

Valentina Marinescu (ed): *The Global Impact of South Korean Popular Culture: Hallyu Unbound*, Lexington Books, 2014.

'The Global Impacts of South Korean Popular Culture' examines the world-wide spread of *Hallyu* or 'Korean Wave' through the processes of social and cultural globalization. The *Hallyu* phenomenon emerged as the East Asian reply to Hollywood-type culture and refers to the current impact of products specific to South Korean popular culture (films, music, games and fashion) in Asia and other regions. The contributors of the volume come from different backgrounds in sociology, linguistics, media and communication studies. Employing an interdisciplinary and multicultural approach they offer diverse perspectives to understand the cultural, social and economic impacts of *Hallyu* in their countries of origin, covering Asia, Eastern Europe and the Americas. The book aims to contribute to the field of social globalization studies by enhancing our understanding of the interplay between the two contradicting trends resulting from globalization: the internationalization of culture and the intensification of national identity. The volume is divided into three sections according to the geographic dimension and twelve chapters - each representing a country case.

The first section reveals the influence of *Hallyu* in Asia that is unsurprisingly very visible and has a deep sociological effect. Focusing on the cases of China, Japan and Indonesia this section offers the most interesting contributions on the impacts of the 'Korean Wave'. The important findings are offered by Summy Yoon, who investigates how Korean historical dramas are received by the Chinese and the Japanese audience (whose vision of common history differs from the Korean). She finds that *Hallyu* stimulates a sense of Asian identity as both the Chinese and Japanese audience rediscover the traditional (Confucianism) values while watching Korean drama. The ideological aspect of Korean historic drama is particularly interesting: both the Chinese and the Japanese audience recognize that certain stereotypical prejudices against China and Japan are present in Korean historic drama. These observations have inspired greater interest among the audience in the history of Korea's relations with China and Japan that in some cases resulted in adopting the Korean historic narrative.

The chapter on Indonesia provides very rich empirical data on the spread of Korean pop culture in this country within only a 5-6 year period and its successful competition with Hollywood products. However, the author does not offer any substantial analysis of the empirical data, drawing the evident conclusion that *Hallyu* has succeeded in feeding Indonesia's demand for foreign entertainment

culture and has increased Indonesia's knowledge of Korean culture. More interesting claims are offered by Atsushi Takeda, who researches the phenomenon of increased international marriages between Japanese women and South Korean men. Basing her argument on the plots of the Korean drama, the author believes that the idealistic representation of male characters in the series triggers increased interest among Japanese women to date or marry South Korean men. However, as the author herself rightly admits in the conclusions, in order to prove the causal link between the 'Korean Wave' and increased cross-national marriages more substantial empirical investigation is required, including the study of the Japanese female audience.

The second section discusses the spread of *Hallyu* in Europe. The impacts of the Korean Wave in this region appear to be less remarkable than in Asia, due to much more moderate number of followers. Hence, the chapters on the Czech Republic, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and the UK offer a descriptive rather than analytical take on the influence of the phenomenon. In each of the cases, the authors point to the increased interest in Korean language and culture, as well as in the participation in Korean study programmes as the main impacts of *Hallyu*, without analyzing deeper sociological, cultural or economic impacts of the 'Korean Wave'.

The third section provides analysis of the co-impacts between South Korean and the US popular cultures and also touches on the influence of *Hallyu* in South America. Similarly to the previous sections it is highly descriptive, so the revealed influence of *Hallyu* in the region remains suggestive. Sherri Ter Molen uncovers the economic value of the 'Korean Wave' by arguing that the images of well-known K-pop stars in tourist advertisements trigger the sentiments of the US *Hallyu* fans and motivate them to travel to South Korea. Crystal Anderson focuses on the co-impacts of the US and Korean cultures. She argues that the US influence on *Hallyu* is not simply the imitation or the 'technical' adoption of Hollywood filming strategies, but that it is the complex blending of Korean content with the American genres and cultural aspects in the K-pop products. The final chapter on Argentina gives a glimpse of the 'Korean Wave in Latin America. Similarly to the previous contributors, Paula Iadevito points to the increasing popularity of Korean culture and language in the country and touches on the interaction between the 'far away' and 'local' identities through the process of cultural exchange.

Overall, the volume offers very rich empirical material on the acceptance and impacts of Korean popular culture across countries and regions. The interdisciplinary and multicultural approach is surely an advantage of the study and the authors indeed succeed in drawing 'real and imaginary 'maps' of the export of South Korean cultural products' (p. 3). However, many chapters do not go beyond describing the empirical presence of *Hallyu* in particular countries and provide very little analysis of its actual effects at best offering some tentative hypotheses.

The same criticism can be applied to the entire volume as no summative findings or conclusions are given. Despite the emphasis on the uniqueness of each country's experience, many impacts of *Hallyu* are shared between and even across the regions, which could have been an interesting general finding. Additionally, the comparative aspect claimed in the introductory chapter is missing, though some comparative claims such as that the countries of the same geographic region are experiencing different stages of the 'Korean Wave', could have been offered in the overall conclusion. These drawbacks aside, the book definitely offers unique empirical evidence of the *Hallyu* beyond Asia and would be of interest to scholars of sociology, cultural globalization studies, tourism and media, as well as to everyone interested in the phenomenon of the 'Korean Wave'.

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