



International Conference

# Invisible Empire: Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan



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Social Sciences and Media Studies Building 2F Conference Room 2135

University of California, Santa Barbara

A striking aspect of contemporary Japanese culture is the pervasive nature of discussions and representations of "spirits" (*tama* or *tamashii*), generally rooted in vaguely articulated discourses on "animism" (*animizumu*) that often exist separately from explicit religious forms. This pervasive presence of animistic and spirit-related themes in Japanese contemporary mass culture (also and especially outside of strictly religious discourses) is often taken for granted as an obvious feature of Japanese culture and spirituality, but very little is articulated about the nature

of spirits and the characteristics of animism that gives them shape. This conference will attempt to map the field of Japanese animism by addressing various instances in which it is evoked—in popular religion, mass culture (films, literature), visual arts and architecture, and even science and technology. The papers will both provide analyses of specific cases of "animistic attitudes" in which the presence of "spirits" and spiritual forces is alleged and attempts to trace cultural genealogies of those attitudes and produce conceptual maps of current animistic ideas about spirits.

Full details:

[www.eastasian.ucsb.edu/invisible-empire](http://www.eastasian.ucsb.edu/invisible-empire)