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## **RELATION BETWEEN *OSHI-KATSU* AND JAPANESE RELIGIOUS VIEWS**

### **What is *Oshi-katsu*?**

Firstly, we will explain what *Oshi-katsu* is. *Katsu* means ‘activities.’ *Oshi* refers to people or things which you want to cheer for. Most people regard *Oshi* as what you love the most and it is similar to “fave.” Some younger people think *Oshi* is central to their lives. For example, idols, entertainers, voice actors, youtubers and fictional characters. In close relationship, we think of our favorite teachers as *Oshi*.

Let’s look at your *Oshi*. Anything is right. What do you cheer for?

Then, we will talk about *Oshi-Katsu* in detail. People say many young Japanese do *Oshi-katsu*. One can even say that *Oshi-katsu* is a new part of Japanese culture. But why do they do those activities? We think there are some reasons. First, they can feel a sense of purpose in life through *Oshi-katsu*. Second, *Oshi-katsu* can become their identities; young people represent their own personalities with *Oshi*. Third, they can be positive about themselves through *Oshi*. They can do *Oshi-katsu* anytime and anywhere. For example, when people go to school, they bring *Oshi*’s goods and they give people power.

### **How and Why is *Oshi-katsu* Popular in Japan?**

Why has *Oshi-katsu* become popular in Japan? In our opinion, it has something to do with the popularity of subculture.

In Japan, there are an estimated 6.8 million people who love to watch animation movies, 4.5 million people enjoy digital games, and 3.6 million fans are involved in Idol contents. Therefore, a vast number of Japanese enjoy subculture in many ways, and *Oshi-katsu* often takes place within those social contexts.

By researching the economic effects of “*Oshi-katsu*”, it is said that there is about 2.1 billion dollars consumption from animation contents, and 1.1 billion dollars consumption from Idol contents. We can say that *Oshi-katsu* has a great impact in the Japanese economy.

### **What Activity is *Oshi-katsu*?**

How do people enjoy *Oshi-katsu*? We can divide *Oshi-katsu* activities into three groups.

1. Reactive and low consumption activities: for example, to imagine *Oshi* and fancy, check SNS, DVD, CD, magazines.

2. Proactive and high consumption activities: for example, to join events such as live concerts or fan meetings, and related places like animation/film locations.

3. Creative activities: for example, to make fun goods, arrange self-outfits and so on.

*Oshi-katu* can be subdivided into many parts. It is because there is no answer for how to express your love for *Oshi*. Therefore, **Oshi-katu** may cost a lot of time and money although people can be cheered up and get power to live through *Oshi*.

Let us introduce some words which have special meaning in *Oshi-katu*.

1. *Precious*: for example, “My *Oshi* is a star but he is humble and friendly. How precious he is ...!”

2. *God*: “Oh my god!! *Oshi* waved at me!!”

3. *Donation*: “I must donate for my *Oshi*’s Birthday event...!”

4. *Propagate*: “I propagate the charm of *Oshi* to my sister.”

One can see that people use several “religious” words. In our opinion, *Oshi-katsu* has a tendency to focus on religious behaviors. For example, the behavior in which people visit a model place or where *Oshi* visited is called “Pilgrimage” among the young Japanese. By visiting such places, they would like to feel their *Oshi*. Some people bring *Oshi*’s goods and take photos to make a memory between them and *Oshi*.

People even make “altars” to celebrate their *Oshi*’s birthday. In *Oshi-Katsu*, an altar means a place or decoration where goods and pictures of *Oshi* characters and idols are collected and displayed in one place like a kind of shrine.

### Why Do the Young Japanese Worship *Oshi* as if It Were a Religion?

Religions such as Christianity consider it taboo to use the word “God” carelessly. However, young Japanese casually refer to *Oshi* as “God” and worship them. Many religious words are used in *Oshi-katu*, and it is very similar to religious behavior. Why do young Japanese people worship *Oshi* like a religion?

In our opinion, the religious character of *Oshi-katu* might be related to “animism” which is a notion that all phenomena and things have spirits. Animism traditionally was strong in Japan. It is said that gods reside in everything, including nature, tools, and words. As is well known, natural disasters have been common in Japan since ancient times, for example, earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis and floods. Some people think that is why Japanese have come to believe in various gods.

Animism evolved into a unique Japanese religion called *Shinto* which merged with Buddhism and other religions. Unlike other religions, *Shinto* has neither a founder nor a scripture. It is more of a folk religion that arose from animism, and it is closer to a philosophy than a religion. *Shinto* is so thoroughly integrated into the lives of Japanese that they are not conscious of their religious behaviors which certainly influence their thought and behaviors.

*Shinto* is also one of polytheism. Unlike monotheism such as Christianity, polytheism has several gods in the same way as Hinduism. By believing in several gods, people can find their activities in anything. If gods reside in everything, *Oshi* also can be gods. People feel their *Oshi* as if their gods are things or entities who influence their lives. That is why *Oshi-katu* looks like religious activities.

In conclusion, we can say *Oshi-Katsu* is one of the new Japanese cultural phenomena. It has a high amount of consumption contents. In addition, younger people can be cheered

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up by *Oshi* and get the power to live. To sum up, *Oshi-Katsu* use a lot of religious words and do religious behavior which seem to have something to do with traditional Japanese polytheism.

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