

The Many Faces of Shinto

A study of Shinto's presence in interpersonal behaviour, ritual activities,
popular culture and politics.

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Norsk Sammendrag (Norwegian Summary)

Denne oppgaven tar for seg shintoismen og dens mange ansikt i det japanske samfunn i dag. Shintoismen blir i vestlig tolkning oppfattet som religion, mens japanere selv mener shintoismen er en kulturarv. I Shintoismen så har man kami og tilbedelse av kami. Kami kan tolkes som en betegnelse for guder, men begrepet er diskutert i den akademiske verden.

Jeg undersøker en rekke aspekter av shintoismen og relasjonene mellom dem. Aspektene er: shintoismen i mellommenneskelig adferd, shintoismens tilstedeværelse i populærkulturelle medier som manga, shintoisme som rituelle aktiviteter og shintoisme i japansk politikk. Jeg fokuserer på to former av shintoisme. Den ene er den formelle formen av shintoisme, den imperiale tilbedelsen (*jingu*). Den andre er den uformelle formen som er sett på som tilbedelse av kami (*jinja*).

For å diskutere og analysere dette materialet bruker jeg to teoretiske perspektiver. Jeg bruker de teoretiske perspektivene til animasjons regissøren Hayao Miyazaki og religionsviteren Eva Hellman. Videre brukere jeg Hellman's sosio-politiske religionsdefinisjon for å undersøke om shintoismen kan regnes som en religion.

Feltarbeidet besto av et to måneder langt opphold i Japan hvor jeg intervjuet fem informanter og utførte observasjoner på shintoistiske helligdommer. Informantene er tre kvinnelige studenter og to kvinnelige politikere, en som er politiker på landet og en som er politiker i en storby og kvinnerettighetsforkjemper. Jeg observerte helligdommer av både *jinja*- og *jingu*-type, og utførte generelle observasjoner av de kulturelle aspektene. I tillegg så har jeg analysert de første tre bindene i mangaen *Noragami: Stray God* lagd av Adachitoka. Denne mangaen følger en ukjent kami, Yato, som oppfyller ønsker og hjelper mennesker i nød, mot den tradisjonelle donasjonen av 5 yen, for å tjene nok penger og samle nok følgere til å etablere sin egen helligdom.

Jeg har tematisk analysert materialet fra intervjuer, observasjoner og mangaen *Noragami: Stray God* og diskutert materialet fra en teoretisk tilnærming. Ved bruk av materialet, de kulturelle aspektene, analyse og diskusjon med en teoretisk tilnærming ønsker jeg å etablere de mange ansikt til shintoismen og få rede på shintoismen sin rolle i det japanske samfunn i dag.

Previous page: A Shinto jinja. Photo CF.

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Preface

I have loved Japan and Japanese popular culture from the moment I first came in contact with it. From the first time I snuck into my sister's room during the night to read the strange comics that one had to read backwards I have loved and continued to read manga. I have been interested in anime and animation films since I sat down with my sister and watched *Inuyasha*.¹ Besides my studies I work in a shop that sells products from different cultures such as books, comic books and manga and to a certain extent it can be considered a centre for foreign popular culture, especially Japanese popular culture, in Bergen. This was my foundation before this study and I have learned so much and have so many to thank for this.

Firstly I would like to thank the University of Bergen and the Scandinavia–Japan Sasakawa Foundation for helping finance this study and making the fieldwork and this thesis possible. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my informants for spending days with me, showing me around, housing and answering my, at times, very challenging questions and for their patience. Without you this thesis would not be, and would not have revealed what it has. Thank you to Lise-Marie Pedersen Leira for helping me translate and making sense of the Japanese aspects, words and anything I did not understand or know.

I would like to thank my family, my big crazy but very supportive family. First, thanks to my older sister, Vera, for introducing me to this amazing world and spending time with me when we were almost at the point of nemesis during our childhood. I would like to thank my father for helping me financially while writing this thesis so that I could focus and finish it on time. Additionally I would like to thank my very patient mother who listened to my rants almost every evening the last month of this process while I walked from the university and home and made sure I came safely home each day. Thank you my dearest family, all of you, from the youngest munchkin niece and nephew to my grandparents.

Lastly I would like to thank my supervisor who has received emails at four in the morning and has helped from our first meeting to the last day of writing. He has been supporting, guiding and correcting the entire way through and I am thankful. These individuals and organizations have all been part of this study and the creation of this thesis, one way or another, and I am eternally grateful. I am proud of the result and I hope you will be too.

¹ *Inuyasha* is a manga that follows the half human half dog demon Inuyasha and the high school student Kagome, from the future, on their adventures gathering shards from a powerful jewel, that grant demons stronger powers, in order to protect the world.

1. Introduction

What is Shinto? What is Shinto's role in the Japanese society today? This study will explore these and other questions using a qualitative approach, with the help of material from interviews, observations and the analysis of manga. This chapter will present my inspiration to study some aspects of Shinto, the focus of my study, my research questions and give some basic information about Shinto and define some of the most important terms. First I would like to tell about what inspired me study Shinto in modern Japanese society.

1.1 My Inspiration

Since I can remember, the far away country Japan and its unique culture have always fascinated me. Japanese culture and popular culture remain one of my greatest interests because it is beautiful, colourful.

Through these popular culture mediums I have learned a lot about Japanese culture and the Japanese way of life as it was and how it is. Manga such as *Mushashi* and animation films such as *My neighbour Totoro* present cultural aspects such as Shinto,² the Kami and Japanese nature. These interests have inspired me to study what I study today but also to embrace any opportunity to travel, learn and to see new cultures. In 2014, while getting a degree in Intercultural Relationships, I got the opportunity to travel to Japan and the trip left an immense impression on me.

The Atom bomb museum in Hiroshima was brutally honest about the actions of the Japanese during the war, such as how the soldiers collected heads and held contests on who had the highest count and the people back home cheered them on and held parades in their honour for every brutal and bloody victory. What I saw in Hiroshima showed Japan as it was before the war, a different side of Japan that I had known little about. It showed me that Japan was not just the happy, peaceful and colourful country I saw in anime and read about in manga but that it had a dark past. This revelation fed my interest and my interest grew. The Grand Ise Shrine was a beautiful place surrounded by nature and sacred trees that told stories with their bark that had been worn down by human touch throughout the centuries, while the

² *Mushashi* follows a wanderer in an alternative feudal Japan who solves conflicts that have risen between Kami and humans and help them understand each other better. *My Neighbour Totoro* on the other hand, follow the story a father and his two daughters who move into a new house and the girls' interaction with the villagers as well as the Kami residing in the area.

Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo showed a pride of cultural traditions that still causes conflict with the neighbouring countries.

This was the very reason I applied for the master's programme in the Study of Religions and my curiosity fell on the Japanese society today and it became the focus of my degree.

This background leads me to present the focus and questions of my thesis.

1.2 Query

In my thesis I will look at Shinto's presence in four aspects of contemporary Japanese society.

These aspects are interpersonal behaviour, ritual activities, popular culture, and politics. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is Shinto's role in Japanese society today?
2. How is Shinto present in Japan as interpersonal behaviour?
3. How is Shinto present in Japan as ritual activities?
4. How is Shinto present in the Japanese popular culture medium such as manga?
5. How is Shinto present in Japanese politics?
6. How are these aspects presented and understood from a Japanese perspective?

1.2.1 Focus

This thesis is based on the material gathered from the interviews, observations during the fieldwork and the analysis of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*.

I will use the theoretical perspectives of Hayao Miyazaki presented in his acceptance speech after having received the Cartoonists Association Prize in 1994, as well as Eva Hellman's socio-political definition of religion to see whether Shinto can be defined as a religion using her theoretical approach.

1.3 Shinto, Politics, Interpersonal Behaviour and Japanese Popular Culture

The aspects of contemporary Japanese culture studied are different aspects of Shinto. I will explore Shinto in interpersonal behaviour, Shinto in ritual activities, Shinto in the popular culture medium manga, and lastly look at Shinto in Japanese politics.

The cultural and social aspect of Shinto will be presented through interpersonal behaviour, whereas Shinto's presence at shrines and the physical aspect of Shinto will be addressed through examples of the ritual activities. I will also focus on will be Shinto's presence and reflection in manga. The last aspect is Shinto in Japanese politics. Shinto is very difficult to

define as a religion or a cultural heritage because of its complexity and its integral place in Japanese society. By an analysis that takes several aspects into account, I hope to be able to give a nuanced account of this complex phenomenon.

1.3.1 Shinto

To many outside Japan Shinto is considered to be a religion. However, Shinto has an ambiguity that makes it difficult for someone who is not Japanese to fully understand what it is. Some scholars, like Peter Beyer in *Religions in Global Society*, argue that based on a western understanding and definition of religion, part of Shinto (sect Shinto) could be considered a religion.³ Furthermore, he discusses the presence and the Japanese understanding of *shūkyō*, ‘religion’, as something that can be highly contested and was primarily considered as teachings and beliefs.⁴ However, Beyer also presents that the Japanese tradition shrine Shinto does not fall under the category of religion but is considered an aspect of Japanese culture. He establishes that because of the practice aspect of Shinto in Japan it can instead be considered a cultural aspect and so he shows that Shinto (as shrine Shinto) does not fall under the Japanese definition and understanding of ‘religion’.⁵ Others, like Jolyon Baraka Thomas in his text *Drawing on Tradition*, present Shinto as *joshiki*, or Japanese common sense, and so present it as a cultural aspect, not a religious one.⁶ This suggests that the most popular form of Shinto, shrine Shinto, is not regarded as religion (in contrast to, for example, Buddhism and Christianity). After the presentation of the material, I will approach Shinto through Hellman’s socio-political definition of religion to see whether Shinto can be defined as a religion through this definition.

According to Mark Teeuwen and John Breen in their book *A New History of Shinto*, display how Shinto is present in Japan today. ‘Shinto is the religion of shrines (*jinja*, *jinju*) [...]. These shrines, some 100,000 in all, are managed by about 20,000 Shinto priests, who are immediately recognizable from their traditional attire.’⁷ They emphasise that even though it is so spread and many may participate and use the services provided by Shinto, there are few who identify themselves and ‘Shintoists’.⁸ The authors further explain that the statistics are unreliable as to the number of adherents of Shinto because over 80% of the Japanese population belong to Shinto, whereas the result of questionnaires shows that very few identify

³ Beyer 2006: 245.

⁴ Beyer 2006: 244.

⁵ Beyer 2006: 249.

⁶ Thomas 2012: 9.

⁷ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 1.

⁸ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 1.

themselves as ‘Shintoists’.⁹ This shows that Shinto is more complex than one might consider and hard to fully grasp when even the Japanese seem to confuse the statistics.¹⁰

An aspect of Shinto is the Kami, which is another ambiguous theme. H. Byron Earhart in *Religions in Japan: Unity and Diversity* presents the Kami as either ‘god’ or ‘spirit’,¹¹ however, there exists no precise translation of Kami. Kami can be anything from the smallest grass straw to the largest mountain and even one’s food. As it was explained to me by one of my informants, every living thing has a Kami and the Kami help in everyday life by granting wishes and answering prayers.

Another aspect of Shinto and Japanese culture is the aspect *joshiki*. This term was something I encountered numerous times during my fieldwork and it was often referred to as Japanese common sense but what this entailed was never fully explained, for it was ‘common sense’. These terms are repeated and reappear throughout this text and have therefore to be defined.

1.3.1.1 Definitions and Focus

I will use the following definitions of Shinto, Kami and *joshiki*:

Shinto:

In this text Shinto will – in accordance with Breen & Teeuwen – be defined as a cultural heritage, to maintain the informants perspective, and it has three faces:

1. ‘A “nonreligious” body of state rituals focusing on the emperor.
2. A broad swathe of local rituals that address a range of other concerns, from community prosperity to individual good luck and health.
3. A number of religious groups, defined by the state as “Shinto sects”.¹²

Kami:

In this study, Kami is interpreted as beings that exist within every living thing and exist alongside humans and help them by granting wishes and answering prayers.

Joshiki:

‘Common sense’ (*joshiki*) informs and presents the Japanese concepts of life and death, morality, “Japaneseness” and cosmology.¹³

⁹ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 1.

¹⁰ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 1.

¹¹ Earhart 2014: 29.

¹² Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 18.

¹³ Thomas 2012: 9.

The focus of Shinto will be on both the formal and informal forms of Shinto in Japan today. The formal form of Shinto is shown through the imperial family, *jingus*, and the Ise Grand Shrine, Naiku. The informal Shinto will be presented through the tradition of the Kami and local shrines, or *jinjas*.

1.3.2 Politics

Japanese democratic politics does not have a long history, like in some European countries. In Japan, there has been a tradition of a one-party system. As presented on the website *Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet*, Shinzo Abe is the current prime minister who has been prime minister from 2007 to 2009 and was re-elected prime minister in 2012.¹⁴ Beyer presented that after the establishment of the constitution in 1947 freedom of religion was invoked and Shinto and state were separated. He states that the Japanese state could no longer support Shinto.¹⁵ Because of this I am interesting in seeing if Shinto still has relations to politics and if so, how Shinto is present in politics. I will now present the definition and [or: of] ‘Japanese politics’ and the focus.

Definitions and Focus

The definition and focus of Japanese politics use the definition of politics presented by the *Merriam-Webster dictionary* and the *Store Norske Leksikon*’s presentation of the Japanese political system. The definition is as follows:

Japanese Politics:

‘The activities, actions, and policies that are used to gain and hold power in a government or to influence a government.’¹⁶ The Japanese political system is constructed as a multiple party system but has one party, the LDP, which has been the mostly dominant party in the Japanese government since World War II.¹⁷

The focus of Japanese politics in this text is on the presentation of Shinto in politics by the informants, observations and analysis of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*. The last aspect of

¹⁴ http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/meibo/daijin/abe_e.html (Read 10 May, 2016).

¹⁵ Beyer 2006: 248.

¹⁶ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politics> (Read 12 May, 2016).

¹⁷ Berg (2013) 2016.

Shinto I present in this text is the popular culture medium manga as a source to knowledge about Shinto.

1.3.3 Popular Culture Medium Manga

Japanese popular culture has become a well-known aspect of Japan for many outside of Japan. According to Susan Napier in her chapter ‘Manga and anime’ in the *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, twenty years ago many outside Japan would not know anything about Japanese popular culture mediums, such as manga and anime. However, today these same Japanese popular cultural aspects are known and cherished around the globe.¹⁸ This is something one might have experienced oneself at home without knowing it. My niece at the age of 7 is very familiar with anime films such as *Frozen* but also with *My Neighbour Totoro*. At Outland, where I work, I have sold manga to kids of all ages and teachers who use them in their classes. In Norway, there is even a festival or gathering for Japanese popular culture called Desucon. On their website, *Desucon*, it is presented as a gathering for fans of Japanese popular culture such as games, anime, manga and Cosplay.¹⁹ This example shows that Japanese popular culture has spread far beyond Asia and to countries such as Norway.

Thomas explains what manga anime is but as the focus of this thesis is manga I will only present manga. According to Thomas, manga represented 40% of print publishing sales in Japan in the 1990s. He further states that although the number has declined today manga is still read as much, if not more, as it is available through second-hand stores, manga cafés, the Internet and on one’s phones.²⁰ Thomas reveals that creators of anime often simplify the story illustrated in the manga, and so alter the original story presented in the manga.²¹ Furthermore, he mentions that religion, such as Shinto, and its practices can be found in manga.²² This strongly suggests that manga as a medium can present different aspects of Shinto better than anime. Because of these factors I chose to focus on manga within Japanese popular culture. I will now present the definitions of manga and Japanese popular culture that I will use and the special focus of popular culture.

¹⁸ Napier 2013: 226.

¹⁹ <http://desucon.no/desu2016/praktisk-info/hva-er-desucon/> 2016.

²⁰ Thomas 2012: 3.

²¹ Thomas 2012: 4.

²² Thomas 2012: 3.

1.3.3.1 Definition and Focus

The definition of ‘popular culture’ and ‘manga’ used in this thesis are:

Popular Culture:

‘[a] collection of attitudes, behaviour, materials and media associated with a particular group’²³

Manga:

Manga is defined as ‘[i]llustrated serial novels that comprise juxtaposed panels that combine artwork and text.’²⁴

The focus of the popular culture aspect in this study is on the presentation of Shinto in the popular culture medium manga. I will do a thematic analysis of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*, with a focus on the different relations and aspects of Shinto presented.

1.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the focus of my thesis, and my inspiration for choosing to study some aspects of Shinto. This study will explore Shinto as interpersonal behaviour, as ritual activities, as well as the presentation of Shinto’s presence and reflection of Shinto in manga and Shinto’s role in politics in Japan today.

I will in the following chapters present the sources and methods used during the fieldwork and the theoretical perspective that will be used. I will explore these aspects and present the material I collected through interviews with student and political informants, and through observations during my two-months fieldwork and analyse the manga *Noragami: Stray God* by Adachitoka, focusing on the presence of Shinto. Lastly I will use a theoretical approach to view the material and aspects of Shinto in order to establish Shinto’s role in Japanese society and to see if Shinto can be defined as a religion using Hellman’s socio-political definition of religion.

First, however, I will present the background using a historical perspective and also present how these aspects of Shinto that I will discuss are currently perceived in Japan.

²³ Thomas 2012: 18.

²⁴ Thomas 2012: 3.

2. Background and Previous Research

In order to put this thesis in context I will present a selection of previous research on Shinto, Japanese politics, and popular culture with special focus on manga and anime.

Japan is known as a country that is both new and old. It is a highly modern society yet the old traditions have great value and presence today, not only in the rural areas, but also in big cities such as Tokyo. In the following, I will briefly present the history of Shinto before the Meiji period, during the Meiji period, and Shinto in contemporary Japan. As to politics, I will limit the presentation to the establishment of democratic Japanese politics during the Meiji period and the political situation today, with focus on the development of the Liberal Democratic Party. As to the popular culture medium manga, I will focus on its role and presentation in Japanese society.

2.1 History

John Breen and Mark Teeuwen have in *A New History of Shinto* established that Shinto in Japan today has a distinct identity.²⁵ They further present Shinto as something integral to Japan's history and that the current narratives of Shinto history can be divided into three parts, ancient purity, the 'medieval age' when Shinto was influenced by and influenced Confucianism and Buddhism, and the last part when Shinto returns to its 'pure' form during the Meiji restoration period.²⁶ This historical presentation will not focus on the chronological history of Japan or Japanese religions. Instead, I will look at the development of Shinto during Japanese history and present the material with the earliest information about Shinto and the Kami myth, such as *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, and then present the development of Shinto and politics during the Meiji restoration period.

2.1.1 Shinto before the Meiji Period

The history of Shinto has been presented and approached by many in different ways. H. Byron Earhart in *Religions in Japan* shows one historical exemplification of Shinto: as unity and diversity. Looking at Shinto during the early or ancient history of Japan is, according to Earhart, complex and the label Shinto can be considered as a designation for the totality of beliefs and practices related to the Kami.²⁷ Earhart, describing Shinto as an early 'Kami tradition', presents this tradition as characterised by the close relationship of Kami who were

²⁵ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 1.

²⁶ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 19.

²⁷ Earhart 2014: 33.

regarded as existing within both natural objects, like mountains, and in living beings, such as animals.²⁸ Furthermore, he emphasises that in ancient Japan political and religious power were closely connected and so the head of the village would both lead and govern religious rituals.²⁹ He also discusses the development of ‘Shinto’ during the time of the arrival of Buddhism in Japan. Earhart states that Emperor Yomei, who reigned in the short period of 585–587, first presented the term ‘Shinto’.³⁰ In this text the word ‘Shinto’ is written with two Chinese characters that could be translated as ‘the way of the Kami’, thereby establishing Shinto as a Kami tradition.³¹

Breen and Teeuwen explain historical Shinto through Kami shrines, showing that the term for ‘shrine’ goes back to prehistoric times in Japan.³² They further presents an eighteenth-century account that depicts the Kami as the original owners of the land, supporting the presentation of Kami as something as existing within the living, land and nature.³³ Breen and Teeuwen also mention the earliest surviving texts *Kojiki*, from 712, and *Nihon Shoki* from 720. Though both these texts present a similar story, with the story, about the origin of the Kami and of Japan, including the myth of Amaterasu, the sun goddess, the plots do differ. Where *Kojiki* presents many names, stories and Kami, it also results in many dead ends; *Nihon shoki* follows the Chinese dynasty story model and gives more precise dates for all entries and so presents more clearly the mytho-history of Japan around 700 than *Kojiki*.³⁴ Breen and Teeuwen further stress that one knows very little about the compilations of these texts but do mention that both do refer to the Kami lineage within the imperial family, although *Nihon shojiki* focuses less on the Kami, especially Amaterasu’s³⁵ relations to the family, and more on the dynasty of the Yamato emperors.³⁶ Additionally, in regard to the presentation of Amaterasu, in the *Kojiki*, and the ancestor lineage of the imperial family within *Kojiki*, it is often seen as a reflection of Emperor Tenmu’s beliefs. He is considered to be the one who ordered the compilation of *Kojiki*. According to Breen and Teeuwen, emperor

²⁸ Earhart 2014: 36.

²⁹ Earhart 2014: 37.

³⁰ Emperor Yomei was the 31st emperor of Japan, according to the traditional order of succession. He ruled for only two years and so did not make much change in Japanese society. However, he did support Buddhism, and Shinto.

³¹ Earhart 2014: 40.

³² Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 24.

³³ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 25

³⁴ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 28 f.

³⁵ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 30.

³⁶ The Yamato family is the imperial family with ties to Amaterasu, presenting her as their ancestor. They are the longest ruling royal family in history, though some of the emperors are mythical.

Tenmu came to power during a coup, the Jinshin war in 672 and deposed his nephews.³⁷ Earhart presents these texts, *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki*, as the main tools used by the scholar Motoori Norinaga³⁸ to present and define Shinto as a tradition that presented Kami as both good and evil, just as life is. Motoori's presentation of the notion of Japanese superiority and literal belief in Shinto myths became a source of the Meiji restoration, along with cultural and political developments.³⁹ This presents the next period that caused great changes within Shinto but also the structure of Japanese society, politics and governmental structure.

2.1.2 From Isolation to Globalisation:

Breen and Teeuwen present the components of Shinto, Kami shrines, rituals and myths, as older aspects than Shinto.⁴⁰ Before discussing the Meiji period, Earhart briefly presents the Tokogawa period, the era before the Meiji period, which was a time of isolation and the *Shogun* rulers.⁴¹ He explains that through economic and other problems, the regime declined and the European and American demand for trade gave way for the rise of the emperor, the establishment of democracy and State Shinto: a period referred to as the Meiji Restoration.⁴² Earhart states that the Meiji Restoration that started in 1868 was the period when Japan changed from a feudal to a modern society. Its new focus was on establishing a new national identity through the restoration of the emperor as a symbolic head of state and the developing of entirely new governmental institutions, similar to the west, such as army, education and politics.⁴³ Earhart explains the rise of Shinto and the emperor during the Meiji period through the fall of Buddhism alongside the *Shogun*. According to Earhart, the fall of Buddhism and the *Shogun* governments gave way to a new identity through Shinto and the Emperor.⁴⁴ An imperial rescript in 1870 presented Japan as a nation founded by the Kami and having remained pure through the unbroken imperial lineage that would maintain the rites, the rule and the unity between the two.⁴⁵ He mentions that in 1882, Shinto was made into a nonreligious character and referred to by western writers as 'state Shinto'.⁴⁶ Beyer also state that the aim of restoring Shinto during the Meiji period was to restore the emperor, Shinto and

³⁷ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 134.

³⁸ Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) was a Shinto scholar who laid the foundation for studying ancient Japanese writing using linguistic principles. He and his work are still widely respected today.

³⁹ Earhart 2014: 190 f.

⁴⁰ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 21.

⁴¹ The Shoguns were the military rulers who ruled in Japan from the thirteenth century to the nineteenth century.

⁴² Earhart 2014: 195.

⁴³ Earhart 2014: 196.

⁴⁴ Earhart 2014: 197.

⁴⁵ Earhart 2014: 199.

⁴⁶ Earhart 2014: 202.

what they considered the ancient and genuine Japanese unity of ritual and government.⁴⁷ Additionally, Earhart presents this as the time when Japanese political ‘nationalism’ rose as well as religious ‘nationalism’ in the form of State Shinto, a term that present the state’s financial support of Shinto and the selective ideological appropriation.⁴⁸ Earhart concludes his presentation of the Meiji period by illustrating the time 1900–1940 as a time when Japan focused on strengthening nationalism and militarism and that Shinto was used to reach these goals.⁴⁹

Another age started in Japan in 1945 after, according to Earhart, Japan’s first defeat in its history. He stresses that the reaction to the defeat and spiritual build-up before the war played major roles in forming Japan’s new religious landscape.⁵⁰ Earhart illustrates the severity of the change and disestablishment of State Shinto through the emperor’s announcement. He states that ‘[t]he emperor, whose voice had never before been broadcast, announced defeat over the radio. In 1947, he issued a public statement that he was not a *kami* or god but only human.’⁵¹ As one can imagine, with the profile and power revolving around the Emperor during the time, this message had a great effect on the Japanese public and the consequences rippled over to Shinto. Shinto lost its governmental financial support and many Japanese blamed and associated Shinto with the war’s destruction.⁵² According to Earhart, because of the abolishment of State Shinto, the forms of Shinto that remained, like shrine Shinto, became a religious aspect again and existed in a different religious and political climate than earlier. He also presents the establishment of the *Jinja Honcho*, or National Association of Shrines, immediately after the war. According to Earhart, the *Jinja Honcho* took the place of the Shinto theology and the organization of shrines and so maintained Shinto as one entity with many forms as it still does to this day.⁵³ Breen and Teeuwen further present the finalizing of the Japanese constitution in 1947 that officially separated state and Shinto. They present the *Jinja Honcho*, not as something that would preserve the theology but as a group established by pre-war intellectuals who wanted to prevent the demise of shrines as they felt that without these shrines, Shinto served no meaning.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Beyer 2006: 246.

⁴⁸ Earhart 2014: 208.

⁴⁹ Earhart 2014: 211.

⁵⁰ Earhart 2014: 261.

⁵¹ Earhart 2014: 262.

⁵² Earhart 2014: 262.

⁵³ Earhart 2014: 263.

⁵⁴ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 125.

Earhart stresses that ‘religion in Japan’ is a general abstraction that refer to the total Japanese religious heritage.⁵⁵ Like Breen and Teeuwen, Earhart uses a historical approach to religion in Japan and ends the study by looking at religion in contemporary Japan. He asks ‘are the Japanese religious’ and answers that religion in Japan is understood as a social tradition, not a religious duty, because they one often practices in more than one tradition.⁵⁶ Earhart concludes his study by stating that religions in contemporary Japan face the challenge of industrialization. He shows that because religions in Japan, such as Shinto, are tied to agrarian rhythms from past Japan, they are threatened by industrialization.⁵⁷

2.2 Development of Japanese Politics With Focus on LDP.

Japanese politics as we see it today was not established until the Meiji restoration and the current leading parties that have led the Japanese nation during their separate rules are, according to David Leheny in *The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, the Democratic Party of Japan, or DPJ, and the Liberal Democratic Party, LDP. He further presents LDP as the most long-standing and dominant party of these two.⁵⁸

Leheny displays the corruption present in Japanese politics, especially the long leading party LDP, since the 1950s and the voter apathy among the Japanese people generally throughout the recent decades. He further stresses that this corruption is something widely discussed by scholars and journalists all the way back to the 1990s.⁵⁹ Leheny explains the presence of this corruption by the voter system, where candidates within the same party would compete against each other. In order to secure victory for the party, money became an element. Through money, a candidate would win votes and loyalty in the political system.⁶⁰

According to Leheny, Jun’ichirō Koizumi, unlike other prime minister candidates, did not win the election in 2001 because of the support of the LDPs leading politicians but because of the change in the party voting rules implemented in 2001. An aspect that Koizumi stood for was Japanese nationalism, as does the LDP. During his time as prime minister, he visited the Yasukuni shrine, which is seen as a sensitive area politically, and his wish to join the U.S.A. in the ‘war on terror’. After Shinzo Abe, as Koizumi’s successor, took power, he focused on pushing these nationalistic views and, according to Leheny, seemed more reliably

⁵⁵ Earhart 2014: 1.

⁵⁶ Earhart 2014: 279.

⁵⁷ Earhart 2014: 303.

⁵⁸ Leheny 2013: 29.

⁵⁹ Leheny 2013: 31 f.

⁶⁰ Leheny 2013: 32.

nationalistic. This could be seen in Abe's defence of his grandfather who was jailed as a Class-A criminal during the Occupation.⁶¹

Leheny mentions another aspect I wish to present briefly, which is the political issues and sensitivity surrounding the Yasukuni shrine. Breen in his collection of observations and commentators, *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*, presents this shrine as unique within the Shinto tradition and unlike the rest of Shinto shrines, still related to Japanese politics, because of the sensitivities surrounding it.⁶² Breen and Teeuwen also present this sensitive subject in their presentation of Shinto. They explain that all those that served the country were enshrined, without discrimination, to symbolize the end of war. Furthermore, Breen and Teeuwen emphasise that when the war dead become Kami, their actions of war do not follow them.⁶³ Though this may not seem beyond the traditions of any war memorial, Breen and Teeuwen also present the event that today causes political struggle and reactions from the neighbouring countries any time there is a high standing political presence at the Yasukuni shrine. They mention how in 1978, 33 years after the war ended, 14 Class A criminals were enshrined in the Yasukuni shrine. These 14 men were, according to Breen and Teeuwen, condemned to death by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.⁶⁴ This strongly suggests the reason for political tensions that occurred when Koizumi visited the shrine during his time as prime minister.

2.3 Japanese Manga as a Tool of Communication

Hayao Miyazaki presented one of the factors to manga's popularity today during his acceptance speech, when he had received the Cartoonists Association's Prize in 1994, as being the historical aspect. He stated that manga, or the older form of 'manga', narrative picture scrolls, which were used from and during the Heian Period that lasted from the eighth to the twelfth century and Kamakura period that lasted from the twelfth to the fourteenth century in Japan were used in the same fashion: they were used to present worldly phenomena.⁶⁵ Susan Napier also presents this historical aspect of manga. She refers to the 'pictographic' tradition in Japan now and in the past, with picture scrolls such as *emakimono*: long and elaborate picture scrolls that present a narrative. She further indicates that these

⁶¹ Leheny 2013: 36

⁶² Breen 2007: xiii-1.

⁶³ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 217.

⁶⁴ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 216.

⁶⁵ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

picture scrolls were historical format of visual narration and so the ancestor of manga and anime.⁶⁶

Napier also presents more clearly manga's process in its current format as the printing culture came to Japan in the eighteenth century and that the development increased the publication of books, or manga, that told stories using written words on lively illustrations.⁶⁷ She shows that in the post-war period, manga was used as an escape for a war-weary nation or relief from the economic growth in Japan later. Through this presentation she displays manga as a creative outlet for many in a competitive and high-pressured society.⁶⁸ Napier mentions the manga artist Tezuka Osamu, who is called the 'god of manga' or 'god of anime' and who was the one who changed the potential and perception of Japanese manga. She presents his career from its start in 1946 and throughout the twentieth century. Napier exemplifies that during the 1970s, manga's golden age, numerous manga such as *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Lum, the Invader Girl* were used to express and communicate worlds, changes and phenomena to the reader, with different genres for different genders and ages.⁶⁹ During the 1980s, according to Napier, publications of manga as well as the audience had a substantial growth because of the awareness of manga's potential.⁷⁰ Furthermore Napier establishes that the age group could safely be considered people in their 50s and younger, though there are no statistics surrounding this.⁷¹

In his study *Drawing on Tradition*, Thomas states that manga and anime are used to express and present phenomena such as how-to-manuals, economics, politics, erotic literature, fantasy and more.⁷² Thomas defines Shintō as *joshiki* (common sense) or 'Japaneseness' because the conceptions of morality, life and death are perceived as such, rather than explicitly religious.⁷³ He has conducted a study that focused on texts, interviews and fieldwork to study the religious aspect and presentation in manga and anime. Thomas does an in depth analysis of several manga, including the work of Miyazaki. Here he explores Miyazaki's work and opinions and how his work can present a mystical understanding of religion, particularly Shinto.⁷⁴ He concludes by building on recent research that looks at different aspect of religion, such as everyday religion and religious visual culture; his study

⁶⁶ Napier 2013: 226.

⁶⁷ Napier 2013: 227.

⁶⁸ Napier 2013: 227.

⁶⁹ Napier 2013: 229.

⁷⁰ Napier 2013: 229–231.

⁷¹ Napier 2013: 229.

⁷² Thomas 2012: 6 f.

⁷³ Thomas 2012: 9.

⁷⁴ Thomas 2012: 103

has presented a novel approach to those aspects.⁷⁵ These aspects are manga and anime can reflect multifaceted interests of those that produce and consume them. The second aspect is that creators re-create religion by depicting religious themes, plots and characters. The last aspect is that audience re-created religion in the interpretation presented in the product.⁷⁶

2.4 The Situation Today

Japan is a sophisticated country today with global influence through many arenas, including popular culture, but how are the three aspects presented in this text present in Japan today? These questions will now be addressed.

Napier, in her presentation of the historical aspect of manga displayed its current place in contemporary Japan. She mentions that there may not have been acknowledged or produced any ground-breaking manga during the twenty-first century, yet, there are manga series that approach challenging topics and expressions. Napier addresses the fact that though not many outside Japan knew of manga 20 years ago, manga has now spread globally as the world of manga is easy to understand for seasoned readers and amateurs.⁷⁷ This established that manga is still present in Japanese society today as a tool of communication, as an expression of worldly phenomena and as entertainment.

When looking at the current political situation one can see that the nationalistic view of Prime Minister Abe has become more founded in Japan. As of the 18th September 2015, according to Matt Ford in *The Atlantic*, the Diet passed Abe's reinterpretation of the pacifist article 9 in the Japanese constitution, which would allow him and the LDP to support Japan joining collective self-defences outside of Japan. Ford stresses that this was a reinterpretation of the article and that it did not pass without notice from the public and tens of thousands of students protested in Tokyo against this bill.⁷⁸ This suggests that there has been a big change in Japanese society regarding its pacifist stand.

Lastly I will address the presence of Shinto in Japanese society today. According to Breen and Teeuwen, the formal imperial form of Shinto, *jingu* Shinto, and the informal form of Shinto, *jinja* Shinto, are both present in Japan today. They establish that modern Shinto is difficult to capture. According to official statistics, Shinto is the largest religion with 80% of the population as followers, whereas if asked, very few would consider themselves as

⁷⁵Thomas 2012: 156.

⁷⁶ Thomas 2012: 156.

⁷⁷ Napier 2013: 226–232.

⁷⁸ Ford 2015.

Shintoist.⁷⁹ Earhart also presents Shinto in this fashion and further asks ‘are the Japanese religious?’⁸⁰

As presented by Beyer and Thomas in the previous chapter, Shinto can be seen as a cultural aspect, not a religious one.⁸¹ Still, according to Breen and Teeuwen, despite these different definitions and views of Shinto it is always presented as something genuinely Japanese.⁸² Whether it is a religion or cultural aspect of Japan, it is anyway an integral part of Japan and Japanese history.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the some historical aspects of Shinto, politics and the popular culture medium ‘manga’. We have seen that Shinto has been regarded as both religious and non-religious and how Shinto’s role in Japanese society has varied, especially during and after the Meiji period. The short overview of the political development of Japan’s dominant party, LDP, has shown how there are currently reactions to political changes in Japanese society. Lastly, the presentation of manga’s historical background by Miyazaki and Napier shows how manga has throughout the ages acted as a tool of communication and a forum of expression of worldly phenomena.

2.6 Relevance of this thesis

The aspects of Shinto I will deal with (Shinto, popular culture, and politics) have previously been mostly studied separately. Thomas did present both the aspect of religion and popular culture, whereas Breen in his collection of observers and commentators on Yasukuni looked at Japanese politics through the scope of Yasukuni, a Shinto shrine.

I however, will focus on Shinto in contemporary Japan using Hellmann’s socio-political definition. Instead of looking at well-established aspects of Shinto and the historical aspect, I focus on the current, especially Shinto’s relations with aspects such as interpersonal behaviour, popular culture, politics and current events or products, like *Noragami: Stray God*.

The relevance of this thesis is in its focus on the relations between all these aspects and their roles in Japanese society today. I focus on current events, Adachitoka’s manga *Noragami: Stray God*, and the informants’ understanding and presentation of Shinto in Japanese society today. This thesis will present how Shinto is present and weaved into everyday life in Japan today, the current relations between Shinto and politics and how manga can be a forum of expression of these aspect or Japanese society using *Noragami: Stray God*.

⁷⁹ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 1.

⁸⁰ Earhart 2014: 279.

⁸¹ Thomas 2012: 9.

⁸² Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 19.

3. Sources and Methods

For this project, I have used qualitative interviews and observations as main sources. My thesis looks at Shinto as interpersonal behaviour, Shinto as ritual activities, Shinto in politics and Shinto's presence in popular culture mediums such as manga in Japan today. Because of this I would ideally have student informants and political informants. Students would be easier to access and could have opinions regarding all four aspects, whereas political informants may have different perspectives than the general public.

Due to the nature of the project, I needed a form of interview that would allow me to remain flexible and open to potential changes that could occur during fieldwork. In order to accomplish this I formulated a guide with qualitative interview questions. Anna Davidsson Bremborg writes in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* that '[w]ithin religious studies the qualitative interview is a very useful method, since people's beliefs are diverse and multifaceted, aspects that can be hard to catch in quantitative studies.'⁸³ Qualitative interviews would allow me to go into depth with the informants' perspectives and understanding of Shinto, Japanese politics and popular culture. I tried to make an interview guide that on the one hand would give the interviews enough structure and on the other hand would make room to explore any line of enquiry my informants might want to go into.

Bremborg explains semi-structured interviews as interviews that make room for new lines of enquiry and can go differently than expected and so one cannot prepare all questions.⁸⁴ Because of the dynamic nature of semi-structured interviews, I decided to use that type of interview questions. I took great care in the formulation of every question and tried to include as many of the questions I would ask in the interviews as possible, both main questions and questions that I perhaps might ask.

In order to explore and gather data on the Shinto, political and popular culture aspects, I have also used observations to gather data at shrines, popular culture societies and political centres. Throughout my preparations for fieldwork I focused on building a network, on methods I would use to gather sufficient data and on other challenges I could meet.

⁸³ Bremborg 2014: 310.

⁸⁴ Bremborg 2014: 315.

3.1 Cultural Aspects

As mentioned above, the four cultural aspects I focus on are interpersonal behaviour, ritual activities, popular culture and Japanese politics. These are very complex and comprehensive aspects so I have narrowed down my focus as explained in the introduction.

Regarding Japanese politics I focus on how Shinto is present in Japanese politics based on the relations presented in the material gathered during the fieldwork from the interviews, observations and the manga *Noragami: Stray God*.

Popular culture can be considered for many a forum to voice one's reactions and opinions without breaking the Japanese norms and so is a very fascinating platform to explore the presentation of Shinto as well as relations between Shinto and politics. I will look at and analyse the recent manga called *Noragami, Stray God*. The manga is written by Adachitoka⁸⁵ and was first published in Japanese in 2011 and translated into English in 2014.

Regarding Shinto as ritual aspects, I focused on the formal (*jingu*) and informal form (*jinja*) of Shinto and did observations at shrines from both forms of Shinto, and at the shrines informants showed me. This will be presented more clearly later in this chapter.

In order to present the methodology and the sources I first need to present the different aspects that are in focus. Shinto is an integral part of Japanese culture and I will therefore first discuss some of the challenges Japanese culture presented to my fieldwork.

3.1.1 Japanese Culture

In order for my fieldwork to be as successful as possible it was important to prepare well. The Japanese are in general much more polite and reserved than Europeans. In order to talk in depth about subjects such as Shinto, popular culture and Japanese politics one has to first build a relationship of trust so that the informants will open up and give as honest answers as possible. If this is not done, their culture of politeness may prevent them from telling their own opinion and instead give the most polite answer or the answer they think you want.⁸⁶ Japanese culture may seem to many a bit strange with many rules and manners that foreigners may not know or recognise but most Japanese seem to know. This is presented by some of the informants in their interviews and by Thomas, in his research on manga, anime and religion, as *joshiki*, Japanese common sense or 'Japaneseness.'⁸⁷ Under the aspect 'Shinto as

⁸⁵ Adachitoka is the pen name for the two female artists that together creates the manga *Noragami: Stray God*

⁸⁶ Haugh & Obama 2011.

⁸⁷ Thomas 2012: 9.

Interpersonal Behaviour' in my analysis I explore the aspects of *joshiki* and Japanese culture in order to present Shinto's role and place in modern Japan.

Although I prepared for meeting Japanese culture and developed relationships with recruited informants, their politeness affected the project when I asked questions and when I went with informants to shrines. It hindered them to answer as fully and honestly as I would have wished and many were too shy or cautious to answer. It took time before the informants would open up and so I repeated many questions.

Japanese culture was both the first challenge I faced and what inspired curiosity during both preparations and fieldwork. Due to the complexity of Japanese society it was difficult to prepare in order to make the most out of my time in Japan. I spent much time collecting information about the different manners, what one should and what one shouldn't do and consulted different sources of information. I searched the Internet, asked professors at the University of Bergen, friends and colleagues who had been to Japan on exchange programs and my Japanese language teacher. What I found most challenging was politeness, shyness, cautiousness and a different body language.

I knew I could not learn Japanese fluently before my fieldwork but I spent eight months studying Japanese in order to get at least a basic understanding of the language. I did this so that my stay would be as efficient and comfortable as possible, because I knew the knowledge of the English language in Japan is limited, especially in the countryside. One's trip goes much smoother when one can ask for directions, help and when one can communicate with the locals. More importantly, having a basic knowledge of Japanese makes it possible to follow conversations, which would allow me to observe not only what I saw but also what I heard during fieldwork.

Japanese is a very complicated language both orally and written. One must know both the hiragana and katakana alphabets. The difficulty is that there in addition are over three thousand kanji pictograms, each with several meanings, and they take years to learn. Furthermore, the language has a cultural aspect that complicates it further. For example, one is supposed to talk differently when talking to someone with higher status like a politician or a superior, talk differently to someone with lower status like children and again, talk differently to someone with equal status. I managed to speak and understand the basic words and concepts but nothing further and found a translation firm recommended by the Norwegian embassy in Japan in case I would need to do an interview in Japanese. I managed well enough during my daily life in Japan and it got better throughout the stay and I could sometimes even use Japanese in my interviews. Communication remained a great challenge throughout the

stay, but I was prepared. Another cultural barrier that proved challenging was the political aspects of Japanese society.

3.1.2 Politics

Part of what I wanted to observe was if Shinto was present in Japanese politics. Because of the *joshiki* and the polite nature of how one interacts in Japanese society, this was not easy to prepare for beforehand.

In Japanese society one is not supposed to stand out, but to maintain the *tatemae* and *honne*. *Tatemae* is ‘the behaviour and opinions one displays in public’, whereas *honne* is ‘a person’s true feelings and desires’.⁸⁸ In private one can do and discuss anything, while in public one must follow the social rules and be part of the collective, part of society. Discussing politics and Shinto with a stranger or explaining it in a public space disrupts the rules expressed with this concept and thus acts as a barrier. Debito Arudou mentions this presentation of *tatemae* in *Japan Times*.⁸⁹ Arudou goes further and mentions another phrase, *uso mo hōben*, that supports the Japanese culture of not voicing one’s opinion in public, or lying to preserve the *tatemae*. The translation of this phrase is ‘lying is also a means to an end,’ which according to Arudou is the Japanese attitude and tolerance of not telling the truth or answering truthfully.⁹⁰

It was when I realised this that I understood how important it was that I tried to make sure that my informants were comfortable and felt safe enough with me so that this would not be an issue. I took care to maintain communications and spend time with them beforehand to ensure that the interviews would be successful. Another cultural aspect I focus on is popular culture. If it was difficult to get information about politics, my previous knowledge of Japanese popular culture was a door-opener, especially when I interviewed the younger informants.

3.1.3 Popular Culture

Japanese popular culture is a very vague term because it can include so much. Most people would think of the normal aspects such as music, film and maybe manga and anime, but Japanese popular culture can include much more because some uses it as a forum of expression of ideas that are not possible to discuss in public in Japan.

⁸⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honne_and_tatemae. (Read 1 March, 2016).

⁸⁹ Arudou (2011) 2016.

⁹⁰ Arudou (2011) 2016.

There are a large number of subcultures and different forms of entertainment that fall under this category, such as Cosplay, idols, themed cafés, anime and manga. Cosplay is where one dresses up in costumes that are often detailed and often from a TV series, manga, anime or games, whereas idols were described by one of my informants as individuals, often musicians, who dress up, promote themselves and entertain their fans. Themed cafés are found in most streets in Japan and either has a theme or a service theme, like cat cafés where one can have a drink while playing with the café's cats, maid café where one is serviced by someone dressed as and acting like a maid, and manga cafés where one can sit, relax and read manga located in the café. These cafés build on popular culture groups such as manga, maid and Cosplay and so become part of these sub-cultures. Anime is the animated form of manga or independent theatrical films in an animated format, such as *Pokemon*,⁹¹ or *My neighbour Totoro*. What these different forms of popular culture do exemplify the width and diversity the term Japanese popular culture entails.

I will however, as mentioned earlier, focus on manga. In the start I did consider both manga and anime or either or, but as mentioned in the introduction anime is often a simplified and altered version of manga. Because of this, I chose to focus only on manga and chose the first three volumes of the English translation of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*. The translation of the manga is one of the most recent manga that present Shinto in current Japanese Society.

It portrays a minor Kami, Yato, and a schoolgirl, Hiyori, who is dragged into the world of Shinto and the Kami by Yato.⁹² It explores the use of Shinto and the life of the Kami in present-day Japan and how especially the younger generation relates to Shinto practices. This makes it a very interesting manga to explore and to compare with the informants' understanding and practicing of Shinto.

3.2 Sources

In order to gather the necessary data I used various sources such as informants, manga and observations at different Shinto locations belonging to both imperial and local Shinto traditions. Firstly, I would like to present and discuss my informants.

⁹¹ *Pokemon* is about Ash, a young boy, who with his first pokemon Pikachu seeks adventure and the title Pokemon Master.

⁹² Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

3.2.1 Informants

I used the contacts at my disposal at the University of Bergen, professors, former professors, colleagues and exchange students, to get in contact with persons in Japan who could broaden my network there or help me recruit informants.

Before travelling to Japan I recruited three student informants and during my fieldwork I managed to recruit two politicians and so did five interviews in the end. My informants are presented in the following table:

Informant's Alias	Age	Gender	Status	From Region
Informant A	20s	Female	Student	Hokkaido
Informant B	20s	Female	Student	Kyushu
Informant T	80s	Female	Politician	Kanto
Informant M	60s	Female	Politician	Kanto
Informant W	20s	Female	Student	Kanto

As one can see, the informants are from geographically different areas. Though three are from the Kanto region they are from different areas within Kanto and belong to different generations. One can also observe that all my informants are female. This was partly coincidental but can also be attributed to the Japanese culture and me being female. I did try to approach male informants but they were less willing to talk to me than female informants were.

Before I left for Japan I had three informants, one from Hokkaido, one from Kanto and one from Kyushu. I contacted the student informants while they were in Bergen as exchange students and recruited them as informants there. Among the politicians, one was a politician in the country, and one in the city.

The status of gender in Japan is like much of Japanese culture, complicated, because it is both old and modern, traditional and controversial, as shown in the different forms of popular culture. Women have equal rights and work beside men similar to in other post-industrial countries but there is a social gap and difference. A young woman can be perceived as of lower social status than an older man, and *gaijin*⁹³ women, such as me, can be perceived as of a higher status than a Japanese man of similar or younger age, whereas of lower status than an older male or a male politician. Initially I did have one male informant, a male student in his 20s, but he fell through at the last minute. I felt that the male students were more shy and

⁹³ *Gaijin* is a Japanese term used for foreigners, or non-Japanese.

difficult do develop contact with than female both during my preparations in Norway and in Japan.

Regarding political informants I was fortunate to get any political informants at all and the sex of my informants did not seem to be a factor in those cases. However, I knew that the student informants were not the ones who would be most challenging. Getting in touch with politicians in one's own society can be very difficult. Considering how reserved and private the Japanese can be, politicians could prove difficult to recruit. I am therefore especially pleased that two female Japanese politicians accepted to act as informants.

3.2.2 Popular Culture Medium: Manga

Manga can be considered a popular culture medium, a forum of expression and presentation of aspects of society like religion, culture and everyday life. Furthermore, manga has played this role in Japan and Japan's history for a long time. This was presented by Miyazaki during his acceptance speech for the Cartoonists Association's Prize in 1994. He presents manga, and the older picture scrolls, dated back to the 12th to 13th centuries, as having the same function in Japanese society as forum and illustration of expressions and worldly phenomena.⁹⁴ There are numerous genres in manga today, some based on age, interests, or setting. The manga I have chosen to analyse is presented as part of the type called *shōnen*, which means for boys from the age 8 to 18. The genres of *Noragami: Stray God*, as presented by the Anime News Network, are comedy and the supernatural.⁹⁵

Manga has become popular in many countries outside of Japan, such as the U.S.A., Norway and France. The American publishing and translation offices show this, as they are part of Japanese publishers, like Kodansha, which is the publisher of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*. Furthermore, it could be mentioned that the Anime News Network reported in 2014, that *Noragami: Stray God* was the 14th bestselling manga in the period of November 2013 to May 2014.⁹⁶

3.2.3 Locations

For my observations, I wanted locations that would reflect and show insight into the aspects of Shinto I would study: interpersonal behaviour, ritual activities, popular culture and politics.

⁹⁴ Miyazaki (1994) 2009: 161.

⁹⁵ <https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/manga.php?id=15584> (Read 4 May, 2016).

⁹⁶ <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2014-06-03/top-selling-manga-in-japan-by-series-2014/.75177> (Read 26 April, 2016).

I researched Shinto and the different forms of shrines in order to select examples. Regarding the local form of Shinto I chose to do repetitive observations of the local shrine close to my location in Tokyo, and in addition I asked my informants to show me their local shrine. The locations for the imperial form I chose were the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, and the Ise Grand Shrines in Ise.

3.3 Methods

The methods I have used to collect my material as mentioned above are, semi-structured interviews and observations. In order to collect material from Adachitoka's manga *Noragami: Stray God* I have used a thematic analysis. I will now present these methods and will first look at the method of the interviews.

3.3.1 Interviews

The method of interview I use in my study is a qualitative interview one. Stein Kvale and Svend Brinkmann present this method in *Det kvalitative forskningsintervju* as a method that builds on the form of daily life conversations, structured as a professional conversation. This conversation presents knowledge through interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer, making it an 'inter view'.⁹⁷ What I want to explore and discuss is my informants' understanding of everyday culture, such as politics and Shinto, and how these aspects affect them. Considering this, the presentation by Kvale and Brinkmann of this method suggests that it is an efficient method of gathering information. Furthermore, Bremborg describes the method of interview as 'a good method for researching people's beliefs and religious experiences.'⁹⁸ Considering the focus on Shinto, using interviews as the main method was the best way to collect data. However, if I were to interview an informant without having built a relation beforehand the culture could be an obstacle. The *joshiki*, Japanese common sense, focus on manners and politeness that is demanded in the presence of guests and strangers. This mannerism can sometimes also be interpreted as shyness and could result in answers that the informants thought I wanted or needed to hear, instead of their own opinion. Additionally, talking about sensitive topics such as current politics and religion to a stranger could go against *joshiki* and they would therefore find it uncomfortable to share their personal opinion. This is why it was important to develop relationships with the informants before the interviews.

⁹⁷ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 22.

⁹⁸ Bremborg 2014: 310.

Trude A. Fonneland in *Metode i religionsvitenskap* emphasizes that the stories told during an interview present the informant, her or his life and culture and therefore as a researcher one should prepare and go into an interview with prior knowledge and understanding of the informant and her or his culture.⁹⁹ Both Fonneland and Bremborg emphasize the importance of proper preparation for a successful interview. Therefore I took my time preparing for the interviews so that I would get the best possible result. One of my informants, Informant T, did not know any English and the interview was arranged in such a haste that I did not have time to contact the translator firm. Still, the contact that had helped me recruit the informant was fluent in English and Japanese and had prior knowledge of both my project and the interview guide and so became my translator for that interview. This worked very well and I got substantial and detailed answers with the help of my contact.

3.3.2 Interview Guide and Interviews

In order to accomplish successful interviews, a well-constructed interview guide was essential. Bremborg describes an interview guide as a tool that ‘consists of the main questions and themes that are to be included in the interview.’¹⁰⁰ The nature of the themes I investigate in addition to *joshiki* demanded a carefully prepared interview guide. The interview guide I constructed was meant to give me control of the interview, yet give the interviewee herself room to explore different angles that I may not have considered. During the interviews, I would sometimes become too focused on the interview guide and the questions and so may have missed something that the informants said. I later realised this, and while transcribing the interviews I therefore sent follow-up questions that have given me further answers.

Before I would interview my informants, I tried to spend time with them, maybe a day or two where they would show me shrines and we would become comfortable in each other’s company. I did this in order for the interview to go as smoothly as possible so that the informant would be comfortable enough to break through any possible remaining barriers that may have hindered her from voicing her own opinion. During the interviews I also used silence as a method. Bremborg presents this method like this: ‘When the interviewer is comfortable with silence, the interviewee often continues and deepens the answer without being interrupted by a new question.’¹⁰¹ I tried this technique both consciously and unconsciously and the results varied. Some informants did not embellish whereas others did,

⁹⁹ Fonneland 2006: 224.

¹⁰⁰ Bremborg 2014: 314.

¹⁰¹ Bremborg 2014: 315.

but many times when the informants did elaborate their statement the answers became more personal and was given more depth. Another important element in the preparation of the interviews that took much time was the construction of the informant consent form.

This form is vital because it gives the informant protection. The consent form had different ways of documenting the interview the informants could choose from. Their choices were: film and sound recording, sound recording or taking notes. All but one informant consented to both film and sound recording. The consent form's ethics and protection of the informant's anonymity will be presented later in 'Ethics and Research'. In addition to the interviews I also made observations.

3.3.3 Observations

Observations are methods that functions well on their own but they can also confirm what one learns from informants during interviews. Fonneland explains in her text that the foundations of one's knowledge, that can later be used to analyse data, are gained through sources such as interviews and observations.¹⁰² When I travelled to Japan to gather data I did not decide on one type of observational method. I did observations in many different ways. I visited the Meiji *jingu* several times with a week or two apart between each visit, whereas other shrines like the Hokkaido *jingu* I visited only once. Other times I would visit a shrine three days in a row like for example the Ise Grand Shrines or the Hato No Mori Hachiman *jinja*. I sometimes spent hours at a shrine observing and taking notes, while other times I stayed for shorter periods of time and film because the area did not allow for me to sit down and write down notes in a notebook. I would also film and talk about what I observed when I walked passed something worth taking note of. According to Ronald L Grimes in *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, studying rituals and events during fieldwork with audio-visual tools is becoming more and more common, despite worries, because of the methodical aspect it grants.¹⁰³ When recording the information from the observations I used the following tools:

- Fieldwork notebook
- Fieldwork diary
- Camera
- Video camera

¹⁰² Fonneland 2006: 224 f.

¹⁰³ Grimes 2014: 95.

I used two different notebooks to write down my observations. One I used for planned observations at shrines and any observations during interviews with informants. Otherwise I used my field research diary to note down any observations I made outside the planned observations. These observations would often be of political demonstrations, public speakers and similar events or interesting behaviours that I came across. Before I bought the video camera I used my cell phone and camera to document these events. I would also take any leaflets I could in case they could give new information.

During observations and interviews I used both a fieldwork notebook and a video camera to record the data. Initially I only used the notebook and camera to document my observations. I used my camera to take pictures and short films of observations and interesting aspects but found that the circumstances of the interviews and locations of observations demanded another tool that could be used while walking around a shrine, because few shrines have areas where one could sit and write. Furthermore, my camera shut down halfway during my first interview and so I needed something that could film for longer periods of time. However, I would like to stress that I mainly used the video camera to record my informants' reactions and as a voice recorder with video during my observations. This was because the video camera became a substitute for my fieldwork diary and so I would say what observed while I filmed. These recordings have therefore been presented as normal notes.

Grimes presents video as an efficient tool because it can capture those fleeting moments or events one would not necessarily be able to document when taking notes.¹⁰⁴ Still I found it beneficial to maintain the notebooks as well as filming, which is something Grimes also mentions. He stresses that not all pictures are worth a thousand words and so sometimes some well-chosen words will reflect more than many pictures.¹⁰⁵ Due to time constrictions I will not analyse the video material but instead use the parts of the video diary and the observational material when I talked during filming when analysing my observational data.

Looking back I would define the type of observations I did as 'unstructured observations'. Alan Bryman defines this as a method where the observer's goal is to record very detailed behaviour, and narrative accounts of the behaviour of the participants, which can be seen as similar to participant observation.¹⁰⁶ I would also like to note that Bryman states that '[i]n a sense, most participant observation is unstructured, but the term unstructured observation is

¹⁰⁴ Grimes 2014: 95.

¹⁰⁵ Grimes 2014: 95.

¹⁰⁶ Bryman (2001) 2012: 273.

usually employed in conjunction with non-participant observation.¹⁰⁷ Therefore it can be discussed whether I used unstructured or participant observations. However, because of the public nature of Shinto shrines any participation I did was done in order to maintain ‘good’ manners and show respect for Japanese *joshiki*.

Considering my focus on both local and imperial Shinto traditions, I wanted to observe both imperial *jingus* and local *jinjas*. I also wanted to connect with my informants and observe their connection to Shinto and therefore tried to persuade them to take me to their local shrine or the shrine they went to the most, but this became very challenging. They did not necessarily understand what I wanted to observe which created some difficulties. During my field research I primarily used the methods of interviews and observations. The method I relied on during the analysis of the gathered data is the method of ‘thematic analysis’.

3.3.4 Thematic Analysis

Because of the thesis’ focus on Shinto’s relations with different cultural aspects such as interpersonal behaviour, popular culture, ritual activities and politics it could be challenging to find an analytical method that allowed me to present each aspect equally. Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann present analytical methods in qualitative research as challenging because there are no standard methods for the analysis of texts, as there are techniques available in statistical analysis.¹⁰⁸ The method I chose to use to analyse the empirical data is a form of thematic analysis.

The thematic analysis I used to structure the interviews is what Kvale and Brinkmann refer to as ‘meningsfortetting’,¹⁰⁹ or as I will refer to it ‘condensing of meaning’. They present this method that consists of five steps and that is a way to shorten long sentences to expose the core understanding and meaning of the phrase of a sentence. The first step is to read through the interviews to see the totality of them and the second is to decide how to condense the meanings as simple and clear as possible.¹¹⁰ I did this by reading through the interviews, presenting the longer phrases and then creating shorter sentences that communicated the informant’s understanding and answer. The third step consists of expressing the theme and understanding that is expressed by the original phrase, and try to maintain the informant’s perspective as the researcher interprets it.¹¹¹ The informant’s opinion and perspective was

¹⁰⁷ Bryman (2001) 2012: 273.

¹⁰⁸ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 199.

¹⁰⁹ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 212.

¹¹⁰ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 212.

¹¹¹ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 212.

something I focused on to maintain as best as I could while remaining aware that what I analysed was my interpretation of their answers and perspectives. When anything was unclear I would ask them the question differently or if I discovered that after the interview I would contact the informant and have her answer it again or elaborate on it. The fifth step examines the condensed meanings in context of the study's focus,¹¹² which I did by categorising the material using the thesis' main aspects and the interview guide. The last step presented by Kvale & Brinkmann is a summary where the most important themes and opinion coalitions condensed meanings are presented and further discussed.¹¹³ I did this through summaries at the end of the presentations of the different main categories. The categorisation of the condensed meanings that is presented in the thematic analysis makes it very useful considering the main aspects of the thesis and has been an efficient analytical method for this study.

I also used this form of thematic analysis for the observations. I read the observation notes and watched the videos in their entirety and then created notes, or shortened sentences, to present the observation and meaning of it as clearly as possible. Then I made sure they were presented as my interpretations of the different situations, events and categories. Lastly, at the end of the main aspects and the chapter in a relation summary I will present the most relevant and important material that present the aspects of Shinto and its relations to the cultural aspects interpersonal behaviour, ritual activities, popular culture, and politics.

Similarly I used a form of this method during my analysis of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*, but because of the different format I did things a bit differently. This was because the meaning was already communicated clearly through the illustrations and dialogue in the manga. I read through the entirety of the series available in the English translation to see the totality of the story and characters and then reread the three volumes I was going to analyse many times. During my rereading I would mark passages in the manga where the different main aspects were presented and wrote short and clear notes or quotes that would be presented in the analysis. In order to maintain the manga's story and the author's meaning, or my interpretation of it, I scanned every page that had the relevant information so that I could use it in the analysis and so more clearly present the author's illustrations and meaning. Again, I presented summaries at the end of every main aspect and a last summary that presented the most relevant relations between Shinto and the cultural aspects.

¹¹² Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 212.

¹¹³ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 212.

After the presentation and analysis of the material I will discuss the results in relation to the theoretical perspectives of Hayao Miyazaki and Eva Hellmann.

3.4 Reflexivity

In order to properly assess the empirical material, I need to reflect on my presence and role in the interviews, observation and during the observations as well as a reader of manga. Bjørn Ola Tafjord in *Metode i religionsvitenskap* presents reflexivity in his article as a mutual influence that affects oneself, those one meets and what one meets and therefore affects the results of the study. This emphasises the importance of reflexivity and being aware of how one can inflict on one's research. He further stresses that when interacting with people during research, nothing or no one is neutral or objective and as the researcher, one is the filter the material is presented to, analysed and finally presented by.¹¹⁴ Therefore one needs to reflect on how one's role and presence affect the research process. The material and the informants' understanding will be presented through my interpretation.

My presence did affect the study. For example, one informant did not want to show me her local shrine because she and her mother felt that it would be too boring, though it would have been more relevant for me than the more well-known shrine that they showed me. I was not able to convince them otherwise. I must admit that my own shyness did hinder me from asking others questions than I did and asking for help when the opportunity showed itself. Not only was the nature of Japanese culture a barrier for me but also my own caution. My social status as a guest in their house hindered me in telling them clearly that I did want to see the local shrine, for I thought it would be impolite. Haugh and Obana addresses this problem when they present the term *toshiba*, which refers to one's role in social interactions or one's 'social selves', and relates to Japanese politeness through social status, responsibility and task.¹¹⁵ The informant and her mother were hospitable and accommodating of my needs, as it was their role to be polite, but their interpretation of my needs did not meet my wishes. They wanted to show me something exciting and may have considered what they regarded as a boring shrine as an impolite treatment of their guest when they could offer something better, whereas I did not correct them because I considering it impolite to do so as their guest. I was especially hesitant because it was clear that they were trying to do what they thought was best for my study and me.

¹¹⁴ Tafjord 2006: 243–245.

¹¹⁵ Haugh & Obana 2011: 157–159.

Another aspect one needs to consider is the limitations of the material and what the informant would be able to or wanted to talk about. According to Bremborg, these limits are present and they might cause informants to lie, or being unwilling to share their knowledge because of lack of trust or from being uncomfortable.¹¹⁶ In order to avoid this I spent – as I have mentioned – time with my informants before the interviews, to gain their trust and in that way help them to feel more comfortable talking about such topics as Shinto, religion and Japanese politics. This was efficient with most informants, except for informant B. Before, during and after her the interview she was willing to discuss most and we had long conversations about Japanese customs, especially surrounding *tatemae*, but she was not comfortable talking about politics. At first she did not want to discuss or talk about politics at all during the interview and I could see that the more we spoke about it the more uncomfortable she got. Because of this lack of comfortableness she might not have told me everything or said something she did not really mean to make me move the interview along. However, during the interview I did not get this impression, she seemed honest and continued to talk about these aspects after her interview.

Considering reflexivity, I can have affected the study as a researcher, as a woman and as a student but also as a *gaijin*, or non-Japanese. As an outsider to the Japanese society, this role might have prevented my informants or other sources from sharing information they might have shared with other Japanese. On the other hand, there were times when I tried to talk to strangers to ask about what was happening, whether it was at a shrine, *masturi*, demonstration, or if I saw something I did not understand and very few wanted to talk or answer. Whenever I asked for help with directions or trains and such most were very welcoming, whereas when it came to explaining more difficult or personal aspects this was not the case. However, this could also be because of the language barrier, which is another thing one has to reflect upon. The examples I have mentioned show that my presence as a *gaijin* affected the study and how possible sources responded to me.

Another aspect I need to address is my relationship with my informants. Because I did spend time with them or communicated with them over a longer period to establish trust I also established a form of relationship with them that can have affected my research. With the student informants A, B and W I spent much time and became close friends with them, whereas I communicated with informant M through email for some time before I came to live with her for two days. Informant T, on the other hand, I met first when I was going to conduct

¹¹⁶ Bremborg 2014: 319.

the interview and had lunch with her before that. Because of my friendship with informants A, B and W they may have opened more up to me but it could also have affected me. Because of our relationship I may have overlooked information, reactions, observations or not asked questions because of our friendship and so may have affected the study. Additionally, because of our friendships, they did have prior knowledge of my research before the interviews and so may have adjusted their answers to my questions. This was also the case with informant M as she asked for the interview guide in advance and I sent it to her. With their prior knowledge of the study and focus of it they might have thought of it more and have presented more information than they normally would or answered differently than they usually would. This would then affect the research results. I suspect the prior knowledge informant B had might also be why she and her mother thought their local shrine would be too small and boring for me. This suggests that their prior knowledge of my project did affect the study to a certain extent.

The largest challenge that I felt affected the study was language. When studying a different culture, such as Japan, that has a different language that the researcher does not master, the study will be affected. My knowledge of Japanese was only elementary, and, therefore, I could not conduct the interviews in Japanese. Had I known the language better, I could have observed and interpreted the information when it was presented instead of having it translated later.

Furthermore, during the interview with informant T it was necessary with a translator and so I could not understand it all because of the speed and length in which the translator talked. Though this does not seem like a great challenge it means that I cannot be fully confident with my findings during this interview and so I have to be more critical to it than to the rest.

There are many things that could have affected my study, such as myself, being *gaijin*, as a researcher and as an acquaintance or friend of my informants. Additionally, the informants and sources may have affected the study also, due to *joshiki*, politeness, lack of trust and when being uncomfortable. What is indicated, from what has been presented above, is that the language barrier, my presence as a *gaijin* and the informants' prior knowledge of my study may have affected the study the most. Though the language barrier and me being *gaijin* may have limited the data gathered and the observations, the informants may have revealed and presented more information because of our friendship. Whether these situations may have resulted in more or less material, they still affect the study, which is something that needs to be considered.

3.5 Research Ethics

Forskningsetiske retningslinjer for samfunnsvitenskap, humaniora, juss og teologi state that the term ‘research ethics’ refers to a complex set of values, norms and institutional arrangements that help to constitute and regulate scientific activity.¹¹⁷ This presents the importance of research ethics and what one has to consider when doing research. Kvale and Brinkmann present a set of questions that suggest what one needs to be aware of during a study. One of the questions they ask is to what degree one should control the directions of the study.¹¹⁸ I did control the study but did allow for diversions and the last section of the interview guide opened for the informant to present aspects she felt she had not been able to talk about, but should be discussed. Another controlled aspect was the settings. I travelled a lot to observe certain things or interview informants that could have restricted the information. To avoid the restriction of a strict planned schedule and being at a specific place at a specific time, I had permanent accommodations in Tokyo and JR passes. The JR pass is a train pass that allowed me to use the bullet trains throughout Japan at any time. Using my accommodation in Tokyo and the JR passes I was very flexible during my stay and could travel often and on short notice.

Another question presented by Kvale and Brinkman was what beneficial consequences would the study have and how could the study better the participants situations?¹¹⁹ Though my informants did not seem very affected by the relations between Shinto and politics, according to the student informants A, B and W, informant T and M expressed it differently. They expressed that the structure of social norms did not allow the younger Japanese generation to ask such questions without repercussions, whereas I as an outsider and foreigner could ask the questions and present the findings without these repercussions. Through a foreign researcher, the study could present the situation properly and perhaps lead to a change that the Japanese themselves cannot present without risking their reputation and their families. The freedom I have as an outsider, or *gaijin*, allows me to ask these questions for them and present the findings and situation on behalf of my informants and so make it possible to address something they cannot do themselves.

Instead of presenting a set of questions as ethical principals such as Kvale and Brinkmann, Frederick Bird and Laurie Sholes in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* state that the basic ethical principles are being honest and objective with

¹¹⁷ *Forskningsetiske retningslinjer* [...] 2006: 5.

¹¹⁸ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 254.

¹¹⁹ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 86.

one's subjects and audiences, showing them the proper respect.¹²⁰ I think respect and respecting one's informants and the study is very important and it was something I tried to uphold throughout the fieldwork. The term 'respect' is also presented by Graham Harvey as a good term that does not mean that one has to agree with everything people and informants say but it does require an open mind and respect to consider their choices, explanations and reasons.¹²¹ As a researcher one has to respect the informants and what they tell and through this respect try to maintain a neutral perspective as much as possible. As a preparation for my fieldwork, I had read about Japanese culture in order to learn to respect their rules and manners as much as possible. Through the help of my informants and their explanations I tried to be respectful to their culture and their opinions. Yet, when the informants presented their opinions, they all explained their reasons and what had led to their opinion and perspective, which made it very easy to remain respectful during the fieldwork and after.

Another aspect one needs to address is one's judgement as a researcher, one's professional ethics, honesty and ability to regard one's potential flaws. Bird and Sholes stress in their text that as a researcher, one needs to responsibly exercise judgement and so consider actions, choices and interpretations.¹²² A way to do this is to remember to protect the informant and oneself through contracts such as the informant consent form. Bird and Sholes present the consent form as a contract, that is an ethical requirement that fully informs the informants about the focus and goal of the study and where they give their voluntary consent to participate.¹²³ Kvale and Brinkmann also address how one should get the informant's informed consent.¹²⁴ As presented earlier in this chapter, I was very deliberate and careful when I designed the consent form, and I made it very clear that the informants could back out whenever they wanted and that they could choose how the interview would be recorded.¹²⁵

This form gives the informants the right for anonymity, which is another ethical aspect that needs to be addressed. Kvale and Brinkmann present this aspect in ethical questions: How can one maintain the informant's confidentiality? How important is it that the informants are anonymous? And lastly, what consequences would the study have for the participants?¹²⁶ Focusing on the first question, the way one can maintain the informants confidentiality is by giving them anonymity through alias and presenting vague enough information that help the

¹²⁰ Bird & Sholes 2014: 84.

¹²¹ Harvey 2014: 235.

¹²² Bird & Sholes 2014: 84.

¹²³ Bird and Sholes 2014: 105.

¹²⁴ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 86.

¹²⁵ The informant consent form can be found in appendix 11.3.

¹²⁶ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 86 f.

readers understand the informants' background but cannot place them or be used to find them. This is what I have focused on. The second question addresses the importance of this anonymity and as already presented earlier in this text there would be consequences for my informants if their identity were presented due to the social norms in Japanese society. This relates to the last question asked by Kvale and Brinkmann. Additionally, the most vulnerable informants of my study are the politicians because they are more easily to identify than the students. If I could present whether the political informants had children or the name of informant M's local shrine, this would give the reader a better impression of them as persons but this would also help identify them and I will therefore not present this information. The consequences for the informants were also stressed by informant M and will be presented in the interview analysis.

The last aspect of research ethics that I will address is the researcher's role in the study. Again Kvale and Brinkmann address this through questions such as how does one's role as a researcher affect the study and how does one avoid identifying with one's informants and still maintaining the critical perspective.¹²⁷ As a *gaijin*, woman and student, I did affect the study, as already presented in this chapter. However, the informants also established that as an outsider I had the opportunity and ability to do this study, ask the questions and address the situation without meeting the repercussions my informants would have met. As a researcher my role is to do a study and present the material in a critical perspective. However, I also have a responsibility to protect my informants and respect their need for anonymity. For me, the latter outweigh the former. Considering this, I am still confident that the material presented will maintain a critical perspective because I do not only rely on the material presented by informants but I have also collected material through observations and the analysis of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the aspects that are the focus of the study and the sources I have used: informants, observations and an analysis of the manga *Noragami: Stray God*. It has also presented the process of fieldwork and the methods that were used to gather the material and how it will be analysed. Lastly this chapter has addressed the problems of reflexivity and research ethics and how they were approached during the study.

¹²⁷ Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 87.

4. Theoretical Perspectives

I will in this chapter present the theoretical perspectives that I will use and I have chosen texts by Hayao Miyazaki and Eva Hellman.

Hayao Miyazaki is a renowned Japanese animator, filmmaker and manga artist who has been part of the Japanese popular culture society since 1963 and is widely known globally for his animation films made through his company, Studio Ghibli. I will use some of the ideas by Miyazaki presented in his biography *Starting Point: 1979–1996* translated by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt. In his acceptance speech for the Japan Cartoonists Association's Prize in 1994, he presented his theories¹²⁸ on manga and I will use these to analyse the popular culture aspect of this thesis.¹²⁹ His theories are not normally used in the study of religions but they are well suited for the themes I deal with. He brings a theoretical perspective that is not only founded in popular culture but also gives a Japanese perspective to my analysis and so can reflect my informants' perspective, but also bring to light different aspects that western researchers may not be aware of.

The other theorist I will use in my analysis of the religious and political findings is Eva Hellman, from whose book *Vad är religion? En disciplinteoretisk metastudie* I will use her definition of socio-political religion, and her idea about an axis transcendent-immanent as a characteristic of religion. Hellman is a retired professor in the history of religions at Uppsala University¹³⁰ and has done extensive research on political Hinduism, the genealogy and definitions of religion and has established her own definition of religion. Because of the complexity surrounding Shintoism and the debate whether it is a religion or not I need a dynamic definition that can possibly reflect the Japanese understanding of Shinto. I will use her definition as a tool in the analysis of the relations between Shinto and politics.

I will also look at her use her idea that the axis transcendent-immanent is central to religion, using it to analyse the relations between Shinto, Kami, Japanese politics and popular culture. Through the axis I can analyse the relations between these different aspects in relation to what is regarded as transcendent and what is regarded as immanent.

These two theorists have very different backgrounds. One is an established animator and artist, while the other is an established academic and by using both of them I hope to be able to analyse the aspects of Japanese society I discuss in more in depth. I will first present Miyazaki's theory of manga.

¹²⁸ When presenting his three theoretical perspectives, Miyazaki uses the word 'theories'.

¹²⁹ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

¹³⁰ <http://katalog.uu.se/empinfo/?id=N99-1508> (Read 15 march, 2016).

4.1 Hayao Miyazaki's Theory of Manga

Miyazaki has been working as an animator since 1963; he directed his first animated feature film in 1980 and began serializing one of his most renowned works, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, which he finished in 1994.¹³¹ He established his own studio, Studio Ghibli, and has affected and inspired the world with his animated movies such as *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Whisper of the Heart* and more. He also presented his political opinion in 1995 that he is against the rearming of Japan, yet interestingly military weapons such as planes and tanks and war are present in his animated films.¹³² With this in mind, Miyazaki presents another interesting observation. He stated that, 'Respectable Japanese do not involve themselves in war and military affairs. But I've been interested in these topics since childhood, a fact that I dare not declare in public. If I declared this in public, I would be considered pro-war.'¹³³ This illustrates an important aspect of the Japanese mind-set that my informants presented and I observed during my fieldwork.

In his acceptance speech in 1994 he presents his theories. The reason he presented these theories was that he was continually asked by foreign reporters about manga, and Asian neighbours tended to think of Japanese comics and anime as manga.¹³⁴ He presents three different theories. The first one he presents looks at how the linear structure of manga is similar to Japanese minds. He thinks that 'Japanese people like to recognize and perceive things in outline form—as lines [---] [t]herefore, a physical reason that Japan mass produces and consumes manga as black-and-white line drawings.'¹³⁵ He also states that other cultures such as the American prefer volume or solid shapes. He builds this conclusion on a comparison of the tastes of American and Japanese animators.

The second theory looks at the historical aspect. He emphasizes through examples such as scrolls during the Kamakura and Heian era and how Japan has a long tradition of presenting different parts of society such as politics, religion, eroticism, art and more through narrative picture scrolls. He thinks that the Japanese today have inherited this tradition and that it is present in Japan today.¹³⁶

The third and final theory he presents is that manga is 'an ideal way to relieve the excessive stress that we Japanese felt during our period of high economic growth.' He also

¹³¹ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 437–445.

¹³² Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 244.

¹³³ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 244.

¹³⁴ Miyazaki (1996) 2009:161.

¹³⁵ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

¹³⁶ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

stated during this speech in 1994 that manga would be read and sold in their modernizing neighbour countries.¹³⁷ This will be especially interesting to analyse because the time between this speech and this study is more than 20 years and during this time, Japan has had economic difficulties, yet manga is still very popular in Japan as well as in countries such as the U.S.A., France and Norway. Manga is also just one of the many aspects of Japanese popular culture that have immigrated to the west.

I will use Miyazaki's three theoretical propositions as a help to analyse my material and to look at how popular culture relates to other aspects of Japanese culture and how his thoughts back then reflects Japan today.

4.2 Eva Hellman's Theory of Religion

Eva Hellman explores earlier definitions of religion in her study using the genealogy of religion and she tries to formulate 'a definition that does not a priori exclude that religion can be normative also in ethical, social, legal, or political questions';¹³⁸ one could add popular culture to this list. In the hub of her own socio-political definition she puts the axis transcendent-immanent.¹³⁹

One important aspect of Hellman's understanding of religion is that she perceives it as a part of human culture that can be studied with rational and scientific methods.¹⁴⁰ I will present her definition of religion and her presentation of the axis transcendent-immanent. This theoretical perspective can be used to analyse the dynamic nature of Japanese society both culturally and maybe even spiritually, for example aspects like nature and Kami. I will first present her definition of religion.

4.2.1 A Definition of Religion

Hellman bases her definition on Gavin Flood, who defined religion as binding stories and actions. He sees individual religious stories, such as sentimental stories and behaviour that binds people to their goal, each other and non-empirical demands and creatures as typical of religion.¹⁴¹ Hellman focuses on the narrative and normative element in his definition and limits and defines religion as a gathering term for stories formulated by a language that is symbolic, mythical and emotive and which regulate beliefs, actions and the world. She further

¹³⁷ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

¹³⁸ Hellman 2011: 110.

¹³⁹ Hellman 2011:115.

¹⁴⁰ Hellman 2011: 113–117.

¹⁴¹ Hellman 2011: 114.

stated that she differentiates between ‘narrative type [Swe. *berättelstyp*], narrative hub [*berättelsenav*] and narrative extent [*berättelseomfang*].’¹⁴²

She stresses that the religious narratives are not created by a singular written language without verbal and non-verbal language playing a major part.¹⁴³ She defines religion as stories created through diverse language, not only verbal but also actions such as prayer, dance, meditation, and pilgrimage and such, but also collective actions such as demonstrations or political elections and so regulate actions and belief. I have done observations at places such as the Ise shrine, at other grand shrines, at a place of pilgrimage, at political demonstrations in Tokyo and I have observed prayer at Shinto shrines. I will use this definition to analyse these observations, how they reflect Hellman’s theory and how her theory can be used to reflect them. She emphasizes that context is important to remember and that the actions and practical aspect contributes to religious stories.¹⁴⁴ Her definition focuses more on the cultural, social and practical aspect of religion than on theology, and from my observations and informant’s answers, Shinto focuses on the practical and physical rather than on teaching and theology. It will be interesting to see whether or not Hellman’s definition will give me an deeper understanding of the data or not.

4.2.2 The Axis Transcendent-Immanent

She also presents the axis transcendent-immanent. She focuses on the communication between these two factors and how they fit under her definition of religion. She limits this to religious stories and understanding, exempting literal, scientific and other perspectives.¹⁴⁵ She defines ‘immanent’ as the entire perceptible reality,¹⁴⁶ and ‘transcendence’ as something that is different and bigger than the human and the worldly, and that people are exposed to through rituals, texts, actions and so on.¹⁴⁷

I will analyse the axis transcendence-immanent and use the idea about transcendence to explore the role of the Kami and Shinto in Japan today and how they and Japanese society relate to each other.

¹⁴² Hellman 2011: 114.

¹⁴³ Hellman 2011: 114.

¹⁴⁴ Hellman 2011: 114–115.

¹⁴⁵ Hellman 2011: 115.

¹⁴⁶ Hellman 2011: 115.

¹⁴⁷ Hellman 2011: 116.

4.3 Summary

Miyazaki's theories present his perspective on popular culture and Japanese culture, whereas Hellman's theories revolve around her socio-political definition of religion. Her definition focuses on the axis transcendent-immanent and narratives told with words, written texts and actions. I will use these theories to analyse the material gathered through my interviews, observations and thematic analysis of the manga *Noragami* to see if they can help me to deepen the understanding of the aspects of Japanese culture I discuss, and their relations. I will also discuss how these aspects could be related to the theories, especially Hellman's definition of religion.

In order to do this, I will use the empirical data from my interviews, observations and *Noragami: Stray God* to analyse and to see the theories' relevance to my study. I will first present and analyse the data of the interviews.

5. Thematic Analysis of Interviews

In order to explore the data I have chosen to use thematic analysis, as described in the ‘Sources and Methods’ chapter. I chose to use the base of the interview guide to categorise the analysis, which consists of four main factors: Shinto as interpersonal behaviour, Shinto’s presence in popular culture, Shinto as ritual activities and Shinto in politics.

My presentation in this chapter is of the results from the interviews; the other material will be presented in their own chapters. Using the four categories and some of the questions from the interview guide I will present the informants answers and analyse the data.

All interviews, except one, were done in English. The exception was Informant T, which was done in Japanese with a translator. When quoting the informants I have removed any irrelevant sounds, stuttering and repetitions of words that are in the original transcriptions, so that they are more fluent and the informants’ answers are clear and well represented. I will first present the informants answers to the question and then, at the conclusion of each topic, I will discuss and analyse the data the informants has presented in their answers.

5.1 Informants

When I started the interviews I gave the informants the opportunity to choose their own aliases. I thought this would make the interview more fluent and the informant comfortable as quickly as possible. They all chose their own alias, except for two who did not understand what an alias was until after I interviewed informant M who asked me to invent alias for them. These informants are informant T and M. This is how the aliases for the informants were created, and they are as follows: A, B, M, T and W.

I have five informants: three students and two politicians. All the informants describe themselves as having been physically active in their childhood, but the political informants T and M seem to remember more clearly their childhoods than the younger informants. They also describe themselves as independent and leaders already at a young age. The young informants on the other hand told me about their hobbies, but remembered little else from their childhoods. Informant A played the piano as well as participating in a brass band. Her best childhood memories were from the brass band. Informant B and W both did dance and sports, but did not talk about these hobbies any further. However, informant B joked about how, even though she was active as a child, she was also very lazy because she loved to sleep. Informant W stressed that she went to a protestant school as a child and thought this was

important to mention. My informants have followed different paths in order to get where they are now.

The three students A, B and W all have travelled abroad. They all chose different studies and different universities, based on their interest and the economical situations of their families. Thus they ended up in different regions: A ended up in Hokkaido, B went to university in Kyushu and W went to university in Kanto. The politicians on the other hand had different stories. Informant T moved to the countryside when she got married. She got involved in politics through her friends and neighbours after she had established study and discussion groups, whereas informant M became involved with the women's movement quite early during her university studies and continued with it in her political career. In order to maintain the anonymity of these informants I will not discern any more background information. The information presented above should establish the informants' background and situation at the time of the interviews.

5.2 Shinto as Interpersonal Behaviour

When doing the interviews I asked about how Shinto was present through interpersonal behaviour. In order to understand the role of Shinto and the Kami in Japanese society today one has to understand the Japanese culture from a Japanese point of view. Shinto as interpersonal behaviour is therefore very important. I also used this aspect of Shinto to make the conversation more fluent and to establish the informants' perspective on Japanese culture, and how they thought foreigners and other Japanese understood Japanese culture. I will look at questions such as what the informant considers typically Japanese, how they would explain *joshiki* to foreigners and whether they saw any relation between Shinto and *joshiki*. This factor gave an insight to the informant's presentation, understanding and opinions regarding their own culture and how foreigners could perceive it.

5.2.1 What do you consider to be typically Japanese?

This question was asked so that the informants could establish or define what being Japanese meant to them. What was the 'normal Japanese' like? This could reveal how they saw themselves and their own culture. The informants presented different perspectives on this theme.

Informant A thought about the question and mentioned that to be typically Japanese meant that one had to behave properly in society and hide one's feelings and opinions in public.

Further she stressed the importance of being polite and how that could result in not being able to show one's feelings or opinions. This meant that if you disagreed with a senior or your boss at work you were supposed to keep quiet or play along. I mentioned that she wasn't like this and A laughed, saying that she maybe wasn't typically Japanese, making us both laugh.

Informant B had a similar answer about the Japanese being polite, but presented this through the concept of *tatemae*. She mentioned other aspects, such as that the Japanese are typically 'shy' and 'humble', thinking of others before oneself and how that can be a double-edged blade. She said that it '[c]an be very good but sometimes it is very bad, because they hide their feelings inside.' Informant B also mentioned that it is typically Japanese to be hospitable because they notice the details in their surroundings and the body language of people around them. She felt that this was because the Japanese care about things that westerners do not. Earlier that day when walking she bought some flowers. The flowers had been wrapped with great care and detail by the shop attendant, double-checking with my informant if she was happy with the presentation. The attention to detail and to my informant's need was different from what I experience in Norway, so I understood what my informant meant.

When asked, Informant W had a different understanding of what was typically Japanese. She described the Japanese as fond of groups and not very fond of outsiders. At the same time she stated that most Japanese cannot speak English but still try to help and are very helpful to strangers. This seems similar to when informant B described the Japanese as humble, but informant W also stressed that Japanese are not shy, like informant B presented them, but they are cautious because of the language barrier.

Informant M presents a different aspect than the others. She focused on the gender roles and stated that '[t]ypically Japanese is a man... walk first and women follow man,' and that this can be seen everywhere. Informant M has a background in women's rights movements in Japan and when she explained this she seemed resigned but also angry that this was so normal and typically Japanese. During the interview she was very open about her passion for women's rights and her distaste for the hierarchy and oppression she saw.

Informant T thought very differently and stated that the Japanese way of thinking was what she would consider typically Japanese. She did not elaborate on this and seemed satisfied with her answer. She presented the Japanese way of thinking throughout the interview later through examples and explanations of popular culture, Shinto and politics. Based on her examples and presentation of the Japanese way of thinking later in the interview it can be summed up as something similar to what other informants have called *joshiki*, thinking and

acting using common sense. However, interestingly, informant T thinks that everyone, not only Japanese, have *joshiki*.

The informants mentioned different aspects of the Japanese culture and ways of thinking. Both informant A and B talked about how one has to act in society and how one should hide one's opinions and feelings, while informant B and W presented the Japanese as helpful but explained it in different ways. Interestingly, informant B and W had different opinions when it came to the word 'shy'. Informant B described the Japanese as shy, while informant W made a point of saying that they were not shy but 'cautious'. This could indicate that this is a description informant W has heard before and disagrees with. Informant M had a very negative attitude to what she saw as 'typically Japanese' and presented it through an old fashioned and oppressive metaphor, whereas informant T presented 'typically Japanese' as simple as a way of thinking.

5.2.2 How would you explain the concept of *joshiki* to a foreigner?

All the informants considered *joshiki* to be normal and many explained it in similar fashions but with different nuances. Informant A thought the question was very interesting and describes it simply as a 'normal thing in Japan.' Informant B presented a similar opinion, she mentioned that *joshiki* is common sense and something to correct bad manners or be a guideline for correct behaviour in Japan. Informant W also presented *joshiki* in this fashion, that it was common sense. She also mentioned that *joshiki* maintained rules and manners in society.

Informant T presented *joshiki* as the basic foundation. She also stresses that it's not just for Japanese but also for 'every human being, yeah for every human being to survive.' These three informants presented *joshiki* as something normal and positive present in their everyday lives.

Informant M however, regarded *joshiki* as something negative, something she has fought her entire life and referred back to her answer to what is typically Japanese, 'as I told you Japan is kind of man first, woman second citizen, so that was *joshiki*.' She also considered *joshiki* to be a form of common sense but not inclusive and she said that *joshiki* encouraged notions such as "“We are superior praise and you should obey this kind of... common sense.”" Informant M presented this attitude throughout the entire interview. This was a very different attitude than the other informants had when answering this question and generally in their interviews.

The three student informants, A, B and W presented a similar understanding of *joshiki*, whereas informant T and M presented *joshiki* differently. Informant T considered *joshiki* the basic foundation of a person and it was part of every human, not just Japanese and something we use to survive in society. Informant M on the other hand presented *joshiki* as something negative. She did perceive *joshiki* as a form of common sense, but a common sense that maintained out-dated and oppressing values. Her presentation differed a lot from the rest.

5.2.3 Are there relations between *joshiki* and the Kami and Shinto?

Many of the informants found this a difficult question to answer. Informant A seemed taken by surprise and did not know how to answer the question. She explained that there might be a strong connection between *joshiki* and Kami and Shinto but she couldn't answer because she had never considered it before, she only accepted it.

Like informant A, informant B found it difficult to answer. She answered after thinking for a while that *joshiki* could be 'Shinto mind'. She used the example of natural disasters to explain this. According to her, when a natural disaster happened, like a tsunami, no one complained, people did panic but no one stole things from houses, stores or things that were left behind. She further mentioned that a lot of foreigners did not understand this but she said that they did not steal because of *joshiki*. She stated that 'I think that reflects Shinto mind because we take nature, ah, we take this destiny, what happened is what happened.' This suggest that after something happened, one accepts it and move on and that to her, this was *joshiki* but also 'Shinto mind'. She further stressed that one needs to live with nature, and therefore also *joshiki*.

Informant W also found this to be a difficult question but answered that there could be a relation between *joshiki* and Shinto and the Kami. She explained that there could be relations through the traditions. According to her, traditions such as the New Year's celebration and the table manners *itadakimas* and *gochisosama* were Shinto traditions but also part of *joshiki*.

When asked this question, informant T thought briefly and answered that '[f]rom my birth I just take it, took it for granted without any hesitation, just for you see, for everyday life customary practises.' She explained that the manners of Shinto, like bowing, prayer and the classical form of culture reflect Shinto. This suggested that there might be relations between Shinto, the Kami and *joshiki*. However, she also emphasised that she does not care about it.

Unlike the others, informant M answered this question very clearly. She said that Shinto, the Kami and *joshiki* are related in a negative way. She explained this using two examples,

our visit to the shrine earlier and when she went to the *Kyoto Gion Matsuri*¹⁴⁸ in Kyoto. She meant that Shinto, the Kami and *joshiki* reflect the Japanese ‘values’ and superiority. She stated that when we went to the shrine together, everyone know that the white paper, or the colour white means purity and that it should always be white, yet no one knew the name of this thing. This indicates that though people participate, they take for granted what is behind Shinto, like the white ribbons. The second example she told like this:

I went to Kyoto and *Kyoto Gion Matsuri* and why *Gion Matsuri* no women at all? I asked top, not top but one of the, you see, there are so many like... and then one of the *Dashis*¹⁴⁹ come, group and I asked the top part of that *Dashis*... They answered me ‘beneath the purification, we need harmony made of purification if you women get into that part, that, that whole purification of harmony would collapse.

After telling the story, she was visibly affected. This story shows that women, and foreigners, were excluded from being part of the *dashi* because, according to the men she talked to, women were not part of the purity and would therefore taint it. This illustrates how Shinto or *joshiki* can be used to maintain old-fashioned values or oppress women in the Japanese society.

As shown, there were many responses to this question and many found it difficult to answer. Many presented this relation as possible but either they did not notice it because Shinto was so ordinary, or even if Shinto was part of their everyday life they did not care. Informant B illustrated the common mind-set of Shinto and *joshiki*, using natural disasters as an example. Like the others, informant M presented a relation between Shinto and *joshiki*. However, she did not regard it as something positive. She illustrated the relation between the two aspects by saying that they were both taken for granted but also that they both were used to maintain old-fashioned values and oppress women’s rights.

5. 3 Shinto in Popular culture

This section will focus on the presentation of Shinto in popular culture and how popular culture media such as manga can reflect or represent Japanese society. In order to approach theme I will first establish the informants’ knowledge of popular culture and their opinion of

¹⁴⁸ *Gion Matsuri* is a festival of the Yasaka Shrine and is one of the most popular festivals in Japan and one of the three biggest *Matsuri* in Kyoto. It lasts the entire month of July and the main parade happens on the 17th.

¹⁴⁹ *Dashi* is in this case Japanese for decorated float used in the parades.

it. I will then present their answers about if they saw the presence of Shinto in this cultural aspect, with focus on manga.

5.3.1 Are you familiar with Japanese popular culture?

The informants answered this question somewhat differently. The students seemed to know more than the others. Informant A presented four aspects of Japanese popular culture: manga, anime, Japanese pop culture or pop music, and Japanese movies. She mentioned these very quickly and seemed very excited when talking about these aspects. She also mentioned that she was interested in a few of these and so was her mother. She stated that they both read manga and that her mother had read a manga called *Aozora Yell*.¹⁵⁰ She further said that liked to read manga that she could relate to, like *Aozora Yell*.

Informant W had a similar reaction to this question and started telling about an essay she had just done on Japanese culture. She emphasised when explaining her essay that before she started she thought she knew a lot about the topic until she travelled abroad and then realised how little she knew. Informant W said, after talking about Japanese culture for a while, that she learned a lot though her Norwegian boyfriend, who had also renewed her interest in popular culture like manga and anime. She did admit that she watched more anime than she read manga and that she had recently watched *Attack on Titan*,¹⁵¹ *Tokyo Ghoul*¹⁵² and *Mushishi*.¹⁵³ I was familiar with these series and knew that they were either currently very popular or received many awards. When talking about this, informant W seemed a bit unsure in the start but became quickly engaged in the topic and seemed to enjoy the conversation.

However, informant B had a different response to this question. When asked this she asked if I meant *otaku* or nerd. This was something she previously had mentioned during the interview. She thought for a little while before mentioning subcultures, animation, media context and food culture. She seemed unsure whether food was popular culture or not. She did not elaborate on any of these aspects but did not think film was part of this. For the rest of the interview she focused on the media context when discussing popular culture and became very

¹⁵⁰ *Aozora Yell* follows a high school student who wanted to play the trumpet in a brass band and starts in a special school because of this.

¹⁵¹ *Attack on Titan*, is a fantasy manga that follows the story of the human civilization, almost made extinct by the monstrous titans who feed on humans out of pleasure, and the humans retaliation and fight for survival in a unforgiving world.

¹⁵² *Tokyo Ghoul* is set in an alternative modern-day Tokyo where ghouls and humans live together. We follow the story of a boy who because of a fatal attack becomes half human and half ghoul. Through him, the reader is shown the two different worlds and their prejudices, existing in the same society.

¹⁵³ *Mushishi* is a Japanese manga series that explores Japanese folklore and feudal age.

engaged when she discussed this. However, when discussing other aspects, such as manga, she said that she was not interested in that.

Another informant that seemed very negative to the current form of popular culture was informant T. When asked by the translator she immediately stated ‘I am so [emphasising ‘so’] disappointed. I’m very disappointed! That’s not Japanese culture at all.’ When she answered the question she was very determined and even slapped the table. She said that she considered classical art, but the new popular culture like cosplay, manga and anime were a shallow and cheap version. She concluded her answer by stressing that she did not consider this Japanese culture at all. Informant T talked about it passionately and left it at that. Considering her age, her reaction was similar to other elder people I meet and their perception of manga. Furthermore, the translator did tell me that informant T had never read a modern manga. This suggests that the only impression of manga that informant T has is what she sees on the cover on a manga or in a store.

Informant M had a bit more enthusiastic discussion about the popular culture aspect and mentioned that because of her previous occupation as a teacher she had seen some of the Studio Ghibli animes, like *My neighbour Totoro* and *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. She further explained that she knew of manga and such because young kids loved it but she herself was not interested in this, because of her age and that she was interested in other serious stories. She also mentioned the *Choju Giga*,¹⁵⁴ the first manga written according to her, and that she was fascinated by the *Choju Giga* because it was more art, not only manga.

As presented, the informants had various knowledge and understanding of popular culture and the different forms it contains. The students, informants A, B and W, knew of many different aspects, like manga, anime, films, pop music and so on, whereas the older informants M and T did not mention many, but focused on the media manga and anime. Informant A and W seemed positive towards it and became very engaged in the conversation when we talked about this, whereas informant B and T seemed negative towards popular culture, especially manga and anime. Informant M on the other hand did not present it as something negative but she was not interested in it because of her age. However, she became very engaged when talking about the earlier form of manga, the *Choju Giga*. When she mentioned this she presented the historical aspect of manga, which was one I had not considered.

¹⁵⁴ *Choju Giga* is a famous set of four picture scrolls from around the 12th or 13th century and is considered one of the earliest linear drawing styles read right to left, and was continually used in Japan. These scrolls depict animals such as frogs and hares and humans such as sumo wrestlers.

5.3.2 Have you observed any Shinto aspects in Japanese popular culture?

When asked if they had noticed Shinto aspects in Japanese popular culture, most seemed surprised and had to think about it before they could answer. Informant A took her time answering the question and after thinking for a while answered that there might be. She explained that she could not be more precise because Shinto and the Kami were such natural and common aspects of their daily life that she never really thought of it or noticed it. Informant A further explained that there might be but if there were, because of the normality of it, she did not notice them.

Like informant A, informant W mentioned that Shinto aspects were difficult to notice because they are so ordinary and integrated parts of their lives. She said that she may 'see' it but never thought of it. She further explained that she did not think of those things, Shinto or the Kami because they were so common, too common for them to notice. Informant W mentioned that she would pray to the Kami to pass her exams, because it was a common thing to do. She would also go to shrines or temples on New Year's Day, because it was tradition. Yet, informant W made a very interesting distinction when answering this question; she stated that she considered the Kami and Shinto as two separate things. After her statement, and her being the last interviewee, I thought of this and wondered if the other informants would also present Shinto and Kami as separate aspects, even if they never said it clearly.

Informant B also mentioned that she had never thought of it because she never paid attention to Shinto. She did present some examples like Miyazaki and maybe horror films. She explained that if one compared Japanese and western horror films, one would probably find Shinto and Japanese religion, as one would find Christian aspects in western film.

The elder informants, informants M and T did not answer this question for different reasons. Informant T did not know, and had never seen or read any Japanese popular culture but I did notice during the interview, even though I did not understand everything the translator said, that the translator explained Shinto to the informant. This indicates not only that informant T did lack intimate knowledge of popular culture but also that the term 'Shinto' was not necessarily familiar to her. On the other hand, Informant M did not answer this question but whenever she spoke of Shinto and when it was reflected in other cultural aspects, she spoke of it negatively.

These answers illustrate that though Shinto might be present in popular culture, for many of the informants, A, B and W, Shinto was such a natural aspect of their daily life that they did not notice it if it was present. It was proposed that when compared with other forms of

popular culture, such as western and Japanese horror films, one might see these aspects more clearly, for one does see them in the other forms of popular culture. Also, through the lack of answers from informant M and T there is an indication that there is a difference between the generations. Another aspect presented by informant W that was particularly interesting was the separation of Shinto and Kami. On the basis of the literature I had read in order to prepare my fieldwork, I interpreted the Kami as part of Shinto and did not consider that these might be considered separated.

5.4 Shinto: Ritual Activities and Role in Society

Shinto is the main aspect of this study and so was the main part of the interviews. I especially focused on the interactions with Shinto and the physical aspects of Shinto through family, childhood, traditions and how the informants perceived Shinto. I will present seven of the questions I asked about the physical aspect of Shinto.

5.4.1 What traditions reflect or belong to Shinto?

There were many similar answers to this question, and most of them were activities performed at the shrines. Informant A mentioned two traditions that she associated with Shinto: New Year's Celebrations and regular worship. She had previously mentioned that she would often visit shrines when travelling around in Japan.

Informant B also mentioned the tradition of New Year's Celebrations. In addition she mentioned festivals, or *matsuri*, and Japanese food manners. She explained that when eating one says *itadakimas* before eating and *gochisosama* afterwards and by doing so one thanked the Kami that was one's food and the Kami that gave the food. Informant B concluded her answer and said that the Japanese and the traditions were open to all religions.

Like informant B, informant T presented *matsuri* and New Year's Celebration as Shinto traditions but she especially mentioned three specific forms of *matsuri*. She mentioned a big *matsuri* they have at the local shrine every seventh year where they would replace the tree Kami, or the tree to the Kami. The other years they celebrate normal shrine *matsuri*. The second form of Shinto tradition she presented was the *shichigosan*¹⁵⁵ ceremony. She explained that this is a ceremony that is done when a child turns 3, 5 and 7 years old. The last form of Shinto tradition she presented was the New Year's celebration and the normal tradition of going to shrines and worship. This was the most well-rounded and clear

¹⁵⁵ Yumiyama (1994) 2016.

presentation of actual events, celebrations and traditions of Shinto that I heard during my fieldwork.

Informant W did present Shinto traditions like the three forms just mentioned, but she mentioned a different aspect of the tradition of regular worship. She thought long before answering the question and stated quite calmly that shrines and the Kami would grant wishes. Informant W further explained that one would pray for big events in one's life such as exams, love, family and illness. These aspects are also elements present in everyday life and so can suggest that the Kami and the shrines are used to help with everyday life challenges and big events.

The last informant, informant M, gave a very brief answer to this question. She stated that Shinto traditions were hierarchy traditions and did not elaborate more on this. Again she presented a negative attitude towards Shinto. This perception and her reasons became clearer throughout the interview.

All the informants, except for informant M, presented the New Year's celebrations as a Shinto tradition and then there were slightly different answers. Informant A, B and T presented *matsuri* as a Shinto tradition. Here, informant T exemplified these forms of tradition in the most thorough way I heard during my entire fieldwork. On the other hand, informant W, and informants A and T, mentioned the regular form of worship but informant W focused on the reasons for worship within the Shinto tradition, whereas the last informant referred to Shinto traditions as hierarchical traditions and presented a negative perspective of Shinto. This was not displayed by any of the other informants during the answering of this question.

5.4.2 Do you visit shrines?

In order to further understand their connection to the physical and ritual aspect of Shinto I asked whether they visited shrines. Informant A divulged that she visited shrines when she travelled, during *matsuri*, when guiding foreign friends and at the New Year's celebration. She also mentioned that she enjoyed going to shrines and that it was part of her everyday life, and something she normally did not think about. Later in the interview she presented another form of shrine that is present in her home, the *kamidana*,¹⁵⁶ or a household Shinto altar but did not know which Kami it honoured.

¹⁵⁶ Yoshiyuki (1994) 2016.

Like informant A, informant B visited shrines during the New Year's celebration and when guiding non-Japanese friends around, like we had done earlier that day. However, these were the only times she visited shrines.

Informant W also mentioned that she went to the shrine on the New Year's celebrations, like the other two student informants. Additionally she would visit shrines when travelling, like informant A, and she would visit shrines before big exams. Informant W was the only one among the students who stated that she would visit a shrine to pray for her exams and she stressed that she prayed every time when she visited a shrine.

Similar to the younger informants, informant T would visit shrines during the New Year's celebration, when friends or relatives visited and when she felt sad or desperate. The last form of visit was what she expressed was for her the most important. She explained that, like informant A, she liked to visit shrines and to her, the shrine was something to rely on and a place to feel safe. Still, she stressed that she was not a very religious person.

Unlike the others, and according to the attitude she had shown previously during the interview, Informant M said that she would not normally visit shrines. She explained that though this was something she did before on the New Year's celebration, but she was now too lazy to go to the shrine at 5 or 6 in the morning. Informant M was also the first to explain that one could visit the shrine on the New Year's celebration at two different times, either in the morning on New Year's Day, or midnight the day before on New Year's Eve. However, she preferred to attend neither because she did not like the *jinja* when there were so many people. Still, informant M did express during the interview that she liked shrines because they were quiet, peaceful and places where one could relax. What she did not like was the religious aspect of the shrines.

All the informants, except for informant M, said that they visited shrines. Some, like informants A and T, liked to visit shrines and did so often, whereas informant W mentioned that she always prayed at the shrine when she visited. Informant A also mentioned that in her home she had a *kamidana*. The reasons for visiting the shrines were presented differently: informant W would visit before big exams, whereas informant T would visit the shrine when she was sad or desperate. Many of the informants would also visit shrines when guiding friends or family in their area. M had a more relaxed relationship to the shrine than the others and was the only one who did not normally visit shrines. The reason for this was that she was too lazy to go during the morning on New Year's Day and was uncomfortable with the many people at the shrine during New Year's Eve.

5.4.3 Who taught you about Shinto?

There were many different answers to this question in the interviews. Informant A did not know but thought that her grandparents or her family had told her. She could not remember who exactly taught her about Shinto.

Informant B also mentioned that her grandmother taught her. She also in addition said that she had learned about Shinto in school, but stressed that it was only for one year. She explained that this was where she was taught the most, but she had also taught about Shinto ‘from people to people’.

Like the two informants presented, informant W told that she learned about Shinto through school and from her grandmother. She presented the same reasons and aspects as the other two students but did not explain these much further.

Informant M had to think about this question a bit before she answered that she thought her parents taught her but she was not sure. She further stated that she experienced Shinto and Buddhism like one normally did in Japan, in the home. She stated that ‘[i]n Japan in [a] regular house, you see, you have some kind of[...] ‘*butsudan*¹⁵⁷ and there is *kamidana*.’ [...] ‘[m]aybe I asked some parents or, I don’t know.’ She explained that when she was a child, she found the *butsudan* and *kamidana* and their presence in her house strange but figured out that they coexisted. Informant M also mentioned that her family did not do much with Shinto and that she related more to Buddhism.

Unlike the others, Informant T had a very clear and different source of her knowledge of Shinto. She said that she learned about Shinto as a child by learning and watching parents and other people. She also stated that during her childhood, there was no concrete object of Shinto and so it was not present in her childhood. She explained that Japanese don’t have the same religious spirit as foreigners. In everyday life, she did not care and generally, she said, the Japanese did not care about Shinto.

The informants presented many different sources who taught them about Shinto; most were unsure, like informant A and M. All the informants presented family as those who taught them about Shinto and informants A and B mentioned specifically their grandparents. Informant A and W also mentioned that their school taught them about Shinto but that this was no more than one year. Informant T and M also talked about other ways of learning about Shinto, by either observing others or through one’s curiosity about the *butsudan* and *kamidana* in their house. These answers show that they mostly learned about Shinto through others, like family, school or the presence of Shinto in their home.

¹⁵⁷ *Butsudan* is a small altar for ancestors. These are usually found in Japanese homes.

5.4.4 What is Shinto to you?

Intrigued how they perceived Shinto and their relation to Shinto I asked what Shinto was or meant to them. The answers to this question varied. Informant A laughed when I asked this and explained that she had no idea. She did not feel she belonged to Shinto or Buddhism and that she did not think about this normally.

Informant B answered in a similar fashion but was clearer about where she stood. She stated that Shinto was not anything and that she did not think about or consider herself part of either Shinto or Buddhism. The answer of these two students are very interesting because if they are representative they do indicate, as informant T mentioned in her answer to an earlier question, that the Japanese are not religious.

Informant T presented Shinto in a different way than the others. She explained that Shinto was a supports system that she used when she was sad or desperate, a place one visited because of tradition and something that was part of one's everyday life. Again this is an interesting answer to the question, because she had already established that she is not religious, but Shinto is still part of her daily life and a place where she seeks comfort and safety. This suggests that to informant T, Shinto does not have something she would regard as a religious function, but a practical one.

Another interpretation of Shinto was made by informant W. She answered 'nature' and thought for a while, then mentioned Japanese traditions but started to seem a bit unsure. She explained that this was what the history books said. This answer indicates that she herself does not have a personal understanding of it, or feels no need for one. I found this interesting because it did seem that she was one of the informants that who visited the shrines often and related to Shinto. However, she also mentioned that to her the Kami were everywhere and even though she did not think about it, the Kami were a natural thing to her.

Again, informant M presented Shinto very differently from the rest. She stated that presently, she considered Shinto to be a political structure that was used to enforce hierarchy in Japanese society. This explained her attitude towards Shinto during the entire interview. As a politician who fights for women's rights, I can understand her reaction to Shinto as Shinto has had a different presence in the lives of the others. Informant M presented a new interpretation and definition of Shinto in Japanese society today.

As we have seen, there were various answers to this question. Two of the informants did not have any opinion because they did not relate to either major religion in Japan. Informant T on the other hand presented Shinto as a social structure that brought safety in her daily life.

Informant W referred to her history books and presented what she had read as her interpretation of Shinto. However, she did also emphasise that the Kami were a natural part of her life and that even if she did not think about it, they were everywhere. Informant M revealed clearly her interpretation of Shinto during this question. She presented Shinto as a structure used in politics to enforce hierarchy in modern day Japan.

5.4.5 What is the role of the Kami in Japan?

Considering that the Kami are presented as an aspect of Shinto by most I was curious as to what they thought was the role of the Kami in Japan, compared to Shinto. When I asked about the Kami's role in Japanese society I got a variety of answers. Informant A did not think that the Kami had a role in Japan today. She explained that the Kami were important before 1945 but that they had no power after WWII. When I asked if she thought there was a difference between the Kami and Shinto she thought for a bit and then stated that 'I don't think there is a difference. *So Shinto wa Kami*¹⁵⁸ is just [Pause] Kami or Shinto relies to our daily life.' She presented Shinto or the Kami as an integral part of the everyday life and so all Japanese has a connection with Shinto culture but it does not have any power. She also mentioned that she thought that the Kami and Shinto had a strong connection with *joshiki*, and thought that most Japanese accept this as a lifestyle but generally do not think about it.

Informant B thought about this question and stated that the Japanese don't have a specific religion they believe in, but that they do believe in the Kami. This indicates that like informant W, informant B considers Shinto and the Kami to be separate things, or that they do not rely on each other. She further mentioned that she never thought of the Kami before because there was no need to. She explained this when she said '[w]e never feel like "oh, Kami's doing this, so I'll do this" or something like that.' This again suggests that the Kami are present in Japanese society but not noticed.

Unlike the others, when I asked informant T about this, she very adamantly stated that what she had told me about Shinto and the Kami before, that one seeks them when sad, desperate, about tradition or normal worship, was not only her attitude but also the general point of view for the Japanese. This was what she considered the role of the Kami to be.

Informant W answered the question differently than the others and presented the six roles of the Kami to the Japanese. Furthermore, she presented these through relation between humans and the Kami. The six roles of the Kami and the reasons to seek the Kami are: one

¹⁵⁸ *Shinto wa Kami* is Japanese for 'Shinto is Kami' [or: *kami no michi*].

makes a wish to the Kami and it comes, to pray, to get strength, to calm down, to reassure, to get power.

The answer from informant M was different from the others. She talked about the historical perspective and that the Kami had a long history in Japan, that the Kami's role was to save people. She meant that people today might take life for granted, even if they love and need the safety the Kami give. She presented some examples of this, like the *dōsojin*¹⁵⁹ and the ritual *jichinsai*.¹⁶⁰ The *dōsojin* is presented by the informant as a small stone type of Kami that is usually found alongside roads or borders of villages and that protected people from natural disasters and other bad things. She again stressed that people take it for granted as they consider it part of everyday life. She felt that when natural disasters occur today, sometimes people remember the hardships and the role of the Kami. She again mentioned the *kamidana* and that this was normal for politicians to have in their election house as well, and stated that she did not have one during her campaign and that had surprised some, also radical feminists. She also presented a ground purification ritual, *jichinsai*, which is normal to do in Japan whenever one builds something new, like a house. Though informant M did not have it done on her own house, she stated that in Japan the '*jichinsai* is a must for a building.' [---] 'this is every day life of course.' Additionally, during the interview it was revealed that informant T had performed this ritual on her house. These aspects and rituals that informant M revealed present Shinto and Kami as an integrated and natural part of the Japanese society still today. Furthermore, she showed that some aspects of Shinto and the Kami, like the *dōsojin* might be taken for granted in Japan today.

These answers show that all the informants consider the Kami and Shinto as part of the Japanese society today and of their everyday lives. Informant A mentioned that the Kami had no power, Informant W emphasised how the Japanese rely on the Kami today and informant T presented the Kami as a social support system. Informant M was the only one to mention specific rituals and aspects, which presented the Kami as an integral part of Japanese society today. However, she also stressed that the Japanese today take Shinto and the Kami for granted.

5.4.6 How is Shinto part of Japan today?

Lastly, I wanted to see how they saw Shinto as part of Japan today. Would it be different from the Kami? Informant A answered that Shinto was a part of the everyday life and was therefore

¹⁵⁹ Kawamura (1994) 2016.

¹⁶⁰ Jun (1994) 2016.

something she did not think about or pay attention to normally. However, she did acknowledge that Shinto had a strong connection with their daily lives and this was something she was aware of. She again mentioned that this was part of her, and Japanese lifestyle, and was something she had accepted.

Informant B also thought that Shinto was part of Japan today but specified that it was not really present as a religion anymore. This suggested that Shinto does not have a religious standing in Japanese society today. She also mentioned that, unlike informant A, she did not think that Shinto was part of her everyday life because the Japanese were – as she said – not religious, except for the food culture, as she had presented it earlier in the interview: what she referred to was the *itadakimas* and *goshisosama* ritual during meals, thanking the Kami for being and bringing them food and nourishment.

When asked this question, informant T found it to be a difficult one to answer, and said that it was difficult because she did not care, the Japanese don't care. She explained that whether there was no connection or strong connection was irrelevant because she did not care. However, she did comment that Shinto was present through everyday routine, traditions and *joshiki*.

Informant W did not answer this question, whereas informant M presented again a different perspective on Shinto than the others. Like informants B and W she differentiated the Kami from Shinto. She presented a negative attitude towards Shinto, but not as much towards the Kami. When discussing them she presented the Kami as something that gave people safety and was part of tradition, though she may not participate in it as others, but she defined Shinto as something that enforced hierarchy. When she talked about Shinto in Japan today she became visibly tired. She stated that

[n]ot everyday life but, you see, as a politician I often see, face the, oh [Sighs heavily] how strong hurdles for me to break. [...] [w]e have fought and fought to change but always, always comes from that side, that means Shinto side. [---] They don't care because they don't feel the hurdles.

As a female politician who fights for women's rights it is clear that she experiences Shinto differently than the other informants, because she fights against the old fashioned and oppressing aspects of Shinto, that according to her, are being used by the politicians to further their conservative agenda. This was how Shinto was a part of her life, as a hurdle that hindered her fight for women's rights. When informant M answered this question, she was visibly affected. She looked and sounded exhausted when describing this.

During the discussion of this question, most informants presented their opinion regarding Shinto in Japanese society, except for informant W who did not answer the question. Some meant that Shinto was not a part of their daily life, like informant B, whereas others meant that Shinto was part of the everyday life of the Japanese and so they did not think of it or notice it. Informant T stated that she, like other Japanese, did not care about Shinto and so it was irrelevant whether Shinto was part of Japanese society or not. On the other hand, informant M presented said that Shinto was a very part of her life and something that affected her greatly because conservative politicians used Shinto to hinder equality for women. Their answers presented many aspects, or faces of Shinto in Japan today.

5.5 Shinto in Politics

One of the cultural aspects I focused on when looking at Shinto was politics in Japan today. In order to analyse Shinto in politics I asked about politics and its relations with Shinto during the interviews.

5.5.1 Are there relations between Shinto and Japanese politics today?

When I asked this question there was a clearer difference between the perspective of the students and the politicians. Informant A did not think there were any relations between Shinto and politics, but she did mention that there were relations between *joshiki* and politics. Earlier in the interview, she stated that there were relations between *joshiki* and Shinto, however, considering that *joshiki* is a term used for a broad concept, common sense, this does not necessarily mean that there are relations between Shinto and politics. Yet, these two factors are connected to *joshiki*. I asked her why there was no relation between Shinto and politics and she answered that ‘[a]ccording to [the] Japanese constitution, religion must [be] separate from politics, so there’s no relationship.’

Informant B did not answer this question because she had never thought about relations between Shinto and politics before. She also mentioned that they learned about Shinto and politics separately in school, never together. She thought it was shameful how little they learned because it helped make them ignorant about politics, something which gave the government the opportunity to do what they want. This answer exemplifies a form of political apathy among the younger generation.

Another informant who found this question difficult to answer was informant W. She thought hard about it and in the end mentioned the Yasukuni shrine as a possible connection

but could not think of anything else. Like informant B she had never thought about such a relation before.

Unlike the student informants, the politicians presented clearly that there were relations between Shinto and politics. Informant T stated that of course Shinto affected politics, to a certain degree. She explained that Shinto affects the Japanese everyday life and therefore Shinto affects politics, through the people. This was a more detailed and reflected answer than the students gave, but not surprising as informant T herself is a politician. She further stated that Shinto was a tool that could be used in politics for both good and bad. She did not elaborate on this.

Like informant T, informant M thought that there were relations between Shinto and politics because many politicians were members of and gained loyalties through different Shinto organizations. She explained that the politicians used this network during elections and that it was effective because Shinto groups nurtured loyalty and endorsed the candidates. This would help them to move further up in the political world in Japan. Informant T named some of these groups as the *Nihon Kaigi*¹⁶¹ and *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai giin Kandanai*.¹⁶² She stressed that this dealing in politics is allowed because of the political apathy among the Japanese people. She considered this it a big problem and seemed sad and angry when discussing this it.

There were different answers given to this question. Two of the informants, A and B, did not think there was a relation between Shinto and politics or could not answer because they did not know. However, they did elaborate the reasons for their answers either referring to the constitution or what they were taught in school. The other three informants said that there were relations between Shinto and politics, but to different degrees. Informant W mentioned the political sensitive shrine Yasukuni but did not present any other relation, whereas the political informants presented more detailed examples of relations between Shinto and politics. Both presented Shinto as a tool used in politics, however. Informant M presented it as a very negative aspect of politics. She explained how the Shinto groups helped cultivate loyalty and endorsement for political candidates, which helped maintain the class difference in Japanese politics and the more conservative values in Japanese society, especially regarding equality for women. Furthermore, informant B and M mentioned that because of

¹⁶¹ *Nihon Kaigi* is a non-party political organisation or group that focus on the historical perception of Japan and has connections with Shinto priests and shrines.

¹⁶² *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai giin Kandanai* is an explicit Shinto lobby group, which is a subsection of *jinja honcho*.

political apathy and lack of knowledge about Japanese politics among the Japanese the politicians were allowed to do as they wanted without being hindered by the public.

5.6 Relations

During this presentation and thematic analysis of the material many interesting aspects have been taken up by the informants. What first struck me when going through the material was that the informants mostly presented different opinions and aspects of Shinto. Sometimes they would disagree with each other but I was surprised at how they often mentioned several examples and aspect and because they often answered so differently this resulted in a lot of relevant material. I did not think that five interviews would generate this much material.

During the interviews the informants had different attitudes towards Shinto generally. Informant A and W seemed positive towards Shinto, whereas informant M presented Shinto in a negative light. She revealed during the interview that to her Shinto and *joshiki* were the structures that allowed the old-fashioned values and hindered modern values such as equality for women and women's rights from becoming the new social norms. She further revealed that politicians would use these structure to maintain the status quo and tradition but, according to her, out-dated values. On the other hand, informant B and T seemed indifferent towards Shinto. Informant B did not consider Shinto to be part of her everyday life and so did not think about it, whereas informant T said that she would visit the shrine when she was sad and that Shinto was an integrated part of her life. However, if Shinto was present or had relations with other cultural aspects, this was not relevant to her, because she, and according to her, other Japanese did not care. I found informant T's attitude towards Shinto very interesting because it was clear to me that it was something she relied on and used in her everyday life, yet she did not care about it.

The answers the informants gave during the interviews when asked about what Shinto was to them were fascinating. Some did not relate to Shinto at all for different reasons, like that it was such a natural part of their life that they did not notice or think about, whereas others presented it as not being part of their lives at all. Informant M presented Shinto differently; to her Shinto was the structure that helped Japanese politicians enforce the hierarchy. This suggests that Shinto could act as an inhibitor for more modern concepts that contradict the traditional thought. During her answer to this question, informant W also mentioned that the Kami were everywhere and she stressed that even if she did not notice them, they were a natural part of her life. Both she and informant B also presented Shinto and the Kami as two separate entities. This did not seem to affect their answers, but it could have affected their

answers that I formulated the question about Shinto or the Kami. However, this was something that I had considered during the preparations and was the reason for the next question I asked.

I asked about the Kami aspect of Shinto, partly to see whether they perceived the Kami's role in Japan differently from Shinto's but also to learn how they understood and related to the Kami in modern day Japan. All the informants presented Kami as part of the society, some separated the Kami from Shinto and some did not. Most of them presented the Kami as being part of their everyday life but in different ways. This indicates that Shinto is present in Japanese society, but not seen. Some, like informant W, mentioned how she would rely on the Kami through prayer to help with bigger events in life, like passing her exams. What I found interesting about her answer, was that the reasons for prayer that she mentioned were events I would consider part of everyday life struggle that could become bigger events. As a student, passing her exams would, to her, be considered a something important and a big event in her current life. Her presentation and use of Shinto suggests that it can be a practical aspect of her everyday life and a support and help with modern troubles. Another interesting interpretation in the answers to this question in the interviews was informant T. She seemed to be one of the informants who took part in most Shinto traditions and rituals. Yet she presented herself as not a religious person and Shinto was called a social support system that one could rely on for comfort and safety. This suggests that Shinto to some Japanese is a practical and cultural aspect of Japanese society, not a religious one. Informant M also presented an interesting interpretation of why the Japanese did not notice Shinto. She meant that they took the cultural and historical aspect of Shinto for granted and so often performed rituals without considering the meaning behind them.

Lastly, I want to further discuss the informants' presentation of Shinto in Japan today. Again, the informants, except for informant B, displayed Shinto as an integral part of Japanese society today. Some repeated that Shinto was present in society but was not noticed. This indicates that Shinto could be such a natural part of Japan that it is something one does not notice. However, it can also suggest that there is a form of indifference in Japan regarding Shinto, because it is such a common element there. Informant B expressed that religion was not present in Japan today and therefore Shinto was not part of her life. This again supports that Shinto is not present as a religion in Japan. Unlike the others, informant M presented Shinto as a burden and something that affected her and Japan in a negative way. She explained that because of her profession and her being a women's rights activist, she experienced Shinto as a hurdle in her political and private life. She became visibly tired and

affected when explaining this. This suggests that there are more than one side to Shinto and sides that not all in Japanese society would notice. Similarly, considering their lack of notice of Shinto, this could indicate why they do not experience this side of Shinto, whereas informant M, who is at the front lines in that battle, does. Another aspect she presented in this light was *joshiki*.

The informants showed that there were relations between Shinto and *joshiki*. However, because most of them, especially informant A and W, did not notice Shinto in everyday life, they could not confidently state this. Again informant M presented the aspects in a more negative light than the other informants. She mentioned that there was a disregard to the history and knowledge of these aspects. An example she presented was that many did not know the name of the ribbons that represent if something is sacred or pure and often indicates the presence of a Kami. I found this example of lack of knowledge interesting, as the Japanese seemed very attentive to following social rules and manners, yet this suggests that this focus can be limited to the practical aspect. Maybe it was not so important to know why one was supposed to follow certain rules and not do certain things, as long as one followed the rules? Furthermore, *joshiki* was presented by informant M as a structure to maintain traditional values and status quo in society and therefore could hinder change.

A more modern aspect that I discussed with my informants was popular culture, especially manga. The students, informant A, B and W, were the ones familiar enough with modern Japanese popular culture and they presented it as an aspect that affected Japanese society. They also answered that Shinto might be present but, the students could not answer how Shinto was present or why popular culture affected Japanese society. Their reasons, again, was that Shinto was such a common aspect that they might see it in popular culture, but they would not register it or think about it. The older informants and informant B presented a more negative attitude towards current popular culture than the other two informants. Informant T was the one who reacted the most and said very clearly that she was disappointed with that form of entertainment, such as manga, and thought it was a shallow and cheap copy of classical culture. She did not consider Japanese popular culture to be Japanese culture. However, it should be said that informant T is in her 80s and it was revealed during the interview that she had not read manga but only briefly seen what was visible on covers, in shops, commercials and shows. This could indicate why she feels so disappointed and is more negatively inclined than the others.

The last relation I asked about was Shinto in politics. The answers to this question were very different. Some meant that it did affect others that it did not. Informant A meant that

there were no relations, because the constitution stated that religion and state were to be separate, but also mentioned that there were relations between *joshiki* and politics. This suggests that there is an expectation to follow the rules, especially the constitution. Informant B also mentioned these two aspects separately but she expressed frustration because there is, according to her, a lack of education about these aspects. They were taught separately and she felt she did not know enough, and her lack of knowledge let the politicians do what they wanted, despite the public's opinion, or lack thereof. Informant M also stressed this political apathy among the Japanese people and the dangers surrounding it. She presented clearly an aspect of Shinto was [or: that is] present in Japanese politics, through 'non-political' [add: Shinto] groups with conservative traditions that had ties to politicians and other groups. On the other hand, informant T presented [or: regarded] Shinto as a tool used in politics that was neutral but could be used for good and bad. These two informants were the ones who presented the most knowledge about this aspect of Shinto, Shinto in Japanese politics.

At the end of the interview I also asked for feedback on how the interview went. Informant B expressed that she answered me normally but was a little nervous to be interviewed in English. This was something I had noticed, as she would be careful how she formulated herself. The other informants talked about how the interview had made them think of aspects they had not considered before. Informant A stated that she now considered Japanese customs differently than before because she had never thought of these relations or aspects. She said that she realised that she did not know much about politics, Shinto or their relations and it made her want to learn more about it.

The responses to this question show that the interview presented aspects to the informants that they had not previously considered and in some cases, changed their perspective and interpretation of aspects of Japanese culture related to Shinto and the Kami.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the informants' answers, understanding and interpretations of the Shinto as interpersonal behaviour, as ritual activities, as well as Shinto in popular culture and Shinto in politics. They presented many aspects and faces of Shinto and show that Shinto could have relations with politics and *joshiki* and might be presented in popular culture, such as manga. However, they also reveal that for many of them Shinto was such a common and natural aspect that they might see Shinto but do not notice or think about it. The next chapter will present, discuss and analyse the material I gathered during the observations.

6. Analysis of Observations

During my fieldwork in Japan I, beside the interviews, did observations of three types: (1) observations with informants outside the interviews, including visiting a shrine of their choosing, (2) planned observations at shrines, and (3) general observations of things I saw during the day such as demonstrations and everyday actions I found relevant. The most interesting thing in relation to observations I was told is that at work and in order to learn in Japan, they were taught through observing. It is common that in Japan one is taught through observing instead of being told what to do. This made observation an especially efficient way of gathering material.

I tried to spend time, at least a day or two with the informant before doing the interview and so did observations of and with the informant during this period. I did this in order to get to know the informant better and to see what else she could tell me about Japan and Shinto. I did planned observations at shrines where I would spend any amount of time between 15 minutes to hours to gather information. During these planned observations I specifically visited the imperial shrines Ise Grand *jingu* and Meiji *jingu*, and the local *jinja* Hato no Mori Hachiman in Tokyo. I did this in order to be able to present both the imperial and local form and practice of Shinto. Lastly I did general observation of Japanese customs, events and traits that I found relevant. These included anything from behaviour on trains, public demonstrations and any aspects that I saw that seemed important to be taken note of.

In addition, I gathered leaflets, maps, newspaper clips, took pictures and video films of demonstrations and other events and things that I needed to translate. This was both written and oral material and was all translated by the same translator after the fieldwork was finished. Some material will be presented in this chapter.

As mentioned in the chapter 'Sources and Method' I used several ways to record these observations:

In this chapter I will divide the information I gathered during my observations in four parts, one for each of the main aspects: Shinto as interpersonal behaviour, Shinto in popular culture, Shinto as ritual activities, and Shinto in politics, and present a brief analysis at the end of each part where I especially focus on the relations between the different aspects. The first aspect I will present is Shinto as interpersonal behaviour.

6.1 Shinto as Interpersonal Behaviour

I did observe many traits, habits, surroundings and behaviour that I thought of as very Japanese, or even uniquely Japanese. Some of these observations did present aspects of Shinto, such as certain manners, sayings, actions and certain ways of doing things and the presence of shrines and nature in the cities. I also found that *joshiki* was present almost wherever I looked, especially after having spent time with and interviewing informant A.

I spent two days with her, when she showed me around the city of Sapporo. I let her lead me around to the places she wanted to show me like parks, shrines, restaurants and the top of Sapporo Mountain. I met with informant A after being in Japan for two weeks and thought I had learned much about Japan but informant A taught me more. Most of the time we spent talking, getting to know each other better and simply having fun but during this time she presented to me different aspects of *joshiki*, especially during meals. She would correct me if I held the chopsticks when I was not eating or ate the food the wrong way. She explained that it was rude to wave the chopsticks when not eating and if you were not eating you should put them down properly. She also explained while we tried to eat a fish jaw that though some food was more difficult to eat than others one should not tear at the food or make a mess of it because that would be disrespectful to the cook who would in many cases stand and work right across from you. She presented these rules and manners as *joshiki*. This made me think of manners in Shinto, it seemed like something they knew because it was common knowledge.

I also observed *joshiki* during my general observations on my own. I noticed that there was a structure to how things were done in Japan and that the majority liked to follow both the written and the unwritten rules. The examples I will present now were either explained to me as part of *joshiki* or as the Japanese way. There were very few who threw trash away in the streets and very few who talked on trains. One only smoked in the assigned locations for smoking. This was sometimes marked in the ground or there where physical glass walls. Sometimes these areas would be filled to the brim so that the smokers would stand back to back and smoke upwards. Another aspect I especially found interesting was the dedication to following traffic rules. People, even when in a hurry, would stand and wait for the sign to turn green before walking and they would use crossings. People always carried their food and would almost never eat while walking. When it came to drinks this was not as clear. One did not shove one another when walking and one could walk in a crowd of 50 people yet not be touched by those around you. Those who did break these rules were often foreigners, and it was a lot easier to see when it was westerners who broke them. Mostly, if one broke these

rules those around one would give that person looks and sometimes someone, usually someone older, would go up to them and correct them sternly.

Additionally, an aspect I found to be ‘very Japanese’ was the fondness for *matsuris* and the celebration of holidays. I experienced numerous *matsuris* of many different kinds both intentionally and unintentionally. I was at shrine *matsuris*, Buddhist *matsuris*, firework *matsuris*, historical *matsuris* and some that I do not know what to call. I would often find myself walking down a street and suddenly walking into a *matsuri* of some sort. I also was shown *matsuris* by my informants. Informant A took me to the food festival and the beer festival in Sapporo, whereas informant M took me to a shrine *matsuri*. However it did not seem like she was aware there was a *matsuri* going on. Everyone seemed to love to celebrate things, and not only local Japanese celebrations.

I also noticed that there is a structured and different food culture than I had experienced before. There are certain manners and ways one should eat and some of these have already been mentioned. I observed that there were certain ways of eating things and that one important rule was that one should not mix food. Most meals had their own rules and ways of eating them. An example is the rice bowl. The rice in the rice bowl should remain clean throughout the meal and one should transfer the rice to the sauce or meat, not the other way round. After a short while I grew to really care for the area I lived in in Tokyo, with the shrine, the restaurant and the people. Looking back I realised that though I did notice and observe many in the start of my fieldwork the longer I stayed in Japan, the more I got used to the Japanese way of life, the less I observed. As I have exemplified in this section there are many aspects of Japan that seemed to be purely theirs in events, manners, thoughts and ways of doing things.

6.2 Popular Culture

Japanese popular culture is a part of the Japanese culture that not necessarily follows the rules of *tatema*e and *joshiki*. Those who show their interest in popular culture publically can be considered *otakus* or nerds, as informant B put it in the interview. Yet popular culture is present in every city that I have seen with its own streets or districts. It is used as a forum of expression through manga, anime, fashion or idols. Because of my focus on manga in popular culture I will focus on this aspect and look only briefly at other forms of popular culture. I did observations at what I was told to be popular culture centres, like the Harajuku district in Tokyo, districts popular with the younger generations such as Shibuya and Shinjuku in Tokyo

and general observations. This part of the analysis will look at how popular culture was present during these observations.

During my general observations I saw that the Japanese read manga on their phones, tablets and in manga books but still saw very few reading manga in public. This was because almost everyone covered their reading material with neutral fabric covers, which made it very difficult to see whether they read a book or manga. It was easier to see what people were reading on their phone than when they had physical books due to this. As a result, I cannot say whether reading manga in public is common or not. When I realised this I did wonder if this was because of social norms such as *tatemaie*. The covers on manga have covers that are colourful but also a form of expression, characters and genres. Is one's preference in reading material considered part of *honne* and so therefore not something one shows in society? This will be discussed further in the chapter 8.

Another presentation of popular culture that I did not notice was the Japanese picture scrolls. I did not consider this as part of popular culture before my interview with informant M who referred to the *Chojū Giga*, what she called the original manga, and that this was the form, which she appreciated popular culture in. She further recommended me to go to the National Museum in Kyoto to look at the *Chojū Giga* picture scrolls. It was after my time with informant M, during our talks outside and during the interview, that I started noticing the picture scroll art, or the lack of it. Surprisingly, the places where I saw these picture scrolls most often were in souvenir shops or at events such as a sumo wrestling tournament. There were shops that did sell forms of scrolls but they mostly sold new designs with inspirations from the old scrolls, with animals, for example the panda. With the presence of the traditional in modern Japan I did expect images inspired by the picture scrolls to be more common. However, I only saw some on posters and commercials for museums but not in many other places. When I was notified about the *matsuri* at the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* there were small flyers with a picture from the old picture scrolls that were handed out (cf. fig. 1).

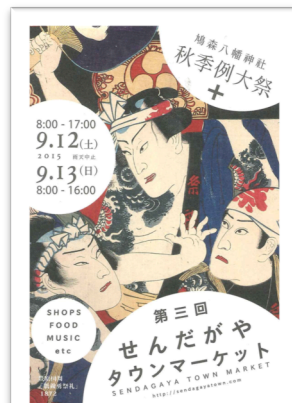


Fig. 1.

This way of using the old picture scroll art was the only one I saw in public. Another place that had a similar art style was the tapestry in small a house at the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja*. This house was used during the *matsuri* and the tapestry has a beautiful but simple drawing of what looked like a bonsai tree. This suggests that Popular culture such as manga can be spread out throughout cities and so maybe is becoming a more common and normal aspect of Japanese culture, not just being *otaku* as informant B indicated.

6.3 Shinto as Ritual Activities

During the interviews the informants presented Shinto as something weaved into their daily lives to the extent that they did not consider it. For a foreigner like me, Shinto's presence in Japan seems quite clear, through the about 80 000 shrines across the country, the many celebrations and manners used every day. However, this common presence of Shinto might be exactly why the Japanese do not think of it. I wanted to see Shinto and the Kami's role in Japanese society today and how it affected everyday life. It was difficult to get information about Shinto because the informants did not think of it or see it in their everyday life. This made my observations more important. I asked my informants to take me to a shrine they used or felt connected with. Three of the informants, A, B and M showed me shrines but informants T and W could not, because of limit of time and opportunity. I also did planned observations over a longer period of time at the Meiji *jingu* and the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* and a shorter observation of three consecutive days at the Ise Grand Shrines. Like with the other aspects, I also did general observations. I will present the observations at the imperial shrines, *jingus*, first and then the observations at the local *jinjas*. I wanted to see how the shrines reflect and affect the role of Shinto and the Kami in Japan today, as well as how

these two types of shrines are different and whether people relate to the local and imperial shrines differently.

6.3.1 Imperial Shrines: *Jingus*

The first imperial shrine I did visited was the Meiji Shrine. I went to this shrine three times: the 10th of September, the 29th of September and lastly the 21st of October. I will first describe the shrine and the rituals and then present my observations.

The Meiji *jingu*¹⁶³ is located in the district Harajuku in Tokyo and is an imperial shrine dedicated to the emperor Meiji. The shrine area, like at many of the bigger shrines, is very big and can easily be mistaken for a park. Both the main and alternative entrance has a big *torii*,¹⁶⁴ a gateway indicating entrance to a sacred area and there are smaller *torii*s inside the shrine. When walking through a *torii*, one should bow both when entering the shrine and when leaving. The main pathways leading to the shrine house from these entrances are wide and surrounded by trees. Walking to the shrine house one walks past different areas such as the tourist shop, the inner garden, the treasury museum, the treasury annex, wine and sake barrels. Outside these areas, such as at the inner garden, one pays an entrance fee. The sign in English stated that because no shrines were supported by the state, their only income came from donations and purchases made at the shops, services and entrances. This is quite interesting because the shrine seemed well maintained and if it survive on the income made by the public it shows how much the shrine is used and supported by its community.

A man I met at the *jingu* told me that the sake barrels were used during ceremonies. The paths are covered in white or light gravel and from the main way there are small wooden bridges over small streams. The lampposts are made of wood and one feels that one is surrounded by nature. Before entering the main square structure there is a purification fountain, a *temizuya*,¹⁶⁵ where one purifies oneself before entering the main shrine area. There is a *temizuya* outside the entrances to the main square structure from both the main and the alternative entrance. The *temizuya* at the path from the main entrance has a sign in English and Japanese that shows how to do the purifying ritual. Informant W and two of my roommates in Tokyo showed me how to do this at other shrines. One takes a ladle in one's right hand and fills it from the dripping water (not the still water) and first pours the water into one's left hand, then takes the ladle in one's left hand and washes one's right hand. Then

¹⁶³ Map of the Meiji shrine is in Appendix 11.5.

¹⁶⁴ Mori (1994) 2016d.

¹⁶⁵ Mori (1994) 2016c.

one switches hands and pours a little water into one's cupped left hand, rinses the mouth, and spits it out; one should not swallow the water. One finishes the ritual by letting the remaining water pour down the handle of the ladle and places it back on the *temizuya* face down. After this one can enter the main shrine structure. The shrine structure at the Meiji shrine is a big open wooden square. When standing in the middle and looking at the main entrance it looks like on fig. 2.



Fig. 2. Photo CF.

When entering the square structure at the Meiji shrine from the main entrance one has benches to the left and right under the roof. The ground is covered in white stone as one can see on fig 2. To the right one has the opening to the alternative entrance or exit, the shop where one can buy an *ema*,¹⁶⁶ a prayer plaque, that one can write one's prayer or thanks on, and a sacred tree surrounded by a structure that holds the *ema*. To the left of the main entrance there is another exit and two sacred trees tied together with a holy rope (cf. fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Photo CF.

¹⁶⁶ Iwai (1994) 2016.

Behind these trees is the *haiden*,¹⁶⁷ the hall of worship, which is in front of the *honden*,¹⁶⁸ which is the most sacred area within the shrine and the sanctuary of the Kami. When one goes to pray at the Meiji shrine, one approaches the *haiden*, throws preferably a 5-yen coin into the *saisen* box (donation box),¹⁶⁹ claps the hands twice, bows twice, claps twice and prays. When one has finished one often walks down the steps and bows one last time in respect. At smaller shrines, such as the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* in Tokyo, there is a bell one rings to call the Kami before one starts praying. Inside the square structure there are guards, in light blue uniforms, walking around and making sure that people behave correctly. They stop tourists taking pictures of the *honden* house and stop people from sitting on the ground. They also answer questions when asked by visitors. I did observe a tourist couple with a baby ask one of the guards if they could breastfeed the baby but was told not by the guard and shown to the alternative entrance/exit where there is a seating area with benches and tables under an open roof. This suggests that the square structure area is different and more sacred than the rest of the shrine area.

During my observations at the Meiji *jingu* I saw many tourists, both western and Asian and noted that people dressed very differently. Most were dressed informally; tourists and Japanese people would, for example, wear sandals and shorts, whereas others wore professional working clothes or traditional clothing. The big presence of tourists and the dressing styles indicates that the Meiji shrine can be considered informal and more commercial than other shrines. Everyone seemed very relaxed and the majority would go to the *tamizuya* and wash but not everyone. Those that [or: who] seemed to continue without doing this ritual were mostly tourists. There was one Japanese young man who showed his American guests or friends how to wash before entering the shrine. He showed them the same way I had been taught. I did observe from both entrances and there were more tourists using the main entrance than the alternative one. Those who used the alternative path as an entrance were Japanese wearing work or informal clothing. Furthermore, the *tamizuya* at the alternative entrance does not have English instructions but still had English pamphlets. This indicates that the locals mostly use the alternative entrance. The *emas* were all of the traditional shape with prayers and thanks in many different languages (cf. fig. 4).

¹⁶⁷ Mori (1994) 2016a.

¹⁶⁸ Mori (1994) 2016b.

¹⁶⁹ Suzuki (1994) 2016.



Fig. 4. Photo CF.

On fig. 4 one can see that some of the *emas* have drawings in addition to the text, and two of these are Japanese drawn in the manga drawing style. This shows that the manga style is used, even on prayers at shrines. When I was shown around at informant A's shrine, she told me that prayers made at shrines are taken very seriously by those who make them, especially by the Japanese. This suggests that the Japanese prayers are serious. However, whether the tourist prayers and thanks are serious, is something I cannot know.

While observing the *haiden* from the benches I saw many tourists and Japanese pray quickly but there were also some Japanese who spent more time praying than most. This included a group of handicapped Japanese who were with their assistants who helped them. They could not get up the stairs so they did their prayers at the bottom of the stairs. Informant A did mention when she showed me around the Hokkaido *jingu* that the size and influence of a shrine would also measure in how far geographically the wish would be granted. If one wished for something at a local shrine, it would be granted when in that vicinity but if one wished for something to be granted further or outside Japan one should pray at bigger shrines like the Meiji shrine and the Ise Grand Shrines. A roommate of mine in Tokyo mentioned that she had wished for a job at the local grocery shop at the local shrine and she got it. She also said that she believed that if the job were not part of the local shrine's area, she would not have been offered the job. This example indicates that those who went to pray seriously at the Meiji shrine wanted the prayer to reach further than the local area and more certainly to be fulfilled.

Another interesting event I observed at the Meiji shrine was that there were held weddings. During my second visit I saw wedding parties walk in and out off the square structure area

and many had their pictures taken outside the opposite side of the main entrance from its *temizuya*. At first I thought this was one wedding, where the bride changed between a red and white wedding dress because they all wore big hoods. However, after talking to a Japanese man who sat next to me, I found out that there were in fact six weddings, not one. These ceremonies were short and the wedding party was led into the area through one exit, while the guards separated the crowd so that they could walk in the centre, with both *mikos*,¹⁷⁰ female Shrine attendants who assist the Shinto priests, and Shinto priests. The couples were followed by what seemed to be friends and family dressed in formal clothing, mostly black and traditional clothing. Usually the groom led the bride on her left and what looked to be the mother or mother-in-law on her right. Most visitors would gather to watch this but disperse quickly after the wedding parties left. Furthermore, there was a sign showing the way to the wedding reception. During these processions I also observed that the guards would salute the Shinto priests and the couple. I did not witness the guards doing this to anyone else. The amount of weddings indicates that getting married according to Shinto traditions is common, also at the Meiji shrine and that it is highly respected. This could also indicate the influence of the Meiji shrine, that it can be considered an influential shrine that is regarded to bring a lot of luck to the couples who are married there.

I also saw many kids participating at the *shichigosan* ceremony at the Meiji shrine. This ceremony is often done when the child is either three (*san*), five (*go*) and seven (*shichi*) years old. These incidents, except for the weddings, were the few times I saw Japanese people dressed in traditional clothing such as *kimono* at the Meiji *jingu*. The children were dressed in traditional clothing and seemed very excited. They were taken pictures of by relatives, and tourists, and the girls wore makeup. The children would follow their parents and a Shinto priest into the ceremony room in the *haiden*, away from public view and the children would emerge with a medallion of some sort and a stick with the sacred white tassels. After the ceremony the entire family seemed to relax more and there were times where the father or mother would change, especially the boys, out of the formal clothing and into something more practical. This was especially the case with the smaller kids who were either three or five. This ceremony and the weddings were the traditional Shinto ceremonies that I saw during my planned observations at the Meiji shrine.

¹⁷⁰ Takao (1994) 2016.

A different ritual that I observed was something I was told by informant A, during my time with her in Hokkaido, was a very common and modern ritual, which was the blessing of new cars.

During my first visit to the Meiji *jingu*, I used the alternative entrance and saw on my way in a woman having her car blessed by two Shinto priests. It did not seem like a long ritual and the woman bowed towards the car when the leading Shinto priest did and followed his lead. This is quite a fascinating ritual and might seem one of the stranger aspects of Shinto to foreigners. However, if one considers the charms one can buy and what people pray for it is in fact very logical. I did read an *ema* in English that wished for safety in traffic during their time in Japan and among the charms you can buy, luck and safety in traffic is one of them and one of the more specific ones. Considering how dangerous traffic can be and the demand for this form of luck, the fact that there are specific charms for it suggests that safety in traffic is something people want to secure through the means of Shinto. Therefore, having a new car blessed in order to be safer and have more luck in traffic can be considered quite logical.

During my observations at the Meiji *jingu* there were many things that remained the same, such as the amount of people visiting the shrine and their behaviour and attitude during their visits. There were many visitors, both Japanese and foreigners, every time I observed there. There may have been more people visiting during my second visit, which was on a Saturday, but there were so many people generally that I cannot state this with confidence. As mentioned earlier, most would pray quickly but some, mostly Japanese, would pray longer and seemed more respectful of the shrine. Yet the air of informality would sometimes convert to a more formal atmosphere when the guards corrected people or when a wedding party walked through the area. Still, the informality would return quickly. During my time at the shrine I felt quite comfortable. There was always the sound of the wind through the trees; Japanese crows croaking away and there was calmness in the area. However, the fewer tourists that were present the better it was because it became quieter. The observations at the Meiji shrine showed the more commercial part of Shinto but also its influence and popularity as a shrine. There were many who went there to pray, see and experience Shinto, both foreigners and Japanese. It was also presented as a popular place to get married or do the *shichigosan* ceremony for one's children. This suggests that the Meiji shrine is considered a popular shrine for both foreigners, as tourists, and for the Japanese because of the influence the *jingu* and the luck it is regarded to bring to those who pray there.

A *jingu* that seemed very similar to the Meiji shrine was the Hokkaidō *jingu*. The Hokkaidō *jingu* was showed to me by informant A, and we did an observation there. We went

to this shrine on the 16th of September 2015, after my first visit to both the Meiji *jingu* and the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* in Tokyo. Like Meiji *jingu*, the Hokkaidō *jingu* is an imperial shrine dedicated to the emperor Meiji, though my informant thought it was not an imperial shrine. In the surrounding area I did see the imperial seal (the chrysanthemum flower) and a Japanese flag and so asked my informant what Kami the shrine was for. We looked at this after our visit to the *jingu* and learned that it was an imperial shrine for the emperor Meiji but also three other Kami. Informant A, who checked this, did not say which Kami were present at the shrine other than the Meiji emperor. The Hokkaidō *jingu* had a similar structure as the Meiji *jingu* but was part of a bigger park.

There were fewer visitors than at the Meiji *jingu* but there were mostly Japanese visitors and the *jingu* is less commercial. When we came there, there were several cars parked close to the shrine and informant A told me that they were going to be blessed by a Shinto priest. On our way out we did see a car being blessed, like I had seen earlier. I asked her if she would bless her car when she got her own and she said yes. Her reasons were that it was normal and so why not ask for safety and luck in traffic, it couldn't hurt. After her explanation it did seem like a natural thing to do and even made me wonder why not more people did this. Before entering we went to the *temizuya* and I noticed that informant A did the ritual slightly different from what I had been taught in Tokyo. It was minor differences such as cleaning the hands in a different order and not rinsing the mouth with water but simply letting it touch her mouth. I asked her why and she told me that this was the way she was taught and that she thought that was the way it was done everywhere. The city of Sapporo is far away from Tokyo and on a different island. That could be a reason why this ritual was done in a partly different way. This difference could also be caused by informant A's family and their traditions. Informant A couldn't answer this for she had never looked or noticed anyone doing it differently herself. The sign that showed the steps of cleansing were not specific enough to show which one of us was doing it properly. However, the sign was only in Japanese, with a comic of a child doing the steps, and so I could not read the detailed description of the ritual. Informant A was not worried that we did the ritual differently. We entered the shrine through an entrance with a very thick sacred rope that I had not seen present at any shrine I had visited so far, neither imperial nor local. The entrance is shown in fig. 5:



Fig. 5. Photo CF.

On the inside of this entrance there was a big open space, like at the Meiji *jingu*, but with more trees. When we were inside this structure we saw a ceremony with people inside the *haiden* where they sat on benches and the Shinto priest was chanting and beating a drum. Every shrine I visited had an *ema* station and a place to tie one's notes of 'bad luck'. At the shrines I visited they had a dispenser of some sort that gave the visitor a paper that told if one was lucky or not. One could get a couple of different ones and I was shown by informant A that if one got one that said one had bad luck one would tie the paper to these stations and so one would leave one's bad luck at the shrine, whereas one brought home the notes of luck and one kept these till the end of the year to remain lucky. Informant A explained that when praying she often prayed for everyday things and that most people did the same. We took a look at the *emas* at the shrine and I observed that the form of these varied, some were in the shape of a popular culture character (cf. fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Photo CF.

As is shown on fig. 6, there were the traditional shaped *emas*, but there were also the *emas* in the form of popular culture bear character Rilakkuma. I also saw manga styled drawings on the *emas*. This does suggest again that popular culture is present and accepted within the Shinto tradition. Informant A did translate some of the *emas* and said that they were about everyday issues and wishes. There were those that wished for passing their exams and to find true love and many more. As mentioned previously, informant A stressed that these prayers were taken very seriously. She also mentioned that people often asked for the same things on the *emas* as one could buy with charms, but that *emas* were often considered more serious wishes. During my visit I also observed a couple praying towards the Kami at the *jingu* and saw that the man led the bow and the wife followed; the wife followed when the man finished praying as well. This has later made me think of what informant M mentioned in the interview, that *joshiki* to her was that the man goes first and the wife follows. This example suggests that this form of *joshiki* is present and can even be connected to Shinto. Informant A did not express any such point of view of Shinto during our visit, though. She remained positive to Shinto throughout the visit and prayed before we left. When we left I felt relaxed and noticed that my reaction at the Hokkaidō was similar to the one at the Meiji shrine, that I was relaxed and calm, but that I felt more calm at this shrine because it was quieter; one could hear and feel the nature more clearly at this shrine. This was when I realised that the ones who disturbed the quiet and calm atmosphere at the shrines were the tourists because they talked more and were louder. I did not see any weddings or *shichigosan* ceremonies during my time at this shrine, yet I liked it very quickly and am still left with a very good impression from this *jingu*.

The last imperial shrine I observed was the Ise Grand Shrines. Masayuki Nakanishi in the *Encyclopedia of Shinto (EOS)* refers to the Ise Grand Shrines as Ise *Shinkō*, *Shinkō* being translated ‘faith’ or ‘a faith’. Nakanishi explains that the Ise Grand Shrines are considered the most sacred shrines in Shinto tradition, is a part of Japan’s long history, and states that the principal Kami at these shrines is Amaterasu, the sun goddess and ancestor of the imperial family, which makes these shrines imperial.¹⁷¹ Initially I did observations of both the *Geku jingu* (outer shrine) and the *Naiku jingu* (inner shrine). However because they were so similar I will focus on my observations done at the *Naiku jingu*. Still, I will include the observation logs and map for *Geku jingu* in the appendix. I did observations at the *Naiku jingu* three days in a row, on the 8th, 9th and 10th of October 2015. This was after my visit to the Meiji *jingu*, Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja*, informant A’s shrine and informant B’s shrine.

The *Naiku jingu* is placed four to five kilometres from the centre of Ise city and as a shrine is very big. There is a big parking lot right out of the entrance and it has its own shopping and eating district on the other side of the river from the shrine. It is not allowed to bring dogs or food inside the shrine area, yet I saw many people with dogs in the area outside the shrine. There was also a service area to the right of the shrine that helped the disabled or handicapped get wheelchairs or any help they needed to visit the shrine. This was also the area that informed what was and was not allowed to bring into the shrine, such as the restriction of animals and food in the shrine area.

During every observation at the *Naiku jingu*, I saw many visitors and tourist groups of all ages visiting the shrine. There were very few western tourists, some Chinese tourist groups but the majority of visitors and tourists were Japanese. On the second day of observations I saw only one western tourist. There were more people dressed in traditional clothing than at the other shrines I observed. Still the dress code varied a lot and I did see people of all ages dressed in both informal and formal clothes. However, I did not observe any wedding or *shichigosan* ceremonies at this shrine, which were the reasons for people dressing in traditional clothing at the other shrines. The area and shrine is very different from the other imperial shrines I visited. The shrine did have a *tamizuya* near one of the bridges near the entrance but the majority of the visitors went to an area that went down to the river and did the cleansing ritual there. All the guide groups were led to this area. There were various paths that led to the main shrine and there were some shrines along the way but most visitors went straight to the main shrine to pray.

¹⁷¹ Nakanishi (1994) 2016.

The colours of the area were mostly natural with sometimes parts of the roof or building being white or gold. The emperor's seal was mostly in gold. An example of this was what seemed to be a ceremony house, where people booked ceremonies. Which ceremonies were done was something I could not observe because it was all hidden by heavy purple curtains but I could every so often hear chanting and drums coming from that building (cf. fig. 7).



Fig. 7. The entrance to a ceremony house at the Naiku *jingu*. Photo CF.

As one can see on fig. 7, the colours present are white and gold. The only building that had purple was this building with its curtains. Close to this building were also many trees that either had a small fence with white tassels or bamboo protection around their trunks to protect the worn down trunks from visitors who touched these trees. There was also a power centre close to the ceremony house shown above in fig. 8, where people would also reach out to receive strength from the holy area. Informant B first taught me about power areas when she took me to Sumiyoshi Taisha, which was before my observations at Ise Naiku, and so I recognised this as such. The power centre and the protected trees are shown in fig. 8:



A:



B:

Fig. 8 A: A visitor at a power centre reaching out trying to gain some of the power from this area. Fig. 9 B: The trees and their protection from visitors. Photo CF.

The picture to the left on fig. 8 (A) shows a visitor at a power centre reaching out trying to gain some of the power from this area. There were no signs that explained this exact spot. The picture to the right on fig. 8 (B) shows the trees and their protection from visitors. Still visitors would reach over this protection or lift their kids over it to touch it and gain something from the tree or simply to touch it. During all three days of observations I saw numerous people touch the trees around this area and using the power centres and sometimes they stayed longer and prayed in front of them.

In order to get to the main *haiden* that most people visited one has to go up some stone steps and inside a fenced area. There was a guardhouse to the right of the entrance and a sign that showed that one was not allowed to film or take pictures inside the *haiden*. The guards were dressed in black suits and seemed more serious, more so than the guards at the Meiji *jingu*, and sternly corrected those who tried to take pictures or film inside the fenced area. Most people prayed in the *haiden* and threw their donations onto a white fabric instead of a *saisen*. This shrine did not have a *saisen* but many of the smaller shrines within the Ise Naiku did have the a *saisen* donation box. The time people spent praying varied a lot and there were always people in this area. Some even stood by the fence and prayed there instead or did both. This area had the most formal atmosphere, yet people seemed in high spirits, laughed and talked with each other. Not many did seem to care that I stood there for longer periods taking notes. The only ones who took notice of me were the guards, the Shinto priests and those who watered the gravel. This was because I stood in the way for a man watering the gravel and as

far as I could see, there were very few people who visited the shrine more than once, especially western tourists. However, despite this I did not feel uncomfortable at all but also tried to not attract attention by standing out of the way of others and taking notes without speaking to anyone. I did try to talk to the guards and the Shinto priests on my second day but they did not understand English so they could not answer and I knew too little Japanese to understand what they said. To the left on the inside of the fenced area there was a house with Shinto priests where I saw people sign up for services with these Shinto priests.

When inside this fence there was an area between the *haiden* and *honden* with a *torii* in between where people with appointments, being led by a Shinto priest, would pray. I saw many groups in those three days pray and show respect for the Kami in this area. There were big groups with many members, only couples and there were individuals who went in on their own. I saw people of all ages and everyone that entered this area was dressed in either formal or in traditional clothing. This included the kids. Those who were part of the ceremony would go into an area next to the Shinto priest house and put away purses and bags. They would line up and face the *honden*, the fence and the Shinto priest. The Shinto priest would bow towards the Kami *honden* and then take salt from a container that was on the fence and softly throw it towards the participants of the prayer. They would all bow towards the Shinto priest and follow him along the fence and into an entrance to the side. The Shinto priest would bow when he entered the area in between the houses, bow towards the *honden* and lead the group or individual towards the centre. The oldest man or the one leading the prayer would walk first and the women would follow last. The only time I saw a woman lead was when she did the prayer alone. The Shinto priest would bow to the leader of the group, the leader would bow back and then the Shinto priest would face the *honden* and bow towards the Kami and the group would follow. The Shinto priest is the first to rise and the rest follow. The leader then bows towards the Shinto priest and they all walk out the way they came, when standing by the wall of the Shinto priest house they again line up and bow to the Shinto priest and then leave the vicinity through the main exit of the area with their things. This ceremony seemed very intricate but took a very short amount of time, maybe five minutes with the biggest group. There was a continuous stream of people using this service until they closed the service around 16 o'clock.

When I was at the shrine I first dressed formally thinking that this shrine was more formal but quickly wore more informal clothes like many of the others. I felt very comfortable at the shrine with the trees, and the sounds of nature and the crunching of the gravel. I felt this at every shrine I visited. At this shrine however and the town Ise, more people noticed me and

some openly stared. This suggests that western tourists are not as common in this area as in other areas.

The shrines that I now have presented were the imperial shrines I did observations at. I also did observations at local shrines, known as *jinjas*.

6.3.2 Local Shrines: *Jinjas*

I did repetitive observations at the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* and visited *jinjas* with my informants B and M. These shrines were mostly smaller and more compact than the imperial ones. Still, they often did have one main shrine and some smaller, such as an Inari shrine or a mountain shrine. When I talked to the Japanese, informants and roommates, they often referred to the Inari shrines as either *kitsune* or *inari* shrines.¹⁷² The *jinja* had the same rituals such as presented in the sections about the Meiji and Hokkaidō *jingu* but only prayers; I did not observe any weddings or *shichigosan* ceremonies at any *jinja*. However, this does not mean that they weren't performed at *jinjas*, just that I did not observe any. Every *jinja* I visited had *emas* and there was always someone who had a manga styled drawing on their prayer or thanks. This further supports popular culture's presence at shrines and in Shinto. Furthermore, the element of nature was still as present as at the imperial shrines, even though the *jinjas* I observed were smaller. Another difference between the *jingu* and the *jinja* was that there were a lot fewer visitors at a *jinja* than at a *jingu* and there were very few tourists and mostly locals who used the *jinjas*. The first *jinja* I will present is the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja*; then I will present informant B's shrine and lastly informant M's.

The Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* is a small local *jinja* of the Sendagaya area, close to Shinjuku Station (south exit), in Tokyo. It consists of the main shrine that had a bell to call on the Kami, an Inari shrine and a Mt. Fuji shrine, from what I could see. There was also a small shrine on the sacred area along the right side of the main shrine house and a small house with *emas* alongside its walls. The *torii* at the entrance of the shrine was smaller than those at imperial shrines and of stone. The entrance to the shrine is shown on fig. 9.

¹⁷² Nogami (1994) 2016a.



Fig. 9. The *torii* at the entrance to the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja*. Photo CF.

This picture on fig. 9 was taken during the shrine *matsuri* and so there are more people and other objects than were usually there. The picture also shows that the shrine is significantly smaller than the imperial shrines. After the *torii* there are two *komainu*,¹⁷³ guardian statues, and one path that leads to the main shrine and then away from the shrine to the exit. When walking on this path one can go to the right at certain points and get to the Inari and Mt. Fuji shrines that are just a couple of steps away from the path. The *temizuya* was right next to the main shrine house alongside the pathway to the shrine and the stations to hang the *emas* or unlucky predictions along the path, leading do the exit. During my observations at the *jinja* many spent time there during their lunch hour, eating, talking, smoking, reading, sleeping and generally relaxing. I saw most people gathered at the shrine during lunch hour or when kids from the neighbouring kindergarten were at the shrine. I often observed many people hurry through to quickly pray to the Kami before going to work. I also saw a mother patiently teaching her daughter, who looked to be about three years old, how to wash and pray to the Kami. Whether people used the bell to the Kami or not varied. It was a much lighter and more informal atmosphere then what one experienced at the *jingus*. This is probably because a *jinja* is used by the local community and so is more informal than a *jingu* that is visited by tourists from many different areas. In some ways it seemed to be more a sanctuary for the locals where they could relax than a place to pray, even though most visitors went to pray. After praying some stayed longer to eat lunch or talk to their friends. Most used the main shrine to pray but I also saw many use the Mt. Fuji shrine. This included one old man who struggled his way up the natural stone steps to pray at the top. This was also the shrine where I experienced a shrine *matsuri*. The *matsuri* was the smallest one I attended but also the nicest.

¹⁷³ Nakayama (1994) 2016.

There were local tradesmen and some who had travelled as far as from Hokkaido to sell their handmade products. These products included Japanese pottery and ceramics, honey, sake, tea and local food. This shrine was possibly the one I visited the most, with many visits that were not part of my observations because I would sit there and read. During my stay I grew very fond of this shrine and thinking back the shrine felt like a second home during my travels and would be the first place I would go to whenever I returned to Tokyo. It was very clear during my time at that shrine that the local community also cared for the shrine and used it frequently. I did not do any other repetitive observations at other local *jinja*s but was shown some by my informants.

When I stayed with informant B she showed me one of the shrines she would visit when in Osaka which was the Sumiyoshi Taisha, the biggest *jinja* I visited in Japan. Originally she was going to show me the small *jinja* that she grew up with but both she and her mother felt that the small *jinja* would be too boring for me and so took me to the bigger one instead. When we reached the shrine it was big and very colourful compared to other shrines I had been to. Many constructions such as some *torii*s and bridges were painted in the traditional orange colour that Inari shrines are often painted in. Following the first *torii* to the area there were two *komainus*, or lion guardians, on the left and right side of the pathway that led to the bridge and the main shrine area. After entering the shrine there was a leaflet in English available that presented the *jinja*'s story and the Kami at the Sumiyoshi Taisha. According to the leaflet the shrine was built by empress Jingu and enshrines the three sea gods, also referred to as the Sumiyoshi-no-Okami and the empress Jingu herself. Even if the empress Jingu is enshrined at this shrine it is still referred to as a *jinja* by Nogami Takihori when he presents the Sumiyoshi Shinkō in the *Encyclopedia of Shinto (EOS)*.¹⁷⁴ According to the leaflet, the shrine is very old, build around 200–300 CE. My informant had mentioned that she had been to this shrine a couple of times, especially at the New Year's celebrations but could not tell me what Kami were enshrined at the *jinja* until we looked at the leaflet. The shrine was big, but was not surrounded by trees like the Meiji or Ise Naiku *jingu*; however, it had ponds and a small channel or stream. Because of this there was animal life such as ducks and turtles there, not only the usual carps that were present at the Ise Naiku *jingu*. Like at many of the other shrines, the ground was covered in light gravel. Because the area was so large there were many *temizuyas* and many shrines, in addition to the four main shrines. Informant B did not know what Kami the smaller shrines were for. The main *haidens* for the

¹⁷⁴ Nogami (1994) 2016b.

empress and the three sea Kami, were kept in the natural, with none of the orange colour that the bridges, fences and smaller structures were painted with. When she showed me around, informant B showed me a power centre connected to the shrine and how it worked compared to at other shrines. She presented it as a holy place to gain strength and power or learn that one needs to gain more. As mentioned earlier, informant B was the only one who explained and showed me a power centre. If there were any power centres at the other shrines that I observed, except for at the Ise Naiku *jingu*, then I did not see them because I did not know of them. We also saw a car parked in front of a smaller shrine and informant B told me that the car was about to be blessed. This can be seen in Fig. 10.



Fig 10. Photo CF.

At this *jinja* there were many red banners with writing on and I had seen that earlier at other shrines I had walked past during my time in Japan. I asked informant B what they were and she explained that the banners carried the names of different donors. There were names of individuals, families and companies. She mentioned that in order to get one's own banner one would have to donate a large amount of money. However she stressed that the state could not publically support shrines but politicians would often offer donations privately in their own name or through a company. This indicates that even though the government cannot publically support Shinto shrines, they are still supported by politicians. This further suggests that there is a connection between Shinto and politics.

This was something informant M presented as well. She pointed this out while she showed me around this *jinja*. Informant M brought me to the bigger *jinja* in her town but in order to keep her anonymity I will not name this *jinja*. She presented the shrine as a shrine for nature and told me that she did not really follow Shinto or go to shrines but she wanted to show me a local shrine. We entered through the one stone *torii* to the shrine that had a main shrine

haiden in an open space and smaller houses surrounding it. The *jinja* is surrounded by nature both with water and trees. The ground is mostly covered in gravel but there are paths that show the way to the different areas of the shrines. This was also the case at the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* that I presented earlier. When we entered the shrine there were only a couple of people there and mostly elder Japanese. There was a *matsuri* going on that informant M presented as a chrysanthemum *matsuri* as it is the Japanese national flower. She explained that people would bring their flowers to their local shrines and present their chrysanthemum flowers and that individuals, groups and companies did this.¹⁷⁵ Informant M also told me that every seventh year they would have a special big *matsuri* where they would chop down and transport a new holy tree to the shrine that would represent the nature Kami worshiped at the shrine. When we were there I asked informant M if she knew what the sacred rope and tassels were called but she did not know. She asked a group of elders and none of them knew what they were called and told her that they had never thought of it. Some of the elders started explaining what the rope and tassels did and that they presented what was sacred. In the end she found a Shinto priest that said the rope was called *shimenawa*¹⁷⁶ and the tassels were called *gohei*.¹⁷⁷ This indicated that the knowledge of the worshippers does not extend to knowing the names of the sacred items but that they understand their function. When we were walking around the informant took us towards the charm and service shop where she translated the prices of the different items and said that the *emas* and other ceremony services could cost a lot of money and that the more one paid the more luck one would get. She further stressed that she did not like this system and that ceremonies such as the *shichigosan* cost a lot of money and was a way to get loyalties from the community and so control people. I asked her if she perceived the lack of ceremonies as something that would bring bad things because I had been told by others that nothing bad could happen, only good. Informant M looked at me and nodded and said that nothing bad happens if you do not participate in ceremonies and pray but nothing good happens either. This was something that I had not considered. With prayer and ceremonies the Kami would grant one's wishes and bring luck but if one did not do this, then it would not happen. This suggests that even though nothing bad or any punishment happened to one if one did not participate, nothing good would happen either. This indicates that the shrines and Shinto could encourage people to participate with the promise of good things if they did and the lack of good things and luck if they didn't.

¹⁷⁵ I later observed the Meiji shrine getting ready for the chrysanthemum *matsuri* after my time with informant M during my last planned observation at that shrine.

¹⁷⁶ Motosawa (1994) 2016b.

¹⁷⁷ Motosawa (1994) 2016a.

None of the other informants presented Shinto in this fashion, whereas informant M mentioned this both during our visit to her shrine and during the interview. When we were leaving, informant M pointed out one last thing, the banners and plaques along the side of the pathway near the entrance and exit of the *jinja*. She explained that not only were the names present but that some also mentioned the amounts people had paid and she stressed that one had to pay a lot in order to get a banner or plaque. She added that donors' names could also be presented on lanterns. She did not read any of the names but pointed out that some of those banners and plaques had the names of politicians that she knew and she saw these donations as private donations from the government because it could not give money officially.

6.4 Shinto in Politics

When walking through the shrines politics did not seem connected to Shinto but through informant M I was shown a connection between the two. Furthermore, the apparent lack of connection between these integral parts of Japanese society is very interesting. Such a separation makes one wonder if that truly is the case and as indicated by informant M it is not really so. I will now present my observations regarding the relations between Shinto and politics as told and presented by informants.

The only informants who presented a clear and detailed connections between Shinto and politics were informants T and M. Informant T presented it as a tool that could be used for both good and bad, whereas informant M saw the Shinto influence in politics as a very negative development. Before my interview with informant M, she showed me a Japanese article, from a communist newspaper that she herself dated to the 12th of October 2015, on Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet at the time and their relations to Shinto conservative groups and the Yasukuni shrine. She explained that out of the 20 members of Abe's cabinet, 19 belonged or were supported by Shinto organizations or groups or positive to visiting the Yasukuni shrine, whereas the last member belonged to a conservative Buddhist group. This was how she first introduced me to her understanding of Shinto and her ambiguous and negative relationship with Shinto and the current government. She spoke very passionately about this article that, according to her, revealed this aspect of Japanese politics and brought up other cases, separate from the article, and civil laws that were controlled powerful individuals within the network and the groups. At this time informant M spoke so quickly I could not quite keep up with the examples she presented. She also mentioned that the media had picked up on the lack of female candidates and members of Abe's cabinet at that time. She stressed during her presentation of this article that the Shinto faction had and still has a

lot of power on Japanese politics and so on the Japanese government. I have later had this news article translated when I came back to Norway and the first thing that was revealed was very interesting.

The translator stated that the language used in newspaper is a very proper and heavy language that many Japanese struggle with, which makes reading newspapers in Japanese difficult. She mentioned that this was what she had been told during her time in Japan and that therefore many Japanese she knew did not read newspapers. When she stated this I recalled that during my observations, I saw few people read newspapers during my stay in Japan. I only observed adult, middle aged or older, men and women read Japanese newspapers, and remembered that I did react to the lack of younger readers of newspapers. At the time I thought this might be because most read the news on their phones, for I did see younger people read twitter feeds from the police and such. Yet, the translator's remarks suggest that a factor in the public's political apathy can – especially for the young – be the language of the Japanese newspapers.

According to the translation, the article mentions the cabinet members by name and as comrades with connections to each other and some in the spirit of camaraderie to visit the Yasukuni shrine. The table in the article presents who supports the different cabinet members and what groups they are part of and so emphasizes this camaraderie. The table shows that every member, except for the Buddhist, belongs to at least one of the three following groups: *Nippon Kaigi*, *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai giin Kandankai*, and something that was translated along the lines of 'support that, as a political group, one should visit Yasukuni'.

The *Nippon Kaigi* is a non-political conservative nationalist lobby group that is presented also in *The Economist*. *The Economist* published an article in June 2015 that stated that the *Nippon Kaigi*, despite being only 18 years old, is one of the most powerful lobby-groups in Japan and that it stand for nationalistic and revisionist goals such as applauding Japan's wartime 'liberation', rebuilding the armed forces, refocusing the education regarding Japan's history and bringing back the emperor's former glory as a worshipped Kami. The article further mentions that over half of Abe's 19 cabinet members are members of the *Nippon Kaigi* parliamentary league and that Abe himself is the group's 'special advisor'.¹⁷⁸ Informant M's article showed that 12 of the 20 cabinet members belong to this group. When informant M talked about this lobby group she became visibly affected and she stressed their influence on the current government and that it worked behind the curtains of Japanese politics.

¹⁷⁸ [Anonymous] (2015) 2016.

The second group presented in the article was the group *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai Giin Kandankai*. McNeill presented this group in his article but referred to the group as *Shinto seiji Renmei*. According to David McNeill, Abe visited the Ise Grand Shrines in October 2013. He stated that Abe, along with many other top elected officials were members of the organization The Association of Shinto Shrines' political wing known as *Shinto Seiji Renmei*. McNeill presented the objectives of this group as renewing the 'Japanese spiritual values and that this group has been established since 1969 and been influencing politics since then.'¹⁷⁹ He also mentioned that Abe's presence at the Ise shrine during such an important ceremony shows that there was a change happening; Shinto's influence is growing in politics, but is mostly unknown to the public.¹⁸⁰ Informant M, both during and outside the interview, also mentioned this group and she stressed her concern of this group's growing influence. Informant M's article presents the group as an explicit Shinto lobby group that is part of the *jinja honcho*, or The Association of Shinto Shrines. The article presents the group in a similar way as McNeill does in his article. Out of the 19 cabinet members connected to Shinto, 17 are members of the *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai Giin Kandankai*. This is a surprisingly high number. The connections between these two groups and the cabinet member suggest that Shinto is very influential in the current Japanese government and that it stands for nationalistic and conservative goals.

The last group presented in the article is named by a sentence and not an actual name. The informant translated this as 'lets go to Yasukuni', whereas the translator formulated it as something like 'support that, as a political group, one should visit Yasukuni.' The newspaper article shows that 13 of the 19 cabinet members connected to Shinto belong to this group. Lastly, informant M stressed that the Japanese people did not know of these groups and that there was a political apathy present in Japan, especially among the young. During her presentation and explanation of this article, informant M was visibly affected and seemed angry. According to this newspaper article, there are clear connections between Shinto and Japanese politics and informant M's reaction to this shows that not everyone does accept it.

6.5 Relations Summary

As shown in this chapter, the observations I made exemplify different aspects of Japanese society. There are also relations and connections between the different aspects. The

¹⁷⁹McNeill (2013) 2016.

¹⁸⁰ McNeill (2013) 2016.

observations made regarding interpersonal behaviour present *joshiki* as an integral part of everyday life through the routine and rules that help individuals to get through their day as fluent and undisturbed as possible. By abiding to the rules of society and *joshiki* one helps each other and gives each other space when it is possible. Shinto was present through the routines and rules, such as the *itadakimas / goshisosama*. This suggests that Shinto is an integrated part of being Japanese. I noticed during my stay how Shinto as interpersonal behaviour was present in everyday life but without being seen. The behaviour and the answers I got when I inquired, indicate that it was such natural part of everyday life that they were not noticed.

The observations presented of popular culture also show that popular culture such as manga is present in Japanese society in many ways through districts, commercials and themed cafés, such as manga cafés. Like Shinto as interpersonal behaviour it was present but not often really seen outside the heavily influenced areas such as Harajuku, even though it was present at many other places and in every city I visited. Additionally, the observations present a relation between popular culture and Shinto in Japan today through the *emas*. The *emas* could be found at every shrine and I did study them at every shrine I did observations at, except for [or: at] Ise. The *emas* came in different shapes, some were traditional but there were also those that were formed as popular culture characters, such as the ones I saw at the Hokkaidō shrine. Furthermore, those who made the *emas*, especially the Japanese, sometimes drew manga-styled drawings on the *emas*. Prayers done at shrines, *emas* or purchase of charms were all presented as very serious by informant A and considering this, the drawings would not diminish these prayers but become part of them.

My observations at the imperial and local shrines showed that these shrines were often used by locals and were maintained by their communities. Both forms of shrines had an informal atmosphere where it was easy to feel welcome and relaxed, even though certain parts of imperial shrines did have a more formal atmosphere. Furthermore people seemed to relax more at the local shrine and treated it not only as a shrine but a place to relax, spend time with friends, eat lunch and it was more like a sanctuary for the local community. There were differences between the shrines such as the size, location worship, formality and visitors but they all displayed a belonging to the Japanese society. The Japanese use these shrines to relax or pray or gain more luck and strength during their everyday life and so they have a very practical role in the everyday life of the Japanese community, even though there are those who do not feel any connection to Shinto such as informant M. The signs at the Meiji *jingu* showed that the state did not financially support shrines and indicates lack political presence.

Informant B and signs at the Meiji shrine stressed that Shinto shrines were not supported by the government or politicians, whereas informant M stressed that the government or parties did not financially support shrines publically. Informant M pointed out names of individuals and companies on the donor wall plaques and banners that were politicians or run by politicians. Thanks to the explanations of informants B and M of the donor plaques and banners this was shown, to a certain extent, to be false. Furthermore, Informant M's information presents another connection between Shinto and politics through the news article and the politicians connections with Shinto organizations and groups. The actions and memberships of Abe and his cabinet shows an even clearer connection between the two aspects.

The observations on the aspect politics showed that Shinto was present in politics in Japan today. The articles, such as the article in *The Economist*, McNeill's article in the *Japan Times* and the newspaper article informant M gave me, exemplify organisations and donor groups such as *Nippon Kaigi*, *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai giin Kandankai* and groups that want to visit Yasukuni as a political group or party. These presentations and observations suggest that Shinto has through politicians like Abe influence over Japanese politics. It is further indicated that nationalistic and revisionist politicians use the traditional values found in Shinto that they share to gain support, influence, power and loyalties within politics. As mentioned by political informant T, Shinto is present in Japanese politics as a tool.

7 Analysis of *Noragami: Stray God*

The manga *Noragami: Stray God* is created by Adachitoka and is placed in a modern Japan with references to events and figures today. It tells the story of Yato, the homeless Kami with no shrine, who tries to gain followers and grant wishes in order to build his own shrine. On one of his jobs he meets the high school student Hiyori whom Yato shows the world of the Kami. One also meets other characters and Kami such as Bishamonten, the warrior Kami, and Yukiné, the Shinki, Yato's protector and weapon. The reader is also shown how the world of Shinto and the Kami is present in Japan today and how Japanese people relate to them.¹⁸¹ The manga established early on the linear form of the universe it is placed in by explaining the different planes as a line. Adachitoka explains the world consisting of different parts, the 'near shore' where the living reside, the 'far shore' which is the opposite where death, spirits and *ayakashi*, or bad spirits, reside. In the middle reside those who are part of both these worlds, such as the Kami, Shinki, and those more connected to the spiritual world, like Hiyori.¹⁸² This is established quickly in the first manga.

This manga was first published in Japan in 2011 and the anime series was launched in 2014 in Japan. The English translation of the manga came first in 2014 and since then 14 volumes of this series has been translated to English. I have analysed the three first volumes in this manga series, focusing on the presence of Shinto in interpersonal behaviour, popular culture, ritual activities and politics. I would like to stress that I have used the English translated and I am well aware of the fact that the English translator can have misinterpreted certain Japanese words. However, the manga does include translation notes that I will refer to in my analysis as well.

This chapter will first present and discuss the material presented in this manga divided in these four main aspects and then I will make a short summary and emphasis on the material that stands out. Lastly in this chapter, I will analyse the main findings and the material emphasized First I will present and discuss the Shinto aspect of interpersonal behaviour that I found in the first three volumes of *Noragami: Stray God*.

7.1 Shinto as Interpersonal Behaviour

¹⁸¹ See Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

¹⁸² Adachitoka 2014a.

The first aspect of interpersonal behaviour present in the manga is *joshiki*. *Joshiki* is considered by many of the informants as Japanese common sense and is presented as such in the manga as well. This is especially emphasized early on when Yato hears the prayer of the girl Mutsumi and when she asks him to slay the *ayakashi* on the school premise. He holds his hand out for the traditional offering of five yen and becomes angry when Mutsumi does not understand what he is after, as one can see in the picture to the right.¹⁸³ Adachitoka



Yato to the left, Mutsumi to the right.

explains the meaning behind the five-yen offering in the manga in the translation notes. Adachitoka notes: that it may not be much, as shown by Mutsumi's reaction, but there is a symbolic meaning. In Japanese five yen is *goen*. Like many Japanese words, this word has other meanings and so also can also mean 'good ties' or 'good relationships'. Adachitoka emphasizes that through this meaning the *goen* becomes a prayer: 'may I be blessed with good ties'.¹⁸⁴ This practice and symbolism of the five-yen coin thus indicates that Shinto traditions are considered part of the Japanese common sense or *joshiki*. *Joshiki* is also present through Hiyori's upholding of the rules of society. This is shown when Hiyori catches the boys Yato, Yukine and the boy Manabu Hagiwara-kun, who called for Yato's help, in the girl's bathroom and punishes them accordingly, despite the boys' cries that they were innocent and meant nothing bad. The situation with Hagiwara-kun bullying and Yato's handling of this also shows that if one wants to remain part of society one needs to abide the rules and does that by remaining strong and doing good.¹⁸⁵ The consequences of not following the rules or *joshiki* is shown when Yukiné breaks these rules by stealing and misbehaving, Yato is hurt through their bond as master and servant. Through this, it is emphasized that bad actions do not only affect oneself but also those around. During the ablution ceremony where Hiyori and the others try to save Yato and Yukine by purifying them, Yukine mentions the crimes and bad behaviour he committed that went against *joshiki*. These crimes were stealing, attempting to grope Hiyori, breaking

¹⁸³ Adachitoka 2014a.

¹⁸⁴ Adachitoka 2014a.

¹⁸⁵ Adachitoka 2015.

windows, shop-lifting and the ripping of an old man.¹⁸⁶ Another aspect of *joshiki* or Japanese tradition that is presented by Adachitoka is through other characters such as Hiyori's mother who is presented and referred to by Hiyori as old-fashioned. This is shown when Hiyori worries that her wrestling mania and her display of this in public would make her mother react. Hiyori keeps her fascination of wrestling from her mother because she is so concerned



about her mother's reaction. This is expressed in the picture to the left. This shows that as they are presented by Adachitoka, one should not disgrace oneself or misbehave for this would bring shame to oneself and the family. On the other hand, this presentation of Hiyori and her mother also suggests that there is a difference in society between the generations. The priorities of the younger generation, like Hiyori who likes martial arts, and the older generation presented by Hiyori's mother who wants her to find a suitable husband do not necessarily correspond.¹⁸⁷

Hiyori to left, her mother to the right.

Another Shinto aspect as interpersonal behaviour is the showing of respect. This is presented through the relationship between Yato and Kazuma who is a Shinki, the guide of Bishamonten. Bishamonten wants revenge for her Shinki that was killed

by Yato, yet because Kazuma owes Yato a debt, that is not presented in the first three manga, he is seen bowing to Yato after Yato has fought Bishamonten and when Kazuma helps with the ablution ceremony in order to save Yato and Yukine. This is shown in the picture to the right.¹⁸⁸ Though his master wants Yato dead, the debt Kazuma owes Yato is greater and needs to be respected and paid. This example emphasizes that loyalties and debts can be taken very seriously in Japanese society. The show of respect through bowing is presented many times



Kazuma, Bishamonten's Shinki.

¹⁸⁶ Adachitoka 2015.

¹⁸⁷ Adachitoka 2014a.

¹⁸⁸ Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b.

throughout these three manga volumes. Another example of this is when Yato and Yukine bow deep to Hyori, Kazuma and the others who saved their life with the ablution ceremony. Yato visibly pushes Yukine's head lower, for the lower one bows the more one respects the person the bow is directed to. This suggests that the depth of one's bow then shows how grateful they are. This exemplifies that the body language and visibly paying respect is important in Japanese society.

Adachitoka also presents typical aspects of Shinto, as the relaxed atmosphere around clothes at shrines, the food culture at the *matsuri*, or festival, and the celebration of the New Year's celebrations where one would pray for better exams. This is shown when Hiyori, who is dressed in *kimono* goes to the shrine of Tenjin, the Kami of education, with her friends, who is dressed in normal clothes, on New Year's Eve to pray for passing her exams and then has fun with her friends exploring the food stands, such as the traditional Japanese snack *takoyaki*.¹⁸⁹ Shinto as interpersonal behaviour that is perhaps presented the most is the co-existence of Kami and humans in Japan. My informants also said that the Kami were a natural part of their everyday life and present in many ways, though they never really thought of them. This is presented continuously in the manga,¹⁹⁰ such as when Yato teaches Hiyori about the Kami. Yato explains that the Kami and Shinki, like him and Yukine, are between the near and far shore and so are hard to notice, even if they are not invisible. He further presents this aspect by asking Hiyori how many waiters there are in the café and when she gives the wrong answer, he explains that he and Yukine blend into the background like the waitress she did not notice, and then says: 'you can see them, but they don't catch your attention.'¹⁹¹

7.2 Popular Culture

The popular aspect is present in the manga *Noragami: Stray God*, but much less than one would expect.

The most obvious example of popular culture is the drawing style. There are many styles of manga drawing, from stick like figures to detailed smooth lines. Another factor that is presented through the drawing styles is the clothes and the different dressing styles.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Adachitoka 2015.

¹⁹⁰ Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

¹⁹¹ Adachitoka 2014b.

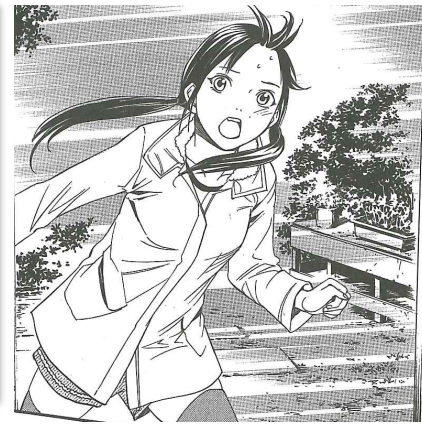
¹⁹² Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.



Top: Yato. Bottom: Yato & Hiyori



Bishamonten on her Shinki.



Hiyori.

8.3 Shinto as ritual activities

The manga follows the story of Yato, the Kami, and his interactions with both humans and the Kami world. Because of this, there are continuous presentations of Shinto throughout the manga. Examples of this are the 5 yen offering to the Kami one prays to, that I mentioned above and the many different Kami presented in the manga.

The protagonist Yato is an unknown Kami but the more one follows his adventures with Hiyori and Yukine one is introduced to well-known Kami such as Bishamonten the Warrior Kami, Ebisu, a Kami of fortune, and Tenjin, the Kami of learning.¹⁹³ The Kami Tenjin is shown in the picture to the left. The picture also presents the use of *emas*, which are explained further in the translation notes. Adachitoka presents the meaning of the word, ‘pictured horse’, and how one uses an *ema*: one writes

one’s wish or prayer on it and then offers the *ema* to the shrine. Adachitoka further states that the reason for the bull on these *emas* is because the bull is a symbol of Tenjin. Adachitoka presents popular Kami as having often many shrines and receiving more prayers and wishes than other Kami, such as Yato. This is exemplified when

Tenjin hires Yato do help him deal with an *ayakashi* that preys on students during exam period, also shown in the picture above.¹⁹⁴



Tenjin.

¹⁹³ Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015

¹⁹⁴ Adachitoka 2014b.

With the presentation of popular Kami, such as Tenjin, Adachitoka also presents the structure and different elements found in a shrine, such as the traditional attire for *mikos*. This is presented when Hiyori in her meeting with Tenjin at his shrine mistakes his *shinki* for *mikos* because they are dressed in the *mikos*' traditional attire¹⁹⁵ This interaction between Hiyori and Tenjin also exemplifies how one pays one's respect to a Kami, which one normally does when at a shrine. As shown in the picture to the right, when meeting Tenjin, Hiyori reacts by praying, which is illustrated by her clapping in the picture.



From left: Yato, Yukine, Tenjin, Hiyori

As shown, shrines are presented as places people go to for help from the Kami. It is also presented as a sanctuary, not only for humans but also for the Kami. This is illustrated when Yato seeks shelter at other Kami's shrines in the evening. He does this because of the increasing presence of *ayakashi* at night and his lack of *shinki*, a Kami's protector and weapon, before he finds Yukine.¹⁹⁶ The shrine acts as a sanctuary and protects Yato from the *ayakashi* during these periods or it functions as a place where he can clean blights at *temizuya*. Through *temizuya* Adachitoka also presents the ritual and practical use of cleansing. This is shown when Yato uses the water from a *temizuya*, or cleansing station, to remove the blight he received during a fight with the *ayakashi*.¹⁹⁷ This also suggests that the *ayakashi*, as bad spirits or energy from the far shore, stains humans or Kami, through touch or negative energy, but the shrines and *temizuya* helps purify and remove stains of bad energy. This can also exemplify the practical use of the *temizuya*, a place to purify oneself of bad energy or stains before entering a shrine and praying to a Kami.

Throughout the manga, Adachitoka also presents the Kami's function in the human society, to grant wishes. This is shown when Yato grants a little boy's wish to find his cat after hearing the boy's prayer and getting the monetary offering of five-yen and when he slays an *ayakashi* at the high school student Mutsumi's prayer and offering.¹⁹⁸ There are numerous examples of this in every volume. Through this, Adachitoka presents the Kami's role in Japanese society as granting wishes and listening to prayers communicated by humans through rituals, *emas*, ceremonies and charms.

¹⁹⁵ Adachitoka 2014b.

¹⁹⁶ Adachitoka 2014a.

¹⁹⁷ Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

¹⁹⁸ Adachitoka 2014a.

Another form of prayer or protection that is presented in the manga is charms. Adachitoka presents this through the charm the high school student Mutsumi made to help her pass her exams. These charms are presented as objects that bring good luck, or something that keeps bad luck away. This

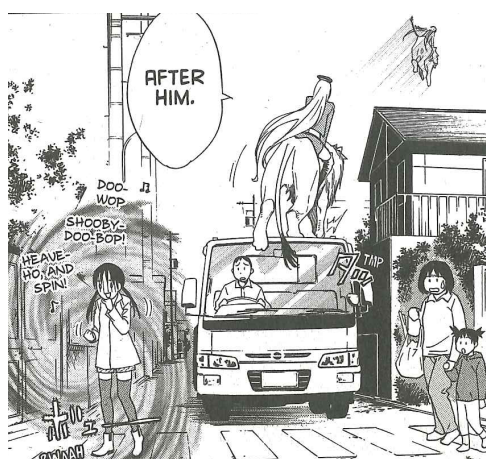


is shown in the manga Mutsumi and the charm's spirit, Yato, *ayakashi* in the middle panel to the left through the spirit of Mutsumi's charm's that keeps the *ayakashi* and their bad luck away from her. As shown in the picture to the left, the little creature, or spirit, from the charmed ring protects Mutsumi and also cheers her on, telling her she can do it.¹⁹⁹ This suggests, as the prayers to Tenjin, that students use the Kami and charms to get luck and help to pass their exams.

Another aspect Adachitoka illustrates clearly in *Noragami: Stray God* is a perspective of the relationship of Kami and humans and how they are connected. This is expressed when Yato explains to Hiyori that through the human nature of doing good and bad, humans help the Kami differentiate right from wrong. This also explains why only human spirits can become a Kami's *shinki*, who acts as the Kami's guides and weapons.²⁰⁰ Another aspect and relation between

humans and Kami is presented through how the Kami world and actions do not affect the human world. This is shown when Kami fight *ayakashi* or each other, but the humans and buildings around them remain undisturbed.²⁰¹ An example of this is when Bishamonten attacks Yato, while riding a lion *shinki* in the middle of a street in Japan and no one,

From left: Hiyori, Bishamonten, Yato



¹⁹⁹ Adachitoka 2014a.

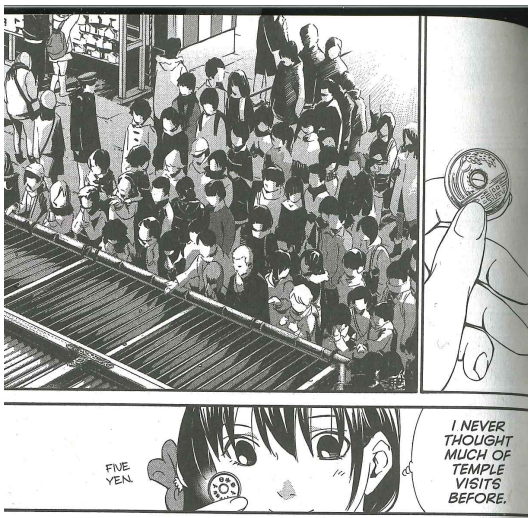
²⁰⁰ Adachitoka 2014b.

²⁰¹ Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

except for Hiyori, reacts to them. This is illustrated in the picture to the left. As one can see, the other humans do not notice the Kami riding on a lion but instead react to Hiyori's strange behaviour when she tries to act like she cannot see the Kami Bishamonten because of Hiyori's ties to Yato.

An aspect of Shinto that Adachitoka presents clearly is the various attitudes of the Japanese towards Shinto and the Kami. This is shown when Hiyori meets her friends at New Year's to pray for luck in their exams and their high school debuts. Hiyori meets up at a shrine on the New Year's celebrations in her Kimono, whereas her friends showed up in everyday clothes.²⁰² There is also a presentation of the presence of Shinto in their everyday life as Hiyori's friends' motivation to pray at the shrines. Even though they dressed informally her friends are still excited to pray, where one even excitingly stated that she intended to give extra money, 1005 yen, to the Kami. She would pray for her tests and her high school debut but also because she wanted to start attracting boys.²⁰³ This emphasizes the use of Shinto and the Kami by Japanese people to help them with their everyday life.

Adachitoka also presents a reflection regarding how Shinto and the Kami are present in



everyday life but not noticed or thought of. This is shown continuously through Hiyori and her development in the manga from before she met Yato to when she gets involved in the Kami community through Yato. Hiyori visibly reflects over this when she prays at Tenjin's shrine at New Year's Eve, as shown in the picture to the left.²⁰⁴ Adachitoka presents how, through her interactions with Yato, Hiyori has begun to notice and view not only the Kami but also Shinto traditions differently. Furthermore, this

suggests that Hiyori did not really think of Shinto and the kami or considered them before her meeting with Yato. This was the same response I met when I interviewed my informants.

I would also like to point out the translation on this page. Previously, *jinja* and *jingu* have been translated 'shrine' but on this page, 'temple'. Normally, temple is used for the Buddhist tradition, not for Shinto, and in the background one can see *emas*, which strongly suggests that Hiyori is praying at a shrine. This is further supported by Tenjin's presence later on the

²⁰² Adachitoka 2015.

²⁰³ Adachitoka 2015.

²⁰⁴ Adachitoka 2015.

torii of the building Hiyori is praying at. Because this is a translation from Japanese to English, this could be a mistake by the translator and it does demonstrate how misinterpretations can happen during the translation of a manga. However this could also indicate that the difference between temples and shrines are not as important as many Japanese visit shrines during the New Year's celebration, while others visit temples.

Still, the illustration of Hiyori's reflection does exemplify something that was presented both during the interviews and my observations. Therefore, it can be indicated that through *Noragami: Stray God* Adachitoka presents the Japanese culture and society as it is today, including the attitudes to Shinto.

The presence of Kami is also presented through Bishamonten, as for example, when she explains to her younger Shinki why she has to go and defeat the *ayakashi* that stirred because of her fight with Yato. She tells them that she has to slay the *ayakashi* who fester and prey on bad thoughts and bad behaviour of humans, and so help the humans. Bishamonten says that she would not be a Kami if she could not co-exist with the humans.²⁰⁵ This indicates that the reason for the Kami's ability to exist in between the near and far shore is because of their ability to co-exist with the human world. Helping humans and granting wishes are the Kami's ways of co-existing alongside humans. It also presents the Kami as a part of the Japanese's everyday life and society, even if the humans do not think of or notice them.

7. 4 Politics

Though the other main aspects are represented in the manga, there are no mention of Japanese politics. There are illustrations of the Kami hierarchy through Yato's relations to the more popular Kami but there is no mention of Amateratsu or the emperor as a Kami. There are small references to the politics between the Kami in the Kami world but nothing that can relate to politics in Japan today.

The lack of presentation of politics in the manga is something I find very interesting. During my interviews and observations politics was presented as something that was not relevant in their lives of interviewees and other people I met until very recently, except for the demonstrations and informant T and M who are politicians.

²⁰⁵ Adachitoka 2015.

7. 5 Relations

Adachitoka presents many aspects of Japanese culture and interpersonal behaviour. *Joshiki* is presented through the need to follow the rules, consequences of the rules and the importance of showing respect and respecting one's debts. There is also a presentation of traditional and old-fashioned values exemplified with Hiyori's mother and how they conflict with Hiyori's life and interests.

The aspect that is continuously presented throughout the manga and also was stressed by my informants is that the Kami co-exist alongside the humans and so are present in society but not seen or noticed. Adachitoka presents this as the reason why the Kami help humans with everyday problems, presented through *ayakashi*, and grant wishes. This defines the Kami's role in Japanese society and, as Adachitoka presents them, in-between the worlds and so are such a natural part of everyday life that they are not seen. This presentation supports the Kami and Shinto as a natural part of Japanese.

As presented, there are some aspects of popular culture and manga present in *Noragami: Stray God*. This is shown through Hiyori's passion for wrestling and her inner struggle to not show this in public. Another, but different presentation is the manga itself and its popularity.

Because of the focus of the manga, Shinto is presented in many different ways. It is shown through the setting of shrines, characters such as the Kami Bishamonten and Tenjin. Furthermore, Shinto and the Kami's role in Japanese society today are presented through Yato and the other Kami who grant wishes and listen to the prayers of humans. This is illustrated through wishes made by the little boy who needs help to find his cat, high school students' wishes to pass their exams and to stop bullying. This presents Shinto as part of everyday life and how especially the young practically and often use Shinto. Additionally, Adachitoka presents the relations between the Kami and humans and how they help each other. Humans help the Kami differentiate between what is good and bad, whereas the Kami protect and grant wishes to the humans. I find this a very interesting presentation, as it has already been established that the Kami and humans are regarded as co-existing but also that Shinto and the Kami are present but not noticed by humans. As it is indicated in the manga, the Kami and Shinto are often used in the lives of the Japanese, still the humans do not consider or see them. This is further illustrated by Hiyori's development in the series. She demonstrates through her growing knowledge of the Kami and Shinto how little she considered them before. This reflects the attitude of my informants as well as the results of my observations.

8. Analysis in Relation to the Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter will look at how Miyazaki and Hellman's theories can deepen the analysis of the interviews, observations and manga material that I have presented. Miyazaki presented three theories that look at the popularity of manga and how manga relate to Japanese society. Hellman's socio-political definition of religion looks at how religion can be regarded as a collection of narratives told through verbal, written and physical actions such as religious rituals but also every day actions. She presents transcendence as the hub and regards the axis transcendent-immanent as the specific characteristic of these narratives.

8.1 Hayao Miyazaki's Theoretical Perspective

Miyazaki presented as mentioned three theoretical perspectives in order to explain the popularity of manga to foreigners. The first one establishes that the linear structure of manga is similar to the Japanese way of thinking. The second focuses on the historical aspect of manga and the structure of manga. He emphasized that the structure of manga, as narrative pictures, follows Japanese history all the way back to the original scrolls from the Kamakura and Heian era. The third idea he submitted in 1994 was that manga was a way to relieve stress in a time of economic growth in Japan and that it will spread to the neighbouring countries.²⁰⁶

I will look at these theories separately to see to what extent these 22 years old theories remain applicable today.

8.1.1 Lines and Linear Structure of Manga

When Miyazaki in 1994 presented the idea that there are similarities between manga and the Japanese way of thinking he stated the following:

Perhaps because of the way our brains are structured, Japanese people like to recognize and perceive things in outline form—as lines. There are, in contrast, other peoples in the world who like to perceive things in terms of volumes or solid shapes.²⁰⁷

There are many aspects of this that can be questioned and discussed. Firstly I will focus on his first statement, that the Japanese like manga because of the structure, the lines, and because of their way of thinking and perceiving. When I asked my informants if they liked manga they reacted very differently.

²⁰⁶ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

²⁰⁷ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

Informant A said that both she and her mother liked manga and read it often and that currently this was her favourite form of Japanese popular culture. Informant W also liked manga but had only recently started to read manga and had earlier preferred to watch anime. This is a distinction, but the linear structure of anime and manga are the same and so shows that she may like this form of structure.

The other informants on the other hand were not positive to manga. Informant B presented herself as not *otaku* and so did not read manga or watch anime. Informant T expressed disappointment and said that she did not consider manga or anime Japanese culture at all. Informant M also expressed her displeasure of manga and anime in general but did say that she like Miyazaki's works She did however bring up *Choju Giga*²⁰⁸ from the 12th or 13th century that she said was considered to be the first manga. She also brought up that Japan has a long history of manga and storytelling in that form. She expressed her interest in this older form of manga and that she appreciates classical art, like informant T.

These responses from the informants show that some liked the modern form of manga and anime, whereas others did not like the current manga but instead preferred old manga or classical art. Though not all showed an interest in manga, those who did not mentioned other products that use similar linear structure, that are often depicted in black and white.

I also tried to observe if the Japanese read manga in public but this was more difficult. I did see many who read in the parks, cafés or on the trains but almost everyone either read on their phone or used a fabric cover on their books. When they used their phones I was often able to see what they were reading and many did read manga. It was more difficult to see what people were reading because of the covers. Even if I cannot confidently answer if manga is read publically or not, because of these covers, manga and anime in commercials on posters do support that the Japanese do like this form of narratives in linear structure mentioned by Miyazaki. Because of these observations, it can be concluded that the Japanese way of thinking, or at least seems positive to, this linear structure.

I have also analysed the manga *Noragami: Stray God*.²⁰⁹ This manga is normal in structure, use black-and-white drawing and is like most manga are today. The structure of the universe is very linear as it all falls on the same plane, in a line from the far shore, to the middle and the near shore.²¹⁰ Furthermore one can follow the lines of actions and

²⁰⁸ *Choju Giga* is a famous set of four picture scrolls from around the 12th or 13th century and is considered one of the earliest linear drawing styles read right to left, and was continually used in Japan. These scrolls illustrate animals such as frogs and hares and humans such as sumo wrestlers.

²⁰⁹ See Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

²¹⁰ Adachitoka 2014a.

consequences. The characters that call Yato for help are heard, they make a wish after paying him the symbolic and traditional donation of five yen and then he grants the wish.²¹¹ This again follows a linear way of thinking that can reflect the linear structure and the Japanese way of thinking that Miyazaki presented.

All the informants said that one needed to behave and follow the rules of society, even if one did not necessarily agree. They also seemed to consider the practical and logical aspect of Japanese society and that things were either or. This does reflect a way of thinking that can be said to follow a linear process along the lines of the black-and-white structure Miyazaki presents and so can verify his theory.

8.1.2 Historical Aspects of Manga

Miyazaki stated that another factor that can contribute to manga's popularity is how long manga, or picture scrolls, have been part of Japanese history. He established this when mentioning scrolls from the Heian era, from the 8th to the 12th century, and from the Kamakura era, from the 12th to the 14th century. He emphasized that from the start manga or picture scrolls have been used to communicate many different aspects of society. He said that

Japanese people have a long tradition of believing they can represent all worldly phenomena with a combination of drawing and words. Politics, economics, religion, art, war, eroticism—there is nothing that narrative picture scrolls did not attempt to depict. We have inherited this tradition and continue it today.²¹²

This indicates that the old narrative picture scrolls and today's manga are tools or forums to express different aspects of Japanese society and opinion. I did not actively ask what the informants knew about manga's historical tradition so there were few informants who expressed knowledge of the history of manga. The only one to mention the history of manga during the interview was Informant M. She brought it up in the conversation and mentioned the *Choju Giga*. As mentioned earlier, she did not like or have any interest in current manga but talked enthusiastically about this work.

During my observations I did not notice much about the historical span and traditional standing of manga in Japan until after my interview with Informant M. After this I started looking more for the older form of manga from *Nausicaä* to *Choju Giga*. I did observe these scrolls mostly at tourist shops or what seemed to me coincidental places. There were cloths,

²¹¹ Adachitoka 2014a; 2014b; 2015.

²¹² Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

bamboo bookmarks, purses and chopsticks that were covered in the pattern and pictures of the *Choju Giga*.

These observations do not necessarily support one another, because I did not look for them for them until I was halfway through my fieldwork and I did not really notice them before I was made aware of them.

It is clear that I therefore have little empirical material about the historical aspect and longstanding tradition of manga. However, it should be mentioned that as picture scrolls in the past were used to communicate all worldly phenomena, according to Miyazaki, that is the case still today.

8.1.3 Manga During Economic Growth and Exposure Outside of Japan

Miyazaki theorized that manga is popular because it is a good way of relieving stress during times of economical growth and with modernization in their neighbouring countries, manga would spread to them as well.²¹³

I did not ask specifically about the relations between economic growth and manga during the interviews. Nor did any of my informants connect manga with the economic situation in the country on their in Japan. This means that the empirical data regarding the economic growth is from my observations and the manga *Noragami: Stray God*. First thing that should be established is that Japan was in a time of economic growth in 1994. Today however, Japan is in an economic decline. According to Miyazaki's hypothesis, this could affect the sales of manga in Japan today. From what I observed during my fieldwork, through the many series, popular culture districts and manga cafés, this is not the case. Manga seems to still stand strong in the Japanese society. I observed Japanese men and women of all ages read and look at manga. Still, I cannot be confident how common the reading of manga is because of the fabric covers the Japanese used when reading in public.

According to my student informants A, B and W, and other people I talked to, the manga cafés are popular and one can usually find at least one in every city. Again my observations verify that manga is still very popular and read by many in Japan despite of the economic decline.

Also, by looking at the numbers of manga sold in Japan today one can get an impression of how popular manga currently is. The manga *Noragami: Stray God* was the 14th bestselling manga in Japan, according to the website Anime News Network, in the period November

²¹³ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161

2013 to May 2014 and sold approximately 1.8 million copies.²¹⁴ The same website stated that the bestselling manga in 2015, *One Piece*,²¹⁵ in the period November 2014 to November 2015 sold about 14 million copies.²¹⁶ This strongly suggests that the sales and consumption of manga in Japan is still high, despite of the economic troubles Japan is experiencing at the moment. This indicates that the manga is not necessarily connected with the economic growth manga experienced in 1994.

Miyazaki presented manga as a way to relieve stress during times of economic growth in Japan. Even though it has been shown that manga flourishes in Japan today during economically troubled time, manga has also shown that it can be a way to relieve stress in many situations. Therefore one can say that Miyazaki's hypothesis that manga relieves stress can be verified, but that it does not only relieve stress in economic growth but also in other situations such as economic decline.

8.1.4 Reflections of Hayao Miyazaki's Theories in Japan Today

Miyazaki's reasons for presenting his theoretical perspective was partly because of the continuous questions by foreigners.²¹⁷ These theories focus mostly on manga and its popularity in Japan and possibly neighbouring countries but do not seem to reach any further. Still, part of manga's development since 1994 is its spreading to western countries. Did Miyazaki not think manga would get that far? Did he not think of the possibility? Were this development present in 1994 but still unseen? It is clear that Miyazaki had his intentions and hypotheses when he presented these theories. With the perspective of time the material can verify parts of these theories. However, the material does also reveal different aspects not presented in the theories or that the theories are no longer relevant. These differences and inaccurate parts of Miyazaki's theoretical perspective shows how much manga and Japan have developed since then.

Manga such as *Noragami: Stray God* explore the world of Shinto and the Kami in Japan today. In the analysis in the previous chapter, I did discuss the role of Shinto, the Kami and religion in Japanese society and will now use Hellman's definition of religion to go further.

²¹⁴ <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2014-06-03/top-selling-manga-in-japan-by-series-2014/.75177> (read 26 April, 2016)

²¹⁵ The manga *One Piece* follows the pirate Luffy, who chose the life of a pirate in order to seek wonder and excitement, and his crew on their adventures and their search for the legendary treasure One Piece.

²¹⁶ <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2015-11-29/top-selling-manga-in-japan-by-series-2015/.95913> (read 26 April, 2016)

²¹⁷ Miyazaki (1996) 2009: 161.

8.2 Eva Hellman's Theoretical Perspective

In her socio-political definition, Hellman presents religion as a collection of narratives, religious and cultural, told in many forms of language: written, verbal and through action. The hub of this definition is transcendence, which is connected to the narratives and the human aspect through the axis transcendent-immanent. I am going to use her definition to further analyse my material by dividing it into three parts: the core transcendence, the axis transcendent-immanent and then her definition as a whole; collections of narratives.

8.2.1 Transcendence

As mentioned earlier, Hellman presents transcendence as the core of her definition of religion. She defines 'transcendence' as something bigger and different than the worldly and human. She also states that we are exposed to the transcendent through texts, rituals, actions and other forms of language.²¹⁸

Based on this definition, the empirical material presents two things that fit it: ancestors and the Kami. The informants were not specifically asked about ancestors because these seemed to belong more to the Buddhist tradition in Japan, which I did not analyse. Still informants W, B and M gave examples where ancestors were present in their lives. Informant W talked about *obon*, an annual Buddhist ritual for commemorating one's ancestors. She described this ritual as a season where people gather with their families, including their ancestors, and go to temples and graves. Informant B did not present any events that included ancestors, but a place. After the interview I asked her whether she had a *kamidana*, miniature altar for the Kami in her home, because another informant, informant M, had mentioned it in the interview. She answered that she did not have a *kamidana* but had a *butsudan*, a Buddhist miniature altar for ancestors at home. Informant M also mentioned *butsudan* when she described what a regular home in Japan usually contains. She also mentioned another ritual or tradition figurines that are called *dōsojin*. She explained that *dōsojin* is the name for road ancestor Kami that are believed to protect travellers and villages from disasters and evil. Informant M was the only one to present ancestors as part of Shinto traditions and not only Buddhist. With this example, informant M displayed ancestors as transcendent beings who protect humans but she also referred to them as Kami. This makes her description of the *dōsojin* very interesting because during my observations the Japanese I spoke to told me that Kami and ancestors were separate, whereas others said they were the same.

²¹⁸ Hellman 2011: 116.

When it comes to the material from the manga *Noragami: Stray God* I did not see any references to Buddhism or ancestors except for the figure of Buddha found in Kofuku, the Kami's figurine collection. The lack of Buddhist references and presence in the manga is very intriguing. In order to avoid the Buddhist aspect in a modern setting in Japan, like the manga has, it may have to be a conscious choice made by Adachitoka. Throughout the entire manga, there are references to dead people, but they are only referred to as spirits or *shinki*, spirits that work for the Kami as their tools and weapons. This is a fascinating distinction and brings us to the second presentation of the transcendent in the empirical material: the Kami.

When the informants talked about the Kami in the interviews, they referred to them very casually, as a normal part of their life. They also presented the Kami as something that is present but not seen and is part of the physical world, and so supported the Kami as transcendent beings. None of the informants mentioned any Kami until they are asked about the Shinto aspects present in popular culture.

Informant M first referred to the Kami when asked about the relations between *joshiki* and the Kami. She described both concepts as presentations of Japanese value and superiority and so presented a negative association with Kami. Looking at this answer, she presented the Kami more as an idea and so something that can be considered transcendent. She also presented the Kami as part of Shinto. Similarly, informant A and T considered the Kami as part of Shinto, but in a positive light. Informant A said that the tradition of Shinto she most appreciated was visiting shrines where she would always pray to the Kami in respect. Like informant W she would pray for help with everyday problems, like passing her exams but she would also pray when she did not have anything to pray for; she would then pray in respect of the Kami. Still, she did not know of many Kami and could not name the Kami that belonged to the shrine she showed me prior to the interview. This suggests that it was important for her to respect the Kami but it did not matter which Kami it was. She also mentioned that the Kami do not have any power in Japanese society after WWI and so have become part of their everyday life and no longer thought of. She did not give a specific definition of the Kami but gave the same impression as Informant W, that Kami were transcendent beings. Like informant A, informant T presented the Kami as part of Shinto but specified that she does not belong to any religion but believe in the Kami. She explained that she does not normally think of the Kami, like the other informant. She also mentioned that she does have a *kamidana* and had a Shinto cleansing ritual done when she built her house to calm the Kami in the ground where the house was being build. She did present the Kami during her interview as something natural in Japan yet spiritual, but considering the cleansing ritual, it seems that informant T

can also consider the Kami as something physical. From the informants' answers, they presented the Kami mostly as something transcendent, either as spirits or ideas and something natural in their everyday life. However, some of the informants also presented the Kami as having a physical aspect as well. This contradiction and presentation of Kami will be discussed further later.

During my observations, I rarely saw the physical form of Kami or had Kami explained as something physical by people I met. I did see some figures in tourist shops or prints of Kami but did not see them in the shrines. Shrines are constructed so that the Kami lives in the shrine but no one but the Shinto priests or *mikos* are allowed to go in to the Kami. This is because the room furthest back in the shrine house is considered to be the Kami's dwelling place and so a place for the Kami, not humans.

The manga *Noragami: Stray God* however does present the Kami in a very physical way, and for the reader to properly follow the story one would have to make the Kami physically present. However, from Adachitoka's definition of the Kami, they present the Kami as something in between the physical and the spiritual world. Therefore, in order to further discuss whether the Kami are transcendent or part of the physical world we need to look at Hellman's axis transcendent-immanent

8.2.2 The Axis Transcendent-Immanent

Hellman's definition of transcendence has already been presented and she defines the immanent as the opposite, our reality or the physical world.²¹⁹ With this in mind we can look back at the question of where the Kami exist in this axis.

The informants presented the Kami mostly as transcendent beings but at the same time they partake in rituals that calm the Kami in the ground where buildings are being built and consider them part of nature. That the Kami are presented as part of nature, as informant B did, does not necessarily mean that they are regarded as physical beings but still it can be discussed. At the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja* there is a small shrine to Mount Fuji. The little shrine is on the top of a small hill-like structure, which is constructed of stones taken from Mount Fuji. In order to pray to the Kami of Mount Fuji one has to walk the steep and small steps to get to the small shrine on the top. Furthermore, the fact that one is not allowed into the room of the Kami and that this room is the home and dwelling place of the Kami suggests that the Kami have some sort of physical presence that needs a room. After talking

²¹⁹ Hellman 2011: 115.

with many people during my stay in Japan, both Japanese and foreign, the majority described the Kami as something every living thing had, from a single grass straw to mountains. Yet they also said the Kami could leave the physical entity and would remain after the living thing died which could make the Kami both transcendent and immanent beings. Though many of the informants and my observations suggest that the Kami are regarded as transcendent beings, they also to a certain extent present the Kami as physical beings as well. The empirical material from my informants and observations do not answer the question about the Kami but the explanation of the Kami in modern Japan in *Noragami: Stray God* may.

As previously mentioned, the world of the manga is described as a linear plane with the living at the ‘near shore’, the opposite at the ‘far shore’ places and the Kami in the middle. This presents the Kami as part of both worlds but not belonging to either. This shows that the Kami can be considered transcendent beings tied to the physical world through nature and living things. With this explanation one can place the Kami in the middle of Hellman’s axis transcendent-immanent in a similar fashion as they are in *Noragami: Stray God*. Considering this, how do Shinto and the Kami correspond with Hellman’s definition of religion?

8.2.3 The Definition of Religion

Hellman presents the core of her definition as transcendence and the axis transcendent-immanent as the main characteristic of religious narratives. With this in mind, Hellman defines religion as a collection of narratives told in many different forms of languages: verbal, written and actions, both religious and everyday actions.²²⁰

The informants talked about Shinto and the Kami in many ways. Some parts were presented as good and some were presented as bad. Yet what all informants mentioned in one way or another was that Shinto and the Kami are part of their every day life in a natural and common fashion. Most informants went to the shrines on New Year’s Day and went to pray at shrines. Some of them expressed that the Kami would grant wishes both religious and in everyday life situations. Informant A and W went further and stated that Shinto and the Kami are a part of their society and life in such a way that they are present but not seen. Furthermore, informant T insisted she was not religious but still often visits shrines to pray to the Kami for safety and comfort. Informant M and T also presented Shinto as part of the Japanese politics as a tool, similar to a double-edged blade. Informant T meant that Shinto is a tool used in politics, she did not say if it was positive or negative, whereas informant M

²²⁰ Hellman 2011: 114–116.

considered Shinto to be a very negative part of Japanese politics. She explained that Shinto was a tool used by politicians to gain a network and loyalty and through this they could maintain status quo, values and traditions. These answers suggest that Shinto has a religious role in Japanese society but also a social one through both everyday life and politics.

My observations generally support the informants' answers that Shinto is part of everyday life and part of politics as a tool. After being in Japan for two months I came to the conclusion that Shinto was present in Japanese everyday life. I saw many rushing through the shrine Hato no Mori Hachiman to pray before work and I saw the locals use the same shrine to talk, relax, eat and smoke. I also saw many demonstrations and talked to Japanese people about the reformulation of article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Through their answers I observed that Shinto was part of Japanese politics as a tool and representation of Japanese values. Though informant M expressed the opinion that Shinto was used in a negative way in politics she also said that the constitution was purely Japanese and reflected the Japanese pacifist way of life. Despite this I also observed with informant B outside of the interview and other people that like Shinto, that the constitution was regarded as reflecting Japanese values. The article focuses on peace between people and that one should not attack other countries, only protect oneself. With the explanations of article 9 during my fieldwork I got the impression that the article embodies a Japanese thought of pacifism and harmony with nature. This further suggests that though Shinto is also part of politics and the social life of Japan, it is not only part of the religious. Can one then define Shinto as a religion? Hellman's definition does express that not only are religious actions part of the narratives that she defines as religious but social and political ones too.

Noragami: Stray God does not present any political aspects related to Japanese politics today or anything similar but it does seem to support the informants understanding of the Kami of Shinto. Its presentation of the Kami is as beings that are present in Japanese society today but not seen or that they affect the human world except for granting wishes. This is shown throughout the manga as Yato interacts with humans by answering prayers and granting their wishes and by the fact that when he fights with *ayakashi* or other Kami, the humans and their surroundings are not affected.

There is no question that Shinto has religious tendencies with rituals, cleansing, stories and Kami. However the informants did not seem to consider Shinto as a religion but as a part of everyday life and if they sometimes expressed Shinto as a religion it was the Kami that are part of everyday life. Similarly, every informant said that they are not religious, at least when it comes to Shinto and only partake because it is tradition or because their visit is not religious

but part of their every day life. Against this background, can one define Shinto as a religion? The aspect the material presented as transcendent was ‘ancestor’ but this seemed to belong to Buddhism, not Shinto. The Kami were more problematic to place as either transcendent or immanent but it has been shown that they can be considered present in both but being part of none. However, the Kami are told and presented in Japanese society through stories and rituals. Considering the Kami’s role in Shinto, though informant W considered them separate, one could consider Shinto as a religion if one were to use Hellman’s definition. As stated, Hellman defines religion as a collection of narratives told through many forms of language, written, spoken or through actions. The presentation of the empirical material suggests that Shinto is present in texts such as manga, verbal language such as *itadakimas/goshisosama* and through actions, both through rituals of prayer but also in everyday actions, politics and social traditions. The social and religious aspects of Shinto presented supports that Shinto can be defined as religion if one uses Hellman’s definition.

8.3 Summary

Using the theoretical perspectives of Miyazaki and Hellman, I have been able to look deeper at the empirical material. Miyazaki’s theories have shown manga’s popularity in Japan but the material has shown that manga has spread further than Japan and today has, to a certain degree, a global audience. Miyazaki theorized that manga’s linear structure is similar to the Japanese way of thinking and that this may be a factor in its appeal to a Japanese audience. The material has supported this idea but suggests that manga does not only appeal to a Japanese audience but that manga can reflect Japanese society and ways of thinking. His second theory looks at the historical aspect of manga and its longstanding tradition as a forum to communicate all worldly phenomena. There is not as much empirical material that addressed this theme but the material does support manga as part of Japanese history. The material also shows that manga is still used as it was in previous forms: as a way of representation of all phenomena through the many genres of manga there is today. Miyazaki’s last theoretical perspective saw manga as a way to relieve stress during times of economic growth and with modernization it would spread to the neighbouring countries. This theory seemed to be the one most affected by time as manga currently thrives in a Japan that is in economic decline and trouble. The material does however suggest that manga is a way to relieve stress for some, in situations like economic growth or decline. Lastly, there was very little empirical data on manga’s popularity in the neighbouring countries, but I know from my

own travels and reading that manga has spread even further than Miyazaki thought in 1994 and has now spread across the world to countries such as Norway, France and the U.S.A.

Hellman's definition of religion has allowed me to look further at Shinto and the Kami and how they relate to the physical and transcendent part of Japanese society. It helped me to analyse the complexity and ambiguity of Shinto and the Kami's role in Japan today, on the basis of the available empirical material. Furthermore, the material indicates that Hellman's definition of religion can be applied to Shinto in modern Japan.

The material presents Shinto's relations with politics and how manga such as *Noragami: Stray God* can reflect Japanese society and Shinto's role in it. Hellman's definition focus on narratives that are told in different forms of languages that are not only religious, but also social and political. Considering this, the material has shown that Shinto is part of not only religious aspects of Japanese society but also social and political. Using Hellman's definition of religion the empirical material supports Shinto as a religion.

But most importantly, by looking at the material with these theoretical perspectives as lenses, I have tried to show how the material I collected in Japan can be used to nuance our understanding of the complexity of Japanese society. The theoretical perspectives have helped me to show how intricately Shinto and the Kami are weaved into Japanese people's everyday life (as represented by my informants and other people I observed). It has also shown how Shinto is part of interpersonal behaviour, how Shinto is presented through popular culture, ritual activities. Lastly, it showed how Shinto is present in Japanese politics. This theoretical approach has therefore helped me to see the many faces of Shinto.

9. Summary and conclusion

In the previous chapter, the theoretical aspects have shown that manga is relevant in Japanese society and that when using Hellman's definition of religion, Shinto can be defined as a religion with socio-political aspects. This chapter will look at the material presented and see if it can answer the research questions posed in the introduction.

9.1 Summary of Research Questions

What is Shinto's role in the Japanese society? Though there were variations in the explanations of Shinto's role in society, the material presented Shinto as something that is present in the everyday life of the Japanese but without being 'seen'. As remarked by Yato and the informants, the Kami and Shinto are a natural part of their world; humans may see the Kami but they don't catch their attention.

How is Shinto present in Japan as interpersonal behaviour? The main aspect that showed Shinto as interpersonal behaviour was *joshiki* and the social rules in society that often related to Shinto. This was shown by all three sources of material. Through traditions such as the New Year's celebrations, manners such as *itadakimas* and *gochisosama*, it is shown that Shinto is related to *joshiki*. This can also be seen through the maintaining of rules, even though the reasons why are not clear, like praying when visiting a shrine or the normality of a *kamidana* in Japanese homes.

How is Shinto present in Japan as ritual activities? The material presents Shinto as something that is actively practiced today. Traditions such as coming of age ceremonies like the *shichigosan*, practical rituals used in everyday life such as the *jichinsai* grounds purification ritual and cleansing one's new car are regularly performed today. However, when asked what Shinto is to them, the informants had no opinion because they never thought about it even or they did not care. The eldest informant explained that even though it was a practical part of their everyday life, Shinto was irrelevant and so the Japanese generally did not care even if at least some of them performed Shinto rituals as part of their everyday life. Therefore, one can consider Shinto as ritual activities as an active aspect of life in Japan today.

How is Shinto present in the Japanese popular culture medium such as manga? Through Adachitoka's work *Noragami: Stray God* it is shown that Shinto is very much part of Japanese popular culture. This is shown through its plot, setting and the characters' actions such as Hiyori praying to the Kami Tenjin and going to a shrine on the New Year's

celebration. Still, the informants did reveal that even though it may be seen, because Shinto and the Kami are such a natural part of their world, it is not noticed or thought of.

How is Shinto presented in Japanese politics. This was the most challenging aspect to explore because of its sensitivity and what some of the informants called the political apathy in Japan. There was a clear lack of political presence in *Noragami: Stray God* and at the shrines and the student informants did not consider these two aspects to be related. However, the political informants showed a clear connection between these aspects through politicians' membership in Shinto organisations or lobby groups. Furthermore, it was shown by informant M that even though politicians do not publically support Shinto and shrines, many support Shinto privately or through corporations.

It has been shown that Shinto has many faces in Japanese society, through interpersonal behaviour such as *joshiki*, popular culture like manga, through ritual activities and a presence in Japanese politics through politicians' connections with Shinto groups, organizations and their network. All this has been shown from a Japanese perspective, though interpreted by a non-Japanese researcher, through the informants, Adachitoka's *Noragami: Stray God* and their understanding and presentation of the aspect of Shinto.

9.2 Conclusion

I would like to end this thesis with the presentation of my informants' opinions about this study. The responses to study were positive. The Informants said that what they had not previously considered was now aspects they thought about and that the interview had changed their perspective and interpretation of these. They expressed gratitude and reflected on the topics we had discussed and on Japanese society. Most of the informants said that this study was something they could not have done themselves. Informant M explained that for the Japanese it is difficult to study these aspects of Japanese for there would be consequences if one went into depth of such sensitive topics in Japan. This suggests why few Japanese have asked these questions even though, when aware of them, they found them interesting.

Shinto may to many seem like a foreign aspect of Japanese culture that can easily for a westerner be interpreted as 'merely a religion'. However, this thesis has explored several aspects of Shinto and their presence in many cultural arenas and has show that Shinto has many faces in Japan today. Shinto is weaved into the Japanese everyday life as an integral part of society that is present and coexisting, but not 'seen'.

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11. Appendix

This appendix has following material and necessary content. The vocabulary list presents the Japanese terms used in this thesis, with definitions, explanations and translations. It also has the interview guide, interview information, informant consent form and log of observations. Furthermore, it contains the map of Meiji shrine.

11.1 Vocabulary List

These translations and definitions of term are based on the sources used in the thesis.

Butsudan

A small altar for ancestors from Buddhist tradition. These are usually found in Japanese homes.

Cosplay

Dressing up as a character from a popular culture medium such as video games, manga, anime, TV series etc.

Dōsojin

“‘Tutelary of roads,” a generic name for a Kami often found dedicated at village borders and intersections as a guard against noxious spirits and evil Kami that bring pestilence and disasters to the local community from outside.’²²¹

Ema

‘Votive tablets bearing illustrations of horses or other scenes offered at shrines, temples, wayside shrines and chapels, as expressions of prayer and thanks.’²²²

Gaijin

A term used in Japan for foreigners and non-Japanese people.

Goen

5 yen, commonly given as donations at Shinto shrines, because of the kanji’s meaning of ‘good luck’.

Gohei

‘A kind of ritual wand.’ [...] ‘Gohei are made by attaching zig-zag cut strips of gold, silver, white or multicolored (five-color) paper to a staff (called a *heigushi*) made of bamboo or other wood.’²²³

Haiden

‘The *haiden* is the building provided for the performance of ceremonies and for worshipping the shrine’s *Kami*. Normally it is located in the foreground of the shrine’s sanctuary, or *honden*.’²²⁴

²²¹ Kawamura (1994) 2016.

²²² Iwai (1994) 2016.

²²³ Motosawa (1994) 2016a.

²²⁴ Mori (1994) 2016a.

Honden

‘The “sanctuary,” or central structure of a shrine that houses the seat of the deity worshipped there. The *honden* is considered the most sacred space within the shrine, and its sacred doors are normally kept closed and locked.’²²⁵

Honne and Tatemaie

Tatemaie is Japanese for ‘face’; *tatemaie* is the face one shows in public as opposed to *honne*, which is being oneself at home; *honne* means ‘home’ or ‘behind closed doors’.²²⁶

Inari

A Kami in the form of a fox. Inari is a Kami for fertility, rice, tea and sake. One can usually find an Inari shrine at *jinjas* such as the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja*.

Itadakimas and gochisosama

These are phrases of gratitude and thanks for food served. One says *itadakimas* before eating and *gochisosama* after.

Jichinsai

Ground-purification rites. This ritual is performed at the commencement of civil engineering or architectural projects to pray that work proceeds safely and smoothly, and that no structural problems will arise after its completion.²²⁷

Jinja

Shrine belonging to the local form of Shinto.

Jingu

Shrine belonging to the imperial form of Shinto.

Joshiki

‘Common sense’ (*joshiki*) informs and presents the Japanese concepts of life and death, morality, “Japaneseness” and cosmology.

Kami

beings that are regarded as existing within every living thing and exist alongside humans and helping them by granting wishes and answering prayers.

Kamidana

‘A household Shinto altar, a facility for the conduct of family rites at home.’²²⁸

Kimono

The national dress of Japan. A long traditional robe with wide sleeves, tied with a sash known as *obi*.

Komainu

²²⁵ Mori (1994) 2016b.

²²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honne_and_tatemaie (Read 4 May, 2016).

²²⁷ Jun (1994) 2016.

²²⁸ Yoshiyuki (1994) 2016.

‘Literally, “Korean lions,” paired figures of lion tutelaries found at the entryway to shrine buildings, or alongside their *torii* or approachways.’²²⁹

Manga

‘Illustrated serial novels that comprise juxtaposed panels that combine artwork and text.’²³⁰

Matsuri

General term for festivals.

Miko

‘Generally refers to a woman who assists shrine priests in ritual or clerical work.’²³¹

Obon

Is an annual Buddhist ritual for family gathering and commemorating one’s ancestors.

Otaku

A person obsessed, or passionate, about a hobby or fandom, usually within Japanese popular culture. This is a negative term.

Saisen

A box or item to gather the monetary gift offered during prayer and worship at temples. This is often a wooden box with a grated lid so the offering falls into the box.

Shichigosan

‘A celebration for three-, five-, and seven-year-old children. Generally, on November 15th boys aged three and five and girls aged three and seven are dressed in their best clothes and taken on a pilgrimage to express gratitude and pray for their continued health and safety.’²³²

Shimenawa

‘A straw rope hung before or around a site to demarcate sacred or pure space, such as in front of the inner sanctuary of a shrine, at the entrance to the shrine precinct, or at the ritual site.’²³³

Shinto

4. ‘A “nonreligious” body of state rituals focusing on the emperor.
5. A broad swathe of local rituals that address a range of other concerns, from community prosperity to individual good luck and health.
6. A number of religious groups, defined by the state as “Shinto sects”.’²³⁴

Shūkyō

Japanese for ‘religion’, primarily considered as teachings and beliefs.²³⁵

²²⁹ Nakayama (1994) 2016.

²³⁰ Thomas 2012: 3.

²³¹ Takaeo (1994) 2016.

²³² Yumiyama (1994) 2016.

²³³ Motosawa (1994) 2016b.

²³⁴ Breen & Teeuwen 2010: 18.

Temizuya

‘A purification font where shrine visitors rinse their hands and mouth in symbolic purification.’²³⁶

Torii

‘A formalized gateway arch signifying entrance to a sacred area.’²³⁷

²³⁵ Beyer 2006: 244.

²³⁶ Mori (1994) 2016c.

²³⁷ Mori (1994) 2016d.

11.2 Interview Guide

Opening Questions:

What do you want to be called in the project? (Alias)

How old are you?

What was your childhood like? (schooling, work, culture)

How did you end up here?

Japaneseness

What do you consider to be typically 'Japanese'?

When you see or hear foreigners talking about Japan, what do they usually misunderstand?

What is the strangest thing you have heard?

What would you recommend that I should read, listen to or view in order to learn more about Japan and Japanese culture?

What are you interested in, in Japanese culture?

How would you explain these concepts to a foreigner?

 'Joshiki'?

 'Nihonjinron'?

Popular culture:

Are you familiar with Japanese popular culture? Which?

Are you interested in popular culture? Which? Why?

Do you think popular culture affect or reflect Japanese society? If yes, can you mention some examples? If not, can you explain why?

Have you observed any Shinto aspects in Japanese popular culture?

Have you observed any political aspects or statements in Japanese popular culture?

Shinto:

How would you explain how Joshiki relates to Kami?

What Japanese traditions do you especially appreciate? Which do you partake in? Can you tell me about them?

How/when did you experience Japanese rituals/traditions as a child?

What does 'Jinja' mean to you?

Do you visit shrines? Which? Why?

What is the role of the Kami for the Japanese in general? For you and people like you?

What does 'Kami no Michi' mean for the Japanese in general? For you and people like you? What do you associate with this term?

Regarding one's understanding of 'Kami no Michi', do you think there are any differences between young and old, urban and rural people? How? Why?

How was Shinto present in your childhood?

Who taught you about Shinto?

Was Shinto present in your family? How?

Was it present in other ways? School, state, traditions (reformulate)

What is Shinto to you?

How is Shinto present in your everyday life?

Which traditions do, according to you, reflect Shinto?

How is Shinto part of Japanese today?

Does Shinto and Japaneseness, or Nihonjinron affect Japanese politics? If so, how? If not, why?

Politics:

What do you consider to be politics?

How would you characterize Japanese politics?

How does the Japanese political system work? Can you explain it to me?

How does it affect the society?

How does Japanese politics affect you? Why?

How do you feel Japanese politics affect the society? Which parts?

Relations:

Are there relations between Shinto and Japanese politics today?

What are they? Why?

Does Shinto affect politics? If so, how? If not, why?

What do you know about LDP's current agenda? How do they intend to help and support Japan? How do other parties influence Japan?

What have you noticed about Abe Shinzo's current plans?

Have you noticed if he emphasizes Shinto or Japanese traditional values? How? If not, then what does he focus on?

Example:

Take an example, such as the Ise Grand shrine?

Have you visited the Ise Shrine? Is this shrine different to other shrines?

How does Ise shrine relate to Shinto?

How does the Ise shrine relate to politics currently in Japan?

Can you think of anything else that can affect this relation or relations?

Can you tell me about the imperial family?

How are they involved with the Kami?

Other Aspects:

What do you think about a Norwegian student like me showing interest in this?

How do you feel this conversation has been?

Are there other relations or aspects that can affect Shinto or politics?

Is there anything you would like to add?

11.3 Informant Consent Form

Request Form for Participation in Research Project

'Relations between Shinto and politics in Japan'

Background and Purpose

Religion, culture, and politics create the structural basis for society. Politics can cause changes in this basis or reinforce it. The purpose of this study is to investigate such changes and reinforcements in Japanese society, through an analysis of some aspects of the relations between Shinto (*kami no michi*), and politics and how they affect each other. The project studies the relations between Shinto (*kami no michi*) and politics in Japan from 2012 to 2015 with a special focus on how Shinto and politics are expressed in popular culture. The results of the project, which will be clearly defined only after the source material has been collected, will be presented in a master's thesis at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies, and Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway.

What does participation in this project imply?

The source material will be collected by means of interviews and observations, and informants will be chosen because of their knowledge of Japanese society. Participating in the project as an informant implies either to accept to be interviewed or to be observed. The data will be recorded through written notes, and – if the informant permits it – through sound and film.

What will happen with the information?

All the information will remain anonymous. Only the student responsible for the study and her supervisor will have access to the informant's information during the writing process. The information will be stored only on the student's laptop and a personal backup hard disk. Any sensitive information will be stored separate from the rest of the data. The informant can withdraw her or his consent at any time and do not have to reveal the reason behind the withdrawal. If an informant decides to withdraw, all the information from that informant will be destroyed.

According to the current plan, the project will be concluded in June 2016. After the completion of the study any sensitive information, films and recordings will be destroyed.

The project has been reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact the project leader, master's student Lisa Camilla Frøyshov Fjeldstad, email Lisa.Fjeldstad@student.uib.no, phone number +47 90174793.

Or contact the supervisor, Professor Håkan Rydving, email Hakan.Rydving@uib.no.

Consent for Participation in this Project as Informant

As informant of the master's project 'Relations between Shinto and Politics in Japan' I consent to...

... participate in an interview.

... video and sound recording during the interview.

... sound recording during the interview.

... participate in an observation.

... video recording during an observation.

I have received information regarding the project and am willing to participate as informant.

(Participant's signature, date)

11.4 Log of observations

These are the logs of my observations. They consist of: general observations in public, planned shrine observations and observation with informants. The shrine visits with informants are registered with the informant log.

11.4.1 General observations in public

Collections and reflections:

- Saw few reading manga in public
 - o Many had covers covering physical books, neutral fabric covers
 - Could this be a *tatema* thing?
 - o Saw many reading on their smartphones
- Commercials:
 - o Signs are everywhere, along buildings on top of each other!
 - o Where either live actions or anime-style, often flat drawing, even on signs
- Did not notice a lot of old Japanese picture scrolls
 - o (Was recommended by M to look at *Chojū Giga* at the national museum in Kyoto)
 - o Did buy a type of scroll with pandas for Runa
 - o Tapestry in small house at local shrine had a beautiful tapestry of a huge Bonsai (?) tree
 - o Saw many old pictures and books in one district in Tokyo that was known for this, they had a lot of manga too
- People like to follow rules
 - o Few throw trash away in the streets
 - o Few talk on the train
 - o Follow traffic rules (when you see it the best)
 - o Only smoke in certain locations
 - o Always walk with a passport, seems like you are hiding something if you do not
 - o If using another person's bike one needs their written consent and papers!
 - Tried to help a friend fix his bike but the store almost took it from me and call the police, this did not happen for they knew the owner and understood from my reasons and after told them I was just helping they sent me home to get proper consent and papers.
- Don't walk and eat, carry it with them to a place
- Like to celebrate
 - o Since September there has been Halloween theme on EVERYTHING
- Chefs are always serious about food, and when they make food
 - o Except for Mochi at Kando, got to know the employees at this restaurant
- Onsens are often used and part of their life
 - o Few reacted to my tattoo at the onsens I was allowed into
 - o Only one girl talked to me at an onsen, girl who was thinking of going to Akita university
 - Wanted to speak English, learn more (knew VERY little) and was very fascinated by my tattoo, did not recognise it as a dragon
- Grew to really love and care for the area I lived in in Tokyo, with the shrine, the local restaurants and the people.

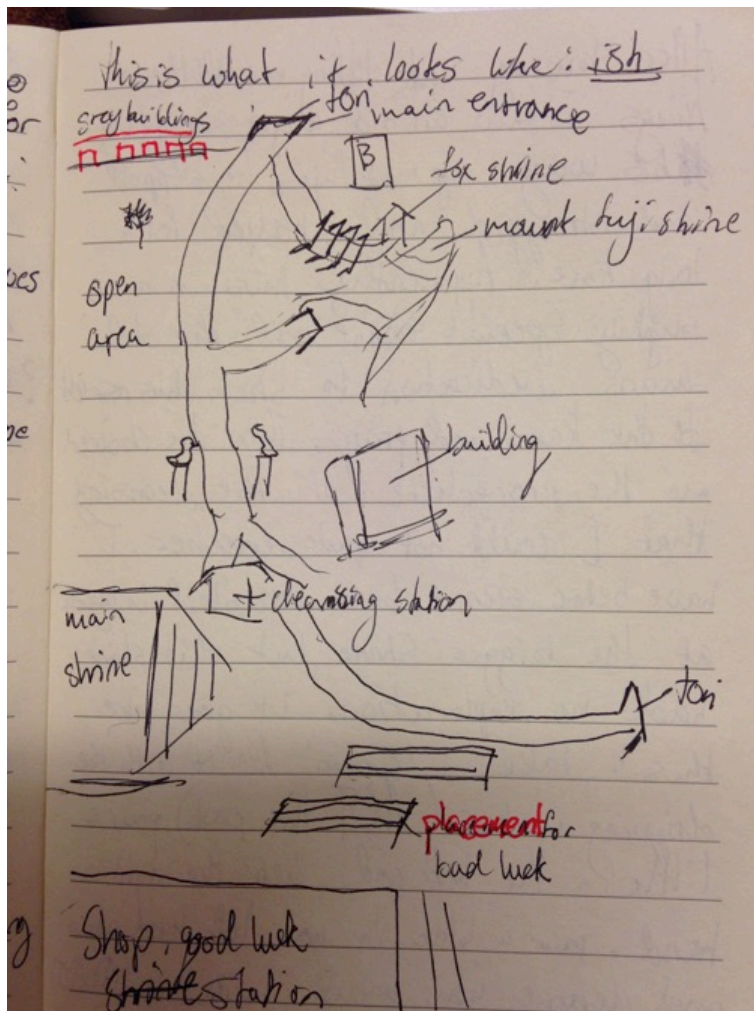
11.4.2 Shrine Observations

Hato no Mori Hachiman Jinja shrine observations:

5.09.15

- Shrine has rope with a bell, ring to call the Kami when you are going to pray
- Some people use it, some don't

The Entrance is a stone Tori where you bow before in respect before entering. As we walked I found out that one is not allowed to walk in the middle of the pathway for this is the path of the *kami*. The shrine contains the main shrine for nature (story with doves above trees and so on), one kitsune shrine and a mount fuji shrine. This last shrine is on top of a small hill that is actually part of mount fuji. When going past these two minor shrines you are met by two guarding *Inu*²³⁸ statues that act as the guardians and protector of the shrine. To the right of these statues was a building, straight ahead/following the path was the cleansing station and to the right was the shine (picture follows) This is what it looks lie: ish/



After showing and telling me these things I saw an old man struggling his way 'up mount fuji', he slipped and struggled and prayed for a long time. Apparently this is a slightly special shrine and the old man's dedication to show his respect for the *kami* and pray. Then they showed me the procedure of the cleansing, that I could not quite remember. I have before seen

²³⁸ Japanese for: 'dog'

it been described in English at the bigger shrine, but this shrine had no explanation. It goes like this: take a 'spoon', fill it with the dripping water (NOT the pool) pour a little in the left and then the right hand. Pour a little in your left hand again and cleanse your mouth with this (DO NOT SWALLOW), spit out on the rocks outside the pool. Then tilt the ladle slightly with both hands so that it drips down the handle. Lastly put the spoon back face down.

When praying to the *kami* you should bow at the bottom of the steps in respect to the *kami*. Then you walk up the steps and ring the bell to wake up the *kami*. You bow twice, then clap twice and with your hands together you silently say your prayer. I prayed for the success of my master degree. Afterwards we walked up Mt. Fuji and prayed there and did the same at the *kitsune*²³⁹ shrine. When going through this Jianna and Maggie apparently did things differently, but Jianna had gone through it with the local tenant and so I followed her instructions, later another did this fashion too.

There were not a lot of people but there were steady visits from people who looked 25ish- 90. After walking around the shrine we went home for the other two had work to do

12-13.10.15

- *Matsuri* at the shrine
- Was held inside the shrine
- Many people at the shrine
- Many vendors with lots of different products, mostly handmade, local products
 - o Sake, food, pottery, art, handcrafts
- Food stands
- Early morning on 12th, there was a pilates class during the *matsuri*
- Young and old, mostly elder people 35-90 years.
- Shrine was very lively, many took the luck dispenser and either took their luck with them or left the bad behind in the shrine
- Small room with tapestry was used for performances but did not see it, only stayed during noon both days.
- Many went to the Mt. Fuji shrine at the *matsuri*
- When there I felt calm, relaxed, happy and satisfied

24.09.15

- Shrine has one big shrine, and circa 3-4 other small shrines
 - o *Kitsune*, Mt. Fuji, small shrine, *Uma* house,(is the last one a shrine in itself, had the divine rope and tassels)
- Went a quick trip to the shrine
- Was told that the local kindergarten was next to the shrine
 - o Saw them in uniform gathered at the shrine with their teacher
- There were MANY kids, with different uniforms and were colour coded
 - o One group was blue (bore pompoms), another was yellow and the last had white hats
- Lined up close to the Mt. Fuji shrine
- One woman came very quickly in to pray before she went to work,
- Hurried in the main gate and out the other
 - o Took the time to clean properly and pray properly
- Couldn't stay to observe more because of Sumo tournament

²³⁹ Japanese for: 'fox'

Separate visit, unknown when:

- Visited during noon, lunchtime
- Went to the shrine, it had a relaxed atmosphere
- Yet no one uses it to take a shortcut
- Someone had parked their bike there
- Many people, normally doesn't see that many people at the shrine
 - o Many dressed like their at work
 - o Dressed formal and informal,
 - o People walking too the shrine and from the shrine from work
 - o Man watching Mt. Fuji shrine (child is there?)
 - o Woman sits and relaxes in the sun, reading. Another seems to be sleeping in sitting position on another bench
- There are was an *uma* house (place to place the *umas*) looks like a small patio house
 - o Has a sign for children with written text and comics that shows how to pray
- Saw both school kids and work age people pray
- Has another place to place *umas*, next to the luckpaper
- OBS: Feels much more informal than the imperial shrines!
- Are drink dispenser inside the shrine, do not often see this!

30.10.15

- Took a small last trip to the shrine before I left
 - Saw a mother teach her daughter to pray to Kami
 - o Was very patient, she was incredibly young
 - o Impressive!
 - Saw people laughing, smoking and eating lunch at the shrine
 - Seems like a sanctuary for the local people!
 - They seem more relaxed there than they do on the streets
 - Some go to pray, but do not rush
 - Some spends long time at the shrine
 - Seems like a popular place to spend ones lunch break
 - o Are food carts in the streets around, a lot of working areas around
 - When there I felt calm, relaxed, happy and satisfied, and a little sad to leave, grew to really like this shrine
 - Said goodbye after walking to the top of 'Mt. Fuji' and looked over the shrine,
-
- Went to this shrine numerous times, that are not documented for they were personal visits, not professional. Went there often to sit and relax, quiet place close to where I stayed in Tokyo.

Shrine Observation notes Meiji Shrine:

10.09.2015

Meiji Shrine, alternative entrance circa 16:30-17:30ish

Weather: Raining/ Cloudy/ Neutral degrees

Sounds: Crows (different from Norway) and crickets

Alternative entrance

- Upon entering via the alternative entrance there were no written signs. There was a Torii, with the imperial Seal (the flower, chrysanthemum)

Outside inner sanctum

- A cleansing shrine
- Blessing areas for cars, saw one get blessed by Shinto priest
- The purchase of lucky charms and sitting area

Inner Sanctum:

- The structure is a square with open area.
 - o Lamps bear the seal
- To the right of the praying shrine/hall is sacred tree with white paper
- To the left, two sacred trees with heavy rope in-between both
- In-between the different sacred trees is prayer area, with its own guard. Sitting area is opposite from the prayer structure.
- Two entrances/exits, on the right when looking at the prayer hall and right across from it.

- Another guard came at the end
 - o Ushered visitors out
- There is a melody when the shrine closes, at 17:20
- Shrine opens at 5:20 am and closes 5:20 pm

- Every Torii bears the emperor's seal!! (the flower) in gold.

Main Shrine:

- When I came to the entrance to park/shrine
- No written signs/indication of shrine
- There were 2 guard by the torii
- Felt like walking in the park with cicada and crows. Traditional lamps
- Huge area and different sections, worshippers hall, *Shiseikan Dojo*, shrine offices, treasure museum, main shrine, meiji garden, eating area and souvenirs, wedding reception and more
- The area seems to have focus on nature. Little artificial things, only night lanterns are of metal.

Main shrine

- Went through the 'wrong' entrance
- Still was a cleansing area outside the fenced shrine area. Opposite cleansing area was a car garage with space for 1 or 2 cars where a car was being blessed
 - o One blue Shinto priest and one white
 - o The female owner bowed when priest did
 - o The car road and area was separated from the place I was
- There was no explanation on how to 'clean' yourself for prayer
 - o Is a sign at the other cleansing station belonging to the main entrance
- There were brochures on the shrine in both English and Japanese.
 - o English was empty at the main entrance to the shrine
- The 'entrance' felt more designed for practitioners and not tourists

- Big wooden structures and bamboo fence. Warm brown colours
- A Torii leads to the next area
- Here it is a shop for charms, next to it (right side) is a seating area, opposite on grounds it was a closed building, could not see inside, too dark.
- Another Torii lead to the 'inner' shrine area. This was a Square structure with open solution to the right was the sacred elements (trees, *uma* (prayer plaques) and prayer hall) and a guard monitoring the prayer hall
- The left side from the 'entrance' was a 'relaxation area' roof over heads, benches to sit on and all could face the prayer hall/sacred side. There was solid walls in wood behind you but the whole open structure made you feel like you still were in nature. More crows in this area.
- Sacred tree to the right of prayer hall
 - o Wore the sacred rope, one tree
 - o Green leaves and formed into a round shape
 - o Encircling the tree was walls filled with *uma* in all languages. Some more serious than others.
- Lanterns along the square were in metal with the imperial seal in gold on sides and bottom
- Sacred trees on left side
 - o Tied together/connected with sacred rope (why?)
 - o Equal size and round as the other tree
 - o Looked more sacred to the inexperienced eye

Prayer hall

- Took the space of an entire side of the square structure. With a guard monitoring those who prayed.
- When a group prayed together it looked like the man led the bow and prayer
- Everyone bowed twice, clapped twice, prayed, bowed once
- The guard stopped some tourists taking pictures in near the praying hall
- Were many tourists! An entire Polish group+++ many Japanese tourists?
- Maybe too late for local practitioners?

Leaving:

- Left by main entrance, much more explanations there in English, more signs
- Walked past the garden on the way, entrance fee, flossed after 17:00, denied entry after 16:30. Flowers for different seasons, spring flowers were the empress' favourite.
 - o Empress' poem is written in the brochure.
 - o Further towards Harajuku you pass wine crates on one side, sake barrels on the other. Signs with explanations on the side.
- Pass many Torii with the imperial seal as one passes sections, many stop and bow towards the Meiji shrine when leaving and entering, especially around the Torii nearest and furthest away.
- Signs to treasure museum and treasure annex (?) on the way
- OBS: area after inner shrine there was a small house with 'no entry sign' nothing to indicate what it was.
- One way leading to Harajuku entrance kept you walking among the trees,
- the other side led you to a 'commercial area' with possible wedding reception, food court, souvenirs + metro exit('wedding arrangements', 'restaurant', 'treasure museum', 'annex')
 - o Here there were less trees, also led to bus parking area

- On the way one passed what looked to be accommodation, but was unclear what they were, for Shinto priests?
- Guard by gate ushering people out politely, area was closed off for public with an iron gate. No one could enter!
- Left with a good feeling but did not get to see many pray.
- Guard specified 'close in 6 minutes' walked round and told everyone personally
- OBS: this was during the period before school start.

26.09.15

Time: 14:30-17:00

Weather: sunnys slightly cloudy and there is a little chill in the air

Used the main entrance:

- When entering the Meiji *jingu* you have to cross a stone bridge that goes over the JR train tracks
- There was a lot of noise near the shrine and a band was setting up on the bridge
- The first Torii was of wood, but the bases were metal
- The pathway was big and gravel
- The 'traditional' lanterns were of stone and some had a lot of cobwebs, seemed like it was part of the nature, 'embraced by nature' like the entire shrine that is situated in a forest
- A LOT more people than last time, a lot of western, chinese (I heard) and Japanese tourists and locals (?)
- Entering through the main entrance I felt more like a tourist than the other entrance. A lot more tourists and more English signs and tourism signs
- A young boy showed his American friends or guests how to wash before entering the shrine
- Was a speaker/s along the pathway informing about no littering, smoking or open flames, in Japanese and English
- When there is a fee charged for entering somewhere, is saying it is to maintain the location. Fees remained around 500 yen
- The second Torii is noted to be the largest wooden Torii (took picture), this did not have metal bases
- Huge groups of tourists coming and going the entire time
- This time the shrine does not have the same calm as did the first observation
- Trees are still green
- The third Torii leading to the first square connected to the main shrine did not have the gold lanterns like the other two did.
- At the cleansing station, most stopped there before entering the main shrine
- (Wedding couple) was taking pictures opposite this on separate grounds
- Many did the cleansing differently, even though there were instructions. Seems like the ritual is open to interpretation
 - o Everyone cleans the left hand first and focus on the hands
- Jap. Students/Jap acquaintances of the tourists go through the rituals with them
- Entering the main shrine area there were a lot more people, otherwise no change
- there are four guards, one watching the prayer side, the others maintaining the rest of the area (i.e. making sure people sit on the benches, not the ground)
- Observed two Indian families (separate), one family was dressed in traditional Indian garbs

- OBS, square before the main entrance was a charm shop where one shook the contained to get their prediction
- Many going, some old, many families with children
 - o Children were allowed to meet(?) how they wanted even close to the prayer station for the Kami
- A source told me before this that prayers were/could be geographically confined to the shrines area, but the Meiji was national, one of the shrines with the furthest reach, global.
 - o Was told that if I wanted to pray for my pregnant sisters then this or Ise would be the best place. (gå forbi bryllup notater for mer)

During the weddings:

- OBS REFLECTION: what I thought was one wedding was in fact 6 different weddings
- Hear drums
- The wedding party uses one of the alternative entrances. (first entered right, then left)
 - o Took pictures before this
- The two guards make sure the wedding party remains undisturbed and actually walk along the set pathway.
 - o Tourists had to move out of the way for this
- The bride is covered in white, with a hat that covers her head
- Three priests and two *miko*
- The couple bows to the main priest, the 'religious' leave and the couple leaves through the right exit
- People talked a lot the first two entrances (filmed this) but was very quiet the last exit
- Crowd dispersed quickly
- After 'entering the left side, a second time there are drums – this entrance is the third one filmed
- Exiting the left 'side' again, drums sounded twice when they were there, bride is wearing white
 - o Groom of on the bride's left ?mother? on the right
 - Are now three priests
 - One of the guards saluted the priests and couple, bowed to each other, talk Shinto priest, bow, 'religious' have with parasol and the couples exits right.
 - o Was only the green clad Shinto priest holding the parasol
- New wedding: Exits the left side again, the bride is in red, drums sounded twice this time as well

Shrine Activity

- Actually one seemed to have different 'forms' of prayer, all contained bows and two claps but people did a bit differently
 - o Some claps can be heard across the courtyard
- The three openings for prayer are never empty for people praying
- Saw Shinto priests looking and discussing/pointing at mine and the surrounding benches
 - o One in all white, one with purple parts, no hat
- Every now and again you can hear the claps (even with earphones), quite often
- The amount of people has diminished slightly while I've been sitting here,
- Seen two being chased away from sitting on the ground, even when they used plastic

- bags and such to sit on
- Signias in wood on the door
- The roof is green copper and wood ends are coloured white, and some imperial flowers are gold,
 - o only added colours in the main shrine area
- Some are dressed informal while others are dressed very professional, mostly the Japanese (coming from work?)
- Everyone takes pictures, even up close to the house of the Kami but not allowed to take pictures in the three prayer sections by guards (not myself, seen others been reprimanded)
- One guard clapped at a women to get her attention
- The round symbol is present here as well
 - o (PICTURE)
- People act very differently, some with a lot of respect, some with none,
 - o Me and one other taking notes
 - o Japanese are the most quiet
- Have observed Jap. Couples, western couples +, and Jap + western couple that I could not distern
- Not many have added prayer plaque/*uma*
 - o Only seen some people take picture of them
- Is a sign with wheelchair and Kanji writing
 - o Seen one person in wheelchair
- Few stay long, some sit on benches but not most
- Few surround/pay attention to the duo tree
- The loudest today are westerners and Chinese
- Guards are dressed in light blue
 - o Seen one in dark blue, police
- As the people dwindle, the calmer it gets
- The smell of the trees is what makes me relax.
- Heard one with the bell luck charm, for luck
- Man was chased from sitting on the ground
- Two people sitting reading
- At the main building there are white screens on the side windows, two on each side, the middle three have wooden screens with blue stripes and blue tassels

21.10.15

- Lot of tourists, more westerners than at the Ise shrines
- More tourist friendly, seems more commercial after looking at Ise shrines
- Getting ready for Chrysanthemum festival
- Many chinese and western tourists
- Less people in Kimono, those that were had kids in kimonos with them
- Like earlier, people had an indifferent attitude
- Was a group of handicapped that was helped by assistants to pray, they seemed to appreciate it
- Did not spend as long time here as before, saw not much new but the
- Saw children celebrating the shichi-go-san ceremony,
 - o Boy came with his parents and grandparents in a kimono, after the ceremony he was holding a medallion and a stick with tassels.
 - o Presents from the ceremony

- People were busy preparing for the chrysanthemum celebration
- Also saw that there were many *matsuris* and celebrations that were going to be in November,
- Little that happened at shrines in October.
- Was tired when entering but felt better after being in the shrine, but noticed that I was more relaxed at the Hato no Mori Hachiman *jinja*

Ise Grand Shrine, Naiku

Naiku, Inner shrine 8.10.15

Before entrance

- Before the entrance there is a huge parking area managed by many traffic offices
- There is an information centre to the right of the entrance, the old building/ shopping district to the left
- The entrance is a really big Tori leading you onto a brigade, similar to Gaku, only more vast, the entire area is enormous in comparison.
- Entrance has a big sign about museum as well, close to the bike parking,
- Huge school groups, at least 3 when we parked.
- Shrine is about 4-5 kilometers away from town
- Many people, a lot more than Geku
 - o Tour busses take abroad here

Entrance

- When entering the shrine were two huge groups of Japanese, all dressed very fine
 - o Company?
- After the bridge there are inner gardens being maintained while we are there
 - o Gives a very relaxing atmosphere
 - o Formed trees and green paths
 - o While walking there were sake caskets presented
- The paths are incredibly wide and the middle pathway is made with bigger white rocks
- No apparent cleansing station before entering the shrine area
 - o A path leads to the right which leads to a river, this is where the tour guides took their groups and showed them how to clean themselves
- Everyone walked down the long sloped steps leading to the river and did the cleansing ritual there
- Huge groups kept flooding in
- Passed through a Tori to get to the river
- Further in there was a house after a third Tori and a charm/service shop,, this house had drapes, no other had that where purple with the emperors seal and there were Japanese flags many places
- Again, many old trees
- Building has gold on them as well
 - o Not sure of its function, think it is a ceremony house (turned out it was)

Main shrine: entered shrine at 15-16:00, sunny

- A lot of smooth and protected trees, because people keep touching them, different paths along two pathways to the main shrine, main shrine
- On the right was a guard house, inside it was similar to Geku shrine
 - o The ropes with tassels, the gravel, the placement of the different houses

- Shinto priest house had only one priest
- Many/ continuous stream of people praying
- Heard no birds, only trees blowing in the wind and Japanese
- Inside there was a ritual:
 - o A family of two elder males, two elder women, one younger man, two younger ladies, with little girls and one last middleaged lady
 - o Elder man talked to the priest, signed a book, they all went inside, lined up as explained in front of the priest, bowed, priest bowed to them, to the Kami house, took salt, threw softly towards the groups
 - o Priest went in first, then elder, men, women, young man, women with children, last woman
 - o They walked on the grey gravel, NOT the cement area, faced priest
 - o On entering the priest bowed to Kami, again when he was in the middle, he did not touch the white path
 - o He wore white clothes, black hat, and held a stick
 - o The group was line up, the priest talked to them, motioned for eldest man to enter the white path while the rest stood in line on the side
 - o The priest bowed to the man, visa versa, then priest held the bow, old man led the prayer with the rest of the family
 - o When finished, they bowed to priest, left the same order they entered
 - o Bags ha to be left on the side of Shinto priest house.
- OBS: anyone who entered the area in between prayer hall and Kami house were dressed nicely!
- Two guards inside the area
- Not allowed to take pictures
- Was close to 4-4:30 on the way back
- Saw another house, the area is huuuge!
 - o Saw people exit and enter the purple cloth house on the way back and people touching the trees
- The sun made it beautiful and the entire area is beautiful!
- The feeling is serene and relaxed, for all
- Elder do not talk loudly but do laugh and have fun
- The crowd is bigger and more varied than at the Geku Shrine
- No majority age group
- Continuous stream of tourist groups
 - o Still a lot of space to walk, fewer than when I was her in Sakura season
- A lot of maintenance work is done
- Man removed hat when bowing before the Tori

Naiku Shrine, Inner Ise shrine, 9.10.15

Weather: good

Time: 14:30 and end 16:00

- Very varied dress code, women in kimono, other in trainers and caps
- Seen no office worker, groups, schools, elder, family and Chinese groups
 - o Again very few western foreigners
- Garden on both sides of path, on the right they are digging and chainsawing
 - o Six benches are placed on the side for people to sit
- Only natural materials used in this area
- Tori at the start and end of bride #1

- Seems like very few seats for the crowds coming
- Wheelchairs given to those in need
- Seems one is not supposed to sit here, but to head to the shrine
- Old woman sitting by herself in wheelchair
 - Family came back to get her
- Looks like a bonsai tree garden
- After bonsai garden there were Sake caskets on the left
- Cleansing station right before the Third Torii
- People touch the Torii here
- After Torii and before creek there is a closed area again
- Haven't seen young people remove hats before Torii
- People clean at both stationed in the creek
- Lake is secluded, trees on each side and trees covering the entire other side.
- By the lake there is a road leading to the right, to a shrine
 - A group was led here
 - Alternative path
- Inside the fence was a 'tomb' like sized rock structure
 - Many rocks
 - Group laughed a lot till each person came to the shrine and became serious during prayer
 - Laughed right after
- Much less people on this route
 - The group even went back to the main path
 - No protected trees, but old
- Path leads to a bridge with Torii
- Bridge at your back you see the charm/ service shop shrine
- Many walk with maps and guides,
- *Miko* sells charms
 - Priests sell services
- Next to shop is purple curtain house
- With only English sign 'keep out'
 - Jap. Flag on the nearest building
- Incredibly old and tall trees create the pathway
- Many enclosed areas, buildings open places and trees
- Many clothing brands
 - Like fjellreven backpacks
- Why are only certain trees protected?

Main shrine

- First view of main shrine is the wall, then alternative exit
- People bring suitcases
- Again a lot of maintenance crew
- Bamboo protected trees (5) close to the entrance to shrine
- Wall with closed open house structure behind
- A lot of talking and laughing
 - Hear the laugh of men most
- Every group is huge
- Stone steps leading to the shrine are whole stone, not gravel
 - With big stone railing
- A line to pray at the shrine

- Two trees with bamboo protection within the shrine (prayer area)
- White curtain conceals the area behind the hall
- Holy branches again.

Ritual

- Group of men (40-60)
 - o Bow towards Kami
 - o They all stand in white stone, the eldest leads the prayer on cue of priest, done same way as before, exit through different exit, close to the Shinto house
 - Bow towards priest afterwards
- Two were caught taking pictures while I was here, told sternly off
- Bunches of branches (with white tassels) next to Torii
- Man waters the stone where people stand to pray in prayer hall, I have to move from my tree
 - o Paper with emperor seal
- Cement steps connected to white path here
- One tree inside the Torii area
- Only Japanese signs
- People seem to be quicker here than Geku
- Seen no long prayer
 - o Still continuous stream of people
- An informal atmosphere
 - o All seemed very calm
- Though when praying people seem very deep
- Shinto apprentice collects coins
- Shinto priests sit in the inner room, reading by a small table

On way out

- One cannot bring food into the shrine area at all (all the way back to the parking lot)
- The big house by the carp (on the path to the right of the charm shop) was a place to sit and relax, buy things toilet and drink dispensers
 - o The carp were many, big and from the looks of it, old
- The number of people dwindled with the sun, those who remained the longest were the old
- The place had a continuous calm, though the guards were more scrutinizing than the other places
- The amount of people looking at me was more than normal, but I also just saw one other when I walked.
- An old man talked to me at the end while I got my bike but I did not understand him
- Last time I walked through the shopping/food area, I was more dogs in wagons than on the ground
 - o This time it was the other way around
- Many young people out of the school uniform, compared to last time
- The amount of people similar
- Saw man with very expensive car driving out the 'in' sign, could this be the car blessing area?
- Many who were not good at walking for longer periods and handicapped were at the shrine with the help of shrine workers.

Inner Naiku Shrine 10.10.15

Saturday, time 10:30-11:30 ish

Weather: cloudy and a little chilly

- Much more people
- More families, more people dressed in kimono
- Two Shinto priests

Ritual at main shrine

- While I am standing there
 - o One woman prayed by Tori
 - o One man in suit and woman in kimono
 - o A group of ten dressed in suits. One woman dressed formally
 - Man in full grey suit leads with woman behind man, man in front is not the eldest
 - The rituals are quick and consecutive
 - A group stand in two line and they all pray, led by grey suit
- Intense and continuous streams of people
- Fresh branches everywhere
- Most women hold babies while most men care for toddlers/ children
 - o Two kids killed a grasshopper
- Many buy charms before prayer (see many with bags)
- Another group (of four, 3 men and 1 woman)
 - o Oldest lead, all four stand in the white
- Bunches of branches in the middle are not switched
- A group of eight men also do a prayer
- The amount of people does not diminish
- Always someone praying in the centre
 - o Group of 8: all young men, not the oldest lead the ritual, a company?
- One single old (60ish) woman prayed too
- All who enter the centre are formally dressed
- The pathway leading to amateratsu shrine was not that clear (is the other not Amateratsu?)

Amateratsu:

- Whole stone steps led down to the area/shrine. The shrine and open area next to it was higher up on a hill(ish) so there were stone steps that led to the shrine
- The white stones formed a path from the Kami house to the worshiper platform
 - o Some prayed to the kami before the steps, very long queue
- Those that stood in front of the path also stood on white but was possible to pray with money toss on the sides as well
 - o Was a long line to the white area
- Some (two men that I saw) prayed at the bottom of the steps
- OBS: was no Tori near this shrine's entrance
- White are on the side with only a very small house

On the way out:

- Cleansing station close to resting house, before that the house there was a house with a white horse (proper horse)
- Saw many women in kimono, some in huge groups
 - o A small group of men (5-7) also wore male kimono but most men wore a suit, black

- Sign at one of the stations said 'welcome to the Spiritual City, Ise'
- Many Japanese visitors, some Chinese, very few *gaijin*
- Many dogs in the shopping area
 - o However, they are not allowed into the shrine area

11.4.3 Informants outside interview and their shrines

Informant A:

Hokkaido Shrine Observation:

16.09.16

- The shrine is situated in a park (don't remember the name) the park included other things than just the shrine. Seemed to be a popular place, many you school kids (10-18 years) , dog owners, elders. When walking to the shrine you are lead up a 'weak/ slow slope with rock steps on these steps we met a family with a wee child that came from the direction of the shrine
 - o The family was a mother, father, grandmother and child who used a trolley but could walk (2-4 years?)
- This is during the period before school
- There are a couple of people walking in the same direction (3-5 people)
- The first Tori is a stone Tori with a white stone sign in the front
- Entire shrine is in this shrine and surrounded by trees, animals and flowers. The feeling you get walking this is a feeling of calm, safe and relaxed, informal atmosphere
- It does feel like walking in the park
- The trees are green, lush and reflects the sunlight
- Not as many crows or cicadas as at Meiji shrine
- Is the biggest shrine in Hokkaido but source did not think it was an imperial one
 - o Turned out to be an imperial shrine!
- The Tori to the entrance of a shrine is made of metal, with no signias
 - o There is a wooden building to the left of the Tori on the 'inside'
- The pathway is paved with light stone and very clean, not many leaves though it is surrounded by trees
- There is a fence separating a shrine and the 'shed' and Tori (ikke sikker om dette er main shrine)
- The shrine space is open, but defined by a fence
- Walked past smaller shrines on the way to the main shrine but A did not know what it belonged to.
 - o The different paths now are gravel and the feeling of park is stronger
- Everything is very clean and pretty, but still there are no trashcans
- Are many paths on the way to the shrine that lead to other places and smaller shrines
- There are white stone 'lanterns', I am unsure if these are symbolic or work. Similar to the ones at Meiji Shrine
- Six people were walking in the front of us
- Inside I did see the imperial seal
 - o Don't know if the shrine is an imperial one

- Beautiful entrance with intricate rope work
 - o Very traditional with two crates on the side (with drawers)
- Below the traditional rope with tassels/ behind it were red (back) and white (front) textiles with a flower pattern (imperial seal?)
- As we enter there are five people praying at the same time
- The crates seem to be information displays with brochures and notification paper
- The entrance/pathway to the main shrine is gravel with what that looks like a place to park one's car? (is it a place to bless one')
- The entrance itself is a big wooden but open structure
- None of the signs are in English
- The structure is of wood
 - o On the inside it has the hanging lanterns with imperial seal, this may be an imperial shrine?
- Main shrine building is decorated with golden flowers (imperial seal)
- Another pair of stairs lead to the house of the kami/ the actual shrine,
- Many levels of steps
 - o This has been consistent with every 'main' shrine I have been at
 - o Outside the main structure was the cleansing station, with no instructions for cleansing in English but there was a comic/ instructions for children
 - We did the ritual differently, she did not know why or noticed, was taught to do this by her family.
- Unlike at meiji or the local shrine, people could walk inside and sit in the shrine house! When we were there it seemed like a ritual led by a Shinto priest was going on
 - o A did not know or understand what it was
- This is passed the rills for *go yen* (5yen) (means also luck) five yen cents
 - o You can throw in what you like but *go-en* is the best for it means luck
 - These are not easy to come by
- The area is quite big with many trees on the inside
 - o Prayer plaques (*uma*)
 - Are taken very seriously, serious form of prayer.
 - o Station for 'unlucky' predictions
 - If one gets a knot of luck one keeps it have the luck with you, if you get an unlucky one you can tie the paper to this station and leave your 'unluck' at the shrine and it will not follow you
- Many trees and the entire complex is a giant open square as in Meiji, only more trees
- Many of the *uma* ask for success with one's exams.
- There is a Japanese flag at this shrine!! Not always seen...
- There was a talisman shop here too
- These gave you:
 - o Luck
 - Luck with exams
 - General luck
 - Luck in love etc.
 - o Birth:
 - Safe birth
 - Getting pregnant
 - Being pregnant etc
 - o Traffic:
 - Luck in traffic, safety in traffic
 - o Health

- To be healthy
 - Protect against certain diseases
 - Keep disease at bay
- Could also buy zodiac signs
- The Japanese follow two calendars, the Augustan and the Japanese. The Jap. Follows the regime of the different emperors so with every new emperors it starts over
 - Ex: I was born in 1991, I was born in the third year, this year is the 27th year of the current emperor's rule.
 - Usually the calendar says the name of the emperor + the year
- Source would go to this shrine on new years eve with family to show respect to the Kami, but she did not know which Kami this shrine was for
- She mentioned that the size and how sacred a shrine was, it would be as influential. A local shrine would be influential and work in that area, whereas if you wanted a prayer or wish to reach Norway or the rest of the world one should pray at the bigger shrines, such as Meiji and Ise grand shrines.
- When walking out of the shrine there was again someone's car eing blessed by a Shinto priest dressed in blue
- When talking with A she mentioned how when she gets a car she would too most likely have it blessed, is part of their daily life
- There were no sign of stress looking at any of the people
 - Everyone was relaxed and calm. The entire atmosphere was best described as comfortable, maybe even informal. No one stressed at the shrine praying and always took their time
 - Thou it was informal when A described the different plaques she emphasized that this was serious and that all prayers were done with 'pure' intentions, that they were all meant honestly.
- Yet which Kami they prayed to, how often or how many times was not that important
- I left the place with a pleasant feeling

- Weather, sunny and warm, walked with a Japanese friend.
- The shrine did not have the tassels/rope to call the kami
- Source mentioned that charms was something to only use on yourself, but was not concerned if done wrong.
- No repercussions or punishment for doing wrong
- Checked after shrine visit which kami were there, showed that it was an imperial shrine but did hold other Kami than just the emperor
 - Informant searched this on a Japanese website.

Informant B:

shrine: Sumiyoshi Taisha

- Is a shrine built by empress for the three Sea Kami
- Is very old, was given a leaflet with the brief account of the shrine's history.
- Informant had been here a couple times before
- Included a power centre, first one my informant's showed me.
- Was really big, had many *temizuya* and shrines, huge area
- In order enter one crossed a small lake using small but high orange/red bridges.
- Was the most colourful shrine I observed, a lot of orange colour.

- Informant B showed how to use a power centre
- Informant B explained what the different banners were:
 - o Different donors: individuals, families or companies, said that the state did not support any shrines.
- Was told the shrine was established by an empress but was not an imperial shrine but was for the main three Sea Kami.
- There was a pond with social ducks and many turtles.
 - o Informant B said that these turtles were there because people put them there.
- Huge area, was not surrounded by trees as the other shrines were, but big.
- Ground was always light gravel.
- Kami houses inside were natural colour but fences, Torii and bridges were in the orange colour.

Informant M:

19.10.15

Wanted to talk politics outside interview as well

Showed a Japanese article on Abe and how he two days before took his cabinet to Yasukuni Shrine:

- From a communist newspaper!
- 20 politicians visit Yasukuni shrine
 - o 19/20 ministers in the house of ministers are member at the Shinto group (look this up)
- Feels Shinto controls politics, many politicians have connections with Shinto, support group, or Yasukuni worship group
- She seems to have an ambiguous relationship with Shinto, critical to government
- One Buddhist in the house of ministers
- 5 years ago, the com. Group (first column) 2 000 000 against keeping maiden name, 100 mp support this, source afraid that it is worse today
- Media picked up lack of female candidates
- The Shinto faction has a lot of power

Translation part

- Language in newspaper use a very proper and heavy language that many struggle with, makes it difficult and a struggle to newspapers.
 - o (saw very few read newspaper publicly)
 - o economy minister was Akira Amari, resigned in Januar because of failure
 - <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/868c5aba-c59e-11e5-b3b1-7b2481276e45.html#axzz4796SFT7v>
 - o Abe is continuously changing his cabinet
- Cabinet consists of comrades with connections to each other and in the spirit of camaraderie visits Yasukuni
 - o Mener at det ble gjort tydelig at de tilhørte en av 3 grupper/organisasjoner
 -
- These three factions are as follow
 - o Nippon Kaigi: Non-political conservative nationalist,
 - o *Shinto Seiji Renmei Kokkai giin kandankai*: explicit Shinto lobby group (a subsection of *jinja honcho*)
 - o ‘support that as a political group one should visit yasukuni’ - group that wants politicians to visit Yasukuni as politicians

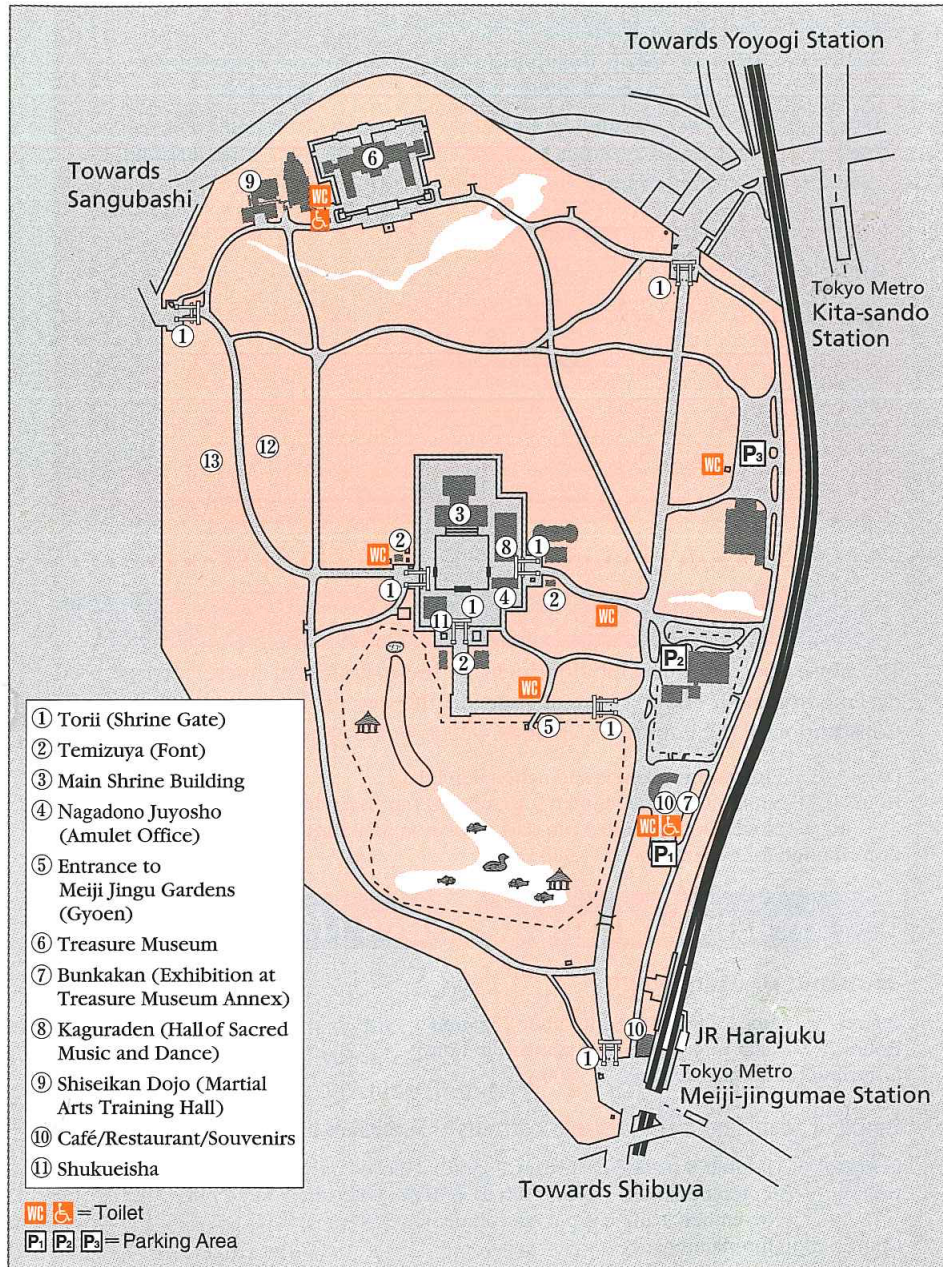
- stressed that no one knows about this group

Shrine visit

- Is a shrine for Nature, *jinja*
- Informant does not really follow Shinto but wanted to show me a shrine
- Were many old people
- Every 7 year they put up a new holy white tree (big matsuri, normal otherwise)
- Was also chrysanthemum *matsuri* many different flowers were displayed at the shrine
- Main shrine in an open space and smaller house surrounding it
- Was a small shrine
- Asked what the rope with white tassels were called: no one knew
 - o Informant asked a group of elders and none of them knew or thought of it
 - Elder starting explaining the rope and tassels use, that they showed them what was sacred and so on
 - o Found a Shinto priest who knew: The rope was called *shimenawa* and the tassels were called *gohei*
- When walking into the shrine there were banners along the path upwards toward the shrine (donations) and the charm/service shop to the side
- Informant said that *ema* and other services can cost a lot and the more one pays the more luck you will get
 - o She did not like this system
- When talking about shichi-go-san ceremony informant M reacted,
 - o Meant that it cost a lot and ceremonies like that was a way to get loyalties, control people
 - o Nothing bad happens if you don't do it but nothing GOOD happens either.
- One Torii that led up to the shrine

11.5 Map of Meiji Jingu

Meiji Jingu Map



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<http://www.meijijingu.or.jp/english/index.html>