THE MEANING OF JUNGKOOK

THE TRIUMPH OF BTS AND THE MAKING OF A GLOBAL POP SUPERSTAR

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS IT ABOUT JUNGKOOK?

Forty seconds. It took forty seconds, by fan and media accounts, to sell out the tickets for Jungkook's solo debut. Jeon Jungkook—surname Jeon, first name Jungkook, professionally styled Jung Kook, but more commonly spelled Jungkook—the "sold-out king," as he's affectionately called, is the center and youngest member of BTS. Short for Bangtan Sonyeondan, or Bulletproof Boy Scouts, the South Korean boy group is the country's most celebrated pop-cultural export to date, hailed as a spiritual successor to the Beatles. An outlier in the K-pop industry, BTS possessed a rare Cinderella story that saw them go from an underdog act, playing for a crowd of 5,000 across three days at AX-Korea in 2014, to performing two sold-out nights at London's Wembley Stadium in 2019 for 120,000 screaming fans.

BTS has shattered many records. At various times they have: held the most viewed YouTube video in twenty-four hours, been the fastest to reach one million followers on TikTok and the first Korean act to debut at number one on the Billboard 200, been the most streamed group on Spotify, the most followed group on Instagram, had the most Twitter (now X) engagements, and been the first Asian act to

perform at Wembley and sell out the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. In 2019, they became the first band since the Beatles to score three number-one albums on the Billboard 200 in a single year. They have been on the cover of *Rolling Stone* and *Variety*, plus *Time* magazine on three separate occasions. ARMY, the official name of their fan base, who number in the tens of millions by unofficial counts, are known for their passion and devotion, racking up more than twenty Guinness World Records for the group through sales and streams. Strictly by the numbers, BTS has become the biggest K-pop group in the world. Though often compared to era-defining acts like the Beatles or One Direction, BTS holds the distinction of being the first all-Asian boy band to reach such great heights without any native English speakers.

The thought of any artists breaking out of their cultural and linguistic restrictions to introduce seven distinctly Korean names—Kim Namjoon, Kim Seokjin, Min Yoongi, Jung Hoseok, Park Jimin, Kim Taehyung, Jeon Jungkook—into the mainstream was unfathomable, something that I and many others of the Asian diaspora considered a pipe dream. The success of BTS and their dominance through the late 2010s and early 2020s is undeniable.

After reaching the top as a member of BTS, Jungkook was set to embark on a new endeavor as a Korean solo artist, aiming to break through an even higher ceiling to singular global pop stardom. He made his opening move in July 2023, as a sweltering heat wave simmered over New York City. Unlike his debut with BTS under the fledgling record label Big Hit Entertainment, Jungkook's second debut was supported by the might of HYBE, a billion-dollar entertainment company with a dedicated US division run by Scooter Braun, former manager of Justin Bieber, Ariana Grande, and Demi Lovato. Jungkook chose "Seven (feat. Latto)," a three-minute, four-second song sung not in Korean but in English. The performance was not on a Korean

music show like *Inkigayo* or *Music Bank* but on *Good Morning America*. Jungkook was the first K-pop solo artist invited to kick off the program's Summer Concert Series with a three-song set in Central Park. Demand was so high that free-ticketing platform 1iota opened the raffle for tickets at 12:00 p.m. EST and closed it down before one minute had passed.

The concert was scheduled for Friday morning, and the line of ticket holders began to form on Monday at Seventy-Second Street, stretching down Fifth Avenue and hugging the low stone wall that encircled the park. Seeking shelter beneath the towering elm trees, their deep green leaves providing ample shade, the fans came with rolling shopping carts and blue IKEA Frakta bags, from which they withdrew collapsible camping chairs and inflatable sofas and pool rafts in shades of pink and silver and blue. Fleece blankets for comfort and warmth, despite the nearly ninety-degree days, were shared between clusters of friends who took turns waiting, cycling between hotel rooms and health clubs to shower and rest, co-opting the Apple Store bathroom on Madison Avenue as an outpost. ARMY was as organized as a local militia.

By Thursday afternoon, more than seven hundred people stood in line, according to fans who checked in at the entrance; by nightfall, close to two thousand, and by dawn of Friday morning, the line reportedly wound its way twelve city blocks down to Sixtieth Street, wrapping back into the park along East Drive. By sunrise, Jungkook, who had flown in from Seoul two days prior, made his way to Rumsey Playfield. Still nursing a stubborn sore throat that had stuck around for several weeks, he was worried how the performance would go, and the storm clouds overhead, threatening heavy rain and thunder, increased his troubles. Dressed in simple light-wash jeans and a white tank with two thin silver chains, a black zip-up worn on top, Jungkook

gripped the railing, bouncing slightly on the heels of his Balenciaga sneakers, looking tense.

Jungkook was scheduled to perform at eight a.m., but not long after seven, the storm warning had become a reality, and the impending lightning made it impossible to proceed. The *Good Morning America* team made the call to cut the rehearsal short and move up and prerecord the sound check to air instead, a contingency plan that caught Jungkook off guard. Fans were quickly ushered past the barricades, clutching their phones and pink plush dolls of Cooky, the adorable muscular bunny that Jungkook had created as a cartoon avatar of himself for BTS's collaboration with Japanese messaging app LINE. Backstage he laughed in disbelief, as the hairstylist fussed over his bangs. For the performance, his stylist exchanged his hoodie for a studded white Givenchy top.

Despite the last-minute change in schedule, Jungkook didn't seem too bothered. Ascending the stairs, Jungkook flashed the camera an easygoing smile, the light catching on a hoop pierced through his bottom lip. The first strains of "Euphoria," a solo from the BTS compilation album *Love Yourself: Answer*, began, the camera closing in on the ARMY logo printed on Jungkook's custom in-ear monitors. When he walked down the bleachers, fans stretched their hands toward him and he gave a few high fives, their recipients gazing giddily at the palms he had briefly touched.

Over the course of nine minutes, Jungkook performed three songs, including the first live performance of "Seven." The music video had dropped at midnight and, according to *Good Morning America*, gained eighteen million views on YouTube by the time of the recording. He sang in his smooth tenor, moving with a light step, a modern-day Fred Astaire had Astaire learned hip-hop. Backed by a live band and with four dancers beside him, Jungkook serenaded the crowd of men and

women, who had been screaming and barking for the last half hour. They pumped their fists and crossed their thumbs and index fingers into little hearts, chanting his name. The fans were experiencing unfettered joy, something that BTS had always offered. Now Jungkook was providing it alone here: communal, unbridled happiness. When he sang a solo rendition of "Dynamite," BTS's first English-language single, Jungkook held the microphone out to the crowd to sing together, as raindrops began to fall. When the concert aired, broadcast-friendly tweets scrolled along the bottom of the screen:

"he was born to perform & Rock on Stage Superstar Jungkook."

"Jungkook has the most beautiful smile!! How do you not instantly fall in love with him??"

"OH JUNGKOOK YOU WILL ALWAYS BE THE MAIN CHARACTER"

"Our Boy is a Born Star . . . So So So Proud of him . . . Feeling Emotional R8 now7"

Not long after he wrapped, the skies opened and the downpour began, as if they, too, had waited for the performance to go on, quenching the crowd that had waited days for what felt like a historic event. "Seven" would become the fastest song to reach one billion streams on Spotify. Jungkook went on to set the first-day sales record for a K-pop soloist, according to Korean music chart Hanteo, debuted at number one on the Billboard Hot 100, and number three on the Official UK Singles Chart, making the then-highest charting UK debut for a Korean solo artist. He made history, and it all started there with ARMY. From the hundreds of fans who attended BTS's first public showcase back in 2013 to those who tuned in to Jungkook's YouTube vlogs, which he began recording as a teenage trainee. This was the latest episode on their shared journey. They championed Jungkook. They loved him. They had watched him grow over the years, mesmerized

by his talent, addicted to his music, and now they stood with him as he began the next chapter. Braving the sweltering heat and sleepless nights on the sidewalk, fans witnessed Jungkook's first steps on the road from K-pop to main pop stardom.

Four months later, when Jungkook released his solo album, *Golden*, he became the first K-pop soloist to have three of his singles—"Seven," "3D," and "Standing Next to You"—hit the top ten of the Billboard Hot 100. *Golden* set the record for longest-charting album on the Billboard 200 from a Korean solo artist, surpassing every bar and expectation that had been set for him. In the span of only eight months, Jungkook once again achieved the unthinkable. An Eastern male singer backed by the Western entertainment industry, applauded by not only ARMY but the laymen who caught him on network TV, Jungkook broke through the foreign trappings of K-pop and set the stage for his ascendance as a global pop superstar.

"The name's Jungkook. The scale's nationwide." That was the first time I heard the name Jungkook when, in June 2013, BTS debuted on the weekly music show *M Countdown* with a performance of "We Are Bulletproof Pt.2," which opened with Jungkook delivering that playful boast. I thought it was charming how the young artist, then fifteen years old, introduced himself with the braggadocio pun (Jungkook and *jeonguk*, the entire nation), but never imagined the name Jungkook would surpass the national scale to be known around the world. It should have been impossible. Back then, long before I covered K-pop for publications like American *Vogue*, before I moved from New York to Seoul and spent one summer working for a record label, I was a K-pop fan like any other. But rather than a fan devoted to any one group, I considered myself more a scholar, who studied the inner workings of the industry with fascination.

When I speak of K-pop, I am not speaking of Korean pop music, which encompasses everything from ballads to rock. I am speaking of the idol system, which was adapted from Japan and developed around fandom culture. As South Korea's most visible cultural product, K-pop was an illuminating means of learning about the country's global reputation, its role and relative position in the world. A child of immigrants, I derived particular interest from watching the way Korean artists were received overseas, as they became a proxy for understanding the way I was received. Observing the constant clash of cultures, taste, and values, the different ways of engaging with the artists and their work, was as engrossing as the earworm songs and hypnotic performances I had enjoyed since the days of H.O.T. and Shinhwa—the first generation of K-pop stars—whose VHS tapes my mother rented from the local Korean market. After I fell into groups like SHINee as a teen, I became absorbed by the wealth of content increasingly available on YouTube.

From my vantage point in the US, I watched so many artists spark for an instant, each one taking a small step forward, laying stones to cross a river without being able to glimpse the opposite shore. In 2007, Rain topped *Time* magazine's Time 100 reader poll; the solo singer received the first-place vote two more times and appeared on *The Colbert Report* and Hollywood's live-action *Speed Racer*. Wonder Girls opened for the Jonas Brothers World Tour 2009. "Gee" by Girls' Generation went viral, to the point where it was played in the dining hall at my American college campus. In 2012, I heard Psy's "Gangnam Style" everywhere, from a greasy club in Midtown to a tiny trattoria in Rome. Before "Gangnam Style," the first YouTube video to ever hit one then two billion views, the average American, in my personal experience, had such a limited view of Korea that the go-to cultural reference was *M*A*S*H*, a seventies TV series about US soldiers in the Korean War.

That was no longer the case. Each artist made a blip, ripples large and small, before returning home to successful careers, largely forgotten by the West. When BTS began trending overseas, I thought it would be another flash in the pan, another "Gangnam Style" moment of virality. I was delightfully wrong. Every time I thought BTS had hit a wall, that the Sisyphean boulder would tumble downhill, they found a way to push forward. Ten years after their debut, their international feats continue to surprise me.

Among the seven members, Jungkook, with his dimples and easy smile, was the name and face that popped most readily in the Western cultural consciousness. He was mentioned by name, for example, on a 2021 episode of *The Simpsons* ("everyone in BTS, except for Jungkook, he's too pretty for my taste."). By 2024 he'd topped the inaugural Billboard K-Pop Artist 100 list. It is not as simple as declaring him the most popular member. All seven members have their own dedicated fandoms. All seven members have made a unique contribution to the group's success. The edict in K-pop fandom is to love and support every member. Anything counter to that is particularly foreign to BTS, whose found-family dynamic has stood the test of time, nor is it what Jungkook himself, always humble and shy, seemed to want, being dedicated to the group and to ARMY. Yet beyond raw statistics, superstars possess a more ineffable quality that draws public attention; in that regard, Jungkook has been the pick of the general populace. As early as 2017, when BTS performed at the American Music Awards, Jungkook drew comparisons to Justin Timberlake and Harry Styles as the potential "breakout" star with the strongest solo prospects. Again and again, people came calling for him: singer-songwriter Charlie Puth, who requested Jungkook for his song "Left and Right" in 2022. The 2022 FIFA World Cup, where he was invited to perform the song "Dreamers" at

the opening ceremony in Qatar. Calvin Klein, who appointed him a global brand ambassador in 2023.

Five years after the American Music Awards, after BTS had transcended their genre to become a cultural phenomenon, the seven members gathered for Festa 2022, their anniversary celebration, and announced a pause on group releases that stunned the public and sent HYBE stocks down by nearly 28 percent. In hindsight, the announcement made perfect sense. Widely referred to as Chapter 2, this new phase would allow each member, for the first time in nine years, to fully pursue their own personal projects, before enlisting in the military to complete the service mandated by South Korean law, which would essentially place a dead stop on their careers. Each could make the music he wanted, not restrained by the needs of the group or the company. They could even take a break if they so wished, which Jungkook did for almost five months.

From that moment, their musical paths began to diverge, just a little. In brief: J-Hope released the hip-hop album *Jack in the Box* and performed at Lollapalooza 2022, the first Korean artist to headline a major US festival. Jin released an upbeat pop-rock single called "The Astronaut," cowritten with Coldplay, and flew seventy-two hours round-trip to Argentina to perform at the band's Buenos Aires show; the eldest, he began military service first, paving the way for the rest of the group. Grappling with creative burnout, RM released the sonically eclectic studio album *Indigo* with a trip to NPR's Tiny Desk concert series, collaborating with a range of artists like Erykah Badu and Youjeen of nineties Korean rock band Cherry Filter, and, in a nod to his artistic inclinations, filmed a twelve-minute concert special at Dia Beacon in Upstate New York. Jimin dropped *Face*, a pop and R&B studio album sung in Korean and English, breaking a slew of records including the first

K-pop solo artist to top the Billboard Hot 100. Under the alias Agust D, which he first used in 2016, Suga released the rap album *D-Day* and went on the Suga Agust D Tour, which became the highest-grossing US tour by an Asian soloist. V took the time to slowly work on the sort of music he liked, not pure pop but a more R&B and jazz-influenced work called *Layover*, which was another record-breaker on release.

As each chose to express himself in his own way, anticipation began to build for Jungkook, nicknamed the golden *maknae* (*maknae* meaning youngest) by RM during their trainee days, who appeared to possess the greatest global ambitions. Those became clear when he released *Golden*: eleven pure pop tracks, sung entirely in English.

By the end of his debut, which featured remixes with artists like Usher and Justin Timberlake and songwriting credits by Shawn Mendes and Ed Sheeran and Diplo, Jungkook seemed to possess a new aura. As a guest on *Suchwita*, the YouTube series hosted by Suga, Jungkook presented his first solo output and received the ultimate recognition from his beloved bandmate. "The moment I saw the cover [of *Golden*], I thought, ah, a true pop star," Suga said. "Now an Asian pop star has finally appeared." His words felt like a coronation, as he declared what many others had been thinking for years.

An Asian pop star, embraced by the West—how did Jungkook achieve the impossible? There are a dozen company heads still gnashing their teeth over this very question, wondering how a boy named Jeon Jungkook from Busan, picked up by a small and struggling music label, became an international sensation. In truth, the potential had always been there. I will never forget the first time I saw him in the flesh. In 2016, when I was still a young editor at American *Vogue*, I had spent a year making an impassioned plea to cover BTS for the website and magazine. At the time, the mainstream media regarded idols as a passing curiosity. Compared to Western pop stars, K-pop stars' public

images appeared more meticulously crafted to present a manufactured fantasy that the average American found difficult to digest. But BTS seemed different. With their raw visuals and insightful lyrics and the unfiltered flow of content on social media platforms like YouTube and Twitter, BTS felt more authentic—and appealed to the West. At the center of that group stood Jungkook, who, even in those early days, had the makings of an it boy. While working for *Vogue* and then as a stylist, I have met more celebrities than I can recall. But the moment Jungkook walked into the room will always remain in my mind.

It was November 2017, and the boys were occupying the tenth floor of the JW Marriott in Los Angeles, a long stone's throw from the Staples Center, where they had performed for the American Music Awards. I remember I was helping a stylist unpack the steel-toed cowboy boots that she had called in from Raf Simons's Calvin Klein, from whom she had spent several days coaxing the samples. We were working with a skeleton crew, just me, the shoot producer, and the stylist, who had flown in from New York for the project. BTS's previous interview was running over schedule, and we were nervous about meeting our own strict timetable. I was anxious about the tensions between Big Hit and *Vogue*, who spoke different languages in more ways than one. I'd pushed for this feature, and I was counting on it to succeed. As I was checking on the seven iced Americanos the label had requested, Jungkook walked into the room without any warning and stood still for a moment, eyes wide, like a deer caught in headlights. In later years, I heard from friends in the industry that HYBE, the K-pop conglomerate that Big Hit would become, instituted some of the strictest policies among labels. Shoot locations were scouted and vetted by HYBE employees, and phones were either confiscated or their camera lenses covered by blue stickers that said "shooting forbidden" in Korean (the latter was my experience covering a HYBE group

for the March 2023 issue of *Vogue*). Interaction with the members was strictly controlled, NDAs signed. But not in 2017.

There was something about Jungkook in that moment that stuck with me. The wide-eyed look in his eyes, as he politely bowed to us and darted away; the way he sang softly to himself in the makeup chair; his ever-present smile, despite the jet lag. He possessed the rare brand of charisma that came through without effort. It was a natural charisma that couldn't be curated or controlled by a label's heavy hand. Despite his center position, he did not draw unnecessary attention to himself. He still seemed a bit shy and deferential to the other members, who were like his older brothers, who fussed over him as they adjusted the collar of his denim shirt. Yet when it came time to dance the chorus of "DNA," which they performed thrice across the city, Jungkook took the lead, humming the melody as he stood at the front. As he moved with ease, he became magnetic, enchanting the film crew of K-pop agnostics. "I'm obsessed," one said to me in a hushed voice, as Jungkook walked past unaware.

When I first considered the rise of Jungkook, I hoped to pinpoint what gave him such exceptional crossover appeal—in the eyes of not only ARMY but the everyman and higher powers, the record labels and publications that gravitated toward him. Jungkook spent only eight months performing as a soloist and, in that short span of time, he broke new ground for Asian artists. Despite his shaky grasp of English, he worked hard enough that it did not matter. I spent months dissecting his dance practices, absorbing livestreams and live performances, making him my dinnertime companion. With his face on my tablet screen, as we ate the same red-hot Buldak noodles, I would come to understand on an intrinsic level what it's like to be his fan. There is an unquantifiable magic at work, an ephemeral charm that belongs to Jungkook alone.

The truth is that Jungkook's success is a culmination of many forces. There is the triumph of BTS, who are inextricably linked to his story; without BTS and the six other members who practically raised him, per his own admission, there is no Jungkook. There are the technological advancements, the rise of social media platforms, and the globalization of pop culture. ARMY is an international force of fans who are among the most internet-savvy in the world and generate limitless content. There is Covid-19, the global pandemic that shut down the world in 2020 and stirred a collective need for the intimacy, joy, and optimism that artists like Jungkook could provide. Of course, there are his artistic talents. His sumptuous voice and his dancing style, which can be traced back to Michael Jackson, the king of dance. His good looks, which meet the conventional Korean standards of beauty but are subverted by his tattoos and piercings. His kindness and humility, which remained even after his rise to stardom. Then there are the larger driving forces that pushed K-pop forward, the historical backdrop and the cultural nuances that made BTS and Jungkook, in particular, palatable to both the East and West.

The complex factors that led to the making of Jungkook are intertwined and impossible to replicate; there is no manual to creating a global pop star. Yet examining these different aspects provides a richer understanding and appreciation for the artist and what he has accomplished in such a short amount of time—and what he can achieve going forward. This is a celebration of Jungkook, as it explores his cultural lineage, his musical influences, K-pop history, and all that he and BTS have achieved together and apart. It is a look at the deeper meaning behind his success. The making of Jungkook, the golden *maknae*, and Jungkook, the pop superstar, is a story about overcoming the odds. Through his triumphs, he challenged the status quo. And he's not even done yet. Not even close.

CHAPTER 1

HIS UNDERDOG STORY

The BTS story began with a classic exposition, containing the bones of a hero's journey: seven boys from the "countryside" move to the unforgiving city to chase after their dreams. It is a timeless trope for good reason, and the relatable underdog story became the group's narrative backbone, part and parcel of their universal attraction.

Gwacheon and Ilsan, satellite cities to the south and northwest of Seoul in the province of Gyeonggi. Daegu, the erstwhile "Apple City," a textile hub and commercial center to the southeast. Gwangju, the political hotbed to the southwest, where the student uprising and subsequent massacre of 1980 marked a pivotal moment in South Korea's road to democracy. Geochang, a county in South Gyeongsang Province. And Busan, the port city on the southeast side, known for its sand and pebble beaches and rugged coastline. These are the hometowns of the seven members of BTS. Ilsan and Gwacheon are a mere half-hour drive from central Seoul, without traffic, like Long Island from Manhattan. Busan, the second-largest city in Korea still dwarfed by Seoul, is certainly not backcountry. Even Korean Americans, if they

did not grow up in Korea, will find it difficult to grasp the vast gaps that exist between Seoul and every other city.

Seoul is more than the capital of South Korea. It is the metaphorical heart and cultural epicenter. Like Chicago is to Illinois, New York City to New York State, the city has become synonymous with the greater area around it. So much of Korean commerce and creativity, business and politics, is concentrated in 234 square miles of earth. Compared to other capitals, however, Seoul takes its centricity to an extreme. In 2024, the city was home to about 9.6 million residents, nearly 20 percent of the total population, with more than 40,000 people residing per square mile. It is extraordinarily dense. (For reference, New York City was estimated to have about 29,303 residents per square mile in 2020). According to a 2024 report by the Bank of Korea, the percentage of the population living in the greater capital area (50.6 percent) was the largest among the twenty-six countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

To live in Seoul is to wage daily war, locked in ceaseless competition with those around you. Fighting day in and day out to carve a space of your own: for parking, a seat at the café, acceptance to a top university, a good job. Those born of privilege have it easier. Those who aren't suffer, and those who are able to win these battles earn the right to reside in the city where everything happens. Being a "Seoul *saram*," which literally translates to a "Seoul person," is a mark of prestige. As in other metropolitan cities, there is a distinct sense of snobbery. Take the existence of the *chaebol*, which are family-run conglomerates supported by the government, immortalized for their wealth and glamorized in Korean TV dramas like *The Heirs*. Their pervasive influence extends to general attitudes: Seoulites tend to be obsessed with brand names and clout to a degree that rivals the upper crust of Manhattan and the glitterati of Los Angeles. The model of

imported car you drive, the prestigious name on your college degree, the logo of the handbag slung from your shoulder, the *Fortune* Global 500 company where you work—these function as shortcuts, allowing you to assign the correct level of respect in an instant, saving time in encoding your social interactions. The pursuit of brand names as signifiers of value is not exclusive to Korean culture, but Koreans, known for needing things done quickly, appreciate the ability to assess a person's importance at a single glance.

It feeds into the elitism that is born from that hypercompetitive mindset. This elitism extends to the K-pop industry, where SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment—known as the Big Three—dominated the industry when BTS debuted in 2013. After finding success as a composer at JYP, Bang Si-hyuk founded his own record label, Big Hit Entertainment, in 2005, but the Big Three had originated in the mid-nineties. With such a head start, the Big Three had amassed financial resources, stacked talent rosters, and cultivated relationships. Connections with brands and sponsors, with media and broadcast companies that guaranteed airtime and publicity, even for their rookie groups. Surrounded by these Seoul elites, BTS fought the battle to exist there.

That said, the members of BTS are far from the only idols to come from disparate parts of the country. Before K-pop stars were international figures with lucrative brand deals and cultural capital, idol music was generally regarded as a low form of entertainment by the Korean public due to its lack of originality and perceived youth marketing, focused on fan service. Many of the trainees came from smaller cities and others from struggling families, hoping to make enough money to give them a comfortable life. Seventeen's Seungkwan is the pride of Jeju, Red Velvet's Irene came from Daegu, Suzy is from Gwangju.

Consider the prevalent attitudes toward *satoori*, which refers to the

regional dialects that exist across South Korea. Often compared to accents, like a Southern twang or a Midwestern roundness, *satoori* can range from the subtle twist of a vowel—an "eh" instead of an "ah," "oo" over "oh"—evoking rurality, to something so thick, it is nigh unintelligible. In parts of Jeju Island, even natives struggle to understand each other. I've found that Seoulites tend to view *satoori* with a degree of condescension. On dating shows like *Single's Inferno*, contestants with *satoori* are generally less popular. Celebrities with *satoori* are often called to speak with it on variety shows, to the hosts' overt fascination. Overseas fans are also charmed by *satoori*, unable to grasp the linguistic nuances, but resonating with the melodic lilt and softness that resemble the rural dialects in their own homelands.

At entertainment agencies, idol trainees are given lessons to correct their *satoori*, learning to speak in the standard Gyeonggi or Seoul dialect, similar to the way that actors and news anchors in the US are coached to speak with a nondescript standard American accent or how Received Pronunciation (RP) in British English maintains a lofty status. Winter of the SM Entertainment girl group Aespa once spoke about this training on an episode of the popular variety show *Knowing Bros*. Panelists noted that Winter, a native of Yangsan in Gyeongsang Province, seemed to pass as a Seoulite because she didn't have *satoori*. "I mostly fixed it when I was a trainee," she commented. In November 2013, Wonwoo of Seventeen, who was born in Changwon, filmed an evaluation as a trainee for Pledis Entertainment. He introduced himself with a shy smile, before being interrupted by a female staffer, who scolded him. "What did we say we'd do if you use *satoori* . . ." she said, her voice trailing off.

In 2011, RM, J-Hope, and Suga were three Big Hit trainees poised to debut as BTS. They released a song called "Paldogangsan," nick-