Legal Consciousness and Images of Lawyers as Reflected in Korean Legal TV Dramas  
- From <Advocate> to <Prosecutor Princess>

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This article aims to investigate the legal consciousness and the images of lawyers as perceived by Koreans through analyzing legal TV dramas that feature lawyers as main characters. Text analysis of the drama contents for five legal TV dramas that were broadcasted between 1998 and 2010 was made. In addition, written posts on the internet bulletin board of the three drama web-pages were used for the reception study. In the majority of the legal TV dramas, the public prosecutor played a primary role, whereas the judge was portrayed as playing a very weak and minimal role. On the other hand, lawyers were depicted as diverse and divided in terms of work and personalities. Frequent binary structures were manifested in the dramas, including good versus evil, the battle between justice and money, and the different perspectives of lawyers and non-lawyers. The dramas frequently feature defendants who are falsely charged and a sort of ‘therapeutic justice’ was displayed, where the main lawyer characters were supposed to heal their clients’ wounded hearts through the legal process. The emotional aspect of the Korean cultural code, such as reliance on comradeship, friendship, and the personal network was also found. Drama viewers tend to have both positive and negative images about lawyers as manifested in the web bulletin board. They construct their opinions by combining what they saw in the TV with their personal interpretations, rather than simply accepting what the drama meant to deliver. Korea’s legal TV dramas have reflected the social changes of the Korean society in recent decades; e.g., the increase of the

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number of lawyers, the important roles of law firms in legal practice, the introduction of criminal jury trials and the establishment of the law school system.

Key words: court drama, popular culture, legal profession, legal consciousness, images, cultivation theory, reception theory, text analysis, internet bulletin-board analysis, law and culture