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RELIGION
INTRODUCTION

Japan’s Religious Traditions

Japanese religious traditions consist of both indigenous and borrowed religions. Shinto, the “way of the kami (gods),” is the term used to describe Japan’s indigenous tradition, although Shinto as an organized tradition with common doctrines and practices probably dates back no further than the medieval period. Related, but often treated separately from Shinto, are Japan’s so-called folk religions (minkan shinko). Rather than comprising an organized belief system, the term folk religion refers to local practices usually involving local deities and rituals that often focus on the agricultural cycle and the well-being of the local community or village.

The foreign traditions of Buddhism and Christianity impacted Japan during the medieval and early modern periods. Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the sixth century from the Asian mainland and quickly became the religion of the aristocrats and the imperial family, thus assuming political significance. It was not until Japan’s medieval period that Buddhism became broadly diffused throughout Japanese society.

European missionaries and traders introduced Christianity to Japan in the middle of the 16th century. It was initially embraced by some Japanese feudal lords as much for the lure of trade as for the Christian religious message. By the middle of the 17th century, Christianity had been banned in Japan as a dangerous foreign presence. Christian missionaries were not permitted in the country again until Japan’s modern period.

While Christianity was never fully embraced by the Japanese, the medieval period was a particularly active time for Shinto-Buddhist interactions, a phenomenon referred to by the term shibutsu shugo, the fusion of gods and Buddhas. This fusing of religions represented reconciliation between the indigenous and foreign traditions. Sometimes, for instance, kami were treated as the more concrete and immediate aspect of the sacred in the natural world, while the Buddhas and bodhisattvas represented a more distant essence.

In the early 19th century, new popular religious movements were formed. Among those that attracted the largest followings were Kurozumikyo, Tenrikyo, and Konkokyo. These traditions usually arose as a result of charismatic leaders whose religious ideas and practices were based in their own religious experiences. These experiences often reflected the overlay of Shinto, Buddhist, and other aspects of existing Japanese religious traditions.

Although individual Japanese religions can be discussed, it is important to bear in mind that in many periods of Japanese history—including the medieval and early modern—distinctions between traditions were not very sharply drawn. This was true both in terms of a person’s worship and in terms of Japanese culture more generally. It was typical for a person to pray to a kami on one occasion and to invoke the aid of a bodhisattva on another. Similarly, Japanese literature and theater often contained plots in which multiple religious ideas and practices were expressed. Thus, in medieval and early modern Japan, the Japanese tended to practice what is now referred to as multiple traditions, but which at the time would have probably been seen as multiple access points to the sacred. Interaction was as prevalent an aspect of Japanese religions as was exclusion between religious traditions.

The word shukyo (religion), a term referring to religion as distinguishable from other human endeavors, such as politics, only gained currency in the late 19th century. Until then, the Japanese had no single term for religion in general. Religious traditions practiced in Japan, such as Buddhism (Bukkyo), Shinto (also known as kami no michi), and Christianity (Kurisuto-kyo), were identified by name, but a term for the universal concept of religion (shukyo) was not coined until after the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

One other aspect of Japanese religions is illuminated by the term shukyo. If religion is thought of in the Western sense as something one professes faith in, religion is defined in terms of what people think and believe. Practice is viewed as secondary to faith. After all, it might be argued, why practice what one does not believe? But in medieval and early modern Japan, practice was far more central to religious
identity than was any profession of faith. The reason, in part, is the very close connection between culture and religion at that time.

### Common Characteristics

Japanese religion displays great diversity of forms and practices, but there are also aspects of Japanese religious attitudes that reflect cohesion across traditions. This introduction will briefly discuss some important themes.

#### CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE SACRED

An intimate relationship between human beings and the sacred exists. Sacredness is found not only in specific gods (*kami*), but also in natural phenomena and in certain human beings, both living and dead. The sacred is understood to be located within the world of humans, not in some transcendent or distant place.

#### RELIGION AND THE FAMILY

Japanese traditions often treat the family as a site of religious activity. Families identified a tutelary god that protected them. Deceased ancestors were propitiated to bring blessings on the living. Buddhist home altars (*butsudan*) were utilized for prayer for the happy rebirth of the deceased. Even Confucian thought, usually associated with political and moral philosophy rather than religion, placed a high premium on filial piety.

#### CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE STATE

Unlike the contemporary United States where there is a debate about the proper relationship between church and state, in medieval and early modern Japan, a very close connection between religion and the state was deemed both proper and necessary. Though there are exceptions, religion was often treated as ancillary to politics. Used to create national identity, religion served the nation as a means of providing legitimacy for political arrangements current at any given time. Japan's national myth, that Japan was created from the sacred acts of the *kami* whose descendants form the imperial line, is one such use of religion to justify political power. The Buddhist priest Nichiren viewed Japan as a sacred country in which the truth of the Lotus Sutra would be enacted.

#### THIS-WORLDLINESS

There tends to be an emphasis on “this-worldly” concerns and benefits rather than an emphasis on death and the afterlife. Some Japanese Buddhist traditions express a deep concern over what happens in the next life, but this is often a subsidiary religious focus. Material benefits are sought through Shinto and Buddhist ritual practices. Religious rituals often deal with being delivered from human troubles—such as illness, debt, drought, and other causes of human misery—rather than with the final disposition of one’s soul. Further, this world is not radically separated from the next, making death a transition rather than a permanent change. Unlike some Western traditions, one need not reject this world to gain spiritual benefits.

#### IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

Religious rituals, though directed to numerous different ends, were often intended for life cycle events such as birth, marriage, and death. Religion was often intimately connected to the everyday, rather than directed beyond daily life. Festivals, too, celebrated various key events in the life of a community. Festivals were held in celebration of the harvest, the New Year, and to honor the spirits of the dead. Both rituals and festivals were methods of personal purification, showing appreciation for the fertility of the land, making offerings to honor the gods, Buddhas, and ancestors, requesting help in troubled times, and seeking the welfare of the community.

#### SACREDNESS OF MOUNTAINS

Mountains have long held a special place in the Japanese religious imagination. Mountains, large and small, were considered to be the abode of the *kami*.
Similarly, mountains were sometimes seen as the abode of deceased ancestors. Because of the sacred nature of mountains, shrines and temples were often built in these locations. A Shinto-Buddhist fusion tradition, Shugendo, focused in part on ascetic rituals performed in desolate mountain locations.

PRAYER AND VERBAL INVOCATIONS

Both Shinto and Buddhism utilize prayer as a way to invoke the powers of gods, Buddhas, and bodhisattvas. Prayers provide a means for humans to request blessings or assistance for their material and spiritual needs. Both Shinto and Buddhism developed specific systems of prayers and invocations. Norito in Shinto and mantras (shingon) in Buddhism are two examples.

SHINTO TRADITIONS

Introduction

Shinto is Japan’s indigenous religious tradition. The term Shinto means the “way of the gods (kami)” and is written with the Chinese characters shin (“god,” “the sacred;” also pronounced kami) and to (“way;” also pronounced michi). Unlike many religions, Shinto has no founder and does not view any single text as its sole scripture. Shinto is closely associated with the Japanese sense of cultural identity. Shinto emphasizes practice over thought or formal doctrine. There is not a formal Shinto theology or rigidly codified set of moral rules. Shinto is intimately connected with the agricultural cycle and a sense of the sacredness of the natural world. The worship of kami and other ritual practices express these concerns.

Central to Shinto traditions is the concept of kami. The word kami refers generally to the sacred manifest in the natural world and specifically to the deities of the Shinto tradition. Kami can be both benevolent and destructive, but if properly worshipped, they are believed to grant blessings to human beings. Ritual practice is central to Shinto traditions and includes such activities as purification, food offerings, dance, and festivals honoring the gods. While kami may be worshipped at shrines under the supervision of Shinto priests (kannushi), they can also be worshipped individually at a shrine or in the home. Further, Shinto associations (ko) provide yet another avenue for interaction with the kami.

Unlike the hierarchies of deities in other traditions, the pantheon of Shinto deities is only loosely structured. What structure it does have is largely the result of the imperial mythology expressed in the Kojiki and the Nihon shoki. It is said that there are 800 myriads of gods (yaoyorozu no kami), a huge number that represents the idea that kami, or the presence of the sacred, suffuses all aspects of the natural world. Kami, while deities, are certainly nothing like the omnipotent, transcendent God of monotheistic traditions. Kami are very much in the world, found both in animate and inanimate objects, such as mountains, rocks, trees, the Sun, animals, and human beings. Kami can be ancestors or even living people, such as the emperor, and are active in the lives of human beings, providing blessings in health and human activities, such as agriculture. In a famous description, the 18th-century Shinto scholar, Motoori Norinaga, described the term kami as having multiple significations. “The word kami refers, in the most general sense, to all divine beings of heaven and earth that appear in the classics. More particularly, the kami are the spirits that abide in and are worshipped at the shrines. In principle human beings, birds, animals, trees, plants, mountains, oceans—all may be kami. According to ancient usage, whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence, or inspired a feeling of awe was called kami.”

There was not a unified Shinto “tradition” until at least the medieval period, but the term is nevertheless used to describe the complex of traditions subsumed under this category. The term Shinto is descriptive of two different aspects of Japanese indigenous religion. On the one hand, Shinto describes an organized set of doctrines and practices related to the state. This perspective on Shinto is strongly tied to the mythology and founding stories of the imperial family, especially as expressed in the
Kojiki (Record of ancient matters, compiled in 712). Shinto was important to the legitimating narratives by which the imperial family justified its right to rule. This aspect of Shinto was conspicuous for the rituals performed expressing the intimate connection between emperor and kami.

The term Shinto also has a more generic meaning, referring generally to local practices—both in the home and in the village—focused on local deities. Worship can occur at a local shrine or at home before a family altar (kamidana). Rituals and festivals are directed to these local deities in hopes of receiving their blessings. Because of the association of kami with deceased ancestors, there is sometimes a strong sense of family connection to a kami. Local worship was often connected to rice deities and local festivals. These rituals were particularly concerned with the agricultural cycle and other seasonal events impacting small, agrarian communities.

Historically, one of the key concepts in Shinto thought is the idea of transgression, or tsumi. Although this term is sometimes translated as sin, tsumi was not originally associated with moral failing. Instead, this term referred to the idea of ritual impurity (kegare). Rather than a central concern with human agency, the traditional view of tsumi is concerned with the physical impurity that results from contact with such things as disease, blood, death and other elements that are, in a sense, beyond one’s control. In order to counteract the deleterious effects of transgressions that result from contact with impurity, Shinto rituals are intended to restore one to purity.

In the medieval and early modern periods, Shinto thought was influenced by both Confucian and Buddhist ideas. One result of this interaction was that the original Shinto focus on tsumi (transgression) as one of physical impurity was transformed to include the notion of moral transgression.

Shinto Mythology

Japanese mythology, though dating back long before the medieval and early modern periods, nevertheless remained an important part of Japanese culture and identity throughout the medieval and early modern periods. In the Edo period, Shinto revivalist movements used Japanese myths compiled in texts like the Kojiki (Record of ancient matters, compiled in 712 at the order of the imperial family) to argue their case for Shinto as the moral and spiritual compass of the Japanese people.

The Kojiki, Japan’s earliest extant written text, recounts the story of the creation of the Japanese islands by Izanagi and Izanami (both brother and sister and husband and wife). It tells the story of the birth of the kami, especially the birth of Amaterasu, the sun goddess, from whom the Japanese imperial family—and by extension the Japanese people—are descended. The narrative tells of how Ninigi no Mikoto, grandson of Amaterasu Omikami, was sent to establish sovereignty over the Japanese islands. It was Ninigi’s great grandson, Jimmu, who became, according to the narrative, the first emperor of Japan. All Japanese emperors are said to descend from this sacred line beginning with Amaterasu. The three regalia—mirror, sword, and jewel—the symbols of imperial ruling authority, are said to have originated with Amaterasu who started the tradition of passing these symbols to each subsequent ruler. In the medieval and early modern periods (in fact, up until 1945), this Kojiki narrative was used to argue the legitimacy of the imperial family as rightful rulers. The origins of the gods are at once the origins of the Japanese islands and the Japanese people. Hence, it was argued, Japan is a sacred land.

Medieval and Early Modern Shinto

Although what is termed Shinto predates the introduction of Buddhist and Confucian traditions, medieval and early modern Shinto was often responding to Buddhist and Confucian influences, sometimes embracing them and sometimes setting itself apart. Soon after Buddhism’s introduction to Japan, Shinto kami were often understood to be Buddhist protective deities. For this reason, Buddhist temples often included a shrine for their related kami. A further development, a theory known as bonji suiijaku, viewed kami as manifesta-
tions (suijaku) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas (bonji) creating a correspondence between specific kami and their Buddha and bodhisattva counterparts. For example, Amaterasu Omikami and Dainichi Nyorai were sometimes connected. Such matching of kami with Buddhas and bodhisattvas started in the Heian period, but its importance extended well into the medieval period. Two Shinto-Buddhist fusion schools were particularly important during the Kamakura period: Ryobu (“Dual Aspect”) Shinto, which blended Shingon Buddhism with Shinto ideas, and Sanno (“Mountain King”) Shinto which fused Tendai Buddhism and Shinto.

Whereas Ryobu and Sanno Shinto were schools that viewed Shinto deities as manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the medieval period also witnessed the development of Shinto schools that viewed kami as the essence and Buddhas and bodhisattvas as subsidiary manifestations. Yoshida Kantei (1435–1511) was one notable theorist who made such an assertion.

In the early modern period, Shinto, instead of encompassing Buddhism, entered into dialogue with Neo-Confucianism. By this time, Neo-Confucian ideas had become quite important as a way of thinking about ethics and political philosophy. Rather than blend or fuse Shinto with Buddhism, some Edo-period Shinto figures reconsidered Shinto in light of Neo-Confucian ideas. In the same way that Shinto and Buddhism had been blended, so Neo-Confucian ideas were combined with Shinto ones.

While some embraced a fusion of Shinto and Neo-Confucianism, others sought to purge any foreign influence from Shinto, whether Buddhist or Confucian. Especially important in this regard was the Kokugaku (“National Learning”) movement, which advocated the study of Japan’s ancient past through philological studies of early texts, such as the Kojiki, that recounted the values and attitudes that the Japanese held in the Age of the Gods (kami no yo). This was an attempt to return to a pristine time unsullied by the Buddhism, Confucianism, and other foreign ideas that were seen as leading Japan away from its true path. Kokugaku sought to rediscover the ancient roots of Japanese culture and religion through painstaking examination of old texts.

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**Shinto Schools**

**Ryobu Shinto** Dual Aspect Shinto. Also known as Shingon Shinto. A Shinto-Buddhist fusion school developed within Shingon Buddhism. The term ryobu refers to the dual aspect of the universe symbolized in Shingon by the dual womb-world and diamond-world mandalas. In this view, the universe is understood as having the twofold characteristics of noumenon and phenomenon, which the mandalas symbolize. Ryobu Shinto also asserts the identity of Shingon Buddhism and Shinto. For instance, the Ise Inner Shrine corresponds to the womb-world mandala (Taizokai), and the Ise Outer Shrine corresponds to the diamond-world mandala (Kongokai). Amaterasu Omikami, enshrined in the Inner Shrine, is identified with the Buddha Mahavairocana (Dainichi Nyorai).

**Sanno Shinto** Mountain King Shinto. Also known as Sanno Ichijitsu (“One Reality”) Shinto or Tendai
Shinto. Sanno Shinto was founded by a Tendai monk named Tenkai (1536–1643). Sanno, or “Mountain King,” refers to the guardian deity of Tendai Buddhism who is enshrined at the Hie Shrine on Mt. Hiei. According to Sanno Shinto, the Mountain King deity is identified as a manifestation of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, and Amaterasu Omikami is a manifestation of Dainichi Nyorai. When Tokugawa Ieyasu died, his funeral was conducted according to the ritual prescriptions of Sanno Shinto.

Watarai Shinto Also known as Ise Shinto and Geku (Outer Shrine) Shinto. A form of Shinto associated with the Watarai family, a lineage of Shinto priests in charge of the Outer Shrine at Ise Shrine. The devout of the Outer Shrine worshipped the deity Toyouke no Okami, who was traditionally viewed as serving Amaterasu, worshipped at the Inner Shrine. Starting in the 13th century, Watarai family priests argued the two shrines were equal. To legitimate this perspective, Watarai priests compiled the Shinto gobusho (Five books of Shinto). These texts recounted the story of the imperial family’s descent from the kami and a history of the Ise Shrine that asserted its highest position over all other Shinto shrines. Watarai theorists also claimed the priority of Shinto over Buddhism and repudiated honji suijaku and its view that kami are but manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Yuiitsu Shinto “Only” Shinto. Also known as Yoshida Shinto. A form of Shinto associated with the Yoshida family and especially with teachings set forth by Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511). Yuiitsu Shinto was particularly concerned with overturning the idea of bonji suijaku and asserting the priority of kami over the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Yuiitsu Shinto priests performed the funeral rites for Toyotomi Hideyoshi on his death in 1598.

Suika Shinto “Conferment of Benefits” Shinto. Also called Suiga Shinto. A form of Shinto that identified similarities between Shinto and Neo-Confucian ideas. Suika Shinto was developed by Yamazaki Ansai (1619–82), an ardent supporter of Shinto who had originally been a Zen monk. Ansai asserted that the Neo-Confucian way of heaven was identical to the way of the kami in Shinto.

Kokugaku National Learning. A Shinto philosophical school that sought the restoration of a pure Shinto that existed prior to the Buddhist, Confucian, and other foreign influences. First developed in the 17th century, the school’s most important spokesperson was Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801). Moto-ori, using detailed philological and philosophical study of ancient texts such as the Kojiki, argued that Japan must embrace the values and attitudes present during the Age of the Gods (kami no yo).

Shinto Rituals and Festivals

Shinto practice is characterized by an extensive ritual and festival calendar. Shinto rituals assume a variety of forms, but in general are concerned with obtaining blessings from the kami for a happy and prosperous family and community. These involve obtaining blessings for aspects of one’s daily life and agriculture-related rituals for a bountiful harvest. Rituals can occur at both the national and local community level, or they may also be private requests to the gods. Shinto rituals often require the devotee to undergo some kind of ritual purification, such as fasting, abstinence, and/or cleansing the hands and mouth with water, to avoid offending the gods. Festivals (matsuri), which play an important role in Shinto tradition, are held on numerous days throughout the year and usually entail lively and colorful displays. They are designed to give thanks to the kami and to venerate the divinities so that they will continue to confer benevolence on their followers.

Daijosai Great Food Offering Ritual. Dates back to at least the seventh century, but was rarely practiced from the middle of the 15th century to the late 17th century, when it came to be regularly practiced again. The Daijosai is conducted by a newly enthroned emperor and is one of three rituals conducted to mark the accession of a new emperor. Rice grown especially for the ritual is offered to Amaterasu, the imperial ancestor kami.

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Gion Matsuri  Gion Festival. The most famous of the many Gion festivals held throughout the country is the one performed at the Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto in July. Yasaka enshrines the Kami Gozu Tenno, a guardian deity with Indian origins who protects the Jetavana monastery (Gion shoja) associated with the historical Buddha. Gozu is believed to be especially efficacious in protecting one's health. The Gion Festival dates to the ninth century. During the Edo period, Kyoto merchants became patrons of the festival.

barae Purification rituals. Purification rituals are central to Shinto practice and are recounted throughout Shinto history. They are practiced, for instance, by the Kami in the Kojiki. Ritual purification is required of worshippers. In order to approach the Kami for blessings and requests, petitioners must cleanse themselves of any pollution (kegare) caused by transgressions (tsumi). Purification is accomplished by rituals involving water, prayers, offerings, and other means.

batsumode First visit to a shrine or temple at the New Year to pray for blessings in the upcoming year.

imi Taboo. Refers to rituals used to avoid pollution or inauspicious things. Causes of impurity are called imi. Imi are related to the idea of kegare, ritual impurity, in the sense that impurities are to be avoided or, if encountered, purified. Death, birth, blood, and disease are some examples of imi. Certain words also need to be avoided and are called imikotoba, or taboo words. Examples include the use of the number 4 (shi) because it is a homonym for the word for death (shi).

kagura Ritual music and dances that enact the activities of the Kami and other sacred events are conducted both at the imperial court and at local shrines.

Kannamesai New Rice Festival. Held in September during the medieval and early modern periods. Ancient annual ritual performed at the Ise Shrine by the emperor. Offerings, including rice from the year's harvest, sake, and other foods, are made to Amaterasu.

kegare Pollution in the sense of ritual impurity or defilement. Pollution originally referred to agents of defilement such as death, childbirth, and menstruation. By the early modern period, spiritual pollution came also to be included in the category of kegare. Regardless of the type, pollution can be removed through purification rituals. A 10th-century Shinto text refers to several categories of pollution, including contact with blood, death (both human and animal), unsanitary things, natural disasters, and sexual impropriety.

misogi A ritual of purification through the use of water after contact with a physical or spiritual pollution. The concept of water being used for personal purification originates in the Kojiki where the god Izanagi purified himself with water after contact with the dead. Although there are various kinds of purification rituals that involve water as the cleansing agent, perhaps the most common is the practice of temizu, whereby one washes both hand and mouth with water before entering the grounds of a Shinto shrine.

Niinamesai New Rice Harvest Festival. This is a festival held in the autumn after the harvest to thank the Kami for the year's rice. Although many local autumn festivals thank the gods for an abundant harvest, the Niinamesai is a national festival that features rice offerings presented by the emperor to the gods. This ritual includes a communal meal with the gods.

norito Prayers. Norito are formulaic words addressed to the Kami on ritual occasions. As sacred speech, they provide a means to connect human beings with the gods. These prayers can be considered a verbal offering to a god as well as a statement of why the Kami is being addressed. Norito are used to express thanks to the Kami for their blessings, to list offerings made, and to identify people making the prayer and their request to the gods.

okage mairi Literally, “thanksgiving pilgrimage.” This term refers to the Edo-period practice of pilgrimage to the Ise Shrine. Occurring about every 60 years, these pilgrimages were usually spontaneous and involved a large number of pilgrims. The Edo
period was witness to four major pilgrimages, the last occurring in 1830. Pilgrims especially sought the blessings of the sun goddess, Amaterasu. These pilgrimages were hardly solemn affairs—they included singing and frenzied dancing.

Shinto Ritual Objects

Shinto rituals and festivals make use of a number of different objects in the conduct of religious practices. Paper, rice, salt, wood, and branches are among the items used in the performance of ritual. These items can be intricately decorated or unadorned strips of paper. Some of the more common ritual objects and their purposes are described below.

**ema** Literally, “horse picture.” Small wooden boards sold at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and used as votive offerings. The name may derive from *ema* as replacements for offerings of horses to shrines. In the medieval and early modern periods, a tradition of large *ema* (*oema*) developed whereby artists made requests to the gods for benefits or artistic ability. These large *ema* were often displayed in *emado*, halls specially built for their exhibition.

**gohei** A wooden staff with paper strips attached. The staff is held by a Shinto priest during a ritual to represent the presence of a *kami*.

**hamaya** Evil-destroying arrow. Arrows symbolizing the possibility of conquering misfortune are sold at Shinto shrines during New Year festivities.

*6.2 Barrels of sake given as offerings to a Shinto shrine* (Photo William E. Deal)
6.3 Example of the use of ema to request assistance from the kami (Photo William E. Deal)

The arrows are placed in the home to ward off evil and to ensure good fortune throughout the year.

**ofuda** Protective amulet. *Ofuda* usually include the name of the *kami* worshipped at the shrine where the amulet was obtained. Amulets are viewed as having the power to bring health, protect the home from fire or other disasters, and ensure success in business and educational endeavors, among other things. Amulets may be carried or placed in the household shrine (*kamidana*).
**omamori** Protective amulet. Similar to *ofuda* (see above).

**omikuji** A form of divination carried out at Shinto shrines. Sticks are taken from a container and exchanged for a prediction, which is understood to be the guidance of the *kami*.

**shimenawa** A rope with white paper attached that is used to mark off a sacred space. It is sometimes found at the entrance of Shinto shrines or placed around trees or other objects to demarcate a place where the *kami* have appeared.

**Shinto Deities**

**Amaterasu Omikami** Sun goddess. The central deity in the *Kojiki*, born from the act of purification conducted by the god Izanagi after his escape from the world of the dead. The imperial family is descended from her lineage through her great grandson, Jimmu, the first emperor. She rules the high plain of heaven (Takamagahara), and is enshrined at the Ise Shrine's Inner Shrine (naiku).

**Bimbogami** God of poverty. This deity became important during the Edo period and is associated with urban life. There are rituals to dispel this deity and, by extension, the poverty and bad fortune he brings into the home.

**Bishamonten/Tamonten** One of the seven gods of good fortune (see “shichifukujin”) and one of the four heavenly kings (see “shitenno”).

**Hachiman** Shinto god of war and protector of warriors. Hachiman is usually identified with the emperor Ojin. He is also considered a Buddhist protective deity and is given the additional title of “great bodhisattva” (*daibosatsu*). Hachimangu—shrines dedicated to Hachiman—exist throughout Japan.

**Inari** Shinto god of rice cultivation. Often worshipped in hopes of receiving an abundant harvest, more generally Inari is worshipped for success in business. In the early modern period, Inari was worshipped in the homes of merchants and warriors who would have a small Inari shrine for this purpose. Inari is often associated with the image of a fox. In the medieval period, the fox was viewed as Inari’s messenger, but later Inari became a fox himself. Inari is famously enshrined at the Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto, but there are many other Inari shrines throughout Japan.

**Izanagi and Izanami** Izanagi no Mikoto (male) and Izanami no Mikoto (female), both brother and sister and husband and wife, are deities depicted in the *Kojiki*. They created the Japanese islands and produced many deities. Several scenes in the narrative of these two *kami* became the foundation for Japanese religious concepts and rituals. For instance, after Izanami dies giving birth to the fire god, Izanagi tries to reunite with her in the land of the dead. Izanagi suffers pollution as a result of his contact with the dead and must cleanse himself through a water purification ritual (*misogi*). It is through this act of purification that the sun goddess, Amaterasu, and the wind god, Susanoo, come into being.

**Ninigi no Mikoto** A deity described in the *Kojiki*. He is Amaterasu’s grandson, who was sent to civilize the Japanese islands in advance of their population. What comes to be called the three imperial regalia—mirror, sword, and jewel—were given to Ninigi as symbols of his right to rule over Japan. Jimmu, Ninigi’s great grandson, became the first Japanese emperor.

**Okuninushi no Mikoto** Shinto deity important in the *Kojiki*, where he is depicted as a benevolent god and bringer of civilization. Depending on the source, he is either the son or grandson of the god, Susanoo. Okuninushi is sometimes worshipped as an agricultural god because of his cultivation skills and farming technologies, such as irrigation. He is said to have instructed the people of Izumo in these matters. According to the many different stories about him, Okuninushi was able to subdue evil beings, cure disease, and ensure a happy marriage. He is enshrined at the Izumo Shrine, which is said to be the grounds of his palace.
Shichifukujin Seven gods of good fortune who are said to travel on the Takarabune, or treasure ship. They are especially worshipped at the New Year in hopes that they will bring renewed prosperity. The seven gods are:

1. Benten/Benzaiten: goddess of music, arts, and fertility
2. Bishamonten: god of war and fortune
3. Daikoku/Daikokuten: god of wealth and the kitchen; associated with Okuninushi no Mikoto
4. Ebisu: god of work; associated with success at various occupations, especially fishing, farming, and, during the Edo period, with commercial business
5. Fukurokuju: god of longevity
6. Hotei: god of fortune and contentment; said to be an incarnation of Miroku, the Buddha of the future
7. Jurojin: god of longevity

Shitenno Four heavenly kings: Bishamonten, Jimokuten, Komokuten, and Zochoten. These four are Buddhist protective deities.

Susanoo no Mikoto A deity prominent in the Kojiki. He is Amaterasu’s mischievous brother who is banished to the Japanese islands from the high plain of heaven (Takamagahara) because of his unruly behavior that results in pollution and defilement. He is sometimes referred to as the wind god or the storm god.

Tenjin Literally, “heavenly god.” This term refers to the spirit of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), a Heian-period courtier and scholar who was exiled from the capital as a result of political intrigue. After his death, a series of disasters befell Kyoto, and it was determined that Michizane’s angry spirit was the cause. In order to end the disasters, Michizane was given a posthumous pardon and came to be considered a god. As a kami, Michizane is associated with learning and scholarship. He is enshrined in Tenjin shrines in many parts of Japan.

Shinto Priesthood

The generic term for a Shinto priest is kannushi. However, Shinto in the medieval and early modern periods was not a centrally organized tradition. Hence, there is great variation in terminology used to denote Shinto priests. Historically, the office of shrine priest was typically passed down through a priestly family from father to son. The hereditary lines of priests associated with some larger shrines represented a particular family’s significant power.
within a community. During the medieval period, there usually was not a formal priesthood at small local or village-level shrines. Rather, villagers—usually from the most powerful and influential families—supervised festivals and other ritual occasions. In the early modern period, priesthands at village shrines did develop.

**Shinto Shrines**

Shinto shrines are places to worship the *kami*. Shrines install one or more gods. There are both local shrines and national shrines, such as the Ise Shrine. A number of different terms and suffixes are used in Japanese to designate a shrine, including:

– *jinja* (Yasaka Jinja = Yasaka Shrine [also used by itself to describe shrines in general])
– *jingu* (Ise Jingu = Ise Shrine)
– *gu* (Tsurugaoka Hachimangu = Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine)
– *sha* (Hie-sha = Hie Shrine)
– *taisha* (Izumo Taisha = Izumo Shrine)

*yashiro*: shrine
*bokora*: small wayside shrine
*jinja*: shrine
*miya*: shrine (also appears as a suffix)

In English, it is commonplace to use the word “temple” to indicate a Buddhist building, and “shrine” to indicate a Shinto building. The architectural style of shrines and some of their physical features are treated in chapter 10: Art and Architecture.

**Asakusa Shrine** (Asakusa Jinja) Shinto shrine built in 1649 by the third Tokugawa shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–51). Located on the grounds of the Sensoji temple in the Asakusa section of the Taito Ward in Tokyo, this shrine pays tribute to two brothers and their lord, who found a statue of the bodhisattva Kannon in the Sumidagawa River in 628 C.E.

**Dazaifu Shrine** (Dazaifu Temmangu) The imperial court first erected Dazaifu Temmangu in 905 to placate the spirit of the scholar and statesman Sugawara no Michizane (posthumously known as Tenjin of Temman). It was built again in 919 after being destroyed by a fire. Located in Dazaifu, Kyushu, at the site of Michizane’s grave, the shrine has become widely associated with education. Annually, on January 7, the festival Dazaifu Usokae takes place when participants exchange bird-shaped amulets at random in hopes of attaining lucky amulets circulated by disguised shrine officials. The ceremony of *Oni-sube* also occurs on this day; it is a form of exorcism in which demons are ushered away from the main shrine.

**Fushimi Inari Shrine** (Fushimi Inari Taisha) The most important shrine dedicated to Inari, the *kami* of agriculture and commerce. Located in southern Kyoto and dating back to 711, the Fushimi Inari Shrine serves as the hub of more than 30,000 secondary shrines throughout Japan that venerate this
The Inari Matsuri takes place here every April and marks the visit by the deity to various o-tabiso, or sacred grounds. The Fushimi Inari Shrine also attracts hundreds of thousands of people every year for hastumode, the celebration of the New Year.

Hie Shrine (Hie Jinja; also known as Sanno Gongen until 1868) The Tokugawa shoguns built the Hie Jinja as a protector shrine of Edo (now Tokyo) and the imperial palace. Dedicated to Oyamakui no Kami, it serves as the largest of about 3,800 secondary Hie temples (Hie Taisha being the primary shrine) located throughout Japan. The Kanda and Sanno Festivals, held in alternate years in May and June respectively, celebrate the shrine deities in a similar fashion to the Takayama Festival at Hie Taisha.

Ise Shrine (Ise Jingu) Ise Jingu, located in the city of Ise in Mie Prefecture, is the most sacred shrine in all of Japan. It consists of two complexes: the inner shrine (Kotaijingu or Naiku), and the outer shrine (Toyoudaijingu or Geku). The inner shrine houses the sacred mirror of Amaterasu, the sun goddess and ancestor to the unbroken lineage of Japanese emperors. The outer complex enshrines Toyouke, who not only serves as the kami of food and agriculture but also provides Amaterasu with her meals. Ever since the reign of Emperor Temmu in the late seventh century, Ise is destroyed and rebuilt every 20 years (shikinen sengu) (with a brief interruption during the Muromachi period due to civil wars) in the same style (shimmei-zukuri) and using cypress wood as in its original construction. Beginning in the 13th century, Ise became a major pilgrimage site.

Itsukushima Shrine (Itsukushima Jinja; also known as Aki no Miyajima) A Shinto shrine built on the small island of Itsukushima in Hiroshima Bay and dedicated to Susanoo’s three daughters (Susanoo is the brother of Amaterasu), and since the Kamakura period, Benzai-ten (see shichifukujin). According to tradition, a local inhabitant established the shrine in 593 after receiving a visitation from the three deities, but, most likely, the shrine was built in 811. The Heian military leader, Taira no Kiyomori, lavishly restored Itsukushima in the
12th century, making it his clan’s tutelary shrine. His family later donated the most elaborate of the Lotus Sutra scrolls—the Heike nokyo (Sutras dedicated by the Heike)—to the shrine. Kiyomori also constructed the predecessor of the shrine’s famous torii: a giant, red gateway that stands 160 meters out in the bay.

Izumo Shrine (Izumo Taisha) Dedicated to Okuninushi no Mikoto; son of Susanoo and the kami associated with love and marriage. During the festival Kamiari Matsuri (“gods are present” festival), kami from all over Japan leave their permanent homes to take up residence at Izumo Shrine. Priests provide temporary lodging for the visiting kami by building numerous small wooden boxes around the shrine’s perimeter. The festival attracts many couples requesting marriage blessings and other related matters.

Kamo Shrines (Kamo Jinja) Refers to two independent Shinto shrines located in Kyoto: the Kamo Wakeikazuchi Jinja (Kamigamo-jinja) and the Kamomioya-jinja (Shimogamo-jinja). As protector shrines of the imperial palace and capital, they enshrine Kamo Wakeikazuchi no Kami, a son of Tamayori-hime and brother of Jimmu-tenno (the legendary first emperor of Japan), and Tamayori-hime, herself, respectively. The Aoi Festival is held at both shrines every May 15 and consists of prayers for an abundant harvest.

Kasuga Shrine (Kasuga Taisha) Located in Nara and closely associated with the major Buddhist temple Kofukuji. Although Kasuga Taisha was originally founded by the Fujiwara clan and served to venerate the four deities of the family’s three shrines, it typified the growing development of the shrine-temple relationship that expressed the interaction of Shinto and Buddhism in medieval and early Japan.

Kitano Shrine (Kitano Temmangu) Located in Kyoto and built on the 44th anniversary of scholar Sugawara no Michizane’s death (see Daizaiifu temple and Tenjin). It remains a popular destination for scholars and students who seek divine assistance with their educational endeavors.

Kotohira Shrine (Kotohiragu; Kompiragu; Kompira-san) Founded in the 11th century and located on Shikoku, Kotohira Shrine first venerated Kompira, a divinity imported from India and transmitted to Japan from China. Originally having associations with the Ganges River and its sacred waters, Kompira became recognized in Japan as the protector of sailors, fishermen, and all others who make a living from the sea. After 1868, however, the shrine was associated with Omononushi no Kami (Okuninushi no Mikoto) and was also dedicated to the spirit of Emperor Sutoku (r. 1123–42), who died exiled in the shrine’s vicinity in 1164.

Kumano Sanzan Shrines (Kumano Sansha) Refers to three shrines located in Wakayama Prefecture: Kumano Hayatama Taisha dedicated to Kumano Hayatama no Kami, Kumano Hongu Taisha dedicated to Ketsumiko (Sunanoo no Mikoto), and Kumano Nachi Taisha, dedicated to Kumano Fusumi no Kami and to the worship of the Nachi waterfalls. Collectively, these shrines served as the seat of one major Shinto-Buddhist movement in which the kami were also considered manifestations of Amida Buddha. The Kumano shrines were also popular among the yamabushi (practitioners of Shugendo or mountain asceticism), for whom they additionally served as a major pilgrimage site.

Sumiyoshi Shrine (Sumiyoshi Taisha) One of the largest shrines in Osaka and dedicated to four deities. Three of them were called the “Sumiyoshi brothers,” who were born from Izanagi no Mikoto after his return from the land of yomi and subsequent ritual purification in the sea. The fourth deity is the shrine’s legendary founder—Empress Jingu Kogo, whose deified name is Okinagatarashihime no Mikoto. The shrine promises marine safety and prosperity for those whose livelihoods depend on the sea.

Toshogu Toshogu, a Shinto shrine and mausoleum honoring the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, also refers to the posthumous title given to him by the imperial court. The first Toshogu shrine, founded in 1617 in Nikko, houses his remains. More than 100 shrines throughout Japan are dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu.

RELIGION
**Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine** (Tsurugaoka Hachimangu) The Tsurugaoka Hachimangu was erected in 1063 by Minamoto no Yoriyoshi (988–1075) to honor the family’s tutelary divinity Hachiman, the god of war. The shrine is dedicated to the spirits of Emperor Ojin (deified as Hachiman); his mother, Jingu Kogo; and his wife, Hime Okami. The annual festival, founded by Minamoto no Yoritomo, is held in September and includes archery demonstrations (yabusame) and parades of the three o-mikoshi (portable shrines).

**Usa Hachiman Shrine** (Usa Hachimangu) The Usa Hachimangu, situated in Usa, Kyushu, is regarded as the central shrine for around 25,000 Hachiman shrines throughout Japan. Like the Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, this shrine is also dedicated to the mythical emperor Ojin, his mother (Empress Jingu Kogo), and his wife (Hime Okami).

**Yasaka Shrine** (Yasaka Jinja) Also called Gionsha, Gion Tenjin, or Kanshinin and located in the Higashiyama district of Kyoto. The Yasaka Shrine is dedicated to Susanoo no Mikoto, the brother of Amaterasu, and the kami who protects against misfortunes and disasters. The Gion festival is held here and lasts the entire month of July.

## JAPANESE BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

### Introduction

Buddhism originated in India around the fifth century B.C.E. Buddhist thought and practice is based on the religious experience of Siddhartha Gautama, the man who became the Buddha (literally, “The Enlightened One”). Historically, two major strands of Buddhism developed, Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada, “Religion of the Elders,” is most closely associated with the teachings of the historical Buddha in India and survives today in places like Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar (formerly Burma). Mahayana Buddhism, “Greater Vehicle,” is the form of Buddhism that developed some 500 years after the death of the historical Buddha. It spread from India to East Asia and Tibet and is the form of Buddhism prominent in Japan during the medieval and early modern periods and today.

**THERAVADA THOUGHT AND PRACTICE**

Theravada Buddhism takes as its starting point the life of the historical Buddha (ca. 563–483 B.C.E.). This tradition treats the Buddha as a human being who, through spiritual practices, comprehended the nature of reality. This realization is termed nirvana, or enlightenment. Buddha’s life stands as a model for others to follow.

After the Buddha’s religious awakening, he began to expound the Dharma—the law or teaching—to others. The Dharma, as taught in Theravada, centers on religious practices that result in a transcendent understanding (enlightenment) of the human condition. This condition is expressed in the “three marks of existence”—impermanence, suffering, and absence of a permanent self or soul—that describe an unenlightened life lived in the world of samsara (the cycle of birth-death-rebirth). The morality of one’s actions (karma) determines one’s status in the samsaric cycle. Moral action offers the promise of a higher spiritual rebirth, while immoral action leads to rebirth in a lower spiritual state. The samsaric world, according to the Buddha, is fundamentally unsatisfactory. As a result, human beings eventually seek to escape the continual round of rebirths.

The Buddha’s Four Noble Truths describe the human condition and the means to liberate oneself from the samsaric world:

1. All existence is suffering.
2. Suffering is caused by desire.
3. Cessation of desire results in the cessation of suffering.
4. The “Eightfold Path” leads to liberation (nirvana).

The Eightfold Path constitutes the Buddha’s method for attaining liberation from samsara. The eight aspects of the path are divided into three components:
Wisdom:  
1) right views  
2) right intention  
Morality:  
3) right speech  
4) right conduct  
5) right livelihood  
Concentration:  
6) right effort  
7) right mindfulness  
8) right concentration

Wisdom refers to the mental states and attitudes required to successfully practice the Buddha’s Dharma. Morality concerns the way one treats others and acts in the world. Concentration encompasses the kinds of practices necessary to master the mental processes required to engage in advanced levels of meditation. Wisdom, morality, and concentration entail ardent effort that eventually leads to a transformation from ignorance to transcendent wisdom—nirvana.

MAHAYANA THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

Mahayana Buddhism arose some 500 years after the death of the historical Buddha. Mahayana includes the idea that the historical Buddha was but one of many Buddhas who have taught human beings the way to gain enlightenment. The tradition includes the important figures known as bodhisattvas (in Japanese, bosatsu) who have vowed to attain Buddhahood (enlightenment). Some Mahayana schools believe that bodhisattvas who have already attained enlightenment postpone their passing out of the samsaric world to help others attain salvation. Compassion is the key virtue that operates in a bodhisattva and is a concept important in medieval and early modern Japanese Buddhism.

Like Theravada, some Mahayana schools, such as Zen Buddhism, assert the possibility of enlightenment achieved through individual effort. Other schools of Mahayana stress the possibility of salvation into a Buddhist paradise on the basis of faith. Pure Land Buddhism, for instance, relates the story of Amida (in Sanskrit, Amitabha) Buddha who vows to save all sentient beings that call on him for assistance into his Pure Land, or Western Paradise.

A primary focus in Mahayana thought is on the bodhisattva. In meditation-based Mahayana, the bodhisattva is a compassionate being who vows to practice the Buddha’s teaching and, once enlightened, to help others do the same. Through meditation, the bodhisattva’s goal is to perceive that the universe is empty of an essential foundation, thereby overcoming the duality of our everyday, ordinary perceptions and experiences.

In faith-based Mahayana, the term bodhisattva refers to beings like Kannon (in Sanskrit, Avalokitesvara) who have already achieved enlightenment and are now endowed with great compassion and spiritual powers. Unenlightened people call upon bodhisattvas—along with Buddhas like Amida—for aid with the material and spiritual difficulties of human existence. This was an especially attractive alternative to the difficulties of meditation for laypeople. According to faith-based Mahayana, humans live in a degenerate age. At such a time, the only hope for release from the samsaric cycle is to place one’s faith in the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Out of compassion, Buddhas and bodhisattvas will relieve one of his or her pain and suffering and deliver the faithful to a Buddhist paradise in the next life.

Medieval and Early Modern Japanese Buddhism

Medieval Japanese Buddhism marks a significant departure from the forms of Buddhist thought and practice current during the aristocratic Heian period. During the Heian period, Buddhism was largely controlled by the Kyoto aristocrats and was characterized, in part, by the use of resource-intensive rituals with an emphasis on a formal Buddhist hierarchy. This style of Buddhism began to break down during the later part of the Heian period, and by the beginning of the medieval period, new Buddhist schools arose that took the Buddhist message of salvation to a much broader segment of the Japanese population. These new Buddhist schools—Pure
Land, Nichiren, and Zen—though not entirely free of political and other influences, nevertheless shifted the focus of Japanese Buddhist thought and practice, resulting in the spread of Buddhism throughout all classes of Japanese society.

Both Pure Land and Nichiren schools stressed the idea that Japan had entered a period of time known as mappo, the end of the Dharma. According to this view, so much time had elapsed since the historical Buddha preached the Dharma in ancient India that it had become increasingly difficult to understand the full import of what he taught. As a result, the idea of relying on one's own efforts to achieve enlightenment gave way to the notion that the only hope for salvation was to place one's faith in the powers of a compassionate Buddha or bodhisattva. To this end, Pure Land emphasized the need to practice the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha (*nembutsu*) to activate the powers of salvation that Amida offered and to achieve birth in his Pure Land (or, Western Paradise). Similarly, the Nichiren school stressed the idea of the recitation of the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra as the ritual practice that activated the possibility of salvation in a defiled and impure world. For the Nichiren school, salvation meant the conversion of the entire country of Japan to Lotus Sutra faith with the result that a Buddhist age would be inaugurated in the world. For both the Pure Land and Nichiren traditions, proof that the end of the Dharma was at hand was reflected in social and political unrest, and in human evil perceived to be rampant in the land. As a result, the idea of relying on one's own efforts to achieve enlightenment gave way to the notion that the only hope for salvation was to place one's faith in the powers of a compassionate Buddha or bodhisattva. To this end, Pure Land emphasized the need to practice the recitation of the name of Amida Buddha (*nembutsu*) to activate the powers of salvation that Amida offered and to achieve birth in his Pure Land (or, Western Paradise). Similarly, the Nichiren school stressed the idea of the recitation of the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra as the ritual practice that activated the possibility of salvation in a defiled and impure world. For the Nichiren school, salvation meant the conversion of the entire country of Japan to Lotus Sutra faith with the result that a Buddhist age would be inaugurated in the world. For both the Pure Land and Nichiren traditions, proof that the end of the Dharma was at hand was reflected in social and political unrest, and in human evil perceived to be rampant in the land. The solution was escape from this unhappy world. These schools, with their message of salvation, became popular during the medieval period.

Zen schools, on the other hand, repudiated the notion of mappo. Instead they taught the idea of enlightenment realized in the context of everyday life. This was to be achieved not through reliance on a power outside of oneself, as Pure Land and Nichiren required, but through traditional Buddhist modes of effort, particularly meditation, leading to a religious awakening. Zen, too, was well suited to monastic traditions that provided the support necessary to engage in rigorous contemplative practice. For this reason, Zen had far less popular appeal than the faith-based forms of Kamakura Buddhism.

It is important to stress, however, that the new Kamakura Buddhist schools did not replace older forms of Japanese Buddhism. The medieval period was often impacted by innovations emerging from these older schools. In the Kamakura period, for instance, priests of the Nara Buddhist schools were active in movements to revitalize monastic regulations. Myoe (1173–1232) was a Kegon priest who advocated strict adherence to the monastic precepts. Similarly, Eizon (1201–90), a Ritsu school priest, worked diligently to transmit the precepts to his generation. He lectured on the precepts, gained followers from both the aristocratic and military elite, and at the same time worked to teach the precepts to the lower classes.

By the late Kamakura and Muromachi periods, Zen Buddhism received patronage from members of the warrior class, including support from the Hojo family of shogunal regents and from the shogunate itself. One of the products of this patronage was the development of a Rinzai Zen temple system known as Gozan (Five Mountains). This was a hierarchical system of monasteries in both Kyoto and Kamakura that received the support of wealthy and powerful patrons. Zen also had a significant impact on Japanese art and literature.

The Pure Land and Nichiren schools also continued to thrive in the Muromachi period. True Pure Land Buddhism (Jodo-shinshu) was ably led by the priest Rennyo (1415–99), who embarked on activities to expand the influence of Jodo-shinshu. In the process, he created a powerful religious movement headquartered at the Honganji in Kyoto. The Nichiren school also became quite powerful in the Kyoto region in the 15th century. As a result, armies of militant monks were dispatched from the Tendai headquarters on Mt. Hiei in 1536 to destroy Nichiren-related temples in Kyoto to counter the growing success of the Nichiren schools.

The role of Buddhism in Edo-period Japan became much more complex than it had been in earlier periods. It was a period in which Buddhism’s primacy as the main way of thinking about the world was challenged by new Shinto movements as well as by the influence of Neo-Confucian ideas on Japanese ways of thinking. Although Japanese Buddhism always had connections to the state and political interests, these associations became quite explicit during the Edo period. In the early 17th century, the Tokugawa shogunate prohibited the teaching of Christianity and
later banned nearly all foreign contacts in Japan for fear of the power of the Christian movement. The government utilized Buddhism as a way to oversee this ban and to enforce its isolationist policies.

One way this was accomplished was by forcing Japanese Christians to renounce their Christianity. Buddhist temples were made into bureaucratic offices of the shogunate by the system of shumon aratame, or examination of religious affiliation. This system—called the danka (parishioner) system—required every Japanese family to become registered members of a local temple and to receive a certificate to the effect that they were not Christian. Temples were required to provide this information to the local lord. As the danka system developed, other obligatory activities were instituted, such as financial support to temples, annual visits to ancestral graves located on temple grounds, and attendance at important temple rituals. In this way, Buddhist temples became overseers of the religious lives of its patrons.

Edo-period Buddhism was not simply an organ of state control. This period also witnessed dynamic new developments in religious thinking and practice. Notably, the early modern period gave rise to a new school of Zen known as the Obaku school. It received its start as a result of the teachings of a Chinese Zen master known in Japanese as Ingen Ryuki (1592–1673), who took up residence in Nagasaki in 1654. Nagasaki’s port permitted limited access by Chinese traders during the Edo isolationist period. Not only did Ingen attract many disciples, but he also attracted the interest of Tokugawa Ietsuna (1641–80), the fourth shogun. Ingen received land near Kyoto at Uji to build a temple. The Mampukuji, established in 1661, became the center of Obaku Zen. This form of Zen stressed the combined practice of both zazen (seated meditation) and recitation of the nembutsu.

Not all Edo-period Buddhist innovations involved the establishment of new schools. Already established Buddhist schools, often under the leadership of dynamic monks, also vitalized Edo Buddhism. Notable among these were such Zen figures as Suzuki Shosan (1579–1655), Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768), and Ryokan (1758–1831). Shosan was a Soto Zen priest with a warrior background who had fought on the side of the Tokugawa at the Battle of Sekigahara and at the siege of Osaka Castle. He later became a Zen priest, advocating the need to practice Zen in the context of daily life. He stressed the importance of virtue and hard work, and viewed these as aspects of proper Zen practice. Hakuin was a Rinzai priest who sought to spread Zen teachings to all people by writing about Zen thought and practice in an easily understood manner. It was largely due to his efforts that Rinzai experienced a revival of interest during the Edo period. Ryokan was a Soto Zen priest and poet who led the life of a solitary mendicant and expressed his religious sensibilities, especially compassion for all living beings, through his poetry.

Other Edo-period Buddhist developments included the revival of the practice of monastic precepts by a Shingon priest named Jiun Onko (1718–1804) and grassroots Pure Land movements among the Jodo-shinshu (True Pure Land school) common people, who led simple religious lives and taught Pure Land practices to others. They came to be called myokonin, “wonderfully good ones.”

Buddhist Schools

SIX NARA BUDDHIST SCHOOLS

These were six Chinese Buddhist schools introduced to Japan during the seventh and eighth centuries that became formalized in the Nara period (710–94) as the six Nara Buddhist schools, named after the capital in which they were located. These six schools are:

Sanron Sanron is a Buddhist school based on the writings of the Indian monks Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva that focus on the concept of emptiness (in Sanskrit, sunyata), the idea that all things in the phenomenal world arise because of cause-and-effect relationships with all other phenomena. Sanron was first introduced to Japan in the early seventh century and was centered at the Gangoji and Daianji in Nara.

Jojitsu Jojitsu is a Buddhist school based on the writings of the Indian monk Harivarman. It focuses on the idea that there are two levels of truth in the world. There is the provisional truth, the reality humans experience in an unenlightened state, and the absolute truth, the enlightened realization that empti-
ness (in Sanskrit, sunyata) characterizes all of reality. Although grouped as one of the six Nara schools, Jojitsu was really a branch of the Sanron school.

**Hosso** This Buddhist school is based on a number of Yogacara Buddhist texts teaching the notion of “consciousness only,” the idea that a careful analysis of the characteristics of worldly phenomena reveals that they do not exist outside of our minds. The Japanese monks Dosho, at the Gangoji, and Gembo, at the Kofukuji, were early proponents of this school.

**Kusha** This Buddhist school is based on the writings of the Indian monk Vasubandhu, teaching that dharmas, the constituent elements that make up all things, exist but that there is no enduring self or soul.

**Kegon** The Kegon school is based on the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Kegon-kyo). This text teaches that all things are interrelated and interconnected. This school was introduced to Japan by Chinese and Korean monks in the eighth century. The Todaiji at Nara is the school’s center in Japan.

**Ritsu** The Ritsu school emphasizes the importance of closely following the rules of monastic discipline known in Sanskrit as vinaya. The school was founded in Japan in 753 by the Chinese monk Ganjin. He established ordination platforms (kaidan) for receiving the Buddhist precepts at the Todaiji and Toshodaiji in Nara.

**SHINGON SCHOOL (SHINGON-SHU)**

The Shingon (True Word) school was founded on Mt. Koya by the ninth-century monk Kukai (774–835), posthumously known as Kobo Daishi (Great teacher who spread the Dharma). After studying in China, Kukai established Shingon in Japan. Shingon is a form of esoteric Buddhism that places a strong emphasis on rituals and modes of practice that must be learned directly from a master. Shingon thought and practice focus on the Buddha Mahavairocana (in Japanese, Dainichi) who, it is said, expounded the ultimate truth, that is, the “True Word.” According to Shingon doctrine and the Mahavairocana Sutra (Dainichi-kyo), Dainichi is the dharmakaya (a Sanskrit term), or “Truth Body,” whose essence permeates the entire universe. It is taught that the universe is composed of the body, speech, and mind of Dainichi. Kukai preached that Buddhist practitioners, under expert guidance from a Shingon teacher, could learn the esoteric rituals and forms of meditation that would enable them to realize that they are intimately connected to the essence of the universe. This realization allows one to “become a Buddha in this lifetime” (sokushin jobutsu).

The notion that Shingon is esoteric derives from the fact that the rituals necessary to realize the truth can only be taught directly by a teacher to a disciple. Thus, for instance, the use of hand gestures (in Sanskrit, mudras), chants (dharani), and other ritual actions can only be learned from a teacher; they can never be adequately learned from a text. Kukai also utilized artistic representations of Shingon ideas to further the practice of his followers. The Diamond World and Womb World mandalas are typical of such usage. The Diamond World mandala represents the wisdom of Dainichi while the Womb World mandala symbolizes the truth conveyed by that wisdom.

During the Kamakura period, doctrinal disputes caused Shingon to split into the Shingi (New doctrine) and Kogi (Old doctrine) schools.

**TENDAI SCHOOL (TENDAI-SHU)**

Tendai Buddhism was founded by the monk Saicho (767–822), posthumously known as Dengyo Daishi (Great teacher who transmits the teaching), on Mt. Hiei in the early ninth century. After studying in China, Saicho returned to Japan to establish Tendai. However, he was met with opposition from the Nara schools. Saicho wanted to create an ordination platform at Mt. Hiei, but the Nara schools opposed this because it threatened their government-recognized right to ordain monks, and thereby maintain sole control over the make-up of the monastic order. After Saicho’s death, Tendai turned its focus to esoteric Buddhist practices under the direction of a series of gifted leaders.

Tendai Buddhism focuses on the *Lotus Sutra*, which teaches that although there are different and apparently contradictory Buddhist teachings, they are all expedient devices used by the Buddha to
preach to human beings according to their ability to understand the profundity of the Dharma. Thus, the different sutras can be explained not as contradictory but rather as teachings accommodated to different levels of discernment. Tendai Buddhism is thus inclusive of myriad different Buddhist teachings, although it follows the Lotus Sutra in arguing that sutra is the pinnacle of the Buddha's Dharma. The Lotus Sutra and Tendai also preach the notion that bodhisattvas, such as Kannon (in Sanskrit, Avalokitesvara), are available to help others in times of spiritual and material need. Finally, the Lotus Sutra also teaches the concept of the end of the Dharma, a time period in which it would be exceedingly difficult for individuals to attain enlightenment through their own efforts at meditation, which was to have a significant impact on some of the new schools of Kamakura Buddhism.

The political prominence of Tendai ended when Oda Nobunaga demolished most of the Mt. Hiei temple complex Enryakuji in 1571.

PURE LAND SCHOOL (JODO-SHU)

Founded in the late 12th century by Honen, the Jodo (Pure Land) school teaches that, in a time so far removed from the era of the historical Buddha, it has become nearly impossible for human beings to attain enlightenment. The only hope for salvation in this degenerate age (known as mappo, the end of the Dharma) is to put faith in the vow of Amida Buddha, who resides in the Western Paradise, or Pure Land, to heed calls for help and deliver the devoted into the Pure Land upon death. The mechanism for calling on Amida for help is the recitation of the nembutsu—chanting the phrase namu Amida butsu (“hail to Amida Buddha”). Sincere and single-minded recitation of the nembutsu would be answered by spiritual, and even material, assistance from Amida.

Honen founded the sect in Kyoto. Not seeking to intentionally start an entirely new sect of Buddhism, he simply began to spread his interpretation of the three foundational sutras and advocate the practice of nembutsu. In 1198, Honen reportedly had a mystical encounter with Amida, which confirmed the truth of his teachings and his new sect. However, his teachings, which were antagonistic to worldly ideas of order, proved threatening to the government and the other established religious groups, and he was forced to flee the capital. Despite this opposition, his sect survived among the small groups of followers left in the capital and grew to gain prominence in the medieval and early modern periods.

TRUE PURE LAND SCHOOL (JODO SHINSHU)

Started by Shinran, a disciple of Jodo sect founder Honen, the so-called True Pure Land sect was originally reported to be the true essence of Honen's doctrines and was known by the name Ikkoshu until 1872. As the sect developed, however, it came to be more about the teachings of Shinran himself than of his former master, and the followers of the school came to emphasize the teachings of Shinran's major work, Kyogyoshinsho, written in 1224. The thrust of his teaching was eschatological in its focus on a final degradation of the human race from which all would be saved by the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha.

In 1207, Shinran was exiled along with his teacher, Honen. Four years later, Shinran was allowed to return to Kyoto to lead those disciples of Honen who had avoided persecution and continued to practice nembutsu. As the Jodo sect developed, the disciples of Shinran split to form the Jodo Shin sect, which saw the path to the Pure Land as one illuminated by the believer's embrace of the Primal Vow. In 1263, Shinran's death sent the sect into decline, only to be revived by the passionate monk, Rennyo, in the 15th century. Under Rennyo's leadership, the sect became one of the most prominent Buddhist schools in Japan.

TIME SCHOOL (JI-SHU)

Started by Ippen (1239–89) in the 13th century, the Ji school is a form of Pure Land Buddhism. Ippen had a dream in which he was told to preach the message of Pure Land salvation among the people. As a result, Ippen became an itinerant preacher, traveling throughout the countryside to instruct people in nembutsu practice. He attracted disciples and a large following. One of his innovations was the use of dance as part of religious practice. The nembutsu
odori, or “dancing chant,” became central to his method of teaching.

**YUZU NEMBUTSU SECT (YUZU NEMBUTSU SHU)**

The Yuzu Nembutsu sect embraced the ideas of the Pure Land scholar, Ryonin, who concluded that the power of nembutsu practice culminated in the intermingling of the individual with the whole of Pure Land devotees. Through this unification, one was reborn into the Pure Land. The sect experienced a renaissance under the direction of Ryoson in the 14th century, and a comprehensive explanation of its doctrines was finally recorded by its patriarch, Yukan, in the 17th-century work *Yuzu emmonsho.*

**NICHIREN SECT (NICHIREN-SHU)**

The Nichiren school, founded by the former Tendai monk Nichiren (1222–82), was a form of faith-based Buddhism that stressed the power of the *Lotus Sutra* as the sole path to salvation. Like Pure Land Buddhism, Nichiren promoted the idea of chanting as a means to tap into the saving power of Buddhism. Unlike Pure Land traditions, Nichiren advocated a practice known as the *daimoku,* chanting the sacred title of the *Lotus Sutra:* namu myoho renge kyo (“hail to the Lotus Sutra”). By chanting this phrase single-mindedly and with faith, one would gain salvation.

Nichiren believed in the idea of *mappo* (“end of the Dharma”), the notion that the world has entered an age so far removed from the enlightened teaching of the historical Buddha that it is not possible for one to gain enlightenment through meditation. Instead, the only course available during this degenerate age was to chant the sacred title of the *Lotus Sutra.* Nichiren taught that if all of the Japanese people would embrace the teaching of the *Lotus Sutra,* then Japan itself would become a Buddhist paradise.

**FUJU FUSE SCHOOL (FUJU FUSE HA)**

A school of Nichiren Buddhism. The term *fuju fuse* (“neither giving nor receiving”) refers to the idea that in order to maintain the purity of Nichiren’s teachings, Nichiren Buddhists must refuse to give offerings and perform rituals for nonbelievers, and they must refuse to receive offerings and rituals from nonbelievers. This movement, started by the monk Nichio (1565–1630), was banned by the Tokugawa shogunate because of its intransigence. Throughout the Edo period, however, Fuju Fuse school adherents continued to practice in secret. It was not until after the start of the Meiji Restoration that the ban on this school was lifted.

**SOTO ZEN SCHOOL (SOTO-SHU)**

The Soto Zen school was founded by the monk Dogen (1200–53), who had originally trained on Mt. Hiei as a Tendai priest. Dissatisfied with Tendai teachings, Dogen traveled to China, where he engaged in intensive study and practice of Soto Zen. Tradition holds that Dogen achieved enlightenment during his stay in China. Upon returning to Japan in 1228, Dogen established Soto as a separate Buddhist school, training monks and nuns as well as writing numerous treatises regarding Zen practice. In 1243, Dogen built the monastery Eiheiji in the mountains of Echizen province (present-day Fukui Prefecture). Dogen’s Zen teaching centered on *zazen,* or seated meditation, as the chief practice leading to enlightenment.

**RINZAI ZEN SCHOOL (RINZAI-SHU)**

The Rinzai Zen school was founded by the monk Eisai (1141–1215). Like Dogen, Eisai studied first as a Tendai priest but took up Rinzai Zen practice after two pilgrimages to China. Settling again in Japan, Eisai built Rinzai Zen temples and otherwise promoted Rinzai teachings. Eisai was also a proponent of green tea drinking as an aid to both meditation and health. To this end, he brought tea seeds with him from China to plant in Japan. Like Soto, Rinzai Zen focused on meditation as a central religious practice, but, unlike Soto, Rinzai also advocated the use of *koan,* nonlogical questions or aphorisms that were given by a Zen master to a disciple. The process of trying to find an answer or response to a *koan* was intended to move the disciple away from logical, discursive thought, to a spontaneous, non-dualistic perspective leading to enlightenment.
OBAKU ZEN SCHOOL (OBAKU-SHU)

Founded in Japan in 1654 with the permission of Tokugawa Ietsuna by the Chinese monk, Ingen, the Obaku sect of Zen combined ideas from Pure Land and esoteric Buddhist sects with traditional Zen to create a distinctive form of religious practice that included the use of nembutsu chant. Ingen and his students founded the Mampukuji temple near Kyoto. The Obaku monks made a large contribution to the advancement of Japanese artistic styles, especially in the disciplines of painting and calligraphy.

SHUGENDO

The Shugendo order, whose members are called yamabushi, combined elements of Japanese folk religion involving mountain worship with esoteric Buddhist doctrines seeking to unlock the mystical powers of the mountains that were home to their ascetic communities. The group traces its ancestry to Heian-period Buddhist hermits, known as bijiri, who lived in the mountains of Japan studying the secrets of Buddhist texts like the Lotus Sutra. Emerging as a full-fledged religious movement in the 12th century, its followers claim allegiance to the teachings of a legendary ascetic named En no Gyoja, and its practices center around seasonal holy mountain pilgrimages known as nyubu, which are said to transform the practitioner into a Buddha by ascending through the profane to the sacred in the course of climbing the mountain. Shugendo holy mountains include the Kumano mountains, Daisen, and Dewa Sanzan.
Buddhist Monasticism

The growth of Buddhist monasticism beginning in the early seventh century is credited largely to the patronage of the influential Soga family whose support of Buddhist monastic orders was spearheaded by Prince Shotoku who founded a number of monasteries including Shitennoji and Ikarugadera in the late sixth century. Despite this early support, by the eighth century, political involvement in the monastic life of many Buddhist sects began to feel suffocating as the government continued to tighten its control over the communities, issuing a number of administrative codes and regulations governing the activities taking place inside these monasteries. The establishment of a number of monastic offices within the government forced religious leaders to assume increasingly bureaucratic roles at the expense of their spiritual responsibilities, drawing the criticism of a number of monks who were looking for a higher standard of religious purity.

Tired of the stale and detached Buddhism of the monasteries that had become, for all intents and purposes, “state run,” monks like Gyogi left to bring the Buddhist message to the common people. These monks, along with a number of other visionaries who came to Japan from China to start religious groups, soon started their own monasteries independent of government sanction. At this time, the emperor moved the capital to Kyoto to escape the influence that religious institutions were having on the government. Thus, the monastic orders seemed to free themselves from governmental interference.

During the Heian period, the monastic orders continued to grow as many new religious sects were introduced from China, including the Tendai and Shingon sects. The introduction of Zen during the 12th century also strengthened the numbers of religious people seeking a monastic lifestyle in Japan, but at this time, Pure Land Buddhism was also gaining influence, which, with its de-emphasis on meditation, led to a decline in Buddhist monasticism. The monastic orders continued to decline until the 16th century, when a renewed interest in Confucian ideals championed by the government brought new patronage of monasteries especially for Zen devotees.

Buddhist Rituals

**Bon Festival** Also known as Urabon or Obon, a Buddhist ritual usually observed on July 13 or 15 to honor ancestral spirits. Commonly, observers construct a *shoryodana* (spirit altar) and make other preparations for the return of their ancestors. The Bon Festival is a highlight of the yearly festival calendar on a par with the New Year celebration.

**pilgrimages** Pilgrimages were journeys of particular religious significance to many Japanese believers. Often such endeavors required travel to a specific religious place (a temple, mountain, or similar site) or to a series of such holy locales in a meaningful, predetermined succession.

Buddhist Ritual Objects

**Buddhist ritual implements** Objects or accessories that are commonly used during ritual practice and often assume larger spiritual significance. A wide assortment of implements has been used in numerous ceremonies with varied historical backgrounds. Some limited examples of ritual objects include the water jug used as a symbol of purification, a monk’s robe, incense, candles, vases, and numerous instruments. One of the most prominent ritual implements is the mandala altar commonly seen in esoteric sects of Buddhism. The mandala is a symmetrical diagram that represents the Buddhist universe and is used during ritual as an object for meditation.

Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhist Deities

**Amida (Butsu)** In Sanskrit, Amitabha (Buddha of Infinite Light) or Amitayus (Buddha of Infinite Life). Buddha of the Western Paradise, or Pure Land. The object of worship in Pure Land Buddhist schools. As a bodhisattva, Dharmakara—the future Amida—vowed to help all sentient beings attain
enlightenment. Japanese Pure Land traditions stress recitation of Amida’s name as a profession of faith. This is known as the practice of the *nembutsu* (Namu Amida Butsu: “I place my faith in Amida Buddha”).

Birushana Another name for Dainichi Nyorai.

*bosatsu* In Sanskrit, bodhisattva. A being who forgoes Buddhahood to help others in their quest for
enlightenment, the bodhisattva will not become a Buddha until all sentient creatures have achieved this state. The bodhisattva is an important concept in Mahayana Buddhism (Mahayana: Greater Vehicle) because it emphasizes the idea that all beings possess the power to reach nirvana.

**butsu** In Sanskrit, Buddha.

**Dainichi** Great sun Buddha. In Sanskrit, Maha-vairocana; also known in Japanese as Dainichi or Dainichi Nyorai. Dainichi is especially important in Shingon (esoteric) Buddhist traditions. Dainichi is understood as the ground or essence of the universe. All phenomena are emanations of this Buddha. Dainichi's nature is expressed in the mandala of the two worlds, the kongokai (in Sanskrit, vajradhatu, diamond world) and the taizokai (in Sanskrit, garbadhatu, womb world), which shows all aspects and manifestations of the Buddha.

**Fugen** In Sanskrit, Samantabhadra. Bodhisattva who represents meditation and practice. Fugen is often depicted riding an elephant.

**Jizo** In Sanskrit, Ksitigarbha (womb of the earth). Jizo, usually represented as a monk with a jewel in one hand and a staff in the other, protects travelers and children, and often assists followers out of the hell realms and guides them to higher levels of existence. He has been venerated since the Heian period.

**Kannon** In Sanskrit, Avalokitesvara; in Chinese: Guanyin. Kannon is perhaps the most popular of all bodhisattvas. Kannon represents infinite compassion and has the power to deliver all beings from danger. Kannon figures prominently in chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra. Kannon is also an attendant to Amida Buddha. Other representations of Kannon include the Bato (Horse-Headed) Kannon, Juichimen (11-Headed) Kannon, and Nyoirin (Wheel of the Wish-Granting Jewel) Kannon.

**Miroku** In Sanskrit, Maitreya (“Benevolent One”). As the Buddha of the future, Miroku will descend to this world in its next cycle and attain Buddhahood, thereby bringing all of its inhabitants to enlightenment. Miroku currently resides in the Tushita heaven (in Japanese, Tosotsu), one of many Buddhist paradises.

**Monju Bosatsu** In Sanskrit, Mañusri. Bodhisattva of wisdom. Monju is often depicted riding on the back of a lion.

**myoo** In Sanskrit, vidyaraja (“kings of light or wisdom”). Considered kings of magical science, myoo deities constitute the third class of Buddhist divinities after the buddhas (nyorai) and bodhisattvas (bosatsu). The fourth class is the tembu (in Sanskrit, deva). Originally of Hindu origin, myoo were adopted into the Buddhist pantheon as protectors of Buddhism. The most famous is Fudo Myoo (in Sanskrit, Achalanatha), often depicted with a fierce visage and associated with fire.

Nyorai In Sanskrit, Tathagata (literally, Thus Come One). An epithet of the Buddha.

rakan Japanese term for an arhat, in Theravada tradition, people who have attained enlightenment.

Rushana Another name for Dainichi Nyorai.

Shaka Nyorai A term for the historical Buddha.

Shakamuni A term for the historical Buddha.

Shakuson A term for the historical Buddha.

Taho Nyorai In Sanskrit, Prabhutaratna. The Buddha “Many Jewels” who appears in the Lotus Sutra to witness the truth of the historical Buddha’s teaching.

Seishi Bosatsu In Sanskrit, Mahasthamaprapta. The bodhisattva of wisdom. Along with Kannon, Seishi is an attendant to Amida Buddha. Seishi is mentioned in the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, the Meditation Sutra, and in the Lotus Sutra as one who attended Shakyamuni’s teachings on Eagle Peak.

Yakushi Nyorai In Sanskrit, Bhaišajyaguru. Medicine Buddha.

Zao Gongen Protective deity of Shugendo mountain ascetic practice. He is especially associated with Mt. Kimpu in the Yoshino region south of Nara.

Buddhist Temples

In English, the word temple is used to indicate a Buddhist building, and shrine is used to indicate a Shinto building. The suffixes -ji, -tera (-dera), -in, and -do are used to denote Buddhist temples and related structures.

Examples of this usage:

Eiheiji = Eihei Temple
Asukadera = Asuka Temple
Hokkedo = Lotus Temple (or Hall)

Chion’in Chion’in, built in 1234 by Genchi (1183–1238), honors his teacher, Honen, the founder of the Jodo sect of Pure Land Buddhism (see Pure Land Buddhism). The temple, located at the foot of the hills known as Higashiyama, marks the site where Honen settled and established his secluded residence after leaving Mt. Hiei in 1175 to proclaim his new Pure Land teachings. The temple became the head of the Jodo sect in 1523. In 1607 the temple was designated a monzekidera, one whose main abbot must be chosen from the imperial family or aristocracy. Its famous bell, cast in 1633, is six meters high, two meters in diameter, and weighs more than 70 tons.

6.10 Stone sculpture of the bodhisattva Kannon (Photo William E. Deal)
Daitokuji  Head temple of Rinzai Zen; located in the Murasakino section of Kyoto. Built in 1315 by Myocho, the temple became a part of the Gozan system. In 1431, however, the abbots of Daitokuji decided to make the temple private, thereby removing the temple from the Gozan ranks; it closed its doors to priests outside of Myocho’s lineage. Daitokuji attracted many priests, including Kaso Sodon (1382–1412), and his disciples, Ikkyu Sojun (1394–1481) and Yoso Soi (1376–1458). The great tea master, Šen no Rikyu (1522–91), under whose auspices the tea ceremony experienced its greatest development, also studied at Daitokuji and contributed to its cultural development by building tearooms and tea gardens. Also buried here is one of the great unifiers of Japan—Oda Nobunaga.

Eiheiji  Founded by Dogen in 1243, Eiheiji serves as one of two main temples of the Soto Zen sect. Dogen built Eiheiji, which he originally called Daibutsu-ji, as a place to live a life of seclusion. In 1246, Dogen changed the name to Eiheiji. The temple was damaged by fire in 1473, but not until the 16th century did Eiheiji become a prominent center of Soto Zen.

Enryakuji  Founded in 785 by Saicho (767–822) (known posthumously as Dengyo Daishi) at the peak of Mt. Hiei, where he spent several years performing austerities, Enryakuji became the head temple of the Tendai school of Buddhism. Situated in the northeast of Kyoto, Enryakuji also became a protector of the city and the imperial palace because it was believed that evil spirits came from the northeast. A conflict arose in the 10th century between the “mountain faction,” and the “temple faction” that led to a struggle between armies of warrior-monks lasting from 993 to the 15th century. Oda Nobunaga saw this as a great threat to the unification of the country, and therefore, destroyed much of the temple in 1571. Enryakuji is also associated with the Hie Jinja, its major tutelary Shinto shrine.

Ginkakuji (Temple of the Silver Pavilion)  Built by Ashikaga Yoshimasa, Ginkakuji functioned as a pleasure villa and retreat when the shogun needed to withdraw temporarily from the pressures of administration. After Yoshimasa’s death in 1490, Ginkakuji was converted into a Zen temple under the name Jishoji.

Higashi Honganji  The head temple of the Otani branch of the Jodo Shinshu sect of Pure Land Buddhism, located in Kyoto. The temple was founded in 1603 by Kyonyo Koju, after an argument split the Honganji Jodo Shinshu branch into two different factions. In 1619 Tokugawa Ieyasu recognized the Otani sect as an independent branch of Jodo Shinshu, giving the temple the same status as its rival, the Nishi Honganji.

Honganji  Originally a small memorial chapel and mausoleum dedicated to Shinran, the founder of the Jodo Shinshu sect of Pure Land Buddhism. Built by Kakushin-ni (1224–83), Shinran’s youngest daughter, in 1272 and called Otani-byodo, it enshrined an image of her father and his remains. Not until 1321 was the building promoted to the rank of main temple by Shinran’s grandson, Kakunyo (1270–1351), and renamed Honganji (Temple of the Original Vow). Honganji, however, garnered little support from other Jodo Shin subgroups even though it claimed to be the most orthodox interpreter of Shinran’s teachings. The Onin War (1467–77) provided the context for the appearance of the Ikko-ikki, a military force of warrior-monks who were trained to defend the temple and their beliefs. Surpassing its rivals, Honganji was officially recognized by the emperor in 1560, whereby the abbots gained not only religious power but also secular power. Because the national power bestowed on its abbots conflicted with Oda Nobunaga’s political agenda of national unification, Nobunaga attacked and destroyed the temple’s political power. Honganji split into two rival branches, the Higashi Honganji and the Nishi Honganji, following a struggle between Kyonyo (1558–1614) and his younger brother Junnyo (1577–1631) for the title of 12th abbot.

Ishiyama Honganji  Temple of the Jodo Shinshu sect founded in 1496 by Rennyo (1415–99), the eighth abbot of Honganji. In the period 1533–80, it served as the center of the Honganji sect after the temple had burned, and provided a center of com-
merce, culture, and most important, a headquarters of the Ikko ikki. Ishiyama Honganji reluctantly surrendered to Oda Nobunaga on September 10, 1580, due to Nobunaga’s political campaigns.

Kan’ei-ji Located in Ueno Park, Tokyo; founded in 1625 by the monk Tenkai (ca. 1536–1643) for the Tendai sect. Situated to the northeast of Edo Castle, Tenkai beseeched the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu that a temple should be erected to protect Edo Castle from evil spirits that emanate from the northeast. Kan’ei-ji also served as a cemetery for many members of the Tokugawa family.

Kencho-ji Temple of Rinzai Zen; located in Kamakura and built in 1249. The fifth Kamakura shogunal regent (shikken) Hojo Tokiyori (1227–63), an avid supporter of Zen, served as a major patron of the temple. The temple was founded by the Chinese monk, Rankei Doryu (in Chinese, Lanqi Daolong), 1213–78, not only to make Kamakura a vital center for Rinzai Zen, but also to serve as a major Zen center and refuge for Chinese Chan (Zen) priests who fled China as it came under control of the Mongols.

Kennin-ji Temple and monastery of Rinzai Zen established in 1202 by the priest Eisai at the behest
of the shogun Minamoto no Yoriie. Kenninji promoted Zen instruction after the warrior class and elite rulers acquired an interest in it because of its strict ideals of self-discipline and the religious idea of transcending death. Kenninji is modeled after the Chinese Baizhang monastery (built during the Tang dynasty, 618–907) and named one of the Five Mountain (gozan) temples of Kyoto in 1334. The name Kenninji comes from the era Kennin, in which it was built.

**Kinkakuji (Temple of the Golden Pavilion)**
Kinkakuji, built by the third Muromachi shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (r. 1369–95), acted as a retreat after he abdicated the shogunate to his son, Ashikaga Yoshimochi. Much like the Phoenix Hall at Byodoin, the Golden Pavilion expresses Yoshimitsu’s power to transcend and make permanent the temporal; the temple, covered in gold foil as its name suggests, is supported on pillars extending over a pond to give the illusion that it floats. After Yoshimitsu’s death in 1408, the pavilion was converted into a Buddhist temple and given the name Rokuonji—Rokuon being Yoshimitsu’s posthumous religious title. The Kinkakuji was set on fire during the Onin War (1467–77) and restored. However, it was completely destroyed by arson in 1950. The existing temple is a 1955 reproduction.

**Kongobuji**  Main building in a complex of Buddhist temples founded in 816 by Kukai (Kobo Daishi) on Mt. Koya; belonging to the Shingon sect of esoteric Buddhism. Kongobuji (Temple of the Diamond Mountain) was the name that originally encompassed every temple and building on Mt. Koya, but in 1869, two temples, Seiganji and Kozanji, merged together to form the temple Kongobuji. Here, Kukai instituted the first teaching center for Shin-gon mikkyo, the doctrine of esoteric Buddhism that originated in India. The temple prohibited women from entering until 1872.

**Nanzenji**  As Zen gained recognition among the Kamakura ruling elite, the cloistered emperor Kameyama (r. 1259–74) granted Mukan Gengo (1212–91) an imperial villa in Kyoto, which became Nanzenji. As a major temple in the Rinzai sect of Zen, it was ranked first among the gozan in Kyoto in 1334, and, in 1386, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu gave Nanzenji a special rank above the gozan ranking system.

**Nishi Honganji**  Pure Land Buddhist temple; founded in 1591 by the 11th abbot (hossu) of Honganji, Kenyon (1543–92). This temple replaced the Ishiyama Honganji and was founded following a dispute between Kennyo’s sons, Kyonyo (1537–98) and Junnyo (1577–1631), for title of the 12th abbot of Honganji. Junnyo became the head abbot of Nishi Honganji in 1593, after which his brother built the Higashi Honganji in 1603. The Tokugawa shogunate recognized both temples as equal, independent establishments of the Jodo Shinshu sect.

**Ryoanji**  Buddhist temple of the Rinzai Zen sect; located in Ukyo Ward, Kyoto. Built in 1450 by Hosokawa Katsumoto and patronized by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, the temple entered into decline after being almost completely destroyed by fire in 1397. Ryoanji is famed for its dry rock garden that consists of 15 large stones in a sea of white gravel designed by Soami c. 1455.

**Sensoji**  Also known as Asakusadera, Sensoji originally belonged to the Tendai sect of Buddhism. According to tradition, two fishermen found a statue of the bodhisattva Kannon in the Sumida-gawa River in 628. Each time they tried to put the statue back in the water, it returned to them. The village head recognized the statue’s divinity and renovated his home into a temple to enshrine the statue. It was completed in 645. (See also ASAKUSA SHRINE.)

**Todaiji**  Major Buddhist temple built in Nara between 728 and 749 by the monk-architect Roben at the order of Emperor Shomu (r. 724–749). This commission signified an effort to emulate temples of the greatly admired Tang dynasty of China. Todaiji is famous for the Nara Daibutsu (The Great Buddha of Nara), the image of the Buddha Birushana (in Sanskrit, Vairocana), regarded by the Kegon sect as the cosmic, supreme Buddha. Having been severely damaged, the present Buddha was restored in 1692. Under the abbot Shunjobo Chogen (1121–1206), many of the buildings at Todaiji were reconstructed.
in 1180 in the style of the Southern Song dynasty in China (1127–1279). The famous Nio guardians sculpted by Unkei and Kaikei were placed at the front of the temple in 1203.

**Tokeiji** Rinzai Zen temple in Kamakura. Founded in 1285 by Kakusan, the widow of Hojo Tokimune, Tokeiji served as an asylum for mistreated women and for those seeking divorce.

**Zojoji** Edo-period Pure Land (Jodo) temple located in Edo. During the Edo period, Zojoji served as the Tokugawa family temple.

**Christianity**

Christianity (in Japanese, kirisutokyo) was introduced to Japan in 1549 with the arrival of Francis Xavier (1506–52), a Christian missionary and one of the founders of the Jesuits (Society of Jesus). The early efforts made by Xavier and other missionaries to convert the Japanese to Christianity were modestly successful, especially given language, worldview, and other cultural impediments to understanding. Missionaries in Japan also came to include representatives of different orders, not only Jesuits, but also Franciscans and others. This resulted in a credibility problem for the missionaries when competition over who could gain the most converts emerged between these different Christian groups. Despite conversion of some powerful local lords, by the early 17th century, Christianity was deemed a threat to the ruling authority of the Tokugawa shogunate, which eventually banned all missionary activity in the 1630s, coinciding with the shogunate’s national seclusion policy. The prohibition on missionary activities lasted some 200 years, until Japan was forced by the United States and other Western nations to open its ports in the 1850s to trade in material goods and, by extension, foreign ideas.

Early Christian missionaries were faced with a number of problems, including confrontation with customs and religious ideas that they neither understood nor respected. Potential Japanese converts were suspicious of the Christian idea that only those who embraced Christianity would be saved. To some Japanese, this seemed to imply that their deceased ancestors were already condemned to an eternity in hell, an idea entirely foreign to those raised at the intersection of both Buddhist ideas about universal salvation and Confucian notions of filial piety. Despite these obstacles, by 1579 the number of Christians in Japan was estimated at approximately 100,000. However, this number includes individuals who were forced to adopt Christianity by their newly converted lords.

For several decades following their arrival in Japan, Christian missionaries received powerful backing from a number of Japanese leaders, including Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who saw in Christianity both economic possibilities as well as a foil to powerful Buddhist monastic communities. However, Hideyoshi eventually became convinced that Christianity was a threat to his plans for unified Japan under his control. Hideyoshi’s suspicions were heightened by the actions of some Japanese Christian converts who sometimes desecrated or destroyed Buddhist and Shinto sacred sites. In 1587, infuriated by reports of these activities, Hideyoshi issued a decree banning Christianity and ordered all missionaries to leave Japan. Enforcement of this decree was sporadic at best, and missionary activity continued without significant government interference. In 1596, the Spanish ship *San Felipe* ran aground off the shore of Japan and was captured by government authorities. Hideyoshi was convinced that this was an advance force of Westerners planning to conquer Japan just as they had other Asian nations such as the Philippines. He ordered the arrest of 26 Christians, a group comprised of both Franciscan priests and their Japanese converts, who were subsequently marched from Kyoto to Nagasaki on foot and burned at the stake.

Tokugawa Ieyasu, Hideyoshi’s successor and founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, initially tolerated the Christian missionaries because it was profitable for the shogunate to maintain friendly relations with Western traders. However, once he no longer deemed Christians a strategic ally, he ordered the missionaries to leave Japan. The Tokugawa shogunate feared not only the colonization of Japan by Western powers but also the possibility
that Christian missionaries would foment dissent among the Japanese populace and challenge the ruling authority of the shogunate.

After the expulsion of the missionaries, persecution of Japanese Christians became systematized under the direction of the government. Individuals were forced to renounce Christianity or face a variety of punishments, including death. It is estimated that 3,000 Japanese Christian adherents were martyred, and still others were imprisoned or exiled. In addition, the Tokugawa shogunate enacted a policy whereby all Japanese families were required to register at a local Buddhist temple in order to receive a certificate testifying to the fact that they were not Christians. In some regions of Japan, people were forced to stamp on displays of Christian images—a practice called *fumie* ("images to step on")—such as the Crucifixion, in order to prove that they were not Christians. The Tokugawa shogunate’s anti-Christian policies, however, were based as much in political exigencies, such as the shogunate’s fear of invasion by Western powers, as it was in any intense religious antagonism. Christianity did not return to Japan, legally, until the opening of Japan in the closing years of the Edo period.

### ROLE OF WOMEN

The attitude of male-dominated Japanese Buddhism has varied in its perspectives on women and the kind of religious lives and roles women were capable of assuming. Sometimes this view was negative toward women, and other times it was significantly more positive. Both Tendai and Shingon Buddhism were headquartered on sacred mountains: Tendai on Mt. Hiei and Shingon on Mt. Koya. On both of these mountains, for much of the medieval and early modern periods, women were either forbidden to enter the mountain precincts or severely restricted in where they could go on the mountain. Women, including nuns, were believed to be spiritually inferior to men and to be subject to the “five obstructions” (*gosho*). The idea of the five obstructions asserted that women are unable to attain the five highest spiritual states, including the highest, that of a Buddha.

Some medieval Japanese Buddhist men held favorable views of women and their spiritual abilities. This was especially true among the new Buddhist schools of the Kamakura period. Pure Land traditions, for instance, with their emphasis on the possibility of universal salvation, included women in this view. Women were not only seen as capable of salvation, but were treated as full participants in the religious life. Honen, the founder of the Pure Land school (*Jodo-shu*), was particularly welcoming of women.

Buddhism served women in yet other ways during the Edo period. One notable example was the service a few temples provided to women who were seeking to leave a bad marriage. The Tokeiji temple in Kamakura was one such temple that included a nunnery where women could enter religious practice, and thereby be released from an abusive or otherwise problematic marriage. In this way, Buddhist temples provided women with a way to extract themselves from a marriage in a society in which there was no secular mechanism for women to end a marriage.

Some Buddhists held the view, based on a Chinese sutra, that women were impure because of the blood associated with menstruation and childbirth. It was believed by these Buddhists that not only were women impure, but that this blood inevitably polluted the nearby water and soil. The result, it was claimed, was that women were condemned to rebirth in one of the nine levels of Buddhist hells unless Buddhist rituals were performed that would obviate this transgression.

In medieval and early modern Japan, women could become Buddhist nuns. Reliable research on this aspect of Japanese Buddhism is still relatively sparse, but it was the case that women did enter the monastic life whether because of a heartfelt wish to pursue enlightenment or in order to avoid an oppressive marriage. Becoming a nun was one method by which women could take control of their own lives in a society that provided them with few lifestyle choices. One role model for a woman’s Bud-
Dhist religious career was the life of Mugai Nyodai (1223–98). She was the daughter of a warrior and married into a samurai family. She took up the study of Rinzai Zen Buddhism, becoming a disciple of the Chinese monk Wu-hsueh Tsu-yuan (in Japanese, Mugaku Sogen). Later, as his spiritual heir, Mugai became the founder and abbess of the Keiaiji temple, a Rinzai Zen convent.

Shinto attitudes toward women were rather different than the attitude of Buddhists. Unlike Buddhist sutras and other Buddhist texts, Shinto had a long tradition of acknowledging and valorizing female deities, most prominently, Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, from whose lineage the imperial family derives. The imperial shrine at Ise included among its priests a chief priestess, typically chosen from the imperial family. On the other hand, local shrines often denied women entrance into the most sacred precincts housing the altar of the enshrined deity. Similarly, women were often denied participation in shrine associations known as miyaza, which functioned as executive administrators over local matters.

In the late Edo period a new phenomenon arose whereby women became the founders of new religious movements. One of the most notable examples was the life and religious experience of Nakayama Miki (1798–1887). Miki, the wife of a farmer, had a series of possession experiences in which the god Tsukihi (literally, “Sun and Moon”) instructed her to provide care for the poor, including faith healing and other rituals for curing disease and ensuring safe childbirth. Miki came to be seen as healer, and as a result, her popularity as a religious figure began to grow. The religion Tenrikyo (Teaching of the heavenly principle) was founded by Miki in 1838, teaching that human beings are children of God the Parent (Oyagami), a later appellation for Tsukihi.

**Reading**

**General**


**Shinto**

Reader 1998; Ono 1962; Muraoka 1964: Shinto thought and language; Philippi 1968: mythology in the Kojiki; Ellwood 1973: imperial enthronement rituals; Bocking 1997: glossary of Shinto terms, rituals, people, and places; Breen and Teeuwen (eds.) 2000: Shinto history

**Buddhism**


**Christianity**

Boxer 1951, Cooper (ed.) 1965; Elison 1973