A Traveler's Guide

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Chapter 01

INTRODUCTION

Imagine riding a boat through a lush, green landscape covered with streams and rivers. These bodies of water, at times, run parallel to each other and, at other times, intersect to form new pathways, coves, and inlets. Together, they create a sprawling mesh of waterways and currents. Someone could float down one stream only to find the current sweeping them into another and another. Sometimes, these rivers flow together, and sometimes, they separate entirely only to come together again elsewhere before separating once again.

Welcome to the worldview of Shinto.

The imagery of interconnecting rivers illustrates how Shinto functions as the prevailing religion of the Japanese people. In many ways, Shinto is a synthesis of local traditions, rituals, folk religion, animism, and other outside worldviews, such as Buddhism and Taoism from mainland China, that function together in a syncretistic way but at times diverge into separate and distinct schools of thought. A leading Japanese scholar once said, "A person may be married in a Shinto shrine, live his life according to Confucian social teachings, hold some Taoist beliefs about 'lucky' and 'unlucky,' participate in folk festivals, and have his funeral conducted by a Buddhist temple."[1] In spite of these syncretistic characteristics, there are major distinctives about Shinto that require special attention as one of the world's major religions.

1.1 What is Shinto?

Shinto is the Japanese national religion based on Japan's indigenous mythology. It was incorporated into the Japanese nation-state and is headed by the emperor. Shinto sees itself as a practical way of relating to the spirit world but offers few specifics. One should avoid the term Shintoism since it is not a system of clearly defined doctrines or a speculative philosophy.[2] It has no supreme deity, official sacred text, or founder.

The term Shinto means "the way of the gods." It is a peaceful religion that teaches its adherents to seek harmony and to live happy lives based on the belief that humanity is inherently good.

Shinto originated as a folk religion and is characterized by the worship of kami. Kami are spirit-like entities associated with various supernatural and sacred forms of life. They are present in human ancestors, spirit figures, and the natural

forces of mountains, rivers, trees, and rocks. As a result, the adherents of Shinto revere nature by committing to care for the environment and numerous ecological sanctuaries in Japan.[3]

1.2 Statistics and Regions

Shinto is a small religion mainly limited to the nation of Japan. Estimating its total population can be difficult. Globally, only 3-4 million people officially identify with Shinto, which is less than 1% of the world's population.[4] In North America, Shinto represents one of the smallest religious sects in the Western Hemisphere, with only 25,000-50,000 adherents. However, in Japan, even though roughly half of the population officially identifies as Shinto, approximately 83.3% (126 million) engage in Shinto-related activities regularly.[5]

Quick Facts:

Religion: Shinto
Adherents: Shintoists
Population: 3-4 million
Founder: No founder
Began: Unknown
Type: Indigenous Religion (Animistic)
God: No supreme deity. Kami are spirits.
Texts: Kojiki, Nihon Shoki
Primary Sects: Jinja, Koshitsu, Kyoha, Minzoku

This indicates that many people in Japan hold Shinto beliefs and Shinto customs, whether or not they officially identify Shinto as their religion. The rituals and ideas of this ancient religion permeate modern life, culture, and history in Japan, but given the syncretistic nature of Shinto, very few Japanese people call themselves "Shintoists." However, scholars still use the term to refer to adherents. For these adherents, Shinto is just as much a way of life as it is a religion, so it should not be surprising that many Japanese people practice forms of Shinto while not officially identifying as followers of the religion.

Approximately half of Japan's population identifies with Shinto.

Chapter 02

THE HISTORY OF SHINTO

Shinto is an ancient religion, and it is impossible to date its origin, but scholars estimate that it developed before the Japanese language had its own system of writing.[6] Likely, the earliest Japanese myths and folk stories emerged sometime between 300 BC - 400 A.D. when residents of the islands became aware of other religious systems. These beliefs eventually established some of the ideas for the institutionalization of Shinto and provided motifs for worship, rituals, and concepts of deities.

Shinto has no founder, revered teacher, or rigid set of doctrines. Before other religions came to Japan, Shinto neither had nor needed a name. It consisted of ethnic Japanese beliefs about their history, their leaders, and the spirits animating the natural world. New religions brought changes to the islands and prompted the local people to name their folk religion to distinguish it from others. These beliefs gradually developed into a nationwide religious tradition which was compiled from myths and traditions into the Kojiki during the 7th century A.D. The more formal regulations of Shinto were established in the 10th century A.D.

Buddhism arrived in the 9th century and coexisted in an uneasy relationship of mutual accommodation for centuries with Shinto, each tradition being influenced by their interactions with the other. In 1868, Shinto became the official state religion as a consequence of the Meiji restoration of imperial rule. At this point, Shinto nationalism and militarism became a guiding principle of the Japanese people that insulated their nation from foreign influences. Local shrines fell under the custody of the state; the head of the Japanese government was the divine emperor; worship at the sacred places became an expression of patriotism; Shinto priests instructed school children; and the government began formalizing Shinto ceremonies as functions of the state.

Emperor Hirohito was the leader of Japan during WW2. As emperor, he was viewed as a divine being by the people of Japan. Shinto greatly impacted Japan's sense of nationalism and isolation from the rest of the world, as well as its view of the emperor as an absolute monarch possessing divine authority. When Japan surrendered in 1945, Japan's dictatorship was replaced with a constitutional monarchy. Hirohito was forced to renounce his claim to divinity and became merely a symbolic figurehead of Japan with no political authority.

In 1945, after Japan surrendered to the United States, Shinto was abolished as the state religion, but unofficial links remained between Shinto, the imperial family, and the government. Despite its abstract nature and lack of official recognition, no religion has influenced the modern Japanese state more than Shinto. Shinto sustained Japan's imperial past and was central to its actions and involvement in World War II. Today, its cities and countryside are still populated with more than 80,000 Shinto shrines.

Chapter 03

THE BRANCHES OF SHINTO

Although Shinto has few systematic beliefs, institutional practices, or formalities, it has a few categorical divisions:[7]

3.1 Jinja

Jinja is the traditional practice of Shinto. Most Shintoists in Japan fall into this category. Observance generally occurs at the nearly 80,000 shrines in Japan that are overseen by the Jinja Honcho (the Association of Shinto Shrines), an administrative organization that seeks to preserve Shinto's faith and traditions.[8]

3.2 Koshitsu

Koshitsu is state-sponsored Shinto. Its rites are performed by the emperor of Japan on behalf of the entire country. It has not been practiced since the end of World War II.[9]

3.3 Kyoha

Kyoha, also known as sect Shinto, sprung up in the 1800s. There are 13 sects officially recognized by the imperial government. Many of these arose out of Jinja Shinto, but each sect has its own founder. They tend to be related in practices and beliefs; however, some no longer consider themselves Shinto but function as independent religions.[10]

3.4 Minzoku

Minzoku is folk Shinto, usually practiced at rural shrines by common people. Many of the folk rituals evolved alongside Jinja Shinto, but Minzoku assimilated Buddhist and/or Taoist elements that distinguished it from more traditional versions of Shinto.[11]

Chapter 04

MAJOR BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

Shinto beliefs and practices revolve around godlike spirits known as kami. Revering the kami and maintaining a harmonious relationship between nature and people are central to Shinto.[12]

4.1 Deities

The divine spirits of Shinto are called kami. Though the word is generally translated as "deities" or "gods," kami are very different from the supreme beings of monotheistic religions. Kami refers to a broad range of divine powers. Generally, it means "divine" or "sacred." Specifically, it can refer to personal deities, personal spirits, loosely identified personal spirits dwelling in natural phenomena, or even an impersonal spiritual force. Thus, kami are spiritual realities that pervade all levels of reality.[13] However, belief or devotion to any specific kami is not obligatory.[14]

Shinto is an animistic worldview with polytheistic characteristics. There is no separation between the material world and the spiritual world because natural/geographic features have divine qualities through an abundance of divine kami inhabiting the world.[15]

Nevertheless, several prominent deities take form within Shinto. Two notable kami are Amaterasu (bottom left), the sun goddess who is the symbol of Japanese nationalism, and Hachiman (bottom right), revered by the samurai as the god of archery and warriors.

4.2 Creation

Shinto's ancient myths contain only vague references to a supreme Creator – allusions that make sense if religions deviated from original monotheism over thousands of years and cultural isolation. The central myth of Shinto and the creation story involves two powerful kami who were themselves descended from other kami. Everything that exists currently has descended from these two kami, the first male and female: Izanagi ("The Male Who Invites") and Izanami ("The Female Who Invites"). Their offspring were the islands of Japan and the other kami (nature deities) who inhabited the island's natural environment.[16]

4.3 The Central Myth of Shinto

The central myth (or story) of Shinto is depicted in both ancient texts of Shinto, the Kojiki and the Nihongi. The myth begins with a paradox of original chaos or "ooze." Out of this ooze, several kami emerged. The first kami to arise was called Kuni-toko-tachi-no-Mikoto (land eternal-stand-august-thing), and in a few Shinto traditions, he has a special dignity. Other kami eventually come after him, including Izanagi ("The Male Who Invites") and Izanami ("The Female Who Invites") who create the Japanese islands.

Shinto's creation myth bears many elements of an ancient fertility-oriented religion. The actions of Izanagi ("The Male Who Invites") and Izanami ("The Female Who Invites") in creating the islands of Japan represent the roots of Japan's marital rituals, social protocols and morals, gender roles, and the place of other kami deities. The myth goes on to explain the interactions among the other kami as governing spirits of the heavens and the earth. The myth eventually culminates in one kami who takes on human form as the emperor of Japan.[17]

Understanding this myth is key to understanding the worldview and social makeup of Japanese society.

4.4 Ethics

The fundamental ethical concept in Shinto is purity. Shinto teaches that humans are born in a state of purity, but two types of things cause impurities. The first are personal acts of sin which are evil deeds. The second is external factors that are out of human control, such as natural disasters, sickness, or contact with death.

Occurrences of impurity must be remedied by ritual acts of purification to restore productivity to the individual and the group, but typically, moral judgment is not associated with the need for purification. Beyond these basic teachings of Shinto, adherents are likely to follow the ethical tenets of Confucianism due to its influence within Japanese culture and Shinto's lack of a complex moral code.[18]

4.5 Death and the Afterlife

Shinto is generally a peaceful religion. Adherents seek harmony with nature and the spiritual forces that inhabit their surroundings, and they do not glorify or seek death. Because of this, Shinto views death in profoundly negative terms. In Shinto, human spirits endure beyond death, but they either go to Yomi (a shadowy, dark underworld) or they become ancestral kami. Many Japanese households contain altars to ancestor spirits who are believed to watch over the families of their loved ones who remain on the earth.

This belief in an afterlife and the kami had a heavy influence on Japan during WW2, particularly Shinto's veneration for warrior spirits. What helped to motivate kamikaze pilots to commit suicide was the belief they would return as warrior kami who protect Japan. The term kamikaze means "divine wind."

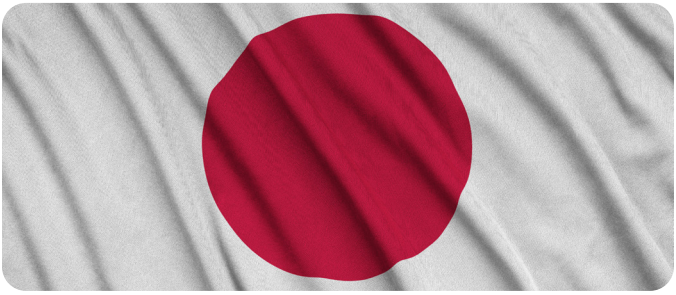
Because death has such a negative connotation in Shinto, its priests do not officiate at funerals. There are no Shinto cemeteries, and any death rituals observed by Shinto adherents are likely to be Buddhist ones.[19] Many Japanese people may believe in reincarnation, but this is more likely due to influences of Buddhism, not Shinto.

Chapter 05

MAJOR TEXTS

Shinto has no central, authoritative scriptures or revered texts. However, there are two major national historical texts compiled during the 7th-9th centuries in reaction to the growing influence of Buddhism. These foundational texts contain the mythology, rituals, traditional beliefs, and history of the emperors.[20]

Both texts trace Japan's imperial lineage to the kami of the sun, Amaterasu, to emphasize the divine origins of the family. Amaterasu is the most famous deity in Japan and is considered to be the ruler of the heavens. Shinto teaches that her offspring descended to Japan and eventually became the emperors of Japan.[21] Japan gets its name, "the land of the rising sun," from its devotion to Amaterasu, and Japan's national flag is a depiction of the sun.



5.1 Kojiki

The Kojiki is a collection of the "records of Ancient Matters." It is the oldest text in Japanese history and was compiled by the order of Emperor Tenmu in 711 A.D. It was produced through a compilation of all available information concerning the kami, the ancient origins of Japan, and the lineage of the royal family.[22]

5.2 Nihon Shoki

The Nihon Shoki, or "the Chronicles of Japan," is the second oldest book in the history of Japan and was completed in 720 A.D. Like the Kojiki, this chronological record of Japan's history begins with the kami creation stories and ends with the accounts of the emperors. The Nihon Shoki incorporates other mythical source material predating the Kojiki.[23]

Chapter 06

COMMON PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS

The rites of passage associated with Shinto are a combination of different traditions. Rites of purification, prayer, and offerings all relate to the worship of kami. Liturgical and ceremonial practices may take place at a shrine or at home.[24]

6.1 Shrines

At first, Shinto shrines were built as temporary structures, but with the arrival of Buddhism, Shintoists erected permanent buildings to preserve their own traditions. Thousands of these shrines have been constructed throughout Japan in various locations. A Shinto shrine is marked by a Torii (a symbolic gateway), and each shrine is generally associated with a single kami. A Torii is the easiest way to recognize a Shinto shrine. They mark the entrance to the shrine, and worshippers will bow at the Torii before entering the shrine.

Public ceremonies are held at shrines, and worshippers may make personal offerings and prayers to the kami.[25] Even though Shinto is primarily practiced at home, worshippers gather at shrines during festivals like Oshogatsu, the Japanese New Year.[26]

A Shinto devotee performs harae (purification) to cleanse sin or evil before entering a shrine or participating in a ritual. Harae involves taking a wooden ladle in the right hand and washing the left hand, then repeating the process for the right hand. The devotee then rinses the mouth using water poured into a cupped hand. Priests may also wave a haraigushi (a wand) over the person or object. Water and salt are viewed as purifying elements. Some restaurants in Japan have salt piled near the entrance, and sumo wrestlers sprinkle salt around a

wrestling ring before entering. These are both homages to the purification ritual harae.

6.2 Priests

Shinto priests may be called a shinshoku (“god’s employee”) or kannushi (“god master”). They officiate ceremonies at a shrine, but they do not hold any position or serve any role related to spiritual leadership or teaching as one might expect from pastors and priests in Christianity. Shinto priests can be male or female and are permitted to marry and have families. The high-ranking priests are often supported by offerings given by worshippers, and important priestly positions are traditionally passed down through the same family for centuries.[27]

Miko are young unmarried women who serve at the shrine and assist the priests in ceremonies. Miko are sometimes the daughters of the priests. They wear red skirts and white kimono jackets, and their primary role is to perform kagura (see below) to honor the kami.[28]

6.3 Kagura

Kagura, a term meaning "entertainment of the gods," is a theatrical ritual dance that is performed, usually by Miko (young women), to honor the kami on special occasions. Kagura includes music played on Japanese flutes and a string instrument (yamatogoto).[29]

6.4 Prayers and Offerings

At a shrine, worshippers perform shinsen, which is an offering to the kami in exchange for a prayer or request. The offering may involve several foods carefully prepared according to formal instructions.[30]

Prayers in Shinto are primarily wishes or hopes for good fortune. At a shrine, a worshiper gains the kami's attention by dropping a small coin into a box and ringing a bell or striking a gong. The worshipper does a ceremonial bow and clap to show respect for the kami. Prayers are typically given with an ema, which is a wooden plaque or tablet usually depicting animals. After writing a prayer on the ema, the worshipper will hang the ema at the shrine.[31]

After making an offering and leaving a prayer, Shinto adherents then take an omikuji. An omikuji is a random fortune written on a small slip of paper. Worshippers choose it from a box after making a small offering. They typically keep the good fortunes and discard the bad ones.[32]

Shinto rituals and worship that occur in household shrines or private home altars involve the use of kamidana ("god shelves"). Kamidana are positioned at eye-level and typically include an object such as a mirror, stone, or jewel as a physical "home" for the kami. Before offering something at the kamidana, family members will conduct purification of their hands.[33]

Shinto house-worship also includes the use of an ofuda. An ofuda is an amulet or talisman believed to protect people from sickness or evil. Ofuda feature the name of the kami written on a strip of paper, cloth, or wood. These must be purchased annually and are usually placed in the house on miniature altars called kamidana.[34]

6.5 Birth Rituals

Parents perform an important family ritual called miyamairi when a newborn boy is 31 days old or a girl is 33 days old. The infant wears a kimono, a traditional Japanese robe, and is taken to a local shrine with family and friends. The priest recites prayers over the infant and makes an offering to the kami as a way of introducing the infant to the kami and expressing gratitude.[35] Also, adherents may celebrate early birthdays and the beginning of adulthood (age 20) in the local shrine.[36]

6.6 Marriage Rituals

Marriage rituals are called shinzen kekkon, which means “marriage before the kami.” These are religious weddings in Japan that are typically officiated by Shinto priests in a shrine, but they may also include traditionally Buddhist or Christian elements. The san san kudo ritual is central to the ceremony. The bride and groom wear traditional kimonos while drinking sake. These ceremonies are fairly new, however, since they only became popular in the 1900s.[37]

Chapter 07

BARRIERS TO THE GOSPEL

7.1 Collective Identity

Japanese people may tend to have an allegiance to their collective identity – and therefore, to Shinto as their cultural heritage – against an individualistic presentation of the gospel. The traditional role of community determines individual affiliation to religion. The Japanese household remains very strong, and religious activities, while not necessarily holding religious significance, reinforce the social and cultural bonds inside and outside family ties. For example, Buddhism is often associated with the rites relating to funerals, and Shinto with nationalist militarism. Christianity, however, with its exclusivist approach to salvation and emphasis on active evangelism of individuals, is not in keeping with Japanese religious traditions.[38] About 80 percent of the population participates in two annual Shinto festivals, the New Year festival (Hatsumode) and the summer festival (Obon), indicating how deeply rooted communal ways of thinking are to the Japanese people.

Japanese society exhibits an emphasis on filial piety and a strong connection with ancestor worship, but these practices are bound by cultural and social traditions and the sense of belonging since religious doctrines are not emphasized by most Japanese and the concepts of deities are not necessarily cognitive beliefs. Japanese do not wish to be associated with institutionalized religion or zealous approaches to faith. To perform the rituals with sincerity and purity of mind is very important to Japanese religiosity, but religion is situational and complementary to contexts of life.

7.2 Action First, Understanding Later

The Japanese orientation toward processes means they look for action plans and want to know first "what to do" rather than observe root causes or grasp the implications of their entire worldview.[39] In Japanese Shinto, action precedes beliefs and gives meaning to the latter.[40] This means that Japanese people may adopt an experimental attitude and fluidity to religion.

When a problem arises, Japanese people may tend to modify their processes first before looking for the root cause of the problem, like Westerners tend to do. For many Japanese, the most important question is how to avoid the same problem in the future, not necessarily what caused the problem in the first place. This line of thought is best illustrated in the proliferation of new religions in Japan. These religions offer their adherents simple solutions to their problems without the burden of learning extensive amounts of doctrine.[41] As long as the new religion produces a good outcome, there is no need to concern oneself with core doctrine.

One problem for Christians in the West is the tendency to emphasize the importance of first recognizing the root causes of the human condition: humanity's fall into sin. Then, the atonement is presented as a direct solution to this problem. Westerners may then expect the uninitiated to understand the full story of salvation before converting to faith in Christ. The Japanese emphasis on processes and the desire to know "what to do now" might make it hard for them to follow the typical Western approach, which first identifies root causes. Hence, the barrier to the gospel is not in the gospel message itself but in how Westerners tend to present it to followers of Shinto.

7.3 Governmental Restrictions and History

As mentioned in the introduction, religion in Japan is a variable set of innovations and compromises, and Shinto is no stranger to adapting to new ways of thinking. Christianity's place in this mix, however, has been very limited. In the 1600s, the Tokugawa regime suppressed Christianity as a foreign religion because it believed Christian missionaries to be culturally subversive and corrosive of Japanese traditions. After this period, only a small and severely persecuted church remained for several centuries.[42]

Christian missionary activity increased dramatically after World War II. Christianity's association with Western culture meant it was received with mixed feelings after the war. On the one hand, it was associated with the new world of industrialization and thus garnered much interest as a tool for economic success. After WW2, when Japan was recovering from the war, the nation was very open to Christianity, but by the late 1950s and early 1960s, as Japan emerged once again as an economic power, growing anti-Western sentiments once again limited the influence of Christian missions.

Today, Christianity makes up less than 1% of the population of Japan, and most churches are very small. Japan is considered a secular country, and although religious freedom is guaranteed, Christianity does not exert great influence in the country.

7.4 Syncretism

Japanese Shinto is generally inclusive and complementary of other religions – but with a twist. The Japanese synthesis of religious traditions combines various elements without discarding the original identity of those religious traditions. For example, a person may have multiple "memberships" in various religions – and so may frequent Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines – but neither religion will be mixed with elements of the other. The desire to preserve Japanese culture while remaining flexible toward religious practices has created an interesting dynamic between faith groups throughout Japan's history.[43] Due to the "process-oriented" outlook on religion, the Japanese have incorporated and assimilated various religious traditions and practices into daily life.[44] Still, Shinto has retained its unique religious identity.

This presents challenges to Christians who seek to evangelize. A Shinto follower might readily incorporate aspects of Christianity, even attending church or Bible studies, without accepting the entire worldview of the Christian faith or believing in Jesus Christ as God and savior of the world. To Shintoists, religion is a practical matter of relating to spiritual powers (kami) for one's personal benefit. Japanese people may join a new religion if the promise of "success" is convincing enough.[45] Thus, it can be difficult to communicate the exclusive nature of Christianity and Christian sacrificial living without alienating Shintoists' cultural sensibilities or practical thinking.

Chapter 08

BRIDGES TO THE GOSPEL

8.1 Family

Japanese culture places a high value on loyalty to family and society. Individual choices about one's life, career, and religion are generally directed by group or tribal identity. Japanese communal orientation often conflicts with the individualistic way of presenting the gospel commonly found in Western settings. Thus, it can be difficult for Western Christians to make headway in evangelizing if they share the gospel with a focus on "making a decision for Christ," which ultimately results in separation from family. Loyalty to one's family may keep a Japanese person from converting to Christ.[46]

Emphasizing the biblical concept of the family of God can build a bridge to this communal orientation. In numerous places (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4; 1 Tim. 3), the church is presented as the body of Christ that cares for each member of its community. Engagement with followers of Shinto should focus on communicating the idea of the church as a body or family that represents Christ on earth. In addition, gospel presentations should emphasize the Christian's adoption into the family of God, not merely on the individual finding his or her unique role and calling in life. God calls Christians out of certain associations with the world and family, but He also calls them into new ones marked by loyalty to Christian brothers and sisters and mutual edification of the body of Christ.[47]

8.2 Faith Seeking Understanding

Because of the action-oriented, process-driven approach to religion within Japanese culture, it will be beneficial to address the nature of faith in Christ first

before discussing the origins of sin. Faith in Christ involves daily habits and spiritual disciplines analogous to the rituals of Shinto. Showing a Shintoist what it looks like practically to follow Christ – the "process" of discipleship – can open doors for conversations about faith and salvation.

A full presentation of the gospel cannot afford to leave out the causes of the world's condition, but it may be wise to use this alternative approach for initial presentations of the gospel. Christians must be prudent about the cultural implications of Western evangelism within Japanese culture. Contextualization of the gospel without compromise is needed for evangelism to be successful.

8.3 The Uniqueness of the Gospel

Japanese people tend to be syncretistic in their approach to other religions. It is important to present the gospel as the unique message of salvation from God and Jesus Christ as the way back to God, the true Creator. This means that Christianity must be presented as the unique way back to God, not one alternative among many, nor the religion of Western prosperity. In contrast to other religions that focus on rituals, traditions, and sacrifices to appease the gods (kami), or religions that demand good works to merit atonement for sins, Christianity offers a free gift of forgiveness for sins because of Jesus Christ's offering of Himself as an atonement for sin. God is pleased when people put their faith in the work of Jesus Christ rather than trying to please Him through other means. This makes Christianity unique among all religions.

8.4 The Spiritual World

Shinto, like other animistic religions, holds that the world is permeated with spiritual forces. These forces may be personal or impersonal, but in either case, a follower of Shinto will seek to relate to the kami and appease them through offerings, prayers, and rituals.

The Christian worldview can account for these spiritual forces and affirm the reality of their existence. In the Christian worldview, these spiritual forces can be angels, Satan, or demons, and these entities can and do affect the world. However, care should be taken not to jump to conclusions regarding spiritual forces inhabiting specific objects in nature or in homes. Folklore and myth play a major part in Shinto traditions, and even though the belief in spiritual forces is valid, not every instance will be. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for Christians to encounter tangible spiritual warfare in places where animistic religions are heavily practiced. Thus, the sincere belief in spirits inhabiting the world should not be dismissed but affirmed and clarified.

Christians should engage thoughtfully on this topic with followers of Shinto, especially since some of them may worship ancestral kami in their homes or territorial kami in their shrines, towns, and villages. The gospel offers hope and freedom to live without fear of these entities or the fear of death. Christ's victory over death offers hope of eternal life and peace to all who believe and trust in Him. By emphasizing the power of Jesus Christ over all spiritual beings, God's sovereignty over all of creation, and the presence of the Holy Spirit to guard the followers of Christ, a cogent and effective gospel presentation can offer adherents of Shinto a new and emancipated way to understand the spiritual world and their place in it.

Appendix

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books and Articles

1. Boyett, Jason. 12 Major World Religions. Naperville: Callisto Publishing, 2016.
2. Corduan, Winfried. Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions. 2nd ed. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012.
3. Hindson, Ed and Ergun Caner. The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.
4. Muck, Terry C, Harold A Netland, and Gerald R. McDermott. Handbook of Religion: A Christian Engagement with Traditions, Teachings, and Practices. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.
5. Studebaker, John A. David Cashin, and Chris Gnanakan. The Quest of World Religions: An Introduction and Anthology. Cognella Academic Publishing, 2022.

References

[1] Quoted in Winfried Corduan, Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998), 310.
[2] Winfried Corduan, Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions, 2nd ed, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 424.
[3] Ibid., 248.
[4] Jason Boyett, Twelve Major World Religions: The Beliefs, Rituals, Traditions of Humanity's Most Influential Faiths (Naperville, IL: Callisto Publishing, 2016), 236.
[5] Sebastian Kim, "North Asia: History, Beliefs, Practices," in Handbook of Religion: A Christian Engagement with Traditions, Teachings, and Practices, eds. Terry C. Muck, Harold A Netland, and Gerald R. McDermott (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 269-271.
[6] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 233, 236-237; Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 428-430, 433; Kim, "North Asia," 269-270.
[7] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 246.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid, 249.
[11] Ibid, 246.
[12] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 238.
[13] Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 424.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 238.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 426-428.
[18] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 239.
[19] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 240.
[20] Ibid., 238-240.
[21] Ibid., 242.
[22] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 240; Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 426.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 240; Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 442.
[25] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 241.
[26] Ibid., 241.
[27] Ibid, 241.
[28] Ibid., 244.
[29] Ibid., 246.
[30] Ibid., 244.
[31] Ibid., 245.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Kim, "North Asia," 271.
[37] Boyett, 12 Major World Religions, 246; Kim, "North Asia," 271.
[38] Kim, "North Asia," 271-272.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 445-446.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 423-424; Kim, "North Asia," 271-272.
[44] Kim, "North Asia," 271-272.
[45] Corduan, Neighboring Faiths, 445-446.
[46] Ibid., 446-447.
[47] Ibid.

Want to learn about other religions? Ask LU Serve for a Traveler's Guide to any of these religions:

Christianity
Judaism
Islam
Hinduism
Buddhism
Sikhism
Confucianism and Taoism
Shinto
Indigenous Religions
Baha'i

Each guidebook will teach you about (1) a religion's history, demographics, and regions of the world, (2) its major beliefs, customs, and practices, and (3) how to share your faith with adherents. Contact LU Serve at luserve@liberty.edu for more information.

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