

Through the Korean Wave Looking Glass: Gender, Consumerism, Transnationalism, Tourism Reflecting Japan-Korea Relations in Global East Asia

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Abstract

This article explores effects of the Korean Wave in Japan in the areas of gender relations, tourism, and Korea-Japan relations. It first looks at Korean Wave fandom among "middle-aged" women in Japan and maintains that the popularity of Korean male stars reflects women's discontent with hegemonic gender relations in Japan. It then explores tourism's role in building cultural contact between Koreans and Japanese. Finally, it discusses how the Korean Wave created communicative venues for Korean and Japanese despite long-standing historical tensions between Korea and Japan such as the Dokdo-Takeshima conflict.

Introduction

This article explores the Korean Wave, called *Hallyu* in Korean or *Hanryu* in Japanese, as a looking glass through which Korea-Japan relations are reflected. The use of the phrase 'through the Korean Wave looking glass' alludes to Lewis Carroll's (2003[1871]) *Through the Looking Glass* in which, for Alice, the looking glass is no longer a tool that shows one's visual self image but also grants new ways of seeing people, relationships, and worlds. It explores the Korean Wave's influence on Japanese imaging, imaginings, and understandings of Korea, Japan-Korea relations, and on the staging of Korea-Japan relations in the temporal period coinciding with the Wave.

The term *Hallyu* (or *Hanryu*) can be translated as: The Korean "flow" or "flows". Globalization

is often discussed in terms of flows, as in Appadurai's (1996) framework of five non-isotopic (occurring independently but potentially interrelated) transnational flows, namely ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, finanscapescapes, and ideoscapescapes. *Hallyu* has been extensively discussed in terms of media, technology, and economic flows, notably the burgeoning financial returns to South Korea from the popularity of Korean creative cultural products elsewhere. *Hallyu* brought more attention to South Korea, creating interest among consumers in learning about Korean culture, and so potentially gaining greater understanding of philosophical ideas underlying Korean culture. However, there is relatively little scholarship on how *Hallyu* relates to flows of people, or more specifically the cultural effects of the flow of ordinary Koreans traveling outside Korea. This article does so, showing how *Hallyu* intersects with Korea-Japan relations at an historic moment through the increased flows of Korean people traveling outside Korea, and adding the 'ethnoscape' element of transnational flows to *Hallyu*.

The most noteworthy aspect of the "Korea Boom" in Japan was that it seemed an 'about face.' Korea had not been particularly popular in the Japanese imagination before 2003 when the Korean Wave reached Japan although other - predominately "Western"- countries were. Up until the 1990s favoured destinations for Japanese tourism tended to involve European, North American, and Australian venues that fit conceptualizations of the West that Japan had

sought to emulate. Few Japanese seemed interested in visiting Korea, and many had an image of Korea as less developed, and hence perhaps less desirable, than the countries they wished to visit, (Moon 2009).² In some cases, discriminatory attitudes towards Korea and Koreans persisted. These seemed to shift with the Korean Wave. Many Japanese began studying the Korean language and engaging in tourism to South Korea. Local Korean stores, restaurants, and tea shops within Japan were sought out by Japanese consumers, often looking to Korea for the "wisdom of the Orient" in everything from herbal teas to cosmetics.

As a popular culture phenomenon, the Korean Wave spread more cultural understanding among ordinary Japanese, than many political or government programs promoting such cultural understanding, and it positively influenced Japan-Korea relations and the mutual imagining of the "other." The Japanese interest in *Hanryu* also had a strong gender component, affecting Japanese tourism to South Korea, and the flows of South Koreans to Japan. These issues are pertinent to the contemporary moment when Korea-Japan relations can suddenly shift between improving and worsening.

Popular Culture, Consumerism, Transnationalism, Tourism and Flows of People

The Korean Wave shows popular culture and consumer culture as entwined. While selling to consumers involves a profit motive, people's engagement in consumerism can also be a means of showing personal identity, or connectedness—a means of linking selves to others in social relationships (Creighton 1994). This self-fashioning also occurs when things are introduced for consumption from other cultures. Cultures do not simply take things in from elsewhere, but attach local uses and meanings to them (D. Miller 1995, Howes 1996, Creighton 1991, 1992, 1993) and Korean Wave

tourism is a good example.

The Korean Wave sparked new forms of tourism and turned South Korea into a major tourist destination for Japanese, initially so-called "middle-aged women," and later younger women among whom the trend has persisted. In the beginning, much of this was "drama tourism" to sites shown in serialized television dramas or movies (Creighton 2009), and later became generalized shopping outings or tourism for cosmetics and esthetic treatments (L. Miller 2006).³ Korean esthetic treatments, known as *esute* in Japanese, including such practices as using fine threads to remove small - often nearly unnoticeable - hair from faces or arms, became popular among Japanese women.

The South Korean government banned the importation of Japanese popular culture to South Korea between 1978 and 1999 (Morris 2005:12), fearing that Japanese culture products would dominate the Korean cultural scene. When this ban was lifted in 1999, rather than a one-way flow of Japanese popular culture inundating South Korea, Korean popular culture also flowed into Japan. The Korean Wave also followed South Korea's full flowering into an advanced developed economy and full-fledged consumer society in the 1990s (Kendall 1998, Nelson 2000), just when Japan entered decades of recession. The Korean Wave also occurred when Korean people could cross national borders more easily than before, both due to increasing affluence in South Korea and because the South Korean government lifted legal restrictions on South Koreans traveling abroad in 1988,⁴ meaning that South Koreans could increasingly travel abroad as tourists. Koreans crossing national borders for work purposes also often engage in tourist pursuits while abroad, showing that the division between work travel and tourism is not clear.

The Korea Boom in Japan-The Good, the Not so Good, and the Sometimes Ugly

The Korean Wave first washed ashore in Japan

in 2003 with a serialized drama, *Winter Sonata* (*Fuyu no Sonata* in Japanese). As it was re-televised in 2004, the Korean Wave (a phrase used for the transnational flow of Korean cultural products both within Japan and elsewhere) flooded Japan, ushering in a "Korea Boom" (a phrase used specifically in Japan to encompass both the Korean Wave and popularity of anything Korean that accompanied it). By the end of 2004, Japan became the biggest importer of Korean films and dramas in the world, accounting for an estimated 70 per cent of all Korean film exports (Shim 2008:21). The young Korean male star of *Winter Sonata*, Pae Yongjun, rose to stellar status in Japan. His image became ubiquitous; his face was used to sell nearly everything imaginable (Fig. 1). While his surname is Pae (sometimes also romanized as Bae) he was given a designation in Japan both respectful yet endearing, Yon-sama, based on his given name plus the highly honorific suffix *-sama*. The nomenclature of utilizing only the given name (followed by *sama*) is used in Japan for people seen as ranking extremely highly, such as members of the imperial family. Yon-sama became the espoused idol of female fan clubs and was projected as the ideal male type, particularly among older (than him) women, so called "middle aged women," a problematic designation that I will discuss shortly.



Figure 1. A poster image of Pae Yong Jun stands near advertising and a storefront in the Insa-dong shopping area of Seoul (Photo by Millie Creighton)

The "Korea Boom" sparked a Korean language-learning craze. Korean language classes were available in Japan. For example, NHK, Japan's educational broadcasting station, offered Korean and other language classes, but it was not a "trendy" language to study until the "Korea Boom." Some magazines offered a free new Korean DVD in each issue for their *Hanryu* fans often featuring Yon-sama's image on the cover. New stores selling Korean products opened, and shops run by Resident-Koreans in Japan suddenly became featured topics on Japanese talk and variety shows. Hirata (2008:143) attributes the 36 per cent jump in Japanese tourism to South Korea in 2004 over 2003 to Japanese fandom of *Winter Sonata*. Many of these Japanese tourists visited the Korean sites where *Winter Sonata* was filmed

(Creighton 2009).

Japan had spent a century and a half (since entry into the Meiji Era starting in 1868) trying to "catch up" with the West. Thus Japanese interest in traveling to foreign countries tended to focus on Europe and North America, along with Australia and New Zealand. Many Japanese were also aware that in Korea there was bitterness from the period when Korea was a colony of Japan, from 1910 to 1945. Thus, Korea was not a venue of desired imagining for Japan before the Korean Wave.

It is also pertinent to consider the effects of the Korean Wave on one of Japan's largest minority groups, people of Korean descent. In Japanese this group of people are called *Zainichi Kankokujin* or *Zainichi* Koreans (in which *Zainichi* means "present in Japan") and often referred to in English as Resident Koreans. Their political, cultural, and economic rights have been seriously hampered in Japan. The Japanese state officially maintained that Japan was a homogenous nation (*tanitsu minzoku*) of one people, one culture, and one language until 1997 (Creighton 1995, 2003 and Levin 2001), after which it began to officially recognize long-existing minority groups.⁵ By that time Resident Koreans had already been present for several generations, now stretching for over a century. Resident Koreans are part of Japanese society but are not granted the same rights as Japanese citizens because (or so it is claimed) citizenship is not based on the principle of birth in the country (*jus soli*) but from biological descent from citizens (*jus sanguinis*).

The Korean Wave fostered more positive attitudes not only towards South Korea and Korean traditions and culture, but also towards Resident Koreans. "Koreatowns" in Japan began to attract mainstream Japanese and Resident Koreans became more common in the Japanese mainstream festivals such as *Tanabata* (the Star Festival)⁶ or summer festivals known in Japan as *matsuri*. Stalls selling Korean foods

such as bibimbap, chapch'ae, and kimchi run by Resident Koreans became a welcome addition to festival offerings in Japan.

Around the time when the Korean Wave was immensely popular in Japan, the two governments planned a campaign for 2005 to recognize the 40th anniversary of normalization of relations. This plan involved a year-long series of events, promoted as the "Japan-Korea (or if in Korea "Korea-Japan") Friendship Year." Many of the events for the year in Japan drew on the "Korea Boom" and in particular *Winter Sonata* and its star Yon-sama. One of the early events of the "Friendship Year" was a Korean language competition for Japanese, which was hosted by the Korean Embassy in Tokyo, where contestants had to memorize and perform scripts from *Winter Sonata* in the original Korean.

However, the festive mood soon cooled largely because of conflicts surrounding territorial claims to a small and mostly uninhabited island called Dokdo in Korean and Takeshima in Japanese. At the popular culture level *Hanryu* fans in Japan continued to pursue Korean dramas, pop music, and tourism to South Korea, thus suggesting that popular culture has done a better job of promoting positive attitudes and involvements than governmentally orchestrated campaigns.

Moreover, the Korean Wave made positive influences on Japan-Korea relations there was a backlash against it, namely, an anti-Korean Wave movement called *ken-hanryu* in Japanese meaning "against *Hanryu*" or the "I/we hate *Hanryu*" movement. Bookstores were flooded with publications claiming to be sick of *Hanryu*. Some of this was simply complaining that daytime television was now so saturated with Korean dramas – not all of which were higher quality – that some Japanese actors complained they could not get acting jobs because there was little else on. In more severe forms, bigoted jabs at the Korean Wave included anti-

Korean commentary, insults or degrading remarks about Koreans, and these were extended to Koreans in Japan, who were insulted or harassed under the guise of *ken-hanryu* commentary.

Some people suggested that the Korean Wave made Japan-Korea relations worse because of the anti-*Hanryu* backlash. I consider this claim a misunderstanding of the phenomenon and counter-phenomenon. Some actions of bigotry were engaged in by individuals expressing forms of discriminatory and harassing behaviour but that does not make the Korean Wave the cause of this bigotry. The popularity of the Korean Wave may have seemed threatening. A recent spate of books published in Japan expressing anti-Korean sentiments, along with other negative portrayals of Korea, often feed on anxieties within Japan over its prolonged recession. Japan has been economically declining from its previously high pinnacle in the 1980s and lost its status as the world's second largest economy, and the sense of South Korea doing well economically is a source of anxiety for some. Japanese also fear North Korea and its potential for aggression or nuclear attack, which also feeds into anti-Korean sentiment.

The Korean Wave remained popular for a decade after its arrival in Japan, although not as much as at its height, and often with shifting foci. In recent years, K-Pop rather than K-drama has become much more important, especially among younger Japanese fans. The performer Psy, for example, gained significant media attention in Japan as elsewhere, and remains one of the main faces of K-Wave in Japan into the second decade of the 21st century. Even past the height of the Korean Wave new magazines or newspapers, such as *K-Fun*, became popular and new K-Pop bars gained a hold on the evening entertainment scene in major Japanese cities as well. At one popular K-Wave bar in Kobe, where walls are adorned with posters with Korean writing,

customers can choose newly invented cocktails that use now-popular forms of Korean alcohol in Japan such as *makkoli* mixed with pineapple and strawberries; meanwhile Japanese "cabaret girls," often scantily clothed, dance to K-Pop songs.

Re-Envisioning Gender via the Korean Wave

Throughout its presence in Japan, the Korean Wave has often involved constructs of what is "sexy," is utilized to project gender images for both men and women, and to voice ideas about gender relations. These became publically visible gender possibilities.

Japan's "middle-aged" women putting gender on public view

When Yon-sama arrived in Japan on April 3, 2004, an estimated five thousand female fans flocked to Tokyo's Narita International Airport to greet him. By contrast, when the soccer star David Beckham arrived, Mori notes that five hundred fans turned out to greet him (Mori 2008:130, Creighton 2009:28). What grabbed the Japanese media attention was not so much the number of fans but their status as "middle-aged women." Much has been written about these women's infatuation with Korean stars including Chikako Nagayama's article in this issue, but here I address the concept of "middle-aged women" in Japan. Japanese society has long maintained set concepts of the life cycle and proper behavior for each stage. Such expectations still hold more strongly than in many Western countries. By these constructs, women are defined as reaching "middle-age" and "old age" younger than their male counterparts, and younger than often conceptualized in the West. The so-called "middle-age" for women begins around 30 or in their 30s. When, as a resident in Japan, I turned 30, the ward office in which I lived sent me (as for all women turning 30) a set of wrapped gifts for my birthday, consisting of grooming products, health books and medical

information. On an attached calligraphy greeting around the package was written: *Chūnen no onna ni natta kara* (because now you have become a middle-aged woman). There was nothing subtle about the way turning 30 marked women's initiation into middle-age status. My Japanese husband turned 30 the same year but nothing was sent to him: men are not considered "middle-aged" in Japan until years later. In short, "middle-aged" women by Japanese standards, means anyone from 30 to 60 (and once being "old-aged" for women began in one's 40s).

Many *Hanryu* fans were in their 30s, others in their 40s and 50s, and some were in their 60s. What also marked the idea of "middle-aged" was the expectation that such women be married with children. The media made great fun of these women parading their infatuation with a foreign younger male star, but rather than silence their interest in the Korean Wave, the women became bolder in their K-Wave fandom. When Yon-sama visited Japan again in November 2007, with an image make over after a lengthy body-building stint, to promote a photo exhibit of his bare upper torso and new pectoral muscles at the posh Mori Tower complex in Tokyo, thousands of female Japanese fans again flocked to the airport and his hotel. So many women climbed up the outer walls of his hotel that they were injured and some women had to be taken to the hospital. Asked by a journalist what he thought of all this, Yon-sama replied that he hoped the women were okay and none had been hurt badly. His comments reaffirmed his appeal as a kind and considerate male.

These "middle-aged" Japanese women presented their reasons for liking Yon-sama and other Korean male stars as more than their physical attractiveness. They saw them as representations of a different sort of masculinity that involved being kind, sweet, and sensitive especially to women with whom they were involved. Via the Korean Wave,

married Japanese middle-aged women could fantasize about a different type of relationship with a possible partner, one more romantic than what their marriage and daily life offered. By celebrating their fandom of younger Korean male stars in the public spotlight in Japan, they were also sending messages to men, including their husbands, about the type of relationships they wished to have. Many of these women got married at a time when, as a Japanese proverbial expression suggested, for men, "wives are like air," meaning something men absolutely needed but could take for granted, not something they were expected to think about or treat with consideration.



Figure 2. The store called "Hanryu Idol Park" in the Shin-Okubo area of Tokyo (Photo by Millie Creighton)

Through the Korean Wave, women were suggesting that maybe men could re-envision new forms of gender relations in which they did not take their wives and dating partners for granted. In their pursuit of *Hanryu* fandom and fantasies and through buying *Hanryu* consumer offerings (Fig. 2), women were displaying, even if only playfully, an interest in men outside of the social categories of men with whom society expected them to be involved. In other words, these women expressed ideas of gender and

gendered involvements subversive to the expected conventions of Japanese society, which reflects Rita Felski's suggestion that women's involvement in consumerism can disrupt "the sanctity of the private sphere, encouraging women to indulge in their own desires in defiance of their husbands and of traditional forms of moral and religious authority" (Felski 1995:74).

In an essay written for the *Japan Times*, Swiss economist Jean-Pierre Lehmann (2002) characterized Japan as a society run by old men for the benefit of old men. Status hierarchies in Japan depict men as having a higher hierarchical status than women, older men as having a higher hierarchical status than younger men, and Japanese as higher than Koreans. Through *Hanryu* fandom, Japanese middle-aged women were inverting these hierarchies, publically professing a preference for Korean over Japanese males, and younger men over older ones. Inverting these two hierarchies also raised the possibility that the third hierarchy-of men over women-should not be treated as "natural" either (Creighton 2009:33-34). In their fandom these women were gaining public attention, giving voice to a category of people rarely in the news or the public mind. Japanese media still tends to highlight males in public and political spheres. Japanese marketing and consumer enterprises do highlight young women, particularly those in the years before marriage, based on an existing belief, even if not always true, that although their incomes are low they reside with and/or depend on their parents. It was also previously assumed that young female consumers pushed trends forward, particularly for consumerism linked to popular culture. Married, middle-aged women moved from the hidden recesses of society's interests to center stage via their highly visible involvements in the Korean Wave, gaining a public means of voicing their desires and frustrations.

Gender-bending, androgyny, and re-visualizing

maleness and femaleness

The Korean Wave interfaced with other re-imaginings of gender in popular and consumer cultures of East and South East Asia. One trend was the shift to an emphasis on male bodies in media, and for advertising goods, services, and entertainments. Previously, as in the West, advertising predominately relied on the female body, using semi-clothed female bodies to elicit erotic desire, which was sublimated into consumer desire. In media, female bodies were previously the ones from which clothing was removed or removed first, with males often shown as undressing them. The Korean Wave was part of a trend that reversed this. New magazines emphasized the male body, especially the naked upper torsos of young men. Ads switched to greater use of male bodies, including some in which both men and women were shown, with the male body often revealing more flesh than the female one. This reflects a shift from thinking of the female body as innately the one to evoke eroticism or sexuality, and instead recognizing the potentially sensuous nature of the male body. This expansion of diverse gender imaging in consumer presentations occurred simultaneously with the Wave.

Long after the initial interest in the Korean Wave by Japan's so called middle-aged women, young unmarried women in their 20s and late teens have continued to travel to South Korea for shopping trips and beauty consultations. South Korea is financially a feasible venue for young unmarried Japanese working women on limited salaries. The long existing Korean cosmetic company now known as Etude House, which was re-launched during the "Korean Boom" in 2005, in particular captured the imagination and purchases of Japanese women. Etude House did so for its beauty products and also provided non-traditional versions of gender imagery in selling cosmetics.

One consumer cosmetic campaign involved the

popular Japanese *tarento* (talent or celebrity) known as Ikko. Ikko rose to fame in Japan's fashion and cosmetic industry as a hair stylist but later her/his beauty and gender bending resulted in pan-Asian popularity. The name Ikko may sound familiar to Japanese as a female Japanese name which can mean "first girl." Born male, Ikko is a cross-dressing, cross-gendering celebrity who performs femininity and she/he has become the image of "ideal" femaleness for women to emulate. Ikko is also a bridge in Japan-Korea relations, because Ikko is a major celebrity image for a South Korean cosmetics company despite the fact that she/he is Japanese. Ikko's image in South Korea became nearly as ubiquitous as Yon-sama's in Japan, and became a common sight in Koreascapes--broad spaces and arenas where Koreanness can be visually encountered and interacted with--within Japan such as in Korean markets and so-called Koreatown areas.

There is historical precedent for the idea of Ikko. In Japan's all male Kabuki theater, men who specialize in playing female roles known as *onnagata* were and are often considered the height of femininity and represent femaleness as an art form to which mundane women can only aspire (Dalby 1983). Moreover, Ikko was far from the sole male model used to sell cosmetics to women. Co-occurring with the Korean Wave's attention to male beauty, the fashion and cosmetic industries began using male models to advertise to women by showing men wearing women's clothing or cosmetics. This trend remains quite common: male models and celebrities also commonly model hair colorings for women's use. Some advertisements show groups of young Korean men (Fig. 3), similar to those seen in the Korean Wave imagery, with different hair colors, which are used as selection templates for women choosing hair colors. With the Korean Wave's entry into gender play, it does not seem inconsistent to young East Asian consumers to see men wearing and presenting beauty and hair products for use by women.



Figure 3. Many young Korean men work in Hallyu related jobs in Japan (Photo by Millie Creighton).

Flows of Koreans and Koreascapes in Japan and Korea-Japan Tensions over Dokdo-Takeshima

"Koreanness" could long be encountered in Japan, but more areas staging Koreanness emerged with the Korean Wave. I call these Koreascapes, areas that present, visually highlight, and represent elements of Koreanness, in Japan. The popularity of the Korean Wave resulted not only in increasing flows of Japanese to South Korea, it also resulted in increasing flows of Koreans to Japan to work in these Koreascapes, to seek work in industries providing Japanese consumers with elements of the Korean Wave, or to combine work and tourism. Some existing areas were markets where members of Japan's Resident Korean community shopped for Korean goods, including an Osaka area marked by a sign labeling it in romanized letters, "Koreatown." Another Osaka area known as *Tsuruhach*, has a large Korean market, reminiscent of markets in large cities of South Korea. Some Japanese did visit these areas before the "Korea Boom," but the Korean Wave made them popular for many Japanese.

Another area staging Koreanness in Japan that became more popular with the Korean Wave, was a theme park named Nango Son in Miyazaki Prefecture in Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands (Graburn 2009:26-33). The location highlighted long historic ties between Japan and Korea via Kyushu, where ferries connect Japan and Korea, providing less expensive transportation for people and goods. The park had great success for a few years because of the Korean Wave, then suffered from tensions in the Japan-Korea relationship over the Dokdo-Takeshima issue when the numbers of Japanese visiting began to drop.



Figure 4. A Korean Restaurant in Shin-Okubo area (Photo by Millie Creighton)

Notable among the newly created Koreascapes has been the Shin-Okubo area of Tokyo, which was transformed into something highly reminiscent of street shopping areas of Seoul. The Shin-Okubo area was formerly considered a seedy district, linked to prostitution. It housed a large number of hotels, often with "colourful" or "flamboyant" room interiors, at lower room rates than most Tokyo accommodations that were understood as "love hotels." As the Korean Wave became more popular in Japan, many of the shops and other

buildings of this area were bought or rented by Koreans or others involved in marketing the Korean Wave within Japan. Shin Okubo was transformed, with shops and stalls selling Korean goods and featuring Korean popular culture, along with new Korean restaurants and cafes (Fig. 4).⁷ A large retail store opened, called, *Hanryu hyakkaten* (Fig. 5). In Japanese, *hyakkaten* literally means, "100 things store" but came to be used for "department store" (Creighton 1992:42). Although not an actual "department store" according to the definitions of Japan's Department Store Association (*Nihon hyakkaten kyōkai*), the name "*Hanryu* Department Store" suggested its size and massive appeal. One large Korean restaurant that became very popular was called, *Taishikan*, the Japanese word for "Embassy." It might be called "poplumatic" for the merging of political and popular culture. People flocked to this particular restaurant because K-Idols went there, allowing Japanese fans the possibility of a K-star sighting. This new Koreascape also put large numbers of Koreans on view, in particular young Korean men who came to work there. These young Korean men were often positioned outside establishments holding signboards or talking to customers in Japanese. At outdoor stations these men gave demonstrations of traditional Korean sweet making, explaining the process in Japanese, in a manner similar to Insa-dong in Seoul, a now touristic area where Korean traditional goods, calligraphy, and foods are displayed and sold. Additionally, young Koreans came to audition for media and entertainment jobs. Of course, many of these newly arriving Koreans also engaged in sightseeing while in Japan before returning to Korea.



Figure 5. Hanryu Department Store in the Shin-Okubo area (Photo by Millie Creighton)

Some of the Koreascapes have recently sharply declined in popularity. Whereas for nearly a decade, from 2004 to 2014, Korean dramas were prevalent on television and at rental outlets, the numbers have dropped since then. The Shin-Okubo Koreascape suddenly shrunk to only a quarter of what it was, with 75 per cent of the area's shops closing, including both the *Taishikan* and the Hanryu Department Store. The "Korea Boom" in Japan has also been linked to rising tensions between Japan and South Korea, particularly over the Dokdo-Takeshima island controversy.

Dokdo-Takeshima tensions

Both Korea and Japan have had long historic interface with Dokdo-Takeshima island and citizens in both countries hold strong feelings

that the island is part of their national territory. For Koreans, Japanese claims to the island are emotionally reminiscent of the Japanese takeover of Korea during the colonial period, while Japanese, particularly those from Shimane Prefecture are acutely aware of long historic local involvement with the island. Debates over the possession of this island or affect popular culture, consumerism, and the Korean Wave. One example is the "Friendship Year" of 2005 to recognize the 40th anniversary of the normalization of relations, making much use of the Korean Wave, which was derailed by other waves of hostility over Dokdo-Takeshima, resulting in the cancellation of many events.

The island issue often symbolizes a variety of tensions over other historic issues. Post-colonial attempts to deal with a sense of trauma and attempted erasure of Korean cultural identity have taken many forms in South Korea. One of these was the dramatic demolition of the former Japanese Government General Building, which housed the National Museum of Korea from 1986 to 1995. Chun (2012) explains that this building was not only destroyed, it was decapitated, with the central peak area undergoing a symbolic beheading in attempts to eradicate colonial memories. When the National Museum of Korea was re-built, its opening exhibit staged Dokdo as the emotional core of Korea. The museum's first major exhibit was entitled, "Dokdo, Our Land for Which We Long," showing that Dokdo, despite being a small island where few Koreans have ever been, may have emotional attachment for Koreans, but Chun also notes that such attachment, to the extent it exists, is the result of official campaigns rather than something that has simply occurred (Chun 2012).

Such emotionalism over Dokdo has entered consumer culture. While in Seoul over the summer of 2009, I noticed Dunkin' Donuts selling T-shirts that both embraced South Korea's claim to the island and seemed to advocate spreading the knowledge of it as

South Korea's island. The T-shirts proclaim in romanization: "Do you know? [Dok-do] Dokdo belongs to Korea." These T-shirts are an example of glocalization in transnational consumer culture. The T-shirts promoting South Korea's claim to the island were not part of the worldwide chain, nor of the originating American parent chain, and they certainly were not part of Dunkin' Donuts in Japan. Rather they were a localized South Korean Dunkin' Donuts offering for South Korean consumers.

Conclusions: Ebbing Tide of *Hanryu* or Rising Tide of Nationalist Sentiment?

The year 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the normalization of South Korea-Japan relations. What does the view through the Korean Wave looking glass suggest about Japan-South Korea relations at this contemporary moment? I contend that the Korean Wave had a big and beneficial influence on those relations, and on the mutual imagining of people from the two countries. This wave of popular culture, consumerism, and transnationalism between Japan and South Korea prompted an interest in South Korea among Japanese, and positively shifted the views of many of them towards Korea, Koreans, and Resident Koreans of Japan. It prompted many Japanese to travel to South Korea, and brought flows of South Koreans to Japan. This increasing interaction among ordinary people was also influential in breaking down stereotypes of otherness for many. The interplay of the Korean Wave with Japanese popular culture and consumerism opened new venues for presentations of and dialogue about self-identities, gender and gender relationships, and possible new ways of conceptualizing and interacting with other countries of Asia.

The anti-Korean activities were not directly a response to the Korean Wave or to *ken-Hanryu*, but were acts of anti-Korean harassment towards Koreans or Resident Koreans in Japan, by some Japanese who were threatened by the

Korean Wave's popularity. Tides come in and tides go out, and as all fashions, the Korean Wave in Japan seems to have ebbed with the "Korea Boom" may be completely gone. It is not yet clear how much of this is a popular culture fad that has run its course and how much a result of a rising tide of nationalist sentiment. Certainly the number of anti-*Hanryu* books and also anti-Korea books has increased. Pinched by a prolonged recession of 20 years, many Japanese respect the new affluence, consumer culture, and middle class lifestyle of South Korea, but may also feel frightened by it.

Japan held elections in December 2012 and Prime Minister Abe Shinzō took office at the end of 2012 with his cabinet's active role beginning with the parliamentary session commencing in January 2013. Many analysts suggest his government rose to power because of people's desires for economic reforms given the persisting recession, but the Abe government is also very right-wing politically in ways that often exacerbate rather than lessen tensions between Japan and South Korea,⁸ and reveal issues such as the Dokdo - Takeshima debate as a symbol of these tensions linked to historical memories. Even given the immense effects of the Korean Wave in Japan, the legacies surrounding Japan's colonization by Japan—such as the Comfort Women and controversies over territory—cannot be resolved nor dissolved by elements of popular culture alone.

However they can help. Even though many events for the planned celebration of the 40th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-South Korea relations did not fare well, at least the year started more positively, thanks in part to popular culture, than did the 50th anniversary year 2015. Thus let us not forget that once there was a moment and a flow, lasting for nearly a decade, and brought about through popular culture, of increased interest among Japanese about South Korea. That desire to learn more about Korean culture and improve

relations between the countries can be seen clearly through the Korean Wave looking glass.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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Jooyeon Rhee, "Gendering Multiculturalism: Representation of Migrant Workers and Foreign Brides in Korean Popular Films."

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Notes

¹ In this paper, the term "*Hanryu*" is used in some places when referring to Japan specific phenomena such as "*Hanryu* fans" and "*ken-Hanryu*" (anti-Korean Wave).

² In the years and decades before the Korean Wave some Japanese men engaged in so-called "sex tourism" to Korea or "*Kisaeng* tourism," often in conjunction with business trips to Korea. However, given its negative connotations and associations with behavior not officially condoned, it tended not to be openly acknowledged even if it was tacitly understood to be

happening. Likewise, although referred to as "sex tourism" or "*Kisaeng* tourism," the focus had little or nothing to do with actual tourism or sight-seeing (see for example, Creighton 2006, Hirata 2005, 2008 and Moon 2009).

³ For example, L. Miller (2006:198-199) mentions Japanese tourism to South Korea for *esute* or aesthetic beauty treatments.

⁴ Both Komai (1995:112) and Gill (2001:46) discuss the increase in Korean workers or laborers coming to Japan from Korea after 1988, with Gill linking it directly to the ability of average South Koreans to get passports. Such Koreans from outside Japan are a different category than Resident Koreans who comprise a long-existing minority group in Japan.

⁵ Until 1997 the Japanese government maintained an official stance that Japan was a homogenous society without minority groups. Resident Koreans although a long-existing community in Japan were considered foreigners because they did not have Japanese citizenship. (see Creighton 1995 "The Non-Vanishing Ainu: A Damming Development Project, Internationalization and Japan's Indigenous Other" *The American Asian Review* 13.2: 69-96, Creighton 2003 "May the Saru River Flow: The Nibutani Dam and the Resurging Tide of the Ainu Identity Movement," in *Joining Past and Future: Japan at the Millennium*, ed. By David Edgington pp. 120-143, and Levin M. A. 2001 "Essential Commodities and Racial Justice: Using Constitutional Protection of Japan's Indigenous Ainu People to Inform Understandings of the United States and Japan." *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 33: 419-526).

⁶ The Star Festival is linked to a myth about a weaver and a shepherd who were lovers separated by the gods and sent to distant parts of the universe but allowed to come into contact once a year (when the stars representing them appear to come into close proximity). Korea also has its versions of this myth. Nonetheless the *Tanabata* as it is celebrated in Japan is considered to be a Japanese version of this festival.

⁷ Hirata's (2005) book about Shin-Okubo in Korean, provides further discussion of its history and development into an area associated with the Korean Wave and sought out by Japanese as part of the Korea Boom in Japan.

⁸ Examples include this government's attempts to backtrack on previous administration's admissions of misuse of so-called "Comfort Women," many or most of whom were Korean, in military "sex stations" during World War II, and the removal of educational stipends or deductions-allowed for all students living in Japan-from Resident Korean families whose technical affiliation is linked to North Korea.