Old Japan Redux --Tell Stories of Japan in Creative Presentations—
X. Jie Yang, University of Calgary

In the past four year, while teaching a survey course on Japanese history, I have designed a series of activities to encourage students to involve to the learning by telling stories of Japan with creative and attractive ways of their own choices, including fictional stories, manga comics, craft productions and video presentations. Outstanding works from those practices were selected and formed a set of on-line publications under the name of "Old Japan Redux".

This paper will document the design and the process of this series of activities, highlight representative achievements by the students, introduce its impact to the active learning on the history and culture of Japan, and discuss the potential of further development within this framework. It will also touch a few fundamental issues related to the way of publication in the digital time.

Can Visual-kei rock you from Japan?!
Sachiyo Kanzaki, Université du Québec à Montréal

Last century, Walter Benjamin discussed the concept of authenticity in art in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. His thoughts on the transformation of cultures and societies still resonate much later, in the age of Internet, when digital technologies modified the process of production and distribution in the music industry. The music genre called visual-kei (“visual rock” in English) appeared in Japan at the end of the 1980s and became popular in the 1990s. The boom has now passed, but visual-kei continues to recruit its followers among the young generation, even outside of Japan. Once, it had been the dream of Japanese rockers to be recognized in the West. While in the 1960s and 1970s, Japanese musicians seriously debated whether it was possible to “rock” in Japanese, today, visual rockers seem to have overcome this question. Inversely, we now wonder whether it is possible for non-Japanese to form visual rock bands. Based on fieldwork carried out in Japan and North America, this presentation examines the emergence of visual rock in Japan, its recent revival and the question of transnational aesthetic legitimation.
Japan-West Interculture: Kuki, Watsuji, Heidegger, Marcuse, An Imaginary Dialogue
Jay Goulding, York University

As progenitors of world interculture, Japanese scholars engage the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger in Germany in the 1920s with discussions of literature, popular culture, language and philosophy: Yamanouchi Tokuryū (1890-1982) reads Husserl’s Logical Investigations with Heidegger, later lecturing Greek philosophy at Kyoto University; Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962) shares Heidegger’s love for art, culture, ontology and nothingness; Kuki Shūzō (1888-1941) engages Heidegger on the aesthetic of iki, publishing the first book on Heidegger: The Philosophy of Heidegger (Haideggā no tetsugaku ハイデッガーの哲學); Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960) brings existential philosophy to Japan, employing Heidegger’s methodology in his classic work Fūdo (climate). This paper creates an imaginary dialogue set in 1928 Freiburg amongst Kuki, Watsuji, Heidegger and Herbert Marcuse on cultural and philosophical intersections East and West. Comparative topics include the Japanese scholars' understanding of Zen monk Dōgen Zenji’s 道元禅師 (1200–1253) uji 有時 (just for the time being), nikon no ima 而今の今 (now of just now), kyōryaku 経歴 (ranging, flowing) and taiho 退歩 (the step back), alongside Heidegger’s verweilen (whiling time), augenblick (right moment of vision), Erstreckung (stretching time along) and schritt züruck (the step back) ---all directed toward creating a mutual discourse of Japan-West interculture.

Richness of Culture in Western China - Review Yanagita's Notions of Culture
Sheri Zhang-Leimbigler & Jeff Ma, University of Ottawa

This is a study on western China where Eastern and Western civilizations met and formed a unique cultural tradition. Japanese intellectuals praise the Chinese Muslims for establishing “Kai-Ju or Hui-Ru” – Islamic Confucianism. More than a thousand years ago in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the Muslims came to China through the ancient Silk Road. The Islamic religion coexisted with Buddhism. Our study takes us from China’s most Muslim-friendly city Xi’an (Chang’an) to Guyuan, a town surrounded by mountains near the Silk Road. We are inspired by the Japanese folklore founder Yanagita Kunio’s notions of culture. He believed that the mountain people and those at sea, namely the fishermen are the real bearers of authentic Japanese culture. The people who lived in the peripheral regions, in the far north and south pass on the folk culture. Yanagita travelled to rural areas of Tōno in the Tohoku region, seeking the true Japaneseness which would exist in even more remote areas that were isolated from the outside world. We study the Chinese Muslims living 400 kilometers away from Xi’an; they observe the Chinese festivals such as the Chinese New Year, the dragon boat festival etc. and keep the celebration alive, not changed nor modified.