

Shinto: Religion or Way of Life

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神道



What is Shinto?

- Defined as the indigenous religion of Japan
- No definitive beginning, founder, or sacred texts
- The way of the Kami
- Others argue it is simply the Japanese people's way of life



Origins

- Adopted from the Chinese word “shendao”
 - 神 (spirit) 道 (way)
- Basis comes from Koshinto (ancient way of the gods) during Jomon period
- Originally a collection of myths and beliefs
 - creation of Japan by Izanagi-no-Mikoto and Inazami-no-Mikoto (right)



Organization and Development

- Organized religion developed with introduction of Buddhism in 552 AD
- Culminated based on religious structure of Buddhism and became dependent in the late 6th century
- Combined Japanese and Buddhist thought and practice until late medieval period
- Was later formed with Japanese ideals and beliefs

Kami 神

- Most important figure is the emperor, who is viewed as a living kami
- Inhabit aspects of nature
- Believed to have two natures
- Worshipped to appease their unpredictable nature
- Collectively referred to as “yaoyozoru no kami”

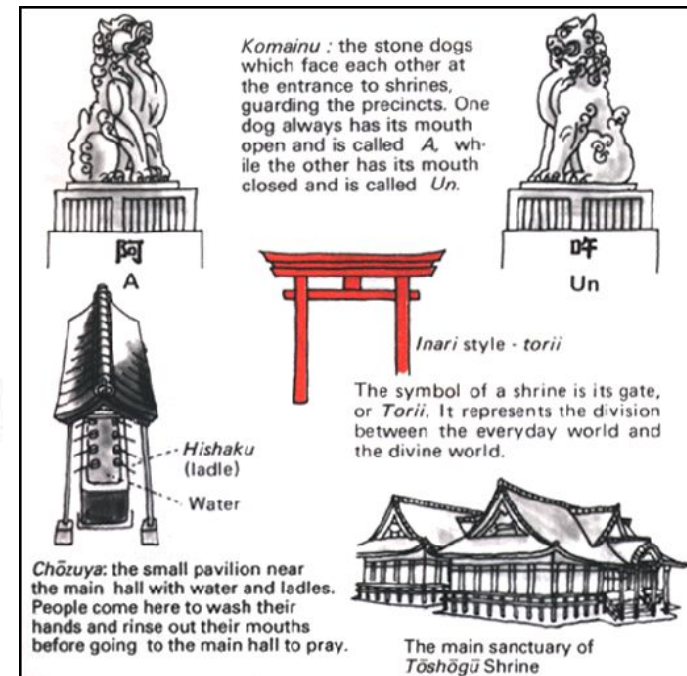
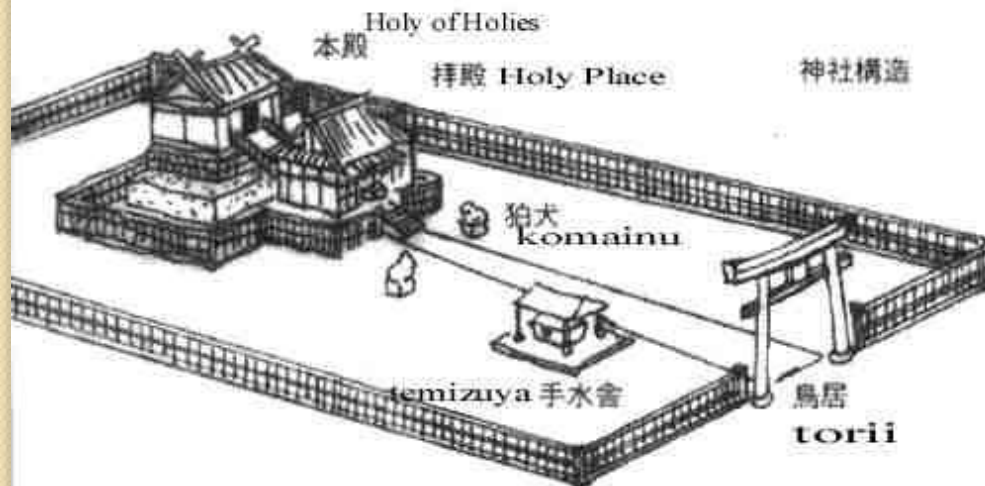


Shrines 神社

- Enacted under influence of Buddhist permanent architectural structures
- Easy access to worship



Key Features



Modern Shinto

- Do not need to declare religion
- Can visit temples and shrines at any time
- Festivals are still held
- Kami are worshipped /prayed to during times of need or hardship



Religion or Not?

- Movement towards redefinition of Shinto as a nonreligious set of native beliefs and customs
- Focuses less on individual belief and more on celebrating deities
- No need to be religious in order to practice or visit Shinto shrines
- Has become a way of life instead of a religious practice