HRHS-8450 Topics in Japanese Religions
Spring 2012

Japanese Religious Landscape

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NOTE: This online class will be taught using voice-to-voice discussion sessions (via Skype) each week, either with the class as a whole or individually, as necessary. Students should get a Skype account, if they do not already have one, and should contact the instructor by email as soon as possible to set up an initial Skype meeting.

Course Overview
This course explores Japanese Buddhism and kami worship (Shinto) through the theoretical lens of landscape. Topics will include: the influence of geography (islands, mountains, plains, oceans) on the conceptions of kami (gods) in early Japan; ideas about landscape and space in Japanese Buddhism; how Buddhist doctrine is “taught” through landscape art; the practical and theoretical roles of temple and shrine architecture, grounds, and gardens; pilgrimage as movement through religious space/landscape; and the continuity/discontinuity of religious practice in the modern landscape.

Student Learning Objectives
• Students will become aware of the issues involved in the category of landscape, including politics, economics and social change.
• Students will consider how categories such as “landscape,” “nature,” and even “religion” may or may not apply to Japan, and will learn about Japanese categories for defining land, geography, sacred sites, and religious traditions.
• Students will understand how pilgrimage in Japan has changed over the course of history.
• Students will understand how temples and gardens function within private and public landscapes.
• Students will be able to state the importance of the Meiji period in the complete transformation of modern Japan and its religious landscape.

Required Texts
Sarah Thal, Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573–1912

All other readings will be given to students through the online application Dropbox.

Written Assignment
Students will write one 10–12 page paper on any topic related to the course. The topic should be chosen in consultation with the instructor. The paper will be due by May 25.

**Grading**

Class participation: 60%

Paper: 40%
Syllabus

Part I. Concepts and Misconceptions

Week 1 (Week of Jan 30)
Introductions:
Japanese Religions, Japanese Landscapes

Defining Buddhism, Shinto, and Shugendo; considering landscape, art, and nature.

Week 2 (Week of Feb 6)
Buddhism, “Shinto,” and Shugendo

- Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*
  Introduction, 1–10.
  Ch. 1 Konpira: Site of the Gods, 11–37.

Week 3 (Week of Feb 13)
Defining Landscape and Sacred Space

Part II. Landscape and Religion in Early and Medieval Japan

Week 4 (Week of Feb 20)
Early Conceptions of Landscape:
Life and Death, Kami and Buddhas


See also:
Michiko Aoki, *Records of Wind and Earth: A Translation of Fudoki with Introduction and Commentaries* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1997), especially the introduction and the *Hitachi no Kuni Fudoki* and *Harima no Kuni Fudoki*.

Week 5 (Week of Feb 27)
Landscape, Gods, and Power

- Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods*
  Ch. 2 Of Gods and Rulers
  Ch. 3 Konpira, Kongōbō, and the Establishment of the Tokugawa Order

Week 6 (Week of Mar 5)
Buddhism’s Impact on Japanese Landscape:
Re-defining and Inscribing Landscape


Part III. Movement through Landscapes

Week 7 (Week of Mar 12)
Mountains and Gender


See also:

Week 8 (Week of Mar 19)
Pilgrimage and Travel in Edo-period and Modern Japan

• Thal, Ch. 8, The Reverence Association

See also:

Week 9
Spring Break, Mar 25–31

Please read Thal, Ch. 4 God of the Market, and Ch. 5 Culture of the Gods

Part IV. Art, Gardens, and Temple Spaces

Week 10 (Week of Apr 2)
Art and Gardens: Criticism of 20th Century Trends

• Shoji Yamada, Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009):
  Ch. 5 Are Rock Gardens Really Pretty?, 105–183. [Optional]
  Ch.6 Looking at the Mirror’s Reflection, 185–242.

Week 11 (Week of Apr 9)
Japanese Gardens: What Kind of Religious Landscape?

  - Ch. 1 Trees, Stones, and Landscapes in Containers, 5–48.  [Optional]
  - Ch. 2 Survey of Themes, 49–113.
- Online sources

Part V. *The Destruction and Remolding of Japanese Religious Landscape*

**Week 12 (Week of Apr 16)**

Destruction

- Thal, Ch. 6 From Kompira to Kotohira
- Optional: Thal, Ch. 7 For the State and Its Teachings

See also:

**Week 13 (Week of Apr 23)**

Shinto as Japanese “Non-Religious” Landscape

- Thal, Ch. 9 A Shrine without Religion
  - Ch. 11 Public Good, Private Gain
- Optional: Thal, Ch. 10 The Crucible of War

**Week 14 (Week of Apr 30)**

Re-Imaging the Gods: Inventing Religion and Disbelief

- Thal, Ch. 12 Remobilizing the God
  - Ch. 13 The Many Faces of Kotohira
Week 15 (Week of May 7)
Country God, City God—and Internet God?

- Thal, Epilogue: Konpira, Then and Now
- Online sources

See also:
Nicola Liscutin, “Mapping the Sacred Body: Shinto versus Popular Beliefs at Mt. Iwakе in Tsugaru,” in *Shinto in History*, 186–204.

Week 16 (Week of May 14)
Paper consultations

Papers due by May 25