

Institute for Japanese Studies Lecture Series

# An Introduction to Shinto and Gagaku: Japan's Traditional Religion and Music

Moriyasu Ito, Atsuki Katayama, Takanaga Tsutsumi  
Meiji Jingu Shrine (Tokyo, Japan)

Monday, September 24, 2018

Lecture & Performance 5:15-7:00pm

Doors Open at 5:00pm

Jennings Hall 001 (1735 Neil Ave.)



Many in contemporary Japan enjoy the occasions of Halloween and Christmas while the patterns of their daily life honor the traditions of Buddhism and Shintoism. Indeed, Japan is best known to the rest of the world for its Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, especially in the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara, together with cultural legacies such as Zen practices, gardens and other forms of art. Today's presentation will focus on Shinto and *gagaku* music that goes with Shinto ceremonies.

Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion that long predates the arrival of Buddhism in the sixth century via China and Korea. To this day, a vast majority of Japanese people visit Shinto shrines on seasonal and auspicious occasions throughout the year. Unlike most organized religions, however, Shinto has no original founder, no formal doctrines, and no holy scriptures. One of the best ways to learn about Shinto is to attend a presentation, and to experience some aspects of it first-hand, by those who practice it. For today's presentation, three priests from Meiji Jingu, one of the best known shrines to both Japanese and foreigners, will discuss the relationship among Shinto, nature, and the way of Japanese life. They will also perform *gagaku*, Japan's traditional music, which can transport the audience in the echo of time and space from the ancient to the present. Three wind instruments – *sho* (harmonica), *hichiriki* (piccolo), and *fuye* (flute) that form part of a larger *gagaku* orchestra – will be featured. Following their short recital, they will provide a hands-on workshop allowing members of the audience to try these three instruments.

**Moriyasu Ito** graduated with a Bachelor of Law from Kyoto University. He joined the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993 and studied at Trent University in Canada. He was then posted to Karachi, Pakistan as a cultural attaché and vice consul for three years before returning to Tokyo in 1999. He left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003 and joined Meiji Jingu. He became a Shinto priest after studying at Kokugakuin University. He is a Chief of the International Relations Division at Meiji Jingu Intercultural Research Institute. He plays *sho* (a wind instrument resembling panpipes).

**Atsuki Katayama** entered Meiji Jingu upon graduation from Kokugakuin University in 2003. He became a Shinto priest in 2008 and currently belongs to the Ritual Division of Meiji Jingu. He plays *ryuteki* (a dragon flute). He comes from a family that serves Hitomaru Jinja in Yamaguchi Prefecture, a Shinto shrine dedicated to the spirit of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, a highly revered ancient poet (A.D. 660-724).

**Takanaga Tsutsumi** studied law at Tokai University, and entered Kokugakuin University to take one year of an intensive curriculum to earn the qualification to be a Shinto priest. He has been at Meiji Jingu for three years as a priest in training. He plays *hichiriki* (a small double-reed wind instrument). He comes from a family that has a close association with Kumano Hongu Taisha (a grand Shinto shrine) in Wakayama prefecture.

This event is hosted by the OSU Institute for Japanese Studies and OSU Libraries. Meiji Jingu has supported the US and Canadian tour of the three speakers.

Free and Open to the Public.

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