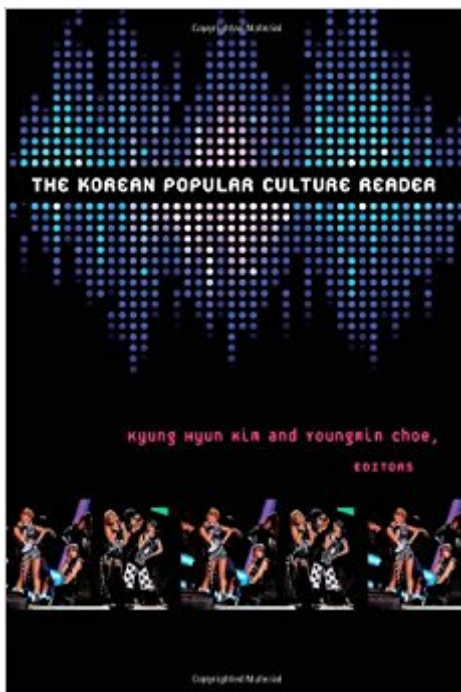


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The Korean Popular Culture Reader



Synopsis

Over the past decade, Korean popular culture has become a global phenomenon. The "Korean Wave" of music, film, television, sports, and cuisine generates significant revenues and cultural pride in South Korea. The Korean Popular Culture Reader provides a timely and essential foundation for the study of "K-pop," relating the contemporary cultural landscape to its historical roots. The essays in this collection reveal the intimate connections of Korean popular culture, or hallyu, to the peninsula's colonial and postcolonial histories, to the nationalist projects of the military dictatorship, and to the neoliberalism of twenty-first-century South Korea. Combining translations of seminal essays by Korean scholars on topics ranging from sports to colonial-era serial fiction with new work by scholars based in fields including literary studies, film and media studies, ethnomusicology, and art history, this collection expertly navigates the social and political dynamics that have shaped Korean cultural production over the past century.

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Customer Reviews

Why publish a reader on Korean popular culture? Because it sells. This is the startling confession the two editors of this volume, Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe, make in their introduction. They are very open about it: their scholarly interest in Korea's contemporary pop culture arose as a

response to students's interest in the field. It was a purely commercial, demand-driven affair. As they confess, "Korean studies had a difficult time selling its tradition and modern aesthetics in course syllabuses until hallyu (Korean Wave) came along." Now students enrolling in cultural studies on American or European campuses want to share their passion for K-pop, Korean TV dramas, movies, manhwa comics, and other recent cultural sensations coming from Korea. Responding to high demand, graduate schools began churning out young PhD's who specialized in such cultural productions. Course syllabuses were designed, classes were opened, workshops were convened, and in a short time the mass of accumulated knowledge was sufficient to allow the publication of a reader. But the average K-pop fan or drama viewer will surely be taken aback by the content of this volume. If they are looking for easy clues to interpret Korean dramas or the latest fad in boys bands' hairstyle, then they will probably drop the book after a few pages. There are magazines or websites for this kind of information. As scholars, the authors have loftier interests and higher ambitions than just discussing whether Girls' Generation really empowers young women or instead reproduces sexual cliches, or why the 'Gangnam Style' video generated so many clicks on Youtube. In fact, in another candid move, the editors confess what they really think about K-pop: it sucks.

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