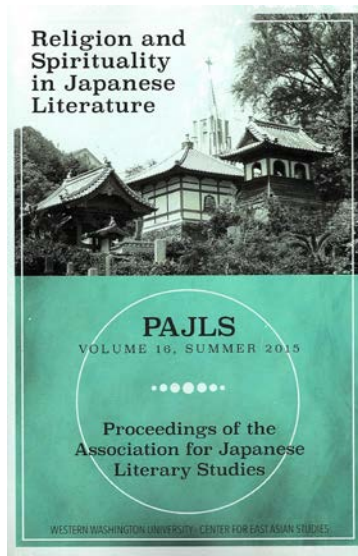


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# Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature



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**Religion and Spirituality in  
Japanese Literature**

edited by  
Massimiliano Tomasi



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## *Preface*

Massimiliano Tomasi  
Chair, 23<sup>rd</sup> AJLS Conference Organizing Committee

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of AJLS was hosted by the Center for East Asian Studies at Western Washington University on October 10-11, 2014. The theme of the conference was "Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature," a topic that had fascinated me for years. In examining this theme, the conference explored intersections between the spiritual and artistic domains in a wide range of literary texts, within the cultural and epistemological settings of different periods. I hoped to attract a diverse group of scholars of modern, pre-modern and classical literature interested in the dialectics between literature and religion, the negotiations between creativity and spiritual formation, and the artistic representation of faith, the sacred and the divine.

Scholars from across the globe submitted proposals, and thirty-four papers were selected for presentation. Every paper and panel was presented to the group as a whole, and the presence of scholars from different parts of the world, approaching topics from a variety of perspectives, enriched the content of the conference beyond expectations. Discussion was vigorous, in a warm and convivial setting.

The keynote address was given by Prof. Miyasaka Satoru, President of the *International Society for Akutagawa Ryūnosuke Studies*, and the conference also featured a roundtable discussion in which Prof. Miyasaka and Prof. Tsuboi Hideto of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies discussed the relationship between religion and art in contemporary Japanese intellectual discourse. This was moderated by Prof. Eiji Sekine of Purdue University.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of AJLS benefited from a grant from the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission and the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies, and from financial support from a number of units across Western Washington University campus, including the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Japanese program, and the Department of Modern and Classical Languages. Needless to say, it was the Center for East Asian Studies that provided the logistics and the critical financial support without which this event would not have been possible. The Center serves as a focal point for Western Washington University's interaction with East Asia, and

## *Preface*

an arena for vibrant intellectual cross-pollination from a variety of disciplines, promoting rigorous training in East Asian languages and cultural traditions. As a complement to its academic offerings and as a service to the campus and local communities, the Center also sponsors lectures, presentations and other activities related to East Asia. The Center's hosting of the annual meeting of AJLS, and publication of the proceedings by its East Asian Studies Press, are an attestation of the Center's commitment to support East Asian Studies at Western and desire to leave an easily accessible record of the cutting-edge scholarship presented during the conference. As the Director of the Center, I am grateful for the opportunity to add my own piece to the eighteen articles that are included in this volume.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. Eiji Sekine for his assistance and encouragement at various stages of the project, and to Stephanie Wanne, the East Asian Studies Program Manager, and Prof. Scott Pearce, the Managing Editor of the Press, for their invaluable help in organizing the meeting and preparing the proceedings.

Religion and Spirituality in  
Japanese Literature

