



INSTITUT FÜR
RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

„EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION – OBSERVATIONS FROM CONTEMPORARY JAPAN“

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03.04.2014, 14 UHR, NUNI HS 12

This illustrated talk will explore the concept of "experimental religion" as a new paradigm for understanding how people affiliate with contemporary religious traditions and the resources they offer.

Previous models of religious affiliation - such as "membership," "conversion," "believer," and so on - are now dated and inaccurate because they do not account for the agency of individuals to investigate, choose, and apply religious resources in the contexts of their own lives. Thanks to internet technology, TV, travel, publications, music, films, and more, we now see a multi-step process whereby individuals and organizations "domesticate" global religious resources. Religious authorities may comment on and criticize these practices but ultimately an individual creates a negotiated religious affiliation that "works" and adds some kind of tangible value to their lives. Examples from Japanese new religions as well as established temple Buddhism, evangelical Christianity, progressive Islam, and nationalistic Hinduism will serve to illustrate and expand the theoretical concepts.