



## **Sufism and Zen in the modern Western world:**

### **Spiritual marriage of East and West or Western cultural hegemony?**

*Place: Theology and Religious Studies, 4 The Square, University of Glasgow*

*Dates: Friday 8 – Saturday 9 December 2017*

Despite the discourse on Islamophobia, Sufism appears to be more accepted in Western society compared to other dimensions of Islam. Similarly, despite the recent incidents of Buddhist monks attacking Muslims in Burma and Sri Lanka, Buddhism is generally considered to be a non-violent religion, and Zen teachings especially have appealed to the popular spiritual movement in the West. The esoteric messages of Sufism/Zen are often regarded in the West as an alternative to conventional religious teachings, not incompatible with other belief systems, and have primarily attracted those who are disillusioned with established religious institutions. Appealing to a similar constituency is not only because Sufism and Zen share a number of teachings and practices. Many Sufi/Zen organisations in the West have contributed to creating a peace-loving image by focusing on humanity, love and the universality of teachings, and a greater transcultural and a more accommodating interpretation than the conventional ways of understanding.

This symposium seeks to explore the way in which Sufism and Zen were introduced to and developed in the West, and the manner in which they have been received by those attracted to them. The key figures who were instrumental in spreading the interest in Sufi/Zen teaching among a Western audience, e.g. Idries Shah, D.T. Suzuki, often used Western references, emphasising the universality of their respective traditions. By juxtaposing the ways in which the comparability of Sufism and Zen to Western thought has been promoted (as if there were a need to do so), this symposium questions to what extent attraction to Eastern esoteric teachings can be considered as the lofty unity of East and West, or whether the relationship should be understood as subject to the forces of political and cultural hegemony. The trans-traditional approach in the West also problematises whether the West/East dichotomy is a useful distinction in this context.

***This symposium is made possible through the generosity of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and the University of Glasgow (Chancellor's Fund and College of Arts).***

Should you have any queries, please contact the organiser:

Dr Saeko Yazaki at [Saeko.Yazaki@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Saeko.Yazaki@glasgow.ac.uk).

*Image by Razwan Ul-Haq*

## Programme

Each session lasts 1h 45min and comprises two papers (30min each; one on Sufism, the other on Zen), followed by 15min responses (5min each) from the chair (to both papers) and the presenters (to each other's paper), and general discussion for 30min.

Papers should focus on one tradition (any mention of comparative aspects is welcome, but not necessary; the main focus should be either Sufism or Zen), while discussion at the symposium should be comparative.

### Friday 8 December 2017

9.30 Registration and tea/coffee

10.00 Welcome

10.15-12.00 Session 1

**Chair: Steven Sutcliffe** (University of Edinburgh)

**Mark Sedgwick** (Aarhus University)

“Inayat Khan, the exotic and the universal”

**Michael Conway** (Otani University)

“Oneness and separation in Japanese Buddhist sensibility: Suzuki Daisetsu's presentation of the Myōkōnin”

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00-14.45 Session 2

**Chair: Malory Nye** (University of Glasgow)

**Saeko Yazaki** (University of Glasgow)

“Has the West changed the Eastern traditions?: Jewish Sufi Sam and his transcultural approach”

**Soho Machida** (Hiroshima University)

“Arigato Zen: a therapeutic voice-meditation”

14.45-15.15 Tea/coffee

15.15-17.00 Session 3

**Chair: Steven Sutcliffe** (University of Edinburgh)

**Kenichiro, TAKAO** (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science)

“Exclusion of Sufism from Western discourses on Islamophobia”

**Tullio Lobetti** (The Institute of Ismaili Studies)

“Zen in the West: appropriations and exclusions”

17.00-18.00 Calligraphy demonstration

**Razwan Ul-Haqq**

“Islamic art theory and practice: an economy of the outward through movement of the inward”

19.00 Dinner (presenters and chairs only)

## Saturday 9 December 2017

9.00-10.45 Session 4

**Chair: Louise Nelstrop** (York St John/St Benet's Hall, Oxford)

**Alice Freeman** (University of Oxford)

“Zen and Western thought: Orientalism, ultra-nationalism and miscommunication”

**Robert Irwin** (School of Oriental African Studies, London University)

“Sufism and its sufferings at the hands of the Orientalists”

10.45-11.15 Tea/coffee

11.15-13.00 Session 5

**Chair: Sohaib Saeed Bhutta** (University of Glasgow)

**Akemi Iwamoto** (D. T. Suzuki Museum)

“American Zen after D.T. Suzuki: encounters with a Tibetan Buddhist master”

**Kei Takahashi** (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science/Sophia University)

“Connecting Sufism to the American Muslim community: ‘Traditional Islam’ and the creation of Muslim Third Place”

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.45 Session 6

**Chair: Louise Nelstrop** (York St John/St Benet's Hall, Oxford)

**Jørn Borup** (Aarhus University)

“Zen and the art of contextualizing D. T. Suzuki”

**Lloyd Ridgeon** (University of Glasgow)

“Overcoming ‘presentism’ in Sufi scholarship”

15.45-16.00 Concluding remarks

## Presenters

**Jørn Borup** (jb@cas.au.dk)

Jørn Borup is an Associate Professor at, and holds an M.A. and Ph.D. degree from, the Department of the Study of Religion at Aarhus University. He has conducted research and published in Danish and English on Japanese Buddhism, Buddhism in the West, religious diversity, spirituality, and religion and migration. Besides publications in Danish, he is the author of *Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism: Myōshinji, a Living Religion* (Brill) and articles in *The Journal of Global Buddhism*, *The Journal of Contemporary Religion* and *Japanese Religions*. He has recently co-edited *Eastspirit. Transnational spirituality and religious circulation in East and West* (Brill 2017).

**Michael Conway** (conway@res.otani.ac.jp)

Michael Conway is currently a Lecturer in the Shin Buddhist Studies Department at Otani University, a Buddhist university in Kyoto that is affiliated with the Shinshū Ōtani-ha. After studying history with a focus on Japan at Northwestern University as an undergraduate, he entered the Master's program in Shin Buddhist Studies at Otani in 2003. During his course work, he was ordained and completed the training to work as a Shin Buddhist minister. He finished his course work for the doctoral program at Otani in 2009 and took up a two-year appointment as assistant professor (departmental assistant) there, during which time he completed his dissertation and received his PhD. He then served as managing editor of *The Eastern Buddhist*, a journal devoted to the open and critical study of Buddhism in all of its aspects that was founded by Suzuki Daisetsu (1870-1966) and other Otani University faculty members in 1921. He took up his current post in 2015. His research interests span most of the history of Pure Land Buddhism, but have particularly focused on the Chinese Pure Land thinker Daochuo (562-654) and the modern interpretations of Shin Buddhist thought presented by figures such as Soga Ryōjin (1875-1971), Kaneko Daiei (1881-1976), and Suzuki Daisetsu.

**Alice Freeman** (alice.freeman@nissan.ox.ac.uk)

Alice Freeman is currently a Research and Teaching Associate at the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies, University of Oxford. Alice has a D.Phil. in History (2016), an M.Sc. in Modern Japanese Studies (2008) and a B.A. in Oriental Studies (2007). All of these degrees have been taken at the University of Oxford. Her D.Phil. thesis in History, *Zen Buddhism in Japan-US Relations, 1941-1973: The Politics of Culture from the Pacific War to the Vietnam War*, considers how Zen Buddhism evolved from its associations with Japanese ultra-nationalism during the Pacific War to become part of the counter-culture of Cold War America. Finally, the thesis examines the impact of the Vietnam War on Buddhism in Japan and the USA. From February to May 2013 Alice conducted research towards her doctorate at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies under Professor Sueki Fumihiko, with the support of JSPS. From November to December 2015 she collaborated with Professor Ōtani Eiichi at Bukkyō University in a JSPS BRIDGE fellowship. Profound gratitude is owed to both Professors. Alice is also interested in ecological issues, and in October 2017 was a co-organiser of the workshop 'Ecologies of Knowledge and Practice: Japanese Studies and the Environmental Humanities'.

**Robert Irwin** (irwin960@btinternet.com)

Robert Irwin is a Senior Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies and a Honorary D.Litt. He is a Fellow of The Royal Society of Literature and Middle East editor at *the Times Literary Supplement*. He is the author of fiction and nonfiction. His seventh novel *Wonders Will Never Cease* was published in 2016. The nonfiction includes *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, *The Alhambra*, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* and *Memoirs of a Dervish: Sufis Mystics and the Sixties*. *Ibn Khaldun: An Intellectual Biography* will be published in 2018.

**Akemi Iwamoto**

Akemi Iwamoto is a Permanent Research Fellow at the D. T. Suzuki Museum in Kanazawa, Japan—a position she has held since the Museum opened in autumn 2011. She has been a Research Associate at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture since 2001 after completing its two-year Junior Research Fellow program. She also has been a Research Associate at the Research Institute for Buddhist Culture at Ryukoku University since 2008. Iwamoto began her study of Buddhism with a focus on Zen (Chan), and her interests extended to the philological study of Buddhist philosophy and meditative practices in both Indian and Tibetan texts. In 2002, she received her Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Kyoto University. Her dissertation title is “Praxis in the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra: With Special Reference to Chapters XIII and XIV.” Iwamoto’s Postdoctoral work in the United States has included: Visiting Scholar at Indiana University (2002-2003) and Visiting Professor at SUNY Albany (2005-2006). In 2008, she also taught a six-week intensive course on Yogācāra Buddhist texts at the University of the West in Rosemead, California. Iwamoto’s current interests include the Globalization of Buddhism, particularly Buddhism in the West.

**Tullio Lobetti** (tlobetti@iis.ac.uk)

Dr Tullio Lobetti graduated in Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Turin in 2003, with particular focus on the philosophies and religions of East Asia. He further pursued his interest in the study of religion by obtaining an MA in Japanese Religion at SOAS in 2004, where in 2011 he was also granted his PhD in the Study of Religions. He worked as Senior Teaching Fellow in the department of the Study of Religions at SOAS from 2008 until 2014 where he taught courses focuses on his regional expertise (such as Religions of East and Central Asia and Japanese Religions), as well as courses of broader theoretical and thematic scope (such as Theory and Method in the Study of Religions and Mysticism in the Great Traditions). He is now Special Projects Manager at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, where he also taught since 2010. His main interests include Philosophy of Religion; Hermeneutics and Epistemology; Theory in the Study of Religions; and Mysticism.

**Soho Machida** (soho@hiroshima-u.ac.jp)

Dr Soho Machida is currently Professor Emeritus of Hiroshima University, and the chief abbot of Arigato Zen temple near Mt. Fuji, Japan. He was born in 1950 and practiced as a Zen monk for 20 years in a conservative monastery of Kyoto. He later earned an MA from Harvard University and a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and taught at Princeton University, the National University of Singapore, the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Hiroshima University. His research disciplines are comparative religion, history of civilization, and bioethics. He has authored about 50 books in Japanese and English, including *Renegade Monk* (University

of California Press), “Religion, War & Ethics” (Cambridge University Press), “Why Religion Prevents Peace?” (Kodansha), etc. He occasionally gives lectures in NHK radio & TV programs. Beside academic activities, he conducts voice-meditation called Arigato Zen meditation in Japan, Taiwan, France, Belgium, and USA. A number of people have recovered from various types of mental illness through his therapeutic meditation.

**Lloyd Ridgeon** (Lloyd.Ridgeon@glasgow.ac.uk)

Dr Lloyd Ridgeon undertakes research mainly of medieval Persian Sufism and has published widely in the field. Other interests include contemporary Iranian politics and culture. His latest monograph is entitled “Awhad al-Din Kirmani and the Controversy of the Sufi Gaze”. He is currently engaged in the investigation of clerical disputes in Iran about the hejab.

**Mark Sedgwick** (mjrs@cas.au.dk)

Mark Sedgwick is Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies at Aarhus University, Denmark. He was born in London, educated at the universities of Oxford and Bergen, and taught for twenty years at the American University in Cairo. He moved to Aarhus in 2007. He is best known for his work on Traditionalism, Western Sufism, and terrorism. His most recent book is *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* (Oxford 2016) and he is currently editing two collections, one on *Global Sufism* and one on *Key Thinkers of the Resurgent Right*.

**Kei Takahashi** (nogseau@e-mail.ne.jp)

Kei Takahashi is Research Fellow at the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. He is also Visiting Scholar at the Center for Islamic Studies at the Graduate Theological Union and Senior Researcher at the Kenan Refai Center for Sufi Studies at Kyoto University. He holds Ph.D. in Area Studies from Sophia University and M.A. in Literature from Keio University. His major research interest is Sufism and tariqas in modern and post-modern societies. His present research topic is Sufism in the United States, and he conducted the field research on Sufi communities in the San Francisco Bay Area between 2016 and 2017. His publications include “Tariqas and Benevolent Associations in Early Twentieth-Century Egypt: The Case of the Society of the ‘Azmiyya Brothers in Alexandria,” *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* 8 (2015) and *Sufi Orders: Traditions and Revival of Popular Islam* (in Japanese, Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2014).

**Kenichiro Takao**

TAKAO Kenichiro is a PD Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science/ The Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, specialized in religious studies, the history of modern Islamic thought and society. He graduated with a Th.D (Doctor of Theology) in 2014, from Doshisha University at Kyoto, with a dissertation on Sufism in Modern Syria (entitled: *The Islamic Tradition in Modern Syria: The Case of Ahmad Kufaru*). From 2011-13, he worked at the Embassy of Japan in Saudi Arabia as a researcher, and conducted research on *the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice*, that is often called the “religious police.” After taking up his present position in 2016, he started the comparative research of the “religious police” seen in the contemporary Muslim societies, such as that of Saudi Arabia, “Islamic State” (“Da’ish”), Indonesia (Aceh province), and Iran etc.

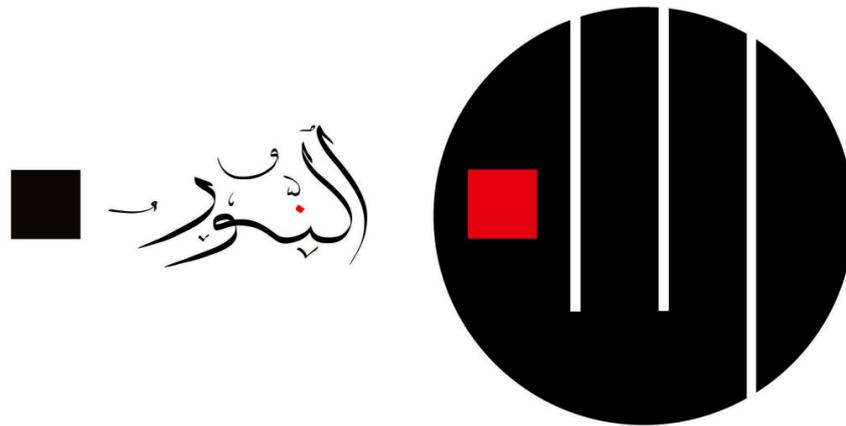
**Saeko Yazaki** (Saeko.Yazaki@glasgow.ac.uk)

Dr Saeko Yazaki is Lecturer in Religious Studies at Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow. She was awarded a PhD in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Before coming to Glasgow in 2012, she worked as the Outreach and Project Manager, then Research Associate at the Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge until 2015. Her areas of research include mysticism and epistemology of religion, the Judaeo-Islamic tradition in al-Andalus, and its continuing relevance to the present. Her monograph, *Islamic Mysticism and Abu Talib al-Makki: The Role of the Heart* (2013) addressed the complexity of the Sufi-Hanbali interaction on one hand, and the Muslim-Jewish nexus on the other. Currently she is carrying out research on morality in the Sufi tradition, connections between Jewish and Muslim spirituality, and the life and work of A.S. Yahuda. She is also pursuing a comparative study of monotheistic and non-monotheistic faiths, and her current projects include the development of trans-traditional teaching of Sufism and Zen in Britain.

## Calligrapher

**Razwan Ul-Haq** (razwan@live.com)

Razwan Ul-Haq is an Artist and Author whose prime vehicle is Arabic Calligraphy, particularly the *Nastaliq* script. A former Headteacher, having travelled the Middle East, Razwan has gone on to pioneer forms that draw from the minimalist tradition in Islamic Art. Whilst he has received training in calligraphy from different Masters of Arabic, his work is influenced by Chinese and Japanese thought. As a writer, two of his Art novels are in print, *Black Taj Mahal* and *Sultan Vs. Dracula*. According to Hollywood Actor and Director, Sean Stone, (son of multi-Oscar winning Director Oliver Stone), “Sultan Vs Dracula is an important re-imagination of the encounter between Islam and the West around the fall of the Byzantine Empire.” He is a widely exhibited Artist whose work has been displayed in many galleries and museums. His commissions include work for the Queen, and Land Art for the inaugural Tour de France of Britain. He recently appeared in Channel 4 as part of their Ramadan Diaries series. As a theorist in Islamic Art, he has presented his views at various Universities and his work is cited in publications around the world.



## Chairs

**Sohaib Saeed Bhutta** (Sohaib.Bhutta@glasgow.ac.uk)

Sohaib Saeed Bhutta's primary interests are in Quranic studies and interpretation. In 2017, he submitted his PhD thesis on "Intraquranic Hermeneutics" at SOAS, University of London. His undergraduate studies were at the University of Edinburgh and the Faculty of Theology at Al-Azhar, Cairo. Sohaib is an affiliate teacher at the University of Glasgow and is responsible for an honours course on Sufism in the 2017-18 session. He has translated classical works from Arabic including the first volume of *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, the exegesis of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (forthcoming, Islamic Texts Society, 2018).

**Louise Nelstrop** (louise.nelstrop@theology.ox.ac.uk)

Louise Nelstrop is Lecturer in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at York St John University and College Lecturer in Theology at St Benet's Hall, Oxford. She works on Christian mysticism, particularly in a late medieval context. She has published a number of articles in this area and an introduction to mysticism for Routledge. She is also a convenor for the Mystical Theology Network.

**Malory Nye** (Malory.Nye@glasgow.ac.uk)

Malory Nye is currently teaching on Islam and the cultural study of religion at the University of Glasgow. He is the author of several books, including "Multiculturalism and Minority Religions" and "Religion the Basics", and is the editor of the journal *Culture and Religion*. He also has a blog and podcast on the study of religion, titled "Religion Bites" (at religionbites.xyz). His most recent work is looking at the intersections of religion, race, gender, decoloniality, and whiteness.

**Steven Sutcliffe** (s.sutcliffe@ed.ac.uk)

Dr Steven Sutcliffe is Senior Lecturer in the Study of Religion at the University of Edinburgh. He specialises in the study of new and alternative forms of religion in modernity and in the modern history of the Study of Religion/s. He is author of *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices* (2003), co-editor (with Ingvild Sælid Gilhus) of *New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion* (2013) and co-editor (with Marion Bowman) of *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (2000). He has also edited *Religion: Empirical Studies* (2004). His current research includes the archive and transnational networks of the Scottish 'life reform' practitioner, Dugald Semple (1884-1964), the social and cultural history of the Gurdjieff-Ouspenskii movement, and the disciplinary formation of Religious Studies since the 1960s. He is Honorary President of the British Association for the Study of Religions 2015-2018.