

CEEPUS lecture:

Japanese New and “New new” religions: An introduction and selected examples

This lecture is an introduction into the history of the so called “New Religions” in Japan, which are an important part of the history of Japanese religions. The term “new religions” (*shinshūkyō*) generally refers to all the groups which have been founded since the 19th century (until today). Japan is one of the countries with a very high number of these movements (when, for instance, compared to Europe): Some statistics argue, that at least 20% of the Japanese population are participating in some kind in one of these groups.

After a general introduction into the history of Japanese religions and a discussion of all the general questions with regard to these developments I want to give thorough descriptions of the major movements, like *Tenrikyo* and *Soka Gakkai*, which are nowadays established religions well settled within Japanese society. In addition the lecture will focus on the latest developments in this field, which are often called “new new religions” (*shin-shinshūkyō*). These are all the religious movements which have been founded since the 70ties of last century. One of these groups became rather “famous” due to a tragic event in 1995: Members of the *Aum Shinrikyo*, which was founded in 1985, made a terrorist attack on the Tokyo metro system where hundreds of people were severely injured. Another one of these newer developments, the group *Kofuku no kagaku* (= “The Institute for Research in Human Happiness”) will be presented more extensively in the course. This is due to the fact that this group is in the centre of my recent research. This will give the opportunity to provide insight into another important feature of the “new new religions”: their use of all kinds of media to present their religions. As an interesting example I want to show one of *Kofuku no kagaku*'s films, namely an *anime* (= animated film) which is presented as the film version of one of the major book publications covering all important aspects of their cosmology and their view of history.

In addition to my own lecture there will be the possibility of active participation in the course: Whoever wants to shall be able to give a small presentation of material (books and articles) which will be provided by me. A list of introductory and general literature and more information on the content will be at the participant's disposal at the beginning of the course in April.