

Shintoism

Shintoism is one of the most popular religious belief systems within the [Yamatai Star Empire](#). It is a spiritualist religion that involves the worship of kami, Ketsurui Chiharu, and the [Empress](#).

Beliefs

Shintoism revolves around the worship of kami (ancestors) and the “living kami” (the Empress and former Yamatai Rulers). Ketsurui Chiharu is considered to be the most famous and prominent ancestral kami, a war hero who was killed in battle during the Fourth War of Elysia. The Empress and the still living former emperors and empresses occupy a unique position within Shintoism as the only living kami. As such, they are seen to be worthy of prayer and worship despite the fact that they continue to live. Extremely devoted individuals often view the entire Ketsurui Clan as being worthy of worship. However, most practitioners do not venerate the Ketsurui Clan in its entirety. The Kami are understood to be divine beings who have a higher manifestation of life energy. They do not inhabit an alternate plane of existence; however, they are understood to exist within the material world. As such, they are not considered to be omnipotent or perfect, but divine nonetheless. The Kami include the Gods that created the universe, however they also take the form of ancestral spirits, forces of nature, aspects of the landscape (rivers, creeks), and, classical elements (earth, water, air, and fire).

Purity is a central theme within Shintoism. Shinto does not consider humans to be inherently impure or sinful. In fact, Shinto considers everyone to be born pure and semi-divine. Sin and impurity arise later in life, and are cleansed by purification rituals. In addition to individual transgressions, impurity often takes the form of death, disease, waste, and disaster. Within Shinto, death is the most divisive aspect of impurity. Its association with war often puts peace-oriented practitioners at odds with militaristic practitioners and the SAoY.

Sects/Doctrines of Belief

- Militaristic Shintoism

With the SAoY, Militaristic Shintoism is the most common doctrine of belief for Shinto personnel. It is characterized by its emphasis on worship towards the Empress and Ketsurui Chiharu. Many personnel also worship Yumiko and the kami and the sun. However, the worship of kami outside of the Empress and Ketsurui Chiharu is perceived by most personnel as ignorant and uncultured.

- Anti-Imperial Shintoism

Anti-Imperial Shintoism is a radical belief doctrine/sect which rejects the worship of the Empress as a living kami. They can also be characterized by their fierce opposition to Yamataian imperialism and expansion. They are also against the existence of the SAoY and many are also against the existence of a state. The political religious beliefs of this sect are anarchistic in nature and practice.

Relationship with the Star Army of Yamatai

[Star Army of Yamatai](#) has many devoted practitioners of Shinto within its ranks. Most Shinto members of the SAoY are of the militaristic sects of Shinto, and believe that the impurity of death can be tolerated as long as blood is shed for a pure cause. However, Shinto soldiers will perform extensive purification rituals before and after battle to cleanse themselves of the impurity of death. After experiencing soul transfers due to their own deaths in combat, highly devoted Shinto personnel will often refuse to return to service until they have performed highly extensive purification rituals and prayer, to rid their souls of the impurity of death. These tendencies have caused a small degree of friction between religious and secular personnel, however the SAoY's emphasis on maintaining high morale within its ranks has led to many concessions being made in favor of religious personnel.

To illustrate, the SAoY offers [personal shrine kits](#) for Shinto personnel and it allows them to take extended leave after a soul transfer.

The warships named for deceased members of the Ketsurui Clan are considered by many highly religious individuals to be near-sacred sites. The [Sharie-class Battleships](#), named for [Ketsurui Sharie](#), are considered to be semi-sacred sites, and many highly devoted personnel seek positions on ships such as these in order to build a closer spiritual relationship with the Ketsurui kami.

Lifestyle and Practices

Purification Rituals:

Before worship, purification rituals are followed. The simplest purification ritual is the washing of the face and hands. During formal worship, purification wands (Haraigushi) are waved by a priest over the person, object, animal, or place to be purified. "Shubatsu" is a purification ritual where salt is sprinkled on the priests, worshippers, or the ground to purify it. Ceremonies of mass purification are referred to as "Oharae". Oharae ceremonies involve large groups of people and occur at large shrines in order to purify an entire group. "Misogi" refers to purification rituals which involve the washing of the entire body. This often occurs under waterfalls and by sacred lakes and rivers. Casual practitioners simply drink from the water rather than plunging their entire bodies in, however, devoted practitioners will follow the ritual thoroughly. Before undergoing Misogi, practitioners undergo preliminary purification rituals, which often involves prayer, fasting, physical activity, and minor purification rituals. Generally, before immersing their bodies in water, practitioners put on a fundoshi and a headband. Highly Devoted practitioners perform Misogi every morning.

Shrine Worship:

"Omairi" refers to visits to shrine sites for prayer, meditation, and purification. Practitioners often undergo the following steps:

1. At the entrance gate, practitioners bow before passing through
2. At the hand washing basin, they perform "Temizu" by washing both their hands, their mouth, and the handle of the water ladle.

3. Approach the shrine, ring the bell, and deposit a modest donation proportional to your means
4. Prayers
5. Bow twice, clap twice while holding the second clap for closing prayers before leaving

Private Worship:

Worship also occurs in private, at personal shrines referred to as “Kamidana”. These shrines are never set up on the ground or at eye level. They are set up above the owner’s eye level. Personal shrines are dedicated to the worship of a particular kami through an “ofuda”, which is imbued with the kami’s spiritual essence. In Yamatai, most personal shrines are dedicated to the Empress or to Ketsurui Chiharu.

Public Worship:

Worship occurs in public during festival rituals. The order of events at these rituals is as follows:

1. Purification
2. Adoration (Bowing at the main altar)
3. Opening of the sanctuary
4. Presentation of offerings
5. Prayer
6. Music and dance (“kagura”)
7. Removal of offerings
8. Closing of the sanctuary
9. Final Adoration
10. Sermon (“Norito”)
11. Ceremonial Meal

Kagura:

Kagura is the ritualized dance that is performed during festival rituals and in worship to kami at Shrines. Dances can function to symbolize ritualized purification, celebration of holidays, and folk tales. Kagura performed at a court or a shrine are performed by the temple maidens (“Miko”). These dances mark festivals and other and ritualized events.

Shrine Life:

Priests and priestesses have similar roles in maintaining shrines, [haidens](#), and [hondens](#). Miko are supplementary priestesses who hold an institutionalized role in shrine life. They perform the Kagura dances and sacred cleansings, communicate with the kami of the deceased, and participate in Yudate (divination by boiling water) rituals.

Kannushi are the main priests and priestesses of a designated Shinto Shrine. They lead in the worship of a kami. They sometimes act as mediums for a given kami and they perform purification rituals.

Kami

- The “living kami”, [Empress Himiko I](#), [Ketsurui Yui](#), [Ketsurui-Motoyoshi Katsuko](#), [Ketsurui Yuumi](#),

[Kitsurugi Uesu](#), and [Ketsurui Aiko](#). Many highly devoted worshipers view the entire Ketusurui Clan as kami, and therefore, worthy of worship. However, this is a rare method of worship and few Shinto practitioners take their belief to this extent.

- Ketsurui Chiharu, An entire sect is built around her worship as people have claimed to have felt her presence or have witnessed her spirit in battle. The multiple locations of the temple serve as headquarters for worshippers. Her worship is heavily associated with the militaristic arm of the faith.
- Yumiko, The kami of archery and war. Her worship is also associated with the militaristic sects of the faith, and as such, worship of her is popular among Shinto [Nekovalkyrja](#). Some consider her to be the patron kami of Nekovalkyrja. Yumiko is normally depicted with four fingers on each hand, almond-shaped eyes, neko style ears, and a weapon.
- Haru, the kami of spring and agriculture. Haru is depicted with either a male or a female form. Haru's messenger takes the form of a fox. Many devoted practitioners of Shintoism believe that the fox has the power to ward off demons.
- Hinata, the Sun Kami
- Ayaka, the kami of flowers, beauty, art, dance, literature, and music. The worship of Ayaka is common among artists and Yamataian nationalists. The depiction of a bellflower on the Yamataian flag, has made it a common nationalistic and militaristic symbol. The worship of Ayaka and the utilization of the bellflower is also used to politically represent Yamatai's commitment to the arts.

OOO Notes

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