

# Korea

# Focus

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Mass Media, Producer or Mediator of  
Knowledge? —Circulation of Concepts of  
munmyŏng (civilization) and hallyu  
(Korean Wave) in Korea

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# Mass Media, Producer or Mediator of Knowledge? — Circulation of Concepts of *munmyōng* (civilization) and *hallyu* (Korean Wave) in Korea

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What is the role of the media in the circulation of knowledge? Are they a mediator or creator of knowledge? This is the key question of this article. On the social and political function of media a number of studies and theories have been put forward. Recently *framing theory* has been used to show how the media construct facts and can directly influence the public sphere through headlines and the selection of terms and pictures with strong connotations in terms of value and emotions. In this sense, media are seen as a “fourth power” in state and politics, yet with a questionable constitutional legitimacy. Mass society and mass media are interrelated and permeate every corner of society and politics. For that reason Nick Couldry suggests to consider the media as “meta-capital” (Pierre Bourdieu).<sup>1</sup> The media possess meta-capital, that is “definitional power across the whole of social space” (2003, p. 669). They determine the rules of public discourse, give legitimation to representations and categories for understanding the social world, which are then taken up within particular fields (2003, p. 668), and set the stage on which the “capital” of cultural producers and intellectuals can prosper. Equally they are essential in the formation of symbolic capital (e.g., prestige, honour, attention) that operates within a wide range of contemporary fields of production. As such the media have “a specific ability to influence all fields at once”, i.e. the field of knowledge too.

In this vein, I will examine in this article the dissemination of two terms *munmyōng* (civilization) in the 1890s and *hallyu* (Korean Wave) during the first ten years of the 21st century. Because of the intensive propagation by the mass media, especially newspapers like *Tongnip sinmun* and *Maeil sinmun*, the concept of “civilization” in the sense of “Western civilization” quickly replaced the traditional concept of civilization of Confucianism during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Korea. Something similar happened in the case of *hallyu*. This term was derived from *hanguk yushaeng* and was initially used in 1997/98 by Chinese media to describe the boom of Korean popular culture in China in the 1990s. The Korean media eagerly picked up this term and would use it on a daily basis, in particular during 2004/2006. In a very short time, the term became part of everyday language and an object for academic research in Korea.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Couldry, “Media Meta-Capital: Extending the Range of Bourdieu's Field Theory”, in: *Theory and Society*, Vol. 32, No. 5/6, Special Issue on The Sociology of Symbolic Power: A Special Issue in Memory of Pierre Bourdieu (Dec., 2003), pp. 653-677.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1998 and 2008 around 250 academic papers on *hallyu* were published in Korea.

In the dissemination process of these two concepts **terms**, *munmyŏng* and *hallyu*, one can clearly see that the media are not just a mediator of knowledge but part of the production process itself. In this process the media determined the meaning of *munmyŏng* and *hallyu*, and why they were so important for Korea. Simultaneously they disseminated these concepts and put them into the centre of public discourse. In this sense, Couldry notes, the media are both a production process with specific internal characteristics and a source of taken-for-granted frameworks for understanding the reality they represent (an influence, potentially, on action in all fields).<sup>3</sup>

In this article I aim to go beyond the mere framing of these two concepts by the media. From a broader perspective, I will explore why *civilisation* and *hallyu* have gained such a primordial importance in public discourse in Korea.

In what follows, I will first outline the theoretical concept of media as meta-capital. In the second part I will deal with the background of the emergence of these two concepts and their dissemination through media. The media will be considered, in Bourdieu's terms, as one field among other fields such as state, economy or society. In the third part the impact of these two concepts on politics, the economy, academic discourse and general knowledge will be looked at. Here is the place where media demonstrate their symbolic power.

## I. Theoretical Frame

The idea of media<sup>4</sup> as meta-capital arises from a distinction within the theoretical concepts of Bourdieu on media and state, like „media field,“ „media as symbolic system“ or „state as meta-capital“. The strength of Bourdieu's theory on media is, according to Cloudry, its explanatory dynamics which are “located entirely in the internal workings of the journalistic field or in the specific connections between those internal workings and the operations of other fields that come into contact with it.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, Bourdieu insists in his work on media strongly on the wider social and political consequences of the media process. In his book “On Television and Journalism” he argues: “One thing leads to another, and, ultimately television, which claims to record reality, creates it instead. We are getting closer and closer to the point where the social world is primarily described—and in a sense prescribed”<sup>6</sup>—by media. The hybrid word described/prescribed captures the naturalizing effect of an institutional sector that generates the very categories through which the social world is perceived. Hence, there is no doubt that as a sphere of cultural production, the media can *prima facie* be analyzed as a single field, or a collection of fields, (each) with a distinctive pattern of prestige and status and its own values.

For Bourdieu, the media's intermediate position between the cultural and economic poles of the wider cultural field gives them a particular interest as a field. <sup>7</sup> Bourdieu's argument here

<sup>3</sup> Nick Couldry, “Media Meta-Capital”, p. 653.

<sup>4</sup> “Media” here means the media that, until recently, have been assumed to be society's “central” media—television, radio and the general press.

<sup>5</sup> Nick Couldry, “Media Meta-Capital”, p. 654.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television and Journalism* (London: Pluto, 1998a), p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Nick Couldry, “Media Meta-Capital”, pp. 657-658.

is based on the convergence between changes within media field and changes in other fields. But how exactly does this convergence work? Bourdieu resolves this question with the strong concept of symbolic power. It suggests that some concentrations of symbolic power are so great that they dominate the whole social landscape; as a result, they seem so natural that they are misrecognized, and their underlying arbitrariness becomes difficult to see. In this way, symbolic power moves from being a merely local power (the power to construct this statement, or make this work of art) to being a general power, what Bourdieu once called a "power of constructing [social] reality."<sup>8</sup> Such symbolic power legitimates key categories with both cognitive and social force and is defined "in the very structure of the field that belief is produced and reproduced in."<sup>9</sup> This power, although it is relevant to the way certain types of capital are constituted as symbolic capital in the context of particular fields, is relevant also to the wider field of power, and indeed, to social space as a whole. To theorize the media's symbolic power in that broad sense consistently with field theory, Nick Couldry illuminates it with Bourdieu's writings on the symbolic system and the state.

Bourdieu used the term "symbolic system" to describe both the university system and religious systems that each had authority to classify social space as a whole.<sup>10</sup> These institutions exercise a "monopoly of the legitimate exercise of the power to modify [...] the practice and world-view of lay people."<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the concept of symbolic systems implies an explanatory framework that cuts across field theory. According to Couldry, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic systems brings into view the impacts that media might have on all fields simultaneously by legitimating certain categories with not just cognitive but also social significance.

Couldry notes that his theoretical experiment to combine field theory and symbolic system in order to explain the role of media as such is encouraged by consideration of Bourdieu's work on the state. Bourdieu conceptualized with Max Weber the state as a monopoly of legitimate physical and symbolic violence.<sup>12</sup> He made hereby an important distinction between the level that the state's own power is established and the field that state's different agents compete for the "monopoly over the advantages attached to (the state's) monopoly."<sup>13</sup> In the latter sense the state is a reference-point in social life, its influence works not in one field only, but across all fields. The "field of power" of which the state is the central reference-point is not therefore a "field" in Bourdieu's normal sense. Rather, it is better understood as a general space where the state exercises influence (very much like a general symbolic power) over the interrelations between all specific fields,<sup>14</sup> indeed, perhaps acts upon social space in general. Here

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<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 166.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ch. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion" in S. Whimster and S. Lash editors, *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 119-136, at p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996) and *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Polity Press), 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>14</sup> Loic Wacquant, "From Ruling Class to Field of Power: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu on La Noblesse d'État," In: *Theory, Culture and Society*, 10/3 (1993), pp. 19-44, at p. 21.

is the place where to observe the increasing convertibility of different types of capital across the whole range of fields. The state adds a specific dimension to this issue because of its increasing influence over the educational field that everyone passes through.

Bourdieu sees a force external to them as a key influence on all fields—the workings of the state. The state acts directly on the infrastructure of all fields: it is "the site of struggles, whose stake is the setting of the rules that govern the different social games (fields) and in particular, the rules of reproduction of those games."<sup>15</sup> In other words, the state influences the hierarchical relationship or "exchange rate" between the fundamental types of capital at stake in each individual field (for example, economic versus cultural capital). This power of the state is, crucially, not derived from the workings of any specific field, even if it is quite possible to think of the immediate space of competition between, say, civil servants as a "field" in its own right. As to the scope of this power, it presumably includes, although Bourdieu does not mention this specifically, influence over what counts as "symbolic capital" in each particular field. The concept of "symbolic capital" in Bourdieu generally means any type of capital (economic, cultural, and so on) that happens to be legitimated or prestigious in a particular field. But the concept of meta-capital introduces the possibility that definitions of prestige within specific fields may be determined by influences outside those fields, specifically the state's meta-capital.

Bourdieu notes about this point:

“This kind of meta-capital capable of exercising a power over other species of power, and particularly over their rate of exchange [...] defines the specific power of the state. It follows that the constitution of the state goes hand-in-hand with the constitution of the field of power understood as the space of play that holders of various forms of capital struggle in for power over the state – that is, over the state's capital, over the different species of capital, and over their reproduction (via the school system in particular).”<sup>16</sup>

Couldry proposes, even though Bourdieu himself never connected his work on media to his theory of symbolic power or state as meta-capital, to use this concept to explain the role of media. If one considers media power also as a form of "meta-capital" through which media exercise power over other forms of power, it gives clearer theoretical shape to Bourdieu's own most interesting insights about the media. Just as the state's influence on cultural capital and prestige through the school system (part of what Bourdieu refers to as the state's meta-capital) is not confined to specific fields but radiates outward into social space generally, so the media's meta-capital may affect social space through the general circulation of media representations. All actors in specific fields are likely also to be actors in general social space and general consumers of media messages. This suggests that the media's meta-capital over specific fields might operate in two distinct ways: first, as Bourdieu explicitly suggests for the state, by influencing what counts as capital in each

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<sup>15</sup> Nick Couldry, "Media Meta-Capital", p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, *Introduction to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 115.

field; and second, through the media's legitimation of influential representations of, and categories for understanding, the social world that, because of their generality, are available to be taken up in the specific conflicts in any particular field. The second type of influence would take us into the media's agenda-setting role across many specific areas of life, and the media's role as the "frame" within which the generality of social "issues" get expressed and settled.<sup>17</sup> Media institutions have come to benefit from a truly dominant concentration of symbolic power ("symbolic power" in the strong sense, of a power over the construction of social reality).

Here one could ask how the meta-capital of the state and that of the media interrelate. This might be an exciting topic for another paper. But Couldry's proposal for supplementing existing field-based accounts of the media's operations with an analysis of the media's meta-capital over all fields and social space allows us to deal with the difficulty of explaining media as both production process and symbolic system and to understand how media become both mediator and creator of knowledge.

### III. Media as a field—a space for dissemination

The focus of this chapter is on the media field as a space for dissemination of newly constructed concepts as new knowledge. It was in the late 1890s when the use of *munmyŏng* in the sense of Western civilization spread widely and quickly into the public realm. This happened at a time when the first newspapers written in the Korean alphabet were founded in order to widen the public sphere and to enlighten the people. Until then modernisation was understood as a process of institutional reform driven by a small elite. These elites had come to terms with the initial shocks and conflicts of the invasion of Western power and culture since 1876 and had developed a better understanding of these forces. In the 1890s a consensus emerged among the elites that it was necessary to open the eyes of masses and to educate them in a process of modernisation and Westernisation of the country. The new and modern ideas were to be shared through the public media. Therefore the elites put a lot of effort into establishing newspapers or other printed journals written in Korean vernacular language, i.e. without recourse to Chinese characters. Hence newspapers and journals came to play a key role in the dissemination of the new ideas. In this sense one can say that through newspapers and journals the modern symbolic system was established and internalized in Korea.

In the 1890s four newspapers were published in Korea. *Tongnip sinmun* started on April 7th 1896, *Hyŏpsŏng hyoebŏ* on January 1st 1898, *Maeil sinmun* on January 26th 1898 and *Hwangsŏng sinmun* on September 5th 1898. Table 1 shows the frequency of occurrence of the term *munmyŏng* in these newspapers. It is remarkable that the word *munmyŏng* appears more often in editorials than in other articles.

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<sup>17</sup> Nick Couldry, *Media Meta-Capital*, p. 667.

**Table 1. The Number of articles with reference to *munmyǒng* (From first number to December 31 1899)**

	Tongnip sinmun (1896.4.7-1899.12.31)	Maeil sinmun (1898.1.26-1899.12.31)	Hyǒpsǒng hyoebo (1898.1.1-1899.12.31)	Hwangsǒng sinmun (1898.9.5.-1899.12.31)
Number of articles with reference to <i>munmyǒng</i>	31	77	7	89
Number of editorials with reference to <i>munmyǒng</i>	20	49	4	53

Source: <http://www.kinds.or.kr> (accessed 30.4.2011).

The concept of *munmyǒng* was used before 1896. In fact, *munmyǒng* is an important Confucian concept with a long tradition. Through the writings of intellectuals like Yu Kil-chun and Pak Yǒng-hyo its meaning was changed radically to mean civilisation in the modern, Western sense, which was the new age that was taking hold of Korea. Various connotations of the new concept of *munmyǒng*—like *munmyǒng kaehwa*, *munmyǒng/yaman*, *munmyǒng chinbo*, *kaemyǒng*, *kaehwa*—were frequently used in those newspapers and magazines. Hence *munmyǒng* became a normal part of everyday language. Because the print media wanted to enlighten the people, it was them that played key role in the dissemination of this discourse on modern civilisation.

When we observe the role the media played during the propagation of *hallyu* more than a hundred years later, it is surprising to see how little the role of media as space for dissemination of certain knowledge has changed. The term *hallyu*, Korean Wave, first appeared in China toward the end of 1997, when Korean TV soap operas, their lead actors and Korean pop music gained high levels of popularity. At the same time, Korean TV dramas and pop idols also became popular in Taiwan and South East Asia. “Korean Wave” became a common phrase for describing the diffusion of Korean popular culture in East and Southeast Asia.

The first significant impact of Korean popular culture can be observed in Taiwan. In the 1980s, at a time when the import of Japanese television programs was still forbidden by the Taiwanese government, the broadcasting of Korean television dramas and animation had already begun. At that time, however, viewer levels remained low. In 1995, Taiwanese television companies started to broadcast Korean soap operas, which they could buy much more cheaply than Japanese ones. These programs were broadcast at prime times and produced high viewer ratings. Since the early 2000s, the popularity of Korean dramas increased dramatically in Taiwan.

Japan became a full-fledged member of the Korean Wave when the Japanese public broadcaster NHK aired ‘*Fuyu no Sonata*’ or ‘*kyōul yōn’ga*’ (Winter Sonata) in 2004. Responding on requests from the Japanese audiences it was broadcast several times by NHK and generated a



memorabilia industry and a sudden wave of tourism to Korea. More than 90% of Japanese people, regardless of age, sex or geographical region, became familiar with the drama, according to a survey conducted in 2004 by NHK (Mitsuya 2004). In the year 2004, Japan became the main importer of Korean television programs. More than half of all Korean exports films and soap operas went to Japan.

The enthusiastic reception of Korean popular culture in Japan was greeted with pride and joy in Korea. The Korean media reported widely and in great detail about the Korea boom in Japan. Correspondingly, during 2004 and 2006 the number of articles dealing with the Korean Wave (*hallyu*) increased dramatically (Table 2).

**Table 2. The Number of Articles and news with Reference to *hallyu* in Korean Print Media.**

Year	Daily newspaper Article with Hallyu in Titel	Editorials with comments on Hallyu	TV-News about Hallyu
2000	8	0	0
2001	149	11	7
2002	90	9	11
2003	84	5	9
2004	279	16	35
2005	715	49	47
2006	627	31	25
2007	436	25	49
2008	282	16	92
2009	235	32	288
2010	333	15	234
2011 (until 31.July)	379	22	254

Source: [www.kinds.or.kr](http://www.kinds.or.kr)

#### IV. Media Framing of Concepts *munmyöng* and *hallyu*

The media recur to certain frames to construct images not only of political and social events but also of cultural concepts and ideas. Because the frames normally bear some correspondence to the political and ideological positions of media, it often happens that their presentations and assessments of certain events media are completely antithetic. In particular that can be easily observed in the Korean case, as ideological and political positions are expressed quite vigorously. Interestingly enough, in the case of *munmyöng* und *hallyu* these divisions hardly seem to play a role. As we have seen in the propagation of *munmyöng* all newspapers followed very similar editorial lines.

### a. Framing of *munmyŏng*

The discourse on the modern concept of *munmyŏng* emerged in 1883, the year when the first newspaper in Korea, *Hansŏng sunbo*, was founded. By then the times when foreign, in particular Western countries were seen as barbarian and animal-like had become a matter of the past. The West was perceived now as the “other” to oneself and it evoked feelings of fear and admiration. The *Hansŏng sunbo* saw the roots of the superiority of the West in its modern science, technology and its institutions. In order to raise the consciousness of its readers of the special significance of Western civilisation it often run articles on Western science and technology. These had made the Western countries strong and rich. The need to absorb Western civilisation was not disputed. If East Asia wanted to catch up or overtake the West, it would have to adopt quickly its science and technology. Its underlying concept of civilisation did not go as far as to denigrate the old East Asian civilisation to a barbarian remnant of the past. The authors and editors of the newspaper did not yet think in terms of a dichotomy of Asian barbarism and Western civilisation. The *Hansŏng sunbo* too considered Korea as a civilised country. Only in terms of science and technology the West was more civilized. The dominant perception was that Korea would have to be modernised on the basis of Eastern morale and Western technology.

Yet, in the 1890s Western civilisation became the only true civilisation. Now all of Korean society and its customs were put under the judgment of what was understood as Western civilisation. In this process the *Tongnip sinmun* took a leading role. This was no accident as this newspaper was founded by Yu Kil-chun, who had studied with Fukuzawa Yukichi, and by Yun Chi-ho and Sŏ Chae-p'il, who had studied in the US and were full of admiration for that country. In many articles run by the *Tongnip sinmun*, Fukuzawa's concept of civilisation was propagated putting vehement pressure on politics and government.

As the other newspapers were strongly influenced by the *Tongnip shinmun*, they put forward very similar positions. They all tried to forge an image of what a civilised country ought to look like by reporting on civilised countries. They set standards of civilisational achievements by using Europe and the USA as examples to be imitated. Through the combination of certain concepts and characteristics images emerged that came to stand as symbols for civilisation. Through the articulation of these elements an interesting image of civilisation was constructed: A civilised country is a country that is rich and militarily powerful; its laws and politics are enlightened and just; it possesses developed systems of communication and transport, it supports modern science in the areas of state governance, physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering and the like; and it guarantees the freedom of the entrepreneur. Its citizens wear clean and comfortable cloths, eat and live healthily. They love their country and its citizens; they are self-reliant, diligent, honest, smart and abhor people relying parasitically on others. They enjoy the same political rights and only the most talented are promoted by the state into important positions. The symbolism of civilisation is multi-layered and complex and comprises the most diverse elements ranging from “Western” institutions to the alleged collective character of the people. Almost any observed situation or condition, as long as it lent itself to positive

reconstruction, became a symbol of civilisation. There was of course no precise definition of civilisation. The construction of the West as such became the symbolic representation of civilisation.

The discourse on civilisation in the newspapers in the 1890s was not based on a sort of philosophical reflection. Instead it consisted basically of a collection of impressions and symbolic representations. It was not considered a necessity to reflect on the logical and philosophical relevance of the equation of the West with civilisation. To become civilised was the spirit of the time and as such a normative challenge. If the concept “civilisation” is construed in such a manner, it is only logical that countries that do not possess such a civilisation are considered barbarian or at least uncivilised. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the countries in East Asia, including China, are classified as uncivilised. Considering that China had been epitomised over many centuries as the most admired and respected civilisation, this paradigmatic change is almost revolutionary. In this perspective Korea as well as China became the embodiment of barbarism, because its people were considered to be lazy, only seeking pleasure, living in poorly equipped houses, using uncomfortable cloths; the people were divided in *yangban* (elite) and *sangnom* (commoners) and could not find a common ground as citizens; as a result the country was poor and weak, in a word unenlightened. After the West had become the embodiment of civilisation Korea and China by implication became the embodiment of underdevelopment.

The editors of these newspapers acquiesced to the imperialist Western power. In their view the West was civilised, strong and wealthy; therefore the East could not enjoy the same rights as the West. The Choson elite, also under the sway of Social Darwinism, had accepted the superiority of Western civilisation. Choson had to become as civilised, rich and powerful as the West in order to be on a par with it. Then Choson would not only be powerful but could become an imperialist power in itself: “When the Koreans wake up from their dream and become civilised, when they adopt the just and useful sciences and customs, which make a country wealthy, then the Koreans will be as strong as the English and the Americans. Korea would be able to attack China, conquer Liaodong and Manchuria and receive 800 million won of reparation from China. In another 10 years it would be in a position to reconquer Tsushima Island.”<sup>18</sup> This was the quintessence of the civilisation discourse in the Korean media at that time: the desire to become as strong as the West.

### **b. Framing of Hallyu**

The dream of the editors of the newspapers during the 1890s was a Korea on the same footing as the West. *Hallyu* rests on a somewhat different basic motive: Korea and the Koreans had caught up with the West in many fields; it had become part of Western civilisation. The dream of their forefathers a century ago had become reality. What the *hallyu* discourses reflect is instead a need

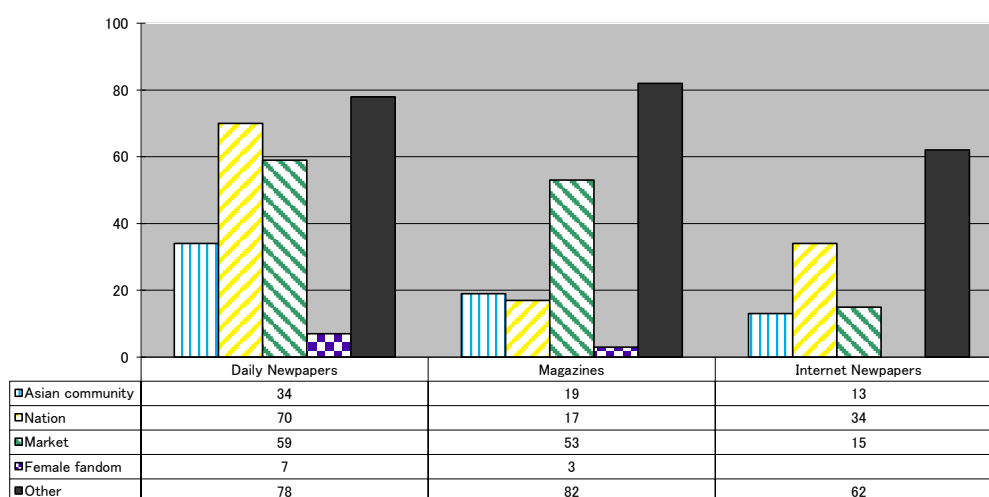
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<sup>18</sup> Dongnib sinmun, 10.10.1896, p. 1.

for reassurance of the achievements of the country. Hence, the basic tenor of the *hallyu* discourses has a strong nationalist undertone.

Thus, in the Korean discourse on the popular reception of the Korean Wave, economic nationalism appears to be an important element. Other prominent notions include a sort of cultural nationalism and aspirations for the making of an Asian community. On the other hand, there were only a few contributions dealing with female fans. In this respect there was very little difference between the conservative dailies *Chosun Ilbo* and *Donga Ilbo* on the one hand, and the daily *Hankyoreh* and the Internet newspaper *OhmyNews* with their more leftist, liberal leanings, on the other. Even *netizen*, which has fought a fervent battle against the dominant conservative newspapers and has had a significant impact on Korean politics in recent years<sup>19</sup>, shared the same emphasis and worries in its contributions to the debate on the Korean Wave.

**Table 4. The Emphasis of Articles in Korean Media Related to the Korean Wave (1 January 2004–31 May 2005).<sup>20</sup>**



It is quite remarkable how often the authors of articles on the popularity of the Korean Wave adopted a perspective that boasts the superiority of Korean culture. Such triumphant feelings on the part of Korean authors may well be called ‘nationalism’ since the products of cultural production that they celebrate are often defined in national terms that elude their diverse origins in order to promote a collective sense of superiority vis-à-vis some ‘other’ (Japan). Statements like the following from a South Korean financial analyst are typical: “The news that the wind of the Korean Wave is blowing abroad, and even more so in Japan, a country that evokes

<sup>19</sup> Lee 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Note: The media analyzed include columns in 10 daily newspapers (*Kyunghyang Sinmun*, *Kookmin Ilbo*, *Nae-il Sinmun*, *Donga Ilbo*, *Munhwa Ilbo*, *Seoul Sinmun*, *Segye Ilbo*, *Chosun Ilbo*, *Hankyoreh*, *Hankuk Ilbo*, and *Magazin*) for a total of 248 articles; 14 magazines (*Newsmaker*, *Newspeople*, *Sisa Journal*, *Sindonga*, *Thinkmoney*, *Wolgan Chosun*, *Wolgan Jungang*, *Economy*, *Economist*, *Jugan Donga*, *Jugan Chosun*, *Jugan Hanguok Hakyoreh 21*, and *Newsplus*) for a total of 174 articles; and 3 Internet newspapers (*OmyNews*, *Pressian*, and *Simin ui Sinmun*) for a total of 124 articles.

our patriotic feelings, fills me with pride to be a Korean".<sup>21</sup> In a similar vein, *Segye Ilbo* wrote that the time of the renaissance of Korean culture had arrived, adding that Korean culture had strongly influenced Japanese culture in ancient times according to the unanimous opinion of mainstream historians.<sup>22</sup>

Another reaction to the Korean popular culture boom was the desire to spread the Korean Wave "far beyond Asia into the whole world".<sup>23</sup> One author remarked that the Korean people possess the abilities and the necessary qualities to become the 'world's best national culture'.<sup>24</sup> The journalist Kim Hyŏng-jin is full of praise for the young people who created *hallyu*. For Kim, they are the 'real patriots' and the 'mainstay of the future of the Korean economy'.<sup>25</sup> The source for these achievements was supposedly found in the 'Korean essence'. As one Korean commentator writes: "These works, which were born out of refreshingly new materials, magnificent ideas and the master spirit of the Koreans, cross borders, language and conventions, and touch the hearts of other Asian peoples."<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, none of these authors or commentators explains what precisely is the supposed Korean essence in TV soap operas like *Winter Sonata*. Against the background of the colonized and divided history of Korea in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this 'nationalist' celebration of the Korean Wave is understandable. With the acquisition of trans-national cultural influence that some equate with soft power, there comes a sense of national pride.

Among some, this optimistic expectation for the emergence of a cultural community in East and Southeast Asia strengthens the perception of a new regional identity. Because of these countries' shared consciousness with respect to their emerging popular cultures, the dominance of the West can be overcome and a specifically East Asian market can be formed.<sup>27</sup>

In October 2003 in an editorial titled 'Popular Culture Creates a Common Cultural Sphere' appearing in *Hankyoreh*, the leading progressive newspaper in Korea, Kim Mu-gon argues that Korean culture is an important agent for overcoming the past and in creating a new Asian cultural community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For him, the special significance of the Asian cultural community lies in the formation of a common market. In contrast to English-speaking areas of the world, the culture industry in East Asia has suffered from a number of barriers, among them the lack of a common language, low levels of income, and few consumers of cultural products. The Korean Wave, however, has demonstrated that it is possible to share hopes for the emergence of 'a common market for culture-related industries among the culturally and geographically close countries of East Asia'. He argues that a single drama like *Winter Sonata* has shown that those barriers 'can fall like the Berlin wall'. For Kim, the enthusiasm of Japanese women for Bae Yong-Jun is 'an overture of hope for a future cultural community in Asia'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kim Chun-bŏm 2004.

<sup>22</sup> *Segye Ilbo*, 28 Jan. 2004, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 16 March 2004, p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Yu Chung-ha 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Hyŏng-jin 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Hwang Ho-t'aek 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Yu Chung-ha 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Kim Mu-gon 2003.

Nonetheless, for Chŏng Sŏng-il this belief in the existence of a ‘pan-Asian consciousness’ is just a myth.<sup>29</sup> Yet this belief is, in his opinion, so strong that the critique of authors like Kim Chong-hwi, who maintain that the idea of a ‘community of popular cultures in Asia’ has been launched by multinational firms in order to open up new markets, is largely ignored.<sup>30</sup> The deeper reasons for this belief are to be found in a rigid dichotomous view of the world, which is accompanied by the ambition for “the East Asian community to recreate the world equilibrium, which was destroyed during the Eurocentric period of modern history”.<sup>31</sup>

In Korea it is well known that most fans for Korean popular culture in East Asia are women.<sup>32</sup> But in Korean media the central role of women in the Korean Wave phenomenon is de-emphasized while the importance of the Korean Wave in general is stressed. One could observe here the assumption that something related to or enjoyed predominantly by women can only be of minor value.

Korean media experts largely agree that what makes *hallyu* sell so well is the “image of Korea as such”.<sup>33</sup> The boom of Korean popular culture has nurtured ambitions to the point that Korea now wants to push and divulge the Korean Wave far beyond Asia into the whole world. Koreans are supposed to possess the ability and the qualities to become the “world’s most cultured people”.<sup>34</sup> No minor projection indeed for a media-generated construct of symbolic power.

## V. Formation of public discourse–media meta-capital

Discourses in the media can depart from facts and need not be rational and coherent. Often they rely and reproduce prejudices and clichés. Framing analysis shows how the media “construct” peculiar realities of the issues they present. Framing analysis are parts of the hypothesis that the media-produced discourses, in spite of their systemic biases and distortions, exercise a significant influence on public opinion. It falls however short of recognising these properties of the media as meta-capital.

In the case of the civilisation discourse in the 1890s it was not put into question why the West could or should be identified with, for instance, self-reliance, power and wealth and through these elements with civilisation. Nor did anybody ask what differences existed between the new and the old, Confucian concept of civilisation. Instead the West became a symbol of civilisation and the desire to present it in a positive way served as a frame for the selection of topics and “facts” and thus shaped the perceptions of the Korean public. How value-laden this frame was can be seen in the use of the terms *munhwa chut’æk* and *munhwa saenghwal* (civilised house and

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<sup>29</sup> Chŏng Sŏng-il 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Kim Chong-hwi 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Chŏng Un-O 2004.

<sup>32</sup> The situation was different in Korea. When this soap opera first ran during 2002 in South Korea, its main audience was women in their 20s. Its viewer ratings measured around 27%, which was not exceptional by Korean television standards. Indeed, other soap operas in South Korea have measured more than 40% in viewer ratings.

<sup>33</sup> Chugan Tong-A, 16 Oct. 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Ryu Jung-Ha 2004.

civilised life). These terms referred to Western living (houses, furniture, concerts, expositions etc.), became part of common parlance in Korea and are still used nowadays. The power of definition of the media is a clear example for the meta-capital of the media.

In the case of the *hallyu* discourses, the power of the media is even more apparent. Not just in the case of *hallyu* but in the industry of popular culture in general the media exercise a determinant role. The dialectics between the public and the media has become more complex and the framing more professional. Possibly the meta-capital of the media has been largely superseded by the profit interests of real capital.

The perception of *hallyu* by the Korean public has been extended in the meantime. It goes now beyond the consumption of Korean popular culture in foreign countries and covers just about all Korean things that become known or enter public discourses in other countries. One can find book titles like “In ancient times too there existed hallyu [Kodae-edo Hallyu-ga issötta]”. The entertainment industry fosters “*hallyu* stars” as a brand name. *Hallyu* is being used by the government to play a central role in the “nation branding” strategy it pursues. Here one can ask if the state (as the meta-capital in the strict sense) has ceded part of its power to the media (as a meta-capital). In times of the dominance of “mediocracy” the state may have succumbed to the inherent logic of the media enterprises. Such questions go beyond the realm of this paper, yet they are essential questions when we deal with matters of the circulation of knowledge.

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