

AJLS Newsletter

Association for Japanese Literary Studies

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Edited by Eiji Sekine

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The 23rd Annual Meeting

Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature

October 10-11, 2014

Western Washington University

Call for Papers

The theme of the 2014 conference is "Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature." The goal of the conference is to explore the intersections between the spiritual and artistic domains in a wide range of literary texts against the backdrop of age-specific cultural and epistemological settings. We hope to attract a diverse group of scholars of modern, pre-modern and classical literature interested in the dialectic of literature and religion, the negotiations between creativity and spiritual formation, and the artistic representation of faith, the sacred and the divine. We are generally interested in papers that examine how religious practices may shape and inform the process of literary signification and how, in turn, the act of writing, in its various forms and manifestations, can address the quintessential question of mankind's place in the universe and its relationship to the divine and the supernatural.

Possible topics include examinations of how literature may reinforce or challenge religious beliefs and eschatologi-

cal views on the questions of salvation, redemption or rebirth; how literature can contribute to shifting the boundaries of what is perceived as sin, profane, and impure; or how it can authenticate, for example, a personal process of spiritual conversion or separation.

We also welcome papers that explore how religious topoi are employed in a broad spectrum of genres and we welcome interdisciplinary approaches that address how such dichotomies as purity versus pollution, the sacred versus the profane, or the body versus mind contribute to the construction of literary texts.

This conference will provide a forum for discussions on how spiritual and religious experience have engendered literature across time and how negotiations between the spiritual and literary domains may have led to forms of coherent discourse on the divine, the universe, and the after life.

Proposals may come either from individuals or from panels. Presentations may be delivered in either English or Japanese. The deadline for panel,

roundtable, and individual paper proposals is **May 26, 2014**.

Please complete and submit your individual proposal (including an abstract of 250 words) at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AJLS2014>.

For panels and roundtables, please submit your proposal at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AJLS2014Panel>.

Please address any queries to Massimiliano Tomasi at Tomasi@wwu.edu.

The conference website is:

<http://www.wwu.edu/AJLS> and will be available by mid-April.

2013 Meeting Report

The 22nd Annual Meeting of AJLS was held October 18-19, 2013 at International House on the campus of the University of Chicago. The theme of the meeting was "Performance and Japanese Literature," and it included fifteen panels with 56 paper presenters. More than 100 proposals were submitted in response to the call for papers. In order to encourage participation by younger scholars, the organizing committee in selecting presenters aimed to achieve a balance of graduate students and non-tenured faculty together with senior scholars. More than 100 participants attended the meeting.

The event included three featured panels. "Performing Hayakawa Yoshio" focused on the conference's keynote performer and included presentations from Michael Bourdaghs (Chicago), James Dorsey (Dartmouth), and Ueno Toshiya (Wako University). "The Social Dimensions of Performance," moderated by Hoyt Long (Chicago), featured papers from Cody Poulton (University of Victoria), Jordan Sand (Georgetown), and Jonathan Zwicker (University of Michigan). The "H. Richard Okada

Memorial Panel on Critical Pedagogies" was a roundtable session moderated by Reginald Jackson (Chicago) and included Jim Fujii (UC Irvine), Christine Marran (University of Minnesota), and Steven Chung (Princeton University).

Another highlight was a public keynote performance by rock musicians Hayakawa Yoshio and Sakuma Masahide. For Hayakawa, who first won widespread attention as leader of the 1960s folk-rock band JACKS, it was his first-ever performance outside Japan. A poignant moment came midway through the concert, when Hayakawa revealed to the audience that Sakuma, one of Japan's most respected musicians and producers, had traveled to Chicago against doctor's orders after receiving a terminal cancer diagnosis a few months previously. An NHK television crew filmed the concert, and footage from the Chicago performance was included in a documentary on Sakuma broadcast nationally in Japan on NHK-General on Christmas night. Sadly, the AJLS performance turned out to be the last public concert appearance by Sakuma, who passed away in Tokyo on January 16.

The primary sponsor of the meeting was the Committee on Japan Studies of the Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago. The organizing committee would also like to thank International House and the Illinois Japan Performing Arts Network, which provided a live Internet feed of the keynote performance. A proceedings volume for the conference is in preparation and is scheduled to appear by late 2014.

AJLS Activities

Please join us or renew your membership regularly. Our publications solely depend on your membership

PAPER/PANEL PROPOSAL FORM
Religion and Spirituality
DEADLINE: MAY 26, 2014

Title (Panel or Paper):

Name (Moderator or Panelist):

Status:

Institution:

**Ad-
dress:**

Telephone: _____ **Fax:** _____

E-mail: _____

Please attach your proposal to this form and send to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AJLS2014> (individual) or <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AJLS2014Panel> (panel) or mail to: Center for East Asian Studies, WWU, 516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225-9057.

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