

Escaping 'Japan': integration, dissidence and location

Chair: Blai Guarne, Paul Hansen

Since the publication of Émile Durkheim's *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, religion has frequently been presented in social scientific discourse as a central component to understand a given society. Religion is formulated most often in social terms, such as in Durkheim's notion of 'collective representation' or in the definition of ritual as 'total social fact' by his disciple Marcel Mauss. In these terms, religion and ritual are seen as central notions to the social construction of community and identity. Reviewing the idea of social construction through ethnographic analysis, this panel will explore the experiences of integration and dissidence in the spheres of personal belonging, collective identity, and political interaction. The goal of the panel is to consider critically the discourses and practices that configure, develop and signify social experience of continuity and rupture in contemporary Japan.

Outsider, Insider, Lo-sider, No-sider: Religion and Belonging on a Hokkaido Dairy Farm.
Paul Hansen, Japan's National Museum of Ethnology

Both Hokkaido and dairy farms are treated as peripheral in the context of Japan; locations and livelihoods on the fringe of a popularly imagined Japan. In the Durkheimian or Marxian tradition religion is seen as an essential tie that binds 'a people' together or pulls them apart; joining them in collective effervescence, dulling or alienating them as a metaphoric opiate. Based on fieldwork carried out in an industrial dairy farm in the Tokachi region of Hokkaido, this paper outlines how change, otherness and the search for security are central in the construction of religious interests and actions of young dairy farmers; individuals who loosely fit into categories of outsider, insider, lo-sider, and no-sider, related to their shifting positions on the dairy and in the broader community. Through explanation and analysis of religious practices I question if applying macro social concepts is appropriate for understanding religious identities, rites, or rituals in ethnographic research contexts.

Religion as a Bureaucratic System: Managing Problematic Sentiment in Li Ying's Yasukuni
Daniel White, Rice University

Classic thinkers of the social theorized religion in terms of emotion and sentiment: for Durkheim such sentiment was indispensable to society; for Marx it was its enemy; and for Freud its neurosis. Nation states too have their theories of religion, and at least since *Aum Shinrikyō's* sarin gas attacks on Tokyo's subways in 1995, religious sentiment has been made into what John Dewey called a "public problem." This paper analyzes the administrative management practices of one of Japan's most emotionally volatile public problems: Yasukuni Shrine. Based on fieldwork with cultural administrators, this paper analyzes the problems surrounding the national funding and troubled release of the documentary film *Yasukuni*, by Chinese filmmaker Li Ying. The paper analyzes how religion emerges not as a necessary component of collective life but as a problem for a modern, highly rationalized national bureaucracy.

Growing Good Citizens: Functionalism and the Role of Religion in the Early Anthropology of Japan

Elizabeth Marks, Rice University

Early anthropological writing on Japan employed a Durkheimian (functionalist) model in attempting to classify the character of the Japanese nation as one monolithic whole. This argument looked to the ways children were raised in Japan as a means to explain the 'Japanese character', using the Durkheimian assumption that society imprints itself upon the individual before *he* is mature (and thus, that we can only truly understand a culture by assessing what is taught to children). Where religion enters the picture is a topic considered by most early anthropologies of Japan. Religion, according to some of these authors, is understood largely as synecdochical for the empty symbolism of an obligation-oriented Japanese culture. In this paper, I explore the early anthropological interpretations of Japanese culture in terms of religion's (perceived) relationship to child rearing and contribution to an American interpretation of Japanese character.

Yakiimo no jikan desu yo (It's yakiimo time!): Difference and Estrangement in Tokyo's Suburbia
Blai Guarne, Stanford University / Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Department of Anthropology

Through a narrative approach and revisiting the Durkheimian conception of 'society', the paper focuses on the ethnographic analysis of the experience of difference in urban Japan. Every afternoon during the cold months, the *yakiimo* ('baked sweet potatoes') vendor's van drives through Tokyo's Inokashira Park. As an advertising strategy, he plays over loudspeakers a song by the famous Cuban duo *Los Compadres* (1976) about sweet potato street vendors. The song tells about the surprise felt when hearing the voice of the *yakiimo* vendor around the city, just like the Cuban peanut vendors in their home country. The story of that moment mingles with the real vendor's voice announcing his arrival in the area. Japanese with Caribbean accent, Cuban rhythms, and the Spanish lyrics of the song fashion a comic and nostalgic spectacle that embodies the experience of difference in Tokyo's suburbia. The paper aims to articulate an open reflection on personal experiences of difference and estrangement in the Japanese social landscape.

Discussant: Professor Dolores Martinez, University of London's SOAS