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석사학위논문

K-pop; K in Conflict and Pop

(갈등하는 케이,팝)

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K-pop; K in Conflict and Pop

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Abstract

저자 이규탁은 K-pop 이 정체성을 확립해 가는 과정에서 겪는 다양한 경험을 정리하였다. 특히, 한국을 대표하는 문화 산업이자 세계적인 인기를 얻고 있는 음악 장르로서 K-pop 이 문화적, 사회적, 경제적, 국제 관계 속에서 대내외적으로 경험하는 갈등과 성장통을 역사의 흐름과 세대 간의 변화 속에서 사례로 소개하고 있다. 기존의 대중이 익숙하게 알고 있던 ‘한류’와 K-pop 1 세대와 2 세대와는 확연히 달라진 K-pop 3 세대 이후 벌어지는 희귀한 현상들을 소개하면서 ‘한류’라는 단어가 무색할 정도로 확장된 K-pop 의 개념을 재정립하려고 시도 한다. 그러나 K-pop 이 지역의 특수성과 글로벌 보편성 모두를 갖고 있음에도 불구하고 아직은 케이팝에서 케이클 땀어 낼 수 없다는 점을 시사한다.

Author Lee Kyu-tak summarized various experiences that K-pop experiences in establishing its identity. In particular, as a representative cultural industry in Korea and a music genre that is gaining worldwide popularity, K-pop introduces conflicts and growth pains experienced internally and externally in cultural, social, economic, and international relations as examples in the flow of history and changes between generations. Introducing the rare phenomena that take place after the third generation of K-pop, which are clearly different from the first and second generations of K-pop, which the public was familiar with, attempts to redefine the concept of K-pop, which is so expanded that the word "Hallyu" is overshadowed. However, even though K-pop has both regional specificity and global universality, it suggests that K-pop's K-pop cannot be removed yet.

; The development of media platforms has increased cultural exchanges, and the emergence of a new generation marks a new phase in the cultural industry. K-pop is the fastest and most direct beneficiary of this trend. More than ever, content quickly spreads to various regions through global media platforms. As a result, we will no longer see a world in which a cultural center exerts an overwhelming influence.

Prologue

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the global success and popularity of K-pop is a trend in the global music industry of the twenty-first century. Three of BTS's albums topped America's <Billboard 200>, and in October of 2019, K-pop's leading agency <SM Entertainment> debuted a project group called <Super M>, which also hit No. 1 on the charts. However, such success is not limited to a number of groups such as BTS. And in 2017, <Billboard> dedicated a separate category just for K-pop treating it as a global genre. In addition, K-pop has become an independent genre on global digital music streaming platforms including iTunes. The fact that a representative social media platform such as Twitter cited its collaborative relationship¹ with K-pop, reflects the greatness of K-pop's global influence. In the past, people would often ask "do you know Kimchee?" to assess their knowledge of Korean culture. However, such question doesn't apply to K-pop due to its wide recognition. K-pop now represents Korean culture and has achieved global success. In fact, Koreans who are not crazy about K-pop might be taken aback by foreigners who ask who their favorite K-pop group is.

K-pop is now regarded as a genre in the global market. The term K-pop stands for 'Korean Popular Music'. Perhaps because of this, many people, including domestic fans, government officials, media, music professionals, pop culture, music critics, and researchers,

often use the term K-pop when referring to Korean popular music. In such case, music by performers including Lee Mi-Ja (이미자¹), Cho Yong-Pil (조용필²), Kim Gun-Mo (김건모), and Shin Seung-Hoon (신승훈) would all line up equally to that of Seo Taiji and Boys (서태지와 아이들), H.O.T., Big Bang (빅뱅), TWICE (트와이스), and BTS (방탄소년단).

However, the actual use of the term K-pop, especially when one considers how it is used overseas among K-pop fans, is not necessarily synonymous with the Korean popular music as a wider category. The term K-pop began to spread widely in East Asia at the end of the 1990s, centered in Chinese-speaking countries, and slowly began to pick up popularity in different regions² of East Asia in the early 2000s. During this period, the term K-pop was rarely used in Korea, its country of origin, until sometime between 2007 and 2008, when it gained familiarity among Koreans. This was also when the word K-pop became known to a wider audience and Korean performers as it gained attention beyond East Asia. In other words, K-pop is not a term created by domestic media, music industry, fans, or

¹ Born in 1941, Lee Mi-ja debuted as a Korean traditional trot singer in 1959 at a young age of 19 with a single titled "Pure Nineteen," and rose to stardom with "Camellia Girl" in 1964. More than 100,000 copies of her album containing the song "Camellia Lady" were sold which is the equivalent of two million today considering the size of the K-pop market, making her a musical "legend" in Korea.

「Kim Hee-eun (2014), 《Lee Mi-ja celebrates 55 years》, Korean Joongang Daily」

² Began his career in 1968 as a guitarist of rock band <Atkins>. His breakthrough came in 1975 with the song <Come Back to Busan Port> and also sung <The Woman Outside the Window>, <The Leopard of Kilimanjaro>, and <Short Hair>.

「Baek.B.Y.(2013), 《Cho Yong-pil is still Korean king of pop》, The Korea Times」

experts. Instead, it was imported back to Korea after first being widely used overseas. It is worth noting that the term was first actively used in Korea after its use spread beyond East Asia (especially to the United States and Western regions of Europe).

In other words, K-pop is a genre defined overseas. Therefore, it is closely interlinked to the cultural phenomena known as the Korean Wave. However, no matter how Koreans define what K-pop may or may not be, some music will never be accepted as K-pop. In recent years, overseas K-pop fans have gained a growing interest in various types of Korean popular music, including K-pop. However, they do not consider rock, hip-hop, or indie music as K-pop and instead use different terminologies such as K-rock, K-hip-hop, and K-indie.

What is their definition of K-pop? K-pop shares a commonality with Britpop, Sweden pop, J-pop, and Latin pop, which use an adjective representing the country placed in front of the word ‘pop.’ The nationality of music is used as an element that defines the genre, yet unlike general genres, musical characteristics are not the only elements that determine the genre. For instance, rhythm patterns, instrumental compositions, and vocal techniques are imperative factors in rock, jazz, or hip-hop. In this respect, K-pop can be considered closer to Swedish pop, J-pop, or Latin pop, and less so than Britpop. Music lovers define K-pop as an independent music genre rather than categorizing it by its geographical origin, musical style, or other elements.

As genres such as rock and hip-hop have evolved over the years, the category and style of K-pop have also constantly changed while embracing its characteristics from the past. If we use hip-hop as an example, old school hip-hop in the 1980s and gangsta rap³ of the 1990s were part of the hip-hop genre but differ from current hip-hop. Old school hip-hop is a term referring to early hip-hop music heard from the late 1970s until the mid 1980s. It constructs a form of rapping using the simplest of beats. On the other

hand, gangster rap is a hip-hop style that was popular in the early and mid-1990s in the United States and around the world, featuring lyrics depicting the lives of back-alley gangsters using heavily layered funky beats. Likewise, current K-pop differs in many aspects to the K-pop that was first commonly used as a genre overseas when the Korean Wave began. Experts generally divide K-pop into three generations, respectively. The era of H.O.T., which began in the late 1990s and ends with their disbandment, is regarded as the first generation. The second generation depicts the era when K-pop was revived, and its popularity expanded to wider regions with the Wonder Girls' <Tell Me> craze. The third generation emerged after 2013 and includes representative K-pop stars BTS and TWICE.

Performers of each generation also differ by age group. The first generation of K-pop was mainly born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while the second generation were born in the late 1980s to early and mid-1990s, and the third generation emerged after the late 1990s. Unlike the first generation, which was based on light electronic dance music (EDM), the second and third generations embraced a variety of rock, pop, and even jazz and folk music based on hip-hop, EDM, and R&B. While most first-generation artists were mainly focused on stage performance, the second and third generations were doing everything from composing, to writing lyrics, and music arrangement. This trend continued into the third generation where it became difficult to find members who didn't participate in composing and lyric writing. Some first-generation performers who lip-synced due to their lack of stage capabilities were ridiculed as 'fish singers⁴'. However, the second generation bore many K-pop singers with excellent singing capabilities, and this became more common in the third generation. It is no longer a surprise that K-pop singers who boast outstanding singing performances

appear in various music contest shows such as <Immortal Songs (불후의 명곡³)> and <King of Mask Singer (복면가왕⁴)>. Another huge turnaround among the generations was the shift in the music market.

Some groups such as H.O.T., N.R.G., Baby V.O.X., and S.E.S. who succeeded in entering overseas markets enjoyed stardom, while most first-generation K-pop singers worked only within the domestic market. They didn't expect the overseas audience would be exposed to their music and worked solely to satisfy the tastes of Korean audiences. Success in overseas markets was nothing more than mere luck or incidental. However, the situation changed with the second generation. With the appearance of artists such as BoA (보아) and TVXQ (동방신기), who appeared in the early and mid-2000s between the first and second generation, international popularity began to pick up pace. Also, more agencies and artists began to build localization strategies targeting overseas markets. Such a trend grew even stronger as K-pop became an international music genre. Agencies began to form groups targeting overseas markets especially centered on China and Japan, debuted their groups with the international audience in mind and prepared their singers accordingly. Agencies began scouting members from East Asia, China, Taiwan, Japan, and Thailand, and trainees were taught how to speak

³ A South Korean television music competition program presented by Shin Dong-yup. The program covers a competition of Korean singers remaking hit songs of legendary musicians.

「Lee.H.J. (2014) 《Michael Bolton to appear on Korean TV music show》, Korean Joongang Daily」

⁴ A south Korean singing competition program presented by Kim Sung-joo. A panel makes their choice based on the singers' voices alone, with no prior knowledge or hint as to who they might be or know what they look like. Their voices are also disguised.

「Won.H.J, (2015), 《Singing shows get a mysterious twist》, The Korea Herald」

Chinese and Japanese languages early in their training. In some cases, albums and singles were released in foreign languages such as Chinese or Japanese, which were all part of K-pop's globalization strategy.

In particular, the third generation became non-comparably global to past generations. Four out of the nine members of the group TWICE (트와이스) are non-Korean, and IZ*ONE (아이즈원) is a group created in collaboration between a Japanese agency and a Korean agency. In addition, groups such as EXP EDITION, Z-Boys, and Z-Girls consist of only non-Korean members. BTS is an example of music that was reimported to Korea and grew in popularity after first making its name known in the United States.

Now that K-pop has become a genre of global popularity that transcends the scope of local music, entering the overseas market no longer is a novelty nor a surprise for K-pop singers. K-pop music and artists are being exported to global consumers, and the methods that domestic consumers consume K-pop are also being exported. In other words, K-pop is gradually expanding its scale in production and consumption. However, no matter how successful K-pop is, and how much it is enjoyed by global consumers, not all domestic and foreign audiences regard K-pop as a universal music genre independent of Korea. The public still considers K-pop as part of Korean culture. Many people want K-pop to keep its unique Korean features. For example, many domestic K-pop fans and media agencies regard K-pop as a 'representative player of Korean culture.' The reason BTS is significant is that they gained success overseas by singing in the Korean language. The claim that 'K-pop is music that must be written in Korean and should not be called K-pop if it is made in English or Japanese' implies that K-pop represents Korea and reflects the expectations⁵ of Koreans. This also accounts for overseas fans. Many foreign fans have expressed their reluctance to attach lyrics such as

English or Japanese to K-pop music, and many feel unfamiliar with non-Korean singers attempting to reproduce K-pop music. If K-pop has established itself as a general popular music genre, such as rock, jazz, and hip-hop, that is irrelevant to Korea, then there would be no reason to associate it with a particular language or ethnic background. Yet, unlike other genres, K-pop strongly relates to specific national, ethnic, and racial elements. This sometimes conflicts with the transnationality pursued by K-pop as a global cultural product.

This book examines the two different sides of K-pop and explains the resulting conflict through various examples, in hope that the publication may help predict future changes in the K-pop industry. This publication explores K-pop's unique characteristics, how it is implemented, and how its two-sided nature (of gaining local and global popularity) provokes feuds and conflict in the K-pop industry. This is also a prospect of the direction of K-pop, which has taken root as a globally popular genre.

Chapter 1. Is K-pop Korean?

A global music genre created in Korea

K-pop, a global music genre created in Korea, began to establish itself as an independent genre with its characteristics in the East Asian market starting in the late 1990s. From the late 2000s, it began to spread beyond East Asia. However, when giving various public lectures on the theme of K-pop, I often was asked whether K-pop was variant or imitation of foreign music. The notion that K-pop is music that has nothing to do with Korea leads to the conclusion that K-pop's global success and Hallyu (Korean Wave) do not have anything to do with Korean culture. This argument would be the same as saying K-pop is simply a product such as a Samsung smartphone or a Hyundai Motors automobile, which have all been successful worldwide.

On the other hand, some argue that K-pop is indeed Korean. A representative case⁶ would be a statement from a traditional Korean Gukak musician who claimed that <Gangnam Style> was based on Korea's classic 'Hwimori rhythm,' a traditional Korean rhythm. While it may seem like an overly patriotic claim referred to as Gukppong (국뽕)⁷ in Korean, it would be difficult to conclude. <Gangnam Style> is based on electronic dance music (EDM), a globally popular music genre, but it is different from that of other countries. As a Korean traditional musician, the artist was trying to differentiate K-pop with its relation Korean traditional music rhythms.

In some ways, these conflicting views on K-pop are understandable. This is because K-pop is both globally universal and regional-specific at the same time. This feature is also reflected in its genre category. K-pop is global pop music that originated

in Korea.

While popular music worldwide has become universal in the sense that it has accepted a variety of global music genres, at the same time, it has been differentiated into various forms with regional uniqueness. Thus K-pop, which holds a unique position as ‘local music that is successful in the global market,’ clearly demonstrates the combination and conflict between the two trends.

Music researcher Shin Hyun-Joon (신현준) described this phenomenon as a ‘confrontation between pop internationalism and Korean song nationalism,’ which implies that K-pop illustrates a conflict between global universality and regional specificity⁸.

Both universal and special

Since the early twentieth century, British and American music has been central to global popular music. The influence of American popular music began in the 1920s and 1930s when American jazz music became popular worldwide and was further solidified after rock and roll became popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, genres such as folk, R&B, soul, disco, pop rock, hip hop, and house music have become the most popular genres of the past twenty years, becoming mainstream in the United States and immediately spreading worldwide.

The influence of British music was also phenomenal. Britain’s music and musicians such as The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Elton John, and Queen greatly influenced the world, including in the United States. Thus music researchers often used the

expression ‘Anglo-American pop music’ centering Britain and American music as the two main stage setters. However, almost every country in the surrounding periphery has been greatly influenced by British and American popular music. Based on this, these countries have developed their popular music.

This also applies to Korea. Currently, all popular music genres in Korea, including hip-hop, K-pop, R&B, rock, folk, ballad, and jazz, which are the most famous music fans in Korea, are rooted in popular British and American music. Along with British and American popular music, Korean popular music was also influenced by Japanese music. Even trot, often referred to as ‘traditional Korean music,’ is based on British and American popular music and Japanese popular music influenced by it, rather than Korean traditional music, in practice.²

As British-American popular music genres have become the global standard, the aspect of unity in local music is being intensified based on this. This is because the time and space between British and American music and local music, which are global standards, have been compressed due to the development of communication technology and the globalization of media.

In the past, it took quite a while for the latest British American music trend to spread to regions such as Korea. Time differences existed due to physical and economic distance. In addition, there were many cases where music was not widely introduced to the greater public due to a national ban on music imports and censorship. The fact that folk and youth culture boom, which flourished in the British-American music industry in the 1960s, blossomed in earnest in the ‘70s, and the dance music craze that hit the world in the late 1970s and early 1980s began to take place in Korea, shows a gap caused by the time difference between the mainstream and surrounding regions. In addition, the case of ‘new generation dance music’ in Korea in the 1990s, which was tainted by

plagiarism and scandals against Japanese music, could be seen as a side effect due to the time difference caused by an inability to access overseas music because of the political situation of the country.¹⁰

However, after the 1990s when Korea's economic growth and democratization started to flourish, the development and popularization of the Internet and the global media industry's entry into Korea progressed simultaneously, reducing the time difference between Korea and the global music industry. Since then, the Korean music industry has immediately accepted global trends. It was called the 'Golden Age of the 1990s.' Although American hip-hop music wasn't settled among young people until the early 2000s in Korea, the latest hip-hop didn't show so much difference in the late 2010s.

Like popular music in many other countries, K-pop has been created and developed based on a global universality influenced by the British-American popular music genre rather than unique Korean musical traditions. Through this process, even if it was greatly influenced by Japanese popular music, it would be considered international or global rather than Korean. Due to the development of media communication technology and rapid globalization, the transnational universality of Korean popular music is strengthening further. Therefore, current K-pop, which is based on hip-hop beats and house rhythms rather than 'Hwimori' beats, is not much different from global popular music in terms of music. Therefore K-pop, and pop music, can easily reach audiences in various regions.

However, despite the global universality of music, K-pop like English American music isn't just called pop, but instead is called a genre name combined with K. This is due to the inherent characteristics of K-pop. If musicians are produced, distributed, and consumed in a Korean context, no matter how much foreign countries influence them in terms of music, the contents are bound to be different from British-American global pop

music.

The origin of hip-hop is the United States, and numerous audiences and creators worldwide, including in Korea, have tried to accept and imitate the musical elements of American hip-hop and the culture associated with it. However, American characteristics contained in the music form of hip-hop, such as race issues, materialism, and gender stereotypes, are challenging to understand and accept from a Korean perspective. In addition, the rhythm created through English lyrics is challenging to reproduce in Korean songs. Therefore, it may seem artificial or even ridiculous if you try to follow the American hip-hop swag or rhyme. On the other hand, value is added when Korean rhythm is applied to universal music formats of hip-hop or when stories and experiences from various sources are included. Adding such Korean context to music makes it original Korean music and adds much more value than a mere imitation of American hip-hop.

Though it is not much different with K-pop, Korean hip-hop, which uses its original genre name, it has been given its genre name by the global music industry. However, other than K-pop, local music has achieved international success, being called by the country's name or a combination of local initials to pop. These include J-pop, Cantopop¹¹, Swedish pop, and Latin pop. When K-pop first began to gain popularity in East Asia, many people compared K-pop with J-pop or Cantopop because of their similarities.

Since the 2010s, when the popularity of K-pop began to expand beyond East Asia to the world, K-pop was often compared to Swedish pop and Latin pop, which are widely known in the British and American regions. However, comparing such music with K-pop, the peculiarity of K-pop as local music began to take shape and become unique.

How do ABBA and Psy differ?

Swedish pop music first made its name known to global audiences through the international success of ABBA in the late 1970s. Rockets Roxette, Ace of Base, The Cardigans, Avicii, Lykke Li, and Tove Lo have been recorded as representative singers of Swedish pop. Max Martin, a Swedish composer, and producer who presented hits to Britney Spears, Taylor Swift, and Ariana Grande, is also a representative musician of Swedish pop. The commercial success of Swedish pop continued steadily into the 2010s. In May of 2012, half of the Top 10 songs on the Billboard singles chart Hot 100 were composed and produced by Swedish musicians.

Why has pop music of Sweden, which is a country that speaks its own language and somewhat separated from the center of the global music industry, steadily gained popularity and be loved by international audiences? Swedish music researcher Ola Johansson analyzed the situation¹² and came to the following conclusions. First, after ABBA, many Swedish singers consciously produced music that satisfied the tastes of global consumers and were successful. And as Swedes who spoke English almost at the level of their mother tongue, they were able to launch an English album for the global market¹³. In line with the globalization of media, the Swedish music industry focused its industrial capabilities on succeeding in the global market. The government established and steadily implemented support policies to foster popular music.

Swedish pop aimed to succeed in the international arena from the very start. If you were to actually listen to Swedish pop, it is not easy to determine whether it is Anglo-American music or Swedish pop. Swedish pop is a successful strategy emphasizing global universality as much as possible.

This strategy can also be found in K-pop. In particular, the third generation of

K-pop, which emerged with a broader market following <Gangnam Style>, considered the overseas market from the early stages of when it began training performers and forming groups. It is common in Swedish pop to actively embrace the latest global music trends; the development of media communication technology and globalization have provided opportunities to enter the international market and concentrate human and material capabilities through K-pop's unique development and management system.

However, despite these commonalities, there are a few striking differences between K-pop and Swedish pop. While there are some musical differences with Swedish pop which encompasses a wider scope of music, there is a rather large difference when you compare how the two appeal to global audiences. If Swedish pop approaches international audiences through its similarity with Anglo-American music, K-pop presented not only its similarity but also highlighted its unique charm. Typically, many K-pop singers have released albums in English, but the music that actually gained much success in the global market was pure Korean music. The ethnicity of the music and composition also stood out. Swedish pop is composed mainly of white people of Nordic descent, the mainstream of Anglo-American music, but K-pop comprises East Asian ethnic groups such as Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese. In addition, K-pop is differentiated from typical mainstream Anglo-American music through its fashion, stage performances, and music videos, all created in a unique style.

Despite the commonalities of world-renowned non-English-speaking music, K-pop and Swedish pop are quite different. Sweden is a Nordic country and is culturally close to Anglo-American music, the mainstream of the global market. At the same time, Korea is both non-English and non-Western, so there are significant cultural differences. This means that no matter how much effort is put into having global universality, K-pop cannot be like Swedish pop.

Attractive due to its uniqueness

Latin pop generally refers to popular music made in Spanish-speaking regions, such as Latin America and Spain. However, in a broad sense, it also includes Spanish music or songs with unique beats and melody lines unique to Latin music, even if they were not made in Spanish¹⁴.

The potential listeners of Latin pop are Latin Americans and immigrants from Latin America who live in North America. Latin pop, which has recently attracted the attention of many fans, has been popular internationally for quite a long time. They include singers Harry Belafonte, a Jamaican American who is loved around the world, including in the United States, Julio Iglesias from Spain, his son Enrique Iglesias, Ricky Martin, Gloria Estefan, Shakira, and others. In 2017, Puerto Rican singer Luis Fonsi's song *Despacito* reignited¹⁵ the Latin pop trend for sixteen consecutive weeks on the Billboard Hot 100. As a result, Latin pop is now considered one of the two most popular non-English-speaking music ranges in the global market, along with K-pop.

Unlike Swedish pop, which pursues global universality while making it as close to British and American music as possible, Latin pop puts 'uniqueness' at the forefront. Because it consists of its own style of rhythm and melody, it has an identity as a Latin pop regardless of genres such as pop, rock, and hip-hop. Spanish lyrics are also a factor that differentiates Latin pop from Anglo-American pop¹⁶. It is similar to K-pop's solidification of its regional identity through Korean lyrics, even though it is based on a popular global music genre.

Technological advances, such as the spread of digital media and the popularization of smartphones, have brought together potential audiences. As a result, the fact that it has also been a great success in the US music market is common between

Latin pop and K-pop. In the past, mainstream media such as British and American record labels, distributors, radio, and TV dominated the global music industry as gatekeepers. However, since the mid-2000s, the environment has changed significantly as music has been consumed through internet-based media platforms such as Spotify and YouTube. As a result, a new path has opened for non-Western and non-English-speaking music to enter niche markets.

In addition, Gen-Z, born between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s, is relatively open-minded, so even if it is not English, it's not a dealbreaker for them to still enjoy the music. Their easygoing attitude and openness to diversity were why Latin pop and K-pop were able to expand their popularity worldwide.

Unlike K-pop and Swedish pop, however, Latin pop does not put national identity at the forefront. Latin pop's Latin is a broad concept that encompasses the entire Spanish-speaking world, centered on Latin America. It includes a wide variety of music, even music sung by Spanish singers in Europe is included in Latin pop. In other words, Latin pop is an ambiguous concept that contains a wide scale of the music genre. Although recently, Latin pop and K-pop are often compared due to the commonalities of 'non-English-speaking music loved by global young people,' unlike K-pop, which still has a clear national identity as non-English-speaking non-Western. While most of the global successful K-pop singers are from Korea, the fact that international Latin pop singers are descendants of immigrants who came to the United States as children, or were born there, reveals the difference in regional identity between the two kinds of music. Therefore, Latin pop can be considered one of the subgenres of Anglo-American music, but K-pop cannot be. This is because K-pop is also a kind of world music based on exoticism.

World music, a term that began to be widely used in the 1980s, was a generic

label for non-English and non-Western music. The term was first coined in the Anglo-American music industry. It mainly referred to the so-called ‘third world’ diverse ethnic and traditional music, distinguished from the global mainstream Anglo-American music. Later, it developed into a term encompassing fusion music that combined musical elements from various regions and Anglo-American music genres. Paul Simon and Peter Gabriel, who performed an eclectic mix of music from Africa, Brazil, and Pakistan, and Deep Forest and Ry Cooder, are representative world music singers. From the 1990s, non-English and non-Western world music singers, who were introduced only through collaboration with British and American musicians, began to enter the global music market. Enya, an Irish singer-songwriter, and Youssou N’Dour, a second-generation Sri Lankan-British from Senegal, mixed Asian music and hip-hop EDM. They created a new kind of music that is difficult to define as an existing genre through a mixture of universal British and musical elements of local and American music.

Viewed in this way, K-pop can be referred to as world music. It is based on the Anglo-American music genre. Still, it reveals mixed colors that are not easy to classify into general Anglo-American categories due to combining melody lines, unique singing styles, and tones that fit Korean emotions or dancing on stage and building an outstanding visual image. In particular, it reveals its cultural identity while giving unfamiliarity to global music fans through original Korean lyrics. In fact, some global musicians see K-pop as representative music that will lead the era of ‘World Music 2.0’¹⁷.

Yet despite the commonalities of eclectic music in non-English speaking and non-Western countries, K-pop differs from general world music. The definition of world music is ambiguous because it was created through comparison and contrast with Anglo-American global popular music. In the extreme, all non-English and non-Western music can be viewed as world music, which in this case becomes an Anglo-Western-centered

concept that denies all the large and small differences between the music.

In particular, world music is based on traditional music from non-English and non-Western countries, and the interpretation of this traditional music is very arbitrary. Therefore, there is room for the genre to be interpreted as an imitation of the Eastern culture based on prejudice against their ethnic culture, which is different from ours.

In response, musicologist ¹⁸Timothy Taylor argues that ‘world music inevitably pursues exotic characteristics.’ This is related to why audiences choose non-English and non-Western music in the global market centered on Anglo-American music. If there is no big difference with international pop music, music listeners do not necessarily choose the music. World music is a genre categorized by the Anglo-American music industry, focusing on the value of differences. Therefore, to create a prosperous world of music, it is essential to secure global universality while containing differentiated exotic elements. However, this limits the musical expandability of the genre by locking world music into a Western-centered realm.

K-pop hardly contains all the traditional elements required by world music but is formed in the on-going process of accepting the universal global music genre beyond traditional music and implementing it in the Korean context. Therefore, although it strongly contains national and regional identity represented by the letter K, it aims for global universality. And because of this, it was supported by young people worldwide who wanted both uniqueness and sophistication. Unlike world music, which generally emphasizes exotic elements, K-pop does not intentionally put Korea at the forefront.

K-pop strongly reflects regional characteristics along with global universality. In a situation where East Asian music, which has succeeded at the center of the worldwide music industry, is still uncommon, K-pop’s regional identity inevitably gives K-pop an extraordinary personality. The unique characteristics were formed by

combining Korean lyrics, methods of music mixing, stage performance, dance, costumes, music videos, agency systems, an emphasis on moral principles, and acceptance of fandom. Therefore, K-pop is not Korean in the traditional sense, but it is very Korean in that it has its own regional identity, which is differentiated from global universality.

Chapter 2. Global pop stars BTS and Korean idol Psy

K-pop's antithesis⁴

Seven young Korean artists dance to music using dynamic dance movements and advanced-level stage performances. In addition, they create music videos with bright and captivating colors. This team of performers gains significant support from their agency's loyal fans. BTS is a K-pop group.

However, if you take a look at pathway BTS has come, you would find it difficult to call them a typical K-pop idol group. Idol music expert Mimi says, "BTS is close to the antithesis of K-pop.¹⁹" For this reason, BTS could garner such success overseas and go in the opposite direction of ordinary K-pop groups. In other words, it is challenging to label BTS as K-pop. They achieved global success by way of a growth process that was different from existing K-pop groups. Some critics even argue that BTS is a 'global teen pop star group based on hip-hop' rather than K-pop.²⁰

Instead, BTS seems to have outdone K-pop, as they released new songs first in the US market, gained more popularity abroad than in Korea, sold out world tours as global stars do, and spent more time abroad than in Korea. So why can BTS be an exception to K-pop or an Antithesis to K-pop? And did they successfully eliminate the 'K' and become pop singers?

Artists who started from scratch

The most obvious reason we see BTS as singers with global universality is their music. Focusing on the latest hip-hop and EDM, BTS music, which contains elements of genres such as R&B, pop, and rock, their musical style is not that different from mainstream music currently prevalent in the global market. Thanks to BTS's global universality, the group collaborated with other international pop stars of various genres, including The Chainsmokers, Nicki Minaj, and Steve Aoki.

From the start, BTS was closer to being a world star rather than a K-pop group. This is because the team initially intended to create a hip-hop group, not an idol group. An essential quality a hip-hop singer should have is to communicate with the audience through the lyrics and music they write based on their experiences and thoughts, not relying on songs that are written by others. In this way, BTS differentiated itself from most K-pop groups which had producers and lyricists doing the work for them. Not only did BTS, which began as a hip-hop group, prefer to work on their songs from scratch from their debut, but in fact, their agency Big Hit Entertainment encouraged this. An Mnet reality show called 'American Hustle Life of BTS' documented the group in the early days of their debut. It depicted how the group formed a mainstream hip-hop group while learning from famous American hip-hop artists, nicely revealing this side of BTS. Their efforts to gain a so-called 'artist' identity through active support by agencies were closer to the universal agency-singer relationship found in the global pop system than the unique business model of K-pop.

Violations of human rights have always been an issue that existed in the K-pop system. Examples include excessive training of young performers, micromanaging agencies, overwhelming schedules, and unethical contracts. Such issues have always

been the subject of criticism among global fans and media susceptible to individual autonomy and human rights.²¹ Yet, Big Hit Entertainment highly respected BTS for the independence of creativity and decision-making rights they exemplified. In addition, Big Hit provided a humane lifestyle for BTS as musicians, such as allowing enough rest after tours and adjusting the schedule for events that artists wanted to attend without force. This is an important reason why overseas K-pop fans, who like K-pop but felt a little uncomfortable after learning about the human rights issues involved, supported BTS.

In addition, unlike large agencies with organized management systems and a large fan base, BTS originated in a small to medium-size agency. The story of bootstrapping their lives as an idol group sheds light on their success. It is also different from other popular global K-pop groups affiliated with Korea's three major agencies. SM Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, and YG Entertainment have secured many loyal fans through successful branding over the past fifteen to twenty years. Idol groups that debut under the three major agencies are 'well-off families' in the K-pop industry, which are more likely to receive strong support from their agencies. Such support brings idols the advantage of gaining popularity from fans at home and abroad even before their debut. These groups quickly became known and gained favor from fans from home and abroad upon their debut. However, BTS debuted under Big Hit Entertainment, a small agency, and thus could not expect support from domestic media or an extensive fan base. Therefore, the way BTS built its global fandom differs from that of other international K-pop groups. BTS entered the overseas market basically on its own. BTS did not have a brand to rely on. Instead, they built their fan base through effort and skill, maintaining constant communication with their fans, and slowly building their stardom from the ground up. Therefore, it is hard to view BTS as your typical K-pop group.

Songs Koreans sing in Korean language

Nevertheless, BTS still shares many characteristics with other K-pop idols. This characteristic is closely related to BTS's Korean identity.

They make music based on the style of universal global music genres such as hip-hop, electronic dance music, and R&B. However, the way they embody themes is similar to that of K-pop. K-pop is built on a hybrid or mixed breed foundation, meaning that it is 'similar, but different' at the same time as it was created by combining local context with global genres. K-pop music uses a hybrid approach by slightly modifying and connecting several of the world's latest hip-hop or electronic dance music rhythm patterns to a repeated hooking sound while underlying it with a global universal melody line and chord progression. This style is already well known as K-pop or Korean style among international fans, media, and music experts.

Unlike general pop music, which creates the music first and then later designs the choreography and stage performances accordingly, K-pop creates the music, lyrics, choreography, stage performances, and costumes simultaneously while using a consistent concept. In fact, several factors are often determined in advance, even before the music is created. Each agency has a separate workforce that oversees and directs the music, lyrics, choreography, stage performances, costumes, and external branding and is deemed a producer along with those in charge of music production. BTS is also very K-pop, focusing on a thoroughly planned comprehensive concept and a musical hybrid method. BTS pursued several K-pop elements more thoroughly than any other group, which was one of the reasons that made them stand out. In terms of 'music production under a consistent concept,' they also took K-pop's 'concept making' to the next level by injecting storytelling and various literary symbols throughout their albums <SKOOL

series (학교 3 부작), <HYYH series (청춘 2 부작)>, and <Love Yourself series²²>. All seven members of BTS are Koreans. They don't even have Korean American members, which was common with first-generation K-pop groups. BTS preferred to work with Korean musicians rather than collaborating with foreign composers and lyricists. Japanese cultural researcher Yoshitaka Mori commented on why national and ethnic colors do not entirely disappear in most non-English and non-Western local music. Mori said, "No matter how global the song is, the music is automatically recognized as a regional language once the mother tongue is used in the lyrics." K-pop is also solidifying its national and regional identity through Korean lyrics.

Foreigners exposed to K-pop immediately notice that the song is from a foreign country once they hear the lyrics sung in Korean²³. Moreover, BTS's members are Korean and succeeded in the global music market where it is difficult to find a successful East Asian group of performances, offering BTS the identity of being Korean.

Shawn Stockman, a member of the American R&B group Boyz II Men, which was popular in the 1990s, expressed great surprise at a BTS concert held in Los Angeles, California, in 2019, when he saw tens of thousands of spectators singing along in Korean²⁴. He said, "Many people would have laughed at me when I said I would release an album in the US with these young men who sing in Korean, but they worked so hard, and to see them succeed is touching." As such, it is very unusual for non-English non-Western singers to succeed in the global market. Even if the music has global universality, BTS's language and nationality will determine their identity for foreign (especially Western) audiences.

BTS and Big Hit Entertainment shared the same vision. As a result, BTS has actively promoted 'K' by avoiding accepting songs from overseas composers or releasing English albums and instead uses Korean slang, buzzwords, and elements of

traditional Korean music. Bang Si-hyuk (방시혁), CEO of Big Hit, said, “Releasing songs in English for the US market is not our goal,” and expressed his rejection of using a strategy that would erase Korean colors²⁵ to enter overseas markets. K-pop appeals to foreign fans, especially outside East Asia, because it differs from universal global music. Some overseas K-pop fans think of K-pop as an alternative to their usual Western-centered international pop music. Such Korean lyrics and other Korean elements help the piece stand out.²⁶ In particular, unlike in the past, K-pop is no longer a barrier to Gen Z, which is used to diverse Internet-based digital content. Some even point out that Gen Z considers Korean elements a ‘cool’ thing²⁷. As such, it is fascinating to see how not only the global characteristics of BTS but also the characteristics of Korea appeal to Gen Z worldwide.

Icons of Generation Z

The keywords that characterize Generation Z and the main supporters of BTS are the internet and digital media. Gen Z is a ‘post-digital generation’ that uses digital devices and communicates through social media from a young age. Digital immigrants began learning the Internet and digital media upon reaching adulthood. There are some regional differences, but it is worldwide. The second generation shares similar ways of thinking, emotions, and behavior worldwide.

In October 2018, *Time* magazine used the words ‘Next Generation Leaders’ to describe BTS. This shows that BTS is highly supported by Gen Z, the next generation of the present era, and exerts significant influence on them. BTS has been the winner for three consecutive years since 2017 in the field of top social artists on the Billboard Music Awards, which is selected based on data including social media participation index,

references, and global online fan votes. In addition, they were chosen as one of the ‘25 Most Influential People Online’ by *Time*. Immediately after the 2017 American Music Awards performance, they topped Google Trend Topics. These are all indicators of how popular BTS is on the Internet worldwide. It is natural to call BTS the best global stars in the digital media era and the leader of Generation Z, who most actively uses the media.

Generation Z, which has communicated and formed an identity through Internet-based digital media, has global universality, unlike generations that represented certain periods in the past. For example, the characteristic of the hippies in 1968, considered to represent the 1960s, is a culture formed by members of the highly educated white middle class in Western society. They didn’t necessarily share the same characteristics with people of the same age from other regions or ethnic groups. For example, in the 1960s, Koreans, Americans, Vietnamese, Mexicans, and Brazilians in their twenties did not have similar characteristics to the hippies or those who experienced the 68 movement. But Generation Z is different. Generation Z is connected globally over the Internet on platforms including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, sharing similarities despite racial and class differences. And at such a large scale, global communication and cultural sharing are unprecedented.

BTS’s communication with fans is often cited as the reason for their success. BTS has constantly worked to communicate directly with its fans by posting music-related videos on YouTube and V Live and sharing their real-time comments. BTS maintained a close relationship with their global fans, many who couldn’t see them in person due to the geographical distance, so that they could feel connected. The far-reaching effect BTS had on their fans was special, differentiating them from the image of ‘unreachable stars,’ who live in a world different from that of ordinary global pop stars. This is similar to how Gen Z communicates globally based on social media

reaching beyond cultural differences. Therefore, Gen Z considers BTS to be an essential cultural symbol representing their generation.

British and American media, including the Billboards and BBC, have compared BTS with the Beatles²⁸. BTS represents the times. Because of their excellent music, the Beatles and Seo Tae-ji (서태지) are still being discussed. Moreover, their music re-emerged with new and diverse features—from the 1960s in the West and the 1990s in Korea. Similarly, BTS is a global revolution, revealing the contemporary society and culture of the 2010s.

Interestingly, the direct communication and intimate image-building method of BTS, appealing to the seventh generation, are common ways of communication among K-pop singers. Therefore, it is quite a Korean characteristic. In other words, ‘K,’ in contrast to global universality, resonates with the international Gen Z.

The fact that BTS’s music is similar but different to global pop appealed to Generation Z, who are receptive to diversity and even consider it calm, highlighting the importance of the Korean characteristics BTS holds.

K-pop and sincerity

BTS has effectively used digital media platforms to strengthen its ties with fans and has become appealing to global fans by combining Koreanness with the worldwide universality of popular music. However, the point that makes BTS stand out even more, which domestic and foreign fans point out in unison, is their sincerity.

Debates on popular music usually refer to authenticity, in other words to find

what is the true or real music.²⁹ However, authenticity in K-pop can be seen in terms of sincerity. In other words, it's closer to integrity. Almost all K-pop idols put their sincere hard work on stage, with various shows and dramas, V-apps, and fan meetings being priorities. Another characteristic that sets K-pop idols apart from performers of other countries is the ethics and identity that arise from the Korean context that demands the artists to be hard working and diligent.³⁰

BTS's fans, both at home and abroad, emphasize sincerity more than fans of other K-pop groups such as EXO, TWICE, and Black Pink. Their success was built upon their efforts to start from scratch, quite the opposite of 'silver spoons' and delivering their sincerity and message through their music. It was all about how they did it on their own rather than relying on capitalism or media and how they appealed to Generation Z while being true to themselves rather than singing obvious love songs. BTS's authenticity took them to the top.

This virtue of authenticity is the result of pursuing sincerity, kindness toward fans, and friendliness that K-pop idols generally have (or are expected to have). This is the strength of BTS and why they are identified with Korean characteristics. Communicating steadily with fans, reflecting their opinions actively and sometimes bending their will has made the relationship between them and their fans, singers, and agencies more equal and desirable. Still, it may be an impediment to freely developing one's creativity as an artist. The authenticity of those who captivated the Generation Z is accompanied by enormous stress and behavioral constraints.

As BTS has achieved worldwide success, some argue that BTS might leave out the 'K' for long-term success³¹. Big Hit Entertainment recognized this and focused on building Weverse, a global platform for BTS fans breaking away from using Korean fan cafes.

Domestic fans then complained that they were neglecting their home country fans. There are even cultural and racist conflicts³² between domestic and overseas fans. This is because BTS is a Korean idol group and, at the same time, has a dual identity as global pop icon. No matter how wide-scale K-pop aims, K-pop will always hold its Korean identity, just like other non-English and non-Western music. This is because the Korean identity is close to the DNA of K-pop music.

As we can see in the lyrics of BTS's hit song <IDOL,> Big Hit Entertainment and BTS aimed to go beyond Korea's K-pop realm. However, as a member of the third generation of K-pop, BTS has grown and developed under the unique idol system of K-pop. Also, they are beneficiaries of the globalized K-pop society pioneered by first-generation and then expanded by second-generation K-pop performers. As a result, one could say that BTS is an extension of K-pop.

Therefore, no matter how popular BTS is, it is still impossible to treat BTS as a regular pop group. BTS had decided to collaborate with Yasushi Agimoto, a famous Japanese producer suspected of being far-right, but had to cancel their deal and issued an apology when fans declared that "cooperation with the Japanese far-right is unacceptable." This case depicts how actively BTS reflected their fans' opinions but also proves that BTS is not free from the national identity of Korea, as can be seen from the boycott demonstrated by their fans on the basis of historical relations between Korea and Japan. Since BTS is recognized as the 'world's most popular group' by eastern and non-English speaking countries,' the demand for domestic and foreign fans to clarify their identity as a Korean group grows. Ironically, BTS's national identity becomes more solid. As can be seen in <IDOL>, where folk songs are included in the lyrics, and traditional Korean images are depicted in the music video, BTS and Big Hit Entertainment are intensely aware of this. They are actively using it to build their vision.

BTS was created as a business model unique to K-pop and was able to appeal to the sensitivities of the global Gen Z population by actively targeting overseas markets, and as a result, BTS became an international pop star while overcoming the limitation of belonging to a small agency. In addition, BTS consistently and actively shared their daily lives, with a sincere and conscientious attitude toward social issues, in addition to their music, dancing, and stage performances. However, the fact that BTS's lifestyle and the virtue of 'sincerity' are linked to K-pop reflects the conflict of non-English, non-Western East Asian K-pop, which is both globally universal and regionally specific at the same time.

Chapter 3. Foreigners performing K-pop

Nationality of Misamotsu

Momo: I'm at the hotel. The Osaka Hotel, I'm in our room. I think this is my first time staying abroad for this long.

Sana: You're right.

(a moment of silence)

MOMO: Huh?

(both laugh)

Sana: It didn't seem awkward to me, either.

- Twice members Momo and Sana on a live broadcast, January 2018

TWICE members, Momo and Sana, are both from Japan. Yet, they found themselves referring to their home country as 'overseas' while on a tour to Japan. For a while, neither of them nor their fans, who were watching them on V Live, noticed it to be strange. TWICE's fans along with the foreign members of TWICE who spend most of their time working overseas, often forget they are of another nationality.

Besides Momo and Sana, Mina is Japanese, and Tzuyu is from Taiwan. Among their fans, they are called by the nickname 'Misamotsu,' which is a combination of their names. Three out of the four foreign members of TWICE are Japanese, and in total, nearly half—44 percent—are foreigners. Significantly, the three Japanese members played a prominent role in TWICE's successful placement in the Japanese market. TWICE's Japanese fans said their interest began with the three members from their own

country, and after seeing their popularity within the team, their interest spread to other group members. Tzuyu is also loved in Taiwan and the entire Chinese region, contributing greatly to TWICE's popularity in East Asia.

While there wasn't much of a difference in the popularity among TWICE members, non-Korean members in the group were mostly favored by the fans. In particular, Masamitsu had a great number of admirers from Korea. Sana's release of <SHA SHA SHA³³> from TWICE's album <CHEER UP> allowed TWICE to garner fame as the top girl group among the third generation of K-pop singers. In addition, Tzuyu gained much popularity with her appearance in the TV entertainment program <Running Man (러닝 맨)>⁵ and gained the nickname 'national sister,' which interestingly indicates once again that Korea's national younger sister is a foreigner.

Globalization of K-pop and its foreign members

Since the first generation, many foreign members have been active in K-pop groups. For example, Tony of H.O.T., Eugene (유진) of S.E.S., Kang Sung-hoon (강성훈) and Eun Ji-won (은지원) of Sechskies (젝스키스), Andy and Eric of Shinhwa, Danny, Ho-young

⁵ After airing its first episode July of 2010. "Running Man" marked its 10th anniversary, becoming SBS' longest-running variety show. The program took its chases to other Asian countries, where it became hugely popular. It localized and exported to nine countries including China, Japan, Singapore and Indonesia. Cho, Ji-won (2020), 《A decade of celebs chasing each other》, The Korea Herald

(호영), and Park Joon-Hyung (박준형) of GOD, were all either Korean-Americans or spent most of their school days abroad. Although most of them were from the United States or Canada with fluent English-speaking skills, they were symbolic members who portrayed a more realistic image of the latest global trends overseas.³⁴

With the second generation of K-pop, the music composition is quite different. Unlike the first generation, which consisted mainly of Korean Americans, the participation of members from abroad increased significantly with the second generation. This change was triggered by the success of Super Junior, a male idol group from SM Entertainment that debuted in 2005. Super Junior enjoyed the highest popularity in China and significantly transformed the Korean Wave in East Asia, which was mostly centered on dramas and turned the audience's attention to K-pop. They started to gain popularity in China because of Han Geng (한경), an early member from China. Han Geng's popularity in China was enormous. He was selected as the torchbearer for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and as an advertising model, sales of his Chinese products increased by 30 percent within a very short span of time. Chinese fans' interest in Han Geng immediately led to their interest in Super Junior, becoming an important driving force in establishing the team as the most popular group in China.

Other agencies and groups began recruiting foreign members following Han Geng's success. SM debuted Super Junior-M³⁵ in 2008, including Henry, a Hong Kong-Taiwanese Canadian, and two Chinese members, Victoria (Chinese) and Amber (Taiwanese American), in the girl group f(x), which debuted in 2009. JYP added Thai American Nichkhun to 2 PM, Chinese-born Pei and Jia to Miss A, and many other foreign artists who made their debut around the same time. This trend continues into the third generation. Four of the twelve members of SM's group EXO are from China, and from the beginning, the group was divided into a Mandarin (standard Chinese) unit EXO-

M and a Korean unit EXO-K. JYP's GOT7 has BamBam from Thailand and Jackson from Hong Kong, while YG's group BLACKPINK has Lisa from Thailand and other foreign members such as (G)I-DLE and CLC.

After the second generation, foreign members began to play a pivotal role within each group. Moving away from being an image making factor or as a bridgehead for gaining popularity in the region, but foreign singers began to take on roles as leaders in their team or generating popularity among domestic and foreign fans. Regarding the composition and status of foreign members in K-pop groups, a larger number of groups are considered international when compared to countries in East Asia, like Japan and China, as well as the United States and Europe. On top of that, in line with the globalization of K-pop, the active participation of overseas musicians in the production process, the inflow of overseas capital, and overseas agencies' advancement into Korea are also actively taking place.

Captivate local fans

If recruiting foreign members was the first generation's strategy that considered the preferences of the Korean domestic market, the inclusion of foreign members with a localized approach started to shape with the second generation. In addition to Han Geng's case mentioned above, Thai members Nichkhun and BamBam played a significant role in the success of 2 PM and GOT7, and Black Pink's Lisa from Thailand played a substantial role in bringing popularity in Southeast Asia, especially from Indonesia and Thailand.

Most of these members are from East Asia, especially China, Japan, and Thailand, which is the center of culture in the region. Two reasons can be given to explain this

phenomenon. The image of K-pop varies from region to region, and the identity of K-pop is the essence of K-pop. Let's consider the different images that K-pop portrays.

K-pop is especially popular among East Asian audiences because of its sophistication, openness, and acceptance of the latest global music trends. This is because of the familiarity that comes from sharing Asian culture that is mixed in well.³⁶ In addition, Korea's relatively high status as the most economically and culturally developed country in East Asia—excluding Japan—cannot be ignored. As a result, K-pop group members from their home country become a presence that gives a sense of familiarity to East Asian fans who have a 'Korean Dream' of wanting their country to develop like Korea. In contrast, the K-pop group is accepted as a national group.

This is similar to Ryu Hyun-jin (류현진), who plays in US Major League Baseball, and Son Heung-min (손흥민), who plays in the British Football Premier League. It's similar to how their team becomes Korea's national cheering team. In particular, the presence of Chinese, Japanese, and Thai members within K-pop groups is deeply related to their share of fans in these East Asian countries. These countries have a large market size and influence on other East Asian countries. The industry will actively employ other countries if the Vietnamese or Indonesian markets grow and bring significant profits to the K-pop industry.

On the other hand, the image and status of Korean culture is very different in regions outside of East Asia, where the political, economic, historical, and cultural context differs. As mentioned earlier, overseas fans outside East Asia pay more attention to K-pop as an alternative to the more familiar global pop. K-pop is neither perceived as sophisticated nor emotionally knowledgeable nor does it imply a 'Korean Dream.' Therefore, there is little chance that fans from America will like a K-pop group just because there are black members in the group.

On the contrary, it will be most likely that the group will face criticism from fans for not being K-pop-ish. Groups like EXP EDITION and G-girls, composed of non-East Asian members, receive a rather lukewarm, sometimes even cynical, response. This is because of the different perspective that K-pop has outside of East Asia. In other words, foreigners in K-pop, mainly from East Asia, give a fresh look to 'K-pop' to fans outside of East Asia. And at the same time, members from China, Japan, and Thailand also provide a sense of familiarity and pride to the relatively large number of fans in these countries.

K-pop and East Asia

The number of foreigners entering the K-pop industry because of its sophisticated image, transnational music, and chance to be a part of their localization strategy aimed in East Asia is taking up an increasing share of the industry. However, they are also often faced with unexpected challenges due to their nationality. As a member of K-pop, it is necessary to accommodate the 'K' factor. Still, at the same time, due to the popularity and symbolism of their country of origin, the identity of their home country should also be revealed. Moreover, the fact that K-pop is part of the regional culture that encompasses the entire East Asian region leads to a complex issue that other East Asian countries must be mindful of, all in addition to Korea and their home countries.

The most important markets in the K-pop industry are China and Japan, among others. However, K-pop is currently very much dependent on the Japanese market, with exports to Japan accounting for 62.5 percent of the total exports in the music industry³⁷. The K-pop industry is always anxious about the Japanese market because of sensitive bilateral relations.

A representative political and economic conflict that directly affected K-pop and the Korean cultural industry was the 2012 ‘surprise visit to Dokdo’ by former President Lee Myung Bak (이명박). Lee’s visit provoked anti-Korean sentiment in Japan. It brought a direct hit on K-pop and the Korean Wave, primarily affecting the growth of the Girls’ Generation and KARA’s popularity in Japan at the time. In particular, a Dokdo-related question once asked by a reporter to members of KARA, who were rising stars in Japan, became the ‘KARA Dokdo Controversy,’ and clearly depicts the impact of the conflict between the two countries³⁸ on K-pop. When this question came up, the event’s host prevented any immediate response by saying that the question was irrelevant to the current event, which brought on intense criticism. What should famous K-pop singers in Japan say to the media or fans if they were asked such questions?

As another example, in 2019, TWICE’s member Sana, posted a comment on the Emperor³⁹ Akihito’s abdication saying “Heisei, thank you for your work⁴⁰.” This unexpectedly led to controversy. The debate was caused by the distinctive characteristic of Koreans who revile Japanese Imperialism. Sana’s remarks stating the era name after the Emperor, which can be associated with Japanese nationalism, drew public disapproval⁴¹, with many feeling it was inappropriate to mention them on her official account. This shows the nationalistic color of K-pop.

Even if one is from Japan, as long as they are a member of a K-pop group, fans express their outrage if they speak and act contrary to Korean sensitivities. While K-pop aims to become transnational music through its production, distribution, and consumption, gaining profits in the global music market, it is still strongly connected to Korea’s ethnic and national identity. This is a dilemma that even groups like TWICE, which build their popularity on their multinational and transnational identity, cannot avoid.

The participation of various foreign members within a K-pop group means that the group may be affected by conflicts and confrontations between Korea and the country of origin of the member or, as in Sana's case, between the country of origin of the member and other countries. As long as the East Asian market plays a role as a central marketplace to K-pop, group members with foreign nationalities will inevitably be linked to countries with conflicts between East Asian countries.

Tzuyu (쯔위), the Taiwanese member of TWICE, once appeared on a Korean terrestrial program with a Taiwanese flag and faced intense criticism and boycott from Chinese media and fans. She was forced to post an official apology on YouTube and had to stop her activities in China. This incident reveals the impact of conflicts between East Asian countries on K-pop. The delicate relationship between China and Taiwan, known as cross-strait relations, is hard to understand without political, historical, and cultural knowledge. K-pop, which has East Asia as its primary market and has them as players within the industry, must now consider all these complexities. However, as Korean Wave researcher Shim Doo-bo (심두보) pointed out, the international acknowledgment of the K-pop industry is still narrow⁴². Before transnational music, the identity of K-pop, local music, often makes it difficult to proactively expand the scope of perception.

The territorial disputes in the South China Sea involve many East Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore and have also had direct and indirect impacts on K-pop. Shortly after the International Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled in July 2016 that China's claims in the South China Sea were groundless, almost all Chinese idols in K-pop, including Victoria, Chao Lu, Pei, and Lei, simultaneously reworked. Chinese fans enthusiastically supported this. However, other East Asian fans, including Vietnamese and the Philippines, and South Koreans, who opposed China's policy, were disappointed.

Though K-pop has aimed to be acknowledged as international music across East Asia, as can be seen in Sana's case, K-pop cannot free itself from the Korean perspective. In addition, various East Asian identities, such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Thailand, permeate K-pop, and their nationalist confrontations are sometimes expressed through K-pop. K-pop's dilemma will be inevitable if it recruits members from other countries and places them at the forefront of embracing East Asia.

Third-generation K-pop, which has been targeting overseas markets in earnest, now must consider the overall geopolitical situation, which wasn't as necessary in the past. K-pop is now proving to be an area that cannot develop independently of international politics, as seen in the case of Taiwanese political parties using the Tzuyu case as a presidential election strategy and Chinese idols to support China's position in the South China Sea territorial dispute.

In the early days, many foreigners were essential members of K-pop to bring on an American (or global) sophistication and had many foreigners join the second generation, which brought much growth in the overseas market. As a result, they have contributed significantly to making K-pop global music, and their sense of support has been steadily growing in the East Asian market.

However, there are political, economic, and historical conflicts in East Asia that are difficult to resolve, and they can cause unexpected problems throughout K-pop at any time. In addition, as can be seen in the case of Super Junior's Han Gyeong and EXO's Chinese members Chris, Luhan, and Tao, there is a risk that if they terminate their contracts halfway through and leave to return home, agencies may not be able to get a return on the investment they put into these members⁴³.

As long as K-pop aims to be a global music genre, it is inevitable that foreign members will play an essential role in K-pop. It is now time for groups to move away

from treating members as ‘mercenaries’ and should instead work to have an understanding of the cultures they come from. They further expand the Korean characteristics of K-pop and contribute to building K-pop to be universal and diverse. The globalization of K-pop members has brought complex problems unthinkable in the past. However, they also face opportunities to broaden their understanding of other cultures and to have a more open perspective. This is an important task that must be solved in the third generation. It is also a miniature of the reality facing Korea, which is rapidly transitioning to a multicultural society in the twenty-first century. Just as foreign idols in K-pop are members of K-pop, migrants who come to Korea should also be treated as members of the Korean community.

Chapter 4. What nationality is K-pop?

Produce 48 and AKB48

<Produce 101> was a seasonal music audition survival program broadcast on Mnet in 2016. Produce 101 is a project group that starts off with a total of 101 trainees from different agencies who participate in a series of challenging competitions of which eleven members are selected by popularity vote in a certain amount of time. Based on viewer votes, a total of eleven finalists are selected and then crafted into a project group⁴⁴ that works to debut within a limited period.

The female group I.O.I. debuted in the first season, and the male group Wanna One debuted in the second season. Thanks to the program's popularity, the artists gained significant attention even before they debuted. Some continue to have relatively successful careers as solo artists, while continuing to perform within their respective groups. They survived until the end of the program, which lasted for three months. After that, they were able to build awareness steadily and strengthened their fandom as idols. Such fandom remains firm even after their debut as a project group and after finishing their time-limited group activities.

In the second half of 2019, some raised speculation over rankings' manipulation in the series <Produce>. Some allegations were true, where producers determined the rankings arbitrarily, rather than basing their assessment on the vote number of viewers, as was intended. Those involved were arrested and indicted. However, it is worth noting that the cultural and industrial collaborative efforts between Korea and Japan are

demonstrated through the incidents with <Produce> and IZ*ONE, illustrating the tension and conflict that may arise from K-pop's national identity.

The <Produce> series has often been compared to Japan's top female idol group, AKB48. However, in 2016, when <Produce> first aired, music fans and the media pointed out that <Produce> plagiarized AKB48's system. Their member selection was made through viewer voting, the program's main feature. However, this system was very similar to the popular AKB48 'general election'⁶. This representative event of AKB48 selects sixteen members who get the opportunity to record music, appear on air, and receive advertising modeling opportunities. Well over one hundred members are voted on by fans while broadcasting the process live. It is similar to how <Produce> selected their top eleven of the 101 candidates voted by viewers to get their chance to debut as a project group.

In response, Mnet denied the plagiarism allegations, claiming that comparing broadcasting programs with a girl group show was inappropriate. The argument was that <Produce>'s first season, which turned out to be much larger in scale, had many different features when compared to AKB48. It is hard to deny that the program's composition was greatly influenced by AKB48 and, more broadly, by the Japanese idol industry.

However, Mnet, which did not admit the allegations of plagiarism, officially collaborated with its counterpart, AKB48, when <Produce> was a great success at home

⁶ AKB48, which stands for their hometown of Akihabara, Japan, includes more than 120 members, but their four sister group members are eligible for the election too, taking the total to 322. To vote, fans buy a CD at around \$15 for a ballot, but some spend thousands of dollars, sometimes hundreds of thousands, to ensure their favorite wins.

「Liu,M.; Wakatsuki,Y.(2017), 《The world's oddest election》, CNN」

and abroad. Korea had already begun to scout Japanese artists in the 1990s to be trained and added as a member of a K-pop group. Therefore, cases like TWICE are no longer new among the third generation. However, <Produce 48> was the first large-scale project involving idol agencies, incumbent idols, trainees, and broadcasting industries from Korea and Japan.

Overall, the industry and the public's outlook on the project was not very bright. This is due to concerns of a lot of opposition from the Korean public toward Japanese music and singers. Japanese music began to officially enter Korea, starting with the opening of Japanese pop culture in 1998. After the fourth opening of Japanese popular culture in 2004, all legal restrictions on Japanese music sales and broadcasting were lifted. Nevertheless, it is still rare to find Japanese songs being played on the air. This is due to people who reject the acceptance of Japanese culture in Korea. Because of this, there was a risk in hosting a survival program with Japanese and Korean cast members in Korea, where people still feel antipathy towards Japan. Some were concerned about possible negative reactions and expected some Korean viewers to refuse to vote for Japanese cast members on nationalistic grounds. Such worries also raised concerns about the program unintentionally being distorted. This was also the case for Japan, which could have had a similarly poor response because the Japanese idol industry, which is not only a significant counterpart of <Produce> but also a primary reference of K-pop itself, could have been reluctant to collaborate with the K-pop industry, especially if they considered <Produce> to be an imitation.

Let's learn K-pop

Despite various concerns, AKB48 agreed to collaborate with Mnet and the K-pop industry. For multiple reasons, AKB48 quickly recovered in popularity and sought a new direction. Although collaboration between AKB48 and K-pop wasn't too difficult, due to the similarity in their systems, they still had their differences. AKB48 (and the Japanese idol industry) now had no choice but to collaborate with K-pop. As the originator, this meant that the Japan idol industry now had no choice but to collaborate with K-pop, even if it meant swallowing its pride.

The Japanese idol industry in the 1980s, represented by performers including Seiko Matsuda, Noriko Sakai, SMAP, Tokio, Arashi, and Kinki Kids, enjoyed its heyday for over two decades, through to the early and mid-2000s. However, from the mid-2000s, the popularity of the millennium girl group Morning Musume started to fade, and the Japanese idol music industry entered an overall decline. As a result, the popularity of idol music and the presence of Japanese idols continued to dwindle among the public, except for the most enthusiastic of fans. Then, out of nowhere, AKB48 appeared.

AKB48 began at a small theater in Akihabara, Tokyo, as a project launched by the famous lyricist and producer Yasushi Akimoto, who wanted to foster an idol group. The group steadily built up its fan base through road shows, and when their release <Heavy Rotation> hit the charts in 2010, it stayed on the singles chart for more than one hundred weeks. In just a few years, Japan grew a craze for AKB48 which broke a record in sales for idol groups in Japan. It took a large portion of the broadcasting and advertising industries, significantly influencing the cultural sector. AKB48's most important event, the General Election, was broadcast live on television yearly. Furthermore, the AKB members gained high recognition by appearing in many shows

including music shows, entertainment shows, dramas, radio programs, magazines, movies, and even commercials. In addition, sister groups that shared a similar concept, such as Nogizaka46 and Keyakizaka46, have also been commercially successful.

However, the popularity of AKB48 in Japan has declined since the mid-2010s. In particular, since 2016, media exposure to broadcast appearances and advertisements has decreased significantly. As a result, music performances were curtailed, and albums and single DVDs, significant revenue sources, were also reduced. Additionally, the number of concert audiences decreased sharply. Although it may not be possible to specify one reason for the decline in their popularity, some point out limitations to how AKB48 managed the group. Unlike the usual K-pop idols who usually are complete even before they debut after a long and systematic approach⁴⁵ to practice and are fully equipped with singing skills and a talent in dancing and rapping, AKB48 debuted as an amateur group. As a result, it grew in the spotlight with the physical and mental support of fans. While profits may have increased with this strategy, musical ability, an essential element of an artist, became a hindrance, and AKB48's music gradually lost competitiveness at home and abroad. Therefore, AKB48's collaboration with <Produce> was an opportunity to revitalize.

Global standard

The global influence and fan base of K-pop, which has increased over the past decade, may also be one of the reasons why AKB48 and the Japanese idol industry wanted to collaborate with <Produce> and K-pop. It is interesting to note that Japan's music market is approximately seven times larger than Korea's⁴⁶. Not only is it significant in size, but

it has a long history as modern popular music. Therefore, it has an advantage in terms of genre diversity. In addition, in the 1980s and 1990s, before K-pop became music encompassing East Asia, J-pop was the most famous music in the region. Namie Amuro, Mr. Children, and Zard were famous throughout East Asia. In Korea, their music was distributed through pirated CDs and videotapes because imports of Japanese music products were prohibited by law. As a result, Japan was reluctant to accept the Korean Wave. Furthermore, the K-drama <Winter Sonata> phenomenon in Japan was considered ‘a typhoon in a teacup’,⁷ something limited to middle-aged women.

However, Japan, which tried very hard to ignore the quantitative and qualitative growth of K-pop, could no longer ignore the remarkable and continued growth K-pop demonstrated in the global market in the late 2000s. Collaboration with the K-pop industry turned into an opportunity to promote Japanese music content to overseas markets by riding the Korean Wave. As a result, in the 2010s, Japan became intensely aware of the Korean Wave and is now especially active in referring to the success of the Korean Wave at the government level.

Even AKB48, which currently represents Japanese idols, is very low in recognition in the overseas market compared to K-pop groups. This is basically because foreign music fans are not satisfied with Japanese idols’ music skills and styles. Fans were just not happy with the lack of sophistication of AKB48. This eventually became an obstacle in the overseas markets, especially in competition with K-pop. Compared to AKB48, where members are trained from scratch, and their greenness is part of their

⁷ “A typhoon in a teacup” is the Korean interpretation of the UK idiom “a storm in a teacup” or US version “tempest in a teapot that holds the meaning of a great outrage or excitement about a trivial matter.

charm, in the <Produce> series, members were trained to overcome their immaturity and grow to meet global standards. Therefore, global audiences feel that Japanese idol music is less sophisticated than K-pop—which meets the latest trends and outstanding performance—and that Japanese idol groups lack both dance and singing skills compared to Korean idol groups that perform high-level dance and singing.

This led to a paradoxical situation in that many active Japanese idols participated in the Korean program—which was apparently their attempt to regain popularity—to develop their skills further like K-pop idols, and to get a chance to promote themselves among global fans. For example, Miyawaki Sakura, who participated in <Produce 48> as a trainee, said, “Korean idols are also recognized in Japan, but Japanese idols are not recognized outside of Japan,” and expressed her hope, saying, “I want to be the best in the world, like Korean girl groups⁴⁷.” Her confession is exciting and reveals how she perceives the current difference between Korean and Japanese idol groups, particularly the lack of Japanese idols’ music skills. Some twenty years have passed since the heyday of J-pop. Now the J-pop teacher and the Korean pop music students have switched sides.

Fortunately, concerns that <Produce 48> would go against the national sentiment were misplaced. Korean viewers actively supported their favorite candidates regardless of nationality. Prominent Japanese participants, such as Sakura Miyawaki, Miuha Shitao, Nako Yabuki, Miho Miyazaki, Hitomi Honda, and Jurihida Takahashi, continued to receive much attention and love.

Commercially, <Produce 48> was relatively successful. The ratings stood at 1.1 percent in the first episode, rose steadily, and reached 3.1 percent in the final episode. It proved its considerable influence with a positive response from the ‘2049 Target Audience’ and rebroadcast services targeting significant viewers of the program, ranking first in the non-drama category. <Produce 48>, which aired in Japan at the same time as

Korea, also ranked first in the daily variety category. It was meaningful to expand the possibility and scope of communication between music fans from both countries, as well as exchanges between the Korean and Japanese music industries.

Until now, Japanese idols, like TWICE, who have been active in Korea have been selected by K-pop agencies and made their debut in a K-pop way. In other words, their nationality was Japanese, but they belonged to K-pop, and their identity was known as K-pop idols. However, IZ*ONE is on the border between the two in that they stand on both K-pop and J-pop systems. IZ*ONE works as a song written by a Korean composer and lyricist in Korea. Still, in the case of Japan, they receive and work under the management of Yasushi Akimoto, the producer of AKB48. In the concert, both Korean and Japanese songs (J-Pop) will be performed. Among the international group projects that have been attempted several times before, IZ*ONE, the most available collaboration, has enjoyed international popularity through singles and albums released in Korea and Japan and has been recognized as a meaningful success story of the joint project.

Interestingly, they are considered ‘K-pop groups’ by the Japanese public even though they work with songs made by Japanese composers and producers in Japan with pieces similar to J-pop idol music. This can be attributed to K-pop’s status as a globally popular genre. And though the music was produced by the Japanese system, it gained world recognition through the Korean business system. Although it is a joint venture between Korea and Japan, their personality does not deviate significantly from the duality of K-pop, which is a mixture of Korean K-pop and global J-pop.

However, <Produce 48> and IZ*ONE are still not free from the nationalities of Korea and Japan. The controversy among viewers about Japanese contestant Miu Sita and Korean contestant Jo Yu-ri (조유리) clearly reveals this.

AKB48 Japanese contestant Miu Shita, who enjoyed a significant degree of popularity with Korean viewers, stirred up controversy when she publicly expressed respect for Hirobumi Ito. As a cast member of a program broadcast in Korea, her behavior directly led to the anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans. This fierce debate among fans exemplifies the potential danger of ‘national sentiment’ between Korea and Japan. On the contrary, Miho Miyazaki, who revealed her extraordinary affection for Korea and Korean language skills by claiming to be a ‘friendly’ group, received much higher support from her Korean fans than those in Japan.

In addition, a video of Jo Yu-ri, a Korean participant wearing a Japanese Military Comfort Women badge⁸, which is undoubtedly linked to anti-Japanese sentiment and nationalism, was like stepping on thin ice. Fans expressed various reactions⁴⁸ to Jo Yu-ri’s wearing the badge, ranging from a cautious approach to revealing sensitive issues in the Korea-Japan joint project, criticizing it as an act of patriotism, and calling those who criticize Jo ‘honorary Japanese.’ In the end, no matter how successful the transnational cooperation pursued by <Produce 48> and IZ*ONE, it was necessary to avoid emotional conflict based on historical relations between the two countries.

⁸ Tens of thousands of Korean women were forced into prostitution during World War II. They were euphemistically called "comfort women."

Frayer, L. (2017), 《Not All South Koreans Satisfied With Japan's Apology To 'Comfort Women'》 , NPR

Culture of East Asia, K-pop

As of January 2020, when controversy over manipulating the number of votes for the entire <Produce> series—including <Produce 48>—came to light, it was difficult to predict the program's future. However, what should be noted about the impact of <Produce> on the K-pop industry is that cultural cooperation between the three Northeast Asian countries, including Korea and Japan, and China will increase. While this may serve as an opportunity to bring recognition to the Korean characteristics of K-pop, such as its unique business model or Korean culture, at the same time it can also work to scale up and strengthen a global recognition of K-pop as a global music genre. As a result, further discussion on the identity of K-pop can become more complicated.

After the great success of <Produce> in Korea, various sub-audition survival programs have been produced in China⁴⁹, including <Creative 101>, which was officially created by Mnet, as well as <Idol Trainee>, which aired without proper copyright. However, in these programs, Cheng Xiao, a Chinese member of the K-pop group WJSN (우주소녀), appeared as a judge, and Xuan Yi and Mei Qi, another Chinese member of the same group, emerged as participants, ranking second and first, respectively. This is quite a peculiar situation. China was referencing AKB48, which was influenced by Japan, and an original member of AKB48 was participating in <Produce 48> while competing against Korean trainees. Meanwhile, the Chinese K-pop idols participated in a Chinese program referring to <Produce> and re-debuted as a member of a Chinese project group. In Japan, the Japanese version of <Produce 101 Japan> was even introduced in September 2019. It would not be surprising to say that <Produce> will be produced in the near future, with the three countries participating

together.

This suggests the possibility that the music markets of Korea, China, and Japan will transform into international markets in the long run. Japanese idols Juri Takahashi and Miyu Takeuchi, who participated in <Produce 48> but were not selected as the final twelve members, have had their contracts terminated with their Japanese agency and instead contracted with a Korean agency. This is proof that shows that the idol industries of both Korea and Japan have come to share their pool of human resources, unlike in the past. Yuehua Entertainment, a primary Chinese entertainment agency, established a local Korean subsidiary in 2016 and immediately jumped into K-pop. Yue Hua is the agency of Choi Yena, one of the Korean members of IZ*ONE, so IZ*ONE can also be seen as a joint venture between Korea, China, and Japan.

Of course, due to language differences between Korea, China, and Japan, and the differences in audience preferences, the direct and indirect conflicts due to the national identity of singers and fans will not dissipate quickly. Also, the political and economic confrontation between the three countries may affect the exchange pattern at any time. For example, the THAAD [missile defense system] dispute put direct and indirect pressure on the Korean Wave in China, and Takeuchi Miyu had to postpone the release of her new song scheduled for July 2019 for three months due to worsening relations between Korea and Japan.

Nevertheless, cultural exchanges, cooperation, and integration symbolized by <Produce> and IZ*ONE can substantially contribute to resolving the two countries' old political and historical grudges and enhancing mutual understanding. So just like how groups that debuted through <Produce> which referenced Japan's AKB48, were producing K-pop groups, groups that were born through localization projects in China and Japan that referenced Korea's <Produce> were being considered as Japanese or

Chinese performers not K-pop. However, the common identity they share will enable diverse forms of collaboration, which will further expand K-pop's stance and possibly further strengthen the universal uniqueness of K-pop as an 'East Asian culture.' This ironic situation in which all aspects of K-pop is reinforced in collaboration with foreign countries is a general trend of cultural globalization, where new conflicts arise due to differences that were unknown in the past.

Chapter 5. Conditions of K-pop

No Koreans in a K-pop group?

Ryan Higa, a famous American YouTuber with 21.3 million subscribers, formed a five-member group called BgA⁵⁰ in 2016. While BgA refers to itself as a K-pop group, it is more of a parody group. Their first single, <Dong Saya Dae (ttongssayadwae 똥싸야돼)>, received a lot of attention from K-pop fans in the United States and ranked second on the Billboard World Music Chart in 2016. The group BgA is short for ‘Boys general Asian’, and the title of the song <Dong Saya Dae> is derived from the translation of <‘You’re the Shit’ (너 끝내 준다)!!> with a literary approach. This is deeply related to the conditions of K-pop that BgA members consider important. BgA members talk about the needs of K-pop at the beginning of the introduction of the song. They argue that K-pop groups should be made up of Asians—including Koreans—and Korean language should be included in the music, regardless of whether it makes sense. All five BgA members are East Asians. Ryan Higa is Japanese American, and three members are Korean-American or Chinese-American.

An essential condition of K-pop in Korea and the United States is that it must be composed of East Asian members while also including Koreans who have the ethnic characteristics of K-pop in their music and dance. This includes BTS, which has ‘native Koreans,’ and GOT7, which provides for Thai and Hong Kong members. This is also why TWICE and IZ*ONE, which alternately released Korean and Japanese singles as a collaborative group, can all be included in the K-pop category, even though almost half of the members are foreigners.

However, even if the music style and atmosphere of the music videos are very similar to K-pop and are based on a system identical to that of K-pop's unique business model, could it be called K-pop without any Korean or East Asian members?

AK-pop

Since the late 2000s, when K-pop started to gain attention in the United States and parts of East Asia, it has become customary for overseas fans to upload reaction videos of themselves while listening to K-pop music or watching music videos and cover dance videos on social media, including YouTube. Psy's <Gangnam Style Syndrome> was a world hit in 2012 and was an example of how cultural influence could go viral. Not only did the song go viral thanks to numerous fans who watched the <Gangnam Style> music video, but many began to post and share various reaction and dance videos, leading to more derivative videos being uploaded later. K-pop led to more interactive content among overseas fans, with fans actively participating in the production and transmedia content⁵¹, reinterpreting and recreating content in various ways.

It was natural for overseas fans not only to reinterpret and recreate existing K-pop music and dance but also to make and sing K-pop-style music themselves. Chad Future, who debuted in 2012, can be referred to as the first attempt of a non-Korean and a non-East Asian to become a K-pop performer. David Lehre, a male Caucasian from Detroit and minor actor, was fascinated by K-pop and began to make a name for himself in the United States in the early 2010s. Afterward, he began to gain popularity as Chad Future and released several digital singles and EP (mini-album) songs while developing his career as a singer. His music, dance, videos, makeup, and outfits reflected K-pop

style. He wanted to bring his style of K-pop to the United States and make his music known as AK-pop, or American K-pop. He continued to approach the K-pop market and also released singles with K-pop idols, Ravi from VIXX and Yuji from Bestie.

K-pop fans reacted cynically. Domestic fans were indifferent to him, and overseas fans disliked him. However, the most significant criticism of Chad Future was that he defined himself as a K-pop singer, but he could not speak Korean and would only sing only in English⁵². Listeners could not take music from non-Asian people seriously and raised fundamental questions about AK-pop, suggesting his music would be pop rather than AK-pop.

This was because overseas fans were hungry for an alternative to regular pop or regional music. They were intrigued by unique or authentic characteristics that came from being ‘foreign or authentically Korean.’ Therefore, the pursuit of ‘American K-pop’ performed by a Caucasian American singing K-pop in English was much the opposite of what fans were seeking. In other words, AK-pop’s concept was fundamentally unacceptable.

The world's most controversial K-pop group

Around the same time, in the early 2010s, another person asked, 'Does one have to be Korean to become a K-pop singer⁹?' Kim Bo-ra, a Korean who went on to study for a master's degree at Columbia University in 2014, raised this question by asking whether it was possible for non-Koreans to reproduce transnational K-pop musically and what it would mean within the global cultural industry. After auditioning, six non-Korean men (three white, one Asian, and two black) were selected for an experiment and turned the team into a K-pop idol group. This is how the world's most controversial K-pop group, EXP EDITION, a K-pop group without Koreans⁵³, was born.⁵⁴

Although it began as part of an experiment for a master's thesis, it was necessary to have high-quality vocals and skilled dancers to attempt the creation of a K-pop group. They also could not give up on creating Korean lyrics for the group, which was an essential element that constituted the identity of a K-pop group. Therefore, while EXP EDITION members did not go through a professional agency system, they went through months of training like other K-pop groups, received songs from music producers at Columbia University, and performed with Korean lyrics. EXP EDITION finally completed a project for the master's thesis with the release of their single Luv/Wrong in 2015.

⁹ EXP Edition has faced a non-stop backlash - from the early days when they launched - even up to today, with many saying they are not and will never be K-pop. They've received death threats, hundreds of insults online and have even been called out by YouTubers for being "fake K-pop". 「 Tan Y. (2018), 《K-pop's EXP Edition: the world's most controversial 'Korean' band》, BBC 」

As they continued to practice dancing and singing and strengthened their bond as a team, they decided to continue their work even after the project was over. They regularly performed at a small New York concert hall, drawing the attention of local K-pop fans. In the process, two black members withdrew from the group, and the number of members dropped to four, but EXP EDITION successfully attracted investment through crowdfunding. The team finally came to Korea, the home of K-pop, in 2016. Since then, the group received full-fledged training and Korean language lessons in Korea for about approximately months and finally succeeded in officially debuting in Korea via a cable channel in April of 2017.

Korean K-pop fans, who weren't supportive of Chad Future, generally responded favorably⁵⁵ to EXP EDITION since they sang in the Korean language and performed in Korea. However, their performance skills weren't good enough to attract Korean fans. Although they practiced hard, they couldn't compare to the singing and dancing skills of ordinary K-pop groups who received professional training. Their Korean pronunciation was also unclear and sounded unnatural. These were reasons why Korean audiences found it difficult to immerse themselves in EXP EDITION's music and stage presence.

The response of overseas fans was more critical. Most of the comments from overseas fans who saw their YouTube music videos were negative, and it is easy to find critical reactions from audiences in a video response. However, unlike Korean fans, the reason why overseas fans criticized them was not simply due to their lack of music skills. Instead, they pointed to 'cultural appropriation' as the main reason for their criticism.

The term 'cultural appropriation' critically describes the act of reproduction and imitation for simple commercial purposes without an accurate understanding of other cultures. For example, the girl group Mamamoo once displayed a video on a screen at

one of their concerts with images of themselves wearing black make-up that replicated the costumes of American singer Bruno Mars. However, so-called blackface makeup is taboo, as it contains racist elements used by white people who discriminated against blacks and caricatured their images in the United States through to the early twentieth century. Mamamoo simply lacked an understanding of American black culture and can be a representative example of cultural appropriation. Many foreign K-pop fans interpret K-pop in a way that is similar to Mamamoo's blackface incident. Their music is considered fake K-pop and clumsy artistic imitations of the Korean language and music while riding on the Korean Wave. However, Kim Bo-ra, who established IMMABB and became EXP EDITION's CEO, denies this. She argues that K-pop is music influenced by various cultures that cannot be a result of cultural appropriation. Instead, she claims that 'K-pop music without Koreans' is another example of K-pop's characteristics. EXP EDITION clearly defines its identity⁵⁶ as a 'K-pop group.'

The controversy with EXP EDITION is similar to a cultural appropriation incident in 2018 involving Bruno Mars. At that year's Grammy Awards held in New York City, Bruno Mars won in seven categories, including 'Album of the Year' and 'Song of the Year,' and became the top singer in the United States. However, following the ceremony, a black social activist criticized Bruno Mars, a non-black performer, for culturally appropriating black music. This criticism made a big stir as cultural appropriation exploits human culture. Born in Hawaii to a mixed father of Puerto Rican and Eastern European Jews and a mother of Filipino immigrants, Bruno Mars had a non-black background but performed R&B, soul, hip-hop, and New Jack Swing⁵⁷. When his album won the Grammy Award, black rapper Kendrick Lamar was left with winning the 'Album of the Year,' and this provoked fans. In response, Bruno Mars said, "I have grown up listening to the music of numerous black singers since childhood, and that is

the root of my music,” stressing that his music is not solely an imitation but a reinvention based on deep affection and understanding of black music and culture.

The controversy over the exclusive ownership of black music and K-pop occurs because both of the genres are a minority and non-mainstream music firmly attached to specific ethnic groups and identities. For example, the underground rap battle scenes of Eminem’s autobiographical story of the world’s most famous hip-hop titled <8 Mile> reveal a scene where a rival black rapper claimed that white rapping is fake. Even thirty years since hip-hop was created as a globally popular genre, the perception that black music should be sung only by blacks, calling non-black performers fake, or claiming those who make a profit out of black music are thieves, still exists. This being the case with black music, it is still challenging to separate the ‘K’ from K-pop, which has appealed to its individuality through its distinction from British and American pop music with its non-English, non-Western characteristics. Thus even if the music and image include ‘K’ characteristics, K-pop without Koreans will always be left open to questions.

The boundaries of K-pop

Although there are no Koreans in the group EXT EDITION, they came to Korea to sing in the Korean language and became a member of K-pop, finally making their official debut. But could a group without Koreans who also don’t sing in the Korean language be considered K-pop?

In March of 2019, Korean agency Zenith Media Content launched the <Z-pop Dream Project> to pursue new Asian music based on K-pop. The project is the same as the usual K-pop group production system for idol groups, using K-pop's unique training system and music production methods. However, they call their music 'Z-pop' rather than K-pop because they sing in English, not Korean, with groups from various Asian countries such as Japan, Thailand, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Their concept is to call their music 'Asian Pop' rather than 'K-pop,' mainly because it targets Generation Z.

K-pop's unique business model is an important characteristic that defines it. Z-pop can be seen as K-pop because it was created under this business model through Korean agencies. However, it is different from ordinary K-pop because it focuses more on overseas markets than in Korea, and more than anything there are no Korean members in the group and they do not sing in Korean either.

Foreign fans especially showed an interest in the first Indian member to appear in a K-pop group belonging to G-Boys and G-Girls, which was created through the project. Various foreigners have been active members of K-pop groups, but most are from East Asia. Therefore, Indian members are essential in making the identity of G-pop groups special. Most of their YouTube music video comments refer to the Indian members. Fans usually comment that they are pleased to see various Asians, including Indians, in the Asian category, which used to be limited to Korea, China, and Japan. In addition, rather than considering G-boys or G-girls as K-pop groups, fans instead dismiss them ⁵⁸and consider them to be groups that target East Asian fans by copying K-pop groups.

This contrasts considerably with the group EXP EDITION which sang in Korean, drew relatively positive responses from Korean fans, yet was criticized by overseas fans.

There are two main reasons for this difference. First, for overseas fans, especially fans outside East Asia, K-pop is considered a cultural symbol of Asians and Korea. Therefore, the Asians in K-pop mentioned by BgA is a broad concept that encompasses China and Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, and even India. But for Koreans, the South Asian country of India is considered culturally distant. This is why Korean fans are reluctant to embrace Z-pop groups, along with the fact that there are no Koreans in the group, and the singing is done in English. The second reason is that Korean fans tend to be generous and friendly to Westerners who like K-pop and want to reproduce it, but their response can be somewhat dismissive of their fellow Asians. Therefore, the conflicting reactions to the EXP EDITION and Z-pop groups illustrate the racial and ethnic perceptions of K-pop that are held by overseas fans while at the same time presenting the racist attitudes of some Korean fans that are based on nationalism and adoration of Western culture. Although it differs from K-pop, Z-pop groups can be seen as another type of K-pop in that it is a group produced by a Korean agency based on a K-pop business model, though without the elements of having Korean members or using Korean lyrics. But what if a group was to be produced by a non-Korean agency in another country?

More than twenty years have passed since K-pop began to enjoy a surge in popularity throughout East Asia. Various countries, especially East Asia, have made their music by referring to K-pop. This trend comes in multiple forms⁵⁹, from simple imitations of K-pop to the creation of music through rigorous recruiting strategies of human resources in the K-pop industry. K-pop, formed and developed through a study of Anglo-American and J-pop music, has become the primary reference standard and role model for other countries.

Cambodian groups⁶⁰, which were considered to have copied the male idol group B1A4 was criticized by local and Korean media. Cambodian groups that copied Wonder Girls'

<Nobody> and SHINee's <Ringdingdong> without permission, are representative examples of simple imitation. On the other hand, Thailand's popular four-member female group Candy Mafia, which debuted in 2009 and worked together until 2015, is closer to a more advanced form of K-pop localization and reinvention. Candy Mafia is a group created by an expert in charge of planning and fostering idol groups in Korea who moved to Thailand and incorporated work into the Thailand region. Perhaps their debut song <Mafia> is very similar to the popular K-pop group 2NE1, from everything including their fashion, dance, and stage mannerisms to their music video tone and atmosphere. However, in terms of their songs, such as <Automatic>, <Cliche>, and <My Boy>, released in 2013-2014, though they are similar to K-pop, they tried to establish their color rather than merely imitating others.

In addition to the Candy Mafia, the Thai music industry is steadily making headway with indigenous K-pop through groups such as <Faye Fang Kawe> and <GAIA>. Their music is called T-pop, which combines Thailand's initials 'T,' and is enjoying considerable popularity in their country and some Southeast Asian regions. This trend can be easily found in China, Vietnam, and other South East Asian countries that actively refer to K-pop. They frequently remake Korean audition programs and steadily train groups similar to K-pop groups. Like T-pop, in Vietnam, sophisticated domestic mainstream pop music with young tastes created under the influence of K-pop is called 'V-pop'. Another example is Q-pop which relates to dance music created in Kazakhstan, located in Central Asia. Although local music is made overseas and sung by foreigners in their language, it is localized in a form very similar to K-pop.

American hip-hop is still hip-hop even if Koreans make, sing, and localize it in Korean. So then, how is K-pop localized in Thailand, Vietnam, and Kazakhstan and defined as T-pop, V-pop, and Q-pop? Just as Korean hip-hop is called K-hip-hop, and Chad Future is trying to call his music AK-pop, can these songs be called TK-pop, VK-

pop, or QK-pop?

In the case of hip-hop, there is still a demand for a specific race and class identity that 'real hip-hop' must-have. In addition, characteristics such as rhymes, rhythm patterns, and composition methods of lyrics are also important factors when making hip-hop music. Therefore, even a Korean love song can become hip-hop when written with specific lyrics and delivered with a certain rhythm. Consequently, it is only natural for the ethnic and social characteristics to weaken when globalized and heard by audiences in other countries.

In other words, it makes sense to have the belief that K-pop must reflect its country's national identity. However, unlike hip-hop, if K-pop becomes genuinely global, music with full-fledged localization will appear in the form of V-pop, T-pop, and Q-pop. In such a case, K-pop as a regional genre is likely to disappear naturally.

Chapter 6. What is the origin of K-pop?

The fandom that rejected the K-pop Avengers

In October of 2019, K-pop group SuperM reached No. 1 on Billboard's main album chart, Billboard 200, as soon as they debuted. SuperM is an SM Entertainment project group consisting of members Taemin (태민) of SHINee, Baekhyun and Kai of EXO, Taeyong (태용) and Mark of NCT, and Lucas and Ten of WayV. Even before their debut, expectations were high for the so-called 'K-pop Avengers'. They became the second K-pop group to hit No. 1 on the Billboard charts following BTS. However, some claimed the team's success of reaching No. 1 on the charts was possible by taking advantage of using expedient marketing tactics such mixing merchandised products⁶¹ and concert tickets in their album sales. However, this type of marketing has been widely used by many famous performers around the world including Taylor Swift. Thus, SuperM's popularity can be attributed to its loyal fandom in the United States as it topped the list among numerous artists who used relatively simple marketing strategies. In the past, super groups of former members of famous rock bands gained attention from fans and performed well on the charts as soon as their albums were released.

However, the album, which topped the Billboard 200 chart, failed to gain similar popularity on domestic charts. It ranked only up to seventh place in Korea's monthly record sales in October 2019. While this is not a low ranking, it is not very impressive compared to its No. 1 ranking on the Billboard chart. It even sold less than Taeyeon's album, which was released three weeks later. Their single <Jopping> briefly appeared on the chart⁶² shortly after its release but soon disappeared and never reappeared on any domestic music sites.

Though BTS started out with more popularity abroad than in Korea, in 2017 when it topped charts overseas BTS gained a considerable number of loyal fans in Korea as well. In addition, BTS albums that ranked No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and singles gained a lot of popularity among K-pop fans in Korea. On the other hand, SuperM received a rather lukewarm response in contrast to its strong reception abroad. In particular, fans of SHINee and EXO took a negative stance towards using Taemin or Baekhyun who getting ready to serve in the military. Fans thought it was inappropriate to push them onto stage just to raise the popularity of agency's junior group NCT. This contrasts with the reactions of overseas fans, who showed great interest and full support for SuperM's formation and activities.

SuperM's case proves that K-pop's popularity in Korea is no longer a requirement to be successful overseas. At the same time, it shows a significant differentiation between domestic and overseas fans. The influence of overseas fans on the K-pop industry is growing daily. Thus, the importance of domestic success is gradually decreasing.

The evolution of fandom and global expansion

From the passionate fandom of Nahoona (나훈아) and Namjin (남진) who often competed with each other in the 1970s to the fans called 'oppa budae' (oppa army 오빠부대)' due to their craze over Cho Yong-pil (조용필) and Sobangcha (소방차) in the 1980s, Korea's avid fan culture had its own history. In the 1990s fans known as 'ppa-sooni(빠순이)' camped in front of the homes of first-generation idols H.O.T and Sechskies in hope to get a glimpse of the idol artists. However, the nuance of the terms 'oppa budae' or 'ppa-sooni' used to refer to the fans were negative, cynical, and sometimes even sexist. Their spontaneous and enthusiastic fandomship was considered by many to be an immature and ruthless act of worshiping stars.

This perception changed in the late 2000s. Idol music used to gain popularity in China. However, in the new era, K-pop gradually gaining recognition throughout East Asia, including Japan and Thailand, as well as outside East Asia. In addition, overseas fans began to use the label ‘K-pop’. By the time the <Gangnam Style> syndrome hit the world, terms such as ‘oppa budae’¹⁰ and ‘ppa-sooni’ began to be replaced by relatively refined fandom, which collectively represented a broader scope of popular cultures including sports and movies.

The most significant difference between the behavior of fans from the first generation ‘ppa-sooni’ with fans after the second generation of K-pop was the kind nature and expanded scale of activities. Fans used be characterized as violent and uncivilized groups for getting into physical fights with other groups. Some even sent hate letters written in blood or inserted razor blades to scare off anyone involved in scandals with their fan. The fans later began to realize that their unacceptable behavior undermined fans and affected the image of their favorite stars. Instead, fans started to work in helping improve the image of their favorite celebrities through good deeds. As a result, fans began to collect funds to donate rice and various items to low-income families in the name of their fan clubs and their favorite stars. Some would volunteer at social facilities including nurseries and supported activities that helped prevent global warming. These activities become the standard to the ‘fandom donation culture.’

¹⁰ The idea of Korean musical fandom dates to the 1980s when fans who adored the singer-songwriter Cho Yong-pil formed what was called an *Oppa Boodae*, or *Oppa Troop*. The naming comes from young, female fans screaming *Oppa*, which means Big brother in Korean.

「Lee,S,H., March 12, 2019, The Sungkyun times; Change in K-Pop Fandom Culture」

At the same time, K-pop fandom still boasts exceptionally high loyalty, solidarity, obsession, and competitiveness. When favorite artists' songs are released, fans strategically play the songs nearly non-stop through the so-called 'Chung-gong' (which is short for an all-out attack in Korean). In other words, fans strategically consume a large number of albums to help raise chart rankings by one level. Online fans work to post as many hashtags as possible on social media and constantly produce positive articles and comments about these stars in online communities. Unfortunately, fans are still overly obsessed⁶³ and violate celebrities' privacy. Some fans are so active that they take on key roles, officially representing members as unofficial staff or running fan clubs under a particular 'deal' with agencies. Some will fight online with their rival groups and slander against one another. While there are many positive K-pop fandoms lead communities, the excessively passionate and sometimes exclusionary ones still exist.

The scope of K-pop fandom, which has a dual and often contradicting character, has expanded significantly from the second generation. First of all, the gender of enthusiastic fans, which was limited to women, has come to include male fans who previously had been relatively passive compared to female fans. In addition, the age range of most fans, which was limited from teenagers to those in their early twenties, has expanded beyond people in their thirties, forties, and even fifties. Although they are often suspected and criticized for seeing the artists as sexual objects, they are called 'aunt fans' or 'uncle fans' and claim to be strong supporters and sometimes even guardians of the star. Thanks to this atmosphere, it is no longer considered shameful that middle-aged adults are fans of idols.

As the popularity of K-pop expands globally, K-pop fan culture also spreads beyond borders. Not only has the number of overseas fans increased, the high loyalty and solidarity that help raise the image of the stars as well as the philanthropic acts of participating in fundraising is also spreading.⁶⁴ Music critic Kim Yoon-ha explained the differences in

domestic and overseas fandom. Earlier overseas K-pop fans tended to prioritize cover dances or reaction videos of K-pop whereas domestic fandom ran under the motto of growing together and sharing deep emotional exchanges with idols. However, this trend has changed significantly since <Gangnam Style> was released. Markets expanded rapidly and private activities became open to public with fans using social media. Of course, K-pop is still a leisurely activity for overseas fans as a means of entertainment. Moreover, now K-pop fandom can easily interact with each other without being tied to a particular country or region. As a result, global fandom reflect the general behavior of Korean fandom. BTS's global fan club, ARMY, is a representative example as it reflects the behavior patterns of Korean K-pop fandom. For example, ARMY worked in unison to raise BTS's ranking on the Billboard Single chart and its members around the world donated a total of 1.6 billion won through the donation campaign 'LOVE MY SELF' led by BTS and Big Hit Entertainment.

Export-oriented idols

As mentioned above, K-pop fans around the world are intensely aware of the importance of building popularity within Korea, and are highly interested in every move seen within in the Korean K-pop scene. K-pop groups, which gained popularity in Korea, immediately obtain overseas fandom. In addition, video recordings of TV appearances and fan cams are shared in real-time through online media platforms such as YouTube and social media. However, changes in overseas K-pop fandom have been more noticeable in recent years. Although a recent prominent example is SuperM's No.1 ranking on Billboard 200, there have been frequent cases in the past two to three years. Music and artists that satisfy the tastes of overseas audiences secured loyal fandom regardless of their popularity in Korea. In other words overseas fandom is gradually developing its own separate ways apart from domestic fandom.

A case in point is the group KARD (카드). KARD received a great deal of attention from overseas fans and enjoyed considerable popularity even before its official debut. However, it has not received much of a response in Korea. It's a rare group mixed with two men and two women. The group belongs to DSP Media, an agency that produced SECHSKIES (젝스키스), Fin. K.L. (핑클), and Kara. KARD is an exceptional case with better reception in the Americas and Europe compared to Korea and East Asian countries including China and Japan. KARD's single <Rumor>, released in 2017, topped the iTunes K-pop chart in thirteen countries and received the best response in the Americas, including the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. However, only 4.3 percent of all YouTube videos related to KARD were viewed in Korea⁶⁵. Most of the viewership took place in South America. Therefore, KARD is more active in South America than in Korea. In 2019, KARD released just two digital singles in Korea without a physical album or performance. Still, in Brazil, they completed a national tour of large cities, including Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and local towns, such as Recife and Porto Alegre. KARD has been touring Brazil every year since 2017, and are known as the K-pop singers that has visited Brazil the most over a short period.

Some critics point out KARD'S success came from going opposite to the current general trend of mainstream K-pop as it was more appealing.⁶⁶ KARD pursues a fresh amateur-like image rather than a polished, refined style. Their unique style is centered on 'dancehall'⁶⁷ and Latin pop rather than your typical K-pop music style based on EDM and hip-hop. In addition, it shows a variety of dynamic stage performances that only mixed groups can perform. Also, KARD does not dwell on broadcast appearances, which are the principal basis of domestic fandom expansion. KARD's different musical, and emotional character, different to existing K-pop groups satisfied overseas fans. On the other hand, it also served as a hindrance to attracting domestic K-pop fans. For example, the characteristic of a mixed group was not welcomed by domestic K-pop fans who value emotional immersion as feelings of love.

Third-generation male K-pop groups such as MONSTA X, GOT7, and SEVENTEEN also have loyal fandom overseas. Unlike KARD, they have a relatively solid fandom in Korea, which often ranks first in the terrestrial music broadcasting rankings. Still, their popularity among overseas K-pop fans goes beyond. For example, MONSTA X is so prevalent in the United States that it appeared on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, a popular talk show on the US terrestrial broadcaster. Psy and BTS appeared in September 2019 and toured all over the United States. In the same year, SEVENTEEN sold out all twelve concerts in Japan, attracting 200,000 spectators and GOT7 completed a world tour twenty cities across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. In addition, Stray Kids and NU'EST are also more prominent overseas than in Korea. NCT, the cause of controversy in SuperM, is also a group that has secured considerable recognition overseas.

The same is true of the women in the third generation. Momoland, which is almost a 'national girl group' in the Philippines, and CLC, a multinational group with members from Thailand and Hong Kong, have an overwhelming proportion of foreigners in terms of YouTube views and frequency of comments on social media. Of the two groups' YouTube video views, Korea only shares 8.2 percent and 7.3 percent, respectively⁶⁸. The same goes for BLACKPINK, the first K-pop girl group to appear in Coachella, a prominent American music festival featuring all mainstream and indie musicians of various genres. They also have a much larger fandom overseas than in Korea.

Such groups are also called 'export idols.' Although it does not meet the general taste of domestic K-pop fandom as KARD does, it focuses on overseas markets with music, images, and performances that can satisfy overseas audiences. For example, in the previous second generation, some top singers such as Big Bang and Super Junior earned much more overseas than they did in Korea. This is because they left Korea for a long time while traveling around Japan and East Asia world tours. However, their top priority at the time was to satisfy domestic

fandom. Therefore, when an album or single was released, they tirelessly appeared in music ranking programs and entertainment programs on domestic terrestrial and cable broadcasts. They even held several fan meetings and autograph sessions, and performed at large and small events, including university and local festivals. Overseas fandom also always paid great attention to its popularity and activities in its home country of Korea. However, it was a different story for the third-generation export-type idols. Even if they released an album or single, they finish their domestic activities quickly in one to two weeks and immediately focus on overseas concerts and fan meetings. With less appearance on domestic broadcasting programs, they had less public recognition and opportunities to meet with their fans. This resulted in reduced the number of loyal fans.

Export-type idols were possible thanks to K-pop's global market's significant quantitatively and qualitatively growth. Until the second generation, K-pop could not gain a return on investment from overseas markets unless they were top performers capable of attracting audiences from world tours or were good enough to perform at one of the five major dome stadiums in Japan ⁶⁹. However, with BTS's great success, overseas K-pop fandom expanded significantly, overwhelming domestic fans in terms of size. In particular, K-pop began to rise in countries—including the United States and those in Europe—countries with purchasing power. Korea's K-pop pie in overseas market grew extensively. According to data from Blip, a K-pop fandom research institute, Korea accounted for only 10.1 percent of the number of views⁷⁰ on K-pop-related YouTube videos worldwide in August 2019.

K-pop is now consumed more overseas. As a result, idol groups and agencies make profits just by securing overseas fandom. The differentiation of tastes between domestic and overseas fandom has provided another possibility for domestic K-pop agencies and singers. Meanwhile, the influence of overseas fandom has increased significantly. Overseas fans have begun to express their needs to agencies and idols, which differ from domestic fans. This action,

which is referred to as ‘gonari,’⁷¹ slang for micromanagement, has begun.

Foreign ‘cockroaches’ and white washing

As the overseas market continues to grow and the number of K-pop singers working mainly overseas increases, domestic fans have begun to express their disappointment in agencies and artists for focusing on only in foreign countries while neglecting their home country. They express their opinions on large Internet bulletin boards where many K-pop fans gather and share comments like “please pay attention to Korean activities.” Some cynically referring to them as ⁷² ‘K-pop singers’ performances in Korea. Complaints erupted among domestic fans after BTS’s fast-paced agency Big Hit launched an open platform Weverse aimed at all global fans, rather than operating a private fan page centered on domestic fans. Korean idol group fan online cafes generally recruit paid members only once a year and then offer them various opportunities to see artists up close, such as pre-booking concerts, joint purchases of albums with fan signing tickets, purchases of exclusive products (aka ‘goods’) and watching music shows, etc. However, currently, if you pay 33,000 won to join Weverse, site members can enjoy the privileges that only existing fan club members have access to, such as booking concerts or purchasing fan-only products. In response, Korean fans stated to abolish the regular recruitment of fan club members and stop discrimination against Korean fans, claiming that they supported BTS to become global stars when BTS was not popular in Korea.

Complaints that come from domestic fans toward agencies and their artists sometimes spill over to fans overseas. When K-pop first expanded its presence to

overseas markets in the early 2010s, some agencies even blocked reservations for prioritized seats for overseas fans visiting domestic concerts in order to ensure that they had seats available to the visiting overseas fans. In addition, Korean fans often complained that they were not allowed to take photos (even with high-quality cameras) yet foreigners were allowed to shoot photos. Especially, now that K-pop can be easily viewed through YouTube and social media with the third generation, most of the commentaries found ‘K-pop singers on tour to Korea’. Complaints erupted among domestic fans after BTS’s fast-paced agency Big Hit launched an open platform Weverse for aiming global fans rather than privately operating a fan page for domestic fans. The typical Korean idol online fan cafes generally recruit paid members once a year offering various benefits for fans to see artists up close, such as pre-booking concerts, joint purchases of albums and tickets for fan signing events, purchases of exclusive products (aka ‘goods’) and tickets for broadcast shows, etc. However, currently, if you pay 33,000 won to join Weverse, site members can enjoy the privileges that only existing fan club members have access to including booking concerts or purchasing fan-only products. In response, Korean fans demand to abolish the regular recruitment of club members. They felt it wasn’t fair for Korean fans and claimed BTS to rise as global stars was possible due to their support when BTS was not popular in Korea.

Complaints of domestic fans toward agencies and their artists sometimes spilt over to overseas fans. When K-pop first expanded its presence to overseas markets in the early 2010s, some agencies blocked reservations as prioritized seats for overseas fans visiting domestic concerts in order to ensure seats would be available for the visiting overseas fans. In addition, at fan meetings domestic fans were strictly restricted from taking photos or cutting in line but officials were less strict to overseas (especially Caucasian or Japanese) fans.

Korean fans high-quality cameras were not allowed to take photos or were asked to exit, while foreigners were allowed to photograph the event. The number of such complaints

continued to increase. Especially, now that K-pop can be easily viewed through YouTube and social media with the third generation, most of the commentaries are written in English. Anyone who posted a comment in Korean could easily receive responses like ‘Eng plz’ [short for English Please] that would be shared to anyone chatting in Korean. Such behavior provoked the tendency to call out foreigners using a hostile expression ‘외퀴’ [We-kui] meaning ‘foreign cockroach’ in Korean. At first Korean fans were pleased to see so many people chatting in English on music videos or social media pages.

Such foreign fans were even had a nickname which was ‘외랑둥이’⁷³ [We-rang-doong-i] which referred to overseas K-pop fans. The nickname also was used for ARMY fans overseas. However, the situation quickly turned around as overseas fans began shouting ‘eng plz’ and actively conveyed their demand to K-pop artists who posted in Korean.

This led to fans deleting comments because they disapproved. Koreans began to protest by stating “K-pop is Korean music, and it is for Korean fans, so why do we have to use English instead of you trying to understand it by learning Korean?.”

The act of comparing overseas fans to cockroaches that suddenly flock over and cause trouble symbolizes the existence of nationalism and xenophobia, a mindset with a belief that an unfamiliar culture is strange and inferior, in K-pop. This is also a conflict between global universality and regional specificity formed based on Western culture symbolized in English. On the other hand, while overseas inclusively built itself upon the culture of domestic K-pop fandom, it gradually began to express dissatisfaction with domestic fandom. In particular overseas fans criticized domestic fans for its racism. Some Korean fans were found to express hate towards a K-pop group because they looked too Southeast Asian-looking. There are Korean fans who casually make racist remarks, saying things like, “There are few whites among foreigners who like K-pop, and all are black, Hispanic, or Asian,” asking how that means they are popular overseas. When filming overseas concerts, Korean broadcasters often

point their camera towards blonde Caucasian fans and do not include other ethnicities. With such cases in mind, overseas fans point out the racist tendencies of Korean fans. In particular, overseas fans criticize the practice of making idols' skin appear whiter by using correcting filters before posting them on the internet. Some even correct the photos back to the original color claiming it is 'the real color of Asian skin tones.' Domestic fandom is sensitive to various incidents such as drugs, drunk driving, and scandals and tries to exclude members who are at the center of the issue. However, overseas fandom is relatively generous and instead criticizes the extreme attitude of domestic fandom. Won-ho was a member of Monsta X who was accused of smoking cannabis. While domestic fans demanded him to leave the group, overseas fans actively opposed his removal.

This may have been attributed to the 'time difference' with K-pop entering the overseas market so quickly leaving little time to fully understand the cultural differences between domestic and overseas fans. Koreans have found jade-like white skin appealing since ancient times. Following the white-washing controversy, fans would refer anyone who said that Korean's skin color had to be yellow discrimination and used the term 'yellow-washing.'

In addition, fans would call out anyone who criticized K-pop without a deep understanding of how it was born based on Korea's historical, cultural, and social contexts. Fans would call them self-centered in terms of culture.

The differentiation, conflict, and racism discourse between domestic and overseas fandom may be a challenging issue to solve for the K-pop industry. However, it is also possible to positively interpret this level of voluntary discussion among audiences. Some considered such discussion possible due to cross-cultural sensitivity and considered it much more advanced compared to interpersonal communication⁷⁴. In a way fans are giving direction by pointing out and debating on issues that haven't even been recognized by producers and the performers themselves.

Fans help indicate the direction of areas that can be easily neglected through their discussions especially in terms of content creators or performers to maintain their business. .

What is clear is that the past view of K-pop's rapid growth in the global market and the explosive increase in overseas fandom from a money-making or national prestige perspective is no longer valid. The identity of K-pop is deeply correlated to the identity of the artist, the production and distribution of the music, and the identity of the fans. The nationalistic tendency of domestic fandom naturally gives K-pop a nationalistic color. The more K-pop becomes transnational; it's identity also turns more naturally. With this multicultural will disappear. While K-pop tries to identify itself as a 'universal pop music in the world and tries to detach itself from Korea, it is constantly redefined as Korean in terms of consumption in the domestic and global markets. This is due to the dual nature of K-pop, being both local and international music.

The convergence and conflict between these two trends will be a steadily recurring problem as long as K-pop enjoys popularity in the global market.

Epilogue

The conflict and evolution of K and pop

In the late 1990s, the global popularity of Korean media content and K-pop, which began as part of the Korean wave in East Asia, expanded with <Gangnam Style> and BTS, making it difficult to define the Korean wave by its framework alone. For example, music critic Kim Young-dae spoke at K-Con, an important annual event related to the Korean Wave in the United States, stating that discussions on K-pop were no longer about sharing knowledge about culture and popular music about Korea. Rather discussions on K-pop center itself with a US producer-consumer perspective⁷⁵. In other words, it is like focusing attention on how music is perceived in terms of Korean history, culture, and social context. Koreans no longer refer to cultural aspects of the US when discussing about rock or hip-hop music. This change occurs as K-pop is gradually becoming a truly global pop music genre. K-pop covers various classes, races including Hallyu fans as well as Korean Americans (and East Asian) Americans.

This book analyzes the groups, music and fandom culture of third generation K-pop. While discussing on K-pop's new identity, the book looks into the global popularity of K-pop in East Asia and beyond. It also looks at how K-pop expanded its popularity to North and South America, Europe and Central Asia.

All of the cases are deeply linked to a particularly to Korea. All of the groups were deeply connect to Korea and Korean characteristics but at the same time transcends beyond borders. Two different concepts conflict with one another. One is K-pop's inherent uniqueness that regional cultures offer and the other is the fact that K-pop is a global pop genre.

K-pop, a non-Western and non-English genre, cannot be separated from its locality. K-pop was created to satisfy its own country's audiences. However, with K-pop's success in overseas markets, especially since the early 2010s, it has been embraced by audiences from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds beyond East Asia. As a result, the situation is rapidly changing. Now K-pop must unconditionally pay attention to markets overseas. In response, the industry is working to meet the needs of foreign members by actively recruiting and fostering members from overseas. Business collaboration with local industries, building groups with local taste in mind are just some of the many tactics being used in order to meet expectations. However, in the process, various conflicts occur between the domestic and overseas markets. This throws skepticism into the K-pop arena. This is due to the lack of understanding of other cultures of K-pop, which has a relatively short history of globalization. Still, it is not possible to completely rid itself of the locality, or Koreanness, that is inherent in K-pop while it aims to flourish globally.

As pointed out by some experts, “the custom of highlighting heterogeneous elements as a subject of spectacle, the risk of racism by skin color, and hierarchy of placing Korea in a superior position” are all issues that K-pop, which is becoming a global music genre, must seriously consider and work to avoid. However, if K-pop, which has so far centered on ‘K,’ or ‘Korea,’ further strengthens its characteristics as a global universal culture and drops the ‘K,’ it faces a contradictory situation that K-pop will no longer be ‘K-pop.’ This is so because K-pop is not defined as rock or hip-hop but as a genre defined by its regional characteristics. Not to mention its cultural factors and style. Therefore, hip-hop in Korea and K-pop in the United States are bound to have completely different meanings. Consequently, the localization of K-pop business models, can be interpreted as universalization. So, hip-hop in Korea and K-pop in the United States are totally different in meaning.

If both artist and target audience were foreigners as in the case where an artist that debuts under the K-pop localization business model or groups made up of foreigners planned for debut in Korea, one could say it was due to K-pop's universal characteristic and global recognition. Groups created using a K-pop localization business model, or foreign groups debuting in Korea could be seen to have been made possible due to K-pop's universal characteristic and global recognition. However this would be categorizing K-pop as a 'technical module'. In other words it would be merely a system for production.

Also, K-pop has become a standard module⁷⁶ or standardized production method. Just as the group created through the Chinese localized version of <Produce 101>, a format based on the K-pop system, becomes Chinese pop music, not K-pop.

However, the nationalistic tendency, which is the nature of K-pop, constantly discourages K-pop from becoming completely trans-nationalized or de-nationalized. Therefore K-pop then ends up being Korean music.⁷⁷ Even if K-pop is considered a universal global music genre, it is not part of the Korean Wave and cannot exist independently from other popular cultures in Korea. The argument that "BTS is different from ordinary K-pop groups and succeeded against the characteristics of K-pop and therefore cannot be seen as part of K-pop" is meaningful at first glance. However it overlooks the various advantages that have raised BTS to its current success based on K-pop virtues. Many overseas fans demand something different from K-pop, different to global pop music or their own local music. We can easily predict it will be difficult to replace the "original," no matter how much local pop music is created by applying the "K-pop standardization module. And because the K-pop industry works very closely with other Korean cultural sectors such as broadcasting, advertising, and movies, K-pop still faithfully serves as a gateway to guiding fans to other cultural content in Korea. Therefore, it is a somewhat biased perspective to separate K-pop

from the context of the Korean culture or music industry and see it as a ‘personage’ or ‘independent genre.’ K-pop’s ‘origin’ will remain an essential factor.

In the end, the series of conflicts and convergence surrounding K-pop is an issue that will constantly recur, with only a slight change in appearance unless K-pop is a combination of K-pop and pop. In addition, K-pop will lose its position in the global music market. Also, K-pop will take on a much more multicultural color than now, musical diversity will increase as audiences differentiate, and the agency idol system, one of the cores of K-pop identity, will also be industrially structured and more flexible in the relationship between singers and agencies. And suppose the popularity of K-pop, Korean music, and even Korean pop culture continues steadily for the foreseeable future and becomes a regular part of global pop culture. In that case, it may no longer be called ‘-Ryu,’ which means a sudden flow.

Even if K-pop needs a new regulation in part, it will not be easy to separate from the characteristic of ‘K,’ or Korea. This is because no matter how popular Korean culture grows it cannot acquire the universal status that American and Western cultures had. The development of Internet media platforms increased direct cultural exchanges, and the emergence of new generations has created a different cultural industry environment. K-pop is the fastest and most immediate beneficiary of this new environment. We now live in a world where content created in several large and small cultural centers—including the United States—is rapidly delivered to various niche markets through Internet-based global media platforms. Just because the United States still holds the hegemony of popular cultures doesn’t mean that it will continue to have an overwhelming influence as the world’s only cultural center as it did in the past. Nor will there ever be another absolute culture that the world as a whole will seek after in the future.

K-pop serves as a niche in the global culture market but holds a rather lower level class limited to a rather smaller group. Thus, it is true that K-pop lacks universality. However,

in this current time where the influence of mainstream is not as huge as it used to be, the level and influence of K-pop is likely to become increasingly high. Therefore, K-pop cannot be universal. It doesn't have to be. 'K' and 'pop' will constantly collide and converge. And even if K-pop changes to a different form in the process, the 'K' will never be discarded.

Endnotes

1. Arin Kim, <Twitter: K-pop's great leveler>, <<The Korea Herald>>, Jan. 1st, 2019.
2. In this book, 'East Asia' was used as a broad concept encompassing both Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia.
3. Old-School Hip-Hop is used to refer to the early hip-hop style between the late 1970s to the mid and late 1980s. It is a form combined with relatively basic rapping and concise, uncomplicated beats. On the other hand, Gangsta rap is a hip-hop style that was prevalent in the U.S. as well as the world in the early and mid 1990s, featuring lyrics describing back-street gangsters' lives in straightforward language and heavy 'funk' beats stacked in layers.
4. A derisive term for singers who only make a muttering lip-sync to AR without using one's own voice during a live performance.
5. See comments of the following video: KLCL, <SHAWN STOCKMAN (of BOYZ II MEN) ON BTS'S ROSE BOWL SHOW>, May 8th, 2019.
6. Kim Tae-eun (김태은), <Professor Park Sang-Jin(박상진) quoted 'Psy's Gangnam Style is the traditional Korean music of Hwimorijangdan Rhythm' > , <<Newsis (뉴시스)>>, Nov. 1st, 2014.
7. A sarcastic remark about praising our culture unconditionally because of too much pride in our country. It is a newly coined term which began to be used frequently in the early 2010s within the internet community.
8. Shin Hyun-jun (신현준), 《Pop song, K-pop and Beyond (가요, 케이팝, 그리고 그 너머)》, Dolbegae (돌베개), 2013.

9. Sohn Min-jung (손민정), 《Politics of Trot (트로트의 정치학)》, Eumaksekye (음악세계), 2009.
10. For further information regarding the acceptance of Anglo-American music into the Korean music industry, the definition of 'new generation dance music', or the definition or scandals related to Japanese music plagiarism, refer to Lee Gyu-tak (이규탁)'s 《The Age of K-pop (케이팝의 시대)》, HanulMPlus (한울엠플러스), 2016.
11. The term refers to popular music in Hong Kong which is called 'Canto-pop' as it is composed of Cantonese lyrics. Also known as C-pop, or HK-pop, it was highly popular between the 1980s and 1990s and gained huge popularity in East Asian regions such as Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Malaysia.
12. Ola Johansson, <Beyond ABBA: The Globalization of Swedish Popular Music>, 《FOCUS on Geography》 53(4), 2010, pp. 134-141.
13. The truth is that not only Abba but most of the other famous Swedish pop performers including Ace of Base, Roxette, Robyn, and Cardigans all released their albums in English and not in Swedish.
14. For example, Hong Kyung-min (홍경민)'s 'Shaky Friendship (흔들리는 우정),' one of the biggest hits in the Korean music industry in 2000, is not a Spanish song, but it has distinctive beats and a unique atmosphere that resembles the characteristic of Latin music, so it can be said to be a Latin pop song interpreted in Korean.
15. Including this song, a total of 19 Latin pop songs were included in the Top 100 Billboard Single Annual Chart of 2017. This is in contrast to the 2016 Annual Chart, which only had four songs listed.
16. Even when considering Latin pop that was released in English, it is mostly common to insert Spanish into the title or lyrics of songs.

17. E.g. Lim Hoe-yoon (임희윤), <'World Music 2.0 Era...expectations for explosive synergy in collaboration with K-pop'>, Dong-A Ilbo, Sept. 27th, 2017.
18. Timothy Taylor, 《Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World》, Duke University Press, 2007.
19. Seo Jung-min (서정민), <'BTS, sometimes helps and sometimes checks Fan Club 'ARMY'>, 《Hankyoreh》, Dec. 9th, 2018.
20. Kim Bong-hyun (김봉형), <'BTS is not the Korean Wave'>, 《Esquire》, Dec. 24th, 2017.
21. As an example, the American weekly literary magazine 《The New Yorker》 described Girls' Generation as 'Factory girls.' John Seabrook, <'Factory Girls'>, 《The New Yorker》, Oct. 1st, 2012.
22. The new school-themed albums 《2 COOL 4 SKOOL》, 《O!RUL8,2?》 and 《SKOOL LUV AFFAIR》 all have a common focus on the stories of teenagers and their school lives. These albums are divided into two parts. Part 1 and part 2 under the title 《THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MOMENT IN LIFE》 depicts young people's agony, anxiety, passion, love, and energy. The series called 'Love yourself' refers to a series that includes three albums released in three stages of 'Seung (승, development) - Jeon (전, turn) - Gyeol (결, conclusion)' and refers to the albums and videos under <'LOVE YOURSELF 起 'Wonder'>. It contains the following topics of the flutter and fear of love, the pain of breakups, and the process of maturing through love.
23. Yoshitaka Mori, <'Reconsidering Cultural Hybridities: International Exchanges of Popular Music between Korea and Japan'>, Jonathan Mackintosh et al. eds, 《Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeastern Asia》, Hong Kong University Press, 2009. pp.213-230.
24. KLCL, <'SHAWN STOCKMAN (of BOYZ II MEN) ON BTS'S ROSE BOWL SHOW'>, May 8th, 2019.

25. Lee Hye-in (이혜인), <Bang Si-hyeok (방시혁) is talking about the factors of success for 'BTS'>, 《Hankyoreh (한겨레)》, Dec. 10th, 2017.
26. According to comments on Arirang TV's news that analyzed the BTS phenomenon, foreign fans were asking for a steady release of Korean albums that were in the Korean language and not English.
ARIRANG NEWS, <The BTS phenomenon and future of K-pop>.
27. Choi Jin-young (최진영), <Korean main characters in the latest 'TV show' speak only in Korean>, 《EconomyChosun》, Apr. 22nd, 2019.
28. BBC, <The Beatles v BTS: How do these supergroups compare?>, Jan. 30th, 2019.
Park Se-yeon (박세연), <'BTS, a Team as influential as the Beatles'>, 《StarToday》, Sept. 26th, 2019.
29. or example, in the case of the constant commercialization of hip-hop, there were discussions about authenticity by the audience and creators on what 'real hip hop' is.
See Kim Su-a (김수아) · Hong Jong-yoon (홍종윤), 《Now, Here, Hip-Hop》, threeChairs, 2017.
30. Kim Su-jeong (김수정) · Kim Su-a (김수아), <'Collective moralism (집단적 도덕주의)' by Ethos (에토스) - Korean cultural identity of mixed K-pop (혼종적 케이팝의 한국적 문화 정체성)>, 《The Press and Society (언론과 사회)》 23(3), 2015, Pages 5-52.
31. Mimyo (미묘), <Drifting Records of Asia Vol.3 - Now, Beyond K-POP>, "W Korea", Jan. 28th, 2019.
32. Yang Seong-hee (양성희), <'Global standing of K-pop, Industrial mindset can't keep up with it'>, 《JoongAng Ilbo》, Aug. 15th, 2019.
33. The original lyrics are 'Shy Shy Shy', but when Sana, a Japanese native, sang the lyrics in Japanese-English pronunciation it sounded like 'Sha Sha Sha.' This section that was combined with unique dancing motions was made into numerous memes and helped <CHEER UP> become a hit.

34. This is the same with Korean-American singers such as Solid, Yoo Seung-joon (유승준), Uptown, and Drunken Tiger, who gained popularity in the 1990s.

Refer to Mi-myoo (미묘), <Multinational Idols, For More Stereoscopic Concerns>, 《Korean Wave Now》 Vol. 26, 2018, pages 33-40.

35. A total of seven members, includes the five-member group Super Junior, along with Henry and Chinese member Jo-mi (조미).

36. This can also be found in an article by Rowan Pease, a scholar who studied the acceptance of Korean pop music in China in the past. In her interview with fans of Korean pop music in China, the interviewees noted that 'K-pop gives a friendly feeling despite its high-quality and sophisticated music.'

Rowan Pease, <Korean Pop Music in China: Nationalism, Authenticity, and Gender>, Jonathan Mackintosh et al. eds, 《Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeastern Asia》, Hong Kong University Press, 2009.

37. <2018 MUSIC INDUSTRY WHITE PAPER> , Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), 2019.

38. Lee Jae-hun (이재훈), <[Focus] Japan's Top Star KARA, No Dokdo to Them?>, 《Newsis》, Aug. 22nd, 2012.

39. There are still many debates on whether to call the Japanese monarch a 'Japanese emperor (天皇)' or 'Japanese king (日王).' In fact, the Korean government currently uses the term 'Japanese Emperor' as its official title, but sometimes the term 'King' is used depending on the Korea-Japan relationship. This article used the term 'Japanese Emperor' instead of 'King,' based on the current usage of the emperor as simply a proper noun for the Japanese monarch, rather than an interpretation relying on the old phrase 'Emperor over Heaven.'

Refer to Lee Ki-cheol (이기철), <The Foreign Office stated 'President Moon, expressed gratitude to Emperor Akihito for contribution on Korea-Japan relationship'>, 《Seoulsinmun Daily》, Apr. 30th, 2019.

40. The original full text is as follows:

“平成生まれとして、平成が終わるのはどことなくきみしいけど、平成お疲れ様でした！！令和という新しいスタートに向けて、平成最終の今日はスッキリした 1 日しましょう！#平成ありがとう #令和よろしく #FANCY もよろしく“

41. Kim Ji-hye (김지혜), <Sana of TWICE and her commentary on the change of Japanese era name in the center of controversy>, 《JoongAng Ilbo》, May. 1st, 2019.

42. Sim du-bo (심두보), <Usefulness of Korean Wave: Beyond Industries, Beyond Great Powers (한류의 효용: 산업 너머, 강대국 너머)>, KOFICA volume, 《Korean Wave, starting again》, KOFICE, 2019, Pages 109-125.

43. Hangeng (한경) of Super Junior signed a contract with a Chinese agency in 2009 and filed a lawsuit against SM for nullifying his exclusive contract. Kris, Luhan, and Tao left EXO in 2014 and 2015, after they gained great popularity for their single album <Growl> and then they signed with a local agency. The withdrawn members of the two groups, who were rising stars, caused some confusion and controversy among Chinese fans, forcing them to leave their fandomship and followership in group activities, thereby incurring great losses for both groups and their agency SM.

44. As of January 2020, <Produce> was renamed slightly each season and its broadcast finished by the fourth season. The first and second seasons were broadcast under the names <Produce 101>, the third was <Produce 48>, and the fourth called <Produce X 101>. In the case of <Produce 48>, it is a little bit different from other seasons: Ninety-six participants instead of 101, 12 selected people instead of the final 11.

45. Hwang Sun-up (황선업), 《Japanese singers you need to know》, Scores(스코어), 2016

46. KOCCA, 《2018 MUSIC INDUSTRY WHITE PAPER》, 2019.

47. Yoo Sung-woon (유성운), <Why didn't AKB48 exceed Korean trainees>, 《JoongAng Ilbo》, Jul. 7th, 2009.
48. MLBPARK, <[프로듀스 48] Looks like people are blaming 조유리 for wearing the comfort woman badge.jpg>, Jul. 27th, 2017.
49. <Produce 101> was produced and aired by Tencent, a Chinese web video service provider and <Idol Trainee (우상연습생)> was produced and aired on iQIYI TV. <Idol Trainee> has changed its name to <Youth With You (청춘유니)> since its first season in 2018 and continues the series. As if it had recently solved their copyright issues, Mnet also publicly wished for the success of <Youth With You>.
50. BgA consists of Ryan Higa, Justin Chon, David Choi, Philip Wang and Jun Sung Ahn (준성 안).
51. Kim Su-cheol (김수철) · Kang Jeon-su (강정수), <Transmedia Strategy in the K-pop Industry: Based on the Case of 'Gangnam Style', 《2012 Korea Society for Press Conferences, Special Session》, 2012, Pages 3–21.
52. Comments on the YouTube video of the 20-minute documentary, <I Am Chad Future> that was about the criticism he had received from K-pop fans abroad.
KCON TV, <I Am Chad Future (Special)>, Apr. 8th, 2014. See comments. The following criticisms were also cited in the comments of the video.
53. Refer to the title of an article on EXP Edition of BBC, UK: Yvette Tan, <K-pop's EXP Edition: The world's most controversial 'Korean' band>, 《BBC》, Dec. 6th, 2018.
54. The group EXP is named after the preceding characters of 'experiment'.
55. Responses on one large Internet bulletin board had mixed messages, but they were generally friendly. Refer to MLBPARK, <K-POP debate of foreigners>, Dec. 3rd. 2018.

56. Yvette Tan, <K-pop's EXP Edition: The world's most controversial 'Korean' band>, 《BBC》, Dec. 6th, 2018.

57. This is R&B music with popular melodies that are easy to dance to and gained huge popularity between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s and regained popularity again from the 2010s.

58. Refers to the reaction from a large Internet bulletin board on G-pop.

MLBPARK, <Z-Girls And Z-Boys, a group name contest was held as a teaser for an upcoming new group that would soon be born in the public interest>, Mar. 19th, 2019.

59. Park Jun-woo (박준우), <imitating K-pop, duplicated Idol (모방하는 케이팝, 복제하는 아이돌) 2/2>, 《Idology》, Jul. 24th, 2015.

60. See the following articles and videos related to the groups in China and Cambodia.

Lee A-yeong (이아영), <Fake B1A4 in China, "Imitation gone too far">, 《Money Today》, Jul. 18, 2012.
gech leng, <This is Ring-Ding-Dong in Cambodia.3gp>

61. This stands for merchandise and refers to celebrity and media-related products such as postcards, T-shirts, and badges. Also known as 'goods.'

62. Gaon chart, <Album Chart in October 2019>

63. There is a word '홈마(home+ma)' which is short for 'homepage master' and refers to fans who follow certain stars with a high quality camera, take pictures and videos and then share them on social media for profit.

64. Kim Yoon-Ha (김윤하), <Global expansion of K-pop fan culture, centered on a culture of charity and donation>, 《Hallyu Now》, Vol. 26, 2018, Pages 18-25.

65. KOFICE, <K-pop Group Card (KARD), Fourth performance in Brazil in October>, Oct. 28th, 2019.
66. Idology, <On all kinds of trends, KARD>, Feb. 22nd, 2017.
67. Based on reggae, dance music genres with elements such as electronic music, hip-hop, and R&B.
68. Kim Hong-Ki (김홍기), <Outlook for Next K-pop through 2019 K-pop World Map>, Seoul International Music Fair, 2019
69. The five major domes refer to Tokyo Dome, Sapporo Dome, Osaka Kyocera Dome, Fukuoka Yahoo Auction Dome, and Nagoya Dome, which are all large venues that can accommodate more than 40,000 people. The arena-class is a concert hall which can accommodate up to approximately 8,000 to 20,000 people. Saitama Super Arena, Yokohama Arena, and Nippon Budokan are representative of the venues.
70. Blip, <Globalization of K-POP is currently in progress?>, Sept. 27th, 2019
71. 'Gonari' is a misspelling of 'Gwanri (management)', which means excessive interference and nagging.
72. Kim Soo-kyung (김수경), <Unenviable BTS...We are 'Export-type Idols'>, 《 Chosun Ilbo 》 , Sept. 27th, 2019.
73. The term began to be used first by BTS fan club ARMY and spread out to other fandoms, which is an abbreviation for 'International ARMY + lovelies.'
74. Park So-jeong (박소정), <Cross-cultural sensitivity, the virtues of the new Korean Wave>, 《N-contents》 Vol. 13, 2009, Pages 20-23.
75. Kim Young-dae, <From Subculture to Discourse Possibility of De-Hallyu (Korean Wave): Centering on the K-con and BTS>, Korean Broadcasting Association version 《Reading popular culture with the lens of cultural research》 , Culturelook, 2018, Pages 159-188.

76. Park So-jung (박소정), <The Virtues of New Korean Wave, Cross-Cultural Sensitivity>, 《N-contents》
Vol. 13, 2019, page 23.

77. Kim Young-dae (김영대), <From Subculture to Discourse Possibility of De-Hallyu (Korean Wave):
Centering on K-con and BTS>, Korean Broadcasting Association version 《Reading popular culture with
the lens of cultural research》, Culturelook, 2018.

Inside Book Journalism ; Music of the global generation

The popularity of K-pop has expanded all over the world and at the same time a new generation has come. Unlike previous generations, generation Z is on a global scale that is not limited to borders. The McKenzie report on generation Z showed that generation gap has a greater impact on consumer behavior compared to socioeconomic differences. Generation Z, also digital natives, share a common identity regardless of nationality or income level. This means that Koreans, Americans, South Americans, Europeans, and Asians have similar characteristics. This also explains why foreign fans see K-pop idols as their friend. Overseas fans do not see K-pop stars as foreign performers but a friend who shares a common identity.

The author has researched cases including BTS, Chad Future, EXP Edition, Z-BOYS, and Z-GIRLS to illustrate what K-pop means to global consumers. For them, K-pop is a symbol of Asian character, diversity, and a friendly peer culture. Foreign fans try to produce K-pop themselves with their understanding of K-pop music, understand and perceive its identity sometimes even in more detail than domestic fans, and critique fake imitation.

This new generation has fundamentally reset the meaning of cultural consumption. The identity and culture of minorities are being accepted and their uniqueness is becoming the new norm. We now no longer live in a world that is dominated by one leading country. As the author said we will never return to an era where one culture dominates the rest of the world to follow one trend.

K-pop stands at the forefront of this change. A conflict between K and pop is caused by the time difference between music consumption and other areas. Music consumption is done regardless of national borders, but there are social issues that are affected by national barriers and cultural differences that can't be ignored. The nationalistic confrontation within

K-pop is evidence of a paradigm shift, not a dispute between consumers. Where there is change, conflict will exist.

Therefore, the dilemma that K-pop struggles doesn't just concern K-pop. The problem may be caused by the success of local businesses in the global market, and every industry targeting the market may be confronted with conflicts. K-pop was the first to experience it and has made numerous cases to refer to.

If K-pop is simply regarded as a Korean music genre, the explosive growth of its global popularity will be regarded simply as 'patriotism' or limited to the cynical belief K-pop will never be as successful Anglo-American pop music. But when K-pop is analyzed from a global perspective, we are able to see the big changes that it faces. The conflict between Korean features and global universalities in K-pop is proof of this huge change and is a leading case, if studied, will allow us to foresee the changes to come.

Editor So Hee Jun