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| http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/stile_amaterasu.gif |
| Literally the 'Great Divinity Illuminating Heaven', Amaterasu is the principal female deity of Japanese mythology. According to the - **Amaterasu Omikami**, 'Record of Ancient Matters', she was born from the left eye of Izanagi and was assigned to rule , the High Plain of Heaven. Japan's first emperor was said to be descended from Amaterasu, and she is worshipped at , the Ise Shrine in. |
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| http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/stile_shinto.gif |
| http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/p6torii.gif**Shinto** is Japan's indigenous religion. The worship of (divine force found in gods of nature and heavenly gods) slowly emerged at the dawn of Japanese history, crystallized as an imperial religious system during the Heian Period and from then on was in constant interaction with Buddhism and Confucianism. Shinto was made the state religion of Japan from the Meiji Period to 1945. Now Shinto and Buddhism, along with other minor religions, exist side by side, and the ceremonies and festivals of one religion are often mirrored by the other in marking significant events in Japanese life.   The shrine is the focal point of organized Shinto religious practice. At the entrance to a shrine stands the (gateway); at the centre is the (hall of worship) where priests conduct their ceremonies and at the back is (the main sanctuary) which houses a sacred object where the is thought to reside. Usually more than one deity is enshrined. |
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| http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/stile_visitingsherine.gif | | |
| This custom is followed to mark the various stages in the life of a Japanese. A child is first taken to the shrine after its birth to pray for divine protection; this is called り(first shrine visit). Later, 5 year old boys and 3 and 7 year old girls are taken to the ceremony of on 15 November to pray for their continued health and safety, as it was originally believed that for children of these ages they were (unlucky years - these feature again in adult life).  On reaching the age of 20, a young person attends a (coming-of-age ceremony), at a shrine or municipal council on 15 January. Then, when it comes time to tie the knot, people may decide to have a (wedding ceremony), at a shrine or temple before moving to the reception. (Recently, some wedding reception venues have built in their own 'shrine' to facilitate proceedings!) もうで, literally 'first visit', refers to the custom of visiting a shrine or temple on . When visiting a shrine it is customary to use to wash your hands and rinse you mouth; this signifies purification of the soul. | | |
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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/stitle_shintoinlife.gif | | | |  | | --- | | めpurifying salt According to Shinto belief salt drives out evil spirits, so it is used for purification in a number of rites practiced today. | | refers to a ceremony held to purify a building site before commencing construction in which the earth is purified with salt, rice wine and water | | At a (sumo tournament), salt is thrown on the ring by (sumo wrestlers), in a pre-bout ritual to purify their body and mind. | | り Salt is put out in front of shops and restaurants in little piles（り） to drive away evil spirits. | | Some homes have household altars at which they can pray to and to their ancestors. The Buddhist equivalent is the , and some homes may have both. | | りTraditionally an autumn festival held to give thanks for a bountiful harvest, it is now also held in some city communities. | | http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/omikoshi.gifおみこし(portable shrines) are carried through the streets by young men calling out 「わっしょい、わっしょい」(Heave ho!) to be laid at the local shrine. | | | |
| Reference: Kodansha 'Japan An Illustrated Encyclopedia' | |
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| http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no32/jtitle_kanji.gif | |
| http://sensei.jpf-sydney.org/no37/p6kanji.gifAs you can see, the word for 'god' is written with kanji 神, and it is also a part of the word , literally 'the way of the gods'. The character comes from a combination of two pictures; an altar (which indicates god) and lightning. Originally it was the word for the god of lightning, and from there it came to mean gods and spiritual phenomena generally.  You can probably guess what the following words are mean which Answers below　 , , ,  Answers:gods, godess, Shinto priest, Catholic priest, theology | |
| |  | | --- | | Reference: 藤堂編小学生版「漢字なりたち辞典」 | |  | | |