



What Is Shinto?

What is Shinto?



⌘ The Japanese Indigenous religion, called Shinto, was based on Nature Spirits.

What is Shinto?



↳ Like many ancient peoples from around the world, the early Japanese believed that all natural things are alive, even the winds, the mountains and the rivers.

What is Shinto?

⌘ They believed that all of these things have their very own spirits.



⌘ This idea is called **Animism**, basically the idea that everything has a soul... plants, inanimate objects, and natural wonders.

What is Shinto?

↳ When people need help, the early Japanese believed that they could ask the nature spirits, whom they called **Kami**, to help them.



↳ **Kami** - a divine being in the Shinto religion, think of them almost as gods.

What is Shinto?

↳ To honor the Kami, the Japanese worshiped at **shrines**.



↳ **Shrine** - a place regarded as holy because of its associations with a religion or a sacred person or relic.

What is Shinto?

⌘ At Shinto shrines priest, musicians and dancers would perform rituals for people who wanted to communicate with the gods.



⌘ Sometimes these communications with the Kami were simple, asking for a healthy harvest of crops, happy marriages, good fortune for children or any other favors.

What is Shinto?

↳ These early Japanese beliefs developed into the religion that we know today as **Shinto**.



↳ The word Shinto means "**Way of the Spirits**", and today it is an essential way of Japanese life that is still followed.

What is Shinto?

↳ Followers of Shinto believe that Kami will help only if a person is pure.



↳ Many things, such as illness, cause spiritual stains that must be cleansed by bathing and other rituals before entering a Shrine and praying.

How Does Shinto Work?

⌘ Part of being Japanese is participating in Shinto...the religion and the Japanese culture are very much intertwined and part of each other.



⌘ Lets look at some different aspects of Shinto, so we can truly understand the religion and Japans past and present relationships with nature.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ **Torii** - The gateway of a Shinto Shrine, normally created with two upright beams and two crosspieces.

How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?



✂ **Komainu** (Kom-ain-u) - Guardian dogs, lions or foxes often found on each side of a shrine's entrance.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ Komainu Fox is a messenger between good and evil spirits.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ **Purification Trough** - The water of these fountains is used for purification... you are supposed to clean your hands and mouth before approaching the main hall of a shrine.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ **Omikuji** – a Japanese word which means “**random fortunes**”. They are fortune telling paper slips found at many shrines and temples. A person will randomly take one... they contain predictions for good or bad luck.

How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?



& **Shimenawa** (Shim-in-awa)- a Japanese word which means "**enclosing rope**" are lengths of laid rice straw rope used for ritual purification in the Shinto religion. Sacred places are typically marked with a Shimenawa and shime (strips of white paper).

How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?

↳ **Origami** - a Japanese word which means "**Paper of the Spirits**" - A Japanese folk art in which paper is folded into beautiful shapes.



↳ They are often seen around Shinto shrines, out of respect for the tree spirit that gave its life to make the paper, origami paper is never cut.

How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?



↳ **Calligraphy** - a Japanese word which means "**the way of writing**" is the art of writing magnificently, most children learn calligraphy in elementary school.

How Does Shinto Work?

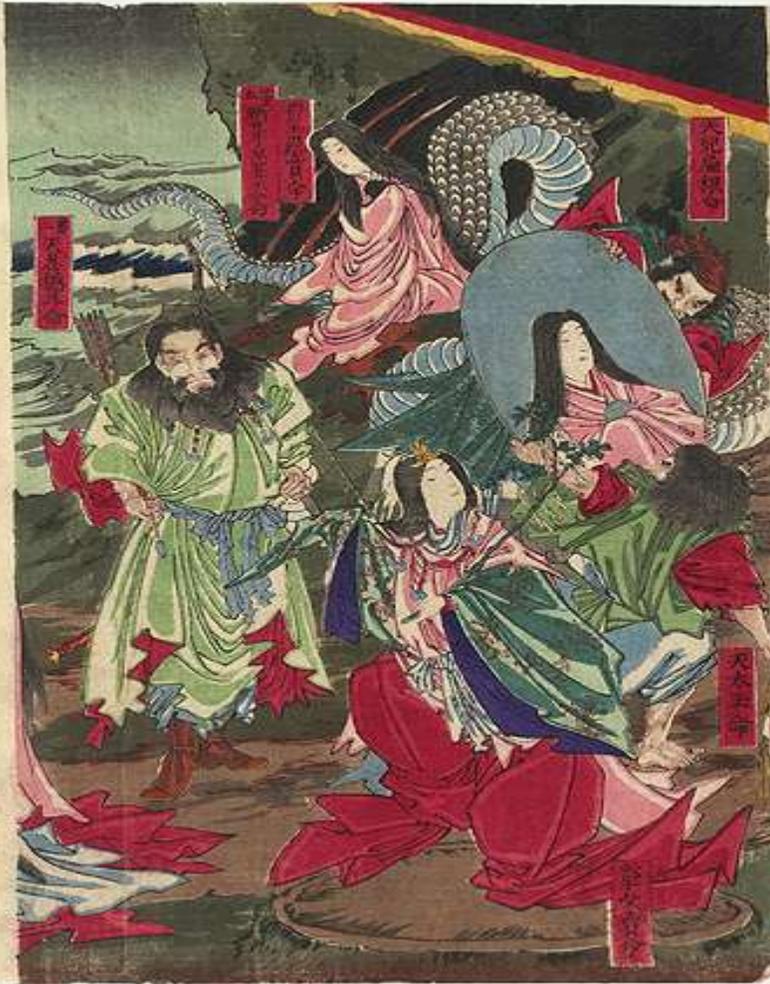
↳ **Shinto** is the term for the original religious beliefs and practices of Japan.



↳ Shinto has no founder, no official sacred scriptures, and no fixed doctrines, however, it has preserved its main beliefs and rituals throughout the ages.

How Does Shinto Work?

& **Shintoism** roots stretch back to 500 B.C.E. and is a **Polytheistic** religion.



& **Polytheism** - the belief in or worship of multiple gods.

How Does Shinto Work?

⌘ Like many ancient people, the early Japanese believed that all natural things are alive... winds, mountains, rivers, rocks, trees

⌘ They believed that all of these objects possessed spirits of their own and even could hold the spirits of their passed ancient ancestors...**Animism**



How Does Shinto Work?



☞ In other words **souls** and **spirits** exist, not only in humans, but also in animals, plants, rocks, natural phenomena such as thunder, rain and even geographic features such as mountains or rivers

How Does Shinto Work?

↳ **Shinto** remains Japan's major religion alongside Buddhism.



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↳ Shinto can be found in all aspects of Japanese life...in fact almost everything you know about Japan comes from Shintoism.

How Does Shinto Work?



⌘ Since Shinto has no official sacred book, it has preserved its main beliefs and rituals by passing down sacred arts like **calligraphy**, **origami** and **story telling**.

How Does Shinto Work? ?



How Does Shinto Work?

↳ The word **Shinto**, comes from the Chinese *shin tao*, meaning "*the way of spirits*", and only received a name in order to distinguish native Japanese beliefs from Buddhism.



↳ Shinto (together with Buddhism) are closely tied to Japanese society and culture.

How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?

↳ Shinto deities are known as **Kami**.



↳ The word "**Kami**" is generally translated "**god**" or "**gods**", however, the Kami has little resemblance to the gods of monotheistic religions.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ **Kami** are sacred spirits which take the form of objects and concepts important to life, such as wind, rain, mountains, trees and rivers...they can be found anywhere and are kind Kami.

How Does Shinto Work?

- ⌘ There are countless Kami within Shintoism...which can be viewed in many different forms and styles throughout Japan.



- ⌘ **Kami** related to natural objects and creatures, essentially take form within nature.

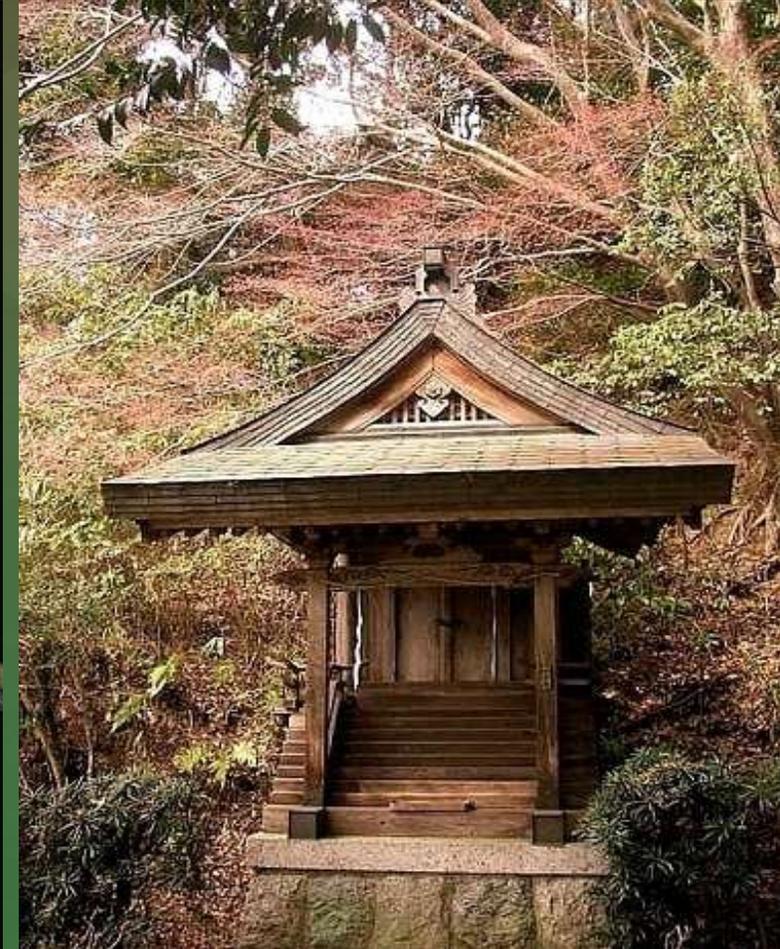
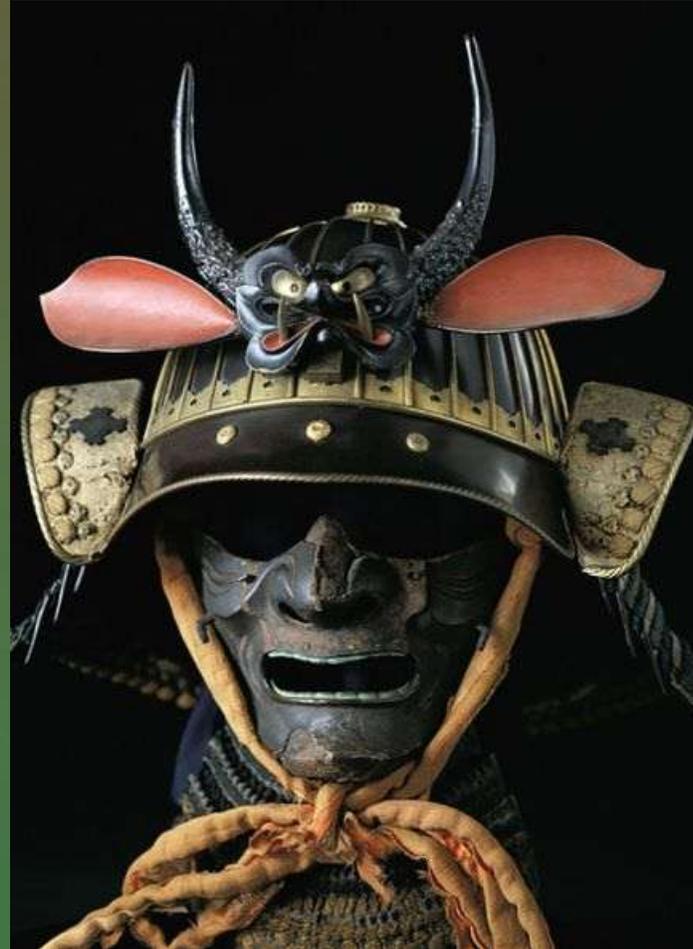
How Does Shinto Work?



↳ **Guardian Kami** are seen as protectors of sacred areas, clans and homes.

How Does Shinto Work?

- Extraordinary people upon death may become **Ancestral Kami**, who will watch over their families and help protect and guide them as spirits.



- These incredible **Ancestral Kami** are preserved at shrines, almost like tombs... it is believed that **Kami** will watch over the areas where their shrines are located.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ Abstract creative forces (**wind**, **rain**) are seen as generally kind Kami who sustain and protect the people of Japan.

How Does Shinto Work?

↳ **Shintoist** believe that natural wonders are created by super natural powers, and the spirits of Kami may in fact dwell in these natural powers.



↳ Also great warriors, leaders and scholars are often divinized and looked at as ascended Kami.

How Does Shinto Work?

↳ To communicate with these Kami Shinto Shrines were created in a sacred spots throughout Japan.



↳ Among these Kami, the **Sun**, "**Amaterasu**" is the most important to Japan and is regarded as the principal deity of Shinto, particularly by the Imperial Family.

Japanese Creation Myth



Long ago all the elements were mixed together with one germ of life. This germ began to mix things around and around until the heavier part sank and the lighter part rose. A muddy sea that covered the entire earth was created. From this ocean grew a green shoot. From this ocean grew a green shoot. It grew and grew until it reached the clouds and there it was transformed into a god. Soon this god grew lonely and it began to create other gods. The last two gods it made, Izanagi (I-Zan-Agi) and Izanami (I-Zan-Ami), were the most remarkable. One day as they were walking along they looked down on the ocean and wondered what was beneath it. Izanagi thrust his staff into the waters and as he pulled it back up some clumps of mud fell back into the sea. They began to harden and grow until they became the islands of Japan.

Japanese Creation Myth

↳ The two descended to these islands and began to explore, each going in different directions. They created all kinds of plants. When they met again they decided to marry and have children to inhabit the land. The first child Izanami bore was a girl of radiant beauty. The gods decided she was too beautiful to live in Japan, so they put her up in the sky and she became the sun. Their second daughter, Tsukiyami, became the moon and their third and unruly son, Sosano-wo, was sentenced to the sea, where he creates storms.



Japanese Creation Myth



⌘ Later, their first child, Amaterasu, (Am-Uh-Ter-Ah-Sue) bore a son who became the father of the first emperor of Japan and all the emperors since then have claimed descent from him.

Japanese Creation Myth

⌘ According to Shinto, the **Meoto Iwa** or the **Loved One and Loved One Rocks** represent the union of Izanagi and Izanami.



⌘ The rocks, therefore, celebrate the union in marriage of man and woman...the rope, which weighs over a ton, must be replaced several times a year in a special ceremony...the larger rock, said to be male, has a small *torii* at its peak.

Shintoism



⌘ This creation myth is important for two reasons, the first being that it establishes the lineage of the **Japanese Emperor** and the main Kami within Shintoism, **Amaterasu**.

⌘ This myth states that centuries ago, two gods dipped a spear into the sea...when they pulled it out, drops of salty mud fell onto the waters and formed the islands of Japan



Shintoism



⌘ The two gods then created the Sun Goddess *Amaterasu*, to rule over earth and the storm god, *Susano*, as her companion.

Shintoism

- ⌘ Susanoo was very bitter towards his sister and was constantly trying to beat her in a sibling rivalry.
- ⌘ Susanoo was sent to earth by Izanagi where his children became the first people of Japan.
- ⌘ Amaterasu, however not entirely trusting Susanoo and sent her grandson Ninigi no Mikoto to rule over the Japanese people of earth and really to keep an eye on Susanoo.



Shintoism

Amaterasu sent **Ninigi** three celestial (holy) gifts important for him to control Japan and have since been used by all emperors throughout Japanese History.



The **Sword**, Kusanagi, **Mirror**, Yata no kagami, and the **Jewel**, Yasakani no magatama...these three gifts signify that the emperor is the descendant of Amaterasu herself, and are used as symbols of sacred leadership today in Japan

Shintoism



Paul D. Healey

⌘ Due to the legendary status of these items, their locations are not confirmed, but it is commonly thought that the sword is located at **Atsuta Shrine** in Nagoya

Shintoism



↳ The jewel maybe located at **Kokyo** (the Imperial Palace) in Tokyo

Shintoism



⌘ The mirror is thought to be located in the **Grand Shrine** of Ise.

Shintoism

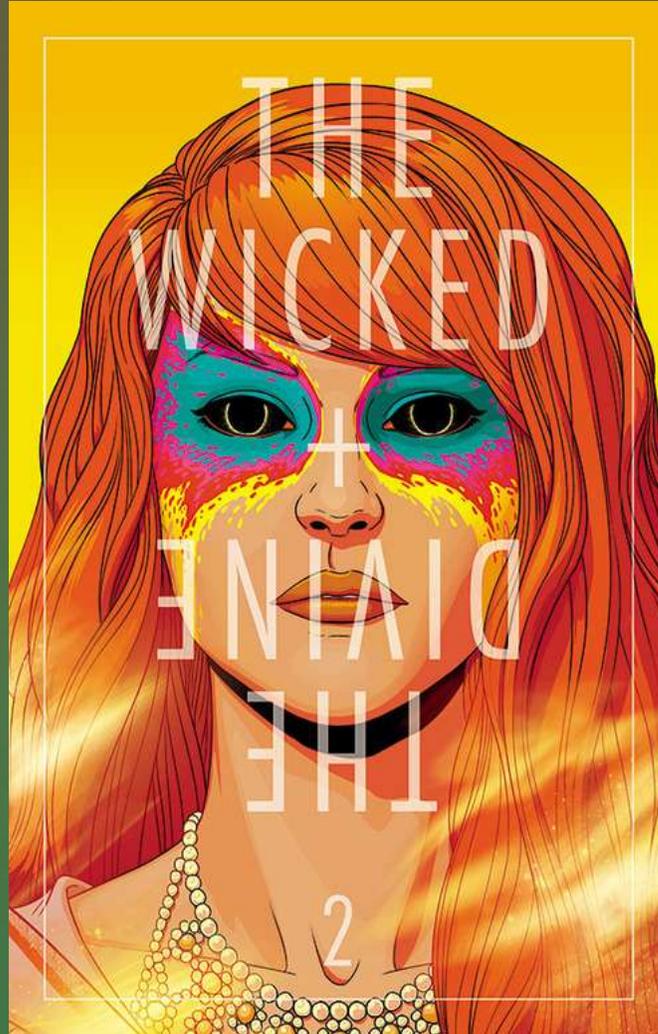
⌘ Historians today are not sure of the actual events on which this myth is based.



⌘ However they do know that during the 500's C.E. a Samurai clan called the **Yamato** became strong enough to bring most of Japan under its rule...perhaps due to these gifts...

Shintoism

⌘ The Sun Goddess **Amaterasu** is considered Shinto's most important **Kami**.

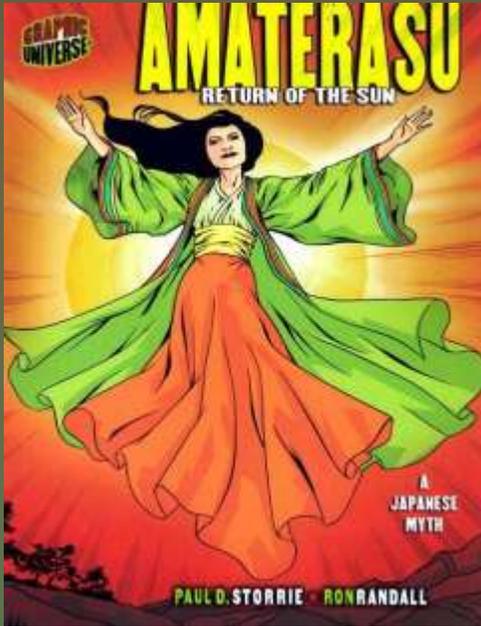


⌘ Amaterasu is such an important part of Japanese culture that Anime cartoons, movies and even videogames have been created using her image and mythological legend.

Shintoism



Shintoism



✧ Japan is known for using Amaterasu's likeness in many different forms of entertainment.

Shintoism

↳ According to Shinto mythology, Japan's first Emperor **Jimmu**, is a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess **Amaterasu** and was crowned in the year 660 B.C. E.



↳ It is a commonly accepted fact that all of the emperors that have reigned over Japan for the past 1500 years have all been direct descends from the same imperial family and ultimately, **Amaterasu**.

Shintoism

⌘ So here is how the account goes...At some points in Japanese history, their Emperors lost power and became a symbolic picture of Japan.

⌘ All samurai and warlord rulers respected them and never challenged their divine lineage.

⌘ Most samurai were keen in having the emperor validate their position as rulers of Japan.



Shintoism

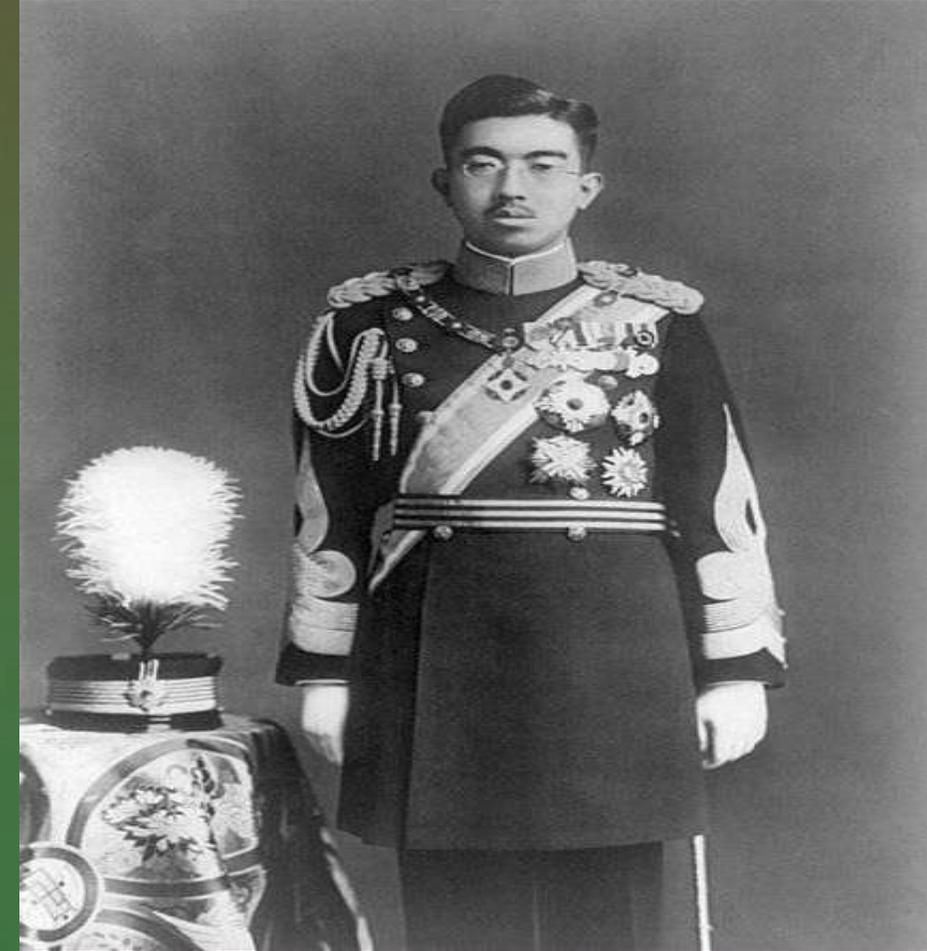
⌘ With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the **Tokugawa Shogunate** (Samurai) was overthrown and **Emperor Komei** became the supreme head of state once again... after 1000 the Emperor gained complete control of Japan.



⌘ Under the new Meiji constitution, the Emperor Komei held supreme power, and his political and military power was absolute.

Shintoism

⌘ After WWII, the postwar constitution of Japan, written by the United States in 1946 declares that the emperor (Hirohito) is now a simple symbol of Japan...with no true power.



⌘ The Emperor now mainly participates at ceremonies and diplomatic meetings, but has no effective political power today.

Shintoism

⌘ In 1989, Emperor Akihito became Japan's 125th emperor.



⌘ The Imperial House of Japan is the oldest continuing hereditary monarchy in the world...and the only monarchy to keep perfectly detailed lineage records of all Emperors, including the direct line to Amaterasu.

How Does Shinto Work?

↳ There are "Four Affirmations" in Shinto:



↳ *Tradition and the family*: The family is seen as the main mechanism by which traditions are preserved, their main celebrations relate to birth and marriage.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ *Love of Nature*: Nature is sacred; to be in contact with nature is to be close to the Gods, natural objects are worshipped as sacred spirits.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ *Physical Cleanliness*: Followers of Shinto take baths, wash their hands, and rinse out their mouth often.

How Does Shinto Work?



↳ *Matsuri*: The worship and honor given to the **Kami** and **Ancestral Spirits** through celebrations.

How Does Shinto Work?



How Does Shinto Work?

↳ "Wakakusa Yamayaki"

An annual festival during which the grass on the hillside of Mount Wakakusayama is set on fire.



Shintoism

↳ About 84% of the population of Japan follow two main religions Shinto and Buddhism.



↳ Buddhism first arrived in Japan from Korea and China during the 6th through 8th centuries C.E.

Shintoism

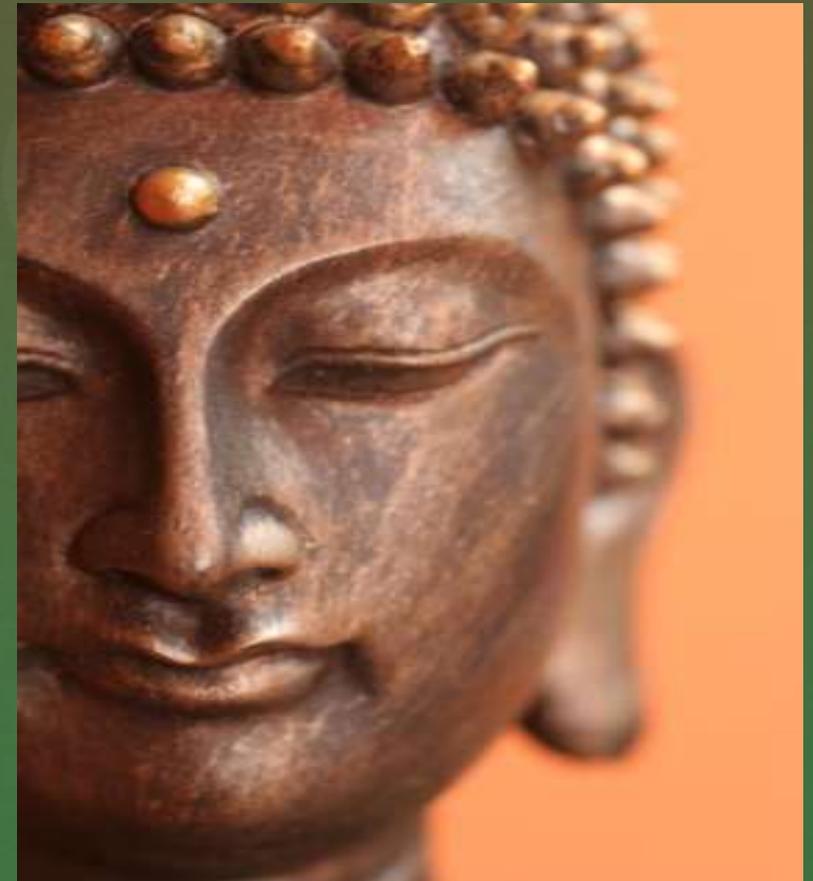
↳ Shinto and Buddhism share a basic optimism about human nature, the world.



↳ Within Shinto, the Buddha was viewed as another "Kami".

Shintoism

⌘ While Buddhism in Japan regarded the Kami as being manifestations of various **Buddha's** and **Bodhisattvas**.



⌘ **Bodhisattva** – Is a person who follows Buddhism and reaches “Enlightenment” however, rather than going to Nirvana (Heaven) then decide to stay on earth and help guide people through life.