
SHINTO — An Overview

Inception: 660 BC

Adherents: 4 Million [EBI Estimate]

Primary Value Proposition: Nature Worship, Emperor Worship, and Purity

The Word of (about and/or attributed to) God:

- In both the beauties of nature and the virtues of men does the Prince of Heaven seek to reveal himself and to show forth his righteous nature.
- I am the maker of heaven and earth; the sun and the moon and all the stars obey my will.
- Although I am great and supreme, still I have regard for the prayer of the poorest man.
- If any creature will worship me, I will hear his prayer and grant the desire of his heart.
- Every time man yields to anxiety, he takes one step away from the leading of the spirit of his heart. If you would obtain heavenly help, put away your pride; every hair of pride shuts off saving light, as it were, by a great cloud.
- If you are not right on the inside, it is useless to pray for that which is on the outside. If I hear your prayers, it is because you come before me with a clean heart, free from falsehood and hypocrisy, with a soul which reflects truth like a mirror.

Core Beliefs: The word Shinto ("Way of the Gods") was adopted from the written Chinese shén dào. Shén (Equivalent to the Japanese Kami) are defined as "spirits," "essences," or "deities." Dào (Originally from the Chinese Tao) is defined as a philosophical path or study. The warrior code of Bushido drew its own traditions from Shinto and Confucianism. These samurai (knights) embraced the precepts of loyalty, gratitude, courage, justice, truthfulness, politeness, reserve, and honor. Shinto is the fundamental connection between the power and beauty of nature (the land) and the Japanese people. It is the manifestation of a path to understanding the institution of divine power.

Shinto teaches that everything contains a kami, a spiritual essence. Kami is generally accepted to describe the innate supernatural force that is above the actions of man, the realm of the sacred, and is inclusive of gods, spirit figures, and human ancestors. The kami reside in all things, but certain places are designated for the interface of people and kami (the common world and the sacred). The principal worship of kami is done at public shrines or worship at small home shrines called kamidana. The public shrine is a building or place that functions as a conduit for kami. A fewer number of shrines are also natural places called mori. The most common of the mori are sacred groves of trees, or mountains, or waterfalls.