

INOUE Nobutaka

Foreword

THE Japanese Association for Religious Studies was established in 1930. With around two thousand members, it is Japan's oldest and largest association bringing together scholars who are engaged in religious studies. Members approach their studies from a wide variety of perspectives, with research methodologies that include comparative studies of religion, sociological and psychological analyses, and historical and cultural anthropological approaches, among others. The objects of their studies likewise range broadly in both temporal and geographical terms, from ancient epochs to the contemporary age, with explorations of phenomena throughout the world.

Articles, essays, and other papers by association members appear in the quarterly *Journal of Religious Studies* (*Shūkyō kenkyū*), with one issue dedicated to the proceedings of the association's Annual Convention. We have also created an online system whereby past articles scanned or saved to PDF format can be read on demand.

A large amount of research written in Japanese has seen the light of day through these various media. However, in recent years some members have also expressed an interest in seeing their work presented in English so that foreign scholars not proficient in Japanese can more easily learn about the current state of Japanese religious studies. Although some members have already published their articles in foreign journals in various languages, the association has come to believe that publishing the work of its members in English is important. A committee was formed more than a year ago to respond to this need, and the

result of the views expressed in those discussions is the English-language digital journal you are now reading.

We are now in the age of digital publication, which has made it quite easy to publicize scholarly research. One of the most useful aspects of publishing in this manner is that scholars throughout the world are now able to easily get access to articles published this way. By publishing in English—which today functions as the *de facto* international language—we hope that foreign scholars will find it easier to more frequently approach religious studies in Japan.

We intend to continue publishing articles so as to shed light on what religious phenomena and research methodologies are the foci of present-day studies in Japan. As we continue our project, we expect to take our efforts in a more bilateral direction in the future and present works from scholars overseas aimed at an audience of their Japanese colleagues.

It is our hope that this journal serves to extend and deepen communications among scholars around the world.

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