

## ENQUIRE PROJECT DETAILS BY GENERAL PUBLIC

### Project Details

<b>Funding Scheme :</b>	General Research Fund
<b>Project Number :</b>	17608517
<b>Project Title(English) :</b>	Japanese Popular Culture and the Cultural Formation of Hong Kong Society
<b>Project Title(Chinese) :</b>	日本流行文化與香港社會的文化建構
<b>Principal Investigator(English) :</b>	Dr Wong, Heung Wah
<b>Principal Investigator(Chinese) :</b>	王向華
<b>Department :</b>	School of Modern Languages and Cultures
<b>Institution :</b>	The University of Hong Kong
<b>E-mail Address :</b>	hwwongc@hku.hk
<b>Tel :</b>	28578612
<b>Co - Investigator(s) :</b>	Dr Yau, Hoi Yan
<b>Panel :</b>	Humanities, Social Sciences
<b>Subject Area :</b>	Social and Behavioural Sciences
<b>Exercise Year :</b>	2017 / 18
<b>Fund Approved :</b>	596,000
<b>Project Status :</b>	Completed
<b>Completion Date :</b>	30-9-2019
<b>Project Objectives :</b>	<p>To analyze the form and content of different Japanese cultural products in Hong Kong</p> <p>To understand the dissemination and consumption of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong</p> <p>To examine the mediations between Japanese cultural products and the local Hong Kong society</p> <p>To identify the roles and functions of the agents/intermediaries in the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong</p> <p>To explain the factors affecting the different ways of consumption of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong</p> <p>To investigate how the local consumers appropriated the Japanese cultural products to express their own values and identities</p> <p>To investigate the impact of Japanese popular culture on the formation of the local Hong Kong culture</p>
<b>Abstract as per original application (English/Chinese):</b>	Japanese popular culture was no doubt an important cultural presence in Hong Kong between the 1980s

and the early 2000s. Despite its declining cultural sway due to recent explosion and proliferation of ‘Korean wave’ in Hong Kong, Japanese popular culture has played an important role in shaping the Hong Kong culture and the everyday life experience of the Hong Kong people during the post-war period. There are a certain number of studies which examine the spread of various Japanese cultural products in Hong Kong, but none of them has systematically studied the arrival, diffusion and consumption of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong in relation to the formation of the local Hong Kong culture. Our study is an anthropological attempt to examine the relationship between Japanese popular culture and the cultural formation of Hong Kong society (1970s–early 2000s). Through examining the spread of four Japanese cultural products, namely the Japanese television dramas, popular music, retail formats and food in Hong Kong, we intend to investigate four sets of interrelated issues: 1) the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong; 2) the consumption of Japanese cultural products by the Hong Kong people; 3) the impact of Japanese popular culture on the daily life of the Hong Kong people and 4) the relationships between Japanese popular culture and the development of the Hong Kong culture. In this project, we do not simply focus on analyzing the texts of the Japanese cultural products and the audience experience like what many previous studies on the subject have done. Instead, we propose to study the mediations among the different Japanese cultural products, between the exporting and receiving societies of the products and among the producers, intermediaries and consumers. We will conduct intensive archival research, literature review, in-depth interviews and fieldwork to investigate the nature and impact of Japanese popular culture in relation to the specific social context of the Hong Kong society. This project will help enhance our understanding not just of the history of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong but also of the formation and constitution of the local Hong Kong culture. We aim at demonstrating that the importance of studying the cultural formation of Hong Kong society in relation to other cultures and societies. The project will also result in an open-access database containing the details of the Japanese popular cultural products in Hong Kong.

從八十年代到千禧年初期，香港社會一直深受日本流行文化影響。此後，日本流行文化的地位雖然受到「韓流」的衝擊，甚至被超越取代，但它對戰後香港社會的影響卻非常深遠。日本流行文化不但與香港本土文化發展息息相關，還在香港人的日常生活中扮演了重要的角色。儘管有不少先行研究曾探討過各種日本文化產物在香港傳播

的情況，但暫時還沒有研究對日本流行文化在香港的傳入、傳播和消費，以及日本流行文化與香港本地文化的形塑作出系統而全面的分析。本研究旨在以人類學的視角探究從七十年代到千禧年之間，日本流行文化與香港社會的文化建構關係。通過集中研究四種日本文化產物——電視劇、流行音樂、零售模式和食品與料理——在香港的傳播，本研究主要分析四組相關的議題：一）日本流行文化在香港的傳播、二）香港人在消費日本流行文化的行為和模式、三）日本流行文化對香港人日常生活的影響、四）日本流行文化與香港文化發展的關係。不同於其他的先行研究，本研究不受文本或受眾經驗分析的侷限，嘗試釐清不同日本文化產物之間，輸出方社會和輸入方社會之間，以及生產者、中介者和消費者等角色之間的三組互動關係。通過進行文獻研究、文獻回顧、深度訪問及田野調查，我們希望探究日本流行文化在香港社會的特定脈絡下之性質及其影響。本研究不但能加強我們對日本流行文化在香港的歷史和發展的理解，更重要的是，可以加深我們對香港本土文化的建構和組成的認知。要理解香港文化就必須研究香港文化和其他文化及社會的關係與互動，而這正是我們的研究所印證的觀點。同時，我們的研究會建立一個公開的資料庫，讓公眾可以有機會查閱有關日本流行文化在香港的資料。

### Realisation of objectives:

Overall speaking, the project objectives have been achieved to a large extent. However, we were not able to complete all the scheduled fieldwork and interviews in the last phase of our research due to the escalating political contention in Hong Kong in the summer of 2019. We will explain how each objective has been achieved. 1) We have traced and examined the different trajectories of the dissemination of Japanese television dramas, popular music, retail formats and food in Hong Kong. For the retail formats, we focused on reconstructing the history of the spread of Japanese general merchandise stores in Hong Kong. For Japanese food, we examined the proliferation of Japanese restaurants in general and the dissemination of Japanese ramen and sake in particular. We have also collected a substantial amount of historical materials including the old television listings and guides, trailers of Japanese television dramas, old local music magazines and newspaper clippings related to the Japanese popular cultural products in Hong Kong. 2) We have applied the ‘art world’ approach proposed by Howard Becker to analyse the process of the dissemination of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong. We have identified the major actors constituting the ‘art worlds’ of the circulation of different Japanese cultural products in Hong Kong. We have examined

the connection between the exporting and receiving sides and how the Japanese cultural products reached the hands of Hong Kong consumers. 3) We have found out that the mediations between Japanese cultural products and the local Hong Kong society were subject to not just cultural but also business logics. We have examined how the intermediaries in the spread of Japanese popular cultural products adjusted their business strategies and changed the form of their products to accommodate the cultural logic of the local people. For instance, we examined the localization of a Japanese restaurant chain and its the introduction of the concept of ‘dining oriented bar’ in Hong Kong. We argue that the business practices of the intermediaries shaped and were shaped by the local cultural understanding of food. 4) We have identified the key actors in facilitating the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong. We have examined the functions and roles of both Japanese and local intermediaries and their interactions. For instance, we have studied the role of local agents in promoting Japanese popular music through local music magazines. We have also examined how the local agents interacted with the Japanese suppliers to introduce the Japanese general merchandise stores into Hong Kong. In addition, we have conducted in-depth interviews with Japanese seafood suppliers and Hong Kong sake brewers and several site visits. 5) We have found out that the spread of the different Japanese popular cultural products each constituted their own ‘art worlds’ characterised by specific conventions and mode of interactions. These ‘art worlds’, we have observed, were not separated from each other. Instead, they were connected with each other and shaped the ways how each of them were consumed by people of Hong Kong. For instance, the proliferation of Japanese television dramas and Japanese popular music went hand in hand and contributed to the consumption of Japanese idols in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the spread of Japanese supermarkets enabled the people Hong Kong to be familiar with Japanese food culture which in turn facilitated the rise of Japanese restaurants in the territory. 6 & 7) We have examined, through in-depth interviews with Hong Kong consumers, how Japanese popular cultural products were consumed for different purposes. We have found out that often cited ‘fondness of Japanese society and culture’ was an oversimplified explanation of the consumption of Japanese culture by the local consumers in Hong Kong. Instead, the consumption of Japanese culture was a strategy employed by the consumers to express their own values and identifies. We have studied the process of how local consumers appropriated different Japanese cultural products to express the newly formed middle class identity. The spread of Japanese popular culture, we would like to emphasize, has become an

integral part of the formation of middle class in Hong Kong society. We would also like to discuss some of the limitations that we faced in the research and our attempts to overcome the problems. In terms of the research on the spread of Japanese food in Hong Kong, some major local regional operators refused to take part in the interviews due to the increasingly polarized political situation in the summer of 2019. We managed to collect and analyse the annual reports of the companies to gain a better understanding of their businesses. With regard to the research on Japanese retail formats, it was difficult for us to contact the Japanese suppliers as some of the Japanese general merchandise stores have already been out of business. We attempted to trace the spread of the Japanese stores by conducting in-depth interviews with former local employees. For the research on Japanese popular music, we did not have the access to Japanese singers. We focused on conducting interviews with local DJs, music magazine publishers, and pop music producers who have established strong personal ties with the Japanese personnel. Lastly, regarding the research on Japanese television dramas, we did not have the access to Japanese television broadcasters. We turned to local buyers and scriptwriters to reconstruct the history of the dissemination of Japanese TV dramas in Hong Kong.

**Summary of objectives addressed:**

	Objectives	Addressed	Percentage achieved
1.	To analyze the form and content of different Japanese cultural products in Hong Kong	Yes	100%
2.	To understand the dissemination and consumption of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong	Yes	100%
3.	To examine the mediations between Japanese cultural products and the local Hong Kong society	Yes	100%
4.	To identify the roles and functions of the agents/intermediaries in the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong	Yes	90%
5.	To explain the factors affecting the different ways of consumption of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong	Yes	100%

6.	To investigate how the local consumers appropriated the Japanese cultural products to express their own values and identities	Yes	100%
7.	To investigate the impact of Japanese popular culture on the formation of the local Hong Kong culture	Yes	100%

## Research Outcome

### Major findings and research outcome:

There are three major findings of our research. First, we have clarified the process of the migration of Japanese popular culture from Japan to Hong Kong and reconstructed the cross-border industrial chains by identifying the key actors in exporting, importing and disseminating different Japanese popular cultural products in Hong Kong. We have also identified the major functions of the Japanese and local intermediaries and their relationships. Second, we have clarified the process of localization of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong. We argue that cultural explanations alone cannot account for the ways Japanese popular culture were consumed by the people of Hong Kong. We have found out that commercial considerations, business regulations, and political circumstances all played an important role in shaping the behaviors of the intermediaries, which in turn shaped the consumption of Japanese popular culture. We have also found out that the consumption of Japanese popular culture was closely related to the class formation in Hong Kong. The popularity of Japanese popular culture products in Hong Kong cannot be understood simply as an argument for the prevalence of pro-Japanese sentiment in the Hong Kong society. Third, we have found out that the paths of the spread of the four Japanese popular cultural products in Hong Kong were different from but interconnected with each other. The implication is that we have to study Japanese popular cultural products as discrete parts in a wider network instead of a homogenous group or isolated phenomena. The last phase of our research was significantly affected by the series of protests and social movements as a number of scheduled interviews and fieldwork arrangements were cancelled. Despite the unexpected situation, we managed to conclude a book contract with Routledge. The tentative title of the book is Japanese Popular Culture in Hong Kong. We are working on the manuscript at the moment and we plan to deliver it to the publisher by the end of December 2020. We also plan to develop four monographs on the spread of each of the Japanese popular cultural items examined in the current project in Hong Kong: Japanese television dramas, Japanese

	popular music, Japanese retail formats and Japanese ramen.								
<p><b>Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action:</b></p>	<p>During our research, we found out that the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong was not an isolated phenomenon, and it should be understood as part of the transnational flow of Japanese popular cultural products in the Greater China region. Hong Kong, as we discovered, was a key nexus in this multidirectional network. On the one hand, some Japanese popular cultural products arrived in Taiwan first and were then brought to Hong Kong; on the other hand, Hong Kong played a key role in the dissemination of Japanese popular culture in mainland China in the 1980s and 1990s. The implication is that we cannot regard the migration of Japanese popular culture to Hong Kong as a simple one-to-one relationship. It is thus important to study the interrelationship among the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan. We are currently conducting another GRF project on Japanese popular culture in mainland China. We plan to submit a new GRF proposal to study the dissemination of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan to gain a comprehensive understanding of the mediation between the transnational flow of Japanese popular culture and the three local Chinese societies.</p>								
<p><b>Layman's Summary of Completion Report:</b></p>	<p>This research is an anthropological study of the spread of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong (1970s–early 2000s). It highlights the importance of studying Japanese popular cultural products not just as texts but also as commodities. It identifies the key agents involved in and facilitating the flow of Japanese popular cultural products from Japan to Hong Kong and examines the context in which they formulated and implemented their business strategies. It also explains how the consumption of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong has been shaped by a combination of cultural, economic and political conditions. The research contributes to the field of business anthropology of popular culture in general and the studies of globalization of Japanese popular culture in particular. First, it helps clarify the relationship between culture and commerce in the creative industries by examining the composition of the different ‘art worlds’ of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong and the role of the intermediaries. Second, it enhances our understanding of the history of Japanese popular culture in Hong Kong by illustrating the different trajectories of the spread of Japanese television dramas, popular music, retail formats and food in Hong Kong and their interconnectedness.</p>								
<p><b>Research Output</b></p>									
<p><b>Peer-reviewed journal publication(s) arising directly from this research project :</b></p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="799 2074 975 2154">Year of Publication</th> <th data-bbox="975 2074 1118 2154">Author(s)</th> <th data-bbox="1118 2074 1326 2154">Title and Journal/Book</th> <th data-bbox="1326 2074 1493 2154">Accessible from</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year of Publication	Author(s)	Title and Journal/Book	Accessible from				
Year of Publication	Author(s)	Title and Journal/Book	Accessible from						

(\* denotes the corresponding author)

			Institution Repository
	*Heung Wah Wong and Hoi Yan Yau	The tentative title of the book is Japanese Popular Culture in Hong Kong (contracted with Routledge). We are working on the manuscript at the moment and we plan to deliver it to the publisher by the end of December 2020.	No

Recognized international conference(s) in which paper(s) related to this research project was/were delivered :

Month/Year/City	Title	Conference Name
Hangzhou	Two or Three Things that I Know about the Study of Transnational Japanese Animation in Particular and Transnational Japanese popular Culture in General	The Fourth Global Creative Industries Conference: East Asian Creative Industries in A Global Context: New Opportunities and Challenges
Osaka	Cantopop Resisted Mandopop Through J Pop between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s.	Anthropology of Japan in Japan (AJJ) Spring Workshop 2019
Osaka	Transnational Japanese Popular Music in Post-war Hong Kong	Anthropology of Japan in Japan (AJJ) Spring Workshop 2019
Osaka	Transnational Japan in Post-war Hong Kong Or How the Images of Japan were	Anthropology of Japan in Japan (AJJ) Spring Workshop 2019

		Made and Remade in Hong Kong?	
	Seoul	From Doing Shopping to Going Shopping Or From “Mai Ye” to “Han Kai”	The Fifth Global Creative Industries Conferences: Global Creative Industries in the Context of New Generation: Globalization, Glocalization and Hybridization
	Seoul	Why Japanese Ramen and Udon are more Expensive than Other Kinds of Noodles?	The Fifth Global Creative Industries Conferences: Global Creative Industries in the Context of New Generation: Globalization, Glocalization and Hybridization
<b>Other impact</b> (e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, etc.):			

Return

SCREEN ID: SCRRM00542