

International Shinto Foundation Endowed Chair in Shinto Studies

Japanese Religions Lectures



PROFESSOR

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Have I Attained Buddhahood?

Mountain Asceticism in Contemporary Japan

Shugendō is a combinatory religious tradition in Japan centered on mountain ascetic practice that dates back to the middle ages. Despite doctrinal claims that Shugendō will result in “becoming a buddha in the present body” (*sokushin jōbutsu*), almost no modern practitioner expects to attain this supreme goal. Yet, as a senior practitioner of Shugendō and a researcher, I would argue that in the mountain practice, a participant does have a distinctive and extraordinary experience. This lecture aims at discussing the mechanisms by which participants gain a profound sense of accomplishment based on my ethnographical research. It will emphasize three points: 1) the importance of the theme of the purification of six sense organs to be realized physically or sensorially, 2) the crucial effects of sound and voice in the ritual process, 3) the performative power brought about by blurring the boundaries of ordinary dualisms such as life and death, human beings and divinities, male and female, and so on.

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