

In Japan, two religions predominate--Buddhism and Shintoism--and the Japanese people see no contradiction in practicing both: worshipping Buddha even as they revere the kami, the divine beings that populate the country and define the indigenous faith of Shintoism. In *Shintoism and the Religions of Japan*, C. Scott Littleton illuminates this unusual spiritual pluralism and shows how it has fertilized a vast and varied religious landscape. Littleton describes the origins and development of Shinto (or Kami no Michi, Way of the Gods), the introduction of Buddhism a millennium and a half ago, the rise of various sects of Buddhism (some indigenous to Japan), and the role of the imperial court and the shogunate in the nation's religious life. Here too is a clear and succinct summary of Shintoism's teeming pantheon of spiritual figures, the holy writings of Shintoism, and the islands landscape of holy sanctuaries. Littleton explains how Buddhism has been reinterpreted in light of Japan's indigenous traditions (some monumental statues of the Buddha are worshipped as manifestations of kami), and describes the new religions that flourished during the Meiji period of the late nineteenth century, after Japan once again opened up to the outside world. Writing with grace and clarity, he captures the essential features of Japanese religious life, including the countless local festivals and rituals, the importance of harmony and enlightenment, and concepts of death and salvation. Lavishly illustrated with some thirty color photographs, sprinkled with boxed features that focus on fascinating issues, this volume offers a marvelous tour of Japan's distinctive spiritual experience.

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