

KOREAN WAVE IN MALAYSIA AND CHANGES OF THE KOREA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the Korean-Malaysian relations. The objective is to know if the relationship has intensified at the civilian level as well as the state level in the 21st century. The study attempts to discover what characteristics the bilateral relations in the 21st century have; how the “Korean Wave” was created and in what status it currently is in Malaysia; what socio-cultural and economic changes the Korean Wave has brought to the Malaysian society; and what changes the Korean Wave has made in the Korean-Malaysian relations. The study also examines the significance of the Korean Wave in Malaysia and predicts on the future relations of the two countries.

Keywords: Second Home Programme, multi-cultural, Look-East Policy, Winter Sonata, Twin Education Programme

MALAYSIA AS A CENTER OF GRAVITY

This study focuses on “Korean Wave” in Malaysia to find out if the Korean-Malaysian relations have been intensified at the civilian level as well as the state level in the 21st century. The study tries to discover what characteristics the bilateral relations in the 21st century have; how the Korean Wave was created and in what status it currently is in Malaysia; what sociocultural and economic changes the Korean Wave has brought to the Malaysian society; and what changes the Korean Wave has made in the Korean-Malaysian relations. The study also tries to discover the significance of the Korean Wave in Malaysia and make predictions of the future relations of the two countries.

In the 20th century, the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Korea were led by the governments of the two countries. South Korea tried to consolidate its relations with Malaysia based on President Park Chung-hee’s export-oriented economic policy. Malaysia also tried to step up its relations with South Korea based on Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad’s “Look East Policy.” In contrast, the Korean-Malaysian relations in the 21st century are more intensifying at

the civilian level. Many South Korean people have taken interest in Malaysia due to the “Malaysian Cultural Wave” – “Twin Educational Programme” and “Second Home Programme.” As a result, about 3,000 South Korean students are currently studying in Malaysia and many South Koreans have begun living in Malaysia after retirement. Many Malaysians have also taken greater interest in Korea thanks to the Korean Wave created by South Korean films and TV dramas, such as *Winter Sonata* and *A Jewel in the Palace*. As a result, many Malaysians have visited South Korea for sightseeing tours. Bilateral economic cooperation has been promoted in various fields, such as cultural content and information technology industries. In order to understand changes in the Korean-Malaysian relations, it is necessary to find out what changes the “Malaysian wave in Korea” and the “Korean Wave in Malaysia” have brought to the bilateral relations. This study has a limit in its analysis of changes in the Korean-Malaysian relations because it is only based on an analysis of the Korean Wave in Malaysia.

This study carries significance as an international relations research that analyzes the interrelations between the two countries by making the most out of substantial data on the influence of the Korean Wave in Malaysia, a center of gravity in Southeast Asia (Clausewitz, 1976). Previous studies on the Korean Wave concentrated on the prevalence of the Korean Wave in China and on its socioeconomic feedback in South Korea (See Lee, Min Ja, 2002; Lee, Eun Sook, 2002; Lee, Chi Han & Huh, Jin, 2002; Huh, Jin, 2002; Lee, Jun Woong, 2003; Park, Kilsoon, 2004; Suh, Young Kun, 2004). Studies have been made on the Korean Wave in Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore and Mongolia (Park, Jae Kyu, 1985). But this study focuses on how the sociocultural and economic changes in Malaysia brought by the Korean Wave are influencing the Korean-Malaysian relations. This study focuses on finding out how domestic factors affect international phenomena. In this regard, this study attempts to make a prediction of the future Korean-Malaysian relations based on the understanding of the Korean Wave in Malaysia. Conversely, it can chart the future direction of the Korean Wave in Malaysia for a desirable relationship between the two countries.

A study of the Korean Wave in Malaysia has a merit in that it can find out how much longer and how much farther the Korean Wave can stay the course in a foreign country like Malaysia which has its own unique social characteristics and international status as a multi-racial nation, multi-cultural society, and Muslim state.

- The multi-racial nation and multi-cultural society
 Malaysia is a multi-racial nation consisting of 58 percent of Malays, 25 percent of Chinese, 7 percent of Indians, and 10 percent of people of other descents and foreign residents. Religious freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution, so that a variety of religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, coexist. It is also a multi-cultural society where besides Malay, English, and Chinese are spoken. With such diverse modes of living and ways of thought, Malaysia can serve as an important yardstick to measure how much longer and how much more universal the Korean Wave can remain in Malaysia.

- Malay society and the Muslim state
 Malaysia is a Muslim state that has adopted Islam as its state religion followed by its major ethnic group, Malays who account for 58 percent of the entire

population. Malaysia is playing a leading role in the worldwide Islamic community as the chair of OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) from 2003 to 2007, an international Islamic organization that comprises 57 Islamic nations and 1.3 billion Muslims. Malaysia is a bridgehead of the pan-Islamic community linking Egypt and the Middle East with Central Asia. In this regard, whether the Korean Wave is accepted in Malaysia or not can be an important measure of how the Korean Wave can be expanded, transcending the boundaries of the Confucian values and Asian trends.

- A center of gravity in Southeast Asia
Malaysia can be called a center of gravity in Southeast Asia in that it has wielded influence as a leading political and economic nation in this region. Politically, Malaysia has continued regional and North-South cooperation in the framework of cooperation with the ASEAN. It has called for strengthening the ASEAN Free Trade Area and the economic cooperation with East Asian nations. Malaysia's influence is being enhanced in the international community due to its chairmanship of the NAM (Nonaligned Movement) (2003–2006), OIC (2003–2007), and ASEAN (2005–2006). In fact, the country is making the most of its status in international relations.

Economically, Malaysia has pushed for its economic development based on "Wawasan 2020," a long-term national development blueprint initiated by former Prime Minister Mahathir in February 1991. Its goal is to become an ideally advanced country, where both economic growth and fair distribution of wealth have been realized by 2020. As of 2004, Malaysia has become a rich country in Southeast Asia, with the growth rate of 7.1 percent, a GNP of 117.8 billion dollars, and per capita GNP of 4,352 dollars. It is regarded as a successful development model in the Islamic community. From this perspective, it will be possible to obtain basic data to make a prediction of the future possibility of the Korean Wave in the entire Southeast Asian region based on an analysis of the Korean Wave in Malaysia.

THE PAST AND PRESENT OF THE KOREA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS

Since it established diplomatic relations with Malaysia in 1960, South Korea has maintained friendly and cooperative relations with the country (Park, Jae Kyu, 1985). Currently, South Korea and Malaysia are mutually important trading partners. The year 2002, when the TV drama *Winter Sonata* was premiered in Malaysia, is idealistically the base year for an analysis of the interrelations between the Korean Wave in Malaysia and the Korean-Malaysian relations. But for convenience sake, this study has looked into the Korean-Malaysian relations, using the 20th and 21st centuries as reference periods.

Korean-Malaysian Relations in the 20th Century: State Level

The Korean-Malaysian relations were promoted by the governments of the two countries in the 20th century. President Park Chung-hee of South Korea tried to strengthen its relations with Malaysia based on export-oriented economic policies.

Prime Minister Mahathir also tried to step up relations with South Korea through his “Look East Policy.”

The “Look East Policy” was initiated by Prime Minister Mahathir in 1982 when the Malaysian-British relations became sour in the wake of Britain’s raise of school tuition fees and Malaysia’s takeover of Guthrie. The policy is aimed at enhancing Malaysian workers’ competitiveness and industrial productivity by following the example of East Asian workers’ industriousness and sacrifice that had made it possible for the East Asian nations to achieve economic successes (Lee, Kyungchan, 1998). The policy was based on development models of South Korea and Japan, instead of those of the West. As a result of the Malaysian government’s efforts and South Korea’s response, the Korean-Malaysian economic relations rapidly developed, with the bilateral trade volume exceeding one billion dollars in 1983. Personnel exchanges were also expanded with South Korea and Japan, with many Malaysian students, engineers, businessmen, and government officials sent to these East Asian countries to learn advanced technologies and industriousness of the workers.

Based on agreements with the Malaysian government, South Korea and Japan supported its “Look East Policy” in four categories—(1) industrial and vocational training, (2) short-term training of mid-career officials from the Malaysian government, (3) university education, and (4) closer ties between educational, training and research institutions of the two countries. As a first step to enhancing the effects of education and training and promoting technology transfer, Japanese and Korean language programs were established at national universities, such as UM (Universiti Malaya), UKM (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), and ITM (Institut Teknologi Mara) (Lee, Kyungchan, 1998). The “Look East Policy” played a decisive role in strengthening relations with South Korea after the 1980s. In conclusion, the Korean-Malaysian relations in the 20th century, when the Korean Wave had not come into play yet, were characterized by state-initiated artificial promotion of bilateral relations.

Korean-Malaysian Relations in the 21st Century: Civilian Level

As in the 20th century, the Korean-Malaysian relations in the 21st century are still maintained and strengthened by the governments of the two countries. This is substantiated by six rounds of summits and frequent exchanges of ministerial-grade senior officials since the beginning of the 21st century.

- Aug. 1997. Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato’ Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi’s Visit to Korea.
- Dec. 1997. Prime Minister Koh Kun’s Visit to Malaysia. (ASEAN+3)
- Nov. 1998. President Kim Dae-jung’s Visit to Malaysia. (APEC)
- Jun. 1999. Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar’s Visit to Korea.
- Oct. 2000. Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad’s Visit to Korea. (ASEM III)
- May 2001. Malaysian King Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin’s Visit to Korea.
- Oct. 2001. Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad’s Visit to Korea.
- May 2002. Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad’s Visit to Korea.
- Apr. 2003. Malaysian Education Minister’s Visit to Korea.

- Jul. 2003. Korean Foreign Minister Yoon Young Kwan's Visit to Malaysia.
- Oct. 2003. Korea-Malaysia Summit Meeting. (ASEAN+3, Bali)
- Dec. 2003. Former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad's Visit to Korea.(EAF)
- Aug. 2004. Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi's Visit to Korea.
- Oct. 2004. Korean National Assembly Chairman Kim Won-ki's Visit to Malaysia.
- Mar. 2005. Former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad's Visit to Korea. (Asian Leader's Conference)
- Dec. 2005. President Roh Moo-hyun's Visit to Malaysia

The two countries' summits have focused on the inter-Korean relations, bilateral economic cooperation in Asia, and bilateral cooperation in economy and science, thereby contributing to developing the friendly and cooperative relations to a mature partnership.

Based on treaties reached at these summits, the two countries have realized working-level cooperation through consultative councils and signed agreements in various fields, such as IT, broadcasting and cultural content. This shows that the bilateral relations have been strengthened at the state level in the 21st century as well.

Examples of bilateral agreements are as follows:

- In December 2004, the Malaysian Institute For Micro Electronic System (MIMOS) signed an agreement on knowledge consulting with the Institute for Industrial Policy Studies in South Korea (*inews*, Dec. 10, 2004).
- In May 2005, the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) of Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding on a cultural content project with the Korea Culture & Content Agency (*Korea Press*, Jan. 26, 2006).
- In May 2005, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) signed a joint statement on the promotion of cooperation in broadcasting with the Korean Broadcasting Commission.

Many Malaysians have taken interest in Korea and its culture in the wake of the Korean cultural wave created by Korean films and TV dramas, including "Winter Sonata" and "A Jewel in the Palace." Consequently, a considerable number of Malaysians have visited Korea for tourist purposes. Concurrently, bilateral economic cooperation has preceded in various fields related to cultural content and IT industries. Meanwhile, many South Koreans have also taken interest in Malaysia thanks to the "Twin Educational Programme" and "Second Home Programme," a Malaysian version of cultural wave. As a result, about 3,000 South Korean students are staying in Malaysia for study. Many elderly South Koreans have begun moving to Malaysia to stay after retirement (*Dongpo News*, Jun. 22, 2006).

The Korean-Malaysian relations in the 21st century are characterized by a livelier implementation of civilian-level economic and technological cooperation, and industrial and cultural activities. The foremost case of civilian-level economic cooperation is the founding of the Malaysian branch of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Association/World OKTA. On April 14, 2006, this

institution was founded in Malaysia with a view of promoting friendship among all businessmen based in Malaysia and helping them exchange business information with each other, as well as enhancing capacity to protect their rights and interests (*Korea Press*, Apr. 14, 2006). As part of a bilateral cooperation in information and communications, Information and Communications University of South Korea signed basic agreements with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) and Multimedia University (MMU) of Malaysia on joint research and the exchange of students and personnel (*Korea Press*, Dec. 30, 2004).

Since the Korean Wave appeared in Malaysia, the Korean-Malaysian relations have developed at the civilian level, too. This relationship is characterized by a natural promotion of ties initiated by civilians.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF KOREAN WAVE IN MALAYSIA

The South Korean TV dramas that have been aired in Malaysia so far include *Winter Sonata*, *Autumn Fairy Tale*, *Joyful Girl*, *My Love*, *Patjwi*, *All About Eve*, *Doctor Brothers*, *Successful Trader*, *All-In*, *Woman Detective*, *Stairway to Heaven*, *Lovers in Paris*, and *A Jewel in the Palace*. Currently, another South Korean TV drama *Land* is being aired on TV2, a civilian channel in Malaysia. TV dramas that have significantly contributed to boosting the Korean Wave in Malaysia include *Winter Sonata*, *Autumn Fairy Tale*, and *A Jewel in the Palace*.

Despite it having been aired three times so far, *Winter Sonata* has enjoyed invariably high viewer ratings. Its lead actor Bae Yong-joon has since been loved by Malaysians as South Korea's representative actor. *Winter Sonata* is a soap opera with a tragic ending of love, using the beautiful winter scenery of South Korea as a backdrop. This drama has captivated the hearts of Malaysians who are family-centered and sensitive to emotions. It has left deep impressions in the hearts of Malaysian viewers of Malay or Chinese descents, regardless of race or religion. The influential Malaysian daily *The Star* has carried a story on the success of South Korean soap operas. According to the newspaper, *Winter Sonata*, which was broadcast in Malaysia in 2002, was such a smash hit that more than 1.5 million viewers riveted their eyes on the TV screen whenever each episode of the drama was on (*The Star*, Aug. 1, 2003).

Following *Winter Sonata* in 2002, *Autumn Fairly Tale* also contributed to maintaining popularity of South Korean dramas in Malaysia. The high popularity of "Autumn Fairy Tale" led to its export to Egypt, another Islamic country (Yoon, Jae Sik, 2006). A Malaysian pop song featuring a boy struggling to win back the heart of his girlfriend who has been fascinated by Song Seung-heun, the lead actor of "Autumn Fairy Tale," hit the headlines in Southeast Asia. This trend also led Southeast Asians to take interest in South Korean pop songs (*Culture Garden*, Dec. 20, 2005).

A Jewel in the Palace, showcasing Korean foods was loved by all Malaysians since it was broadcast as a prime-time programming (*Hannah Press*, Mar. 3, 2006). The drama won popularity both from Malaysian women and men. This drama caused many Malaysians to take greater interest in Korean culture and foods. Naturally, many Malaysians visited Korean restaurants to taste "kimchi" and "bulgogi." Its lead actress Lee Young-ae has ranked second following Bae Yong-joon as a favorite

South Korean celebrity in Malaysia. TV ads featuring Lee are still showing on TV screens.

The Korean Wave in films began with the blockbuster *Swiri*. This trend was followed by Malaysians' love of the horror movie *Phone*. With the introduction of these films as momentum, Malaysians came to know about South Korean movie stars, such as Won Bin and Lee Jung-jae (*Yonhap News*, May 17, 2005). Afterwards, scores of South Korean films, including *Old Boy*, *Friends*, *Taegukgi: Brotherhood of War*, *My Sassy Girl*, *Windstruck*, and *My Little Bride*, were introduced to Malaysia one after another. Because of a relatively stable social structure of Malaysia, Malaysians prefer South Korean films that comically deal with love stories, rather than movies with serious themes of war or violence. Just as these South Korean films and TV dramas have won high popularity in Malaysia, so have many South Korean pop stars, such as Bae Yong-joon, Choi Ji-woo, Lee Young-ae, Ahn Jae-wook, Jang Dong-kun, Won Bin, and Lee Byung-heon. Film actor Kwon Sang-woo has won popularity as a next-generation Korean Wave star as the drama *Stairway to Heaven* starring him was broadcast on 8TV in Malaysia (*Daily Sports*, May 7, 2005). Actresses Song Hye-kyo and Kim Hee-sun have captivated the hearts of young Malaysian men (*The Star*, May 16, 2005).

In the wake of the popularity of South Korean dramas and films, South Korean pop songs have consistently won popularity in Malaysia, with singers or groups, such as Jang Nara, Rain, BoA, BabyVox, and T.V.X.Q, coming into the spotlight in Malaysia.

In a celebration to mark the 15th anniversary of South Korea joining the ASEAN as an observer nation on September 22, 2005, BabyVox gave a successful performance along with TV actor Kim Jae-won, the dance group WaWa, and the rock duo The Cloth (*Hannah Press*, Sep. 29, 2005). T.V.X.Q. won recognition as an LG cellular phone advertisement starring the group was broadcast on TV channels in Malaysia. At a fervent request from local agency officials, T.V.X.Q. will give a solo concert entitled "Rising Sun 1st Asia Tour 2006 Live In Malaysia" at the Putra Indoor Stadium with a capacity of about 20,000 seats on July 14, 2006 (*NoCut News*, Jun. 22, 2006). Besides, a traditional percussion performance was given at the Genting International Showroom from November 18 to 27, 2005, introducing a modernized version of traditional Korean percussion to Malaysia.

The characteristics of Korean culture as introduced by Korean films, dramas, pop performances in Malaysia have led to the efforts to discover the possibility of the Korean Wave going global, spreading to the Islamic world, and sustaining itself for a long term.

1. The Possibility of the Korean Wave going Global

Malaysia is a multi-racial nation and multi-cultural society where diverse ways of thought and modes of living coexist peacefully and in harmony. Such a country's acceptance of the Korean Wave signifies the possibility that the trend can go global. Malaysia's acceptance of the Korean Wave also means that it does not merely carry Korean nationalist trends, but also contains global universalism.

Malaysia is composed of diverse ethnic groups, such as Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others. The country is also a multi-cultural society. Islam is its state religion, but also permits the freedom of religions, accepting Buddhism and

Hinduism. While Malay is the official language, English and Chinese are also spoken extensively. In Malaysia with such diversity, the Korean Wave has successfully come into play through TV dramas and films. According to Ryu Jong-jun, director of the Trade Center of KOTRA (Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency), South Korean TV dramas have captivated the hearts of Malaysian viewers, with a growing number of many local residents of Chinese descent or other descents becoming fans of the Korean Wave. Fed up with Hong Kong or Taiwanese programs that were broadcast during the prime time, the Malaysian viewers have now turned their eyes to South Korean TV soap operas.

There are two views about how the Korean Wave has been successful overseas. The first view is that the South Korean programs feature Korean nationalism reflecting the unique Korean way of thinking and mode of living. The other view is that the South Korean programs are based on global universalism that can win sympathy from anyone, regardless of gender, race or religion. Malaysians may have been attracted to the beautiful Korean landscape and the unique Korean ways of thinking and living, including the snow in winter, foliage in autumn, and traditional costume and foods, as they have never seen these kinds of things in Malaysia (*Segye Daily*, Feb. 1, 2006). But this allegation has a limit in explaining most of the Malaysians who have diverse ways of thinking and modes of living. On the contrary, the second view about the global universalism of the Korean Wave is more persuasive, as human beings can sympathize with inherent human emotions (*The Star*, May 16, 2005).

After watching *Winter Sonata*, the pioneer program of the Korean Wave, Felicia Tan, an avid fan of South Korean TV dramas, said, "The love stories in South Korean TV dramas portray very innocent and everlasting love between men and women. But they sometimes reveal weak fabrics in storylines. No matter what, the South Korean dramas deal with values that are rapidly vanishing from Asians' lives" (Lee, Diana).

Diana Lee, an expert in the Korean Wave in Southeast Asia, said, "The main reason for *Winter Sonata's* popularity could be attributed to its bold exposition of the various aspects of love: 1) puppy love; 2) first love; 3) possessive love; 4) lost love; 5) parental love; and 6) true love. Everyone in the audience has experienced at least one or more of these different shades of love, where he or she could empathize with any of the characters at one time or another in this melodrama" (Lee, Diana).

As such, in Malaysia, a country that has diverse ways of thinking and modes of living, the Korean Wave has successfully taken root through TV dramas and films. This means that the Korean Wave carries global universalism, transcending a parochial nationalism that publicizes only the unique Korean ways of thinking and living.

2. The Possibility of the Korean Wave Spreading to the Islamic World

Malaysia is a Muslim state where nearly 60 percent of the entire population follows Islam. Malaysia's acceptance of the Korean Wave shows the possibility that the trend can spread to the Islamic world. KOTRA expects Malaysia to contribute largely to forming a "Korean Wave belt" in the Islamic world, considering that the country plays a bridgehead role in the Islamic world linking Egypt and the Middle East to Central Asia (*Yonhap News*, May 7, 2005). In reality, Malaysia serves as a gate to the Islamic market. TV dramas that have won recognition in this country have been

exported once again to Islamic countries in the Middle East. After airing in Malaysia, "Autumn Fairy Tale" was broadcast on an Egyptian state TV channel in 2004. "A Jewel in the Palace," which has been broadcast in Malaysia more than three times because many Malaysians love it, has been on the air in Egypt since February 2006 (*Yonhap News*, May 7, 2005).

Malaysia is currently holding the chairmanship of the OIC, an organization that speaks for 57 Islamic nations and 1.3 billion Muslims, 2003-2007, playing a leading role among Islamic nations. In light of this, Malaysia's acceptance of the Korean Wave signifies that the Korean Wave can be embraced by Muslims and stretch its values as a global trend.

3. The Possibility of the Korean Wave Sustaining Itself for a Long Term

The way Malaysia has accepted the Korean Wave shows that this trend will continue for a long term. Although it is one of the countries that have joined the trend of the Korean Wave last in Southeast Asia, Malaysia has accepted the trend faster and more aggressively. The Korea Foundation for Asian Cultural Exchange has conducted a survey of 1,543 people living in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand from September 26 to October 14, 2005. According to the "Report on the Consumer Trend and Policies in Southeast Asia Regarding Korean Cultural Products" prepared by the foundation, 44.3 percent of Malaysian respondents have watched "Korean TV dramas," 19.2 percent have seen "Korean films," and 4.7 percent have listened to "Korean pop songs" (*Herald Economics*, Dec. 2, 2005). According to another survey of 500 Malaysians in Kuala Lumpur (50 percent of them are of Malay descent and the other 50 of non-Malay descent) conducted by Professor Ha Bongjoon from June 1 to 14, 2006, 59.7 percent have watched Korean TV dramas (over the past month), 57.3 percent have seen Korean films (over the past six months), and 34.2 percent (over the past month). Of these respondents, 70.3 percent are very satisfied with Korean dramas, 68.9 percent with Korean movies, and 56.7 percent with Korean pop songs (Ha, Bongjoon, 2006).

In reality, "Winter Sonata" and "A Jewel in the Palace" have been broadcast more than three times. Currently, "Lovers in Paris" is on the air for the third time. This shows that the Korean Wave trend in Malaysia is not a short-term phenomenon, but a long-term tendency. Malaysia should be categorized as ranking in the middle group of countries where the Korean Wave has spread proportionately and rather extensively.

THE KOREAN WAVE AND THE SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES IN MALAYSIA

The Korean Wave trend in Malaysia has brought sociocultural and economic changes that are different from the changes occurring before the introduction of the trend. First of all, sociocultural changes include more favorable views of Korea, greater interest in South Korea's society and culture, including the Korean language and Korean studies, and Malaysians' changed way of thinking and mode of living. Next, economic changes include Malaysians' higher preference of Korean food, more Malaysians' visit to South Korea for tourist purposes, and more Malaysians' purchase of South Korean goods.

Sociocultural Changes:

More favorable views of Korea

The Korean Wave trend in Malaysia has led Malaysians to have a better understanding of Korea's society and culture, helping them to have more favorable views of Korea. A survey about Korea and Koreans conducted by Professor Ha Bongjoon shows the following: "Korea is an advanced country" (3.19 percent), "I have a good feeling of Korea" (3.11 percent), and "Korea is an open country" (3.08 percent). These responses show that Malaysians have a favorable view of Korea. Their negative views of the Korean culture are below the average scale ratings: "disgusting" (2.52 percent), "violent" (2.57 percent), "sexual" (2.73 percent), and "westernized" (2.85 percent). Their positive views of the Korean culture are above the average scale ratings: "fresh" (3.09 percent), "advanced" (3.14 percent), "romantic" (3.16 percent), and "traditional" (3.26 percent) (Ha, Bongjoon, 2006).

As there are no available data on the Malaysians' views of Korea that were compiled before the introduction of the Korean Wave, it is not proper to say that Malaysians' positive views of Korea as seen in the 2006 survey are the outcome of the Korean Wave in Malaysia. However, it is possible to conclude that Malaysia's acceptance of the Korean Wave has not given Malaysians negative images of Korea.

Greater interest in Korea's society and culture: Korean studies

The Korean Wave trend in Malaysia has led Malaysians to take greater interest in Korea's society and culture and therefore stimulated curiosity about the Korean language and Korean studies. The results of the survey about the Korean culture and Korea conducted by Professor Ha Bongjoon are as follows: "I like Korean culture" (3.07 percent), "I like to experience more Korean culture" (3.15 percent), "I am interested in Korea" (2.92 percent), and "I want to know Korea better" (3.14 percent). Such a high interest in Korea's society and culture will lead to an academic curiosity of the Korean language and Korean studies (Ha, Bongjoon, 2006).

Currently, the Korean language education is being conducted at several Malaysian universities, including UM, UKM, UPM, UiTM, and SNU, with about 200 to 300 students taking the course at each university. Unfortunately, teacher shortage is becoming a problem. As such, private tutoring institutes have opened Korean language courses. The number of Korean language students is smaller in Malaysia than in any other Southeast Asian nation. In other Southeast Asian countries, people's enthusiasm about the Korean language runs high. Hence high fever of the Korean language study and a large number of students, as good command of the Korean language is directly linked to finding jobs. In contrast to other Southeast Asian nations, Malaysia maintains relatively stable economic growth rates. As such, Malaysia has a smaller number of Korean language students and their relatively lower enthusiasm. But Malaysians' enthusiasm about the Korean language is quite a different case of Korean Wave trend, as it is based on their interest in the Korean culture and their academic curiosity.

At the present, UM is the only Malaysian learning institution that offers Korean studies. The university began Korean studies education by opening the Korean Studies Program within the framework of the Department of Asian Studies in 1997. In the early days, there were only three or four students attending Korean studies. In the academic years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004, there was no student at all.

But 10 students were enrolled in Korean studies in the academic year 2004/2005, with 8 students in the year 2005/2006. Now in the academic year 2006/2007, 11 students are enrolled in Korean studies. We can now say that Korean studies programs in Malaysia are in a stable status. The Korean Wave trend in Malaysia may have an indirect relationship with the increasing interest in Korean studies.

The current and future Korean-Malaysian relations need more experts in Korean language and Korean studies and in Malay and the Malaysian studies. Both countries should pay more attention and give more support to the development of the Malay language and Malaysian studies programs, as well as Korean language and Korean studies programs.

Changes in Malaysians' way of thinking and mode of living

The Korean Wave trend in Malaysia may have the possibility of bringing changes to Malaysians' way of thinking and mode of living by allowing them to have access to the Korean way of thinking and living. The most immediate changes include efforts of Malaysian people and students to gather information on South Korean TV dramas, films, and entertainers, and to form fraternities to share this information. Teoh Chit Hwa, a Malaysian resident who has caused a stir by announcing his donation of internal organs after death, was reportedly influenced by a South Korean TV drama. Health Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk Lee Kah Choon said superstitious beliefs had been hampering efforts to get people to donate their organs. When the media highlighted Chit Hwa's noble act, it created a lot of public awareness on organ donation (*The Star*, Jan. 5, 2006).

The Korean people's sense of community, diligence and good manners as seen in South Korean TV dramas and movies can give positive influence to the Malaysian society. In this sense, the Korean Wave trend is a new type of "East Look Policy" that has come into shape from down below in a civic society. As everything has double sides, South Korea and Malaysia should join hands to ensure that the Korean Wave trend gives affirmative impact to the Malaysian society.

Economic Changes:

Preference of Korean food

The Korean Wave trend in Malaysia has helped Malaysians take greater interest in Korean food by allowing them a glimpse of Korean traditions and food. Among other things, *A Jewel in the Palace* featuring traditional Korean food played a major role in bringing these changes to Malaysia. In actuality, five new Korean restaurants named "Daejanggeum" (*A Jewel in the Palace*) have opened in Kuala Lumpur. Thanks to the boom of the Korean Wave trend, exports of kimchi to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia have largely increased, with the volume of kimchi export to Malaysia increasing 150 percent (*Joongang Daily*, Nov. 10, 2005). But according to Professor Ha Bongjoon's survey, 30.6 percent of residents in Kuala Lumpur have tasted Korean food, with a mere 2.96 percent of them showing a certain "degree of satisfaction" and 2.88 percent expressing "purchasing intention." The percentages of responses in the categories "degree of satisfaction" and "purchasing intention" are below the average scale ratings. This tells us that we should make efforts to develop Korean food palatable to Malaysians.

More Malaysians visit South Korea for tourist purposes

The Korean Wave in Malaysia has led many Malaysians to visit South Korea for tourist purposes. The Ha Bongjoon survey about Malaysians' tours of South Korea shows the following responses: "I like to experience more Korean culture" (3.15 percent) and "I want to visit Korea" (3.51 percent). The number of Malaysian tourists to South Korea has jumped year by year—55,848 in 2001, 82,720 in 2002, and 90,623 in 2003 (*Hangerye Daily*, Feb. 22, 2005).

According to Ham Kyung-joon, director of the Korea National Tourism Organization's Kuala Lumpur Office, the KNTTO has recently successfully persuaded a group of 2,700 tourists—from "Great Eastern," Malaysia's largest life insurance company, and "Elken Group"—to visit South Korea for tourist purposes. He said he was able to persuade them to visit South Korea by actively publicizing tourist themes: traditional Korean food, including "samgyetang" (chicken broth with ginseng and other ingredients) introduced by "A Jewel in the Palace," a "Nanta" percussion performance, and ski resorts (*Joongang Daily*, Mar. 29, 2006). In this sense, the Korean Wave trend in Malaysia is closely related to tours of South Korea.

In order to remove Malaysians' inconvenience in terms of food and language barrier, Muslim restaurants have opened at major tourist resorts and the Malaysia culture wave has arisen in South Korea to understand the Malaysian society and culture (*Joongang Daily*, Mar. 29, 2006). The Korean Wave in Malaysia is reversely giving rise to the Malaysia wave in South Korea and is contributing to strengthening bilateral ties.

Promotion of Korean audio/visual products

The Korean Wave in Malaysia may encourage Malaysians to purchase Korean goods by allowing them a glimpse of Korean society and culture. According to the Professor Ha Bongjoon survey, about 30.6 percent of residents in Kuala Lumpur have bought Korean goods before. Based on the responses from these respondents, South Korean cellular phones ("degree of satisfaction" 3.17 percent, "purchasing intention" 3.15 percent), and other South Korean goods ("degree of satisfaction" 3.06 percent, "purchasing intention" 3.13 percent) are found to have competitive edges.

The popularity of South Korean TV dramas has greatly influenced the sale of IT-related goods such as cellular phones and MP3 players, as well as videos and CDs. CD shops at large shopping malls operate separate corners named "corners of the original sound tracks of Korean TV dramas." South Korean music CDs and DVDs and copies of South Korean celebrities' photos are selling like hot cakes. On the back of the booming Korean Wave trend, South Korean IT goods are also expanding their market in Malaysia. Personal computers sold over 10 percent more in November 2005 than 37 billion dollar-worth of computers sold in 2004. The sale of cellular phones posted 241.29 million dollars, up about 5 percent year-on-year. The sale of MP3P exceeded 260,000 dollars as of November 2005, up 70 percent from the previous year (*Segye Daily*, Feb. 1, 2006).

According to the Samsung Economic Research Institute's report entitled "Ways to Maintain the Korean Wave and Corporate Strategies," the expansion process of the Korean Wave is categorized into four stages—spread of pop culture ® purchase of derivatives (cultural content, tourism, cosmetics) ® purchase of South Korean goods ® preference of South Korean goods (*Joongang Daily*, Jul. 7, 2005). Based on

this categorization, the Korean Wave in Malaysia is currently at a transition period between the purchase of derivatives and that of South Korean goods.

THE FUTURE OF THE KOREAN WAVE IN MALAYSIA

This study has tried to find out if the Korean-Malaysian relations are intensifying also at the civilian level in the 21st century, with focus on the Korean Wave in Malaysia. The Korean Wave trend that began in 2002 has brought sociocultural and economic changes to Malaysia and contributed to strengthening bilateral relations also at the civilian level.

Malaysia has emerged as a center of gravity and a political and economic leader in Southeast Asia. With such a country's acceptance of the Korean Wave, the trend carries significance as it has the possibility of going global, the possibility of spreading to other Islamic countries, and the possibility of continuing to gain momentum for a long term.

The Korean Wave in Malaysia has contributed to enhancing favorable images of Korea, increasing Malaysians' interest in Korea's society and culture, such as its language and Korean studies, and bringing changes to Malaysians' ways of thinking and living. It has also brought economic changes to the Malaysian society by helping Malaysians prefer Korean food, visit South Korea for tourist purposes, and buy South Korean goods.

Based on such significance carried by the Korean Wave in Malaysia, we can say Malaysia's acceptance of the Korean Wave will likely continue for a long time and it will strengthen bilateral relations. In order to make more accurate predictions and make preparations for future Korean-Malaysian relations, we need to carry out research on changes in the Korean-Malaysian relations and the Malaysian wave in Korea, a new trend that is arising due to the "Twin Programme", and "Second Home Programme."

In consideration of the Korean Wave, Malaysia will need Korean experts and Korea will need Malaysian experts to maintain and develop close bilateral relations in the future. In this sense, the two countries should pay more attention and give more support to developing the Korean language and Korean studies programs in Malaysia, and the Malay and Malaysian studies in South Korea concurrently.

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