

ANNUAL UPDATE

JAPANESE JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES



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The following is a summary of activities and circulation of the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies during the 2024 academic year. This update includes table of contents for published issues, an overview of online engagement with articles, and notes on present and future plans for the journal.

THE YEAR 2024 marked half a century of *JJRS* publications. David Reid gave the journal the new title of *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* in 1974 when relaunching the defunct *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, which had originally been founded at the International Institute for the Study of Religions in Tokyo in 1960. The journal moved to the NIRC in 1981, where it has remained ever since. Over the course of these five decades, the *JJRS* has become the leading academic journal for the study of Japanese religion.

The *JJRS* published three issues in 2024. The first is the annual at-large issue (vol. 51, no. 1), which includes articles on topics related to religion in the Meiji, Tokugawa, and medieval periods. The other two publications are special issues that had been delayed from 2022 and 2023 on “Borders, Performance, Deities” and “Searching for Legitimacy: Tenrikyo, Omoto, and ‘Marginalized’ Religions in Modern Japan,” respectively. For details on the contents of these issues, see the table of contents below.

There was a decline in online engagement with the journal in 2024. A total of 59,208 successful DOI searches between April 2024 and March 2025 is a considerable reduction from the previous year of just under 100,000 (see the *JJRS* update in *Bulletin* 44 for an explanation of DOIs). The most popular DOI search for the 2024 academic year was “Sacred Forests, Sacred Nation: The Shinto Environmentalist Paradigm and the Rediscovery of *Chinju no Mori*” (vol. 42, no. 2) by Aike P. Rots. Congratulations to Aike on having the top-searched *JJRS* article of the year. (Editor’s note: You can increase the online traffic of individual articles by assigning

JJRS articles in your courses.) On JSTOR, which maintains its own database of *JJRS* articles, there was a decrease in the number of downloads from the previous year; *JJRS* articles were accessed 81,935 times between April 2024 and March 2025, down from 101,882 the previous year. The institution with the most downloads of *JJRS* articles from JSTOR during this period was Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. A shout out to our friends in Venice!

The above numbers do not include articles downloaded directly from the Nanzan Institute website (<https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/journal/6>). Although it is difficult to confirm how many articles have been downloaded in a given period, the *JJRS* page was viewed about 9,000 times last year, making it by far the most visited page on the website.

Although all *JJRS* articles are available for download free of charge on the NIRC website and numerous academic databases, the journal is by definition a “print journal.” Print copies are available for order from global Amazon Marketplaces. The NIRC receives neither royalties nor any other profits from the sale of the journal. Price per issue depends on local costs of printing and shipping, as well as the whims of the Amazon corporation. However, we strive to keep the price per issue under 1,000 JPY, which is less than half the price of an annual subscription in 1981 when the journal first came to the NIRC. Thirty-two copies were sold from April 2024 to March 2025, which is an increase from the previous year.

The Fiftieth Anniversary special issue (i.e., the “Golden Issue”) is still in production and should be in print sometime this summer. This will be the final issue published under the previous *JJRS* publication schedule. Beginning in 2025, only one issue of the journal will be published per year. Individual articles will be first published in PDF on the NIRC website, then collected in a single print volume at the end of the year. Special issues will no longer be published on an annual basis. Instead, they will be treated as edited volumes and published on an independent schedule. Although the publication schedule for special issues will change, their contents will still be made available gratis open access on the NIRC website and contracted academic databases such as JSTOR. Hopefully, the new publication schedule will allow more freedom for guest editors and authors regarding the length and style of edited volumes and, perhaps most importantly, give *JJRS* editors more time to focus on editing and publishing individual articles in a timely manner.

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