K-Pop and K-Pop Fandom in Indonesia: Charting a New Musical Geography in Asia

As Indonesians develop an indigenous popular music industry, ranging in style from cover versions of American hits to hybridized blends of rock and local genres, foreign influences from other parts of Asia have entered the mix. Since the early 21st century, the most prominent has been Korean pop—which swept in suddenly in the early 2000s along with a flood of Korean TV dramas. Along with the sound of the music, itself derivative of pop music elsewhere, the visual dimension plays a critical role in its appeal: dance, staging, and clothing. Based on field work in Indonesia in 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2013, and direct engagement with social media, this paper identifies core features of K-pop as perceived and appreciated by Indonesians and considers contours of K-pop fandom in Indonesia, the methods of distribution and patterns of consumption. It also queries the contributions K-pop is making to Indonesian notions of “Koreanness” and the reasons underlying its appeal over other popular music transmitted transnationally.