained high ratings in some countries, such as China and

Hongkong. This drama created “*Dae Jang Geum* Fever” for the audiences.

Furthermore, in 2003, the drama was able to beat football matches between Spain and Hong Kong. When the show ran, most of the streets became empty. Meanwhile, in those countries above, Korean products and Korean foods also gained unprecedented popularity. The editor of a Chinese monthly argued that the Korean food had become sought-after stuff, a pride for South Korea in being a country that is rich in culinary.

Iran also another country that ran the drama. The country’s state-run TV Channel two started to broadcast *Dae Jang Geum*. It recorded high ratings of more than 90% in the capital of Tehran and about 86% nationwide. According to the Chosun Ilbo, a Korean daily claimed that due to the program, Iranians had changed their attitudes better towards the Koreans. The paper also reported that when Iranians found people in the street who appeared to be Korean, then they would get closer to them, shake their hands all of a sudden and say *Yang Gom* (the Iranian pronunciation of the drama's title character, Jang Geum), *kaili khube* (very good). In November 2011, there were about 100 Iranian government officials, such as from foreign ministry, oil ministry, and national broadcast company attended to the event at Korean Embassy in Tehran marking the end of the show. The Korean Ambassador argued that this was the first time that many high-ranking government officials were willing to attend such an event (Ministry of Culture, 2011).

B. The Types of Korean Wave

Korean wave is the result of the South Korean cultures that had changed over the times. However, the Korean people did not abandon their old culture, yet they included the old

culture into the new ones. Korean Wave is very diverse. There are several types of Korean Waves, such as Korean drama, movies, K-pops, fashion, food, and so on. In this part, the writer will explain some types of Korean Wave above.

1. *Dramas and Movies*

Since 1903 the history of Korean movies has begun. However, due to the Korean War, it made Korean people hard to find documentation about the first time when movies were introduced in South Korea. In 1919, *Uiyeok Gutu* was a Korean drama which was first airing in South Korea (Paquet, 2007). While in 1923, Korean movies grew along with the advancement of technology. The first silent movie was airing in that year was *Plighted Love Under the Moon* directed by Yun Baek Ham. In the 2000s, Asia was famous for its television series from Taiwan, let say *The Meteor Garden*.

The Meteor Garden's popularity began to fade along the times. Thus, South Korea had the opportunity to introduce its television dramas and movies on the international stage. In the beginning, Korean dramas and Korean movies were only accessible in Asian countries such as Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian countries. However, Korean cinema has grown to other countries such as Latin America and in the Middle Eastern countries.

The film industry is currently not only centered on the *Hollywood* film industry by the United States, but the Korean film industry has begun to show its strength and popularity through dominating in Asian countries by overcoming the popularity of the Indian film industry which so-called as *Bollywood* and the Hong Kong film industry. Even a popular actor from Hong Kong, Jackie Chan said that the Hong Kong film industry had lost its prestige compared to the South Korean film industry. The thing that makes Korean dramas and Korean movies popular is the variety of storylines so that the audiences will not be comfortable to get bored while they

watch it. Not only the modern dramas, such as *Decendent of The Sun*, *Winter Sonata*, and *Boys Over Flowers* that become favorite for the international societies yet the colossal dramas gained a high demand from the international societies, such as *Dae Jang Geum* as the writer has mentioned in some paragraphs above.

2. *Korean pop songs*

Thanks to the TV programs that has made South Korea known to the world, and has made progress on the Korean Entertainment Business, Korean singers also feel that way. Starting in the late 1990s, Korean pop music videos began to be displayed by Hong Kong-based Channel V. As successful as the other idol group H.O.T. in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the actor and actresses like Park Yong-ha and Ahn Jae-wook, also NRG boy and girl bands such as baby V.O.X., Sechs Kies, Shinwha held concerts to be packed houses in Hong Kong and Taiwan as well.

Since then, Korean singers and bands have regularly held concerts in several neighboring countries, such as in China, Hong Kong, and Japan, even they have recorded albums in foreign languages such as Chinese and Japanese. If previously Japanese pop music had been enjoyed as the epicenter of pop culture in Asia, then it was the turn for Korean pop music to feel it. Teenagers rushed to buy concert tickets, CDs and posters and not a few of them were interested in learning Korean in order to make it easier for them to sing Korean songs.

BoA was one of the first Korean singers gained the cult status throughout Asia by directing more careers to Japan and the United States than to South Korea for live recordings and shows. She became the first foreign singer that ever get the number one position in Japan's Oricon weekly album chart seven times. Thus, BoA has significantly become successful in the Japanese market. On the other hand, the title of "The Kings

of K-Pop" still enjoyed by the boy group TVXQ, surely their groups was one of the most successful in Asia. This group has attracted many awards in South Korea and throughout Asia. Moreover, in Japan, they became the first foreign artist that gained the top position in the Oricon weekly approximately nine times and made the highest sales record in the first week of the album's launch. They are genuinely acknowledged as one of Asia's top global.

3. *Food*

Same as Korean dramas and Korean songs, Korean food also becomes part of the Korean Wave. Directly speaking, food also part of the culture. The food culture is conservative. Indeed, Korean food culture has changed and has become more modern today. Koreans believe that their traditional food must be eaten in their daily lives. Moreover, it has to be developed by times to times. If not, the efforts to irradiate the traditional food's supremacy will not run well. There are some methods used to irradiate the Korean traditional food's supremacy, which is through public relations and education. However, these methods are still inadequate. Korean food will not survive if not be considered in a social code. South Korea has the most popular food like *kimchi*. It is a fermented dish of mixed and seasoned vegetables. In the 21st century, it is indispensable for Koreans starting to package and promote these foods to the world market and make a strong position for their food among advanced countries.

One of the popular Korean dramas *Dae Jang Geum* shew to the world on how cooking can provide an immense role in order to maintain the Korean food life. This is one of the examples that shew how Korean food can goes global. *Jang Geum* was a medical scholar and a Korean scientist. The reason *Dae Jang Geum* is a legendary TV drama in the world not only because the drama "directly" shows off the Korean food yet the thing that makes this drama more interesting was

when people used the social relationship's resource and the local resource, but cooking also affects the other lives. Thanks to *Dae Jang Geum*, many international societies have willing to know and learn more about the Korean culture especially food culture. Their goal is to understand more about Korean food.

Another Korean dishes, which has been widely known for world taste is *bibimbap*. Besides, *bibimbap* is one of the Korean food that becomes representatives at the international level. Surely *bibimbap* is a unique dish. Due to most the Koreans are used to it, then they forget the uniqueness of *bibimbap* itself. A varied mix of ingredients makes *bibimbap* highly desirable food. This dish the Korean people's character; they like to mix and group. Many Korean dishes involving mixing and harmonization.

The character of Koreans can be shown through food, namely *bibimbap*. Koreans like to socialize with each other. For that, *bibimbap* seems to represent this mixed aesthetic very well. “Korean culture is of a bundle culture” is an expression by the Koreans that represent the Korean character of consolidating various elements and mix them. Koreans like to bring any content and make it in a package. Not to mention, *gochujang* that combines all these ingredients is an incredible meal. It must be weird to think that *bibimbap* without the *gochujang*. The power of *gochujang* is not only combining variant vegetables into one taste, yet it also unites a tastes' variety with one another. Many people believed that *bibimbap* reflects the convergence of many kinds of vegetables and sometimes meats (Chung Hae-kyung, 2016). Here are the figures of *kimchi* and *bibimbap*.

Figure 2.1 Kimchi



Source: (gettyimages, 2019)

Figure 2.2 Bibimbap



Source: (gettyimages, 2019)

4. *Fashion*

Fashion is the last type of Korean Wave to be explained by the author. Time magazine called the biggest export three years ago was South Korean K-pop. At the same time, this provocative statement may have been rejected as click bait, and also ignored what consumers of the giant companies Samsung, LG, and Hyundai did for the success of these companies. One of the member boyband Big Bang, G-Dragon, through their hits, he was babbling and highly slippery dance in front of more than 30.000 fans in Hong Kong. In order to support his appearance, he was dressing as bright as a star. All their fans bought the merchandise. Visible that K-pop has become a cultural phenomenon.

Moreover, it becomes a commercial juggernaut. Inevitably, fashion also progressively at its essence. However, probably a better description of the international attract of K-pop and Korean fashion lies in the growth of KCON's popularity. KCON is an annual convention-type event that usually held in Japan and the United States since 2012. Western Europeans after the Second World War became obsessed with all things that were American. A film called James Dean, rock 'n' roll, poodle skirt for girls, fast food like burgers, and Coca-Cola are things that were very popular in Western Europe. "Coca-colonization" of Europe is a term described by historians for that period. This soft power influence, even though it is not as striking as it once was, it is still apparent. Just as in East Asia, something like Coca-colonization also happens. Whether it is in theaters, in supermarkets or on television, it is almost impossible to avoid the power of the modern South Korean style.

Music and fashion are the most visible, audible in the cultural wedge. Many K-pop stars have swept out the charts in Hong Kong to penetrate the West, approaching the Korean wave in Europe and North America. As a result, many Korean designers have gotten a spark, in the United States, there have

been Korean-themed events at New York Fashion Week recently garnering much attention for Korean designers, such as Lie Sang-bong, Lee Suk-tae, and Lee Ji-yeon.

They are starting to the Korean televisions and movies that made K-pop moved on to the international obsession. A superstar of the Korean drama *My Love from the Star*, Kim Soo-Hyun successfully advertising various items from mobile phones to cars in other countries such as Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Singapore. Willy-nilly fashion came to it. All fans around the world were to dress like their Korean idols. One of the member girl band Dal Shabet, Jiyul said that Korean Wave is incomplete without fashion because fashion itself has influenced K-pop in many ways. Moreover, fashion was also supporting the artists to look their good when performing on the stage. Thus, K-pop would not be what it is today if there is no fashion (Rahman, 2015). Here is picture 2.3 which is a Korean superstar Kim-Soo-Hyun as one of the actors that become fashion trend-center.

Figure 2.3 Kim Soo-hyun



Source: (gettyimages, Kim Soo Hyun, 2019)

For Chinese youngsters who have been influenced by the Korean Wave, South Korea has become synonymous with 'fashionable' or 'stylish' (Onishi, 2006). Many of the youth generations have followed the trend of fashion from South Korea. The fashion of Korean idol group like H.O.T coloring their hair in yellow and wearing hip hop pants, has become popular among the trend of Chinese youth for a long time. Straightened or permed hair, boot cut pants and platform shoes from Korean female stars are also hot items. In big cities like Beijing, shops that exclusively sell Korean clothes and accessories are popping up everywhere. Encouraged by this trend, many Korean clothing brands have begun to expand into the Chinese market. E-Land and Basic House enhance brand recognition by using Korean Wave stars as models (ibid).