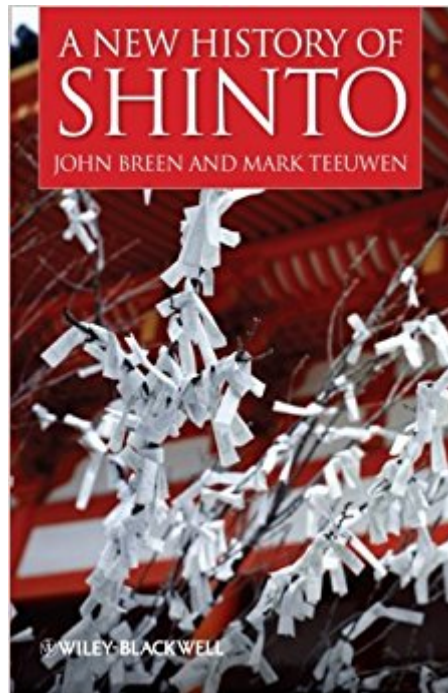




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# A New History Of Shinto



## Synopsis

This accessible guide to the development of Japan's indigenous religion from ancient times to the present day offers an illuminating introduction to the myths, sites and rituals of kami worship, and their role in Shinto's enduring religious identity. Offers a unique new approach to Shinto history that combines critical analysis with original research Examines key evolutionary moments in the long history of Shinto, including the Meiji Revolution of 1868, and provides the first critical history in English or Japanese of the Ise shrine, one of the most important in all Japan Traces the development of various shrines, myths, and rituals through history as uniquely diverse phenomena, exploring how and when they merged into the modern notion of Shinto that exists in Japan today Challenges the historic stereotype of Shinto as the unchanging, all-defining core of Japanese culture

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It is a measure of the book's achievement that it has managed to introduce such scholarly notions in a way that is at once accessible and instructive. Even those skeptical about its claims would have to admit the solidity of the research, and the book renders valuable service by opening up debate about Shinto's origins to a general readership. Its influence is likely to be long lasting. (Japan Review, 2012) "Breen and Teeuwen offer a postmodern, historical exposition of Shinto. In addition to independent research, they draw on a wide field of contemporary Japanese Shinto studies . . . The book is thus not only a result of solid academic work-it is also an ambitious

political assessment." (Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, 2010) "But for anyone interested in Shinto studies, religion and nationalism, and the contested and ever-changing nature of religious traditions, this is an essential read." (Religious Studies Review, 1 March 2011) "Written by two scholars at the forefront of the study of Japanese religions, this book offers much more than a brief history™. It is in fact a very bold and lucid attempt to redraw the parameters that govern our understanding of that elusive body of thought and practice we call Shinto | This book will surprise and on occasion shock; it will surely be required reading for all those interested in Japan and the Japanese." --Richard Bowring, Professor of Japanese Studies, University of Cambridge

Fresh material presented in an entirely original format. Co-written by two of the world's leading academic authorities on Japanese religions, this book is a substantial and highly readable introduction to Shinto | It sets a new standard for a concise introduction to Shinto [and] should be required reading for anyone interested in Japan and religion. • "Brian Bocking, University College Cork

A clear, highly readable critique of modern Shinto's evolution through history. It illustrates how what we think of as Shinto has changed in response to the challenges posed by shifting power structures within Japanese culture.

It was complete

This is easily the best book on Shinto out there. This book avoids the major pitfall of works on Shinto: that this is a timeless "way of the gods," the unchanging (or little changed) indigenous religion of Japan. Shinto has a very long past, one that reaches back to the dawn of Japanese history. However as a living religious tradition, Shinto was reinterpreted at various major historical watersheds. These reinterpretations have drawn richly using preexisting religious practices (both native and "foreign"), incorporating new elements and reconfiguring older beliefs (often during periods of political upheaval). The net result has been various "reinventions" of Shinto tradition which reflected pressing needs and historical practice. The major points of change are located at the dawn of the classical era (when the supposedly untainted myths were recorded), the medieval (when an independent priesthood was worked into the samurai's political order), and the dawn of the modern era (with the emergence of state Shinto). The Shinto that exists today must be seen as the product of these epochal upheavals, and how we see Shinto is through the lenses of these

transformations. This does not make Shinto somehow "inauthentic," as such changes are a part of every living religious tradition. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this book is the balance it strikes between analyzing the various reinventions of this religion, and exploring centuries of tradition which define this thing we call "Shinto." While Shinto may be a presentist reinvention tradition, those traditions are tangible and have a rich history extending back over a thousand years.

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