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*The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality* ed.  
by Tae-Jin Yoon and Dal Yong Jin (review)

Roald Maliangkay

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assemblage, now in the identity-free rhizome rather than any residual geographical place marked “Seoul.”

King is most comfortable when citing English-language materials, including those by Korean authors. The unfortunate result of this is that King’s Romanization of Korean terms is inconsistent. Particularly worrying is the statement that *juche* is the North Korean spelling of South Korean *chuch’e*; simply, these are two Romanizations of a single term. I am alarmed, as Koreans both sides of the divide will be, by the statement that former southern president Syngman Rhee shared the ideology of *juche* with North Korea’s Kim Il Sung; even though not acknowledged, I suspect an attempt to marry Rhee’s *ilmin chu’i* one-people principle with *juche* is responsible for this. Two other eyebrow-raisers are King’s repeated spelling of “sharmanism” (with a spurious “r”) in the reference list, and, in both the text and reference list, citations to “Koen De Ceunster” (whose family name is, and has always been, De Ceuster).

Keith Howard  
*SOAS, University of London*

*The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality*, edited by Tae-Jin Yoon and Dal Yong Jin. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017. 300 pages. \$105.00 cloth, \$99.50 paper.

The study of *Hallyu* is steadily broadening, in terms of both subject matter and the theoretical frameworks applied. Considering the large number of people involved in the production and consumption of related products around the world, edited volumes can play an important role in bringing together the divergent objectives and experiences. *The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality* is a collection of studies aimed at exactly that: providing new perspectives on *Hallyu* as a field of enquiry, with a particular focus on the transnational nature of related developments. In their very brief introduction, the editors explain that rather than adding to the large body of fragmentary case studies on *Hallyu*-related phenomena, the collection is intended “to provide a better understanding of *Hallyu*’s theoretical and institutional history, on the one hand, and new features of the Korean Wave, on the other” (p. xiii). But whereas they aspire also to provide the basis for a new theoretical framework and explain the everyday lives of people in the contemporary world (p. xiv), the editors have left it mostly up to the predominantly macroscopic approaches to dovetail with

one another on their own accord, which they do with varying degrees of success.

The volume comprises thirteen chapters that are divided up into four sections of similar length, respectively “The Histories of the Korean Wave,” “New Perspectives of Hallyu Studies,” “Online Media and Global Fandom,” and “Transnationality of the Korean Wave.” Due to considerable overlap between the chapters, however, the categorization is slightly ambiguous. In the opening chapter, Tae-Jin Yoon and Bora Kang discuss what studies of the Korean Wave have thus far contributed. In doing so, they make a haplessly non-transnational distinction between academics working in Korea and those working outside concluding (p. 16) that, “most research (published in English) on the Korean Wave is the results [sic] of observation of an interesting and alien culture” and that “studying *Hallyu* in English-speaking countries is studying ‘Others’ (other culture, other people).”<sup>1</sup> In the next chapter, Yong-jin Won discusses discourses of Hallyu in regard to their use in developing a national identity. While it offers an insightful overview of how in particular the Korean government and the entertainment industries have supported and responded to the *Hallyu* phenomenon, it is marred by a lack of evidence. Other chapters that fell a tad short of their potential include Lisa Yuk-ming Leung’s chapter on the activities of K-pop fan clubs. Despite promising to analyze social media algorithms as a significant factor in the transnational prosumerism of K-pop fans, Leung focuses mainly on the experiences of two Hong Kong-based managers of a K-pop fan club, which despite being thought provoking leaves the mechanics of algorithms largely unexplored. Like Leung, Kyong Yoon offers interesting fieldwork-based comments and anecdotes, but his study of K-pop consumption in Canada fails to demonstrate the relevance of the allegedly subaltern experiences he relates to the presupposed postcolonial legacies of K-pop. And while Wonjung Min’s study of K-pop reception in Latin America and Eunbyul Lee’s study of *Hallyu* in Tunisia offer fresh observations, both are somewhat let down by their structure and framework.

Among the chapters that stand out is Seok-Kyeong Hong’s study of the global consumption of *Hallyu*. Exploring the concept of cultural proximity and the hierarchy of taste, she finds that “*Hallyu* is like a Korean car running on a well-built highway, primarily constructed and polished by Japanese popular cultures” (p. 76). In his own chapter, coeditor Jin traces how *Hallyu* has developed into a national policy marked by the commodification of culture. Starting from its conception by Horkheimer and Adorno in 1947, he offers useful reflections on the development of the

notion of cultural industries, and its inclusion in government policies. He ultimately arrives at a rejection of a neo-Marxist view arguing that the soft power generated by the Korean Wave had little to do with the government's cultural policy per se (p. 50). I also recommend Hyangjin Lee's study of anti-*Hallyu* sentiments in Japan. Lee carefully considers the mechanics of soft power and the factors behind *Hallyu* in Japan, and draws on examples from Japanese politics and media to sustain her claim that "a recipient country can have more decisive roles than a producing country in spreading a new soft power" (p. 192). Particularly significant is her discussion of the various realms of fandom and the effect of the racism and sexism-fuelled anti-*Hallyu* lobby on them.

*The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality* offers a wide range of case studies with a particular focus on hybridization and transnationalism. It may serve as a useful resource to those studying Korea's contemporary cultural policy or the impact of the Korean Wave on foreign shores. However, while it includes a number of important new studies of *Hallyu*-related notions and phenomena, the value of the collection as a whole is undermined by lackluster editing. I suspect that historians, in particular, will take offense at the frequent use of paradigms, which only a few scholars, including Hyeri Jung and Hyangjin Lee, deliberate meaningfully. Even those working within the discipline that has come to count hybridization and transnationalism among its primetime celebrities, will notice the lack of proper correlation between the chapters, as well as the frequent repetitions, inconsistencies, missing references, and factual errors. Despite a few strong chapters, and indeed many intriguing observations throughout, I cannot, therefore, echo the sentiments of other reviewers printed on the back cover. This compilation is certainly not without merit, but it deserved more attention from either the editors or Lexington Books, or both.

## Note

1. Similar reductionism provides the framework for a study on *Hallyu* by In-gyu Oh and Gil-Sung Park published in *Korea Observer*, 4:3, Autumn 2012, pp. 365–397.

Roald Maliangkay  
*The Australian National University*