

The Japanese Religion of Shintoism

Translated – Spirits of the Wind or the Way of the Gods
Founded between 700 to 800 C.E.



In Shintoism, nature is divine. Deities live in rocks, trees, mountains, and all of the forces of nature. This means that the way of the gods identifies these deities by such names as the Sun Goddess, Moon God, Mountain Goddesses, and the Food God.

The Shinto way teaches that people should be thankful for all blessings of nature, for birth, growth, and life. Death, decay, and sterility should be regarded as evil.

The most joyous festivals are related to the planting, growing, and harvesting of crops.

Ancient Shintoism had no shrines except the soaring tree, the quiet stream, and the majestic mountaintop. Later, under the influence of Buddhism, shrines appeared, the most famous being at Ise. To enter the shrine, one must first pass through a structure called a **Torii**.



Every 20 years these shrines are destroyed and rebuilt out of unpainted wood. Generally people approach the shrine, wash their hands, rinse their mouths, clap their hands, and some then ring a bell and make an offering to the gods. They then pray, bow their heads and leave.

True Shintoists find divinity outside the shrine, not within.

Those who participate in the rituals of Shintoism must be physically pure, hence the washing prior to prayers. The deities will be offended if a person approaches who is dirty. Shintoism is not concerned with moral guilt or impurities beyond the physical. It is actual physical uncleanliness that must be washed away.