

CSJR Newsletter

The SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

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SOAS

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/Centres/JapaneseReligions>

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From the CSJR Chair

Dear friends and colleagues

Welcome to the Spring 2002 issue of the *CSJR Newsletter*. In these pages you will find reports of research activities, details of this term's CSJR seminars, beginning with David Lewis on 'Religious Rites in a Japanese Factory' on February 7th and news of the forthcoming symposium on Japanese religious landscape scheduled for May 9-10 2002.

We offer hearty congratulations to Lucia Dolce who on 16th January was awarded her Leiden University PhD *cum laude* (a rare distinction from Leiden!) for her dissertation on Nichiren and medieval Japanese Buddhism. Dr Dolce will be on research leave from January for two terms, including a planned period in Japan. During this time the MA class 'Religious Practice in Japan' will be taught by Dr Hideaki Matsuoka. Congratulations also to our CSJR research student Anna Schegoleva who has worked tirelessly to organise Centre meetings this year and has been awarded a Sanwa Scholarship to visit Japan in Spring 2002. Dr John Breen remains on research leave this term.

Looking back, the Autumn 2001 programme of Thursday evening meetings included no less than six CSJR seminars and two Japanese Religion Forum meetings, one of these a group visit led by Lucia Dolce to the British Museum's *Shinto: The Sacred Art of Japan* exhibition (a report on the visit by Yukiko Nishimura is included in this Newsletter). The term began with a paper from our newly arrived Research Fellow Dr Hideaki Matsuoka, entitled 'Beyond Diaspora: Japanese New Religions in Brazil' while on October 25th Dr Cynthia Bogel (University of Washington and a visiting Fellow at SISJAC/SOAS) gave an illustrated talk on 'Material and Immaterial Functions of Image in Ninth Century Japanese Esotericism'. In November Ian Astley (University of Edinburgh) discussed 'Ancestors, Predecessors and Successors: Some Issues of Lineage in Shingon Buddhism' and Bernhard Scheid (Austrian Academy of Sciences) asked 'What's wrong with "Shinto"?' In December, papers were presented by Dr Tadeusz Skorupski (SOAS) on 'Obsequies and Ancestral Worship in Japanese Buddhism from the Perspective of Indian Buddhism' and by Prof Sueki Fumihiko (Tokyo University) on '19th Century Europe's Encounter with Japanese Buddhism'. The Japanese Religions Forum paper on December 6th entitled 'The Essence of Soto Zen' was given by John LoBreglio, a PhD Candidate from the University of California at Santa Barbara & Kyoto University.

We look forward to seeing you at the CSJR seminars this term.

Brian Bocking

CSJR Seminars Spring Term 2002

Thursdays 5pm 6.30pm

Room 336 SOAS main building, Russell Square

February 7	<p>Dr. David Lewis (Independent Scholar) <i>Religious Rites In a Japanese Factory</i></p>
February 28	<p>Prof. Kemmyo Taira Sato (Professorial Research Associate, SOAS) <i>D. 7'. Suzuki and the Shin-Buddhist Poet</i> <i>Saichi Asahara</i></p>
March 14	<p>Prof. Choryu Ikemi (CSJR academic visitor; Bukkyo University, Kyoto) <i>Deep Stratum of the Hojoki; Body-mind Awareness</i></p>
March 21	<p>Dr Kazuo Ueno (Archaeologist) <i>Origins of Religion in Japan</i></p>

For further information on the seminars, contact Anna Schegoleva on anka@soas.ac.uk (tel.020-7898-4760) or see the Centre website: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/Centres/JapaneseRelicrions/>

*Space, Experience, and the Sacred:
Towards the Study of Japanese Religious Landscape*

A two-day symposium: Thursday 9 May (1pm-5pm) and Friday 10 May

(9.30-5pm), 2002

Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions (CSJR)

Coordinator: Dr Hideaki Matsuoka (CSJR)

Venue: School of Oriental and African Studies

University of London
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

Kenneth Clark's influential *Landscape into Art* (1949) was based on a way of thinking which has been very widely accepted; namely to consider landscape as "nature." However, trends over the past one or two decades have encouraged the development of new perspectives. For instance, scholars such as W.J.T. Mitchell who edited *Landscape and Power* (1994) and Eric Hirsch, one of the editors of *The Anthropology of Landscape* (1995), shed new light on this subject from other angles. The question emerges; has religious landscape been adequately studied by scholars of religion? The answer is "no." Unlike 'scripture', 'ritual', 'mysticism' and other concepts that have been central in the study of religion, landscape has received little overt treatment in this academic arena.

The symposium aims to bring together a group of international scholars to discuss contemporary perspectives on the religious landscape of Japan. Ideas of a sacrality immanent in the landscape which might be considered naive persist in Japan and elsewhere, providing a focus and a frame for pilgrimage, enshrinement and *communitas*. Since such ideas are increasingly emerging as central, rather than marginal, to religious discourse and practice, this symposium will shed light on the topic and provide a stimulus for further lines of cross-cultural research.

The keynote speakers are; Dr. Augustin Berque (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) on "The Japanese landscape: Construction, Deconstruction, and Destruction", and Professor Shimazono Susumu (University of Tokyo) "Japan as a Nation State and its Sacred Home". Other speakers include

Dr Carmen Blacker, Dr Max Moerman & Prof. Ian Reader.

Exhibition Review

Shinto: the Sacred Art of Ancient Japan

From 4 September to 2 December 2001 a major exhibition on Japanese religious art and archaeology was held at the British Museum's Japan Gallery. On 1 November, a group visit was made by more than fifteen undergraduate and postgraduate students of Japanese religions under the convenorship of Dr Lucia Dolce and joined by Prof. Brian Bocking.

This exhibition included many artefacts exhibited in the UK for the first time, including some National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties of Japan. The title of this exhibition 'Shinto: the Sacred Art of Ancient Japan' was somewhat misleading; in reality it covered almost the whole history of Japan from the Jomon period (12500-300BC) up to the end of the Edo period (1615-1868AD). Many of the artefacts exhibited were created by borrowing the styles and forms of Buddhist art and some were very closely connected to Buddhism.

The exhibition consisted of five parts: (i) Archaeological Insights into Primitive Belief, (ii) Archaeology and the World of Mythology, (iii) The First Shinden and the Birth of Shinto Images, (iv) Kami and Buddhas, and (v) the World of Ancient Sacred Treasures, though this sequence, seen in the exhibition catalogue, was perhaps based on considerations of chronology and Buddhist influence and was quite different from the exhibition order. The first two parts included clay figures and ornaments from the Jomon and Yayoi (300BC-AD300) periods such as Umataka, a famous representative Jomon earthenware, although its religious connections are still under scrutiny and were presented rather vaguely in this exhibition. The third and fourth parts included numerous marvellous artefacts created after the introduction of Buddhism to Japan and show definite Buddhist influence. These included the major mandalas of Kami such as Kasuga, Yoshino, Kumano and Fuji and important sculptural and pictorial images of Kami such as Sogyo Hachiman yogo-zu which depicts the historical moment when the deity Hachiman bestowed its oracle which prevented the usurping monk Doko from taking the throne. The final part in spite of its title was again not from the ancient period but comprised treasures dedicated to and/or enshrined in shrines such as swords, mirrors and jewel boxes.

The group visit focused on parts (iii)-(v). At each artefact the group took time to question and discuss after brief explanations by Dr Dolce. The visit was very useful for deepening our understanding of the historical and religious background of those materials and for understanding their relation to Buddhism. The connection with Buddhism is undoubtedly one of the most important and complex issues arising in any discussion of ‘the way of Kami’ and its artefacts and it is necessary to have a standpoint from which to think about how, not we in the 21st century but the people who created and venerated these artefacts were conscious of the difference between “Buddhism” and “the way of Kami” and what those people thought Buddhism and the way of the relevant Kami was. In other words, it is necessary to bear in mind the possibility that certain elements in materials that we look at as “Buddhist” might not have been regarded as such by people of the time.

Regrettably this exhibition, whether intentionally or unintentionally, remained rather ambiguous about whose viewpoint was adopted in presenting certain elements as Buddhist and in discussing the influence of Buddhism. Nevertheless, the exhibition was significant in spotlighting and presenting a variety of creations related to shrines and their activities and in providing materials for further research on diverse aspects of practices and beliefs in Japanese religion.

Yukiko Nishimura
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Ongoing PhD dissertations on Japanese religions at SOAS

Men Arichi, *Hie-Sanno mandara: the Iconography of Kami and Sacred Landscape in Medieval Japan* (Dr Tim Screech, Art and Archaeology)

Usami Hirokuni, *Social crisis and religious change in pre-Kamakura Japan* (completed) (Dr John Breen, East Asia)

Chi Ho Ivan Hon, *Japanese and Chinese intellectuals views on state and religion from the mid-19th to early 20th century* (Prof. Brian Bocking, Study of Religions)

Arthur Marques, *On concepts of healing and charity in Japanese new religions* (Drs Lola Martinez and Kit Davies, Anthropology)

Yukiko Nishimura, *Worship of Avalokitesvara in Japan* (Dr Lucia Dolce, Study of Religions)

Anna Schegoleva, *Ghosts in Japan: re-constructing horror in modernity* (Prof. Brian Bocking, Study of Religions)

Philip Swift, *Ghosts and Spirit Possession in Japan ‘s new religions* (Dr Lola Martinez, Anthropology)

MA in Japanese Religion

The MA Programme in Japanese Religion, now in its third year, is the first European taught graduate programme devoted to the study of Japanese religions. The degree provides an overview of Japanese religion, both past and present, and supplies the tools of analysis for further research in the field. The degree comprises four components: three taught courses and a dissertation and may be completed in one calendar year (full time), or in two or three calendar years (part-time).

The programme centres on the course “Religious Practice in Japan: Texts, Rituals and Believers,” which presents religious phenomena in Japan in their historical context and devotes attention to specific themes relevant for the understanding of the social aspects of Japanese religion and the influence of religion upon Japanese culture. Students have the opportunity to select other courses, depending on their specific interests and previous knowledge, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of Japanese religion. Options include the study of Asian context, contemporary developments outside Japan and methodologies for the analysis of religious phenomena.

A previous knowledge of the Japanese language is not required for entry. However, students with a sufficient knowledge of Japanese and an interest in approaching primary sources will be able to take “Readings in Japanese Religions.” In addition, the degree offers language courses in modern Japanese. Students on the programme will benefit from seminars, discussion groups, guest lectures, and international workshops organised by the Centre for the study of Japanese religions.

Application forms are available from the Registrar, SOAS.

For further information, contact Lucia Dolce, Dept. East Asia/Study of Religions LD16@soas.ac.uk