

# Analysis and Comparison of Various New Waves of Movies

## —Taking France, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea as Examples

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### ABSTRACT

The term "New Wave" is widely used to refer to the new film movements that emerged in other countries in the history of cinema after Second World War. New Wave movements are often influenced by more than just one factor. The reasons for the New Wave in different regions are common but also different. The New Wave movement has contributed significantly to the development of film history in different areas. This article highlights and compares New Wave movements in France, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, by summarizing the comparative literature. A boom in the local economy accompanied the New Wave movements in each of these four regions, each of the New Wave movements combined art and commerce, and each had a specific time period, so the New Wave movements were cyclical in nature. However, the fact that different types of filmmakers initiated the New Wave in different regions also determines the specificity of the New Wave in the different areas.

**Keywords:** *cinema new wave, France, Korea, Hong Kong, features, comparison*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From Neupert's work, it is easily known that 'New Wave' comes from the French word 'La Nouvelle Vague', which refers to a film movement in France from the late 1950s onwards. The term 'New Wave' was later widely used to refer to the new film movement that emerged in other countries in the history of the cinema after World War II [1]. The New Wave movement has left a valuable film heritage in France and the world, and its influence has spread to many countries. The critical role of the New Wave movement was to push the film forward. Many factors often influenced the New Wave movement, and the creators of the New Wave period consciously explored the social ills of politics. Therefore, this paper will compare and contrast the New Wave movements in France, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong, focusing on the causes and backgrounds (including cultural, historical, economic, and political factors) of the New Wave movements in these four regions. It will also compare and contrast the characteristics of the films made during the movement and analyse its impact. This paper will contribute to film studies in France, Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong, China.

### 2. FRENCH NEW WAVE

Firstly, the French New Wave is one of the most famous film movements in cinema history. This movement called for a radical transformation of the art of cinema in the spirit of modernism [1]. Secondly, the French New Wave was a coherent movement that existed for a limited period, mainly from the 1950s to the 1960s, when the context of the time and a range of factors favoured the word movement [2]. Finally, the movement was a cultural phenomenon influenced by aesthetic, political, economic and social changes. Thus, the term 'French New Wave' was a marketing tool that also encompassed sociological, economic and technological changes [1].

There are several reasons that why this New Wave took place. Firstly, after the Second World War, the economic reconstruction of Western Europe led to economic growth in France between the 1950s and 1960s, which was one of the main reasons for the boom in French cinema. This economic growth provided the economic conditions for these original filmmakers to produce their style of films. As the economy grew, the government had the funds to support investment in film. "France's Center National de la's Cine's mammographic

(CNC) offered substantial monetary support for French filmmakers. In the mid-to-late 1950s, the CNC devoted considerable funds to fostering fresh cinematic talents. [3]" Secondly, the influence of political factors also influenced this film revolution. During the Second World War, France stopped importing films. However, after World War II, imported films began to re-enter France again. The influx of Hollywood productions inspired French filmmakers [4]. The term 'Nouvelle Vague' (New Wave) was initially applied to this emerging, invigorated youth culture [3]. This revolutionary culture enhances the creativity and uniqueness of French filmmakers. Just taking inspiration from other filmmaker's works does not mean that these French filmmakers hope to be followers. They want to be leaders.

For decades, mainstream filmmaking, particularly Hollywood filmmaking, has set the standards and 'rules' for making films. The films that emerged during the New Wave broke those standards. As a result, the French New Wave films had several features, such as improvisation, jump cuts rather than continuous editing, handheld cameras, long takes and the use of live sound and lighting [4]. The films of the French New Wave, for example, put the initiative more in the hands of the director, who often had to shoot on his own without the equipment volunteered by the major studios. In addition, the French New Wave films were more focused on expressing the ideas of their creators than the entertainment purposes of Old Hollywood films. The use of long shots allowed the viewer's experience of the film to be brought into the plot and provoke thought. Between 1958 and 1964, around 120 French directors made their first record films [1].

This movement revolutionised mainstream filmmaking and influenced filmmaking in France and beyond to a large extent [4]. The New Wave encouraged new styles, themes and modes of production worldwide, leading a generation to break with the old rules of storytelling and experiment with new forms. Overall the French New Wave influenced the work of Hollywood directors, contributed significantly to the language of cinema in the world's cinemas and had a profound influence on the rise of the New Wave in other regions.

### **3. HONG KONG NEW WAVE**

There are two primary new waves in the cinema of Hong Kong. The first wave started from the 1970s to the mid-1980s. From 1985 to the late 1990s, this period was the second and the last residual glory in Hong Kong cinema. Several factors that cause the cinema new wave in Hong Kong are discussed and stated in the next paragraphs.

Advanced economy usually is accompanied with a booming culture". With the development of economic

growth and prosperity in the early 1970s, Hong Kong became one of Asian's four tigers (the other three were Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore). During the 1960s and 1970s, Hong Kong unexpectedly transformed from a resource-deprived location to a global financial center with a thriving manufacturing economy, booming import and export commerce, and a sophisticated service sector [5]. The success in the economic sector of this incredible city provides more than financial sponsors for producing films and the numbers of construction in movie theatres and the rising income of residents in Hong Kong. People have extra money and time to enjoy movies in movie theatres.

Besides the economic aspect, as the British colony (at that point), the censorship authority didn't exist in this land. The freedom of artistic creation hugely released the energy and dynamic for Hong Kong filmmakers. These filmmakers could write and shoot whatever they want in their minds without considering or negotiating with any bureau or government. The economy brings financial support, and political freedom builds the ecological system for cinema creation. But it is the well-educated filmmakers who make good motion pictures happen in production. In the 1970s, many Hong Kong filmmakers who studied film productions from America, U.K. came and gathered up in Hong Kong, which created and contributed the professional and distinctive style to the Hong Kong cinema.

So much for the discourse of causes of the Hong Kong New Wave. Like the special aesthetic of French Cinema compared to Hollywood productions, the auteurist style is significantly connected to the definition of "New Wave". Before the "New Wave", there were only two major production studios, "Shaw Brothers" and "Golden Harvest", which were originally developed in the conventional style of filmmaking. For example, "Shaw Brothers" initially released productions that were about the Cantonese opera. Or some remixed version of American and other westerns films. The other big studio, "Golden Harvest", released its debut feature "Big Boss" (1970), which was the first Kung Fu genre in the world. But those filmmakers were trained in an old-school way. They did not receive professional cinema education. But with rapid economic growth, society and people's needs change to diversity. Those old school filmmakers gradually wouldn't satisfy the diverse and abundant demands of Hong Kong society. Fortunately, during that time, these overseas filmmakers from western countries were introduced to Hong Kong in the late 1970s. They brought not only the unique cinematic style but also the advanced workflow on set. In other words, the first wave in Hong Kong cinema was under the influence of the westernised production method and the base of economic growth. These overseas filmmakers made films in the western way, but they were still "Hong Konger" ethnically and culturally. The film is a reflection of life. That is why most

filmmakers would take inspiration from the culture they grow up with. “Many of the New Wave directors had a European-style education and were influenced by European filmmaking and culture. The Hong Kong New Wave films were not stylistically homogeneous [6]”.

In conclusion, in the first wave, the aesthetic was the combination of the South Asian urban culture and Western film techniques originating from those overseas filmmakers in Hong Kong. “It is a commercial city suffering from colonial rule. Hong Kong culture was based on the Chinese culture with Lingnan culture as its main form[6]”. For example, Tsai Hark, the most famous filmmaker during the first wave. His film works are combined with traditional Chinese cultures and filmmaking techniques maturely applied into the western feature motion pictures he learned from the U.S. Wong Kar-Wai, another flagship film director during the second wave, masterfully implements the Chinese southern environment to the cinema language he is influenced by European filmmakers.

#### **4. JAPANESE NEW WAVE**

Japanese New Wave started from late 1950 to 1970s, which was under the influence of the French New Wave and against the traditions and conventions of Japanese cinema.

Japanese economy thrived back from the trauma of World War II and began growth in 1955. At that point, the studio system was already established and matured. All of the film directors were approximately trained from the big studio, the “Toho Film”, and some of them were even internationally acclaimed. For example, the most well-known studio director whose work “Rashomon” (1950) already won the Golden Lion Award at Venice Film Festival was Akira Kurosawa. At that point, big studios monopolized the production and distribution of the whole Japanese film industry. “Indie Film” remained absent. The financial support benefited from the economic prosperity of the film industry all transmitted to studios instead of nourishing the filmmakers who were independent of filmmakers.

However, just because the studios’ educated film directors, does not mean, those filmmakers should stay in their original region forever. In the late 1950s, Japanese politics and diplomacy were alerted dramatically and drastically. In 1960, “the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, also known in Japan as Anpo/Ampo jōyaku or just Anpo/Ampo, were valid. Japan lost its military and security power and moved that power to the US. This caused the concussion of Japanese society. people protested on the street including filmmakers. During that time, “Breathless” (1960) was already screened in Japan, Japanese filmmakers inspired and learned new techniques for making films.

In this aspect of the Japanese culture, the older the person was, the higher chance he could get a promotion. Japanese young filmmakers felt stressed under the previous old and privileged directors, such as Akira Kurosawa, Yusajiro Ozu. They decided to make a new film.

In terms of the characteristics of the Japanese New Wave, unlike the French New Wave, Japanese new cinema originally began within the studio. And it was under the influence of the French New Wave. All works in the New Wave era have very close connections to politics, public affairs and social issues. The stories in New Wave films, including the narrative structure and themes or how the themes are told, are subversive of traditional Japanese cinema. Examples include unfettered sexuality, the changing role of women in society, racism and the status of minorities in Japan, and the critique (or deconstruction) of social structures and assumptions. “Protagonists like Time from Imamura’s *The Insect Woman* (1963) or the adolescent delinquents of Oshima’s *Cruel Story of Youth* (1960) represented rebellion, but also gave domestic and international audiences a glimpse into lives that would otherwise likely escape cinematic attention.”

All in all, it has influenced the world of cinema, especially some indie filmmakers in America, for example, Martin Scorsese. Secondly, the Japanese New Wave enriches and enlarges the categories and genres of Japanese cinema. Japanese cinema gained international acclaim in Hollywood and in the European film festivals, such as Cannes Film Festivals. Last but not least, “big studio systems” have collapsed since the rise of the Japanese New Wave. Filmmakers seldom rely on assistant and support from film studios. Their free thoughts and creative ideas regarding filmmaking could be practiced into the frame and screens of movie theatres.

#### **5. KOREAN NEW WAVE**

Korean New Wave began in the early 1980s. After the end of the military dictatorship era, President Park Chung-hee’s “yusin system”, South Korea stepped into the democracy, the government began to relax the censorship. The Motion Picture Law of 1984 allowed independent filmmakers to start producing films, and the 1986 revision of the law permitted more films to be imported into South Korea. The independent film industry and filmmakers began to proliferate, with some independent works gaining international favour. For example, Lim Kwon-taek’s *Mandala* (1981) won the Grand Prix at the 1981 Hawaii Film Festival and he soon became the first Korean director to have his film screened at a European festival for many years. His film *Gilsoddeum* (1986) was shown at the 36th Berlin International Film Festival, and actress Kang Soo-yeon won Best Actress at the 1987 Venice International Film

Festival for her role in Im's film, *The Surrogate Woman*. Meanwhile, in 1984, the Korean government established the limitation of the import quotas to foreign films. Obviously, this policy damaged the principle of free trade, but it oppositely promoted the rapid development of the domestic film industry. "For domestic films to compete, the government once again enforced a screen quota that required movie theatres to show domestic films for at least 146 days per year. [7]"

Such a radical growth in the film industry ended in 1997 when the Asian financial crisis stormed South Korea. Those Chaebols, such as Samsung, begin to scale back to the investment of the film industry. However, the groundwork of the young filmmakers was already established in the 1980s. At that point, the financial crisis caused a large amount of capital to flow back from the stock market to the entertainment industry. Korean rulers realized that they had to switch their main economic backbone from finance to the entertainment and cultural sector. Also, Hollywood introduced another business model for the film to South Korea, the "blockbuster", Korean filmmakers started to make "Korean Blockbusters" to profit and recover the entire film industry.

All New Wave's characteristics are different due to the various causes of the New wave's rising and the filmmakers' environment and geographical areas. Korean New Wave was developed with the cancellation of censorship, which was the main factor western new wave cinemas never encountered. Korean new wave filmmakers were from the low-income class. Most filmmakers did not have professional school education. Moreover, due to the particular economic structure, Korean New Wave was highly supported by chaebols (the big firm group, for example, Samsung) instead of the government or professional cinema studios. Korean New Wave was recovering oppositely, instead of the depressing of the Hong Kong cinema after 1997. Most New Korean Cinema works were focused on the class difference between rich and poor, the dark corruption of the government.

## 6. ANALYSIS OF SIMILARITIES

All cinema new wave in all regions discussed above happens and follows with the local economic prosperity. Film production is a game of capital and investment. Everything related to producing films is a utopian fantasy without discussion of money and budget. On the one hand, economic ascending would dynamically promote the cinema revolution. On the other hand, cinema new wave would be fallen by the financial crisis. Hong Kong's new wave died out in the late 1990s because of the financial crisis in South Asia in 1997.

The loosening and rejection of censorship/ freedom of the cultural creation. Cinema combines art and

business, which requires a free and diverse environment for artists and business people. Cinema new wave is a rebellion of film tradition, which even calls for embracing the freedom of cinema creation. For example, when South Korea ceased the dictatorship system and stepped into the democracy progress, the creative dynamic in filmmaking was released in the 1980s. The Korean New Wave continues even today.

Every cinema new wave only lasts 20 years, which means such artistic movement is periodic. French new wave made began from the 1960s until the 1980s. Nobody even watches Godard or Tarruffaut's works or any French films at all in the 21st century.

The exploration of different features and genres. The Hong Kong New Wave created the martial arts/martial arts genre; the French New Wave gave birth to jump cuts and 'long shot mise-en-scene', a mixture of sex and violence scenes and street politics that introduced the world to an alternative beauty of Japanese cinema to Akira Kurosawa and Masayuki Ozu; the Korean director Bo Jun-ho and his work *Parasite* will always shine as a mobile star in cinema history, because filmmakers will never forget that there should be another way to portray the problem of class differences.

## 7. ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITIES

Comparing Japan and South Korea: South Korean cinema new wave rises with the development of the social and political movement. South Korea ended the military dictatorship in the late 1980s, which is later than the collapse of Japanese militarism in 1945.

Different filmmakers' specialities in backgrounds lead to the speciality of each cinema movement. French filmmakers leading the first new wave were originally film critics and scholars. They saw platitude flaws of cinema techniques, which motivated them to start the revolution of new cinema; Hong Kong did not have a film school that educated filmmakers. But due to the unique position in the economy geographically, Hong Kong could introduce all overseas elites to make new cinemas; Korean and Japanese filmmakers were used to being educated in the big film studios. They were trained in the studio originally, but the problem was from the studio system itself, which gave fewer opportunities for young filmmakers, some of them left the old system and began their own "rebellion" career.

## 8. CONCLUSION

To sum up, all cinema new wave movements in France, Japan, Hong Kong end up declining. French and Japanese New Wave movement ended in the 1970s. Hong Kong even concluded its domestic productions in early 2000. The underlying reason behind these brilliant

but short-lived film movements in the cinema is the lack of a full-fledged film industry in the areas where these movements once broke out. Post-production, color correction and even production assistants, who work at a low to mid-level in the production team, can exert a huge influence on the whole team.

All cinema new wave movements emphasize the importance of the auteurist, the director's contribution to the work of a film. This causes, on the one hand, the outburst of legendary masterful auteurist directors, such as Godard, Truffaut, Wong Kar Wai, Tsui Hark, etc. However, masterful cinematographers or film editors, actors were less well-known than directors in the world.

Cinema new wave is a revolutionary movement in the history of the world of cinema. The discourse and analysis above whole paragraphs of social background and characteristics regarding those subsequent regions that experienced the motion picture revolution: France, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea. Comprehension of the common ground of the diversities of cinema's rise and fall movements comparatively in relation to each area could assist contemporary filmmakers in improving cinematic creation and the reflection of cinema history.

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