K-Literature
Korean Literature Reaches Out to A Wider Audience

Korean Oriental Painter
Song Soo-nam

"Gangnam Style"
PSY
Treading Every Inch of Joseon on Foot

CARTOGRAPHER

KIM JEONG-HO

Kim Jeong-ho was well aware of the utmost importance of maps to national interest, and he is remembered today as a pioneering cartographer and geographer and one of the heroes of the Joseon Dynasty for his tenacity, determination, and creativity. by Im Sang-beom

Today, all one needs in order to see what a certain area looks like is an Internet connection. A little typing and clicking can afford you maps and satellite images on many different scales. In many parts of the world, people commonly use satellite navigation devices and handheld smart devices to find their way with precision, even to remote locations where they have never been. An entire generation is growing up with these technologies, but paper maps were previously indispensable to travelers.

The travelers of the Joseon Dynasty (1932-1910) were no exception. The need for accurate and detailed maps must have been great also for the national interest as Korea suffered so many foreign incursions and major invasions during the Joseon Dynasty period. Yet, no maps were accurate enough. Mountains, rivers, and roads were indicated, but the scales were not precise despite the best efforts of cartographers.

This did not mean that Koreans gave short shrift to the publication of maps. The first maps of Korea were drafted before the Three Kingdoms Period (BCE 57-CE 668), and the government of the Joseon Dynasty began printing maps immediately after its establishment. An extremely important example is the Honil Gangni Yeokdae Gukdo jido (lit. The Integrated Map of the Territories and Capitals of the States; the oldest extant world map; 1.68m x 1.58m). However, nobody would disagree that the cartography of the Joseon Dynasty marked a watershed when Kim Jeong-ho (cir. 1804-1866) completed the Daedongryeojido (lit. The Map of the Great East), a national map that he published in 1861 after studying the available national maps and treading every corner of the country for more than 30 years. Last year marked the 150th anniversary of the publication of the map.

The Daedongryeojido was printed with 22 wooden blocks. When it is completely unfolded, a grand map of Joseon appears at a scale of about 1:162,000. Standing before this enormous
map about 6.7 meters high north to south is overwhelming. It shows the territory of Joseon in extreme detail. The map in its entirety has an air of an artist’s relief work, and every line bespeaks of the tremendous effort that Kim Jeong-ho poured into it. Every scale mark conveys geographical, social, cultural, and administrative information.

Before the Daedongnyeojido, Kim published such maps as the Suseon Jeonmu (a map of Seoul) in the 1840s, the Cheonggudo (a national map) in 1834, and the Dongnyeodo (a national map) in 1857. He authored atlases and geography books including Dongnyeodoji (1834-1844), Yeodobiji (1853-1956), and Daedongjiji (1861-1864).

**UNKNOWN LIFE OF KIM JEONG-HO**

We can only surmise at his date of birth, hometown, and the locations where he did his most important work. This suggests that Kim Jeong-ho was not of high stature in Joseon society. What there is of his biography is contained in Injang Gyeommunok (1862), a collection of biographies of great people from the middle and lower classes, which implies that Kim was probably a commoner who achieved remarkable feats that were widely recognized.

It is not clear what motivated Kim to preoccupy himself with the production of maps, but it is evident that he transcended the class barriers as a geographer and cartographer by inventing new cartographical techniques and thereby pushing the boundaries of his realm. He had no intention of blindly following the conventional methods, nor remaining a map-drawing technical drone. He left distance marks at about every 5.4 kilometers on his maps and presented neatly devised legends that explain symbols and signs for easier use of his atlas and geography books.

A case in point is the Cheonggudo, which was the first map made by Kim. A two-volume book, the map came with an easy-to-use legend and two indications of distance (on-the-map distances and actual distances) with grids. Kim also provided administrative and military statistics on his maps for users who were ruling-class yangban and government officials. All these point to his idea of ideal maps; maps are not simple illustrative representations of geographical features, but must serve their users’ purposes—personal or governmental. Not only are there few official records of Kim Jeong-ho, he also did not write much about himself. Yet, his maps, atlases, and books shed light on his character and vision. If he had lived in the 21st century, he would still be a creative pioneer, transcending limits, pushing old boundaries, and setting new rules.

**DOKDO ON THE DAEDONGNYEOJIDO**

Japan’s claim to sovereignty over Dokdo was partly based on the fact that the wooden block version of the Daedongnyeojido does not indicate Dokdo. However, the manuscript version of the Daedongnyeojido which a team of the Academy of Korean Studies discovered in 2010 in the collection of the Research Institute for Korean Studies, shows a small island to the right of Ulleungdo named Uzan, which was the old name of Dokdo.
The Globe’s Gone with “Gangnam Style”

PSY

An exciting, addictive song with an electronic beat and a wacky, comical music video is transcending culture and language barriers with its infectious “horse-riding dance.” Multitalented Korean musician PSY’s “Gangnam Style” is a worldwide sensation. by Yang In-sil

When Dodger Stadium hosted a baseball game between the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Francisco Giants on August 22, the stadium looked as it always does, but during the break following the fifth inning, something unexpected happened. Korean rapper PSY’s “Gangnam Style” blasted throughout the stadium and the announcer rallied the spectators to do PSY’s “horse-riding dance.” Over 40,000 spectators got up and started moving their bodies on “invisible air horses.” Coincidentally or not, the multitalented Korean singer PSY was on the scene in the stands. The stadium cameras zoomed in on him just as PSY had stood up and began treating the cheering spectators to his signature horse-riding dance moves. The big electronic video board flashed this Korean overnight sensation with his stage name, PSY.

The same day, Katy Perry, the popular American singer, songwriter, and actress, tweeted, “Help, I’m in a Gangnam style k hole [sic],” and attached a link to the music video “Gangnam Style.” PSY replied to Katy’s tweet, saying, “Hi...I’m the very ‘PSY’ of the video [sic].”

Other celebrity musicians including T-Pain, Robbie Williams, Josh Groban, and Britney Spears tweeted about the viral song, accelerating its spread. Another big name who tweeted about “Gangnam Style” was Tom Cruise, who reportedly began following PSY on Twitter.
OVER 100 MILLION VIEWS ON YOUTUBE IN 50 DAYS
Events are moving so quickly that everything your reporter writes becomes old news as soon as it is printed. PSY’s “Gangnam Style” creates news story after news story every single day. Appearing on The Ellen DeGeneres Show on NBC, he taught Britney Spears how to dance the horse-riding dance. PSY became the first Korean singer to top the US iTunes Chart. According to the Guinness World Records (GWR), the music video is not only the most ever viewed on YouTube, but also the most liked. An MTV European Music Award (EMA) nomination for Best Video must have sent PSY galloping. On September 19, the Associated Press (AP) sent out news that PSY’s “Gangnam Style” has racked up 220 million YouTube views. The New York Times, an influential US daily, ran detailed coverage on PSY and his music video under the heading, “Viral Video Gets Propaganda Treatment,” on September 20. And for quite some time yet, the story of PSY’s meteoric success will continue to unfold too rapidly and too wildly to adequately cover in any article.

At the 2012 MTV Video Music Awards held at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on September 6, PSY appeared from below the stage with host Kevin Hart. The two were doing the horse-riding dance together. When asked how he felt, PSY answered in Korean, “I feel awesome and happy. I’ve been hoping to speak in Korean on this stage someday,” and then shouted also in Korean, “Isn’t it cool?”

YG Entertainment, a management agency for PSY, officially announced that PSY had signed a contract on international publishing rights with Universal Republic Records, a label owned by Universal Music Group. The contract covers the global market excluding Korea and Japan.

Foreign media outlets such as TIME, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times, CNN, and ABC (all of which are headquartered in the United States), Reuters (based in the United Kingdom), and M6 TV (France) noted the sensation that PSY’s “Gangnam Style” has created.

THE POWER OF ONE WELL-MADE SONG
In addition to the sheer artistry and genius of PSY, there are three major factors for the phenomenal worldwide response to “Gangnam Style.” The song and music video are in touch with electronic music, which today is the big trend worldwide. Its comical elements help “Gangnam Style” cross national and cultural boundaries. There’s also the Internet, which has made the music video globally viewable. This mode of communication came of age just as Korean pop (K-pop) gained a global following.

Globally, electronic music is all the rage in the popular music world. Such mainstream genres as rock, hip hop, and pop constantly attempt to mingle with electronic music since electronic music-based songs are now popular.

The many comical and humorous touches in “Gangnam Style” made the music video spread like wildfire on the Internet by people looking for something fun and simple. Gawker, a New York City-based humor and gossip website, spread the wildfire even further before it reached CNN, TIME, and many other media outlets.

It is easy to sing along with “Gangnam Style.” There are neither especially high notes nor difficult rap parts. The lyrics are straightforward and simple, and the chorus is full of the simple
worldwide spread of Hallyu and are showing their formidable power to the fullest in the success of “Gangnam Style.” SNS channels, empowered even further by the appearance of smart handheld devices, make it possible for global villagers to share content whenever they want and wherever they are.

LOOKING FORWARD TO SECOND AND THIRD GANGNAM STYLES

The music industry hardly expected “Gangnam Style” to be accepted globally so rapturously. K-pop has been led by extremely attractive girl and boy bands. PSY is not a handsome boy, but a rather chubby 35-year-old father of twin girls. “Gangnam Style,” however, has overtaken the K-pop girl and boy bands, who have been building increasingly fervent fan bases globally, from Asia to North America, Europe, and Oceania. It is also much more than a flash in the pan. The world seems to avidly anticipate what more this talented entertainer, PSY, has to offer.

“This might indicate that more and more people are becoming less and less attracted to K-pop girl bands. They have been hot for the past four or five years at home and abroad,” says a critic. “Considering that the typical popular music trend lasts four or five years, we may be witnessing a significant transition right now.”

“The music video ‘Gangnam Style’ isn’t something that a giant producer could make through systematic planning. Rather, it’s a product of PSY, an individual who is pretty far from the universal standards of beauty and who has discovered his own strengths and developed his own style and knowhow over time.”

This view is also shared by other critics, many of whom believe that now may be the time to apply new strategies for K-pop, instead of relying so heavily on attractive girls and boys who dance and sing together. PSY’s “Gangnam Style” has awakened people to the explosive power that one well-made song can have and is raising expectations for second and third Gangnam Styles to stratospheric levels.