6 Hallyu

New politico-cultural discourse in East Asia?

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Introduction

The popularity of Hallyu (South Korean popular culture) in Japan sets us three puzzles. First, does it really mean that Japanese women in their 40s and over have overcome cultural and ethnic animosity towards South Koreans as a result of the mass consumption of Hallyu, including TV dramas, films, music, food, video games and animation? Second, if it does, does the Hallyu boom represent a rupture in post-war East Asian cultural history which will unite Japan, Korea and the greater China culturally (i.e. one universal East Asian popular culture)? Finally, why is the Hallyu boom occurring in the post-Cold War and post-industrial era? What is special about South Korea and its popular culture in the twenty-first century? These questions directly tackle the applicability of Victor Cha’s model (and its revised version) discussed in detail by Professor Söderberg in the introductory chapter of this book.

The first question is really about the identity of Japanese Hallyu consumers and is based on an unreasonable assumption. Individual or group entertainment choices do not necessarily change people’s understanding of the ‘other’. Watching Denzel Washington films, for example, would rarely change viewers’ perception of African Americans. The influence of local religion, local reconstructions of global culture, social networks and class relations on the identity of the consumers of culture is still strong. Nonetheless, the popularity of Hallyu among middle-aged Japanese women, who were once considered the group of people least likely to love anything related to Korea, has aroused curiosity about this first question among many researchers. A key concern in this regard therefore is whether the Japanese middle-aged women have really overcome their ethnic animosity, and if they have, how.

The second question is anchored in relatively plausible assumptions. If people in a particular region, such as East Asia, start to consume a particular cultural product, such as Hallyu, in mass quantities, this may possibly lead to the shaping of a new cultural ideology or fad that can unite East Asians culturally, regardless of their nationality, ethnic rivalries and traditional local values. A crucial historical example is the Renaissance and the Enlightenment movement that swept through Europe and eventually shaped a Eurocentric ideology for all Europeans.
Eurocentrism was a means by which Europeans could distinguish themselves from the people in the Orient.⁴

Throughout the modern era, East Asia has failed to generate a unifying cultural ideology that could bring together the entire region as a universal cultural camp. The lack of a universal East Asian culture has invited unfiltered western perceptions of East Asia fabricated by westerners and the wholesale transfer of western culture to East Asia by Asians and westerners. The politico-cultural ramifications of Orientalism and Westernization were cultural and ethnic divisions among East Asians, who engaged in fierce cultural uniqueness campaigns.

The ideology of cultural uniqueness sought to justify unrealistic political arguments that Japan and Korea are culturally distinctive (a) from China and (b) from each other.⁵ Although professional female dancers and singers existed in China and Korea, geishas had to be a piece of unique Japanese culture. Despite the fact that all East Asian countries had martial arts similar to Kung Fu, it had to be a Chinese cultural phenomenon. In a similar vein, the universal East Asian medicine widely found in China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Okinawa and Thailand had to be reduced to Chinese only. In contrast to the European Renaissance or Enlightenment, which led to the fusion of local cultures, the Japanese, Korean and Chinese governments and their scholars are still fighting over the issue of historical fabrications and distortions committed by each other.⁶

If these premises about Orientalism are correct, we can certainly raise the issue of Hallyu's historical and cultural significance in East Asian history. Provided that 'Oriental' people have had no cultural pride throughout the modern era, with the probable exception of the Japanese, is Hallyu going to provide these people with a new paradigmatic shift in understanding themselves? Is Hallyu to East Asians what the Enlightenment movement was to Europeans? Are the Japanese Hallyu consumers demanding a new version of Orientalism, which can be a unifying cultural symbol for all East Asians?

Finally, the third question of Hallyu's ascendance during the post-Cold War and post-industrial era is about timing. South Korean television (or traditional) dramas, films, popular music and food have existed for many decades throughout the 1900s. But why are they appealing to the Japanese audience only now? Are there economic factors (e.g., globalization, post-industrialization), political reasons (e.g., democratization), international effects (e.g., the end of the Cold War) and cultural causes (e.g., liberalization of Japanese popular culture in South Korea) at play?

Contrary to the common perception, East Asia has maintained active cultural exchanges throughout its history with only a short period of interruption between 1945 and 2000.⁷ This period of intermission was a dark age in East Asia, throughout which traffic between islands (Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan), the peninsulas (Liaodong, Shandong, Korea) and the continent (the Russian Far East, Manchuria, China) was systematically curtailed, mainly by the Cold War and the two civil wars in China and Korea. The artificial barricades which separated these polities for over 50 years were ideological and political. The lifting of
these barriers in the new era of détente and thaw after the fall of the Soviet regime and its communist world system coincided with the dawning of economic and cultural openness in China (kaihō) and democratization (minjūsō) in South Korea and Taiwan. It also coincided with the advancement of a new world order and the global economic system. These facts therefore lead us to another question about the impact of regional, historical, economic, political, geopolitical and global factors on the shaping of the Hallyu boom.

When these three dimensions of the Hallyu problem – ethnic animosity, Orientalism and timing – are theoretically resolved with relative success, we can dare to explore the possibility of popular culture playing an important role in constructing and changing international relations. If cultural and ethnic animosity has truly been overcome in the consumption of Hallyu, and if Hallyu is a new common language with which to accurately depict the cultural and mental underpinning of lifestyles, I believe Hallyu can be a new medium of harmony between the rival Japanese and South Korean politics and cultures.

Ethnic animosity

To analyse the process of ethnic animosity towards Korean culture and/or Koreans being overcome through consuming Hallyu, we need to consider two possible hypotheses. First, the plots and stories of South Korean films and dramas were simply too impressive and cathartic for Japanese viewers to deny the high quality of South Korean entertainment, so that animosity naturally declined. Second, the contending thesis is that economic (e.g. globalization), social (e.g. peer pressure) and institutional (e.g. governmental and corporate campaigns; propaganda or brainwash) facilitators shaped the Hallyu boom in Japan. I will explain why both scenarios are equally convincing.

Ethnographic evidence suggests that the content of Hallyu dramas and films has indeed persuaded Japanese viewers, especially middle-aged women, to overcome ethnic animosity and fully embrace South Korean culture. In an interview with Hirata, a middle-aged Japanese woman confessed that:

My husband often had fun in the kisaeng [prostitute] party in South Korea during his business trips. My image of South Korea was very negative. I didn’t know anything about the country, but I didn’t have any positive image about South Korea, either.

However, ever since she was first exposed to Fuyu no Sonata (Winter Sonata) in 2003, the single most influential TV drama from South Korea that captured the minds of Japanese middle-aged women, the interviewee has learned to use the computer and the Internet and read South Korean newspaper sites in Japanese, and routinely visits the formal fan site of Bae Yong Joon, the main actor of the drama.

In an interview with another middle-aged Japanese woman, Hirata reports the following testimony:
I am envious of their [South Korean] family relationship. Kids really respect their parents. I don’t know whether it’s heroes’ and heroines’ black hair, but it makes me adore their culture more than others. It’s an impressive culture, and dramas like this don’t exist in Japan [any more].

On the basis of these testimonies, we can safely conclude that a change in ethnic perception has occurred, at least among Hallyu viewers in Japan.11 Their ignorance about South Korea or negative impression of the country has changed dramatically since they encountered Hallyu dramas.12 The content of Hallyu dramas appealed to these middle-aged women because it reminded them of old Japanese cultural values that are no longer found in Japanese dramas.

In a previous study, I named this type of perceptual change, permeated by the discovery of nostalgic values in the Hallyu content, ‘retrospective learning’.13 Retrospective learning is an opposite concept to forward learning which aims to pick up new and the most advanced knowledge in a particular intellectual, technological, scientific or cultural area. Learners are motivated to obtain the newest and most advanced piece of knowledge in order to maintain their leading position in their field. However, some learners are also motivated to pick up traditional or obsolete knowledge that is no longer in demand by the public. Developing traditional craftsmanship is one example, and learning the history of one’s nation is another. Retrospective learning also includes travel to less developed or developing countries by people from recently developed countries in order to experience nostalgic feelings or catharsis.

The Japanese learning pattern has been forward-looking: learning western culture or catching up with western technologies was a national motto for over a century.14 The Japanese proved to be the best forward learners in the entire non-western world. Young Japanese women have been as active in learning new things as their male counterparts, and were probably the keener learners of all Asian women. For example, it is still not uncommon to find young Japanese women aspiring to be French chefs at prestigious culinary schools in Paris. Numerous Japanese women would also visit even such remote places as Anne Shirley’s house in Prince Edward Island, Canada, and the Moomin World in Naantali, Finland, to study European and North American culture. Japanese women are often visible in New York’s Harlem neighbourhoods, not as wives of African-American GIs stationed in Okinawa but as learners of reggae and African-American popular music, including blues, soul and jazz.15

The Hallyu phenomenon suggests that middle-aged women (who might have been energetic forward learners themselves, watching Akage no An (Ann of Green Gables) and visiting Prince Edward Island in the mid-1980s) are now taking retrospective learning seriously. By watching Hallyu programmes (e.g. NHK Korean-language courses, special reports on South Korea and Korean historical dramas), these women are now energetically learning the Korean language, culture and history in the hope of narrowing the distance between their previous bias about South Korea and their new knowledge about the country through retrospective learning.
Ethnic animosity towards Koreans can, however, also be significantly reduced by economic (e.g. globalization), social (e.g. peer pressure) and institutional (e.g. governmental and corporate campaigns; propaganda or brainwash) means. Peer pressures lead middle-aged women to spend money watching Hallyu and later to join fan clubs to spend more money. Between these two stages, these women also take group tours to South Korea to visit famous film and drama location sites, a phenomenon which others call ‘audience tours’. Family pressures are also significant. Recently, sisters and daughters of Hallyu fans have joined the bandwagon as they rent DVDs for and join the audience tour with their older sisters or mothers.

Hallyu campaigns by the government and corporations exert very significant influence on these middle-aged women. The role the NHK, the national broadcasting agency in Japan, played in the promotion was also essential. The NHK broadcast Winter Sonata, the single most important Hallyu drama in Japan, four times altogether, twice through its satellite channels and twice on its regular terrestrial channels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the prolongation of the Hallyu boom in Japan (teichaku-ka) in exchange for the Japanese wave (nichiryuu) in South Korea. Private TV channels came on the scene later than the NHK, but their local and nationwide stations are now actively showing South Korean dramas and re-runs day and night. Furthermore, private promoters with Internet downloading sites dedicated to Hallyu programmes helped middle-aged women learn computer and Internet skills in order to satisfy their desire for Hallyu.

The impact of economic factors on the Hallyu boom is not as clear as the impact of the other factors explained above. It is obvious that a cogent correlation exists between economic development in South Korea and the subsequent sophistication of its film and TV industries. However, it is not clear if there is a similar correlation between the sophistication of the South Korean mass media industry and its business success in Japan, especially among Japanese middle-aged women. No one can deny the fact that both South Korean and Japanese investments in Hallyu business have substantially increased since the success of Winter Sonata and Daejanggeum. However, this does not mean that the capital investment was the initial factor in the boom in Japan. In fact, investors realized Hallyu’s market potential much later, as South Korean industrial experts urged the government to spend more money on the Hallyu industry.

On the other hand, the globalization that enabled the opening up of the Japanese domestic entertainment market to foreign products and investment can be an important clue to the question why the NHK decided to import and show Hallyu dramas and films to begin with. The Japanese government policy of globalization, which included cultural exchanges between Japan and South Korea, easily encouraged the NHK to continue to air Hallyu programmes throughout the 2000s. The globalization of the Japanese entertainment industry will eventually mean developing the NHK into something similar to the BBC, for instance.

Combined with economic, social and institutional factors, the content of Hallyu films and dramas succeeded in transforming the perception of South
Korea among middle-aged Japanese women. The next question is whether this process of ethnic animosity subsiding will expand to Japanese male viewers and develop into a new version of Orientalism that would culturally unite Koreans, the Japanese and the Chinese in the near future.

Orientalism, old and new

Until the nineteenth century all of East Asia was under the universal cultural influence of China. The use of Chinese characters was the norm in Manchuria, Korea, Japan, Ryūkyū, Taiwan and Vietnam. Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism were the three main religions of the region, although regional varieties also existed (e.g. Shintoism, Shamanism, Totemism). Political and legal systems in these countries were also borrowed from China. Paper, calendars, noodles, rice, pottery, silk, gunpowder, printing, calligraphy, music, food and social etiquette came from China as well. The East Asian world view was epitomised by the Chinese perception of the Middle Kingdom, or Sino-centrism (chóng huā sì xiāng). All the neighbouring countries were either satellite polities of China or tributary kingdoms. Although Mongolia and Manchuria did indeed conquer China, they were quickly absorbed into Chinese culture without any trace.

A dark age in East Asia started with the advance of Eurocentrism from the sixteenth century and onwards. Instead of China-centrism, the western perception of the Orient or Orientalism prevailed in East Asia. However, for Koreans, Okinawans and the Taiwanese, two versions of Orientalism were circulated – one by the west and the other by Japan. The Japanese imperialist perception of East Asia contended that China and Korea were in fact backward, ignorant, obsolete and unrelenting even in the face of western imperialism. In a newspaper commentary in 1885, Fukuzawa argued that Japan had to differentiate itself from China and Korea, since these two neighbouring Confucian countries were sure to lose their political sovereignty to western powers. For the first time in Japanese history, Fukuzawa argued that racial differences between the Japanese and the Chinese (and Koreans) might have been one of the reasons why only the Japanese had successfully absorbed western civilization. His famous ‘escape from Asia’ (Datsu A) thesis was thus based on his despair of China and Korea, both of which he thought would succumb to the west.

However, contrary to Fukuzawa’s wishful thinking inherent in the ideology of Datsu A, Japan was soon under attack from the west during the Pacific War, and was unable to win the war against the Chinese or the Allied Forces. The dropping of two atomic bombs in 1945 was a bitter insult to Japan’s pride in its forward learning drive, which in fact did not last even six decades (1880s–1945). Forward learning had to be reconfigured and continued again to transform Japan, this time into a western-style democratic and capitalist society.

With China and Japan failing to take cultural leadership of East Asia since 1945, the western version of Orientalism persisted throughout the Cold War era. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan therefore had to compete with each other to
imitate the west at full speed, eventually succeeding in rapid economic development and modernization. This, however, reinforced animosity and jealousy between the three nations, thus causing the failure to promote an East Asian style of cultural, political or economic unity that can be compared to what the European Union (EU) has achieved during the post-Cold War period.

With the emergence of China as a regional economic superpower and military hegemon in East Asia since the 2000s, along with economic development in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, East Asia is now creating a new movement towards the establishment of an economic cooperation zone or a free trade zone much akin to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the EU. Japan and China have also showed enormous interest in promoting their own national currencies as a main means of payment for the future free trade zone.

There is a clear trend for the East Asian countries to participate in common cultural and sporting events, despite continuing threats from North Korea. The inauguration of the tri-nation annual meeting of ministers of culture, which started in China in 2007 and was held again in South Korea the following year, is an evident example. During the inaugural meeting, three ministers of culture from China, South Korea and Japan, agreed to promote their cultural ‘harmony’ while resisting complete ‘assimilation’ (He Er Bu Tong). They also decided to develop regional economic cooperation, the Asian Union, in the near future, while actively exchanging cultural products, such as Hallyu, Han Feng (Chinese wind) and Michiyü. In line with these basic policy agreements, the three countries vowed to cooperate in hosting international events, including the 2010 Shanghai Exhibition and the 2011 Daegu International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championships.

Cultural and sporting exchanges between three countries include live concerts by musicians, film festivals, Go inter-leagues, baseball tournaments, soccer games and ping-pong matches. For the purpose of these cultural exchanges, the political leaders of China, South Korea and Japan gathered in Kyushu in 2008 for the first time in post-war East Asian history. Although it is not clear whether these new developments, especially the campaign for East Asian cultural unity or He Er Bu Tong and sports exchanges, are a bottom-up process, it is obvious that the elites of the three countries are ready to talk about their paradigmatic shift from ‘Datsu A’ (escape from Asia) to ‘He Er Bu Tong’ (Asian cultural unity without complete assimilation).

East Asian cultural unity or the new Orientalism is not about propagating Sino-centrism vis-à-vis Eurocentrism. It is about searching for and rediscovering the roots of East Asia that had been forgotten for many decades by the peoples of China, Korea and Japan. It is not uncommon to find Chinese people who do not know the history of China–Korea or China–Japan relations, even though they are well informed about the history of England or the USA. In a similar vein, many Japanese people still think that they know nothing about China or Korea, even though they are well versed in American or European culture. Koreans, for example, have completely stopped learning how to read and write Chinese characters since the 1970s.
It is not yet clear whether Hallyu is serving the function of reuniting the three countries culturally or making the people in East Asia rethink their cultural roots. However, it has certainly created a new set of cultural symbols and discourses with which economic, cultural and political leaders of the region can start to talk about future cooperation. Hallyu is therefore one of the most popular subjects in the cultural discourse among East Asians.

Timing

The rise of the Hallyu boom in Japan and the rest of East Asia is a novel element in modern East Asian history. The content of Hallyu films and dramas has certainly improved the perception of South Korea and South Korean culture among the Japanese, even if that did not really lift all forms of ethnic animosity and racism. Peer pressures, globalization, political democratization and institutional factors have also helped to expedite the boom in Japan. Although the demands of the new Orientalism cannot be as easily documented as might be thought, political, cultural and economic leaders in East Asia have clearly demonstrated their intention to promote a universal East Asian culture with which to unite the region in a similar fashion to NAFTA or the EU. The idea of the Asian Union based on Hallyu, Han Feng and Mohryū is a new trend in the region right now. However, why would these changes occur now, in the early twenty-first century?

The centripetal movement of the East Asian countries towards a cultural union coincides with the rise of all three in the global economic, political and military settings. Japan was the first, achieving second position in the world ranked by nominal gross domestic product (GDP) in 1968. However, Japan’s ascendance in the global economic system as a new East Asian leader was not accompanied by similar economic success in neighbouring countries, which were still caught up in the Cold War and economic backwardness. South Korea and Taiwan maintained dictatorial control of politics under the name of fighting communism in North Korea and China. North Korea was busy consolidating the new despotic rule of Kim Il-Sung’s son, Kim Jong-II. Until the early 1990s, especially because of the Tianamen Incident in 1989, China was still under the formidable communist political control and the Communist Party determined the slow pace of its economic opening and reform. The military confrontation between the US-Japan-South Korea-Taiwan alliance and the USSR-China-North Korea-Vietnam alliance was very evident.

The 1990s, however, drastically changed the overall picture of the region. While Japan suffered its first massive economic recession due to the bursting of the ‘bubble’, slowing down its economic growth machine, South Korea and Taiwan developed rapidly to catch up with the rest of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. During the same decade South Korea’s GDP reached ninth place in the world. The opening up and economic liberalization of China have not only made the country the second largest market in the world, but have also attracted most of Taiwanese overseas investment into China. The combined GDP of Japan, China, South Korea and
Taiwan is now only about 30 per cent smaller than that of the Eurozone or the USA. Politically, both Taiwan and South Korea became completely democratized despite initial worries about renewed military intervention or communist threats from China or North Korea. South Korea, after Japan, also became the second Asian member of the OECD in 1996.

Consequently, it is not far-fetched to envisage the creation of a regional market for East Asians for the first time in their post-war history. China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, along with other smaller participants from Mongolia, Central Asia, Vietnam and the Russian Far East, have formed a huge economic market that is fully open to free trade, foreign direct investment and international joint ventures, with all parts just a short flight from each other. Throughout the 1990s the average volume of trade between China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan accounted for between 30 and 40 per cent of the total trade of each country, shaping a new possibility of introducing a free trade zone. The growth in trade was also accompanied by frequent travel by the citizens of these four countries. Currently, more than 70 per cent of all flights taken by the Japanese and South Koreans are short-haul flights, mostly between neighbouring countries.

Military tensions also substantially subsided in the Taiwan Strait and the demilitarized zone (DMZ) during the 1990s, as the two Koreas successfully orchestrated two historic summits after the death of Kim Il-Sung. China was also preoccupied by its gargantuan economic expansion plans and the Beijing Olympic Games, while Hong Kong and Macao were peacefully transferred back to China.

If the 1990s saw the achievement of basic levels of institutional complementarity for economic exchange (China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan) and political alliances (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) within East Asia, the twenty-first century is a new era of communications and an explosion of traffic between these countries. The rise of China as a key supplier of raw materials, primary goods and services, combined with its massive land area and labour force, all of which are complementary to the needs of the capitals in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, was pivotal for the economic regionalization of East Asia. Concomitantly, Japan actively pursued strategic alliances with Taiwanese firms for new technology and product development, especially in the area of semiconductor and LCD displays. Although South Korea and Japan have competed fiercely in the motor industry, electronics and the information technology (IT) sector, the Samsung–Sony joint venture (S-LCD) epitomized a new era of regionalization based on their respective needs and complementarity. Strategic alliances between South Korea and Taiwan are still few and far between, although this may also change in the near future as their mutual complementarity and interdependence increase, especially in the motor industry and machinery parts and the IT sector.

Political democratization in Taiwan and South Korea has significantly increased the extent of interaction not only between the two countries but with Japan as well. Taiwan and South Korea rapidly developed political and ethnic animosity towards each other due to South Korea's sudden normalization of diplomatic relations with China in 1992. However, the election of opposition
leaders to the presidency in Taiwan (Chen Sui-bian) and South Korea (Kim Dae-Jung) eased tensions somewhat due to their long-held camaraderie on the one hand and their complete agreement on plans for regional security and economic cooperation on the other. These two leaders worked together to reinstate airline services between the two nations, introduce visa-waiver programmes for their nationals and elect Taiwan as a member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).40

South Korea’s relationship with Japan has also changed substantially. The election of Kim Dae-Jung led to the liberalization of Japanese cultural products in the South Korean market.41 This policy persuaded the Japanese government to ease and later completely abolish the visa requirement for South Koreans entering Japan. Currently, the majority of tourists entering Japan are South Koreans, while for South Korea they are the Japanese.42 The democratically elected regional governments of South Korea have also rapidly increased political and economic ties with their counterparts in Japan, culminating in the signing of 151 local-level treaties.43 Nonetheless, territorial conflicts and the problem of the Yasukuni Shrine are still hampering political complementarity between the two nations, despite democratization and the election of new generations of political leaders.44 The North Korean nuclear card is particularly threatening to Japan, leading it actively to seek alliances with the USA, instead of South Korea, which appears to be ineffective in attempts to curb the nuclear threat.45

Last but not least, the IT revolution and technological complementarity between the three nations are another set of important catalysts for East Asian regionalism in the twenty-first century. Although Japan was very reluctant to embrace, or even deliberately postponed the necessary commitment to, digital technologies, it was South Korea and Taiwan that made immensely risky investments in the digital IT revolution.46 The enormous success of Samsung, LG and TSMC forced Japan to reform its electronics sector in order to actively participate in the digital revolution. The adoption of digital NTSC high-definition signals for television broadcasting and the CDMA coding technologies for mobile communications, which are found throughout the three countries as industry standards, increased technological complementarity between the countries to a level unparalleled in other regions.

While political and economic complementarity has improved over the years, non-economic and cultural interactions between East Asian neighbours also increased substantially during the 2000s. The Japanese visited China and South Korea more than any other countries in the world during the 2000s. It is not surprising therefore that the size of the Asia-Pacific tourism market was expected to grow to US$5 trillion by 2010.47 On top of this, the number of both short- and long-term student exchanges between the four countries in East Asia is rapidly increasing. Japan hosted 170,000 overseas students in 2006 (80 per cent of them from China, South Korea and Taiwan), while 110,000 students studied in China.48 South Korea had about 32,000 foreign students in 2006, of whom 90 per cent were from Asia.49 These figures also mean that a massive number of East Asian students are learning the Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages.
However, the most radical cultural change in East Asia is probably the quick arrival of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. The number of migrant brides and labourers moving from China and other parts of Asia into Japan, South Korea and Taiwan has increased phenomenally in the 2000s due to the shortage of both skilled and unskilled workers and eligible brides for young men in the primary (agriculture, fishery, timber and mining) sector. Chinese migrant workers and brides, both documented and undocumented, are the absolute majority among all foreign residents currently living in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Japan currently hosts roughly 2.5 million legal residents, while South Korea has one million legal and undocumented migrant workers.

Ethnic and cultural diversity in East Asia means heightened interest in others’ cultures. Taiwan and Hong Kong were an initial object of cultural curiosity for Chinese film and entertainment audiences until South Korean and Japanese popular culture also became trendy there. Japanese people’s interests in the Chinese and Taiwanese cultures have also increased enormously due to this change. Intermarriage between South Koreans and Japanese were the most frequent before both Koreans and Japanese were replaced by the Chinese in 1995. Consequently, the Japanese and South Koreans feel much closer to each other culturally than they did before, developing empathy and a sense that they are in fact very similar to each other linguistically and culturally. The love affair between South Korean youngsters and Japanese anime is beyond imagination. This is a far cry from the pre-war Fukuzawa-style ideology that the Japanese were culturally closer to the westerners than to Asians. Likewise, for the first time in Chinese history, many Chinese people are travelling or migrating to South Korea and Japan only to find that they are in fact very similar to each other culturally. Chinese travellers are shocked at the facts that the Japanese use Chinese characters (kanji) and that the Korean last names are virtually the same as the Chinese.

The timing of the Hallyu boom coincides with the impact of global developments on East Asia. Economic globalization and regionalization led to radically increased trade and other international businesses, leading to ethnic migrations from China to Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. A surprising number of marriages between South Koreans and Japanese also coincided with this economic boom in East Asia. Politically, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea have for the first time in post-war history achieved political complementarity in the form of democracy. The defence of democracy in the region led to increased cooperation between the three countries vis-a-vis North Korea and China, despite such thorny issues as the Dokdo/Takeshima islands and the Yasukuni Shrine. Militarily, East Asia is enjoying peace despite nuclear threats from North Korea and possibly from China. All these elements provided the right time for the ascendance of Hallyu in Japan.

Hallyu and relations between South Korea and Japan

Many South Koreans showed scepticism when former South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung lifted the ban on the importing of Japanese cultural products,
including films, manga, anime, enka and J-pop. Their scepticism was built on the fear of another wave of Japanese popular culture that would quickly destroy indigenous and thus ‘unique’ Korean culture.

However, the outcome was quite the reverse. In less than one decade after the liberalization of Japanese popular culture in South Korea, it is Hallyu dramas, films, music and food that dominate the Japanese mass media. Of course cultural exchanges between the two nations are not always unidirectional or unfair. In exchange for the boom in Korean Hallyu in Japan, what is witnessed in South Korea is the mushrooming of Japanese-style or Japanese-run restaurants not only to cater to Japanese travellers but also to introduce Japanese cuisine to South Korean consumers. However, this does not mean that South Korean restaurants are being rapidly crowded out of the market. Rather, Japanese and Chinese tourists visit them in massive numbers.

More and more Japanese and kanji signs are visible in Myeongdong, Seoul and Jagalchi, Busan, where most Japanese Hallyu tourists gather. However, this does not mean that the Korean language is slowly disappearing. In tandem with this new development in South Korea, Japanese TV channels air South Korean dramas day and night, while South Korean film and drama DVDs occupy the most visible and largest section of any neighbourhood DVD rental shop or chain store in Japan.

The post-war Japan–South Korea relationship has been epitomized by serious ethnic rivalry and hatred, due to the history of colonialism, wartime atrocities, discrimination against the Korean-Japanese and Japan’s persistent refusal to apologize or propose a full reparations package for war victims, including jūgūn tanfu (wartime sex slaves), kyōsei chōyōsha (forced labourers), war draftees and victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings. Recently, the two countries have fought diplomatic battles over the territorial issue of Dokdo/Takeshima and the Yasukuni Shrine problem.

However, it is also true that the two countries have maintained contradictory postures when it comes to the issue of security and economic cooperation. Although Japan could not dispatch any military forces to South Korea during the Korean War due to article 9 of its constitution, it virtually allowed the USA and the Allied Forces to use its land, sea and air bases along with other resources for the war effort. Japan has also provided economic, financial and technological assistance since 1965 to South Korea to strengthen the bulwark against communism on the divided peninsula.

The South Korean export industry, including such gigantic firms as Hyundai, Samsung and LG, would not have acquired their technological know-how without Japan’s crucial support. As a result, the only country with which South Korea has been running a huge trade deficit is Japan, as a result of the former’s reliance on Japanese technology, machinery, finance and other cutting-edge elements. The overall security and economic guidelines between the two countries have been Cold-War based: the Cold War necessitated cooperation, despite the deep-rooted hatred on a national level. The situation is somewhat similar to the hostility between Greece and Turkey during the Cold War. As long as North
Korea remains a threat to the security of Japan, and South Korea maintains pro-west/pro-Japan diplomatic policies, this contradictory diplomatic dualism will continue.

Diplomatic dualism has prevented animosity from escalating into active combat, battle or war between the two nations even during the heightened territorial dispute over Dokdo/Takeshima. The 2008 confrontation between two Japanese naval vessels in the Korea Strait and a suspicious South Korean fishing boat, which the Japanese Self-Defence Navy tried to capture for an alleged intrusion into Japanese territorial waters, could have escalated into combat. However, after six hours of naval confrontation, the Japanese government ordered the naval vessels to return to base immediately. It is not strange at all for Koreans and the Japanese to see the same two naval ships working together in an exercise on the Sea of Korea the next year, training for a possible invasion from North Korea.

The national-level hatred between the two countries was expressed only in the realm of sports competition, the mass media (e.g. derogatory depictions of South Koreans and the Japanese in news, dramas and films), personal and right-wing blogs and fierce scholarly debates (e.g. regarding history, security issues, economic inequality). Judo, soccer and baseball matches have been constantly organized to arouse interest among nationalist fans on both sides of the Sea of Japan.

However, like the politicians in both countries, several sports heroes and heroines from Japan and South Korea, unlike their fans, have developed and maintained camaraderie with each other, sometimes culminating into marriages or long-term friendships. A Hallyu-influenced Japanese film, Chiruoku no Natsu, for example, depicts a love story with a happy ending about a South Korean hero and a Japanese heroine who fell in love during the 1977 Shimonoseki-Pusan track and field event.

The national-level hatred and territorial disputes have been significantly diluted by the two countries' shared goal of containing the communist enemies in the North, but the question still remains whether Hallyu can also attenuate the cultural, historical and emotional aspects of the clash between the two nations. A key concern in this context is the possibility of male chauvinists actually enjoying and purchasing Hallyu products as a 'universal East Asian' value.

Creating a universal East Asian value will be an important facilitator of peace and friendship between the two nations. It can not only distinguish East Asian lifestyles from those of the rest of the world, but promote unity among East Asians through their own cultural pride as well. Although it is not always the case, a common East Asian cultural value can make mutual engagement easier and less conflictual than that with other ethnic groups. For example, when South Korean and Japanese businessmen meet, they have dinner at either a Hallyu-style Korean restaurant (yakiniku) or a Nihonryū-style Japanese sashimi restaurant (washoku). During dinner they talk about Japanese and Korean cuisine, new Hallyu heroes and heroines, sports stars who are playing in the Japanese baseball leagues and the South Korean soccer league, and potential threats
from North Korea. After dinner they all move to an adjacent karaoke bar to sing both Japanese and South Korean songs. Most South Korean and Japanese businessmen know at least one or two Japanese or Korean songs, respectively. This kind of meeting cannot be reciprocated in quite the same way with Chinese businessmen, who seem to have different cultural protocols; but, thanks to the influence of Hallyu and Nohyû in China, Chinese businessmen are also quickly learning the South Korean-Japanese style of intercultural communication.

The fact that South Koreans love Japanese sushi and sashimi does not necessarily mean that they love Japan as well. However, it certainly means that they can share some of their cultural commonalities with the Japanese people when they have to meet together. In similar vein, the fact that Japanese middle-aged women have learned to love Hallyu dramas does not necessarily mean that they have expunged all ethnic animosity towards Koreans. However, it certainly means that they can now more easily than ever interact with Koreans culturally. These women viewers now have a newly acquired cultural and linguistic knowledge about Korea.

Having said all this, the possibility of Hallyu being accepted as a universal value throughout Asia, at least by the Japanese, is currently very slim, despite the fact that the Hallyu boom is now established (teitakukaisei) and expanding to young and male audiences in Japan. The biggest threat in promoting Hallyu as a universal cultural discourse for East Asians is the existence of a strong anti-Hallyu movement in Japan. The Ken-kanryû (Hallyu-hatred) movement emerged first as a four-volume manga series (2005–9) illustrated by Yamano Sharin. This series advances the following main arguments:

1. The South Korean soccer team advanced to the semi-final in the 2002 soccer World Cup by bribing referees.
2. Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910 was legitimate, and the Japanese and Koreans had lived peacefully during the occupation. There is no need to make war reparations.
3. South Korea illegally copied many Japanese cultural artefacts, such as Judo, Kendo and anime, without acknowledgement.
4. The use of Hangeul in Korea is due to national chauvinism, making its people no longer learn Chinese characters. Using Hangeul only is very inconvenient.
5. The Korean-Japanese have never been subject to politically unfair treatment from the Japanese government, and it is unreasonable for them to demand political and civic rights.
6. South Korea is illegally occupying the Takeshima Islands, and Koreans are polluting the Sea of Japan.
7. The anti-Japan group, consisting of both Koreans and the left-wing Japanese, is taking over Japanese schools.
8. South Koreans are hated by the entire world, as they cannot coexist with other peoples. They are criminals, committing vicious crimes all over the world. In fact, South Korea is a country of rape.
South Korean religious cults are destroying Japanese society.

10 Koreans constantly distort history and violate human rights. They do not recognize the fact that Japan saved the Korean Peninsula from total annihilation. Also, wartime Korean sex slaves were commercial prostitutes who came to the battlefields of their own volition to make money.

11 The Korean-Japanese are a privileged group in Japan, who massacred innocent Japanese people after the war. They are now in the final stage of hijacking the entire state of Japan. Japan should therefore deport all of them back to the Korean Peninsula.

The Hallyu-hated movement is expanding as much as the Hallyu boom: 200,000 copies of the first volume of the manga series were sold in the first week of publication in 2005. According to extant studies, the Japanese right wing is opposed to the very idea of friendship between Korea and Japan in general and to reducing ethnic bias in particular. In a careful analysis of the right-wing interpretation of Hallyu, Kimura found that the whole basis for denying the Hallyu boom among this group of nationalists was the conspiracy theory:

What a joke! I am sick of mass media lies. Hallyu? A Korean boom? What’s that? Oh, I now understand! The Korean boom is fabricated by the Japanese mass media. Although Winter Sonata was temporarily successful, and so was the Korea-Japan Friendship Year in facilitating the Korea boom, what it actually means is that Korean or Korean-Japanese companies made huge windfalls. In fact, the whole fabrication was simply based on the commercial strategy [masterminded by Korean corporations].

Behind this conspiracy theory is right-wing nationalism and racism directed at Koreans. As mentioned above, Koreans, including those living in Japan, are one of the main targets of Japanese right-wing criticism: First of all, let me clarify it definitely. I think we hate Koreans. Not just South Koreans or North Koreans. We hate all Koreans [as an ethnic or racial group].

It is clear that the mass media industries on both sides of the Sea of Japan welcome the Hallyu and Nichiyu booms in South Korea and Japan, as their coverage of each other’s culture has increased substantially over the years. Reciprocal investments in films and dramas in the form of joint ventures have also increased sharply in recent years. However, we still have no tangible evidence that augers the possibility of Hallyu escalating into a long-term friendly relationship between the two former enemies based on a shared concept of universal culture or new Orientalism. It is simply too premature, fragile and shallow for the Hallyu products to be the backbone of a new Orientalism.

However, if Japan and Korea can cooperate on a long-term basis to create an East Asian Hollywood (or what Koreans call ‘Hallywood’), following the UK-US model applied to the creation and development of Hollywood, the future may not be entirely bleak. Instead of Korea only promoting Korean culture, a joint effort between Korea and Japan in promoting a new Orientalism to the rest of the
world can be a better solution for the future relationship between Japan and South Korea. To use yet another Hollywood analogy, it is virtually impossible to convert Arab terrorists into pro-American allies by showing them Hollywood films. However, it is very likely that a British audience can change its view of the USA by watching some of the impressive Hollywood films about American culture (or post-war Eurocentrism). In a similar context, it would be virtually impossible to transform North Korean audiences to pro-South Korea Hallyu fans, although it is very likely that Japanese viewers can change their perceptions of Korea by watching Hallyu films and dramas. Cooperation between the two nations based on common cultural values towards the creation of Hallywood as one means of creating new Orientalism is not an entirely meaningless idea.

Conclusion

This chapter has raised three questions on the Hallyu puzzle, namely ethnic animosity, a new Orientalism and timing. It has tried to make convincing arguments that Hallyu dramas and films have successfully persuaded Japanese viewers to change their perceptions of South Korea and South Koreans, although there is no strong evidence as to whether Hallyu has also helped them overcome ethnic animosity. Be that as it may, it is obvious from the phenomenon of Hallyu tourism that these Japanese viewers have at least begun to feel more secure and closer than ever in their exploration of South Korea and its culture. The process of evolving from bilateral enmity between Korea and Japan to global or transnational interactions with other players in the regional and global cultural market is evident from the Hallyu example.

I have also argued that, along with Han Feng and Nishiyu, Hallyu is becoming a third cultural form that can quickly draw East Asia together, while each culture still maintains its uniqueness (He Er Bu Tong). The new Orientalism is therefore not China-centrism but is an expression of enjoyment of the fundamentally similar layers of cultural commonality found in China, Korea and Japan. Finally, I have argued that Hallyu is a good common breeding ground for mutual cooperation and appreciation between the Japanese and South Korean peoples, as long as it has a lasting effect of giving motivation to create a universal cultural value for East Asians. Instead of restricting Hallyu to Korean popular culture alone, opening it up for Japanese and Chinese inputs can motivate these people to envisage a new Orientalism, cultural universalism and cultural maturity for East Asians.

Notes

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9 Hirata, Han'guk til Sobih na mǔn Ibon, p. 129.
10 Ibid., p. 133.
11 Ishita, 'Kan'nyû Bûmû'; and Oh, 'Hallyu'.
13 Oh, 'Hallyu'.
16 Hirata, Han'guk til Sobih na mǔn Ibon.
18 Hirata, Han'guk til Sobih na mǔn Ibon.
20 Wow! Korea News, ‘Nichie Tere vs NHK “Kan’nyû Dorama Senso Boppatsu”,’


24 MOFA, ‘Saikin no Nikkan Kankei’.


27 Y. Fukuzawa, ‘Shasetsu: Datsu A Rou’, Jiiji Shinbun, 16 March 1885; and Fukuzawa, Bunmeiron no Gairaku.

28 Fukuzawa, ‘Shasetsu: Datsu A Rou’.


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42 JTM, ‘Nihonjin Shokkoku Tokei’.


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