

Tsunoda, Ryusaku, William T. Bary, and Donald Keene. *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Vol. I: From Earliest Times to 1600*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1964.

These myths can be difficult to read because they are so at odds with how we think about the world. Although they can sound dry, try to find how they would resonate with a Japanese person, to have survived so long.

“Birth of the Sun Goddess.” and “The Divine Creation of the Imperial Ancestors.” pp. 14 – 17

- What's the significance behind the lord of the universe being a second-generation god?
- English doesn't use such flowery names. What might the use of them suggest about Japanese culture?
- What does this story suggest about attitudes toward children and personality?

“Descent of the Divine Grandson with the Three Imperial Regalia.” pp. 17 - 18

- What significance do the imperial regalia have for whom?
- Different sub-ethnic group in Japan have distinct divine origins. What significance does this have?
- Mirror and jewel makers also have divine origins. What significance does this have?

“Birth of the Land.” pp. 21 – 26

- Why is it important to study ancient Shinto myths?
- What does the gods' behavior around the column suggest about male-female interactions?

“The Sun Goddess and Susa-no-o.” pp. 27 - 29

- The footnotes mention a sacred tree, mirror, and dance from the story used in current ritual. How does myth empower ritual?

“The Imperial Regalia.” pp. 274 - 276

- How are the three regalia considered to embody the virtues of right rule?
- What are the effects of knowing that gem-makers are divinely inspired?

Beaseley, W. G. “Buddhism and Shinto.” In *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000. ISBN: 978-0520225602. pp. 42-47.

The complex mix of Buddhism and Shinto is a core source of Japanese culture. The fact that Buddhism had such a strong effect on the early Japanese suggests that it was an appropriate religion for their culture -- it fulfilled some needs and empowered institutions which were important to their society.

- Do we have kami in American culture?
- How did the political role of religion support the spread of Buddhism?
- How was Buddhism well-equipped to displace previous religions?

- How was Buddhism an appropriate technology for the royal courts? for the people?

Storry, Richard. "The Samurai Emerges." *The Way of the Samurai*. London, England: Orbis Books, 1978. ISBN: 9780856134043. pp. 18-41.

The samurai -- perhaps like all social classes -- emerged straight out of legend. The Gempei war, including the legends of the refined culture that came before it and the power struggles that lasted for centuries after it, is a foundational part of the samurai's sense of identity. The way it's remembered serves an important purpose in Japanese culture.

- How did the Heian court respond to the rise of the samurai?
- What internal flaws led to the decay of Kyoto court culture?
- How do the meanings of service and honor differ between samurai and knight?
- Is seppuku beautiful?
- Why did the samurai embrace seppuku?
- How could the samurai claim servitude to the emperor while overthrowing and displacing his court?
- Under what conditions can a samurai break etiquette?
- What role do the legends of the Gempei war play in forming the identity of the samurai? of the contemporary Japanese?

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