

2135 SS&MS, 12:00pm Monday, February 11

Ellen Van Goethem
Kyushu University

Heian shrine in 1895.
Detail of Kawai Senrō's *Daijōkai naikoku kangō hakurankai oyobi Heian jingū daijōkuden no zu*. Personal collection.

COMMEMORATION
AND DEIFICATION

THE CREATION OF
HEIAN JINGŪ

The founding of Heian Jingū in 1895 is usually explained in very simple terms; it was established to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of the move to the Heian capital and was, therefore, dedicated to the city's founder, Kanmu Tennō (r.781–806). Nevertheless, a closer look at this founding story reveals a much more complex narrative that touches not only on material aspects such as the government's creation of a blueprint for new shrines, but also on doctrinal issues such as the unprecedented deification of past emperors. Moreover, it helps explain how a major imperial shrine (*kanpei taisha*) in the emerging Japanese nation state could be so replete with Chinese symbolism and why in later years at least one of its designers expressed great disappointment at the end result.

Ellen Van Goethem is Associate Professor of Japanese History and History of Ideas at Kyushu University. During the 2018–2019 academic year, she is also a Visiting Fellow at UCSB's East Asia Center. Her research mainly concerns the Asuka, Nara, and Heian periods, with a specific focus on the layout of Japan's ancient capital cities, on religious and philosophical thought underpinning the construction of these cities, and on inscribed wooden tablets (*mokkan*). More recently, she has also started to investigate site divination in East Asia and the presence of Chinese cosmological symbolism and practices in Shinto shrines. She is the author of *Nagaoka, Japan's Forgotten Capital* (Brill, 2008).

EAST ASIA
CENTER

