

# Reception of Japanese and Korean Popular Culture in Europe



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## Preface

This book" is the result of an international and interdisciplinary collective research project called Acceptance of Japanese and Korean Popular Culture in Europe, supported by the Suntory Foundation subsidy program 2010-2011. The project is conducted by the Centre of Asian Studies at Vytautas Magnus University, and is directed by Dr. Aurelijus Zykas. It has been a long time since Japanese and Korean popular cultures were popular on the world stage. This research focuses on the acceptance of Japanese and Korean Culture in Europe, which could be considered as one of the most influential factors in constructing the image of these two Asian countries.

Our research background is as follows: In the 1990s, when *Asian Popular Culture* (Lent 1994, Westview), or *Global Goes Local* (Craig and King 2002<sup>1</sup>, University of Hawaii) was published, Studies of Asian popular culture tended to focus on the localisation of globalised (that is, American) culture in each Asian country. However, in the 21st century, in the domain of the studies of Asian popular culture, we found the terms "Japanisation", "globalisation of Japan" (Iwabuchi 2002, Duke University), "Koreanisation" (Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park). Under existing circumstances we have not yet found many books on the acceptance of Japanese and Korean popular culture in Europe, although books on Japanese and Korean popular culture have already been published in Europe. Thus we tended to research

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<sup>1</sup> The genesis of *Global Goes Local* was the 1998 University of Victoria Conference on Asian Popular Culture, organised by Tim Craig. (Craig and King 2002: xiv)

how Japanese and Korean popular cultures are accepted not only in western European countries such as Germany and France, but also in eastern European countries such as Poland and Lithuania. The members of this project have carried out their research as follows:

Choi Sung-Eun (Esteria Choi) discusses *the reception of Korean popular culture in Poland*, focusing on four main channels through which Korean culture reaches Poland: 1. Universities that offer Korean studies, 2. The Korean Cultural Centre in Poland (government institution), 3. Commercial distributors launching Korean films and TV dramas, 4. Internet-based fan clubs.

Takashi Kitamura analyses *Takarazuka's overseas performances in Europe and Asia* by examining the social and political background to these performance, comparing the performances in Europe and in Asia, and illustrating how the program is constructed to be accommodated in each country, bearing in mind their different historical and diplomatic relationships with Japan.

Kyoko Koma discusses *Kawaii in Europe through a questionnaire survey* conducted in France and Lithuania. She identifies three questions: 1. Could Kawaii be considered odourless culture or is it a reproduction of exoticism, the inheritance of Japonism of the 19th century? 2. Will Kawaii be accepted in France and Lithuania as it is in Japan? 3. How much is Kawaii accepted in France and Lithuania in general?

Sang Gum Li examines arguments about *the reception of Korean popular culture in Germany*, investigating Hallyu and Korean culture from a diachronic point of view. Li looks at the major cultural genres of Hallyu limited to media contents such as drama, Korean pop music ("K-Pop"), games and cartoons, and other general areas such as movies, performing art and other intangible cultural assets. He concludes that in general, the introduction of Korean culture to Germany through the influence of Hallyu is in its early stage, so that more content development for Europe and Germany are necessary.

Seo Jinseok discusses *From the barbarism to the cultural leader in Asia – the transition of image of Korea in the mass media of Lithuania*,

investigating the transition of the image of Korea mainly in the Lithuanian mass media according to two periods: 1. The image of Korea reflected in newspapers published before annexation by the Soviet Union, 2. Translated literature from Korea published during the Soviet Union, and 3. The rapid transition of the national image in the 21<sup>st</sup> century under the influence of Hallyu.

Martynas Šiaučiūnas-Kačinskas investigates *the popularity of Japanese and Korean cinematography in European countries* through analysis of the presence of Japanese and Korean films at major European Film Festivals, their achievements and awards received. Šiaučiūnas-Kačinskas makes clear his hypothesis that differences can be seen when analysing the cinematography of both countries and their popularity in Europe, although Japanese culture is quite well known in the European region, leading to Korean culture being viewed as a variation of Japanese culture.

Aurelijus Zykas contributes his paper, entitled *The Discourses of Popular Culture in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Japan's Cultural Diplomacy Agenda*, in order to argue his research into the case of Japan from the perspective of the exploitation of "popular" culture discourses in Japan's cultural diplomacy, based on empirical research (expert interviews with people who deal with Japan's public diplomacy). The research shows a division in attitudes among four institutional clusters that deal with Japan's cultural diplomacy.

We hope that our research will be one of first steps towards academic presentation of the acculturation of Japanese and Korean Popular culture in Europe, as well as towards systematising Asian popular culture as a research field in European academia.

We express our sincere gratitude to the Suntory Foundation for their warm support for our research.

*Editor*  
Kyoko Koma

