

Old Norse Mythology in Japanese Manga: A Preliminary Analysis

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1. Introduction

- Joint research project 2017-18: “Exploratory Research on the Reception of Old Norse Mythology in Japanese Manga Media”
- Our goal: Finding a Japanese style of representation of Medieval North Culture
 1. Creating a database of Norse motifs depicted in Japanese manga
 2. Investigating the original texts of Norse myths or legends
 3. Analyzing these texts from multidisciplinary perspectives: literature, comparative literature, history, media studies

2. Database in progress

- Sample 1: *Harp of the Stars* by Mizuno Hideko, 1960
- Sample 2: *Crystal Dragon* by Ashibe Yūho, 1984
- Sample 3, 4: *ONE PIECE* by Oda Eiichiro, 2017

3. Categorization of motif use

- Influence of translations
 - The two Eddas in 1973
 - J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* in 1972-1975
- a. historical fiction
 - *Crystal Dragon* by Ashibe Yūho, 1981-present
 - Azumi Ryō's series of works, 1983-2001
 - *Vinland Saga* by Yukimura Makoto, 2005-present
- b. rewriting the myths
 - *The Mythical Detective Loki* by Sakura Kinoshita, 1999-2015
 - *Saint Young Men* by Hikaru Nakamura, 2006-present
- c. borrowing names
 - *Jormungand* by Keitarō Takahashi, 2006-2012
 - 'berserkr'
- d. the influence of Wagner's *Ring*
 - *Der Ring des Nibelungen*: First performance of *Walküre* in Japan in 1967
 - TV animated work: *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982; English version *Robotech*, 1985)

4. A closer look: Representing violence

- Makoto Yukimura, *Vinland Saga* (幸村誠『ヴィンランド・サガ』) Ch. 28: “Night attack”
- Differences between Christians and Vikings

- *Njáls saga*

‘Have you heard,’ she [the woman in Iceland] said, ‘that Thor challenged Christ to a duel and that Christ didn’t dare to fight with him?’

‘What I have heard,’ said Thangbrand, ‘is that Thor would be mere dust and ashes if God didn’t want him to live.’

(*Njáls Saga*, 2001, ch. 102. The square brackets were inserted by speaker.)

- *The Saga of Hákon the good* (king of Norway, 934–961)

‘farmers complained that the king would take away their work from them, and said that they cannot live in the country with such a thing.’

(*Saga Hákonar góða*, ch. 15. Translation by speaker.)

- What is Japanese imagination?

5. Closing remarks

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