

Shinto History

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About the project

Our understanding of Shinto and its history has changed radically over the last decades. The notion that Shinto is Japan's original religion, with roots in ancient or even divine times, was first challenged in earnest in the 1980s. Authors such as Kuroda Toshio and Allan Grapard showed the way to a new understanding of Shinto as a historical phenomenon. The question is no longer how a timeless Shinto has adapted to historical change, but rather how the concept of "Shinto" itself originated in the Japanese medieval period, and in what ways the history of that concept is interwoven with developments at shrines in their local contexts.

Objectives

This project seeks to investigate the history of selected shrines, in order to uncover new understandings of the concept of "shinto" in different periods. Its focus is on the interplay between particular shrines and the abstract notion of Shinto.

The project has resulted in a range of articles and books, many written or edited in cooperation with other researchers. The main books related to this project are: Breen & Teeuwen, *Shinto in History* (2000), Teeuwen & Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan* (2003), Teeuwen & Breen, tr., *Shinto -- A Short History*, Scheid & Teeuwen, *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (2006), Breen & Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto* (2010), Blezer & Teeuwen, *Buddhism and Nativism* (2013).

At the moment, I am cooperating with John Breen on a history of the Ise shrines.