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Japan Society & Portland Japanese Garden Present

[Zen and Japanese Spiritual Practices](#)

Second Live Webinar of the *Living Traditions Series*, A Five-Part Program Designed to Examine Iconic Facets of Japanese Culture, from Ancient Roots to Modern Day

Tuesday, October 19, 7-8:00 pm EDT/ 4-5:00 pm PDT



Photo credit: Daiko Matsuyama

New York, NY (September 30, 2021)— What is Zen? It is a term most people are familiar with, but for which few are able to find deeper understanding. In this live webinar, a panel of experts will discuss how this religious tradition has influenced not only Japanese culture and spiritual

practices immensely but has also had a significant impact on Western society. Japan Society and Portland Japanese Garden have invited scholars and practitioners **Daiko Matsuyama, Shoko Mekata, Dave Morin, and Paul S. Atkins (moderator)** to share their unique perspectives on the subject. In this conversation, they will discuss Zen's role and perception in Japan and the West, as well as differences in practices, and the path forward in a post-COVID world. *This is the second of the five-part Living Traditions webinar series*

The series is produced through an inaugural partnership between two top-tier, non-government Japanese cultural organizations – [Japan Society](#) and [Portland Japanese Garden](#). Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in New York and around the world. Portland Japanese Garden is a non-profit cultural organization, considered the most authentic Japanese garden outside of Japan. Both entities, while located on opposite sides of the U.S., share a common mission of inspiring people around the world to connect with each other through Japanese culture.

Agenda: Discussion and Q&A, 7:00–8:00 pm EDT (4:00–5:00 pm PDT)

Program Details: This is a free event, with advance registration required. The program will be live-streamed through YouTube, and registrants will receive the viewing link by email in advance. Participants can submit questions through YouTube during the live stream. Register [here](#).

Participant Bios:

Daiko Matsuyama (Speaker), Deputy Head Priest of Taizo-in, Zen Buddhist Temple; Visiting Lecturer at Stanford University, was born in 1978 in Kyoto. Matsuyama obtained his master's degree in Agriculture and Life Sciences from the University of Tokyo. After training at Heirin-ji Temple, Niiza, he became the deputy priest of Taizo-in Temple in 2007. Matsuyama is acclaimed for organizing intercultural activities for foreign visitors. In May 2009, he was elected as a Japan Tourism Agency's Ambassador for its "Visit Japan" Campaign. Additionally, he has been a member of Kyoto's Ambassadors for Tourism since 2011. Currently, he is serving as an appointed member of the Kyoto City Board of Education. As a representative of the Zen Sect in Japan, Matsuyama has interacted with many religious leaders, such as the Roman Catholic Pope and the 14th Dalai Lama. He is the author of the book, *Forget What's Important First: 30 Zen Teachings for the Wavering Soul* (Sekai Bunka Publishing, 2014) *Strolling around Zen Gardens in Kyoto* (PHP Publishing, 2016) *Introduction of ZEN for workers* (Kodansha Publishing, 2016).

Shoko Mekata, Ph.D (Speaker), is an Associate/Instructor in the Department of South Asian Studies at Harvard University. She received her BA from Otani University in Kyoto in 2002, and her MA from the same university in 2005. From 2007-2008 she studied at Tibet University, Lhasa, for which she received the Scholarship for Asian Studies from The Eastern Institute, Tokyo, Japan. During this period, she studied the Tibetan language, as well as religious and modern literature, and did field work for her dissertation. In 2011 she received her Ph.D. from Otani University, with a dissertation focused on the early history, and especially genealogy, of

the Sakya sect of Tibetan Buddhism. She has been an Associate Member of the Committee on Southern Asian Studies at the University of Chicago since 2011 and held her position as Teaching Instructor (Colloquial Tibetan) at Harvard University since 2013. Her current work focuses on Tibetan historical materials.

Dave Morin (Speaker) is an entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist. He is Co-Founder & Managing Director of Offline Ventures, an investing and inventing company focused on the creation of humanist technology, serving founder potential, and building beautiful companies. He is Chairman of Esalen Institute, the leading center for exploring and realizing human potential through experience, education, and research. He is on the Board of Dwell, the award-winning, category-defining, media company serving the global community of architecture and design.

Previously, he was Founder & Partner at Slow Ventures, a leading Silicon Valley venture fund that champions long-term thinking and innovation. He was the Co-Founder & CEO of Path which was acquired by Kakao in 2015. Dave has had a lifelong passion for technology, entrepreneurship, culture, design, photography, nature, skiing, and improving society. He served both Apple and Facebook for several years during periods of rapid innovation and growth. He holds a degree in Economics from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Paul S. Atkins (Moderator) is professor of Japanese in the Department of Asian Languages and Literature at the University of Washington, Seattle. He holds a Ph.D. in Japanese from Stanford University. His specialization is the literature, drama, and culture of medieval Japan. Publications include *Teika: The Life and Works of a Medieval Japanese Poet* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2017) and *Revealed Identity: The Noh Plays of Komparu Zenchiku* (Center of Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2006). He was awarded the William F. Sibley Memorial Translation Prize in Japanese Literature and Literary Studies by the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Chicago in 2011 for his translation from the Japanese of the play *Nagamachi onna harakiri (Harakiri of a woman at Nagamachi)* by Chikamatsu Monzaemon.

About the *Living Traditions* Series

Many of today's most popular and newest trends are rooted in ancient Japanese tradition going back centuries, if not millennia. Through five distinct, single-topic webinars, the *Living Traditions* series unravels the historical journeys of some of the most iconic facets of Japanese culture through conversations between thought-provoking experts and cultural stewards on how they maintain deep-rooted traditions in the present day. [Zen and Japanese Spiritual Practices](#) is the second event of the five-part *Living Traditions* series. Additional webinar topics will be announced and held throughout the fall season and early 2022.

About Japan Society

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in New York and around the world. At Japan Society, we are inspired by

the Japanese concept of *kizuna* (絆)—forging deep connections to bind people together. We are committed to telling the story of Japan while strengthening connections within New York City and building new bridges beyond. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. We strive to convene important conversations on topics that bind our two countries together, champion the next generation of innovative creators, promote mutual understanding, and serve as a trusted guide for people everywhere who seek to appreciate the rich complexities and abundance of Japan more fully. From our New York headquarters, a landmark building designed by architect Junzo Yoshimura that opened to the public in 1971, we look forward to the years ahead, which will be defined by our digital and ideational impact through the *kizuna* that we build. Our future can only be enhanced by learning from our peers and engaging with our audiences, both near and afar.

This year, Japan Society is celebrating our heritage through the 50th anniversary of our landmark building with the launch of a new distinct modern logo and visual identity. The “JS” monogram is created via overlapping, interconnected lines and shapes, reinforcing the idea of *kizuna* and that Japan Society acts as a platform that connects across, cultures, people, and time.

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About Portland Japanese Garden

[Portland Japanese Garden](#) is a nonprofit organization originally founded in 1963 as a place for cross-cultural understanding following World War II. A hallmark in the City of Portland, the Garden was founded on the ideals of peace and mutual understanding between peoples and cultures. Portland Japanese Garden is considered the most authentic Japanese garden outside of Japan and offers programming that seeks to use Japanese gardens, arts, and culture as a lens for engaging diverse people and helping them transcend their differences to embrace commonalities. The Garden is a place for convening and collaborating across the community and globe, attracting nearly half a million visitors each year. Follow the Garden on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

Living Traditions webinar series is co-presented with Portland Japanese Garden and supported by the Government of Japan. Talks+ Programs at Japan Society are generously sponsored by MUFG (Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group) and ORIX Corporation USA. Additional support is provided by an anonymous donor, the Sandy Heck Lecture Fund, and Helen and Kenneth A. Cowin.

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