

DE-NATIONALIZATION AND RE-NATIONALIZATION OF CULTURE:
THE GLOBALIZATION OF K-POP

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wife, Eunjoo Lee, my little daughter, Hemin Lee, and my parents, Sung-Sook Choi and Jong-Yeol Lee, who have always been supported me with all their hearts.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables.....	ix
Abstract.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Media and Globalization	5
Homogenization and Hybridization: Two viewpoints.....	7
Globalization of Popular Music	15
The Status of Nation-State in the Era of Globalization.....	19
Chapter Outline	23
CHAPTER 2: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE KOREAN MUSIC INDUSTRY IN THE 1990S.....	27
Growth of the Korean Music Industry	28
Participating in the Global Copyright System.....	28
Increasing cultural demand with the lack of substitution goods	31
Digitalization in Music Producing.....	37
Emergence of the youth as the main audience.....	43
Shut Up and Dance: New Generation Dance Music Dominates the Industry	46
New Generation Dance Music on the Rise.....	47
Radio in Decline	51
The Question of Originality	55
A Brief History of Music Imports into Korean Popular Music Scene.....	56
New Access to Music in the 1990s: Pirated CD sand Public Video Screenings	59
Acquiescence of Illegal: Global as a Sign of Development	67
Plagiarism in New Generation Dance Music	70
Conclusion.....	76
CHAPTER 3: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF K-POP: K-POP’S MAIN	

CHARACTERISTICS	78
K-Pop as Musical Genre	78
K-Pop Branding.....	80
Music of both Transnationality and Nationality.....	84
K-Pop: the Most Hybridized and Transnational Music in Korean Music	
Industry	85
Re-Nationalizing of Transnational music	87
K-Pop as Systemized Industry	90
Idol.....	91
The Meaning of ‘Idol’ in K-Pop	91
H.O.T. and the First-generation K-Pop Idols	92
The Limits of the First-generation K-Pop Idols.....	97
Wonder Girls and the Second-Generation K-Pop Idols.....	99
Agency: Total Management Strategy	100
Yunsupseng Academy	102
Digital Distribution	108
Hangsah	114
Agency and Television Industry: Interdependence Relationship	117
Idols to the broader audience.....	121
Conclusion.....	122
CHAPTER 4: GLOBALIZATION OF K-POP: <i>HALLYU</i> IN EAST ASIA AND THE WEST.....	126
Development of the <i>Hallyu</i>	127
Political and Economic Transformation in East Asia during the 1990s	129
Development of a New Geo-cultural Market in East Asia	134
Increase of Cultural Demand in Local/Regional Contents	136
Korean Popular Culture vs. Japanese Popular Culture	139
<i>Harizu</i> : Japanese Popular Culture in East Asia and Its Limits	139
Ambivalence in Korean Popular Culture: Moderate Modernity	145
The Case of Korean Television Dramas	148
The Case of K-Pop	154
<i>Hallyu</i> in Japan: Different Modernity	161

K-Pop Outside East Asia	166
<i>The Boys and Gangnam Style: Different Strategies of K-Pop</i>	167
Audience of K-Pop Outside East Asia	172
Diversification of ‘Tastes’	173
East Asian Immigrants and K-Pop	177
Role of the Nation-State in <i>Hallyu</i> ?	181
Conclusion	183
CHAPTER 5: THE MEANING OF GLOBALIZATION OF K-POP: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS	187
Between Homogenization and Hybridization	188
Possibility: Understanding Each Other	189
Limits of <i>Hallyu</i> and in East Asia	194
Unevenness of Cultural Flows	194
<i>Banil</i> vs. <i>Kenkanryu</i> : “Identity War” between Korea and Japan	197
“Why Don’t You Go to the Army?”: Tablo Scandal	201
Conclusion	204
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF K-POP	206
Significance, Limitations, and Future Research	211
REFERENCES	214

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 2.1 – Record production, sales, and GNP	32
Table 2.2 – Comparison between recording industry, film industry, and GNP	34
Table 2.3 – No. 1 singles of KBS <i>Gayo Top 10</i> , 1990	47
Table 2.4 – No. 1 singles of KBS <i>Gayo Top 10</i> , 1995	48
Table 2.5 – List of songs suspected to be plagiarism in the 1990s	73
Table 3.1 – Weekly training schedule of a teenager <i>yunsupseng</i> in Nega Network	105
Table 3.2 – Formats of digital music source distributed in Korean music industry	110
Table 3.3 – Role of each agent in digital music products market in Korea	113

ABSTRACT

DE-NATIONALIZATION AND RE-NATIONALIZATION: THE GLOBALIZATION OF K-POP

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K-Pop – contemporary Korean dance music – is currently becoming one of the noticeable popular music genres in the world. It was firstly globalized in East Asian region, and recently it is being globalized in the rest of the world including US and the West. This dissertation demonstrates that the development of K-Pop was based on globalization of culture, media, and communication technology such as the reinforcement of global copyright system, penetration of global media into East Asia, and digitalization worldwide. K-Pop is the localization/indigenization of global popular music within its own context. I demonstrate that due to the development of capitalism and globalization occurred in East Asia in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, a different type of ‘modernity’ was established in the region. K-Pop was developed based on this new East Asian modernity, but it has been influencing East Asian audiences vice versa. In spite of the limitations, as pan-East Asian culture which has not existed before, K-Pop is now constructing new East Asian identity not only among regional audiences but also among ethnic East Asian in the rest of the world.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

K-Pop is going global at this moment. A music video of the single *Gangnam Style*, produced and performed by famous Korean rapper and producer PSY (Jae-Sang Park), has been viewed over 300 million times worldwide since it was posted on YouTube. This song was his first single released internationally, though his Korean debut album released in 2001 and *Gangnam Style* is the first single cut from his sixth studio album, *6TH Part 1*. It was ranked No.1 on the UK Singles Chart in September of 2011 and ranked the second place of Billboard Hot 100 Chart (the main single chart of the Billboard) for seven consecutive weeks. *Gangnam Style* became the first Korean song to reach No. 1 in the UK and top 5 in the US, two of the dominant powers of global popular music industry. Notably, its lyrics are Korean, not English, Spanish, or other European languages yet Americans sing along to this Korean song with its funny ‘invisible horse dance’, even without knowing what its lyrics mean.

Although the success of *Gangnam Style* is unique, there has been slight but significant hint of this K-Pop wave since the late 2000s in the US and some Western European countries. Billboard newly introduced a weekly K-pop chart in July of 2011 after several K-Pop musicians such as BoA, Girl’s Generation, Wonder Girls, and BigBang appeared on the Billboard 200 (albums) and Billboard Hot 100 (singles) charts. Before PSY swept a number of television variety and talk shows in the late 2012, Girl’s Generation, one of the most popular K-Pop girl bands in its domestic market, had appeared as guests on *The David Letterman Show* in January of 2012.

Detailed articles regarding the K-Pop phenomenon were published in a few news and music magazines such as *Newsweek* (Poole, 2012), *Time* (Mahr, 2012), and two of the most famous and prestigious US popular music magazines *Rolling Stone* (Benjamin, 2012) and *Spin* (Bevan, 2012) even before other media outlets jumped on the trend after the *Gangnam Style* phenomenon. Many K-Pop musicians have had joint concerts in global cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Barcelona, Berlin, Mexico City, São Paulo, and Sidney since the late 2000s, with almost all the seats occupied.

K-Pop is a recent trend that has just become a noticeable cultural phenomenon in Europe and the Americas for only about a couple of years or so. However, K-Pop has already been established as one of the ‘coolest’ popular musical forms in most East Asian countries such as Chinese-speaking regions (Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and to a lesser extent, Malaysia and Singapore), Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, the world’s second largest music market Japan, and in the Korean domestic market since the late 1990s. It has led to the rapid popularization of Korean popular cultural products in East Asia – the new and broad cultural phenomenon called the *Hallyu* (韓流) or Korean Wave. K-Pop had already conquered the regional East Asian music industry, and now it is going global far and wide.

The globalization of K-Pop is a new kind of phenomenon. K-Pop is definitely Korean pop music, but it is also a kind of transnational hybrid music that refers to other global popular music in various ways. The history of the development of K-Pop shows how local cultural industries survived in the flow of globalization by building regional international success and then expanding around the world. That is to say, the

recent K-Pop phenomenon is ‘globalization of non-hegemonic local culture’, which does not usually happen in overall globalization.

Why do other East Asian audiences like K-Pop? Why has the exportation of K-Pop (and other Korean cultural products) to East Asia (and other regions recently) significantly increased since the late 1990s? How could the K-Pop industry survive against the invasion of multi-national music conglomerates while most other countries surrendered their control of production and distribution of popular music to those transnational businesses? How has this non-Anglo American, non-hegemonic popular culture become global popular music? And, what do the development and globalization of K-Pop suggest about our current understandings of popular culture and globalization? These are the questions that motivated the present research.

To answer these questions, this dissertation explores and interrogates interaction between the global configurations of contemporary popular music and local music scenes in Korea (hereafter Korea), especially since the 1990s. The largely Anglo-American music industry, which dominates the global popular music industry, is often portrayed by writers on globalization as forms of cultural imperialism. As a result, local popular music is homogenized, displaced, and appropriated by the global music industry and its products, losing its ‘traditional’ representations.

This dissertation sets out to examine and challenge this homogenization theory that fails to represent “the often complex cultural and political issues involved in local versions of imported music cultures” (Mitchell, 1996, p. 1). This dissertation is particularly concerned with the nation-states and region, which relate to the global/local production and consumption of popular music. Nationalism and regionalism have played important roles in the development of contemporary popular

music, giving it a sense of defining local identity, particularly “when it is confronted with broader narratives of globalization” (ibid.). While the local/region cannot but adopt the power of global music industry, it can appropriate global music products and system as a way to access to global markets alongside the global flow of music produced in the US and the UK? Focusing on this ambivalence, this dissertation aims to enunciate the influence of national and regional identity on the development and articulation of K-Pop – simultaneously local, regional, and global popular music – in context of globalization. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the historical, political-economic, and cultural contexts of Korea and East Asia in 1990s and 2000s are intertwined with the rise of the K-Pop phenomenon and the *Hallyu* in general, and gives shape to K-Pop as Pan-East Asian culture. It is obvious that some other factors play an important role in the case of current globalization of K-Pop outside East Asia. I argue that this wider globalization of K-Pop depends upon this new trend in East Asia to a large extent.

To begin the research, this dissertation refers to a set of theories and assumptions about the globalization of media, culture and popular music. As with most popular culture of the periphery (or the semi-periphery), K-Pop has been deeply related to globalization and modernization occurring in the developing world, especially globalization of communication media and culture. A number of scholars have studied globalization of media and culture in various ways, a useful springboard for the discussion. However, this dissertation shifts from the global/local binarism, such as ‘homogenizing global power vs. authentic local tradition’, to alternative dimensions, focusing on the role of the nation-state and the region.

Media and Globalization

A number of scholars pay significant attention to the nature and impact of communication media in globalization (Giddens, 1990; Appadurai, 1996; Mattelart, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2001; Artz and Kamalipour, 2003; Friedmann, 2007). Among others, Thompson (1995) refers to Giddens's argument of modern institutions (see Giddens, 1990, p. 6), noting the role of global communication media:

[T]he development of communication media was interwoven in complex ways with a number of other developmental processes which, taken together, were constitutive of what we have come to call 'modernity'. Hence, if we wish to understand the nature of modernity – that is, of the institutional characteristics of modern societies and the life conditions created by them – then we must give a central role to the development of communication media and their impact. (p. 3)

From this point of view, globalization may happen only when “the growing interconnectedness of different regions and locales becomes systematic and reciprocal to some degree, and only when the scope of interconnectedness is effectively global” (Thompson, 1995, p. 150). According to Thompson, even if Giddens (1990) is right in asserting that “modernity is inherently globalizing”, without the interconnection achieved by the development of communication media, globalization could not take shape. He argues that “the use of technical media provides individuals with new ways of organizing and controlling space and time, and new ways of using space and time for their own ends” and as a result, it has “a profound impact on the ways in which

individuals experience the spatial and temporal dimensions of social life” (Thompson, 1995, p. 22).

Moreover, while Giddens and others emphasize the discontinuous aspects of modernity from tradition (or pre-modernity), Thompson (1995, p. 187) argues that communication media does not obliterate tradition entirely, but instead lead to the “re-mooring of tradition.” He notes that “while tradition retains its significance, it has been transformed in a crucial way: the transmission of the symbolic materials which comprise traditions has become increasingly detached from social interaction in a shared locale.” According to Thompson, traditions (or pre-modernities) will not disappear even in the era of global modernity but rather, they will be “sustained over time only if they are continually re-embedded in new contexts and re-moored to new kinds of territorial units.”

Thompson (1995, p. 152-157) names a number of empirical examples, such as the development of underwater cable systems by the European imperial powers, and the establishment of international news agencies tied into global networks of communication by European oligopolists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This growing global interconnectedness is due to the development of new communication technologies (Thompson, 1995). Robertson (1992; 1995) also notes that to understand the present rapid shifts towards “a highly interdependent world” (in short, globalization), we should pay attention to the rapid extension of communication, shifts in elements of global-human conditions (societies, individuals, the international system of societies, and humankind), and the issue of changing conceptions of time and space – all of which occurred in a certain period (see also Tomlinson, 1991; Featherstone, 1995; Hannerz, 1996). In particular, globalization of culture is largely

due to the development of communication media, both in positive and negative terms.

Homogenization and Hybridization: Two viewpoints

Since the late twentieth century, one of the most important features in globalization discourse has been the globalization of culture by the USA and, to a lesser extent, some Western European countries. Though there were several instances of internationalization and globalization of culture such as technologies, texts, and genres in the late 19th and early 20th century, there has been an accelerated intensification of international cultural flows, including much greater globalization on the part of cultural industry businesses. The important factor in recent globalization of culture is the increasing ease of doing business across national borders as communications and transportation have improved. The increase in leisure time and disposable income in some parts of the world, such as East Asia and Latin America, has provided American and European cultural industry corporations the opportunity to expand into these markets. Meanwhile, companies of these regions have made attempts to produce domestic cultural products and have created “regional international cultural markets”, that are different from global markets dominated by American and European powers (Iwabuchi, 2001; Park and Curran, 2002; Iwabuchi et al., 2004; Artz and Kamalipour, 2003; Archer et al, 2009).

Pieterse (1995a) classifies the debates of the globalization of culture into three basic positions: 1) homogenization theory, in which globalization leads to cultural convergence, 2) polarization theory, which posits cultural wars between Western globalization and its opponents, and 3) hybridization theory, in which globalization encourages a blending of the diverse set of cultural repertoires made

available through cross-border exchange. The first two, homogenization theory and polarization theory, stem from a similar theoretical basis which assumes that there is a “pure and core” traditional culture in contrast to a “commercial and imperial” global (Western) culture. Pieterse (1995a, p. 1389) argues that these two might be considered forms of modernism in its Romantic and Enlightenment versions respectively, while hybridization refers to a postmodern sensibility of a travelling culture. Thus, polarization theory could be included in homogenization theory, but is quite distinct from hybridization theory.

The homogenization theory was the most widely held belief about globalization of culture, especially before the 1990s. The term ‘homogenization’ does not only mean a convergence toward a common set of cultural traits and practices (including cultural products themselves), but also refers to a homogenization of world cultures and communication systems. Homogenization has been emphasized by writers focused on the concept of cultural imperialism (e.g. Schiller, 1976; Hamelink, 1983; Herman and McChesney, 1997; Harvey, 2005b), or McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993; 2007). This term refers to the way that the cultures of less developed countries have been affected by flows of cultural texts, forms, and technologies associated with the West. Homogenization is then equivalent to Westernization or even Americanization. The mechanisms of change are associated with the worldwide spread of a market economy and the global strategies of multinational corporations (see Holton, 2000, p. 142). Some versions of the homogenization thesis focus more on cultural meanings and values, arguing that the impending homogeneous world culture will largely be a version of contemporary Western culture, and the loss of local culture will be most distinct at the periphery (see, for example Norberg-Hodge, 1996). Other

versions of homogenization theory focus less on the homogenization of cultural values and more on the global commodification of culture as well as the elimination of alternatives to a system of private, for-profit media production articulated tightly with the imperatives of marketing, advertising, and consumerism (Schiller, 1976; 1998; Tomlinson, 1991; 1997). This picture of homogeneity has been further enhanced with the recent development of communication technology and the global media (Lull, 2000; Mattelart, 2000).

Besides the industries, the US Government also has played an important role in promoting its cultural industries abroad as a means of securing export income, and in order to export a set of beliefs and values concerning how to organize cultural production and consumption (Schiller, 1998, p. 18-19). For instance, foreign aid from the USA during the post-war period was tied to stipulations that both its industrial products, and (more importantly) its cultural exports would be permitted. As a result, American cultural exports boomed during the post-Second World War period (Herman and McChesney, 1997, p. 18-21; McMichael, 2008, p. 61-63). Schiller (1992, p. 151) notes “many developing states are able to afford the new communications complexes only by accepting commercial packages which ‘tie’ their broadcasting systems to foreign programming and foreign financial sponsorship.” Such interventions by some powerful states led to the copyright interests and intellectual properties of cultural industry corporations, mostly owned by the US, Western European countries, and Japan (see Lathrop, 2007, p. 223-228). Therefore, the homogenization theory holds that as the age of direct political and economic domination by colonial powers came to an end, a new, indirect form of international domination began. Schiller (1992) suggests that in economically peripheral countries,

“(Modern communications and foreign policy) provide a sort of entryway of Western ideas and Western concepts, even though these concepts may not be explicitly and completely stated at any one particular moment in the communication” (p. 150).

A quick look at the world today affords homogenization theory a certain plausibility. A shopping mall or hotel looks very similar whether it is in Seoul, New York, or São Paulo. Audiences around the world are listening to the same Beatles’ songs, watching the same Hollywood movies, and fanatical about the same CSI drama series. All of these commodities are produced by transnational media conglomerates based in Western countries. Moreover, global audiences are composing hip hop music and producing commercial films and TV dramas, based on formats and genres are from the West rather than their own traditional cultural forms. It is more than just ‘Americanization’, because exporters are neither the U.S. government nor U.S. companies – they are “transnational corporations”, who deploy strategies that are much more complex than simply exporting American culture abroad. Thus, it is globalization of commodified popular culture, and globalization of transnational capitalism (Iwabuchi, 2001; Harvey, 2005b).

However, the homogenization theory is liable to a range of criticisms and limitations. Hannerz (1998, p. 125) notes that the homogenization theory has much in common with “1940s or 1950s imagery of mass culture within the metropole which showed a faceless, undifferentiated crowd drowning in a flood of mediocre but mass-produced cultural commodities.” In contrast to the “faceless, undifferentiated crowd”, in communication studies, there have been a number of studies arguing that audiences are not merely passive consumers. For example, a study by Liebes and Katz (1993) was about the reception of the TV series *Dallas* in different countries and argued for a

theory of the 'active audience' theory. A number of writers have applied the active audience framework in their studies of cultural practices in peripheral regions to argue against homogenization theory (Zolov, 1999; Iwabuchi, 2001; Chung, 2003; Ko, 2004; Thomas, 2004; Moran and Keane, 2004). Using different types of media, these writers emphasize that audiences have been able to reinterpret and transform dominant Western cultural imports according to their own contexts, and have created different types of cultures using foreign (Western) cultural products and communication systems. While homogenization theory assumed that the spread of Western cultural products, technologies, and systems involved homogenization, critics of the theory point out strong processes of cultural differentiation taking place throughout the world. As Hall (1997: 211) puts it, "there are many countervailing tendencies which prevent the world from becoming a culturally uniform and homogenous space."

Varan (1998, p. 68) notes that though "cultures have proven to be remarkably resilient and adaptive", scholars tend to "exaggerate the strength of media agents while discounting the resourcefulness of cultural system." For example, Kang and Morgan (1990) found that for Korean audiences, US television programs sometimes evoke opposition to American and Western culture, rather than brainwashing them into their cultures and ideas. Morris (2002, p. 284) argues that "cultural homogenization is quite visible in the baseball-cap-ization and general 'westernization' of dress styles throughout the world.... Although the world's repertoire of dress styles may be shifting, and even perhaps diminishing, people do not seem to feel a reduced sense of membership in their groups." She notes "one reason the vast influx of external symbols does not wipe out identities is precisely because of the ability of cultures to assimilate new influences", because importing

foreign cultures and assimilation of that does not always mean the “loss of identity.”

Thus, rather than the homogenization theory, some cultural studies approaches tend to see global cultures as “hybrids.” Studies within the hybrid camp argue that the idea of a pure, uncontaminated tradition is problematic, because it may serve to support racism, ethno-centrism, and reactionary versions of nationalism (e.g. Canclini, 1995; 1997; Hall, 1998; Bhabha, 2004). They suggest heterogeneity rather than a universal sameness. Pieterse (1995b) puts forth examples of hybridity in the recent globalization of culture:

How do we come to terms with phenomena such as Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam, Asian rap in London, Irish bagels, Chinese tacos and Mardi Gras Indians in the United States, or Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan? How do we interpret Peter Brook directing the Mahabharata, or Ariane Mnouchkine staging a Shakespeare play in Japanese Kabuki style for a Paris audience in the Théâtre du Soleil? (p. 53)

These instances draw attention to a second tendency woven into the complex fabric of globalization, that of *hybridization* (or syncretization / creolization). It centers on intercultural exchange and the incorporation of cultural elements from a variety of sources within particular cultural practices. It goes against doctrines of purity as strength and sanctity, ancient and classical. Writers who support this perspective usually take the significance of the homogenization effect into account, yet argue that it does not exhaust the complex multi-dimensional elements that make

up global culture (Hannerz, 1992; 1998; Pieterse, 1995b; Hall, 1998; Holton, 2000). Thompson (1995, p. 257) argues that “the localized appropriation of globalized media products is also a source of tension and potential conflict”, and in some contexts these conflicts may “help individuals to take a distance, to imagine alternatives, and thereby to question traditional practices.”

While homogenization theory tends to assume a negative impact of global (Western) cultural products, hybridization theory stresses the creative and active uses and appropriations of Western cultural products by local audiences. Hybridization is not a scene where the peripheral culture is totally inactive, but rather evolves alternatives through producing and exporting innovative cultural products (Sinclair, 1999; Chohan, 2003; M. Lee, 2004; White, 2005).

Moreover, hybridization theory does not only include the “active audience” in periphery, but it also includes multi-dimensional cultural exchange between the center and periphery – in other words, cultural products and aspects do not always flow from the center to periphery, but sometimes in reverse. For instance, Nochimson (2007) sees that several Hong Kong gangster movies and scripts, of which their origins might refer to old American gangster movies, are imported in recent Hollywood productions.¹ Those movies are hybridized with American cultural contexts by American writers, creators and producers, and born as separate movies different from their Hong Kong origins and also from ordinary Hollywood gangster movies. There are also several examples in the construction of specific genres in American popular

¹ For instance, a 2006 Hollywood film *the Departed*, of which the director is Martin Scorsese and main featured actors are Leonardo DiCaprio and Matt Damon, is originated from the 2002 big hit Hong Kong gangster movie *Infernal Affairs, Vol. 1*.

music related to the influence of immigration and diaspora from outside the U.S., such as the effect of merengue and salsa on the American music industry (see Austerlitz, 1997; Cowen, 2002; Waxer, 2002).

A number of studies have pointed out limitations of the hybridization theory, too. Emphasizing the role of active and creative audience usefully problematizes the assumptions in homogenization theory that peripheral, non-Western populations accept the Western cultural products and its values. However, this does not provide the answer to the question of *inequality*. For example, do American audiences accept non-Western cultural products as peripheral audiences do? What do American audiences think of the cultures they view? Is it as important as peripheral audiences' thoughts of American cultural products? And, what are the relationships, if any, between the flows of cultural products and the continuing international and intra-national inequalities of wealth and opportunities? Havens (2007, p. 52-65) argues that the complex flow of global television markets, such as the popularity in *telenovela*, originated neither from the U.S. nor Western European countries. Yet, the U.S. is the leading country both in products and formats exports. Havens (ibid.) notes the inequality:

[T]hey (industries of the U.S. and Western European countries) continue to control much of the market for the highest-priced genres[...] through the use of Western cultural values in their promotion materials, including language, music, and themes[...] (The global television markets) guarantee that Western executives' opinions and practices remain the most highly respected among all participants, thereby lending to their practices an aura of quality that other

distributors emulate, and buyers expect. (p. 65)

The hybridization theory does not account for this type of inequality. Instead, it tends to suggest that such relationships are more complex than were thought by a previous generation.

Most scholars who explore globalization of culture, therefore, tend to conclude that the two trends are not simply contradictory, but interdependent (Pieterse, 1995a; Hannerz, 1998; Tomlinson, 1999; Holton, 2000; Cowen, 2002; Archer et al., 2009). For example, Tomlinson (1999: 30) describes this aspect as “double-edged: as it dissolves the securities of locality, it offers a new understandings of experience in wider – ultimately global – terms.” This is because of the failure of grand theories to adequately explain the diversity and complexity of global cultural development. It is clear that while global economic, technological, and political change exhibits high levels of “convergence” around market-driven capitalism, electronic technology, and liberal-democratic politics, high levels of “divergence” characterize culture (Holton, 2002: 151). Thus, homogenization and hybridization may, together, represent the ambivalence of globalization of culture.

Globalization of Popular Music

Popular music is a particularly good area for exploring the globalization of culture, from the perspective of both homogenization and hybridization theory. In the earlier period of the contemporary popular music study, the internationalization of Western popular musical genres was an example of how the homogenizing cultural power has encouraged people to discard their domestic forms of music and follow

Western forms (Manuel, 1988). However, influenced by theories of globalization and by the emphasis on transnational cultural flows and deterritorialization in cultural theory, postcolonial studies, and anthropology, a number of writers since the 1990s have ushered in a discourse centered on notions of musical hybridity and interaction, and oriented toward new kinds of musical objects (Slobin, 1993; Gilroy, 1993; Lipsitz, 1994). Some of the writers stressed that the aesthetics of modern popular music is the aesthetics of the hybrid (Hall, 1998, p. 38-39; Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000, p. 16-17). Scholars of the constitution of music practices shifted focus toward localized communities and their intervention in those communities have taken place in recent popular music studies (Frith, 1989; Cohen, 1991; Bennett, 2000; Craig and King, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002).

Indeed, much of the popular music that traverses the globe is the result of the creativity of African diaspora and very often of African-Americans (Filene, 2000; Wald, 2004). A number of studies have provided impressive evidence that the export of Western sounds and technologies has not led to a kind of cultural homogenization, and the studies have shown that much local popular music is the result of complex reinterpretations of imported styles and technologies (see, for example, Chernoff, 1985; Austerlitz, 1997; Mitchell, 2001; Ho, 2003). In some instances, local people have appropriated the Western popular music genre as a means to distance themselves from a parental 'national traditional culture', or a means to struggle against authoritarianism and totalitarianism (Wicke, 1990; Zolov, 1999; Dunn, 2001; Veloso, 2002). At the same time, Western (or American) popular music has continued to combine elements of musical traditions drawn from elsewhere, often due to histories of migration and diaspora (King, 2002: 89-104; Ramsey, 2003: 17-42). Globalization

of culture promotes the meeting of musical cultures, while simultaneously encouraging regional differences.

Moreover, compared to the film and television industry, there are many musical centers overlapping and competing with Anglo-American domination. For example, Brazilian popular music has been influential and widely sold throughout much of Latin America. In addition, the music of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Argentina and Colombia have also exerted strong influences throughout the continent at different times and in different ways (Aparicio, 1998; Perrone and Dunn, 2001; McCann, 2004; Sublette, 2004).

Popular music, then, provides some evidence against the homogenization theory. However, some writers argue that a number of problems must be taken into consideration. Hesmondhalgh (2007, p. 237-238) notes that systematic global inequalities in cultural prestige and economic profit continue to exist in the globalization of the popular music industry. The logic of the global market means that the access to the audience is geographical and nationally differentiated (see also Robinson et al., 1991). There are also significant inequalities in what is available to different sets of audiences. Lathrop (2007, p. 15-41) points out that most local music industries still depend upon standardized forms and genres defined by the dominant Western music industry. While not specific to music, Wittrock (2000, p. 54-55) argues that in the process of globalization of culture, “a set of technological, economic, and political institutions, with their origins in the context of Western Europe [and America], have become diffused across the globe at least as ideals, sometimes also as working realities.” The unequal processes of diffusion and adaptation does not mean that “deep-seated cultural and cosmological differences between, say, Western Europe,

China, and Japan are about to disappear.” However, it must be acknowledged that “these different cultural entities *have to adapt to* and *refer to* a set of globally diffused ideas and practices (emphasis by the author).”

Moreover, we can see several instances of exploitation of non-Westerners’ intellectual and artistic property through the mediation of Western cultural industries, with no recompenses to them.² Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000, p. 30) note that the myth of obscured, impossible or irrelevant origins is itself highly ideological: “it can conceal and naturalize domination, both economic and aesthetic, in the cultural sphere.” The celebration of hybridity must resist concealing the unequal relationships between musicians (wherever they come from) and transnational companies that still control access to the most prominent and expansive systems of distribution.

Frith (1991) suggests that even if the hybridization theory reflects the very real changes in the extent and complexity of international cultural flows, it has been re-inflected by popular music scholars as a new form of authenticity. He resists either side of the debate – homogenization and hybridization – by arguing that the significance of transnational popular music derives not from its potential use as a sign of a new era of globalization, but from the lives and practices of musicians, music industry workers, audiences, and their formation of networks of activity. Shin (2002: 42-43) also argues that “the process of hybridity is not one of absolute free choice but one of constant compromise between what might be desired creatively and what will

² For example, when Paul Simon was producing his best-known masterpiece album *Graceland*, he hitched a ride from a number of African traditional tunes and rhythmic patterns with the help of many African musicians. However, even after completing and producing the album producing, he did not cite his musical references and underpaid African musicians. Ironically, he is very sensitive to the copyright issue that he filed several law suits against some creators for their infringing his copyright. See Lessig (2005) for more details.

be accepted commercially.” According to their approaches, globalization of popular music is the evidence of the negotiation of homogenization and hybridization, a kind of “globalization from below.”

The Status of Nation-State in the Era of Globalization

Like Frith and Shin, some scholars have tried to find the space between global/local binarism. For example, Robertson (1995) adapted the term ‘glocal’, firstly used by Sony as the business strategy of global capitalists, and Pieterse (1995b) used the term ‘interculturalism’, seeking to articulate the new type of dialogues between the global and local (see also Canclini, 1995; 1997; Hall, 1990; 1996; Lipsitz, 1990; 1994; Appadurai, 2000). In addition to these studies, Biddle and Knights attempt to introduce *the national or regional dimension* in a productive and critical manner “as the missing middle term of the local/global syllogism in order to reconsider how nation-states and social units like them might operate as, as it were, a ‘mediator’ of the two outer terms” (Biddle and Knights, 2007, p. 2).

There have been debates regarding the role of the nation-state in the procedure of globalization. Among others, some writers such as so-called postmodernists argue that the end of modern society and institution, especially the end of the nation-state, has already come in the globalization era (Turner, 1990; Fukuyama, 1992; Jameson, 1992; Ohmae, 1993; Strange, 1996; Albrow, 1997a). They proclaim that after the end of modernity, or “the end of history”, a new stage of historical development has begun where the nation-state does not have the same dominant status as it did in the past. For instance, Albrow (1997a, p. 4) asserts that globalization supplants modernity with overall change on the basis of action and social institutions.

Ohmae (1993, p. 85-86) argues that globalization replaces modernity with “the death of nation-state.” He claims that the nation-state has become “an unnatural, even dysfunctional, unit for organizing human activity and managing economic endeavor in a borderless world”, and insists that the new “region states”, such as Hong Kong, New York, London, and Tokyo are replacing old, out-of-date nation states. These postmodern theorists anticipate that globalization decenters and democratizes the world. Thus, the globalization era means shifting from the modern era to the postmodern era. In this procedure, the nation-state has come to lose its control and cannot play an important role in the globalization process.

However, Mann (1997, p. 495) notes that postmodernists “exaggerate the former strength of nation-states..., exaggerate their current decline..., and downplay inter-national relations.” While globalization seems to be weakening the most advanced nation-states of the North (or the developed world), Mann notes that “successful economic development would strengthen nation-states elsewhere” (ibid.). Globalization seems to strengthen transnational networks, but these networks are also “modestly segmented by the particularities of nation-states, especially the more powerful ones of the north” (Mann, 1997, p. 496).

Biddle and Knights note that while there is increasing interest in the global, international or transnational in recent popular music studies, the nation and the region within and across national boundaries are far from the prime focus for understanding the relationship between popular music and places (Biddle and Knights, 2007, p. 2; see also Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002, p. 8). However, as Mann points out, the nation-state is still a main, principal agent of the globalization process. Biddle and Knights also argue that the nation-state or the region “operates as one of those

middle ground social units that can make some claim to intervene in the flow of global capital through protectionist measures, both ‘hard’ and ‘cultural’” (Biddle and Knights, 2007, p. 6). They note that this middle ground is a space where the resources of dominant global culture “may be appropriated by the subaltern as strategies to make inroads into global markets” (ibid. See also Murphy, 2007).

In addition, Hannerz (1996; 1998) also appreciates the role of the nation-state and the relationship between the market and the nation-state in the globalization procedure in his insightful argument *saturation/maturation tendencies*. Like ‘the nation-state and/or the region as a middle ground’ frame, his argument has more to do with hybridization than homogenization, yet emphasizes the ambivalence in the globalization of culture. According to Hannerz, these two tendencies happen “in the longer-term reconstruction of peripheral cultures within the global ecumene” (Hannerz, 1998, p. 122). The saturation tendency posits that peripheral culture will “step by step assimilate more and more of the imported meanings and forms, becoming gradually indistinguishable from the center” (ibid.). By contrast, the maturation tendency postulates that “the inherent cultural power of the form of life framework” could colonize the market framework, rather than vice versa (Hannerz, 1998, p. 124). According to Hannerz, these two tendencies are not mutually exclusive; rather, they occur simultaneously and intertwiningly. He emphasizes the amount of time it takes to “absorb the foreign influences, and to modify the modifications in turn and to fit shifting cultural forms to developing social structures, to situations and emerging audiences” (ibid.). Hybridization and indigenization of culture is not instant product. Therefore, the saturation and maturation, that is to say, homogenization and hybridization, are “not necessarily alternatives” (Hannerz, 1998: 127). Rather, they

can appear in real life “interwoven with on another.” For example, while the market has the tendency to homogenize and reach as widely as possible with the same goods, there is also “the alternative of limiting the competition by finding a particular niche for a more specialized product” (Hannerz, 1996, p. 74). The nation-state, the other main agent of globalization of culture, also engages in the construction of ‘national culture’ mainly by education, but a number of scholars note that education creates differences, as “it sorts and prepares people for that division of knowledge which matches a contemporary division of labor” (Hannerz, 1996: 71. See also Collins, 1979; Bourdieu, 1984). His two-tendency model, therefore, can appropriately represent the ambivalent, complex, and contested process of the globalization of culture by the market and the state.

In this dissertation, I follow those theoretical assumptions based on the hybridization theory. I refer to Biddle and Knights in arguing that the nation-state and/or region is a mediator and middle ground of the interdependent process between global and local. As mentioned previously, although the scholarship of globalization of communication media, globalization of culture and popular music inform my inquiry in various aspects, existing studies on the globalization of popular music too often focus obsessively on the binarism of local and global. With this binarism, what seems particularly problematic is the location of the ‘local’. In recent popular music studies, the local seems to “have been consistently figured in the last decade or so as a kind of supplement to globalization, as the lesser term of the asymmetrical binarism global/local” (Biddle and Knights, 2007, p. 2). It is a romanticized concept of the ‘local’ that it is “inherently ‘subversive’, ‘oppositional’ and ‘authentic’, and an inverse

figuration of the global as always already artificial and inauthentic” (p. 3).

Contemporary popular music scholarship in Northern Europe and the U.S. (two of which are main centers of popular music studies) scarcely considers alternative spheres out of this global/local dualism. The critical analysis of the globalization of K-Pop, which does not easily fit into this global/local binarism, would make visible the role of nationalism and regionalism in globalization of media, culture and popular music.

Chapter Outline

Each chapter of this dissertation analyzes how national and regional identities formed from the 1990s have influenced the development and articulation of K-Pop. When doing this analysis, globalization of communication media is ceaselessly related and referred with it.

Chapter 2 looks at the early history of K-Pop – the rise and fall of *New Generation Dance Music* in the early 1990s on the Korean popular music scene. Unlike the current K-Pop, New Generation Dance Music was a local popular music genre that was not globally popular among international audiences. However, the background of establishment of New Generation Dance Music should be analyzed before the discussion of K-Pop, because its political, economic, social, and cultural contexts continued to influence the development of the current K-Pop. Especially, political economic transformations in Korea during the late 1980s significantly changed the environments of Korean cultural industries. Due to the democratization and growth of economy, new cultural demands began to increase rapidly. One of the important factors established by these political economic transformations was that the

youth became the main audience of Korean popular music for the first time in Korean history. In addition, global cultural phenomena such as the reinforcement of international copyright protections in the late 1980s, development of global communication media, and digitalization of music producing were combined with these political, economic, and social transformations. These factors all brought about a radical upheaval in the Korean music industry. This chapter describes these transformations in detail, and also discusses the meaning and limitations of New Generation Dance Music, which gave lessons to Korean music industry and became a foundation of globalization of K-Pop later.

Chapter 3 describes K-Pop in detail – the origin of the term ‘K-Pop’, and its musical/industrial uniqueness that differentiate K-Pop from former Korean popular music and other global musical genres. Though K-Pop is from Korean popular music, the term does not include all genres of Korean music. Rather, it refers to a specific kind of music: electronic dance music performed by pop idol(s), recruited and trained by the entertainment management agencies. This system is usually called the ‘idol-agency’ system, which based on *yunsupseng* academies, total management systems, and an interdependent relationship with the television industry. Chapter 3 analyzes this system in detail, and explores the way the system was established. Moreover, Chapter 3 discusses the ‘transnationality’ or ‘de-nationality’ of K-Pop that enabled it to be global popular music. Hybridity in K-Pop music is similar to that of New Generation Dance Music in the early 1990s. However, in K-Pop, hybridization has been more deeply processed and as a result, it is not totally local music anymore. Rather, it is better to be called trans- or de-national music. Also, K-Pop is demographically transnational in that a number of foreigners are participating in

writing, producing, and performing K-Pop music. This de-nationality of K-Pop sometimes meets negative reactions from nationalist media and audiences, but in spite of the backlash, K-Pop industry continuously pursues the production of transnational/de-nationality.

Chapter 4 examines the globalization of K-Pop, both in East Asia and beyond. In the name of *Hallyu*, K-Pop and other Korean cultural products (especially Korean television dramas) became the most popular cultural products in East Asia since the late 1990s. Chapter 4 analyzes political economic and cultural factors that made K-Pop popular in the region. Although political economic transformations in East Asia, similar to those of Korea in the late 1980s, are important reasons of regional globalization of K-Pop, cultural values should not be overlooked. The regional modernity – moderate modernity and/or different modernity – in K-Pop and Korean television dramas appeals to East Asian audiences and arouses their sympathy. After discussing K-Pop in East Asia, chapter 4 then analyzes the rise of K-Pop in the West. Though *Gangnam Style* succeeded globally, it is by no means certain whether Western audiences see K-Pop as attractive ‘global music’ or just the music of exotic funniness. Western audiences of K-Pop are naturally very different from that in East Asia. Chapter 4 analyzes the different factors that enabled K-Pop to penetrate global (Western) markets, with a particular focus on the attitudes of current Western audiences towards K-Pop.

Chapter 5 is a shorter chapter than others. This chapter deals with meanings and limitations of K-Pop’s regional globalization. By consuming K-Pop, East Asian audiences can find ‘new East Asian values’ different from their traditional historic and religious values (such as Confucianism and Buddhism) or modern nationalistic values

(neo-Confucianism and Asian Renaissance). Chapter 5 analyzes the response of audiences of K-Pop and *Hallyu*, and their finding of new East Asian values through their consumption of K-Pop. However, the cultural influence of K-Pop has limitations. Despite its influence as a pan-East Asian culture, problems remain, such as unevenness of cultural flows between countries and classes as well as the possibility of sparking a nationalist backlash against K-Pop's cosmopolitan regionalism/transnationalism both in other East Asian countries and even within Korea itself.

Finally, the conclusion reiterates essential findings of this dissertation. It also notes some of the dissertation's limitations. Since globalization of K-Pop – especially in the West – is a recent phenomenon still in process, it may be too early to analyze the meanings of K-Pop. Therefore the conclusion addresses the significance of this dissertation in the current situation of academia. Then I briefly describe the expected future research related to this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE KOREAN MUSIC INDUSTRY IN THE 1990S

Though K-Pop is a recently recognized as a unique genre even in its home ground (see Shin, 2011), its emergence was precipitated by several factors. Like every other popular music genre, K-Pop has its musical roots and influences in several styles, including especially the ‘New Generation Dance Music’ that swept the country in the early and mid 1990s as well as several global and international musical genres.

This chapter explores the transformations in the Korean music industry in 1990s, which became the basis of the emergence of K-Pop in the 2000s. During the 1990s electronic dance music became the most popular genre in Korea and its emergence was deeply related to cultural, political-economic, social and technical shifts occurred in that period, both in global and local terms. The rapid economic growth in the country that began in mid 1980s brought about the sudden and explosive cultural demand by youth, who became the main audience/consumers of the Korean cultural industry for the first time. Due to this rapidly increasing demand, cultural production expanded quickly and the music industry was the first and the most prolific sector. Digitalization of music producing, which had been proceeding globally since the late 1980s, played an important role in the development of New Generation Dance Music in the early to mid 1990s. This technological advancement brought with it a greater opportunity for imitation and even outright plagiarism. However, imitation quickly taught creation, which became an immediate foundation

of the K-Pop genre.

Growth of the Korean Music Industry

During 1980s and 1990s – before the financial crisis struck the East Asian region – Korea had the greatest period of economic development in its history. Korean cultural industries made great strides during these decades caused both by the high growth of overall national economy as well as the overthrow of the military regime which established a civilian government in 1987. The rapid growth of the music industry, among others, was extraordinary when compared to other industries, which is discussed later in detail in this chapter.

Participating in the Global Copyright System

One of the important factors that contributed to the rapid growth of the Korean music industry was the reform of copyright laws since 1987. Before the mid 1980s, the Korean music business did not have any central whole sale dealers, so records were distributed directly from recording companies to small retailers. In this scattered distribution environment, it was nearly impossible to estimate the amount of total sales. Profits from playing music on the radio in nightclubs, shops, hotels and other public spaces were not returned in royalties to the musical creators and performers due to the lack of the copyright law enforcement.

It is beyond the scope of this research to offer justifications or criticisms about copyright issues. However, it is necessary to outline some of its most important characteristics of the concept of copyright to create an overall picture of the Korean

music industry.³ Frith and Marshall (2004, p. 7) note that in general, copyright provides the rights holder with the exclusive rights to: 1) copy the work; 2) make adaptations of the work (or prepare derivative works); 3) issue copies of the work to the public; 4) perform the work in public; and 5) broadcast or send a cable transmission of the work.

There are three important copyrights regarding the music industry. One right is the *mechanical right* – the right to record the work. It is the most basic and the most valuable copyright for creators and performers because the mechanical royalties (for instance, record sales) are distributed to the copyright owner by this copyright.

However, “it also led to a new kind of exploitation”, Frith and Marshall point out, “as first broadcasters, then film makers and juke box owners began to use records (rather than live musicians) for public entertainment” (Frith and Marshall, 2004, p. 8).

Therefore, a new kind of musical copyright was needed, “a right related to the original composition but subsisting in the recording itself rather than the underlying musical work” (ibid.). This copyright is known as *neighboring right*, usually owned by the recording company rather than by the creators and performers. According to this right, legal royalty should be paid to the copyright owner when the recording is heard in public, broadcasted by whatever means (i.e. radio and the Internet), sampled or extracted.

The final important copyright to the music industry is *performer’s rights*.

These rights refer to the rights all the musicians and performers involved have in the performance itself (Frith and Marshall, 2004, p. 9).

³ Concept of copyright is generally a legal issue that it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For more detailed discussion about copyright issues, see Cornish (2000); Frith and Marshall (2004). Lessig (2005; 2008); Litman (2006); and Hull, Hutchison, and Strasser (2011).

Generally in developed countries, these copyrights are managed by official or authoritative organizations. For instance, in the UK, creators and performers usually assign their mechanical, neighboring and performer's rights to the PRS for Music.⁴ The PRS for Music licenses and collects royalties on its members' musical works whenever they are publically performed, recordings are broadcast, or recordings are played in public spaces, both in the UK and globally. After operating costs are deducted, the remaining money is distributed to the copyright holders. In the case of neighboring rights, companies usually assign their rights to Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL). PPL licenses recorded music and music videos played in public and broadcast on the radio, TV and internet and then it distributes the license fees as royalties to its performers and record company members.

Unlike the UK and other developed countries, before 1987, there was no regulation of musical copyrights in the Korean music industry to enforce payment of royalties to creators, musicians or recording companies from broadcasting networks. Additionally, the copyright laws in place at that time were inadequate to handle complex copyright issues. Korea finally joined the Universal Copyright Convention (or UCC) in 1987 and established its national copyright law according to the external pressure to participate in the global economic agreement.⁵ This transition improved

⁴ PRS for Music was formed in 1997 as the MCPS-PRS Alliance, bringing together two collection societies: the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS) and Performing Right Society (PRS). See their official website for details (<http://www.prsformusic.com/pages/rights.aspx>).

⁵ The Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) is one of the two important international conventions protecting copyright adopted in 1952; the other is the Berne Convention, the first copyright treaty established in 1886. The UCC was developed by those who were seeking to an alternative to the Berne Convention, and the main participant countries were Soviet Union and United States. However, since almost every country is either a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and is thus conforming to the Agreement on Trade-Related

the visibility of the flow of revenue in the music industry, though it brought new issues as well.⁶ The strict implementation of the law created an environment where creators and performers could receive more, if not all, of the royalties they were entitled to, and recording companies began investigating sales and other neighboring usage.

This transition fuelled the expansion of the Korean music industry in a way that was distinct from other sectors of the Korean economy. By these new copyright regime producers could gain their profits appropriately – for example, revenues from broadcasting officially began to flow into them. Korea became a part of global music industry – one of the most important factors in determining the path Korean popular music would take henceforward.

Increasing cultural demand with the lack of substitution goods

The rise in average earnings and overall improvement in standards of living from increased disposable income usually evoke the demand for cultural products. In Korea, the music industry was the first cultural industry to grow substantially, followed by the sports industry, television networks, and film industries. Before the

Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS), the USS has lost significance. TRIPS was negotiated at the end of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994. It is an international agreement which contains requirements that nation's laws must meet for copyright rights including three musical copyrights mentioned previously. Korea joined the WTO (and TRIPS) in January 1995. See also Frith and Marshall (2004, p. 12-14) and Laing (2004).

⁶ Some scholars argue that the current global regime of copyright and intellectual property can impede cultural innovation and dissemination. Also, the regime is imposing Western-style copyright protection on other parts of the world, which have different policies on the protection of cultural right. Therefore, current global copyright laws tend to favor Western copyright owners by opening up markets of developing countries in a more comprehensive way. See May (2000); Houtart (2003); Frith and Marshall (2004); Laing (2004); Archibugi and Filippetti (2010); and Henry and Stiglitz (2010).

financial crisis that hit Korea and other East Asian countries in the late 1997, the Korean music industry developed dramatically, even considering the overall rapid increase of Korea's GNP. Between 1987 and 1997, total sales of the Korea record industry increased almost sevenfold in a decade in which Korea's overall GNP tripled (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Record production, sales, and GNP⁷

Year	Total Record Production (million)	Total Sales in Recording Industry (million KRW)	GNP (USD)
1987	47.94	28,493	3,321
1988	68.07	50,504	4,435
1989	94.12	61,958	5,418
1990	96.37	84,948	6,147
1991	108.94	105,476	7,105
1992	116.09	116,094	7,527
1993	114.36	114,364	8,188
1994	119.60	119,597	9,459
1995	137.89	137,890	11,432
1996	150.36	150,361	12,197
1997	196.36	196,362	11,176

The pace of the growth of the Korean music industry was also extraordinarily fast when compared to other cultural industries. Generally, the growth of one cultural

⁷ Record Production includes LPs, CDs and the cassette tapes; sales excludes imported and pirated records.

industry is closely related to other cultural industries as well as the overall national economy. The expansion of the scale of a nation's cultural industry cannot but be limited by its portion of the economic pie and consumption potential. Products of some cultural industries are generally 'substitute goods' for others in that, for example, watching a film can substitute for consuming music (Lieberman and Esgate, 2002). Substitute goods are goods which, as a result of changed conditions, may replace each other in use (or consumption) (Nicholson, 1998). A substitute good, in contrast to a complementary good, has a positive cross-elasticity of demand (ibid.). Therefore, if goods A and B are substitutes, an increase of the consumption of A (resulting, for example, from a drop in the price of A) would decrease the consumption of B.⁸ Therefore, in the case of cultural industries, if the sales of music products including physical recordings, music files and concert tickets increase, sales of other cultural industries such as film, theater, and gaming decrease (Lieberman and Esgate, 2002, p. 80-81).⁹ Therefore, if the total population and GNP (or an average income level) of Korea increased threefold while music industry increased sevenfold (see table 2.1), the extraordinary growth of the Korean popular music industry during that period could mean that the scale of other cultural industries might not increase and could potentially decrease, which is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 shows the comparison between the sales of the recording industry and the total annual movie-goers along with the GNP. While music industry grew

⁸ Classic examples of substitute goods are 'margarine and butter', and 'tea and coffee'.

⁹ This is not always true when the total scale of industries is expanding rapidly enough to support the growth of each industry, or one industry develops a new market – the new demand. In these cases, one industry can grow well even with the growth of other 'substitute' industry. The 'new market' sometimes means foreign/international markets.

rapidly in the decade from 1987 to 1997, the amount of movie-goers fluctuated.¹⁰

This means that even with the rise of GNP, the film industry did not develop as the music industry did. In that decade, the Korean film industry experienced a recession due to the direct distribution of Hollywood movies by US distributors, which firstly began in 1988.¹¹ As is shown in Table 2.2, the amount of the audiences waned in the first half of the 1990s despite the development of the national economy and the overall cultural industries.

Table 2.2 Comparison between recording industry, film industry, and GNP

Year	Total Sales in Recording Industry (million KRW)	Total Viewers of Film Industry (million)	GNP (USD)
1987	28,493	48.6	3,321
1988	50,504	52.2	4,435

¹⁰ The figure in dollars for the film industry during that period did not exist, because the box-office was counted by the number of audiences, not the amount of revenue.

¹¹ Until the mid 1980s, a limited number of Korean importers of foreign/international movies purchased publication rights of movies and sold them to local distributors. However, by a trade agreement between Korea and US signed in 1986, Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA), which changed its name to the Motion Picture Association in 1994, began to distribute Hollywood movies in the Korean film market directly. Local film industry including film companies, producers, directors and actors/actresses fiercely opposed to that agreement. They continuously did street demonstrations and signature collecting to block the passage of the agreement, insisting that if MPEAA directly distributed their movies to Korean movie theaters, they would take our market, drive out domestic movies, and in the end, Korean film industry would lose its independence. However, actually they were worried that they might lose the profit they had gained in the distribution of Hollywood movies. Their struggle was ended in failure because of a 'snake incident'. On September 24th of 1988, staffs of a film company put snakes into a theater as a sign of protest, where the first directly-distributed movie, *Fatal Attraction*, was being shown. MPEAA and US government lodged a strong claim about the accident, and even domestic audiences claimed about the way of the protests of the Korean film industry. As a result, representatives of the Korean film industry signed an official written document that they would never do the demonstration against the direct distribution system of Hollywood movies. See Won (1999) for more details.

1989	61,958	55.3	5,418
1990	84,948	53.5	6,147
1991	105,476	52.2	7,105
1992	116,094	47.1	7,527
1993	114,364	48.2	8,188
1994	119,597	48.3	9,459
1995	137,890	45.1	11,432
1996	150,361	42.2	12,197
1997	196,362	47.5	11,176

Between 1998 and 1999, the Korean film industry experienced an explosive expansion following the opening of first multiplex cinema CGV in Seoul in 1998. The following year, the domestic film *Shiri* set new box-office records in Korean film history drawing over 6 million tickets and the film industry has been prosperous since then.¹²

I argue that the music industry was the first cultural industry in Korea to expand its scale due to its flexibility and the innovations in technology at the time. Compared to the music industry, the film industry needs greater capital investment as well as more trained and experienced human resources and, therefore could not meet the demand for cultural products as quickly as the music industry. Additionally, the

¹² Until the late 1990s, profits of Korea film industry were totally relied on the screen quota for protecting Korean film market against Hollywood movies. However, after big commercial success of *Shiri* and other movies such as *Silmido* (2003), *Taegukgi* (2004), and *Wang-ui Namja* (2005) – all of which drew more than 10 million tickets – Korean movies have had over a 50% market share in its domestic market.

emergence of a new digital media, the CD (compact disc), created a new demand and expanded the market for musical products that audiences who already had cassette tapes and LPs re-purchase their catalog. However, the film industry was not experiencing a technological innovation or marketing development to attract more audience. As a result, the music industry was timely and adapted quickly to the changing industrial condition produced by the new and sudden cultural demand.¹³

As I have sought to demonstrate, while the growth of Korean music industry in the decade between the late 1980s and the mid 1990s depended mostly on the development of national economy, which created more cultural demand, the speed of its growth was exceptional. Moreover, not every cultural industry in Korea grew substantially as the music industry did. To a certain extent, its extraordinary growth was based on difficulties of other cultural industries – especially the film industry, one of the important substitute goods to popular music – to respond the rapidly increasing demand based on their cultural and industrial features.

¹³ Along with the music industry, sports industry was one of cultural industries that grew rapidly during the decade. The main leagues of the Korean sports industry are the pro-baseball league (KBO, Korea Baseball Organization), the pro-soccer league (K-League), and the pro-basketball league (KBL, Korean Basketball League). These top 3 leagues grew rapidly in that period. For example, KBO, launched in 1982, attracted over five million spectators (5,406,374) in 1995. It was the best record before the new record was set in 2009's 5,925,285 (retrieved from <http://www.koreabaseball.com/History/Spectator.aspx>). The total spectators of K-League, launched in 1983, increase from 1987's 341,330 to 1996's 1,911,347 (retrieved from http://old.soccer4u.co.kr/bbs/zboard.php?id=1009&page=1&sn1=&divpage=1&sn=off&ss=on&sc=on&select_arrange=headnum&desc=asc&no=161). The case of KBL is slightly different. There had not been a pro-basketball league until the mid 1990s. However, induced by enormous popularity of the college basketball league and the semi-pro league during the late 1980s and early 1990s, KBL was launched in 1997.

Digitalization in Music Producing

How was the music industry able to supply products in such a quickly and timely manner in response to the sudden and huge demand for cultural goods? One of the key factors is *digitalization in music producing*. Before discussing about the influence of digitalization on Korean music industry, it is necessary to examine the meaning of digitalization and how it has affected the overall music industry.

All the so-called ‘new’ media – such as internet technologies, mobile telephone devices, cable, satellite, mp3, video games, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs and Blue-Ray – have been developed from digitalization, and the most immediate impact of digitalization was on technologies of cultural production (see Lister et al. 2003). The ‘old’ media technologies such as sound recording, photography, cinema, radio, and television were mainly from analogue systems. In analogue systems, the main information to be communicated – words, images, music, other sounds, etc. – were translated into a continuous body of information (e.g. radio waves) that would in some way reproduce the form of the original. These analogue signals would then be decoded by suitable devices such as radio and television. These signals were analogous to the original component of communication they resembled the original component, but were not exactly the same. For example, the sound waves produced by musical instruments or voices were converted into a signal. The signal was coded into a vinyl record or onto magnetic tape, and then decoded by a LP or tape player. However, the most significant innovation associated with digitalization enables cultural products to be converted into binary (digital) code, which can be read and stored by computers, making communication more transportable and manipulable.

It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s that digitalization began to have a

noticeable impact on cultural industries. The effects of digitalization were first felt in journalism, as news agencies such as Reuters began to provide electronic financial data and news services to news organizations (Tunstall and Machin, 1999). In many cases, however, the most immediate impact of digitalization was on technologies of cultural production. With the development of the personal computer in the 1980s, digitalization of production spread through all of the major cultural industries. The cost of personal computers fell sharply in the early 1980s, and sales of PCs went from 0 in 1975 to 7 million in 1983, 20% of which were sold in the USA (Forester, 1987: 134). The ownership of computers became essential for cultural industries in developed countries, with important effects on both the working practices of producers – photographers, film animators, radio producers, television editors, etc. – and the experiences of consumers (see Castells, 2000: 328-372).

The popular music industry was affected by digitalization earlier and more directly than any other areas in cultural industries. In the music industry, musical instruments and recording studios were increasingly moving from analogue to digital in the late 1980s and early 1990s, because digital methods had the advantage of less interference, more accurate reproduction, and more manipulability. And as digital musical instruments have become less expensive, it has become easier for creators outside the traditional center of popular music production (i.e. Anglo-American music industry) to purchase digital machines to make quality electronic music with low costs, compared to 15 before when those digital technologies were virtually only available in the West. The rapid development of the Korean music industry was propelled by the globalization of digital technologies, along with the economic development and the increase of the cultural demand.

First of all, producing music in digital formats has a great advantage in terms of costs. Computer-based digital machines can perform all of the music producing procedures without any other musical instruments. Therefore, if there are two or more computers, machines, and specific programs, creators can produce their own music without professional session instrumentalists and/or big studios. This means that producers or music corporations can cut down expenses that would have been paid to session instrumentalists, engineers and studio owners. In addition, since the early 1990s, the price of integral digital machines – such as digital audio tapes (DAT),¹⁴ multi-track recorders (MTR)¹⁵, digital sequencers (sequence),¹⁶ sampling synthesizers (sampler)¹⁷, and musical instrument digital interfaces (MIDI)¹⁸ – has

¹⁴ DAT is a signal recording and playback medium. It was developed by Sony, and firstly introduced to the public in 1987. As the name suggests, DAT has the ability to do digital recording. When a digital source is copied, DAT will produce an exact clone. It was professionally used in the 1990s as a part of an emerging all-digital production with MTR and digital mixing consoles. Recently, it is slowly being superseded by modern hard disc recording equipment and recently Sony has ceased producing it (see Price, 2005, p. 115-126; Ugaya, 2005; Sony Global, 2012).

¹⁵ Multi-track recording is a method of sound recording that allows for the separate recording of multiple sound sources to create a cohesive whole. It became easier than before to produce better sound by computers, providing digitalized sound recording and reproduction (see Théberge, 1997, p. 215-233).

¹⁶ Sequencer is a device or application software that can record, edit, or play back music by handling note and performance information in several forms. It firstly developed in the late 1970s, but became popular among music creators in the 1980s and 1990s (see Théberge, 1997, p. 222-231).

¹⁷ Sampler is an electronic musical instrument. It is similar to a synthesizer in some aspects, but instead of generating sounds, it uses recording (or 'samples') of sounds that are loaded or recorded into it by the user and then played back by means of sampler or other devices to perform or compose music. It is widely used since the late 1980s, especially in hip-hop and electronica (see Théberge, 1997, p. 82-83; Schloss, 2004, p. 101-120; Price, 2005, p. 105-114).

¹⁸ MIDI is an electronic musical instrument that enables a wide variety of digital music instruments, computers and other related devices to connect and communicate with one another. It is the most important device in digital music producing that it allows electronic musical instruments, controllers, computers and other devices to communicate and guarantees compatibility between them. It was firstly developed between the end of the 1970s and the

fallen dramatically down to almost 90% less than the price in the 1980s (see Théberge, 1997; Ugaya, 2005). High-performance computers, the basic device running the digital machines for music production, became more widespread in the early 1990s. As a result, devices became more accessible with relatively lower prices. Though new musical technologies such as synthesizers and MIDI became popular and were used by many creators and musicians since the 1980s, those technologies were only available to those who could afford them – creators and musicians from developed countries such as US, UK, and Western Europe. However, the decreasing machine prices in the early and 1990s made digital technologies more accessible to creators outside those regions. These changing dynamics resulted in the global diffusion of digital technologies for music production (see Ugaya, 2005, p. 46-52; Sony Global, 2012).

In addition to drop in prices, there has also been an improvement in the quality of music produced by these digital instruments since the 1990s (see Kusek and Leonard, 2005; Byrne, 2012). When they first appeared, music produced only by digital instruments was criticized for being of lesser quality than music produced using analogue methods. Also, intense controversies and debates sprung up over whether or not these new technologies made music-making less creative and less collaborative than traditional methods (Katz, 2004). A common lament among some musicians and audiences has been that, despite the apparent power and diversity of new musical instruments and recording devices, everyone's work was beginning to sound the same. Some critics have complained that digitalization drains the "soul" out

early 1980s, and had a huge impact on the popular music industry since then (see Craner, 1991; Swift, 1997; Théberge, 1997, p. 83-90; Shuker, 2001, p. 54; Price, 2005, p. 54).

of music because creators tend to play their parts separately rather than as a band when using digital recording techniques (see Warner, 2005).

However, technological advances since the late 1980s have greatly improved, and one can produce good ‘musical-quality’ music even without any ‘real’ or ‘original’ (i.e. analogue) musical instruments. Others have noted that digital musical instruments are hybrid devices that alter the structure of musical practice and concepts of what music is and can be, which places musicians and musical practice in a new relationship with consumer practices and consumer society as a whole (Théberge, 1997, p. 2-3). Toynbee (2000, p. 35) argues that in popular music, “the unit of creativity is a small one” – musicians work in a context of “possible”, where possibility of innovation is subject to the constraints posed by digital production systems.

I argue that digital technologies have expanded the scope of innovative possibility more than ever before. Digitalization can lead to more creativity and democratization, since difficult operations become easier to perform and the availability of digital technologies becomes wider so that more people can be involved in musical creativity such as home studio music production. Among others, electronic dance music (or ‘electronica’) and hip-hop are the two representative musical genres that depend on this new type of creativity and democratization. Important musical aspects that create and *define* the aesthetics of these genres such as the repetitive short rhythmic pattern and the sampled phrases are produced by the technique called ‘cut-n-paste’, which only became available by digital instruments such as digital sequencer and sampler.

Then, how did digitalization influence the Korean music industry in the

decade between the late 1980s and the mid 1990s? As mentioned previously, the drop in prices of digital instruments and the improvement in their level of performance encouraged the globalization digital music production. This became a key factor of the development of Korean music industry because these efficient technologies made it possible to meet the sudden increase of cultural demand. Creators and producers could respond quickly and produce ‘quality music’ with much lower cost than before.

In addition, *pitch correction* and *quantization*, techniques developed in the mid 1990s, enabled creators and producers to ‘produce musicians’ swiftly and easily. Pitch correction is the process of correcting the intonation of an audio signal without affecting other aspects of its sound. Quantization is the process of transforming performed musical notes, which may have some imprecision due to expressive performance, to an underlying musical representation that eliminates this imprecision (Price, 2005, p. 136). In addition to making production simple and fast, these techniques also allow producers and engineers to create a perfectly in-tune performance from musicians who are otherwise not skilled enough to give one, known as “studio magic” (see Daley, 2003). This means that anyone can be a good musician with the help of producers using digital technology and that anyone can produce good musicians with the help of digital machines.

Therefore, in the process of digital music producing, conventional assumptions surrounding musical authorship simply do not hold. The process of musical production is guided by the producer’s twin desires for economic efficiency and technical control. Longhurst (2007, p. 81) argues that this has resulted in the “rationalization in the studio” led by the development of new technologies of musical production. In this process, producers or recording companies are the main agents and

do not need to depend upon the expertise of musicians. Thus, many producers and recording companies “do not engage in a dialogue with the musicians or carry out their wishes” (Longhurst, 2007, p. 81). Instead, digital sampling and mixing technologies allow producers to take control of the studio and the process of producing music.

Therefore, “studio magic” and the “rationalization in the studio” which became possible through digital technologies formed a basis of the new music production system in Korean music industry. Such production system – producing products not by a small number of craftsmen but by machines – was a kind of *standardized* production system. Interestingly, while digitalization of music producing has made mass production possible, the shift in the main audience has made mass consumption available – the emergence of youth.

Emergence of the youth as the main audience

One of the most important changes that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Korean popular music scene was that teenagers became the most influential audiences. In the 1970s and 1980s, the main audience of Korean music was people over the age of 20 (see Shin et al., 2005). In addition to Anglo-American popular music, people in their twenties usually enjoyed contemporary folk music and pop ballads, while audiences over thirty preferred *trot*.¹⁹ During the late 1980s, however,

¹⁹ *Trot*, or *ppongchak*, is the oldest genre of contemporary Korean popular music. While the name *trot* derives from a shortening of ‘foxtrot’ (a ballroom dance which influenced the simple two-beat of elements of *trot*), it does not have a similar musical structure except for the two-beat rhythm. The other name *ppongchak* is onomatopoeia from this distinctive background rhythmic pattern. Besides its unique rhythmic pattern, it has its own melody and vocal style – melancholic melody lines in a minor key, and a unique vibrato (*ppongkki*). It

the age of the main audience shifted to younger listeners and the purchasing power of teenagers born in the 1970s has increased enormously.

The emergence of teenagers as the main consumers of popular music was made possible due to the increase of the average level of household income, the result of the development of national economy during that decade. In Korea, teenagers are not the main agents of economic activity, because they usually receive pocket money from their parents to purchase what they need including cultural products.

At the same time, the education system in Korea became tougher than before for teenagers. While the demand for higher education increased significantly because of the nation's rapid economic growth, the educational infrastructure was underdeveloped so there were not enough colleges and universities to meet the needs.²⁰ Therefore it became extremely competitive for teenagers to enter higher educational institutions, and popular culture became the most important means to escape their stress due to the *exam hell*.²¹ Among others forms of cultural products, teenagers of this time relied on popular music to express their desire, hopes, despair, sentiment, and struggle (see Kim, H. S., 1999; Lee, G. T., 2012, p. 252-254).

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the Korean education

was formulated during Japan's colonization (in the 1930s). Since then, *trot* was the most dominant musical genre in the Korean music industry. However, it gradually began losing its dominance in the 1980s as pop ballads and dance music took over the music scene. Now *trot* is adult-oriented music and considered as a symbol of traditional popular music in Korea (see Shin et al., 2005). Ironically, in the past, *trot* was criticized for its colonial origin by a number of critics and audiences. They argued that *trot* was merely a shameful imitation of Japanese *enka* (the oldest Japanese popular musical genre developed in the early 1900s), not to be respected as 'Korean tradition' (see Pak, 2006).

²⁰ Many public and private colleges/universities were established during the Young-Sam Kim era (the 13th president of Korea, 1993-1998).

²¹ 'Exam hell' is a phrase that is commonly used by Korean media, students, parents, and teachers.

system and youth culture in detail. It is of utmost importance, however, to emphasize the fact that the emergence of youth as the main audience of popular music has had a profound effect on the Korean music industry. The emergence of the teen audience expanded the size of the market and young people came to have the largest purchasing power in the music industry. For this reason, the industry began making changes to suit their tastes. Conversely, the lifestyle of youth culture has been much influenced by popular music, including of course the music itself, but also stylistic images associated with artists, including their fashion and distinctive expressions of affect and attitude. It was not totally new that music and style became important cultural resources for young people in Korea (in this, Korean youth have much in common with youth across the world).²² However, in that period, the relationship between youth culture and popular music became more visible and interdependent.

As consumption by teenagers in Korean cultural industries increased rapidly, their cultural tastes became more important than ever. Korean youths' active acceptance of new digitalized music had a great influence on the industry, much in the same way that American baby boomers' embrace of rock music in the 1960s changed the American music industry. Like rock music in the 1960s, music produced by digital technologies was new, trendy, and cool.

Moreover, it was the defining characteristic of 'global' musical genres in the Korean music industry. In fact, the 'contemporary globality' is one of the most appealing features of cultural products for youth in the peripheral social and cultural contexts – it is global, therefore it is highbrow and better than old, out-of-date, and

²² See Hebdige (1979), McRobbie (1993), and Bennett (2000) for detailed description of the relationship between youth culture, popular music, and stylistic images.

unchic domestic (traditional) culture (Zolov, 1999; Dunn, 2001; Veloso, 2002; Mori, 2009). For instance, when discussing Mexican rock and roll music, Zolov notes that youth tend to consume global/international cultural products conspicuously to show off their modernity, not only in material terms but also in the more abstract sense of seeming to embrace development itself (Zolov, 1999, p. 6). For their part, many Korean adults condemned accepting this digitized global culture as unpatriotic. Also, the Korean intelligentsia also criticized it as an agent of cultural imperialism. And yet, Korean youth adopted this latest global music trend and technologies related to it as an agent of modernity and globality. That is to say, it made young audiences feel modern and cultivated to listen to the newest global sound; listening to this music allowed them to think of themselves as highbrow compared to old audiences who were listening to out-of-date *trot* or ordinary pop ballads (for example, see Shin, 2002). Young people yearned to be a part of the global culture on the basis of economic development and the newly achieved democratic society, which is discussed later in this chapter. This tendency of youth during the late 1980s and early 1990s to consume new, modern and global cultural products significantly influenced the shift of Korean music industry thereafter.

Shut Up and Dance: New Generation Dance Music Dominates the Industry

One of the biggest changes occurred in Korean music industry in the early 1990s was that electronic dance music became the most popular and influential genre. That electronic dance music was called ‘New Generation Dance Music’, because it was literally music made for the ‘new generation’ – youth who became the main

audience of the music industry at that moment.

New Generation Dance Music on the Rise

In the early 1980s, dominant genres in Korean music industry were *trot* and pop ballads. Although some dance music songs became big hits in the early 1980s such as music of Sobangcha, Nami, Nam-Jung Park and Wan-Sun Kim, they were usually one-offs and dance music was still a minor genre until the late 1980s.

Table 2.3 No. 1 singles of KBS *Gayo Top 10*, 1990²³

Song Title	Musician	Genre
Nasty Boy	Kim, Ji-Ae	<i>Trot</i>
With a Big Smile	Lee, Sun-Hee	Pop Ballad
Coming Back to You	Byun, Jin-Sup	Pop Ballad
Wishlist	Byun, Jin-Sup	Pop Ballad
Don't Forget	Choi, Sung-Soo	Pop Ballad
Even that Pain	Cho, Jung-Hyun	Pop Ballad
Raindrops on the Window	Hatbitchon	Pop Ballad
It's Only Love	Kim, Min-Woo	Pop Ballad
Like an Indian Doll	Nami	Dance
In the Army Train	Kim, Min-Woo	Pop Ballad
Missing Face	Min, Hae-Gyung	Dance
A Girl who Doesn't Look in the Mirror	Tae, Jin-Ah	<i>Trot</i>

²³ All of song titles are originally in Korean, translated by the author

Of the twelve number one songs in *Gayo Top 10*²⁴ in 1990, eight were pop ballads, and two of them were dance music (see table 2.3).

By 1995, however, the situation had changed dramatically. Dance music became the most popular genre by far. Among fourteen no.1 songs of the *Gayo Top 10* in 1995, eleven were dance music, while only two songs were pop ballads (see table 2.4). This New Generation Dance Music began to dominate not only the music industry, but the whole cultural industry including television, radio, and fashion.

Table 2.4 No. 1 singles of KBS *Gayo Top 10*, 1995²⁵

Song Title	Musician	Genre
There's no Secret	Roo'Ra	Dance
Ridiculous Reason	Park, Mi-Kyung	Dance
Don't Leave Me	Park, Jin-Young	Dance
Unhappy Meeting	Kim, Gun-Mo	Dance
I Wanna Love	Noksack Jidae	Pop Ballad
Don't Give Up	Sung, Jin-Woo	Dance

²⁴ *Gayo Top 10* was the most famous television music chart program (such as British music chart program *Top of the Pops* of BBC), broadcasted by *Korean Broadcasting System* (KBS). This program was broadcasted weekly for 17 years, from February 10th, 1981 to February 11th, 1998. During that period, *Gayo Top 10* was considered as the most reliable and reputable chart program, because it was broadcasted by national public broadcasting system and had strict and concrete rules to determine the ranking. This program had a unique rule – if one song topped the chart continuously for five weeks, *Gayo Top 10* gave 'Golden Cup' to the song. After receiving Golden Cup, that song retired from the chart.

²⁵ All of song titles (except for *Come Back Home*) are originally in Korean, translated by the author.

You in My Imagination	Noise	Dance
Murphy's Law	DJ DOC	Dance
Eve's Warning	Park, Mi-Kyung	Dance
Law of Farewell	R.ef	Dance
Heungbo at a Loss	Yookaksoo	Dance
I Wanna Marry You	Park, Jin-Young	Dance
Come Back Home	Seotaji & the Boys	Dance/Hip-hop
I Am Happy	Lee, Sora	Pop Ballad

Many of New Generation Dance musicians were from the 'dance floor'. In other words, before their debut as musicians, they began their careers as backup dancers of popular singers or club DJs, where they developed their dancing skills and production abilities in famous nightclubs.²⁶ Due to the development and globalization of digital music producing, it became much easier for them to create diverse rhythmic patterns. In producing electronic dance music, the rhythmic pattern is the most important element because the music is intended to get audiences to dance to the beat (Shin et al., 1998). When producing electronic dance music, the composer first creates a short and repetitive rhythmic pattern that continuously flows through one song; and then he or she layers a melody line on top of that rhythmic pattern. Digital music producing technologies enabled musicians to create diverse rhythmic patterns with

²⁶ For example, among New Generation Dance musicians seen in table 2.4, the dance music trio DJ DOC and R.ef consist of three former DJs; two members of the hip hop trio Seotaji & the Boys were backup dancers of Hyun Jin-Young & the Wa-Wa, one of the famous dance groups in the early 1990s. And members of Noise and Roo'ra were backup dancers of other dance music musicians of the 1980s.

unerring precision, which is why a number of sub-genres of electronic dance music such as house,²⁷ techno,²⁸ rave,²⁹ trance,³⁰ and trip-hop³¹ developed since the late 1980s.

As former DJs and backup dancers, New Generation Dance musicians were more sensitive to global electronic dance music trends than other musicians.

Musically, the verse and chorus of New Generation Dance Music were made of simple, catch, and *trot*-inspired melodies, and were influenced by contemporary

²⁷ House is up-tempo music for dancing with a four-on-the-floor beat usually generated by drum machine, synthesizer, sequencer, and sampler. Though house music originated in the US (especially in Chicago), it emerged into the UK mainstream music market in the late 1980s. Based on the popularity in UK, house became a global phenomenon in the early 1990s. It was the most important electronic dance music genre that influenced on other electronic genres developed afterward, and still remains popular in both clubs and the mainstream pop music scene (Bidder, 1999; Bogdanov et al., 2001).

²⁸ Techno came from house music, but usually it has faster bpm (beat per minute). Much of the instrumentation in techno emphasizes the role of rhythm over other musical parameters, and unlike other electronic dance music genres, it does not stick to the general harmonic practice of Western popular music. Rather, it emphasizes mechanical sounds produced by drum machines and synthesizers (Sicko, 1999).

²⁹ As a musical genre, rave is a mixture of house, techno, and psychedelic rock music. However, rather than just a musical genre, the term generally indicates a youth sub-culture – ‘rave culture’ – including electronic dance music, parties, drugs, dancing, and light shows. It was firstly developed in UK in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and spread out to other European countries, US, and Australia. It was one of the most important sub-culture movements by youth in the 1990s (Reynolds, 2012).

³⁰ Trance broke out of the German techno scene of the early 1990s. Among other electronic dance music genres, trance “emphasized brief synthesizer lines endlessly throughout tracks, with only the addition of minimal rhythmic changes and occasional synthesizer atmospherics to distinguish them” (Bogdanov et al., 2001). The name ‘trance’ comes from this aspect that put listeners into a trance. To do that, vocals present in trance music are usually female voices with soaring, operatic voice.

³¹ Trip-hop is a genre of which the name came from the fusion of psychotropic atmospherics (hence ‘trip’) and hip-hop. It was developed in UK in the early 1990s. Trip-hop has much slower tempo than other electronic dance music genres such as house and techno. And as name suggests, it contains diverse musical elements from black music such as hip-hop, r&b, soul, funk, and jazz (Bogdanov et al., 2001).

British and European electronic dance music (such as Hi-NRG,³² house, Euro-Dance,³³ and Eurobeat³⁴). New Generation Dance Music creators were also influenced by the latest trend of US dance music – hip-hop. Along with these rhythmic patterns, the Korean musicians always added rap during the bridge or pre-chorus part instead of instrumental solos.³⁵ Some musicians of New Generation Dance Music aggressively emphasized their trendiness to young audiences and claimed that they were pioneers of the latest global music genres.³⁶

Radio in Decline

The popularity of New Generation Dance Music also changed the environment of broadcasting industry. Due to the dominance of this new genre, the role of television became more important than radio in the Korean music industry.

³² HI-NRG (high energy) is one of the electronic dance music genres mostly influenced by up-tempo disco (Bogdano v et al., 2001. See also Fritz, 1999, p. 94). It was developed during the late 1970s in UK, and was in its heyday in the mid to late 1980s globally.

³³ Euro-Dance refers to a specific style of dance music produced on the European continent that originated in the late 1980s. It combines various elements from disco, HI-NRG, and house music. Euro-Dance is performed entirely in the recording studio on synthesizers and drum machines. Therefore, producers are much more responsible for the finished product than the singers. It is very similar to Euro-Pop with its simple, lightweight, and catchy melodies with repetitive lyrics. However, Euro-Dance is entirely club-oriented music while Euro-Pop doesn't have to be (Bogdanov et al., 2001).

³⁴ Eurobeat is either a form of the British dance music, or Italian disco/house music (Italo House), both developed in the late 1980s. It influenced Japanese electronic dance music directly, which became one of the important references to Korean New Generation Dance Music and K-Pop (retrieved from <http://www.nrgexpress.com/whats/history.htm>).

³⁵ The structure of popular music usually consists of: verse – pre-chorus – chorus – verse – pre-chorus – chorus – bridge – chorus. In pre-chorus or bridge part, instrumental solo is inserted such as a guitar solo, harmonica solo, or keyboard solo.

³⁶ For instance, while popular dance music quartet Roo'ra touted their music as 'the original Jamaican dancehall reggae', a dance music trio R.ef insisted that they were the first musicians to bring rave music to Korean popular music scene (the name R.ef is an abbreviation of 'Rave effect'). Also, dance music duo Deux emphasized their music as original American hip-hop, quartet Noise as house, and Goofy as techno (see Kang, I.K., 2012).

The role of radio in the history of popular music cannot be overemphasized. Radio has been the main media to bring popular music to audiences, and even after television became common in most societies, the role of the radio in popular music has still remained important. Unlike other popular cultural products such as film and novel, where the consumer can only sample some of their contents before they buy the whole thing (by buying movie tickets or books), consumers of music can listen to a whole song through the radio before their purchase. While the condition of the music industry has significantly changed since the late 1990s, the radio can still incite listeners to buy singles and albums even without direct advertising campaigns. To become a hit, a song must be played on the radio as many times as possible, therefore the music industry has had a higher level of dependence on the radio industry than the radio industry has had on the music industry (i.e., radio can use other formats than music). Slichter³⁷ (2004) notes that “radio is king” that there is “no better guarantor of a band’s success than a hit single on the radio luring listeners into record stores to buy the album” (p. 76). He also argues that the conventional wisdom that the radio plays what the audience wants is “largely a fiction.” It is the radio station that decides what songs it will play and how frequently it will play them (p. 82).

However, as New Generation Dance Music became the dominant musical genre in Korean music industry, the power of radio over the recording industry weakened. Unlike radio-friendly *trot* and pop ballad genres, New Generation Dance Music was also club- and/or stage-friendly, like other dance music genres. In addition, New Generation Dance Music gave at least the same (and sometimes even more)

³⁷ Jacob Slichter was a drummer of the famous American rock band Semisonic. Their single *Closing Time* was one of the popular rock songs in the late 1990s.

weight to the visual material – brilliant dances, fancy costumes, and radiantly attractive musicians – as to the music. For these reasons, television was more suited to New Generation Dance Music than radio because it could encompass both the audio and the visual aspects of the genre. New Generation Dance Music inaugurated a general trend among teenagers to imitate singers' signature dance moves and style themselves based on musicians' fashion choices. While music itself was still important, this music was more of a transmedia cultural and lifestyle phenomenon than just a musical genre, much like punk movement in the UK in the late 1970s. However, radio could not encompass the visual aspects of this cultural phenomenon in the ways television did.

In recognition of this situation, radio stations changed their formats to compete with television. First, radio stations launched more domestic music programs and decreased international/global pop music programs. Until the early 1990s, there were several programs that broadcasted only international/global pop music. However, since the mid 1990s, many radio stations shut down or scaled back their international/global pop music programs. This change was in response to the growth of domestic music market share in the music industry with a new demand for domestic Korean music more than Anglo-American pop music.

This shift was also related to the enforcement of international copyright protections because radio networks were now forced to pay higher royalties to the copyright holders (mostly international recording conglomerates) when playing foreign songs than domestic music (Lee, 2002; Shin, 2002). While multinational music companies began to strictly apply the law to collect royalties after Korea joined the UCC, domestic companies did not take the same steps because 1) they did not

have enough power to force radio stations to pay fair royalties in spite of the copyright law, and 2) they reluctantly swallowed unfair royalties in order to obtain advertising. Even though they did not collect much money from radio stations, it was better that their songs were played (Shin, 2002, p. 122-128).

Secondly, major radio stations replaced most of their professional DJs with teen pop stars, famous talk show hosts, and comedians. This move away from music-centered programming indicated that they could not compete with television. Instead, they shifted towards various kinds of talk-oriented shows where guests were mainly popular musicians. In those programs, the music was secondary. Unlike previous generations of pop music radio, radio DJs had neither musical expertise nor substantial power to support specific songs and make them hits.³⁸ Rather, the program director, or PD, became the most powerful role at radio stations, stripping the voice of DJs in deciding what to play. Though some PDs assigned to radio programs have a specialty in popular music, most do not. Moreover, unlike professional DJs in the past, PDs are employees of radio stations. They are more concerned with the ratings of programs because the most important thing for the radio station (and its staff) is to obtain higher ratings than rival stations (Lee, 2002). Therefore, their connection to the music itself was reduced in favor of economic concerns.

Due to those transformations, the music industry gained the upper hand on the radio station. While the music industry was no longer dependent on radio

³⁸ Until the late 1980s, some famous DJs had power to choose what music they played and how often they played them. If DJs picked up one song and played it continuously, that song soon became a big hit. Therefore, their musical tastes and knowledge had great influences on audiences. Also, they were relatively free from radio stations because they were usually freelancers. Among others, Ki-Duck Kim, Kwang-Hwan Kim, and Jong-Hwan Lee were the most influential professional DJs during the 1970s and 1980s.

broadcasting, radio stations were in acute need of popular music stars as guests to satisfy the audience and get higher ratings. These shifts of radio stations strengthened the power of the television industry on the popular music scene. Though these shifts originated from ‘the visualization of music’, the decline of the radio as the most important music media strengthened this tendency. The emergent support of young audiences looking for new, energetic and global music changed the entire Korean Music market in a short period of time to cater to the new dance music genre and pushed the domestic music industry to a ‘tipping point’.³⁹

The Question of Originality

As New Generation Dance Music gained influence, many music critics and even some audiences began to question the originality of the genre. Many claimed that although New Generation Dance Music was the product of Korean producers, creators, and musicians, it did not reflect any noticeable ‘Korean-ness’. Moreover, critics argued that the genre did not even satisfy the basic requirement of creativity and many New Generation Dance Music hit songwriters were accused of serious plagiarism. New Generation Dance Music can be seen as, therefore, the music of a transition period. The Korean music industry and its audience tried to become a part of the global music scene, and they succeeded in becoming “saturated” by globalization in some ways, but they did not reach “maturation” (Hannerz, 1998).

³⁹ Tipping point is a concept from economics that when a certain technology or player competing with others reaches at a specific point (tipping point) it suddenly overwhelms its competitors and comes to take most of market share. For instance, in the 1980s, VHS and Betamax were in rivalry that there was not a significant difference in their market share. However, when the market share of VHS reached at a certain point, it suddenly took over the market and Betamax disappeared soon after that. See Gladwell (2000).

A Brief History of Music Imports into Korean Popular Music Scene

Larkey (1992) argues that when local music scenes face the flow of global music (usually Anglo-American music), they indigenize the imported music by four different stages of integration: first, consumption; second, imitation of global/international music by local musicians; third, de-Anglicization; and fourth, ethnification. In the last stage, global musical genres merge into local contexts to form new genres which depend on different sources (see also Gebesmair and Smudits, 2001). While the root and origin of a specific local popular music genre often comes from ‘elsewhere’, there is also possibility that “re-proposals of foreign musical styles can still express local cultural practices and concerns” (Mitchell, 1996, p. 142).

As a local music genre influenced by global Anglo-American popular music, Korean popular music also has experienced these stages. In addition, it has been significantly influenced by Japanese popular music as a consequence of Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), geographic proximity, and its earlier successful modernization, which became the unofficial ‘role model’ of modern Korea even while Korea has resisted admitting Japanese cultural influences.

In 1955, two years after the Korean War ended, the 8th US Army’s headquarter moved from Japan to Yongsan in Seoul, Korea. After that, the 8th US Army became the name among Korean people used to reference the whole US army stationed in Korea. The 8th US regularly held shows to entertain soldiers and staffs, which included extravagant dancing, gags, and musical performances. This show became known as ‘*Mi-Palagoon Show*’ (the 8th US Army Show) by Korean public. Though the show was only intended for US soldiers, staff and their families, it

became the biggest show in Korea as the country suffered from the damage of the Korean War. In the decade from the late 1950s to the 1960s, the 8th US Army spent 1.2 million dollar per year to hold the show, which was almost the equivalent of Korea's total annual export income at the time (Shin et al., 2005, p. 25).

Therefore, *Mi-Palagoon Show* was the biggest opportunity for Korean musicians to succeed, and those who attempted to appear on that stage tried to catch up with and imitate the latest American popular music trends. To be showcased at the *Mi-Palagoon Show*, musicians had to audition with American show directors who selected those who could most appeal to the taste of American soldiers. The most of famous and influential musicians to contribute to the development of Korean modern popular music in the 1960s, such as Joong-Hyun Shin, Hee-Jun Choi, Patty Kim, and Wicky Lee,⁴⁰ made their debut as professional musicians in the *Mi-Palagoon Show*. After cultivating their musical skills on the *Mi-Palagoon* stage, they introduced the latest Anglo-American popular music to Korean audiences by translating world-wide hit songs to Korean lyrics. Therefore, it was the early and mid 1960s when Korean popular music began to adapt global popular music to their domestic music scene.

However, Anglo-American popular music and the domestic music directly influenced by it did not become the dominant music in the Korean music industry. Rather, it became the music of the city and the elite. The headquarters of the 8th US Army were located only in big cities such as Seoul, Busan, and Daegu, therefore musicians who were regularly featured at the *Mi-Palagoon Show* mainly performed in small clubs of those cities where mostly white-collar workers and college students

⁴⁰ Among them, Joong-Hyun Shin was named as 'the progenitor of Korean rock music', and Patty Kim as 'the mother of Korean pop ballads'.

lived. In other areas and among lower classes, it was the *trot* that was the most popular genre among the audience (Shin et al., 2005).⁴¹ The differentiation of musical genres according to the area, the education level, and the class were important factors in the early stage of Korean popular music and this tendency continued until the mid 1980s. For example, contemporary acoustic folk music – directly influenced by the early 1970s Anglo-American contemporary folk musicians such as the music of Carole King, Joni Mitchell and James Taylor – was the most popular genre among college students and white-collar workers in the 1970s. In contrast, blue-collar workers and rural people still clung to *trot*, the origin of which is older Japanese popular music as mentioned previously.⁴² Anglo-American style popular music was consumed by the urbane, intellectual, and young, while *trot* (or Japanese style music) represented rural, working class, and old-fashioned tastes. These two imported musical genres – Anglo-American contemporary folk and Japanese *trot* – have been the pivotal references in the development of Korean modern popular music.

This dualism began to dissolve during the mid- and late-1980s. *Trot* still maintained its dominance over the older generation and blue-collar listeners, however, its market share weakened as pop ballads and rock musicians captured the tastes of wider audiences. While previous Western-influenced genres such as acoustic folk music in the 1970s emphasized its modern and intelligent characteristics and tried to

⁴¹ Among others, Mi-Ja Lee, Hun-Ah Na, and Jin Nam were the most representative *trot* musicians in the 60s and 70s. Mi-Ja Lee had a well-known nickname – Queen of Elegy – that most of her hit songs were melancholic *trot* music in a minor key. Her most famous song, *Dongbaek Agassi* (Lady of Camellia), was one of the all-time big hit *trot* songs in the history of Korean popular music. Hun-Ah Nam and Jin Nam were the biggest rivals with each other in the 1970s, especially among female audiences. Not only themselves, but their fans were also in a fierce rivalry that fans of those two musicians often clashed with each other in stages of broadcasting stations, concerts and live clubs.

⁴² See footnote 19.

avoid *trot*'s musical aspects consciously to differentiate itself from the 'old and vulgar' *trot* music, pop ballads musicians in the 1980s integrated *trot*'s characteristics into its own modern style. Their strategy was a kind of hybridization – 'Korean style melody line on Westernized (or modernized) rhythmic patterns and producing'.⁴³ Even rock musicians, who resisted the out-of-date and banal image of *trot* and outwardly emphasized young and rebellious 'rock spirit', used the same approach when creating their music.⁴⁴ These two divided tendencies in Korean popular music was reconciled during the mid 1980s that in accordance with the economic development and the growth of music industry. The commercial and musical success of this hybrid strategy – Japanese-influenced Korean *trot* melody lines layered with Western rhythmic patterns – became the fundamental element of Korean musical innovation thereafter.

New Access to Music in the 1990s: Pirated CD and Public Video Screenings

Although 'melodies referring to Japanese music and rhythmic patterns

⁴³ For example, Moon-Sae Lee, a popular musician who established the basic form of Korean pop ballads in the 1980s, released a number of songs which pursued this strategy with his producing partner, Young-Hun Lee. After his success, musicians such as Jin-Seop Byun and Seung-Hoon Shin followed his path in the early 1990s.

⁴⁴ Korean rock was not widely popularized until the mid 1980s when rock bands such as Deulgookhwa, Boohwal, and Sinawi had great success on both album and single charts. Their musical style was different from one another – while Deulgookhwa and Boohwal focused more on rock ballads, Sinawi was heavily weighted towards heavy metal and hard rock. Those three bands and most of other famous rock bands usually refused to appear on TV and other public media, because they did not like the harsh and unreasonable pre-censorship on their music and fashion by major media. Instead, they maintained their rebellious attitudes and preferred live concerts performed in clubs and small concert halls to directly access their fans, who supported them as a means to struggle against the Chun military regime. However, their music was not such mutinous that lyrics of their music usually did not contain explicit political and social criticism, if any. Also, in musical aspect, they adopted *trot* melody lines and hybridized them into rock music, which made their music easily acceptable not only to college students and social elites but also to wider audiences. See Park (1999) for the detailed history of Korean rock music.

referring to Western music' was a widely accepted musical hybrid form, this fusion was at odds with the Korean government's cultural policies, which banned opening its market to Japanese culture and some of other international cultural products.

Following the experience of Japanese colonialism, the Korean governments maintained an oppositional stance toward Japanese cultural products. Additionally, three military regimes between the early 1960s and the late 1980s – the Park Military Regime (1961-1979), the Chun Military Regime (1979-1988), and the Noh Military Regime (1988-1993) – all came into power through illegal and violent military coups and thus lacked legitimacy. Therefore, to establish authority and maintain power, these regimes emphasized patriotism and nationalism by denying Japanese influences as well as strongly opposing communism and socialism in North Korea.⁴⁵

The Korean government officially asserted that Japanese popular culture was too vulgar and lewd for Korean audiences, and banned the import of Japanese cultural products. However, a number of scholars note that the attitude of the Korean government was based more on the fear rather than on the concern for its people (Lee, Y., 1998; Im, 1998). As Appadurai (2000, p. 32) points out, Japanization has been more worrisome than Americanization for Koreans, especially for politicians who tried to establish their legitimacy in the name of patriotism. Like other suppressive

⁴⁵ Ironically, while they strongly denied opening Korean cultural market to Japan, the Park military regime formed the official bilateral ties with Japan in 1965. This agreement faced fierce opposition among Korean people and college students, which evoked street demonstration against it. However, the Park military regime pushed ahead the agreement to get subsidy from Japan in the name of the reparation. With that reparation the Park Military Regime could launch its first 5-year economic development plan, which became the basis of Korea's current economic growth. However, this agreement has been criticized heavily even until now, because the Park military regime got too small reparations and the regime was too hasty to conclude the agreement without considering many important factors. For example, the regime did neither ask Japan to compensate the victim of Comfort Women in that reparation, nor request the official apology.

cultural policies of the Korean military regimes, they declared that Japanese TV dramas, films, or music could not be aired on TV or radio, performed on the stage, or shown in the theaters, let alone being sold in the market. The only Japanese cultural products allowed into the country and the only route to encounter Japanese popular culture was through TV animation and cartoon⁴⁶ dubbed and translated in Korean.

It was also difficult to access Anglo-American and other Western and foreign popular culture at the time. In addition to the fact that Korea was an economically under-developed country without the communication infrastructure to support the latest Western/international popular culture, Korean military regimes strictly controlled cultural imports as well as domestic cultural production. Korea was notorious for their tough censorship imposed on cultural products, and popular music was no exception. These regimes did not permit the release of foreign and/or domestic music with ‘explicit lyrics’ about sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, or songs with slang or abusive terms. Not only were the music and lyrics deemed offensive, but visual images such as those in album cover art, booklets, and music videos were also tightly censored and deemed ‘vulgar and lewd’.⁴⁷ Even when an album was allowed to be released in the market, it was not unusual to omit one or more songs that failed to pass

⁴⁶ It became possible for Japanese musicians to have concert in Korea in 2000 (the Third Open-Door Act towards Japanese Popular Culture), to release records, and to be aired by the media in 2004 (the Fourth Open-Door Act towards Japanese Popular Culture). Japanese movies and dramas also became available in 2004. And yet, Japanese cultural products can only be aired in cable networks and are still not allowed in public television and radio networks such as KBS, MBC, and SBS.

⁴⁷ For example, an album *Pornograffiti*, one of the biggest hit albums in the early 1990s produced and performed by American rock band Extreme, was not released in Korea until the early 2000s. This delay was due to the album title including the word ‘porno’ and several songs depicting sex and liquor directly. The album could have been released in the 1990s if the recording company or the musician agreed to release a ‘Korean special edition’ – changed the title and contained ‘clean versions’ songs – but Extreme refused to do that.

the censorship standards. Sometimes, almost half of the songs were cut from an album and replaced with a 'clean version', or the album was issued with only approved tracks.⁴⁸ It was not until 1996 that the Korean government liberalized its policy on the cultural imports and domestic music as well.⁴⁹

These factors were not of great concern until Korean audiences began to pay closer attention to the latest Japanese and global music trends. Due to several reasons mentioned earlier such as the development of the music industry, the emergence of teenagers as the main audience, and the development and globalization of communication media, it became more important than before that audiences and creators/producers alike wanted to keep up with the latest trends. However, formal and legal opportunities for Korean audiences to access global music trends were highly restricted.

⁴⁸ For example, songs contained in the album *Master of Puppets*, one of the famous albums by American Heavy Metal band Metallica, were rearranged because a number of songs were omitted due to the censorship. As a result, song list of Korean version was different from that of the original one.

⁴⁹ Korean censorship system was relieved by the abolition of pre-censorship law, generated by one hip hop song, *Si-Dae-You-Ghame* ([si-de-ju-gam], *Dissatisfied with the Age*). In 1995, Seo Taiji and the Boys, the most famous hip hop trio in Korea, were about to release this single. However, the Censorship Committee would not allow them to release the single unless they changed the lyrics containing a criticism of unspecific politicians and the current trends of capitalism and materialism. Seo Taiji and the Boys refused to change the lyrics and released the single as an instrumental version as a sign of protest. Since they were the most influential musicians of the period, their protest greatly impacted young audiences. As a sign of protest to the censorship and of supporting Seo Taiji and the Boys, their aficionados ceaselessly sent protest letters to the Censorship Committee and the Ministry of Media and Culture, and held demonstrations against the censorship law. Because of the popularity of Seotaji and the Boys, the campaign soon became a huge issue that media and intellectuals also began to criticize the censorship publicly and the patriarchy of the government towards popular culture. The new civilian regime, whose representative pride was its 'liberal and democratic authority' contrary to the previous military regimes, finally decided to loosen the censorship law and abolish the pre-censorship in 1996. Also, the government relaxed restrictions and censorships on importing foreign popular cultural products. See "Seotaji Vol 4" (199) and Seo (1996).

Before the abolition of the Pre-Censorship law in 1996, Korean musicians and audiences who wanted to listen to the latest Japanese popular music, Anglo-American music and other international pop music could only access to it in informal (and illegal) ways. Among others avenues, purchasing bootlegs, smuggled CDs and pirate CDs, and watching music video tapes at public video screenings were the most common to access international music trends.

First, audiences could access the latest Japanese and Western music through smuggled musical products, mainly music CDs. However, it was not easy to buy those smuggled music CDs because only a small amount of them were brought into the market, and they usually cost one and a half times or twice as much as legally ‘licensed’ CDs. Therefore, audiences preferred pirated CDs to the smuggled ones. In fact, audiences began purchasing pirated records even before the early 1990s, usually in the form of audio cassette tapes. When music is copied into tape, a serious loss in its sound quality is inevitable. However, the CD offered a new alternative. The CD is a digital format that can be copied exactly the same without a single loss of sound quality. Also, unlike the tape that would get abrasion when being copied, the copy of one CD to the other did not do any harm to the original copy even if it was copied dozens of times. Therefore, the CD ushered in a new where music piracy became more rampant and effective than before.

Usually, small record shops and street vendors produced a number of pirated copy CDs from an original and sold them in public or in secret. Most of those pirated CDs were copied from unreleased and unlicensed albums, because it was riskier for those small retailers to sell illegal pirated CDs of licensed ones due to the strict copyright laws since the late 1980s. Unlicensed or unreleased albums were in a blind

spot – copyright holders did not actively crack down on the smuggling and piracy of unlicensed CDs while audiences actively sought to access them. Small shops and street vendors dealing illegal music CDs were usually located in big cities such as downtown Seoul (*Gangnam, Myung Dong, Apgujeong, and Shinchon*), Busan (*Nampo, Seomyun, and Haeundae*), and Daegu (*Joong-Ang Ro and Dongsung Ro*) – the places where their main audiences (teenagers and young men and women in their twenties) usually gathered. There are no official records of the sales of those illegal music CDs, but experts and industry insiders speculate that it was too high to be neglected.⁵⁰

Second, audiences who were eager for the latest Anglo-American and/or Japanese popular music could access it through watching satellite music video channels such as MTV Asia, Channel [V] International,⁵¹ NHK and other Japanese television networks. In Korea, the cable television industry only launched its service in 1995.⁵² Until then, there were only 5 channels – KBS 1, KBS 2, MBC,⁵³ EBS,⁵⁴ and SBS.⁵⁵ KBS, MBC, and EBS are all publicly owned, managed and operated by the Government, and SBS was the first private television network which began in

⁵⁰ For example, *Sweet 19 Blues* (1996), the debut album of the famous Japanese musician Namie Amuro, was surmised to be sold nearly a million copies unofficially. It was not allowed to officially release Japanese music in Korea until 2004, therefore her album sold only through piracy and smuggling (Hong, 2005).

⁵¹ Channel [V] International is a satellite broadcasting music channel owned by Rupert Murdoch. Its main base is located in Hong Kong. It was founded after MTV Asia parted ways with the Star TV network, a Murdoch-owned Asian satellite television network.

⁵² Though Korean cable television industry does not have a long history, it has grown rapidly since it launched its service. In 2007, the cable TV penetration rate in Korea became over 92%. It is quite a high rate compared to the rate of other countries such as US (90%), Taiwan (83%), Japan (73%), and UK (67%) (Kim, Y.S., 2007). See <http://www.kcta.or.kr/introduction/history.asp> for the detailed history of cable television services in Korea.

⁵³ The initial of *Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation*

⁵⁴ The initial of *Educational Broadcasting System*

⁵⁵ The initial of *Seoul Broadcasting System*

1991. Since those networks offer general service including news, dramas, documentaries, sports and movies, they could not meet the rapidly increasing cultural demand in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Moreover, since four of five television networks were public and run by the Government, they were an oligopoly in the broadcasting industry that was conservative with regard to popular culture did not pay much attention to young audiences. In that situation, watching international satellite music channels offered a way to encounter Western and Japanese latest popular music.

And yet, like directly imported CDs, international satellite televisions were also too expensive at that time to enlist broad consumption. Audiences who wanted to watch international satellite televisions needed a ‘dish’ to receive scrambled satellite signals, but the dish cost more than 1.5 million KRW (about 1,500 USD) while the monthly salary of the average white collar worker in the early 1990s was less than 1 million KRW (about 1,000 USD) (Choi, H. S., 1999). Moreover, there was a serious limitation to watch international satellite televisions because these satellite channels were not legally or officially licensed in Korea. In fact, international satellite televisions only became available in Korea thanks to the development of communication technology which enabled Korean audiences to pick up broadcasting signals originally for viewers in Japan, Mainland China and other East Asian countries geographically close to Korea. It was like a ‘stealing satellite signals without payment’.⁵⁶ However, even if one could afford the satellite, he/she might not

⁵⁶ Unfortunately, there are not official records about the penetration rate of this ‘unofficial’ dish for the international satellite networks, because neither Korean government nor those international satellite networks did not pay much attention to these ‘secret’ Korean viewers. In some region – such as *Gangnam* and *Apgujeong* – where middle and upper middle class resided, it was said that 10~20% of every household had the dish to watch international satellite networks mostly, but not limited to, Japanese broadcasting channels such as BS-

be able to watch the satellite channels if they lived in the place far from the signal coverage. Usually, in cities close to Japan, such as Busan and some cities in Gyeongsangnam-*Do* (Masan, Changwon, and Ulsan, among others), or close to Mainland China such as the Seoul metropolitan area, Incheon, and some cities in Jeollanam-*Do* (Mokpo) audiences could get a relatively acceptable quality of satellite signals. In other regions, it was almost impossible to access.

Young Korean audiences solved the problems posed by limited availability of international satellite music channels by hosting ‘public video screenings’. By the late 1980s and the early 1990s, BBS (bulletin board system) had diffused rapidly among Korean teenagers and those who were in their twenties, based on the development of telecommunication systems and increasing prevalence of personal computers. Among others, music audiences were one of the most active groups (see Lim, 1996). Lacking widely accessible sources, young cultural consumers used the BBS to share the information about contemporary Anglo-American and Japanese popular music that was not officially available.

In this way, using the BBS, the public video screening became one of the most common and popular ways for members to see ‘what’s going on’ in the global music scene. First, some members who had the satellite dish – usually leaders and active participants of the BBS – videotaped music videos, music programs, and live performances aired on international satellite channels. They, then, announced on the BBS that they would hold a public video screening of those recordings. Public video screenings were regularly held in small cafés or clubs located at *Shinchon*, *Gangnam*, *Apgujeong*, and around Hongik University in Seoul. Through these public video

screenings, audiences shared information with each other and accessed the latest global music trends even if they did not have the dish at home. At screenings, copies of those videotapes were also sold for about 4,000-5,000 KRW (4-5 USD), which was usually affordable price for the young audience. Those same cafés and clubs also showed international satellite music channels during their business hours so fans often gathered there outside regular meetings to watch videos and listen to music. In addition to the ordinary audience, prospective and active musicians including producers, composers and performers also based themselves at those cafés or clubs to access the latest global music trends.

At that time, purchasing and listening to smuggled and pirated CDs, as well as holding, supporting, and participating in the public screening was illegal. If one wanted to legally screen music videos in a café or club, 1) the videotape which he/she wanted to show had to be an officially licensed and 2) the café or club had to pay a royalty to the copyright holder (or its agent). However, public video screenings did not meet either of the requirements. The installation of the satellite dish was also illegal. The government never permitted international satellite television providers to broadcast in Korea, and those providers actually did not intend to do so. In addition, the dish itself was not authorized or guaranteed by international satellite networks.

Acquiescence of Illegal: Global as a Sign of Development

Ironically, though both these ways of receiving global popular music were illegal and unofficial, the Korean government, which tried to control the import of the foreign popular culture, actually overlooked most of these practices. Pirated or smuggled CDs sold openly in the crowded downtown of Seoul and were policed only

very occasionally. BBS, which organized the public video screenings, was not subjected to serious restrictions, if any. Cafés and clubs publicly advertised that they offered the international satellite television to their customers, but they were not subject to restrictions either.

At times, the government even indirectly encouraged consuming those ‘officially not-allowed’ cultural products. During the era of the rapid economic development, it was considered as a sign of the nation’s improvement to adopt the latest global popular culture, not only in material terms but also in the more abstract sense of development itself. Even now, the economic development and growth of the middle class has been considered as an accomplishment of the Korean Military Regimes. Through their direct and indirect control over the media and popular culture, these military regimes actively promoted a discourse with promises of modernity, all aimed at constructing a middle-class to prevent any direct opposition to their authoritarian dictatorship. Though the last military regime declined through the movement for democracy by the people and was finally replaced with the civilian government in 1993, the basic logic of national propaganda did not change. The new government has tried to emphasize the evidence of development by showing how much Korea has been modernized and globalized, or in other words, ‘Westernized’.

At this point, it is necessary to consider the distinctive character of Korean popular music (and other non-Western popular music such as Japanese popular music) in contrast to its Euro-American counterparts. As mentioned previously in the introduction, in recent Western popular music studies, the nature of popular music is often understood by ethnic/cultural hybridity. According to these studies, the most representative global popular music genres are products of hybridization of ethnically

diverse cultures. As Mori argues, hybridity in the West is “further defined when one considers, in particular, ‘high culture’ forms like classical music, which emphasizes the traditional and authentic” (Mori, 2009, p. 219).

However, within a specific context of several non-Western countries such as Korea, popular music is distinguished not between ‘high’ and ‘hybrid’ levels, per se, but between domestic music and global/Western (mainly Anglo-American) music (Mori, 2009, p. 219-223; see also Veloso’s discussion on Brazilian popular music in Veloso, 2002, p. 94-110). In this context, highbrow culture is seen as something from the West (Zolov, 1999; Lee, G. T., 2011). For instance, in the beginning of Korean hip-hop culture, authentic fashionable items of the hip-hop culture such as baggy jeans by FUBU, baseball caps by New Era, and basketball shoes by Nike, which were as important as the music itself in hip-hop culture, were expensive and difficult to find for audiences, unless they lived in the big cities. Therefore, the audiences who could most easily access global (American) hip-hop culture, the newest trend of that period, were the middle and upper class youths who were living in the big cities. Only these consumers had the money and ability to buy (illegally imported) expensive CDs, subscribe to satellite music channels, and purchase hip-hop fashion items. Like having dinner at TGI Friday’s, drinking a cup of coffee at Starbucks, or wearing a pair of jeans by Tommy Hilfiger, conspicuous consumption of hip-hop cultural products in Korea became one of the symbols of the middle class youths’ own highbrow culture – Westernized, and therefore, highly cultivated.

The government administered a two-pronged strategy. Officially and on the surface, the government tried to protect Korean popular culture by controlling cultural imports from foreign countries (mostly, but not limited to, Japan and the US).

However, unofficially and on a deeper level, the government connived leaving it to the underground youth culture. This two-faced attitude of the government lasted until the ‘Third Open-Door Act towards Japanese Popular Culture’.⁵⁷ its official shift to the open-door policy. As a result, by the late 1980s and the mid 1990s when cultural industries were rapidly growing to meet the newly increased cultural demands for modern and global cultural products, the way of adopting, hybridizing and indigenizing global culture into the local was oddly distorted. This distortion had a negative influence upon the music industry, in the form of plagiarism.

Plagiarism in New Generation Dance Music

Though recording companies and musicians of New Generation Dance Music continued to assert that they were pioneers who were bringing the trendiest and coolest dance music of the world into the Korean popular music scene, they were not as challenging as they proclaimed. Rather, their ‘challenge’ was largely cosmetic and their rhetoric largely empty. For example, R.ef, one of the popular New Generation Dance groups, claimed to be ‘introducer of Rave Music’ (even the band name came from an abbreviation of ‘Rave Effect’). However, their actual music was nothing to do with popular rave music in UK and other Western European countries. In fact, their music was not much different from that of other New Generation Dance musicians such as Roo’ra, Goofy, or Noise,⁵⁸ who similarly proclaimed themselves the introducers of different genres. Various other musicians also claimed to be pioneers or challengers of various genres, but few of them really tried to adopt something

⁵⁷ See footnote no. 46 for the detailed information about the Act.

⁵⁸ See footnote no. 36.

‘original’ and to indigenize it. Regardless of their assertion, most of their music was based on the rhythms of the Euro-Dance, disco, or house with a dash of New Jack Swing⁵⁹ and hip-hop thrown in.

It was true that New Generation Dance Music was something new to most Korean audiences, but it was not original or creative in the traditional sense. In fact, the way of mixing patterns was already established by the Japanese music industry (Ugaya, 2005). The Korean music industry tried to follow the path of hybridization and localization that Japanese music industry had paved. It might have not been a serious problem if New Generation Dance Music producers and musicians had just referred to or consult what Japanese musicians had already done. However, they chose an easier way – to simply plagiarize Western and Japanese music (Cha & Choi, 2011; Han, 2011).

It was not the first time that Korean songs were accused of plagiarism of Japanese songs. As mentioned earlier, the Korean music industry had been influenced by Japanese popular music in the establishment of the first Korean modern popular music genre *trot*, which was deeply rooted in Japanese *enka*. After the independence from Japan was established in 1945, and in spite of the close-door policy towards Japanese popular culture, Korea still referred to Japanese style of music making and producing. Several songs were actually banned after their release due to plagiarism of Japanese songs.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ New jack swing evolved in the late 1980s, when contemporary soul musicians began incorporating hip-hop rhythms, samples, and production techniques into their sound. Overall, the result of this mixture was an edgier, more street-oriented sound that blended both the melodic qualities of soul and the funky rhythms of hip-hop. It was in its heyday in the early and mid 1990s.

⁶⁰ Plagiarism of Japanese music and its style was called ‘*waesaek* [wæ sæk]’, which meant too

However, the scale of plagiarism of Japanese music by the Korean music industry in the early and the mid 1990s was unparalleled in its history (Lee. Y., 1998; Lim, 1998). The pervasiveness of plagiarism secretly done by many composers and producers came to the surface by a big scandal in the 1990s – the Roo’ra Scandal.⁶¹ Roo’ra, the most popular New Generation Dance Music group in the early 1990s, released their third album *Chun Sang Yoo Ae* (Love in the Heaven) in December 1995. The first single from this album, *Chun Sang Yoo Ae*, one of the singles that many audiences had been looking forward to, went straight to the top as soon as it was released.⁶² However, right after its release, several fans and critics accused Roo’ra for plagiarizing a Japanese song, *Omatsuri Ninja* (お祭り忍者, Festival Ninja) performed by the Japanese band, Ninja. After an examination, the Korea Media Rating Board (the national committee of censorship and rating on cultural products, hereafter KMRB) declared that *Chun Sang You Ae* was the result of plagiarism of *Omatsuri Ninja*, and ordered that the recording company recall all of the records. Sangmin Lee, the leader of Roo’ra, attempted suicide after the verdict in despair (fortunately, he did not succeed) and the band went on hiatus.

The scandal was shocking and aroused public discourse that asked for a thorough investigation into the plagiarism rampant in New Generation Dance Music and the whole music industry. Journalists and music critics began reporting several cases of plagiarism in songs of New Generation Dance Music (see Lee, H. Y., 1996).

much Japan-esque. During the 1960s and 1970s, in Korean popular music, *waesaek* was one of the most common causes for government’s banning as well as ‘lewdness’ and ‘impure ideology’.

⁶¹ Details for the Roo’ra Scandal, see Huh (1996).

⁶² According to Huh (1996), it was reported that this album was pre-ordered over two million copies before its release.

Soon after, the KMRB, which had not actively intervened in plagiarism before 1995, officially began to investigate the problem. According to Lee (2002), by 1996, the KMRB banned 22 songs for plagiarism. This was a huge number considering the fact that from 1966 (the year when KMRB was established) to 1994, the total number of banned songs was only 74. Also, in the past, reasons for the ban of songs were usually ‘lewdness’ and ‘impure ideology’ while plagiarism was rather a rare case. Moreover, the KMRB did not investigate all songs under suspicion of plagiarism and journalists, industry insiders, music critics, and academics expected that there were more songs of plagiarism than what KMRB revealed. For example, Yong-Hyun Shin, a former SBS radio music program producer, drew up a list of songs suspected to be plagiarized but not banned by KMRB (Lee, Y., 1998: 171). See table 2.5.

Table 2.5 List of songs suspected to be plagiarism in the 1990s⁶³

Korean Songs Suspected to be plagiarism	Original Japanese Songs
Silver Knife by Soo	I Can't Let Go by Zard
Jealousy by Yoo, Seung-Bum	Fly by Hound Dog
My Own Reason by Zam	Season of the Sun by Amuro Namie**
Too Proud to Beg by Sechs Kies	To the Sea by Southern All Stars
You & I by URI	Theme from Marco Jjang, the TV animation
I Can't Do That by NRG	Try Me by Amuro Namie
Another Bad Day by HOT	Doubt by Hide
Come Back to Me by Route One	Jumpin' Jack Boy by Wands

⁶³ All titles in Korean are translated into English by the author, except the song of which original title is English*. Japanese song titles** are translated into English by the author.

What Should I do by Pinocchio	Cross Road by Mr. Children
Like We First Met by Yoon, Jong-Shin	Baby You're My Home by B'z
Missing You by Coco	Is It Love by Zoo
Short Promise by Kim, Won-Joon	Ticket to the Loneliness by Wands**
Above the Sky by Lee, Moo-Song*	You're My World by Matsuda Seiko
For Me by The Blue	Telephone Line by TMR
Screaming in the Silence by R.ef	Enjoy by Club Maharaja
Farewell without Preparation by Noksaek Jidae	Endless Rain by X-Japan
Always in My Dream by Jang, Hye-Jin	Under the Sun by Hamada Koko**
I Will Love by Lee, Sang-Eun	Just a Man in Love by Kuwata Band

This phenomenon was the result of the rapid growth of the music industry that was too fast to keep up and mature normally. In spite of the expansion of the industry size, companies and musicians alike did not have enough experience and competence to fill the increased demand with their own original content.

It should be noted that most plagiarism of that period was focused on Japanese music, not Anglo-American or other European (Western) music, which was more dominant in the global market. During the period of rapid growth, the Korean music industry tended to rely on the proven way of hybridization and indigenization – adopting foreign music into the domestic culture. Moreover, while Anglo-American music was officially released, Japanese music was not officially allowed in the Korean music market. Based on the fact that most Korean audiences had no exposure to it (see Lim, 1996; Shin et al., 2005), many producers and musicians thought that only they knew the latest information about Japanese music, which was a big miscalculation. These dynamics, combined with the crucial element of digitalization,

incited the explosion of plagiarism. It had already been apparent that Korean audiences liked Japanese style melodies (such as *trot*), so it was somewhat natural for lackadaisical creators, musicians and producers to pay attention to Japanese trends in dance music and to copy it.

Ironically, it was a BBS user who firstly accused the plagiarism of Roo'ra to the public (Kim, K. W., 1996). He uploaded the original Japanese song on the BBS for other users to compare it to Roo'ra's *Chun Sang Yoo Ae*, which had become a huge issue of discussion on other BBS as well as popular music BBS. Soon after, a number of users organized a signature campaign against the plagiarism both on-line and off-line and reported it to the press (ibid.). Through this procedure, audiences of 'forbidden music' were officially disclosed to the public including the music industry, which saw in these populations the possibility of potential consumers. Those plagiarism scandals evoked the discourse of opening the cultural market to global products without active control and penetration by the government. In this process, the power of young audiences in Korean music industry grew stronger that they proved themselves to be not passive consumers but active listeners.

After several plagiarism scandals, New Generation Dance Music rapidly declined and disappeared in the market. However, while New Generation Dance Music might be regarded as disposable in considering its roots in plagiarism and industrial immaturity, it still proved to be influential over the decade and a half after its rise.

The current form of K-Pop may have discarded the shameful tendency of plagiarism and begun to use different ways such as remake, sampling, and remix instead, yet they borrowed musicians' images, as well as the legacy of combining

trendy dance rhythms with domestic melody lines. The rise of K-Pop has demonstrated the possibility that the domestic music industry could produce music of global quality, despite its beginnings in plagiarism. The main transformation in the music industry from New Generation Dance Music to K-Pop since the late 1990s has been the creation of a well-established industrial system and a great musical competence of both musicians and producers.

Conclusion

The 1990s were a transition period for the Korean music industry. While the development of technologies such as digitalization and communication media had a great influence, the industry could not keep up with the pace of growth in demand. The Korean government regulations, which had been strong and fierce, were loosened by the strong resistance by young audiences and musicians – the New Generation. This time was a period of transition where Korea began to enter into the global market through media production technology, the copy right system, and the economy. All of these factors deeply influenced the Korean music industry and impacted many other cultural industries. New Generation Dance Music was result of this transition. Though it did not have ‘happy ending’, audiences, producers, and musicians alike got a lesson from the rise and fall of this musical genre and matured through it. In the decade from the late 1980s to mid 1990s, like those of several other developing countries, the Korean cultural industries were also in danger of being encroached by global/multinational conglomerates. However, the whole system of the music industry in the 1990s, established based on transformations in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was improved and modified to produce global products and support their first-ever

global culture brand. It is *K-Pop*, the direct descendant of New Generation Dance Music.

CHAPTER 3: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF K-POP: K-POP'S MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

Recently, fans, media, critics, and scholars have begun using the term 'K-Pop' to refer to the general category of Korean modern popular music (for instance, see Russell, 2009). However, the term has a much shorter history than Korean popular music in general. 'K-Pop' has only been used since the late 1990s, and in its home ground, the term came into use even more recently. Moreover, K-Pop does not actually mean all Korean popular music, but rather indicates a specific kind of music produced and consumed in a particular way.

Generally, K-Pop songs are electronic dance music, performed by 'idols' and produced and distributed by 'agencies' who manage those artists. The usual discourse about musicians and recording companies, the two important axes in most of other international music industries, cannot be applied mechanically to the K-Pop industry. K-Pop idols are musicians and the agencies are recording companies, but they are operating in ways that are distinct from most other industries.

In this chapter, I will discuss the main industrial and musical aspects of the K-Pop industry. This will reveal K-Pop's uniqueness which has enabled it to become global music in its region – East Asia – and also broader parts of the world.

K-Pop as Musical Genre

New Generation Dance Music of the first half of the 1990s is undeniably a forefather of the current K-Pop genre. The beginnings of contemporary Korean dance

music styles can be traced back to the late 1980s when the music of Sobangcha, Nam-Jung Park, and Wan-Sun Kim swept the country. However, the period between 1996 and 1998, when several boy bands (e.g., H.O.T., N.R.G., Sechs Kies and G.O.D.) and girl bands (e.g., S.E.S., Fin.K.L., and Baby Vox) appeared and began making hit songs is generally considered as the beginning of K-Pop. These boy/girl bands are usually called ‘First-generation K-Pop Idols’ (Cha & Choi, 2011). New Generation Dance Music is not usually included in histories of K-Pop though it has some musical similarities. Factors which differentiate earlier dance music in general Korean popular music (including New Generation Dance Music) from K-Pop include:

- 1) The popularity of the earlier dance music did not last while K-Pop has maintained popularity for more than 15 years.
- 2) The scope of the earlier dance music was limited to the domestic market while K-Pop has made hits all over East Asia and in some Western countries.
- 3) Musically (or aesthetically), the styles are distinct though they have some similarities, which are discussed later in this chapter.
- 4) The industry system in which early Korean popular dance music was produced and performed was different from the current K-Pop system.

In his book *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, Keith Negus defines a popular music genre as the way in which musical categories and systems of classification shape the music that we might play and listen to, mediating both the experience of music and its formal organization by an entertainment industry” (Negus, 1999, p. 4). In other words, the labels applied to music answer the question such as

“what type of music do you listen to (or play)?” For example, when we call a specific music ‘grunge rock’, that music usually includes distorted, fuzzy electronic guitar tones, contrasting song dynamics, apathetic or angst-filled lyrics, as well as a fashion style and attitude expressed by wearing things like flannel shirts.

If K-Pop is a popular musical genre, it also has distinct musical characteristics and cultural aspects. What are the musical and cultural things that characterize K-Pop? When, how, and why has a specific kind of Korean music begun to be called ‘K-Pop’?

K-Pop Branding

Though the term K-Pop has recently come to represent all of Korean popular music, this is not correct. It is different from something like European Austropop,⁶⁴ which is not so much of a specific style but more a trademark of origin. Rather, the term K-Pop is similar to Britpop and J-Pop in that they do not indicate all popular music in Britain or Japan. Like Britpop and J-Pop, K-Pop is a specific kind of music with distinct origins. For instance, not every kind of British popular music is Britpop, and music that has similar musical characteristics to Britpop but is not produced by British musicians (or music industry) is usually not regarded as Britpop. The same is true of K-Pop.

The domestic term indicating general Korean modern popular music is *Gayo* (가요, 哥謠), not K-Pop. In *Gayo*, global musical genres such as rock, blues, country,

⁶⁴ Austropop is a musical movement that started in Austria in the middle of the 1970s. It includes various styles such as rock, New Folk, and contemporary pop music (“Austropop”, 2012).

R'n'B, hip hop, and (pop and rock) ballads are also used with domestically named genres (such as *trot*) to indicate the characteristics of a specific *Gayo* song. Like these genre names, K-Pop is one of *Gayo*'s genres, not the *Gayo* itself (for example, see Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 112-114).

The origin of the term K-Pop can be traced back only to the late 1990s, when Channel [V] International named one of its television program 'K-Pop Station'. It was the time when some Korean popular music musicians began to be noticed by young audiences in Chinese-speaking regions of East Asia (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and some parts of Philippines and Malaysia). The term began to be widely used in the media of those Chinese-speaking regions and other East Asian countries in the early 2000s. For example, titles of joint concerts in China and Japan featuring performances by a number of Korean musicians were given titles such as 'K-Pop Super Live Concert' (Kang, S.H., 2005), 'K-Pop All-Star in Japan' (Lee, G.L., 2006), or 'Feel the K-Pop in Shanghai' (Lee, E.J., 2006).

But even after a specific kind of Korean popular music struck most East Asian countries and was called K-Pop there, the term was hardly used by the Korean media, musicians, the industry, critics, or fans until the late 2000s. When searching the keyword 'K-Pop' (or the Korean word '케이팝') in news libraries, the first article is about a boy band whose name was 'K-Pop' in 2001. The first media usage of the term in Korea as one of *Gayo* genres is found in 2004, and even after that, the term did not appear often. It seems that K-Pop began to be widely accepted as an official name of a specific genre only after 2008, the year when some K-Pop musicians such as Rain, BoA, Wonder Girls and Se7en began introducing their music to international audience other than East Asian, especially US and other Western audience. This

means that Korean media and fans did not either actively create or use the term, but have followed the usage of the term by media and audiences outside Korea. In other words, the label ‘K-Pop’ only emerged once the music itself began to find audiences outside of its domestic market.

Why has the term K-Pop been used so much later, and reluctantly, in domestic cultural industries? Interestingly, in addition to the fact that the term was ‘not being in use’, it even drew unpleasant and unwelcome responses (Shin, 2011). This dynamic is germane to the fact that the term K-Pop originated from the term ‘J-Pop’. Fans, music industry insiders, the media, and critics in Chinese-speaking regions (especially Taiwan and Hong Kong, two of the first East Asian regions where Korean popular music became popular) named the new type of Korean popular music after J-Pop, the previous regional popular music in East Asia. However, the Korean media, musicians, fans, and the music industry were dissatisfied with the term, for the term looks like just mimicry of Japanese music and, therefore, lacks of originality. Korea has considered Japan a rival since the colonial period, and intense debates have sprung up when Korea tries to refer to Japanese forums because many Koreans still have negative attitude towards Japanese culture (Yoon and Na, 2005, p. 21; Yang, 2008, p. 73-74). For example, since 1998 when a Korean professional soccer league began to use ‘K-League’ as its official name, a number of fans and media opposed the naming because it obviously imitated the official name of Japanese professional soccer league ‘J-League’.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ When Korean professional soccer league was established in 1983, its first official name was ‘Super League’. In 1986, the league soon changed its official name into ‘Pro Soccer Championship League’. However, when J-League, which was established in 1993 and became popular right after its establishment, some Korean media and fans quietly began to

However, it is not so strange that East Asian media, music industries, and audiences compare K-Pop to J-Pop, because there are several similarities between K-Pop and J-Pop rooted in an acceptance and consumption of them. The difference is that while the term K-Pop was first created by international audiences, J-Pop was not. When discussing the origin of the term J-Pop, Ugaya (2005, p. 2-7) notes that the term was created by ‘J-Wave’, a popular FM radio stations in Tokyo since the late 1980s. It was the period when the Japanese media was seeking to find a new musical category that distinguished Western/global-sounding Japanese music from both Euro-American music and older Japanese domestic popular musical forms (ibid.; see also Mōri, 2009, p. 225). Therefore, though the term J-Pop might seem like an abbreviation for ‘Japanese popular music’, it was not created to represent every genre of Japanese popular music. Ugaya (2005) notes that the initial English letter ‘J’ from the word ‘Japanese’ – instead of the letter ‘N’ from the Japanese word ‘日本 (pronounced as nihon/nippon)’ – implies “this new Japanese music is different from old and traditional Japanese popular music”, and moreover, “the new Japanese music is global-quality music in range with Western (mostly Anglo-American) popular music that has dominated the global music industry” (p. 20-24). According to the definition of this “newness, modernity, and internationality”, the trendy popular music produced after the late 1980s was categorized as J-Pop. This newly-developed genre replaced elements of the non-global and domestic adult-oriented *enka* style with contemporary global styles such as electronic dance and some pop rock music. After branding the term, J-Pop soon became a regional popular music in East Asia, especially in Hong

use the term ‘K-League’ to indicate Korean league. And suddenly, the association changed the official name into ‘K-League’ in 1998, without any public discussion. See Kim, H.H. (2011) for details.

Kong and Taiwan, in the late 1980s⁶⁶.

The basic principal of naming and categorizing specific kinds of Korean music as K-Pop is similar to that of J-Pop. While the term K-Pop may seem to stand for ‘Korean popular music’, it only includes specific genres created and circulated after the mid 1990s. Like J-Pop, the English term K-Pop also implies a new, modern, chic, and global Korean-ness different from previous *Gayo*. Before the establishment of K-Pop, there were many genres in Korean popular music such as rock, R’n’B, acoustic folk, jazz, dance music and pop and rock ballads. However, the names of these genres all came from the Anglo-American music industry. It means that until that time there was no ‘Made in Korea’ genre except for *trot*, which originated from Japanese *enka*. K-Pop is the first Korean-born genre that is new, modern, and global/international.

In sum, the fact that the term K-Pop became widely used in Korea only after the recognition by the West indicates the general animosity towards imitating the Japanese term J-Pop. In spite of the uncomfortable reference to J-Pop, the branding of K-Pop emphasizes its internationality/globality, which no Korean popular music had ever achieved before it – it is a genre ‘Made in Korea’ but named and recognized by outside its domestic market.

Music of both Transnationality and Nationality

A recent study notes that hybridity and transnationality seems clearer and more strengthened in K-Pop than earlier Korean hybrid dance music such as New Generation Dance Music, the previous hybrid dance music in Korean popular music

⁶⁶ The popularity of J-Pop in East Asia is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

industry (Lee, D. Y., 2011, p. 37-42). Importantly, there are very few elements of traditional Korean instrumentation, melodic modes, or compound rhythms in K-Pop. Both the music and the audience of K-Pop are more global and transnational than any Korean genre before.

It is nonetheless a Korean local music produced by the Korean music industry. Many politicians, journalists, and scholars recognize K-Pop as a ‘uniquely Korean’ form of music, such as ‘Made in Korea’ products (Chohan, 2005). Moreover, domestic audiences and media ceaselessly work to re-nationalize K-Pop in spite of its obvious transnationality.

K-Pop: the Most Hybridized and Transnational Music in Korean Music Industry

Musically, K-Pop is based on the way which New Generation Dance Music was established – most of K-Pop songs are dance pop based on the combination of Korean style melody line and Western rhythmic patterns.

K-Pop has many similarities with European electronic dance music but integrates more elements of American contemporary R’n’B and hip hop. And yet, it is distinct from American-styled music because it has *trot*-based melodies influenced by Japanese pop music. However, compared to Japanese dance music, which usually lacks American R’n’B and hip hop elements, K-Pop has a more powerful beat, vocals and rapping referring to black American musical genres. The adaptation of numerous musical elements makes K-Pop more hybrid and transnational than any other globally known popular music.

In some ways, K-Pop is similar to New Generation Dance Music in the early 1990s in that they both are dance music primarily based on European electronic dance

music, American R'n'B and hip hop, and Japanese dance music. However, there are noticeable differences between New Generation Dance Music and K-Pop as follows:

- 1) While creators and musicians of New Generation Dance Music were heavily influenced by *Gayo*, the first-generation K-Pop creators and musicians developed their musical sensibilities and skills from global popular music, due to the globalization of culture and media in Korea since the late 1980s.⁶⁷
- 2) Musicians and producers on the K-Pop scene have more international and cosmopolitan backgrounds than those of New Generation Dance Music.
- 3) K-Pop is produced and consumed in a much more standardized, Fordist system than New Generation Dance Music, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

As a result, K-Pop is more transnational (or de-national) than New Generation Dance Music. The shift in demographic factors in K-Pop described in points 1) and 2) have created unique musical characteristics and some believe that K-Pop is the real 'new generation' of the Korean music industry. While almost all the producers and musicians of New Generation Dance Music were Korean, a number of K-Pop's biggest hit songs have been written by American, European, and Japanese composers and producers.⁶⁸ Moreover, countless numbers of creators and musicians

⁶⁷ See Chapter 2 for details about globalization of culture and media occurred in Korea since the late 1980s.

⁶⁸ Especially, SM Entertainment – the no.1 company of K-Pop industry – is open to foreign composers/producers and actively embraces their music into K-Pop scene. For instance,

are 1.5 or second-generation Korean-American, Korean-Canadian, or Korean-Australian. Most K-Pop are composed of members from ‘transnational’ backgrounds and several K-Pop musicians are actually foreigners.⁶⁹ A number of creators and industry insiders in the current Korean music industry have studied music production and management of entertainment business in foreign countries (mostly in the US and Japan).⁷⁰ Due to their global/transnational backgrounds, they are bilingual and also bicultural.

Therefore, K-Pop can be seen as one of the clearest examples of ‘hybridity-as-origin’, with specific effects, acceptances, and forms of consumption. The relative de-nationality of K-Pop is constructed not only by its musical hybridity, but also by its demographic transnationality. The genre has drawn on such a wide range of popular music and that is hardly anything recognizably traditional ‘Korean’ about K-Pop (for example, see Pease, 2009).

Re-Nationalizing of Transnational music

Nonetheless K-Pop is also at the same time local Korean music because it is articulated and consumed by Korean creators, performers, industries and audiences.

Genie, performed by Girl’s Generation – the most famous female vocal group of SM Entertainment – was written and produced by an European producing team Design Music. Members of this producing team are Norwegian, Swedish, etc. Several Girl’s Generation’s international hit song such as *The Boys* – written by Teddy Riley, a famous American r’n’b producer/composer and the main producer of Michael Jackson’s global hit album *Dangerous* – and *Run Devil Run* – co-written by composers from diverse countries (US, Britain, Sweden, etc) – also from foreign composers and producers. Other SM Entertainment’s musicians such as Shinee, f(x), and Super Junior have also performed a number of songs written and produced by foreign composers (Kim, S.H., 2013).

⁶⁹ For example, Nick Khun of 2pm is Thai-American, Gangnam of MIB is Japanese, Amber of f(x) is Chinese-American, and Victoria of f(x), Fei and Jia of Miss A are Chinese.

⁷⁰ Psy, one of the most famous K-Pop musicians in the world with his hit song *Gangnam Style*, also studied popular music in US colleges.

According to several audience studies about K-Pop in East Asia, international audiences admit that they still feel distinct Korean-ness while they do not specifically pay much attention to the nationality of other global popular music they consume (for example, see Chua Beng Huat, 2008). Moreover, the space for hybridized popular music is further restricted in Korean context. As Mōri (2009, p. 220) argues in his discussion of de-nationalized Japanese music with domestic Japanese lyrics, songs with Korean lyrics are “automatically ‘nationalized’ and labeled” as purely Korean even if K-Pop do not express anything identifiable as Korean. In this way, K-Pop is different from other local musical forms that have achieved international success outside their domestic market. For example, Swedish pop music – an example of a local music genre that is also popular in the global market – has mostly English lyrics, which weakens its ‘localness’. While K-Pop songwriters sometimes use English lyrics, this is uncommon, even as the music become more popular globally. One of the things that makes K-Pop distinctly Korean is the fact that most songs use Korean lyrics, in addition to *trot*-influenced melodies.⁷¹

Although K-Pop exists in a more global and transnational period than any other in the history of the Korean music industry, many audiences, media and critics have attempted to frame it in nationalistic terms; these parties seek to re-nationalize something that is a transnational culture.

The ‘Jay Park Scandal’ exemplifies the fact that K-Pop still exists within the borders of Korean popular culture despite of its globality and transnationality. Jay Park, a Korean-American musician and then-lead vocalist of the famous K-pop boy band 2pm, was thrown out from the band in 2009. Jay Park had publicly complained

⁷¹ Distinctive localness in K-Pop is discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

about his life in Korea and sneered at Korean people and culture on his Facebook, which was harshly criticized by some audiences and media. Interestingly, these posts were written several years prior (even before he joined the band) and the criticism did not seem too serious because the time he wrote the post was right after he began living in Korea. He did not fully understand the ways of Korean life because, though he looks Korean, he was born and raised in the United States and is culturally American. Nonetheless, he was attacked by many Korean fans and media sources from a nationalist point of view.

In a different way, the tone of Korean media towards Kara, the most successful K-Pop girl band in Japan, also showed cultural nationalism. The Korean media used words such as ‘conquest’ and ‘invasion’ to describe Kara’s success in the Japanese popular music industry. Their achievements were described as ‘the victory of Korean culture over Japan’ (for example, see Won, 2013). When these articles express pride about its ‘national victory over Japan’, however, they do not usually point out that a number of Kara’s hit songs were actually written and produced by Japanese composers and producers, and the lyrics of those songs are totally Japanese, not Korean. And like most of K-Pop bands, Kara has also a transnational member.⁷²

There have been ceaseless conflicts between K-Pop’s transnationality denationality the intense of re-nationalizing K-Pop into Korean national culture. These conflicts reflect a struggle between ‘global’ and ‘local’, and between cosmopolitanism and nation/ethnic centrism in Korean cultural industries.

⁷² Nicole, a rapper of Kara, is Korean American born and raised in Los Angeles.

K-Pop as Systemized Industry

As mentioned above, one of the important aspects that differentiate K-Pop from other *Gayo* genres is the system in which it is produced, distributed, and consumed. This system can be described as an *idol-agency system*, because ‘idol’ and ‘agency’ are the two main ingredients of K-Pop industry system. It is a structure that unique to the Korean music industry, and was established relatively recently.

The idol-agency system is the product of transformations in the Korean music industry during the first half of the 1990s, as discussed in the previous chapter. This system refers to many other music industries that have achieved global success including Anglo-American, European, and Japanese industries. However, the international Korean music industry is distinct because it is not limited to music companies but also includes musicians, audiences, and media related to popular music.

However, the idol-agency system does not represent all of the Korean music industry and is unique to the K-Pop genre. In domestic market, some music is still produced, performed, distributed, and consumed outside the idol-agency system and attracts a considerable amount of fans, though significantly less than K-Pop. Various kinds of music such as rock, *Gayo* ballads, *trot*, and even hip hop and indietronica⁷³ are produced outside the idol-agency system, while K-Pop music is exclusively within it. To date, all K-Pop music to achieve success in East Asia and other parts of the world has been rooted in the idol-agency system. Therefore, the current K-Pop music and the idol-agency system are inseparable. This system has not only influenced the ways music is produced, distributed, and consumed, but also the identity of K-Pop

⁷³ Indietronica (also called indie electronic) is a music genre that combines indie, electronica, rock and pop music. It is a sub-genre of electronica that related less to the major dance music and more to the experimental electronica (“Indietronica”, 2013).

music its musicians. In other words, the idol-agency system is the result of shifts in the industry, and has come to change the industry in which it was born.

Idol

Most of the active musicians on the K-Pop scene are boy or girl bands called ‘idol group’ or individual performers referred to as ‘idol’. The terms ‘idol’ and ‘idol group’ were not created by the K-Pop industry, but in the Korean context, they take on meaning that are distinct from other cultural industries.

The Meaning of ‘Idol’ in K-Pop

In Western cultural industries, the term ‘teen idols’ refers to celebrity actors, musicians, and sports figures who appeal to and are idolized by teenagers (All Music Guide, “Teen Idols”). Some contemporary American teen idols include musicians (such as Justin Bieber and Taylor Swift), movie stars (such as Robert Pattinson and Taylor Lautner), TV stars (such as Hannah Montana and Lindsay Lohan), and sports stars (such as Tim Tebow). In the Korean cultural context, however, the term ‘idol’ usually indicates musicians in idol groups on K-Pop scene specifically. In contrast to Western cultural industries, the term ‘idol’ is not usually applied to other entertainment fields or music styles.

The meaning of the term ‘idol’ in the K-Pop scene is closer to Japanese usage of idol (アイドル) rather than that of Western cultural industries. However, Cha and Choi (2011, p. 113) note that while Japanese idols are actors (or actresses) as well as musicians, Korean idols are mainly musicians who sometime also act. Cha and Choi argue that for Japanese idols, acting and music careers are almost equal while for

Korean idols, acting is usually considered secondary to their music careers (ibid.). For example, a case study comparing Korean boy idol group BigBang to the Japanese boy idol group Arashi showed that BigBang focuses on music while Arashi branched out to variety shows, dramas, movies, theater, voiceovers, and even news and weather reporting (Han, 2011, p. 97-100). In this study, Han (2011) argues that Korean audiences, media, and cultural industries generally expect idols to have competence in musical activities (not just limited to musicianship, but also including dancing or rapping) more than their counterparts in Japan (p. 98).

H.O.T. and the First-generation K-Pop Idols

Idols did exist in the Korean music industry before K-Pop. Some previous teen *Gayo* stars such as Sobangcha in the late 1980s, or R.ef and Seotaji and the Boys in the early 1990s could be considered idols (see Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 118). However, as mentioned previously, the K-Pop idol is different from older idols, because the former is a product of the idol-agency system. H.O.T., a boy band of five members, is usually considered as the first idol group in the history of K-Pop and are among the groups that have come to be known as the ‘first-generation K-Pop idol’.

There are several reasons that H.O.T. is called the first K-Pop idol group. First, H.O.T. was signed to the big agency SM Entertainment,⁷⁴ while previous teen *Gayo* stars had worked with smaller and pettier recording companies. Second, while previous teen *Gayo* stars had begun their career from the bottom of the ladder,⁷⁵ the

⁷⁴ SM Entertainment had about 35% of K-Pop market share by 2011, the biggest among other agencies. See KOCCA (2012).

⁷⁵ Members of Sobangcha, the representative teen idol group in the 1980s, began their careers as backup dancers. Also, as mentioned previously, many teen *Gayo* stars in the early 1990s

members of H.O.T. were selected, trained, and made their debut according to the deliberate and thorough planning by their agency (Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 118-120; see also Han, 2011). Therefore contrary to previous teen *Gayo* stars, they did not have any musical career before their official debut.⁷⁶ This means that the band was created within the idol-agency system. Third, H.O.T. successfully tapped into the foreign East Asian markets and became regionally global/international stars for the first time in the history of Korean cultural industries. On the contrary, previous teen *Gayo* stars had been limited to their domestic Korean market (ibid.).⁷⁷ And finally, H.O.T. became the precedent for the composition of K-Pop idol groups and many bands who subsequently made their debut were modeled after them.

The model for idol groups that was pioneered by H.O.T. had several distinct characteristics:⁷⁸

- 1) *Constitution of a group.* Since the emergence of H.O.T., K-Pop idol groups have been made up of more than three members, generally 4 to 6 (H.O.T. consisted of five members). Some popular idol groups have even more members. For example, Girl's Generation and Super Junior, two of the most popular idol groups of SM Entertainment, have 9 members.⁷⁹
- 2) *Format of dividing roles.* Each member of H.O.T. had his own distinct

also were backup dancers, backing vocals, and club DJs before they made their official debut (see Chapter 2).

⁷⁶ Every member of H.O.T. was a high school student when they made their debut in 1996.

⁷⁷ The success of K-Pop in international markets is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁷⁸ First and second aspects will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁷⁹ Super Junior originally had 13 members. However, two members left the group and the other two joined the army as a mandatory military service, a duty for Korean male in their twenties.

role. Among the five, Gangta was the lead vocal, Tony Ahn and Hee-Jun Moon were subvocal,⁸⁰ and Woo-Hyuk Jang and Jae-Won Lee were rappers and dancers. In some of their songs, Heejun also took on a rapper role. Like H.O.T., each member in subsequent idol groups has his or her own specific role. Among others, the *singer* (lead vocal and subvocal), *rapper*, and *dancer* are the three most important roles in K-Pop idol groups. Usually, a member who raps dances, and vice versa. However, all members do some group dances in each song and some members both sing and rap such as Heejun of H.O.T. The singer role and the rapper/dancer roles are often strictly divided and members who perform one role do not take part in the other role. For example, rapper/dancer members hardly have singing parts.⁸¹ Sometimes roles are not related to musical or dancing abilities, but just serve as a ‘good-looking guy or girl’,⁸² or a witty raconteur.

Some members do not sing in his or her group, especially in the case of rock band or other types of bands including instrumentalists. It is not common, however, for a vocal group with no instrumentals to have non-

⁸⁰ Originally, ‘subvocal’ means “Characterized by movement of the lips or other speech organs without making audible sounds” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). However, the term ‘subvocal’ used in K-Pop means the secondary or tertiary vocal. Subvocals usually sing a solo in one verse or a bridge of one song. When singing the chorus, they participate as backing vocals and the lead vocal sings the main part and a solo.

⁸¹ For example, Hyo-Yeon, one of the dance members in Girl’s Generation, does not sing a bit in some songs. Even if she sings, she sings only few seconds in a song (Cho, H. W, 2008). Also, Kwang-Hee, a member of an idol group ZE:A and plays a ‘witty raconteur’ role in the group, confessed that sometimes he did not get a microphone on stage because he did not have his part on singing (Choi, D. S., 2012).

⁸² These members who emphasize their good looks but lack musical or dancing competence are usually called ‘visual members’.

singing members. Even in the case of current Western teen pop groups (such as British teen pop band One Direction and American teen pop idols the Jonas Brothers), it is hard to find a member who does not sing at all, at least as backing vocals.

- 3) *Exuberant group dancing*. Though each member has his own role, when together on stage, H.O.T. performed an exuberant and sometimes even acrobatic type of group dance in unison, wearing united fancy uniform. They performed unique styles of dance for each single. Therefore, audiences could associate each song for a specific kind of group dance, similar to the way people associate *Smooth Criminal*, one of Michael Jackson's hit songs, with *Moonwalk* dancing.

One notable difference between Michael Jackson and H.O.T. is that while not every single of Michael Jackson has a specific dance, every song by H.O.T. has specific choreography associated with it. Synchronized group dancing is an important feature for H.O.T. and other idol groups.

- 4) *Performance first, then the music*. In other cultural industries, a song is usually composed and produced first, and then a dance is developed according to the style of the song for the performance on stage and/or music video. However, in the case of H.O.T. and other idol groups in the late 1990s, most of their songs were influenced by the role of each member and the group dancing.

According to Young-Jin Yoo – the main composer, writer, and producer of SM Entertainment who has composed many of the hit songs H.O.T. and many other K-Pop idol groups such as S.E.S., Super Junior, Girl's

Generation, and Shinee – said that he has always composed and produced songs only after forming the performance, taking into consideration the group dancing, the shape of the stage, and even the position of each member on stage (Kang, M. S., 2010). This means that the format of dividing roles in an idol group determines the structure of songs, not vice versa. As mentioned above, an idol group usually is composed of singers (lead and sub vocals), dancers, and rappers, and songs are composed and produced considering this basic structure. In a typical K-Pop song, the introduction is made for group dancing, which every member does. After that there are usually two verses – the first verse is for the lead vocal, the second verse is for the subvocals. This is followed by the chorus, which features all vocals (lead vocal sings the melody while subvocals sing harmonies) with all-group dancing. Before or after the chorus, or between the first verse and the second verse, there is usually a bridge featuring the rappers (see Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 123-125; Kang, I. K, 2011). It is not exactly the same for every idol group, but the basic principle is that ‘the performance is firstly created and then the music is produced’ when creating songs. Therefore, dancing is an essential, structuring feature to the music in K-Pop.

To a greater or lesser extent,⁸³ other idol groups followed the model H.O.T.

⁸³ For example, while the music of H.O.T. was greatly influenced by hip-hop and trendy dance music, songs of G.O.D. were based on R’n’B and soul music. Also, while H.O.T. chose the mysterious and cool attitude towards their fans, Sechs Kies preferred more relaxed and friendly attitude.

had set with a few changes as differentiation strategies. Among them, Sechs Kies, G.O.D., Shinwha, and NRG were popular boy idols, and S.E.S., Fin.K.L., and Baby Vox were the most popular girl idols.⁸⁴ During the period between the mid 1990s and the early 2000s, those idol groups gained tremendous popularity both inside and outside their domestic market. After the term ‘K-Pop’ became widely used, they came to be called ‘the first-generation of K-Pop idols’ by the audience, media, and the academy (e.g. Cho, W. Y., 2010; Lee, D. Y., 2011; Kang, I. K., 2011; Cha & Choi, 2011; Lee, G. T., 2012; Lim, H. Y., 2013).

The Limits of the First-generation K-Pop Idols

In spite of their enormous popularity, some audiences, media, critics, and even fellow musicians raised questions of whether these idols were actually musicians. It should be noted that members of those first-generation idol groups seldom wrote their own songs with the exception of some lyrics.⁸⁵ Instead, professional composers, usually experts of the latest digital technologies, wrote songs for these idol groups. Interestingly, this was not the focus of their criticism. As with other global teen pop bands, critics did not expect first-generation K-Pop idols to be ‘great artists’ with exceptional songwriting or instrumental skills. Yet these new idols did not even sing their songs well, let alone songwriting and playing musical instruments. These idols usually lip-synched when they performed both on television shows (where some

⁸⁴ Also, there were mixed idol groups such as Sharp, UP, Young Turks Club, and Koyote. In these idol groups, male members rapped and danced while female members took part in lead and backing vocals. However, the mixed idol group was not a typical form of the idol group and in the second-generation K-Pop idol era, mixed idol groups seldom appear.

⁸⁵ Only a few idols – for example, members of H.O.T. (Gangta and Hee-Jun) and NRG (Myung-Hoon Chun) - wrote or co-wrote some of their songs such as *Lights* (a song of H.O.T.) and *Hit Song* (a song of NRG).

musicians lip-synch due to the limitation of sound systems) as well as at live concerts. The only live performance they embodied was actually dance. The pervasion of lip-synching was sneered at by a number of audiences and critics, who often referred to these idols as ‘Goldfish’. The nickname meant that these idols just opened and closed their mouths without making any sound, like a fish in water (e.g. Park, E. J., 2001; Park, H. S, 2004).

In contrast to previous *Gayo* musicians who had musical training and performed live at venues such as small-scale live clubs or concerts halls before their major debut, first-generation K-Pop idols did not have experiences to develop their musical competence. Though agencies devised songs, music, and roles for members of idol groups, they did not give much attention to their musical abilities. Rather, both the agencies and idols in the first-generation era focused on creating ‘entertainers’. For example, Soo-Man Lee, a founder and the current owner of the SM Entertainment, stated in an interview that he developed their idols to be ‘entertainers’ rather than ‘serious musicians’ (Kim, B. S., 2006). Therefore, for most first-generation K-Pop idols, the songs often became just ‘background music’ for their dance performances and elaborate costumes.

Without a solid grounding of musical competence, those idols and their songs could not help but decline in popularity soon after their heydays in the late 1990s (1997-1999). Moreover, while idols continued to be overproduced, music consumption continuously fell due to the the financial crisis that hit East Asia in the late 1990s and a rapid growth of Korean film industry.⁸⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter, digitalization of music production in the early 1990s reduced both

⁸⁶ See Chapter 2 for details.

cost and time, and enabled music companies to ‘mass produce’ music and idol groups. However, due to the financial crisis that undermined purchasing power of cultural consumers (especially teenagers – the main popular music consumer whose buying power is dependent upon their parents’ financial condition) and illegal online music file sharing, many record wholesalers went bankrupt (Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 122-123). More importantly, global and regional industrial environments were changing. First, digital music distribution (such as the mp3 file format and streaming services) became a contested issue in the domestic and global music industries. Second, ex-communist countries in East Asia – Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, and most importantly, China – opened their markets and aggressively tried to enter the global economy.

Wonder Girls and the Second-Generation K-Pop Idols

From the early 2000s to 2006, after the demoralizing decline that resulted from debates about their artistry as well as changes in the economy, idol group did not achieve popularity nearly as significant as in the late 1990s.⁸⁷ However, this all changed in the fall 2007 when the second single of a new idol group, Wonder Girls made of five female members, became the biggest hit in the Korean music industry. After the success of Wonder Girls, a number of male idol groups – such as 2PM, 2AM, Shinee, BEAST, MBLAQ, U-Kiss, Infinity, and B1A4 – and female idol groups – such as Girl’s Generation, Kara, 4 Minutes, 2NE1, After School, T-ara, f(x), Miss A, Sistar, Apink, and Girl’s Day –debuted and achieved popularity. Some idol groups

⁸⁷ In fact, some idols such as TVXQ – an idol group of five male members produced by SM Entertainment – Shinhwa, BoA, Rain, and Seven were popular and made several hits in both domestic market and international markets. However, their popularity was sporadic and did not become the continuous tide such as the first and second-generation K-Pop idols.

who made their debuts before Wonder Girls such as Super Junior (debut in 2005) and BigBang (debut in 2006) became widely successful after the Wonder Girls' fad. Six years have passed since Wonder Girls' successful debut, but the idol groups and music right after them are still popular in both their domestic and global markets to date.

These groups are called 'second-generation' K-Pop idols. They share several characteristics with the 'first-generation', such as the constitution of members, the division of roles, and a great emphasis on brilliant group dancing. Additionally, the genre of both first- and second-generation K-Pop is hybrid and transnational electronic dance music. Unlike their predecessors, second-generation idols have maintained their popularity for many years and have a broad appeal. What, then, are the differences that have contributed to the longevity and success of second-generation K-Pop idols?

At this point, it is necessary to shift focus and discuss about the other main agent of K-Pop system – the agency. One of the most important changes in the era of the second-generation K-Pop idols that differentiated them from that of the first-generation is that big agencies had established more sophisticated strategies to train, produce, and 'sell' idols and their music than. Based on limits of the first-generation K-Pop idol groups based on the early idol-agency system, they made some revisions to the system to develop more mature system than the early one. What is this new strategy, and how has this strategy changed both the idol and the idol system?

Agency: Total Management Strategy

The full name of the agencies that manage K-Pop idols is the 'entertainment

management agency’.⁸⁸ There are a number of agencies,⁸⁹ but the *big 4* oligopolistic agencies – SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, YG Entertainment, and DSP Media – have most of big name K-Pop idols therefore are possessing most of the market share.⁹⁰

In many ways, these agencies are similar to recording companies in other countries. Generally, recording companies mainly focus on music publishing, recruiting potential stars, and designing, producing, and circulating records (Toynbee, 2000; Shuker, 2001), all of which are also done by K-Pop agencies. However, in addition to these functions, K-Pop agencies perform activities that are wider more extensive than ordinary recording companies.

The primary design of K-Pop agencies is called *total management strategy*. This strategy aims to combine all sorts of music and entertainment business aspects – such as training musicians, marketing and promoting their music, creating and producing songs, music engineering, choreographing group dances, coordinating fashion and costumes – under the same management system. Each agency is based in a big building in *Gangnam* or the *Hongdae district* (the area around Hong-Ik University), which are two representative areas of trendy youth culture in Seoul. These areas are home to clubs, live bars, and trendy fashion shops. Almost every facility and office related to produce the idol is located in these buildings including

⁸⁸ In Korean, it’s ‘연예기획사’ [j3:nje:gihwecsa:], or ‘기획사’ [gihwecsa:] in brief.

⁸⁹ According to the list of Korea Entertainment Management Association (CEMA, the biggest association for entertainment management agencies), by November 2012, there are 193 agencies. (CEMA, 2012).

⁹⁰ These 4 agencies have more than 60% percent market share (see KOCCA, 2012). Among others, Girl’s Generation and Super Junior of SM Entertainment, 2AM and Miss A of JYP Entertainment, Big Bang, Psy, and 2NE1 of YG Entertainment, and Kara of DSP Entertainment are the most popular idol groups in the domestic and international markets.

recording studios, dance studios, practice rooms, conference rooms, wardrobe department, etc.

Though there was a similar tendency in the early idol-agency system (for example, H.O.T. was managed by the SM Entertainment agency which had its own producers, composers, and choreographer), the strategy has become more thorough and sophisticated with the second-generation K-Pop era. The total management system of the Korean music industry today resembles Fordism (that is to say, ‘factory-like system’ that characterized the postwar manufacturing industry) more than the system of first-generation K-Pop.⁹¹ First, every part in the agency has a discrete role to develop an idol from the ‘raw material’. Second, individual idols are ‘assembled’ into one idol group according to a highly standardized process. And third, the standardized idol group is mass-consumed by the audience through the mass distribution and consumption system that has capitalized on technological development.

Yunsupseng Academy

The ‘*yunsupseng* [jɜːnsupsæŋ] (연습생 in Korean)⁹² academy’ is one of the

⁹¹ In their study of the film industry, Christopherson & Storper (1989) argue that the Hollywood studios of the ‘golden age (from 1920 to approximately 1950)’ was “organized around mass production principles”, rather than the flexible specialization system of the contemporary era – the post-Fordist system (p. 333). The total management agencies are more like those early Hollywood studios (Fordist system) than contemporary ones, because like those Hollywood studios, K-Pop products are very much “standardized”, and carried out “under the aegis of a small number of oligopolistic, vertically integrated firms”, the major agencies (ibid.). See also Fisher (2012), Flatley (2012), and Seabrook (2012) for factory-like aspects of K-Pop.

⁹² In English, a word ‘trainee’ has the closest meaning to the meaning of the word *yunsupseng*. However, there is a slight difference in the shade of meaning between the two

most important systems that operates in this Fordist-like total management strategy. It is a unique recruiting and training system that agencies of the second-generation K-Pop era have developed to discover talent, the first step in making an idol. Soo Man Lee, the founder of SM Entertainment, notes that one of the elements of their technology to produce idols is their training system (Vitalsign, 2011). Lee argues that “through auditions, we discover hidden talent and put them through three to seven years of music, dance, and acting training in order to create a star that’s close to perfection” (ibid. See also Bailey, 2012; Woo, 2012).

The general procedure of producing idols is as follows:

- 1) Recruiting *yunsupsengs* and signing them to a contract
- 2) Basic training in singing, dancing, and rapping
- 3) Monthly evaluation of each *yunsupseng*
- 4) Arranging *yunsupsengs* into idol groups and preparing them for their official debut
- 5) Making the idol group debut with the release of their first single (or album) and presenting them on television programs

In the first, the Artists & Repertoire (A&R) department of the agency scouts prospects who seem to have the possibility to be developed. On the surface, the selection procedure of the *yunsupseng* seems to be similar to that of the A&R

words. In addition, to describe its semantic nuance, it is better to use original Korean word than to translate it into the English word trainee.

departments of most recording companies,⁹³ but it is actually quite different. A&R departments do not usually focus on developing raw talent. Rather, they find musicians who potentially possess enough musical talent to succeed. However, prospects chosen to be *yunsupsengs* by the A&R departments of K-Pop agencies do not usually have any notable musical competence at the time they are picked up. Also, different from those picked up by most recording companies, those selected by the K-Pop agency are granted *yunsupseng* status – not ‘musician’ – even after being recruited.

Applicants for *yunsupseng* are usually teenagers from 13 to 16 years old. Once recruited, they are offered an exclusive contract tied to the agency from a minimum 5 years to a maximum 13 years, including both their training and post-debut years.⁹⁴ However, in the contract, their debut is not guaranteed. They are more like ‘employees’ rather than musicians and are paid small stipend for food and transportation.

According to Nega Network (2012), *yunsupsengs* are trained in the three talent departments: singing, dancing, and rapping after they are accepted as *yunsupsengs*. These big agencies often teach the *yunsupsengs* other pertinent subjects

⁹³ Workers in the A&R (Artists and Repertoire) department are talent scouts and production coordinators (Bernstein, Sekine, & Weissman, 2007, p. 30). A&R staff “go out to gigs and listen to tapes that are sent in; if they like a band or artist, they will usually commission a demo-tape to be made fairly quickly in a small studio; if that turns out well, the act will be signed to the label” (Longhurst, 2007, p. 51). Therefore, they focus more on the consummate musical skill, not the raw talent that should be developed. Interestingly, most of A&R workers are male and it is hard to find any female staff in the department (ibid.).

⁹⁴ This also seems similar to Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s mentioned previously (see Christopherson & Storper, 1989). For details about the *yunsupseng* contract, see Nega Network (2012, p. 32-37; 54-57).

other than three main subjects such as English and other foreign languages,⁹⁵ acting, and correcting local dialects. The detailed daily training schedule depends on the individual talents of each *yunsupseng*, and what stages in the process they are in at a given moment. Every *yunsupseng* must participate in intensive training every day from 6pm to 10pm except Sunday.⁹⁶ As mentioned above, the first-generation K-Pop idols were criticized for being ‘goldfish’, who could not sing but only dance, one of the factors that led to their loss in popularity. These agencies learned the lesson of that failure and now intensively train their *yunsupsengs* in both dancing and singing. An example of a typical *yunsupseng* schedule, specifically, of the famous Nega Network K-Pop agencies,⁹⁷ is shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Weekly training schedule of a teenager *yunsupseng* in Nega Network*

	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
6pm-7pm	Weekly Review	Dance Lesson	Vocal Lesson	Dance Lesson	Vocal Lesson	Voluntary Practice
7pm-8pm		Vocal Lesson				
8pm-9pm	Dance Lesson	Weekly Review	Dance Lesson	Rapping Lesson	Rapping Lesson	Dance Lesson
9pm-10pm					Weekly Review	

⁹⁵ Usually, Chinese and Japanese languages are selected among others because of their future international activities.

⁹⁶ In the case of adult *yunsunsengs*, they come to the practice room located in the agency building at 10am and practice individually until 6pm. From 6pm to 10pm, they get the same training courses with teenager *yunsupsengs*.

⁹⁷ The most famous K-Pop star of Nega Network is Brown Eyed Girls, an female idol group of five members.

* Excerpt from the table in Nega Network (2012, p. 268).

Generally the *yunsupseng* is training for 3 to 5 years, sometimes longer.⁹⁸ During that period, the agency invests large amounts of money in training them to be an idol. The training procedure is extremely intensive, tough, and long. For this reason, many *yunsupsengs* give up and leave the agency during the training stage. If a *yunsupseng* leaves, they are required to pay penalties to the agency unless they were fired.

The agency regularly evaluates all of its *yunsupsengs* once a month. *Yunsupsengs* are given a week's notice of what songs they should sing, rap, and what music they will dance to in the monthly evaluation. All senior staff such as the CEO, general manager, executive board, and directors of each part – singing, dancing, rapping, and acting – participate at the evaluation. During the evaluation, the *yunsupseng* show how much progress he or she has made in than the past month. The monthly evaluation is recorded and shown to all the parties involved. The *yunsupsengs* review their performance with instructors and discuss their strengths and shortcomings. If their performances do not demonstrate to the evaluation committee that they have improved their abilities more than three or four times, they are told by the director that they “might just as well leave” (Nega Network, 2012, p. 301). This means that the agency gives them up, and they should look for another agency if they still want to be an idol.

⁹⁸ For example, Jo Gwon, a member of the male idol group 2AM of JYP Entertainment, was a *yunsupseng* of that agency for 8 years. And Jessica, a member of Girl's Generation, was a *yunsupseng* of SM Entertainment for 7 years. However, Susie, a member of the female idol group Miss A of JYP Entertainment, was a *yunsupseng* only for 6 months.

Besides failure in training process, *yunsupsengs* can also be dismissed by the agency if they cause disharmony with other *yunsupsengs*, including smoking and drinking,⁹⁹ committing crimes, and other kinds of scandals (Nega Network, 2012, p. 246-249). Generally, Korean audiences have a very strict moral compass on K-Pop idols. Therefore, the agencies put stress on reputation and tightly manage their idols from their *yunsupseng* period. Even their school life is strictly supervised as some agencies hire instructors for several school subjects (such as English and math) and give lessons to *yunsupsengs* to get reasonable grades in their middle/high school.

If a *yunsupseng* passes monthly evaluations successfully, he/she is advanced to the 'qualified *yunsupseng*' stage and put into one of the idol group projects of the agency. The agency carefully selects prospective idol group members from these qualified *yunsupsengs* through an elaborate plan of clearly divided roles. For instance, an agency may choose two *yunsupsengs* who are very good at singing, two who are good at rapping and dancing, and one whose point of attraction is his or her good appearance to compose a 5-member idol group. However, not every qualified *yunsupseng* can be chosen to become a member of an idol group even if he/she performs well or has a charming appearance. For example, if the agency is planning to produce an idol group that has a rebellious, wild kid image, it chooses appropriate members from qualified *yunsupsengs*. Therefore even if someone is advanced to the qualified *yunsupseng* stage, he/she may wait much longer than others.

After the selection process is completed, the prospective idol group is organized and begins preparing for their debut. Members of the idol group may be

⁹⁹ As mentioned previously, most of *yunsupsengs* are teenagers who are not of legal age to smoke and drink. If they are adults, then it does not matter unless they make troubles because of drinking and smoking.

friends or share musical interests; however, this is not a factor taken into consideration and usually the relationship between members in a group is primarily business. The unity is not constructed by the members, but rather by the agency's will.¹⁰⁰ The organization of the group – including musical genre, fashion concept, group dance style, and role of each member – is almost entirely determined by the agency. In addition, when establishing an idol group, the agency requires all members live together in a house designated by the agency for a certain period of time (usually 2-3 years). After becoming a member of an idol group, both their official and personal schedules are tightly controlled by the agency.

Digital Distribution

Once the *yunsupseng* has successfully passed all the hard and tough procedures and made his/her debut as one of the members of an idol group, he/she becomes an 'idol'. However, as with other musicians and entertainers, it is harder to succeed in show business than to break into it. The K-Pop scene is now full of idol groups trying to present themselves to the domestic and global market and the industry is more competitive than ever. The K-Pop agencies have invested their great amounts of capital into the development of *yunsupsengs* to become idol groups more directly than ordinary recording companies do to their musicians. Therefore, they intervene and manage on a deeper level as a strategy to make idols and profits.

The first way of making profits of an idol group for an agency is, of course, to

¹⁰⁰ Some agencies directly advise their *yunsupsengs* not to have too close friendship with each other, because it can be an obstacle to their success if they become close friends and neglect their training with hanging around with each other. Also, agencies emphasize that it is their will – not a *yunsupseng*'s will – to decide who will be his/her fellow members of an idol group. See Nega Network (2012, p. 78-79; 305).

sell records. Since the 2000s, distribution of music around the world has shifted from physical records such as LPs, cassette tapes, and CDs to digital music sources – mp3s, ringtones, and streaming services. There have been many severe conflicts between recording companies and the copy-left (illegal) digital providers. However, the overall result of digitalization and new technologies is “a kind of compromise in which national copyright law remained central but the distribution of the value in recorded music had shifted” – the traditional recording industry loses profits, while newer companies such as iTunes gain profits (Goldsmith & Wu, 2008, p. 125). Now producers and consumers alike admit that digital distribution costs less money, and is more convenient than the distribution of physical products. Therefore, global spending on digital formats has increased every year. In 2007, the digital spending ratio in the global music industry was 16 percent; and by 2011, it reached 33 percent. Digital music distribution is expected to surpass physical distribution in 2015, and to reach 55 percent in 2016 (PWC, 2012).

The shift from physical records to digital music sources has also proceeded in the Korean music industry. After a long dispute with newly established online music services and recording companies and the Korean Association of Phonogram Producers (KAPP), *Bugs Music*, one of the earliest online music download services in Korea established in 1999, finally began to charge users for their services in September 2005 (Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 136). Also, *Soribada*, the first Korean P2P network service where users shared music files, much like Napster¹⁰¹ in the US, changed its policy from free usage to charging fees in July 2006 (ibid.). Since then,

¹⁰¹ Detailed information about Napster, and the history of dispute between Napster and other free P2P file-sharing networks and dominant recording companies, see Goldsmith and Wu (2008).

the shift from spending on physical forms to digital forms of music has proceeded more rapidly than the general global music industry. In 2010, the ratio of digital sales to physical sales was already 4.7:1 (KOCCA, 2011, p. 140-143). These digital sales include the mp3 files and ringtones, but there are more formats as well due to the popularization of mobile phones which can often be used as a portable music player. Various formats of digital music sources distributed in Korean music industry are shown in table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Formats of digital music source distributed in Korean music industry

Format			Description
Internet Music Service	Download	Digital Download	- Downloading music files (mp3 and other format) to own them
		Portable Subscription	- 'Large Catalogue+Portability' with Subscription - Users cannot own songs
	Streaming	Streaming Subscription	- Users can choose their music with a flat monthly rate - Users cannot own songs
		Streaming Radio	- Providing radio service with a flat monthly rate
Mobile Music Service	Ringtone		- Processing original music into the simple format to use on the mobile phone - Royalty is given to the direct copyright holder (composer/writer)
	Ringtone		- Compared to ringtone, ringtone uses a part of the song 'as it is' - Royalty is given both to the direct and indirect copyright holder including performer and producer
	Ring-back Tone		- An audible indication that is heard on the telephone line by the caller while the phone they are calling is being rung** - SK Telecom (the biggest mobile network

		operator in Korea) launched the world's ring-back tone service.
	Full-Track Download	- Downloading full music with the mobile device

* Excerpted from the table in Oh (2007, p. 83).

** Quoted from “Ring-back tone” (2013).

It is notable that one of the important changes from the first- to the second-generation K-Pop scene – musicians began to release mostly the *digital singles* instead of the full-length albums – occurred simultaneously with the shift to the digital distribution and consumption. Though musicians still release full-length albums, it is significantly less often, especially in the case of K-Pop idols. In December 2004, Seven, a Korean male solo idol, released a digital single *Crazy* for the first time in Korea. The term digital single means that the single is released only in a digital format (mp3 and other types of files), not in a physical record format. After that, a number of musicians – usually K-Pop idol groups but also including musicians of other *Gayo* genres – began to release digital singles and soon it became the main releasing format of Korean music industry. Other single-like formats such as the digital EP and double single also became widely used.¹⁰²

Originally, before the mid 2000s, musicians (and their recording companies) seldom released a single and/or EP in Korean music industry, however, digitalization changed that situation. When recording and producing a full-length album, it costs at least tens of millions KRW (tens of thousands USD), and sometimes it costs more than hundreds of millions KRW (hundreds of thousands USD) in the case of big name

¹⁰² Digital singles and EPs are sometimes released in physical CD format as well. However, these single/EP CDs are produced in only a small amount of quantities to meet the demand of a few aficionados.

musicians. However, the stakes are much lower when producing and releasing digital singles because it only costs about 10 million KRW (10,000 USD) or less (Gil, 2012). Also, consumers of the digital music format prefer single/EP to the full-length album, because digitalization has enabled the audience to purchase just one or more songs from a full-length album without buying ‘redundant filler’ songs they do not listen to. Therefore, K-Pop musicians (and their agencies) do not often bother producing full-length albums with singles and fillers, focusing only on singles. In addition, the single is more suitable for some digital formats related to the mobile phones such as ringtone, ringtone, and ring-back tone because these ‘processed’ digital music products only need one song (or part of the song), not the full-length album. In these ways, K-Pop greatly depends on digital technologies for both production and consumption.

And yet, in the Korean music industry, the distribution of profit from these digital music products is quite unfair. According to Oh (2007), when selling mp3s, less than 40% of the profit is given to the agency and the musician combined, while the rest stays with the digital circulating companies (p. 78-80). In the market of digital music products, the flow of music is as follows (KOCCA, 2007):

① Musician (including composers, lyricists, performers and session instrumentalists)
→ ② Entertainment Management Agency/Recording Company → ③ Music Sourcing Agency → ④ Content Provider → ⑤ Service Provider → ⑥ Audience

In this flow chart, ‘content providers (CP)’ are businesses that produce digital music products, while the ‘service provider (SP)’ sells the contents to the audience. Therefore, CP is more like a wholesaler and SP a retailer. There is no official organization that represents recording industry in Korea – such as the Recording

Industry Association of America (RIAA) in the US – but rather small music sourcing agencies (MSA) which have contracts with several entertainment management agencies (agencies) and recording companies to distribute their music. Some big agencies such as SM Entertainment have contracted directly with CPs, but generally agencies and recording companies authorize MSAs to provide their music source to CPs. The role of each agent is shown in table 3.3

Table 3.3 Role of each agent in digital music products market in Korea*

	Musicians/ Performers	Agency /Recording Company	MSA	CP	SP	Audience
Role	- Write, play, and perform music	- Develop idols/Recruit Musicians Producing	- Provide digital music source	- Produce digital music products	- Distribute digital music products	- Purchase digital music products

* Lee, E. M. (2005).

The problem is that while CPs and SPs are separated in theory, in fact most CPs also have their own SPs. There are only three large mobile communication companies in Korea – SK Telecommunication (SKT), KT Corporation (KT), and LG Telecommunication (LGT) – that are provided digital music source by MSA or agencies/recording companies, and then process this music source into digital music products and distribute them.¹⁰³ These oligopolistic mobile telecommunication

¹⁰³ SKT owns *Melon*, KT owns *Dosirak*, and LGT has a partnership with *MNet*. These three online music services offer large discounts to their mobile service users. If a user of SKT subscribes Melon, he or she can get 50% off from the original subscription.

companies are really powerful *chaebol*,¹⁰⁴ more powerful than copyright holders (musicians and agencies/recording companies). As a result, idols and agencies do not have the power to negotiate fair revenue from digital music products sales. For example, only approximately 10% of the profits from ringtones are given to the agency/recording company, musician, and performer while the rest 90% is directed to the CP and SP. Generally, the ratio of the distribution of profit between the agency and the idol group is between 7:3 and 8:2 (Jang & Ahn, 2009). According to these distribution rates, the profit for each member of the idol group is sometimes less than 1% of the total digital music product sales. Therefore, digital music is not as profitable for the agency and the idol as it seems.

Then, why would the agency invest so heavily in creating idols, and what is the most profitable business for the agency and the idol alike? The answer is a *hangsah*. *Hangsah* is one of the most important factors that form the unique characteristics of the second-generation K-Pop idol, because it is directly related to the revenue from relationships with festival organizers, and the television industry.

Hangsah

Hangsah [hæŋsa] is a small-scale concert, usually a subsidiary event to local festivals, college festivals, fund-raising events, business opening ceremonies, etc.

¹⁰⁴ *Chaebol* is a Korean form of business conglomerate, such as Hyundai, LG, and Samsung. It originated from the Korean word ‘재벌 [dʒæ:bʌl]’, and has become a widely used term in the economics and other fields of social science as a proper noun to indicate the “large integrated firms” (see Harvey, 2005a, p. 107-110). *Chaebuls* literally ‘produce and sell everything’, from producing bubble gums to the high-technology mobile phone, running small retailers, and selling weapons. Among *chaebuls*, SK and LG are third and fourth largest in Korea and KT is between 10th and 15th, all of them have mobile communication companies (KFTC, 2012; Lee, Hwang, & Park, 2012).

Among them, local festivals and college festivals are the two most important *hangsah* where musicians meet their fans directly on stage. Since the development of local self-government in the late 1990s,¹⁰⁵ many local governments have established various types of local festivals such as ‘*Sungju* Oriental Melon Festival’, ‘*Hampyung* Butterfly Festival’, and ‘*Chungdo* Bullfighting Festival’.¹⁰⁶ As a result, the number of *hangsahs* has rapidly increased in the 2000s and has quickly become one of the most important sources of income for these governments and agencies/idols.

Different from big music markets such as the US, the UK and Western Europe, and Japan, there are only a small number of concert halls and live clubs in Korea. Additionally, the modern concept of concert/performance culture is still not completely established among general Korean audiences who prefer free public concerts usually held by big television/cable networks or local governments. Due to this dynamic, Koreans tend to begrudge spending their money on purchasing concert tickets.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, although Korean music industry has grown rapidly since the late 1980s, it is still very hard for musicians and agencies to depend on concert ticket sales.

In this situation, *hangsah* is one of the important means to get in touch with audiences directly, and to earn money. In a typical *hangsah*, musicians sing one to three songs. In the case of some popular musicians, they perform 5 or more *hangsahs* in one day, crisscrossing the entire country. Details about the *hangsah*, such as how many and which songs a musician will perform, are determined in advance. Usually musicians receive a certain sum for an entire *hangsah*, but sometimes they get paid per song (Na, 2011). This means that if he/she will get paid 10 million KRW (10,000

¹⁰⁵ The first direct election of local political and administrative leaders held in June 1995.

¹⁰⁶ *Sungju*, *Hampyung*, and *Chungdo* are city names located in Korea.

¹⁰⁷ For example, see Choi, T. S. (2012).

USD) when they perform one song, the performer will get paid double when he/she performs two songs on the *hangsah* stage. Top stars receive 50 million KRW (50,000 USD) or more for one *hangsah*, while indie musicians of low recognition will be paid 0.5 million KRW (500 USD) or less (Go, 2010; Na, 2011). Regardless of how much they pay for musicians to perform in the *hangsah*, festival organizers do not charge the audience any fee for the *hangsahs*. *Hangsahs* are held to attract more people to their festivals; therefore, *hangsah* fees are regarded as advertisement rates. And like live concerts, all revenue from the *hangsah* directly flows to the agency and the idol group. After paying various expenses,¹⁰⁸ agencies divide up the profits between them and the idol group according to their contract. In some cases, each member of the 5-member idol group receives approximately 1 million KRW (1,000 USD) for one *hangsah* (Na, 2011).

Almost every musician performs at *hangsahs* regardless of musical genre. However, because of its current high popularity, festival organizers invite more K-Pop idol groups than any other musicians to perform at *hangsahs*. K-Pop idol groups prefer *hangsahs* to typical live concerts because they can earn more money and it is much easier to perform (Na, 2011). Besides their short set list on *hangsah* stage, backing bands or session musicians do not accompany the idol group for *hangsah* performance, because usually festival organizers cannot accommodate stage and other musical facilities necessary for full bands. Therefore, the idol group uses MR (music recorded) or AR (all recorded) background music sources instead of live instrumental accompaniment. Due to poor stage acoustics, performers cannot help but concentrate

¹⁰⁸ Usually half of the revenue is used to pay staffs, royalties to composers, purchase costumes, and food and transportation expenses (see Na, 2011).

on dancing performance rather than singing/musical performance. In this situation, exuberant group dancing and fancy costumes are the strongest ways to attract audiences attention rapidly and effectively. This means that while K-Pop idol groups are preferred in the *hangsah* because of their spectacular stage performances and popularity, the special environment of *hangsah* reinforces their glamorousness again.

Agency and Television Industry: Interdependence Relationship

It cannot be emphasized enough how important the *hangsah* is as the main source of income for the agencies and idols alike. How, then, do agencies book these *hangsahs*? Naturally, festival organizers prefer well-known idol groups to unknown ones, because they attract audiences with the *hangsah*. In addition, while the target audience of a musician's typical concert is fans who like their music and are willing to pay for a ticket, the *hangsah* is usually targeted at the general audience who comes to the main festival. Though some die-hard fans come to festivals only to see an idol group, most of the audience of the *hangsah* are not their fans and may not have even heard any of their songs of them. Therefore, it is more important for the *hangsah* than the concert that the idol groups have general name recognition beyond their teenage fan base. The agencies and idol groups use several avenues to reach general audiences such as appearances on films, musicals, dramas, etc.

Among them, appearances on television programs are the most important and effective ways to make groups known to the general audience. As described in Chapter 2, there are three major terrestrial nation-wide broadcasting companies – two that are state-run networks (KBS and MBC) and one private broadcaster (SBS). There are also a number of cable networks, the largest of which is the CJ Media Group.

These television networks are the most powerful and overwhelmingly influential communication media entities in the cultural industries of Korea (see Kim et al., 2011, p. 139-148). However, as the music industry continues growing, globalizing, and gaining influence in the second-generation K-Pop era, the television industry cannot look down on it anymore. To get higher ratings and export their programs to the global market,¹⁰⁹ television networks need K-Pop idols as much as the idols need them. According to an antitrust law, agencies cannot also own television networks, and vice versa. However, the market has necessitated that they develop an intimate and interdependent relationship because of mutual interests, and this interdependence is getting even deeper.

First-generation K-Pop idols also made frequent television appearances and, in some ways, their level of dependence was not less than that of the second-generation (for instance, see Cha & Choi, 2011, p. 123). However, while the first-generation K-Pop idols usually appeared on television networks' music chart programs rather than other types of programs, the second-generation is appearing on several popular variety shows as well as music-related programs, because there are generally less music-related programs televised. Another distinction from their forgoers is that current K-Pop idol groups do not always appear on television programs as a whole. Usually, one or two individual idols in the group who can do funny, appropriate jokes and other witticism appear as guests on variety shows as a group's representative. Sometimes an idol group will make a number of appearances

¹⁰⁹ The exportation of Korean television programs to the global market is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

on variety shows even before officially releasing their very first single.¹¹⁰ Television networks not only invite idols to be guests on their shows but also cast them as hosts as well as actors/actresses in their dramas.¹¹¹ Though not every program featuring K-Pop idols gets high ratings, their inclusion usually guarantees a program ‘not to fail’, which is an important advantage in the high-risk and competitive television industry.

Sometimes one agency has a deeper relationship with a specific television network, and rather a strained with others. Though not officially admitted, it is widely recognized that each big agency has an affinity with a particular television network. For example, SM Entertainment is known to be closer to MBC while YG Entertainment has a close connection with the CJ Media Group. It is also common knowledge that the KBS network and YG Entertainment do not get on well each other and SM Entertainment does not have a good relationship with the CJ Media Group for (Ha, 2012). However, these unofficial partnerships are not fixed. For example, SM Entertainment had conflicts with MBC and disallowed the appearance of their idols on MBC for four months – from the late 2007 to the early 2008 – but now they have the closest partnership and in 2012, MBC sponsored a concert of SM Entertainment idol groups in Los Angeles (Kim, S. H., 2008; Kim, Y. J., 2012). Both agencies and television networks sometimes change their affinities according to their needs and strategies.

¹¹⁰ For example, T-ara, a female idol group of six members, made their official debut not by releasing a digital single or appearance on the music program, but appearance on one of MBC’s popular variety shows *Radio Star*.

¹¹¹ According to an analysis by Jung and Kim (2010), by July 2010, the total number of variety shows of three major nation-wide television networks (KBS, MBC, and SBS) was 14. Among them, K-Pop idols were regularly appearing on 10 shows. Additionally, among 142 MCs in those 10 shows (including main and assistant MCs), 44 MCs were K-Pop idols (42%). See Jung and Kim (2010) for details.

These symbiotic and interdependent relationships began getting stronger in the mid 2000s – almost the same period when the second-generation K-Pop era began. Since then, several variety shows became popular with general audiences. Among others, MBC's *Infinite Challenge* and *Radio Star*, KBS's *Happy Together* and *One Night and Two Days*, and SBS's *Running man* and *Strong Heart* have greater influence than any other previous shows, because they attract not only young audiences (teenagers and people in their twenties), but also viewers in their forties and older. Therefore, K-Pop idols need to expand their fan base outside teenagers for more *hangsaes* and make appearances on those variety shows to promote or maintain their name value, and those programs need K-Pop stars to maintain their viewer ratings.

In addition to variety shows, some television dramas have been co-produced by the agencies and the television networks in recent years. These dramas are funded by the agencies in return for casting their idols as main and supporting characters. These dramas are pre-ordered by other countries where these idols have a considerable fan base. For instance, *Dream High*, one of the most popular television dramas in 2011, was funded by two big agencies – JYP Entertainment, one of the 'big 4' agencies, and another leading agency, Kea East – and broadcasted by KBS. Even before it was released, television networks of other countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, and Cambodia pre-ordered it because of the appearance of K-Pop idols in that drama (Lee, S. J., 2011). As is seen in this example, the television industry is one of the most influential partners of the K-Pop industry both in domestic and global markets.

Idols to the broader audience

Through the active appearance on various television programs such as variety shows and dramas, viewed not only by young audiences but people of all ages, idols have succeeded in widening their fan base. Compared to the first-generation K-Pop idols whose fans were generally teenagers and people in their twenties, second-generation K-Pop idols have fans such as their forties and even fifties. Reflecting this phenomenon, two neologisms were recently coined – the terms ‘uncle fan’ and ‘aunt fan’.¹¹² The term ‘aunt fan’ refers women in their thirties, forties, or older who love male K-Pop idols, and ‘uncle fan’ means middle-aged men who are fans of female idols. The reason they are called ‘uncle’ and ‘aunt’ is that 1) they are usually 15-20 or more years older than their idols, and 2) those ‘uncles’ and ‘aunts’ insist that they love their idols not because they are sexually attractive, but because they are cute as their nephews/nieces (Kim, S. A., 2011). They are active as fans and purchase their digital music sources, physical albums, concert tickets, and sometimes send their idols various gifts from fan letters to expensive things like the latest laptops, smartphones or table/tablet PCs (Kim, S. Y., 2011).

Whether their assertion that they love these idols as an uncle or aunt is true or not, it is certain that current K-Pop stars have broader fandom than previous idols. On the one hand their music is getting more powerful, transnational, and modern, and their looks more charismatic and trendy. But on the other hand, K-Pop idols are also constructing their images as more familiar – like guys/girls next door – to approach general audiences.¹¹³ This ambivalence is another unique and important aspect of K-

¹¹² In Korean, they are called ‘삼촌 팬 (samchon fan)’ and ‘이모 팬 (emo fan)’.

¹¹³ There are some ‘rebellious’ idols such as G-Dragon of BigBang and Min Ji of 2NE1, but

Pop that has been established according to the specific environments of Korean cultural industries alongside the idol-agency system, the unique *hangsah* culture caused by unfair distribution of digital music profits, and the intimate relationship with the television industry.

Conclusion

K-Pop is a result of the globalization of the Korean music industry. Musically, it is more transnational than ever. From the name of the genre to players on the scene, it is ceaselessly de-nationalized in spite of attempts to re-nationalize by some media and audience, and to some extent, the nation-state.

However, the industry has strengthened its locality even while adopting global systems by indigenizing the industry. Compared to the New Generation Dance Music era in the early 1990s, the industry has established a more localized and mature system to produce their music and stars – the idol-agency system. Like Korean *chaebol* which does everything from producing small food to a high-technological product such as a smartphone, the agency directs the entire process of making idols including recruiting *yunsupsengs*, training them in everything from singing to studies, forming a group, producing music, liaising between television networks and *hangsah* organizers, etc. – the total management strategy.

It is a localized industrial strategy in the era of globalization. One noticeable aspect of K-Pop agencies is that domestic capitalists own and manage these agencies. In Korea, global/international popular music has lost its popularity since the late

even these ‘bad boy/girl’ idols do not emphasize their rebellious characters and try to maintain the friendliness towards the audiences. See Han (2011).

1990s in contrast to the expansion of the K-Pop market share.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the Korean music industry is one of the rare markets where multinational recording conglomerates entered but did not succeed and some withdrew their business projects after the mid 2000s.¹¹⁵ There are several reasons for their failure including the outdated distribution system and a clannish attitude towards foreign companies, but Shin (2002) argues that the most important was that those multinational conglomerates were not “localized enough.” They neither tried to make alliances with local Korean agencies and/or recording companies, nor paid much attention to the voice of their local employees and music workers (p. 161). Additionally, they were not enthusiastic about catering to the preferences of local audiences (p. 162). Shin notes that “multinational conglomerates could not, or worse, did not even try to understand the taste of East Asian audience, different from both Western audience and other Third World audience” (p. 164). He continues to argue that East Asian “local nationalism” and their “tradition of national popular music” is “far from what Anglo-American understanding of popular music industry” could comprehend, and that multinational music conglomerates were “too confident in their strategies towards general international markets” so they did not listen carefully to local voices (p. 165).

On the contrary, domestic K-Pop agencies have utilized different strategies. Interestingly, the owners of the big 4 agencies and other relatively large agencies originally started their careers as popular musicians.¹¹⁶ Therefore, they know a lot

¹¹⁴ In 1995, the market share of global/international popular music products in the Korean music industry was 32%. However, in 2010, the market share has fallen down to less than 10% (Shin, 2002; Kang, 2011; KOCCA, 2011).

¹¹⁵ For example, EMI Korea withdrew their music business in Korea in 2008. Also, Warner Korea reduced its size and gave up its DVD business including music-related DVD in 2008.

¹¹⁶ For example, in the case of big 4 agencies, 3 of 4 owners are, musicians. The owner of

about the Korean music industry and the preferences of their local and regional audiences. They actively participate in scouting prospects, and sometimes write songs for idol groups with the support of competent music writers exclusively attached to each agency.¹¹⁷

In foreign markets, those same agencies establish strategic alliances with local recording and other entertainment companies. According to Chang and Choi (2011), when expanding the presence of K-Pop musicians in overseas music markets, Korean agencies usually team up with local entertainment and/or recording companies. For instance, while SM entertainment has been in a partnership with Avex Trax (one of the largest recording companies in Japan) for several years in Japan and East Asia, it has recently set up a cooperation system with Universal Music in North America, Latin America, and Europe. With these alliances, agencies use the distribution and promotion networks of their partners and respond promptly to each local audience. Additionally, joint ventures are also forged with these local companies, such as assignment of foreign composers, producers, and choreographers to be used for certain songs to expand the cultural outreach (see Chang & Choi, 2011; Chung, 2011).

In short, the current idol-agency system is a result of indigenizing not only music itself but also an industrial system. Learning a lesson from the relatively rapid

SM Entertainment Soo-Man Lee was a contemporary folk singer during the 1970s and 1980s; the owner of YG Entertainment Hyun-Suk Yang was a member of the most famous band in the 1990s, Seotaji & the Boys; and the owner of JYP Entertainment Jin-Young Park is still an active contemporary R'n'B singer-songwriter.

¹¹⁷ Some famous songwriters are working almost only for a particular agency. For example, Il-Sang Yoon, one of the famous dance music songwriters during the late 1990s and early 2000s, is now composing songs only for idols of Nega Network. Also, Si-Hyuk Bang, another big name songwriter in the second-generation K-Pop era, is working for JYP Entertainment. Young-Jin Yoo, a popular R'n'B singer-songwriter in the 1990s, has been working as a songwriter exclusively for SM Entertainment and now is a member of board of directors of the agency.

wane of first-generation K-Pop, the second-generation K-Pop industry has established a more elaborate and more balanced – between global and local – system. Within this system, idols are produced and consumed like industrial products in Fordism. They are standardized in the process of being recruited, trained, produced, and worked. However, be it ever so standardized, K-Pop is still a kind of popular culture that cannot be totally standardized or de-humanized like industrial products. The unexpected success of K-Pop in the regional and broader global markets is not entirely due to its industry-like standardization, but also its cultural characteristics and advantages. The K-Pop industry seized this unexpected opportunity and has been successfully expanding into global markets, which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: GLOBALIZATION OF K-POP: *HALLYU* IN EAST ASIA AND THE WEST

As mentioned previously in Chapter 1, K-Pop has been one of the ‘coolest’ music in East Asian countries¹¹⁸ since the late 1990s though it has only recently begun to draw attention from US and other Western audiences. In addition to K-Pop, a number of Korean television dramas, variety shows, and films have become widely popular in East Asian cultural market and this phenomenon has come to be known as *Hallyu* (韓流, 한류) or Korean Wave. *Hallyu* is one of the few noticeable cultural phenomena in East Asia from a non-hegemonic, that is to say non-Western, context to successfully gain accepted and acclaim from international audience. This is especially remarkable because it is generally harder for non-Western culture to maintain consistent popularity for relatively long periods of time (more than a decade or so), as opposed to becoming just another ‘one hit wonder’.

It is interesting that after the late 1990s when the financial crisis gripped many of East Asian countries including Korea, multi-national music conglomerates tried to penetrate the Korean market as well as other global industrial companies in the name of ‘globalization’ and ‘economic reform’. However, unlike other developing countries whose markets were encroached upon by these global companies, they did

¹¹⁸ The term ‘East Asia’ usually includes countries such as China, North and South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mongolia, and ‘Southeast Asia’ includes Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, and more. However, unlike countries of South Asia which have quite different racial, ethnic, historical and cultural backgrounds, East and Southeast Asia have many things in common. Therefore, in this dissertation, the term ‘East Asia’ hereafter includes countries both in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

not significantly succeed to occupy the *Gayo* market and finally retreated only to distribute global music products, which are not a big part of the Korean market. Instead, Korean agencies began to export their own cultural products outside the domestic market and their international markets are broadening. How has K-Pop succeeded both in both their domestic and regional markets? This chapter will discuss the factors that made *Hallyu* in East Asia, and the impact *Hallyu* has had on East Asian audiences.

Development of the *Hallyu*

When *Hallyu* first broke into China in 1997, it arrived through television broadcasts of Korean TV dramas. *What is love?* was the first Korean television drama that achieved great success in Chinese-speaking regions such as Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. After that, several Korean television dramas became huge hits continuously in other East Asian countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia as well as in Chinese-speaking regions. Since the mid 2000s, Japanese audiences, who had previously kept themselves aloof from the *Hallyu*, have also been brought into the fold with the *Winter Sonata* sensation.¹¹⁹ Recently, the television drama *Jewel in the Palace* was a hit all over East Asia and even in some Middle Eastern countries such as Iran.¹²⁰

The development of the *Hallyu* coincided with a proliferation of local and satellite TV channels (such as Rupert Murdoch's Star TV) in the East Asian region,

¹¹⁹ Detailed description of the *Winter Sonata* sensation is discussed in a later part of this chapter.

¹²⁰ In Iran, *Jewel in the Palace* was got more than 80% of viewer ratings in 2007. After the success of *Jewel in the Palace*, Iranian audiences have also joined the *Hallyu* and several K-Pop idol groups are very popular recently. See Hwang, M.K. (2012) for more details.

caused by democratization and open-market strategies that occurred in those countries. These changes increased their imports of foreign programs, including music television and, through that, the spread of K-Pop music (see Iwabuchi, 2004a; Sung, 2006; Pease, 2009). The K-Pop duo Clon was a pioneer of the K-Pop phenomenon in Chinese-speaking regions in 1999, followed by the first-generation idol groups such as H.O.T. and N.R.G., S.E.S. and Baby Vox. Then like television dramas, K-Pop spread to other East Asian regions. Recently, the second-generation idol groups TVXQ, Super Junior, Shinee, Girl's Generation, Kara, 2pm, Miss A, BigBang, 2NE1, T-ara, MBLAQ, and BEAST have gained great popularity in East Asian region.

On its own home ground, there have been attempts to claim the *Hallyu* and Korean television dramas as the evidence of the strength of the 'nation', and K-Pop is sometimes related to 'national pride' by nationalists and scholars affiliated with them.¹²¹ Korea had not been an exporter of cultural products since the modernization period and, like other developing countries, it had no choice but to accept imported global popular culture. For this reason, there have always been worries among conservatives and traditionalists that Korean culture would become Americanized or Japan-ized and gradually lose its own distinctive characteristics (e.g. Hong, 2005). For them, *Hallyu* means a 'victory' of Korean popular culture, evidence of overcoming foreign cultural invasion and demonstrating its cultural superiority to others (for instance, see Huh, 2011).

However, K-Pop and the overall *Hallyu* phenomenon do not actually seem to mean victory for Korean nationality. K-Pop and other Korean cultural products have

¹²¹ Detailed discussion of the *Hallyu* by Korean media and scholars, see Chohan (2005). Also, see the previous chapter for the discussion of the discourse of re-nationalizing of K-Pop by some Korean media and audiences.

not totally replaced the status of global (Western) cultural products in the East Asian market despite its obvious success. Moreover, K-Pop products as well as television dramas do not directly come from traditional Korean culture, but rather come from an indigenization of global culture. K-Pop is made in Korea, but it is hard to say that K-Pop belongs to, or is purely, Korean. As mentioned in previous chapters, the form and content of K-Pop are deeply influenced by modernization and globalization of culture. For example, a study of the international audience of K-Pop notes that they consider K-Pop one of the many trendy global popular cultural products such as J-Pop, American pop music, and European pop music (Pease, 2009, p. 156-161). They do see Korean-ness in K-Pop and Korean television dramas, but not as much as some nationalistic Korean media, government officials, and audiences seem to think.

Some factors that contribute to the K-Pop phenomenon in East Asia are political economic transformation in a number of these countries, formation of a new 'geo-cultural market' due to development of communication media, cultural tastes of East Asian audiences that tend towards 'moderately modern' products, and the rise of New East Asian values.

Political and Economic Transformation in East Asia during the 1990s

Like Korea in the mid 1980s, many East Asian countries experienced significant political and economic transformation – democratization and open market strategies moving towards capitalization. In the decade between the mid 1980s and the mid 1990s, several East Asian countries enjoyed exceptional economic development with rapid industrialization. In addition to Japan, which had already become one of the most developed countries in the world, a second group East Asian

countries experienced rapid growth. These countries – Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea – came to be known as the ‘Four East Asian Tigers (or Dragons)’. Among them, Hong Kong had been a prosperous trade port since the early 20th century and served as an informal window from Communist China to the outside capitalist world since the 1950s.¹²²

With the exception of Hong Kong, the political and economic systems of these three other countries are quite similar; though they are capitalist countries, their central governments have not hesitated to intervene in their markets. These countries have also maintained a ‘restricted democracy’ and radical anti-communist policies, because they were at the frontline of the Cold War.¹²³ And, less obviously, their ex-colonial relationships with Japan conferred benefits that ranged from familiarity with Japanese economic and military organizational strategies to active Japanese assistance in penetrating foreign markets (see Guillén, 2001; Iwabuchi, 2004a; Harvey, 2005a).¹²⁴ With the assistance of the U.S. and Japan, governments of these countries supported export-led strategies by mobilizing internal savings and rewarding successful businesses (Harvey, 2005a, p. 106-112). In addition, those governments created economic development plans which gave corporations easy access to credit, tax advantages, procurement of inputs, control over the labor force, and support in gaining access to foreign (particularly U.S.) markets (ibid.). In some cases,

¹²² See Ng (2009) for detailed history of Hong Kong.

¹²³ Because of such important geostrategic positions these countries have, U.S. was prepared to support them militarily and economically during the Cold War era.

¹²⁴ For example, Korean General Chung-Hee Park, who seized power in a military coup in 1961 and held his power until his assassination in 1979, was trained in the Japanese Military Academy in the colonial period.

governments even directly assigned a specific field of industry to a corporation.¹²⁵

With complete support from the state, companies in these countries could easily become the locus of economic power, and some of them became global players in the mid 1980s (see Guillén, 2001, p. 76-82).

They also had similar political structures in that they had military regimes (Korean and Taiwan) and dictatorship (Singapore), both of which held severe control over people's economic activity and restricted political and cultural freedom. These countries strictly censored the mass media and popular culture, limited the right to vote, and imposed several years of military service on their citizens. Korea and Taiwan were particularly opposed to communism in rival nations – North Korea, and Mainland China – and they severely oppressed socialists and communists internally. A number of dissidents who resisted these military regimes and/or dictatorship governments were accused of being communists even when they actually were not. Once people were branded as communists, they were treated harshly and were not allowed sufficient legal procedures.

However, there have been ceaseless political struggles against oppression in these nations. As a result, the dictatorial regimes in Korea and Taiwan were subverted by democratic movements in the mid 1980s.¹²⁶ But even after the end of these military regimes, they still have strong governments, and big corporations are under the influence of the state bureaucracy more than any American and European

¹²⁵ For instance, the Korean government assigned Hyundai to automobiles and shipbuilding, while it prohibited Samsung from participating in those businesses.

¹²⁶ In Korea, due to the violent demonstration for democracy by people, the Chun military regime declared the constitutional amendment to the direct presidential election system in June of 1987. And Taiwanese government lifted martial law by the civil movements also in July of 1987. Korean military regimes lasted for 26 years (1961-1987), and Taiwanese martial law era lasted for 38 years (1949-1987).

companies. In addition, free market principles are often ignored in the name of national interests. For instance the Korean Government intervenes in the economy in four main ways: 1) they maintain strict 'screen quota' to protect the domestic film market from infiltration of Hollywood products, 2) they purchase overproduced domestic rice at a fixed price to protect farmers from competition with imported rice, 3) they enact strict antitrust laws, and 4) they impose high tariffs on some imported products. And lastly, these countries were all struck by the Asian financial crisis that occurred in the late 1990s, the effects of which have been gradually deepened even after their rather quick turnaround (Guillén, 2001, p. 227-230; Harvey, 2005a, p. 112-115).

Though not as similar to one another as Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, other East Asian countries have similar histories since the end of the World War II. First, Japan had succeeded in the global economy and became one of the most developed countries in the world. The 'Four East Asian Tigers' emulated the Japanese model, and were followed by Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. While they achieved the economic growth and development in the early to mid 1990s, they took a direct hit from the financial crisis at the end of that decade. These countries also share the presence of pro-democracy and anti-dictatorship movements since the 1990s.

One of the most noticeable shifts in East Asia nations in the 1990s was the aggressive movement of China toward capitalization and globalization. In December 1978, two years after Mao's death, the Chinese government under Deng Xiaoping announced a program of economic reform – to accept capitalism to a degree. Although Deng and the Beijing bureaucracy did not totally abandon socialism and communism, they argued that individual and local initiatives had to be unleashed in

order to increase productivity and spark economic growth. Deng's famous statement – "What does it matter if it is a black cat or a white cat as long as it catches mice well?" – reflects the Chinese way of adopting capitalism as their economy system. They used capitalistic strategies to develop and globalize, while maintaining a state-dominated economic system.¹²⁷ Though the 1989 Tiananmen Square for freedom and democracy ended in misery and tragedy due to the use of force against the protesters by Chinese government,¹²⁸ new policies were implemented to appease the disgruntled people. Many of these policies opened the country to more aspects of capitalism, especially, global popular culture.¹²⁹ At the end of the Cold War era, several communist countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Mongolia also began to open their markets and accept more elements of capitalism, along with global popular cultural products since the late 1990s. Those formerly communist countries have achieved high economic growth after implementing open-door policies, and China and Vietnam were some of the greatest examples among them.

Though those countries have different modern histories from capitalist countries such as Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines since the end of the World War II, there are more commonalities than differences among those countries in

¹²⁷ Shanghai is a good example of this strategy. Though Shanghai is the most globalized and capitalized city in China, it is still strictly controlled by the central government. For example, it is not free for Chinese people to move into Shanghai or work in there. In fact, Shanghai was carefully chosen by the state to be a competitive global city because of its regional advantage and its history as the largest financial center in East Asia. See Wasserstrom (2009, p. 134-138) and Wu (2003) for details.

¹²⁸ On June 3 and 4 of 1989, Chinese Army opened fire on unarmed demonstrators who were demanding democracy and freedom. The army killed thousands of students and citizen bystanders. See Cunningham (2010) for details about the protest.

¹²⁹ Many policies of freedom introduced to Chinese people during the 1980s were rescinded, and conservatives tried to slow the rapid changes of their economic system right after the protest. However, soon the atmosphere was relieved due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the demise of communism in most Eastern European countries.

this region. They share similar histories of colonialization, modernization, democratization, and globalization, as well as time-honored traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Moreover, almost all of those countries use, or have used, ancient Chinese characters (漢字) in their languages to an extent. And, as mentioned previously in Chapter 2, the economic growth and democratization evoked cultural demand among people towards the new, modern, and global, and the development of communication media promoted this tendency. This means that these countries have become important potential cultural markets due to their economic growth and newly formed cultural demands, especially newly capitalized China and Vietnam, which have enormous population.¹³⁰

Development of a New Geo-cultural Market in East Asia

The newly established cultural market of East Asian countries is one of the *geo-cultural markets* in the global cultural industries. In his discussion of the global television industry, Havens (2006, p. 6; p. 29-35) argues that there are three kinds of needs in the industry – the need for domestic products, local products, and international products. His use of the term ‘local’ is related to the concept of *regional cultural proximity*, such as the same language, religion, geographical nearness, closely related histories, etc. While some scholars have used the term ‘geo-linguistic regions’

¹³⁰ The population of China is 1.35 billion in 2011. Also, the population of Vietnam is about 88 million. The population of China is ranked no. 1, and Vietnam is no. 13 (data from Google Public Data, retrieved from https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_&met_y=sp_pop_totl&idim=country:VNM&dl=en&hl=en&q=population%20of%20vietnam#!ctype=l&strail=false&bcs=d&nselm=h&met_y=sp_pop_totl&scale_y=lin&ind_y=false&rdim=region&idim=region:EA P&idim=country:CHN:VNM&ifdim=region&tdim=true&hl=en_US&dl=en&ind=false).

to express this kind of regional cultural proximity, Hesmondhalgh (2007, p. 220) uses the term ‘geo-cultural markets’ rather than ‘geo-linguistic regions’, arguing that “‘geo-cultural’ is better than ‘geo-linguistic’ because language is only one of a number of potential cultural connections between places and peoples [...] (And) ‘markets’ is a better term than ‘regions’ because such cultural connections can work across enormous distances that transcend geographical proximity.” He uses the example of Eastern European nations and other nations of the former USSR as a particular geo-cultural market. Even though they do not have the exact same language, they form a particular geo-cultural region with shared histories and religious traditions.

These arguments can also be applicable to the context of newly-formed East Asian cultural markets. Though they do not use the same language, they have obvious cultural proximity such as similar modern histories and traditions as previously mentioned. Some scholars and industrial insiders working in East Asian cultural industries have posited that the success of K-Pop and Korean television dramas have resulted from how they offer a different choice from global popular cultural products which usually come from the US and Western European countries (e.g. Mōri, 2009; Pease, 2009). They argue that K-Pop exemplifies the rise of ‘new Asian values’, different from previous references such as Neo-Confucianism. For example, Mackintosh et. al argues that “the current focus on culture (in East Asia) is the product of a neoliberal ideology espousing a global free-market... and the linking of post-industrial globalized consumerism to individual freedom, hence, individual and social well-being” (2009, p. 5). Therefore, East Asian cultural industries have created a “a cosmopole of consumers who identify themselves as Asian” (ibid.).

Increase of Cultural Demand in Local/Regional Contents

However, the decision about exporting and importing East Asian cultural products do not simply come from cultural proximity, but also from conditions of the global cultural industries. In the 1990s, there was an important transformation in the East Asian media market that helped established it as a geo-cultural market – the development of cable networks and international satellite television networks.

It should be noted that the first buyers of Korean television dramas and other cultural products in East Asia were cable and satellite channels looking for entertainment contents. For example, there were originally only three public channels in Taiwan – Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV), China Television Company (CTV), and Chinese Television System (CTS).¹³¹ Those television networks were all government-controlled, and had not broadcasted many entertainment programs because of the tight control of the government until 1987 when the martial law was abolished. Iwabuchi (2004a) points out that in addition to freedom of speech and press, audiences wanted to enjoy more popular culture on television (p. 191-193). Many illegal ‘pirate channels’ arose to cover entertainment contents, using local cable systems in order to meet these new and rapidly-developing cultural demands. After several instances of hide-and-seek between the government and these pirate channels, the Taiwanese state finally legalized cable TV services. After legalization, more than 600 channels popped up, and these channels began looking for entertainment content

¹³¹ Taiwan Television Enterprise (TTV, 台灣電視公司), the first television broadcast in Taiwan, was founded in 1962. China Television Company (CTV, 中國電視公司, formerly known as Taiwan Daytime TV[TDT] in 1968-1975), the first color television channel in Taiwan, was established in 1968. And Chinese Television System (CTS, 中華電視公司) was founded in 1971.

that was both cheap and had quality to attract viewers.¹³² The government of Singapore also opened up to new free-to-air television in 1999 and, as a result, two channels began to broadcast in 2001 – English language ‘Channel I’ and the Mandarin ‘Channel U’ (Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 5). STAR TV – a satellite broadcasting corporation owned by Rupert Murdoch – was also established with the aim to tap East Asian viewers. All of these new stations needed cheap and quality contents.

The original plan for STAR TV was to broadcast popular Western (American) shows, television shows, dramas, and music videos to these Asian audiences (see Shiau, 2008). However, the strategy of offering mainly Western/global programming through cable and satellite networks did not succeed. STAR TV (and the owner Murdoch) soon realized that East Asian audiences preferred domestic and local/regional programs to Western/American ones, which was all the better since local/regional contents were cheaper. For these reasons, Murdoch “paid attention to the delicate difference between global audiences and East Asian audience” and changed the strategy from providing Western to local content (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 137; see also Sowards, 2003). English Channel I of Singapore also failed to establish an audience and was shut down completely within three years of its establishment, while the Mandarin Channel U, which provided half locally produced programs and half imported regional programs, carved out a significant place in the market (Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 5).

Development of cable and international satellite networks in East Asia

¹³² However, after several years of the explosion, almost 80% of these channels went bankrupt. See Iwabuchi (2004a) for details.

invoked greater cultural demand, especially after the mid 1990s when a number of people began to subscribe to STAR TV networks in mainland China. However, domestic cultural products could not satisfy audiences whose standards had been affected by globalization of media and culture. This situation offered a great opportunity for Chinese cultural industries to become influential by providing cultural products to the enormous number of Chinese-speaking audiences in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, several East Asian countries, and places around the world where Chinese people were living and gaining commercial/financial supremacy. However, it was impossible for China to create such sophisticated cultural industries right after establishing policies that opened their economy toward capitalization. Hong Kong, one of the cultural centers of East Asia between 1970s and 1980s, was another place that had the potential to capitalize on these new cultural demands in East Asia. However, the Hong Kong cultural industries lost their vitality in the late 1990s when it was returned to China from the UK, even though there was not direct suppression or restriction on freedom of creation and speech, if any (see Ng, 2009, p. 32-38; Walker & Cook, 2009).¹³³

At just the right moment, K-Pop and other Korean cultural products began to penetrate the ‘niche market’ of China and other East Asian countries. In contrast to its counterparts, Korean cultural products are a ‘geo-cultural’ rather than ‘international’

¹³³ The reversion of Hong Kong to China occurred in July 1 of 1997. Even after its return, China declared the principle of ‘one country, two systems’ that Hong Kong would have a different political system from mainland China. Media of Hong Kong is actually free from official interference, as well as its political and economy systems. However, some critics note that there are signs of self-censorship by journals whose owners have close ties to or business interests with mainland China (Walker & Cook, 2009). Also, because of the fear of Communist China, many artists, creators, actors/actresses, and musicians changed their nationalities and moved to Canada and other countries before its return to China.

product in that market. Royalties given to the K-Pop industry are cheaper than those to the global (Western) music industry, and the cost of inviting K-Pop musicians and holding their concerts in the region is also lower. Both Korean television dramas and K-Pop became widely popular in the region because they could satisfy both the requirements of quality and cost efficiency, as well as their geo-cultural proximity.

Korean Popular Culture vs. Japanese Popular Culture

At this moment, it is necessary to compare K-Pop (and Korean television dramas) to J-Pop (and Japanese television dramas), which were the former popular regional cultural products in several East Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and, to a lesser extent, Korea.¹³⁴ What is the difference between them? How have Korean cultural products become the most popular in the East Asian geo-cultural market since the late 1990s, replacing Japanese ones?

***Harizu*: Japanese Popular Culture in East Asia and Its Limits**

Hallyu is not the first phenomenon of regional, non-global (or Western) culture to become popular among East Asian audiences. Before the *Hallyu*, especially in Taiwan and Hong Kong, there was *Harizu* (哈日族) in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The term *Harizu* was created and first used by Taiwanese cartoonist Harixingzi (哈日杏子), meaning ‘people favorable to Japan and its culture’ (Iwabuchi, 2004a; Sakai, 2004).¹³⁵ The *Harizu* was not as broad a trend as *Hallyu*, which has come to

¹³⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 2, J-Pop music was not officially released in Korea though its popularity should not be negligible. So were Japanese television dramas.

¹³⁵ The letter 哈(ha) takes its sound from the English word ‘hot’. The letter 日(ri) means

influence the whole East Asia. The *Harizu* people were very fond of Japanese popular cultural products, especially popular music and television dramas, among others. Several Japanese songs became big hits such as music of Shonentai, Matsuda Seiko, X-Japan, Amuro Namie, etc. In addition, a number of Japanese songs were covered by Hong Kong and Taiwanese musicians with Chinese and/or Cantonese lyrics, and achieved success in their domestic charts.¹³⁶ At that time, it was natural for both producers and consumers of the Taiwanese and Hong Kong music industries to imitate the latest Japanese music and fashion (Ching, 1994). Also, television dramas such as *Tokyo Love Story* and *In the Shining Season* were popular among Taiwanese and Hong Kong audiences (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 196-203). Some viewers thought Japanese dramas were better than American dramas, not to mention their domestic ones (Hattori & Hara, 1997).

Interestingly, Japanese media companies did not create active strategies to sell their products in those markets (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 143). Japanese television networks had already attained self-sufficiency since 1970s, and were not gaining considerable profits by selling their products to East Asian countries at that time (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 142-143). Therefore, even though their products gained popularity in Taiwan and Hong Kong, Japanese television networks did not need to ‘cultivate’ foreign markets while car industries or electronic industries did. It should also be noted that not every kind of Japanese music and dramas became popular

Japan, and 族(zu) means people. Therefore it originally means people who are addicted to ‘hot’ Japanese culture, not the traditional one (Sakai, 2004).

¹³⁶ There were too many Japanese cover songs in Hong Kong music industry. Therefore in 1994, Hong Kong radio stations once banned on broadcasting of these cover songs to protect their domestic creators (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 163).

among *Harizu* but rather, the specific genres of them – J-Pop¹³⁷ and Trendy Drama¹³⁸ – attracted their attention while other products did not.

Why were only J-Pop and Trendy Dramas successful? Why did these audiences prefer those genres to domestic and even global cultural products? There are several possible answers to these questions, but one of the most important factors is that Japanese cultural products showed ‘tangible’ modernity and globality. They were more developed than their domestic counterparts and more accessible than Western ones.

As mentioned, the Japanese model of economic development, modernization, and globalization was “broadly emulated first by ‘Gang of Four’ (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore)” and then by other East Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines (Harvey, 2005a, p. 89). Since the late 1960s when Japan began to achieve their huge economic growth, it became the ‘role model’ for several East Asian countries – an example of the successful modernization. Though Western European countries and the US are the most developed countries in

¹³⁷ For details about J-Pop, see ‘K-Pop Branding’ section in the previous chapter.

¹³⁸ Trendy Drama, which was named first by Japanese media critiques in early 90s, is a TV drama genre that deals with love stories of young couples living in metropolitan cities. Most of characters’ jobs are modern and urban society works with high wages like fashion designers, doctors, lawyers, pilots, famous musicians or journalists. They are living in big cities – usually Tokyo – and especially in the most urbanized and sophisticated parts of those cities such as Shibuya or Ropponki. In these TV dramas, they enjoy their urban lives with great satisfaction, even if they take failure in their career or break up with their lovers sometimes. Narratives of these Trendy Dramas are not so important – they are usually normal and common love stories. Important factors of these TV dramas are the ‘background’, like night scenery of urban cities, luxury cars, modern houses, and J-Pop; and these ‘environments’ are strongly connected to idealized consumerism. In short, Japanese Trendy Dramas show audiences the attractiveness of life in the ‘modernized urban city’. After the success of Trendy Dramas in Japan and some East Asian countries, Korean television networks have also produced several trendy dramas such as *Jealousy*, *The Feeling*, and *Propose*. They became big hits in their domestic market.

the world, they did not offer suitable models for East Asian countries because they have significantly different historical, social, and cultural contexts. East Asian countries have more similarities with other developing countries but also differ from other contexts, say, in South Asia,¹³⁹ the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. In addition to historical, political and cultural differences, in other regions, there is no country which has achieved a world-wide level of a ‘global economic success’, if any.

However, there is one in the East Asian region – Japan. For many East Asian countries, the successful modernization of Europe and America is an unattainable dream which is too far to reach, but Japan’s modernization and economic growth is tangible in both economic and cultural terms. In sum, Japan became a better ‘example’ of modern lifestyles than US and other Western countries.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, in the 1990s, when the speed of economic growth in East Asia was at its peak, the modern and urban lifestyle depicted in Japanese Trendy Dramas was more attractive and friendly for East Asian audiences than the New Yorker’s life in American television dramas such as *Seinfeld* or *Friends*. For East Asian audiences who had achieved some sense of modernization, it seemed impossible to have their own ‘New York’, while ‘Tokyo’ seemed familiar and accessible.

However, it was not a long-lasting cultural fashion. Media of those countries noted that the *Harizu* phenomenon and the popularity of Japanese music and television drama was at its peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but waned in the mid 1990s (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 176-177). Moreover, the range of the *Harizu* trend

¹³⁹ The region South Asia includes countries such as India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. It is bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean and on land by Middle-East, Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia (“South Asia”, 2013).

¹⁴⁰ See Iwabuchi (2004a, p. 207-215) for more discussion.

was mostly limited only to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore – three of the earliest countries that achieved successful economic growth soon after Japan. In mainland China, the most important country in the East Asian geo-cultural market because of its enormous population and corresponding purchasing power, there was not any conspicuous *Harizu* fashion, if any. Other East Asian countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines did not have significant *Harizu* audiences either.

Instead, Chinese cultural industries, which were still characterized by some government interference, were unwelcoming to Japanese popular culture. The Chinese government actively controlled the import of Japanese cultural products and tightened regulations on broadcasting Japanese music and television dramas, though they were not entirely banned. This is the most important reason that *Harizu* did not emerge in mainland China, and as a result, could not spread out to the whole of East Asia (Cha, 2004). The situation has become more welcoming in recent year, but China is still not entirely open to Japanese culture.

The reason that China and its audiences are not friendly, and sometimes hostile, to Japanese culture originates from historical tensions, especially since the late 19th century. During an ebb in the Qing Dynasty, Japanese imperials invaded China and occupied some parts such as Manchuria. Moreover, the tragic Nanjing Massacre¹⁴¹ of 1937 is still an unforgettable and unforgivable historical wound of Japanese imperialism for Chinese people. Japan officially denied the occurrence of the Massacre until 1995 when it gave the first formal apology for their actions – 50 years after the end of the World War II. Even after the official apology, several

¹⁴¹ Historians and witnesses estimated that almost 250,000 to 300,000 people were killed by Imperial Japanese Army in Nanjing Massacre (Chang, 2004).

politicians, nationalists, and extreme rightists are still denying that Nanjing Massacre really happened.¹⁴² This attitude infuriates many Chinese people, and the current conflicts between China and Japan, such as the Senkaku Islands dispute,¹⁴³ are still significant barriers to resolution of the tensions between them. These historical disputes have evoked negative feelings towards Japan and its culture for Chinese people. For instance, in 2012, there was a boycott of Japanese products because of the Senkaku dispute, and Japanese exports to China decreased significantly in the fourth quarter of 2012 (Korea Economy Daily, 2013).¹⁴⁴

In contrast, there is no serious hostility or repulsion towards Korea and its culture in China but rather, a sense of closeness from the shared experience of being colonized during Japanese imperialism in the first half of the 20th century. Therefore the Chinese government did not raise significant barriers against the import of Korean cultural products as they did against Japanese products, though sometimes both Chinese government and television networks tried to “redress the cultural deficit” (Cha, 2004; Leung, 2008, p. 68) by limiting the import. Sometimes Chinese government used Korean cultural products to block the import of Japanese culture (see Cha, 2004).

And yet, the historical tension between Japan and China is not the only reason

¹⁴² For example, Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara recently stated in public that he still believes that Nanjing Massacre never happened, and it would have been impossible to kill that many people in such a short period of time (AFP, 2012).

¹⁴³ The Senkaku Islands dispute is a territorial dispute over a group of uninhabited islands known as Senkaku Islands in Japan, and Diaoyu Islands in China, and Tiaoyutai in Taiwan. Those islands have been controlled by Japan since 1895, but both China and Taiwan assert that the dominance of Japan is illegal and should be returned to either of them.

¹⁴⁴ This boycott was serious that to avoid the boycott, one of Japanese global clothing companies UNIQLO gave instructions to their Chinese stores to hang up the banner saying “Diaoyu Islands are Chinese territory” (Nam, 2012).

for replacing Japanese cultural products with Korean ones. For example, Taiwan was also colonized by Japanese imperialism in the first half of the 20th century, but Taiwan does not have hostility toward Japan in the way the Chinese do.¹⁴⁵ Other East Asian countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia do not have serious historical conflicts with Japan, if any. However, in those countries, the *Hallyu* phenomenon has become more noticeable than the *Harizu*. How and why did this happen?

Ambivalence in Korean Popular Culture: Moderate Modernity

Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi (2008) note that the penetration of Korean popular cultural products into East Asian markets in the late 1990s is the consequence of “felicitous timing”:

The post-1997 Asian Financial Crisis that savaged national economy contributed to the stepping-up of the exporting Korean pop culture as part of the national export industry. The same crisis had led television industries in the other affected East Asian economies to look for cheaper programmes than the relatively expensive Japanese dramas. The confluence of these two separate industry strategies led to the rapid importation and screening of Korean TV dramas in the rest of East-Asia, except Japan, creating the so-called ‘Korean Wave’ in that region. (p. 4)

¹⁴⁵ Several scholars note that some old Taiwan-born people even think that the Japanese colonial period was better than the dictatorship period of Republic of China (ROC) government, which came from the mainland China and discriminated Taiwan-born people (Liao, 1996; Maruyama, 2000).

As mentioned earlier in the case of Taiwan and Singapore, democratization, economic development, and capitalization, created markets for local and national cable networks and satellite television companies that have sprung up since the late 1990s. At that opportune moment, Korean cultural industries were looking for foreign markets to solve financial problems caused by the Asian financial crisis. Many of these newly-launched television networks used Korean media products – television dramas and music – as a “vehicle to establish its footprint in the competitive national TV media space” (Chua Beng Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 7-8).¹⁴⁶ Encouraged by several successful cases, other East Asian local and national networks turned their eyes from global and Japanese products to Korean ones.

Why did they pay attention to Korean music and dramas rather than Japanese or other East Asian cultural products? In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the *Harizu* boom was happening in some parts of East Asia, other East Asian countries did not seriously open their markets to global/foreign popular culture (e.g. mainland China, Vietnam, and other ex-communist countries) or did not yet have sufficient economic and media development to pay attention to either global/international or local cultural products (e.g. Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia). Additionally, while Japanese cultural industries attempted to penetrate Western markets, they did not have active invest in this new regional market because it was not profitable (see Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 142-145). Hong Kong was another country that have potentially provided cheap and quality cultural products (they did export some

¹⁴⁶ For example, Hunan Satellite TV, a regional station in mainland China, could survive in the competition with other local and national television networks through its successful bid for one of the most popular Korean television dramas, *Jewel in the Palace* (Leung, 2008).

great movies and music to East Asian audiences until the early 1990s),¹⁴⁷ but it had its own limits. Hong Kong was a small city-state that could not become a leading cultural producer due to their limited capital and political power. In short, there was no noticeable ‘geo-cultural’ market in East Asia of either producers or consumers (or exporters and importers) at that time.

The East Asian geo-cultural market was developed during the late 1990s with the demand for ‘something different’ global cultural products in many East Asian countries – especially mainland China. At this time, only Japan and Hong Kong had have exported their cultural products to East Asian countries. It was a perfect time for Korea to begin tapping into these markets and capitalize based on the growth of its economy and cultural industries. Other countries could not establish the foundation for cultural exporting, though many were successfully in exporting manufactured goods. Products that were ‘Made in China’, ‘Made in Vietnam’, and ‘Made in Indonesia’ have been exported throughout the world since then. Other East Asian countries did not have either the financial or cultural capital to produce ‘qualified’ products that could be competitive in foreign media markets. Again, it was truly “felicitous timing” for Korean cultural industries.

As mentioned earlier, the first reason that East Asian cultural industries chose Korean music and dramas was price competitiveness – royalties for Korean dramas and music were cheaper than Japanese. However, audiences are not aware of whether industries imported cultural products with low prices or not because they pay the same amount of money to television networks and/or music industry. For consumers, it is ‘quality’ that is most important. In other words, audiences want to be satisfied

¹⁴⁷ See Wei (2010) for detailed history of the Hong Kong film industry.

with cultural products regardless of import prices. They invest “their time, money, energy, and emotional allowances” in cultural products in order to have pleasurable touching, and meaning-making entertainment experiences (Shim, 2008, p. 26).

Korean music and television dramas have another advantage over other regional products from places such as Japan and China. When discussing Korean television dramas, Heo (2002) notes that Korean cultural products “touch the right chord of Asian sentiments.” Other scholars and journalists also points out that Korean cultural products are more acceptable than Japanese (or sometimes Western/American) ones because they are a prominent model of how to follow or catch up, both culturally and economically (Choe, 2001; Chon, 2001).

What do these authors mean by “Asian sentiments” or “prominent model to follow or catch up”? I define these terms as relating a *sense of moderate modernity and globality*. Korean cultural products definitely have modern and global qualities. However, it still has local/regional values that are sometimes traditional, and sometimes familiar to East Asian audiences. This ambivalence in Korean cultural products has represented to most East Asian audiences tangible examples of modernization/globalization, and to Japanese audiences, a nostalgia for lost and forgotten vitality.

The Case of Korean Television Dramas

To understand what it meant by the ‘moderate modernity’ of Korean cultural products, it is best to begin by looking at Korean television dramas to get a sense of the values they exemplify. The values of these cultural products are easier to target than music due to narrative a dialogue and there have been several useful audience

studies about them since the mid 2000s.¹⁴⁸ Those studies show that one of the main reasons for the success of several Korean television dramas is “their depiction of family matters and relationships, which enable them to appeal to a wider range of viewers than Japanese programs” (Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 246; see also Kim, H. G., 2004; Chua Beng Huat, 2008). Iwabuchi (2008) mentions that in his interviews with Taiwanese university students in 2001, they said that while Japanese television dramas, which they had enjoyed before the *Hallyu*, usually focused solely on the urban life of young people and their love stories while Korean television dramas portrayed the problems and bonds between parents and children, grandparents, and other relatives (p. 246). Usually, Japanese Trendy Dramas depict the “small universe” of youth, whose “isolation from the complexity of the real world makes young audiences emotionally involved in the dramatized reality” (Iwabuchi, 2004b, p. 17).¹⁴⁹ Japanese audiences see “realistic aspects” of the stories depicted and understand them to be the kind of thing they “could see happening around them as well” (Ito, 2004, p. 37). This individualized lifestyle void of serious relationship with family, relatives, and the society is more like the life depicted in US dramas such as *Friends* and *Sex and the City* – the Americanized life.

However, while many Korean television dramas are also based upon the themes of love and youth, family relationships are “an integral part of Korean drama

¹⁴⁸ Sections about the response of East Asian audiences to Korean television dramas and K-Pop include a couple of long quotes from other audience studies to show direct examples of the response to Korean popular culture.

¹⁴⁹ In most Japanese Trendy Dramas, “tales of romance and love are told within a small universe, without reference to family, career, and society” (Ito, 2004). Those dramas avoid “deep and meticulous depictions of human relationships between heroine/hero and those around them related through family and work, and were solely devoted to the depiction of this small universe” (ibid.).

texts” (Iwabuchi, 2004b, p. 17). In the real lives of most young Korean people, relationships between family members and relatives as well as the social environments around them are much more important than for American and other Western young people, and even their ‘love stories’ are not independent from those relationships.¹⁵⁰ This is also true of young people in other East Asian countries where family relationships are still tight. Young audiences in countries such as China, Taiwan, and Vietnam greatly sympathized with Korean television dramas because “the youths’ lives intertwined with family relationships seem more similar to (their) real situations” (ibid.). For them, life in Japanese television dramas is too ‘Westernized’. Life in Korean television dramas, however, is more accurate and appropriate – it looks modern and sophisticated, but with a hint of the ‘traditional values’ that still have much influence on the lives of viewers.

Audiences of East Asian audiences also see the ‘romantic dream of modern and global urban life’ in Korean television dramas. When discussing the popularity of Japanese television dramas in Taiwan in the early 1990s, Ko (2004) argues that those dramas represent “a new mode of social life facilitated by the systematic capitalist mode of production” (p. 124). This analysis also can be applied to the popularity of Korea television dramas in East Asia since the late 1990s. If Japanese television dramas depicted a ‘tangible dream’ to Taiwanese audiences in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Korean dramas are now playing that role for most East Asian countries.

¹⁵⁰ For example, in Korea, there is a saying that “marriage is the union not only between a man and a woman, but also between his and her families.” Parents’ firm opposition towards the marriage (and sometimes the courtship) between the hero and heroine, and the enforcement of marriage of the couple against their parents’ will is one of the most common themes of Korean television dramas. In this narrative, usually squabbles between siblings are also combined.

Audiences in the region see their hope and romantic future in Korean TV dramas, and they are more “fueled by an idealism to change present condition” (ibid.). For countries which adopted the capitalist economic system later than others, Korean culture is a more realistic role model than the Japanese one, which is ‘too much modernized and Westernized/Americanized’. In her studies about Vietnamese audiences of Korean cultural products, Thomas (2004) notes as follows:

From the interview I conducted (in Vietnam), it appears that East Asian popular culture in Vietnam signifies prosperity and sophistication and engenders longing, a longing for a richer consumer world, for technical expertise and creativity, and for societies that foster these elements. (p. 186)

Among East Asian popular culture representing “prosperity and sophistication”, her interviewees identified Korean depictions as the most accessible. One of the interviewees said that the reason he likes Korean films and dramas is that “it’s very cool at the moment”, while Japanese ones are not so “familiar” because it seems too far ahead (2004, p. 177). It is in this sense that Korean culture is moderately modern.

Lin and Tong (2008) also note in their study of female audiences in Hong Kong and Singapore that viewers see “hybridization of traditionality and modernity” in Korean television dramas. First, they feel a sense of “traditionality” in them:

Comparing TV dramas from different countries, most informants said they liked Korean dramas most, as they found them ‘more subtle’, with more

emphasis on ‘qing’ (a Chinese word referring to compassion for family members, friends, spouses, colleagues and people of different relations).¹⁵¹

Some informants pointed out that Korean dramas tend to focus on a wide range of topics including love, friendship, family relationships and moral values, issues that they said are not seriously dealt with in local productions in both Hong Kong and Singapore [...] Many of informants said they liked the very realistic and sophisticated portrayals of what they called ‘Asian’ ways of expressing various kinds of relationships and emotional attachments among the characters. (p. 98)

However, while audiences responded that the plots and themes of Korean television dramas are distinctly ‘Asian’, the appeal was rooted in the fact that these dramas deal with Asian values in a new way – “global cosmopolitan aesthetics” (ibid., p. 100; see also Evers & Korff, 2001). Like Japanese Trendy Dramas, Korean television dramas have modern qualities – “the fashion, music, beautiful sceneries, and the pleasures and plights of city life” – alongside the Asian traditional values that remain even in the urban lives of young East Asians (ibid.). In this way, Korean popular cultural products embody global consumerist cultures. Lin and Tong (2008) argue that what Korean television dramas depict reflects the “spread of global consumerism and expansion of the middle class in many modern Asian cities” (p. 101). They have both what Japanese dramas exhibit as well as what they lack.

One Singaporean interviewee explained that viewers of Korean television dramas consider concepts of ‘free love’ and ‘social justice’ depicted in them as ‘very

¹⁵¹ The Chinese word ‘qing’ is ‘jung (정, 情)’ in Korean.

modern’:

In the dramas it seems that [they] are upholding values which upset the cultural norms. And I thought that’s very brave and very modern. Through a medium of expression, their concept of free love, freedom to love someone, and other concepts of justice [...] I admire the modern sensibility that they have, they try to break away from certain traditions that don’t make sense. (p. 101-102)

Some viewers have specifically pointed out the ways Korean dramas portray modern career women and their working conditions as more appealing to East Asian audiences than Japanese because they seem more realistic. In the audience study conducted by Maclachlan and Chua (2004) with Chinese women living in Singapore, it was found that East Asian female audiences did not feel as free from various social restraints as those in Japanese television dramas. For example, most Chinese and Singaporean women have a conservative attitude towards premarital sexual behavior even if they are modernized/Westernized career women. However, Japanese women described in Japanese television dramas do not adhere to these traditional values and “are more open towards sex”, which makes Chinese/Singaporean audiences uncomfortable and rarely sympathetic (Maclachlan & Chua, 2004, p. 164). Modern East Asian women have both old and new values, and Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi (2008) argue that they see their reality as well as ideal futures in Korean dramas:

These audiences are adept in using Korean dramas to construct and confirm

their own multiple, at times conflicting, subjectivities, which seem to be rooted concurrently in ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, to negotiate everyday life tensions and dilemmas experienced in contemporary urban living, and to construct what they see as their distinctive ‘Asian’ modern femininities. (p. 8)

In sum, at this moment, in the early 21st century, Korean dramas satisfy East Asian media markets’ need for relatively low priced and moderately modernized cultural content. Korean media companies developed enough of a financial foundation to produce and sell cultural products beginning in the late 1990s, a time when other East Asian countries that share cultural proximity with Korea were looking for suitable products to fill new television channels. Korean media products have been able to meet both the economic and cultural needs of East Asian media markets. The portrayals of moderate modernity fused with cultural tradition are especially important to the success of Korean cultural products, particularly television dramas.

The Case of K-Pop

Though there have been a number of critical analyses and audience studies of Korean television dramas, there has been very little research about of K-Pop. Nonetheless, K-Pop is as important as Korean dramas in the *Hallyu* phenomenon, because it is one of the most popular and representative cultural products in East Asia.

Many of the reasons K-Pop has become a beloved genre by East Asian audiences are similar to the factors that contribute to the popularity of Korean television dramas. As mentioned previously, K-Pop has a unique transnationality that Iwabuchi (2001) has described this kind of transnationality elsewhere as “Asianized

Western.” This term describes the fact that although K-Pop is not traditional Korean music, it is distinct from typical Western (global) pop music.

While US products have enjoyed a privileged status in the film and television drama markets of East Asia, the popular music market has had a different trajectory. Shin (2002) notes that the East Asian popular music market has retained a stronger interest in ‘national popular music’¹⁵² than other regions (p. 164). Since the 1960s, Anglo-American popular music such as rock and roll, R’n’B, and contemporary folk have dominated the markets of most developing countries, overshadowing the national popular music of each country. However, Anglo-American music has not dominated the market as such in East Asian countries.

The acceptance of Anglo-American music by East Asian audiences has been very selective and much American music that achieved success in their domestic and global markets did not do so in East Asia. Additionally, some musicians who were not particularly famous in the global market gained considerable popularity only in East Asia. For example, in the 1990s, a Danish rock band called Michael Learns to Rock had several hit songs such as ‘Paint My Love’, ‘That’s Why’, ‘25 Minutes’, and ‘Sleeping Child’ in several East Asian countries. However, they did not have any hit singles in the US, the UK, or global markets in general.¹⁵³ Korean music industry

¹⁵² National popular music indicates the dominant popular music of a nation before the full-scale globalization of Anglo-American popular music, such as French *chanson*, Italian *canzone*, Brazilian *samba*, Japanese *enka*, and Korean *trot*. See Shin (2002, p. 164) for details.

¹⁵³ Also, musicians such as Air Supply (from Australia) and Scorpions (from Germany) in the 1970s and 1980s, Rialto (from UK) and Patricia Kaas (from France) in the 1990s, and Kent (from Sweden) and Sweetbox (from Germany) in the 2000s were popular only in East Asia and not in other region. Though some of them made a couple of hits in the US, UK, and other international markets, they were more popular and maintained their popularity for much longer in East Asia. Usually those musicians were from European countries or Australia where Anglo-American and other global audiences usually did not pay much attention to.

insiders have attributed this peculiar dynamic to distinctly ‘Korean tastes’ or ‘East Asian tastes’.

This does not mean that East Asians have inherent tastes but rather, the specific context of the East Asian popular music industry has influenced the formation of unique tastes. In Europe, Latin America and Africa, small local recording companies have been directly connected to the network of global music companies. However, before the direct distribution began in the late 1980s,¹⁵⁴ Japan intermediated trade in East Asian music industry, purchasing publication rights for regional market from global music companies, and reselling them to recording companies of individual East Asian countries (Shin, 2002, p. 165). This means that before the late 1980s, for example, to sell Led Zeppelin albums in Korea, Korean recording companies had to purchase publication rights from Japanese recording companies that had been acquired from the original owner of these publication rights, Warner Music. Japan played a primary gateway role for importing foreign music and local companies played a second gateway role. Though the system has changed from indirect to direct distribution by global music conglomerates, the enduring uniqueness of East Asian tastes in popular music developed through these procedures for selecting foreign popular music imports.

Therefore, in some sense, K-Pop may fit the meaning of geo-cultural market product better than Korean television dramas. As is shown in a number of audience studies previously discussed, for East Asian audiences, the selection is made between local television dramas and ‘foreign’ (including Western/American, Japanese, Chinese,

¹⁵⁴ For details about the history of direct distribution of foreign music by global music companies in local markets, see Chapter 2.

Hong Kong/Taiwanese, and Korean) dramas rather than foreign, regional, and local,¹⁵⁵ not actually between foreign, regional, and local. However, when choosing what to listen to, they categorize local, American/Western (global), and K-Pop and other regional music. For example, in her audience study of K-Pop, Pease (2009) quotes an interview with an executive producer of Chinese local television network on the popularity of Korean hip-hop:

Hip-hop never got big in China; lots of people think it doesn't fit Chinese language. Chinese don't respect blacks, but they can take Koreans doing hip-hop [...] They can't totally love Japanese, for historical reasons, and because they feel it's too different. (p. 157)

A sense of moderate modernity can be seen in this quote about American hip hop. The genre is seen as incompatible with their culture (language), and many Chinese people have not yet developed a 'modern/global' way of accepting other races. For these reasons, while there is not a broad appeal of American hip hop, Chinese listeners can accept Korean-stylized hip hop. Notably, Chinese audiences feel uncomfortable with Japanese hip hop even though it is also from the East Asian region. According to Chinese media executives and audiences, Korea is in "an exciting period of development" and "specialized in high-quality dance music" (ibid.). One Chinese student even purported that there is an "evolutionary timeline" in which American (Western) music is most developed, followed by Japan, and then

¹⁵⁵ For example, in Lin and Tong (2008), their interviewees usually compare Korean dramas to other 'foreign' dramas put together.

Korea/Hong Kong (ibid.). American (Western) music seems distant, and K-Pop is close while still demonstrating advancement and quality.

Then what aspects in K-Pop appeal to East Asian audiences? It is not as easy to locate the Asian-ness in K-Pop as in Korean television dramas. For instance, modern Asian values such as ‘close-knit family relationships’ or ‘new types of Asian modern femininities’ depicted in Korean television dramas are clear and easily demonstrable while values in music are comparatively hard to grasp. I assert that K-Pop also is moderately modern in that it has both elements of modernity/globality as well as traditionality/Asian-ness.

As mentioned earlier, there are several visible modern and global elements of K-Pop, for instance, its appropriation of elements from the latest European electronic dance music as well as American trendy hip hop and R’n’B. It is distinct from these forms, however, because the dancing and fashion of K-Pop idols are more polished, sophisticated, and sometimes ‘experimental’ than Western teen pop music. The difference is visible when comparing the K-Pop idol group BigBang with the British teen pop band One Direction.¹⁵⁶ Hit songs by One Direction, such as *What Makes You Beautiful* and *Live While You Are Young*, feature typical dance pop elements – popular melodies, easy rhythmic patterns, and little electronic music elements. In contrast, the popular songs of BigBang such as *Fantastic Baby* and *Blue* actively use trendy electronic music elements and complicated rhythmic patterns. In this way, the music of One Direction is more like that of previous Western teen pop bands such as Backstreet Boys and New Kids on the Block, while BigBang is akin to the latest

¹⁵⁶ BigBang of one of the big 4 agencies YG Entertainment, was the most popular male idol groups in 2012, both in its domestic and international market. The British teen pop band One Direction was the most successful teen pop band of 2012 in the UK, Europe and the US.

European DJ music and electornica, which is more powerful and experimental than general dance pop. Additionally, the ‘look’ of One Direction is a kind of a ‘guy next door’ style –clean and tidy shirts, sweaters, and jeans with neat hairstyles. BigBang is known for their stimulating and sometimes radical presentation with futuristic and shiny clothing, variously colored hair, and several tattoos. Lastly, the stage manners, attitude, and dance style of BigBang emphasizes trends in ways that One Direction does not.

As mentioned, K-Pop music and idols are produced in a Fordist, factory style. As standardized commercial goods, K-Pop products guarantee certain qualities, which can be an advantage over other cultural products. In the current environment of digital distribution and consumption, music is ‘instant’ and ‘disposable’. It is easy to get and download rapidly, and easy to erase and throw away rapidly – one click, and done. So guaranteed, standardized quality is an important to induce and maintain consumption. This is one of the ‘modernistic’ aspects of K-Pop music.

However, as with Korean television dramas, K-Pop maintains an ambivalent and uniqueness. Even while audiences appreciate K-Pop for its persistent quality and polish, they also consider the idols and music to be emotionally honest and “sincere” (Pease, 2009). Those two different viewpoints reveal that East Asian audiences see a similar ‘sensibility’ to their own in K-Pop music and idols. They also point out that K-Pop covers varied themes, in contrast to domestic music of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. For example, one Chinese listener asserted:

They (K-Pop) are not like the majority of pop music in China, always singing that sort of mm mm chee chee love you love me romantic song. They always

sing about the problems appearing in society or fresh and original themes.

(Pease, 2009, p. 157)

It is interesting that though K-Pop is the result of a sophisticated industrial system – the idol-agency model – for many East Asian audiences it is ‘sensitivity’ and ‘authenticity’ that differentiate K-Pop from their domestic music as well as other foreign/global music. East Asian audiences have also expressed appreciation for the creativity in K-Pop, something they see as lacking in their domestic markets (for example, see Kang, I.K., 2011). Another K-Pop listener said:

When I see how many Chinese singers cover Korean songs, it reveals how the Chinese music world lacks creativity. As a Chinese person, I feel really ashamed. Taiwan’s latest bands even more so are obviously imitating Korean bands. (p. 160)

As with Korean television dramas, K-Pop penetrates the newly-developed East Asian geo-cultural market at a particularly opportune time. It is an ambivalent culture that has both modern/global and Asian features and themes that appeal to the sensibilities of teenagers and general East Asian audiences. For example, while K-Pop is dynamic and powerful music such as hip-hop and club electronic music in the West, songs of K-Pop usually do not have ‘explicit lyrics’ that deal with sex, violence, drugs, etc, which are repeated themes of Western hip-hop and club dance music but can draw unwelcome attention from East Asian audiences (Shin, H. Y., 2012). Also, K-Pop idols do not have sex, drug, and violence scandals that because their East Asian fans

more ‘conservative’ towards those scandals (Han, 2011). In short, K-Pop music and idols have ‘traditional’ values which other global youth music usually does not have. Additionally, a number of K-Pop idol groups include members from East Asian countries such as China, Singapore, and Japan¹⁵⁷ which strengthens their regional appeal.

***Hallyu* in Japan: Different Modernity**

Japan was the last East Asian country that accepted the *Hallyu* phenomenon. While some Korean television dramas and K-Pop became successful in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including a Korea-Japan collaborative television drama produced in 2002,¹⁵⁸ *Hallyu* was not as prevalent as it was in other East Asian countries. Only a small number of people in Japan consumed Korean cultural products before the mid 2000s.

A critical turning point for *Hallyu* in Japan was the release of the Korean television drama *Winter Sonata* (in Japanese, 冬のソナタ). It was first broadcasted by KBS in 2002, and became a big hit in the Korean domestic market. Following this success, it was picked up in April of 2003 by NHK BS, the satellite channel run by the biggest Japanese public television network NHK.¹⁵⁹ It gradually gained popularity through word-of-mouth and the media, and the series was soon released on DVD,

¹⁵⁷ Detailed examples of East Asian members in K-Pop idol groups can be seen in Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Friends*, featuring Korean actor Won Bin and Japanese actress Fukada Kyoko as a hero and a heroine, was jointly produced by Korean television network *MBC* and Japanese network *TBS*. It was the first collaborative program between Korean and Japan, though the rating was not particularly higher than expected.

¹⁵⁹ Detailed data and information described below are cited from Hayashi (2004; 2005) and Mōri (2008).

which became an instant hit.

A visit to Japan by Young-Jun Bae, the hero of *Winter Sonata*, in April of 2004 demonstrated the explosive popularity of the drama in Japanese cultural scene. When he arrived at Tokyo International Airport, more than five hundred fans (mostly middle-aged women) came to the airport to see him. This exceptional welcome surprised Japanese audience and media, and this phenomenon was named the *Yon-sama Syndrome*.¹⁶⁰ Stimulated by this unexpectedly enthusiastic response, NHK began broadcasting the drama through their main terrestrial channel instead of their satellite channel at 11:30pm. Surprisingly, viewer ratings shot up by more than 20%, an incredible hike considering even their prime time programs, broadcasted between 7:00-10:00pm, did not receive such high ratings. Additionally, NHK sold 330,000 sets of DVDs and 1,220,000 copies of an adaption of *Winter Sonata* into a book novel. After the enormous success of *Winter Sonata*, several other Korean television dramas such as *Jewel in the Palace*, *You're Beautiful*, and *Brilliant Legacy* became big hits in Japan.

K-Pop landed in Japan in almost the same year when *Winter Sonata* gained its popularity. While the primary audience of Korean television dramas was middle-aged women, K-Pop simultaneously began attracting young fans from teenagers to people in their thirties (Byun, 2011, p. 9). In 2003, both songs and albums of a Korean female singer BoA ranked no. 1 on the Japanese popular music chart *Oricon*. After that, K-Pop idol groups such as TVXQ and BigBang also made it to the top of the *Oricon* chart. Recently, Kara and Girl's Generation – two of the most famous K-Pop female idol groups – crashed the *Oricon* chart with their singles “Mister” and “Genie”

¹⁶⁰ *Yon* is an abbreviation of Young-Jun, and *sama* is an honorific title added to the male.

ranking the top. Other popular K-Pop idol groups such as 2NE1, Brown Eyed Girls, 2PM, and T-ara also made several songs that became hits in Japan. Due to a number of successful K-Pop idols, Japan has now become the biggest importer of K-Pop products in East Asia.¹⁶¹ Though this was not the first time that East Asian cultural products became attractive to Japanese audiences, the scope and intensity of flow of cultural products from Korea is incomparable to those from other East Asian countries.¹⁶²

Until the early 2000s, most Japanese audiences, media, and scholars considered Korean cultural products as ‘less modern’ than their own. Japan held belief that their cultural products were the highest quality of East Asian popular culture and believed they could, by example, “teach East Asian cultural industries how to produce high-quality modern/global culture” (Iwabuchi, 2004a, p. 156-162; see also Ko, 2004). However, the sudden and unexpected *Hallyu* in Japan confused many of them and even provoked Japanese rightists and nationalists to express hostility toward Korean popular culture such as with *Kenkanryu* (anti-*Hallyu*), because they believed that Japanese culture was being overtaken by inferior Korean culture (e.g. Liscutin, 2009).¹⁶³

Unlike other East Asian countries, Japanese audiences were not attracted to the ‘tangible modernity/globality’ because they were ‘more developed’ or had

¹⁶¹ According to KOCCA (2012), Japan accounted for almost 80% of the total amount of export of K-Pop (130 million out of 171million USD) in 2011.

¹⁶² For example, there was a ‘Hong Kong boom’ in the late 1990s Japan. Several Hong Kong films and music were popular among Japanese young audiences at that time. However, the scope of Hong Kong boom audiences was limited to devoted fan communities, and any of Hong Kong television dramas have been shown in Japanese national television networks. See Iwabuchi (2002, p. 158-198) for details.

¹⁶³ The anti-*Hallyu* movement is discussed more in detail in the next chapter.

‘already developed earlier’ than Korea. Some of these sentiments and prejudices were rooted in Japanese colonial rule of the Korean peninsula from 1910-1945. Mōri (2008, p. 138-139) notes that generally there have been “two official ways” of speaking about Korea in Japan. The first is a “comparatively liberal one which says that Japanese need to understand colonial history properly” and to apologize sincerely for their historical past. And the second is an “exclusively patriotic and nationalist discourse” which regards Japanese imperialism as a process that helped Korea become modernized and developed, and that Korea was (and is) inferior to Japan. Regardless of which way individual people see this history, many Japanese looked down on Korea and its people due to stereotypical images rooted in their collective memory of their colonial rule. The *Hallyu* has provided for Japanese consumers a new and different point on Korean culture in Japan. Japanese audiences have confessed that they have changed their perception of Korea due to Korean television dramas and K-Pop, and realized their prejudices based on distorted historical understanding of the relationship between Korean and Japan (ibid.).

Then, what aspects of Korean television dramas and K-Pop have appealed to Japanese audiences? Iwabuchi notes that Korean cultural industries have developed their own styles of music and dramas which attain “transnational appeal in terms of the representation of ‘here and now’ in Asian urban contexts” (2008, p. 245-246). In Korean cultural products, Japanese audiences often develop differing and intertwined perceptions of similarity and difference in “regional cultural dynamics” (p. 246). While other East Asian audiences usually have been attracted by the ambivalence of modernity and traditionality in K-Pop and television dramas, Japanese audiences see these depictions as a “different mode of Asian modernity” (p. 247). For example,

Japanese fans of *Winter Sonata* and other Korean television dramas often say that they see a purity and energy in Korean dramas, which is uncommon in contemporary Japanese television dramas (Hayashi, 2004; Li, 2004).

Japanese K-Pop audiences also often explain that their preference for K-Pop over other global and/or their domestic popular music is due to the fact that the genre represents a different type of modernity/globality – less refined, but more powerful, vigorous, full of energy, and more friendly (Michel, 2011). For example, many Japanese audiences point out that while Japanese idols usually keep their distance from fans, Korean idols show modesty, friendliness, and warmth to their fans (Ahn, 2010). These values and qualities are a “different freshness” from Japanese and global popular music (Byun, 2011, p. 9-10).

With the popularity of *Winter Sonata* and a number of K-Pop idols, many Japanese people who held stereotypes about Koreans and their culture, constructed by the experience of their colonial rule, began to change their perceptions. These cultural products have helped some Japanese people see a different modernity through the *Hallyu* and now understand themselves to be living in the same ‘historical zone’ of modernization, urbanization, and globalization as other East Asians. A considerable number of Japanese people still believe that Japan is superior to the rest of East Asia based on the *datsuanyuuou* (脱亞入歐)¹⁶⁴ discourse. However, as Iwabuchi (2008)

¹⁶⁴ *Datsuanyuuou* (脱亞入歐) is a discourse established in the 1880s by the ‘founding father of modern Japan’ Fukuzawa Yukichi (福沢諭吉). It was the time when Japan began to modernize their country with the open-door policy to the West. The term means ‘Escape from Asia, and Enter into Europe’, a discourse that distinguishes Japan from other East Asian countries, which were less developed and less modernized than Japan. With this discourse, Japan aimed to be considered ‘not one of East Asian countries’, but ‘one of the developed as European countries’. This term was used as the important theoretical basis of national policies

argues, such conceptions are “being shaken” as East Asian countries, especially Korea, become “more and more interconnected through popular cultural flows” (p. 247).

K-Pop Outside East Asia

While *Hallyu* has maintained a presence in East Asia for the past 15 years, K-Pop was almost ‘not known’ to the rest of the world until recently. At the beginning of the 2010s, however, K-Pop has become a ‘music of minority’, meaning that the genre has found a niche market on the global music scene, similar to indie rock/pop or experimental electronica. In past three years, more global audiences have begun to pay attention to K-Pop, and in the second half of 2012, the ‘*Gangnam Style* sensation’ struck all over the world including US and Western Europe and places where the West has hegemonic cultural dominance such as Oceania, Latin America, and Africa (Park, 2012). Though the popularity of Psy,¹⁶⁵ the composer, producer, and performer of *Gangnam Style*, may not last long, the enormous popularity of the song and music video demonstrate the fact that K-Pop is now widening its fan base out of the region of East Asia.

Of course, it is still too early to discuss the lasting effects of K-Pop on the world would be, but it would be meaningful to investigate who likes K-Pop in these global contexts, and why. Unlike East Asian audiences, people in other parts of the

of imperialist Japan, and still is the basic principal of nationalists and rightists in Japan.

¹⁶⁵ Although Psy is not an example of typical K-Pop that he is not an idol in a group with multiple members. Also, he composes his own songs, which is also different from other K-Pop idols. However, he can be categorized as a K-Pop musicians because 1) he is from one of the big 4 K-Pop agencies (YG Entertainment) that supports him with typical K-Pop industrial strategies; 2) his musical characteristics are much the same as other K-Pop music (actually, Psy composed some songs for idol groups); and 3) he also depends much on the Korean television industry like other K-Pop idols. In short, though he is not a typical K-Pop ‘idol’, he may be considered as one of K-Pop musicians.

world – for example, the US – do not share the similar historical, political economic, and cultural contexts that contributed to the popularity of K-Pop in East Asia. Notably, other Korean cultural products, like television dramas that are as popular as K-Pop in East Asia, are not drawing attention from global audience. Why are global audiences drawn to K-Pop? What strategies are the K-Pop industries taking to make it a more broadly global genre?

The Boys and Gangnam Style: Different Strategies of K-Pop

Before the discussion of K-Pop's globalization outside East Asia, it is necessary to consider the current 'hot issue' of the *Gangnam Style* phenomenon. When the YouTube video of *Gangnam Style* first captivated global audiences in the summer of 2012, nobody expected that it would become a global hit song. However, on September 14, 2012, the single *Gangnam Style* came in as No. 64 on the *Billboard Hot 100*¹⁶⁶ – the main single chart of the Billboard Magazine in the United States. Its ranking rose rapidly, and just two weeks later, it was ranked No. 2 on the chart, maintaining this position continuously for seven consecutive weeks. It charted at No. 1 in countries such as UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, and Canada, among others.

Gangnam Style is not the first K-Pop song to hit Billboard's main charts – the Billboard Hot 100 for singles and the Billboard 200 for albums. The first K-Pop single that hit the Billboard Hot 100 was *Nobody*, performed by the famous female K-Pop idol group Wonder Girls, who inaugurated the second-generation K-Pop era. On October 31, 2009, it reached No. 76 in Hot 100 chart. Earlier that year, the self-titled

¹⁶⁶ All of chart records are from www.Billboard.com

English album by BoA – a female singer who has achieved the biggest success in Japan among K-Pop musicians – reached No. 127 on the Billboard 200 chart. Right before the *Gangnam Style* phenomenon, an EP album by BigBang entitled *Alive* also reached No. 150 on the Billboard 200 chart in March of 2012. In January of 2012, Girl's Generation¹⁶⁷ appeared on one of the famous US talk shows, the *David Letterman Show*, to promote their new single *The Boys*. Though the single was not ranked in Hot 100, the album reached No. 2 on the Billboard World Albums chart. However, unlike *Gangnam Style*, the songs and albums that appeared on those two main charts soon disappeared after the week they debuted.

There were several things that distinguished *Gangnam Style* from K-Pop songs and albums that found some success worldwide. Let's look at the Girl's Generation single *The Boys*, for example, and compare it to *Gangnam Style*.

First, *The Boys* was released in the US and other parts of the world in English, while it was released in Korean in its domestic market. As mentioned earlier, the language of the lyrics are very important, especially in Korea, where the song structure and musical elements have become transnational and global, and lyrics clearly show the nationality of K-Pop.¹⁶⁸ However, Girl's Generation (and their agency SM Entertainment) gave up Korean lyrics and prepared an English version for the global market. In fact, the lyrics and music were composed and produced by the famous American producer/composer Teddy Riley.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Information about Girl's Generation can be found in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁸ See Chapter 3 for detailed discussion of the importance of the language of lyrics in K-Pop.

¹⁶⁹ Teddy Riley is a Grammy Award-winning American songwriter, musician, and record producer. He is credited with the creation of the New Jack Swing genre. He has co-worked with number of big name musicians such as Michael Jackson, Bobby Brown, Usher, Blackstreet, Snoop Dogg, and Lady Gaga. He also has stepped into K-Pop industry recently.

Second, the music video for *The Boys* does not provide any clues to the nationality of the performers. One can ascertain that they are ‘East Asian’ by their skin color and looks, but there is nothing to distinguish whether they are Korean, Chinese, Japanese, or other nationalities, even if the viewer understands Korean language. Viewers may assume they are not from East Asia even if they look like ‘Asian’. For example, Far East Movement, a popular American hip-hop band, consists of only Asian-American.¹⁷⁰ Though they look like East Asian, they are, in fact, American – born and raised in the US, and compose and sing English songs. Therefore, having East-Asian ‘look’ does not necessarily convey the nationality (or regionality) of the group to the viewer. Nothing in the music, lyrics, clothes, dance, subtitles, and the background in the music video for *The Boys* directly or indirectly show that the genre is K-Pop, a kind of Korean music by Korean musicians.

Therefore, *The Boys* is literally ‘transnational’ in that global audience who encountered Girl’s Generation for the first time will have no clue as to whether the group is Korean, East Asian, or Asian American. In the song, distinct nationality is removed, or *de-nationalized*. The K-Pop songs and albums which appeared in Billboard charts for a short period of time before *Gangnam Style* chose similar strategies – their songs were composed and produced by foreign (usually American/Western) musicians, features English lyrics, and do not give any visual hint

Besides Girl’s Generation, he worked with Jay Park, a male singer/rapper and the former member of the popular K-Pop male idol group 2PM.

¹⁷⁰ Far East Movement consists of 4 East Asian-American – Kev Nish (Kevin Nishimura, Japanese-Chinese American), Prohgress (James Roh, Korean American), J-Splif (Jae Choung, Korean American), and DJ Virman (Virman Coquia, Filipino American). Though they are not actively hiding their ethnic roots – rather, they are directly showing their ethnicity by the band name – their music is typical trendy American hip hop music. Two of their songs – *Like a G6* and *Rockteer* – reached top 10 on Billboard Hot 100 chart in 2010, and one of them (*Like a G6*) reached No. 1 on Billboard single chart and No. 5 on UK single chart.

of their Korean-ness in their music videos. Notably, these songs did not appeal to orientalism, such as the racial/ethnic stereotypes of East Asian woman.

Gangnam Style is different. First, it displays its Korean-ness in the title with the inclusion of the word *Gangnam*, a town of youth, trend, fashion and wealth in Seoul, Korea. Second, the lyrics are Korean though it includes a few English words such as ‘style’ and ‘sexy ladies’, not to mention its composer and producer – Psy composed and produced it for himself. And third, the famous music video features familiar Korean scenes, which become an exotic atmosphere for those who do not know anything about Korea. Backgrounds of the video include a subway station and the inside of a train, a typical Korean style apartment complex with a typical type of Korean playground, the view of *Hangang* River Park, women with big sun caps walking backwards rapidly,¹⁷¹ a public bathing house with the guy covered in tattoos.¹⁷² All of these scenes are recognizably ‘Korean’ for those who know even a little about Korean culture. For audiences who are not familiar with Korea, these backgrounds provide ‘exotic’ setting. Similarly, when watching the famous ‘elevator guy scene’ and ‘yellow guy scene’, global audiences wonder who these characters are, and why they are doing such strange dances. However, Korean and other East Asian

¹⁷¹ In most Korean large parks located in big cities, it is easy to see women (usually middle-aged women) walking backward rapidly. They usually wear big sun caps which shield not only their heads but also their whole faces. It has been a fad among Korean middle-aged women to walk backward for their health, and to wear the big sun cap to protect their skin from ultraviolet radiation.

¹⁷² In Korea, it is a symbol of a gangster to cover his body with numerous large tattoos. Therefore, when the ‘tattoo’ guy enters into the public bath, men in the bath are afraid of him and try to escape from his eyes. It is a typical anecdote among Korean men, such as: “I’ve seen a man covered with big tattoos in the public bath, who made me really scared.” You can see this type of imaginary in the public bath scene of *Gangnam Style* music video. In that scene, Psy pretends to be a friend of whom he doesn’t know, when ‘a guy covered with big tattoos’ comes into the public bath.

audiences immediately recognize them as two of the most famous comedians in Korea and East Asia, and that those strange dances are their signature dances. Therefore, though its musical style is global and transnational, *Gangnam Style* is very localized, or *re-nationalized*.

It is notable that the former strategy of K-Pop's globalization – transnationalizing or de-nationalizing – has only been used in Japan and US (and global), and not in China and other East Asian countries. In some ways, the K-Pop industry has tried to erase or hide its Korean-ness while emphasizing its globality, asserting that American, Japanese, and K-Pop music and idols are not different from one another. For example, songs and albums of BoA and Kara, two of the most popular K-Pop musicians in Japan, have been composed and produced by Japanese composers/producers with Japanese lyrics for release in Japan.¹⁷³ In the case of Girl's Generation, they sometimes have three different versions of one song with lyrics in Korean, English, and Japanese. With this strategy, the K-Pop industry tries to convince American or Japanese local audiences that though K-Pop is from Korea, it does not have any specific Korean-ness that might seem to foreign or alien. K-Pop idols and agencies try to assert that K-Pop is high-quality music, and that “now we can make global-quality music as you – Japan and America – do.”

However, K-Pop idols seldom release their songs with Chinese, Cantonese, Thai, Vietnamese, or other East Asian languages. When marketing and releasing music for regional (East Asian) audiences other than Japan, the K-Pop industry does not try to hide or erase the Korean-ness in their musical products because it is not a

¹⁷³ Especially, in the case of BoA, her Japan-released albums and Korea-released albums have been separated that songs included in her Japan albums have not been included in her Korean albums, and vice versa.

barrier to success in those places. In short, K-Pop idol groups and their agencies actively de-nationalize and localize their music in countries considered ‘more developed’ than Korea. They have chosen different strategies for different regions according to the ‘name value’ and the ‘status’ of K-Pop – and the nation-state of Korea in general – among the audiences of each region.

Though it is too early to thoroughly assess the situation, ironically, the most successful K-Pop songs in the US and UK to date has been *Gangnam Style*, written by a Korean musician and with Korean lyrics, not *The Boys* written by American songwriter and with English lyrics. Moreover, it should be noted that Psy did not consider the possibility of *Gangnam Style*’s success outside its domestic and East Asian market and, therefore, did not create the song or video to cater to the US and global markets (see, for example, Kim, Y. M., 2012). On the other hand, *The Boys* and other K-Pop songs, which were actively fashioned for the American market, failed or had only moderate success. Contrary to general expectation of the K-Pop industry, the case of *Gangnam Style* shows that American and Western audiences paid attention to the foreign sentiment and ‘exotic funniness’ of the song rather than to the transnationality and globality of this K-Pop song. In spite of *Gangnam Style*’s unexpected mega success, until now, K-Pop remains music for a few fans searching for something different in countries like the US and the UK. It has not captured the general global audience, although it is possible that Psy and his *Gangnam Style* may become a trigger for the *Hallyu* in the West.

Audience of K-Pop Outside East Asia

At any rate, it is clear that K-Pop is widening its fan base outside East Asia.

Even before the *Gangnam Style* phenomenon, there were number of concerts by K-Pop musicians in the West that received enthusiastic welcomes. For example, the ‘SM Town Concert’ – a joint show by K-Pop idols of SM Entertainment including Girl’s Generation, Super Junior, TVXQ, f(x), BoA, and Shinee – held in Paris in June 2011, sold out in just 15 minutes after tickets went on sale (Shin, H. Y., 2012). The concert was broadcasted by Korean and French media and fans that not only fans in Paris but from many European countries who could not get the tickets staged a demonstration in front of the Louver Museum to extend the show.¹⁷⁴ Soon after the tickets went on sale at *Live Nation* and *Fnac*, those European ticketing websites became overwhelmed by the rush of users and temporarily shut down (Kim, J. B., 2011). In 2012, some K-Pop idols had another joint concert in Paris, which was a moderate success with about 8,000 attendees (Lee, J. S., 2012).¹⁷⁵

In the previous chapter, I argued that the *Hallyu* phenomenon was characterized by the appeal of Asianized modernity – whether it is ‘moderate modernity’ or ‘different modernity’ – in East Asian markets. In the case of *Hallyu* outside East Asia, however, there are different factors. And yet, the perception of K-Pop as ‘our’ regional culture in East Asia is still of great importance because most of K-Pop’s audiences outside East Asia are immigrants or descendants of the region.

Diversification of ‘Tastes’

The increasing popularity of K-Pop in US and other global music markets is due to the development of K-Pop music itself as well as transformations in the music

¹⁷⁴ See Kang, S. A. (2011) for pictures of the demonstration.

¹⁷⁵ Beside France, UK also began to pay attention to K-Pop even before the smash hit of *Gangnam Style* in their charts. See Mukasa (2011).

industry since the 2010s that have spurred the diversification of tastes through digital distribution. In the popular music industries of the US and UK, diversification of musical tastes has accelerated since the beginning of the 21st century with the digitalization and communication media. This trend has extended to other global markets that are heavily influenced by the British and American music industries. Until the late 1990s, each decade had seen ‘dominant’ genres arise in the global popular music scene. For example, in the 1960s, rock music by bands such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who, and acoustic folk music by Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were the dominant music of the decade. In the 1970s there was hard rock by Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple, progressive rock by Pink Floyd and Yes, and in the late 1970s, disco music by the Bee Gees was heard all over the world. After that, various genres such as punk, New Wave, pop metal, dance pop, grunge rock, hip hop, Brit Pop, roots rock, and electronic dance music have dominated the global music scene for specific periods. Many people listened to the same music by Michael Jackson or Nirvana through several decades.

However, since the early 2000s, there has been no Michael Jackson-like super star. There are more genres, such as trendy R’n’B, hip hop, electronica, and garage rock, in the global popular music scene and it is hard to insist that one or two genres are dominant in this era. As digitalization of the distribution – from the record (CD) to the mp3 and other digital formats – has been progressed since the early 2000s, it has become difficult to produce ‘million-selling’ albums. Audiences can download just one song from an album and access various kinds of music through YouTube and other websites, which was almost impossible to do that in the past. Digitalization has made it possible for audiences to use diverse ways to access diverse kinds of music.

Therefore, since the early 2000s, people have more choices than ever before.

For the music industry, the diversification of musical tastes means the development of more niche markets and, in fact, the popular music industry has been more opened to niche markets than other cultural industries. Negus (1999) argues that the music industry has been “organized according to small-scale productions and selling to changing niche markets alongside the creation of big hits and blockbusters” (p. 17). This is different from the production of Hollywood movies and novels, which are basically mass produced and mass consumed.

However, during the 1970s, when records began to sell by the millions with frequency, the music business became like a Fordist industry with the trend of ‘mega hit’ as the dominant model. For example, in the first half of the 1990s, when Nirvana and other grunge bands took over popular music market, it was considered ‘out-of-date’ to listen to the heavy metal or New Wave music that was dominant in the previous decade. The musicians of those genres were rapidly cleared out of the popular music scene to make way for the latest trends.¹⁷⁶ However, since the early 2000s, many ‘out-of-date’ genres that were discarded both by the audience and the industry have been revived, as is exemplified by ‘New Wave revival’, ‘disco revival’ and ‘retro-metal’. Though the music has not regained the popularity of their heydays, they have found niche markets.

The rise of K-Pop as one of subculture in the US and the global music market is also caused by the diversification of musical tastes with the development of digital

¹⁷⁶ For example, popular heavy metal bands of the 1980s such as Motley Crue, Guns ‘n’ Roses, and Skid Row disappeared on the charts soon after the grunge boom. In movies and dramas, their music and fashion soon became a laughing stock. Also, in the early 1970s, disco music and its musicians were treated in a similar way by punk rock musicians and fans with the slogan such as “disco sucks.”

distribution. It cannot be overstated that one of the most important reasons Korean music has come to be globally consumed music is the ability to produce global-quality music due to the development and globalization of digital music producing technologies. Above all, however, if there has not been a niche for K-Pop to squeeze through formed by the transformation of the global music industry in the 2000s, K-Pop might not become known to the global audience.

Here, *Gangnam Style* is a good example. First, the sonic/musical texture of *Gangnam Style* is considered by Western music critics to be of the same quality as that of contemporary American and European electronic dance music.¹⁷⁷ However, it was not the music alone, but by YouTube music video of *Gangnam Style* that attracted global audiences. YouTube music videos are one of the important ways almost all musicians (and their recording companies) release new singles and albums. YouTube has already replaced MTV as the source for music videos,¹⁷⁸ and is even playing the role of the radio. On YouTube site, listeners choose videos, make playlists, and play them on smartphones that can connect to the internet wherever they are.

Therefore, although the development of K-Pop has definitely played an important role, transformation in the US music industry have been instrumental to K-Pop becoming a global music. It has aided the diversification of tastes among audiences and now K-Pop is forming a niche market formed in the US and global

¹⁷⁷ For example, one of the music critics of Billboard reviewed the music style of *Gangnam Style* that it plays “all the right moves sonically” (Benjamin, 2012). Also other music journalist wrote that *Gangnam Style* “takes one part LMFAO’s synth-based party music, another part Ricky Martin’s Latin dance party and the rest a powerfully charismatic Korean showman” (Lamb, 2012).

¹⁷⁸ Since the early 2000s, when the environments of the music industry changed rapidly into digitalization, MTV has seldom played music videos on their channels. Recently, there are few music programs let alone the music video. Instead, most of their programs are reality programs and scripted programs targeted at adolescents and teenage girls (e.g. Hibberd, 2009).

music industry.

East Asian Immigrants and K-Pop

Interestingly, the Korean media tends to emphasize that audiences who attend K-Pop concerts outside East Asia are of diverse ethnic background, especially many Caucasian and black people (for example, Jung, 2010).¹⁷⁹ However, according to individual fans and reviewers who attend international K-Pop concerts, the numbers of whites and blacks in these audiences were small. For example, Dong-Yeon Lee, a Korean cultural studies scholar who attended a K-Pop concert in Los Angeles, stated that (2012) “it is not true that 70% or more of the audience was non-Asian as some media and the agency are insisting.” Rather, according to his report, most of audience at that concert was East Asian immigrants or their descendants born in the US. In other cities such as London and Paris, the situation was similar. Though it is obvious that K-Pop is getting more popularity among Western females in their teens and early twenties, most of attendees of K-Pop concerts were actually East Asian students studying in those cities or immigrants from the region.¹⁸⁰

Though there is not accurate and detailed information about the demographics of people who purchase K-Pop products in the West, it is possible to surmise that the

¹⁷⁹ Number of Korean media, critics, and scholars criticize that the popularity of Korean popular culture outside East Asia is too much overemphasized (see Park, S. W., 2011; Lee, D. Y., 2012; Lee, J. S., 2012). This topic is discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁸⁰ One of the audiences even insists that 90% of the attendees of the 2011 K-Pop concert in London were East Asian. For example, see personal blogs for the reference, though they do not have public confidence, such as <http://blog.naver.com/findcarrie/120147185140> (review of K-Pop concert in London, 5 December 2011) and <http://sktreporter.com/30114283379> (informal interviews done by one of Korean private enterprise – SK Telecom – that asked international audiences about *Hallyu*).

major audiences may be first and second generation East Asian immigrants.¹⁸¹ In the case of the US, immigration from East Asia increased following the enactment of the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965.¹⁸² This act naturalized refugees from conflicts that occurred in the late 20th century such as the Vietnam War and Cambodian Killing Fields. As a result, Asians comprise 4.8% population of the US population, and people who are Asian combined with at least one other race are 5.6% (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez, 2011). These numbers are increasing and in 2009, Asians¹⁸³ surpassed Latinos as the largest plurality of immigrants in the United States – Asians were nearly 40 percent of those who immigrated in 2009, while immigrants of Hispanic origin were just over 30 percent (Selesky, 2012). In 2012, Asian Americans also had the highest educational levels and median household income of any racial demographic in US (Taylor et al., 2012; White, 2013), which means they can afford to enjoy more popular cultural products than others.

France, the country where K-Pop is the most popular in Western Europe, also has a considerable number of Southeast Asian immigrants and 2nd generation

¹⁸¹ Illegal immigrants and the short term residents (such as students from East Asia) are not included here.

¹⁸² The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the National Origins Formula that had been in place in the US since the Immigration Act of 1924. This act opened the door to immigrants from various parts of the world, especially from Mexico, Latin American countries, and Asia (see Keely, 1971; Asian-Nation, n.d.).

¹⁸³ U.S. Census Bureau definition of Asians refers to person having origins in any of the original peoples of Far East, Southeast Asia (in here, East Asia), or the India subcontinent. Therefore, in ‘Asian American’, Indian Americans are also included. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, total number of Asian immigrants in the US during 1971 to 2002 is 7,331,500. Among them, a number of immigrants from India were 1,005,100 while rest of them came from East Asia such as China (1,179,300), Philippines (1,508,100), Vietnam (1,098,000), Korea (839,600), and Japan (177,600). Based on this data, the percentage of East Asian origin in Asian immigrants is estimated at 85% or more. See Asian-Nation (n.d.) for the statistical data quoted from the statistical abstract of U.S. Census Bureau.

immigrants, though it is smaller than the number of Africans. According to data gathered by the French national institution *Insee*, as of 2008, immigrants and their direct descendants numbered at 12 million, about 20% of the total French population (Insee, 2010). Among them, 14% had Asian origin. Until the 1950s, France had many colonies in the Southeast Asian region – the French Indochinese Union which includes present-day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia – which is the reason that among the European countries, the largest number of Asian immigrants lives in France. For example, the expulsion of Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, a former French colony, in the 1970s, led to a wave of immigration towards France.

Though most descendants of East Asian immigrants have been well-integrated in the Western societies as a ‘model minority’, they are still strongly attached to their homelands both culturally and emotionally (e.g. “Wenzhou”, 2000; Blanc, 2004). In addition, the development of communication media such as the internet, satellite and cable networks providing international channels, and social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter is enabling them to connect more closely to their country of origin. Through these means of communication, they can enjoy the contemporary culture of their origin in real time from overseas (e.g. Parrenas, 2001; Lee, E. K., 2012). For example, by adding 2.00 USD per month to a standard cable television service, a viewer can access the ‘international channels package’ which includes one or more Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and other East Asian channels. On those channels, immigrants can watch news in real time, as well as variety shows and television dramas broadcasted about a month before their domestic television networks. They can also use internet-based real time and replay services as well as YouTube, where several Korean programs are officially released

right after their local television broadcast. Therefore, it is getting easier and faster for East Asian immigrants to access the current popular culture of their origin, not the traditional culture, in which many 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants usually have little interest. They are ceaselessly accessing and enjoying the current trends of their homeland (Lee, E. K., 2012).

As mentioned previously, K-Pop is very popular among East Asian immigrants and their descendants. Even if it is not the popular culture of their origin, they are aware of its popularity as the ‘coolest’ regional culture. Compared to first generation East Asian immigrants who tend to cling to their traditional culture, their descendants, some of whom cannot speak the languages of their origin, do not have much emotional familiarity with traditional culture. Many first generation East Asian immigrants came to US after the late 1960s, and most East Asian countries have experienced rapid changes in their political, economic, and cultural structures, since then, beginning in the late 1980s. Therefore, the culture that first generation East Asian immigrants had become ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘out-of-date’ in their homeland. There are often cultural conflicts between the first generation immigrants, who are generally not familiar or comfortable with Western culture, and their second generation children, who become well-integrated.

K-Pop is different. First, it does not have too much traditional locality/regionalism. Second, young East Asian young immigrants still feel racial, ethnic, and to a lesser extent, cultural affinity. Third, due to their transnational cultural consumption through diverse communication media, what is ‘cool’ in their homeland is becoming ‘cool’ internationally as well. For them, K-Pop is considered ‘our’ regional/global popular music, rather than ‘their (Korean)’ ethnic popular music. And

fourth, K-Pop helps East Asian immigrants to identify with a pan-East Asian identity that has cultural affinity. For example, in the US, Asian Americans are considered as ‘model minority’, there are not real role models for them that the media (and cultural industries in general) only give little visibility and stereotypical depictions of Asian Americans (for example, see Kim, 2004; Yuen. 2004). However, K-Pop is different that it is not old-fashioned and stereotypical traditional culture but is hip, popular among US and global audiences, and can call their own since it is still hard to get successful Asian American musicians in the US and global popular music scene.

In sum, the emergence of K-Pop audiences outside East Asia since the late 2000s is due to 1) the transformation in the US and global music industry – diversification of tastes; and 2) the increase of East Asian immigrants in the West and new modes of transnational cultural consumption. Both factors have been established by the development of communication media – digital music distribution, cable/satellite television networks, and internet-based social networking services. Due to digitalization, new niche markets have opened up to diverse popular musical genres and K-Pop is one of the ‘beneficiaries’ that has offered a freshness and globality for different races and ethnic groups, and modern regionality for East Asian immigrants. The growing popularity of K-Pop has, therefore, been dependent on the transformation of communication media as well as the appeal of the music itself.

Role of the Nation-State in *Hallyu*?

Before concluding this chapter, one thing must be addressed – the role of the nation-state in *Hallyu*. Some scholars argue that the Korean government has played an important supporting role in the rise of *Hallyu* in East Asia and the rest of the world

(for example, see Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 7; Mackintosh, Berry, and Liscutin, 2009, p. 4). The Korean government has certainly invested considerable amounts of money into domestic cultural industries. For example, in 2001, the government established the Korea Culture and Content Agency (now Korea Creative Content Agency [KOCCA]) with a budget of 90 million USD for that year (Shim, 2008, p. 28). Additionally, KOCCA provided subsidies amounting to four hundred and seventy three thousand USD to independent producers and cable channel PPs (program providers) to compete in the global cultural markets (ibid.). In addition to KOCCA, the Korea Tourism Organization has invested in *Hallyu* to increase tourism generated by fans of Korean television dramas and K-Pop. Recently, the organization sponsored a visit to the country, including a meeting with several K-Pop idols, for members of ‘Korean Connection’ – the main organization of promoting K-Pop and other Korean culture in France (Han, K. M., 2011). These policies and actions show that the Korean government has been “likewise keen to capitalize on the economic benefits of *Hallyu*” (Pease, 2009, p. 155).

However, the government support of the cultural industries and the *Hallyu* is not always helpful. Shim (2008) notes that the Korean government is sometimes “hypocritical”, because while the government announced a plan to support cultural industries, in reality it did not spend the amount that was proposed (p. 28). Ko (2005b) argues that events such as the Korean government-sponsored road shows of Korean television dramas and films actually caused backlash against Korean popular culture among some international audiences because of the emphasis on nationality. These actions and policies were sometimes met with considerable opposition by cultural industries at home (for example, see Shim, 2008, p. 29).

It should be noted that support by Korean government has come only after private cultural industries successfully penetrated foreign markets, not vice versa.

Shim (2008) points out that:

While the government might be credited with drawing up policies to bring new players and funding sources into the industry, many commentators and industry players in Korea tend to discount the government's contribution in engendering the Korean Wave. They even remarked that the government only jumped on the bandwagon when the phenomenon became very apparent. (p. 30)

Government support is generally based on strong nationalism and patriotism, both of which are unwelcomed with global audiences (Han, K. M., 2011). Therefore, industry insiders are cynical about the effectiveness of government support in the globalization of K-Pop and other Korean cultural products. Instead of active support of globalization, industry insiders want the government to correct practical problems such as the unfair relationship between the large television networks (distributors) and small independent production companies (producers), or the unfair alliances between the mainstream media, including big newspaper companies and television networks, and several dominant K-Pop agencies (Yi, 2004; Ko, 2005a; Lee, D. Y., 2012).

Conclusion

Market conditions were instrumental in making Korean popular culture the 'coolest' regional culture in East Asia. Due to the financial crisis that struck East

Asian in the late 1990s, many Korean recording companies and other cultural production companies went bankrupt. To resolve the crisis, Korean cultural industries turned their eyes towards East Asian markets where some of their products began to gain sporadic popularity. Just at that time, the cultural demands of East Asian audiences began to shift and increase significantly due to rapid democratization and capitalization. As a result, a new geo-cultural market was opened in East Asia. While there had already been cultural flows among East Asian countries – such as the popularity of Hong Kong movies in the 1970s and the 1980s in Korea, and Japanese television dramas and J-Pop in the late 1980s and the early 1990s in Taiwan and Hong Kong – it had not been spread to the whole East Asia, and lasted for a short time. However, when China and several former communist countries began to actively open its political and economic policies in the 1990s, East Asia developed into a geo-cultural market. Korean cultural industries were timely took advantage of these newly-developed niche markets.

Unlike American and other Western popular culture, Korea is a *non-hegemonic culture* that does not have enough political and economic power to impose its culture on other East Asian countries. Therefore, market conditions – the context of political economic conditions – cannot fully explain how K-Pop and Korean television dramas became the most popular regional culture in the East Asian geo-cultural market. The unique ambivalent ‘value’ and ‘quality’ found in Korean popular culture enthralls East Asian audiences – the *Asianized modernity/globality*. For developing countries such as China, Vietnam, and other several East Asian countries, moderate modernity – a blend of the modern and global with traditionality and Asian-ness – appeals to audiences because they see their past, present, and near future

simultaneously in K-Pop and Korean television dramas. As for Japan, the only ‘already developed country’ in East Asia, they see different type of modernity/globality in Korean popular culture that includes a vitality and warmth that is lacking in their own. These Asianized modern and global values cannot be found in other popular cultures, and East Asian audiences have empathized with and embraced this ambivalence.

K-Pop has gained popularity outside East Asia for different reasons. While Psy’s *Gangnam Style* has succeeded without hiding its Korean-ness, most K-Pop idols and agencies have attempted to de-nationalized their music, styles, and images when they release music outside East Asia. For example, many agencies and idols use songs written by famous American composers/producers, translate Korean songs into English lyrics, and leave anything distinctly or visually Korean of music videos. However, audiences in the US seem to prefer an ‘exotic feeling’ over ‘universal globality’ exemplified by the fact that *Gangnam Style* is more successful than any other K-Pop music released in US and other Western music markets. Western listeners who really like K-Pop are those looking for the new and fresh music to be different from others and descendants of East Asian immigrants who feel regional identity through K-Pop. Digitalization and the development of communication media have enabled them to access K-Pop as their alternatives to other genres of music or to old-fashioned traditional culture.

Though it is too early to predict, but the success of *Gangnam Style* in the West means for the potential of *Hallyu* to spread to the West. Unlike American hip hop/R’n’B, usually K-Pop music does not have explicit lyrics including sex, violence, and defaming female. Also, unlike experimental and only-for-club European

electronica, K-Pop has more popular appeal. Western audiences have already begun to notice about K-Pop, and *Gangnam Style* phenomenon may be the trigger of wider *Hallyu*.

CHAPTER 5: THE MEANING OF GLOBALIZATION OF K-POP: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS

K-Pop and the K-Pop industry are gaining a global reputation in East Asia and the West with the support of East Asian and immigrants from the region. Both K-Pop products and industries are “influencing and helping to constitute a new sense of the region as ‘New Asia’” (Mackintosh, Berry, & Liscutin, 2009, p. 2). Before the 1990s, there was little cultural flow and integration between countries of the East Asian region. Rather, there had sour relations between many nations due to unresolved histories, ideological conflicts, and as a result, strident nationalisms. The examples of international tension are almost too many to mention. As discussed above, Korea banned the import of Japanese popular culture and media.¹⁸⁴ Taiwan emphasized its independence from mainland China, and when Korea established full diplomatic relations with China in 1992, Taiwan immediately cut off official diplomatic relations with Korea. As a result, some Taiwanese nationalists still call Korea a ‘betrayal’. Japan and mainland China have territorial conflicts regarding Senkaku islands as well as historical animosity from the Nanjing Massacre.¹⁸⁵

Though these problems and conflicts remain, K-Pop and the *Hallyu* phenomenon has opened possibilities to ease these tensions and establish a new type of East Asian identity. As is shown by the presence of *Hallyu* in the West, K-Pop is embraced by East Asian immigrants and their descendants as a pan-East Asian

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter 2 for details.

¹⁸⁵ See Chapter 4 for details.

popular culture, something that has not existed since the late 19th century with colonialism in the region.

Between Homogenization and Hybridization

As discussed in Chapter 1, homogenization theory and hybridization theory are two main theories that describe the globalization of culture. Both these theories depend mainly on local/global binarism that while homogenization theory emphasizes the conflict between them, hybridization theory pays attention to the fusion of them. However, globalization of culture does not happen only in this dualism. Rather, it is always more complicated because 1) the world cannot be fully divided as global and local that sometimes the local culture can be globalized, and vice versa; and 2) homogenization and hybridization can happen simultaneously, not only separately

K-Pop is one of the good examples that describe this complexity in the globalization of culture. First, the development of K-Pop is based on the global homogenizing power such as the global political economic system – for instance, the direct distribution by global music conglomerates, establishment of global copyright regime, and penetration of global communication media – imposed on developing country Korea in the 1980s and the 1990s. By these flows of homogenization, global music genres pushed local and/or traditional Korean popular music.

However, K-Pop was not established just ‘under pressure’. Rather, Korean producers and audiences actively participated in accepting global musical genres and creating their own music referring to them. In spite of the strict regulation of the Korean government, creators and audiences ceaselessly tried to access to the latest trend of global culture, and indigenize it as their own culture. Transnationality of K-

Pop – both in musical and demographic aspects – and the uniqueness of K-Pop industry reflect Korea's own historical, political economic and cultural contexts. These aspects show that K-Pop is the result of hybridization of global and local.

However, it is not a victory of local struggle towards the global. Rather, the procedure of the establishment of K-Pop was an unavoidable adaptation and negotiation of the global. Though Korean popular music industry and audiences actively accepted global musical genres into their own culture and established a new hybrid genre K-Pop, it should not be ignored that they had no choice but to accept them in the globalization era since the late 1980s.

Also, contrary to the hybridization theory that celebrates the diversity and locality, K-Pop is trying to globalize itself and therefore playing as a homogenizing power, at least in its domestic and some East Asian markets. K-Pop is trans- and de-national music which contains both globality and locality/regionalism. However, it still has a tendency to persist in maintaining national identity and to become a compelling power, though the scope of the leverage is smaller than that of dominant global cultural power such as the US.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, K-Pop has ambivalent aspects that it is one of hybrid music developed by homogenizing power of globalization and, ironically, has come to have the homogenizing power even though in a smaller scale.

Possibility: Understanding Each Other

Cultural products are usually considered a type of industrial products, so the exchange of these can be explained by the logic of the market. Therefore, when accounting for the popularity of *Hallyu* in East Asia, one can easily assert that the

¹⁸⁶ Detailed discussion about this argument is described in later in this chapter.

condition of the media enabled K-Pop and Korean television dramas to successfully capture the East Asian market – and in some ways, this is true.

However, culture is distinct from other industrial products because the flows of cultural products can be related into ideational goals, while the production and sale cars and mobile phones usually are not. Robins (1997) argues that flows of the market in a globalized related to culture and identity as:

It is surely clear that the global shift – associated with the creation of world markets, with international communication and media flows, and with international travel – has profound implications for the way we make sense of our lives and of the changing world we live in. (p. 38)

Mackintosh et al. (2009) notes that Robins’ argument “underscores a basic premise of economic-cum-cultural regionalization in Northeast Asia” (p. 13). Though they discuss Northeast Asia exclusively, this argument can be applied to East Asia as a whole. Popular cultural products have played a distinctive and crucial role to construct regional identity.¹⁸⁷

For example, Itsunori Onodera (2004), the former Japanese Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, wrote as follows:

The process of promoting mutual exchange, discovering what values are common to Asia, and gaining a better understanding of what place their own

¹⁸⁷ However, the flow of popular cultural products in East Asia has not created sufficient momentum to bring about economic regionalization like EU-style institutional supra-nationalism. See Mackintosh et. al (2009).

culture has in Asian culture as a whole would contribute to an increased understanding among the people of Asia of the cultures of the different countries of Asia, and further promote the appeal of Asian culture and the culture of each country. In so doing, (East) Asian values, which embrace peace and harmony, would, if transmitted more dynamically to the world, be able to make a significant contribution in the future of human civilization in the 21st century.

It is interesting that politicians in the late 1980s and 1990s who observed the so-called ‘Asian Renaissance’¹⁸⁸ emphasized traditional, anti-Western, and nationalistic ideologies such as Neo-Confucianism (Berger, 2004, p. 191). However, the current cultural flow is the “product of a neo-liberal ideology” based on embracing the global free market ideology, globalized consumerism, and individual freedom (Mackintosh et al., 2009, p. 5; see also Liu, 2002). That is to say, contrary to the expectation of those politicians, cultural industries have influenced the establishment of *new* Asian values: by consuming K-Pop, East Asian audiences identify themselves as East Asian.

For example, the Korean television drama *Winter Sonata* has done more to improve relations between Korea and Japan than any politician or businessperson.

¹⁸⁸ The discourse of ‘Asian Renaissance’ was declared by a number of East Asian politicians such as Lee Kuan Yew (Prime Minister of Singapore during 1959-1990), Mahathir bin Mohamad (Prime Minister of Malaysia during 1981-2003), and Anwar Ibrahim (Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia during 1993-1998). They insisted that ‘the era of New East Asia’ began not with Western ideologies, but with traditional East Asian ideologies such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and East Asian Islamism. For example, Ibrahim argues that Western style democracy is not suitable for East Asia that it should be controlled by religion or other traditional values. See Ibrahim (1996) for details.

According to a survey, 60 percent of Japanese audiences are paying more attention to media coverage of the Japan-Korea political and historical relationship (Hayashi, 2004). In an interview, a Japanese viewer of *Winter Sonata* explained that watching the show made her reconsider the image of Korea she had before by consuming Korean cultural products:

Korea was very far from me. I thought that they (Korea) just copied us. I was only thinking what we could give to them, but I thought there was nothing I could receive from them. After watching *Winter Sonata*, Korea got closer, but a strong gap still exists: it is in our history [...] Now I believe that women like me can be a good breakthrough, by loving Korean dramas and actors, even if Korean people may be surprised at us. (An interview quoted from Mōri, 2008, p. 139)

Another Japanese interviewee who has memories of World War II and colonization of Korea described the influence that *Winter Sonata* had on her:

As I grew up in Omura city, where a camp for illegal migrants was located, I had a certain image of Koreans. They often had quarrelling with each other. They were always loud. Honestly, I looked down on them. But *Yon-sama* changed everything. I have learned about Korea through *Winter Sonata* and now understand that a larger part of Japanese culture came from Korea. This reminded me that I was born in Manchuria (during Japanese colonial period) where my father worked. (ibid.)

In these interviews, Japanese people spoke about Korea in very personal ways, based on their memories, stereotypes, and historical knowledge. Through watching the drama, these viewers were given an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between Korea and Japan, and to understand it differently. Some people were even inspired to learn about the effects of Japanese colonialism in the Korean peninsula, and change their view of the current situation between the nations (Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 251-252).

Many consumers of Korean television dramas and K-Pop in Japan have begun to actively learn about contemporary Korea – its popular culture, society, and people. A considerable number of people from Japan have recently visited Korea to experience the setting of drama, local culture and people, and began to learn Korean language (see Hirata, 2008). In addition to tourism and language, Korean food and liquor has become one of the ‘hot’¹⁸⁹ trends among Japanese young people, especially young females, and the Japanese media is now paying attention to these other types of *Hallyu* (e.g. “*Makkori* Boom”, 2011).¹⁹⁰ Most students who begin to learn the Korean languages in the US are descendants of East Asian immigrants and their white and/or black friends interested in K-Pop, and to a lesser extent, Korean television dramas (Shin, H.Y., 2012, p. 126).

These cultural flows in and through the East Asia have contributed to the establishment of new East Asian identities. Mackintosh et al. (2009) point out that

¹⁸⁹ In here, the word ‘hot’ has two different meanings: 1) the latest trend, and 2) the taste of Korean food which is actually hot and spicy.

¹⁹⁰ For example, among young Japanese females, it is ‘chic’ to eat hot Korean food and *Makkori*, traditional Korean liquor, naturally and with equanimity.

cultural flows alone cannot promote economic integration and political co-operation in the region, but that, through these dynamics, East Asia is “being constructed discursively, ideologically, and normatively as a cultural entity” (p. 21). Therefore, though K-Pop and Korean television dramas are Korean ethnic popular culture, they have possibilities to become an East Asian regional culture – the pan-East Asian culture – simultaneously. Though East Asian audiences do not directly consider K-Pop and Korean dramas as ‘our culture’, these cultural products contribute to construct friendliness and familiarity among East Asian people with providing chances to understand each other better than before.

Limits of *Hallyu* and in East Asia

However, there are still questions such as these. Can *Hallyu* and cultural regionalization displace the strong patriotism and nationalism dominant in East Asia during the 20th century? Have these nations really become closer? Though *Hallyu* has constituted a significant force to construct a new kind of regional identity, it has actually caused some hostility towards Korean cultural products based on historical animosity, reviving nationalism against transnational K-Pop both in domestic and other East Asian markets. On whose terms are new East Asian identities formed? Do they include all the East Asian people? This section discusses about these questions.

Unevenness of Cultural Flows

When positive globalists ‘celebrate’ the potential power of global popular culture and media to transform a society to one where ‘we live together in peace’, they are challenged with the criticism that cultural exchange is not always

harmonious.¹⁹¹ Mackintosh et al. (2009) note that cultural exchange in East Asia is often about “projecting one’s own national prestige, presence, and influence through a jockeying for position in a regional and global market structured by relative strength of economic – now linked to culture – and/or political power” (p. 15). For example, McGray (2002, p. 9) argues that cultural products can create a “mighty engine of national cool”, where “commercial trends and products, and a country’s knack for spawning them, can serve political and economic ends.” K-Pop has produced an image of ‘national cool’, which may exercise “soft power” on East Asian audiences.

As in globalization of culture in general, the cultural exchange between East Asian countries is often uneven. Though K-Pop has come to be considered a ‘regional culture’ in East Asia, it is, in fact, a one-way cultural flow. For example, Chinese and Vietnamese popular culture is not recognized by Korean audiences. Sreberny-Mohammadi argued (1991) that the power of the nation-state is important in producing cultural products. The relative economic power of Korea to produce domestic cultural products gave it, and subsequently K-Pop, an advantage over other East Asian nations though the popularity was not entirely due to Korea’s economic advantage because it is not so powerful as other hegemonic culture such as American one.

Some ‘cultural nationalists’ in Korea – the Korean government, and some politicians and patriotic media sources – assert that the final goal of *Hallyu* is to become the dominant global culture and “conquer” US and Western markets (e.g. Huh, 2011, p. 40). Chohan (2005) argues that cultural nationalists stress the economic benefits of *Hallyu*, assert its superiority over “other” East Asian cultures, and believe

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 1 for discussions of a number of scholars about the globalization of culture.

it is a challenge to ‘developed’ Western culture. These discourses of the cultural flow reproduce views by Koreans of other East Asians as “not-quite-modern” (Iwabuchi, 2009, p. 31). Some Koreans see the popularity of K-Pop in other East Asian countries as proof that the other countries in East Asia are ‘behind us’. They identify K-Pop with global enterprises such as Samsung and LG, and believe that “we are more modern and developed” than other countries in the region (Lee, D.Y., 2011b). In this perception, they understand East Asia’s present to be equal to with ‘our (Korean)’ past.

Additionally, while many people see an opportunity for the construction of a regional identity in K-Pop, not every East Asian feels this way. Access to this regional identity and affiliation is only accessible to those “who can afford a cosmopolitan identity” (Friedman, 1997, p. 81; see also Smith, 1996; Graham, 2000). Iwabuchi (2009) explains this point further:

While the circulation of made-in-Asia texts are becoming more common in many parts of urban spaces in East Asia, the kinds of text circulating are mostly restricted to commercially and ideologically hegemonic ones in each country. [...] Exchange among the dominant cultures of East Asia [...] does not do justice to cultural differences, inequality, and marginalization in each society in gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, region, class, migration, and so forth. (p. 29-30)

The consumers of K-Pop and other Korean media products are mostly the urban middle classes, and business and media elites. Yeo (2005) notes that the “constituencies promoting these trends are narrowly based and therefore vulnerable to

pressures from those with wider nationalist identifications and loyalties, including the desire to protect fragile national sovereignties” (p. 5). Though it may be not “insuperable barrier”, the unevenness within and among countries restrains the ability of cultural flow to construct new East Asian identities.

***Banil* vs. *Kenkanryu*: “Identity War” between Korea and Japan**

Paradoxically, there have been anti-Japanese protests in Korea even while Japanese popular cultural products are popular among some Korean audiences in recent years.¹⁹² In Japan, anti-Korean movements have existed while K-Pop and Korean television dramas have simultaneously gained great popularity.

Banil (反日, 반일) is a Korean word meaning ‘anti-Japan’, and *Kenkanryu* (嫌韓流, けんかんりゅう) is a newly developed Japanese word meaning ‘anti-*Hallyu*’.¹⁹³ As mentioned previously, there are deep historical animosities between Korea and Japan. In brief, Korean people want the Japanese government to sincerely apologize for colonial rule of Korea, while many Japanese people do not understand why Koreans want this to happen. Some Japanese rightists and nationalists still even insist that colonial Japan did not treat Korea harshly but rather helped Korea’s modernization and development. In addition, there has been a territorial dispute over *Dokdo*¹⁹⁴ – which exacerbates negative national sentiments between them.

¹⁹² The popularity of Japanese culture in Korea – especially J-Pop – in the 1990s is discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁹³ Both in Korean and Japanese languages, there is no difference between the pronunciation of ‘l’ and ‘r’. Therefore, *Hallyu* is also written as *Hanryu* in Korean, or *Kanryu* in Japan. Korean ‘*han* (한)’ and Japanese ‘*kan* (かん)’ means the same Chinese character ‘韓’, which means Korea (韓國).

¹⁹⁴ *Dokdo* (Japanese name *Takeshima*) is a group of small islands located in East Sea (Sea of

While *banil* sentiments have a long history rooted in Japanese colonialism, *kenkanryu* is a recent development. However, Japanese patriotic and nationalist discourses which justify Japan's colonial past have a longer history (Mōri, 2008, p. 138). There are two conflicting discourses in Japan: one is rooted in the belief that Japan should understand Korean's hostility towards sincerely apologize for the past; the other an underground rightist perspective maintains that "it was not our fault." These two views are typical Japanese way of expressing '*tatema* and *honne*' – official expression and hidden, but real, consciousness.

The *Kenkanryu* movement gives its supporters "the thrill of breaking taboos" to openly express their *honne* – "what you always thought about Korean but never dared to say" (Liscutin, 2009, p. 174). In March 2005, the long-standing *Dokdo* dispute was reignited when the *Shimane* Prefecture's¹⁹⁵ assembly passed the 'Takeshima Day' bill to celebrate their possession of the island. As in many moments of Korean-Japanese history, Korean protesters demonstrated in front of Japanese Embassy in Seoul, taking violent actions such as setting the Japanese national flag on fire. A boycott of Japanese products and strong statements of politicians against the Japanese governments soon followed.

And yet, even while Japanese politicians "continued to add fuel to the raging flames of Korean ire", *Hallyu* was gaining popularity in Japan with several television dramas and K-Pop stars. At the same time, in Korea, novels written by Japanese

Japan). Japan claims that the islands became their territory in 1905 when they began to colonize Korean peninsula. However, Korea asserts that the islands were already returned back to Korea when it became independent from Japan. See "Liancourt Rocks" (n.d.) for details.

¹⁹⁵ While *Dokdo* (*Takeshima*) is a part of *Gyeongsang Bukdo* Province of Korea, in Japan, it is a part of *Shimane* Prefecture.

novelists such as Haruki Murakami and Kaori Ecuni became best sellers. While these dynamics seem strange, regardless of political conflicts, these countries often continue to exchange their industrial and cultural products. Some Korean and Japanese even anticipated that *Hallyu* in Japan would create “a reconciliatory power ascribed to cultural exchange and regional flows of culture” (Liscutin, 2009, p. 172). However, though there is sufficient evidence of the power of cultural flows to create greater understanding between nations, Japanese neo-nationalists became worried about losing their cultural identities and the no. 1 position in East Asia.

Kenkanryu was a representative example of this neo-nationalist backlash. In July 2005, a Japanese writer named Sharin Yamano published a manga¹⁹⁶ called *Manga Kenkanryu*. As the title shows, the main argument of the manga was hostility towards *Hallyu* and criticized Japanese consumers of Korean popular culture. In this manga, Yamano asserted that he would tell the “truth about Korea” – its history and culture, and Korean’s remonstrance about Japanese colonialism. He insisted that *Banil* sentiments in Korea did not have any legitimate basis – the development and modernization in Korea was is all a result of 36 years of Japanese colonial domination.

This is nothing new –the *Kenkanryu* argument demonstrates a typical logic among Japanese rightists and nationalists. For this reason, many critics have either dismissed it as “simply another, of several, neo-nationalist pop-culture products” or denied it any attention at all (Liscutin, 2009, p. 173). However, the manga became an

¹⁹⁶ Manga (漫画) are comics created in Japan, or by Japanese creators in Japanese language. In Japan, people of all ages read manga. The medium includes works in a broad range of genres: action-adventure, romance, sports, games, historical drama, comedy, science fiction, horror, and sexuality. Manga have also gained a significant worldwide audience. In 2008, in the US and Canada, manga market was valued at 175 million USD, and in Europe and the Middle East the market was worth 250 million USD. See Gravett (2004) and Wong (2006) for more information about manga.

instant bestseller and topped the bestseller in Japan for several weeks. By now, sales have reached more than 800,000 copies, a surprisingly high figure compared to other manga (ibid.). This book provoked a *Kenkanryu* boom and anti-*Hallyu* became one of the mainstream trends, especially on personal blogs and other websites. Though it is not as prevalent now as it was in 2005, there are a considerable number of anti-*Hallyu* users on big internet sites such as Japanese *2channel*. Some public figures and celebrities openly expressed their uneasiness about *Hallyu*, and, for example, in 2011 the famous Japanese actor Takaoka Sosuke¹⁹⁷ criticized that Japanese television networks saying that they were broadcasting too much Korean dramas and music and that Japanese audiences hated them (Baek, 2011).

As is shown by this *kenkanryu* boom, though K-Pop has possibilities to become a pan-East Asian cultural phenomenon in the region and other parts of the world, this does not bode well for an East Asian identity taking hold anytime soon. There is backlash from nationalists of East Asian countries who become anxious about losing their identities. The unevenness of cultural exchange exacerbates these anxieties¹⁹⁸ and can potentially become aggressive when seen in the legacy of historical and territorial conflicts. There remains a long way to go.

¹⁹⁷ Ironically, Sousuke became famous through appearing in the movie *Bakchigi*, the story of which is about the discrimination of Korean Japanese in Japan. In that movie, he played a role as a second generation Korean Japanese and by this role, he won the ‘Best Actor’ award in one of Japanese film awards in 2005.

¹⁹⁸ For example, though not as strong as that of Japan, there are also ‘anti-*Hallyu*’ sentiments among Chinese audiences. They criticize that Koreans don’t import much Chinese cultural products, while Chinese have “unrequited love” for K-Pop and Korean television dramas. See Jang (2011).

“Why Don’t You Go to the Army?”: Tablo Scandal

K-Pop’s transnationality is one of the important elements that appeal to international audiences. It is not only musically transnational, but also demographically and therefore ‘culturally’ transnational, as described previously. Some Korean media outlets and audiences, however, have attempted to re-nationalize K-Pop as ‘Korean’ while other fans and scholars praise its transnationality and cosmopolitanism. Both the Jay Park scandal described in Chapter 3 and the Tablo scandal in 2010 also shows the ‘de-nationalizing movement’ of K-Pop by nationalistic Korean media and audiences.

Tablo is a member of the famous K-Pop/Korean hip hop trio, Epik High. He is a Korean-Canadian who moved to Canada when he was in middle school. After graduating from Stanford University in the US, he formed the group in 2002 with Mithra Jin and DJ Tukutz, both of whom are Korean. The group made several hit songs such as *The Day of Peace*, *Fly*, *Paris*, *Fan*, and *Love Love Love*. Tablo was the most popular member of Epik High and appeared on television dramas, variety shows, and worked as a radio DJ.

From his debut, Tablo attracted public attention because he graduated from Stanford, one of the most prestigious universities in the US, which is unique among K-Pop and Korean hip-hop musicians. Many Korean audiences were critical of him because, like other socially ‘conscious’ hip hop musicians, he criticized the irrationalities of Korean society without hesitation. They pointed out that actually he was not Korean but Canadian and, therefore, ‘don’t have to go to the army’. Military service is mandatory for every Korean male in his twenties, but because Tablo does not have Korean nationality – though his ethnicity is Korean – he did not have to

serve. Therefore many Koreans, especially males, thought he was hypocritical. They pointed out that he was born in and now living in Korea, but was away for several years, and returned to the country to earn money from Korean audiences by criticizing Korean society. Critics were outraged that he dared to criticize Korean society and making money there without having fulfilled his 'Korean duty'.

The Tablo scandal should be understood as part of wider hostility towards ethnic Koreans working in Korea as musicians and members of idol groups. During the summer of 2010, an internet user, who went by the screen-name of *whatbecomes*,¹⁹⁹ suggested that Tablo did not actually graduate from Stanford University. He insisted that Tablo's diploma was forged, and created a small internet community named 'Asking Tablo to Tell the Truth (*Tajinyo*)'.²⁰⁰ Although *whatbecomes* had glaring loopholes in his claims from the beginning, it soon became a hot issue and more than 120,000 internet users registered to the community (Bae, S. J., 2010). At first Tablo did not officially respond to the claims, but as the scandal grew more serious he asked Stanford University to release his diploma to the public. In addition, to Stanford administrative offices officially providing his graduation, several of Tablo's classmates vouched for him through Facebook and other social networking services. However, the rumors continued until one of the biggest Korean television networks (MBC) fully investigated the scandal and reported that Tablo was truly a Stanford alumnus. Tablo sued several members of *Tajinyo* committee, eight of

¹⁹⁹ Later, *whatbecomes* revealed his identity that he is Korean immigrants living in the US in his fifties. He insisted that he completed mandatory military duty serving in Korea Marines. He argued that every celebrity whose ethnicity is Korean should go to the army, regardless of his nationality. See Cho, W. Y. (2010) and Lim, J. S. (2010).

²⁰⁰ The community is called *Tajinyo*, the abbreviation of the Korean sentence of 'Asking Tablo to Tell the Truth (*Tabloegae Jinsilul Yogoohapnida*)'.

whom were convicted.

As with the Jay Park scandal, many Korean nationalists and media showed their true colors during the Tablo scandal. Though there was no evidence against Tablo, many audiences and media attacked Tablo as ‘a liar’ harshly because ‘he is a foreigner who does not go to the army’. Min-Woo Jung (2011, p. 184-186) investigated the internet communities who criticized Tablo and found that the main reason Korean people were angry with him was not suspicion about his graduation from Stanford. Rather, they were incensed that he escaped mandatory military service. They were enraged that Tablo was able to enjoy the pleasures of Korea as ‘half-Korean’, but did not have to participate in arduous military duty they did because he was also ‘half-Canadian’. In short, the privileges derived from his nationality – including his English and educational background that many Korean males are eager to attain but cannot easily access – provoked severe backlash among neo-nationalists.

A number of ethnic Koreans as well as complete foreigners have been part of the K-Pop movement, which has contributed its globality, transnationality and denationality. However, a number of domestic audiences are not satisfied with these dynamics and seize every opportunity to re-nationalize K-Pop. As we have seen, this endeavor sometimes involves aggressive response due to a sensitivity around national issues such as mandatory military service. Many of the most vehement nationalists are stricken with a victim mentality due to the *trauma* induced by serving in the army during their youth against their will. This trauma has led some people to construct a distorted and exclusive nationalism against foreigners, including ethnic Koreans. Tablo and Jay Park are just two examples where this nationalism exploded into outrage directed at individuals. This is a paradox of K-Pop: in order to succeed in the

global market, it needs to be de-nationalized; however, de-nationalization often makes domestic audiences feel uneasy about potentially losing the national identity.

Therefore, the conflicts between de-nationality and re-nationality that are happening in other East Asian countries, is also taking place in Korea.

Conclusion

K-Pop is a hybrid popular music developed under the influence of global homogenizing power such as an imposed global political economic system and the penetration of global communication media. It is transnational and de-nationalized music due to its hybrid aspects, but still clings to the national identity and now is becoming one of the global homogenizing powers to a lesser extent.

K-Pop and other Korean cultural products such as Korean television dramas have possibilities to become a pan-East Asian popular culture that it has helped many East Asian audiences to understand each other and feel a sense of ‘new East Asian’ identity. They see their regionality – moderate modernity constructed based on East Asian contexts – in K-Pop and Korean dramas. This is especially true for East Asian immigrants outside the region who often identify themselves with this regional culture as closely as their domestic cultures. The possibility of K-Pop as the pan-East Asian culture has opened up people in East Asian countries who have historically held resentment and prejudices toward other Asian countries in ways that may contribute to the resolution of political/historical disputes.

However, K-Pop is still not ‘our East Asian’ culture. Rather, there is still unevenness in the cultural flow of East Asia. It is often a one-way flow – from Korea (or Japan) to other ‘less-developed’ countries’. Moreover, the experience of new East

Asian values in this pan-East Asian culture is only available to the urban middle and upper-middle classes who can afford to enjoy these cultural products. In this way, social, political, and economic class still is a barrier to the spread of this experience of new East Asian modernity. There has been backlash from neo-nationalists towards the regional culture of K-Pop and *Hallyu*, in both its domestic and regional markets. There are several reasons for this backlash, the most important being a ‘fear of losing national identity’. While some East Asian audiences – especially Japanese – are worried that this ‘Korean invasion’ may weaken their national identity, Korean neo-nationalists fear that K-Pop and other Korean cultural products are getting too non-Korean. K-Pop has begun to establish the possibility of pan-, transnational and East Asian culture, yet there are several dynamics that limit its reach that may not disappear anytime soon.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF K-POP

During the late 1980s, globalization of culture began to accelerate due to several global transformations such as the development of communication media, reinforcement of global copyright laws, and digitalization. The development of communication media propelled the broad and rapid spread of dominant global cultural products such as Anglo-American and some European popular music, Hollywood movies, and American television dramas. The reinforcement of global copyright laws in developing countries forced them to participate in the system of global cultural industries with other global political economic systems. Digitalization changed the nature of producing and distributing global cultural products, especially in the popular music scene, with the development of digital production systems and digital distribution formats such as the compact disc (CD).

During this same period, Korea was experiencing dramatic political and economic transformations. In 1987, the country established a civilian government following violent pro-democracy protests that culminated in the fall of the thirty-year military dictatorship. At the same time, the Korean economy experienced rapid economic growth, standards of living began to improve, and the country became involved in the global system of cultural industries. Those transformations brought about a sudden and rapid increase in demands for cultural products. As a result, the scale of cultural industries in Korea expanded rapidly, and the popular music industry

was the first and most prominent industry to grow.

New Generation Dance Music, the early form of current K-Pop, gained popularity in this new Korean context. Different from former general *Gayo*, New Generation Dance Music was actively influenced by trendy global music and catered to the tastes of young audiences, who emerged as the primary consumers of these new popular music products. With newly developed communication media such as cable and satellite networks and computers, young Korean audiences could access trendy global music more directly than ever before. This opened their eyes to sophisticated global popular music, and they came to demand similar quality in their domestic music. The Korean music industry responded quickly to this new demand with New Generation Dance Music. However, there were several fatal flaws in New Generation Dance Music, including the plagiarism of Japanese and Western popular music that led to its rapid decline. While New Generation Dance Music did not last, it changed the way the Korean music industry produced and distributed music, setting the stage for K-Pop.

The Korean music industry learned a lesson from the failure of New Generation Dance Music, and established a more refined system to produce global level music. The industry developed a Fordism-like system of music production and distribution called the 'idol-agency' system. In this context, the term 'idol' refers to a performer who is recruited, trained, and debuted all by a single entertainment management agency ('agency'). To produce idols, agencies established a 'total management' system which involves training the raw potential idols to sing, dance, rap, act, etc.; producing music; managing their individual schedules; and sometimes intervening in their private lives. These agencies co-operated with the television

industry, which also depended on idols and agencies for higher ratings.

In contrast to New Generation Dance Music and other previous *Gayo* genres, K-Pop is both musically and demographically transnational. It has drawn musical elements from different types of global popular music such as American R'n'B and hip hop, European electronic dance music, and Japanese popular music. Many international musicians, producers, and performers are participating in the current K-Pop scene including foreign composers/producers and idol groups featuring one or more international members. Most of them are ethnic-Korean (Korean American, Korean Canadian, and Korean Australian), but some are actual foreigners such as American, Japanese, Chinese, Chinese-American, Thai American, etc. However, though K-Pop is rooted in transnationality and de-nationality, K-Pop is Korean popular music produced and distributed by Korean agencies, owners of which are Korean capitalists. In addition, some Korean fans and media ceaselessly try to re-nationalize K-Pop as their own music.

Along with Korean television dramas, K-Pop began to gain popularity in East Asia in the late 1990s. Both K-Pop and the television dramas quickly became explosively popular in East Asia, and this phenomenon came to be known as *Hallyu*, which means Korean Wave. There are several reasons that K-Pop and Korean television dramas became one of the 'coolest' popular cultural products in East Asia, the most important being 'felicitous timing'. During the late 1990s, when Korean cultural industries began to produce global quality K-Pop and Korean television dramas, many East Asian countries experienced considerable economic growth, democratization, and development of media industries. As with Korea in the late and early 1990s, these East Asian countries developed new cultural demands and Korean

cultural products were relatively cheap compared to other international products yet still of global quality.

In addition to economic factors, K-pop and Korean television dramas had a unique appeal to East Asian audiences because they represented Asianized modernity. Through consuming K-Pop and Korean television dramas, East Asian audiences could experience cultural products that were definitely of modern and global quality, but were also uniquely suited for the tastes of East Asian audiences. Japanese audiences, who thought of themselves as ‘the most developed and modern in East Asia’, saw different modernity in Korean culture. These cultural products compelled many Japanese viewers come to feel that Korean popular culture (and East Asian audiences who enjoy it) was not inferior to their own, as was the dominant stereotype at the time, but just ‘different’ one.

Since the late 2000s, K-Pop has begun attracting attention from audiences outside East Asia. K-Pop concerts have received enthusiastic responses around the world, and listeners in the US and UK, two of dominant countries in global popular music, have begun seeking K-Pop as a new popular music genre. The unexpected global success of the single *Gangnam Style* has ignited global interest in K-Pop. While *Hallyu* has been a phenomenon in East Asia for many years, K-Pop has gained popularity in the West very recently and it is too early to discuss the effects in these countries. However, the increasing success of K-Pop is due to the transformations in the global music industry – the digitalization of music distribution and websites such as YouTube – and the increase of the amount of people of East Asian origin living in countries around the world. Though Western audiences concentrate on K-Pop’s exotic elements rather than its transnationality and de-nationality, East Asian immigrants and

their descendants living in the West see K-Pop as their own regional culture, not just as Korean ethnic popular music.

The popularity of K-Pop among East Asian audiences presents the possibility of pan-East Asian culture that has not existed since the 20th century. With K-Pop and other *Hallyu* products, East Asian audiences have come to understand each other better, and consuming these cultural products have even served to relieve some political tensions based on the historical animosity. Among East Asian immigrants around the world, K-Pop is becoming a link to connect broader East Asian communities.

However, there are several limitations to the ability of K-Pop to bring a sense of continuity among East Asians, particularly unevenness in the cultural flow of the region. Only Korea, and to a lesser extent, Japan, two of ‘more developed and globalized’ countries, are exporting cultural products to other East Asian countries, while they do not import many cultural products from the region. Additionally, the new pan-East Asian identity constructed in the consumption of *Hallyu* products is only accessible to middle and upper middle class urban consumers. There has also been backlash from neo-nationalists in several countries that are hostile toward Korean popular culture for fear of losing their national identities. *Kenkanryu*, an anti-*Hallyu* movement, is an aggressive example of the negative attitudes towards K-Pop and Korean dramas from neo-nationalists. In its domestic market, K-Pop is facing radical nationalism by considerable number of audiences and media that are worried that K-Pop is too transnational and, therefore, de-national. They emphasize the Korean-ness of K-Pop, and have targeted and attacked transnational people working in K-Pop industry.

Significance, Limitations, and Future Research

While about 15 years have passed since K-Pop became the ‘coolest’ popular music in East Asia, there has been little academic inquiry about the phenomenon, and most of studies of *Hallyu* and East Asian culture focus on Korean television dramas. East Asia has been “an almost forgotten area in the academic study of the popular music of the English language sphere” (Shin, Mōri, and Ho; 2013, p. 1). For example, Shin, Mōri, and Ho note that even in the anthology of popular music studies such as *The Popular Music Studies Reader* (edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee), there is not “any single article that touches on, let alone discusses, East Asian popular music” (ibid.). However, K-Pop is swiftly becoming one of the global musical genres not only in East Asian but around the world. Therefore, this phenomenon should not be overlooked. This dissertation considers the unique globalization of K-Pop – globalization of a non-hegemonic culture, which is an uncommon phenomenon.

In this dissertation, I have documented the historical, political, social, and economic contexts of the development of K-Pop. While the few studies of K-Pop usually concentrate on the reaction of consumers, they fail to address K-Pop’s distinct characteristics that, I argue, are the most important factors that have contributed to its globalization. K-Pop did not come into global markets out of the blue, but rather was the result of a process of globalization that took place within Korea. This dissertation pays close attention to these changes, and connects it to wider globalization. In order to discuss the rise of the music that came to be known as K-Pop, I necessarily begin by discussing its early form – New Generation Dance Music. While K-Pop might

seem to be just another popular music phenomenon, several important political economic and social factors such as globalization of copyright laws and digitalization are unique to the construction of this musical genre. By discussing K-Pop and the process of its globalization, this dissertation expands the scope of cultural studies research and connects it to other fields of studies such as communication studies and regional studies.

Because this dissertation is one of the pioneering studies of K-Pop, the principal limitation I encountered in conducting this research was the lack of previous study. Other than some media coverage, there has been little public or academic discussion about the globalization of K-Pop. Though I did conduct some informal interviews with a few industry insiders – engineers, music critics, journalists, etc – as well as some Korean audiences, these were few and I was unable to get enough responses from international audiences due to time and space restraints. Also, since it is a very recent phenomenon in the West, it may be too early to discuss the influence and meaning of globalization of K-Pop outside East Asia.

Since the globalization of K-Pop is in progress now, this dissertation is not the end of research about it, but rather, a beginning. Future research will be more centered on ethnography to capture the sentiments of audiences in and outside of East Asia. While this dissertation discusses the influence of globalization on the construction of K-Pop, interviews and participant observation in future research will explore the way that K-Pop affects transnationalism and the diversification of global culture.

Future research projects on K-Pop should take into consideration of national identity and opposition to *Hallyu*. First, it should explore the relationship between the

identity formation of Korean immigrants and K-Pop's globalization, especially in Japan where Korean immigrants have been treated discriminately. I expect that this future research will help reveal whether K-Pop and other *Hallyu* products have affected discrimination ethnic stereotypes of Koreans in other countries. Second, future research should explore the discrimination by Korean people towards other East Asians living in Korea.²⁰¹ The numbers of East Asian immigrants to Korea is increasing rapidly, and several problems such as discrimination, illegal/undocumented immigration, and crime have become social issues as a result. Finally, future research should explore the question: Does K-Pop (and *Hallyu*) contribute to the resolution of ethnic conflicts and the establishment of a transnational regional pan-East Asian identity, or does it exacerbate these dynamics and bring about nationalistic backlash?

²⁰¹ There are a considerable number of East Asian people in Korea. Most East Asian males are working in '3D (dirty, difficult, and dangerous)' industries with fewer wages. Additionally, many females are married to Korean farmers, whom many Korean women do not consider as marriage potential.

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