



Scuola Italiana di Studi
sull'Asia Orientale
ISEAS



École Française
d'Extrême-Orient
EFEF

CO-HOSTED BY



International
Research Center (IRH)
Kyoto University



2010 KYOTO LECTURES

Thursday, December 16th, 18:00h

Erica Baffelli SPEAKER

Can the Internet make religion? Japanese "New Religions" online

The analysis of the socio-historical context of Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in relation to the terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway by members of Aum Shinrikyō in 1995, demonstrates the vital importance of understanding the processes by which religious groups produce meanings through the media. Indeed, the media can be incorporated into religion (i.e. the use of media devices during rituals), and religious experience can even be totally mediated through them (i.e., a leader communicating to members only through videos or, more recently, the increasing use of online rituals). In particular, the development of the so-called new media has apparently amplified the possibilities for religious groups not only to inform others about themselves, but also to create wholly novel forms of religious practice and interaction between leaders and members. This lecture will focus on the use of the Internet by so-called Japanese New Religions. More specifically, it will dwell on the shift from official websites to what has been deemed "Web 2.0"—in particular, social networking services and video sharing websites.

Erica Baffelli is Lecturer in Asian Religions at the University of Otago (New Zealand). Both her doctoral research (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, 2005) and her post-doctoral research project as a Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS, 2005-2007) investigated the relationship between the media and the 'image construction' of Japanese New Religions. Her research interests lie primarily in the groups' self-presentation, both online and offline, and in the interaction between religion and popular cultures. She is the co-editor (with Ian Reader and Birgit Staemmler) of *Japanese Religions on the Internet: Innovation, Representation, and Authority* (Routledge, forthcoming 2010), and she is currently working on a monograph discussing media and religion in 1980s and 1990s Japan.

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

Italian School of East Asian Studies (ISEAS)

École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEF)

4th Floor, 4 Yoshida Ushinomiya-cho, Sakyo-ku Kyoto, 606-8302 Japan

ISEAS | T: 075-751-8132 F: 075-751-8221 E: iseas@iseas-kyoto.org

EFEF | T: 075-761-3946 F: 075-761-3947 E: efeo.kyoto@gmail.com

