

4. What concept/ideas/thoughts coming from Shintosim do you think are the most valuable?

I find two Shinto concepts to be the most valuable. The first is the gratitude for all that keeps us alive which I mentioned in Question 2. The second is the nature and history of Shinto itself.

Shinto doesn't have a founder or doctrine.

While the contemporary mainstream understanding of Shinto is rooted in ancient texts like the Kojiki and the tradition of rice cultivation, forming an intellectualized version known as "Shrine Shinto," Shinto has a more primordial aspect called "Ko-Shinto" which venerates natural elements such as mountains, rocks, and ancient trees. In ancient times, the Japanese people believed that the gods resided in huge natural creations such as large trees, rocks, and waterfalls, and held rituals in front of these natural creatures, offering thanks and prayers in the belief that they were roughly equivalent to the residence of the gods. As time went by and Japanese society developed architecture, shrine pavilions and torii gates were erected around the sacred objects, and shrines were formed. (A photo of a shrine with Japan's largest tree as its sacred tree, and a shrine with a strange stone as its object of worship.) Interestingly, as history moves forward, Shinto's interpretations and logical structures have increased, whereas retracing the origins reveals a purer form of reverence, characterized by a wordless respect for nature. This silent reverence is integral to Shinto, which does not necessitate verbal explanations or fixed definitions. Instead, it allows for a multitude of perspectives, affirming that with a hundred individuals there can be a hundred interpretations. Shinto encourages each person to resonate with their own version of it.

The kanji for Shinto(神道) does not use the word "teaching"(教) as it is used in other religions, including Christianity(キリスト教) and

Buddhism(仏教). Instead, the word Do(道) meaning "path of way" is used. Several Do/道(paths) have been passed down from generation to generation in Japan, such as judo(柔道), kendo(剣道), bushido(武士道), aikido(合気道), calligraphy(書道), tea ceremony(茶道), flower arrangement(華道), etc. The mastery of "Do/道" is not found in efficiency, that is short-term proficiency. The goal is to achieve a state in which the body remembers the motions to the point where they can be done without thinking. It is a level of mastery higher than the state in which motions are done without error. While the correct translation for 道 is "path or way", 道 has connotations that are difficult to translate. These connotations apply to ultimate concepts that span both life and cosmology.

If there is a "教/teaching," it cannot be more than a "教/teaching" given from the outside. True mastery lies in the self and the work and practice put into the Do/道(paths). Even if one understands the meaning of conceptual values such as "truth, goodness, and beauty," "human ability," or "spiritual richness" as taught by others, these are still definitions in someone else's words. It is still someone else's business.

Shinto is merely a way to arrive at meaning. It is a personal journey that leads different people to find their own answers. Because Shinto is a "Do/道/path" and not a "teaching/教", people can honestly and straightforwardly seek their true nature throughout their lives to reach their ultimate state of being.

The fact that there are no teachings in Shinto means that the more one learns, the more one's path opens up in unlimited branches, and the more one grows boundless.

These are the most precious aspects of Shinto, the splendor of being able to grow and find one's boundless potential because there is no "teaching" and the gratitude for all that keeps us alive along the way.



Japan's highest single-step waterfall is called Nachimitaki and can be found at Hirou Shrine. The waterfall itself is enshrined as the sacred body of the deity Oanamuchi no Mikoto. While it's called a shrine, Hirou Shrine does not have an actual physical shrine. Worshipers pray to the waterfall directly.





The giant camphor tree towering in the precincts of Kamou Hachiman Shrine in Kagoshima Prefecture is about 1,600 years old, with a root circumference of 33.5 meters, a trunk circumference of 24.22 meters at eye level, and a height of about 30 meters, making it the largest camphor tree in Japan. Legend has it that when Wake Kiyomaro, a nobleman in the end of Nara Period, was exiled to Osumi, he visited Kamou and drove a stick in the ground, which took root and grew into a large camphor tree.





A human-faced rock called "Ishigami-sama" is located behind the shrine building of Ishigami Shrine in the mountains of Aomori City. The right eye is said to represent Amaterasu Omikami, and the left eye Tsukiyomi-no-mikoto.

During the era of the feudal government, the shrine was widely advertised as "Ishi-jin-sama," or "Stone God," for its spiritual power. It is said that the freshwater gushing from the eyes was effective in curing intractable diseases and eye diseases. In the early Meiji period (1868-1912), when the mixture of Shintoism and Buddhism was banned, the belief in the shrine was prohibited. However, many people seeking the sacred spring petitioned for a prayer hall. In 1872, the prefectural government denied the request, citing it as "a bewitching spell to mislead the foolish". Later, an attempt was also made to destroy the rock. In 1905, the Ishigami Shrine was again recognized as a shrine and remains so to this day.







