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2016 KYOTO LECTURES

Tuesday, January 26th, 18:00h

Carina Roth SPEAKER

Reflections on the Ascetic Practice at the Flute Cave of Mount Ōmine

The "Flute Cave", Shō no Iwaya 笙岩屋, is one of the oldest sites for Shugendō practice. As early as the 11th century, there are records of retreats in this shallow recess, open to rain and sun alike. The first part of the talk will consider in historical terms how the Shugendō tradition has been connected to this location by the Tendai monk Gyōson 行尊 (1055-1135), and how once its status as a spot for winter retreat was established this became a trademark of ascetic achievement. To trace the reasons of the cave's lasting repute until now, an overview of the evolution of this practice over time will follow. Then, contemporary practice at the Flute Cave will also be examined. In the 20th century, three monks performed a full one-hundred days retreat there, one of them being Sylvain Guintard, a French Shugendō practitioner. The notes he took in his diary give us a personalized insight into what extreme ascetic pursuit can mean today.

Carina Roth is a lecturer in Japanese history and language at the University of Geneva, Switzerland (Department of East Asian Studies). Her fields of interest are medieval Japanese religions, focusing on Shugendō, its history and its texts, as well as the various aspects of *honji suijaku* discourse and practices. In 2014, she obtained her Ph.D. degree with a dissertation on the *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起 ("Origins of the mountains"), considered as one of the seminal texts of Shugendō. She is currently revising her dissertation for publication by the Institut des Hautes études japonaises (Collège de France), and at the same time starting a critical study of En no Gyōja 役行者, the founding figure of Shugendō.

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

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