

WEINTRAUB, ANDREW N. & BART BARENDREGT
(eds). *Vamping the stage: female voices of Asian modernities*. viii, 363 pp., figs, illus., bibliogr.
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Vamping the stage is an enlightening edited volume which details the struggles of Asian female vocalists from the turn of the twentieth century. This rare collection of essays gives voice to women's participation in and contributions to the changing trends of the popular culture industry in Asia amidst shifts in political ideologies, religious discourses, commercial expansion, and increasing commodification. As editors Andrew N. Weintraub and Bart Barendregt explain, the book's aim is to 'study modernity as both a discursive construct and an experimental project within Asia' with its 'complicating histories and unexpected trajectories' (p. 12).

The volume has four sections. Part I, 'Triumph and tragedies of the colonized voice', begins at the turn of the twentieth century with chapters 1 and 2 on several prominent female singers in pre-war China, followed by chapter 3 on Malay women singers in colonial Malaya, and a general essay on 'comfort women' in China and South Korea (chap. 4). Part II, 'Modern stars and modern lives', examines female singers in Japan, Indonesia, and South India up to the 1960s. It is an engaging section, led by Christine R. Yano's riveting discussion of the 'musical evolution' of Misora Hibari's voice through the often-paradoxical shifts in political, commercial, and cultural genres of both pre-war and post-war Japan (chap. 6). Chapter 7 is Andrew N. Weintraub's meticulous portrayal of the Indonesian singer and songwriter Titiiek Puspa as representative of the 'disjuncture between civil society and the reigning political order' from the anti-imperialist 'Old Order' of Suharto's era, to the pro-western 'New Order' under Sukarno's

leadership (p. 145). Amanda Weidman's chapter 8 then offers an insightful analysis of L.R. Eswari's career contextualized by the growing trend in postcolonial India to idealize the female playback voice.

Part III, 'Silenced voices and forbidden modernities', is led by Soojin Kim's chapter 9 on two female singers in South Korea during the 1960s, followed by Bart Barendregt's chapter 10 on a pop diva in postcolonial Malaysia. Chapter 11 examines the female icon Googoosh amidst the political and cultural turmoil of twentieth-century Iran, though it is unclear as to how an essay on a Middle Eastern country is linked conceptually or discursively to this book on Asia. A brief introduction to each section might have helped readers better understand the rationale and flow of the content selection and arrangement. Part IV, 'Body politics and discourses of femininity', includes Ricard Trimillos's chapter 12 on the Philippines; Russell Skelchy's chapter 13 on Java, Indonesia; followed by Hee-sun Kim's chapter 14 on several 'dancing divas' from the burgeoning post-1980s K-pop industry; ending with a discussion of the popularity of the synthesizer-produced 'female voice' of Hatsune Miku, a modern Japanese anthropomorph in Jennifer Matsue's chapter 15.

There is thus an extensive emphasis on East Asia – three chapters on South Korea, two on China, and two on Japan – and a rather limited focus on Southeast Asia: two chapters on Indonesia, two on Malaysia, and one on the Philippines. Only one chapter is devoted to India, despite the country's enormous entertainment industry, which also has a long history, while Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam are not featured. A chapter on the influence of prominent female singers from Hong Kong and Taiwan would also have been illuminating since they dominated Asia's entertainment scene – among Chinese-speaking audiences – for several decades before the ascension of K-pop. Many of these singers achieved iconic status by transforming lyrical genres and increasing the visibility of the feminine on the Asian stage. Some became household names across Asia, including Japan, and contributed significantly to the radical geopolitical shifts within the region that realigned the dominance of Asia's popular culture landscape, and created new possibilities for redefining the meaning of femininity and redrawing the gender dynamics and body politics of Asia's entertainment industries.

In exploring the divergent paths towards modernity and the conflicting trends of feminization in the popular culture industry across

Asia, the insightful compilation of essays in *Vamping the stage* gives voice to an under-documented category of the Asian population whose struggles, accomplishments, and experiences of conformity, resistance, and change in their professional pursuits and private life would otherwise have remained muted. It paves the way for future publications on many more artistes who have been marginalized and under-represented, though whose aesthetic contributions have had significant impact on the varying transformations in the political structures, economic pursuits, and cultural shifts across Asia. This is thus an important volume for researchers, teachers, students, and non-academics interested in gaining a better understanding of gender studies, Asian studies, and developments in Asian popular culture, especially women's contributions to geopolitical shifts in the popular culture industry across Asia.

SWEE-LIN HO *National University of Singapore*