

EARLY & MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Aesthetics and Politics

EAST 363; Tuesday & Thursday 1:05-2:25; Education Building 624

Instructor: Thomas LAMARRE

Office Hours: M 9-13 @ 688 Sherbrooke 274, or by appointment

Objectives: This course offers an introduction to the court cultures of ‘early Japan’ of the Nara and Heian periods, roughly from the 8th to 12th centuries, also referred to as ‘classical Japanese culture.’ The goal is to give students a general sense of the diversity of political institutions (emperor systems related to Confucian and Daoist formations), religious practices (varieties of Buddhism, Shintō, onmyōdō), and cultural forms. Cultural forms will include architecture, song, painting, calligraphy, and various forms of written expression (poetry, narrative, diaries). Methodologically speaking, politics and aesthetics have usually been treated separately in this historical context, but this course will focus on more recent approaches that strive to explore the interconnections between aesthetics and politics.

Methodology: What makes early Japan interesting is that many of our modern social distinctions and political assumptions do not hold. Indeed, to borrow Lowenthal’s phrase, this “past is a foreign country.” Yet the bulk of our accounts of early Japanese societies strive to make them appear to be modern, or to anticipate the modern, that is, to serve as sources of identity for the modern Japanese nation. What makes the study of early Japan challenging, then, is that we cannot separate it from the history of its interpretation. Simply put, we must always adopt a ‘dual optic.’ To this end, each unit will begin with discussion of how a particular political and aesthetic formation in early Japan has been framed in the early modern (Tokugawa or Edo) or modern (Meiji) era. We will then turn to primary texts and materials in translation and explore different interpretations of them. In lectures, other aspects of early Japanese societies will be introduced — urban design, architecture, forms of art, and material culture. But students are expected to read the materials prior to class, and to formulate questions about them.

Course Materials:

Depending on student numbers and interests, a course packet will be made available, or links to the library sources will be posted on my website.

Evaluation:

Participation: 20%. Note that participation includes attendance.

Quizzes: 20% x 4. Quiz 1 will concern dates, geography, and background information.

Quizzes 2 and 3 will be multiple choice and short essay responses. Quiz 4 will be an essay of roughly five pages. Details will be given in class.

McGill requires that the following two statements be included in course outlines:

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).”

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”

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Reading Schedule

INTRODUCTION

- Sept 6 Introduction
- Sept 8 —Karl F. Friday, “Sorting the Past,” in *Japan Emerging*, 16-20.
—Joan R. Piggot, “Defining ‘Ancient’ and ‘Classical,’” in *Japan Emerging*, 21-31.
—Gina Barnes, “The Emergence of Political Rulership and the State in Early Japan,” in *Japan Emerging*, 77-88.
—Bruce Batten, “Early Japan and the Continent,” in *Japan Emerging*, 89-97.
- Sept 13 —Amino Yoshihiko, “The Maritime View of the Japanese Archipelago,” from *Rethinking Japanese History*, 31-64.
—Kenneth Dean and Brian Massumi, “The Elimination of Strength,” from *First & Last Emperors*, 1-54 (online version)

KOJIKI: SPEECH ACTS

- Sept 15 —Susan Burns, “The Politics of Philology in Japan,” in *World Philology*, 245-263
—Ō no Yasumaro, “Preface,” *Kojiki*, trans. Gustav Heldt, 1-5.
—Ō no Yasumaro, “Preface,” *Kojiki*, trans. Donald L. Philippi, 37-44.
Recommended:
—Roy Andrew Miller, “The Search for Origins,” from *The Origins of the Japanese Language*, 3-32.

QUIZ 1

- Sept 20 —Ō no Yasumaro, “Book One,” *Kojiki*, trans. Gustav Heldt, 7-60.
—Isomae Jun'ichi, “Reappropriating the Japanese Myths: Motoori Norinaga and the Creation Myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27: 1/2 (Spring, 2000): 15-39.
- Sept 22 —Klaus Antoni, “Izumo as the ‘Other’ Japan: Construction versus Reality,” *Japanese Religions* 30: 1/2 (2005): 1-20.
—Ōbayashi Taryō, “Japanese Myths of Descent from Heaven and Their Korean Parallels,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 43: 2 (1984), 171-184.
- Sept 27 —Rodger K. Thomas, “A Land Blessed by Word Spirit”: Kamochi Masazumi and Early Modern Constructs of *Kotodama*,” *Early Modern Japan* (2012): 1-29.
—Judith Butler, “Burning Acts, Injurious Speech,” *The University of Chicago Law School Roundtable*: 3: 1 (1996): 199-221.

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MAN'YŌSHŪ: THE PROPENSITY OF WORDS

- Sept 29 —Shinada Yoshikazu, “*Man'yōshū: The Invention of a National Poetry Anthology*,” in *Inventing the Classics* (2000), 31-50.
—Torquil Duthie, “Yamato as Empire in the Sinoscript Sphere,” *Man'yōshū and the Imperial Imagination of Japan* (Brill, 2014), 15-56.
- Oct 4 *The Ten Thousand Leaves (Man'yōshū)*, Book 1, trans. Ian Hideo Levy, 37-78.
- Oct 6 —Gary Ebersole, “Ritual Poetry and the Court,” in *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton, 1989), 17-77.
—Kenneth Dean and Thomas Lamarre, “Microsociology and the Ritual Event,” in *Deleuzian Encounters* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 181-194.
- Oct 11 —David Bialock, “Hidden Texts” and “The Yin-Yang of Power,” in *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories* (Stanford, 2007), 1-32, 33-64.
—François Jullien, “Positioning as a Determining Factor in Politics,” *The Propensity of Things* (MIT 1995), 39-57.

KŪKAI AND RITUAL STATES

- Oct 13 —Robert Sharf, “The Zen of Japanese Nationalism,” *History of Religions* 33.1 (1993): 1-43.
—Mikael Adolphson, “Monastic Developments in the Heian Age,” from *The Gates of Power* (Hawaii, 2000), 21-74.

QUIZ 2

- Oct 18 —Kūkai, “The Difference between Esoteric and Exoteric Buddhism,” “On Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence,” and “The Meaning of Sound, Word, and Reality,” in *Major Works*, trans. Yoshito Hakeda (Columbia, 1972), 151-56; 225-233; 234-245.
- Oct 20 —Abe Ryūichi, “Introduction” and “Semiology of the Dharma,” from *The Weaving of Mantra* (Columbia, 1999), 1-17; 275-304.
—Robert Sharf, “Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism,” *Living images* (Stanford, 2001): 151-197
- Oct 25 —Allan G. Grappard, “The Economics of Ritual Power,” in *Shinto in History* (Routledge, 2013), 68-94.
—David Graeber, “On the Moral Grounds of Economic Relations: A Maussian approach,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 14.1 (2014): 65-77.

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KOKINSHŪ: THE ORDER OF THE SENSES

- Oct 27 —Mark Morris, “Waka and Form, Waka and History,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46.2 (1986): 551-610.
—Gustav Heldt, “Introduction,” from *The Pursuit of Harmony* (Cornell East Asian Series 2008), 1-28.
- Nov 1 —“Mana Preface to the *Kokinshū*” and “Kana Preface to the *Kokinshū*,” trans. Gustav Heldt, in *The Pursuit of Harmony*, 325-335.
—“Kana Preface,” trans. Laurel Rasplica Rodd,
—*Kokinshū*, Books 1: 49-68.
- Nov 3 —*Kokinshū*, Books 11: 183-207
—Thomas Lamarre, “Kana Inscription and Stylistic Differentiation,” and “Heian Calligraphy,” from *Uncovering Heian Japan* (Duke 2000), 26-49; 93-115.
- Nov 8 —Konishi Jin’ichi, “Association and Progression: Principles of Integration in Anthologies and Sequences of Japanese Court Poetry, A. D. 900-1350,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 21 (1958), 67-127.

MONOGATARI: DIVAGATIONS OF FORCE

- Nov 10 —Tomiko Yoda, “Gender and the Emergence of National Literature,” *Gender and National Literature* (Duke 2004), 41-80.
—Ivo Smits, “The Way of the Literati,” in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries* (Hawaii 2007), 105-128.

QUIZ 3

- Nov 15 —*Tales of Ise* (excerpts), trans. Helen McCullough, in *Classical Japanese Prose* (Stanford), 38-69.
—Richard Bowring, “The *Ise monogatari*: A Short Cultural History,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52:2 (1992): 401-480.
- Nov 17 —*Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* (*Taketori monogatari*), trans. Donald Keene, *Monumenta Nipponica* 11: 4 (1956): 329-355
—Michele Marra, “A Counterideological Discourse,” from *The Aesthetics of Discontent* (Hawaii 1991), 14-34.
—Jonathan Stockdale, “The Radiance of Exile,” *Imagining Exile in Heian Japan* 43-62.

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- Nov 22 —Murasaki Shikibu, “Kiritsubo” and “Suma,” from *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Dennis Washburn (W. W. Norton, 2015), 3-21; 255-287.
- Nov 24 —Inoue Eimei, “The Truth in Patterns of Oral Tradition”
—G. Camerson Hurst III, “*Kugyō* and *Zuryō*,” in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, 66-101.
- Nov 29 —Murasaki Shikibu, “E-awase,” from *The Tale of Genji*, 360-372.
—Peter Nickerson, “The Meaning of Matrilocality: Kinship, Property, and Politics in Mid-Heian,” *Monumenta Nipponica* (1993): 429-467.
- Dec 1 —Thomas Keirstead, “Gardens and Estates: Medievality and Space,” *positions* 1.2 (1993): 289-320.
- Dec 5 QUIZ 4 DUE