

## QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS?

### How many Shinto shrines are there?

The actual number of Shinto Shrines in Japan today is not accurately known. In 1880 there were, according to official government reports, 186,812, not counting the ones within commercial and industrial establishments or within the compounds of private institutions and homes. In 1900 they had increased to 196,357 but by 1920 there were only 115,509, and in 1936, that is, shortly before the beginning of World War II, the total number was 110,967.

The total number of shrines reported in the 1960 *Religious Year Book* of the Ministry of Education was 80,674 as of December 31, 1959. What has happened to the other thirty thousand is uncertain. Some have united for administrative purposes and constitute a single legal organization. A large number of very small wayside shrines and shrines in out-of-the-way places, which never had definite precincts nor much, if any, organization, are not affiliated with any of the associations and have not been incorporated independently. Consequently, they do not appear in any reports. Probably most of them remain intact and are cared for by local residents, but no doubt some have ceased to exist. This is not a new phenomenon. The ancient records report the names of many shrines about which nothing else is known. Incidentally, in the *Engi Shiki*<sup>a</sup> ("Detailed Laws of the Engi Period" 921 A.D.) there is a list of 2,861 shrines.

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a. 延喜式

**What is meant by the term "shrine?" How are they classified?**

Many writers in the early Meiji period used the terms "shrine" and "temple" interchangeably to refer to either Buddhist or Shinto sanctuaries. However, it has become customary in recent decades to use the term "temple" for Buddhist sanctuaries and "shrine" for the traditional Shinto sanctuaries. The word "shrine" is a translation of several Japanese terms the most common of which are *jinja*<sup>a</sup> (divine dwelling), *jingū*<sup>b</sup> (divine palace), *shinden*<sup>c</sup> (divine hall), *shaden*<sup>d</sup> (dwelling hall), *omiya*<sup>e</sup> (august palace), *oyashiro*<sup>f</sup> (august dwelling) and *hokora*<sup>g</sup> (a small wayside shrine).

The miniature shrine-like structure seen in the homes on the "sacred shelf" (*kami-dana*),<sup>h</sup> which is usually called in English a "god shelf," is ordinarily referred to as *kami-dana*, but sometimes it is called a *miya*, or *miya-gatai* (literally, "shrine-form"). Some shrines may have special terms for this structure. At Yasukuni Shrine it is called *shinshōj* that is, "sacred place."

In a Shinto context these all mean "a dwelling for the kami." Prior to the end of World War II shrines were government institutions and the use of these terms was restricted by law to state shrines. With the disestablishment of Shrine Shinto in the fall of 1945 this legal restriction was abolished, but there is no indication that these terms are being widely used by any other type of institution.

To distinguish a main sanctuary from a subordinate sanctuary, the term *honden*<sup>k</sup> (main hall) is also used. The term *jingū* and *jinji*<sup>l</sup> and the endings *-gū*<sup>l</sup> and *-ja*,<sup>m</sup> also pronounced *-sha*,<sup>n</sup> are used commonly as the final component in shrine names. Examples of such usage may be seen in the following: Meiji Jingū,<sup>o</sup> Yasukuni

a. 神社 b. 神宮 c. 神殿 d. 社殿 e. お宮 f. お社 g. 祠 h. 神棚  
i. 宮型 j. 神味 k. 本殿 l. 宮 m. 社 n. 社 o. 明治神宮

Jinja,<sup>a</sup> Tōshō-gū,<sup>b</sup> and Shōkon-sha.<sup>c</sup>

As may be surmised from the explanations given above, the ideograph for *gū*, also pronounced *miya*, means "palace." *Jingū*, therefore, means a "kami's palace" and is used as a title for "shrines of a special status," that is, those closely associated with the Imperial Family. The ending *-gū* after a proper noun has the same meaning but it is applied to shrines having a relatively lower status than *jingū*. A *jinja* is an ordinary shrine, and the ending *sha*, which has the same meaning, is used for shrines having a relatively lower status. Regardless of what has just been said above, the terms *jinja* and *omiya* in common parlance are generally interchangeable.

A different type of classification, no longer in current use but often encountered in pre-war documents and books, and occasionally found on the name posts of some shrines, is the pre-disestablishment official classification of the government into: government (*kampeisha*<sup>d</sup>), national (*kokuhei-sha*<sup>e</sup>), prefectural (*kensha*<sup>f</sup> or *fusha*<sup>g</sup>), district (*gōsha*<sup>h</sup>), village (*sonsha*<sup>i</sup>), and shrines without rank (*mu-kaku-sha*<sup>j</sup>).

The government and national shrines<sup>k</sup> together were called *kankokuhei-sha*, and were further divided into three grades: great (*taik*<sup>k</sup>), medium (*chū*<sup>l</sup>), and small (*shō*<sup>m</sup>); but, except where technical accuracy was required, these terms were not used. For example, Katori<sup>n</sup> Shrine in Chiba prefecture was a *kampe taisha*<sup>o</sup>; Tsurugaoka Hachiman<sup>p</sup> Shrine in Kamakura, a *kokuhei chūsha*<sup>q</sup>; and Ōkunitama<sup>r</sup> Shrine in Fuchū<sup>s</sup> outside Tokyo a *kokuhei shōsha*<sup>t</sup> but

a. 帝國神社 b. 東照宮 c. 招魂社 d. 官幣社 e. 國幣社 f. 県社 g. 府社  
h. 郷社 i. 村社 j. 無格社 k. 大 l. 中 m. 小 n. 香取 o. 官幣大社  
p. 八幡 q. 國幣中社 r. 大國魂 s. 府中 t. 國幣小社

\* The terms "government" and "national" shrines are not very satisfactory, but appear to be the best that can be found. For a detailed historical explanation of the use of these terms the reader is referred to the footnote on page 12 of Dr. D.C. Holkom's "The National Faith of Japan," (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., LTD., 1938)

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these expressions were never in common use. The Grand Shrine of Ise (Ise Dai Jingū<sup>a</sup>) and the Grand Shrine of Izumo (Izumo Taisha<sup>b</sup>) are two of a few cases in which the grade is ordinarily considered to be a part of the name. However, the correct name for the Grand Shrine of Ise is simply "Jingū," that is "The Shrine."

In the same general classification was a group of twenty-seven shrines devoted to the veneration of those who had rendered specially noteworthy service to the Emperor. These shrines were called special government shrines (*bekkaku kampei-sha*<sup>c</sup>).

In July, 1951, the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honchō<sup>d</sup>) temporarily classified all shrines into *sōsha*<sup>e</sup>, that is, main shrines, and *shoshaf*, that is, all other shrines. The *sōsha* were the former government and national shrines (*kankokuhei-sha*<sup>f</sup>). In 1951, however, this classification was changed to *beppyō jinjah*<sup>g</sup> (special list shrines) and *jinjai*, that is, shrines. The special list shrines are the former government and national shrines plus some of the very influential and more active shrines, such as Nogi<sup>j</sup> Shrine in Tokyo.

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a. 伊勢大神宮 b. 出雲大社 c. 別格官幣社 d. 神社本庁 e. 宗社 f. 諸社  
g. 官海幣社 h. 別表神社 i. 神社 j. 乃木