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# KYOTO LECTURES

Monday, February 27th, 18:00h

Chiara Ghidini SPEAKER

## The Archaic in the Modern Orikuchi Shinobu on Man'yō Japan and the Ryukyus

This talk aims to investigate how writer, poet and folklorist Orikuchi Shinobu (1887-1953) attempted on re-enacting antiquity (*kodai*) in early 20th-century Japan, both through essays and fiction. Also, it will emphasise the social and cultural orientations of his time and shed light on his (un?)scholarly approach, in between mysticism and anthropology, to use the definition historian Momigliano applied to Swiss jurist and philologist Johann Jakob Bachofen, whose works Orikuchi probably gained access to through his readings of James Frazer and Okinawan researcher Sakima Kōei.

In crafting his vision of Japanese antiquity, Orikuchi was inspired by theories related to the search for ancestral origins, the need to preserve and revive oral transmission, and the crucial role supposedly played by women in the ritual "everyday life" of a remote, almost mythical, past. Lamenting the lack of belief in contemporary Japan, he located the site where the "cultural principles" of such an envisioned *kodai* were still being reproduced and perpetuated in the Ryukyus, by then formally annexed to Japan and mostly included within Okinawa Prefecture.

**Chiara Ghidini** is Lecturer in East Asian Religions at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge. Her dissertation dealt with Orikuchi Shinobu's *Book of the Dead* and the (re-)construction of antiquity in modern Japan. She is presently working on the *Ryūkyū Shintō ki*, recorded by the Pure Land Buddhist priest Taichū shōnin (1552-1639) at the request of court officials. She is also involved in an interdisciplinary research project aimed to produce a cultural history of mental illness in Taiwan.

**This lecture will be held at the Institute for Research in Humanities (IRH), Kyoto University (seminar room 1, 1st floor).**

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