

Zsuzsanna KEMENESI

The Soul and the Memory in Japanese Photomedia

When a cultural anthropologist publishes his/her thesis in a book about a nation where aesthetics is highly appreciated, where the artist and actors are respected, where the cultivation of the chrysanthemum is an art, it is usually not necessary for a supplementary volume to be published additionally about the worship of the sword and the distinguished prestige of the warriors – says Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887–1948). Her theory about cultural relativism is highlighting the necessity of tolerancy and illuminating the diversity of humankind. How can her theories be adopted these days in the examination of Japanese photomedia? In what way the soul and the memory is represented and interpreted in Japanese photomedia will be examined in my talk. Memories and the history of memories, as well as the personal mental representation and the collective memory are the key issue of my research. A kind of letter addressed to “one’s ego”, in the past, in the present and in the future. Until 1872, in Japan, women weren’t allowed to climb to the Fujiyama. One hundred years ago only monks and pilgrims could conquer it. Reconciling the social codes and the personal history suggests a further question: given the characteristic feature of Japanese culture, based on the confidence of “hierarchy” and “order” – how can that culture be reconciled with the cultural codes of Ruth Fulton Benedict, rooted in “freedom” and “equality”?

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