ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Changing Role of Shinto: An Examination of Age Related Differences in Ritual Participation and Motivations in Japan

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PAGES: 84

The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency and motivations for participation in Shinto rituals in Kyoto, Japan. The study involved both qualitative and quantitative data gathered in July and August of 2009. The principal data consists of 85 surveys conducted in person on the grounds of Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto. Supplemental data from informal interviews with 10 individuals who live in the surrounding area serve to highlight themes and conclusions extrapolated from the data. The primary goal of this study was to discern what, if any, differences in behavior are apparent across age groups. It was found that there are in fact a number of differences including frequency of participation, types of rituals participated in, level of involvement in rituals, and even distance traveled to participate in rituals. This study offers a number of explanations as to why these differences may exist, but these explanations remain highly speculative. As such this study represents an initial investigation in age differences and religiosity in Japan, a topic that has had very little attention in the academic literature thus far.