

## CULTURE WEB

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Japan's colonization of Korea, the Prime Minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, kidnappings and comfort women...when it comes to relations between Japan and Korea, these are things that we hear about regularly in the news. And the governments of the two nations are working to resolve the various related issues.

At a different level, we are seeing something else. An amazing exchange of culture is taking place between the two countries, witnessed most clearly here in Japan as the "Hanryu Boom", Korean Culture Boom.

My name is Masayo Hayashi. I was born and raised in Japan. My parents are Korean. I am naturally very interested in both countries and what is happening between them. But out of the issues and the booms, I've noticed something bigger happening. I like to call it "the culture web".

The recent interest here in Korean culture perhaps started with the amazing popularity of the Korean drama "Fuyu no Sonata". From there, an interest in all things Korean spread out like a web: first to other dramas, then perhaps to an interest in Korean food, and from food to Korean ideas on health, beauty, and more.

In addition, more people began studying the Korean language and visiting Korea itself. And with that, new strands of interests have surely developed. As these interests are passed from one person to the next, the extent of the web becomes nearly limitless.

Interestingly, the boom in Korean dramas has triggered a similar boom in dramas from Taiwan and China, as we see the web spreading out in completely different directions, to connect with completely different peoples and cultures.

From the other side, Korean interest in Japan has been going on for some time. I visited Korea recently and there are many things written in Japanese. Plus, many Koreans can, and want to speak Japanese. They are truly excited to communicate and to find out as much as they can about Japan and the Japanese people.

But again, this culture web is not limited to exchanges between these two countries. I have American friends who were here in Japan. At first, they came to study animation design, and began studying the language, martial arts, and other Japanese things as well. And now

that they have taken their new interests and experiences back to the States, we can only imagine the many different directions the culture web continues to spread.

The point I'm trying to make is that this web of cultural exchange is going on everywhere and at all times. It is a powerful force that is shaping the lives of everyone. It is the power of influence that exists in the great web of everyday people: millions and millions of people, some visiting other countries, others visiting through television, books, or the Internet. All of them changing and being changed in the process of sharing cultural information; people like you and me, individual to individual, like a great chain reaction, spreading out in all directions.

This is a tremendous force: a force what we need to recognize, appreciate and encourage in a positive way. If we don't, we can't really say that we are in control of who we are. If we do, we can harness its power, both for our own personal benefit and for the benefit of the larger world.

We live in a new era: an era of unprecedented cultural exchange. Our politicians may be sincere in their efforts, but I truly believe that it is only the power of this huge, ongoing culture web that can eventually solve the "bigger problems" that exist between the nations of the world. It is our responsibility to understand this, to think, and to make positive contributions.