

CSJR Newsletter

The SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

September, 2001

no. 4

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

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Associate members: Dr. Matsuoka Hideaki, hideaki_matsuoka@hotmail.com; Yukiko Nishimura, NishimuraYukiko2@aol.com;
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From the Centre chair

A warm welcome to issue four of the Newsletter of the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions. Last year's regular seminar series from January to May began with a

talk by Charles Rowe on _moto and the new religions of Japan. Subsequently Wim Boot of Leiden spoke on Confucian thought, Koji Mizoguchi (UCL) on prehistoric mortuary practices and Yukiko Shirahara (SOAS) on the sixteen arhats in Japanese art. Mary Picone (Paris) discussed her ongoing research on the 'menacing foetus', John Breen (SOAS) brought us up to date on Yasukuni shrine studies and Massimo Raveri (Venice) expatiated on living mummies and 'the search for the perfect body'.

We would like to offer a very warm welcome to Dr Matsuoka Hideaki, the recipient of this year's CSJR postdoctoral Fellowship, to the new holder of the CSJR Research studentship, Yukiko Nishimura, and to our academic visitor Prof. Ikemi Choryu whose arrival in March 2001 was heralded in the last issue of the CSJR Newsletter. In the following pages you will find brief self-introductions from each of these scholars.

Former Chair of the Centre John Breen left for Japan in July as planned, returning briefly to London to host the Kagura performance at SOAS on September 3. The performance was preceded by a lecture by Irit Averbuch of Tel Aviv University, organised by Lucia Dolce. Readers of this Newsletter will no doubt be aware that a major Shinto symposium was held at the British Museum from September 6th – 8th to mark the exhibition at the British Museum entitled *Shint_*: The Sacred Art of Ancient Japan. More recently, Gaynor Sekimori, CSJR Postdoctoral Research Fellow 2000-2001 who is moving on to a post at Tokyo University, organised the *Shinbutsu Sh_g_* Symposium, a two-day international workshop (September 20th – 21st at SOAS) dealing with the relationship between Kami and Buddhas. Reports on these events as well as reflections by Gaynor on her productive year as CSJR Fellow at SOAS are included later in this Newsletter.

Finally, a word on the MA program in Japanese Religions sponsored by the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions at SOAS, directed by Lucia Dolce and now in its successful third year. Three students from last year's intake have already completed, and we are expecting seven new entrants this year. Increasing interest in the serious study of Japanese religions by significant numbers of very able postgraduate students is an excellent indicator of the intrinsic value and the continuing vitality of CSJR.

All of us at the Centre look forward to a new year of interesting activities; thank you for your continuing support for the Centre and we hope to see you regularly at CSJR seminars and other events.

Prof. Brian Bocking

CSJR Seminars

Thursdays, 5:00 -6:30 pm

Room 336, SOAS
main building, Russell Square

- October 11 **Matsuoka Hideaki**
(CSJR)
Beyond Diaspora: Japanese New Religions in Brazil
- October 25 **Cynthea Bogel**
(University of Washington/SISJAC)
Material and Immaterial Functions of Image in Ninth Century Japanese Esotericism
- November 15 **Ian Astley**
(University of Edinburgh)
Ancestors, Predecessors and Successors: Some Issues of Lineage in Shingon Buddhism
- November 29 **Bernhard Scheid**
(Austrian Academy of Sciences)
What's wrong with “Shint_”?
- December 12 **Tadeusz Skorupski**
Joint JRC-CSJR seminar
(Note: Wednesday, room G52) (SOAS)
Obsequies and Ancestral Worship in Japanese Buddhism from the Perspective of Indian Buddhism
- December 20 **Sueki Fumihiko**
(Tokyo University)
19th Century Europe’s Encounter with Japanese Buddhism

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/JapaneseReligions/>

Japanese Religions Forum

The Forum, which meets on Thursday evenings between CSJR seminars in term time, brings together post-graduate students, MA and PhD, working on Japanese religions from all academic departments at SOAS. The Forum aims to encourage a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Japanese religions.

Forum activities may include PhD student presentations; videos/films related to Japanese religions; presentations by representatives of Japanese religions in the UK; visits to the British Museum's collection of art and artefacts related to Japanese religions

Time: 5:00 - 6:30 p.m., Thursday

Place: Room 336 (3rd floor, SOAS *main* building, Russell Square)

November 1

Group visit to the British Museum to view *Shintō: The Sacred Art of Ancient Japan*
all undergraduate and postgraduate students of Japanese religions welcome

December 6

John LoBreglio
(PhD Candidate, University of California at Santa Barbara / Kyoto University)
The Essence of S_t_Zen

For updates on the Japanese Religions Forum programme, please check the CSJR notice board on the East Asia floor of the SOAS main building (opposite room 365) or contact Anna Schegoleva directly on anka@soas.ac.uk

Academic Profiles

From Professor Ikemi Choryu, Academic visitor at the CSJR

I came to England in April 2001 to spend a year as CSJR academic visitor, making use of research leave on offer at my own Bukky_ University in Kyoto. Dr John Breen kindly arranged for me to spend time here at SOAS. I am professor of the History of Japanese Mediaeval Thought, and my current research topic is 'An investigation of the History of the Mentality behind Japanese Mediaeval Tales: the Self and Society, Sin and Shame'.

In recent years, treatment of the history of Japanese mediaeval thought and religion from a politico-historical standpoint has formed the mainstream. The mutual exchange we see now between established theory and new-found theory appears, at first sight, to constitute a lively argument, but in reality the situation is one of deadlock.

Though I rate the importance of a politico-historical standpoint on the history of thought very highly, this particular problematic now dominates the field and there is a danger that the thoughts and passions of the general, nameless populace are discarded. My own research involves an attempt to clarify the mentality of the masses through an analysis of medieval tales and other forms of literature. It was my awareness of the gap between the general direction of the academic world and the present state of research on the one hand and my own aspirations on the other that led to my decision to come to Britain. In my view, SOAS was the ideal place from which to look again at Japan from the outside. I am now deeply immersed in research.

Ikemi Choryu PhD

From Dr Hideaki Matsuoka, recipient of the 2001 CSJR Postdoctoral Fellowship

I am very pleased to be chosen as the CSJR postdoctoral fellow at SOAS for 2001-2002. I would like to introduce my research briefly. In December 2000, I took a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley with my dissertation entitled *Blemish on Our Spirits: How Brazilians Believe in a Japanese New Religion Called The Church of World Messianity*. It may sound strange to most readers, but Japanese religion in general has over one million followers in Brazil and over ninety percent of them are Brazilians. In this dissertation, I analysed why and how a Japanese new religion has crossed "ethnic barriers." In doing so, I also elucidated the position of Messianity in the Brazilian religious arena.

My next in-depth project is to explore the historical transformation of three-dimensional representations of heaven and hell in Japanese religiosity, which will integrate the various aspects of my research since I started studying Japanese religion. While at SOAS, I would like to organise a symposium on religious landscape and/or space.

My other research interests include; Japanese modernisation and the transformation of religions, the historical approach to the development of ideas and methods in anthropology and religious studies, and the Jazz Café *Jazz Kissa* as a public space in the 1960s.

hideaki_matsuoka@hotmail.com

From Nishimura Yukiko, the holder of the 2001 CSJR PhD studentship

I am grateful to the CSJR for giving me this opportunity to continue my research at SOAS with the CSJR studentship. My research will be on the cult of Kannon (Skr. Avalokiteshvara) in Japan. This benevolent deity in Buddhism occupies a distinctive position in Japanese religion, taking a variety of forms and functions reflecting different social and religious needs. Japanese people have called this deity with familiarity and affection “Kannon sama”; Kannon sama often appears in Japanese folk-tales and children’s stories. The cult of Kannon constitutes diverse ways to worship this deity including the pilgrimage to thirty-three Kannon, already popular in western Japan in the Heian period. A variety of art has also been inspired by the cult of this deity; the colossal eleven-headed Kannon in Hase-dera and the ferocious horse-headed Kannon in J_ruri-dera are examples. I think that these artefacts are also important in any discussion of the cult since they highlight, for example, influences from continental countries and the Japanised elements and the religious needs of certain groups of people in certain periods. For example, Kannon was worshipped as a deity for protection of the nation in the Nara period, and my research will also explore the iconography, styles, and especially the function of those artefacts.

My interest in Kannon started from my study on Japanese religious art, especially ancient Buddhist sculptures. I attended the MA History of Art at SOAS in 2000, where I took courses on subjects closely related to my interests, including ‘Religious practice in Japan: Texts, Rituals and Believers’ which looked into the history and the doctrines as well as the actual practices, beliefs and faith of people in history and in contemporary Japanese society. This approach helped me to reconsider from a new viewpoint various aspects of Japanese religion and prompted my interest in the piously worshipped “Kannon sama”, the practical religious activities and faith relating to which sometimes drifted far away from any doctrinal basis. Other areas of research that interest me include everyday religious activities such as visits to temples and shrines in New Year and the buying of amulets, the worship of natural phenomena, such as Mt. Miwa as kami, ways to perceive and deal with death, and the interrelationship between religion and art.

NishimuraYukiko2@aol.com

Cultural event report

Kagura at SOAS, September 3rd, 2001

Two *kagura* troupes, from Buzen in Kyushu and Chichibu in Saitama, performed before a full house in the auditorium of the Brunei gallery SOAS on September 3rd.

The evening began with a *shubatsu* purification conducted by the Rev Hatsuyama of the Usobuki Hachiman shrine in Buzen. The Chichibu troupe, attached to the Chichibu shrine in Saitama, then opened the dramatic proceedings with the mesmerising, ‘Ame no Iwato biraki’, the story of the Sun Goddess’s emergence from the heavenly rock cave. Memorable were the dancing of Ame no uzume and the opening of the rock cave by Tajikarao. ‘Inasaku’, the second piece, was a portrayal of the night time world of the rice deity Inari and his two assistants, the heavenly fox and the earthly fox, as they nurtured the

crop and danced in celebration of its abundance.

If the Chichibu kagura was stately and refined, the Buzen kagura that began part two was dramatic. 'Bon kagura', the first of three pieces, was a celebration of the rice crop that involved a dancer spinning across stage bearing trays laden with rice; 'Sanjin' had deities of the mountains, the fields and the seas celebrating the natural abundance of the world with dancing on stage and among the audience. 'Misaki kagura' was a dynamic enactment of the encounter between Ame no uzume and the ferocious Sarutahiko. Sarutahiko caused screams of delight as he posed and strutted down the aisles in the midst of the audience. The last piece of the evening was 'Kunihira no tsuchi' performed by the Chichibu troupe. The performance featured Daikoku - kuninushi no kami, the smiling deity whose hammer forges both harmony and prosperity. Daikoku's scattering of rice cakes among the audience brought the evening to a dramatic end.

Prior to the performance, Dr Irit Averbuch gave an illustrated talk on the shamanic tradition in kagura entitled 'Gods on stage'.

The SOAS event was hosted by the Centre and sponsored by the International Shinto Foundation, the GB Sasakawa Foundation, the International Foundation for arts and culture and Japan 2001.

The kagura troupes performed at SOAS as the second leg of their European tour, which began in Oslo and concluded in St. Ignatius church, Rome.

John Breen

Conference report

Nature, Man and Art

A Symposium to accompany the exhibition *Shint_*: *The Sacred Art of Ancient Japan*

On September 4, a major exhibition on Japanese religious art and archaeology opened at the British Museum. A symposium intended to elucidate the various areas covered was held later that week, between September 6 and 8.

The keynote speaker for the opening session was Professor Umehara Takeshi, recently retired head of the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto. Professor Umehara, seeking to define Japanese culture, limited himself to the J_mon period, in which he identified the origins of Shint_. Umehara illustrated his presentation with slides of Jōmon artefacts from the exhibition, but the religious connections remained rather vague.

The following day Harada Masayuki, a graduate of Kokugakuin University and a specialist in cultural properties protection in the Agency for Cultural Affairs, talked about the concept of “religious archaeology.” Here “Shint_” was used to apply to “folk religion,” whose ritual sites and relics could be analysed to understand the spirit of those who lived in the past. Harada made a useful distinction between prehistoric beliefs and later folk religion. His emphasis on the importance of local variations and the importance of the “archaeology of rituals” turned attention to process and helped contextualise his topic of Jōmon archaeology. Dr Gina Barnes, of Durham University, followed with a well-organised and enlightening presentation about the use of beadstone objects in Kofun society. Here again the importance of regional variations was stressed, in that production can be interpreted as a product of relations between the centre(s) and the peripheries. It was emphasised too that the early fifth century marks “the transformation of the political economy and the secure establishment of a Kinai elite.”

In the afternoon It_ Shir_, also from the Agency of Cultural Affairs, pointed out the difficulties of defining exactly what was a “Shint_” image. This he related to the lack of an object of worship in shrines, explaining theshintai as yorishiro rather than sacred image. He outlined the development of kami images in four stages, relating it to expanding ideas about kami-buddha combination (shinbutsu sh_g_). Kami images he concluded reverted after the tenth century to “the ancient concept of yorishiro,” which, I think, provides a useful tool for understanding the role of images somewhat outside the Buddhist orbit. Harada Kazutoshi of the Tokyo National Museum concluded the day’s presentations with a description of the treasures presented to the kami, tracing them from shamanistic type magical objects to objects for use in daily life.

The final day opened with a discussion of Shrine Mandalas by Gy_toku Shin’ichir_, of the Agency of Cultural Affairs. These he presented as forms of symbolic landscape, combining aspects of both devotional and landscape painting, understanding them as representing kami-buddha combination as it had matured during the medieval period. Dr Carmen Blacker of Cambridge University then spoke on the temporary shapes kami assume to appear before human beings in dreams and visions. She distinguished three paradigmatic forms in particular, the old man, the boy, and the lady, and illustrated the types of guises adopted through the examples of the mountain kami, Kasuga My_jin and Inari. After lunch, Victor Harris of the British Museum spoke about Japanese aesthetic sensibility in terms of swords and ceramics. He understood the origins of the Japanese aesthetic to reside in the long Jōmon past, later to be amplified through contacts with Chinese civilisation and Buddhism. As a result of medieval kami-buddha combination, the sword was regarded “as an instrument of spiritual enlightenment” as well as in a “practical, ritual and aesthetic sense.” The symposium closed with a talk by Kobayashi Tatsuo of Kokugakuin University about the cultural impact of the J_mon people, whom he considers “reached the highest level of culture in a society without legitimate agriculture.”

The symposium, like the related Shint_ exhibition, dealt with two themes, Jōmon artefacts and principally medieval religious painting. The use of the word “Shint_” here is somewhat misleading; a weakness in many such discussions is that inadequate attention is paid to the very important point of what it is we mean by “Shint_”. Non-specialist participants were confused by references to kami-buddha fusion, or similar descriptions. Another point of concern was the unstated but underlying assumption that “Shint_,” if not

actually in existence in J_mon times, at least existed in a way that can be described by the modern use of the word.

Nevertheless certain presentations were very useful for deepening the understanding of the material in the wonderful exhibition, and have added significantly to specialist knowledge available in the English-speaking world. A translation of the more significant Japanese presentations would be of lasting benefit.

Gaynor Sekimori

(editor's note: the British Museum exhibition is to be reviewed in the next issue)

Conference report

Undiscerned forms: kami-Buddha combination and Japanese religion,
September 20-21, SOAS, Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

On 20 and 21 September the CSJR symposium on *shinbutsu sh_g_* was held at SOAS in order to provide a forum in which leading scholars from Japan, UK and the USA were invited to share their expertise. *Shinbutsu sh_g_* which, literally translated, means 'combination of kami and Buddha', is a very important subject that has rarely been discussed on the conference level. The aims of this symposium, organized by Dr. Gaynor Sekimori, were to reconsider terminology and reevaluate approaches towards the study of *shinbutsu sh_g_*.

The focus of the first part of the symposium entitled *Theoretical Concerns* opened with a presentation '*Shinbutsu sh_g_ in Japanese History*' given by Professor Akio Yoshie of Tokyo University. Professor Yoshie's dense and stimulating discussion on how various examples of kami-buddha combination in the late Nara to early Heian periods occurred in relation to changes in social structure and patterns of belief was followed by a non-stop series of questions from the audience. The subsequent panel discussion, *Defining Shinbutsu Sh_g_*, chaired by Professor Brian Bocking, covered a wide variety of issues such as the singularity of Japanese *shinbutsu sh_g_*, the theme of distinguishing kami and buddhas, and the development of Han-honji Suijaku. These stimulating topics notwithstanding, a large part of the session was taken up with further questions posed to Professor Yoshie by members of the panel.

Shinbutsu Sh_g_ in Practice was the theme of day two of the conference which began with a presentation on the *Meaning of Kami in Medieval Hokkesh_* given by Dr. Lucia Dolce of SOAS. Dr. Dolce highlighted this example of *shinbutsu sh_g_* in the medieval period and elucidated the complex development significant in terms of the pre-existing theory of *Shinbutsu sh_g_* as well as the involvement of Yoshida Shint_. This was followed by a talk entitled *Combination of Religious Metaphor in the Akinomine of Haguro Shugend_* presented by Dr. Gaynor Sekimori of SOAS. Drawing from the rich materials collected during her fieldwork with Shugendô practice in Japan, Dr. Sekimori demonstrated that Yakinomine, the most important ritual in Haguro Shintô, is comprised of various strands from Buddhism and the Way of the Kami, the primary theme of both being death and rebirth.

Shinbutsu Sh_g_ in Art and Music was the focus of the third part of the conference, and comprised three presentations as innovative as those of the morning session. *Kami-Buddha Combination through Sound* was presented by Professor Fumi Ouchi of Miyagi Gakuin University, who has many years of experience with the practice of Haguro Shugend_. Professor Ouchi began with a discussion of the importance of generating sounds through techniques such as reciting, chanting, and through special tools in the Akinomine ritual, and went on to unfold a new area of research in this area by pointing out that these sounds were derivative of the simplification and popularization of the reciting of Buddhist sutras by the Tendai sect.

The second presentation was on the *Fushimi Inari Mandala: an Aspect of Fushimi Inari Worship in the Fourteenth Century*, given by Dr. Yukiko Shirahara, Handa Research Fellow (SISJAC). By means of a detailed analysis of the two different lineages of legends about this famous *inari* shrine, and the iconography of the *Fushimi Inari Mandala*, Dr. Shirahara clarified how and by which sponsorship this mandala was developed.

The final presentation was *Kami Images in Ninth Century Esoteric Temples* by Dr. Cynthia Bogel (University of Washington and SISJAC). Dr. Bogel focused on the famous sculpture of Yakushi Nyorai now housed at Jingoji temple, arguing that, based on the material, technique of construction, and its function, the sculpture was made in the context of Buddhism as well as the Way of the Kami.

This exciting symposium came to an end with closing remarks by Dr. Carmen Blacker of the University of Cambridge, who emphasized the magnitude of the influence of *Shinbutsu Bunri* (separation of Kami and Buddha), which took place in the Meiji period. According to Dr. Blacker, *shinbutsu sh_g_* impacted many facets of Japanese religion, and should be seen as *fusion* rather than as *syncretism* because the characterization of syncretism

seems to imply that Buddhism is higher in rank than the Way of the Kami.

All in all, the symposium revealed new aspects and innovative approaches towards a further understanding of the subject, and paved the way for the formulation of a wealth of new ideas to bring to the topic.

Yukiko Nishimura and Anna Schegoleva

Members' research-related activities

Winter

Anna Schegoleva gave a paper called '*Sleepless in Japan: the kanashibari phenomenon*' at The dark side of life in Asia and the West: Night time and time to sleep conference, Vienna University (January 4-6)

Gaynor Sekimori gave a paper in the Gender and Religions Research Centre, SOAS seminar series 'Damaged bodies'. Her paper was: '*Ny_nin kinsei: ritual exclusion of women in Japan*' (January, 19)

Spring

John Breen gave a paper at the CSJR entitled '*Yasukuni: land of peace*' (March, 22)

John Breen gave a paper at Stirling University entitled '*Contesting death and challenging memory: on Yasukuni shrine*' (April, 2)

John Breen chaired a panel on '*Power and spectacle in East Asia*' at the Joint East Asian studies conference, Pollock Halls, Edinburgh University (April 3-5)

Gaynor Sekimori gave a paper at the Joint East Asian studies conference, Pollock Halls, Edinburgh University on '*Who founded Haguro Shugend_: uses and abuses of a founder legend*' (April 4)

John Breen gave a paper on '*The rituals of diplomacy: early Meiji imperial audiences*' at the Marius Jansen memorial conference on modern and pre-modern Japanese history, Princeton University, (May 12-13)

Summer- Autumn

Anna Schegoleva attended the Japanese studies postgraduate workshop, Oxford Brookes University and gave a paper entitled '*Bad dreams of modern Japan: ghost stories on time to sleep*' (July 28)

Lucia Dolce chaired a session at the International Conference '*History and Practice of Copying In Japan*' Oxford Brookes University, Sept. 2-5

Gaynor Sekimori gave a paper called '*How to impose religious reformation: the separation of Buddha and kami worship at Hagurosan*', British Association for the Study of Religions annual conference (September 10-13)

Lucia Dolce attended the International Symposium "Undiscerned Forms: Kami-Buddha Combination (*shinbutsu sh_g_*) and Japanese Religion", SOAS, Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Sept. 20-21 and presented a paper '*Meanings of kami in medieval Hokkesh_*'

Gaynor Sekimori organised the International Symposium "Undiscerned Forms: Kami-Buddha Combination (*shinbutsu sh_g_*) and Japanese Religion", SOAS, Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Sept. 20-21 and presented a paper '*Combination of Religious Metaphor in the Akinomine of Haguro Shugend_*'

Members' publications

Brian Bocking *The Oracles of the Three Shrines: Windows on Japanese Religion* Curzon Press, 2000

John Breen 'Meiji shonen no ekken girei: Nichi-Ei k_ry_shi no ichidanmen' in Ocha no mizu joshi daigaku daigakuin ningen bunka kenky_ka ed, *Atarashii Nihongaku no k_chiku* 2 (2000)

Report on CSJR Post-doctoral Year

Dr Gaynor Sekimori

As the first CSJR Post-doctoral fellow, I have enjoyed over the last year the hospitality of SOAS and the Centre. A major achievement during this first year has been the establishment of the Handa Study Centre as the base for four Sainsbury and Handa fellows, located in the Brunei Gallery. For this the initiative and hard work of Dr John Carpenter, Sainsbury lecturer in Japanese Art, should be recognised. What was a bare space filled with a good deal of unwanted furniture when I arrived at the beginning of October had, by the end of November, become two superbly furnished rooms with four computers, two printers, a fax machine, and a scanner. The comfortable physical environment has been a major factor in creating a good research space.

On reflection, I think the most important benefit I have received from the past year has been the opportunity to meet other academics and to create my own academic standing. I was delighted to open the CSJR workshop series last October with a presentation concerning the separation of Buddha and kami worship at Hagurosan, the topic of my dissertation. In January I spoke about female prohibition from sacred sites in Japan (*ny_nin kinsei*) at the newly organised Gender and Religion seminar series here at SOAS, and I shall in fact be closing my time here with a presentation to the JRC on October 10 about Shugendô art. A realization of the importance of art in religious studies has perhaps been the most unexpected result of my stay, and owes much to the contiguity of so many art scholars, of whom Dr Yukiko Shirahara has been the greatest influence.

I gave papers too at two academic conferences this year, first at the British Association for Japanese Studies at Edinburgh in April, where I talked about the political implications of founder myths in Shugend_, and then at the British Association for the Study of Religions at Cambridge in September, where my topic was entitled 'Reformation at Hagurosan', in a deliberate attempt to encourage cross-area discussion about the similarities in the experience of the Reformation in England and kami-buddha separation in Japan.

Wanting to be involved with teaching, I took on one MA course at SOAS, *Readings in Japanese Religions*, where students read and discussed a wide variety of textual material relating to kami-buddha combination (*shinbutsu sh_g_*) and Shugend_. I gained a great deal of knowledge about the abilities and interests of students, as well as the administrative aspects of running a course, particularly regarding setting examinations. I also taught individual classes at both undergraduate and master's levels within the Japanese Religions programme.

With my research appetite so stimulated, I had to be careful not to embark on a number of new topics to the exclusion of my own previous research. I finished two articles incorporating materials dealt with in my dissertation, and they are at present in the referral system. I also wrote an entry on 'Shugend_' for the *Encyclopaedia of the Worlds' Religions*. I have two other articles substantially finished, concerning the papers I presented at the two conferences mentioned above.

My year finished with the international symposium held at SOAS in September 20 and 21 called "Undiscerned Forms, kami-buddha combination (*shinbutsu sh_g_*) in Japanese religious history." We combined skilled local talent with guest speakers and had a total of more than sixty attendees over the two days. There is a strong possibility that a conference volume will emerge from this.

I go on to take up an associate professorship within the Institute of Oriental Cultures at the University of Tokyo, with the specific brief of acting as Managing Editor for a new journal on East Asian studies that the university is to issue. I will also be working on my own areas of research and on at least one other publishing project, so I should be very busy. In closing I want to express my thanks to both Dr John Breen and Professor Brian Bocking for the support and encouragement they have given me over the past year, and most particularly, to acknowledge the cooperation, friendship and sheer hard work of Dr Lucia Dolce, my very good colleague. I shall miss you all.

Gaynor Sekimori gaynor-s@dial.pipex.com

Completed MA dissertations in Japanese religions at SOAS, 2001-2

Janet Foster, *The daikon as a symbol in Japanese religion*

Christopher Jones, *Mizuko kuy_: Critical Discourse and Actuality*

Spas Rangelov, *Two Types of Shamanic Figures in the Northern Japan: Ways of the Itako and the Gomiso*

Ongoing PhD dissertations on Japanese religions at SOAS

Meri Arichi, *Mandalas of the Hiei-san cult* (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, *Ghost stories 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)

SOAS

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 around 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.

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, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square WC1H 0XG London UK

For further information, contact Dept. of the Study of Religions, religions@soas.ac.uk (tel. 0207898-4760)

Also, see the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions website <http://www.soas.ac.uk/Centres/JapaneseReligions/>