In this issue

Centre Activities

3 Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems
4 CSJR Programme Overview
6 Where Art Meets Ritual
7 Cinematic Religion: Japanese Religion in Film

Centre Activities Reports

11 Representing Religion in Japanese Films

Postgraduate

15 Christianity in Pre-modern Japan
17 Expressing Emotions: Practices of Caring for the Dead in Contemporary Japanese Christianity
19 The Precious Steed of the Buddhist Pantheon: Ritual, Faith and Images of Bato Kannon in Japan
21 The Somatic Nature of Enlightenment: Vocal Arts in the Japanese Tendai Tradition
23 Postgraduate Research on Japanese Religions at SOAS
23 CSJR Bursary
24 MA Japanese Religions
24 Members’ Activities

Information on Japanese Religions

26 The Centenary of the Birth of Fosco Maraini: Ethnologist, Photographer and Writer
29 Scholars’ Day: Storytelling in Japanese Art

Research Notes on Japanese Religions


Publications

33 Giri to kenryoku: Tennō no Meiji ishin
34 The Concept of Danzo
35 Religion and Politics in Contemporary Japan

From the Guest Editors of this Issue:

This issue of the CSJR Newsletter comes after a year of intense activity and remarkable achievements for many of the Centre’s members. It is indeed rather rewarding to see our field of interest still passionately developing even under the strains of the current un-favourable economic climate. The constant participation of a broad range of public in the variety of events we were able to organise certainly evinces not only a lasting interest for Japanese Religions, but also a fertile curiosity towards other ways of thinking and living, which is proof of an unabated cultural openness so needed in these difficult times.

A rich series of talks and seminars in 2011-12 concluded with the exciting workshop and exhibition O-Fuda: The Material Culture of Japanese Religious Practice. This year’s activities started with the CSJR-Ritsumeikan International Joint Workshop Where Art Meets Ritual: Aesthetic and Religious Practices in Japan. The workshop examined aspects of the Japanese religious and artistic experience through the analysis of texts, images and performance. This stimulating event marked the beginning of a lively academic year, and once again confirmed the fruitful relationship with Ritsumeikan University.

Following last year’s success, Term 1 featured the seven-week series Cinematic Religion: Japanese Religion in Film, comprised of a selection of masterpieces dealing with various aspects of Japanese religious history and practices. The series offered students enrolled in our BA course Representing Religion in Japanese Films as well as those interested in the subject, a chance to explore, appreciate and discuss the complexity of the Japanese religious landscape through featured films and documentaries. Dr Lucia Dolce then took a well-deserved research leave in Term 2, the fruits of which we are all looking forward to enjoying in the near future.

The CSJR Seminar Series continued throughout the academic year with a very lively programme. We were pleased to host international guest speakers from Europe, the US and Japan, who presented their research on a wealth of topics ranging from Schopenhauer and Buddhism, daoist visuality, Buddhist astronomy, as well as religion and politics. In June we will hold a summer workshop Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems, which has been organised with the support of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. The workshop will conclude a busy but exciting academic year, and we hope you will all be able to attend.

In the past two years many CSJR members successfully achieved their doctoral degrees, and we have invited them to offer a report of their experience in the Newsletter. We hope that this may also be inspirational to those who will walk the same path in the future. In the pages that follow Benedetta Lomi, Fumi Ouchi, Carla Tronu Montanè, Satomi Oriuchi and Tullio Lobetti will tell us how important was this experience for their academic development and personal lives. It is with mixed feelings of nostalgia and excitement that we must now remove their names from the ‘PhD Research’ column, making room for a new generation of doctoral students to come. But we know that they will always remain close to the CSJR, and certainly more updates on their activities will appear in future issues of the Newsletter. For the time being please join us in bidding them a well-deserved omedetō gozaimasu!

Tullio Lobetti and Benedetta Lomi

Front Cover and Left (Detail)
Batō Kannon on Horseback
Shōwa Period
Hanging Scroll, Ink and colour and gold on paper, mounted on silk
Gift of Gaynor Sekimori
Forthcoming Workshop

Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems

Thursday, June 20\textsuperscript{th} 2013, SOAS, University of London
9:30am - 7:00pm
Venue:
Room 4421 (9:30 - 12:00)
Room B104 (13:00 - 19:00)

For further information, please check the CSJR website:
http://www.soas.ac.uk/csr/events/
Contact Information:
Benedetta Lomi, email: bl21@soas.ac.uk
Center for the Study of Japanese Religions

Programme
2012-2013

Term 1

October 5, 2-7:00pm, V122
International Workshop: Where Art Meets Ritual
Speakers: Mikael Bauer (Leeds), Takashi Kirimura (Ritsumeikan)
Benedetta Lomi (SOAS), Taka Oshiriki (SOAS), Nobushiro Takahashi
(Ritsumeikan), Li Zengxian (Ritsumeikan)

October 18 - December 5-7:00pm, G2
CSJR Film Series:
Cinematic Religion
(For further details, please see the programme on page 7.)

November 23, 5-6:30pm, G2
Gil Raz (Dartmouth)
The Great Image Has No Form: Towards a Daoist Visual Theory

November 23, 5-6:30pm, G2
Urs App
Schopenhauer: Europe's First Buddhist?

Term 2

January 10, 5-6:30pm, G2
Wendi L. Adamek (University of Sydney)
Making Buddhist Ancestors: Portrait-Statues at Baoshan

January 23, 5-6:30pm, G2
Masahiko Okada (Tenri University)
A Forgotten Buddhist Astronomy: History of Bonreki Movement in 19th
Century Japan

January 24, 5-6:30pm, G2
Masahiko Okada (Tenri University)
Historical Documents and Cultural Materials in the Study of Modern
Japanese Buddhism: Varieties of Materials in Bonreki Movement

January 31, 5-6:30pm, G2
Michiya Murata
Evil’s Threats, Pain’s Problems and Life’s Limits : Natural, Social and
Faith Perspectives

February 28
Book Launch:
Anne Mette Fisker-Nielsen (SOAS)
Religion and Politics in Contemporary Japan: Soka Gakkai Youth and
Komeito
Center for the Study of Japanese Religions

Programme 2012-2013

March 7, 5-6:30pm, G2
Claudio Caniglia
The Fire Ritual of Japanese Mountain Ascetics

March 14, 5-6:30pm, G2
Steven Trenson (Kyōto University)
Interpretations and Transformations of the ‘Mother of All Buddhas’ in Medieval Shingon Buddhism

March 31, 5-6:30pm, G2
Christian Boehm
Portable Sandalwood Shrines (Dangan): Miniature Representations of Buddhist Worlds

Term 3

April 19, 5-6:30pm, Khalili Lecture Theatre
Hideo Yamanaka (Tenri University)
Wakosho: An Overview of Early Japanese books from the Tenri Central Library

May 9, 5-7:00pm, Khalili Lecture Theatre
Brian Victoria (Antioch University)
A Tale of Two Buddhism – Will the 'Real' Buddhism Please Stand Up?

May 22, 5-6:30pm, B104
Carla Tronu (University of Madrid)
Christian Religious Practices in Early Modern Japan

May 23, 5-6:30pm, Khalili Lecture Theatre
Ikuo Higashibaba (Tenri University)
The Jesuit Mission Press in Early Modern Japan

June 20, 9:30am-6:30pm, Room 4421 (morning) and B104 (afternoon)
Workshop: Workshop: Buddhist Medicine and Asian Medical Systems

ALL WELCOME

For more information and updates on the schedule please visit our website:

www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/

or contact:
ld16@soas.ac.uk
Centre Activity

THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF JAPANESE RELIGIONS, SOAS
AND
THE ART RESEARCH CENTRE, RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY, KYÔTO

WHERE ART MEETS RITUAL

Friday, 5 October 2012
2.00-7.00
SOAS Vernon Square
V122

Programme

2:00 - 2:15 Welcome by the CSJR Chair, Lucia Dolce

Section 1

2:15 - 2:45 Nobushiro Takahashi (Ritsumeikan)
Picture of Bishamon by Hanabusa Ikkei at the British Museum

2:45 - 3:15 Benedetta Lomi (SOAS)
The Iconography and Rituals of Rokujiten

3:15 - 3:45 Mikael Bauer (Leeds)
Kofukuji's Ritual Space through a Comparative Analysis of the Yuima-e and Jion-e shidai

3:45 - 4:00 Q&A

4:00 - 4:15 Tea Break

Section 2

4:15 - 4:45 Takashi Kirimura (Ritsumeikan), Masao Takagi (Ritsumeikan)
Geographical Patterns of the Jodo Shinshu's Honganji-ha and Otani-ha Followers in Present-day Japan

4:45 - 5:15 Li Zengxian (Ritsumeikan)
A Comparative Research Regarding Rituals and Literature: a Case Study about Kyokusui-en

5:15 - 5:45 Taka Oshiriki (SOAS)
The Shogun's Tea Jar

5:45 - 6:00 Q&A

6:00 - 6:15 Concluding Remarks by Gaynor Sekimori

6:30 - 7:00 Reception

Sponsored by: Global On-site Training Program for Young Researchers on the Protection of Cultural Heritage and Artworks, JSPS International Training Program (ITP)
Centre Activity

Japanese Religions and Film Series

October 18, 2012
*Okuribito (Departures)* by Takita Yôjirô, 2008, running time 130 min

October 25, 2012
*Onmyôji* by Takita Yôjirô, 2001, running time 112 min

November 1, 2012
*Where Mountains Fly* by Sandra and Karina Roth, 2008, running time 60 min

November 15, 2012
*Kamigami no jukaki yokubo (Profound desire of the gods)* by Imamura Shôhei, 1968, running time 173 min

November 22, 2012
*Fragment* by Sasaki Makoto, 2008, running time 93 min

November 29, 2012
*Fanshi Dansu (Fancy Dance)* by Masayuki Suo, 1989, running time 102 min

December 6, 2012
*KanZeeOn* by Neil Cantwell and Tim Grabham 2011, running time 81 min
The screening will be followed by a Q&A and roundtable with the directors.

**Thursdays 5:00-6:30 pm**
**Room G2 (SOAS) - ALL WELCOME**

Contact: ld16@soas.ac.uk; bl21@soas.ac.uk
Centre Activity Report

O-Fuda:The Material Culture of Japanese Religious Practice

Gaynor Sekimori

An exhibition of o-fuda and related printed material was held under the joint auspices of the CSJR and the Royal Asiatic Society, at the premises of the latter in Euston, between May 16-18, 2012. A workshop on May 17 was the highlight of the event, consisting of a guided tour of the exhibition for participants and presentations by Matthias Hayek, of Paris Diderot University and CRCAO, Fusa McLynn, Associate Researcher at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, and myself.

My own interest in o-fuda was sparked by my acquisition in August 2011 of a woven lacquered box of 37 items of o-fuda and related material dating, from internal evidence, from around 1845-1885. I reported on this collection in the CSJR Newsletter, Issue 22-23, 2011-2012, pp. 22-27. The exhibition was based on this material, supplemented with related visual material in my collection dating from the seventeenth century down to the present, in order to demonstrate the wide range of deities and buddhas that have been staples of popular religious life in Japan.

O-fuda are rectangular slips of wood, card or paper containing a printed calligraphic or iconographic representation. They include gikitō-fuda and goma-fuda, written confirmations of the performance of magico-religious prayer rituals and the goma fire ritual, to ward against illness or to ensure business prosperity, good crops and family harmony and suchlike; mie (omiei, osugata, goshin’ei) bearing representations of the deity associated with a particular religious site and often having a specific function, such as Kosodate Jizo or Yakuyoke Yakushi; and goō hōin bearing the names of certain temples and shrines, often written with stylized letters in the shape, for example, of snakes or birds. The oblong shape, particularly of calligraphic forms such as gikitō-fuda and goma-fuda, suggest they derive from mokkan, rectangular pieces of wood used principally for record keeping and labeling in the seventh and eighth centuries. Omnyōji used them to write down magical formulae (jifu mokkan), and Buddhist priests used them to record the numbers of prayers recited or services performed. Strictly speaking, the term o-fuda applies to these alone, but the use has been extended to pictorial forms as well, whose dimensions are wider; Togawa Anshō, for example, uses the term e-fuda (pictorial fuda) to refer to the other categories mentioned above, and this seems to have been accepted by Japanese scholars. A miniaturised version of both calligraphic and pictorial forms is used for o-mamori (protective charms). The question of definition for such printed material remains imprecise; Matthias Hayek addressed this issue in his presentation, “Talismans? Amulets? Holy cards? European collections of Japanese ofuda and how to define them”.

Printed images of deities first appeared as a result of the custom of making multiple stamped images (inbutsu) as a measure of one’s piety, usually with the intention of inserting them inside Buddhist statues. The image of a deity or some material symbol such as a pagoda was carved on a small wooden seal and then stamped onto paper or cloth using ink or cinnabar. The oldest ones extant, such as sheets of seated Amida figures from inside the Amida Nyorai statue at Jōruriji, date from the twelfth century. People would stamp a certain number of images each day, sign the same sheet of paper, and the stamped images would eventually be deposited inside a statue. Today stamped images are still found, particularly in the form of shuincho, books for collecting the stamps and seals of temples and shrines visited, and on pilgrim clothing.

The expansion of woodblock printing and the wider availability of paper allowed a cheaper alternative for people wishing to donate images to temples; paper was pressed over inked blocks in a technique called shubutsu and the image was inserted into a hanging scroll (kakejiku). Large numbers of such printed images survive from the Muromachi period and beyond. Woodblock printing was also the basis upon which images of the deities were mass produced in later centuries by temples for sale to pilgrims and for distribution among believers. Though most pictorial fuda (mie) were printed in black ink, sometimes, as in the case of the Ōtsu-e, produced below Mt Hiei, the ink outline was painted over in colour, a technique in use down to the end of the nineteenth century before modern colour printing techniques were introduced. The use of colour seems to have been confined to kakejiku-sized sheets.

Though reasonably large numbers of inbutsu images have survived because they were deposited inside stat-
ues, what we associate today with ofuda, that is images used as protective charms, gofu, have not survived to anywhere near the same degree because of the custom of renewing them each year and burning the old ones. As W. L. Hildburgh, who wrote extensively on the use of amulets and charms in Japan and around the world in the early years of the twentieth century, noted, ‘People prefer to renew their amulets yearly, if possible; and when they have replaced the old amulets by new ones, they destroy the former in a “clean” manner, by throwing them into running water or burning them in a fire of clean materials’. However, larger-size versions of mie tend to survive better because often they were mounted to hang in the butsudan and served as souvenirs of pilgrimage. Non-contemporary calligraphic and pictorial o-fuda of more standard dimensions (typically 14-18 cm x 8-10 cm) are much more difficult to find, though they continue to turn up when storehouses and old dwelling are cleared out. Sadly, though, non-specialist dealers tend to regard them as unsaleable rubbish and dispose of them, as I myself experienced last summer in Tsuruoka. Many survive too because people pasted them together onto scrolls as souvenirs of pilgrimage.

One of the richest sources of information about how such o-fuda were used in the seventeenth century comes from the travel descriptions of Kaempfer (1692). He specifically mentions that printed images of ‘hotoke and other gods’ were ‘printed on half sheets of paper’, and ‘pasted on the gates of cities and villages, on wooden posts near bridges, … and other places along the highway’. This suggests the custom of placing deities at the entrances to villages; today such protection is usually provided by small stone statues of Dōsojin and the like, but we can still find wooden o-fuda serving the same function in the countryside. The custom of pasting o-fuda over the doors of houses was widespread. Luis Frois observed late in the sixteenth century that ‘the Japanese nail their images and nominas (gofu) outside their doors to face the street’, and Kaempfer mentions that the common people always pasted an image of some guardian deity to the doors and posts of their houses. He stated that the most common was ‘the blackhorned Gion, also called Gozu Tennō’ who was believed to protect from illness. Actually, as an illustration makes clear, this ‘black-horned’ figure is Ganzan Daishi, or Tsuno Daishi. Ganzan Daishi refers to Ryōgen, or Jie Daishi, the tenth century Tendai prelate Ryōgen, who has been the subject of a thriving posthumous cult down to present as a protector against demonic forces. His image continues to guard the home today.

Kaempfer attests to the multiplicity of o-fuda that were in existence. People received ‘long pieces of paper’ with ‘writing and ritual prayers’ on them, in return for making donations to the clergy. These too they pasted to their doors to keep misfortune out. They might also paste on their doors ‘amulets directed against the plague, misfortune and poverty’, such as Shōki, the demon queller, who Kaempfer described as ‘being hairy all over his body, and carrying a large sword with both hands’, to protect the house from ‘all sorts of distempers and misfortunes’. In similar vein, Isabella Bird wrote that people pasted...
pictures of the Niō over their doors to deter thieves, and Chamberlain mentions a long strip of paper inscribed with the ‘sacred dog of Mitsumine, a powerful protector against robbers’. In modern times, Ian Reader has written that he was given a paper o-fuda depicting Fudo by a priest in Shodoshima and told to place it in the hallway of his house facing the door to keep the house safe from burglars and other miscreants.

From medieval times down to the present, the o-fuda called goō hōin has been central to talismanic life. It may have derived from the Goō kaji, a rite at times of pestilence as a tokens to protect against it. Most famous religious centres had their own versions, with the best-known coming from the three Kumano shrines, which Kaempfer described. ‘Goo is a letter with characters on it and decorated with some black birds such as ravens, which has been certified by the seal of a yamabushi. It is stuck to the pillar of the house to ward off evil spirits’. He also mentioned that accused criminals were made to drink pills made of the Kumano goō, in order to confess their guilt. The Kumano goō were famously used down to modern times for written oaths, and are still found today pasted to doors and stuck in seed beds to protect against insects.

When protective o-fuda are miniaturized in order to be carried on the body, they are called o-mamori. Kaempfer described how a sheet of paper was folded into four and stamped on the outside face with characters and a red seal. Inside was contained small sticks, a piece of paper with writing, or printed seals. An o-mamori in Chamberlain’s collection from Suitengu in Tokyo contains two sheets with five debased Sanskrit characters on. Today it comes as part of a set of talismans for safe childbirth, but Hildburgh recorded that it served several purposes: it was ‘carried for general protection, but, a character at a time, it may be eaten or drunk as a remedial agent, or used in a domestic form of divination’. In Akita today, small charms called ogifu continue to be given out at New Year; they are cut into strips and eaten. At Togenuki Jizo (Kogani, Tokyo), too, small paper images of Jizo are designed to be swallowed or stuck to the skin over the affected area.

William Griffis, who was in Japan in the early 1870s, wrote, ‘Rare is the Japanese farmer, laborer, mechanic, ward-man, or heimin of any trade who does not wear amulet, charm or other object which he regards with more or less of reverence as having relation to the powers that help or harm. In most of the Buddhist temples these amulets are sold for the benefit of the priests or of the shrine or monastery. Not a few even of the gentry consider it best to on the safe side and wear in pouch or purse their protectors against evil’. He noted that the proprietor of a paper mill in Massachusetts, who had bought a cargo of rags, consisting mostly of farmers’ cast off clothes, had brought him a bundle of scraps of paper among which there were numerous temple amulets and priests’ certificates.

Many of the surviving o-fuda today are to be found outside Japan. There are three well-known collections in Europe of such printed religious material: the Chamberlain Collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, around 800 items, mainly Shinto, dating from between around 1890 and 1910 (introduced in a presentation by Fusa McLynn); the collection of Andre Leroi-Gourhan, consisting of around 900 Shinto and Buddhist iconicographic items, centring on pictorial o-fuda and dating from between 1937 and 1939, kept in the Musee d’Ethnologie de Geneve; and the collection of Bernard Frank, gathered over forty years from 1954, consisting of over 1,000 items, and today in the possession of the Collège de France in Paris. The latter two collections may be viewed digitally. Recently, however, a further collection had been identified at the British Library, around 350 items stuck into five folding albums. Internal evidence strongly suggests that the items date predominantly from before the Meiji Restoration. Nothing is known about the collector; the books were bought by the British Museum in 1894 from the Egyptian Exploration Fund. Another is the private Price-Zimmer collection (USA) of 73 mainly pre-Meiji iconographic o-fuda, also pasted in albums (also available digitally). In addition there are also a small number of o-fuda, mainly pasted onto kakejiku, belonging to the Spinner Collection in Zurich. In Japan, the Machida hakubutsukan has a considerable collection as part of its deposit of woodblock-printed material, and there are also a number of private collectors in Japan. My own collection consists of about 500 items, both individual o-fuda and kakejiku. The majority of the collection is pre-war, with a considerable number of pre-Meiji items.


The content of this article is based on the paper I gave at the workshop.
Representing Religion in Japanese Films

Marina Costanza Mennella

From October to December 2011, the SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions held an event called ‘Representing Religion in Japanese Films’ as part of its annual series of seminars, lectures and public talks organized by the Centre’s Chair, Dr Lucia Dolce.

The aim of the film series was to demonstrate the way in which various features of Japanese religious practice could be expressed and mediated through cinema. The films featured ancient, modern and contemporary Japanese religious movements in a continuous mixture of old and new practices, ceremonies and rituals, as well as old and new attitudes towards them. It was all made accessible and clearly understandable to the audience thanks to the projection of a selection of films from the early 1980s to the late 2000s, all followed by a rich discussion.

Onmyōji is a film of 2001 directed by Takita Yōjirō and based on the novels of Baku Yumemakura. It is set during the Heian period, in the then capital city of Heiankyō. Japan is shown as a land where ghosts, demons and evil creature dwell among human beings and interact and communicate with them at different levels. The Heian Emperor relies on the Imperial Order of the Onmyōji (yin/yang masters and ritual specialists) to protect the kingdom. However, as the birth of the Emperor’s heir approaches, the kingdom is threatened by evil forces and Abe no Seimei, the most talented Onmyōji, will have to face his former teacher and now enemy, Doson, in order to protect the life of the Emperor’s heir. The film is a Japanese costume epic, full of mythical figures and supernatural events, which did not fail to give the audience a sense of the mystical that possibly characterized the religious and everyday life in Japan at that time.

The Funeral, winner of five Japan Academy Prizes, is a 1984 film by Itami Juzo. The plot follows the preparations for a traditional Japanese funeral. The Buddhist ritual ceremony seems to be observed with detachment by the members of the family and the grief for the loss of a husband and father is only superficially analyzed. However, at the same time a vivid sense of curiosity and participation is felt as the characters, young and old, interact during the three days of preparation. The film suggests a realistic perspective from which the observer can question himself about the alleged ‘reality’ of feelings as opposed to the ‘artificiality’ of the ritual structure in the Japanese funerary tradition. The result is a complex image of human behaviour, full of contradictions and paradoxes, which leaves the observer full of questions and concerns about the need, or not, of a ritual grid in which is embedded the social and personal life of an individual.

Where Mountains Fly by Sandra and Carina Roth is a film of 2008. In 538 CE, a mountain is said to have flown over from India to land in Japan. The ‘arrival’ of Mt. Ōmine in the Kii peninsula has always been used as a metaphor to refer to the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. The film follows two different narrative threads, one a fictional story about the alleged founder of Shugendō, En-no-gyōja, on his pilgrimage through the Kii peninsula to pursue the ‘way of magical powers’, and the other is a documentary on the contemporary ascetic practices carried on in the mountains and performed mainly by laymen.

Thanks to an innovative animation technique, the film joins video footage shot in the Kumano region to textual passages from the Shozan Engi and wonderful images of Kii Peninsula’s mountains. They all move across the screen one after the other in a fixed frame, resembling the unfolding of a classical emaki. The audience could feel the deep contrast between the wonderful natural landscapes of Japanese sacred mountains and the dull and dry concrete setting of the most contemporary ascetic practices carried on, for example, under artificial waterfalls. This was, possibly, desired by the director to show that the perception of the meaning and the healing power of ascetic practices, such as meditation under waterfalls, sūtra recitation, pilgrimages, and fasting, still survives unaltered even in a completely altered Japanese rural landscape.

The Suwa Onbashira Festival is a documentary of 1992 by Kitamura Minao that records the largest pillar-raising festival in the world that takes place in Nagano Prefecture every six years, in the years of the Tiger and the Monkey in the Chinese calendar. The purpose of the festival is the symbolical renewal of the Suwa Taisha shrine and it includes a number of ceremonies and rituals which reinforce a strong connection between nature and human beings, in a primordial fight and reconciliation with the gods that dwell in trees, streams and the elements. The ki-otoshi (log chute) is a ceremony where
huge trees are cut down into logs, which are then dragged down the mountain towards the four shrines of the Suwa Taisha. The course of the logs goes over rough terrain, and at certain points, the logs must be skidded or dropped down steep slopes. This is a good occasion for young men to show their courage in riding these huge logs down the hill, where many of them fall off and risk their lives to stay aboard.

The logs are then pulled across one of the rivers of the Suwa Lake during the kawa-goshi (river crossing), and at the tate-onbashira (raising of the pillar) they are raised up by hand by the same ceremonial group of men, who climb them to the top at the end of the ceremony to announce the successful raising. The documentary is a fascinating record of an ancient tradition that is believed to have continued, uninterrupted, for 1200 years.

Fragments is a film of 2008 by Makoto Sasaki. It follows the journey of Jicchoku Inoue, a young television entertainer, who, moved by the Twin Towers attack on 9/11, decides to undertake a strict religious training to become a Nichirenshū Buddhist priest to make offerings to those who died in New York. The aragyo is a one hundred days training which takes place in winter, during which participants can eat only two cups of rice and miso soup daily. They douse themselves with cold water seven times a day and can sleep only three hours per night. The austerities experienced are so severe that some priests are said to have died during them, but those who survive are cleansed of all their sins and are spiritually reborn. The film leaves Jicchoku when he enters the retreat, since no filming is permitted from that point and what happens during the aragyo is kept secret.

By surviving the training, Jicchoku earns the right to use special ritual implements believed capable of destroying evil karma and pacifying the dead and he has now the duty to pray for good luck, to expel evil spirits and to rid people of their sins. The film follows him on his journey to New York where he performs and offers prayers for world peace with his newly acquired ritual skills at Ground Zero. This experience inspires Jicchoku to embark on another journey, this time to Hawaii, to pray for the dead of the kamikaze attack at Pearl Harbor. The documentary ends with an interview of a hibakusha, a survivor of the Nagasaki atomic bomb, for whom Jicchoku, now an experienced ritualist, performs his spiritual healing prayers.

Zen by Takahashi Banmei, 2009, is a film based on the historical novel Eihei no kaze: Dōgen no shōgai by Ōtani Tetsuō, a Buddhist scholar and former president of Komazawa Daigaku, the university run by the Sōtō Zen school. The story is set in thirteenth century Japan and follows Dōgen Zenji from his troubled childhood, to his travels in China as a monk in search of a master, until his return to Japan where he finally establishes Eiheiji north of Kyōto. Dōgen is represented as a very intuitive and sensitive monk, who is able to reach sudden awakening, fusing himself with the Buddha, and who is allowed to carry on to Japan the teachings of his Chinese Chan master Ruijin, from whom he receives the Dharma transmission, the inka.

Through his words and actions, Dōgen inspires a whole community of monks, who decide to leave the schools to which they belong, to follow him on his path towards salvation. Zen is a retelling of the life and deeds of Dōgen in a clearly and outspokenly apologetic manner, his teachings are recounted as universal truths and his character prevails among the others, so the overall effect is an enjoyable parable of a saint which lacks a historical and comparative perspective.

The Rebirth of the Buddha, by Takaaki Ishiyama, is a 2009 anime adaptation of the book by Ryūhō Ōkawa, the founder of Kōfuku no Kagaku, a new religious movement established in Japan in 1986, which has become an official religious organization all over the world, taking its English name of Happy Science in 2008.

The principal character is the 17 year-old girl Sayako Amanokawa, whose dream is to become a journalist like her favorite writer Kanemoto. When the latter commits suicide over a corruption scandal, Sayako suddenly is able to see spirits and ghosts and her life is in danger. When she decides to discover and understand the truth behind everything that is happening to her and to people around her, she eventually ends up in the meeting hall of a new religious movement, which turns out to be the stronghold of a devilish spiritual guide. She is then saved by her friends, who reveal to be themselves followers of Kōfuku no Kagaku, whose founder Ryūhō is described as the most understanding, dear, helpful and good human being on earth.

Ryūhō himself, at the end of the anime, engages in a battle with the evil spiritual guide of the rival new religious school, and he is finally able to display his marvellous powers in a mixture of Christian and Buddhist visual images of angel wings and wisdom rays of light.

The CSJR film series has been a very interesting overview of the complexity of Japanese religiosity, seen as an ongoing field of study, through the lens of cinematic expression, and it offered a new and attractive perspective accessible to an audience of scholars and students, as well as to the broader public.

Marina Costanza Mennella is currently an MA student in the Department for the Study of Religions at SOAS.
PhD Research at SOAS

Thesis Title:

Tullio Lobetti

Since I started teaching at SOAS in 2008, I have had the chance to meet countless students pondering a decision that is at the same time a question: ‘I want to do a PhD’. I do not know what my face looks like when I hear them saying those fateful words, but from the cracking muscles at the sides of my head I guess I am probably smiling. And at the same time my heart is stirred by an uncanny combination of mixed feelings. That smile indeed means much more than these ready-and-willing fellows can yet understand, an awkward marriage between ‘good luck!’ and ‘oh dear...’, but I am sure that by the end of their PhD experience they will indeed understand. Similar mixed feelings also characterised my own PhD experience, an incongruous set of enthusiasm, frustration, joy and embarrassment. One likely reason for this is that there is much more to a PhD that the mere academic exercise, i.e. doing research and writing the dreaded 100,000 words dissertation. Enrolling yourself in a doctoral programme also means undertaking a journey of intellectual and personal maturity, which will eventually leave you a little older, and hopefully a little wiser. I would like then to say a few words here about this more intimate dimension of the doctoral process, hoping that they might be of some use to those wishing to walk the same path.

Wisdom is a cruel virtue, which thrives on struggle and strain - and anybody who has ever attempted a PhD knows very well that there is no want of struggle and labour on the path towards your doctorate. This is at least one of the reasons for the free broad smile I offer to all the aspiring PhD students visiting my office or stalking me in the hallways: ‘Friend, you don’t know what’s ahead of you, but here, start with a smile’. Mind you, I am not saying that there are evil minds at work to make your life miserable while doing a PhD, quite the contrary. People are generally helpful, your supervisor (if you are as lucky as I have been) will be a kind and knowledgeable person, and may even take you out for drinks once in a while (and of course pay for them, as a PhD student you are inherently a pauper). Friends and family will both admire and be bewildered by the daredevil spirit they never guessed you possessed. True enough, they may never understand exactly what you are doing (I believe my parents still think I am teaching Japanese), but nonetheless it will be clear to all that you are onto something big. And indeed you are. A mere look at the University of London Regulations for the Degrees of MPhil and PhD, can cause your self-esteem to retrogress to the level of a dung beetle in a heartbeat: in the words of the wise and the just, a PhD should ‘form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power’, which is a long and winding way of saying that great things are expected of you, not excuses. But, you see, this is the heart of the matter: you have now a chance to show what you can do by stretching the limits of your own wits, brawn and guts – and opportunities like this do not come so often.

I remember starting my PhD in 2004 with the same sense of elation and responsibility. I was a bit older than the average, with a different life behind me where I had already enjoyed a good share of responsibility, but nonetheless I felt like a child in first grade. For a second, I was back at my first day at school (it was 1979 - yes, a bit older I said): our teacher opened the classroom door and we saw the desks, the blackboard, the painted alphabet letters on the wall, and we all went ‘ohhhh!’. Well, I am not ashamed to say I went ‘ohhhh!’ during the PhD preliminary meetings, the first training sections, my first tour of the library looking for dusty books that had never before seen the light of day. The only difference was that this time I kept my ‘ohhhh!’ inside myself, as becomes a responsible adult – but, believe me, I was as happy as a child. There I realised how starting something so new and demanding can make you, in a sense, a new person ready to start afresh as well. So I took my first step into my new life and I kept striding on. Well, it was not always ‘striding’, I have to confess; sometimes it was more like ‘crawling’, ‘wandering’, ‘groping’. Uncertainties are many and they can chew at your enthusiasm like the notorious biblical locusts. Is my Japanese good enough? Is my English good enough? Is my knowledge of Buddhist doctrine good enough? When the answer to all such questions is ‘no’ you can suddenly find yourself hanging out hand-in-hand with the aforementioned dung beetle again. But realising the...
vastness of my shortcomings was possibly one of the best lessons I have ever learned, and after mulling over my ignorance for a while, I picked myself up and carried on. A PhD can indeed be a very solitary process: it is very hard to find somebody who understands what your are doing and the related problems; after all it is supposed to be something entirely new, so how could they! But many will understand the effort behind it. I remember many helping hands in those days, my supervisor, fellow PhD students, staff at SOAS, friends. Most had a kind word for me even if I have always been too introverted to talk about my problems explicitly, and this is a good time to let them know that their simple honest intentions helped a lot.

With the help of many, and a bit of pride of my own, I then managed to put together the material for the upgrade at the end of the first year. This was surprisingly a quite painless and straightforward process, but I still remember pacing nervously out of the room, waiting for the committee decision. I also had a number of B-plans ready: start singing in pubs for a living, becoming a writer, joining the army (yes, I did not think them through very well). But none was necessary, I passed and stepped into my second year as a full-fledged PhD candidate. I always liked that denomination, ‘candidate’. It gives you the impression that after all you might really have a tiny chance of getting your PhD eventually. But before that, in the glorious SOAS tradition, I had to go through my fieldwork year. Fieldwork was, and as far as I know still is, a requirement for all PhD candidates at SOAS, and rightly so. Studying through books is good, but nothing can match a first-hand knowledge of the field. So, having sufficiently honed my Japanese, I was ready to set out on my journey of discovery amongst Japanese ascetics.

My fieldwork year in Japan was, and I am not exaggerating, one of the best periods of my life. Not only did I have the possibility of making substantial research under the wise guidance of my Japanese supervisor, but I was also blessed with the chance of truly experiencing many aspects of Japanese life. If we want to attempt an anthropological reading, the fieldwork period is a rite of passage: managing to survive for one year in a place on the other side of the world truly qualifies you for a research degree, more than any amount of knowledge you may have achieved in the library. And everyday issues often prove to be as testing as your research schedule. During the time I spent with Japanese ascetics I have been starved, hung upside down from a cliff, frozen half-solid and beaten bloody with a stick. I have walked for 15 hours a day until my blisters actually developed a conbini - a quite painless and straightforward process, but I still always liked that denomination, ‘candidate’. It gives you the impression that after all you might really have a tiny chance of getting your PhD eventually. But before that, in the glorious SOAS tradition, I had to go through my fieldwork year. Fieldwork was, and as far as I know still is, a requirement for all PhD candidates at SOAS, and rightly so. Studying through books is good, but nothing can match a first-hand knowledge of the field. So, having sufficiently honed my Japanese, I was ready to set out on my journey of discovery amongst Japanese ascetics.

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The rest is practical skills. Write up something tidy and well referenced, print it, bind it and submit it. And later you can even make a book out of it, mine is coming out soon, so if you wish you will be able to read where I went and what I did in Japan in detail. Here I just wanted to tell you a bit about what will not be published, that I never wrote anywhere, but was still so important and defining in my PhD experience. If you are about to embark on this
adventure yourself, please accept my best wishes; I hope it will be as rewarding as my own, and that you will find a lot of help on the way. I have always pitied those who proudly say they “have done everything on their own”; these are lonely people, not strong ones. Sometimes I think I should cut my PhD diploma in pieces, and send them to all the people who helped me along the way. The pieces will be tiny, as friends are many, and this is my greatest pride. Fear not, I have no intention of defacing an official document, but please allow me a few more lines to repay my debt in more explicit terms:

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Lucia Dolce, for her constant support and her patience. None of this would have ever happened without her continuous encouragement and advice. In Japan, I benefited from the help and supervision of Suzuki Masataka, who allowed me to attend his seminars and introduced me to the leaders of many of the ascetic practices in which I participated. Without his support, much of my fieldwork would have been impossible. I also want to express my gratitude to Gaynor Sekimori, who first introduced me to Shugendō and who helped me in settling in Japan. I would also like to remember the leaders of the Shōzen-in, Tōnan-in and Tōshōji temples, the head priest of Dewa Sanzan-jinja and the leaders of the Agematsu Jiga Daikyōkai for allowing me to participate in their practices and for their patience in answering all of my endless questions.

My study was financed by the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions (CSJR) and by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC), while I was supported by a Japan Foundation Fellowship during my fieldwork period. I would like to express my gratitude for their financial help. Fellow SOAS PhD students Satomi, Fumi, Benedetta and Kigensan have all helped me along the way. At SOAS, I thank Cosimo Zene for his continuous support and inspiration, and above all for honouring me with his friendship. I also would like to thank my language teacher Yoshiko Jones for her patience in teaching me how to communicate proficiently in Japanese.

Thank you all, for granting me the opportunity not only to learn and obtain a prestigious degree, but above all to become a better person.

Tullio Lobetti graduated in Japanese Language and Literature at the University of Turin in 2003. Since then, he pursued his interest in the study of religion in Japan by obtaining an MA degree in Japanese Religion at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS - University of London) in 2004. In 2011 he obtained his PhD in the Study of Religions from SOAS. He is now Senior Teaching Fellow in the department of the Study of Religions at SOAS, currently focusing his research on Philosophy of Religion, Hermeneutics and Epistemology.

PhD Research at SOAS

Thesis Title:
Christianity in Pre-modern Japan

Carla Tronu

Having been a PhD student at SOAS was one of the most intense experiences in my life. It moulded me as an academic and as a person. Some of my best friends and colleagues are ‘SOAS people’, whether they managed to stay or found jobs elsewhere. Whenever I visit SOAS I feel like home. I usually come across interesting people, lectures, seminars, workshops, exhibits or concerts, not to mention the pleasure of doing research at the good old (now renewed) SOAS library. The library, with its terraces and well-sourced specialised rooms, is one of those memories all SOAS alumni share, regardless of field of study. I first heard about SOAS in my hometown, Barcelona, from Dr Ramon Prats, a Tibetologist who had studied and lectured in Italian Universities. He had organised an exhibition in Barcelona, my hometown, on Tibetan Sacred Art and gave several seminars on Tibetan Buddhism. I was then a Humanities undergraduate student, and as Asian Studies was not yet recognised as a field of study in the Spanish university system, he encouraged me to go abroad to study and recommended SOAS and its library.

In my fourth year I went to the Karls-Eberhard Tübingen University as an Erasmus student. I audited lectures on Shintō in the Faculty of Japanese Studies, by Dr Klaus Antoni, who encouraged me to join the one-year postgraduate program on Japanese Language and Culture, with the opportunity to get a grant to spend the second term in Japan at the Tübingen University Centre for Japanese Language and Culture at the Dōshisha University in Kyoto. I started learning Japanese in German and very intensively, with five hours per day, and was able to go to Japan for the first time, which was amazing. By the time the programme finished I had already decided to write a PhD on Japanese Religions, but was very worried and discouraged by the lack of tradition of Japanese Studies in Spain. Dr James Dobbins, a specialist in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism whom I met in Kyoto, told me about Dr Lucia Dolce, a SOAS Buddhist who convened the
MA Japanese Religions. Once I returned from Japan, I applied for a grant to do postgraduate studies in the UK from the Catalan Foundation ‘La Caixa’ and the British Council and enrolled in the MA Japanese Religions. By the end of that academic year I somehow managed to successfully pass the exams, write the MA dissertation and apply for the PhD programme and the CSJR studentship.

Things turned out very well and rather than going back to Barcelona I engaged in the PhD programme at SOAS with a CSJR studentship to do research on the first encounter between Christianity and Japan under the supervision of Dr John Breen, an historian in the Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea. Although I was working on the history of religion, I was registered in the Faculty for Languages and Cultures, and hence the methodological course that I attended was mainly one on how to do research on the languages and literature of Africa, China, Korea, Japan, etc., which was interesting, but seemed rather unrelated to my own research, though some sessions turned out to be useful in the end, like the one about archival research abroad. I asked permission to attend the methodological seminars of the Department of the Study of Religion and the Department of History, where I was kindly received. It was great to meet other PhD students and be able to share insecurities, methodological concerns, structure and bibliography problems, as well as the contagious passion for our subjects. I learned a lot from them and from the SOAS staff. Often I felt I had to renounce other things to concentrate on the thesis, but I kept going to some of the many seminars offered at SOAS, at the CSJR, the JRC, the Centre of Buddhist Studies, the inaugural lectures, the Tsuda lectures, etc. It was stimulating, made my motivation rise, and gave me the opportunity (and one of the few acceptable excuses) to get some distance from my own work.

The first year of the PhD was marked by many deadlines: the submission of a bibliography, a literature review, an outline of the whole thesis, a thesis plan and a core chapter, in order to upgrade from MPhil student to PhD candidate. I remember meeting my supervisor almost every week, basically to read together through academic articles and books in Japanese. It was a busy year, but somehow I was lucky enough to upgrade and obtain a Japanese government scholarship to go to Japan and get special permission from the Registry to stay not one but two years abroad.

My base in Japan was the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, which is now part of Osaka University. I audited many courses, not only to keep improving my language skills, but also to learn about how kirishitan [the Japanese term referring to sixteenth and seventeenth century Christians in Japan] were studied in Japanese scholarship. I was very lucky to have several Japanese academics help me during those two years. The late Dr Komei Rikiya was my tutor and met me at least once a month and sometimes once a week to read primary and secondary Japanese sources related to my topic, which I chose or he suggested. Dr. Kishimoto Emi helped me read and translate primary sources in Japanese, like the Jesuit manuscripts or books in Japanese related to ritual, like Bauchizumo o sazukeyô, Dochiriina Kirishitan, and the Japanese addenda to the Manuale Ecclesia ad Sacramente Administranda. I also was able to work with some Buddhistologists from the Ôtani University in Kyoto, who came to the Centre for Japanese Language and Culture to teach Japanese language, but were kind enough to meet me in one-to-one sessions to read Buddhist sources, like Dr. Kaji, who taught me how to read kanbun by reading the precepts for Zen monasteries in Japan, and Dr. Motohyashi, who helped me read secondary and primary sources on Shinshû temples and funerals in sixteenth century.

After I came back to SOAS, it was suggested I focus my dissertation on a single place. Although I had material on other cities of Japan, I focused on a case study of Nagasaki, which seemed the most relevant city for Japanese early-modern Christianity. In this sense, it was nice to attend the seminars that the SOAS LTU offered for PhD students coming back from fieldwork on how to write up. I realised I was not the only one whose thesis was undergoing serious structural changes, or who experienced writer’s blocks or was coping with the counter-culture shock after returning to the UK. I lived in the Paul Robson House, the SOAS Postgraduate Halls of Residence. I had had a really nice experience there during my MA and my first PhD year, and it was good to be back at Islington and Angel, and to share the kitchen with SOAS people working on interesting subjects and with different cultural backgrounds.

Then my supervisor took leave to go to Japan and I started teaching at SOAS as a GTA and at the Autonomous University of Madrid as a visiting lecturer. Teaching brought new challenges. Probably like all who teach a subject for the first time, I put in many hours to prepare each lesson or session, but working with students was also rewarding. The PhD thesis stopped being the centre of my life and I had to juggle to keep writing while working, with the help of write-up grants from the Wingate Foundation and the British Association of Japanese Studies. My supervisor left SOAS for good and Dr Angus Lockyer, from the History Department, stepped in as supervisor at a very late stage, but in time to bring some fresh air into my final draft, for which I will always be grateful. I had been scared about the possibility of not passing the examination from the very beginning and hence I was elated with the outcome of my examination. My viva was very intense, but also very civilised and constructive. I felt really lucky to be able to get critical feedback from two excellent examiners, Dr Tim Serchee and Dr Kiri Paramore, about what I had been thinking and writing about for such a long time. So, because of all the great experiences, and because all is well that ends well, my balance of my PhD experience at SOAS is a very positive one. I know fees are higher and deadlines harder now, but still I would recommend the experience of doing a PhD at SOAS.

Carla Tronu Montane is visiting lecturer in Japanese Religions and Japanese History at the Centre of East Asian Studies at the Autonomous University of Madrid.
PhD Research at SOAS

Thesis Title:
Expressing Emotions: Practices of Caring for the Dead in Contemporary Japanese Christianity

Satomi Horiuchi

I started a PhD at SOAS in autumn 2003 and graduated in summer 2011. It was a great time and I thank everyone who supported my research, especially my supervisor Dr Lucia Dolce who guided my research from the start to the end.

My thesis title is “Expressing Emotions: Practices of Caring for the Dead in Contemporary Japanese Christianity”. The reason I chose this subject was that I had been always interested in the way Christians treat the dead. Some Christian denominations in Japan see that the way Japanese Christians treat the dead (or ancestors) is equal to idol worship. Christians in Japan had often encountered conflict between the traditional rituals within their community. I wanted to search out the reason why Japanese Christians continue traditional rituals and what is significant for them in the rituals.

I went to Japan for my fieldwork between 2005 and 2006 to find out what Japanese Christians actually do for the dead at home privately and what rituals their church officially provides them. To maintain close contact with church members, in the first half of my fieldwork, I stayed for four months at a house in Matsumoto city, in Nagano Prefecture, owned by a senior member of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ, Nihon Kirisuto Kyōdan), Mrs Mochizuki. She introduced me to church members and to her Catholic friend, who in turn introduced me to a Catholic priest and to members of a Catholic church. After this fieldwork on Protestant and Catholic churches, I moved to Tokyo and lived there for further four months, participating in a weekly Orthodox bible class, as well as in Sunday services and in any other events held by the Orthodox Church, in order to become familiar with both its priests and church members. In Tokyo, with support from Dr Mark Mullins who had written Christianity Made in Japan, I was able to access Sophia University to take part in his seminars and to use its facilities.

I used a phenomenological approach that deals with what I saw, heard and felt, rather than what may definitely be true about care for the dead in all Japanese Christian churches. Also, I applied a qualitative methodology to the gathering of material. The analysis of field data was prioritized and carried out in an interdisciplinary context. This in turn disclosed and revealed the affective and emotional strategies of death rituals and the mechanics of individuals’ reflections about their feelings towards the dead. In my dissertation, this analysis is preceded by a historical and doctrinal overview of the problems facing Japanese Christians in dealing with the phenomenon of death, enabling further scrutiny of the authenticity of Christian rituals and of the extent to which they are actually orthodox Christian behaviour. I had thought that this was an important issue for Japanese Christians, who want to be convinced that their practices for the dead are genuine expressions of emotional and social needs, and not idol worship. I attended every possible service, meeting, ceremony and event held by the churches and the members as I could. I examined funerals and post-funeral rites (memorial services) in churches, how they become a vehicle for the meaningful expression of human emotions, and how and whether the satisfaction of church members with these rituals can be measured and tested. I also mingled with local Christians to understand their honest feelings and ideas about their ancestors as well as what they do regarding them.

After returning to the UK, I had some time to re-think my fieldwork materials and digest what I saw and heard in Japan. The most difficult part to arrange my thesis was to choose a framework. This should have been done before starting the fieldwork, but I had thought that it would have been much clearer to decide after seeing and listening to the Japanese Christians. But it never became very clear in my mind. I could not build my arguments to make my thesis solid (is it a problem for a person who was educated in Japanese society?), and, again, this should have been done before the fieldwork. I admit that I was too naive to understand how to put forward my arguments. I struggled quite a lot and had sleepless nights for a while; however, there was no magic to solve the solution. I discussed my research with my friends who were also doing their PhD, listened to their opinions, and borrowed some perspectives and theories from their books, then “cooked” them into my research. Eventually, these helped to put my thesis into a “proper” shape.

I found that all the people I met during my fieldwork had a similar understanding to the dead which is totally different from the normative Christian Doctrine. A common phenomenon was that they all have very intimate feeling towards the dead and seemed not to forget them. It was as if they were living with the dead. This led me to analyse the performance of memorial rituals in Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox churches, and draw attention to the “Christian” signification of participants’ actions and the way in which human emotions are expressed in these rituals, both officially and privately. Such emotional expression in rituals in contemporary Japanese Christianity shows the diversity of Christianity but also the depth of the tradition of caring for the dead. The research questions that guided my analysis are: (1) Why are rituals for the dead important for Japanese Christians? (2) What is the difference between official rituals and private prac-
tices in terms of caring for the dead in Japanese Christianity? (3) How do Christian churches respond to their members in terms of caring for the dead? and (4) Are Japanese Christians unique when contrasted with other Asian countries where Christianity has become a popular part of the religious landscape?

I further explored theological and historical changes to the understanding of death and life after death in Christianity, and contrasted these with Japanese beliefs before Christianity was introduced. This overlap between ritual studies, history, and theology provides a basis from which to examine differences between Christian and Japanese traditions. I was interested in the rituals which have been developed by Christian churches, for the context they provide concerning emotional fulfilment, for the way they show obligations of the churches to their members, and for their meaning to Japanese Christians themselves, both regarding how they actually practice their religion and what they believe in life after death.

The first part of my thesis illustrates the different understandings of life after death within Christian doctrine to demonstrate the diversity of Christianity in general and the gap between the traditional Japanese view and Christian views. I approach this section theoretically to show how Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians have differing views about life after death which divide the generic field of Christianity (a diverse unity). I also assessed traditional Japanese practices towards the dead, the importance of caring for the dead, and what, if anything, makes Japanese Christians different from Christians in other countries, particularly, in European and North American countries. I think it is important to see what lies behind the churches’ decisions to establish periodical memorial services and why ancestral belief accounts for Japanese religious sensitivity.

The thesis goes on to examine the presence of the dead in Japanese society and show that caring for the dead is both a basic emotive need of the Japanese people and, as has been established by previous research, at the same time is a form of proper social and cultural behaviour. I consider that the attitude of caring for the dead is one that the Japanese cannot ignore or do without, as it is part of “proper” Japanese behaviour. I suggest, drawing on the writings of Japanese Christian leaders, that there is no intention of “worshipping” or “honouring” the dead in Christian churches in Japan but rather of commemorating the dead and releasing the grief of their families.

Following the historical contextualization of Christian rituals for the dead, I examined how contemporary Japanese Christians continue to remember the dead and participate in ritual services in the churches of Japan, divided into two categories, official and unofficial rituals. These terms “official” and “private” have been suggested by Mark Mullins to distinguish between the churches’ and the individuals’ activities. Funerals and memorial services conducted by clergy at sacred sites on the basis of Church doctrine are investigated as official rituals, whereas frequent and mundane practices such as daily prayer by lay people at home or over the memorial grave without prescriptions from their churches are categorized as unofficial practices. However, some practices prove more difficult to classify according to the official/unofficial dichotomy. Certain rituals are conducted by clergy at houses of church members (at their request), and certain rituals at churches are conducted by lay people. I classify such rituals initiated by lay people as “private”, notwithstanding the church setting.

For the official rituals by the three different Christian churches, I paid close attention to the way in which memorial services are adopted and adapted by the churches and how these services, in a strictly historical context, were created. This contextualizes the analysis of characteristic understandings of the dead by each denomination, and how these understandings are reflected in funerals and memorial services. In the context of the UCCJ, I focus on innovations in the way memorial services are conducted. Considering the Catholic Church, I focus on changing view on the dead, the legitimation of ancestral “veneration”, the adaptation of All Souls’ Day, and prayers for the dead at Mass. In relation to the Orthodox Church, I focus on the role and meaning of the Panikhida memorial service to highlight the role and meaning of ancestral ‘veneration’.

Private practices are also an important way through which Japanese Christians commemorate the dead, especially family members who have passed away. These are performed independently from church membership and formal doctrinal understanding. This relies on data obtained from informal interviews with individual church members, mostly conducted among three Christian families from each of the three churches. I seek to examine whether these individual private practices are characteristic of each denomination or if they share a performative and conceptual similarity. In the solace of private houses I especially observed a reserved ‘site’ for commemorating the dead, along with symbols (photos, flowers, masonry tablets) decorating the memorial ‘shrine’ in order to examine whether these spiritually ‘syncretic’ features combine Christianity with other religious elements such as making tablets and giving the dead new posthumous names. I neither seek to champion nor to deny ancestral rites. It was simply an attempt to identify the variety of those practices, analysing the changes in their content and function. I argue that emotions are largely cultural creations and the ways they are expressed are also culturally different.

Finally, during my PhD research, I realized that I was not an academic person but an academic degree consumer, therefore, at present I am working for a private sector company in London and am enjoying working in the different environment. However, it does not mean that I have forgotten what I have done at SOAS. I have written some articles about my subject (Christians and Christianity in Japan, ancestor rituals, Japanese perspectives on the dead, Japanese religions) and give lectures at universities and workshops when I have the opportunity. What I have done and achieved at SOAS will always remain a part of my life and it may grow in future, you never know. So, I am looking forward to meeting you at the next opportunity.
PhD Research at SOAS

Thesis Title:
The Precious Steed of the Buddhist Pantheon: Ritual, Faith and Images of Bato Kannon in Japan

Benedetta Lomi

Hello, I am Benedetta and I am a PhD student. The compulsory induction course I attended during the first months of my research program resembled an AA meeting. In fact, listening to my fellow class-(in)mates’ jikoshōkai, I slowly started to picture the PhD status as an addiction: no one of us could let go of dusty volumes, of long hours in front of a computer monitor, of nights spent at the library – while outside London was bursting with life! This addiction, I was warned, had some nasty side-effects: it would have eventually inflicted on me loneliness, eating-disorders, mood-swings, sleeplessness and, why not, even depression. Of course, I was further advised, being a woman I also risked developing maternity desires, leading to pregnancy, which end up generating a lot of extra work for a lot of innocent people. [I am not making this up.]

Needless to say, I was scared; but this again, I had to get used to. In the volume How to Get a PhD: A Handbook for Students and Their Supervisors – the bibles of the PhD-Anonymous – there is a brief and revealing section titled “The Psychology of Being a PhD Student” which is 25 lines long. It states:

They come into the university or college knowing precisely who they are: successful and intelligent holders of well-earned qualifications. It is not long before they lose their initial confidence and begin to question their own self-image.

Here it is, I thought, I am about to experience my own personal bildungsroman!

As much as I would like to contradict the shallow PhD-Anonymous bible, my research years have indeed been filled with self-questioning, doubts, uncertainties, and challenges. However, I am not sure I questioned my self-image because of the daunting task of writing a 100,000 words dissertation, because this is the forma mentis of anyone doing research in the humanities, or simply because of how I am. Truth be told, I was not confident when I started, and I have surely not emerged from my PhD experience as Clark Kent from the phone booth. Quite the contrary.

I decided to start my research degree even without external funding: for a couple of years I alternated full-time work at Bonhams Auctioneers with my research and teaching duties. My choice was not one of compromise, but the best way of nurturing my interests while keeping different options open. Having started the research degree at 24, I had never left university and had no clear idea of the type of career I wanted – I was not a representative of the self-confident graduate described in the PhD-Anonymous bible.

Because I had studied East Asian art history, my interests were very strongly oriented toward objects, to the material rather than the doctrinal dimensions of East Asian Buddhism. I was especially unsure whether to direct my efforts toward a commercial or a research career, so working in auctions and doing research seemed to me the best way of finding out. What fascinated me was the power certain religious and ritual objects retained even when removed from their original context. I was interested in the way both medieval Japanese monks and contemporary dealers catalogued, copied and transmitted sacred objects, so from the auction room to the library, I could explore the efficacy of things. Even if it was their liturgical and ritual uses that I had set out to research, it was more broadly the ability that objects had to change meaning but not shape that I was drawn to. These interests informed my research project on the Bodhisattva Bato Kannon in Japan and stimulated me to concentrate not only on its numerous existing icons, but on the way people looked at and engaged with them at different times. However, I had underestimated the amount of work that a double profession entailed. Working and researching leaves very little space for anything else. Furthermore, on my feet all day, moving things, hanging things, showing things, I would get to the library at 6 pm, starving and sleepy. I had considered several times abandoning the PhD for a career as a junior catalogue, that was timidly opening up in front of me, but I never got around to making that choice. It was rather the unfolding of the PhD iter that distanced me from the hectic world of auction houses: the need for fieldwork in Japan naturally ended my work at Bonhams.

Because of my hectic work-life, none of the scenarios of depression, loneliness and anorexia presented to me at the beginning of the PhD have ever applied to me. I never felt isolated, discriminated, depressed or underestimated, but this was most certainly not due to my self-confidence. More than anything, it has been a matter of teamwork.

Besides the compulsory induction meetings – which I hope have since been improved – I found SOAS, and my research group, to be an ideal work environment. I was lucky enough that when I started my research project under the supervision of Lucia Dolce, I was not alone. She was also supervising Tullio Lobetti, Fumi Ouchi, Shinya Mano, Satomi Horiuchi and subsequently Kigensan Licha and Yagi Morris, some of whom I knew already from the previous year’s MA program. Our common focus on Japanese religions allowed for research meetings and exchanges moderated by Lucia, and this helped create a very unique relationship of mutual support. Even if working on different projects, being able to rely on a group dynamic was in my case an incredible resource. Through the years, the exchanges I had with all
my colleagues were as important for my work as those with already affirmed scholars. In fact, in some cases our relationship went far beyond the academic walls, and we have shared food, beer, (too many cigarettes in some cases) and a few grumblings on the state of our life.

It was thanks to the generosity of the Central Research Fund of the University of London and the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, that I could carry out a 16-months fieldwork in Japan. Besides the exhilarating experience of finally doing paid research, it was the support and warmth of incredible individuals that made my time in Japan one of the happiest and most fruitful of my academic career. I was able to explore many unbeatenn Batō Kannon tracks of the Japanese urban and rural space, I managed to collect documents, visit temples and attend rituals, and even build up a small photographic archive for my thesis.

The most gratifying thing of all, was being invited to be part of people’s lives: from the Miyama family, who had hosted me and welcomed me into their home as a daughter, to Andrea Castiglioni, who has been an exceptional guide around Keiō and Tōkyō, to my friends Yuko, Erica, Aki and many others. Besides, it was also a great fortune to share my fieldwork in Japan with some of my SOAS colleagues. Among them Fumi has been of incredible support in getting in touch with a number of Batō Kannon temples, and with Mr Kitamura Minao. Kitamura-san was so kind as to organise a three-day field trip in the footsteps of Batō Kannon in the Ina Valley, Nagano prefecture, that has been instrumental for my research. All these people have, to a different extent, contributed to my work.

If fieldwork was challenging and ever so stimulating, returning to London and making sense of the materials collected proved to be an even greater challenge. Back in the library and away from the excitement of temple and ritual exploration, I started craving for something else to keep me busy (I pride myself in never learning from my mistakes!) Even if the Sutaseda and Tsuda bursaries gave me the freedom of not having to work full-time anymore, I started taking up more teaching obligations both at SOAS and at Goldsmiths college, hopeful that they would not interfere too much with the writing process. Of course this ended up not being the case, and what I should have accomplished in one year took almost two. In the meantime, however, I discovered the pleasures (yes pleasures) of teaching. I often hear scholars remarking on the necessity of swearing you are committed to teaching when you apply for a job, when all you truly wish is to be is locked away in a library, or temple, with no students, exams and bureaucracy in sight. In my case, I discovered I actually did like teaching, even when I thought I could not pull it off just yet.

Throughout this time of research, fieldwork and work, my supervisor, Lucia Dolce was a source of guidance and support, in more ways than she was obliged or expected to be. It was thanks to her constant encouragement (and pushing) that I finally managed to finish my work, to present it and to publish parts of it. The thesis would not have reached its present state without the comments of the two examiners, Christine Guth and Gaynor Sekimori, whom I thank deeply for a wonderfully challenging viva. I was also immensely fortunate to work together with Antonello Palumbo, who continues to be an inspiration for his integrity and honesty toward his work. If ever I was told that the PhD was an isolating process, I should beg to disagree: my work is the result of the effort of many people, who have supported me and helped me and at times put up with my many shortcomings. [As it happens, though, I am in the process of tearing the dissertation apart to make it into hopefully something better, most likely into something incomplete in a different way, and so the same may possibly happen to me.]

Hello, I am Benedetta and I have a Phd.

Wow!

In the Study of Religions

Ah, So, what is it exactly that you will do with it?

Throughout my research year, and definitely since the end of my PhD, I have been asked this question several times – by friends, ex-classmates, relatives or random people I meet on airplanes. Sometimes, reading the infamous words “We are sorry to inform you that [bla bla bla], very competitive pool [bla bla bla], best of luck for all your future endeavors,” I ask myself the very same question.

Self-doubt never goes away, even when I am sure that I am doing what I should. Yet, even with all the uncertainties that these past few years have shaken to the academic lot, I can still recognise myself in the path that I have taken eight years ago. Fortunately, the phd years have provided a perfect training for operating on unstable grounds, in the most painfully positive of terms. It has indeed been a formative process, and what took shape was not only my dissertation but also me, Benedetta. I have grown increasingly used to the constant questioning, and the uncertainty that comes along when answers do not. And so it goes that in reply to my interlocutor I usually smile and say: more research?

Benedetta Lomi is Associate Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University and Senior Teaching Fellow in the Department of Study of Religions at SOAS. Between 2011 and 2012, she was the Shinjo-ito Postdoctoral Fellow in Japanese Buddhism at UC Berkeley.
PhD Research at SOAS

Thesis Title:
The Somatic Nature of Enlightenment:
Vocal Arts in the Japanese Tendai Tradition

Fumi Ouchi

When I told the immigration officer at Heathrow Airport that I was going to study Japanese Buddhism at SOAS, the University of London, he asked me suspiciously, “Are you doing research on Japanese Buddhism in London?” I answered, “Yes, I am. I expect that SOAS will be the best school for me to work on my subject, since it has excellent scholars in the field and there is a liberal and lively atmosphere to expand my intellectual horizons.” The officer then said, “OK. Good luck!” with a slightly ironical smile. It was April, 2004. I started my PhD in September that year and finished it in June 2011. It was a long path, through which I accumulated a variety of academic and social experiences. Having reached the goal, I would like to see that officer again and tell him with a cordial smile that my expectations have fully materialized.

The subject of my PhD dissertation concerned the different types of Buddhist practice using vocalisation, such as liturgical chanting, sutra recitation, chanting the Buddha’s name and sermons, which were developed in Japan from the mid Heian to the medieval period. I aimed at exploring how the physicality and sensory nature of human beings was understood in the Buddhist thought at the time, pursuing the development of such ritual vocalisation, and at questioning what this new understanding of the body signified in the evolution of Buddhism in Japan. My interest in aural culture was derived from my original academic background. I started my academic career as an ethnomusicologist working on research into different types of music and performing arts enacted within the folkloric religious culture in Japan. Shugendō, the religious tradition in Japan centring on mountain retreat practice that symbolizes death and rebirth, particularly attracted me, since Shugendō rituals were constructed skilfully using ritual sounds and vocalisation. The ritual power of the mountain retreat practice of Shugendō that leads a practitioner to attain rebirth as a bodhisattva is deeply connected with physiological and psychological experiences engendered through ascetic practice, aural phenomena and vocalisation. This points to a positive understanding of our somatic nature as a crucial agency for accomplishing ritual purpose in Japanese religious culture. Gaining this inspiration, I became interested in the fact that various types of ritual vocalisation were devised in the Buddhist tradition from the mid Heian to the medieval period, the very time when Shugendō was systematised. I then had the idea of focusing my PhD research on the development of Buddhist ritual vocalisation at that time and the relationship with its theoretical background.

However, apparently, there was no universities in Japan where I could work on this subject. In order to pursue my thesis, I needed to take a multidisciplinary approach: doctrinal, Buddhological, historical, performative, anthropological and musicological. Unfortunately, Japanese scholarship does not endorse this type of research, rather emphasising the pursuit of a specialised theme through a precise method, employing a detailed investigation of primary sources. As a consequence, each academic field has strict boundaries regarding both how the subject is taught and its methodology. Moreover, a barrier is often created between the researchers of different traditions of Buddhism. It did not seem that I, as an ethnomusicologist, could find a way to pursue my thesis in Japan. I was at a loss.

It was Dr Gaynor Sekimori, one of the present members of the management committee of the CSJR, who gave me my big chance. She and Dr Lucia Dolce organised a conference on the theme of Kami/Buddha combination at the CSJR in 2001 and she invited me as a speaker. I had met her during my field research in the mountain retreat practice of the Haguro sect of Shugendō. At the conference, I gave a paper on the theme of how ritual sounds and liturgical chanting were involved in the process of combining different religious traditions, analysing Shugendō rituals. This was the first time I had presented in English, and I felt too nervous to read the paper. Besides feeling acutely embarrassed, I was very excited to find that the multidisciplinary approach to my research theme attracted an audience of the conference. At that time, I started thinking I could pursue my research in the UK. Yet, embarking on a PhD in the UK was a mere dream at the time!

When I met Dr Dolce again in 2002 during her research trip in Japan, my vague dream took on a touch of reality. She suggested I could study at SOAS. Taking temporary leave from the university that I had been working for, I flew to London in April 2004, at the age of 44.

As a PhD student, I fully enjoyed the life at SOAS. Attending classes with students from various countries and different cultural backgrounds, and of a wide range of generations, was a very intriguing experience. For me, the mature attitude towards socio-cultural diversity, which the UK has cultivated through the bright and dark sides of its history, was one of the most impressive features of the country. I felt that SOAS is particularly open to cultural diversity. This cultural diversity that filled the School also provided me with rich opportunities to enjoy different types of music and performing arts from various cultures at concerts held by the Department of Music and the several research centres. Not only the musical performances but also the response of the audience to performances unfamiliar to them were very interesting to me. What I experienced at these concerts gave me an insight into how powerfully an excellent musical performance moves audiences who have a common cultural background with the performer(s) and leads them into aesthetic or emotional experiences. This later
provided me with a useful point of view for analysing the performative power of rituals that pertained to my thesis.

Thanks to my supervisor Dr Dolce and my colleagues at SOAS, I had rich opportunities to give papers based on my research at some international conferences, while working on the field research in Japan and on the thesis writing. Each paper, and the discussion that took place afterwards, came to fruition in some chapters of the dissertation: the paper for the COE/CSJR International symposium, ‘The Power of Ritual: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Medieval Religious Practices’ organised by Dr Dolce and Dr Ikuyo Matsumoto and held at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto in 2006 became the third chapter entitled ‘The Buddhist liturgical chant as contemplation’; the paper for a panel organised by Dr Dolce and Dr Katja Triplett, who is one of the associate members of the CSJR, at the International Conference, ‘Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual’ held at the Heidelberg University in 2008 expanded into the fifth chapter entitled ‘Mantra recitation and attaining Buddhahood’; and the paper for the panel that Benedetta Lomi and I organised at ASCJ 2010 held at the Sophia University in Tokyo became the main part of Chapter Six, ‘Genshin’s nenbutsu movement and vocalisation’.

Attending these conferences and presenting papers there greatly supported me not only to make progress in writing up the dissertation but also to expand my intellectual world. I came to understand how an argument should be developed to be appreciated in the Western academic world and what was important there; this was completely different from what was demanded within Japanese academia. On the one hand, if I give a presentation in the Japanese style to an audience of Western academics, they would be lost in the dense line of argument. On the other hand, if I give a paper in the Western style for Japanese academics, they would criticise me for a lack of detailed investigation of the materials. I think that both methods are significant and what is rather needed is to use an appropriate one in order to advance further the study of Japanese religious cultures. To realize this and to learn about both methods, even if only partly, was another great benefit that I gained through my PhD research.

Despite these beneficial circumstances, finishing up the dissertation was not easy. On the way to the goal, I returned to my teaching job at Miyagi Gakuin Women’s University in Japan as a professor in the Department of Music. There I had to cope with both my work at the university and my dissertation work. To be honest, I thought of giving up the PhD dissertation several times. It was my supervisor Dr Dolce who kindly and powerfully supported me. As a sincere intellectual, she kept watching the progress of my research carefully, giving me not only appropriate academic advice, but also useful information as to conferences, workshops, bursaries, and so on, with warm encouragement. When I ran up against a wall, because of my lack of discipline working on a buddhological or doctrinal theme, she suggested how I could break down the wall. When the combined work as a professor and a PhD student started to crush me, she encouraged me with moving words to stand up again and go ahead. I believe that I could not have reached the goal without her patient instructions and cordial support. I have kept all the emails exchanged between us, and I will keep them forever as my treasure.

I finally finished writing and submitted the thesis in December 2010. After passing the viva, there was just a minor amendment that the examiners demanded. However, an unexpected event happened: the calamitous earthquake and tsunami that struck the northeast coast of Japan on March 11, 2011. Miyagi Gakuin, where I have been working, and my parents’ house are both in Miyagi Prefecture, one of the most severely affected areas. The devastating earthquake did considerable damage to the buildings and the facilities of the university. Moreover, sadly, the dreadful tsunami bloated out the life of a student in our department, who had dreamt of becoming a piano teacher. All of the university staff worked hard to restore the school to its former condition, so that we could start the spring term as soon as possible. Fortunately, we were able to reopen the school at the beginning of May. In the meantime, the deadline of the resubmission of my dissertation was May 31. I felt that I did not have any more energy to deal with the intellectual work of amending the dissertation after coping with the demands of the disaster. Again, Dr Dolce came to my rescue. My PhD colleagues at SOAS, Tullio Lobetti and Kigensan Licha, along with Benedetta Lomi and Dr Sekimori in particular also gave me great help mentally and practically. Thanks to the firm support of these people, I was able to stir up the energy needed to finish up the dissertation. I received my PhD degree in June 2011.

When I look back along the road to accomplishing my PhD research, I realize I have gained much more than I expected: academic training, rich social experiences, research colleagues, and good friends, on a worldwide scale. I believe that my choice of SOAS in London to take the degree was completely the right one.

To achieve a PhD degree also means the start of the next challenge. I am planning to publish my dissertation both in English and Japanese. Accomplishing it does not seem to be easy for me, since I am always struggling with a horrible amount of university work in Japan. Yet, I should do it, in order to share the fruits of my study with many people, including those who strongly supported me. The dissertation also led me to pursue several new subjects, two of which especially move me. One is the reason why the positive attitude towards utilising the somatic, sensory, and emotional nature of human beings as an effective agency for accomplishing religious purposes or realising enlightenment developed in medieval Japan. I assume that this was deeply connected with the tradition of Japanese poetry and songs that flourished from ancient times. The other subject came from my experience of the earthquake and tsunami, which exposed me to the fatal issue of death and how the religious culture and music/performing arts provide people with mental and spiritual help. I saw how young mothers who had lost their children in the disaster got great relief from listening to the sutra
recitations of Buddhist priests, although they had no sense of being Buddhist in their everyday lives. I also saw how victims regained their energy through singing together or performing the performing arts that they had inherited from their ancestors. I would like to investigate what happened there and how such performative power was created. By doing so, I would like to walk together with the victims on the long path to tomorrow.

**Fumi Ouchi** is currently Professor in the Department of Music at Miyagi Gakuin Women’s University.

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Recently Awarded PhDs on Japanese Religions

**Kigensan Licha** *The Esoterization of Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Dr Dolce, Study of Religions)

**Carla Tronu Montane**, *Christianity in Pre-modern Japan* (Dr Angus Lockyer, Department of History)

PhD Research at SOAS on Japanese Religions

**Shinya Mano**, *Eisai and the development of Zen-Esoteric Buddhism* (Dr Dolce, Study of Religions)

**Yaara Morris**, *Cult of Benzaiten in the village of Tenkawa in the Kii peninsula— her rituals, texts, and mandalas* (Dr Dolce, Study of Religions)

MA Japanese Religions Dissertations 2011-2012

**Giulia Duranti**, *Shamanism as a Category of Religious Practice in Japan: The Cases of Hokkaido and Okinawa*

**Daniele Ricci**, *Japanese Ascetics: A rethinking of the Shamanic Character of the Shugenja*

**Ang Zou**, *Fighting for the Platform. From the Transmission of Vinaya Lineage from China to Japan to the Advocacy of Exclusive Mahayana Ordination*

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**The 2012-2013 CSJR Research Student Bursary**

The Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions offers a CSJR Research Student Bursary in Japanese Religions to be held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

The value of the bursary is £4000, which covers the fees for the first year of MPhil/PhD study at SOAS (UK/EU fees). If the successful candidate receives a grant to cover fees from another funding body the bursary may be used towards maintenance.

Applications are invited from outstanding students of Japanese religions, regardless of nationality. Closing date for applications is June 1, 2013.

The selection will take place in June and results communicated shortly thereafter.

The CSJR Research Student Bursary will be awarded to candidates proposing to register full-time or part-time for a research degree (MPhil/PhD) in Japanese Religions (Department of the Study of Religions) at SOAS commencing in September 2013. Candidates must have applied for a research degree at SOAS by June 1, 2013 in order to be considered for the CSJR Research Student Bursary.

The awards will be made on the basis of outstanding academic merit, and the Centre reserves the right not to make an award in the event that no suitable application is received.

You can download the application forms and further particulars can be found on:

[www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/bursaries/](http://www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/bursaries/)
Postgraduate

MA Religions of Africa and Asia, Focus on Japanese Religions

The MA Japanese Religions started in 1999 as the first European taught graduate programme devoted to the study of Japanese religion, and remains so. The degree has now converged into the MA Religions of Asia and Africa, to allow both for a more comprehensive approach to the study of Japanese Religions, and an individualised programme focused on Japan.

The degree comprises taught courses equivalent to three units in total and a dissertation. The programme 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 Japanese religious phenomena in historic context and devotes attention to specific themes relevant for the understanding of the social aspect of Japanese religion and the influence of religion upon Japanese culture.

Students have the opportunity to select other courses, according to their specific interests and previous knowledge. The courses East Asian Buddhist Thought and Readings in Japanese Religion focus specifically on Japanese Buddhism. Other options include the study of Chinese Religions, Japanese History, Society, Art, and a variety of methodologies for the analysis of religious phenomena from an hermeneutical to anthropological perspectives.

A previous knowledge of the Japanese language is not required for entry in the programme. However, the degree offers language courses in modern Japanese.

Students in 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 can be downloaded from the SOAS website. For further information on the programme, please visit the SOAS website at:

www.soas.ac.uk/religions/programmes/mareligions/
or contact: Dr Lucia Dolce, Room 342, ext. 4217
email: ld16@soas.ac.uk

Members' Research Related Activities

Lucia Dolce

Publications


Invited Lectures

John Breen

Last year John Breen worked on several different projects. He also started teaching at Kwansei Gakuin University and took on a new PhD student. The projects include a multi-authored volume on modern Kyoto, a critical study of the early 17th century Christian text, “Myōtei mondō,” a study of Yasukuni in war-time Japan, and, above all, research into the Ise shrines in modern Japan. Modern Ise is his main research focus for 2013, the year in which the shrines are totally re-built.

Publications
‘Shirarezaru gyōseki; Kindai Nihon no gaikōshi ni hatashita Meiji Tennō no yakuwari’, Rekishi Dokuhon, 12, 2012.


Meri Arichi

Activities: In autumn 2012, gave several lectures outside SOAS, including the Zurich University’s E-Learning program, Bristol Art Society, and the WEA course in Japanese Art at the Daiwa House.

Publication: I contributed one chapter ‘Treasures of the Nation: Japanese Paintings in the Fine Arts Palace’ in Ayako Hotta-Lister and Ian Nish eds. Commerce and Culture at the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition Centenary Perspective, Global Oriental, Leiden-Boston. DATE?

Forthcoming: Workshop and a photo display in the SOAS Library focusing on the Sengū rebuilding of the Ise Shrine in autumn 2013.

Anna Andreeva

Academic Fellow, Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe’ in a Global Context’ Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies, University of Heidelberg, Karl Jaspers Centre, Voßstraße 2, Bldg. 4400, Heidelberg, 69115 Germany; Nov. 2012 – June 2013: Visiting Researcher at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken), Kyoto, Japan

Research Projects:
2010-2012: Coordinator, Project C11, ‘Religion and Medicine in Pre-modern East Asia’, Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe’, Heidelberg. This research project was sponsored by the German Research Council (DFG) under the auspices of the Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe in a Global Context’, (Karl Jaspers Centre, University of Heidelberg). This project was conducted in collaboration with Dr Dominic Steavu (presently of University of California at Santa Barbara). It focused on several aspects of transmission and appropriation of medico-religious knowledge in pre-modern China and Japan and included several sub-projects. Collaborative work with Dr Steavu concentrated on the concepts of body, gestation and embryological discourses in premoldern China and Japan. Several publications resulting from the workshops and international conferences organized by this project are currently in progress. These publications include a volume of essays co-edited with Dr Dominic Steavu (USCB) that deals with the emergence and development of embryological discourses in medico-religious fields of production in premodern China and Japan. This volume includes contributions by other CSJR members, Dr Lucia Dolce, Dr Gaynor Sekimori and Dr Kigen-san Licha.

Anna Andreeva’s own research focused on the cultural history of childbirth and women’s health in pre-modern Japan. A research workshop organized in collaboration with Project C1 ‘Medical Systems’ and entitled ‘Childbirth and Women’s Health in Premodern Societies’ led to a publication of essays of the same title intended as a special journal issue. This volume includes a contribution by Dr Katja Triplett (Goettingen, Germany) as well as by scholars working on the histories of childbirth and women’s health in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and medieval Spain. More publications and lectures on this topic will follow in 2013 and 2014.

Invited Lectures and Conference Papers:
March 2012, Divine Movers and Shakers: Conceptualising Earthquakes in Pre-Modern Japan, international conference ‘Imaging Disasters’, Internationales Wissenschaftsforum and Karl Jaspers Centre, University of Heidelberg (presenter); April 2012, Mt Miwa and the Emergence of Esoteric Kami Worship in Medieval Japan, Yokohama National University, Japan (invited speaker); June 2012, Childbirth and Women’s Health in Premodern Japan, Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe’, Research Area C ‘Health and Environment’, RA C retreat, Tutzling, Germany; June 2012, Mt Asama and the Buddhist Arts of Memory, international conference ‘Buddhism and the Dynamics of Transculturality’, Internationales Wissenschaftsforum and Karl Jaspers Centre, University of Heidelberg (presenter); Sept. 2012, Esoteric Buddhism at Work, panel ‘Cultural Mobility in Japanese Religions’, British Association of Japanese Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich (UK), (panel organizer, presenter). Panel participants: Dr Gaynor Sekimori (SOAS/Cambridge), Dr Mikael Bauer (Leeds), Dr Benedetta Lomi (SOAS); Nov. 2012, ‘Chasing the Earthquake Insect’: Value-knowledge Systems of Pre-modern Japan, Universität of Tübingen, Germany.
Information on Japanese Religions

The Centenary of the Birth of Fosco Maraini: Ethnologist, Photographer and Writer

Claudio Caniglia

Several events were organized last year in Florence and in other cities to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Fosco Maraini.

It is not easy to describe in a few words the multidisciplinary work and the pioneering role of Florence-born Fosco Maraini (1912-2004): ethno-anthropologist, photographer, and author of documentaries, writer and mountaineer. It is also difficult to draw a distinct line between his work and his different fields of expertise. The eye of the artist is clearly visible in many of his photographs, which also have an inestimable ethnographic and documentary value. The same could be said of his two most popular books on Tibet and Japan. These are not only travel accounts, but also in-depth and erudite reports of a scholar’s encounters with various cultures. Probably the most suitable definition for Maraini is that of anthropologist-humanist, whose intellectual curiosity is expressed in one of his favourite sentences ‘everything that happens in the world concerns me’ (see Dacia and Fosco Maraini, Il Gioco dell’Universo, Mondadori, 2007, pp. 27).

The son of sculptor Antonio Maraini and English writer Yoi Crosse, he grew up in the international, stimulating and open environment of the artistic community of Florence at the beginning of the twentieth century. He enrolled in the faculty of Natural Sciences and, at the same time, he continued the family artistic tradition, beginning his career as a photographer. Maraini was close to the Futurist movement and actively participated in the debate about the status of photography as an art form. Both his qualities as a photographer and his well-known mountaineering skills must have influenced the decision of the famous Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci to hire him as photographer for his expedition to Tibet in 1937. This was a defining experience for Maraini, which directed his future interests towards East Asian ethnology. Although absorbed in a somewhat unorthodox way, Tucci’s intellectual depth was also important for his understanding of religion as an essential factor in most cultural phenomena.

After graduating in Natural Sciences at Florence University, Maraini obtained a scholarship from the Japanese Government to undertake a study of the Ainu indigenous groups of Hokkaido. He left for Japan in 1938 with his young wife and their daughter Dacia (then only 2 years old). The time he spent in Hokkaido was essential to his scientific training as an ethnologist. He managed to collect a huge amount of Ainu materials, a large part of which miraculously escaped the destructions of the war and is now preserved in the Anthropology Museum of Florence. The results of his research in Hokkaido were later collected in a volume printed in Tokyo in 1942 (Gliiku-bashui degli Ainu, Istituto italiano di cultura, Tokyo). Appointed as language assistant at Kyoto University in 1941, he had to face the hardships of the concentration camp when in 1943 he was imprisoned with his family...
in Nagoya because he and his wife refused to adhere to the puppet Fascist government of the Italian Republic of Salò. The difficulties of this period when he, his wife and three little daughters (two of them were born in Japan) had to struggle both with hunger and the brutality of the military guards, are narrated in some of his books (Meeting with Japan, Case, Amori, Universi, Mondadori, 2011). At the end of the war Maraini and his family returned to Italy. He spent the following five years in Sicily carrying on pioneering although less known photographic work on the South Italian ethnographic, naturalistic and artistic heritage, part of which has only recently been published (see Toni Maraini, Da Ricorbo
talli Luna, Poesis, Alberobello, 2012, and Nostro Sud, Alinari 24 Ore, Firenze, 2010). In 1948 he was invited by Tucci to take part in another expedition to Tibet, after which he wrote the book Segreto Tibet (English edition: Secret Tibet, Hutchinson, 1952). This is an important record of the country ‘as it would no longer be’, before the Chinese invasion of 1950. The text has unquestionable literary and ethnological value, and was internationally acclaimed and translated into 12 languages.

In 1953 and 1954 Maraini went back in Japan for a series of documentaries, most of which are unfortunately lost. The material collected in these years together with records and memories of his previous stay in the country would form the core of his next and most famous book, Ore Giapponesi (Japanese Hours’, published in English with the title Meeting with Japan, London, Hutchinson, 1959). It was an even greater success than Secret Tibet and was awarded the ‘Book of the Year’ prize in the USA, selling more than 250,000 copies. (Maraini, Pellegrino in Asia, Meridiani, Mondadori, 2007, from Paolo Campione’s introduction)

In the following years Maraini continued his activity of documenting Japanese culture focusing especially on festivals and folk religion rituals under the influence of scholars like Yanagita Kunio and Hori Ichirō. Of particular interest is the 1972 book Japan: Pattern of Continuity, in which he combined text and photographs in an innovative way, showing the elements of continuity (and discontinuity) of Japanese culture during its most acute phase of modernization (Japan: Patterns of Continuity, Hamilton, London 1972).

Maraini was then very active in popularizing Japanese culture in Italy and abroad (and conversely, in the promotion of Italian culture in Japan). After a period spent in Saint Anthony’s College in Oxford, where he was invited as a Fellow, he was appointed professor of Japanese culture and religions at Florence University. At the same time, he continued to spend long research periods in Japan carrying on both duties commissioned by the Italian or Japanese authorities (as, for instance, that of public relations director of the Italian Pavilion at the Osaka World Exposition in 1970, and as logistic coordinator of the Italian team in the Sapporo winter Olympics in 1972).

One of most remarkable actions in the promotion of Japanese studies in Italy was the foundation, along with other scholars, of the Italian Association of Japanese Studies (AISTUGIA). The association, which includes most of the Italian scholars of Japan, was formed in 1973 and it was among the first of its kind in Europe. Maraini acted as general secretary and subsequently as honorary president, and was one of the association’s most active and enthusiastic promoters. He greatly determined the success of its establishment, thanks to his ability in mediating between different academic corporations.

The variety of initiatives organised in celebration of Maraini’s centenary was in keeping with the many facets of his activities as an ethno-anthropologist, photographer, writer and mountaineer.

Among them it is worth mentioning two exhibitions: the exhibition of Ainu photographic and ethnographical material, donated by Maraini to the Florence Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology; and the exhibition organized by the Lugano Museum of Cultures, displaying part of the material that Maraini collected in the 1950s during the fieldwork on the ama, fisherwomen of the Hekura Island in Japan, (see Hekura: The Diving Girl’s Island, London, H. Hamilton, 1962). The calendar of cultural events included seminars and book launches (during this last year two new books on Maraini have been published and a rare book by Maraini republished). An event was even organized in Ladakh, India, where on August 26 a newly built hospital was dedicated to the scholar.

The annual conference of the Italian Association for Japanese Studies, held in Florence from 22 to 24 September, also paid a tribute to Maraini’s scholarship organizing the symposium around the subject ‘Variations on Themes of Fosco Maraini’.

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In the opening session, the Japanese government conferred the Order of the Rising Sun upon Massimo Raveri (professor at Venice University and one of Maraini’s first pupils) for his activity in promoting knowledge of Japanese culture. In the next session two papers on Maraini were presented. The first by Prof. Cesare De Michelis from Padua University highlighted the literary value of Maraini’s works and their pioneering character in representing the 20th century, ‘which opens itself to meeting with the Other’. In the second, Takaharu Miyashita, of Kanazawa University, recalled his friendship with Maraini and their collaboration in the Japanese courses at Florence University in the seventies. Like the opening session, the closing one was also devoted to Fosco Maraini, with three speeches shedding light on the historical identity of some of the characters in Meeting with Japan and on Italians living in Japan during the Second World War.

Thirteen papers on different topics were presented in two parallel sessions: one dedicated to Literature, Art and the History of Ideas and the other to History and the Social Sciences. An interesting panel on Japanese fisherwomen, ama, in the literary tradition of Japan and on the related ethnographic research conducted on Heruka Island by Maraini was held in the morning session of the 23rd.

My own paper focused on folk religion and Shugendō, a subject directly connected with Maraini’s work. It must be said that my original interest in the topic was influenced by Carmen Blacker’s The Catalpa Bow, as well as Maraini’s work. However, when I read The Catalpa Bow for the first time, my attention was attracted by a beautiful image of an indoor goma ritual showing an officiant with his right hand raised towards a fire set on an altar. The caption of the image reads: ‘The ascetic and fire. Photograph courtesy of Fosco Maraini’. This was not the first time that I had seen one of Maraini’s photos in books by other writers but it was interesting to find them in a book that had been so important for at least two generations of scholars and students of Japanese religions.

Another question had been intriguing me for many years. Since I was aware of the importance of mountains for Maraini as photographer and mountaineer, I wondered whether during his ethno-anthropological research he had dealt with Japanese mountain cults and mountain ascetics. In a book published in English in 1971, Japan: Pattern of Continuity, (recently published for the first time in Italian with the title that Maraini originally wanted to give to it, Japan: Mandala) I saw several photos of yamabushi, and I was quite sure that Maraini in his tireless documentation of matsuri and rituals had often come across material related to mountain asceticism. My research carried out in July 2012 and in January 2013 at the Vieuxseux Archive in Florence, where all the Maraini materials are kept, has provided answers to this question.

Between Fosco Maraini and Carmen Blacker there was friendship and mutual admiration. Carmen Blacker probably met Maraini for the first time in Japan in 1960, and after that they kept in touch until the last years of their lives (see Andrew Armour ‘Fosco Maraini: I discorsi di un mago’, in Dren-Giong: il primo libro di Maraini e i ricordi dei suoi amici, Corbaccio, 2012, p. 302).

When Maraini was invited to contribute an article to the volume published by Cambridge University to celebrate Blacker’s 70th birthday, he decided to write about the Ainu bear ritual (iyomaude). He had taken part in this in the early fifties, soon after the war, when the generation of its older performers was still alive. In a letter of 1996, Carmen Blacker thanked Maraini for his contribution, and expressed appreciation for his ability to reproduce in his prose the atmosphere of a ritual now irretrievably lost as opposed to ‘the cut and dried quantitative reports that some anthropologists write’ (FFM, Fas. II, 7, Vieuxseux Archive, Florence).

Blacker also had a true admiration for Maraini as a photographer, and she was delighted to be able to include Maraini’s photo of a goma ritual in her most important book. In a letter dated March 1999, referring to an exhibition held by Maraini in New York, she wrote: ‘I have always thought you the best photographer in the world and you must have a big store of pictures that have not been published before’ (FFM, Fas. II, 7, Vieuxseux Archive, Florence). Carmen Blacker was right, but she no doubt could not have imagined that the Maraini photographic archives would contain about 42,000 pictures, most of them of great documentary value. The photos taken from the early thirties until the nineties, mainly in Tibet and Japan (but also in Southern Italy), are preserved together with his personal archive in the Archivio Vieuxseux in Florence.

With the help of the archivists of the Vieuxseux Archive, I found several photos of yamabushi, most of them images of the fire ritual (saitō goma). This is a spectacular ceremony lasting for at least two hours and involving many officiants. The dramatic aesthetic display of rising flames, smoke and colourful yamabushi costumes, in addition to the ethnographic interest of the ritual, would have particularly intrigued Maraini, who took photographs of saitō goma on many occasions after 1962 and over a period of more than thirty years. In total, I have uncovered around fifty photos of yamabushi fire rituals, but I am convinced that as the cataloguing progresses other photos on the same subject will come to light. By interpreting the captions written by Maraini on photographs and in some of his notebooks, I tried to identify the places and dates of the different rituals. However, due to gaps in the research notes, and to the ongoing cataloguing, this task has not been successful for all the photographs. In this regard, I would like to thank the Reverend Miyagi Tainen of the Shōgoin temple in Kyoto (headquarters of the Honzan branch of Shugendō), whose kind help has been essential in identifying the dates and places of the fire rituals performed by the Shōgoin temple’s yamabushi.

Participating in the Florence conference was therefore an extremely welcome opportunity to further my topic, the history of Shugendō rituals, providing a new insight through the vision of one of the most important figures, not only of Italian Japanese Studies, but also of Italian and European culture as a whole.
Information on Japanese Religions

Scholars’ Day: Storytelling in Japanese Art

Radu Leca

On 12 March 2012, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York hosted a Scholars’ Day in conjunction with the exhibition Storytelling in Japanese Art. This one-day event took the form of presentations within the exhibition galleries by distinguished Japanese scholars on themes related to the artworks on view. These were supplemented by moderated discussions and viewings of the exhibition galleries. In the audience were scholars from Japan and East Coast universities, and curators from Japanese museums.

The morning session began with welcome remarks by John Carpenter, who encouraged all present to make the most of this special event. Hiroshi Onishi then talked about the characteristics of the formats in which the ‘Great Woven Cap’ (Taishokan) narrative was illustrated in late medieval and early modern Japan. The next talk by Shōko Ōta focused on the ‘Illustrated Sutra of the Miracles of Kannon’ in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The speaker focused on the interplay between Kannon’s dual iconography (as a religious icon sitting on a lotus pedestal and as a dynamic standing figure) and the dual location (this world and the celestial realm) depicted throughout the handscroll.

Of interest for readers of this Newsletter will be issues approached by Michio Yonekura in his talk on the depiction of a white horse left of the Nachi waterfall in medieval works such as ‘The Illustrated Biography of the Priest Ippen’ (Ippen Hijiri-e) and Kumano mandalas. Yonekura suggested a connection to the Valahasa jātaka illustrated in medieval sutra sleeve illustrations such as those analysed in Ota’s talk. In this story, Kannon appears in the form of a white horse to save men stranded on an island inhabited by demonic women. Since Nachi was believed to be the sacred space of Kannon, Yonekura proposed that the white horse functioned as a visual icon of the Kannon cult for fishermen and sailors in Kumano Bay.

This dense series of talks was followed by viewings of the galleries and lively discussions in front of the artworks.

The afternoon session started with a joint presentation by Naoko Kojima and Toru Takahashi, on the illustrated versions of the ‘Tale of the Bamboo Cutter’ (Taketori Monogatari), which only started to be produced in the seventeenth century. The speakers focused on visualizations of the liminal elements within the tale, both the protagonist Kaguyahime and Mount Fuji being points of contact between the mortal and immortal realms. The renewed popularity of the illustrated tale in the seventeenth century might be due to its association with the correspondingly liminal state of the bride through its use as a heirloom item.

Midori Sano talked about illustrations of the ‘Tale of Genji’ across various formats. Sano focused on the creative role of copying, exemplified by unexpected dia-

logue lines added by painters within the illustrations. The authorship of these seventeenth century versions of ancient tales has been largely unknown, but the next talk by Tōru Ishikawa revealed recently discovered information on producers of illustrated scrolls such as Asakura Jūken and a rare female author, Isome Tsuna.

Masako Watanabe, curator of the exhibition and moderator of the event, concluded the afternoon session with a talk on tales of animals and ghosts. Watanabe provided an authoritative historical overview of the iconography of non-humans in Japanese narrative art, starting with ‘The Handscroll of Frolicking Animals’ (Chōju giga) and ‘Battles of Twelve Animals’ (Jūnirai gassen), and following the evolution and iconographical changes up to Shibata Zeshin’s ‘Ibaraki Demon’ at the end of the early modern period. This concluding talk placed early modern works, around which previous talks had gravitated, into a larger historical context, while underlining the wide range and significance of the exhibition.

The talks were rounded with another session of viewings throughout the galleries, with animated collective discussions in front of the artworks and interventions from audience members, who included Abe Yasurō and Haruo Shirane.

This was a rare opportunity for scholars and curators to exchange information and approaches in the presence of the artworks themselves. A theme that permeated the encounter was the importance of formats both for the style of the artworks and for the insights that they allow into the modes of image production across different periods. What emerged was a rich picture of the versatility of visual narrative in Japan, along with an innovative model of engaging with the content of an exhibition.

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Research Notes on Japanese Religions

A Growing Interest in the Life and the Works of Alessandro Valignano S.I. (1539-1606)

Claudio Caniglia

Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) is perhaps one of the most eminent figures in the history of the missions in Asia, second only to Francis Xavier in the importance of his activity and works. He was born into an influential aristocratic family from the city of Chieti in Abruzzo. Chieti was part of the Kingdom of Naples (at that time under the control of the Spanish crown), but the city had (and still has) close relationships with the Vatican elites, and Valignano could count during his career on the protection of important figures belonging to the ecclesiastic hierarchy.

He obtained a doctorate from the University of Padua, then the cradle of Renaissance culture in Europe, and subsequently entered the Jesuit novitiate, taking the vows some years later. Owing to his humanistic background and strong family connections, he rose quickly in the hierarchy of the order. Indeed, only seven years after becoming a Jesuit he was appointed General Visitor to the missions in Asia, a role which de facto granted him considerable powers (and responsibilities) over the Jesuit missions ‘citra et ultra Gangem’ (within and beyond the Ganges). The decision to appoint an Italian as Visitor was taken by the new Superior General of the order, the Belgian Everard Mercurian (1514-1580), in an effort to counter the growing control over the missions by the Portuguese Jesuits, who acted in the interest of the Lisbon court.

Valignano arrived in Goa in 1574 and sailed to Macao in 1578 and then on to Japan the following year. His main role was to organize and consolidate the missions started by the pioneers of the order in the previous years; his task was however not limited to a purely ‘bureaucratic’ aspect but became instead a complex twofold cultural operation. First he sought to adapt the Jesuit image and missionary activities in countries such as Japan and China which, in organization, culture and military power, were perceived as being on the same level, if not, to some extent, superior to European countries. Second, he aimed to define Jesuit priorities in the difficult context of conflicting Spanish and Portuguese interests and the challenges of rival religious orders.

More than India, where his work, although tireless in the organization and historical documentation of the Mission’s actions, was probably affected by racial prejudice (widespread at that time especially towards Africans) against peoples with a dark skin, (see Paolo Aranha, ‘Gerarchie razziali e adattamento culturale: la “ipotesi Valignano”’, in Alessandro Valignano S.I., Bibliotheca Instituti Historici S.I., 2008, Rome), Japan was the field where his innovative missionary method of ‘accomodatio’ (adaptation) was first conceived and applied.

After his arrival in Japan in 1579, Valignano experienced a sort of cultural shock when he saw how inadequate the intellectual categories involved in the training of the missionaries were with respect to the profoundly different local cultural background and its complex social system. After he spent a year in the country, as he later wrote, ‘mute as a statue’, observing and trying to understand, he began to reconsider and reshape the missionary approach to the Japanese reality.

While Valignano had always considered a knowledge of languages to be an important part of the missionary process, he now realized that it was necessary to take further steps in ‘adaptation’, if the Japanese enterprise was to be a success. He was supported in this decision by the advice of Japanese converts and by the example of the results obtained by the mission in the Kyōto area, which the Italian missionary, Father Organtino, administered according to more flexible principles than Francisco Cabral pursued in Kyūshū, where a rigid hierarchical division was enforced between Japanese converts and western missionaries. Valignano’s instructions required missionaries to adapt to Japanese custom and to take Buddhist monks as models for their attire and their public behaviour, in particular the Zen monks, who Valignano felt were held in higher esteem by the Japanese elite. His instructions for the missionaries in Japan were collected in a manual created in October 1581, ‘Advertimentos e Avisos acerca dos costumes e catangues de Jappão’. The use of a Portuguese transliteration for the term *katagi* 形儀 (catangues, appropriate behaviour) in the title seems to emphasize even more the ‘otherness’ of Japanese customs, as though Valignano had been unable to find a corresponding Portuguese word (see Boscaro Adriana,

At the time of Valignano’s first visit to Japan the Jesuits were able to count on the support of Oda Nobunaga, who met him personally on more than one occasion. With the accession of Hideyoshi, the situation became more problematic; nevertheless, the number of conversions continued to increase until the missionaries were finally banned from the archipelago.

The favourable circumstances of his first visit and the anticipated positive developments in Japan were the basis of the plans for the delegation of the Tenshō shōnen (‘the young boys of Tenshō era’) conceived by Valignano and his collaborators. The Visitor’s intention was to present a delegation of new converts to the Pope, as well as to European supporters and detractors of the Jesuit order, as tangible proof of the success of the Jesuit enterprise in Japan. As for the Japanese, the intention was to show the young envoys the splendour and wealth of the European cities and the Catholic Church so that on their return they might dispel claims from Japanese detractors that the Jesuit missionaries had come to Japan to make their fortune.

The delegation, composed of four young nobles connected to the Kyūshū Christian Daimyō and accompanied by Valignano himself, left Japan in 1582. To his disappointment the visitor learned in Goa that he had been appointed the Provincial of the Indian province and could not continue his trip. Nevertheless the delegation, received by King Philip II of Spain, the Grand Duke of Tuscany and two Popes, was a critical and successful step toward defending the cause of the Jesuits among their European supporters and in the Vatican.

Valignano and his direct collaborators, Michele Ruggieri and Matteo Ricci, applied in China the same missionary strategies conceived and enacted in Japan; as is widely known, the Jesuits obtained even better results there, managing to gain admission to the Forbidden City. It is likely (and desirable) that knowledge of the role and actions of such an authoritative figure in the history of the early relationships between Europe and Asia should come to be more carefully studied, as the focus in historical studies shifts towards a less Eurocentric perspective, and that personalities like Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci will begin to be recognized by a wider, non-academic public.

The recent publication of the translation of *De missione Legatorvm Japonensium ad Romanum curiam* (Japanese Travellers in Sixteenth-Century Europe, Hakluyt Society Third Series, 2012), the account of the journey of the four envoys in Europe (officially the diaries of the young nobles but in fact an elaboration by Valignano and his entourage), can be considered a step in this direction. Publication of the translation by the great scholar of the Christian century and of Valignano, Francis Moran, was halted owing to the latter’s untimely death. Thanks to the historian Derek Massarella, who revised the manuscript and enriched it with a scholarly apparatus of notes and a detailed introduction, it has finally been possible to publish the work. The book, a beautiful hardback volume with valuable tables, offers a very useful insight into the way in which the Jesuits tried to shape the image of Europe among their Japanese audience (and at the same time an interesting account of how Europe was somehow forced to look at itself in the mirror).

Another interesting study worth mentioning even though it deals only partially with Valignano is *The Cult of Emptiness* by Urs App (University Media, Rorschach/Kyoto, 2012). In his search for the roots of the concept (or misconception) of ‘Oriental Philosophy’ which became widespread in Europe from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, the author delves deeper into some of the topics dealt with in his previous book *The Birth of Orientalism*. This volume showed how the first encounter between Jesuits and Buddhists in Japan was the source of most of the ideas which came to determine European conceptions about Asian thought until the end of the nineteenth century. When, after their first years in Japan, the Jesuits realized that the hypothesis, which had attracted the French humanist Guillaume Postel (see Elisonas, ‘An Itinerary to the Terrestrial Paradise. Early European Reports on Japan and a Contemporary Exegesis’, in *Itinerario*, N. 3, Vol. 20, 1986), that a natural form of Christianity might have been introduced in Japan in the remote past was totally wrong, they hastened to point out the differences between the Christian religion and that inspired by the devil ‘Xaca’ (Shakyamuni Buddha). The efforts of the following years devoted to the study of the ‘Japanese heresies’ with the help of new Japanese converts brought to realization the *Sumario de los errores* (Summary of Errors) in 1557. As App notes, this text is extremely important in the history of ‘the European discovery of the globe’s religions and philosophies, being, among other things, the first document to identify Shintō and Buddhism as the main religions of Japan, and Buddhism as a religion consisting of different sects with distinctive doctrines’ (pp. 34-35). As stated above, when Valignano arrived in Japan he realized the importance of the institution of Christian schools in the training of novices from among the Japanese converts. In order to preach among members of the Japanese elites, an accurate knowledge of the Buddhist sects and their differences was paramount, and Valignano collated all the information collected in previous years by other Jesuits such as Torres and Luis Frois and, moreover, he ordered an accurate report on Japanese religions from two of the most knowledgeable new converts. All this material contributed to the framework of a course for Japanese and western novices given by Valignano in January 1581 (probably the first set of lectures on Japanese religions given by a westerner). The same material was used as the basis for the *Catechismus Christianae fidei*, published in Lisbon in 1586 (App, pp. 53-55). The text, republished as part of Possevino’s *Bibliotecha selecta*, a very influential book which was widely used in European Jesuit schools for two centuries, was to have a ‘huge yet hitherto entirely ignored impact on Europe’s perception
of Asian philosophies and religions’ (page 57). In successive chapters App, analysing the developments of the misconception of ‘Oriental philosophy’ in some of the most influential texts of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe, such as those of Kircher, Bernier and Bayle, shows how Valignano’s ideas and those developed from his premises by his pupil, the ‘interpreter’ João Rodrigues, continue to maintain their centrality in the European cultural debate.

As an example of the growing interest in Valignano and his work the activities organized by the city of Chieti, the Jesuit’s birthplace, should be mentioned. The year 2006, the quadricentenary of his death, was declared ‘Valignano Year’ by Chieti’s city council. This involved a series of commemorative events including two exhibitions at local museums, the inauguration of a bust of the missionary in the central square of the city, as well as an international symposium on the different aspects of his work and missionary activities, to which both established scholars and young researchers contributed to mark the occasion. A detailed report of the symposium by Carla Tronu was published in the 2007 CSJR Newsletter, and the Proceedings were made available in a handsome volume of the Bibliotheca Instituti Historicorum S.I. in 2008 (Alessandro Valignano S.I. Uomo del Rinascimento, ponte tra Oriente e Occidente Adolfo Tamburello, Marisa Di Russo, M. Antoni J. Üçerler S. I.). All the events, including the symposium and the publishing of the book, were made possible on the one hand by the thorough organization and coordination of Marisa Di Russo, professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages for twenty years and a noted specialist in the history of Italian-Japanese relations, while on the other, they were the result of the generous financial and organizational support of the Carichieti Foundation, associated with one of the oldest banks in Chieti province, which has always been very active in protecting and promoting Abruzzo’s cultural and artistic heritage.

Undertakings such as the Chieti project have the merit of attracting sponsorship for important events in the Italian cultural context, where there is evidence of a gradual, yet progressive, disengagement of public institutions from such enterprises. Moreover, when the purpose is not simply commemorative, this sort of event often becomes the opportunity for scholars to meet and exchange ideas, highlighting new issues and unresolved questions as was the case in Chieti (see the 2007 CSJR Newsletter). Unfortunately, in most cases such initiatives tend to remain one-off events for lack of follow-up. Nevertheless, in Chieti, thanks to the scholars’ efforts and the farsightedness of the board of the Carichieti Foundation which, since the Valignano year, has maintained its financial and organizational support, it has been possible to give continuity to this project. Indeed, the Carichieti Foundation has established a research centre devoted to promoting interest and research into Valignano and his work, times and cultural legacy in a recently acquired and restored seventeenth century building in the centre of Chieti.

The Alessandro Valignano International Centre, which will be inaugurated next March, seeks among other things to develop collaboration with other centres and institutions also involved in research activities into the same or related subjects both in Italy and abroad. The University Gabriele D’Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara, Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University (the principal educational institution of the Jesuits since the foundation of the order), and members of the Valignano family, who are already offering a grant to deserving bachelor theses concerning the Visitor, have joined the project by offering respectively scientific and financial support.

The official program for the current year will be released after the inauguration, and we can reasonably hope that the expertise and competence of the members of the board together with the synergies of all participating institutions will provide an effective contribution to the creation of new and interesting projects. One of such projects would be the publication of rare documents on or by Valignano. For instance, an eighteenth century biography written by a descendent of the Jesuit, Abbot Ferrante Valignani, is to be republished to celebrate the inauguration of the centre (Vita del Padre Alessandro Valignani della Compagnia di Giesù descritta dall’abate D. Ferrante Valignani [promipote del Visitatore], in Roma, Nella Stamperia di Gaetano Zenobij, e Giorgio Placho, vicino la Colonna Trajana. M. DC. XCVIII. Con Licenza de’ Superiori, Reprinted in its original form, eDICOLA editrice, Chieti, 2013).

In view of future international collaborations, it would also be desirable for the Alessandro Valignano International Centre to become a network hub to host Asian scholars studying the history of Jesuit missions and Christianity in Asia. In spite of the longstanding tradition of this field of study in Japan, linguistic barriers have up to now hindered the diffusion of this research among a western audience. Young Asian researchers would be able to count on the support and expertise made available by the Centre while conducting research in Italian archives and libraries. Among the other objectives of this institution is to assemble a library with a large collection of works on Valignano and on the history of the missions in Asia and we would hope that in the future Japanese scholars, who more than once during their recent research tours of the Italian archives have stopped over in Chieti to see the Valignano bust in the city hall square, will decide to extend their stay in order to carry on research at the Centre.

Claudio Caniglia is currently visiting researcher at the SOAS Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions. He holds a PhD from the University of Rome “La Sapienza” and his research investigates Shugendō practices, focusing particularly on the period of formation and organization of the ritual ascent during Kamakura and Muromachi periods. He is also Associate researcher at the Italian School of East Asian Studies in Kyoto, and member of the Association for the Study of Japanese Mountain Religion.
Publications


Reviewed by Taka Oshikiri

*Girei to kenryoku: Tennō no Meiji ishin* is an examination of the relationship between power and ritual performances in late nineteenth century Japan. In this book, John Breen explores the significance of ritual performances conducted both by the emperors and by shrines in the construction of the modern nation state.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part examines the way in which the imperial institution seized power through the politics of two emperors, Kōmei and Meiji. The second part explores the formation of religious institutions during the Meiji era. In this book, Breen suggests that the modern development of both the imperial authority and Shinto institutions was intertwined, as they were mutually supportive. In other words, Shinto and its related ritual performances served to create the myth of an unbroken line of emperors, which was one of the central ideologies in building the modern nation state after the Meiji Restoration. In turn, the imperial institution gave authority to the Shinto institutions. By reading how the Kōmei and Meiji Emperors’ bodies were displayed in ritual performances and in diplomacy, Breen emphasises the importance of the emperors’ presence in the political theatre during the Meiji Restoration and the reformation period that followed.

Chapter One explores the significance of the visit of the Shogun, Tokugawa Iemochi, to Kyoto in 1863. Breen suggests that the centre of politics was relocated from the Tokugawa to the court through a series of imperial audiences to establish a new regime, for which he coins the term, Kōmei seiken (Kōmei regime). Although the Kōmei regime was transitional and did not last long, Breen argues that it marked the end of Tokugawa rule, which had lasted for over 260 years.

Chapter Two examines Gokajō no goseimon (the Charter Oath). The Oath has been studied as a text and a number of scholars have examined and analysed its content. Their works emphasise its long-lasting influence on the development of political thought and practice in modern Japan, especially in the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement. However, Breen suggests that the Oath could be read as a performance, and given certain conditions, a performance becomes a ritual. Consecutively, hierarchies are created by these rituals. As such, the Oath functioned as a device to construct hierarchies in the monarchy after the imperial power had been restored. By analysing the space in which the ceremony of promulgation of the Oath took place, Breen analyses the power relationships represented in such ritual and suggests that the imperial oath is a clear example of the construction of ritual symbols. Within this ceremonial space, he argues, the myth of an unbroken line of emperors was established.

Chapter Three discusses the role of the body of the Meiji Emperor in diplomacy. The visual representation of the Meiji Emperor, such as a portrait, enabled his body to be the object of gift exchange between the European monarchs. Breen argues that the Meiji Emperor was not in a place to make any decision; however, he was not a powerless figure in diplomatic relations. By dressing himself in a decorated Western military uniform, and having physical contact with the Western delegations, such as shaking hands with the former president of the United States for example, the Emperor presented his body as representative of the ‘modernised’ and ‘civilised’ monarchy. Breen concludes that by ‘modernising’ his body, the Meiji Emperor was playing a significant diplomatic role, appealing to its western allies that Japan was ‘civilised’ state. This was one of the fundamental conditions in revising the unequal treaties, which the previous regime had negotiated with the great Western powers.

Chapters Four, Five and Six explore the development of religious institutions under the Meiji regime. Chapter Four discusses the Meiji regime’s policy towards religion and re-examines the view held by Western scholars on the role of Shinto at the end of the Tokugawa period and in the early Meiji period. Earlier works by Western scholars, as Breen points out, suggest that the rise of State Shinto broke the continuity of Japanese cultural and religious history by destroying Buddhist practices and institutions. However, Breen points out that with the exception of the very early Meiji period, the Meiji regime did not intend to destroy Buddhist practices or its institutions. Instead, as he suggests, the regime had intended to establish a new Buddhism by separating it from Shinto and enclosing it in a private space. While the new Buddhism became a private practice, the new Shinto formed official networks of priests, institutions and ritual performances, all of which were acknowledged by the state and assigned to perform rituals for the state.
Chapter Five discusses the thought of Ōkuni Takamasa. In this chapter, Breen emphasises the importance of Ōkuni’s writings, arguing that they represent an intellectual trend in this period. By studying Ōkuni’s writings, Breen argues, the study of Kokugaku Shintō and the intellectual history of the Meiji Restoration period can be bridged.

According to Breen, Ōkuni objected in his early work to the introduction of Christianity because it was ethically incompatible with the Japanese nation. However, as Breen points out, by the time of the Meiji Restoration, Ōkuni changed his position and accepted Christianity at the theological level. Breen suggests that the way in which Ōkuni Takamasa wrote about the relationships between Shinto, Christianity, and the arrival of the Westerners shows that State Shintō did not deny all religions and religious practices other than Shintō.

Chapter Six examines the Sannō Festival of the Hie Shrine in Shiga prefecture. In this chapter, he explores the origins of the festival and argues that even though the Sannō Festival looks as if it has an ancient origin, its roots can in fact only be traced back to the early modern period. In addition, in the appendix, Breen discusses the significance of the relationships between the Yasukuni Shrine and the Imperial authority in contemporary Japan.

Girei to kenyoku is a vibrant discussion of ritual and power, and the entwined relationships between the imperial institution, religious practice and modern state building. Breen’s methodology brilliantly analyses texts and the space in which the rituals were performed, and then situates them in a broad cultural, ritual and political context. By so doing, Breen suggests a certain continuum between pre-modern and modern Japan in terms of cultural practices, and he questions the traditional view that sees a break between before and after the Meiji Restoration. This book should be read not only by those who are interested in the history of Japanese religion and imperial authority but also by those who work on the cultural history of modern Japan.

**Publications**


Reviewed by Rada Leca

This is a book about classification. It is as much about how Japanese Buddhism classified sacred objects (in this case danzō – sandalwood sculptures), as it is about the categories with which modern researchers operate. For the former, Boehm proposes a comprehensive approach, which includes material, form and religious function. When discussing the material, for example, Boehm convincingly argues for the inclusion of sculptures from substitute woods such as kaya or hinoki into the category of danzō, quoting scriptural sources that allow the use of substitutes.

Crucial for the understanding of the concept of danzō is the ensuing discussion of danjiki – the application of sandalwood colour on either sandalwood or substitute materials, in order to replicate the intense reddish colour of the fragrant core of the sandalwood tree. According to Boehm, ‘the application of danjiki on plain-wood sculptures was a means to bestow some of the sanctity and efficacy associated with danzō on plain-wood sculptures in the same way as the use of the term danzō in temple records was an attempt to imbue plain-wood sculptures with some of the special sacredness of danzō’ (p. 101). It becomes clear that the spiritual idea of sandalwood was at least as important as the actual material. Boehm shows that this idea led to the use of danzō in high-profile Buddhist ceremonies by the highest members of the clergy and aristocracy.

To my mind, this discussion of religious function is the most interesting aspect of the study. Despite the scarcity of sources (which are covered exhaustively), I would be tempted to apply agency theory, or think of ‘performative’ sculpture. Perhaps more wisely, Boehm chooses instead to focus on the discussion of form, covering the physical characteristics of the sculptures in minute detail. You will know a lot about these objects. There are traces of art dealer talk: ‘the richness of decorative detail, considering the small size of the shrines, seems almost beyond human capabilities’ (p.138). If this phrasing is supposed to capture the believer’s feeling, then it needs further elaboration.

But this is where the art historian can bring the most insight: these careful descriptions are aimed at substantiating the argument that the formal concept of danzō was not limited to a type-style, but also included the period-style. In other words, requisitioning Donald Wood, ‘artistically these pieces changed with the style of the times, while technically the special features of wood sculptures that are manifest within them remain relatively constant’ (p. 15). This in turn allows Boehm to argue for the art historical value of danzō up to the fourteenth century. This is
a departure from previous research which had considered danzō only from the point of view of the type-style exemplified by early danzō of continental origin, dismissing those made after the early Heian period.

In the introduction, Boehm argued that ‘Buddhist sculptures, although visually compelling, cannot merely be studied in aesthetic terms, since the original reason for their creation was to serve a religious function as icons for veneration and rituals’. However, Boehm does insist on one aesthetic concept, shōgon (sublime adornment), a conspicuous display of skill, close to the concept of kazari. In the case of danzō, shōgon is manifested in the intricate carving and, after the middle of the Heian period, in the use of the kirikane technique of inlaying strips of gold foil into the wood.

While on the subject of adornment, the presentation of the book does justice to the value of the material. Full-page lavish colour illustrations, tens of pages of them, are inserted between the text of the introduction and the first chapter. I almost wished they wouldn’t stop. They bring readers of all levels to the original wonder of contemplating and worshipping these statues. This is (or should be) also the starting point of the art historian, although this joy is often muffled with text. We are also reminded of the author’s profession as an art dealer, and can reconstruct his joy and familiarity in handling these objects. In other words, the excitement of visual experience is where historians of religion, art dealers and art historians converge. What differs is their means of accounting for this joy.

Returning to the issue of categories, although this is a book about Japanese Buddhist art, it becomes obvious that these sandalwood sculptures belong to an East Asian tradition. A number of examples discussed are from the Tang, Northern Song and Qi dynasties, and some are in Korean temples. This study will thus also be of interest to historians of East Asian Buddhism up to the eleventh century. They will be enabled to provide a more detailed and overarching discussion of this sculptural tradition, something which Japanese scholarship (on which most of Boehm’s study is based) has not yet done.

It is true that the Japanese adaptations are fascinating. For example, large numbers of Aizen Myōō amulets (goshibyōzō), discussed on p. 166, were supposed to have been made, but very few survive. Might they have been cremated with the owner? However tentative the question, it is an example of the kind of research questions which this study will encourage specialist readers to make. Therefore, this thoroughly researched and engaging book is a path-opener for a new approach to the study of Japanese Buddhist sculpture. It also has the great potential of enabling a comprehensive study of interactions within the East Asian cultural sphere.

New Publication


Presenting a study of politics at grassroots level among young Japanese, this book examines the alliance between the religious movement Soka Gakkai (the ‘Value-creation Society’) and Komeito (the ‘Clean Government Party’), which shared power with the Liberal Democratic Party from 1999 to 2009 (and again in government as of December 2012). Drawing on primary research carried out among Komeito supporters, the book focuses on the lives of supporters and voters in order to better understand the processes of democracy. It goes on to discuss what the political behaviour of young Komeito supporters tell us about the role of religious organizations, such as Soka Gakkai, in Japanese politics. Unlike most other books on politics in Japan which tend to concentrate on political elites, this book provides extremely valuable insights into political culture at the grassroots level.