



Imagining Korean Space: Visual Localization Strategies in Korean Popular Music Videos

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The government of South Korea has been supporting Hallyu, the international popularity of Korean popular culture, particularly as an investment in soft power diplomacy with the power to reframe the image of Korea abroad. As Hallyu and related goods and services have grown to become a major part of the economy, the government has used Hallyu stars to promote Korean tourism and that stars, feeling their unofficial status as ambassadors of "brand Korea" are motivated to include nods to Koreanness in their cultural products. Whether exhibiting nationalist zeal, genuinely inspired, or blindly self-exoticizing, "Korea" is a significant actor in many songs and videos. In this paper I explore the contradictions and effect of imagined Korean settings and the use of Korean traditional iconography in recent hip-hop videos from major idols, independent, and underground artists with a particularly close reading of rapper Beenzino's mid-2016 offering "January." Examining the types of spaces and icons used introduces questions about what type of space is imagined as a "Korean space," and poses complex questions about the role of pop stars (and their agencies) in branding Korea.

CedarBough T. Saeji is Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia. Saeji's long term research focuses on cultural policies and intangible cultural heritage, but an overarching interest in how culture is presented has led to a wide range of research that examines media, museum displays, and performances. In addition to pieces in *The Journal of Korean Studies*, *Korea Journal*, *Acta Koreana*, *Asian Theatre Journal* and several edited volumes, Saeji is currently completing a book on Korean mask dance dramas and co-editing a volume on the invention of tradition in the Korean context.

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