comprehensive laws to protect intellectual property. As a result, 100 percent of Chinese editions of Japanese comics were pirated copies (Schodt, 1983:157-158). Taiwan was the largest exporter of pirated copies of Chinese editions of Japanese comics, followed by Malaysia, China, and Hong Kong. Pirated copies in Singapore were mostly made either by Taiwanese or Malaysian publishers. Taiwanese publishers, such as Tong Li and Ching Nian, selected and translated many good titles into Chinese. Malaysian editions were actually photocopies of Taiwanese editions. Many Malaysian editions did not even mention the publishers. Most of these pirated Japanese comics were of poor quality in terms of translation and printing. They were well received in the Singapore market because they were very cheap and included many excellent and now-classical works made in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Tetsuka Osamu's *Astro Boy*, *Jungle Emperor*, and *Princess Knight* and Igarashi Yumiko's *Candy Candy*. Many of their TV animated series were also shown in Singapore or Malaysia during this period.

Singaporean and Malaysian readers did not mind the poor-quality printing, but they found the frequent interruption of serialized works very disturbing. There were two reasons for this situation. First, most Japanese comics were very long. Sometimes the serialization stopped when the response was lukewarm or the publisher went out of business. Second, a problem existed with local distribution and retailing as there were no specific bookstores in the region selling Japanese comics in this period. Newspaper stands usually did not take Japanese comics. Some bookstores carried a few titles of Japanese comics, but stopped if they did not sell well. As a result, Japanese comic fans did not know when and whether the next issue of their favorite comics would come out.

Although Japanese comic culture came to Singapore and Malaysia in the early 1980s, it started as a small current within the local comics market and popular culture. Japanese comics had strong competitors. Hong Kong comics seem to have been better received than Japanese comics, having a group of faithful readers in Singapore and Malaysia and uninterrupted serialization. In particular the *kung fu* series by Wong Yuk Long and Ma Wing Shing were quite popular among students since the late 1970s.

During the latter half of the 1980s, Japanese comics began to secure a leading role in the Singapore and Malaysian comics markets, outselling Hong Kong comics by a comfortable margin. A major reason for their popularity was the broadcasting of a number of popular Japanese TV animated series such as *Macross* and *Thunderbird 2076* in these two nations. Fans of these animated series turned to comics for greater details and satisfaction. Besides, as Japanese comics became extremely popular in Taiwan and Hong Kong, more and more pirated copies were imported. Malaysia also continued to reprint Taiwanese pirated copies. The largest supplier of Japanese comics, the Taiwanese brought out editions popular because they were nicely printed and published regularly. Hong Kong editions were also well printed, but were translated into Cantonese and the supplies in Singapore were unreliable. On the other hand, Malaysian editions were of very poor quality and were not suitable for collecting. Popular titles in the late 1980s in Singapore and Southeast Asia were *Doraemon, Dragonball, Doctor Slump, City Hunter*, and *Macross*. Some had multiple editions. For example, *Doraemon* had at least three different

Chinese editions made in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia respectively, each with a different title in Chinese. **(Figure 1)**

Figure 1: **Different Chinese editions of *Doraemon* available in Singapore and Malaysia**

| Taiwanese Edition | Singapore Edition | Hong Kong Edition |

By the late 1980s, some Singapore companies also began printing pirated Japanese comics; the quality was even worse than the Malaysian editions. Most of these early Singaporean editions ended after a few issues due to a poor response to them. Those of Walter Printing (later Chuang Yi) were the exception. Making its name by reprinting *Doraemon* in 1985 and 1986, Walter Printing made quality-printed comics and became a major player in the Japanese comics market in Singapore in the 1990s.

Due to the rising popularity and the importation in large quantity of Chinese editions of Japanese comics, increasingly more book shops and newspaper stands were willing to carry them. Some comic book shops even rented out Taiwanese editions of Japanese comics at a very low fee.

Why are Japanese comics becoming increasingly popular in Singapore and Southeast Asia generally in the 1990s? First, Japanese comics are becoming popular worldwide, and particularly in Asia. While Taiwan and Hong Kong are at the center of this boom, Singapore and Southeast Asia have been also strongly affected. Second, Southeast Asia (except for the Philippines) does not have a strong local comics tradition to counterbalance the Japanese comics. Even places like mainland China and Hong Kong which have their own comic tradition cannot resist the influence of Japanese comics, let alone Southeast Asia with its very immature comic culture. Third, animated TV series boost the popularity of Japanese comics. More and more Japanese animated series have been screened on local TV stations. Basically all Japanese TV cartoons become hits in the comics market. Some of these titles include *Doraemon, Bow Wow, Ranma 1/2, Macross, Dragonball, Sailormoon*, and *What's Michael*. Singaporean TV channels are showing 12 Japanese animated series (10.5 hours) a week. The number at least doubles if we take into consideration cable TV and Malay channels. Besides Singapore and Malaysia, mostly all nations in Southeast Asia broadcast some Japanese TV cartoons, such as