Hallyu: Numerous Discourses, One Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the historical factors that have constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed the discourses on *Hallyu*. At its initial stage, with Asian intellectuals' increasing interest in Asianism in the mid-1990s and cultural studies scholars' research trend focusing on media audience, discussions were centered on utilizing *Hallyu* as a means of forming a cultural (exchange) community in East Asia. Pushing aside this perspective of Asianism, the perspective of Cultural Nationalism has been held by the successive Korean governments since the mid-1990s, mobilizing different political and social subjects—such as government departments and organizations, mass media, academic circles, civic groups, and entertainment agency companies—to dedicate themselves to the political and economic projects of "nation branding" and "culture industry promotion." Focused only on utilizing *Hallyu* as a means of enhancing the national image and prestige of Korea and achieving economic benefits, their discussions have deeply permeated all the spheres of the society, exerting effects on every aspect of life of Koreans.

The Numerous Discourses on *Hallyu*

On March 19, 2014, Chinese fans of the Korean TV drama *My Love from the Star*(which aired from December 2013 to February 2014) placed an advertisement in the most widely circulated newspaper in South Korea (Korea hereafter). This advertisement expressed their disapproval of the work of Professor Kang Myungkoo's research team at Seoul National University, which had published a study in a scholarly journal in 2013 (Kang et al.). The fans believed that the professor's research claimed that, compared to the fans of American television dramas, the enthusiastic consumer group of Korean dramas

in China is comprised of individuals with low levels of income and education. Contending that the research disparaged Chinese fans of Korean dramas, they demanded that Professor Kang issue a formal apology to Chinese fans and to Do, Min-joon, the protagonist of *My Love from the Star* (*Kyunghyang Daily*, March 19, 2014).

This incident was featured in a majority of media outlets in Korea, with newspapers competing to cover the international popularity of Korean pop culture, a phenomenon that is called "Korean Wave" (hereafter, *Hallyu*). Curiously, however, rather than investigating the rationality of the Chinese fans' demand for an apology from Professor Kang, the media mainly concentrated on reporting the big success of the drama in China and of Chinese fans' dedication to Korean dramas. Although the fans' grievances were somewhat beyond the focus of the research study, which aimed to map the diversified taste profiles of Chinese viewers of Korean dramas according to differing social, economic, and cultural capital, the media focused their attention on proclaiming that Korean dramas enjoy incredible popularity, especially among young people in China. One online newspaper even conducted an interview with Professor Kang and asked if his team would apologize to the Chinese fans, treating the research conclusion as an afterthought (*e-Today*, March 19, 2014). In a way, the Chinese fans' protest made a substantial contribution to reawakening the discourses on *Hallyu*, which had died down for a period of time.

The word *Hallyu*, which was coined by a Chinese journalist in the late 1990s, has often fallen from the lips of various social subjects such as research teams and media in Korea, despite its cryptic meaning and absence of any etymological definition. For the last fifteen years, the mass media have detailed the surprising and unexpected success of Korean pop culture gaining popularity in other countries. They also noted that some countries in Asia fear a loss of their nation's cultural identity due to the invasion of Korean pop culture. Furthermore, successive academic studies have examined which aspects of Korean pop culture have contributed to its rising popularity in other countries and in what ways foreign audiences have accepted Korean pop culture (Ju, 2014; Shim, 2006). They also have elaborated on the infrastructural system of the

production and distribution of *Hallyu* content and fandom activities in various geographical areas. In such a way, divergent discourses on *Hallyu* have been produced and fervently circulated.

Interestingly, the quantity of the discourses has increased as *Hallyu* has resonated across the Asian region. For instance, the Korean media produce more discourses reflecting the discourses produced by the Chinese mass media, government officials, and academic circles. It is known that top ranking Chinese officials, including Wang Qishan, Head of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, have held intense discussions over why China has not been able to produce soap operas of similar quality to those from Korea (*Washington Post*, March 10, 2014). Such discussion could possibly spark a chain reaction by urging Chinese academic circles to discover why phenomena such as *Hallyu* occur in their country. Their findings would then serve as a foundation for the Korean media to enthuse about "Korean drama fever" or "*Hallyu*" sweeping across China.

Similar regional resonance originated from another series of events involving the advertisement placed by the Chinese fans of *My Love from the Star*. In a speech delivered to the members of the cabinet on March 20, 2014, Korean President Park Geun-hye requested that ministers immediately eliminate regulations on Korean internet shopping malls. This request was in reference to complaints from fans concerning the regulations they had faced when attempting to purchase the clothes of the female protagonist of *My Love from the Star*(*Yonhap News*, March 20, 2014). It was evident that President Park wished to demonstrate to the people of Korea her concern for the national economic benefits accrued from Chinese fans of *Hallyu*, who possibly become consumers of Korean products. This episode displays another example of regional resonances regarding *Hallyu*: Chinese viewers of Korean drama created a discourse, which was then transmitted by the Korean president to government officials. These officials were to reorganize the online shopping system through which Chinese consumers purchase goods, which would then serve as a research topic for Korean or Chinese scholars. Such cross-reference at home and abroad illustrates the principles of the discursive formation of *Hallyu*.

Taking this point into consideration, this research project aims to critically and meticulously examine how discourses on *Hallyu* have flourished in academic settings and in mass media both inside and outside Korea over long periods of time. Firstly, this project explores the requisite conditions for *Hallyu* to attract considerable attention from various concerned parties, and maps the typological positions of the different discourses conducted by the parties. Secondly, this project examines how these discourses have cooperated and conflicted with each other, and identifies the outstanding factors in the historical contexts of *Hallyu* that caused cooperation and conflict between the discourses. Finally, this project investigates which political and social subjects in Korea have endeavored to establish the mainstream discourse on *Hallyu* in Korea, and how they have appropriated the discourses produced in the other countries for their purposes. All of these aspects are then combined to form the argument that our general understanding or knowledge of *Hallyu* is a discursive construct produced by social actors in connivance, rather than an objective understanding of the substance of the cultural phenomenon, *Hallyu*. In brief, this project aims to investigate how the current forms of discourses came to surround *Hallyu*.

The Influential Factors in its Historical Conditions

The numerous discourses about *Hallyu* cannot be attributed to the notion that *Hallyu* is the first "Made-in-Asia" pop culture trend to gain great popularity across the Asian region. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Hong Kong pop culture swept through the region, represented by key genres such as kung-fu movies, film noir, and Cantopop[2] (exemplified by the Four Heavenly Kings). Hong Kong movies and Cantopop, although falling in popularity since the repatriation of Hong Kong to China, still attract attention from a wide range of Asian populations, providing them with sources of youth subculture and nostalgic enjoyment (Chu, 2007). Japan was also a notable case in regard to the dissemination of its pop culture to East and Southeast Asia, as it created productions ranging from animation, *manga*, pop music (known as J-Pop), and cartoon characters (e.g., Hello Kitty, Pokémon) to television (trendy) dramas such as *Tokyo Love Story* and *Long Vacation* (Otmazgin, 2013). It is still very

common for a visitor to any of the major cities of the Asian region to observe the pervasive presence of Japanese pop culture. Compared to the long history and great popularity of the previous "Made-in-Asia" popular cultures, *Hallyu* is merely in its infancy.

As new works and stars appeared in the past, Hong Kong and Japanese popular culture also attracted journalistic and scholarly attention. By now, many journalists and scholars often recall and refer to the past success of these other pop cultures while observing the current popularity of *Hallyu* (Lynn and Tong, 2008). However, the discussions on Hong Kong and Japanese culture were confined mainly to the process and extent of their diffusions in Asia, unlike the case of *Hallyu*, which has driven journalists and scholars to track every single route and phase of its diffusion and acceptance (Lee, 2005). How then did *Hallyu* become the most popular topic of discussion, unlike its Hong Kong and Japanese predecessors?

Apparently, the most active discussions surrounding *Hallyu* are based in Korea; however, it would be incorrect to conclude that discourses on *Hallyu* have been produced there exclusively. Korean discussions on *Hallyu* are the result of comprehensive absorption and (convenient) appropriation of the disquisitions produced both inside and outside the country (Kim, 2009; Dirlik, 2002). As demonstrated by the example of the Chinese fans of the previously referenced drama, *My Love from the Star*, Korea has absorbed the body of discourses created outside the country and transformed it into a collection of stories that establish the country's excellence in this regard. The disquisitions traveling abroad from Korea have also been modified in each different area that they are received. Accordingly, the emergence of the great number of discourses on *Hallyu* should be understood as an inter-Asian phenomenon.

Academic focus on *Hallyu* has been fostered by Asian intellectuals' ideals to solidify the individual countries of the East Asian region as a community, a strategy intended to decentralize American-centered globalization. Some Korean scholars (known as *Chang-bi*) once argued that the reunification of the Korean peninsula should be achieved via the cooperation of the East Asian countries, believing that self-settling the matter of reunification with the assistance of the

other East Asian countries would lead to a stable "independence" of the region from the geo-political interventions of the West. Raising a question concerning the worldwide spread of Western––particularly American––pop culture, cultural studies scholars in Korea also argued for the formation of a cultural community (through cultural exchanges) in East Asia (Paik, 2005). This idea of cultural community formation was also shared by a number of authorities in other parts of Asia, including the Japanese cultural studies scholar Koichi Iwabuchi (2002), who acknowledged the cultural imperialism of the world powers.

Interested in constructing a power block in Asia to resist Western rules, these intellectuals have searched for theoretical and methodological concepts to realize their ideals. They once considered concepts, such as "Confucian capitalism" (Lee, Kuan Yew) and "Asian Coalitionism." Confucian capitalism explains Asian capitalism in terms of Confucian cultures and values, while Asian Coalitionism, which originated during the East Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s, is a variant version of Pan Americanism (introduced by the United States, which sought to create, encourage, and organize relationships, associations, and cooperation between the states, through diplomatic, political, economic, and social means). However, the former concept was criticized for its ahistorical and essentialist aspects, and the latter was disapproved for its lack of consideration of power inequalities between countries to be integrated.

Meanwhile, a somewhat pedantic concept entitled "Asianism"[3] fascinated the intellectuals. Asianism is a theoretical and methodological perspective on the identity of the region of Asia in terms of cooperation, stability, and peace. Asianism underlines the historicity of culture and individuality, and repudiates the principle of interiority; in doing so, it overcomes the shortcomings of the previously considered concepts, Confucian capitalism and Asian Coalitionism. Asianism was originally theorized in the 1940s by the Japanese scholar, Takeuchi Yoshimi (who had critically reflected on Japanese modernity, referring to Chinese modernity),[4] and was further developed by the Chinese scholar, Sun-ge, along with several other Asian scholars, who recognized Takeuchi's academic legacy. In the mid-1990s, Asianism even served as a theoretical

background for a movement against cultural, philosophical, and political invasions from the West.

Those intellectuals who had been concerned with Asianism were enthralled when *Hallyu* first appeared in the late 1990s. They attempted to utilize *Hallyu* as a source, with which to construct an imaginary community in the Asian continent. The advent of *Hallyu* was well-timed, unlike Hong Kong pop culture, which had appeared too early to be the focus of scholarly attention. Japanese popular culture could not be the core source of their discussions either, given that the country had not directly acknowledged its past misdeeds. As Appadurai (1996) correctly indicates, one's imagined community might become another's political prison. Furthermore, Japan's attitude toward its pop culture, which had circulated throughout all of the Asian countries, was recognized as a form of being "in but above" or "similar but superior to," summarized by the term, "soft nationalism" (Iwabuchi, 2002). However, *Hallyu* could be an attraction for those seeking empirical data to portray the imaginary Asian community. Despite its American qualities, *Hallyu* was seen only as incorporating modernization experiences that are unique to Asia (Paik, 2005).

Cultural studies researchers in Korea also displayed their special interests in *Hallyu*, given that the principle of cultural studies is consistent with the perspective of Asianism that underscores the socio-cultural diversity and individuality of each area of the region.Korean cultural studies researchers, who had developed their interest in audience studies, began to explore how Korean pop culture circulates in various geographical areas differently. They have found that audiences consume *Hallyu* in a variety of ways, rather than homogeneously craving or pursuing Korea or Korean life-styles, as is the typical misunderstanding in Korea (Kim, 2005; Lynn and Tong, 2008; Kim, 2009). Korean cultural studies on *Hallyu* have also been energized by cultural studies research in other parts of Asia, as inter-Asian academic symposiums and journals that include *Hallyu* as the main topics demonstrate (Lee, 2005). However, the perspectives of Asianism and cultural studies have remained confined to scholars' intellectual discussions, while most discourses on *Hallyu* have originated from non-academic discussions.

Indeed, the interests in culture industry increasing in the Asian region served another factor that expanded discourse on *Hallyu.* In the mid-1990s, the number of mass media tremendously grew in conjunction with Asian economic improvement (Shim, 2006). Together with mass media, the newly emerged media—such as cable television, satellite television, computers, and other digital media—required content.The rise in the number of young people in other Asian and South East Asian countries served as an additional incentive for the media's growth (Lee, 2003; Otmazgin, 2005). However,the media of Taiwan and a number of other South East Asian countriesevinced a penchant for Korean pop culture.This preference originated from their beliefs that its quality, especially that of Korean television drama, had been commercially proven, and that the price of Korean popular culture content was affordable. Major Korean corporations (e.g. Samsung, LG) facilitated the spread of *Hallyu* by distributing Korean dramas in these countries free of charge, capitalizing on these opportunities as advertising platforms for their products and brand names.

However, observing the tremendous influx of *Hallyu*, intellectuals in other parts of Asia expressed their concern that this foreign pop culture might disfigure their own cultural identities and weaken their media and cultural industries (Huat, 2010). At the time, some Taiwanese television actors went so far as to protest against *Hallyu*, claiming that it infringed upon their occupational stability (Huang, 2011). China also adopted an annual quota system regarding the number of Korean dramas aired by its broadcasters. Vietnamese commentators seriously condemned *Hallyu*, claiming that it was corrupting their youth and was nothing more than a subtype of cultural imperialism (Huong, 2011).[5] In Japan, the middle-aged female fans of Korean dramas were abhorred, and a multitude of protests were held against the broadcasting of Korean dramas.

At the same time, other countries began to focus on plans to develop their own pop culture industry. *Hallyu* provoked competitions between the cultural industries in the Asian region. Culture industry workers in Japan urged their government to support their businesses in the same way that the Korean government was supporting its own industry (Moon, 2006). They also sought methods of employing *Hallyu* stars and creating Korean-Japanese joint ventures.

While conducting research projects on the marketing practices of the *Hallyu* industry, culture industry professionals in Thailand also developed their own popular culture, targeting niche markets in China. Countries throughout Asia attempted to systematize and vitalize their cultural industry through research studies focused on *Hallyu* in cultural economics and media economics.

In summary, the upsurge of discourses on *Hallyu* was the outcome of far-reaching factors affecting other factors, ranging from Asianism, cultural studies research trend, the explosive increase of media and media industries in Asia, the growing population of young people craving more pop culture, to the shift to a culture industry society. Rather than one factor exclusively dominating the other factors, these factors became entangled, disentangled, and re-entangled with one another to produce the staggering number of discourses on *Hallyu*.

The Genealogy and Topology of Discourses on *Hallyu* in Korea

In the late 1990s, Korean pop culture began to create sensations in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, and other locations in Asia. Korean TV dramas suddenly gained considerable popularity among the Asian youth; Korean pop music singers attracted the youth to their concerts; the enthusiasts of Korean pop culture organized fan clubs in their countries. Korean pop culture also made progress in Europe and South America, stimulating strong responsesas far as the Middle East. Such significant occurrences have been the foundations for the longstanding discourses on *Hallyu* conducted outside of Korea.However, it is important to acknowledge the difference between foreign and Korean *Hallyu* discourses: whereas the discourses in foreign countries consist of fragmentary news reports, tersely hinting at the popularity of Korean pop culture, the discourses in Korea depict the multi-layered and multi-dimensional landscapes of *Hallyu* as various social subjects are involved in the discourse production.

Accordingly, there are various forms of discourses in Korea, all of which simultaneously cooperate and conflict with one another. As mentioned in the previous section, one such discoursesis based on the perspective of Asianism, the notion on which cultural studies researchers have focused in order to use

Hallyu as an opportunity for bilateral cultural exchanges in the Asian region. However, this form of discourses has remained mainly among academic fields, and has never been an important element in public and media consideration. That is, there is a strictly defined hierarchy between the discourses on *Hallyu*; the discourses based on the perspective of Asianism have remained at the bottom of the hierarchy. Conversely, the perspectives of "Cultural Nationalism" and "Cultural Economism" (conflicting with the perspective of Asianism) have led a majority of discussions on *Hallyu* and aroused positive responses and public consent. They have been the bedrock for (re)producing, sustaining, and spreading the *Hallyu* discourses.

Since the initial stage of *Hallyu*, "Cultural Nationalism" has been an overarching perspective for understanding and discussing the phenomenon in Korea. Prepossessed with the perspective, journalists, commentators, and other members of the public were mainly concerned the soaring prestige of the nation; their comments on *Hallyu* belonged to one of the following types: First, Korea had finally been recognized by the world; second, Korea had occupied the forefront of the world's attention; third, the economic success of Korean pop culture in foreign countries was derived from the excellence of Korean culture and sensibility; fourth, an increased effort should be made to further develop this phenomenon. This form of discourse was fueled by the circumstances of Korea, the 1997-8 financial and economic crisis, which drove Korea to search for a story of hope. In this context, *Hallyu* was capable of becoming a source of both hope and national pride.

Specifically, the perspective of Cultural Nationalism has promoted two different projects (that are also cooperative with each other): one is focused on "nation branding," and the other is centered on "culture industry promotion." The purpose of the first project, nation branding, is to inspire the public's sense of national pride by publicizing that *Hallyu* enhances the national image and prestige of Korea. The mass media, the government ministries, academia, and culture industry sectors have all intentionally or unintentionally participated in this project. First of all, the Korean news media have stirred the general public by portraying the *Hallyu* events as historically unprecedented events in the

world (Kim et al., 2005). When K-pop recently became the main genre of *Hallyu*, the national networks aggressively reported every single details about idol groups' K-pop concerts held in Trafalgar Square, London; the Louvre Museum, Paris; and Catalonia Square, Spain under the catchphrases like "Korean invasions of Europe," or "the nation's pop culture has conquered most of the Asian region and is now moving across the world." The networks also aired documentaries that tell the success stories of the idol groups (Kim, 2013).[6] The cable TV music channel MNet made a great fuss about airing a program entitled the "MNet Asian Music Awards" hosted in Macau, Hong Kong, and Singapore in 2010 via a live satellite telecast.

In accordance with the successive media reports on *Hallyu*, government ministries, such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Trade, established national support policies for the *Hallyu* events; embassies and consulates have assisted with planning and organizing K-pop concerts outside the country. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism even made a goal of establishing dozens of Korean Cultural Centers worldwide in the name of Korean culture promotion and cultural exchange facilitation. Such actions of the national government affected the provincial governments; both the national and provincial governments have appointed university and other research centers to lead research projects to design proper governmental support policies and plans for *Hallyu* (Choi, 2013).

Available funds for research on *Hallyu* increased. Research centers, in the governments' train, released the results of their studies, which accentuate the historical significances of *Hallyu*, and by which the governments were able to justify their support policies on *Hallyu*. The centers even pumped out variant terms for *Hallyu*, such as *New Hallyu*, *Hallyu 2.0*, *Hallyu 3.0*, *Hallyu 4.0*, and *Digital Hallyu*, which mark each stage in which a different genre (among TV soap opera, movie, K-pop, and game industries) was brought into the mainstream of *Hallyu*.

As the discourses (aiming to utilize *Hallyu* to raise a sense of national pride) swept throughout the nation, workers in the *Hallyu* industries began to see themselves as engaging in national events (Won and Kim, 2012). *Hallyu* stars

firstly emerged as national heroes: some stars were invited to dinner meetings with the foreign prime ministers from Vietnam and Japan, and some were awarded National Medals (including Bae Yong-jun, who starred in the drama *Winter Sonata*; Psy, the *Gangnam Style* performer; and Lee Soo-man, the founder of S.M. Entertainment). The public considered these individuals to be either national heroes or ardent patriots. These stars also often proudly identified themselves in public as heroes of patriotism;[7] an example of this mindset can be seen in Psy's performance of the national anthem before an audience of ten thousand in Seoul Square.[8] Afterwards, he spoke of the heartwarming feeling of strolling onto the world stage through his performance of the "horse dance."

Because anything could easily garner public support once associated with the term *Hallyu* in such an atmosphere, many global business projects dubbed themselves part of *Hallyu*. The Korean public also tended to deem everything related to Korea as *Hallyu*: even when foreign teams recruited Korean coaches of sports such as *taekwondo* and archery, in which Korea has traditionally excelled, the public attributed it to *Hallyu*. Essentially, the word *Hallyu* began to be used as the equivalent of Made-in-Korea. Koreans also use *Hallyu* as a vehicle to initiate conversations and to acquire attention on the global stage. It is well-known that foreign delegates are first asked "Do you know *Gangnam Style*?' on visiting Korea. A video clip on YouTube shows a Korean journalist posing the question at a press conference held by the U.S. Department of State in October 2012: "Firstly, I am wondering if you know of the Korean singer Psy and his song *Gangnam Style*?" It appears that the perspective of Cultural Nationalism deeply permeates all the spheres of the society, exerting effects (and effectivity) on every aspect of life of Koreans.

The project of culture industry promotion has been carried out together with an argument for the state-led industrialization of culture, which has long been reflected in Korean government policies. Traditionally in Korea, the government has taken a leading role regarding culture industry. Until the 1990s, the government maintained the policy of protectionism over the cultural domains: a legislated policy of screen quotas was introduced and maintained to protect the domestic film market from foreign markets, despite frictions with the United

States concerning trade (Yecies, 2007). Cultural imports from Japan were also banned until 1998. From the mid-1990s, however, the protectionism policy was shifted into a promotion policy of culture industry. Each new government considered the issue of state-led industrialization of culture and largely expanded its policies and plans especially at the emergence of *Hallyu*.

The government policy for state-led industrialization of culture could be justified on the basis of the belief that industrializing culture would contribute to the development of the nation's economy. As if to prove the belief, the national networks and research centers announced that *Hallyu* would greatly contribute to securing opportunities for the exports of consumer goods and travel products.

Aseries of marketing strategies were also developed utilizing *Hallyu*: the shooting locations of TV dramas and movies were transformed into tourist destinations; local special products and props from TV dramas were transformed into sellable commodities; theme parks were opened to attract foreign tourists; clothes and foods featured in *Hallyu* dramas were exported to the regions where the relevant dramas had gained popularity. Companies advertised their products in particular areas using *Hallyu* stars that were popular in those locations (e.g., Kim Nam-ju, who enjoyed special popularity in Vietnam, appeared in an advertisement for LG cosmetics in Vietnam).

The government agencies, such as the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), the Korea Culture & Tourism Institute (KCTI), the Korea Communications Commission, and the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE), have founded research divisions in order to conduct research studies on the economic effects of *Hallyu*. These divisions announced that they would systemize the data from the research studies on *Hallyu* in order to sustain its development. They even created the "Korean Wave Index," which serves to gauge current *Hallyu* conditions abroad (KOFICE, 2010).

In accordance with this fast-growing perspective of Cultural Economism, the entertainment agencies (which have played a large role in transforming idol groups into *Hallyu* stars in other Asian countries and the West) began to be considered the role models at a social level as "Industrial Warriors" (Won and

Kim, 2011). The entertainment agencies are music production and management companies that discover aspiring performers and provide them with an extensive period of training in order to create idol groups.Currently, S.M. Entertainment[9] (founded by CEO Lee, Soo-man, a former singer), JYP Entertainment (founded by CEO Park, Jin-Young, a former singer), and YG Entertainment (founded by CEO Yang, Hyun-Seok, a former singer) are the "Big Three" among the agencies in Korea as they possess a significant portion of the music industry equity through extensive planning, funding, and tactical marketing (Jang, Gyu-soo, 2009).

The CEOs of these agencies have often been asked to speak about their global business strategies at universities and enterprises;their speeches at world-famous universities such as Cambridge and Harvard have been broadcast to the public through television news and talk show programs and also through the Internet site YouTube.[10] They made seemingly well-informed comments announcing that they had contributed to developing the nation's pop culture, K-pop, which raised the national image and prestige of Korea and which would subsequently lead to derivative benefits for the country. In particular, the largest company, S.M. Entertainment, has boasted that it is the inventor of the "Cultural Technology"[11] that has contributed to the spread of Korean pop music worldwide and will lead the world entertainment business. At the end of speech, the CEOs always strategically add that public supports for their activities are the only method by which *Hallyu* can be developed.

As indicated earlier, the perspective of Cultural Nationalism has dominated any other perspective and substantiated these two projects of nation branding and culture industry promotion. This perspective encourages aggressive attitudes insisting upon a one-way stream of *Hallyu* rather than attitudes taking *Hallyu* as the opportunity for bilateral cultural exchanges with other countries. Although Korean intellectuals onceharshly criticized America and other culturally powerful Western countries in regards to their cultural imperialist practices, Koreans now tend to express their interests only in *Hallyu*'s contributions to the improved national image, prestige, and economic accomplishments of the country. However, such a standpoint has provoked

counterattacks from other countries, as exemplified by the above mentioned protests against *Hallyu* in Taiwan, China, Vietnam, and Japan. Is it not time, then, for Koreans to reflect on what they take for granted?

The Power Controller and its Network

The hierarchy of the *Hallyu* discourses has been maintained by a "power controller." Although it is already known that the government has acted aggressively in supporting culture industry in Korea (Huang, 2011), it is difficult to track how the government has been able to control the perspective of discourses on *Hallyu*, because it uses multi-channels to promote certain discourses. It stands behind a complex-tangled network consisting of different political and social subjects and orchestrates them to implement its agenda (Tung and Wan, 2010). In order to maintain their stability, each subject spreads the discourses with the perspective of Cultural Nationalism, marginalizing the other perspectives. The government assigns different roles to each subject and allocates budgets, funds, and subsidies (Choi, 2013). As long as the hierarchy of the discourses is maintained, the government is able to seize hegemony.

It was Kim Young-sam's government (1993–1998) that initiated the construction of such a network. Kim's government gained an interest in culture industry when a report was delivered to President Kim. The report included a calculation revealing that the export revenue of Steven Spielberg's blockbuster *Jurassic Park* was equal to the export sale of 1.5 million Hyundai automobiles. This government began to explore a new approach to cultural policy to create economic contributions of the cultural sector. It confided the related tasks to the Bureau of Culture Industry under the Ministry of Culture, which had traditionally supported the preservation of traditional culture and the promotion of fine arts. To invest in culture industries such as films, pop music, and broadcasting, it also attracted corporate capital from top electronic goods manufacturers like Samsung, Hyundai, and Daewoo (Shim, 2006). In1995, cable broadcasters were launched and immediately became another source of optimism in the government's plans to foster culture industries, as these broadcasts could serve as platforms for distributing pop culture. In accordance with the

government's plans and endeavors, a small number of Korean soap operas and pop music singers began to gain popularity in China.

The following Kim Dae-jung's government (1998–2003) was established during the economic crisis in 1998. Under these circumstances, the government found that the increasing popularity of Korean pop culture would provide both an uplifting story and serve as an engine for economic recovery. Hence, the government began to consider culture industry as the fundamental national business. It increased culture industry budgets by up to 500 times compared to those allocated by the previous government, and enacted the Basic Law for Culture Industry to provide more systematic support for the industry. In 1998, the government lifted the ban imposed on the influx of Japanese pop culture in an aggressive attempt to encourage the Korean culture industry to cultivate its faculties through competitions in the international market. Ironically, however, the opening of this market facilitated the export of Korean pop culture to Japan.

In the meantime, the government transformed the state-led film industry into an autonomous management system. Film professionals created the Korean Film Council (KOFIC) both to protect the domestic film industry from Hollywood and to increase Korea's export capacity by improving film diversity and expanding filmic outreach. Compared with the other state apparatuses, the KOFIC operated in a completely new governance system (that is currently believed to have contributed to the global proliferation of Korean films in the 2000s as part of *Hallyu*).In 1999, for the other areas of the culture industry, two additional organizations named the Korea Game Industry Agency and the Korea Broadcasting Visual Industry Agency (later integrated into the Korea Creative Content Agency [KOCCA]) were launched. These organizations invited related industries and civil society organizations as members who would implement the government policy (Lee, 2009).

The subsequent Roh Moo-hyun's government (2003–2008) was established when certain Korean soap operas, such as *Winter Sonata* and *A Jewel in the Palace*, and Korean films, including *My Sassy Girl*, had made a soft landing in other regions of Asia, but *Hallyu* had not yet reached its prime. The government created strong incentives to encourage *Hallyu*-related culture

industries and businesses. Its Ministry of Culture and Tourism established a new agency named the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE), and requested its pre-existing agency KOCCA (established in 2001to promote *Hallyu*) to open new branches in other Asian countries to conduct research studies on *Hallyu*. Besides the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Science, ICT, and Future Planning, other government-affiliated organizations such as the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), and the Korea Communications Commission (KCC)also cooperated with the government's support policies for *Hallyu* industry.

Elected under a promise to revitalize the national economy, Lee Myung-bak's government (2008–2013) established the goal of developing Korea into a "content industry" powerhouse, and changed the name of the policy from "culture industry" to "cultural content industry."With the participation of eleven government ministries under the Prime Minister, Lee's government created the "Content Industry Promotion Committee," thereby fulfilling its promise to directly and meticulously construct promotional plans and provide support for cultural content industry. This strong government action was reminiscent of the economic development experienced in the 1960s and '70s, when Korea was under the control of an authoritarian military regime (Nam, 2013).[12]

During the period of Lee's government, *Hallyu* entered a sort of new phase. At the initiatory stage of *Hallyu*, TV dramas had created sensations in Japan and other parts of Asia, but this genre had subsided after reaching a climax. From then on, the K-pop music performed by idol groups began to create new sensations in Asia. The media stressed the importance of this change, pumping out variant terms for *Hallyu*, such as *New Hallyu* and *Hallyu 2.0*. At the time, the government defined *Hallyu* as the chief Korean item of export, and designed global plans to promote K-pop beyond Asia. The media industry, content industry, academic circles, and civic groups surrounded the government; all of these groups fully committed to the goal of globalizing *Hallyu*. As a result of their efforts, K-pop entered Europe, South America, and other parts of the world, and also achieved popularity. Interestingly, however, the more

widespread *Hallyu* grew, the narrower the viewpoint on *Hallyu* became. Even as *Hallyu* spread throughout the world, it was only discussed from the perspective of Cultural Nationalism in Korea.

The current Park Geun-hye administration was established in 2013 with its vision entitled "Creative Economy."[13] The administration introduced this ambiguous concept as its plans to create new business opportunities through the fusion of ICT, culture, and other realms, along with moving beyond the country's traditional manufacturing base. Despite the haziness of the concept, President Park has spoken of her vision on each of her official trips abroad, asserting that *Hallyu* industry and business are definitely the means of achieving her vision.[14] In doing so, she has made *Hallyu* an essential topic of discussion throughout all aspects of society, and has pushed the boundary of *Hallyu* industry even further by including any related fields such as information technology.[15]Currently, any business related to either pop culture or ICT can expect support from the government along with public respect.

In this way, each new government from 1993 to the present has shifted culture industry policy from "protection" to "promotion-oriented," and has extended the range of the government departments' involvement in culture industry.[16]These actions were based on the perspective of Cultural Nationalism, which also has led the successive governments to become enthusiastically involved with *Hallyu*, but to regard it only as a means of national branding and national economic promotion (rather than as a means for bilateral cultural exchanges between countries).

Establishing promotion policies for *Hallyu*, each government has included different social subjects in its network. The network system has been constructed gradually and sophisticatedly over a long period of time such that no one outside the country can easily comprehend it. Government-affiliated organizations (such as KOCCA and KOFICE) were firstly created in order to implement the government policies. These organizations included culture industries and civic groups as their members, generating the impression that the Korean general public had reached a social consensus on the government policies. As mentioned in the previous section, the public broadcasting networks

and academic circles have also been mobilized to assist the implementation of the government policies: newspapers and other media outlets are vehicles that deliver all the details of *Hallyu*-related events occurring in other countries, while academia release research results showing economic contributions *Hallyu* will make.

The entertainment agency companies have been another key figure to contribute to the implementation of the government policies by distributing the discourses based on the perspective of Cultural Nationalism. The agencies provide the media with news sources by constantly creating events overseas and transforming idol groups into *Hallyu* stars, while TV networks have maintained a good relationship with the entertainment agencies to gain more sources of *Hallyu* news that cater to the government. The agencies have even used their international fame to recruit foreign performers and have created "global" idol groups, which serve as sources of news for media of foreign countries. Every move by the entertainment agencies serves as a source of news (Kim, 2013). The CEOs of the agencies transformed themselves into stars through their media mobilization capacities, and have had the opportunities to deliver speeches to the public that encourage the perspective of viewing *Hallyu* as a means of nation branding and achieving economic benefits. However, the Korean public tends to believe these individuals have far-reaching influence. All of these are tributes to the government's supports.

The media demonstration of *Hallyu*'s success and the entertainment agencies' glossy performances have been the best means of advertising the government's support policies for culture industry. Public recognition of their accomplishments amplifies the government's hegemony. Consequently, the government designs more policies to promote the culture industry and contents industry; government-affiliated organizations, civic groups, media, and the entertainment agencies would implement the policies. The perspectives of Cultural Nationalism and Economism residing in this cycle have penetrated everyday public life, becoming a common sense within Korean society. In that respect, no one has objected to S.M Entertainment CEO Lee Soo-man's declaration regarding K-pop performances in Europe: "Genghis Khan never

reached France. We are achieving what Genghis Khan failed to accomplish" (*Chosun.com*, June 7, 2011).

Conclusion

In order to demonstrate that our general understanding or knowledge of *Hallyu* is a discursive construct, rather than an objective understanding of the substance of the cultural phenomenon, this paper has examined the historical factors that have constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed the discourses on *Hallyu*. Through a critical and meticulous analysis of the historical conditions of *Hallyu*, this paper firstly discovers that discourses on *Hallyu* have flourished in academic settings and in mass media both inside and outside Korea over long periods of time because of Asian intellectuals' increasing interest in Asianism and cultural studies scholars' research trend focusing on media audience in the mid-1990s. These Asian intellectuals and cultural studies attempted to utilize *Hallyu* as a means of forming a cultural (exchange) community in East Asia, which has enough power to resist Western rules. The increasing interest in culture industry in other Asian countries was another requisite condition for *Hallyu* to attract considerable attention from various concerned parties.

Secondly, this paper has found that the perspective of Cultural Nationalism has pushed aside the perspective of Asianism and dominated among the perspectives for understanding *Hallyu*. This perspective of Cultural Nationalism has led Korea to pursue two political and economic projects of "nation branding" and "culture industry promotion," and to understand *Hallyu* as a means either of enhancing the national image and prestige of Korea or of achieving economic benefits.

Thirdly, this paper has discussed that the successive Korean governments since the mid-1990s have held the perspectives of Cultural Nationalism in regards to the *Hallyu* phenomenon. The governments have established support policies for culture industry to maintain the phenomenon, and have constructed a network by mobilizing different political and social subjects, including government departments and organizations, mass media, academic circles, civic

groups, and entertainment agency companies, to join it. Dedicating themselves to their roles allocated by the governments, the subjects in the network in connivance reproduced discourses on *Hallyu* reflecting only the perspective of Cultural Nationalism; in doing so, they have constrained the main focus of the discourses on *Hallyu* to this perspective.

Especially, entertainment agencies have assumed the role of stabilizing the network. They discover aspiring performers and provide them with an extensive period of training in order to create idol groups. Through their commercial planning and media mobilization capacities, the agencies have transformed these groups into *Hallyu* stars. These stars then create stories of their firsthand experiences of *Hallyu* success in other countries. These success stories justify the government's *Hallyu* promotion policy and also emphasize the perspective of Cultural Nationalism. By broadcasting these stories to the public using television, the agencies have inflated their businesses into the future-growth powers and sources of national pride. As the stories have penetrated the everyday life of Korean public, it has become impossible to ask any question about or raise any criticism of *Hallyu*.

The discourses based on the perspective of Cultural Nationalism have deeply permeated all the spheres of the society, exerting effects on every aspect of life of Koreans. At the same time, Koreans have not had sufficient opportunities to access the cultures of Japan, China, and South East Asia, since the media rarely display them. In this regard, literature and films from other parts of Asia have rarely been popular in Korea. Hence, Koreans see the rest of Asia through narrowly framed and mono-colored window. Rather than imagining a united Asian community, Koreans tend to track the roads *Hallyu* has taken. It is for this reason that the discourses on *Hallyu* that are at the forefront of the government-led network are so problematic.

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[2]A contraction of Cantonese popular music is also known as HK-pop (Hong Kong popular music).

[3] It is also called either "East Asian Discourse" or "Discourse in East Asia." As many scholars quote Takeuchi Yoshimi's work "Method As Asia," I would like to employ the term "Asianism" in this paper.

[4] Takeuchi criticized Japanese modernists and modernization theorists who recognized Japan as superior to Asia, and concluded Japan was not part of Asia (that was inferior to Japan in their interpretations). Takeuchi admitted such a modern Japanese Asianism ended with Japanese defeat of the Pacific War in 1945 after all, and argued that "invasion" and "solidarity" in Japanese Asianism should be distinguished. Finally, he set up a new notion of Asianism liberated from imperialism, which cut off a relationship between dominant and subject.

[5]Huong, Dang Thi Thu, "Hallyu and Its Effect on Young Vietnamese," *Korea Herald*, June3, 2009.

[6]The documentary programs present how *Hallyu* stars have overcome dramatic hardship, and the challenges faced by the entertainment agency companies to which these stars belong. Their last scenes always portray *Hallyu* stars meeting with their fans in foreign countries.

[7]S.M. Entertainment CEO Lee is also considered to be the hero or father of *Hallyu*, or a missionary of national pride. It is also known that he cried "Hurrah Korea!" during the ceremony at which he was awarded his National Medal.

[8]Psy's *Gangnam Style* marked the pinnacle of the *Hallyu* phenomenon (Korean Culture & Information Service, 2011).

[9] It is noteworthy here that S.M. Entertainmentis a representative record label and talent agency that led the *Hallyu* phenomenon by successively catapulting a series of singers into stardom. These stars include H.O.T., who initiated the *Hallyu* boom in China; BoA, who are popular in Japan; and Girls' Generation and TVXQ, both of whom enjoy popularity across the Asian region.Having broken into foreign music markets through these groups, the agency has become popular across the world.

[10]Korean news channels rushed to report that S.M. Entertainment CEO Lee, Soo-man gave his speech at Stanford, and JYP Entertainment CEO Park, Jin-Young at Harvard..

[11]During his speech at a conference in Paris on June 11, 2011, to an audience of 70 attendants comprised of music composers and TV producers from Europe, S.M. Entertainment CEO Lee introduced his theory of Culture Technology (CT) and its three-step process of exporting K-pop overseas as part of *Hallyu* (Joong-Ang Daily, June 13, 2011). Step one involves scouting for trainees through the use of global auditions. After screening a small number of selected applicants, the company creates a simulation of the trainees'voices and appearances will

change in three to seven years. Then, the trainees are entered into the company's nurturing system, called the "in-housing system." Step two involves expanding the presence of K-pop musicians into overseas music markets by teaming up with local entertainment companies and organizing virtual concerts outside of Korea. Step three involves forging joint ventures with local companies.

[12]It is noteworthy here that the military regime's selection and promotion of certain sectors was not highly regarded as it caused too many production units to be grouped into only small number of industry sectors, while many worthwhile economic projects failed.

[13] For further information about "Creative Economy", refer to the site of the Ministry of Science, ICT & Future Planning (*english.msip.go.kr*)

[14]It is known that President Park invited K-pop singer Psy to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, and presented him as a champion of her idea of Creative Economy."Park Champions 'Creative Economy' as Solution to Global Economic Woes," *Yonhap News*, Jan. 22, 2014.

[15]The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, together with the KOCCA, has also held open forums and symposiums named "Cultural Technology (CT) Forums." In a CT, Forum held on April 16, 2013, CT was referred to in connection with creative economy, and K-pop was mentioned as an applied case of CT. In the forum, S.M. CEO Lee presented digital technology that can be used to create a "virtual reality," claiming that this technology can be used for K-pop performances (*Policy News of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism*, April 4, 2013).

[16] It is a significant irony that the government's promotion policy of culture industry was triggered by the vortex of neoliberal globalization. "Neoliberalism" is a politico-economic principle or ideology that operates with an emphasis on the reduction of state intervention and the deregulation and liberation of markets. Korea first adopted neo-liberal measures as part of its agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the 1998 economic crisis. Since then on, the successive Korean governments have constantly pursued neoliberal policy. For the entirety of *Hallyu*, however, the governments have taken a step backward. Just as the military regime in the past, which selected and promoted certain sectors of the economy at the initial stage of economic development, especially the latest governments have demonstrated that the state-centered economic systems are intended for *Hallyu* (Nam, 2013).