Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture

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Introduction

This book is an introduction to an emerging field of study, namely, East Asian Pop Culture. An inherent precondition of such a text is that a substantial amount of research and published material must already be available in the field before the writing can be undertaken. An introductory text is, therefore, fundamentally a parasitic text that draws on the existing material in order to attempt a relatively coherent mapping of the contours of the object of analysis. The indebtedness of such an endeavor to available material is even more pronounced in instances, such as this one, in which the analytic object has to be formulated in/from both comparative and regional perspectives. This is because rare is a single author who is equipped with the linguistic competency and cultural sensitivity required to understand the different regional sites, and is thus able to conduct research in all the significant locations that constitute the region as a unit, spatially and in other ways.

The basis of this text is a body of published empirical research work from a community of scholars who, though dispersed throughout the region, have been exchanging and collaborating intellectually, in workshops, conferences, and joint publications, for the past two decades, as the loose integration of the media industry in East Asia, particularly in the flows of television drama and pop music, became noticeable. These empirical studies of the different modes of production, distribution, circulation, and consumption in different regional locations are pioneering, seminal studies that opened up the emerging field both substantively and conceptually. They provide the necessary groundwork for not only comparative understanding of regional media activities but also the necessary ingredient for conceptual abstractions and concept formations that are the building blocks of a regional East Asian Pop Culture as a discursive formation. By examining specific structures, processes and practices, the chapters of this book address some of the conceptual issues in the formation of a field of investigation. As an introductory text, at best, it hopes to delineate some of the basic and broad outlines of the field and is therefore far from being exhaustive, let alone complete. The chapters of the book, which move from a preliminary conceptualization of an East Asian Pop Culture to the examination of some of the processes within it, to its current manifestation in regional cultural politics, are outlined below through a short history of the development, in the last two decades (1990–2010), of a loosely integrated field of research.

By the mid-1990s, in East Asia—made up of the People's Republic of China (henceforth China), Taiwan, Japan, South Korea (henceforth Korea), Hong Kong, and Singapore, on account of its seventy-five percent ethnic Chinese population—free-to-air cable and satellite television screens and computer screens with Internet streaming and the capacity to download were awash with Japanese television dramas. Japanese "trendy" dramas featured beautiful men and women who were young professionals, adorned in high fashion clothes, dining in upscale restaurants, living on their own in well-appointed apartments in the city (Iwabuchi 2004). By the beginning of the new millennium, Japanese television dramas began to face competition from Korean television dramas with the same formulae for romance but with main characters from a younger generation who remained entangled in familial relations, thus inserting an additional layer of drama—that between parents and grown children—and thereby mixing the romance and family-drama genres. Alongside the introduction of television dramas was also the influx of Japanese and Korean pop music and films (see Chapter 1). However, the conventional popularity of foreign-language pop music in any consumption location has always been limited to a smaller population of dedicated fans, largely because the majority of the potential audience do not possess the requisite language skills to appreciate the lyrics of the songs; this was also the case for Korean and Japanese pop music in East Asia. Films, on the other hand, are aimed at international markets of which the regional market is a significant segment; however, the number of Korean and Japanese films reaching the international market remains limited.[1] Ultimately, it is television dramas that have the greatest presence and impact on the regional cultural geography.

Each influx of dramas created media excitement, generating new transnational audiences in the region and, simultaneously, political anxieties in the importing locations regarding the "invasion" of foreign cultures. By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, however, the regional presence of Japanese and Korean television dramas had become routine in daily television programming and, therefore, a regular component of the daily viewing diet of the regional audience; surfing television channels in any major city in East Asia will bear this out. This is most observable in a place like Singapore which, because of its small domestic market, is essentially an importing and audience reception location.

The timing of the inflows of Japanese and Korean television dramas into the rest of East Asia was not accidental. First, it was partly a consequence of the radical changes in telecommunication technologies that enabled the rapid and massive expansion of television stations and changed the prevailing modes of transmission and reception from cable to satellite stations and to Internet downloads on computer screens. Second, by the late 1980s, the authoritarian regimes in the region, including China, began to liberalize their media industries, which resulted in the rapid development of television stations, legal and illegal, and the massive expansion of airtime that needed to be filled quickly and inexpensively. Imported serial television dramas were one of the most convenient vehicles to fill a substantial amount of airtime. The first wave of television dramas to cross national borders were Japanese dramas brought in physically in DVD form, without any consideration for copyright laws, to be aired on illegal cable television stations in Taiwan, in the mid-1980s. Subsequently, Korean dramas were legally bought by new stations in Hong Kong and Singapore—STAR TV and Channel U respectively—as alternative entertainment to compete with the already entrenched local stations which produced local dramas for the domestic media market.

To date, it has been overwhelmingly Korean and Japanese dramas that enter Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and urban China, that is, locations where ethnic Chinese make up the overwhelming majority of the population. There is very little flow in the reverse direction. This unequal condition is largely market-driven. Television drama that is dubbed and/or subtitled into a Chinese language in one location—primarily dubbed in Cantonese or Mandarin, and subtitled in simplified or complex script—can be re-exported to the other locations with a predominant ethnic Chinese population with no additional production costs. The massive ethnic Chinese market in East Asia—in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—makes dubbing and subtitling a financially-viable undertaking. In contrast the much, much smaller Korean and Japanese markets make the dubbing and translation of Chinese languages programs unprofitable.

In addition to the size of markets, the entry and circulation of Japanese and Korean pop culture into locations with dominant ethnic Chinese populations have been facilitated by a historically well-established commercial structure through which Chinese-language pop culture has been produced, distributed, circulated, and consumed for close to a century. Since the 1920s, there has been an uninterrupted flow and circulation of Chinese-language pop music and films and, after the 1960s, television programs as well. Political and social instabilities in China since the turn of the twentieth century, when the decaying Qing dynasty faced military invasion from Western powers and imperial Japan, meant that film production progressively moved to Hong Kong. By the 1950s, with the consolidation of communism in China, Hong Kong emerged as the center for Mandarin and Cantonese film production. There was also a separate and short-lived development of a small production of Hokkien films, financed by overseas Chinese capital from the Philippines (Taylor 2008). The films were distributed throughout Southeast Asia which, with the closing of China's borders, emerged as the major market. Significantly, films from communist China continued to be imported to Singapore and Malaysia until the late 1950s, when these British colonial territories gained political independence. The new nations, abiding by the politics of the Cold War, banned films from all communist territories, including China.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the production of Chinese-language pop music and the making of Chinese-language singers were more diffused, and included Malaysian and Singaporean artists. However, by the 1970s, production had begun to concentrate in Hong Kong. In the 1980s, Hong Kong developed a new wave in Cantonese pop music, popularly known as Cantopop, which dominated the Chinese-language pop music scene (Erni 2007) for more than a decade. However, the economic liberalization of China from 1978 onwards precipitated a radical shift in the pop music market. The huge China market opened up opportunities for Mandarin pop music, such that by the end of the 1980s, even major Cantopop singers were recording Mandarin songs, and Taipei emerged as the center for Mandarin pop. The domination of Hong Kong and Taiwan in Chinese-language pop culture is reflected in the common use of the term *Gangtai* (港台) entertainment (Liew 2010; Moskowitz 2010) to refer to contemporary Chinese pop culture; a literal translation of Kong and Tai to signify Mandarin pop music from Hong Kong and Taiwan.[2] In spite of the shifting center, the overall structure and the paths of production, distribution, circulation, and consumption of Chinese-language pop culture remain quite stable and can be substantively and discursively constituted as Pop Culture China (see Chapter 2); a decentered, multilingual, multi-nodal, relatively well-integrated cultural economy that operates under the presumed "sameness" of a "common" Chinese cultural heritage (Tay 2009). Within this decentered but relatively integrated structure, China and Singapore remain largely locations of reception/consumption. In the case of China, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the commercial pop culture industry is still in its infancy; however, with its massive consumer market and production capacity, the media industry in China has already begun to compete with Taiwan and Hong Kong as centers of production of Chinese-language pop culture.[3] On the other hand, conditions in Singapore—specifically its multiracial population, use of English as the de facto lingua franca and relatively small ethnic Chinese population (approximately three million)[4]—pose insurmountable obstacles to the ability of its media and entertainment industries to compete in the regional market, condemning its artists to sojourn in the other centers of production and leaving Singapore to be largely a location of reception and consumption of imported media products, not only from East Asia but also South Asia and, of course, the United States (see Chapter 4).[5]

The multinational media enterprise, Shaw Brothers, illustrates the structure of Pop Culture China very clearly as it is central to the structure itself. Established as a film production company in Shanghai in the early 1920s, Shaw Brothers quickly moved its financial headquarters to Singapore by mid-decade, and produced largely Cantonese films in Hong Kong throughout the 1930s. From Singapore, the company fanned out to cities in Southeast Asia through the construction and acquisition of a network of movie houses and entertainment centers, which would exhibit its Hong Kong-produced films. After the disruptions of the Second World War, it rebuilt quickly in the 1950s and, by the 1960s, Mandarin had emerged as the primary language of its film production. By then, the centrality of Shaw Brothers in the structure of Pop Culture China was fully established: "it developed into what can be called a trans-Asia empire that included theme parks; dance halls; film studios of Chinese and Malay languages; a massive distribution network importing films from Hong Kong, India, Europe and the United States; and a circuit of more than 130 theaters throughout Southeast Asia" (Fu 2008: 3). As the nature of the media industry changed, Shaw Brothers abandoned filmmaking in the 1970s, and reduced its movie business to exhibition only. It turned to television production exclusively, establishing TVB; now one of the two established free-to-air stations in Hong Kong.

Culturally the multilingual character of Pop Culture China poses interesting questions for the transnational reception of Chinese-language pop culture. First, a media product from one of its constitutive locations with dialogue in the local language is often verbally incomprehensible to the audience in another constitutive location who speak a different language or "dialect." The dialogue would therefore have to be subtitled in standardized written script for those who can read, which is not everyone, across the entire Pop Culture China. Second, the same Chinese language may also have a different political, social and cultural status in different locations within Pop Culture China; for example, Cantonese, which is the lingua franca in Hong Kong, is a minority language in Singapore and almost completely absent in Taiwan. Meanwhile the Minnan (闽南语) or Fujian (福建话, also known as Hokkien) language has been appropriated by Taiwan independence supporters as the Taiwanese language (台语). The majority of ethnic Chinese in Singapore used to be Hokkien speakers but now the same language marks, and socially marginalizes, its speakers as without much, if any, formal education. Such complexities of the political, social, and cultural status of different Chinese languages in different locations unavoidably lead to different readings and receptions of the same films, drama narratives, and song lyrics. These differences are not, strictly speaking, the consequence of misunderstandings or any communicative failures; they are simply different local readings (see Chapter 3).

Without the massive and well-established Pop Culture China market and its audience that receives the Japanese and Korean pop cultures via different Chinese languages, flows and exchanges between Japan, Korea and other particular East Asian locations would be merely bilateral rather than regional. The nation-border crossings of Japanese and Korean pop culture into the rest of East Asia may thus be said to be their integration into the established structure of Pop Culture China, and together they constitute a larger entity of East Asian Pop Culture as a loosely integrated regional cultural economy. Within this general structure, the flows, circulation and consumption of pop culture products, that is, the processes that operate and mobilize the structure across national and cultural boundaries, raise many significant issues that warrant examination. Particularly, given the radically unequal flows and circulation, the impact of these processes is most pronounced, and thus most readily observable, in the different locations of Pop Culture China; unsurprisingly, most empirical analyses of consumption practices have been conducted by researchers within Pop Culture China locations.

On the consumption front, given that Korean and Japanese television programs are dubbed and subtitled in a Chinese language before being circulated through and received in Pop Culture China, the most immediate question that arises is: how do dubbing and subtitling impact the transnational audience's identification with or distancing from the actions and narratives on screen, during the reception process (see Chapter 5)? Beyond the individual audience are issues of the formation of transnational audience communities, such as conventional fan clubs and, with new communication technologies, online Internet communities which bypass the profits of producers and the censorship of the state. There is the question of the possibility, or likelihood, of the engendering of a pan-East Asian identity among regional transnational audiences. Finally, there are issues of cultural politics between the local audience of imported pop culture and those who view such importation as "cultural invasion" and "cultural imperialism," often implicitly or explicitly involving local state agencies (see Chapter 6).

On the production front, East Asian Pop Culture engenders the possibility of co-production, and generates opportunities for border-crossing employment of media professionals, including artists. The mixing of actors and actresses drawn from across the region—as in films in which Korean and Hong Kong actors and actresses co-star and the inclusion of ethnic Chinese singers in popular Korean boy-bands—to create pan-East Asian screen-and sound-products enables producers to tap an expanding market. Parenthetically, until now a successful formula for a pan-East Asian film or television drama seems to have eluded the regional media industries.

In terms of distribution, producers of East Asian Pop Culture ignore the massive China market at their own peril. For example, wary of the uncontrolled media piracy industry in China, Japanese producers have been reluctant to directly distribute their products there (Pang 2009). Nevertheless, Japanese pop culture, particularly animation and television dramas are well distributed and watched in China as they are readily available on pirated DVDs and/or the Internet. The result is a very significant loss of profit for the Japanese production companies without, however, diminishing the popularity of Japanese pop culture in China. In contrast, Hong Kong television and film producers were quick to tap into the southern China market almost immediately after, if not before, the handover of the island to China in 1997 (Fung and Ma 2002). After a brief period of dependency on Taiwan as a commercial intermediary, the state-owned but commercialized television companies in China began to import Korean dramas directly.

Withdrawal of state subsidies has forced the state-owned media enterprises in China to compete in the market. This has resulted in the rapid expansion of cable, satellite and relay television stations at the city and provincial levels, generating a greatly expanded, aggregated quantum of airtime that needs to be filled. Meanwhile, as a condition of joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002, China was required to open its domestic media industries to foreign competition. Importation of foreign television programs satisfied both of these conditions. By the end of the 2000s, China had surpassed Taiwan and Japan to become the biggest regional importer of Korean television dramas. However, it continues to regulate the flow of foreign imports through import quotas and the restriction of screening-time schedules on domestic stations. To bypass these restrictions, successful Korean companies, as well as other foreign producers, have begun to work with Chinese partners to co-produce Korean television dramas that can be framed as "local" Chinese products for the Chinese market; they subsequently export the China-made Korean dramas back to the Korean market (Lee D.H. 2008). These co-production arrangements have greatly benefited nascent Chinese companies, by improving both the quantity and quality of local products.

The dense traffic of pop culture products across East Asia has inevitably caught the attention of national governments in the region. Indeed, in the case of Korea, the government has elevated the economic status of pop culture to that of an export industry, assigning designated state agencies to coordinate the export effort. Significantly, the attention paid by governments in the region to pop culture extends beyond economic interests to interests in "cultural influence" and "cultural diplomacy." The idea that pop culture can be a resource for diplomacy was initially developed by American political scientist Joseph Nye. Drawing on the example of the global export of American consumerism, including Hollywood films and rock and roll music, Nye (2004) suggests that pop culture export is a vehicle through which the rest of the world comes to know and be attracted to the US. For this reason, he includes pop culture in a collection of social institutions, such as education and political ideology, that he considers to be effective instruments of a US "soft power," namely, the "ability" of pop culture to attract and influence its international audience to accept American views without coercion.

Evoking the concept of soft power, the Korean, Japanese, and Chinese governments have begun to talk publicly about their respective pop cultural exports as sources of soft power, provoking a regional soft power "competition." Their positions on this competition are reflective of their relative power in the region. The Koreans, with lingering memories of fifty years of Japanese colonization, think of an alliance with China to counter Japan, especially since its pop culture export to Japan has met with the jingoism and xenophobia of Japanese nationalists. The Japanese, under former prime minister Taro Aso, sought to place Japan at the center of manga and animation culture by establishing an International Manga Award for non-Japanese manga artists; the competition is judged by a panel of Japanese manga artists. Meanwhile, state officials in China, who see Chinese culture as the "root" culture of East Asia, refer to the Confucian tradition and set for themselves the "duty," if not the "right," to define what are "proper" East Asian cultural practices. In this last stance, the Chinese officials and public had been provoked by what they see as "cultural theft" by the Koreans. Two of the more controversial instances are illustrative. First, Korea has successfully petitioned UNESCO to recognize the rice dumpling festival, part of the Chinese *Duanwu* Festival (端午节), as Korean immaterial culture,[6] and second, the television drama *Jewel in the Palace* (大长今 2003) had, in the eyes of Chinese netizens, "audaciously" implied that acupuncture, a Chinese traditional medical practice, was Korea's own.[7] In this soft power competition, China has a trump card: again, its massive audience/consumer market. The desire to profit from this market has driven regional producers to co-produce in China. Unavoidably, this enables the state-owned partners in China to dictate to varying degrees the content of the final product, leaving foreign producers and their respective governments holding the short end of the ideological stick (see Chapter 7).

This brief narrative of the emergence and consolidation of the regionalization of media industries and pop culture in East Asia is but one illustrative instance of similar processes taking place at varying rates in different Asian regions. Broadly speaking, three other instances of regionalization deserve mention: in mainland Southeast Asia, that is, in Cambodia, Myanmar (also known as Burma), Laos and Thailand, Thai pop culture, including television dramas, has a dominant role regionally; in the Malay-speaking communities of island Southeast Asia, consisting of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines, and perhaps the Malay-Muslim provinces of southern Thailand, a Malay-language pop culture, with Indonesia being the major producer of television dramas, can be identified; and in South Asia, Indian pop culture dominates but, given that importation is severely regulated if not banned, local producers freely imitate the style of Indian pop culture, most noticeably the Bollywood movie format. Each of these instances has its particularities that deserve to be analyzed in their own right. For example, Burmese refugee entrepreneurs are key players and refugee camps an important conduit for the circulation of Thai-language television dramas (Jirattikorn 2008); Malay-language pop culture flows from an economically less developed Indonesia to a more prosperous Malaysia and Singapore;[8] while within India itself, regional film industries compete unyieldingly with Hindi-language Bollywood (Rajadhyaksha 2003; Raghavendra 2009). In view of these instances of regionalization, this introduction to East Asian Pop Culture should be read as a series of illustrations of some of the issues that should be examined not only within each region, but comparatively across regions in an inter-Asia framework.

Conclusion

The emergence of an East Asian Pop Culture stands significantly in the way of complete hegemony of US media culture, which undoubtedly continues to dominate the entertainment media globally. Indeed, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, discussions on media in East Asia have displaced concern with the "cultural imperialism" of the West, namely of the US, to focus instead on the celebration of the "arrival" of East Asian pop cultures in the global entertainment market; however, traces of this debate, albeit reconfigured in terms of the hegemony of multinational media corporations rather than nation-states, continue (Shi 2008). Several achievements mark this sense of "arrival." The earliest East Asian entries into the global pop culture entertainment markets were probably Japanese animation, *manga* and video games. According to Iwabuchi (2002: 257), these products were "culturally odorless" because they contain little explicit Japanese content; animation and *manga* figures have always been intentionally devoid of Japanese features and resemble no particular ethnic group. Nevertheless, they were recognizably "Japanese" because of the highly stylized renderings of the characters; the term *anime* refers exclusively to either Japanese or Japanese-inspired animation. These products continue to be the mainstays of Japanese pop culture export to the world. Since the 1990s, Chinese and Korean cinemas have entered global circulation, in both art house film festivals and commercial markets, and are juxtaposed against Hollywood's global dominance. Beneath the global scale, since the mid-1990s, the most significant pop culture genre to circulate transnationally within East Asia is serialized television dramas, streaming routinely into homes throughout the region—Japanese television dramas throughout the 1990s, followed by Korean television dramas in the early 2000s. The commercial success of these television dramas is, practically, an exclusively regional phenomenon as they have no market in the West, except among East Asian diasporas watching DVDs or licensed cable channels in their adopted land.

Singapore: Signifier of East Asian Pop Culture

The transnationalization and regionalization of East Asian Pop Culture is most visible in Singapore because it is primarily an import and reception/consumption location of East Asian programs, as the small, multiracial and multilingual domestic population on this island-nation is unable to sustain a large media industry of its own. In the 1950s, when communist China was closed to Hong Kong producers, Singapore was also a point of redistribution for Hong Kong cinema throughout Southeast Asia. In the 1950s and 1960s, movies in Cantonese, Hokkien and Mandarin from Hong Kong and Taiwan were regular offerings in local Singaporean cinemas. Often funding for the films would come from Singapore through presale arrangements between Hong Kong producers and Singaporean and other Southeast Asian cinema owners.

In the mid-1970s, when television was still new and had low production capacity, Singaporean television screens were filled with television dramas imported from Hong Kong's TVB. Singaporeans were introduced to the now global movie star, Chow Yun Fat, on the small screen in the serial drama, *Man in the Net*, in which he played a Chinese migrant struggling to survive in Hong Kong. At the same time, the Singaporean audience was also watching Chinese costume dramas with themes drawn from the "traditional" family politics dictated by the Confucian principle of filial piety, particularly those based on the popular romance novels by the female Taiwanese writer Qiong Yao. Since then, Hong Kong and Taiwanese dramas of all genres have become an integral part of the daily programming of Singapore television stations. The circulation of Hong Kong and Taiwanese movies, television dramas and pop music in Singapore substantiates the incorporation of these locations with the predominant Huaren population into a loosely integrated cultural economy, which can be discursively designated as Pop Culture China.

Japanese action movies were popular in Singapore in the 1960s but the flow was disrupted as the Japanese movie industry fell into decline (Yau 2005). Japanese screen products returned in the 1990s, with what has come to be called "trendy" television dramas—melodramatic romance among young urban(e) professionals. Japanese export of these trendy dramas to the rest of Asia was largely serendipitous. Japanese television dramas were "imported" through informal channels into Taiwan, including via Taiwanese business people going to Japan who returned with DVD-sets of the dramas with the purpose of public screening, so as to feed the demands given the explosion of unlicensed satellite television stations caused by media liberalization in the late 1980s. From there Japanese trendy dramas spread to Singapore. However, by the end of the decade, Japanese trendy dramas had all but disappeared. Significantly, by the new millennium, the Japanese government's push to lend financial and institutional support to the development and export of its pop culture industries was primarily focused on animation and films, and television dramas are conspicuously absent from these efforts.

As Japanese television dramas lost their vitality and appeal at the end of the 1990s, Korean television dramas took over the space on the small screen. In contrast to the serendipity of the export of Japanese television dramas, the export of Korean television dramas is a well-executed national industrial strategy on the part of the Korean government. Correspondingly, the importing of Korean dramas became a strategy for new, smaller or marginal television stations to establish their presence among local audiences. Singapore is again a good illustrative example of this dovetailing of interests between Korean producer-exporters and local importers. In 1999, Singapore Press Holdings, the local monopoly newspaper publisher, ventured into commercial television with two free-to-air stations, one in English (Channel I) and the other in Mandarin (Channel U). The English language channel failed and was closed in less than two years. On the other hand, the Mandarin channel was able to carve out and take away a significant segment of the audience from the already established state-owned television station, through very heavy doses of Korean drama broadcasts. The popularity of the Korean dramas on Channel U pushed the state-owned Channel 8 to similarly import such series. Korean dramas became routine broadcasts by the early 2000s. Finally, the destructive competition for the same Korean dramas caused the two corporations to merge, with Channel 8 developing local drama and variety programs, and Channel U repositioning itself as the "Asian Pop Culture Channel" on which movies, television dramas and variety shows from Hong Kong, Korea and Japan are freely mixed into the daily offerings, interspersed with local news, talk shows and occasional variety or game shows, making it a signifier of the idea of an East Asian Pop Culture.

Japanese and Korean Pop Culture: Similar Trajectories

The trajectory of entry of Japanese and Korean pop culture into Singapore was repeated in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. In Hong Kong, where more than ninety percent of the local audience was already captured by the two free-to-air television stations, TVB and ATV, Japanese drama series were a significant vehicle for STAR TV, a cable television provider, to establish its presence in airspace and to garner its share of the local audience (Iwabuchi 2004: 7). In China, the dramas are mostly distributed by pirated VCDs and DVDs and, with increasingly sophisticated computer-mediated information technologies, circulated by sub-fan groups, who download, subtitle and upload for free distribution (Hu 2005: 176–180). By the early 2000s, Japanese dramas were either displaced or faced competition from Korean dramas. The inflow of Korean pop culture was so swift and noticeable that it came to be dubbed almost immediately as the "Korean Wave" (韩流) by journalists in China.

In 2004 and 2005, the most popular Korean drama series in East Asia was undoubtedly *Jewel in the Palace,* a fictionalized chronicle of the rise of the first female imperial court physician in the Choson dynasty during the fifteenth century. The "close" cultural affinity between the Choson dynastic period and Chinese history was an important bridge to its success. Practices such as the sharing of the same written calligraphic script and the use of herbs in traditional medicine facilitated the "indigenization" of the series for, and enhancing its popularity with, the Huaren audience. This is reflected in the way this drama traveled. First exported to Taiwan and dubbed into Mandarin, it was subsequently broadcast on TVB in Cantonese in Hong Kong, to record-breaking audience ratings; in 2004, the Hunan Satellite TV Station obtained the rights from the Taiwan distributor and broadcast it nationally in China and, finally, the drama was broadcast in Singapore on cable television and on the free-to-air Channel U; thus, completing the coverage of all points in Pop Culture China.

In contrast to the ease of penetration of Japanese and Korean pop culture into Pop Culture China, Japan is most resistant to the penetration of pop culture from the rest of the region. In the 1990s, there was a trickle of Hong Kong action movies, especially those of Jackie Chan, and almost no Korean imports at all. This situation exploded with the arrival of the Korean television drama, *Winter Sonata* in 2003; the drama, released in January 2002, had already gained popularity throughout Pop Culture China. The lead actor, Bae Yong-joon became the object of adoration of middle-aged housewives in Japan, their "Yon-sama," or "Prince Yon" (Jung 2011). After that, Japan became one of the leading importers of Korean pop culture in the region.

The trajectories of the popularization of Japanese and Korean television dramas across the region substantiate the presence of an East Asian Pop Culture sphere. The unequal flow of Japanese and Korean pop culture into Pop Culture China is a consequence of both industry structure and demographics. Structurally, Pop Culture China is a well-established production, distribution and circulation network that has a history stretching back to the late nineteenth century. Demographically, the relatively smaller consumer populations of Japan and Korea make routine dubbing or subtitling of Chinese-language(s) programs financially unviable. On the other hand, the massive Huaren population makes the dubbing and subtitling of Korean and Japanese programs a potentially lucrative business, as in the case of *Jewel in the Palace*. This configuration suggests that East Asian Pop Culture is a structural expansion of Pop Culture China that loosely incorporates Korean and Japanese pop culture into its extensive and established network. Meanwhile, within Pop Culture China, Chinese language(s) pop culture remains more widely consumed than Korean and Japanese imports, with occasional spikes generated by a very popular singer, film or drama from the latter.

The Transnational Audience of Transnational Television

The emergence of East Asian Pop Culture provides an opportunity for examining the practices of transnational audiences, namely, local audiences receiving imported foreign pop culture products, where the culture in which the audience is embedded is different from the culture at the location of production. This "transnational" aspect is referred to as a matter of fact because it is commonly recognized that the global media culture is dominated by American products which are foreign to all locations but the US itself, yet it is a phenomenon that is curiously under-researched. It is argued that the serial nature of television drama draws an audience into an intimate virtual relationship with the characters in the drama, resulting in an active participation with what is on screen. This accounts for why the watching of television drama has conventionally been a fertile ground for audience reception studies. Transnational audience reception is no exception.

Within East Asia, Korean and Japanese dramas are routinely dubbed into Chinese languages to facilitate their reception in the regional Huaren audience. Dubbing is a process that "seeks to domesticate a foreign product and to make both the translator and the translation invisible" (Chaume 2004: 39). To this end, expressions and contextual references of the onscreen language which have no equivalent in the target language are substituted, and thus changed, with elements from the culture of the target audience. In this instance, Japanese and Korean television dramas are domesticated by the Chinese language and cultural context. This is in addition to the relatively similar physiognomy, a shared ideographic Chinese script, a common Confucian worldview—as illustrated in the Korean drama *Jewel in the Palace*—and a shared achievement of or desire for capitalist consumerist modernity (Iwabuchi 2002). However, the "foreignness" of imported dramas is a large part of the viewing pleasure for a transnational audience. Foreignness is preserved on screen through the various visual elements, especially those that signify "tradition," such as ethnic food and costumes or contemporary streetscapes of iconic or "slang" images (Khoo 2006) that are unmistakably metonymic representations of the foreign location. In audience reception, dubbed dialogue domesticates foreign television drama in order to facilitate identification while the visually exotic foreign items raise obstacles to identification.

Empirical investigations suggest that identification requires a certain order of abstraction: the most immediate level of identification is also at the most generalized and abstract level of simply "being human;" as seen in such comments from audience members as: "I understand the onscreen character because we are all humans" or "Love stories in big cities are more *real* for us. We are young. It is what we *dream* of" (Ko 2004: 123, original emphasis) or "The major attraction of *Tokyo Love Story* [a Japanese drama] to me is that it is not a story about somebody else.

It is a story about our generation, about us, about myself" (quoted in Iwabuchi 2002b: 146). In East Asia this abstract identification can take the form of "I identify with the character because we are Asians," affirming a sense of "Asianness" which implicitly invokes various cultural elements that can be claimed to be shared by East Asians, while simultaneously suppressing cultural differences between the production and consumption locations. All the variations of identification with what is on screen are ready-to-hand "repertoires of interpretation" (Hermes 1999).

Crucially, the factual foreignness/difference of the imported television drama is never erased but merely displaced to just beneath the surface of the abstract identifications. They emerge immediately, as soon as onscreen characters and actions are contrary to an audience's sentiment. Difference can be used by a transnational audience to distance itself from the culture of the location of production thus rejecting the "other," or can be received positively and engender a desire to embrace the "other." One particularly poignant instance of this is the changes the Korean television drama *Winter Sonata* wrought on its audience of middle-aged Japanese women. Many began to consider the possibility of becoming "cultural brokers" who could work on changing the image of Korea/Koreans in Japan and even improve the international relations between the two nations (Mōri 2008). Concretely, as tourists they transform Korea from a male sex-tourist site to a female tourist location of "friendship."

To generalize, what emerges is a picture of the transnational audience as a fragmented entity that intermittently identifies and recognizes difference and distances itself from what is on screen rather than holding a sustained and unwavering identification with or rejection of what is on screen. The factors that can be and are invoked—one can imagine for example, "global citizenship," gender and class—as grounds for identification are invariably abstract and contextual. Conversely, the factors that are invoked for distancing are more often than not culturally specific. This opens up opportunities for empirical investigations into how different historical, political, social and cultural factors can, and have been, evoked in different locations across different national, cultural and linguistic boundaries to anchor specific instances of identification/distancing.

The popularity of a pop culture item, such as a television drama, is the result of a mass audience who does nothing more than watch the show on television, although a relatively small number of dedicated fans will engage in beyond-the-text activities and practices. For the leisure entertainment audience, a possible "community" is latent and invisible until it is instantiated when two or more members happen to be co-present at a social occasion/event and, as part of the free flowing social conversation, they exchange impressions and opinions, i.e., they consider their shared knowledge concerning the latest television drama drawn from their watching and/or reading, and a "community of audience" instantly materializes. When the occasion is over, the community is dissolved. Such occasioned communities of audience are a grounded, incidental and face-to-face phenomenon and, one can imagine, ubiquitous although ephemeral. The ephemeral character does not amount to a stable "interpretive community" (Alasuutari 1999: 7).

In the case of fans, the Internet and new communication technologies have spawned new possibilities for fan organization across time and space. One of the most significant developments is the sub-fan communities of highly organized but de-territorialized, de-centralized and faceless organizations of highly skilled and highly dedicated individual transnational audience members engaged in downloading a program, subtitling it in good time and uploading it for distribution; a tightly coordinated sequence of activities that is accomplished smoothly for every episode of a particular drama series. The immaterial labor (Lazzarato 1996: 145) is done entirely for the pleasure of self-satisfaction, and for the benefit of others in the cyber-virtual world. It escapes the clutches of the profit-oriented producers and distributers and flies under the radar of censorship and other legal constraints of the nation-state. Another development made possible by the Internet is the engagement by fan groups in coordinated international petitioning of specific governments in the interests of their idols/stars. This is tantamount to "extraterritorial" intervention into the political sphere of the nation in question. Admittedly, it is difficult to imagine how such petitioning activities could have any significant impact on the nation's domestic politics.

Pop Culture and Soft Power

Conventionally, the politics of transnational pop culture are framed within the terms of "cultural imperialism" on the one hand and "cultural security" on the other (Tomlinson 1997). Since the end of the ideological Cold War in East Asia that was initiated by the marketization of the economy in China, "ideology" has been displaced by the less politically-charged terms "culture" and "cultural imperialism," and "cultural security" has been replaced by "soft power" competition. The exporting and importing of pop culture has been transformed into an arena of such competition, as the potential use of military power between the region's competing nations recedes. In this competition, Korea is most anxious about the race because it is sandwiched between two much bigger powers—Japan whose animation and *manga* are globally distributed, and a rising China with a massive consumer market with expanding consumption capacity. It is already apparent that the size of this market has played to the advantage of China. Producers of pop culture, particularly films and television dramas, not only from Taiwan and Hong Kong but also Korea, are already heading to China to develop co-productions with Chinese media companies in order to escape any restrictions imposed by the government on foreign pop culture imports. In so doing, they subject the contents of the products to the ideological control of the Chinese state, which owns all media enterprises, even if they operate without state subsidy.

Getting beneath these four abstract concepts to the level of actual transnational audience practices, "politics" takes on a more personal character in East Asia, where fandom is oriented towards particular idols. As we have already seen in the instances of coordinated petitioning activities, the adoration of the fans can occasionally spill into the larger public political sphere of the location of production or the location of reception, or both. In the location of reception/consumption, members of the local audience of foreign pop culture are confronted by the overwhelmingly large population of compatriots who are not audience members. Activists against foreign pop culture could mobilize the large non-audience population to raise objections to its importation and to the presence of foreign artists in the country. In such mobilization efforts, such activists could position themselves as "defenders" of national culture and national interests, which simultaneously cast and politically marginalize the much smaller audience population as "cultural traitors." Ironically, empirical evidence suggests that the individual audience is often inclined to distance themselves and reject precisely the particularistic cultural elements of foreign pop culture, defying the label of cultural traitor. Nevertheless, in such instances, the state is often complacent and complicit regarding the activists invoking its name, as activists' "nationalist" protests are advantageous to the state. Arguably, such anti-foreign protests are part and parcel of the soft power competition conducted between states. Politics of consumption at the popular level is therefore inextricably intertwined with politics of soft power at the state and international levels.

Conclusion

With the massive transformations in communication technologies that enable information to transcend all the constraints of time and space, it is entirely understandable that contemporary discussions of media industries will emphasize globalization and its potential cultural homogenization effects. Simultaneously, in reaction to the emphasis on globalization is the often rather shrill defense of the local as "resistance" to the global and its effects. Empirically, of course, given the reality that global capitalism no longer has any ideological and/or practical resistance and the oligopolistic formation that concentrates the media industries in the hands of a few global media enterprises, some homogenization of media culture around the world is unavoidable. This is most obvious in the selling of formats, usually developed in a few media centers and sold to any station that can afford the price.

However, what has also happened empirically, in the spaces between globalization and localization, is the regionalization of media industries. This is especially the case in television entertainment. Conventionally, local audiences favor local television programs over imported ones. However, the concept of the "local" can be rather elastic in cultural terms. "Local" is conventionally used to substantiate politically the result of artificial boundaries of geographically contiguous territory by nation-states. The artificial national boundaries are imposed on shared histories, shared cultures and shared languages, even the similar physiognomy, of people living in contiguous geographic spaces. The shared conditions constitute a loose "cultural proximity" that facilitates the boundary crossing of "local" television programs into spatially contiguous and historically and culturally proximate regions, engendering the regionalization of media culture. "Cultural proximity" however is not "cultural identity" but implies both elements of familiarity and foreignness/difference, and identification/distancing (or even rejection) by the local audience of culture products from its neighbors. The regionalization of East Asian Pop Culture is but one of the many identifiable instances taking place within Asia: other examples include the impact of Indian soap operas in South Asia (Fazal 2009: 49), Thai television dramas in mainland Southeast Asia (Jirattikorn 2008) and Malay language television dramas in archipelagic Southeast Asia (Weintraub 2011). The reception practices used by transnational audiences of these regional pop cultures may share similar structures of identification and distancing. The transnational fan activities and the politics that result from the contact between fans and the non-audience local population may share similar features of confrontation around the trope of nationalism, as each of these regions has its own historical legacy of regional conflicts and border disputes. Finally, each of these regionalizations has its own history of structural integration of the production, distribution and circulation processes. These are, of course, empirical questions, and the present study of East Asia Pop Culture will hopefully invite comparative analysis from researchers examining other instances of the regionalization of media elsewhere in the world.

Notes

Introduction

1. There is a plethora of books that focus on different "national cinemas" from East Asia. An illustrative sample includes Shin and Stringer (2005) on new Korean cinema, Davis and Chen (2007) on post–New Wave Taiwanese cinema, Berry and Farquhar (2006) and Zhang (2004) on Chinese national cinema, and Morris, Li and Chan (2005) on Hong Kong films.
2. Curtin (2003) provides a very concise history of the development of Hong Kong as a media capital in Chinese-language pop culture and notes the constant competition it faces from other contenders such as Taiwan.
3. This is most apparent in the case of Chinese-language cinema, see Yeh (2010).
4. Approximately seventy-four percent of the residential population of five million is ethnically Chinese, thirteen percent Malay, and nine percent Indian, with a very small percentage of others. English is the language of education, commerce, public administration and, increasingly, everyday life. Statistics from Advance Release of Singapore Population Census 2010, http://www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/c2010acr.pdf (accessed Sept 15, 2011).
5. Liew (2010) provides a succinct account of the obstacles faced by Southeast Asian ethnic Chinese, including Singaporean, artists in the *Gangtai* entertainment industries.
6. http://blog.tianya.cn/blogger/post_show.asp?BlogID=561820&PostID=6211910 (accessed Feb 22, 2011).
7. See http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/include/print.asp?newsIdx=30480 (in Chinese, accessed Feb 22, 2011); http://tieba.baidu.com/f?kz=64514375 (accessed Feb 22, 2011).
8. As the Malays of Malaysia and Indonesia are Muslims, comparative studies of pop culture across these two countries tend to focus on Islamic themes and issues, rather than on the Malay language; for example, the papers presented at the Conference on Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia, University of Pittsburg, October 10–12, 2005; http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/asc/conference/indonesia/index.html (accessed Jan 31, 2011).

Chapter 1

1. The term "idol" has become an adjective that characterizes a specific segment of popular culture products, as in "idol-drama."
2. There is a wealth of books on Asian national cinemas and auteur filmmakers, which are referenced throughout this book; for an example of an analysis of auteur filmmakers, see Teo (2005; 2007).
3. This "nostalgic" reading of other Asian pop culture may be read as a vernacular version of the historically deep-seated Japanese ideological tendency to place itself as the "leader" of the rest of Asia; see Ching (2000).
4. It has also been excluded from two major surveys in the field (du Gay and Pryke 2002; Amin and Thrift 2004).
5. See du Gay and Pryke (2002) and Amin and Thrift (2004).
6. Communication as a social process of encoding/decoding was proposed by Stuart Hall (1980); for a critique of parts of Hall's thesis, see Rajagopal (2001:10).
7. This is a case of what Lee and LiPuma (2002) call the "culture of circulation."
8. The historical conditions under which a location emerges as a "media capital," such as Hong Kong, are examined in detail by Curtin (2003).
9. "Ethnic" Chinese is a problematic category because "Chinese" is itself a multi-ethnic category. In this book, "ethnic Chinese" refers to Han Chinese, with all its different dialects or languages.
10. See the *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (2008) theme issue on Hou Hsiao-Hsien.
11. The television station, Channel U, which broadcasts in Mandarin, only produces its own news program and fills the rest of its twelve-hour daily airtime with variety shows and dramas from every production point in East Asian Pop Culture.
12. For a personal account of academic fascination with Japanese trendy drama, see Tsai (2003).
13. This Japanese view of themselves as being ahead of the rest of Asia is one of deep historical standing and prejudice; indeed, it was partially responsible for Japan's imperial and militarist ambition during the Second World War, see Ching (2000).
14. This was the first contemporary Korean drama to be brought to the television screen in Japan, by Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK) Station, to shore up its flagging audience base. The television station was so uncertain of the reception of the drama that it was screened in the late night (11 pm) program slot. Its popularity was thus entirely unexpected. *Winter Sonata*'s first broadcast garnered an audience of 9 percent; within the next two years, the drama was repeatedly screened on prime time, free-to-air channels, managing to capture a 17.6 percent audience rating (Fuyono 2004); around 40,000 DVD sets were sold, as of September 2003 (Han 2008).
15. During that time, Korea was under the repression of an authoritarian regime; the fact that Japanese pop culture was illegal generated additional pleasure in consumption, see Kim Hyun-mee (2002).

16. These figures were provided by Dr Shin Hyunjoon from the Institute of East Asian Studies, Sungkonghoe University, in personal communication, email dated February 4, 2010.
17. In contrast, Chinese historical dramas do circulate quite well within Pop Culture China.
18. Refer to Leong (2002).
19. Many of these series were based on the popular romance novels by the (female) writer, Qiong Yao.
20. It was also the very first popular Mandarin television drama to be screened in Indonesia after the lifting of the official ban on Chinese culture. It was alleged that the "*Meteor Garden* has turned many Indonesians on to anything Chinese" (Asmarani, 2002).
21. For a brief analysis of Ah-Mei's stage persona, see Moskowitz (2010: 81–83).
22. Some of the more domestically popular dramas are analyzed in Zhu, Keane, and Bai (2008).
23. On the other hand, Shaw Brothers, Malay Film Productions Limited, and Cathay-Keris Films were producing Malay-language films in Singapore. These studios closed after Singapore separated politically from Malaysia.
24. For a review of their earlier films, see Chua and Yeo (2003).
25. For a history of the Singapore film industry, see Millet (2006).
26. Refer to Lin (2010).
27. In response to the film being poorly received by the critics, supposed distributors Miramax delayed its scheduled American screening and subjected the film to edits. Miramax eventually sold the rights to Warner Independent who screened it to a poor response, relative to the former two films mentioned.

Chapter 2

1. For a critical commentary on the use of the term "diaspora" to describe the dispersed overseas Chinese population, see Wang (2000).
2. See also the Special Issue of *China Quarterly* (1993) "Greater China," no. 136.
3. For a critical discussion on this imposition of a presumed shared Chineseness by self-interested others, see Ien Ang (2001).
4. This was particularly promoted under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government, which championed Taiwanese independence, between 2000 and 2008.
5. To date, Curtin (2007) has provided the most comprehensive survey of the film and television industry in Pop Culture China.
6. In 2007, a textbook entitled *Pop Culture China! Media, Arts and Lifestyle* (Latham 2007) was published under a series called Pop Culture in the Contemporary World. This book sidesteps the transnational dimensions of Chinese-language pop culture and focuses only on pop culture in mainland China.
7. The 2010 film, *It's a Great Great World*, by Singapore filmmaker Kelvin Tong, set in 1950s/60s Singapore has multilingual dialogue—Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hainan, and Mandarin—on screen, reflecting the polyglot reality of the Singapore Huaren community at the time.

8. Parenthetically, it should be noted it is the multi-accented Mandarin dialogue of this film that inspired Shih (2007) to coin the term "Sinophone."
9. There are, of course, individuals who consider being "'culturally' Chinese" as their dominant personal identity regardless of nationality. These include many Huaren academics who are intellectually and emotionally heavily invested in overseas Chinese studies; for these individuals, nationality is incidental, cultural identity is everything.
10. Nevertheless, their places of origin are occasionally mentioned, perhaps as a reminder to regular readers or, more likely, as background information for a new generation of readers/audience.
11. As no major events took place during March 2010, examples had to be drawn from other times.
12. The inclusion of this Japanese actor is a reflection of the possibility of a larger construction of the popular culture sphere in East Asia, which includes Japan and South Korea, see Chua (2004).
13. http://koreajoongangdaily.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2933181 (accessed Mar 9, 2011).
14. http://english.chosun.com/svc/list.html?catid=48pn=3 (accessed Mar 2–11, 2011).

Chapter 3

1. I have left out on this particular occasion the language of the Hakka, who constitute a substantial proportion of the Taiwan population.
2. Hokkien migrants also constitute the majority of the Chinese immigrant population in Penang in Malaysia and Manila in the Philippines.
3. Many films from Taiwan are not released in the commercial movie houses in Singapore, although they are frequently included as "art" films during the film festival and are usually among the films that sell out. Often, commercial outlets will pick up the films for popular release based on their reception during the festival.
4. In Singapore, as a legacy of the British colonial negligence of public education, more than fifty percent of the adult population who is more than fifty years of age has less than a secondary school education. Refer to official census: http:www.singstat.gov.sg/pubn/popn/c2000adr/chap3.pdf (accessed Sept 20, 2011).
5. It should be noted that at the time *Money* was shown on the big screen the three main actors also appeared together, every Monday night, in a very popular local situation comedy in which one of them (the Mandarin speaker) cross-dresses as the mother of household. In a country in which homosexuality remains largely hidden from the public eye, this actor is the only one who appears in drag on public television, as a "woman/mother/old lady" without sex or sexuality.
6. The romanticizing of Hokkien is not restricted to the mass media. The present prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, and his immediate predecessor, Goh Chok Tong, have been known to pepper their annual National Day Rally speeches with a few phrases in Hokkien to great effect. Such phrases never fail to draw laughter and applause from the audience.

7. For a debate on "the invention of Taiwanese," see the exchange between Chun (1998) and Wu (1998).
8. Indeed, it is a lesser language in Taiwan than the Japanese language as a consequence of close to fifty years of Japanese colonization of Taiwan. Many older, or elderly, Taiwanese can still speak Japanese fluently. Furthermore, some Japanese lexical items are mixed into Taiwanese conversational practices, but one almost never encounters two Taiwanese people conducting their conversation in Japanese.
9. In Singapore, the concept of a "dialect" or "language" is used to designate the difference between the official and written language of Chinese, and their spoken languages. Within the frame of the official and written, all Chinese languages other than Mandarin are rendered as "dialects," yet in the world of speech each of these "dialects" can operate fully as a language.
10. To date, Purushotam has provided the most comprehensive analysis of the politics of languages in Singapore, to which this discussion is indebted.
11. In May 2010, the minister of education announced that Mandarin would be given less "weight" in a student's overall academic achievement standing, which caused a storm of public outcry and led to a public petition and demonstration, very rare occurrences in this generally quiescent society, see Oon (2010).
12. However, with the introduction of paid cable television in 1995, which is owned by the state, Cantonese and Hokkien programs have been screened on cable channels, but the ban on public television continues.
13. I will have to depend on Taiwan researchers to analyze Taiwanese audience's reception of the very occasional Singapore films that are screened there.
14. Indeed, Taiwan Hokkien films are rare in Singapore, in part because of the no-dialect-in-mass-media policy that is still in place. However, when they are screened, as during the annual Singapore International Film Festival, Taiwanese films are often among the earliest to be sold out, which is indicative of their popularity.
15. Indeed, Hokkien films have to be occasional as the Singaporean audience seems to tire of them easily. For example, since the release of *Money* there have been several much better made Hokkien films which could not recoup their costs of production, including the above mentioned *Eating Air*, which was immediately picked up by international film festivals.

Chapter 4

1. In recent years, there have been efforts to imagine Japan and Korea as multicultural societies; however, non-Koreans only constitute one percent of Korea's national population and in the case of Japan, a significant portion of so-called new immigrants are South Americans of Japanese descendant.
2. For example, Zee TV of India has found a ready audience among the Indian-Singaporeans, see Kaur and Yahya (2010); nevertheless, the Malay population has been known to watch Korean television dramas on a regular basis.

3. The Chinese-language schools in Singapore have used Mandarin as the language of instruction since the 1920s. Nevertheless, all the other Huaren languages were still being transmitted across generations and through the mass media until the government imposed a ban on the use of these languages, which led progressively to the decline of their use such that by now Huaren under thirty years of age are often unable to speak or understand any Huaren language other than Mandarin.
4. Malay is nominally the "national" language because it is the historical lingua franca of island Southeast Asia where Malays are the indigenous population.
5. In 2003, the EDB entered into partnership with both the National Geographic and Discovery channels, on a 50/50 partnership for a period of five years and a total of budget of thirty-five million US dollars, to finance documentary projects which are to be produced in Singapore. Technical professionals in production from both channels are brought in to work with local practitioners. These are "factual" documentaries with exotic "anthropological" themes not necessarily about Asian cultures, let alone contemporary Singapore. The well-financed, one-hour programs—which could cost up to one million US dollars per program, in contrast to about thirty-five thousand dollars per hour of local television drama—have been of very high quality, winning awards internationally and a few have even made their way into the prized US market.
6. No Singaporean singers or actors have ever made it big in the Anglo-American entertainment world.
7. For a detailed discussion of Khoo's films for an international audience, see Marchetti (2005); for a local comparative reading of the films of Neo and Khoo, see Chua and Yeo (2003).
8. Notable among these are Ann Kok and Bryan Wong, see Liew (2010: 192).
9. Mandarin music has long been dominated by romantic ballads. However, in recent years, some Taiwanese singers have used hip hop or rap rhythms with Mandarin lyrics, a combination that has proved to be very popular, see Felicia Seck Yen Yin (2004) and Moskowitz (2010).
10. The Lee Wei Song School of Music has since become a choice location for aspiring local singers and Lee Wei Song himself is now a much sought-after songwriter for Mandarin pop singers.
11. The rest of the four channels consist of one Malay-language channel, one channel for Indian languages, one arts channel and one regional twenty-four hour news channel, Channel News Asia. Of these, Channel News Asia is most successful regionally, see Yue (2006).
12. One Singaporean actress that has achieved some success through this mode of entry is Fann Wong, who played the Little Dragon Girl in a popular *wuxia* series and, in 2003, starred in Jackie Chan's blockbuster, Hollywood produced movie, *Shanghai Knights*.
13. For a detailed discussion of format sharing in East Asia, see Lim (2005).
14. A general conceptualization of the diasporic audience can be gleaned from Appadurai (1996).
15. See also Robins and Aksoy's (2006) analysis of diasporic Turks in Europe.

16. There have been instances where the non-Mandarin speakers, including non-Mandarin competent Huaren, complained of being deprived of the viewing pleasure of highly popular Korean television dramas because no English subtitles were provided.
17. In one instance, a Singapore tour group was persuaded by a member to change their designated ski resort to one that was featured in the very popular Korean drama, *Winter Sonata* (Foong 2003).
18. A politically very embarrassing instance attests to this: Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong has been quoted as saying of people in less developed countries: "Because they don't know what life is, they're quite happy. They wake up, they brush their teeth, then they'll farm, and then they'll sleep. But do you want it that way?" (Cheong 2011). The "rural" is often ideologically reduced to the "underdeveloped" and is used to refer to the pre-1960s past. In recent years it has been nostalgically re-inscribed as a place to escape to for its simplicity of life, if only temporarily; as a respite from the complexities and overcrowding of the city (Chua 1997).
19. Jung (2011) has demonstrated that the different Korean masculinities are embodied by different Korean actors and genres, of which "beautiful masculinity" is one category particularly appreciated in Japan.

Chapter 5

1. The unevenness has become a source of complaint among media practitioners in China who see the popularity of Korean pop culture as "cultural invasion" (Foong 2005).
2. For greater detail on the idea of "dominant" meanings and the "encoding/decoding" process, see Morley (2003).
3. For a summary of the different theories of audience reception, see Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams (1997: 125–133).
4. There is a very large body of literature on the encoding/decoding model that is well nigh impossible to review here; for a recent summary of some points of debate, see Morley (2006).
5. Cross-national joint productions of films among the East Asian locations have been on the increase in the past decade. However, unlike television programs, films tend not to be dubbed, thus increasing their "multi-Asian-language" character, including multi-accented Mandarin(s) in Chinese language films.
6. In addition to lip-synchrony, dubbing must also pay attention to "kinetic synchrony"—synchrony with body movements on screen— and "isochrony"— synchrony in the timing of screen characters' utterances (Varela 2004: 41).
7. Significantly, many in Singapore prefer the Cantonese to the Mandarin version because of the effect of the "greater authenticity" the colloquial expressions give, rather than the relative "stiffness" of the Mandarin version.
8. Interestingly, the popularity of *Jewel* reportedly exceeded that of the locally produced, large-scale period drama *Emperor of the Han Dynasty* (汉武大帝 2004) among the Chinese audience; according to one commentator, this is because the former series "resonates with modern viewers" (Foong 2005), implying the latter does not, presumably because it is too historical.

9. The researcher adds her commentary, which reinforces the sense that "we are all human" (Leung 2004: 94–95).
10. Similar sentiments against explicit sexuality in Japanese dramas are apparently held by Hong Kong Huaren audiences (Lin and Tong 2008: 103), who consider Japanese dramas to be closer to Western dramas than Hong Kong dramas in the attitudes they convey.
11. For an excellent discussion of the complex history of relations between modern Japan and the rest of Asia, see Sun Ke (2000).
12. This "superior" attitude was used to justify Japan's invasion of the rest of Asia during the Second World War.
13. As Thomas (2004: 178) observes, along with an imagined prosperity, there are also Vietnamese who see consumerism-driven capitalist modernization as "cultural contamination" and the destruction of wholesome local cultural practices. Ambivalence towards capitalist consumerism is pervasive in all developing societies, it is not limited to the Vietnamese (Chua 2000: 12–16).
14. Ko's emphasis on the youth audience possibly arose from a generational gap in the reception of Japanese television dramas in Taiwan. Harking back to the history of the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, older Taiwanese, particularly the intellectuals, are wary of yet another "invasion" of Japanese imperialism.
15. The smug sense of "elitism" is common among aficionados of marginal cultures.
16. East Asian pop music industries share a similar temporal placement in discussing the development of regional pop music (Pease 2009: 157).
17. A counter-sentiment has emerged in recent years in Taiwan. In the face of China's unyielding claim on Taiwan as a "province," some Taiwanese filmmakers have been using the island's Japanese colonial past as a marker to distinguish and distance the island from China. A very popular example of this genre is the film, *Cape No. 7* (海角七号 2008) by Wei Te-Sheng (魏德圣).
18. On the idea of social repertoires, see Taylor (2004).

Chapter 6

1. Lee quotes the idea of the "mega-text" from Su (1999).
2. In 2004, it similarly canceled the already granted performance permits to a few Singaporean singers after the then-incoming prime minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong, visited Taiwan in his "personal" capacity. http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/xw/t142816.htm (accessed Oct 12, 2011).
3. According to Tsai, the dramatic event was somewhat staged, "not only were reporters informed and played a part in this sentimental media event, some audience members from Japan were invited by a television company to observe the send-off" (2008: 277, endnote 24).
4. The information on 2PM is indebted to the research work of Lee Yumi, a Ph.D. candidate in the Cultural Studies in Asia program at the National University of Singapore and to Alyson Rozells, an events manager at the Asia Research Institute and a Korean Wave fan.

5. The mode of operation of the Korean talent companies is copied from the practices established by the Japanese company, Johnny Company, who is responsible for many of the regionally popular Japanese boy-bands, including SMAP (Chua 2005).
6. Lawsuits against the Korean entertainment agencies have been increasing in recent years; for example, three of the now disbanded five member boy-band, TVSQ, sued SM Entertainment, Korea's biggest talent agency to end their contract (Kim 2011).
7. http://www.allkpop.com/2009/09/2000_mobilize_at_jype_building_in_a_silent_protest (accessed Apr 23, 2011).
8. http://www.allkpop.com/2009/10/hottests_around_the_world_are_flashing_for_jaebeom (accessed Apr 23, 2011).
9. http://www.allkpop.com/2010/03/transcript-of-jypes-conference-about-2pm-jaebeom-pt-1 (accessed Mar 10, 2010); http://www.allkpop.com/2010/02/full-letter-from-jyp-entertainment-regarding-jaebeom (accessed Feb 28, 2010).
10. Jay Park visited his fans in Taipei, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia in early 2011 and has plans to release a new album in Korea in the same year.
11. Sub-fan practices have already been found among anime fans in the US since the days of video types, see Leonard (2005).
12. Hu is quoting Streeter (2003: 649).
13. I owe this point to Lee Yumi in a written assignment she did for a course in Cultural Studies in Asia at the National University of Singapore.

Chapter 7

1. For a detailed analysis on the popularity of *Doraemon* in Asia, see Shiraishi (1996). *Astro Boy* was the first foreign animation series to be broadcast in China (Shiraishi 1996: 268).
2. Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs website on details of various policies regarding the promotion of Japanese culture: http://www.bunka.go.jp/english/index.html (accessed Apr 29, 2011).
3. http://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/mono_info_service/creative_industries/creative_industries.html (accessed Apr 29, 2011).
4. Conversely, as Iwabuchi points out, instead of Asia desiring Japan, this situation is more symptomatic of the desire of Japanese nationalists to "return" to the embrace of Asia, a desire that was suppressed as Japan became culturally marginalized after being defeated in 1945, in the Pacific War (Iwabuchi 2002).
5. A more oblique criticism of the cultural proximity argument is the fact that Korean television dramas are also popular among Malays, who are Muslims, in Malaysia.
6. A transcription of the song is provided by Yang (2008).
7. Ngo and Truong have grossly simplified the complex issue of foreign brides, including Vietnamese brides, and why they marry low-income and rural Korean men who are unable to find partners in their local Korean society, although they do note that "the number of ill-treated and suicidal Vietnamese wives has continuously increased" (2009: 102).

8. See Hu Jintao's speech to the Seventeenth Communist Party Congress, 2007.
9. The American company, A. C. Nielson set up a rating service in China in 1999. CCTV also has "its own audience surveys and feedbacks to allocate primetime slots for various news and social programs" (Chang 2002: 20).
10. At the end of the 2000s, independent production remains a high risk business. Because of the difficulty of securing broadcasting time, joint productions with guaranteed screening are the preferred mode of operation (Xu 2010).
11. According to one estimate, in 2002, television dramas generated ninety percent of all the advertising revenues generated from television programming (Zhu, Keane and Bai 2008: 1).
12. Here it is opportune to point out that the party-state's interest in soft power is equally directed towards the domestic sphere in the pursuit of a "harmonious society," "a concept that the Hu–Wen leadership has proposed to tackle mounting domestic social challenges" (Li 2008: 14).
13. For detailed discussions on the new developments in the media industry of mainland China, see Xu (2010).
14. In that same year, the Taiwanese government restricted the airing of imported (read Korean) dramas between six and ten pm (Kim 2005: 198).

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