



Over the past months, Korean culture has become increasingly popular in Japan. The new mania has come about mainly through the success of a South Korean soap opera, *Winter Sonata*. The soap was first aired on satellite, but after enormous demand is now also being shown on terrestrial television, creating millions of fans throughout Japan. Fans are of all

ages, with the soap being particularly popular among older Japanese, who appreciate the traditional values portrayed in the series. This popularity is remarkable in that it shows a marked shift from anti-Korean feeling in Japan, legacy of the Japanese colonialisation of Korea during the first half of the XXth century.

*Winter Sonata*'s leading actors, Bae Yong-joon and Choi Ji Woo, have become mega-stars in Japan, to the point that when Bae Yong visited the country at the end of November, he was greeted by thousands of screaming middle-aged female fans.

The popularity of the soap opera has changed common perceptions of Korea. According to a recent survey by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, half of the show's viewers have become more willing to



*Winter Sonata*

seek contact with South Korean culture since they saw it and 26% have changed their view of the country.

As a result, Korean pop star BoA now tops the Japanese charts and *Brotherhood*, a Korean war movie, took the Japanese box office by storm this summer.

It is not only Korean entertainment which has taken off in Japan. There has been a sharp increase in Japanese presences in Korean language classes, as well as nearly 40% additional Japanese tourists visiting South Korea this year.

In Tokyo, a miniature version of a popular Korean marketplace has opened in the stylish neighbourhood of Shibuya. Other less conventional Korean-inspired services include matchmaking services for Japanese and Koreans – for many female fans of all things Korean, the ultimate Korean “accessory” is a Korean husband.



*The Korean Dongdaemun Market in Tokyo*

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