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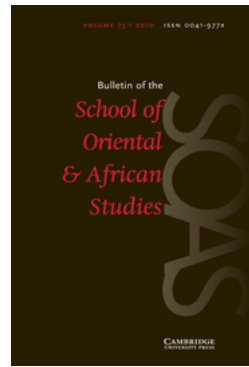
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**Chua Beng Huat and Koichi Iwabuchi (eds): *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*. (TransAsia: Screen Cultures.) xi, 307 pp. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008. ISBN 978 962 209 893 0.**

Keith Howard

Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies / Volume 73 / Issue 01 / February 2010, pp 144 - 146

DOI: 10.1017/S0041977X09990589, Published online: 28 January 2010

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**How to cite this article:**

Keith Howard (2010). Review of Chua Beng Huat, and Koichi Iwabuchi 'East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave' Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 73, pp 144-146 doi:10.1017/S0041977X09990589

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CHUA BENG HUAT and KOICHI IWABUCHI (eds):

*East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave.*

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For a few years now it has been commonplace to talk about the Korean Wave – the increasing importance of Korean cultural production in East and South-East Asia – largely from outside. Admittedly, this reflects how Korean production has impacted on the music, TV and film markets outside the Korean peninsula, whether writers discuss the TV drama “Winter Sonata” or the pop artiste Bo’A. However, an imbalance has been apparent, where Korean writers typically celebrate the importance of cultural exports without analysing the local markets into which those exports are promoted, while non-Korean writers tend to overlook domestic production and to have limited knowledge of both the motives of the Korean companies and government agencies who seek to promote exports. This volume goes some way to overcoming that imbalance, by combining the efforts of a number of distinguished scholars and commentators from Taiwan (Eva Tsai and Fang-chih Irene Yang), Korea (Yukie Hirata, Dong-Hoo Lee, Keehyeung Lee and Doobo Shim), Japan (Yoshitaka Mori), Hong Kong (Lisa Y. M. Leung, Angel Limn, Avin Hei Man Tong) and Australia (Tania Lim). This gives a notably broad coverage, bringing together a number of national perspectives and disciplinary interests from journalism through globalization to feminist theory.

“Korean Wave” (*hanliu*) is a term that was coined in China in 1997, when the first broadcasts of Korean television dramas were aired. Taiwan also began to buy and broadcast soap operas, and within the next year introduced Korean dance and rap music performed by bands such as CLON, NRG and H.O.T. H.O.T., a band whose name comes from “High Five of Teenagers” went on to perform to large crowds of Chinese fans and sell over 40,000 albums on the mainland in 2000 alone (and, over their seven-year existence, they sold seven million albums in Korea). Korean agencies and companies set about teaching their top stars Mandarin or Japanese, and sought to place them in films and TV dramas produced in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. The Korean government began to implement policies that aimed to capitalize on success, and to promote trade and tourism.

The introduction to this volume points out that the mainstream cultural imports across the region in the 1980s and early 1990s tended to be Japanese, although Taiwanese costume dramas had also enjoyed some success. Japanese productions were “visual metaphors for capitalist–consumerist modernity”; they were “urban trendy dramas of romances among young professionals dressed from head to toe in international designer togs, living in well appointed apartments and dining in upscale, especially Western, restaurants in the most trendy locations in the city of Tokyo” (p. 2). However, the size of the Japanese market meant that producers and companies typically measured success by sales and viewing figures at home. They did not need exports to make profits, hence many of the initial broadcasts of Japanese dramas were illegal. In fact, some of the attempts to market Japanese productions abroad then failed, an example being the drama *Romance 2000*, which was broadcast simultaneously in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Also, the costs of buying dramas produced for the developed and expensive Japanese market were high.

Cost played to Korea's advantage as Japanese dramas waned in popularity. The relatively small size of the Korean domestic market encouraged Korean producers and companies to look for export markets. They did so as a reassessment of Japanese colonial activities before and during the Pacific War spread throughout the region, and this too played a part in making a move away from Japanese cultural production attractive. Korean cultural exports began to circulate. Within a few years, the popularity of Korean pop music, at least when sung by Korean stars, waned, but TV dramas and films remained: "one drama series was followed hot on the heels by another", as Korean dramas "became part of the daily programming of many free-to-air and satellite television stations in East Asia and, thus, part of the routine viewing habits of their respective audiences" (p. 2).

This volume descends from a workshop at the Cultural Studies in Asia Research Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. The two editors are Chua Beng Huat, Professor of Sociology at the National University of Singapore and editor of, among other volumes, *Election as Popular Culture in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2007), and Koichi Iwabuchi, from Waseda University in Tokyo, who is a well-known commentator on East Asian cultural flows, with books such as *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002) and *Rogue Flows: Trans-Asian Cultural Traffic* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004) to his credit. Chua keeps the volume grounded, commenting that the region's cultural flows have much to do with the massive and disproportionate ethnic Chinese consumer market. Iwabuchi, who in earlier publications proved himself to be the master of statistics about market penetration, costs, profits, and more, here confines himself to how the Korean Wave impacted on Korean residents in Japan.

The volume divides into three sections. Three initial chapters consider the television industry in East Asia. Korea is held up as a good example of how television is promoted as part of national policy, with investment from industrial conglomerates and capital accumulated by the media sector. The second chapter considers how star culture and the celebration of individual icons permeates the whole of East Asia, and the third offers a case study that explores how regional media operators use imports of foreign dramas to compete with dominant national broadcasters. The second section begins with a broad-brush consideration of transcultural flows of media production by Chua Beng Huat. Angel Lin and Avin Tong then explore how Korean dramas play to a modern pan-Asian femininity. Two further chapters explore how Japanese women consume Korean dramas, and a final chapter turns the tables, looking at how Korean women appropriate aspects of Japanese dramas. The third section is titled "Nationalistic reactions". Keehyeung Lee looks at Korean cultural policies to promote the Korean Wave developed by government, producers, and intellectuals; somewhat disappointingly, he notes that there is a lack of self-reflexive critiques of the phenomenon in Korea, but never offers the critique himself (I note he also gives 2001 rather than 1997 as the date when the term *hanliu* was coined; p. 176). Fang-chih Yang, returning to a feminist perspective, identifies the somewhat xenophobic Taiwanese reappraisal of Korean cultural imports, while Eva Tsai, citing the Korean Bo'A and the Taiwanese Aboriginal singer A-mei, looks at border crossing stars, illustrating how different nationalisms meet and compete. Finally, Iwabuchi turns our attention to Japan.

The division of the volume into three broad sections is, at times, a little unsettling. Only a short introduction sets the scene, and each of the three sections juxtaposes chapters that cross regional boundaries with chapters based on case studies. Again, the theoretical perspectives often depart some distance from what I assume was meant to be the central theme – how the Korean Wave is or has been perceived

in Korea and the East Asian region – as we move between feminist theory, media studies, and more. This, I guess, is the nature of many edited volumes, but I for one would have preferred a greater consistency between authors in their approaches and subjects.

**Keith Howard**

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GENERAL

NINIAN SMART:

*World Philosophies*. (2nd edition. Edited by OLIVER LEAMAN.)

xi, 564 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. £80. ISBN 978 0 415 41188 2.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X09990590

This second edition of Ninian Smart's 1999 original is a welcome revision of a valuable work. In sixteen chapters Smart's survey embraces South and East Asian, Greek and Roman thought, Islamic, Jewish and European philosophies and North and Latin American contributions. The final four chapters focus on modern times, including African philosophies. In his 1999 Preface Smart wrote: "Mine is a guide to intellectual thought from all parts of the world. I have limited its scope up to shortly after World War II, say the 1960s, and chiefly to the dead. This is partly because of limitations of my own knowledge and because of the desire for my descriptions to be confined to complete philosophers, namely dead ones. This has generally led to the underplaying of some recent movements, including feminism, environmentalism and postmodernism. It has led to the neglect of otherwise excellent philosophers, such as my brother". Oliver Leaman's intention as editor of the second edition is unobtrusively "to tweak [Smart's] material to bring it more up to date and in line with current research in the many areas that he discussed". Accordingly, in this edition some additional sections have been added and minor revisions made, sometimes without it being obvious that a hand other than Smart's is at work. This is still a book that, for the most part, admirers of Smart's lucid style can relax into. The work takes an admirably broad view of "philosophy" and "philosophers", with the minimum criterion being some kind of systematic expression of a world-view (hence the Buddha with his lists makes the cut, while Jesus the mysterious storyteller and healer does not). In his opening chapter, quite ambitiously titled "The history of the world and our intellectual inheritance" Smart sketches eight "human types" of philosopher. These are: sage, spiritual analyst, super-scientist, metaphysician, sceptic, logician and adviser, as well as the modern professional philosopher. This latter, Smart observes, "is in danger of becoming tamed by the very institutions that have begotten him [*sic*]. The image of suit and briefcase flit through the mind, and hours completed at the knowledge-plant from nine to five". The tasks undertaken by philosophers of these various sorts across the world and throughout history include analysis, systematic instruction, worldview construction, questioning (from curiosity or scepticism), and offering political and ethical advice. Smart notes that globalization encourages such systematic representations of world-views (and university courses on them), where previously local and idiosyncratic reflections prevailed.