

Laura Brandt, M.A.

Institute for Religious Studies
Fischmarkt 2, Room 310
69117 Heidelberg

Phone: 06221 54-19725

E-Mail: laura.brandt@zegk.uni-heidelberg.de

Ongoing PhD

“Tourism in Japan: Contemporary Religious Scenarios and Dynamics” (working title)

Abstract

Japan has enjoyed enormous popularity as a tourist destination for quite some time. Marketing trailers by the Japanese tourist board portray a trip to Japan as a way to broaden one's horizons. A unique selling point lies in the merging of tradition and future: a vibrant nightlife, a popular music and video game industry, and high-tech megacities with facades of steel and glass are juxtaposed with images of untouched nature and traditional art forms. Temples and shrines, priests and monks, rituals, religious architectures, and aesthetics are also chosen to represent Japan's traditional side. The Daibutsu ("giant Buddha") in Kamakura, the Ise Shrine, the torii avenues of the Inari Shrine, or the Zen garden of the Ryōan-ji in Kyōto are just as popular travel destinations and photo motifs as the lively streets and shopping districts of Japan's major cities.

The PhD project addresses the interactions of religion and tourism. Instead of maintaining the artificial division between superficial vacations and serious pilgrimages that shaped the past discourse, religious institutions taking part in the economy will be understood as the normal case. This approach will be complemented by the theoretical approaches of material religion and considerations of recent media practices such as digital photography and the omnipresence of social media.

The project will examine the history of the Japanese tourism industry with the participation of religious actors, as well as its connections to concepts of culture, nation, and identity.

Academic Career

- since April 2020: research assistant at the Institute of Religious Studies (teaching, accounting, and quality management)
- 2017-2019: Master's degree in Religious Studies at the Heidelberg University and the University of Bern (Thesis: *Japanese Buddhism in Germany*)
- August 2015-March 2020: graduate assistant at the Institute for Religious Studies.

- 2013-2017: Bachelor studies in Religious Studies and German Philology at the University of Heidelberg (Thesis: *The Emergence of Western Buddhism in three Phases of Transmission*)
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Publications

- with Inken Prohl: “Japanese Buddhism in Germany”, in: *Journal of Religion in Japan* (published online ahead of print 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1163/22118349-01002009>
 - Book Review: “Buddhist Tourism in Asia” by Courtney Bruntz and Brooke Schedneck. *Reading Religion*, June 24, 2021. ([Link](#))
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Research Interests

- global transformations of Buddhism
 - Buddhism in Germany
 - modern Japanese religious history and contemporary religion
 - religions, tourism, cultural heritage
 - religions, new media, and popular culture
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Teaching

- Receptions of Buddhism in Germany (Winter 2021/22), [Link](#)*
- Religions in Japan – Theory and Practice (Summer 2021), [Link](#)*
- Religion(s) and Tourism – Perspectives from Religious Past and Present (Winter 2020/21), [Link](#)*
- The Emergence of Global Buddhism (Summer 2020), [Link](#)*
- Workshop: Study Skills for Religious Studies (Winter 2018/19 – Winter 2019/20)
- Tutorials for the Introductory Lectures of Prof. Inken Prohl (Summer 2016 – Summer 2017)

* Links refer to the German archive of Heidelberg University.

Lectures and Conference Participations

- *Japanese Buddhism in Germany*. Lecture at the workshop *Japanese Buddhism in Europe*, Aarhus University, 28.11.2019.

- *Aum Shinrikyō: Media Perspectives on Religion and Violence*. Lecture at the 26th Student Symposium of Religious Studies, University of Heidelberg, 30.05. – 02.06.2019).
- Organisation of the 26th Student Symposium of Religious Studies at the University of Heidelberg, May 2018 – May 2019.
- *Mythology and World Building in Pen-and-Paper Role Playing Games*. Lecture at the 24th Student Symposium of Religious Studies, LMU Munich, 25. – 28.05.2017.