

## EASR PANEL PROPOSAL

### **Shintō in Recent Research** (Proposal: Michael Pye)

Shintō can be studied both historically and in its contemporary forms. However it is only possible to present the history of “Shintō” if one is sensitive to the ways in which this term and associated concepts have been used at various times. Similarly it is impossible to do contemporary fieldwork on Shintō without taking into account the force of invented and contestable tradition. There is a tension between the search for independent historical precision and value-laden, essentialist claims about the past made from within contemporary Shintō. Such claims are themselves part of the phenomenon. This is not only a recent matter: there is no simple escape into history. Even if we could transport ourselves into some earlier century, pretending to disregard the upsurge of Shintō consciousness from the nineteenth century onwards, similar problems of interpretation would arise in other ways. For general historians this may all be quite frustrating, and indeed the field is currently in some disarray, and yet for historians of religion and those who study religion on the ground it is part of the fascination of the subject itself. The panel will consider recent research in this regard, for example in the work of John Breen, Mark Teeuwen, Ross Bender and Helen Hardacre, and will also welcome new contributions by others. The proposal stems from the incoming president of the International Society for Shintō Studies (ISSA).