

Are the Meanings of Japanese Popular Songs Part of *Seken-Jinseikan* Meanings?

*The interpretation of the meanings of Japanese popular songs
within the frameworks of Seken as an old and indigenous world
of meanings in Japan*

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Abstract

In this paper we will try to unite the meanings and evaluations of Japanese popular songs and the general world-views of people together using the data from the researches we conducted during the past several years. These world-views include the desirable aims in life, concerns for social problems, criteria of value judgments leading to high evaluations of such things as morals, social ethics, common senses as well as shared myths, illusions, beliefs in, expectations about our life and world (*Lebenswelt*) deriving from the past experiences of natural disasters, people's relations with natures, the tradition of Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism. These world-views which we might call *Seken* (or *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings) seem to be a kind of horizon of meanings or network of meanings that enables us to relate various meanings in this world or society with each other together so that we can share a certain sort of integrated or holistic meanings of this world or of our life, even though they might be just "intersubjective" imagination (*Einbildungskraft* or the imagination through *Einbildungskraft* in Kant's or Heidegger's terminology).

1. Introduction

Myself, tomorrow, everything, today, world, word, place, sorrow, eternity, distance, yesterday, pity, everyday, truth, future, answer, feeling, courage. "J-Pop", or Japanese popular songs are full of these meanings. This was one of the findings I could extract from the content analysis on the Japanese popular "hit" songs of several years ago. (This analysis was based on the randomly selected samples of hit songs in 2002.) While "J-Pop" is deluged with these abstract and "ontological"(in a way) meanings, surprisingly enough, it is difficult to find words related with concrete places, people, seasons, social situations in the flood of these "spiritual" or "pure" meanings. (One of my postgraduate students in my class said, "These songs are not the songs of this world but of another world or next world".) For example, the emergence of such words as Japan, Tokyo, Ginza, Ochanomizu, Ikebukuro, social welfare, principle of

competition, free market is never or very rare in these popular songs.

One of the possible interpretations of this tendency is such as; Japanese young people, the main "consumers" of these songs, have pessimistic attitudes towards the real society, so they want to fly into pure imaginative world. Although this interpretation seems to be persuasive because of the expectancy or "*Vor-sicht/for-seeing*"(this term derives from the field of hermeneutics) that lies behind this interpretation, the "real" situations are a little more complicated. According to the results of the researches that I did towards the students in the same year (2002)(the respondents were 148 university students and of course this research was tentative), surprisingly enough again, the general attitudes of young people towards their family, society, social ethics are far more optimistic or affirmative than the older generations might expect. For instance, their images about home (or family) or society sound very affirmative, so far as the figures of the research show. For the images of home (or family), we got the figures as follows; *the place where we can get a peace of mind* (75.0%=the figures of the respondents who said yes to this type of image of home), *the place where important people live* (56.1%), *the place where we can learn important things* (49.3%). On the contrary, the negative images of home are comparatively weak; *restrictive* (8.8%), *the place in which we are not so much interested* (0.7%). This is the same with the images of society; *(society is) something that we optimistically build together* (43.9%), *something that we should leave up to politicians to take responsibility for* (5.4%).

Another important finding from this tentative research is that the images of a singer (Ayumi Hamasaki) are closely related to the concerns of the respondents for the society as well as their self images or their aims in their life. For instance, the respondents with the negative images of Hamasaki tend to answer yes to the question as follows; *to be concerned about political and social problems (is important in my own life, individual life)*. And at the same time the respondents with positive images of Hamasaki tend to have an ambivalent self image including the relationships with their friends.

In short, things seem to be closely related with each other in the world of meanings of Japanese popular songs with some inexplicable relations like ones between the surface pessimistic unrealistic meanings of the contents of music and the respondents' optimistic and positive attitudes towards the real society. And this seems to be a far more important finding than any other isolated and separated findings such as the unexpected low and severe evaluations of the respondents towards a famous and

somewhat charismatic pop star Ayumi Hamasaki , although this astonishing fact itself is remarkable in various ways. ("*Hamasaki's songs are all similar (and therefore worthless)*" or "*Hamasaki's popularity is just an artificial product produced by mass media through advertisement*" are the typical responses by the respondents. The percentage of the respondents who affirmed the former view was 48.0% and the latter was affirmed by 33.8% of the respondents, while the more sympathetic views like "*Hamasaki has a pure inner mind*" were affirmed by the relatively less respondents. The respondents who affirmed the view on Hamasaki's inner purity were just 7.4%.)

These things seem to show us several important things as well as some assumptions. First, younger generations of Japan (appear to) have more positive and active attitudes towards their society, family, their human relations or their aims of life than the older generations of Japan generally might expect. Secondly, the meanings or evaluations of songs (seem to) cannot be separated from the listeners' attitudes towards or views on their world, their life and their society. Thirdly, although the relations between "spirituality" and "purity" of the contents of Japanese popular songs and listeners' positive attitudes their life and world is not clear at the present moment, they might be included within some inner-related networks of meanings in a certain way.

In the following part of this article, I will try to explain these things and assumptions while examining the data of the researches I conducted during the last decade. As I will show later, Japanese people seem to have a certain kind of network(s) of meanings that comprises attitudes towards their world, views on the meanings of life, views on nature, and orientation to better life. We'd like to call this kind of network(s) of meanings "*Seken*". *Seken* is a tentative word and might be changed into a better term if it might be possible, but the important thing is not the finding of an appropriate term but a fact that there seems to be a kind of horizons of meanings that include even the evaluations of various media as well as the Internet, as I will show the data in this respect later. The focus of discussions of the following sections of this paper is about the possibility of relating the meanings of Japanese popular songs to a holistic horizon of meanings that might be called *Seken*. We have to look into *Seken* or the *Seken*-related meanings as well as the process of "rediscovering" of *Seken*, before we can examine the meanings of the Japanese popular songs. This detour is necessarily because the meanings of the Japanese popular songs cannot be separated from *Seken*-related meanings, as we will see later.

2. Third way leading to finding *Seiken* and the meanings relative to imagination or shared imagination

My (the author's) main fields of study are media studies and social psychology including the study on the Information Society. What I have tried to do in my fields of study since I entered post-graduate course in a university is to find or rediscover some aspects or spheres of meanings that I often refer to during my lectures as "the third area of meanings". This means, according to my own view, that there are vacant areas of meanings in our every day life and the fields of study on the meanings of life within this world in Japan and perhaps in other countries in certain respects (Nakada, 1994). To put this in another way, our world of life or even our minds are divided into two splits; one is the sphere where people believe that the meanings of our world or the truth of our existence are mainly determined by science, technology supported by science or the intellect, perhaps more correctly, instrumental intellect or narrowly interpreted reason (Nakada, 1998). And another sphere or area is the place where mere isolated subjective minds exist or everything is regarded as sheer something arbitrarily interpreted. This second sphere is the place where Postmodernism or misunderstood Postmodernism plays a crucial role. I suppose that considerable percentage of people cannot find the place for themselves in this divided situation because important meanings like mutual relationships, the determination of minds, desires, hopes, common senses, or even pities, shared imagination seem to be generally neglected in both of these divided spheres of meanings.

At least in Japan, this situation of division of our world of meanings appears to cause serious problems in various respects of our daily life. For example, the phenomenon of prevalence of the information studies narrowly interpreted by the so-called techno-determinism in Japan is clearly due to the belief in the one world mainly depending upon the power of mere reason, instrumental intellect, or natural science, or technology. And to make matters worse, this techno-determinism is very often accompanied by the other imported thought or model for "improvement" of our society, i.e. principle of competition supported by orientation to free market or neo classical school of economics (Nakada, 2003). (The economists in the mainstream in Japan including Takenaka, the present minister in Japan appear to be adherents of the neo classical school of economics (Higaishiani, 2001).) In a way, the introduction of the techno-deterministic information studies accompanied by principle of competition or neo classical school of economics into Japan was unavoidable. Japan experienced the crash of the so-called bubble economy (overheated

stock and estate markets) at the beginning of 1990's. Since that, Japanese economy and also the society has been tortured by a slump that we had never experienced during the several decades after the World War Two. It seems that some people including politicians, scholars and economists could not resist believing in the miracle power of the techno-deterministic interpreted information technology accompanied by principle of competition or neo classical school of economics and the imported information studies, because these are interpreted as the true reason of the prosperity of the United States in the economical condition in the 1990's that are often called "the era of new economy"(Nakada, 2003). But generally speaking, the introduction of imported thoughts or models appears to bring about the serious problems in many ways in Japan. Take for instance, the disappearance of motivation of job or solidarity in place of job.

According to a newspaper report, the motivations of job and the loyalty to the companies of Japanese workers are the worst among the major countries (Ibaraki-sinbunn, 5 of September 2002). One of the most important aims of life for Japanese, as I will explain later, seems to be the good human relationships with family, friends and colleagues of the same place of work as well as the purity of minds. But as the result of the imported principle of competition that emphasizes upon mere figures of productivity and profit that are often extracted from the contexts or the situations of place of work without considering the related factors behind the mere figures such as cooperation of people of the same job-place and the informal job training after the formal job hours, the majority of Japanese workers including teachers working at the national and public universities are now isolated and cannot find meanings of work and also the meanings uniting the workers themselves.

And in spite of the import of principle of competition and the techno-deterministic information studies, the Japan still remains the miserable conditions in terms of economic and social situations. The total amount of debts of national bonds (government securities) and bonds of the local governments (prefectures, cities and towns) is over 720 trillion yen, i.e. 8 trillion dollars at the present moment that is almost 150% of the total amount of GDP of Japan (Asahi-sinbunn, 30 of August 2003). And still worse, the majority of Japanese people are afraid of the growth of crime rate and also of the hopelessness of their future life. The systems of pensions and public welfare are now getting worse year by year.

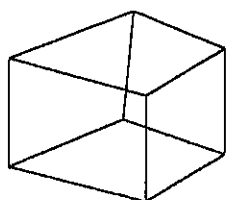
And in addition, we are now facing another serious situation brought by the division of our world into two splits. As the result of prevalence of narrowly

understood version of Postmodernism, many people now tend to negatively evaluate such things self-respect, determination of minds, common senses, mutual support, although the majority of Japanese people actually still believe in these values as I will show the research data about this tendency. This phenomenon clearly has brought about the confusions in our society. In Japan Postmodernism seems to mean very often equivalent to nihilism or extreme relativism.

2.1. INNER WAY TO REDISCOVER IMAGINATION

Getting back to "the third way" or "the third area of meanings", I referred to at the beginning of this section, according to my present view, it seems that we might be able to find the possible suggestions about this another way from two different and at the same time probably interrelated approaches. One is to discover or rediscover the meanings of the imagination, *Einbildungskraft* or related aspects of recognition or phenomena in our minds or brains. The way that we might call the inner way to rediscover imagination is probably to trace the same or similar way tried by such scholars as Hanna Arendts, Heidegger or some psychiatrist like Wolfgang Blankenburg or Japanese psychiatrist Bin Kimura and of course Kant, the author of the book "Kritik der Urteilskraft" himself. These authors are the ones who paid attention to imagination or *Einbildungskraft* in various ways (Nakada, 2003).

What I have been interested in about this problem recently are the conditions that enable the sharing of certain imaginative meanings. According to the findings in the study fields of psychiatry or neuroscience, certain patients of schizophrenia or agnosia cannot see some illusionary shapes or figures (Nakada, 2003).



<Figure 1>

In relation to this finding, the ability (or inability) of changing aspects (plural perspectives) also appears to be another important point. The figure 1 shows us that the appearance of this figure cannot exist without the ability of changing aspects (perspectives) accompanied with the changing the directions of sights of the supposed plural subjects. Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a rectangular cube in the shape of something like dice or Japanese *tofu*. The characteristic of this figure is the change

of outward appearance of the object. At the first moment of perception of this object, this object is a dice but suddenly the appearance of this object transforms into another appearance. After and before this transform of appearance a dice is a dice, while the appearance of this dice completely changes. This means that this figure can be seen from different perspectives and that this change of perspectives includes the change of the directions of sights or the subjects as the sources of these sights. In short, the phenomenon of this figure presupposes the imagined or supposed directions of sights and also the imagined or supposed subjects. In this sense, the phenomenon of this figure seems to be imaginative phenomenon.

If I try to continue to interpret this phenomenon, we can find further several interesting points. The bottom of the dice suddenly transforms into a side and in accord with this change the total shape of the dice changes. And to our surprise, the subject (the subject who perceives this cube or the imagined subject who is considered to be watching this cube) α changes his/her direction of sight from upside to the left at the same moment of transform of the shape of a dice.

What can we get through this imaginative experiment? It is clear that we can not answer to the question, whether the object itself changes or whether only the outward appearance of the object changes, because in the case of Figure 1 or in the similar cases perhaps we can not separate the appearance of the object from the object itself. In a sense, the object itself or the "*Wesen* (essence)" of the object exists nowhere. And in another sense, the object itself exists somewhere in the imaginative field.

The phenomenon that the direction of sight of the subject α changes with the change of the appearance of the object is indeed stimulating. The subject β is watching the phenomenon that the direction of sight of the subject α changes. If it were not for the existence of the subject β or this dual situation of the subjects this phenomenon doesn't exist. The subject β is watching the phenomenon in the continuation of time. Figure 1 is not a substance but a process because this figure or the experience of seeing this figure exists in the continuation of time. The subject β is not my private subject nor the unique subject only for myself because you and he/she as well as myself can experience the role of the subject β , i.e. the subject β is a universal subject. In other words, the subject β is a sort of intersubjective subject.

2.2. ANOTHER WAY TO REDISCOVER IMAGINATION OR SHARED IMAGINATION

Once we can find this kind of intersubjective or "shared imaginative" meanings in the phenomena of subjective perception or interpretation of "*das Seiende*", perhaps

we can grasp the direction to lead us to unite the inner way to rediscover imagination and another way (outer way) to rediscover imagination together. (This another way is to rediscover the world where some kinds of shared imagination or shared imaginative meanings comprise the essential aspects of a network of meanings.)

If we relate these phenomena of imagination or shared imagination with the discussions of Hannah Arendt, Blankenburg, or Bin Kimura, it seems that we can find the way of grasping useful suggestions about uniting the inner imaginative world of meanings and the outer imaginative world of meanings together. What Hannah Arendt, Blankenburg, or Bin Kimura tried to do is, according to my interpretation, to unite the two aspects of imaginative world, inside and outside, one in my mind and another in our minds together (Nakada, 2001).

What I want to do in the following sections is to show my trail of finding "the third way" and more correctly finding or rediscovering the imaginative world of meanings in Japanese society or culture that I'd like to refer to as "*Seken*". In a different way, *Seken* is a shared imaginative world of meanings that consists of morals, social ethics, criteria of value judgements, common sense, aims of life, desirable behaviours, shared illusions, shared myths and the like (Nakada et al, 2004). One of the most remarkable characteristics of *Seken* is that *Seken* has its long history in Japanese culture and that parts of *Seken*-related meanings derive from Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto, Bushido (moral and ethics of Samurai), traditional views on Nature, orientation to solidarity and so on.

Originally, *Seken* consists of two different meanings, *Se* and *Ken*. *Se* means this world and *Ken* means "between". So *Seken* means the Between World, i.e. this world between heaven and the vulgar earth or the world between gods and people or the world between me and the others.

Seken is a neglected world of meanings because the majority of Japanese scholars and intellectuals have paid their attention to the more westernized and modernized aspects of our world that might be called *Shakai*. In contrast to *Seken*, *Shakai* is an imported term and concept that was imported at the end of Japanese feudal age and the beginning of our modern age in the late 19th century from England, the Netherlands, France, Germany or other Western countries. But in spite of neglect by scholars, as I will show here, *Seken*-related meanings still live in Japanese minds and still has powerful influence upon our various areas of life including the evaluations and the meanings of the Internet as well as the meanings of popular songs.

Just as I mentioned above, what I want to do in my paper is to find or rediscover

Seken-related meanings and the meanings of various aspects of our modern society as well as the meanings of various media in relation with *Seken* (and finally the meanings of Japanese popular songs within *Seken* will be discussed). And I want to do this by showing the empirical data from the researches I and my research groups conducted during the last decade. But before doing so, we have to see the process of rediscovery of *Seken* as well as additional explanation of meanings of *Seken* for a while.

3. Rediscovery of *Seken*

As I said in another place (Nakada et al,2004), (some parts of) *Seken* or *Seken*-related meanings seem to derive from traditional views on nature or natural disasters and from people's interpretation of natural disasters or their experiences of natural disasters. Traditionally Japanese people tend to interpret natural disasters as something related with one's destiny or as the result of scourge of heaven. And surprisingly enough this kind of view on disasters is not confined to people who lived in not-modernized stage of history. This kind of view on natural disasters still remains in people's minds in modernized era (Nakada, 2004). (I am the one of the scholars that rediscovered this kind of view on natural disasters in modern age through several researches.) And according to my opinion, this kind of view on natural disasters is part of *Seken*-related meanings. (Or more correctly, this kind of view on nature and natural disasters seems to occupy the central position in a certain kind of network of meanings that we want to call *Seken*.) As I show later, it is clear that this kind of view on natural disasters has strong relationships with *Seken*-related meanings generally. (More correctly , "rediscovery" of this kind of view on natural disasters and nature led us to findings the relationships between this kind of view on nature and disasters and people's awareness of environmental problems as well as other important social problems.)

3.1. NATURAL DISASTER AND SCOURGE OF HEAVEN

Let me show some of these cases about views on natural disasters. As I described in my several papers (Nakada, 1982,2004), in 1923 a great earthquake hit Tokyo and and the neighbour districts and killed more than 100000 people. In the aftermath of this catastrophe, Japanese people including writers, scholars, politicians, and Buddhism priests discussed in the magazines or in the books the "hidden" causes of this earthquake. One of the themes of their discussions was about that; "Was this earthquake brought about by the scourge of Heaven?" And at the same time according to the magazines, newspapers, essays and poems, the air was filled with

pessimistic modes and attitudes associated with traditional way of thinking, i.e., it was their destiny that the big earthquake destroyed Tokyo and killed more than 100000 citizens.

In 1981 I and the other members of a research team of Tokyo University visited Oofunato and other several other cities and towns in Northern Japan and conducted a research there. This research was about people's views on natural disasters. The cities and towns we visited were tortured again and again by severe tidal waves (Tsunami) during several decades or during several centuries. For example, the tidal wave in 1888 killed almost 20000 people and the one in 1933 killed about 3000 men and women and more recently the one in 1960 killed 62 people including the missing. In this area, Sanrikutiiki, we asked people how they feel about the natural disasters. The results of the questionnaire were surprising. For example, we asked the respondents whether they sympathize with such view; *"to die or not in a severe natural disaster is determined by one's destiny"*. 64.9 % of the respondents said "yes".

And in the case of the flood disaster in 1982 that hit Nagasaki and killed more than 400 citizens, I tried to analyse the contents of newspaper reports about this disaster and I found that the disaster was reported by using a certain kind of framework of interpretation of meanings of disasters. This framework turned out to consist of dichotomy, "this disaster is heaven-made disaster or human-made disaster"? Clearly, this disaster was interpreted by the traditional framework of meanings just as the disasters just mentioned above.

3.2. PURITY OF MIND AS VIRTUE CONSISTING OF MEANINGS OF *SEKEN*

It seems that part of *Seken*-related meanings comes from our traditional value judgments about sincerity or purity of minds as virtue (Nakada, 2004). Japanese history or fictions like movies, popular literature, comic books are filled with tales about these kinds of virtues.

One of the famous stories in relation to this can be found among the list of the anecdotes at the time of Meiji-Restoration in 1868. This story is about the communication or friendship between two political leaders of the antagonistic political organizations. One is the political leader of Tokugawa-shogun party and another is the political leader of the (former) revolt party. The story tells us that both leaders are persons with sincerity and thanks to their sincerity the final stage of Meiji-Restoration or Meiji-revolution ended peacefully without meaningless blood (Katsu, 1972).

Ayumi Hamasaki is one of the most famous pop stars in Japan of today. And her songs are filled with the pities or sorrows that come from the experiences of the younger generations. Their experiences are that they have to get damage in their minds because of their inner purity or fragile sincerity. And the pains or hardships brought about through sincerity were often the main theme of the anecdotes in Japanese history. Toshizo Hijikata was a leader of political group at the end of Tokugawa era and he was also the one who experienced hardship or tragedy because of his loyalty to inner sincerity. (Or he is often portrayed in such a way in various dramas or films.) He is one of the major heroes of NHK's historical drama, "Sinsengumi" in 2004.

Seken-related meanings also include traditional views on nature in Japan. For example, cherry blossoms have been referred to as symbol of purity or sincerity of inner minds. Norinaga Motoori, the founder of *Kokugaku*, the study of ancient and indigenous thoughts and culture, thought that the essence of the traditional poetry and literature in Japan is nothing but purity or simplicity of minds. And in this sense, cherry blossoms shining in the morning sun, the theme of one of Norinaga's famous poems, are the symbols for purity of minds (and also Japanese purified indigenous minds leading to a certain kind of broader intelligence called *Yamatodamashii* with similarity to common senses (Takamizawa,1970)).

In summery, *Seken* is a network of meanings that includes "sense of destiny", "purity of minds as highly evaluated value", "sincerity and honesty as important values", "nature as a symbol of purity of mind" and "contempt for earthly richness and success". *Seken*-related meanings seem to be derived from the traditional culture (Buddhism, traditions of poetry and literature, Shinto, Confucianism), the tendencies of human relationships and the past history related to politics and community life.

One of the things I have paid attention to since I entered post-graduate school in Tokyo University is to rediscover *Seken*-related meanings and to find the relationships between *Seken*-related meanings and people's consciousness on other social problems or their attitudes towards society, politics, social ethics, and media. What I described just above is my interpretation of meanings of *Seken* or meanings that seem to be closely related to *Seken* or to consist of part of *Seken*. And to unite this interpretation and the findings of related empirical research data together has been part of my trials for years. During the last 10 years or so, I have continued to do researches and I could find that there are the relationships between *Seken*-related meanings and environmental consciousness or people's attitudes towards politics, social problems or

various media including the Internet. This means my speculation on *Seiken* is (at least partly) supported by the empirical data.

4. The interrelationship between *Seiken*-related meanings and consciousness on other important social problems

I'd like to present here mainly the data from the recent 7 researches I and my colleagues conducted about people's consciousness on the Internet, the other media, environmental problems, and the other social problems.

These 7 researches are 1995G, 1998G, 2000G, 2002G, 2003G, 2003S and 2003T (these are tentative names for my researches and all of them were conducted in Japan with exception of 2003T conducted in Germany.)

In the following part of this paper, we will mainly examine the data of the following 7 surveys. (1) "1995 G"= research on people's awareness and thinking about social problems. This research was conducted by the author and the members of Research Group on the Media and Environmental Problems (RGME) in Japan's capitol Tokyo in 1995. The author belongs to this group and *Seiken*-related questions in this research were mainly originated by the author himself. The respondents were 587 men and women of over 20 years old in Tokyo and the respondents were collected through the method of random sampling. (2) "1998 G"= research on people's awareness and thinking about social problems by Makoto Nakada and RGME in Tokyo in 1998. The respondents were 502 randomly selected men and women of age over 20. (3) "2000 G"= research on people's awareness and thinking about social problems by Makoto Nakada and RGME in Tokyo metropolitan area in 2000. The respondents were 611 randomly selected men and women of age over 20. (4) "2002 G"=research conducted by ReGIS (Research Group on Information Studies at Tsukuba University directed by Makoto Nakada) in 2002 in Japan to a range of 25- to 44-year-old survey monitors selected by a research company in Japan. This survey was designed as quota sampling, and ratios of gender and age were quoted from the 2001 World Internet Project Japan (WIPJ) report ([http:// media.asaka.toyo.ac.jp/wip/survey2001e/index.html](http://media.asaka.toyo.ac.jp/wip/survey2001e/index.html)). (The income and education distributions of this survey were quite similar to those of the WIPJ research. It seems that the reliability of our research was fundamentally assured by the similarity of the data of the two researches.) The respondents were 569 men and women. (5) "2003 S"=research done by ReGIS in 2003 in Japan. This survey was conducted to a survey population composed of Tsukuba University and Takachiho University students. The

sample was collected through relative random sampling from student lists at both universities. The valid response rate was 425 male and female undergraduate students. (6) "2003 G"=research conducted by ReGIS in 2003 in Japan. This was conducted to a survey population of 25- to 44-year-old registered survey monitors selected by a Japanese research company. This survey used a quota sampling method, and ratios for gender and age were quoted from the 2002 WIPJ report. The respondents were 876 men and women. (7) "2003 T"=research done by ReGIS with help of Dr. Birgit Staemmler in 2003 in Germany. The survey population was a selection of university students from Tübingen. Dr. Birgit Staemmler arranged the survey by distributing information regarding our online survey to all students' e-mail addresses. This survey was conducted for the comparison of the data of Japan and Germany. The respondents were 249 male and female students.

In the following sections, we will examine how and to what extent *Seken*-related meanings determine (or relate to) people's evaluations of the Internet as well as their consciousness on social problems in Japan by considering the findings of our researches (and in the next chapter, we will see the relationships between *Seken*-related meanings and meanings of popular songs). The major points we try to think of are such as: 1) the characteristics and natures of *Seken*; 2) the relations between *Seken* and the evaluations of (and meanings of) various media as well as people's concerns for the important social problems; 3) the relations between *Seken* and the meanings of Japanese popular songs. According to my own view, Japanese people live in *Seken* consisting of traditional values, shared values (values or common senses shared by people), views on the meanings of the world, orientation to better human relationships, and some ways of feeling about or emotional attitudes towards the world or the situations of the society. And it's my assumption that various meanings of media, people's attitudes towards their world (*Lebenswelt*), the meanings of people's life as well as the meanings of popular songs consist of part of the horizon of meanings or a network of meanings called *Seken*. *Seken* is a tentative term but the term itself is not so important as the assumption or "facts" that the meanings of our world are not isolated but related to each other and form certain type(s) of network(s) of meanings.

4.1. DATA ABOUT *SEKEN*-RELATED MEANINGS

Table 1 shows the percentage of the respondents that have sympathy for various *Seken*-related meanings. (The interrelationships between these meanings and views have been confirmed repeatedly through our researches. The reason why we call these

sets of meanings and views "*Seken*" is due to my assumption that "destiny", "distance from nature" and the rest of these meanings and views comprise our common images of *Seken* or our traditional *Lebenswelt* (Nakada, 1991)).

Table 1(Sympathy for *Seken*-related meanings)

	1995G	1998G	2000G	2002G	2003G	2003S	2003T
Distance from nature	73.6%	-	-	82.6	79.0	71.9	(83.1)
Honest poverty	83.7	-	81.5	84.4	80.3	82.3	(68.7)
Destiny	84.4	-	79.0	77.9	76.0	67.3	(35.7)
Denial of natural science	88.5	-	88.3	90.7	88.7	82.7	(60.6)
Criticism of selfishness	85.5	-	88.3	90.0	90.3	71.9	(89.9)
Powerlessness	71.9	-	64.8	69.2	62.0	46.5	(57.5)
Superficial cheerfulness	73.3	-	65.6	70.8	62.7	50.0	(40.1)
Belief in kindness	-	68.5	68.1	73.1	71.5	73.2	(91.5)
Scourge of Heaven	62.7	-	49.5	-	-	-	-

Table 2-1 shows the percentages of the respondents who said "agree or somewhat agree" to *Seken* -related statements. These statements are such as: "*Within our modern lifestyles, people have become too distant from nature*"(This is a question about *Distance from nature*); "*People will become corrupt if they become too rich*"(i.e. *Honest poverty*); "*People have a certain destiny, no matter what form it takes*"(i.e. *Destiny*); "*In our world, there are a number of things that cannot be explained by science*"(i.e. *Denial of natural science*); "*There are too many people in developed countries (or Japan) today who are concerned only with themselves*" (i.e. *Criticism of selfishness*); "*In today's world, people are helpless if they are (individually) themselves*" (i.e. *Powerlessness*); "*In today's world, what seems cheerful and enjoyable is really only superficial*" (i.e. *Superficial cheerfulness*); "*Doing your best for other people is good for you*" (i.e. *Belief in kindness*); "*The frequent occurrence of natural disasters is due to scourge of Heaven*" (i.e. *Scourge of Heaven*).

As this table shows, it is clear that *Seken*-related meanings still remain in people's minds. I imagine that these findings are surprising for the majority of Japanese scholars in the fields of social science, because they seem to believe that we Japanese live in more modernized aspects of our society.

Table 2 is about the percentage of the respondents who chose various desirable or important aims of life. The percentage of the respondents who chose "*Concerns for*

computers and the Internet (computers and the Internet)" is relatively small.

Table 2 (Evaluation of the Internet as aim of individual life)

	1998G	2000G	2002G	2003G	2003S	2003T
Concerns for computers and the Internet	7.6(%)	13.9	31.1	29.6	15.5	(50.6)
Good and friendly relations with family members and close friends	68.1	72.3	72.9	70.9	76.5	(91.2)
Improvement of humanness, social morals, common sense	57.6	61.0	53.1	48.5	49.3	(62.2)
Achievement of jobs and studies	29.9	33.9	49.9	43.0	57.5	(83.9)
Lifestyle that is environmentally responsible	52.2	42.2	40.1	32.9	28.8	(74.3)
Economic stability	60.2	50.7	70.3	66.1	57.3	(67.9)
Safety from disaster and crime	60.4	75.0	58.9	61.1	48.9	(69.5)

1)Table 2-1 shows the responses to the question, "Given the list of items below, what do you consider important in your own, individual life?" (or "what do you want to consider important in your life?")

4.2. FACTOR ANALYSIS ON *SEKEN*-RELATED MEANINGS

Table 3 is about the results of factor analysis (principal component analysis, Varimax rotation) calculated using part of the figures of Table 1 and Table 2, i.e. the table about "*Seken*-related meanings" and "orientation to good life". We could get several factors shown in this table. We extracted factors from the data of 2003G and 2003S separately. Factor analysis is the statistical method for dividing the data into several main groups. As the table shows, *Seken*-related meanings or responses of data from 2003G Research and 2003S Research are segmented into several groups.

Table 3 (Factor analysis of *Seken* and orientation to good life- related responses)

	2003G	2003S
<i>Seken</i> -related factors	Criticism of modern civilization G-I (denial of modern civilization as deceit)	Criticism of modern civilization S-I (denial of modern civilization as deceit)
	Criticism of modern civilization G-II(denial of rationality)	Criticism of modern civilization S-II(denial of rationality)
		Criticism of modern civilization S-III(denial of wealth)

'Orientation to good life'-related factors	Orientation to good life G-I(concerns for social problems)	Orientation to good life S-I(wish for self-realization)
	Orientation to good life G-II(hope for stability)	Orientation to good life S-II(concerns for charity)
	Orientation to good life G-III(wish for self-improvement)	Orientation to good life S-III(concerns for social problems)
		Orientation to good life S-IV(wish for safety and stability)

The results of this factor analysis were used for examining the relationships between *Seken*-related meanings and the other consciousness, as we will see just below. (We want to call both the *Seken*-related factors and 'Orientation to good life'-related factors "*Seken-Jinseikan* factors (or meanings)". *Jinseikan* means views on (meanings of) life in Japanese.)

Table 4,5,6,7 and 8 are about the correlation coefficients between *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings and evaluations of various media as well as concerns for political problems and environmental problems. It clear that *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings have strong relationships with these concerns and evaluations of media. This appears to mean that for Japanese people, or at least for considerable part of Japanese people the concerns for important social problems and evaluations of media are something they can or should see from the frameworks of *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings.

Table 4(Correlation coefficients between *Seken*-related factors and evaluations of media)(Data: 2003G)

	Criticism of modern civilization G-I (denial of modern civilization as deceit)	Criticism of modern civilization G-II(denial of rationality)
Television	N.S.	.0942(**)
Books	N.S.	N.S.
Movies	N.S.	.0697(*)
Internet	N.S.	.1759(**)
Newspapers	N.S.	.0829(*)
Discussions with family and friends	N.S.	.1313(**)

1)** =p <0.01, * =p<0.05; controlling for gender and age

2) This table shows the results of correlation coefficients between *Seken*-related factors and evaluations of media (evaluations of various media as sources of general information).

Table 5(Correlation coefficients between *Seiken*-related factors and evaluations of media)(Data: 2003S)

	Criticism of modern civilization S-I (denial of modern civilization as deceit)	Criticism of modern civilization S-II (denial of rationality)	Criticism of modern civilization S-III (denial of wealth)
Television	.1488(**)	N.S.	N.S.
Books	.1078(*)	N.S.	N.S.
Movies	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Internet	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Newspapers	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Discussions with family and friends	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.

** =p <0.01, * =p<0.05; controlling for gender and age

Table 6(Correlation coefficients between 'orientation to good life'-related factors and evaluations of media)(Data: 2003G)

	Orientation to good life G-I(concerns for social problems)	Orientation to good life G-II(hope for stability)	Orientation to good life G- III(wish for self-improvement)
Television	-.0767(*)	.1197(**)	N.S.
Books	.0805(*)	N.S.	.1885(**)
Movies	.0683(*)	N.S.	.0976(**)
Internet	.1146(**)	.0836(*)	.1941(**)
Newspapers	N.S.	.0763(*)	N.S.
Discussions with family and friends	.0944(**)	.0787(*)	.1836(**)

** =p <0.01, * =p<0.05; controlling for gender and age

Table 7(Correlation coefficients between 'orientation to good life'-related factors and evaluations of media)(Data: 2003S)

	Orientation to good life S-I(wish for self-realization)	Orientation to good life S-II(charity)	Orientation to good life S-III(concerns for social problems)	Orientation to good life S-IV(wish for safety and stability)
Television	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Books	N.S.	.1290(**)	.1337(**)	N.S.
Movies	-.0954(*)	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.
Internet	-.1145(*)	N.S.	.1097(*)	N.S.
Newspapers	N.S.	.1470(**)	.1824(**)	N.S.
Discussions with family and friends	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	.1269(**)

** =p <0.01, * =p<0.05; controlling for gender and age

Table 8(Correlation coefficients between *Seken*-related factors, 'Orientation to good life'-related factors and concerns for dominant social problems)(Data: 2003G)

		Political consciousness	Environmental consciousness	Consciousness for community problems
Seken-related factors	Criticism of modern civilization G-I (deceit)	.0815(*)	.0916(**)	N.S.
	Criticism of modern civilization G-II(denial of rationality)	.1701(**)	.2290(**)	.1314(**)
'Orientation to good life'-related factors	Orientation to good life G-I(concerns for social problems)	.2838(**)	.3044(**)	.2489(**)
	Orientation to good life G-II(hope for stability)	.1111(**)	.1115(**)	.0837(**)
	Orientation to good life G-III(wish for self-improvement)	.2261(**)	.1238(**)	.1470(**)

- 1) Percentages show the results of partial correlation coefficients between political consciousness as well as concerns for other dominant social problems and *Seken*-related factors as well as 'orientation to good life'-related factors (controlling for age and gender).
 2) (*) significant at $p < .05$; (**) significant at $p < .01$

5. Relations between *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings and meanings of Japanese popular songs

In this part, we'd like to analyze the data of 2003S and 2003G, mainly focusing on the meanings of Japanese popular songs and the relations between meanings of popular songs and *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings.

5.1. MEANINGS OF POPULAR SONGS AND POPULAR SONG SINGERS

Table 9 shows the results of the responses to the question; *who taught you important things in your life?* (M.A.). As this table shows, the role of favorite singers and actors are rather limited compared to "*Father and/or mother*" or "*Friends or older comrades in school*". It is rather surprising that according to our data "*Father and/or mother*" are the most influential people for the younger generations. This surprising finding

is endorsed with the data shown in Table 13. As Table 13 shows, family or home is still the important place for younger generations. This finding is interesting and at the same time very difficult to interpret, because this finding is far from the common belief in the destruction or collapse of family prevailing throughout our society. How should we interpret this finding? Does this finding reflect people's desires or hopes in the age when the fears or anxieties about the family system worsen day by day? Or is family still alive in *Seken*, while the role of family is changing in *Shakai*? So far as our research data show, nothing is clear in these respects. But at least one thing is clear; the pessimistic attitudes towards our family system and society that are believed to be prevailing in Japan of today were not supported by our research data.

Table 9(People from whom meanings in life were taught)
(Data: 2003S)

People from whom important things in life were taught (MA)
Friendly grownups in neighborhood (4.0%)
Favorite singers or actors (15.0%)
Characters of animation or comics (18.4%)
Characters in TV dramas or movies (15.7%)
Famous people in history (12.2%)
School teachers (41.8%)
Friends or older comrades in school (58.4%)
Father and/or mother (66.4%)
Friends acquainted through the Internet (3.3%)
Famous scientists (2.4%)
Respectable politicians (1.3%)

Table 10 shows the results of the same question as Table 9 but items of selection are confined to popular song singers. As this table shows, the group, "Mr. Children" is the most influential singers as the ones who are evaluated to teach the respondents the meanings of life.

Table 10(Singers from whom meanings in life were taught)
(Data: 2003S)

Singers from whom important things in life were taught (MA)
The Beatles (10.0%)
Ayumi Hamasaki (6.9%)
Hikaru Utada (7.5%)
Glay (7.1%)
B'z (6.4%)
Mr. Children (22.1%)
Miyuki Nakajimaor (5.1%)
Yumi Matsutoya (3.5%)

5.2. MEANINGS OF HOME AND SOCIETY

Table 11(Images of society) (Data: 2003S)

Images of society (MA)
Restrictive (18.7%)
Something that is so unrelated to me that it seems far way (5.5%)
I don't want to interact with it but I have to (38.3%)
Something that we optimistically build together (43.6%)
Something that we should leave up to politicians to take responsibility for(3.3 %)
Noting in particular (15.5%)

1) The figures show the percentages of the responses to the question; *what do you think when you hear the following phrases?*

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, in spite of the common images of people's pessimistic attitudes towards the society, the younger generations seem to have more affirmative and active attitudes towards the society. And this tentative finding or assumption was affirmed by our different data (Table 11). And this tendency is true of the more elder generations too (Table 12). In addition to the finding shown through the data of Table 9, this finding also seems to be far from the common images prevailing in the society of Japan of today.

Table 12(Images of society) (Data: 2003G)

Images of society (MA)
Restrictive (15.3%)
Something that is so unrelated to me that it seems far away(2.7%)
I don't want to interact with it but I have to (46.1%)
Something that we optimistically build together(40.8%)
Something that we should leave up to politicians to take responsibility for(0.9%)
Noting in particular (17.0%)

1) The figures show the percentages of the responses to the question ; *what do you think when you hear the following phrases?*

Table 13(Images of home) (Data: 2003S)

Images of home (MA)
The place where we can get a piece of mind (75.7%)
Restrictive (13.3%)
The place where we can get food and residence (54.6%)
The place where important people live (61.5%)
The place where we can learn important things (49.3%)
The place which we want to protect more carefully than any other places (33.4%)
The place in which we are not so interested in (2.9%)
Noting in particular (1.3%)

1) The figures show the percentages of the responses to the question; *what do you think when you hear the following phrases?*

5.3. RELATIONS BETWEEN *SEKEN-JINSEIKAN* MEANINGS AND MEANINGS OF POPULAR SONGS

Table 14 (Factors gained through factor analysis on meanings of popular songs)
(Data: 2003S)

	Major Contributing Values and Factor Loading
<i>Songs S1</i> (encouragement)	Something that encourages us (.551) Something that gives us peace of mind (.524)
<i>Songs S2</i> (purity of mind)	Somewhere we can touch purity of minds of singers (.621)
<i>Songs S3</i> (search for self-identity)	Somewhere we can get hints for search of our self-identity (.481)

Table 15 (Factors gained through factor analysis on meanings of popular songs)
(Data: 2003G)

	Major Contributing Values and Factor Loading
<i>Songs G1</i> (love)	Something that shows us the meaning of love (.718) Something that shows us the meanings of contradictions in this world (.402)
<i>Songs G2</i> (encouragement)	Something that encourages us (.654) Something that gives us peace of mind (.459)
<i>Songs G3</i> (search for self-identity)	Somewhere we can get hints for search of our self-identity (.643)

Table 14 and Table 15 show the results of factor analysis of the responses to the questions about the meanings of popular songs. By performing factor analysis (principal component analysis, Varimax rotation) of the responses, we could get 3 dominant factors both for the data of Research 2003S and 2003G. Table 16, 17, 18 and 19 show the results of correlation coefficients between these factors and *Seken-Jinseikan* factors. It is clear that the meanings of popular songs have strong relationships with *Seken-Jinseikan* factors. So far as our data show, the meanings of popular songs clearly consist of (part) of the network of meanings for which *Seken*-related meanings or *Seken-Jinseikan* meanings play dominant roles.

Table 16 (Correlation coefficients between *Seken*-related factors and meanings of popular songs) (Data: 2003G)

	Criticism of modern civilization G-I (denial of modern civilization as deceit)	Criticism of modern civilization G-II (denial of rationality)
<i>Songs G1</i> (love)	N.S.	.1156 (**)
<i>Songs G2</i> (encouragement)	N.S.	.2229 (**)
<i>Songs G3</i> (search for self- identity)	N.S.	.1209 (**)

** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$; controlling for gender and age

Table 17 (Correlation coefficients between *Seken*-related factors and meanings of popular songs) (Data: 2003S)

	Criticism of modern civilization S-I (denial of modern civilization as deceit)	Criticism of modern civilization S-II (denial of rationality)	Criticism of modern civilization S-III (denial of wealth)
<i>Songs S1</i> (encouragement)	N.S.	.1508 (**)	.1010 (*)
<i>Songs S2</i> (purity of mind)	.N.S.	N.S.	.1089 (*)
<i>Songs S3</i> (search for self- identity)	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.

** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$; controlling for gender and age

Table 18 (Correlation coefficients between 'orientation to good life'-related factors and meanings of popular songs) (Data: 2003G)

	Orientation to good life G-I (concerns for social problems)	Orientation to good life G-II (hope for stability)	Orientation to good life G-III (wish for self-improvement)
<i>Songs G1</i> (love)	.1587 (**)	N.S.	.1344 (**)
<i>Songs G2</i> (encouragement)	.2378 (**)	.1583 (**)	.2036 (**)
<i>Songs G3</i> (search for self- identity)	.1926 (*)	N.S.	.1718 (**)

** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$; controlling for gender and age

Table 19(Correlation coefficients between 'orientation to good life'-related factors and meanings of popular songs)(Data: 2003S)

	Orientation to good life S-I (wish for self-realization)	Orientation to good life S-II (charity)	Orientation to good life S-III (concerns for social problems)	Orientation to good life S-IV (wish for safety and stability)
<i>Songs S1</i> (encouragement)	.3041(**)	.1250(**)	N.S.	.1362(**)
<i>Songs S2</i> (purity of mind)	.1368(**)	.1822 (**)	N.S.	N.S.
<i>Songs S3</i> (search for self-identity)	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.	N.S.

** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$; controlling for gender and age

6. Popular songs within *Seken*

In the sections above we mainly discussed two things (two related things) while showing our research data; *Seken* as a horizon of meanings (or a network of meanings) and the meanings of popular songs within *Seken*. In regard to the interpretation of meanings and roles of popular songs (or the popular culture or the mass mediated culture as a whole), the approach that we tried here seems to be very rare. So far as I know, the relations between *Seken* and popular songs has never been "popular" themes in the field of media studies or the related study areas. This is mainly due to the situations that the studies of popular songs (and the popular culture) have been motivated by the intentions to solve the contradictions brought about in the modernizing process of the Western culture and society. For example, Adorno's famous discussions about the standardization of popular music are typical (Adorno, 1941, 1962). In his articles, "On popular music" and "Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie", the dominant theme is about the problem in relation to the fragmentation of people's experiences or life. But this process of fragmentation of people's experiences or life seems to be closely related to the history of Western culture and society. If we still live in *Seken* and in this *Seken*, the meanings of the world, evaluations of media, the aims of life, the value judgments of everyday activity, images of home, images of society are closely related with each other; the situation about "fragmentation of people's experiences or life" seems to need a different viewpoint. If things are closely related with each other in *Seken* as our data show (even if this relationships might be due to a shared imagination), the discussions about the meanings of popular songs that are viewed mainly from the viewpoints rooted in the

modern Western culture sound rather limited at the least for us as the dwellers in *Seken*. To put this another way, we need a different perspective to see popular culture as well as the related aspects of our life or our existence like the meanings of privacy, individualism, the human relations.

Indeed, it is possible that we, the dwellers in *Seken*, don't know even the meanings of the terms or concepts "individualism" or "privacy" in crucial points. Recently I got a personal mail from Professor Charles Ess (Drury University, his major research theme is information ethics) about the concept of privacy. According to his explanation, in Western culture, at least in the United States and Germany (he teaches in both countries) the discussions about privacy are fundamentally rooted on the distinction between "privacy as an instrumental good" and "privacy as an intrinsic good" (Ess, 2004). The former is "privacy is something needed to develop a sense of self and personal autonomy" or so. The latter is privacy as "a good in itself that needs no further justification". This is surprising to us, because it is clear that we know only the "privacy as an instrumental good". And if the concepts of "privacy" or related term "individualism" lie in the bottom of Western culture or democracy as Abe suggests (Abe, 2004:115), our understanding about Western culture or democracy is clearly awfully limited. And on the other hand, our understanding of privacy appears to be difficult for people from Western world to understand, if our understanding rests on *Seken*-related meanings or experiences in Japanese culture. As a matter fact, my mail as follows seems to have surprised Ess, because in Europe "confession" is just to a priest and not to public (Ess, 2004).

"I think that the concept of privacy in Japan is different from that of Western countries (this is just a guess). For example, expressing or sharing of (part of) one's privacy seems to be a 'popular' and 'traditional' way to get good personal friends in Japan. In Japan 'privacy novel' is (or was) very popular genre of literature. Some famous writers like Isota Kamura seemed to intentionally betray the inner secrets, privacy or even private shames in their novels. According to some sociologist (Sakuta, 1972: 318-328), this kind way of expressing the inner secrets in novels is (at least partly) rooted in the concept of 'self-salvation' or 'self-purification' deriving from a school of Buddhism. In the Kamakura era (1192-1333) Japan experienced a sort of 'Reformation'. According to a new interpretation of Shinran (a famous priest), the Buddha (strictly speaking, Amida-Nyorai) is the supreme being that has hopes to save the weak, bad, sinful humans. One of Shinran's famous words are such as; 'Even good people can be saved by Buddha, then why not bad people?' And as a result, to

betray or express one's inner secrets or sins or shames is regarded to be as the way to become persons that deserve to be saved by Buddha. According to some sociologist, the modern novels in Japan still remain (at least partly) in this tradition of spiritual interpretation of losing one's 'private minds'. In short, to betray one's dirty, sinful inner mind or privacy is to view oneself from the point of view of Buddha."

In this sense, it seems that even though we know the history of long tradition of discussions on popular culture or popular songs in Western culture since the eras of Montaigne or Pascal (Lowenthal, 1968), we don't know the important aspects of the meanings of popular songs; popular songs in *Seken*. Our attempt here appears to be one of a few exceptions, although some important problems like the "contradiction" of the contents of popular songs and the positive attitudes of the listeners (the younger generations) towards the society still remain unsolved here.

7. Concluding Remarks

As we discussed here, *Seken* is a very important aspect of the world for Japanese people. But we have to add another important thing to this fact or finding; Japanese people live in *Seken* and at the same time they live in a more modernized aspect of the world, "*Shakai*" (Nakada et al. 2004). As our research data clearly showed, the relationships between *Seken* and the meanings of popular songs are very clear. But if the world where Japanese people live is a dichotomy of *Seken* and *Shakai*, we have to analyse the relationships between *Shakai* and the meanings of popular songs as well as those between *Seken* and popular songs. This analysis is very important for the "holistic" understanding of the popular songs and this will be our next subject. The dichotomy of *Seken* and *Shakai* was already analysed in another paper (Nakada et al., 2004) but we have to leave the analysis of the relations between the dichotomy of *Seken* -*Shakai* and popular songs as well as the "contradictory" relations between the meanings of the words of popular songs and people's attitudes towards society or family as our next problem in the near future, mainly because of the limited space allowed to this paper.

(This paper is partly based on my draft for presentation at IV. ICIE -Symposium held at Karlsruhe in Germany in 2004. This paper was originally written for the scholars from Western countries with relatively limited information or knowledge on Japanese traditional culture or *Seken*.)

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