

China outperforming Japan in campus romance

Japan is no longer what it used to be – namely the world’s second largest economy – thanks to China, which overtook it in 2010. Elsewhere too, China finds itself triumphant. Where else? On campus. In love.

Roughly 87,000 Chinese exchange students are enrolled in Japanese universities – nearly twice as many as 10 years ago. “Herbivorous male” is a term coined several years ago to describe young Japanese men’s approach to sex these days. It suggests timidity and indifference. The Chinese students are not herbivorous. They are carnivorous. The result, says Shukan Bunshun (Feb 2) is that the Chinese enjoy a rich campus sex life while the Japanese look on in mingled envy, resentment and bewilderment.

How do they do it? They hardly even speak the language. But they know the words they need, and they don’t take no for an answer. Take it from a Meiji University sophomore the magazine calls Sudo. There was a girl he loved from afar. He couldn’t bring himself to get closer. She was a year older, probably more sophisticated, and somehow intimidating. “I had the feeling it wouldn’t do to be too aggressive,” he explains. A Chinese who spotted her knew no such scruples. He would say to her, in broken Japanese: “Really, you are so beautiful. I never met anyone so beautiful. Is your mother beautiful too?”

Poor Sudo! In less than a month, the girl and the exchange student were a couple, while he licked his wounds unnoticed on the sidelines.

It’s not just him, of course. Shukan Bunshun’s anecdotal evidence suggests a trend. Here’s the story of a girl named Chiemi, a boy named Yang, and another boy who used to be Chiemi’s boyfriend. They’re all Waseda University students. Yang urged Chiemi: “Go out with me,”
“But I already have a boyfriend,” she insisted.
“But it’s better if you go out with me,” persisted Yang.

It didn’t matter where they were, or who was present. Not even Chiemi’s boyfriend put Yang off. “Go out with me,” he’d say over and over. The boyfriend grumbled about Yang’s bad manners, but otherwise seemed stymied.

That didn't escape Chiemi, who gradually found herself drawn to the Chinese boy. His boldness and persistence were attractive – so un-Japanese! He could cook, too. He'd whip up wonderful Chinese dishes, saying, "Whatever you want, I'll make." The Japanese boyfriend didn't stand a chance. Yang was in, he was out.

According to writer and erotic merchandise shop manager Minori Kitahara in *Shukan Bunshun*, "The lukewarm approach of Japanese herbivorous men is just no match for the animal magnetism of the Chinese male."

Questions:

1. Do you think it's true that young Japanese men are more "herbivorous" than previous generations? Is it also true that Chinese men are "carnivorous"?
2. What do you think about Sudo's story? What should he have done? Why do you think he did nothing? Should we feel sorry for him? Or is it his fault?
3. What's your opinion about Chiemi, her boyfriend, and Yang? Was Yang's behavior bad? Was Chiemi's? How about her boyfriend? Do you feel sorry for him? What should he have done about this situation?
4. Chiemi thought Yang's boldness and persistence were attractive, and also that they were un-Japanese. Do you agree? Do Japanese men lack boldness and persistence? Why? Why not?
5. Yang can cook. What do you think about the cooking skills of Japanese men? Are younger men better cooks than older men? Why? Why not?