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Hallyu from Its Origin to Present: A Historical Overview

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As the first chapter in this series of studies on the influence of Korean pop-culture in Asia and other parts of the world, this chapter provides historical background related to cultural relations between Korea and other countries, tracing back several thousand years, and the influence of international media in the age of mass media. Based on this theme, this chapter is organized by three different eras, consisting of 1) international and intercultural relations in Korea's pre-media age, 2) emergence of modern media in Korea, and, recently, 3) media and pop culture known as the Korean Wave. This chapter deals with these topics by focusing on Korea's cultural relations with other countries in the pre-media age, the history of modern media, and its effects in Korea and beyond.

Korea's International and Intercultural Relations in the Pre-Media Age (~18th Century)

For several thousand years, the history of Korea produced several kingdoms and dynasties that emerged and failed over time within the same ethnic population. The first kingdom in Korean history was established by Dangun in 2333 B.C. and named (Old) Joseon (KMEST, 2003). After several thousand years of prosperity, the first kingdom was destroyed by Han China in 108 B.C. and several new nations appeared in the Korean peninsula and Manchuria, such as Buyeo, Okjeo, Eastern Ye, and Samhan. The nations following Old Joseon were unified by Three Kingdoms, which were Goguryeo (37 B.C. ~ 668 A.D.) in the northern part of the Korean peninsula and Manchuria, Baekje (18 B.C. ~ 660 A.D.) in the southwestern part of Korea, and Silla (57 B.C. ~918 A.D.) in the southeastern part of Korea. By 668 A.D., Silla unified other kingdoms and renamed itself Unified Silla. However, its territory remained smaller than the combination of all Three Kingdoms, since Balhae, which succeeded Goguryeo, arose in the northern part of Korea and Manchuria and took northern parts of Goguryeo. After unification, the nation of Unified Silla flourished for more than two hundred years before it was divided by Later Three Kingdoms – Later Goguryeo, Later Baekje, and Silla. The Later Three Kingdoms were unified by the Goryeo Dynasty in 939 A.D., which lasted until it was defeated by the founders of Joseon Dynasty in 1392 A.D. For the next five hundred years, the Joseon Dynasty (1392 A.D. ~1910 A.D.) ruled the Korean peninsula.

In the pre-media age, Korea's intercultural relationships with foreign countries were primarily the result of economic trade, influx of religions, and wars with other countries. Beginning with the Three

Kingdom Period, Korea served as a cultural bridge between China and Japan due to its geographical location between the two countries. For example, Buddhism was imported from China and exported to Japan through Korea. In the process, Buddhism became a major religion in the Three Kingdoms. Even though all three Kingdoms participated in the transmission of culture between China and Japan, Baekje's role was especially remarkable in transcending and transporting culture. The force of its maritime power and its geographical advantage enabled the government to build strong international relationships.

Geographically, Baekje was located on the southwestern side of Korea, and its territory had sea routes on the Yellow Sea with China and the Namsae Sea in the southern part of the country with Japan. By using its ideal geographic location, Baekje built a formidable maritime power and established productive sea routes for international trade and cultural exchange with both China and Japan. In fact, many Buddhist scholars and artists from Baekje were sent to Japan, diffusing Buddhism and its culture. The Baekje's influence reached as far as the Shandong province of China and Kyushu province of Japan.

After the age of the Three Kingdoms, the Unified Silla further developed the Buddhist culture, building magnificent temples, developing rich scriptures, and erecting the gigantic Buddhist bells. Several historic temples (e.g., Bulguk Temple) were meant to glorify Unified Silla as the "Land of Buddha." Meanwhile, Confucianism and Chinese letters were imported from China, amplifying the public and royal culture of the Unified Silla.

Along with the cultural development, Cheonghaejin in Wando, an island located on the southern edge of Silla, emerged as a center for Silla's cultural exchange with other countries and a hub of international

relations and trade. Cheonghaejin was also a naval military base, established by Jang Bo-Go, who was originally an international trader but also an admiral in the Silla navy. Jang Bo-Go eradicated the pirates in the Yellow and Namhae Seas and established international sea trade routes that connected Tang China, the Unified Silla, and Japan. A residential area on the eastern coast of China known as Silla-bang was a well-known international trading post where merchants from as far away as Arabia came to trade with other international traders. As a result, Silla-bang became an international hub of diverse cultural exchange, and, thanks to Jang Bo-Go, Silla was introduced to international merchants around the world.

During this same period, while Unified Silla occupied the middle and southern parts of the Korean peninsula, Balhae governed the northern part of Korea, occupying a large part of Manchuria as well. The culture of Balhae was strongly influenced by both Silla and China, and its economy was secure through its active international trade with China. The Chinese referred to Balhae as the "flourishing land of the East." Unfortunately, ethnic unrest within and around its territory led Balhae to fade from Korean history in 926 A.D.

After a period of historical turbulence when the power of Unified Silla was weakened, the Goryeo Dynasty emerged in its land. It became another Buddhist society, however, as opposed to the previous dynasty, the influence of Buddhism reached as far as Goryeo's political realm and covered both the public and aristocratic societies. Accordingly, a Buddhist monk was respected as much as a royal prince. In fact, a real prince of the dynasty, Euicheon, became a Buddhist monk as well. As fervent followers of Buddhism, the Goryeo people firmly believed Buddha would protect Goryeo from its enemies (KOIS, 1993).

Goryeo had tolerant international relations and trade policies (KMEST, 2007), allowing merchants from other countries, including Sung Chian, Japan, Jurchen, southeast Asia, and Arabia, to trade freely in their land. They also encouraged the people of Goryeo to trade with the international merchants (KMEST, 2003). Especially, Byeokrando, a port city close to the capital of Goryeo, was the center of international trade, and cultural traits were freely exchanged between Goryeo and other countries. Interestingly, the name, "Korea," originated from the pronunciation of Goryeo as it was called by international people at that time.

While Goryeo was the land of Buddhism, the Joseon Dynasty was based on a strong belief in Confucianism. In the late period of Goryeo history, resistance to Buddhism's influence in politics grew from a new group in the Goryeo bureaucratic class. They criticized the political corruption created by the collusion between religion and politics and argued for the elimination of Buddhist monks in the government system. After a period of conflict between the new Confucianism group and those in power, the Confucianism group succeeded in taking control of the government, establishing a new dynasty called Joseon in 1392.

From their experience with political corruption caused by the collusion between religion and politics, the new dynasty promulgated a strict separation of state between politics and religion and restructured its political and social systems based upon the Confucian philosophy. As a consequence, the development of Confucianism flourished. Although Confucianism was imported from China, its level of sophistication was much more developed in the Joseon Dynasty and, as a result, created a new school of the philosophy called Neo-Confucianism (KMEST, 2007). Neo-Confucianism was synthesized

by two Confucian scholars, Yi Hwang and Yi Yi, of the Joseon Dynasty. In terms of international relations, the Joseon Dynasty maintained a close relationship with the Ming Dynasty of China in contrast to the strict policy they adopted toward Japan, whose frequent pillaging in the sea lane of Joseon caused them constant problems.

The frequency and importance of international relations declined during the Joseon Dynasty, although international trade was still allowed with other countries. Because the Joseon Dynasty restricted international relations with other countries, it experienced several military invasions from Japan (e.g., Im-jin-Oye-Ran in 1592) and China (e.g., Byeongja Horan in 1627). Due to its isolationist policies, the Joseon Dynasty developed its own culture and unique cultural heritage.

The most significant invention of the Joseon Dynasty, in terms of the cultivation of culture, was the invention of Korean alphabet, *Hangul* (the original name of *Hangul* was *Hun-min-jeong-eum*). King Sejong, the 4th king of the Joseon Dynasty, invented the Korean alphabet. Until the Korean alphabet was invented, only highly educated and wealthier people were able to write Chinese characters, as they were very hard to learn and mismatched to the Korean language, leaving most of the general public illiterate. However, with the introduction of the *Hangul* alphabet, based on the Korean language, reading and writing became easier to learn. Originally, it was composed of 28 consonants and 28 vowels, but it was later simplified and is now composed of 14 consonants and 10 vowels.

Although the *Hangul* alphabet fit well with the Korean language, elite groups in Joseon society and government were unwilling to accept it, wanting to differentiate themselves from people at the lower levels of the social hierarchy. Thus, while *Hangul* spread rapidly through the

general public, the more socially and politically elite groups ignored it. Some elitists even regarded *Hangul* disdainfully, as letters meant only for women and peasants. Because of this stigma, the type of letters a person used often indicated a person's social status and educational level. However, as in other countries, increasing literacy and its power to expand knowledge more rapidly to a greater number of people scattered over even greater distances led to new opportunities in terms of developing the public culture (Anderson, 1983).

For the general public, the invention of *Hangul*, which was easy to learn, greatly accelerated the dissemination of beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior throughout the country. The rapid increase in public literacy was due, in large part, to the fast spread of *Hangul* literature. According to Benedict Anderson (1983), a shared print-language constructs the base of a group's identity and solidarity by delivering an ontological truth, the nature of being, and this is why some religions were able to generate transcontinental influences, such as the Christianity, the Islamic Ummah, and so on. In Joseon society, the influence of the print-language, *Hangul*, also significantly contributed to developing a public culture and communicating the culture among the people in the country.

The Emergence of the Modern Media in Korea

In 1883, the Joseon Dynasty published the first governmental newspaper, named *Hanseung Soonbo*. This was the first modern newspaper in the history of Korea. It was published once every ten days. The contents of the newspaper contained translated international news and selective domestic news as determined by King Go Jong. Although *Hanseung Soonbo* was a government-run newspaper and strictly

controlled through government censorship, the newspaper introduced readers to new ideas and information, including new governmental systems, such as democracy, as well as foreign cultures.

In the 19th century, many foreign countries attempted to initiate social, economic, and political relationships with the Joseon Dynasty. However, this was widely viewed as an imperialistic move by foreign countries to extend their influence or power with the interest of dominating smaller countries, such as Joseon. Unfortunately, the constant invasion by foreign powers greatly weakened the Joseon Dynasty's sovereignty and, as a result, the King's power was undermined and vulnerable to foreign interference. Despite the turmoil, the first privately-owned newspaper, *The Independence*, was published in 1896.

The Independence was published and edited by Seo Jae-Phil, who returned from the United States with the purpose of fostering a spirit of independence in spite of the pressure from foreign powers and the weakened local government. The newspaper was published in both Hangul and English. Hangul, not Chinese characters, was selected, purposely, to target the general public. The paper covered many types of news items, including local and government events. It also included editorial content with the goal of informing the public of erroneous or prejudiced information, while promoting public awareness of domestic and foreign affairs. Although a significant effort was made to maintain its sovereignty, the Joseon Dynasty was finally toppled by a Japanese invasion in 1910. For the next 35 years, Japan occupied and controlled the Korean peninsula under colonial rule until the Japanese surrendered to the United States on August 15, 1945 at the end of the Second World War.

During the period of Japanese occupation, Korea's first broadcasting company, Kyungseung Broadcasting Company, was established by the Resident-General, the Japanese governing body of colonial Korea. Its radio programs were primarily propaganda in nature and designed to deliver messages from the Japanese government to the Korean people. Although Kyungseung Broadcasting Company was established by the Japanese government for political purposes, it became the foundation of the Korean broadcasting industry and, after several name changes, became the Korean Broadcasting System, which is now the largest broadcasting company in Korea (KBS Overview, n.d.).

The first television station, *HLKZ-TV*, aired its first television program in 1956, and, until 1991, Korea's television companies were primarily supported and controlled by the Korean government. In 1991, the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) became the first television company established by a private company. Since then, the Korean government has allowed the establishment of private television companies and, as a result, several regional cable television companies were established in 1995. By 2010, South Korea had four major nationwide public broadcasting companies – Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), and Educational Broadcasting System – and several regional cable channel companies.

Until the 1990s, Korean media companies relied heavily on U.S. media products, such as U.S. television sitcoms and Hollywood movies, and Hong Kong media products, mostly movies. The influence of foreign media products, technology, and the stabilization of the nation's economy and politics coalesced to transform the culture of South Korea, especially among the young who were drawn to the new

western trends in fashion, music, entertainment, sports, and the media products that conveyed such trends. However, by the dawn of the 21st century, the evidence of the skyrocketing popularity of South Korean media products and popular culture could be observed in many Asian countries, particularly the new, but enormous surge of the Korean Wave referred to as *Hallyu*.

The Age of *Hallyu*: Korean Media and Pop Culture Wave

The term, *Hallyu*, was first coined in China by Beijing journalists in the middle of the 1990s (Faiola, 2006), marking the beginning of the age of *Hallyu*. Since then, the term, *Hallyu*, has been used to describe the unprecedented sweeping popularity of Korean pop culture to other countries, especially in Asia. In English, *Hallyu* is often referred to as the "Korean Wave."

Among many Korean pop culture products, the popularity of television dramas / soap operas and films have led the wave especially in the Asian markets due primarily to their common themes of love, friendship, good, evil, and other emotional sentiments. The Korean Wave, *Hallyu*, is now rapidly expanding to more and more countries beyond Asia. Recently, *The Seattle Times* reported that "*Hallyu* is rolling over Asia with pop music, TV dramas and movies that dazzle audiences from Tokyo and Beijing to Seattle" (Dickie, 2006). Although China, Japan, and Southeast Asian countries have been the countries where *Hallyu* has been the most salient, currently, the Korean Wave is expanding to the areas beyond Asia, spreading to the Middle East, Africa, and the shores of North, Central and South America (Lee, 2007). To better understand the *Hallyu* phenomena, the specific trends by genre are explained in the following sections in

greater detail.

• *Korean Dramas*

The popularity of Korean television dramas, including soap operas and fictional mini-series, has been the main force behind the explosion of *Hallyu* in many countries. This trend has made Korean television stars famous in other countries and, more significantly, improved the image and prestige of Korean popular culture (Lim, 2007). Then, what are the main features of Korean television dramas?

Korean television dramas deal with a wide range of stories, but the most prominent type of stories has been romance (e.g., *Autumn Fairy Tale*, *Winter Sonata*, *Goong*, and *Boys over Flowers*) and historical dramas (e.g., *Dae Jang Geum*, *Jumong*, and *Emperor of the Sea*). Korean dramas, whether historical or romantic, reflect a high quality production, moving characters, and intelligent scripts (Yu, 2009). In particular, since they are designed for a broad range of audiences, the content of the stories offer interwoven themes of family, romance, friendship, martial arts, war, and business. According to *The New York Times*, "Korean dramas are considered more emotionally powerful" (Omishi, 2005). In addition, the dramatic stories often embrace themes that appeal to all viewers including women and men and young and old.

As previously noted, the Korean Wave began with the export of Korean television dramas to Northeast and Southeast Asia (see Table 1). Due to their growing success, Korean television dramas have significantly affected the growth of other media genres, including movies and popular music, as well as the dissemination of Korean culture, such as food and language. Moreover, this phenomenon has also led to an increased popularity of South Korean products and of tourism in

Table 1 Korean Dramas Exported

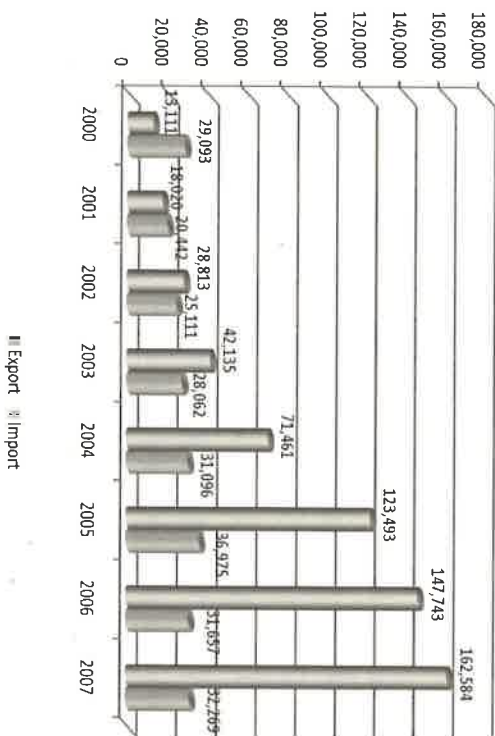
Year	Title	Exported Nations	Media Producer
1998	What is Love All About 사랑이 뭐길래	China	MBC
1999	Stars in My Heart 별은 내 가슴에	China, Taiwan	MBC
2000	Autumn Fairy Tale (Gaeul Donghwal) 가을동화	Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines,	KBS
2002	Winter Sonata (Gyeongseoul Yeogae) 겨울연가	China, Hong Kong, Japan	KBS
2003	Jewel in the Palace (Daejanggeum) 대장금	China, Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines	MBC
2004	Emperor of the Sea (Hae Sin) 해신	India, Iran	KBS
2005	My lovely Sam Soon (Naeremeun Kim Sam Soon) 내 이름은 김삼순	Philippines	MBC
2006	Princess Hours (Goong) 궁	Philippines	MBC
2006	Hwang Ji Ni 황진이	China, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam	KBS
2006	Jumong 주몽	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam	MBC
2007	The Legend (Taewangsasongi) 태왕사신기	Japan, Taiwan	MBC
2008	Gourmet (Sik Gaek) 식객	China, Hong Kong, Taiwan	SBS
2009	Boys over Flowers (Kkotboda Namja) 꽃보다 남자	Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand	KBS
2009	Queen Seon Duk 섣덕여왕	Japan, Taiwan	MBC
2010	The Slave Hunters (Chuno) 추노	Hong Kong, China, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand	KBS

South Korea (Kim et al, 2009, Lim, 2006). The statistical graph (Figure 1) shows how dramatically the export of Korean television programs have grown since the Korean Wave started in mid-1999.

• Korean Movies

Currently, Korean movies have been showcased at many international film festivals, including the Berlin International Film Festival and the Festival de Cannes. The first award winning Korean film was *The Day of Wedding* (1956) at an Asian film festival. Although Korean films had often demonstrated the potential for international recognition, the *Hallyu* trend accelerated their acceptance in the international film market. For instance, the Korean film, *Shiri* (1999), a story about a North Korean spy planning a coup in Seoul, was popular in the Korean domestic film market, becoming the first Korean movie to sell more than two million tickets in Seoul alone (Korean Film Council, 2009). After this movie was exported to several Asian countries including Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Taiwan, *Shiri* surpassed sales at several foreign box offices.

In the early 2000s, more Korean films were exported to several international film markets, receiving substantial acclaim by their international viewers. Much like Korean television dramas, Korean films have dealt with several challenging and/or controversial topics, including the tension between South and North Korea, friendship, and romance. In 2004, Korean film director Park Chan-Wook won the Grand Prix at the Festival de Cannes with his cult film, *Old Boy*. According to the Korean Film Council (n.d), new films continue to break box office records, and some have even become more popular than Hollywood films in domestic and international film markets.

Figure 1 Statistics in Exports and Imports of Korean Television Programs (Unit: US\$ 1,000)

Source: Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2009

Today, South Korea is one of the few countries where Hollywood productions do not enjoy dominance in the domestic market (Choi, 2004). For example, both *Silmido* (2004) and *The Brotherhood of War* (2004), which were watched by more than 10 million people domestically, approximately a quarter of the Korean population (Shim, 2006), and *The Host* (2006), a fantasy film, broke several Korean box office records in 2006 and gained a substantial audience after it was exported to the United States.

The international success of Korean films has attracted the attention of Hollywood as well. Since the success of Korean films in the U.S. film market (see Table 2), such as *Shiri* (1998), *Brotherhood of War* (2003), *Typhoon* (2005), *The Host* (2006), *D-War* (2007), *The Chaser* (2008), and *Haundae* (2009), more and more Korean movies have been introduced in the U.S. film market and screened with other

Table 2 Korean Films Exported

Year	Title	Exported Nations
1998	Christmas in August 8월의 크리스마스	Hong Kong
1998	Shiri 쉬리	Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, North America, Singapore, Taiwan
2000	Joint Security Area 공동경비구역 JSA	Japan,
2001	My Sassy Girl 열거적인 그녀	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan
2003	Old Boy 올드보이	England, France, Japan, Malaysia
2003	TaeGukGi: Brotherhood of War 태극기를 휘날리며	Benelux, China, England, German, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, North America, Scandinavia, Singapore, Taiwan
2003	Conduct Zero 품행제로	Singapore
2003	Marriage is a Crazy Thing 결혼은 미친짓이다	Singapore
2003	My Tutor Friend 동갑내기 과외하기	Singapore
2003	A Tale of Two Sisters 정화, 홍련	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam
2004	Silmido 실미도	Japan
2004	Windstruck 내 여자친구를 소개합니다	Malaysia
2004	My Little Bride 어린신부	Malaysia
2005	The King and the Clown 왕의 남자	China, Japan
2005	Typhoon 태풍	North America
2006	The Host 괴물	Argentina, Brazil, China, England, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, United States
2007	D-War 디워	United States
2008	The Chaser 추격자	Benelux, France, Greek, Hong Kong, Japan, South America, United States

Table 2. continued

Year	Title	Exported Nations
2008	The Divine Weapon 신기전	Hong Kong, Sweden
2009	Haeundae 해운대	Benelux, China France, Greek, Hong Kong, Japan, United States
2009	Take Off 국가대표	China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, Turkey

Hollywood movies. In academia, Korean film studies are also growing rapidly in the United States, producing a number of articles and books by not only Korean scholars, e.g., Choi (2010), Lee (2001), & Kim (2004), but also non-Korean scholars, e.g., Shin & Stringer (2005) and Leong (2006).

• *Korean Popular Music*

Korean pop music has emerged as a predominant trend among young Asians over the last decade. Its strong beats mixed with unique rhythms have appealed greatly to numerous teenagers in China, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Southeast Asian countries. Cho (2005) further explained the uniqueness of Korean pop music and its appeal to people in other countries:

“The reason that the Chinese are crazy about our dance music is not because our dance artists and singers created the music with the Chinese market in mind. The music that they like is the music that we created for the domestic Korean market – that is, music reflecting a Korean sensibility and sung in Korean...” (pp.161-162).

Many soloists and music groups, such as TVXQ, Wonder Girls, Big

Bang, Girl's Generation, and many more, have performed in a number of concerts, TV shows, fan meetings, and festivals both at home and abroad (see Table 3). Finally, Korean pop stars have also introduced new trends and styles of Korea, such as fashion, to other countries.

Table 3. Korean Pop Musicians Performed Abroad

Year	Name	Nation
2000	H.O.T	China
2001	Ahn Jae-wook	China
2001	NRG	China
2001	Shinhwa	China
2001	Baby V.O.X	China
2002	BoA	Japan
2002	S.E.S	Japan
2005	Rain	China
2006	TVXQ	China, Japan, Malaysia
2007	Rain	Japan
2008	Seven	United States
2008	Rain	United States
2009	Wonder Girls	United States
2009	Girls Generation	China, Japan
2009	Big Bang	Japan
2009	2PM	China
2009	U-Kiss	China
2009	Jang Na-ra	China
2009	2AM	China
2009	4minute	China
2010	U-Kiss	Japan

Korean Waves in Other Asian Countries

The *Hallyu* phenomenon has been observed in many countries throughout the world. As briefly stated above, China, including Hong Kong, was the first country to publicly use the term, *Hallyu*, in the early 1990s. After reporting the initial wave of Korean pop culture, China's Asia Television Ltd. and Hong Kong Cable TV began to show several Korean television drama series. ATV aired *Winter Sonata* in 2002, and TVB broadcast several more series, such as *Stairway to Heaven*, *Full House* and *Dae Jang Geum*. Many Korean actors, actresses, and singers, such as Lee Young Ae, Song Hye-Kyo, Bae Yong Joon and Rain, are now international celebrities in China (Lim, 2006; Onishi, 2006).

In Japan, the biggest trend-setting program, *Winter Sonata*, was broadcast by Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) several times in the early 2000s. The television drama was aired twice in the same year due to a high demand from Japanese viewers. NHK even hosted a classical concert featuring *Winter Sonata's* melodic tunes performed by Korean musicians. Former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is known to be a big fan of Choi Ji Woo, the leading female character in *Winter Sonata*, often described as "Princess Ji-woo" in Japan. The first lady Miyuki Hatoyama, wife of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, has often expressed her love of Korean drama publicly (Kim, 2010).

Addressing the *Hallyu* influence in Japan, Hanaki et al. (2007) and Kim et al. (2009) argued that the Korean Wave, particularly after *Winter Sonata* was broadcast, has greatly reshaped the Japanese perception toward Korean people and their culture and, as a consequence, improved international relations between the two countries. They also reported that Japanese people have been interested in learning the Korean language to better understand the content of Korean television

dramas in its original language. Additionally, Cho (2005) argued that such *Hallyu* phenomena have helped to relieve the age-old antagonism between the two countries after decades of Japanese colonialism in the early 20th century. The increased interest in Korean culture has even promoted Japanese tourism to South Korea, and many tour packages for Japanese fan groups of *Winter Sonata* and other Korean television dramas have led numerous Japanese travelers to South Korea.

In Malaysia as well, the Korean wave started with the popular Korean drama, *Winter Sonata*, after TV3 aired it on the Malaysian TV. Among the many Korean television dramas, *Dae Jang Geum* (Jewel in the Palace), a story about a court lady in a Korean Palace several hundred years ago, ranked the highest in popularity and made actress Lee Yong-Ae one of the most popular South Korean celebrities in Malaysia. Because of the great success of these Korean dramas, Malaysian television companies competitively air Korean dramas, and millions of Malaysians have fallen in love with them (Yang, 2008). In addition to the television dramas, Korean movies have also captured the hearts of Malaysian fans, beginning with the blockbuster, *Shiri*, and, later, with *Old Boy*, *Brotherhood of War*, *My Sassy Girl*, and *Windstruck*. This trend has ignited a desire for any type of Korean media products in general (Korean Film Council, 2009).

When the Korean television drama, *Dae Jang Geum*, was first aired in Thailand, the demand for Korean food skyrocketed because of the attention Korean food received in the drama. Eventually, due to a trade imbalance of media exchange between Korea and Thailand, the Thailand government requested the Korean government to increase the importation of Thai films for the South Korea media market. As a result, the Agreement of Cultural Cooperation between the two countries was

signed in August 2004 (Korea Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2009).

Another country greatly influenced by the Korean Wave is the Philippines, where primetime television has become known as "Koreanovelas," said one media watcher according to *The Japan Times* (Meinardus, 2005). Even memorabilia from Korean media products, such as posters and wallet-size fan photos of Korean soap opera stars, are highly sought in the Philippine marketplace. Today, it is not uncommon to see Filipinos watch Korean dramas and movies, and share the stories in their daily lives.

In summary, Korean media products and their impact are now popular in many Asian countries. Beyond Asia, the Korean cultural wave is extending its reach throughout the world. Although the themes and influences of the Korean Wave are usually accepted in most countries, sometimes, *Hallyu* encounters antipathy associated with cultural imperialism in other countries. However, *Hallyu* is certainly an outstanding global media and pop culture phenomenon and has contributed to the globalization of the media market and the diversification of global media studies. The following chapters of this book introduce the new wave of media studies with *Hallyu* and demonstrate its significance in academia, society, and international relations.

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Globalization of Korean Media: Meanings and Significance

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Abstract

While not denying the obvious power of Western, particularly American, dominance over the international media landscape, this study draws attention to the rise of a new player in regional media flows – Korean popular culture – and suggests that its transnational mobility across Asia and beyond is a facet of decentralizing multiplicity of global media flows today. With a particular focus on the transnational mobility of Korean TV drama, this study also suggests that its meanings and significance at socio-cultural and political levels can be seen as a conscious, and often intentional, way to counter the threat and insensibility of the Western-dominated media market within the context of global inequalities and uneven power structures.

"I was almost dreaming about it, every day anticipating the next episode. I can't think of a single American show that has that sort of pull for me." (A Chinese-American fan of South Korean drama)

"Why are we poor?" (North Koreans starting to question, after watching