

New religiosity and Popular Culture in Japan

In the postwar Japan

- Traditional and institutional religions
- Emerging new religious/spiritual movements

Animism and Polytheism in contemporary Japan

Spirited Away



In the Spirit of *Spirited Away*

“The ‘confrontation of civilizations’ is being discussed. In the background there is a confrontation of monotheistic religions, such as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, which presuppose the absoluteness of God. ... What is now required for the world is **the spirit of primitive polytheism**, which tells us gods dwell in forests or mountains. That is what the philosopher Takeshi Umehara advocates. Although the Japanese people have a history of polytheism from ancient times, they have tried to build **a country of monotheism**, which has brought tragedy. Should we not learn much from the bitter past and demonstrate a new spirit of ‘multitudinous gods?’”

(*Asahi Newspaper*, Editorial, Jan 1, 2003)

- coexistence of humans, animals, nature and *kami*
- how to reconcile humans with nature in the industrialized society
- Big challenges after 3.11
- how to manage the nuclear energy and human desire

Eschatology in Anime and Manga

Apocalypse

- apo- 'un' + kaluptein 'to cover'
- Revelation of the New Testament
- Messianism

Eschatology

- eskhatos 'last' 'end' + logos
- Move from this world to...
 - the new age and world (temporal dimension)
= cosmic eschatology, apocalypse
 - the other world (spatial dimension)
ex. afterlife, next life, cyberspace
= otherworldly eschatology

Why Apocalypse in Popular Culture?

- The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- An exhilarating mixture of dread and desire
 - desire of catastrophe against endless routine in the daily life

Aum Shinrikyo

Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995



Examples of Eschatological Themes

- Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (1984)
- Akira (1988)
- Neon Genesis Evangelion (1997)
- Dragon Ball (1985-)
- Bleach (2001-)
- Full Metal Alchemist (2001-)
- Ghost in the Shell (1995)

The other world



Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind



Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind



Seven Volumes of Manga



Conclusion

Ancient Animism

Techno-Animism

Relating human body with **animals, nature and invisible anima**

Relating human body with **machines, cyborg and cyberspace**

Conclusion

Traditional Apocalypse

Japanese Apocalypse

- The final battle between good and evil
- Punishment and reward
- Male-oriented messianism

- The battle beyond good and evil
- Reconciliation
- Female-oriented messianism