

# CSJR Newsletter

The SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

September, 2001

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## SOAS

# 日本宗教研究

# センター

# 公報

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*From the Centre chair*

First and foremost a big welcome to Dr. Gaynor Sekimori, the first CSJR Post doctoral fellow, and to Anna Shchegoleva, the first recipient of the CSJR Post Graduate studentship. Dr. Sekimori, who introduces herself on page 4 (below), is an expert on *shugendo*. She will be working on a history of *shugendo* while at SOAS, and will be giving the first of the CSJR seminars this term. Anna will be embarking on her PhD thesis on ‘Conceptions of the supernatural in Japan’. We wish them both all the best.

After the launch of the Centre last December with the conference on Death, we ran a full of programme of seminars and Japan religions’ fora. They were all, I think, a great success, and I would like to record my thanks to Lucia Dolce for all her hard work in making them happen. The seminars approached different aspects of religious culture in different periods from different theoretical perspectives. We had Richard Bowring on pre-Heian religion; Brian Bocking on Shinto approaches, Daniel Stevenson on hungry ghosts, Ian Reader on pilgrimage and Bernard Faure on the darker side of Buddhism. We also had a memorable multi-media event when Graham Parkes came over from the University of Hawaii to give us a presentation on Zen and rocks. Talks to the Japanese religions fora were given by Rev. Takeuchi on Tenrikyo and by Meri Arichi on mandalas of the Hiei-san cult. Before this new term started, CSJR played host to Prof. Matsuo Kenji of Yamagata university who headed a two-day workshop on medieval Japanese religion. Lucia once again organised this. (See below, Conference report)

The seminar programme for term 1 of the new academic year is full, as you can see. There are other events related to Japanese religions to look forward to in the coming year, too: a performance of No drama in November in SOAS’s Brunei gallery; a visit by two *kagura* troupes in September of next year and the Centre hopes to be hosting a conference/workshop on *shinbutsu shugo* at some time during the coming academic year. Note, too, that the Japanese religions fora, the informal sessions principally for MA and PhD students, will be running next term. Details of all these events and updates of information about the CSJR are available on the CSJR website at:

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

Finally, a word is in order on the taught programmes in Japanese religions at SOAS. The MA programme continues to thrive. Last academic year, we had four students; this year we start with six. The new students come from the UK, Europe, the US and Australia. At BA level, there are two new courses available in the Department of the Study of Religions: Japanese religion. A historical overview" and Themes in Japanese Religion.

# Seminars

Thursdays, 5:00 -6:30 pm

Room 379

Thursday  
October 12

**Gaynor Sekimori**  
(SOAS)

Religious reformation in action: the prosecution of the *shinbutsu bunri* policy within Haguro *shugendō*

Thursday  
October 19

**Massimo Raveri**  
(University of Venice)

The search for the perfect body: living mummies and ways to utopia

Wednesday  
November 15

**Brian Bocking\***  
(SOAS)

The Oracles of the Three Shrines: a scroll through Japanese religion

\* This seminar, jointly hosted by the JRC and the CSJR, will take place in room G52.

Thursday  
November 23

**Rein Raud**  
(University of Helsinki)

Space-time and enlightenment in traditional and contemporary thought

Thursday  
December 14

**Carmen Blacker**  
(University of Cambridge)  
Types of *kami*

For further information on the seminars, contact Lucia Dolce on [ld16@soas.uk](mailto:ld16@soas.uk) or see the Centre website:

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

*From Dr. Gaynor Sekimori, the CSJR Post -doctoral fellow, 2000-1.*

I am delighted to be at SOAS as the CSJR post doctoral fellow for 2000-2001. I have recently completed my PhD at the University of Cambridge, my dissertation being concerned with the effects of the early Meiji policy of the separation of buddha and kami worship (*shinbutsu bunri*) on Haguro Shugendo.

Following my undergraduate degree in Oriental Studies, I undertook further language study in Japan at Waseda University and while there became interested in Zen Buddhism. I subsequently did my Masters degree at Sophia University in Tokyo, concentrating on Buddhist Studies and intellectual history. During this time I developed a career as a translator, specialising in academic works on Buddhism and Japanese religious history. My interest in Shugendo dates from a visit to Hagurosan in Yamagata in 1992. Initially I studied the Akinomine, the annual mountain-entry ritual, but my interest in my research topic was whetted by the clear influence the events of the 1870s still has on the religion, ritual, society and economy of Hagurosan and its pilgrimage centre, Toge. Receiving a copy of the manuscript diary of the religious bureaucrat sent by the Meiji government to turn Hagurosan from a Tendai shrine-temple complex to a Shinto shrine was the spur to my decision to read for a doctorate. While at SOAS I hope I will have the opportunity to work on a full history of Haguro Shugendo, to speak about Shugendo in lectures or workshops and to introduce the Akinomine to a wider audience. I would also like to encourage a wide-ranging discussion and examination of the concept of shinbutsu shugo in Japanese religion. Other areas of research interest include the exclusion of females from sacred sites (*nyonin kekkaï*), the politicization of founder myths, and the popularization of Shinto in the early Meiji years.

## **Members' research-related activities**

### *May*

Lucia Dolce gave a paper 'Redefining the 'New Sects' of Kamakura Buddhism: lineages, orthodoxy and orthopraxis in medieval Japan,' at the International colloquium on 'Buddhism: schools and sects,' University of Leuven, Belgium, May, 26-7;

### *July*

John Breen gave a paper '*Gaiko girei: Nichiei gaikoshi no ichikosatsu*' at Ocha no mizu University, Tokyo, July, 15th;

John Breen attended the Mitama matsuri at Yasukuni jinja as part of an on-going research project on Yasukuni in post-war Japan, July 16th;

### *August*

Brian Bocking presented a paper 'Iconography of the Oracles of the Three Shrines', at the XVIII International Congress of the History of Religions, Durban, S.Africa, 5-13 August; 2000; he convened the panel on 'Using iconography to document religious change' and was respondent to the plenary session on the future of the Study of Religions;

Lucia Dolce gave a paper 'Hokke Shinto: Kami interpretations in the Nichiren tradition' for a panel on *honji suijaku* at the European Association for Japanese Studies triennial conference, Lahti, Finland, 23-26 August;

Gaynor Sekimori visited Akinomine at Hagurosan, August 24 - September 1, 2000.

### *September*

Lucia Dolce convened an international symposium on 'Religious practice in medieval Japan' at SOAS September, 21-2; it was attended by Brian Bocking, John Breen, and Gaynor Sekimori (see below Conference reports)

## **Members' publications**

### *Brian Bocking*

• 'Changing images of Shinto: *Sanja takusen* or the three oracles' in John Breen and Mark Teeuwen eds., *Shinto in history: ways of the kami*, Curzon Press/Hawaii UP, 2000.

### *John Breen*

- 'Nativism restored', *Monumenta Nipponica*, 55, 3 (2000).
- *Shinto in history: ways of the kami*, Curzon Press/Hawaii University Press (edited with Mark Teeuwen), 2000.
- 'Introduction: Shinto past and present' (with Mark Teeuwen) in *ibid.*, pp. 1-12.

- 'Ideologues, bureaucrats and priests: on 'Shinto' and 'Buddhism' in early Meiji Japan' in *ibid.*
- 'Heretics in Nagasaki 1790-96' reprinted in S.Turnbull ed., *Kakure kirishitan, hidden Christians* (2 vols.), London, Japan Library, 2000.

*Gaynor Sekimori*

- Hajime Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha, biography based on the most reliable texts*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 2000 (Translation)

**Completed dissertations from the MA in Japanese religions programme, 1999-2000**

Elisabeth Abenrieb, 'Is Sunyata the solution to Nihilism?'

Rosa Bellino, 'Dogen's meditation'

Chi Ho Ivan Hon, 'The Shingaku movement in Japan during the Tokugawa period'

Naoko Sakakibara, 'Shamanistic practices in Medieval Japan'

**On-going PhD dissertations on Japanese religions at SOAS**

Meri Arichi, 'Mandalas of the Hiei-san cult' (Dr. Tim Screech, Art and Archaeology)

Artur Marquez, 'On concepts of healing and charity in Japanese new religions' (Drs. Lola Martinez and Kit Davies, Anthropology)

Anna Shchegoleva, 'Conceptions of the supernatural in Japan' (Prof. Brian Bocking, Study of Religions)

Philip Swift, 'Ghosts and spirit possession in Japan's new religions' (Dr. Lola Martinez, Anthropology)

Hirokuni Usami, 'Crisis and religious change in early Japan' (Dr. John Breen, East Asia)

CSJR Workshop on Religious practice in medieval Japan, September 21-22.

*Guest speaker:* Prof Matsuo Kenji; *Chair:* Ms. Lucia Dolce; *Panellists:* Prof Richard Bowring; Dr. Mark Teeuwen; Dr. Ian Astley; Dr. Gaynor Sekimori

The research of Kuroda Toshio revising the "traditional" view of Kamakura Buddhism as being characterised by the "new sects" like Pure Land and Zen has stimulated other scholars to create models for a better understanding of that period through a reemphasis on the role of the "old" sects. Matsuo Kenji of Yamagata University, a scholar of medieval Buddhism and urbanisation, presented in two workshops on September 21 and 22 at SOAS a new model for Kamakura "new" Buddhism based on a division between official and reclusive monks and then used that model to discuss Eizon (1200-90) and the salvation of women.

Kuroda's *kenmitsu taisei* model emphasised that the dominant Buddhism of the Kamakura period was not the new but the esoteric sects, whose central concept was "original enlightenment" (*hongaku shiso*). His markers were not the "old" and "new" that scholars like Ienaga Saburo had used, but "heresy" and "orthodoxy." Matsuo, however, questioned several of Kuroda's arguments. First, he argued that Kuroda confused the religious and sociopolitical dimensions by extending the use of his key terms "heresy" and "orthodoxy" to the social context. By this definition the new Buddhism must have been "heretical." Matsuo's examination of the period, however, showed that the new was not automatically suppressed, so that the "new" Buddhism was not necessarily heretical. Furthermore, the work of Sueki Fumihiko, for example, demonstrated that "original enlightenment" was not fundamentally esoteric.

Matsuo's alternative model focused on the role of "reclusive" monks (*tonseiso*) as the movers of a new Buddhism which met the individual needs of ordinary people, men like Honen, Shinran and Dogen, former "official" monks (*kanso*) who made the decision to leave their state-supported temples because of the restrictions imposed on them. Matsuo identified their distinguishing features in terms of, for example, function, dress, organization and methods of ordination, and used the terms "personal" and "community" religion respectively to separate *tonseiso* from *kanso*. *Tonseiso* were not restricted by the demands of ritual purity that circumscribed *kanso* and so were able to concern themselves with female religious issues. The reformed Ritsu school (traditionally regarded as being "old" Buddhism), at whose centre was Eizon, a *tonseiso* by Matsuo's definition, offered women both formal ordination and advanced consecration, from which they were excluded by the "old" schools. However, all schools, old and new, accepted the dominant theory that women were not entitled to receive buddhahood without becoming male.

Professor Richard Bowring (University of Cambridge) questioned the basic concept of the model, suggesting that the distinction between new and old in Kamakura Buddhism was merely a scholarly construction, and that there were problems with all the markers that we use to define it. Since, too, the *tonseiso* /*kanso* distinction had long existed in Japanese Buddhism, why should it receive particular emphasis in the Kamakura period? Matsuo replied that in Kamakura the *tonseiso* began to engage in relatively new kinds of activities; there was now for the first time a formalised move from community to private religion; and religious groups were receiving the support of lay people. This did not happen before because *kanso* were restricted from activities like conducting funerals and fundraising and those focusing on women and lepers. Matsuo suggested further that *tonseiso*-like monks (Kakuban for example) could not form their own large-scale orders. Urbanisation and economic development were decisive factors explaining the new phenomenon.

Dr Mark Teeuwen (Oslo University) pointed out that the privatisation of religious power was a theme of the Buddhism of this time. Private rituals became a primary concern of official priests as state authority and monopoly of ritual broke down. New schools were not more private or personal than the old schools, and they were as motivated by community concerns as much as personal. Matsuo replied that the difference was in the system; the Kamakura period was the time when *tonseiso* became dominant over *kanso*. This contradicted Kuroda's assertion that "new" Buddhism was not influential in the Kamakura period. Matsuo stressed that his model did not place *tonseiso* and *kanso* in opposition to one another, because both groups operated at both the individual and the community level. However, for the *tonseiso*, a regard for the individual was orthodox, which the *kanso* regarded as irregular.

Dr Ian Astley (University of Edinburgh) commented that Buddhism has always had a dual aspect in Japan, popular and official, and was more complex than a single systematic analysis can accommodate. Where do the "unofficial" clergy (*yamabushi*, *hijiri*, etc.) fit in Matsuo's model, he asked. Matsuo replied that Buddhism was basically a state cult until the Kamakura period. The role of the unofficial clergy, he proposed, laid the groundwork for the Kamakura *tonseiso*.

Finally, it seemed to me that Matsuo's model perpetuated the existing theoretical building blocks, since it focused on the upper layer of official (and ex-official) monks without taking sufficient account of the broader religious picture. His analysis cautioned us against using sectarian identity as a basis for description, yet did not go far enough perhaps in analysing the wider motivations that propelled religious activity in the Kamakura period. His presentation made the issues alive for all participants and stimulated wide-ranging discussion.

## **CSJR Post-doctoral fellowship in Japanese religions, 2001-2**

Applications are now invited for the one-year CSJR Postdoctoral fellowship in Japanese religions (any area) to be held at SOAS from September 2001.

The main purpose of the fellowship is to enable the holder to bring his/her recently completed PhD thesis to publication during the year at SOAS. Whilst at SOAS, the CSJR Fellow will be expected to contribute a maximum of 3 hours of teaching per week. In addition, s/he will be expected to organise a workshop/symposium in his/her speciality. Financial and administrative support will be available to this end. The Fellow will have access to appropriate study facilities and will be a member of the Senior Common room and a full member of SOAS library.

The fellow's annual stipend will be £19,482 plus London weighting.

It is expected that the successful candidate's doctorate will have been awarded no earlier than September 30, 1998.

Applications consist of a *curriculum vitae* (to include a list of publications) an abstract/summary of the applicant's doctoral thesis, a clear statement of the candidate's academic plans for the postdoctoral year and the names of three referees. Five copies of these documents together with a covering note should be sent to Personnel Department, SOAS, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG. Dr. John Breen, Chair, Centre for the study of Japanese religions, SOAS, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG.

**The closing date for applications is Monday April 2nd, 2001.**

Interviews will be held during May/June 2001.

For informal enquiries about the CSJR fellowship, please contact Dr. John Breen, Chair, Centre for the study of Japanese religions, SOAS, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG.  
e-mail: [jb8@soas.ac.uk](mailto:jb8@soas.ac.uk)

## **CSJR Research studentships, 2001**

Applications are now invited for the CSJR research studentship in Japanese religions. The studentship, which is for training leading to a PhD in Japanese religions at SOAS, is to be held from September, 2001.

The studentship will consist of a remittance of fees and a bursary of £7,060 per year in the first year of postgraduate study, and is renewable for up to a further two years, subject to satisfactory progress. The Studentship is open to outstanding students of Japanese religions regardless of nationality.

**Closing date for applications is March 31 2001.**

**The** CSJR studentship may be awarded to candidates proposing to register full-time for a research degree (MPhil/PhD) at SOAS in September 2001, and to those who enrolled full time in September 2000 or after for a research degree at SOAS.

Candidates must have applied for a research degree at SOAS by March 31, 2001 in order to be considered for the CSJR Research Studentship.

Application forms and further particulars are available from:

The Registrar, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornough Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG.

For informal inquiries, please contact Dr. John Breen, CSJR Chairman, on [jb8@soas.ac.uk](mailto:jb8@soas.ac.uk)

## **MA in Japanese Religion**

The MA Programme in Japanese Religion, now in its second 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. 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 organized 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