

# Asian Celebrity Cultures in the Digital Age

Edited by Jian Xu, Glen Donnar, and Divya Garg

## Crossings: Asian Cinema and Media Culture

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# Doing and Consuming Celebrity

## Transformations in Asian Celebrity Cultures in the Digital Age

Jian Xu, Divya Garg, and Glen Donnar

Celebrity is a 'cultural phenomenon' highly associated with the media (Giles 2018). As Sharon Marcus (2019) argues, celebrity culture is the collective product of celebrities, media, and their publics. With the changing global media landscape, especially the transformative nature of the internet and digital media in the twenty-first century, few would disagree that celebrity cultures have transformed and continue to transform globally. The evolution of all contemporary media through the digital encounter, with many 'legacy' forms being digitalised, is a precondition for celebrity culture in the digital era, according to David Giles (2018). The 'technological convergence' (Jenkins 2006a), which allows the digitalisation and cross-platform distribution of celebrity-related cultural objects, such as films, television dramas, concerts, celebrity news, and fanzines, unprecedentedly increased the production and consumption of celebrity.

Alice Marwick (2016) identifies two significant changes in celebrity culture caused by rapid digitisation. Firstly, digital media allows the public to obtain direct access to established celebrities. Secondly, a new type of celebrity, known as 'micro-celebrity' and popularly called 'influencers', rose to prominence. Acknowledging the two major changes, we further argue that digital media communication has significantly reshaped celebrity production, presentation, personae, fandom, and economies, as well as the ways celebrities engage with media, politics, publics, and society. The changes in almost all aspects of celebrity culture have fuelled what we call the 'transformations in celebrity cultures' in the digital era, and nowhere more so than in Asia.

Digital media has fundamentally transformed Asian economies, politics, and societies.<sup>1</sup> Asia has the world's largest digital media market and the most vibrant celebrity, entertainment, and cultural industries. China and India have the largest digital populations in the world, with approximately 1.05 billion and 692 million internet users respectively (Statista 2023). K-pop continues to grow in global prominence with the facilitation of digital communication and generates about 10 billion USD each year for South Korea (AFM 2022). In China, the country's digital transformation has boosted the idol economy, with the domestic idol market valued at US\$14 billion by 2020 (Achim 2019). In Southeast Asia, there has been explosive growth in the influencer industry, worth US\$638 million in 2019 and expected to reach US\$2.59 billion in 2024 (Taslaud 2022). Asia is also at the forefront of innovation in digital technologies and leads the world in digital transformation (Jakob 2017). For example, initiating efforts in the mid-1990s, Japan pioneered the creation of virtual idols, producing the world's most iconic virtual idol, Hatsune Miku, in 2007 (St. Michel 2016).

In addition to its digital vibrancy, Asia's diverse—even unique—historical, social, cultural, and political contexts also distinguish its celebrity cultures from the rest of the world. For example, China's tightening regulations on idols and their fandoms in recent years represent a unique celebrity politics, in which celebrities—whether established stars or internet celebrities—must 'navigate the complex trade-off between the intertwined neoliberal market ideology and Party ideology' to survive, let alone thrive, in China's competitive entertainment industry (Xu and Yang 2021, 202). And in India, the 'intertwining of Bollywood and Hindu nationalism' (Chakraborty 2021, 94) has compelled stars, increasingly garnering box office success through nationalist films, to be cautious about presenting their opinions publicly. The encounter of Asia's digital transformation and its diversified celebrity ecologies make Asia a vital context for the examination of celebrity cultures in the digital age.

The fields of star and celebrity studies have long been Western-centric (Shingler and Steenberg 2019). Even in the relatively new area of internet celebrities, as Abidin and Brown (2018) observe, the existing scholarship is also Anglo-centric, English-speaking, and focused on global North platforms. Against this backdrop, Iwabuchi (2014, 47) proposes 'inter-Asian referencing', which 'aims to advance innovative knowledge production through reciprocal learning from other Asian experiences' as a way to decentre Western perspectives. Xu, Donnar, and Kishore (2021, 178) have further proposed internationalising celebrity studies by 'turning towards Asia', arguing that specifically 'studying Asian celebrity and stardom will expand the current research agenda in celebrity studies and holds the potential to

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1. While we recognise the fundamental distinction between the digital, which refers to technology that stores data in binary form, and the internet, the worldwide network that permits the distribution of data to and between individuals, groups and the public, our employment of 'digital media' is intended to encompass both.

innovate theoretical and methodological developments'. Likewise, Garg (2022) suggests diversifying methodological frameworks examining celebrities and audiences to address the structural whiteness of these fields and do justice to the diversity of global celebrity and fan cultures today. Echoing these calls, mapping transformations in celebrity cultures in digital Asia contributes to this internationalisation of celebrity studies.

In the following sections, we examine how digital media and communication has transformed the ways of doing and consuming celebrity in Asia. In 'doing celebrity', we first focus on new forms of celebrity practices and new types of celebrity enabled by digital media and communication. Then, in 'consuming celebrity', we concentrate on relations among celebrities, fans, and the wider public in the digital age. We conclude by outlining the themes and chapters in the collection, which collectively illustrate the ongoing transformations in doing and consuming celebrity across a range of Asian case studies, phenomena, and practices.

## Doing Celebrity

David Marshall (2010, 39) argues that social media is 'simultaneously a media and communication form', which enables new forms of 'cultural production' and 'public engagement and exchange'. Underscoring the transformational role of social media in the 'presentation of the self', he vividly identifies social media as 'presentational media'. To Marshall, the celebrity system in the digital era is transforming from a 'representative regime' reliant on mass media's representations of celebrities to a 'presentational culture and regime' in which celebrities actively present themselves and interact with their public through online communication (Marshall 2010). In this era, established celebrities who obtained fame mainly within the representative regime must 're-present and re-construct themselves with the benefit of this continued negotiation of the self that celebrity culture has articulated' (Marshall 2010, 38). It is now difficult to find a celebrity who—outside of temporary periods of withdrawal due to scandal or excessive personal abuse—neither has verified social media accounts nor uses them for self-presentation, promotion, and interaction with their publics. This trend has been exacerbated by increasing digitalisation across the world in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world went into lockdown, entertainment practices further shifted online. Stars in the entertainment industries had to harness social media in unprecedented ways to adapt to a radically changed environment to sustain fame and profit—from K-pop idols performing virtual concerts to Bollywood stars creating social media 'quarantine diaries' (Raghav 2020). Despite this, celebrity performance and self-presentation via social media have led to deepened norms of 'authenticity, legitimacy, and "reliability"' (Kanai 2020).

Digital platforms not only allow stars to create and circulate celebrity content with the potential to reach a global audience, such as vlogging, livestreaming, and



online concerts, but also to engage with the public and society through celebrity advocacy, diplomacy, philanthropy, and political elections. For example, the K-pop band BTS garnered five million tweets and fifty million engagements for their posts for the 'Love Myself' awareness campaign in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund to end violence against children (Nakamura 2021). In China, UN-affiliated Chinese celebrities similarly use their Weibo account (the Chinese version of Twitter) to do celebrity diplomacy for the UN (Postema and Melissen 2021). While the social and political activism of celebrities is not a new phenomenon, by utilising their social and cultural capital to advocate for global social good and justice via digital media, celebrities can 'facilitate processes of democratization in international affairs through creating new political spaces that finesse the disconnection that has opened between professional diplomatic elites and the public' (Elliot and Boyd 2018, 16). In countries such as Indonesia and India, celebrity politicians make use of social media to transform their fame and celebrity status into political legitimacy for electoral competition (Beta and Neyazi 2022; Watson-Lynn and Star 2019). 'Going digital' activism has greatly transformed traditional ways for celebrities to engage with various social and political issues, including in terms of frequency, strategy, and impact.

Digital media is, however, a 'double-edged sword' for celebrities. On the one hand, it empowers them to present themselves with much less 'gatekeeping' and engage with the public and politics more widely and effectively, creating greater visibility than ever. On the other hand, increased digital visibility does not always equate to positive capital for promotion and the attention economy. It can even be professionally fatal if the visibility of their misconduct is weaponised by netizens to challenge their established persona and morality. For example, Chinese celebrity singer Tong Zhuo's inadvertent revelation that he cheated in the college entrance examination during a June 2020 livestream with fans caused an outcry among netizens. The public outrage forced his university to strip him of his graduation certificate and his father, a local senior official who facilitated his son's identity fraud in the exam, was investigated for potential abuse of power (Yan 2020). Similarly, many celebrities across the world who carelessly displayed controversial behaviours on social media during the pandemic provoked a backlash from the public (Torres and Willen 2020). In the digital era, celebrities are under constant surveillance by global netizens. Greater digital visibility can quickly become greater vulnerability, posing new challenges for celebrity self-governance and image management.

In addition to such digitalised celebrity practices, digital media and communication have also enabled many 'ordinary' people to become famous. 'Microcelebrity' is the term coined to refer to ordinary people-turned-celebrities who use digital media platforms to self-brand and build their public persona and intimacy with followers online, typically in a niche or narrow area (Marwick and boyd 2011; Senft 2008). Also widely called 'internet celebrities', they drive engagement and set trends among their receptive audience and have the potential to become 'social media

influencers' (Abidin 2018), who monetise influence through brand endorsements and livestreaming e-commerce. The study of 'microcelebrity' or 'social media influencers' is a fast-growing area in celebrity studies; from their economics and marketing (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2016), the authenticity of influencer-sponsored content (Wellman et al. 2020), to influencer-brand endorsement relationships (Nascimento, Campos, and Suarez 2020) and the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intentions (Saima and Khan 2021).

Turner (2013) has argued that the rise of ordinary-people-cum-celebrities demonstrates a 'demotic' rather than 'democratic' turn in celebrity culture. In the digital era, the rise of microcelebrities and influencers has escalated this demotic turn and, given that the purpose of producing ordinary celebrities of varying class positions and ethnicities is primarily for mass entertainment, shown scant sign of rights-based democratisation. Nevertheless, scholars have paid attention to 'influencer activism' and its social and political impacts on movements such as Black Lives Matter (Duvall and Heckemeyer 2018) and #MeToo (Franssen 2020). The influence of microcelebrities among internet users, especially internet-savvy young people, has also been increasingly harnessed by governments to do social governance and public diplomacy. In China, foreign (non-Chinese) influencers who develop careers in the Chinese market have been used to defend China's positions on controversial issues in their content production to counter the Western media's anti-China narratives (see Chapter 4). Microcelebrities and influencers also played a variety of roles in the COVID-19 pandemic, from awareness raising to countering misinformation and disinformation. For example, In Indonesia, social media influencers were given priority for vaccination and were requested to share vaccination videos with their followers to support the vaccination rollout (Widiyanto and Lamb 2021).

Meanwhile, the rise of controversies surrounding influencers worldwide has brought numerous legal and ethical issues to public attention, including fake endorsements, the promotion of false information and conspiracy theories, and tax evasion. This has provoked increasing actions from state agencies, relevant industry associations, and social media platforms to regulate influencers and their practices (Goanta and Ranchordas 2020; Xu Qu and Zhang, 2022). The visibility of this new type of celebrity has also encouraged a perception among young people that being an influencer is an easy path to affluence and success. From America to China, a majority of young respondents aspire to become social media influencers or would choose 'influencer' as their preferred profession (21jingji 2017; Townsend 2019). However, these aspirants may be less aware that social media influencers must 'game' the algorithms of the digital platforms (Cotter 2019) and are subject to policing and surveillance by platforms, agencies, advertisers, and regulatory bodies. Moreover, racism and pay inequality have become prominent issues in the influencer industry (Tietjen 2020), highlighting both the exploitive potential of capitalism in a booming industry and the relative powerlessness of individual influencers.

The digital age has also witnessed the emergence of fictional computer-generated ‘influencers’ with realistic characteristics, features, and personalities of humans—‘virtual influencers’ (widely called VI), such as Japanese VI Imma (see Chapter 15). Originating in Japan’s anime and idol culture, VI celebrities usefully interrogate ideas of authenticity, exposure, identity, celebrity, and consumption in an age of increasing human-virtual interaction. Often constructed as females of colour, these VI also raise significant questions about the relationship between female virtual idols and their predominantly male consumers (Black 2012; Lam 2016), as well as the commodification of racial capital (Miyake 2022). Drenten and Brooks (2020, 1319–1321) argue that VI celebrity ‘represents a bridge between the highly controlled Hollywood star system and the highly liberated social media influencer’. The creation and dissemination of VI celebrity draws upon elements of influencer culture such as self-branding and individual control. Despite often acknowledging their virtuality, the VI celebrity’s authenticity emulates that of a typical influencer through their engagement with real social issues and social media to create an ‘effect of realness’.

### Consuming Celebrity

Beyond enabling new forms of celebrity practices, digital media and communication have also altered celebrity consumption and the ways that audiences, and especially fan communities, interact with celebrities. Fans have always been at the forefront of media transformations (Pearson 2010). In the digital age, rapid digitalisation has changed the relationships between fans and celebrities, giving rise to local and transnational fan activism that builds off and impacts the global popularity of celebrities.

First, digital communication has reshaped celebrity-fan proximity and interaction (Couldry 2016), transforming relationships between celebrities and fans. Much research on fan-celebrity relationships has used the concept of ‘parasocial relationships’ (Horton and Wohl 1956), surmising that the relationship that fans form is largely ‘illusory’ or one-sided. This research, according to Holmes, Ralph, and Redmond (2015), holds a common belief that fans are fooled into believing that they are in an actual social relationship with the celebrity. Giles (2018, 42) critiques how parasocial interactions are often mistakenly positioned as opposite to or substitutes for “‘normal”, “healthy”, face-to-face relationships’ and can be negative or positive (2018, 42). The positive aspects of parasocial relationships became more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, as online communication and interaction became the ‘new normal’ for celebrity presentation, promotion, and interaction with fans. Jarzyna (2020) observes that the ‘social surrogacy’ enabled through parasocial interactions, especially as people relied increasingly on social media and streaming services for entertainment during lockdown or quarantine, allowed isolated individuals to find a sense of connection with others. The rise of the influencer

economy has witnessed increasing parasocial relationships with internet celebrities who appear closer to ordinary individuals than traditional stars. Rasmussen (2018) finds that audiences experience increased feelings of knowing and familiarity with influencers, finding them to be credible and trustworthy sources. However, it remains important to caution that enhanced parasocial relationships in the digital era can have harmful effects. For example, social media influencers have become a popular source of misinformation about COVID-19 during the pandemic (Harff, Bollen, and Schmuck 2022).

Second, national or transnational fandoms have demonstrated unprecedented power through fan activism in the digital age, somewhat shifting power relations between celebrities and fans. For example, in East-Asian idol culture, ‘data fans’—fans who use social and digital media to influence and intervene in the processes of idol production and promotion—have been integrated into the capital-manipulated idol industry due to their ability to employ tactics that ‘boost’ idols through coordinated cooperation (Zhang and Negus 2020). Conversely, networked fans and publics can boycott or ostracise celebrities on social media and beyond for perceived misdemeanours or problematic opinions in a practice popularly called ‘cancel culture’ (Ng 2022). These digitally equipped fans and publics place celebrities under increased scrutiny, paying greater attention to their online and offline persona, speech, and behaviour, as well as their public relations strategies to manage scandals and crises.

Fans have also demonstrated their political participation and impact globally, showing fandom as a ‘new global force for change’ (Walden and Salim 2021). For example, K-pop fans raised money for victims of natural disasters in Indonesia, disrupted former US president Donald Trump’s political rallies to support the resurgent Black Lives Matter movement, and buoyed pro-democracy protests in Thailand. However, the growing power of disruptive fandom in the digital era also led the Chinese government to initiate campaigns to crack down on ‘chaotic’ online fan culture (Liao and Fu 2022). Overt state governance is particularly acute in relation to fandom and queerness, which occupies a liminal space in many Asian countries as media industries exploit idols’ sexually ambiguous aesthetics. For example, a fanfic that explicitly queered Chinese superstar Xiao Zhan (see Chapter 8) provoked a furious backlash from his fans on Weibo and eventually resulted in the blocking of the global fanfiction repository Archive of Our Own (AO3) in China in 2020.

Finally, digital communication has promoted the formation of transnational celebrities and transcultural fandom. Such transnational fandom has evolved from fans’ voluntary translation and circulation of celebrity-related content across borders via the internet into today’s highly organised and commercialised industry. This is exemplified in Hallyu 2.0, the global popularity of the Korean Wave in the digital age (Lee and Nornes 2015). As Jung (2015) argues, rather than the overseas Asian reception of television, Hallyu 2.0 is primarily led by K-pop idol bands, such as BTS, who have used digital technologies and platforms in unprecedented

# Afterword: Towards an Asian Model of Celebrity Culture

David C. Giles

In the decolonial era, scholars of all stripes are reconfiguring their disciplines, tugging at the rug beneath the sturdy old table of received wisdom. Even a fledgling discipline like celebrity studies has already knocked together a doughty piece of furniture. We know, or think we know, how the canon plays out: the theatrical fore-runners of stage fame giving way to the Hollywood explosion in the early twentieth century, followed by the mass adoption of radio and television bringing new types of personalities into our homes, and, more recently, the colonisation of the individual self by social media. Not all of this has taken place on a global scale (although researchers around the world are gradually producing the jigsaw's missing pieces), and it is digital culture that has really broadened the territory.

And yet the mainstay of celebrity scholarship remains the Hollywood icon, remote in their fairy castle, swooned over by millions, teasingly drip-fed to the global audience by a slow-moving and tightly controlled broadcast media. They are to celebrity studies what the Ancient Greek epics are to the Western literary canon, itself being unwound fast, despite being the foundations that support the whole edifice. But are we not all celebrities now? Some have argued that it is time to move away from this model altogether, rethinking celebrity as persona, representational media as presentational media (Marshall, Moore, and Barbour 2020). But the traditional broadcast media are hanging on pretty much everywhere, still trying to set the agenda where they can. And while it might be hard to claim that there would be no YouTube influencers without Audrey Hepburn and Clark Gable, the social processes of fame and the psychological experiences of parasocial interaction provide the same mechanisms for celebrity-audience relationships. We are not truly done with celebrity.

In my discipline, Psychology, I have spent much of my career trying to persuade my colleagues of the futility of the quest that seeks to firmly establish a timeless and universal set of rules that govern human behaviour. Media Psychology has taken a long time to establish itself as a subdiscipline because, in cultural and social terms, nothing changes faster than media, and no branch of Psychology can less afford to seek the timeless and universal than this one. This does not mean simply conjuring up a whole new set of theories each time a new medium emerges on the market, more about the ways social-historical change can challenge the rules that seemed to govern behaviour in previous periods. Many of the experimental studies from the post-war US that shaped social psychology have failed to replicate (Open Science Collaboration 2015). This has led to what is often termed a ‘replication crisis’ for the discipline, typically attributed to poor science on behalf of the original researchers (the implication being, naturally, that we are now doing ‘better science’). It is rarely suggested that social change might be responsible, although there are good reasons for believing that, say, Milgram’s obedience studies would not be replicated now, not least because so many people now know about them (Elms 2009).

Likewise, we are foolish if we think we can stick to one single definition of celebrity. I have suggested that we can really only understand celebrity in relation to specific forms of media (Giles 2018). YouTube may not have started life as an obvious vehicle for celebrity: the slogan ‘broadcast yourself’ arrived some years after its original purpose as a repository for home movies had generated unexpected stardom for some of its unwitting subjects (Smith 2014). However, it has since evolved its own distinctive culture, in which some of the tropes of earlier celebrity (perhaps TV rather than Hollywood) have been reworked according to the unique affordances of the medium. We can now talk about ‘YouTubers’ in the way that we once talked about ‘pop stars’ or ‘television personalities’ whose celebrity was defined by the unique affordances of the recording industry and analogue television alike.

What makes digital culture fundamentally different to its predecessors, however, is its global nature, and this brings us back to the starting point. By opening up media like YouTube to the billions, the evolution of celebrity culture in such media is no longer—except in specific nations—constrained by local concerns. Any YouTuber with over one million subscribers is almost certain to owe some of that number to users outside their home country. Even language is no barrier, it seems, judging by the Tower of Babel that is the comments stream beneath some of the most watched videos. And as time has passed, we have seen performers influencing audiences in the most unlikely places. Who would have thought, at the start of the new millennium, that within two decades, South Korea would have become the coolest place on earth, seducing millions of Westerners through cultural phenomena such as K-pop and Gangnam style? (Adams 2022).

While some Asian cultural forms have enjoyed a degree of popularity in the West, notably Japanese anime and manga, it has taken the arrival of truly global media to influence Western popular culture. Like the reverse process undertaken

by Hollywood in the previous century, this influence has been driven largely by visual media. Gangnam style performances cut across linguistic boundaries as easily as Disney cartoon characters. K-pop acts like BTS and NCT 127 have the chiselled looks and slick dance routines that appeal to teenagers everywhere, long prepared for this kind of entertainment by British and American ‘boy bands’ from the Osmonds onwards. YouTube and TikTok have driven this success. Perhaps their most unlikely achievement is to sell music to English-speaking audiences recorded in a foreign language, something that has eluded all but a handful of novelty acts for decades.

If these linguistic doors can be broken down, is it fair to say we are moving towards a fully globalised media culture, where country of origin no longer means anything? Clearly not, since most social media is firmly rooted in the US, and although American students are increasingly interested in studying the Korean language (Sovillo 2019), there are still more people studying English as a second language in America alone (NCES 2019). And to return to celebrity studies, the literature—in English, naturally—continues to be dominated by Western models of celebrity. The flagship journal, *Celebrity Studies*, overwhelmingly draws on North American, European (typically British) and occasionally Oceanian (typically Australian) case studies. This is inevitable given the discipline started its life in those parts of the globe where most celebrity scholars have traditionally been based. The balance is now shifting, albeit slowly, in part owing to the editors’ previous call to internationalise the field via a ‘turn’ towards Asia (Xu, Donnar, and Kishore 2021).

Xu, Donnar, and Garg have launched the present collection as a way of further counteracting the Western domination of celebrity studies, assembling a diverse collection of case studies and examples from across the continent. Many of these tackle topics that are familiar to celebrity scholars from the literature: the reinvention of ageing stars in digital culture (Wai Sim Lau and Donnar), the use of social media for electioneering (Lee and Lee), the breakdown of front stage/backstage performance on streaming platforms (Kim). But the book (and I include the aforementioned chapters in this claim) is much more than a set of local instances of recognisable phenomena to provide a bit of colour to the literature. It is an attempt to establish a model of celebrity culture that is distinctively Asian.

China is not only the geographical centre of the continent but provides its most striking contrast to the West, culturally and socially. The Chinese government’s restrictions on social media use and its overall degree of social control have important implications for the global reach of platforms like YouTube and Twitter/X, potentially blunting the influence of digital culture on audience-celebrity relationships that has been seen elsewhere. This is well illustrated in Lovric’s study of the Chinese actress Liu Yifei, who seems to have been caught in a tug-of-war between the local demands of the pro-China Hong Kong government and the global demands of the Hollywood empire. These twin pressures correspond approximately



to the two different social media platforms Twitter/X and Weibo, which for Lovric afford 'two distinct modes of mediated identity performance'.

The local/global tensions affecting Chinese celebrity in particular are also played out in Xu and Qu's discussion of the 'soft power' of uncritical or openly sponsored PR puff for China in many online vlogs and videos promoting the country. Some of these, such as Li Ziqi, a YouTuber with over seventeen million subscribers, are Chinese vloggers selling an idealised latter-day Orientalism to the global audience. Others, more insidiously perhaps, are foreigners relaying the glories of China back home known locally as '*laowai wanghong*', such as the British journalist Stuart Wiggin, who regularly posts videos extolling the glories of Chinese society and culture. Most of these are posted on the CGTN (China Global TV Network) YouTube channel, which carries the disclaimer 'funded in whole or in part by the Chinese government' should Western viewers be in any doubt as to its impartiality. Of course, picking apart the seams of cultural propaganda is always a difficult business: nobody is disputing the probability that the *laowai wanghong* actually love Chinese life and are communicating genuine enthusiasm.

A different kind of pro-Chinese media content is provided by expatriate vloggers such as Liu Yong, a long-term Chinese resident of India, who constructs his host country as a 'backwards' neighbour by focusing on local cultural practices that represent an 'exotic otherness'. Yang's analysis of the Bilibili channel 'Liu Yong Universe' articulates the mechanisms through which Chinese culture is promoted implicitly through Liu Yong's critiques of Indian street food and gender relations, among other things, that are interpreted by his followers as emphasising what they see as a gulf between the countries.

While these issues are largely a continuation of local twentieth-century tensions, many of the chapters in the book focus on uniquely twenty-first-century developments, specifically the way that social media have transformed pre-Internet culture. Bose's chapter on OTT (over-the-top) media in India documents the way that digital culture has opened up Indian cinema and shifted the focus away from its traditional bias towards Mumbai (home of Bollywood) and the South. At the same time, it has demystified the aura surrounding the stars and enabled women to obtain more 'substantial' roles.

Other examples of social media transforming traditional culture include the rise of 'modest fashion designers' in Indonesia who combine the contemporary marketing strategies of Instagram influencers with traditional Islamic qualities, in what Beta describes as the 'entanglement of piety and gendered expectations of success'. It certainly seems to work for creators such as Dian Pelangi, who has amassed over four million followers to her profile, allowing for the restraints placed on the drive for 'perfection' demanded by being a highly visible Muslim woman in Indonesia. Perhaps a less positive example of the arrival of social media in a long-standing cultural practice is Cabalquinto's discussion of a traditional tattooing practice that



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