

Shinto Tapestry 2009



Shinto Prayer

Although the people living
across the ocean surrounding us
I believe are all over
brother and sister
why are there constant
troubles in this world?
Why do winds and waves
rise in the oceans surrounding us?
I only earnestly wish
that the wind will soon puff away
all the clouds which are
hanging over the tops
of mountains.



Shinto is the aboriginal religion of Japan. Generally translated as “the Way of the Gods,” Shinto is a mixture of religious beliefs and practices, and its roots date back to prehistory. It was first mentioned in 720 in the Nihon shoki, Japan’s earliest historical chronicle. Unlike most major world religions, Shinto has no organized body of teachings, no recognized historical founder, and no moral code. Instead, it focuses on worship of nature, ancestors, and a pantheon of kami, sacred spirits or gods that personify aspects of the natural world. In the Shinto tradition, nearly everything possesses (or is possessed by) a kami. We have selected Amaterasu omikami, the goddess of the sun, as our honoring of all the kamis.

The wooden Torii gate is a symbol of the transition between the finite world and the infinite world of the gods. Flowing water brings purification, a very important concept in Shintoism. Mount Fuji is depicted because, more than any other spiritual path we’ve studied, Shinto is integrally linked to Japan. The Origami frog sitting on a stone brings the concepts both of Origami, which comes from Shinto, and all of the natural animals and the importance of the natural world. Sumo wrestling is the other Shinto ritual now familiar around the world. Cherry blossoms also bring in the natural world, with the reverence for both its beauty and its impermanence.

The Shinto altar includes shrine architecture, to welcome and to house our local kami.