



SHINTOISM

Shinto is an animistic religion that began around 500 BCE and revolved around *matsuri*, the worship and honour of Kami. Kami are sacred spirits that take their forms in nature—such as rocks, rain, and mountains—as well as in exceptional leaders such as previous emperors. Kami want us to treat them well, and if they are well they will bring us health, happiness and success. Buddhism, introduced to Japan in the sixth century CE, co-exists with Shinto because Shinto is regarded as a way of life as much as a religion. About 84% of the population in Japan follows both Shinto and Buddhism. Shinto is generally not practised today as a form of worship, but it still exists in *omikuji* (a form of fortune-telling), *origami* (used around Shinto shrines) and the Japanese New Year.

SHINTO'S CENTRAL TEXTS

- The Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)
- The Rikkokushi (Six National Histories)
- The Shoku Nihongi and its Nihon Shoki (Continuing Chronicles of Japan)
- The Jinnō Shōtōki (a study of Shinto and Japanese politics and history) written in the 14th century

ESSENTIAL NON-FICTION

ROBERTS, Jeremy. (2003). *Japanese Mythology A to Z: A Young Reader's Companion*. Facts on File. ISBN 978-0-8160-4871-7. Grades 8 and up.

This book for middle-school readers includes chapters on major Shinto gods and goddesses. It also references locations, objects and themes with significant Japanese legends and folktales.

HAY, Jack. (2006). *Shinto. Religions and Religious Movements*. Greenhaven. ISBN 978-0-7377-2575-9. Grades 10 and up

Favourably reviewed by VOYA, this volume uses both primary and secondary sources to illustrate and explain the major Shinto gods and goddesses, the creation myths and fundamental beliefs. The author takes care to connect the Shinto religion to Japanese history and culture.