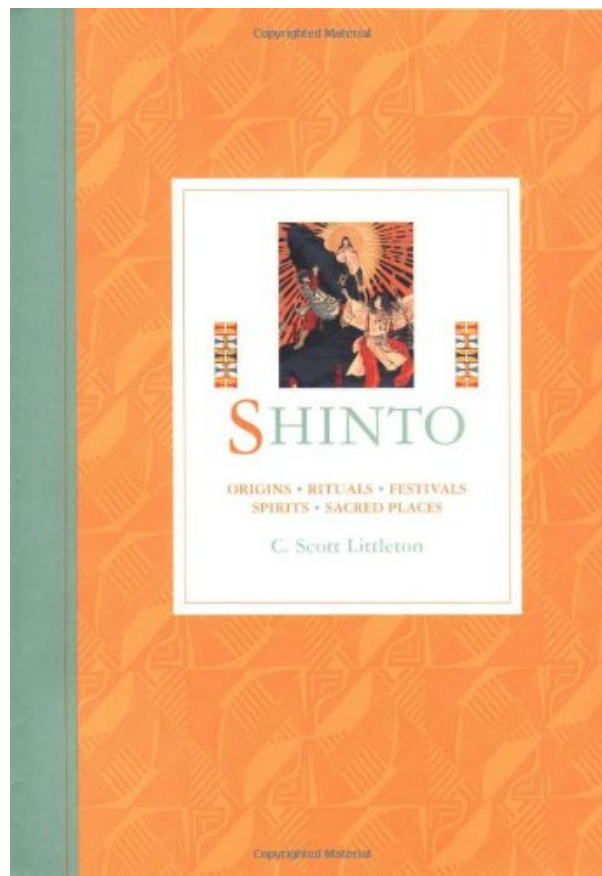
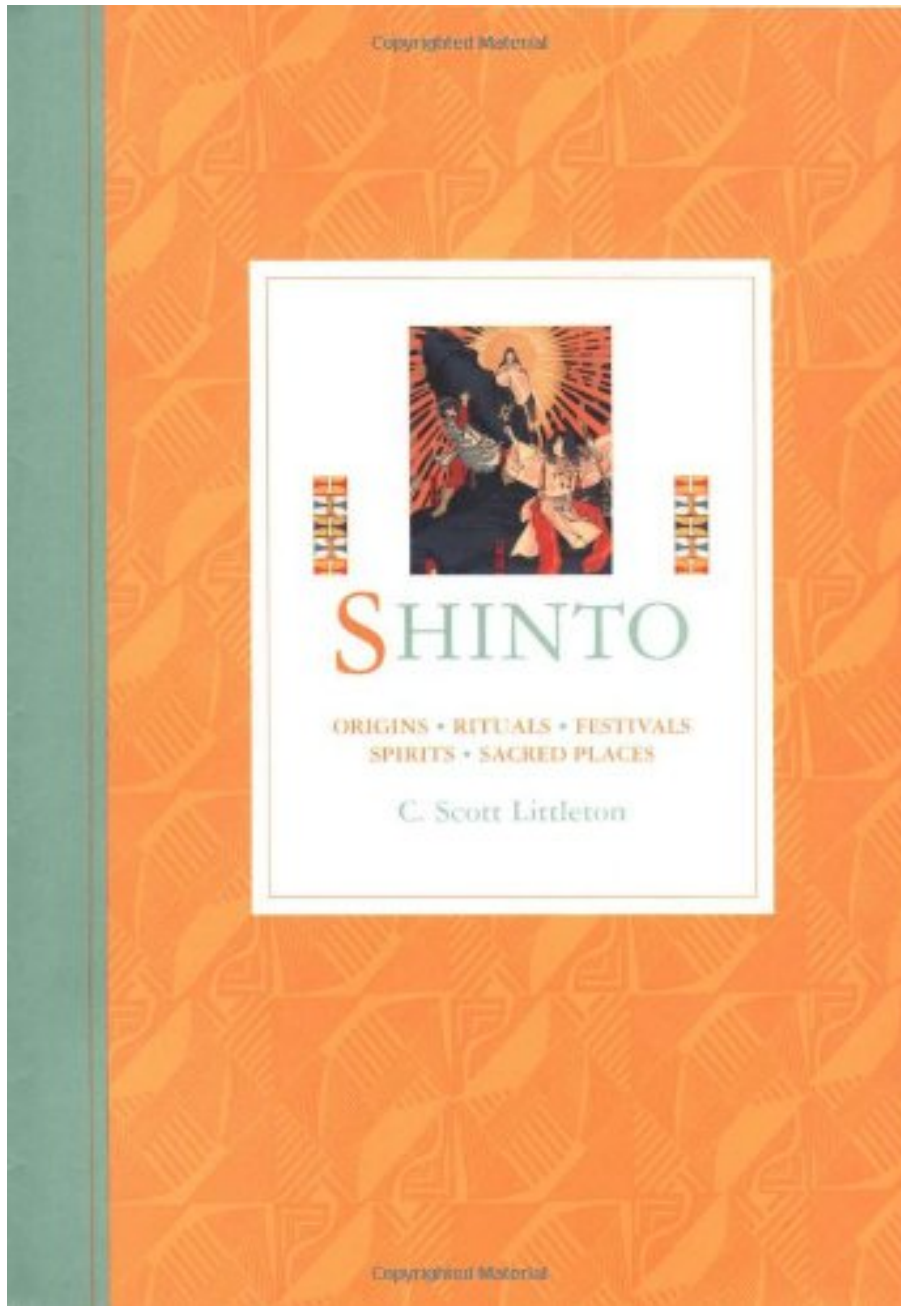


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From Publishers Weekly

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From Library Journal

These two introductory texts are similar both in format they are short, visually appealing, and have a small trim size and in arrangement, with chapters including "Origins and Historical Development," "Sacred Persons," "Ethical Principles," "Sacred Time," "Death and After Life," and "Society and Religion." Chapters conclude with a one-page excerpt and commentary from a sacred or historical book. Littleton (*Eastern Wisdom*) and Gordon (*The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*) provide clear and informative explanations about Shinto and Islam, respectively, as they develop and balance themes of religion, history, society, and modernity within their discussions. In discussing Shinto, a significant religion in Japan, Littleton focuses on deities and spirits, shrines, and the ways Buddhism and Christianity have influenced Shintoism. He frequently cites Ryusaku Tsunoda's *Sources of Japanese Traditions* (1958), along with more recent sources. The several themes Gordon develops in his introduction to Islam include Hadith, or stories regarding the life, teachings, and actions of Muhammad; and Sharia, or ways divine will is portrayed in Islamic sacred law, Hadith, and the Quran. Libraries may already be well stocked with introductions to Islam by such authors as Karen Armstrong and John Esposito, but these useful works are unique in providing an introduction to their respective religions without trying to explain too much. These books can either stand alone or supplement a larger collection. Appropriate for academic and public libraries, especially where there is interest and existing religion collections. Naomi Hafter, Baltimore

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SHINTO: ORIGINS, RITUALS, FESTIVALS, SPIRITS, SACRED PLACES BY C. SCOTT LITTLETON PDF

In Japan, two religions predominate--Buddhism and Shintoism--and the Japanese people see no contradiction in practicing both: worshipping Buddha even as they revere the kami, the divine beings that populate the country and define the indigenous faith of Shintoism.

In *Shintoism and the Religions of Japan*, C. Scott Littleton illuminates this unusual spiritual pluralism and shows how it has fertilized a vast and varied religious landscape. Littleton describes the origins and development of Shinto (or Kami no Michi, "Way of the Gods"), the introduction of Buddhism a millennium and a half ago, the rise of various sects of Buddhism (some indigenous to Japan), and the role of the imperial court and the shogunate in the nation's religious life. Here too is a clear and succinct summary of Shintoism's teeming pantheon of spiritual figures, the holy writings of Shintoism, and the islands' landscape of holy sanctuaries. Littleton explains how Buddhism has been reinterpreted in light of Japan's indigenous traditions (some monumental statues of the Buddha are worshipped as manifestations of kami), and describes the "new religions" that flourished during the Meiji period of the late nineteenth century, after Japan once again opened up to the outside world. Writing with grace and clarity, he captures the essential features of Japanese religious life, including the countless local festivals and rituals, the importance of harmony and enlightenment, and concepts of death and salvation.

Lavishly illustrated with some thirty color photographs, sprinkled with boxed features that focus on fascinating issues, this volume offers a marvelous tour of Japan's distinctive spiritual experience.

- Sales Rank: #1235387 in Books
- Published on: 2002-05-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.30" h x .60" w x 7.90" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 112 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

16 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Shinto - The Way of the Gods, condensed for your convenience

By Zack Davisson

C. Scott Littleton's "Shinto: Origins, Ritual, Festivals, Spirits and Sacred Places" is a surprisingly good guide to Japan's native religion, considering its small size and ease of reading. This thin book takes a respectful look at Shinto's origin, main tenants, major characters, sacred texts and theology. The information is quite scholarly, as befits an Oxford Press publication.

It is a very brief overview, and should be considered as an introductory book for anyone who wants to quickly understand Shinto without dedicating considerable time. Only the very main aspects are introduced, and many controversial elements, such as the inclusion of Tenri-kyo amongst the Shinto sects, are never touched on. Other things such as the nature of kami and their role in Japanese society over time, are not developed well, and could lead to some misunderstandings regarding the kami. However, this is to be expected in such a small book.

There are several lovely pictures, but all in all this book is more text than photo-guide, as it should be. It is impressive to see Shinto so well-condensed, allowing for a general understanding of the religion in such a short time.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

I'd pass on this one

By Aaron Sotala

If you're a western tourist, who's never read anything about Shinto, you might be able to get something out of this book. Anyone with a little knowledge of the spiritual practice should probably pass on this one. It's too

condensed to really discuss the topic in anything more than a superficial way. It has some pretty pictures, but they do little to illustrate anything being discussed.

I also felt it suffered from being written by someone who was clearly from the West and seemed to be struggling to interpret it too much through the viewpoint of our own value systems and philosophy, rather than on its own terms. If he'd used the terms "ambiguity tolerance" or "contradictory" as a shorthand way of describing Shinto one more time, I think I'd have chucked the book in the waste bin.

10 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

good intro to the basics

By Joel Gee

This tiny book (100 pages in length and of small dimensions) explores the basics of the origins, rituals, festivals, spirits, sacred places, conception of sacred time, sacred texts and the afterlife as pertains to Shinto.

Also interesting is the author's discussion of how Shinto fits into the greater framework of Japanese society and how it is often practiced right alongside Buddhism with no feeling of contradiction. He says many Japanese often have Shinto weddings but Buddhist funerals.

The book has some beautiful photographs as well as some plates of works of art. This is the simplest of introductions, nothing in depth, no deep theology. I was surprised how much of it I already knew (and I've never read anything on Shinto.) I guess I just picked it up from talking to people and from literature. It did provide a lot of info I didn't know though and it piqued my interest enough to want to read more about Japan's indigenous religion.

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