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# Why Didn't "Gangnam Style" Go Viral in Japan?: Gender Divide and Subcultural Heterogeneity in Contemporary Japan

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## ABSTRACT

Psy's "Gangnam Style" was the global pop music and video sensation of 2012, but it failed to go viral in Japan. The involuted nature of the Japanese popular music industry—especially the imperative of indigenization—stunted the song's dissemination. Simultaneously, the song failed to resonate with its potential base of Japanese K-pop fans, who valorized beauty and romance. In making sense of the Japanese reception of "Gangnam Style," the author also analyzes the sources of both the Korean Wave and the anti-Korean Wave in Japan.

KEYWORDS: Japan, South Korea, popular culture, Korean Wave, K-pop, J-pop, anti-Korean Wave, gender, subculture, popular music, soap opera, Internet, virality, cultural globalization

Psy's "Gangnam Style" was the greatest global pop sensation of 2012.<sup>1</sup> It not only registered over a billion hits on YouTube by the end of the year but also became the best-selling single in over thirty countries, including Austria and Australia, Belgium, and Bulgaria.<sup>2</sup> The singer's pony-gallop dance could be seen nearly everywhere, as imitations and parodies proliferated. As a wag put it: "Gangnam Style parodies are the new Gangnam Style."<sup>3</sup> However, one OECD country that remained relatively immune to the viral video's snare was Japan.<sup>4</sup> As Erica Ho speculated in 2012 in *Time* magazine,

The recent political climate in northeast Asia might have cooled the Japanese fever for Korean pop songs. In late August . . . a dispute erupted over the Takeshima and Dokdo islets between Japan and Korea, with both countries claiming ownership. With diplomatic tensions running high, the Japanese public increasingly steered away from any perceived pro-Korean sentiment.<sup>5</sup>

As if to substantiate the geopolitical argument, in the last quarter of 2012 the disputed rocks between the two countries and nationalist (and at times xenophobic) discourses and demonstrations garnered headlines almost daily.<sup>6</sup> There is even a long-standing movement, principally online, against the influence (or infiltration) of South Korean popular culture in Japan, called the anti-Korean Wave (Ken-Kanryū). Indeed, some Japanese bloggers and commentators went so far as to deny or denigrate the worldwide success of “Gangnam Style,” charging it with everything from unoriginality to the use of Bot<sup>7</sup> to artificially enhance the number of YouTube hits. Some even alleged plagiarism.<sup>8</sup> Casually informed pundits could in good conscience draw a straight line between Japan’s rejection of “Gangnam Style” and its tangled history with its neighbor, most obviously Japan’s colonization of the Korean peninsula in the first half of the twentieth century.

The grand narrative of the mutual enmity between Japan and South Korea collides with the ubiquitous presence of K-pop in particular, and the Korean Wave in general, in Japan. That the country has been awash with South Korean television drama (commonly called *kandora*, a contraction of *Kankoku dorama*, or “South Korean drama”) since the breakout success of *Fuyu no sonata* (K. *Kyöul yöng’a*; E. *Winter Sonata*; and often called by the contraction *Fuyusona* in Japanese) after the 2002 World Cup is a truth universally acknowledged in Japan.<sup>9</sup> The recent influx of K-pop in Japan—the very term, a riff on J-pop, is most likely of Japanese origin<sup>10</sup>—is equally noteworthy.<sup>11</sup> After all, the only country outside of South Korea where Psy was a recognized figure before “Gangnam Style” was Japan, where the song was in fact modestly successful. Debuting at number twenty on the Japan *Billboard* Hot 100 chart on October 15, it stayed on the chart for two more weeks (descending to forty-nine on October 22 and fifty-eight on October 29). More strikingly, two K-pop acts hit number one in the same month: “Oh!” by the band Shōjo Jidai (K. Sonyō Sidae; E. Girls’ Generation) on October 8

and KARA's "Erekutorikku bōi" ("Electric Boy") on October 29.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, the geopolitical dispute and long-standing historical hatred have only limited power in explaining the modest success of "Gangnam Style" in Japan.

The paradox—"Gangnam Style" being popular almost everywhere except in Japan, where K-pop is more popular than almost everywhere else—underscores the particular and peculiar reception of K-pop in contemporary Japanese society. Psy's video is charming and cheesy, humorous and danceable, imitable and universal; these and other factors contributed mightily to both its rapid dissemination around the world and its limited circulation in Japan. Conversely, K-pop's success in Japan points to the way in which its appeal—cool and cute, beautiful and handsome, refined and regimented—contradicts Psy's virtues (or vices). Put simply, Psy was not part of K-pop for Japanese K-pop fans. K-pop's success in Japan depended on not only honing its universalistic appeal—good singing and great dancing by attractive youths—but also systematically rendering the stars and songs locally adapted and palatable, from Japanese-language singing to Japan-specific marketing. That is, Psy's limited success in Japan reveals the involuted character of the Japanese pop-music market.

#### KOREAN WAVE FANDOM IN JAPAN

To comprehend K-pop's reception in Japan requires us to understand the nature of the Korean Wave in Japan, which began with the tsunami-like impact of the soap opera *Fuyusona*. Originally aired in South Korea in 2002, *Fuyusona* was shown in 2003 in Japan, initially with Japanese dubbing and later with Japanese subtitles. By the reprised broadcast in 2004 it had become a blockbuster, establishing both *Fuyusona* and Kanryū (Korean Wave) as buzzwords in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Beyond selling close to a half million DVD sets and over 1.2 million novelized volumes in a year, the program motivated viewers to embark on language learning and location tours (package tours to film sites in South Korea).<sup>14</sup> Encouraged by *Fuyusona*'s sensational reception, Japanese cable channels and even mainstream networks began to air *kandora* regularly. By the mid-2000s *kandora* fandom had become something of an institution in Japan, whose members were mostly middle-aged and older women usually called, somewhat pejoratively, *obasan* (middle-aged women).<sup>15</sup>

Two intertwining undertows facilitated the Korean Wave's smooth sail-

ing in Japan in the first decade of the twenty-first century: the relaxation of geopolitical tensions within East Asia after the Cold War and the improved image of South Koreans.<sup>16</sup> Even after the 1965 Normalization Treaty between Japan and South Korea, the two countries maintained at best rocky relations. If South Korean common sense reviled Japan as the erstwhile colonial oppressor, the dominant Japanese perspective cast South Korea as a poor country under military dictatorship. Starting in the 1980s, however, Japanese journalists and tourists conveyed increasingly positive depictions of South Korea, cresting in 2002 with the joint hosting of the World Cup, which generated an impressive amount of bonhomie (Lie 2008, 146–152).

Put differently, South Korea often ranked among the country least liked by Japanese people in opinion surveys from the 1970s, but by 2002 there were more likes than dislikes. Beyond a shift in Japanese perceptions lies a transformed South Korea. The South Korea of *Fuyusona* is a country of great natural beauty, an affluent society of elegance and sophistication, and a land of romance and gallant, handsome heroes. Older women recall the country not only as poor but also as a destination of sex tours that their husbands and other male acquaintances indulged in (Lie 1995). A devoted Japanese fan recalls that when she went to South Korea on a package tour around 1990, she encountered pushy vendors and rude pedestrians (Mikazuki 2012, 4–7). However, a decade later, when she viewed the 2000 South Korean film *Irumāre* (the Japanese title is the Japanese rendering of the Italian *Il Mare*; K. *Siwölae*, meaning “Love That Transcends Time”), she was struck by a completely different vision of the country, which was crystallized by her immersion in *Fuyusona* soon thereafter. Rather than urban poverty and rustic behavior, she found romance and elegance. She later visited Seoul and found South Koreans to be kind and generous. This woman was under *kandora*’s thrall: she had been swept away by the Korean Wave.

From suspicion or ignorance on matters South Korean, chance viewing, sheer curiosity, or insistent recommendation from friends tether *Fuyusona* fans (who often call themselves *pen*, after the Japanese pronunciation of the Korean pronunciation of the English word *fan*) to the experience of *hamaru* (being entrapped, entranced, and enthralled). The rhetoric of *hamaru* discloses sentiments somewhere between religious conversion and falling in love. *Fuyusona* was not just a compelling melodrama—a common connotation of *hamaru* is to be “hooked”—but it became a way of life, focused

especially on the protagonist Bae YongJoon (Pae Yong-jun) as a semideity of romance.<sup>17</sup> Widely known in Japan as Yon-sama (“Honorable Yon[g]”), he was thirty years old at the time of *Fuyusona*’s filming and still commands a legion of devoted fans or, in cult-like language, *kazoku* (family).

Beauty and charisma are central ingredients of any star system, and the modern entertainment industry, exemplified by Hollywood, banks on good looks and charismatic presence. Bae is hardly the only *ikemen* (the contraction of *iketeru men*, which literally translates as “mask or mug that goes” but means gorgeous men), as the Korean Wave cannot be extricated from its attractive stars. Although tastes vary, a long-standing ideal among Japanese women is the androgynous or even effeminate man. Bae has an effeminate visage and gentle demeanor far removed from the conventional Japanese stereotype of South Korean masculine behavior (and also distinct from the stereotypical middle-aged Japanese man).<sup>18</sup> One Japanese woman recalls that the first time she saw Bae’s face on the cover of a glossy magazine, she was convinced that he was a female star, perhaps a former Takarazuka performer. Takarazuka is a renowned all-female revue that performs musical theater, and its transvestite leads frequently capture the hearts and souls of female fans (Robertson 1998). *Berusaikyū no bara* (E. *The Rose of Versailles*; often called *Berubara* in Japanese) exemplifies Takarazuka aesthetics: the story is of a torrid romantic love affair in an exotic locale, featuring an effeminate and charismatic (fe)male hero(ine). *Berubara* set one standard of an ideal male beauty (and behavior) and generated many imitators in girls’ manga (see Ikeda [1972–1973] 2009).<sup>19</sup>

Appeal is not merely a matter of appearance, however. Fans often note the timbre of stars’ voices. This is naturally the case for singers, but the principle holds surprisingly strongly for actors as well. A Japanese housewife in her forties recalled overhearing Bae talking on television and finding his voice “electric.” *Fuyusona* was originally broadcast in a dubbed version, but a clamor from the audience restored the original Korean soundtrack. A crucial element of this counterintuitive move (very few Japanese people understand Korean) is that many listeners found Bae’s voice, as well as those of other actors, resonant and seductive. Japanese viewers’ habituation to watching foreign films and reading subtitles is undoubtedly a factor in the popularity of Korean-speaking *kandora*. Needless to say, K-pop’s appeal also combines physical attractiveness and vocal allure.

Beauty is as beauty does: it is an aesthetic not only of appearance but also of behavior and character. He must be noble in spirit, kind at heart: a prince charming who is as beautiful outwardly as inwardly, in face as in heart. Thus, Bae is handsome but also beautiful: not a muscled, macho man (Arnold Schwarzenegger fans tend to be men in Japan) but kind, gentle, and gallant. Bae certainly captures the Japanese female aesthetic of effeminate male beauty.<sup>20</sup> The ideal is not a powerful patriarch but a noble gentleman.

Beyond the seemingly straightforward appeal of South Korean stars lies a curious cultural logic that sustains them as safe and approachable objects of love and fantasy. In the post–World War II period, an influential ideal of beauty in Japan was dominated by projected Western standards of masculine and feminine perfection, usually embodied in Hollywood stars. Even today, models for expensive products that stress beauty, elegance, and sophistication tend to be white. As a simple binary, the Japanese were said to be short and stocky, narrow-eyed and flat-faced, whereas the (white) Westerners were the polar opposite. At the same time, many Japanese regarded foreigners as different and distant, definitely unattainable. *Kandora* and K-pop stars are at once similar to but different from Western or Japanese stars (see Tanaka Chizuko 2009, 69–71).<sup>21</sup> *Kandora* fans often remark that South Koreans are tall and attractive like Western stars but seem more approachable because they look basically Japanese. Not being Japanese makes them, however, less threatening because as foreigners they are safely distant. Thus, South Korean stars are beautiful and exotic, but not *too* different; comforting and familiar, but not *too* similar.

Needless to say, a comprehensive analysis of *kandora*'s success must also consider the development of the South Korean television industry and its ability to penetrate foreign markets. In many national markets—usually undergirded by language barriers and cultural protectionism—the incentive to generate soap opera with transnational appeal is limited. But South Korea's economic ideology makes the drive to export a powerful motivating force (Lie 1998). In turn, we cannot ignore the sheer improvements in producing and marketing television dramas, including a plethora of professional scriptwriters and stagehands as well as a stable of well-trained directors and actors.<sup>22</sup> Suffice it to say that South Korean producers became capable of manufacturing high-quality soap operas with global appeal, which itself is a consequence of South Korea's affluent and democratic society.

In summary, the Korean Wave became a significant subcultural presence in Japan by 2005. Its fan base was predominantly middle-aged and older women who equated its stars with a feminized masculine ideal: *ikemen* gentlemen.

#### THE INVOLUTED MARKET AND THE IMPERATIVE OF INDIGENIZATION

*Fuyusona* and Bae were at the epicenter of the Korean Wave, but the swelling tide soon carried ever-larger numbers of stars, styles, and genres from South Korean popular culture. The initial and all-but-invisible enthusiasm for South Korean popular music in the early part of the decade was focused on R&B, but starting in the middle of the decade, *kandora* fans began to follow K-pop. Bae was merely the first icon; the K-pop boy band Tōhō Shinki (K. *Tongbang Singi*; TVQX, DBSK, and other names elsewhere) also exemplified the *ikemen* ideal (Furuya Masayuki 2005, 60–61; see also S. Hasegawa 2012, 10–13, and Yamakawa 2010). One fan recounts that after her immersion in *Fuyusona*, her encounter with Tōhō Shinki shook her up, leading to a “dangerous” level of fanaticism (S. Hasegawa 2012, 11). *Kandora* fans not only provided a core group of K-pop fans but also, more importantly, legitimated South Korean popular culture in Japan. The first South Korean popular music acts, such as the singer BoA, largely concealed their origins, and South Korean popular music probably would have continued to masquerade as part of J-pop were it not for the Korean Wave. As it was, even as K-pop, South Korean singers followed Japanese conventions. To understand this particular configuration requires us to make sense of the Japanese pop music market.

Contemporary Japan is characterized by subcultural heterogeneity. In terms of music—from classical European music including opera, to jazz and blues, dance-pop and hip-hop, rave and reggae, experimental electronic music, and even traditional Japanese *gagaku* (courtly music)—all genres have their share of devoted aficionados.<sup>23</sup> Although there is a great deal of room for independent musicians—such as free-floating “live scenes” in which amateurs perform a variety of musical genres and subgenres—mainstream pop music has meant J-pop, which is a generic term for a Japanese popular music style that emerged in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to older ballads, J-pop is distinctly



more Western in lyric, composition, and instrumentation. Songs and singers' names are often written in *katakana* (the Japanese script used for foreign words) or even in the roman script. Appealing to younger listeners, the music is at once more upbeat, faster, and louder than older Japanese music but less upbeat, slower, and quieter than mainstream American pop rock (Bourdagh 2012, 195–222). J-pop is mellower, ballad-based post-rock music, sung often at a high pitch. J-pop seems on the surface to be extremely Westernized, with its English names for performers and songs, almost exclusive use of Western instrumentation, and obedience to the general convention of American pop music. J-pop singers often sound as though they are singing American pop songs in English, yet they are in fact vocalizing Japanese words.

In spite of considerable diversity, the mainstream Japanese pop-music industry is insular and oligopolistic. The iron triangle of music moguls, corporate sponsors, and the mass media constitutes an industry in which outsiders and independents have difficulty surviving and thriving.<sup>25</sup> Particularly powerful are the overlapping networks of television and other performance venues that are linked to corporate sponsors and their associations with advertised commodities (Ugaya 2005, 173–181). Although it would be easy enough to emulate J-pop music qua music, it is nigh impossible to reproduce its extramusical dimensions. The convention of production and distribution is highly evolved and elaborated. J-pop singers are promoted as idols (or personalities, if they are too old to be idols). Producers peddle not only various versions of CDs—often with special gifts enclosed—but also a wide range of expensive merchandise specially made for fans. Fan clubs and meetings, as well as regular concerts, require extended contact with fans and catering to their whims and desires. Consequently, it is difficult for a foreign producer to successfully enter the Japanese market unless they work closely with one of the established Japanese promoters or producers. To be sure, involuted and oligopolistic do not mean that the industry is not highly competitive. Indeed, the rapid ascent and descent of singles, as well as the sheer number of one-hit wonders, testify to the extreme competitiveness of the mainstream Japanese popular music market—if not to the insistent planned obsolescence born of profit motive—as well as to the fickleness of the overwhelmingly young but sophisticated fans.

In spite of the proliferation and popularity of various musical styles and genres, then, the Japanese pop-music industry is closed. Most of the biggest

stars are mainstream J-pop acts, which appeal to youths with considerable disposable income to spend on music and music products. Ugaya Hiromichi (2005, 186–192) argues that Japanese pop-music hits are made by female high school students. Foreign music—or, for that matter, domestic nonmainstream pop music—faces considerable challenge (again, in spite of the strong subcultural support for virtually every type of world music).

Given the tightly structured nature of the Japanese music market, K-pop producers coordinated closely with Japanese music moguls, often by offering unusually attractive deals. One Japanese pop-music industry insider claimed that, although the usual cut is fifty-fifty, one South Korean agency offered 90 percent of its profit for the first year (a tactic that South Korean automakers employed in entering the U.S. market a decade earlier). Furthermore, South Korean promoters sought to indigenize the performers, engaging them in intensive Japanese-language and culture instruction. In spite of their South Korean origins and reliance on English refrains, South Korean performers sing lyrics in Japanese (it is widely believed that non-Japanese-language songs will not do well in the domestic pop market). Magazine interviews and fan-club meetings require Japanese conversations as well. Hence, many would-be K-pop stars in Japan learn the Japanese language and receive considerable training in cultural adaptation in order to appeal to Japanese fans (see, for example, Furuya Masayuki 2005, 8). In these and other matters, South Korean pop musicians follow the established conventions of the Japanese music industry.

Setting aside the earlier successes of some South Korean and Zainichi (ethnic Koreans in Japan) singers, the first South Korean pop-music star in Japan was BoA, whose “Listen to My Heart” shot to number one in 2002 (Lie 2012). BoA was followed by Tōhō Shinki, who debuted in 2005. Although neither BoA nor Tōhō Shinki veiled their South Korean origins, most Japanese fans regarded them as Japanese and as part of J-pop. BoA’s “Listen to My Heart” was indistinguishable from J-pop songs, and BoA herself seemed every bit as Japanese as other young female J-pop singers.<sup>26</sup> Much the same can be said of Tōhō Shinki. As I suggested, mainly middle-aged women, most of whom were *kandora* fans, recognized the group’s South Korean origin, but younger fans in general did not. Initially, then, South Korean performers passed as J-pop singers, and K-pop did not exist as a distinct genre in Japan in the early part of the twenty-first century.

K-pop entered Japan in earnest in 2010, when a boatload of K-pop groups washed ashore (Kigoshi 2011). Although some boy bands—such as SHINee, CNBLUE, and 2PM—have become popular, much of the initial fanfare revolved around KARA, Shōjo Shidai, and other groups of young women. What characterize them are precision dancing to upbeat pop songs and the concomitant centrality of the music video: a genre of dance-pop that catapulted MTV to a major cultural institution in the early 1980s, along with the likes of Michael Jackson and Madonna (see Marks and Tannenbaum 2012, 143–166). BoA and Tōhō Shinki were balladeers and much closer to the J-pop norm; KARA and Shōjo Shidai sold their singles on the basis of their dynamic dancing, as a distinct genre called K-pop.

What is the significance of *kandora* fans, then? In the short run, they fueled the initial enthusiasm for Tōhō Shinki and other South Korean popular-music acts, knowing that they were South Korean. Their long-term impact, however, was to carve a niche for South Korean popular music and make it a legitimate genre. Consider that KARA and Shōjo Jidai were openly introduced as South Korean stars. The radio disc jockey Furuya Masayuki recalls that when he began to air South Korean popular music (sung in Korean) in 1999, he received many complaints from his listeners (Furuya Masayuki 2005, 4). What changed the Japanese common sense was the Korean Wave, which had rendered South Korean popular culture as a recognizable presence in Japanese life. That is, *kandora* was the foundation upon which K-pop could thrive as a distinct, South Korean brand. With the regular airing of South Korean dramas, South Korea had become less alien in urban Japan. Even the place of the Korean language in Japan changed. Rather than employing the Japanese rendering of the Chinese script (instead of the Korean reading), the new norm was to write Korean using *katakana*. Moreover, as Japanese fans picked up Korean, they often employed Korean readings of the Chinese characters (see, for example, K. Hasegawa 2006, 48–49). Hence, those immersed in the Korean Wave often talk of *Hanryū* (the Japanese adaptation of the Korean Hallyu), rather than *Kanryū*. That is, the Korean language—like the English language—became foreign but familiar in Japan. South Korean popular music in Japan, which would have long been considered something of an oxymoron, became as plausible as any other genre of foreign popular music.

If *kandora* programs are aired in Japan with subtitles (but in the original

Korean), then why can't K-pop songs be sung in Korean? Devoted *kandora* fans are at times avid K-pop fans, who talk of having “affairs” (*uwaki*) with younger male singers (meaning that they have become devoted fans of boy bands while their true relationship remains with a *kandora* star, such as Bae). However, they constitute a limited market for the music industry. The *kandora obasan*'s enthusiasm often infects her daughter, who becomes immersed in South Korean popular culture and, in particular, becomes enamored of K-pop groups. However, to reach number one on the hit charts requires a much wider dissemination than would be possible by cultivating the core *kandora* fanatics and their daughters. Hence, great energy was expended in making K-pop groups, such as KARA and Shōjo Jidai, appealing to the pop-music mainstream, if only as flavors of the moment. In short, the fan base for *kandora* and for K-pop are distinct. Whereas Japanese fans reached out to South Korean drama (including learning Korean), K-pop reached out to Japanese fans (including singing in Japanese).

South Korean music producers target younger Japanese listeners who devote time and money to pop-music consumption, and in so doing follow the practice of J-pop that appeals to this large purchasing public. K-pop acts and song titles use almost exclusively English and *katakana*, which of course is no different from almost all J-pop music. More importantly, like BoA and Tōhō Shinki, almost all K-pop songs released in Japan are sung in Japanese (though peppered with English words). Not only are there separate Japanese-language websites for K-pop singers and groups, but the manner of their presentation follows the received Japanese convention, such as the abundant use of promotional goods and steady support for fan club activities. Thus, although their South Korean origins are not occluded, K-pop stars and songs are virtually indistinguishable from their J-pop counterparts in terms of their extramusical presentation of self. K-pop stars sing in Japanese and act no differently from J-pop stars. Differences manifest themselves most starkly in concerts. Whereas South Korean events tend to be very loud, including fans singing together with the stars, Japanese affairs tend to be quieter, with fans listening to the singers. There are fan clubs that use face-to-face meetings—such as holding an event to shake hands with the stars—as well as Japanese-language websites to distribute information. Japanese fans also tend to buy more accessories and goods, such as pen lights, shirts, and trading cards. Therefore, the leading K-pop agency, SM Entertainment, for

example, has a dedicated store, eVERYSING, for its K-pop stars, replete with specialty accessories as well as karaoke rooms to sing and imitate K-pop songs and dances.

The extramusical dimension of K-pop fandom has entrenched itself in Shin Ōkubo, an area near the bustling Shinjuku in Tokyo (Suzuki 2011). The neighborhood of recent South Korean immigrants and sojourners, as well as Korean restaurants and grocery stores, was somewhat disreputable. However, it transformed into a fashionable district by the early part of the twenty-first century. Not only are there bookstores, music shops, and specialty-goods stores for all things South Korean popular culture, but there are cafés and karaoke establishments dedicated to K-pop. In particular, otherwise ordinary South Korean young men perform as *ikemen* waiters and singers to serve the largely Japanese clientele. There are also mini concerts by would-be K-pop stars as well as occasional visits by active K-pop performers to enliven the area that has become the mecca of the Korean Wave in Japan.

The general and generic appeal of not only girl groups but also boy bands is the combination of catchy music and dance, attractive appearance, and model behavior. Mainstream K-pop groups (after BoA, almost all the initial successes were groups rather than individual singers) engage almost universally in precision dancing that in turn becomes fashionable enough to generate imitators. These performers are also considered good looking, tall, and slim. An oft-mentioned attribute of K-pop stars is that they are taller and better looking than their Japanese counterparts.<sup>27</sup> They become, in short, “idols” (*aidoru*), who in turn must cultivate a fleeting but nonetheless intense relationship with their fan base. In this regard, there is considerable overlap in the aesthetic preferences of *kandora* and K-pop fans.

## GENDER DIVIDE

If my descriptive account of K-pop fandom (and the Korean Wave more generally) is broadly correct, then the crucial category of analysis is gender. By gender divide, I refer not so much to the persistent inequality—educational achievement, job advancement, income and wealth, and social prestige and political power—between women and men in contemporary Japanese society, but rather to the humdrum reality of the two genders leading separate lives: occupying distinct spaces and pursuing separate interests. Although

an excessive focus on gender may occlude internal heterogeneity and bypass other divides and dynamics, gender articulates a deep distinction and division in Japanese society.

Gender divide is ubiquitous and constitutes one of the two major classificatory binaries in Japanese society (along with the divide between domestic and foreign [see Lie 2001]). Consider a day in the life of a tourist in Tokyo who wakes up to face the option between domestic and foreign breakfast. She will notice that most men choose the former, the majority of women the latter. Seeking to board a subway, she will notice “women only” compartments. Venturing into a bookstore, she will note that the fiction section is divided along two axes: domestic versus foreign and male versus female. Ambling around Tokyo, she will observe that Italian and French restaurants are replete with women (except for scattered men on dates), whereas Japanese-style restaurants are filled with mainly male diners. Seeking postprandial entertainment, she will see that some options, such as professional sports, are almost exclusively male, whereas others, such as *kandora*, are almost all female. Needless to say, the binary is not absolute, but the Korean Wave fits snugly in the women’s territory: it is deemed a “female thing.”

As I suggested, there are divisions among fans of South Korean popular culture: middle-aged and older women’s interest in *kandora* as opposed to the generally younger demographic’s interest in K-pop. Yet these differences pale in significance to the gendered character of South Korean popular culture’s appeal in Japan. One discernible recent trend, for example, is the rise of mother-daughter tourism to South Korea, underscored by a plethora of special travel guides geared to them. These guidebooks suggest several common activities for mothers and daughters, such as touring iconic sites, going shopping, making beauty stops (for cosmetics and at spas), and seeing art (see Poketto Sukkara 2012). Others suggest seeking fashionable cafés and restaurants (K. Hasegawa 2006, 70–71, 80–82). Mothers and daughters may then proceed to pursue their individual interests—usually South Korean drama in the case of mothers and K-pop for daughters.

Furthermore, there are common aesthetic principles that animate fans of South Korean popular culture, including physical attractiveness—tall, slim, resonantly voiced *ikemen*—as well as behavioral ideals—kind and loving, gentle and gallant, sensitive and thoughtful.<sup>28</sup> The aesthetics are also embedded in a world of affluence: a rich, elegant, and sophisticated environ-

ment of high life exemplified by “Gangnam Style.” What do Japanese female fans of South Korean popular culture want? Whatever their differences—in terms of education or employment, age or generation—they share at least one common set of characteristics desirable in men. Although variations are significant and it would be a simplification to cast the contrast between the actual and the desirable as either antipodal (as opposing) or complementary (as lacking), there is no better way to summarize them than as qualities lacking among actually existing Japanese men. The ne plus ultra of this trend is to seek boyfriends or husbands who are South Korean. Judging by the profusion of Internet discussions and published books and articles, it is a nontrivial, albeit minor, phenomenon (see Chisa 2010; Kankoku Danshi Kenkyūkai 2012; Shindō 2011). The cultural distance—and the suspension of disbelief—is breaking down for some Japanese women.

As I suggested, the most popular K-pop acts in Japan in 2012 are girl groups. Interestingly, most of the fans are women who find songs catchy and dances infectious. They are at once *kakkoi* (cool) and *kawaii* (cute), the two ultimate adjectives for a significant segment of (mainly female and youth) popular culture. Heterosocial or heterosexual attraction remains mainly for boy groups, which also appeal to Japanese girls and women. The gender divide remains robust.

Where are the men? There are, of course, male fans of South Korean popular culture, but *kandora* and K-pop have remained largely the province of women. A predictable corollary is the predominantly male constitution of the anti-Korean Wave movement. The discourse of *Ken-Kanryū* spans a range of criticisms, from the lack of originality of South Korean drama or music and the artificial character of South Korean stars (as evidenced by the prevalent use of plastic surgery) to the political criticism of the South Korean state and big business and the generalized dislike of Korean people and things Korean.<sup>29</sup> The most visible political action so far has been a series of demonstrations in front of Fuji TV Station, which has been closely associated with *kandora* (see Furuya Tsunehira 2012). A common refrain is that most Japanese are not interested in watching *kandora* and that the Korean Wave is manufactured by South Korean political and business interests as well as by Japanese promoters bent on profit (Bessatsu Takarajima Henshūbu 2012). The discourse manifests a mixture of chauvinism (“Japanese culture is superior”) and xenophobia (“I don’t want foreign shows on Japanese TV”).



Hollywood movies have been shown on prime-time TV, though it should be noted that they are almost always dubbed in Japanese. What underlies a visceral dislike on the part of many Japanese men is a baffling reality that “their” women—mothers, sisters, and friends—have been smitten by South Koreans, threatening at once their patriarchal and patriotic longings. Usually lumped together with other voices of the *netto uyoku* (the Internet-based right wing), anti-Korean Wave men tend to seek family-like solidarity with other xenophobic forces to counter the threat to the purity—and their ownership—of the family and the nation (Yasuda 2012, 320–325).

Contemporary right-wing nationalism in Japan is noteworthy for its appeal to young men, but its salient feature is its almost completely male constitution. The postbubble economy (the entire span of the conscious life of many young Japanese men) has been a relentless mixture of longing for the good old days of rapid economic growth and bemoaning that the future may be stationary or possibly stagnant. Almost no one believes in the post-World War II social order—sometimes called the 1955 system after the year in which the Liberal Democratic Party became consolidated, and coinciding with the beginning of rapid economic growth after the Korean War—in which many men could look forward to lifetime employment with steadily rising standards of living. It was also the time when the nuclear family became the indisputable norm, consolidating the gender divide between working husband-fathers and housewife mothers. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, few could trust their faith in the postwar 1955 system. Many young men, especially those unable to attend college, now find the future uncertain and economically unstable. As the mass media constantly pontificate on the rise of *furitā* (the contraction of the English “freelance” and the German “arbeiter” [worker]) and *nīto* (NEET, as in “not in education, employment, or training”), these men seem to lack any obvious place or prospect in Japanese economy and society (Honda 2007). In turn, some of their mothers (and wives) seek to explore, if only in the realm of fantasy, other possible lives beyond the confines of domesticity. The Korean Wave, in this sense, is an interloper for some young men just as it is an escape for some women. The unusually passionate hatred for South Korean popular culture expresses, if only in part, the collapse of the postwar order of male superiority and domestic stability.<sup>30</sup>

It would be misleading to dwell on rabid right-wing nationalists, for as



vocal as they are, they remain a small minority. What are other men doing? The most visible counterpart to the Korean Wave is the fanatical enthusiasm for the Japanese girl group AKB 48. As a *reductio ad absurdum* of elections in the manner of *American Idol* or *X Factor*, girls who aspire to be in AKB 48 and ascend its hierarchy engage in elaborate campaigns. Each CD purchased allows a fan—almost all men, not all of them young—to cast one vote, and the annual election result eclipses all other news in Japan. Indeed, one commentator has suggested that the most popular AKB 48 member, Maeda Atsuko, “has transcended Christ” (Hamano 2012).<sup>31</sup> It is a popularity contest in which what prevails is not beauty or talent but rather someone who achieves the ideal of the girl next door: a girl who is cute but not beautiful, who sings and dances well but not too well. Non-Japanese observers usually remain baffled and mystified by AKB 48, for their musical performance is amateurish, lacking the polish and professionalism of a group like Shōjo Jidai.<sup>32</sup> However, it is precisely the lack of polish—the apotheosis of the demotic impulse—that inspires and sustains the AKB 48 phenomenon.<sup>33</sup>

AKB stands for Akihabara, an area formerly known for electronics shops that is now much better known as the mecca of *otaku* culture. *Otaku* is a term that surfaced in the late 1970s, referring at the time to fanatical followers of science-fiction *manga* and anime.<sup>34</sup> Soon the term came to signify any single-minded subcultural pursuit. Younger Japanese social theorists often connect *otaku* culture to the breakdown of the master narrative and the arrival of the postmodern (Azuma 2001).<sup>35</sup> Yet what has come to characterize a particular *otaku* culture in Akihabara is not so much anime and *manga*—which are ubiquitous in Japan—but rather two interrelated phenomena: erotic *manga*, especially on the theme of *rorikon* (an abbreviation of Japanese term for the Lolita complex, signifying sexual interest in adolescent or prepubescent girls), and *meido kissa* (maid cafés), in which girls dressed as French maids serve their *goshujinsama* (“lords” or “masters,” as customers are called). In both instances—and in AKB 48 as well—young and old Japanese men seek limited relational and erotic gratification in dealing with, whether in the imaginative realm or through role playing, very young girls, who are ideally at once cute and buxom, modern but submissive. The commonly expressed ideal is *dōgan kyonyū* (“infantile face, big breasts”), sort of a sexual Chimera that exemplifies the ambivalent desire of the men in this particular slice of *otaku* culture. The contained nature

of interaction is critical. Any Japanese city is replete with *mizu shōbai* (lit. “water businesses”), from hostess bars and *kyabakura* (“cabaret clubs”) to *deriberu* (lit. “delivery health,” meaning women who make house calls to offer erotic massage and sometimes more) and *sōpurando* (“soap land,” a bath house that is often a brothel).<sup>36</sup> What maid cafés or AKB 48 offer is a much more attenuated form of interaction: no extended conversations, no tactile exchanges, no intercourse of bodily fluids (and hence not part of the established *mizu shōbai*). That is, there is a substantial section of young (and old) Japanese men who do not wish to or are incapable of interacting with independent women—those who are educated, pursue professional careers, and express desires and opinions—who, in fact, constitute the norm among young Japanese women. Sure enough, the proportion of women who do not want to become housewives or even marry at all exemplify at once a desire for independence and an unwillingness to compromise marrying just any man for the sake of social respectability and intergenerational reproduction. The social phenomenon is well captured in the 2012 Fuji TV drama *Kekkon, shinai* (lit. “I Won’t Get Married,” subtitled in English as “Wonderful Single Life”). As many Japanese women are wont to express their disappointment with the general lot of Japanese men, Japanese men, too, vocally or silently express a preference for another, more archaic version of femininity (though it is important to note that the ideal appearance is still thoroughly modern). South Korean stars, in this context, become contested, and the fundamental divide occurs along the gender line. However different, *Kandora obasan* and Akihabara *otaku* both reside in their respective worlds of fantasy. The two ideals are, alas, incompatible and, indeed, contradictory.

As I said, most Japanese men are neither rabidly anti-Korean nor even patriarchal nationalists. Neither are they all obsessed with infantile girls with hypertrophied busts. Beyond a minority of the marginalized, most Japanese young men engage in particular pursuits, rather than criticizing others’ idiosyncratic interests. Contemporary Japan is a country whose principal civil tenet is “not to bother others” (*meiwaku o kakenai*). In a society without a singular dominant culture or taste, fractured and differentiated pursuits coexist. Many Japanese people have their own subcultural interests and obsessions, which do not overlap—or overlap very little—with the pursuits and passions of others. Thus K-pop fans and AKB 48 fans coexist, however distinct the fandom’s demographic base and gender ideal.

## “ROPPONGI STYLE”

Let us return to “Gangnam Style.” Psy’s agent, YG Entertainment, attempted to follow the Japanese convention and to promote a Japanese version of the song as “Roppongi Style.” Roppongi is a fancy area in Tokyo, roughly comparable to Seoul’s Gangnam. YG Entertainment’s launch event, scheduled for July 11, 2012, was canceled because of the massively publicized claim dispute over islets in the South China Sea that broke out the day before. As the song appeared to be on its way to going viral in the United States and elsewhere, YG Entertainment decided to pursue opportunities outside of Japan. In short, Psy planned to follow the received rule of the Japanese music industry and sought to crack the Japanese market, but he achieved only limited success, in part because of the accident of history. There is thus a grain of truth in argument that geopolitics was responsible for the failure of “Gangnam Style” in Japan.

It remains unclear, however, whether “Roppongi Style” would have become any more popular than “Gangnam Style” in Japan. As Psy told a Japanese K-pop magazine: “Isn’t Gangnam the hottest place in Seoul? In this music video, people who are not hot are dancing dances that are not hot, but are insisting that they are doing it in the style of the hot place” (Kang 2010, 4).<sup>37</sup> It is an insightful self-interpretation, but the humor and parody go against everything that Japanese K-pop fans (and Korean Wave fanatics) hold dear. Among K-pop fans in Shin-Ōkubo—the mecca of K-pop in Japan—the most common reaction to Psy was that he is unattractive (*kakko warui*) and chubby (*kobutori*). These fans—as unrepresentative a sample as they may be—responded ungenerously when they viewed the video of “Gangnam Style.” Psy was said to look more like a sumo wrestler or Kim Jong Il than a model K-pop star. In other words, his persona contradicts the reigning image and aesthetic of South Korean stars. He is, rather, the male counterpart of *obasan*: *ojisan*, also called by the less-respectful term *ossan* (middle-aged men), widely mocked and reviled in Japan, often by *obasan* themselves. In Psy’s viral video, viewers get humor and parody, not romance and beauty. Instead of valorizing Gangnam, Psy offers a tongue-in-cheek celebration by people who are not of or from the place. It is, to adopt a contemporary slang term popular in the United States and Japan, a loser’s point of view—far from the romance and fantasy that fuel K-pop in particular

and the Korean Wave in general. Japanese women, young or old, who are the natural fan base of K-pop do not want to see someone like the men around them in soap operas and music videos. In short, for K-pop fans in Japan, Psy is not part of K-pop.

Because Psy lacked appeal to the extant base of K-pop fans in Japan, it was critical that he and YG Entertainment adapt the song and video to local conventions and tastes. As I noted, the initial plan was derailed less by geopolitics and more by the unpredictable and unpredicted success in the United States and elsewhere. Viral success may have been possible in Japan; the extensive Internet penetration in the country ensures that it remained a distinct possibility, and Japan is certainly not immune to other global fads and fashions. Given the profound subcultural heterogeneity in Japan, however, access to the mainstream audience relied on the entertainment establishment, which mandates rules of indigenization (most importantly, working with the pop-music establishment). Moreover, free-floating Internet users tend to be predominantly male, precisely the demographic least likely to be swayed by a South Korean performer. Here it is worth noting that a key to the virality of “Gangnam Style” or any other music video is “sharing” or “reposting”—it must be considered “cool” or “hot”; however marginal the cost of pushing the button to “repost,” it must be worth spreading (a sure way to lose one’s credibility is to “forward” every music video one sees). That is, a music video worth spreading is something that articulates with or enhances one’s sense of self and taste, consumed to satisfy the desire to discover something new but also to *produce* an active response and thereby become a phenomenon. That possibility in Japan was foreclosed in part by those who were vaccinated—and some who were actively antiviral—against South Korean popular culture. It was not considered “cool” for young Japanese men to like South Korean popular music. The video, as I argued, also failed to elicit excitement among K-pop fans. The possibility of dissemination was stomped out by indifference and even hostility.

The relative failure of “Gangnam Style” in Japan, therefore, was overdetermined. What makes K-pop so popular in Japan in turn tamed Psy’s viral video into a minor infection. Psy’s catchy song and cheesy dancing could neither hook themselves to the existing K-pop fandom nor cultivate a new audience in Japan.

If I am right, then is the contrapositive true? Does the popularity of

Psy's video elsewhere indicate that K-pop does not have much of a future globally? Would the perfectionist impulse of K-pop groups—antipodal to Psy's aesthetics of humorous and humdrum singing and dancing—doom them to minor successes in the United States and other OECD countries, turning off pop fans because of their artificial and inauthentic character? Popular music is everywhere part of the culture industry, but there's a powerful animus against ready-made, producer-cultivated singers: their robotic character made more evident, and easy to dismiss, because of their foreign provenance (and the entrenched dissonance between popular music and East Asia in the minds of many Europeans and North Americans). However, had anyone predicted in 1992 that a decade hence a South Korean television drama would become a sensation in Japan, or in 2002 that a decade hence several young South Korean musicians would become household names in Japan, then that person would have been silenced or institutionalized. Popular taste is fickle; prediction is a fool's game.

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## NOTES

1. I have used the McCune-Reischauer system for transliterating Korean words, though I often retain commonly used words, such as “Gangnam” (instead of “Kangnam”). All translations are mine.
2. See *Wikipedia*, “Gangnam Style” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangnam\\_Style](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangnam_Style)). All the Internet links cited in this article were active as of November 5, 2013.
3. See Ricardo Zepeda-Esquivel, “10 Gangnam Style Parodies You Have to See” (<http://listverse.com/2012/12/05/10-gangnam-style-parodies-you-have-to-see/>), accessed December 5, 2013.
4. Eric Spitznagel (2012) characterizes the “fan base” of “Gangnam Style” as “most of the world, except Japan” (“Gandalf vs. ‘Gangnam Style,’” *The New*

- York Times Magazine*, December 9, p. 17). Strictly speaking, only those areas of the world where Internet dissemination is still limited escaped the virus called “Gangnam Style.”
5. See Erica Ho’s “‘Gangnam Style’: Is Japan Immune to Psy Mania?” at *Time.com* (<http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/10/15/gangnam-style-is-japan-immune-to-psy-mania/>), accessed December 12, 2012.
  6. See the official line by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/takeshima/>) and compare it to that of the South Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (<http://dokdo.mofat.go.kr/>). ROK Drop compiles the more unhinged statements and actions over the disputed micro-landmasses at <http://rokdrops.com/2010/07/12/the-newest-dokdo-idiot-cement-thrower-man/>.
  7. A “Bot,” or “web robot,” is a software program that automatically repeats a task over the Internet.
  8. The Japanese neologism for the artificial manipulation of YouTube by Psy and his colleagues is “F5 Style” (see <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/keyword/F5%A5%B9%A5%BF%A5%A4%A5%EB>). On the accusation that Psy “stole” (*pakuri*) his dance from a Japanese video, see <http://www.tokyo-sports.co.jp/entame/47649/>.
  9. As one barometer, see the cornucopia of cultural commentaries in the form of books on *Fuyusona* in Japan. Already by 2006, K. Hasegawa’s review of the literature yielded several books and over a score of articles.
  10. Furuya Masayuki (2005, 58–59) suggests that the term arose around 2002, when the Japanese interest in South Korea became fashionable in conjunction with the joint hosting of the 2002 World Cup.
  11. The sheer volume of print materials on K-pop is staggering. For overviews, see *Seoul de 100% tanoshimu K-Pop kanzen gaido* (2012) and *Seoul hon-Kanryū K-Pop 2013* (2012). For magazines, see, among others, *ODINA*, *K-Pop Wave*, and *A-Music*.
  12. SHINee’s “Dazzling Girl” was number two on October 22, 2012. Needless to say, other K-pop songs also cracked the top hundred in October 2012. For weekly Japan Billboard Hot 100 charts, see <http://www.billboard-japan.com/charts/>.
  13. For early studies of South Korean television drama’s expansion into Japan and elsewhere, see Mōri (2004); Hirata (2005); Ishita, Kimura, and Yamanaka (2007); Yi (2008); Pak (2008); Huat and Iwabuchi (2008); Russell (2008).
  14. Over 430,000 DVDs and the 1.2 million copies of the novelized two-volume sets were sold by fall 2005 (Hayashi 2005, 8–10).
  15. *Obasan*, as a kinship term, means “aunt,” but it is generally used to refer to any middle-aged woman. In contemporary usage, it has accrued negative conno-

- tations. Whereas young women are prized for being *kawaii* (cute) or *sekushi* (sexy), an *obasan* is, by definition, neither cute nor sexy. A woman of certain age with sexual appeal is often called *jukujo* (mature woman), but not *obasan*. Neither is *obasan* associated with professional women with social standing and cultural prestige, so it carries the implication of being an ordinary housewife. Some less-than-complimentary character traits associated with *obasan* include being nosy, gossipy, and bossy. For an overview of *obasan* as a pejorative stereotype, see Tanaka Hikaru (2011).
16. The significance of popular culture in enhancing popular perceptions of Japan and South Korea in both countries should not be underestimated (Kwon 2010, 35–45). For an overview of Japanese images of South Korea, see Tei (2010). For an early study of South Korean consumption of Japanese popular culture, see Paku and Tsuchiya (2001). For a pioneering study of transnational cultural flow in East Asia, see Iwabuchi (2001).
  17. To gauge Bae Yong Joon’s enduring appeal, see the special feature on Bae in *Aishiterut!! Shin Kankoku Dorama* (2012). On the phenomenology of *hamaru*, at least in the case of *kandora* fans, Higashimura (2012) offers a brilliant depiction.
  18. Hayashi, for example, reveals that her favorite scene from *Fuyusona*, in which women are taken care of, exemplifies Bae’s kindness (2005, 14). On South Korean popular culture and “soft masculinity,” see Jung (2011, 35–39).
  19. The Takarazuka version debuted in 1975. In spite of its significance in making sense of Japanese popular culture, there is surprisingly little commentary on *Berubara*. This may be yet another manifestation of the gender divide: “sub-culture” sections of large Japanese bookstores tend to be full of books on male subcultures, but include few books on female subcultures. See, however, for *Berubara*, Asahi (2012).
  20. Some commentators are wont to expatiate on the Confucian character of South Korean stars. Although it is difficult to deny that the rhetoric of Confucian tradition is widely invoked in South Korea, it is misleading to see that as a crucial component of Japanese women’s attraction to Korean stars. It is fair to say that South Koreans have had enough of the Confucian and post-Confucian patriarchy that promotes male boorishness (Lie forthcoming).
  21. It is possible that the popularity of *kandora* stars signifies the waning hegemony of Westernized beauty ideals in Japan, which may in turn be related to the declining significance of American cultural hegemony in Japan. Paek (2005) argues that the Korean Wave is a counterhegemonic cultural movement.
  22. For an overview of South Korean television, see Chōng and Chang (2000). On the South Korean culture industry’s export strategy, see Onoda (2011).



23. Consider, among many others, books on opera (Masui and Sekine 2011), jazz (Atkins 2001), hip-hop (Condry 2006), reggae (Sterling 2010), and electronic music (Tanaka Yūji 2001).
24. For a useful overview, see Ugaya (2005).
25. See, for example, Kimizuka (2012, chap. 2). For a larger picture, see Mōri (2007, chap. 5).
26. Note BoA's almost impeccable spoken Japanese by the time she debuted in Japan in 2002 (<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ABkXXiWaz6A>). Although grammatically similar, Japanese and Korean are phonetically distinct. It is an extremely rare feat to sound like a native speaker in both languages.
27. Objectively, at least, K-pop stars tend to be taller than J-pop stars. See, for example, the statistics in *K-pop for Aera* (2012, 90–91).
28. BL (Boys' Love) *manga* provide another form of displacement (same-sex love) but valorize the same set of male ideals, the genealogy of which can be traced to *Berubara* and even earlier. Yoshinaga Fumi's post-BL *manga* play with two polarized types: the aggressive, rough rapist sort versus the gentle, kind, sensitive male type in, for example, her four-volume *Seiyō kottō kashiten* (2000–2002) and her ongoing masterpiece *Ōoku* (2005–).
29. In the original, first volume of *Manga Ken Kanryū* (2005), Yamano's ire is directed against progressive Japanese intellectuals and their interpretation of Japanese history and war crimes. Introducing a Zainichi protagonist, by the fourth volume (2009), the *manga* deals with Zainichi political demands, such as local suffrage rights.
30. South Korea is also an interloper in the sense of being a nation of arrivistes. That is, the dynamism of not only the South Korean economy but also its popular culture threatens the longstanding status hierarchy in which, for almost all Japanese people, Japan had until recently been superior to South Korea.
31. John Lennon notwithstanding, what is remarkable is the intensely inward-looking—and almost untranslatable—nature of the AKB 48 phenomenon.
32. Fortunately, readers can judge for themselves. Compare, for example, the music videos by the two groups, both big hits in Japan: [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=lkHInWFnAoc&feature=list\\_related&playnext=1&list=AL94UKMTqg-9CrZ-P\\_rw1paPmSQwMrVBvo](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=lkHInWFnAoc&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=AL94UKMTqg-9CrZ-P_rw1paPmSQwMrVBvo) and <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=fhseD2tRLUY>.
33. For a debate on the source of AKB 48's popularity, see Kobayashi et al. (2012).
34. For a general introduction, see Okada (2000). For an interesting chronicle of the 1980s by one of the chief theorists of *otaku* culture, see Ōtsuka (2004).
35. For an earlier, more empirical, articulation, see Miyadai, Ōtsuka, and Ishikara (1993).



36. For overviews, see Kadokura (2006, 2009).
37. See also Psy's interview with CNN, in which he says: "I would say that Gangnam is the capital of Seoul, which, of course, is the capital of [South] Korea. People who are actually from Gangnam never proclaim that they are—it's only the posers and wannabes that put on these airs and say that they are 'Gangnam Style'—so this song is actually poking fun at those kinds of people who are trying so hard to be something that they're not." Available at <http://travel.cnn.com/seoul/play/interview-psy-gangnam-style-posers-and-hysterical-little-boy-285626>.

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