

THE POPULARITY OF KOREAN MUSIC (K-POP) AMONG *PERANAKAN* CHINESE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF SOEGIJAPRANATA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Shierly June¹ and Ekawati Marhaenny Dukut²

Abstract: *Korean Wave is one of the popular cultures that has developed in Indonesia. It comes with some special products that attract Indonesian youth. Doing a research on this, it is found that Korean music or K-Pop has noticeable popularity among 96.87% of selected peranakan Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University. This article to discusses and analyzes the phenomenon and the development of K-Pop of the factors of why the peranakan Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University are found of the Korean Wave product.*

Key words: *Korean Wave, K-Pop music, peranakan Chinese, Soegijapranata Catholic University*

¹ **Shierly June.** lovely_darlene_cavanaugh@yahoo.com +6281901214647 was a student of the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University, whose thesis on “Korean Wave and the Understanding of Chinese Identity among Peranakan Chinese Undergraduate Students in Soegijapranata Catholic University” has been defended on June 20, 2012

² **Dra. Ekawati Marhaenny Dukut, M.Hum.** ekawatimd@gmail.com +628122938202 is a lecturer at the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University who is currently also pursuing a doctorate degree at the American Studies Graduate Program in Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta with a specialization on popular culture.

POPULAR CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

Every person brings with them their culture and lives with it in the society they decide to choose and develop it further. In doing so, they blend the culture they have inherited from generation to generation with the immediate culture of their new society. Thus, within a society, there are many cultural point of views in looking at and behaving towards the others' cultures. Some may look down at certain cultures, do discrimination, and even refuse and fight others' cultures.

However, on the contrary, some people can also admire and idolize others' cultures that they consider fabulous, prestigious, and have a higher value, which is often further considered as „popular culture'. The phenomenon of popular culture cannot be separated from what is called „globalization'. Shim (2006:26) in his study states that:

The major frame of reference in international communication research today is globalization, a word that has become part of everyday vocabulary. The term refers to the process and context of the word becoming integrated, and it is most exuberantly used in corporate slogans

Through globalization, the exchange of cultures among countries is very possible especially for the cultures which are considered popular. People can immediately get information about a kind of popular culture as much as possible easily from the internet and other mass media and then apply it.

Thus, globalization becomes a bridge and path for countries in the world to exchange information and communicate each other unlimitedly and it makes possible for capitalist countries with their modern cultures to spread out and sell the cultures world-widely.

THE NOTIONS OF KOREAN WAVE

As the writer has explained above, the dissemination of popular culture cannot be separated from what is called „globalization’. The latest booming popular culture, Korean Wave, also comes, develops, and influences Indonesian people through globalization.

There are some notions to define „Korean Wave’. A finding from Shim states that “News media and trade magazines have recognized the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia by dubbing it in „Korean Wave’ (*Hallyu* or *Hanryu* in Korean). The Associated Press reported in March 2002: „Call it “kim chic”” (2006:25). In addition, Xuezhe in her study defines Korean Wave as “the growing popularity of South Korean culture and South Korean products ... from clothes to hairstyle, well-packaged television dramas to slick movies, popular music to comic books, video games to electronic appliances, mobile phone to automobiles” (2007:3). Therefore, from the definitions, Korean Wave rises in Asia with many congregating elements that influence many life aspects of the countries affected by it.

A study by Dator and Seo (2004) reveals the reasons of Korean Wave’s popularity into some points: first, Korean dynamic young generation is claimed as the engine behind its success story (Dator and Seo 2004:32). The youths’ creativity and imagination is blossoming as the result of the prosperity of the country as well as in its political democracy.

Second, democratization in Korea plays a role where the full-fledge freedom of expression is guaranteed (Dator & Seo, 2004, p.33). The youth can freely express their creativity in their songs or the story of drama because in the rule of pop culture, old authoritarian traditional rules are assumed as ridiculous thing.

Third, some experts argue that the phenomenal success and advance of Korea's mass culture in Asia to a set of its unique qualities is in its dynamism characteristic, such as that "played in Korean dance music", which is a "highly entertaining nature, admirable production quality, and niche market position" (Dator and Seo 2004:33).

Therefore, Korean Wave is a new Korean cultural product, besides its manufacturing products, that has significant popularity and affects many people because it takes the young generations as the engine supported by the democratization in Korea that produces the unique and quality popular culture.

KOREAN WAVE IN INDONESIA

Korean popular culture, or usually known as „Korean Wave’, can be easily found and applied by many Indonesian youth nowadays. When the writer perceives the phenomenon happening among the youth today, there are many boys and girls, starting from hairstyles, wardrobes, accessories, and music, applying to what is called „Korean Wave’. In addition, there are also a lot of Korean drama DVDs (although some prefer to watch it on television) and songs collected by Korean Wave lovers.

Mass media becomes a source that encourages the youth to perform and apply Korean Wave. For example, there are many guidelines or tutorials of how to be fabulous with Korean fashion, style, and make up in magazines and internet in addition to the spread of many online shops of Korean wardrobes and accessories. The youth can also easily download K-Pop songs, music videos, and dramas from the internet.

The phenomenon of Korean Wave among Indonesian youth is also supported by the emergence of some Korean dramas broadcasted by two Indonesian TV stations such as SCTV that

broadcasted the first Korean drama “Winter Sonata” in 2002 continued by *Indosiar*³ which has been broadcasting a lot of Korean dramas for these recent years.

Furthermore, the spread of Korean songs and music videos of Korean boy/girl-bands performing the energetic dance and easy-listening songs in the internet encourages the youth to imitate or apply the similar style of dress, dance and song arrangement.

The effect of popular culture always seems to infect some groups in societies to be drawn in it. However, from the writer’s observation, the *peranakan* Chinese youth are very potential to be the object of study about Korean Wave because of particular factors, which are discussed in the next section.

PERANAKAN CHINESE

Korean Wave is known as a popular culture that comes from East Asia. The characteristics of the culture are still under the rule of East Asian cultures although it includes Western cultures inside it. However, the packaging of Korean Wave will be seen as Asian cultures.

It is observed that there are many *peranakan* Chinese youth that are fond of Korean Wave. The term *peranakan* Chinese itself appears from what happened in the New Order Era. A study by Suryadinata (1999:3) states that:

Let us look at the ethnic Chinese situation. Just as the indigenous Indonesians are not a homogenous group, neither are the ethnic Chinese a homogeneous group. There are Chinese-speaking and Indonesian-speaking groups. But the 32 years of Soeharto rule have

³ *Indosiar* is a television channel in Indonesia.

succeeded in “Indonesianizing” the majority of ethnic Chinese in that the younger generation has lost the command of the Chinese language completely. Only those above forty, who attended Chinese schools in Indonesia, are still able to converse in Chinese.

Realizing this fact, Suryadinata then adds that “among those who no longer speak Chinese, local terms are often used to refer to themselves - for example, *peranakan* Chinese (locally born and Indonesian-speaking Chinese)” (1999:4).

However, the fact shows that *peranakan* Chinese nowadays are not only unable to speak Chinese. They have lost many Chinese cultures. For example, there are many *peranakan* Chinese who do not have Chinese names or even know their parents’ Chinese names. A study by Prasetyo (2011:9) defines name as “one of the inheritances of a race and it can reflect their identity of their race; it has special characteristic that will distinguish them from others”. Thus, the inability to speak Chinese and the absence of Chinese names have become a clear view how many *peranakan* Chinese have lost their Chinese identity. The New Order government’s bad treatments become the cause of this. The study by Prasetyo (2011:2-3) reveals the fact that:

In 1965, there was a law; Kep.Presidium No.127/U/Kep/12/1966 *mengenai Peraturan Ganti Nama Bagi WNI yang Memakai Nama Cina*; that compelled Chinese-Indonesians people to change their Chinese names into Indonesian names. It can be one of the reasons why they did not use Chinese names as their names. They were forced to change their Chinese names to Indonesian and they had no freedom to use Chinese names as their names so

that they change their Chinese names and use Indonesian names.

Thus, it is concluded that *peranakan* Chinese are Chinese Indonesians with less knowledge of Chinese cultures. It makes them easy to apply another culture, especially popular culture like Korean Wave. In addition, as youth, *peranakan* Chinese are in the phase of identity formation process and easily influenced.

THE POPULARITY OF KOREAN MUSIC (K-POP)

Korean Wave comes, develops, and influences many people through globalization. However, the youth becomes a potential subject, who applies Korean Wave because a study by Xuezhe (2007:7-8) indicates that most youth prefer to indulge in using the internet to play computer games and animation and they are the ones who more willing to be fashionable and find their own characteristics. In the age range, the youth is also a group that is in the phase of the individual identity formation process which becomes one of the “unending layering and interaction of cultural knowledge acquisition” (Huat 2006:35). Thus, as youth, the *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University are easily influenced by Korean Wave which is booming nowadays as a popular culture.

Doing a research about Korean Wave, 32 *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University were collected as data. In classifying Korean Wave, the kinds of products that the participants like are found to be in the forms of: K-Pop (music), Korean dramas, Korean variety show, Korean celebrities (actors/actresses, singers, and bands), fashion and style, and dance. The result from the interview about the participants’ kinds of interest of Korean Wave is as follows:

Kinds of Interest	Percentage
Korean Music (K-Pop)	96.87%
Korean Dramas	62.50%
Korean Variety Show	09.37%
Korean Celebrities	71.87%
Fashion and Style	56.25%
Dance	06.25%

Table 1:

Participants' Kinds of Interest in Korean Wave (June, 2012)

Because Korean music or K-Pop holds the highest percentage of participants' interest, then this article makes a focused discussion on the popularity of K-Pop among the *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University.

Korean pop music or known as K-Pop is a new music genre coming from Korea that skillfully blends Western and Asian values to create its own (Shim 2006:40). The research among *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University is done by interviewing the participants and got a result that 96.875% of them like K-Pop. The reasons why they like K-Pop are:

- a. Easy listening and nice songs: Most *Peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University like K-Pop because of the easy listening and nice songs.
- b. The songs have soft music especially for the instrumental music: K-Pop does not only consist of music with the voices of the singers, but it also has instrumental music with its particular style. Interviewing the participants, the reason that they like K-Pop instrumental music is because it has a soft and calm character.

- c. The songs have good lyrics and melody: Relating to the first reason that K-Pop is nice and easy listening, K-Pop is also considered having meaningful lyrics and good melody. This makes *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University like Korean music.
- d. The singers have good voices: Korean music has many singers as the engine that supports the popularity of Korean Wave. Thus, the vocal ability and skill of the singers become a crucial thing that makes K-Pop popular. Doing interview with participants, it is found that the good vocal of the singers, in addition to the good melody and meaningful lyrics, makes K-Pop well-liked by *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University.
- e. Some music tends to be „cute’: As a popular culture, K-Pop appears with its special music style that offers cute songs and singers. Interviewing participants, the writer finds that K-Pop has a special style that makes it different from the other music in which some songs tend to be “cute”. This particular music style attracts some *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University and makes them like K-Pop.
- f. A new different music genre: In addition to the previous reason that K-Pop has some ‘cute’ music style, K-Pop is also known to have and is creatively blending in some music genres. The participants’ ideas in the interview state that K-Pop is a new music genre that is different from the others in which it is the blend of some music genres such as pop, rock, R&B, ballad, and rap. This new music genre makes many *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University like K-Pop.
- g. The music videos have a good story line or plot: It is common for music to have its video to support it. The music videos can be about the meaning of the songs, only perform the singers with their styles, show particular situations, and tell a kind of story. In the same way with the other music, K-Pop also has music videos with many themes and styles including music videos with stories. For Korean music videos with stories, the consideration that the story line is clear makes

many *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University like K-Pop.

The above findings show that Korean music is one of the Korean Wave products than can be enjoyed universally. It offers new genre, easy listening songs, meaningful lyrics, soft instrumental music, good quality of the singers, and interesting music videos. It is easy to get K-Pop songs from the internet and needs only a few minutes to enjoy it. Its superior quality makes K-Pop popular among *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University.

CONCLUSION

Peranakan Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University have less knowledge about Chinese cultures. The lack of knowledge about Chinese cultures is caused by the injustice experienced by Chinese Indonesians in the New Order era. Many Chinese Indonesians were forced to change their Chinese names to Indonesian names and the young generation could not speak Chinese language except those who attended Chinese schools. What happened in the New Order era brings effect to *peranakan* Chinese nowadays. It makes them easy to adopt another culture, especially popular culture like Korean Wave. In addition, their ages as youth also support them to apply Korean Wave because the characteristic of youth are easily influenced and they like to indulge in internet, as it is the best tool to get many up to date information.

Through an analysis of 32 *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students spread out in the many faculties and departments offered by Soegijapranata Catholic University, it is found that the students like certain kinds of Korean Wave products, such as: K-Pop (music), Korean dramas, Korean variety show, Korean celebrities (actors/actresses, singers, and bands), fashion and style, and dance.

However, 96.87% of the students as respondents liked Korean music or K-Pop best. The reasons are that K-Pop offers a new music genre, it has easy listening songs, meaningful lyrics, soft instrumental music, good quality of the singers, and interesting music videos, so it made K-Pop very popular among the *peranakan* Chinese undergraduate students in Soegijapranata Catholic University.

REFERENCES

- Dator, Jim, and Yongseok Seo. Korea as the wave of a future: the emerging dream society of icons and aesthetic experience. In *Journal of Futures Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1: 31–44. In <http://www.jfs.tku.edu.tw/91/04.pdf?refer=www.clickfind.com.au>, 2004, retrieved 11 June 2011.
- Huat, Chua Beng. East Asian Pop Culture: Consumer Communities and Politics of the National. In *Cultural Space and Public Sphere in Asia*, 2006: 27-43. In http://asiafuture.org/csps2006/50pdf/csps2006_1a.pdf, retrieved 15 April 2011.
- June, Shierly. “Korean Wave and the Understanding of Chinese Identity among Peranakan Chinese Undergraduate Students in Soegijapranata Catholic University”. An unpublished thesis Semarang: English Department, Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University, 2012.
- Prasetyo, Lydia. *Language and Identity: An Analysis of the Chinese-Indonesian People’s Practice in Adopting Names at the Faculty of Letters, Unika Soegijapranata*. An unpublished thesis. Semarang: English Department, Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University, 2011.
- Shim, Doobo. “Hybridity and the Rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia”. In *Media, Culture and Society Journal*, Vol. 28, No.1, 2006:25-44. In <http://mcs.sagepub.com/>, retrieved 12 June 2011.

Suryadinata, Leo. *The Ethnic Chinese Issue and National Integration in Indonesia*. Singapore: Department of Political Science National University of Singapore, 1999. In <http://www.iseas.edu.sg/trends992.pdf>, retrieved 16 January 2012.

Xuezhe, Liu. *The Rising of Korean Wave among Chinese Youth.*, 2007. In <http://www.fxqw820.tripod.com/AWS.pdf>, retrieved 11 June 2011.

