THE CHANGING ROLE OF SHINTO:
AN EXAMINATION OF AGE RELATED DIFFERENCES IN
RITUAL PARTICIPATION AND MOTIVATIONS IN JAPAN

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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ABSTRACT

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

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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.
Acknowledgements

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Finally, I’d like to thank the priests at Yasaka shrine for allowing me to conduct my study at their shrine in Kyoto. And I am thankful for the willing participants of my surveys and interviews. Thank you for sharing a brief moment of your lives with me. You’ve given me a once in a lifetime experience, and a thesis I can be proud of.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Scholars of Japanese religion have long debated the nature of religious behavior in Japan. This debate primarily stems from most Japanese people’s claims that they are “not religious”, combined with their participation in many temple and shrine rituals and activities (see Kawano 2005; Nelson 1996a; Roemer 2006). In an attempt to sort some of this out, many scholars have entered the debate on what is and what is not considered religious behavior. To some degree, this has produced useful theoretical insights into the nature of Japanese religious behavior, but it has also limited the attention given to how Japanese people actually use and exploit the idea of religion and its ritual/religious activity. Some scholars have chosen to expand their definition of religion outright in order to include Japanese behaviors, and it is in their studies that popular western economic models were applied to Japanese religious behavior; models that have proven to be particularly insightful in their analysis and explanation of behavior, but lack a foundation within the Japanese cultural perspective.

This thesis is therefore grounded in the anthropological idea that one must look first at how the Japanese people behave and participate in ritual and religious activity, while foregoing any application and elaboration of theoretical models in general. Furthermore, since the academic literature tends to treat all Japanese age groups the same when it comes to religious behavior, this study also will focus on the differences between generations.

This study represents a mixed methods approach to ethnographic investigation aimed primarily at examining the role of Shinto shrines and rituals in the lives of
Japanese individuals. Questions regarding frequency of visitation to shrines, motivation for attendance, and involvement in rituals and other religious behavior were asked in order to discern if, and what kind of, differences exist between age groups and how these groups use and conceptualize Shinto and ritual activity\textsuperscript{1}.

It has been argued (Schnell 1997) that in Japan the shrine (and by extension its associated festivals and rituals) has played an important role in the formation of personal and social or national identity. This research builds upon this idea but places further emphasis on the differences of this role between two age groups. In particular the data will show that there are different motives for visitation, a similar difference between ritual participation and level of involvement, and a distinct separation between Shinto’s role in personal and national identity formation.

Chapter 2 begins with a brief introduction to the historical origins of Shinto and its relationship to government and politics. This is particularly important in order to introduce the background behind the complex nature of political involvement that has played a variable role in how the citizenry associate and identify with religious institutions in Japan. Chapter 3 introduces the economic models commonly used in the study of Japanese religion in religious studies as well as recent research on relevant topics. An introduction to the field site and general project outline is given in Chapter 4, and subsequent chapters are then divided by theme to present the results and data collected in this study. Chapter 5 deals with frequency and motivations for visitation to shrines, and is followed by a discussion of ritual participation by looking both at

\textsuperscript{1} In keeping with the American Anthropological Association (AAA) formatting style guide, all Japanese terms will appear in italics when introduced for the first time. English translations will appear in parenthesis, and a glossary of terms can be found in Appendix A.
frequency and in what capacity an individual participates in rituals in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 introduces the final topic of inquiry, identity, and the role of Shinto as an important element in Japanese identity formation. Finally in Chapter 8 this thesis ends with a brief summary and a look at further investigations.
Chapter 2: Historical Origins, Shinto, and Politics

It is important when studying Shinto to first locate it within its historical and political context. Therefore it is necessary to begin by discussing the general history of Shinto before moving on to a more specific thematic inquiry. The origins of Shinto date back approximately fourteen centuries. For the purposes of this thesis however, a brief examination of pre-modern Shinto will introduce readers to the themes of nationalism, modernization, and social cohesion - ones that are prevalent in post-industrialized Japan.

Specific attention will be paid to the radical changes that influenced the public image of Shinto during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and the post-war era (1945) to present) immediately following the culmination of the World War II (1937-1945) (Ellwood 2008).

**General Historical Overview**

As far back as one can trace the national identity of Japan, Shinto has been an integral part in the formation of identity and cultural tradition. The earliest accounts of Japanese civilization dates back to the second and third centuries C.E., when Chinese chronicles describe the country as a conglomeration of kingdoms (Hendry 1995). It is unclear if these kingdoms represent immigrant settlements from mainland Asia, but archeological evidence of key shaped burial mounds from 100 B.C.E. shows remarkable similarity to mounds known to have been built in the fifth century C.E. suggesting an
unbroken continuity with pre-historical civilization (Hendry 1995). These excavations also show the usage of metal tools for both military and religious purposes. Among the latter a bronze mirror, jeweled spear, and curved jewel became the symbols of the imperial family that rose from the leading clans of the Yamato Plains in central Honshu (the main island of Japan), and claimed divine supremacy by their descent from the gods. Throughout the course of Japanese history this imperial line has not maintained political dominance, but is has nevertheless remained a strong central symbolic focus for Japanese identity (Hendry 1995).

It is said that Shinto was not officially recognized as a native tradition or even given a name until it came face to face with “imported elements” such as Buddhism and Daoism during the sixth century (Isomae 2005; Tsuda 1949). With the introduction of Buddhist themes into Japanese religion, many 6th century scholars felt that it was necessary to define the native religious tradition that is now known as Shinto. Early Shinto was transmitted through oral tradition and participation in rituals. It was understood that the *kami* were supernatural deities and forces that embodied a piece of the natural world (Nelson 1996a). In simplistic terms a kami can be anything from natural phenomena to important people that have since passed away.

The movement of foreign religious theologies into Japan during the 6th century led Shinto practitioners to systematize their religious tradition to support Imperial rule. Shinto priests began compiling existing myths and legends into written accounts, and a more intricate mythology was created that gave many of these kami a name and genealogy (Nelson 1996a). This was an attempt by the imperial family to legitimize their
ruling authority based on claimed descent² from Amaterasu, the sun kami. Amaterasu is one of the most important kami because of her role as the sun kami and because of her mythological connection to the imperial family.

It is important to understand that while Shinto was beginning to emerge as an official national ideology, many parts of the Japanese archipelago were still resisting state unification. It was not until the eighth century that a strong central Japanese state emerged. With the imperial family embracing the Shinto ideology, Shinto shrines were seen as a rallying force behind the mobilization of national spirit (Fridell 1975). Visiting a Shinto shrine and participating in the rituals reinforced Shinto ideology and therefore also supported the legitimacy of the imperial family, and its right to rule the nation.

During the Heian period (794-1185) Shinto saw the expansion of Chinese ideologies such as Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan but it survived as a form of national cultural tradition³. In fact, Shinto and Buddhism were seen by the population as complementary; the former concerned with life processes and the latter with the transition of death. This led to a synthesis of the two religions⁴ that would not be reversed until the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (Nelson 1996a). While Buddhism saw a rise in popularity, Shinto rituals were often incorporated into Buddhist practices. In this way, Shinto

² The imperial family claimed decent from Amaterasu in order to legitimize their rule of Japan (Nelson 1996a). Additionally this thousand year old claim was essentially overturned by the Emperor's declaration of humanity after World War II, which denied any supernatural lineage with the kami.

³ Here sources indicate that Shinto became synonymous with cultural tradition in the face of expanding foreign religious ideologies. However, this does not mean that Shinto is not also seen as a religious tradition. In fact, throughout Japan’s history Shinto has had a double identity of sorts that plays against this tension between religion and cultural tradition (Fridell 1975,Nelson 1996a). For this reason, this thesis will treat Shinto as a form of both cultural and religious tradition.

⁴ Similar to Shinto, Buddhism has long been involved in the tension between religious practices and cultural tradition. It may be better to view the two terms as complimentary rather than mutually exclusive. Cultural tradition in this sense can be read ‘religious cultural tradition’ or ‘religious tradition’.
survived the expansion of foreign, competing religious ideology and continued to grow as a form of national tradition. In addition, Shinto remained an essential tool for imperial legitimacy for even when the Emperor lost power to the shogun (“military rulers” essentially) Shinto was still seen as first and foremost Japanese and key to Japanese identity (Nelson 1996a).

The Japanese Feudal era (1185-1868), characterized by the emergence of the famous samurai warriors, saw drastic changes to the public image of Shinto. Of particular note are the Mongol Invasions of 1274 and 1281. Twice the massive Mongol empire tried to invade the Japanese homeland, and both times the fleet was destroyed by typhoon. Shinto priests connected these phenomena with supernatural “natural” forces, claiming that the kamikaze (divine wind) protected the Japanese from subjugation. This gave credence to the belief that the Japanese nation was chosen by the gods as the only true power in East Asia (Khan 1988; May 2007). The proclamation of the kamikaze was a successful attempt at legitimizing Japanese superiority and is a perfect example of the relationship between Shinto and the Japanese state.

Contact with the Portuguese during the 16th century changed the already interesting relationship between Shinto and the public. On the political front the importation of firearms led to clan rivalry and civil wars, as various clans with new technology vied for power within the government. In addition, the introduction of Christianity by the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries to the Japanese mainland had a dramatic affect on religious institutions. Poor farmers and fisherman saw Christianity as a way to shed the yokes of imperial oppression and submission (Nelson 1996a). In the eyes
of the people, temples and shrines were often equated with feudal lords and the oppressive government which kept them in poverty.

Christianity flourished until 1592 when a Portuguese ship captain admitted that the proselytizing was a “plan to encroach upon Japanese territory and bring this part of Asia under Spanish influence” (Nelson 1996a:16). This helped justify the persecution of the Jesuits and the prohibition of the Christian faith. However, Christianity continued to flourish despite aggressive government actions, and the government realized that it needed non-militaristic methods to re-exert control and authority (Nelson 1996a). With the threat of foreign dominance and ideology growing, the government once again turned to Shinto to revive national spirit and identity.

Because the government saw Christianity as systematically destroying imperial authority, it began a plan to revitalize traditional beliefs and institutions. Government officials believed that a return to the values promoted by Buddhism and Shinto would “enhance local and regional compliance and restore centralized control of the state” (Nelson 1996a). The government began contributing to the reconstruction and restoration of temples and shrines throughout the country. This emphasis on traditional values and Japanese nationalism eventually led to the 1633 sakoku (closed country) edict that effectively placed Japan in isolation for almost 200 years. All foreigners were relocated to one small island near Nagasaki, and all ports were officially closed to outsiders (Nelson 1996a). As the memory of the Christian era grew more and more remote, the shrine once again became a major part of typical Japanese life. For the moment, Shinto was at peace, but the arrival of the American Navy in 1853 and the subsequent Meiji Restoration of 1868 would once again transform Shinto (Fridell 1975).
From Meiji to Modern Era

On July 8, 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry and his fleet of “Black Ships” arrived in Japan and anchored in the coastal waters near Edo (modern day Tokyo). With cannons at the ready, Commodore Perry negotiated the opening of Japanese ports for trade with the United States. Japan had no choice but to agree because of the threat of naval bombardment. The “Black Ships” became a symbol of Western technological dominance and foreign superiority. The resulting trade agreement known as the Convention of Kanagawa, ushered in a brief period of civil war, political reformation, and the nationalization of Shinto and led to the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (Fridell 1975).

The opening of Japan to the West caused a dramatic transformation in the public image of Shinto. Faced by the imposing superiority of Western technology and the dawn of civil war inside Japan, many felt that the nation needed to unify in order to resist colonization (Fridell 1975; Isomae 2005). This led to the formation of what is known as “State Shinto”. Anthropologist John Nelson writes, “the government began a policy which stressed that a revival of traditional Japanese beliefs and institutions was essential in restoring centralized control” (1996a:17). The Japanese government acquisitioned Shinto values and beliefs to foster national pride and to reaffirm the imperial family’s right to rule. The first act of the Meiji government was to remove Buddhist ideology from Shinto traditions so that government subsidies could more effectively support and control Shinto ideology and interface directly with the public (Nelson 1996a).

The government set up the Ministry of Kami Affairs to oversee shrine activities, and abolished hereditary priesthood and private ownership of shrines in attempts to nationalize Shinto. All shrines were now seen as public institutions supervised by and for
the state. The shrine system was organized, establishing grades of shrines in order of importance and the corresponding ranks of the priests. This also set up a legal system that allowed the government to directly subsidize shrine income, with more important shrines receiving more government funding. At this point in time rituals themselves became heavily regulated as well and through ritual all “good” Japanese people were required to express national reverence at their local shrine (Fridell 1975). Shrines became places where the state or nation expressed reverence for the kami, and by extension for the emperor due to his supernatural lineage (Fridell 1975).

By 1868 the Meiji Government was in place and was using the symbols and mythology of State Shinto which would later justify its involvement in the WWII (Nelson 1996a). According to Shinto, the Japanese emperor was a direct descendent of the kami, and therefore he and his country were destined for greatness. Japan was to be the protector of Asian nations and drive out the imperialistic West by means of a sacred war (Nelson 1996a). The rise of ultra-nationalism would eventually be seen as national hubris, when Japan’s ideas of grandeur came crashing down in August 1945 (Nelson 1996a).

When atomic bombs reduced Hiroshima (August 6th) and Nagasaki (August 9th) to rubble, Shinto was once again removed from national favor but this time by outside forces. The Occupation forces in post-war Japan sought to eliminate the imperialistic character of Japanese religions (Isomae 2005). The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers issued a directive that fictionalized Shinto ideology and required that it be removed from educational programs (Ueda 1979). Students were required to black out in ink in their textbooks anything Shinto related, and government funding of Shinto shrines
was made illegal (Lancashire 2002). The Directive also accused Shinto of criminal responsibility for the WWII, eventually leading to Emperor Hirohito’s renunciation of his ancestral lineage and god-like status in what became known as his “Declaration of Humanity” (Ueda 1979). The Emperor, the Imperial Family, and Shinto institutions around the country were discredited due to their involvement in the failed war effort (Ueda 1979).

The post-war constitution took effect in 1947 and legally established the complete separation between state and religion. The new constitution led to a general atmosphere of secularization throughout the country (Ueda 1979). The entire nation attempted to forget their mistakes and to modernize, and Shinto shrines were marginalized (Fridell 1975). The new constitution made it very difficult for Shinto to even retain any cultural relevance. State Shinto, or the political institution of Shinto, ceased to exist, but the independent practices of Shinto shrines, or “Shrine Shinto”, was allowed to continue (Fridell 1975; Ueda 1979).

In response to the 1947 constitution, the Association of Shinto Shrines was formed in 1952 (Ueda 1979) to restore Shinto to its lost status and to revitalize the old tradition. This began the long legal struggle for Shinto to retain its cultural traditions. There were movements to permit governmental institutions to take part in religious ceremonies, such as building purification, as well as the rights of schools and universities to receive state funds to sponsor pilgrimages to Shinto Shrines. A 1975 court ruling allowed Shinto to receive state funds because Shinto was “folk art” and the government was able to “designate certain religious practices as ‘cultural properties’ and maintain them as such” (Ueda 1979:307). With this ruling, Shinto was finally able to exist as a
separate entity from the state, while at the same time the government was able to support Shinto as a secular form of cultural tradition (Ueda 1979).

The 1975 court ruling allowed Shinto to “emerge from under the watchful eye of military rulers” for the first time in its entire history (Nelson 1996a). “Shrine Shinto” was able to separate itself from political agendas, and began to focus on earning the support of the citizens. Shinto appealed to those in need of the strength, luck, and perseverance necessary to rise from the ashes of the postwar rubble. To assist this new agenda, the Association of Shinto Shrines sponsored a number of educational programs. They appointed representatives to the state education committee, created the position of prison chaplains, and sponsored youth organizations and community involvement programs including a shrine boy scout troupe. Shinto’s new agenda focused on instilling virtue and respect by educating the average citizen about Shinto and developing a relationship with the community (Ueda 1979).

The dramatic changes brought by the Meiji Restoration and WWII highlight the changing nature of Shinto’s identity. Shinto went from being embraced as a state mandated belief system to a cultural and religious outcast shunned “because of their complicity in the doomed war effort” (Nelson 1996a:23). However, gradually Shrine Shinto began to be seen as a gentler and more respectable form of cultural tradition. Shrine Shinto was able to separate itself from the memories of and association with Christian persecution, warring civil-states, and Japan’s defeat in World War II. Ueda (1979) even speculates that the urbanization and westernization processes that began during the postwar era may have led people to attempt to recover their traditional value orientation. In a sense, Shrine Shinto reaffirmed their Japanese identity and fostered
community interaction. The complex histories of Shinto and Buddhism are but one aspect of Japanese religiosity. The introduction of Christianity and the rise of new religions in Japan add another dimension to religious affiliation and ritual practices in the country. Unlike in the United States, the Japanese do not commonly hold to ideas of exclusive religious affiliation (see Davis 1992; Ellwood 2008; Kawano 2005; Roemer 2006) and this poses difficulties for researching and understanding Japanese religiosity. This study attempts to address some of these issues by examining the still shifting nature of Shinto’s public image and the differences found among age groups in Japan today.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Evaluations

Introduction

There has been much written on Japanese culture by anthropologists. Among the topics addressed have been religion, kinship, politics, and the various interrelated facets of Japanese culture. Perhaps the most adequate recent account of Japanese religion was done by John K. Nelson (1996a) and his book *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine*. Other notable scholars of Japanese religion include Winston Davis (see Davis 1992), Ian Reader (see Reader 1988; Reader 1991; Reader and Tanabe 1998), and John W. Traphagan (see Traphagan 2004). An interest in Japanese religion itself among anthropologists at least was triggered by Ruth Benedict (see Babcock 1992; Lummis 1982; Ryang 2002), and any for any serious scholar of Japanese culture her work still serves as a starting point for additional study.

Much of anthropological work in Japan owes its roots to Ruth Benedict’s postwar ethnography entitled *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Ryang (2002) states that Benedict’s ethnography “served as the starting point for the holistic approach to Japanese culture” (Ryang 2002: 87). Benedict was commissioned by the government to work with Japanese people in the WWII internment camps to create a portrait of Japanese culture. While praised by some as a hallmark of western thought on Japan, some scholars also criticize the methods, data, and political nature of Benedict’s work.
Of the strongest criticisms of Benedict’s research was that she was working for the government to write ethnography of a wartime enemy (Ryang 2002). This colored her work as political propaganda which validated and explained Japan’s involvement in World War II as well as the necessity of the West to overthrow Japan. Additionally critics claim that the piece was written from the logic of the conquering nation with themes of cultural domination and colonial re-modeling (Lummis 1982). In essence the only way for Japan to survive and regain integrity would be to adopt a western model of culture and democracy.

Other criticisms include discussions on Benedict’s methods and data selection. Since much of Benedict’s work was done during WWII and immediately thereafter, she never had the opportunity to travel to Japan to do her research. Because of this, her primary interview data was from Japanese natives imprisoned in internment camps in the United States. Some scholars argue that the data collected from such interviews may be biased by ex-patriots that had been removed from their native culture and lived among the American’s for a substantial period of time already (Ryang 2002). Additionally some scholars argue that Benedict’s selection of data often ignored the anomalies in an attempt to produce a cohesive portrait of Japanese society (see Lummis 1982; Ryang 2002).

On the other hand, Benedict’s work also received praise. Babcock (1992) believes Benedict’s research was a great example of integrating cultural fragments such as magazines, newspapers, and other written materials, with interviews without being able to visit the country of study. Additionally she says that Benedict’s work on the concept of “on” (debt) and “shame culture” led to a pattern of Japanese society that served as a paradigm in cultural anthropology for many years (Babcock 1992, Ryang 2002). While
there are plenty of criticisms and support for Benedict’s work (see Babcock 1992; Lummis 1982; Ryang 2002), *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* remains a popular read for any anthropologist studying Japan.

Since the time of Benedict, there has been a great proliferation of anthropological work on Japan. In the way of religion there has been a general fascination with both the established religious institutions (Buddhism and Shinto) as well as a focus on the rise of Japan’s New Religions. As early as the late 19th century new religions began to spring up in Japan. While only a few at first, after the end of WWII Japan saw an explosion of “New New Religions”\(^5\) which today are too numerous to get into detail here. This interest in the origins and motivations for establishing these new religions led to an almost an entirely new genre of religious study in Japan.

While there is much literature on the New Religions most scholars seem to focus on one particular sect as a case study rather all of them in general. This leads to specific studies of one particular sect such as Tenchi Seikyo (see Pearce 1994), Okawa Ryuho (see Astley 1995), Mahikari (see Reader 1991), or Aum Shinrikyo (see Susumu 1995); and these are only but a few of many. Some of these new religions profess origins in Buddhism or Shinto rites, and differ only slightly in beliefs and practices, while others may come from a ‘divine prophet’ or medium who proselytizes a new truth. What are common of almost all of these New Religions are a central charismatic leader, emphasis on personal belief and commitment, and an “opt-in” style membership (Ellwood 2008).

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\(^5\) The term “New New Religion” refers to new religions that have cropped up in the years after WWII, while the term “New Religion” refers to religions that cropped up during the mid to late 19th century.
Perhaps most striking of these characteristics is the emphasis on personal belief and commitment to the religious sect. While profession of belief and commitment are the benchmarks of studies of religious behavior in the west, this tends not to be the case in Japan (Fitzgerald 2003). In fact, T. Fitzgerald (2003) says that because Japanese people may have multiple commitments to various religious institutions, to have only one form of religious belief or behavior is not typical to Japanese spiritual behavior. This could be why the Japanese people do not profess to be religious, which becomes problematic for any scholar of Japanese Religion. If the Japanese people do not believe they are religious or even what they’re doing is religion, what then do scholars study?

This problem of “is it religious or not” usually leads to one of two outcomes. Either the scholar commits to saying that the Japanese are religious and do not know it, assuming that the trained western eye knows better that the locals, or there is a shift in vocabulary calling their behavior “socio-religious”, or “tradition” or some other version thereof (Fitzgerald 2003). Neither of these solutions is particularly desirable as they both come with additional problems. Assuming that the western scholar knows better harkens back to the colonial era of western superiority, while calling their behavior “socio-religious” is still lacking proper clarity and definition. What is the difference between “religious” and “socio-religious”? What is “religious” in Japan?

A detailed discussion of the definition of religion, and by extension Japanese religion, is perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis; so much so that the topic would merit a thesis all of its own. However the problem does deserve some attention in the context of Japan. Fitzgerald writes, “Religion as an idea is de facto defined in our thinking by its distinction from that which is not religion, the secular, and this distinction itself is highly
ideological and the product of specific European historical trends” (Fitzgerald 2003). Since the working definition, and even the original concept, of religion is a foreign import into Japanese thought it is inseparable from this western notion of a religion-secular dichotomy. It is no wonder then that the Japanese may profess to be secular when faced with the categorical implications of the Western definition of religion. However, the binary distinction is perhaps not wholly applicable to Japanese behavior. In fact Reader (1991) says that in Japan the secular is “intricately interwoven with religious themes” (5), perhaps so much so that the distinction hardly applies. A more proper metaphor may be to say that the secular and religious are so well blended into each other that a separation of the two would be near impossible.

Scholars may avoid this religion-secular problem without directly addressing it by labeling only some Japanese behavior as religious, or by re-defining religion as a socio-religious category. However, understanding that the Japanese place more value on experience rather than belief provides a different way of understanding their behavior, one that highlights the importance of action and participation in religious rites and ceremonies. Thus, ritual, as experience, becomes one of the most recognizable manifestations of what western scholars would call Japanese religion.

Ritual participation, defined this way, may be seen as a religious expression of belief and doctrine to some people, to others is may be wholly a secular form of heritage tourism and still to others a well-blended cocktail of the two. Regardless of its framing, ritual behavior remains one of the most salient forms of religious expression in Japan (Davis 1992; Roemer 2006; Traphagan 2004). While frequency of participation does not directly equal level of religiosity, it stands to reason that dedication to attend and
participate in religious rituals and festivals would hint at a greater level of commitment religious or otherwise.

Therefore, this study is concerned with frequency and motivation of ritual participation and shrine visitation. While these two topics are already represented within the academic literature, most sources seem to lump the entire Japanese population into one general group. It is here that this study finds its particular niche, by examining the differences of these visitation behaviors between age groups.

There are a variety of models and theories applied to the study of ritual, one family of which (economic models) has gained widespread popularity among top scholars of Japanese religion (see Davis 1992; Ellwood 2008; Reader and Tanabe 1998; Traphagan 2004). Because economic assumptions are used by some of the best known scholars of Japanese religions to understand Japanese ritual behavior this section looks at these assumptions. Following the evaluation of the origins and validity of economic models, recent literature on ritual, festivals, and religion in Japan will be addressed to provide background for this study.

**Economic Models**

In recent years, scholars have applied economic models to the study of Japanese “religious” behavior (see Davis 1992; Reader and Tanabe 1998). Economic ideas have formed one of the most powerful models for understanding Japanese religious behavior. Most of these models applied to Japanese religions by social scientists are based on a western conceptual framework of economic study, how economics function, and its relationship to religion. This emphasis fails to evaluate the applicability of such a model
in Japan by neglecting to take into account the pre-existing frameworks of the people themselves. The failure to acknowledge that the Japanese may have culturally different ideas about economic behavior and its relation to religious or cultural behavior raises questions about the validity of these economic approaches to Japanese religious behavior.

Reader and Tanabe (1998) argue that the increasing materialism of the modern age has lead to a greater need for spirituality in the Japanese people. “Modern” spirituality in Japan then is concerned not so much with transcendence, but rather with cares and concerns of everyday living (Reader and Tanabe 1998; see also Traphagan 2004). Furthermore, many scholars suggest that, in Japan, belief in scripture and doctrine is not as important as ritual participation and practical behavior (see Davis 1992; Roemer 2006; Traphagan 2004,). Reader and Tanabe (1998) call this focus on everyday concerns “material spirituality” and in this sense it is more than simply amassing material goods. It is the realization that to receive wealth in terms of practical benefits or material goods, one is obligated to pay a moral price. In this case morality is assumed through participation in rituals and shrine related activities. Therefore, spiritual means are used to acquire material comforts (Reader and Tanabe 1998) and this idea is the basis for the application of economic models such as exchange theory, or purchase theory, to the study of Japanese religion.

Davis (1992) embraces a modified exchange theory to help explain Japanese social religious behavior. The premise of this theory is not unlike that used in economics. It is based on the importance of exchange when a person gives one thing in exchange for another. Additionally, any act of exchange has two parts; when A acts to solicit a response from B, then B, having benefitted from A, is obligated to act in return.
Exchange Theory is thought to manifest in Japanese religious behavior in the form of “in order to” and “because of” motives (Davis 1992). Davis uses this distinction to explain a broad range of religious affiliation and behavior in Japan.

“In order to” motives are defined as personal motivations seeking practical benefits. Applied to religious behavior this implies a “willingness to sacrifice or exchange something with the gods in order to achieve one’s aims” (Davis 1992:17) and can be used, according to Davis, to explain types of religious behavior, including ritual practice, purchasing sacred objects, and sectarian affiliation. For example, a trip to the shrine to sanctify a car involves a personal sacrifice of money, time, and offerings in order to assure the kami’s blessing of the car for safe driving. Similar motivations can include recovery of health, safe childbirth, good test scores or even the simple desire to form more intimate relationships within the community.

The second kind of behavior is what Davis calls “because of” or “obligatory” motivations. In this case, actions are necessary because of perceived benefits already received. A good example is obligatory affiliation. The local shrine or parish is part of a system of community obligations into which individuals are born. This sense of obligation, as Davis explains it, comes from the perceived benefits that the shrine or parish has transferred to the community and the individual throughout life, and these benefits are to be repaid through participation in rituals and events or monetary donations (Davis 1992).

The distinction between “in order to” and “because of” motivations cannot explain the religious behavior of Japanese people for a number of reasons. Firstly, it implies that the actors involved are fully aware of the model of exchange and embrace it
in their own lives. Motivations seeking practical benefits are relatively easy to discern and have obvious correlations with the idea of exchange, but obligatory behaviors may not be as easily explained by an exchange model. It is unclear if Japanese people conceptualize their own obligatory behaviors in terms of repaying a debt for perceived benefits. If the actors involved do not profess any sort of implicit or explicit benefits in exchange, the structure of the economic model and the structure of the individual’s religious framework do not match, and the model itself collapses. While the idea that obligatory behaviors are a product of exchange may be attractive to Western academics, the role of choice and agency can not be handled well within such a model. Exchange theory, therefore, risks making claims that categorizes religious behavior without paying attention to the conceptual framework of the Japanese. Nor can it account for the plethora of alternatives or mixed motivations that may be present in most aspects of human life.

Davis (1992) himself concedes that his model cannot account for mixed motivations. This leads him to explain behaviors that do not fit neatly into either category as a combination of both obligatory and practical motivations. However, classifying motivations as both obligatory and practical denies the binary distinction his model rests on. While this may circumvent the model’s shortcomings, it weakens the argument for the applicability of exchange theory. If a behavior can be classified as one, the other, both, or none, the utility of such distinctions in the first place is questionable.

Reader and Tanabe also claim that the model of exchange theory developed by Winston Davis (1992) cannot adequately account for obligatory behaviors. Furthermore, obligation represents only one form of morality. In short, Davis’s model cannot account for other types of moral action in the context of seeking benefits. In light of these
criticisms, Reader and Tanabe suggest that “goods and benefits are not so much exchanged as they are bought” (Reader and Tanabe 1998: 33). They call this idea “purchase theory”. In this model, the buyer pays a moral and material price to ensure that good things happen and bad things are kept at a distance. In this model, the actors are entering into a contract with the kami to purchase the benefits they desire (Reader and Tanabe 1998: 33).

The idea of purchase theory treats prayer as a contract an *ema* (small wooden prayer plaque) as the purchase order, ritual as compounding interest, and the scriptures as a warranty that benefits will be produced (Reader and Tanabe 1998: 136). While this metaphor neatly categorizes and explains a variety of religious behavior, it still implies a western sense of contract and the knowledge required to enter into a contract. While to some extent this may be true, especially in the case where a person asks for a specific outcome, it is doubtful all religious behavior can be explained in this way, particularly since the emphasis is on a “contract”; a notion seldom used in Japan.

Purchase theory, a modified form of exchange theory, may explain more than Davis’s version of exchange theory but still cannot account for the role that agency plays in ritual or religious behaviors. As Reader and Tanabe (1998) point out, there are times when a person asks for a specific wish or prayer to be granted offering a vow that she or he will work his or her hardest to make it happen. Indeed, as Reader and Tanabe (1998) show, there are rumors about what happens when people do not fulfill their promise. In brief, they get sick or have bad fortune. Here, the general idea of entering into a contract and the possible repercussions if one fails to pay the invoice are clear. However, religious behavior is not always this straightforward.
There are inherent problems with Reader and Tanabe’s approach. It is not clear whether the average Japanese person perceives all of these behaviors as the same thing. In order to accept Reader and Tanabe’s model, every religious practitioner would have to understand their religious actions as payment for protection, or some other benefit. Do practitioners think that the rituals they perform every time they go to a shrine are in effect interest for the order they placed when they made a wish at New Year? Is that why they are performing the ritual? Some people may understand that not performing rituals might be asking for misfortune, but they may not connect this model of transaction with the economic model of religious behavior.

Another model is offered by Traphagan (2004). He introduces a model of religious behavior based on a Health Management Organization (HMO) system. He looks at Japanese ritual activity as the expression of concern. In this model, the practitioner sees shrines and their associated rituals as something akin to health service providers. Actors are able to shop around and find the religious plan that best suits their needs. Once the selection is made, the practitioner then enters into a relationship with the shrine and in exchange for prayer and patronage they are provided with well being (Traphagan 2004). Ritual performance thus becomes a framework for individuals to exert control over their environment and so make sense about what occurs in society.

Traphagan uses the ema to demonstrate how his model both operates and organizes for human actors in the Japanese world. An ema is a wooden prayer plaque upon which an individual writes his or her prayer or wish, or an expression of gratitude. It is then hung on the shrine grounds so the kami can read it and decide to fulfill the wish or not. Clearly, the ema can be seen as a public expression of concern for self, individual, or
community. Shinto festivals are another example of shrines offering religious services for which this model can account. Traphagan (2004) notes that festivals can be directly associated with health care by its primary objective (warding off the plague, or fire prevention for instance). However, just like the other economic models, the HMO theory presupposes that the actor’s personal belief and intent are economic in nature.

Traphagan (2004) also sees Japanese religious activity as analogous to a complimentary health care system. He treats religious behaviors (rituals, shrine visits, ema purchases etc) as equivalent to specific units of services and motives. According to this model, a practitioner sees Shinto shrines as the providers of services that he or she can exploit when a need arises. Religion is thus relegated to the same status as any packaged units displayed to the public for purchase and consumption, with ignores the imperative that the researcher’s focus should be on the actor and the actor’s conceptualization of religious thought and acts itself.

**Thematic Research**

Ritual is one of the most visible and important activities related to Japanese religiosity. These rituals can take the form of community festivals, private ancestor veneration, casual prayer or worship, and formal practice. The religious studies literature on Japanese religion and ritual shows a variability of concerns ranging from festivals, social cohesion and identity, and aesthetics (e.g. Lancashire 2002; Littleton 1986; Schnell 1997.). In this thesis the primary focus will be on Shinto rituals, and their relationship to the collective and individual identity. As well, the thesis will look at how these relationships change with age.
Almost every shrine around Japan hosts an annual festival honoring the local kami and festivals are perhaps the most obvious and identifiable characteristic of Shrine Shinto today. The matsuri (festival) encapsulates the values, ideology, and accepted patterns of social behavior that identify the local population as a cohesive unit (Ashkenazi 1993, Littleton 1986). To this degree participation in the festival reinforces social bonds within neighborhoods. People not only attend the festival out of respect for tradition, but also because it provides an opportunity to transcend the hierarchical relationships of Japanese society and express opposition to these kinds of relationships (Schnell 1997). The sheer size and weight of a festival float-cart or mikoshi (portable shrine that temporarily houses the kami) is often difficult to navigate through the narrow streets of Japanese towns. Combined with the tradition of consuming large quantities of alcohol during the festival, those carrying the float or shrine sometimes unintentionally cause it to crash into buildings. This is seen as the kami’s way of enacting divine justice for perceived grievances against the shop owner or family of the damaged building (Schnell 1997). The presence of the kami or a sacred object during the festival procession symbolizes a ritual cleansing and purification that brings forth perceived grievances within the community and purges the social actors of these feelings. Thus, the matsuri is an opportunity to strengthen community ties and reaffirm local identity by clearing the air and linking and reinforcing the social unit with traditionally accepted values and beliefs.

One item of particular interest is the question of actor motivation. What draws people to the shrines and motivates citizenry to participate in ritual? Nelson (1996b: 117) suggests that visitors are drawn to the shrine as a “repository of cultural heritage within a tranquil ‘natural’ setting”. Nelson argues that with urbanization, the average citizen’s
interaction with nature has become limited. In this sense, the shrine provides an aesthetically pleasing environment associated with an image of Japan’s past. This links the shrine to the cultural heritage of its ancestors in a similar fashion to the annual festival. Once at the shrine, visitors find that the priests do not dictate their path through shrine grounds, nor do they force participation in ritual. In a society such as Japan where there is a heavy emphasis on structure and formality, this freedom of choice, coupled with a serene setting, can rejuvenate the urbanized social body (Nelson 1996b). In other words, the shrine atmosphere gives the visitor both a welcome sense of autonomy and a way to interact with a traditional Japanese environment.

Traphagan’s theory that religious behavior is like health care behavior at a HMO also throws light on festival participation. Traphagan (2004) suggests that not only does festival participation and private ritual express latent feelings of concern for self and society, but also that the actor’s involvement changes (i.e. increases) with age. Traphagan is unclear if this increased involvement is directly related to a parallel increase in personal religious belief in Shinto, but it is quite apparent that the structure of festivals and rituals echoes the secular. Much like China, Taiwan, and Korea, Japan has been heavily influenced by Confucian ideals. This creates an age graded hierarchy in which more senior male members of family, society, or corporate communities receive greater reverence and respect. In the religious sphere, this ensures a role for the more aged members of the community in festival and ritual participation by giving more important and powerful positions to seniors (Traphagan 2004).

All of these ideas are important to consider when looking at the data presented in this thesis. Nelson (1996b) suggests that shrines are seen as a repository of cultural
heritage. This plays an important role when considering the motivations of the younger generation for attending the shrine and its festivals. The shrine provides an unbroken link between modern social and personal identity and that of the Japanese ancestors. However, as the data will show, there is a difference in how the younger and older generations incorporate the Shrine into their identity. While festivals and ritual participation provide the social actor with a variety of ways to get involved the level of involvement and what this involvement means differs across age groups.
This chapter introduces the people and the city where this study took place and it is divided into two main sections. The first is a physical description of the field site and its people. This will situate Kyoto and its people geographically and demographically among contemporary Japanese society. The second section is a detailed description of the project goals, timeline, sampling, and data collection methods. This part will provide the tools and background necessary to critically analyze the data and support the conclusions presented in the following chapters.

**The City and its People**

Kyoto City, where the data for this study was collected, is located on the western side of Japan’s main island of Honshu. The city is nestled between three large mountain ranges that rise beyond the city skyline in any direction. The founders settled in this valley over a thousand years ago and since then the city has grown to fill the basin from one mountain’s edge to the other. Most of Japan is forested and mountainous which makes it unsuitable for development and habitation, and thus the areas that have been settled have become densely populated and optimized for efficient use of space. An eagle’s eye view would show a densely packed sprawling urban area not unlike any major metropolitan city, with the exception that Kyoto has no large skyscrapers. The buildings may stretch some fifteen to twenty floors up, and possibly two or three sub-
floors below, but they do not rise high enough to compare to the skyscrapers of Tokyo, Osaka, Chicago, or New York City.

Kyoto was once the capital of Japan, before it was moved to modern day Tokyo in the east at the time of the Meiji restoration in 1868. In fact the name Kyoto actually means “capital city” (Tokyo means “eastern capital”), and Kyoto served for centuries as the center for official governmental and cultural influence (Ellwood 2008). Because of this, the expansive urbanized city is dotted with hundreds if not thousands of shrines and temples, and is still one of the most visited cities in all of Japan. The juxtaposition of old and new is striking. In between office buildings, 7-11’s and the iPod store, one can find a small shrine dedicated to some kami unknown to most passers-by. Although few may know what kami is present there, many still stop to bow and clap on their way to the bustling shopping district. Occasionally someone goes clopping along in their geta (traditional wooden shoes) wearing summer yukata (light cotton kimono, traditional summer clothing) and carrying a Prada handbag while texting on their cell phone.

Covered walkways shelter pedestrians from the heat or downpours of Kyoto summers. Navigating the sidewalks is a process of weaving in and out of the mass of tourists, residents, and shop owners alike. During the month of July signs hang from walkway canopies depicting scenes and dates for Kyoto’s Gion Festival events, alongside hanging lanterns, noodle shops, and pachinko parlors (a popular gambling game). On the eastern edge of the main thoroughfare lies an entrance to Teramachi, a massive outdoor shopping arcade, in which mazes of alleyways turn miles of restaurants, souvenir shops, and other small stores that seem to go on forever in all directions.
Toward the east end of the shopping district is a small brook surrounded by seven or eight floor buildings hosting a plethora of small bars, *izakaya* (drinking establishments with a menu of restaurant style appetizers), and *McDonalds*. This is the center of Kyoto’s nightlife, also known as Kiyamachi Street, and it is popular with foreigners and locals young and old. Just beyond, and a bit further east, is a bridge over Kyoto’s main river leading into the city’s Gion district.

The Kamo River runs north-south with the west bank boasting modern style architecture and outdoor terrace style dining lit with glowing lanterns and decorative lights. The river itself is long and wide, although shallow, and riverside walkways are host to romantic walks, individual late night sparkler and firework displays, and the occasional fisherman or pedestrian soaking his feet in the cool water. Just beyond the bridge to the east, and a few steps past the corner subway station the cityscape changes dramatically to the old *machiya*-style (traditional wooden longhouses) buildings of Gion district.

Most of Kyoto was spared from the destruction of civil conflict and World War II, and because of this Gion district is like revisiting the past. Buildings are smaller, featuring wooden lattice work, low ceilings, and baked roof tiles. Gion is known for its *hanamachi*, or *geisha* neighborhoods (“geisha” means “artist”, although in Kyoto they are called “geiko”, or “women of the arts”), and although geisha numbers are dwindling today they still perform at various occasions including the annual *Miyako Odori* (cherry blossom dance) in April. Traditionally the homes and shops of the merchants and craftsmen of Japan’s past, today the *machiya* are similarly used as small food and craft shops for passing tourists as well as personal residences. The narrow two-person wide
alleys, lined with lanterns, signs, and compact shops, are like a scene straight from the movies, or a romantic pre-war Japanese novel; until a few steps later when one comes face to face with a corner store Starbucks and is reminded that this is, after all, the present.

Gion district is home to many shrines and temples. The shrine studied for this thesis is, Yasaka Jinja (Yasaka Shrine). Yasaka Jinja is host to the annual Gion Festival every year in July and is the primary location of this field study. Yasaka Jinja is dramatically placed at a three way intersection of two main streets, and the large vermilion torii (shrine entrance gates) rise out of the hustle and bustle of pedestrian crowds and car exhaust. A familiar location for tourists to stop and take pictures, this entrance is also center stage for various activities during the Gion Festival and at times is so crowded one can barely move an inch.

A series of steps lead up from the street to the main entrance, and just beyond the entrance gate is a small structure with wooden ladles and water flowing from bamboo pipes used to wash one’s hands and face for purification before entering the main grounds. Systems of walkways run around the shrine grounds with small stone and wooden structures set aside from the main path. Another torii gate sets apart the restrooms and vending machines on the south side, and in the eastern part a large wooden covered platform can be found among other shrine buildings. The platform is usually empty, except when it is the stage for various local events, plays, and dances. At festival time the platform also holds the bronze plated mikoshi (portable shrines) that house the kami temporarily so they can be paraded around. There are other buildings including a shrine shop for purchasing ema (small wooden prayer plaques) and omomori (talismans
and other religious items), the administrative building, and the main shrine building which houses the kami. Only priests, sponsors, and other select people are allowed into the main shrine building.

The east exit of Yasaka leads to an open garden area with benches for resting, fortune tellers, ice cream shops, and a weeping cherry tree. A mass of pigeons usually surrounds the main seating area which is next to a small pond, and on certain occasions travelling entertainers perform for the crowds of tourists and visitors. The garden complex branches out to other side streets, and a bit further back the Chion-in, a Buddhist temple and the head of the Pure Land sect of Buddhism, decorates the mountainside. The garden area is a popular retreat for picnicking couples, tourists, and families on a visit to various shrines and temples.

Originally designed as a Buddhist temple the date of initial construction of Yasaka Shrine is debated. It was not until the middle of the ninth century that Yasaka shrine rose in prominence (McMullin 1987). Because of its climate and location, Kyoto was often prone to summer illness and sickness, and in 869 C.E. the illness reached national epidemic proportions. The illness was thought to be the result of malevolent kami, so Emperor Seiwa ordered the priests of Yasaka Shrine to hold a festival to purify the streets and protect the people from the evil spirits (Roemer 2007). The townspeople built sixty-six floats representing the various neighborhoods and paraded them through town. One week later the kami at Yasaka, including Gozu Tenno (commonly known as Susano-o mikoto), were placed in portable shrines and carried throughout the city streets (Roemer 2007). This was the beginning of the Gion Matsuri (Gion Festival), and Yasaka’s subsequent rise in fame.
Yasaka’s prestige continued to increase due to the Gion Matsuri, and by 970 C.E. the festival had become an annual event. By the tenth century the festival included floats, musicians, dancers, plays, and artistic treasures. Since the inception of the festival, Yasaka Shrine’s identity has been inextricably tied to the Gion Matsuri. As the festival grew in importance and popularity, so too did the shrine, and in the late 19th century Yasaka was given the title of *kanpei-taisha* which was the highest rank of government support (Breen and Teeuwen 2000). Similarly, the Gion Matsuri was elevated to the rank of Grand Festival of Japan and is often considered one of the most festivals in all of Japan (Breen and Teeuwen 2000).

The Gion Festival lasts the entire month of July with events happening in different locations through the city at different times. Because of its high popularity and importance on a national level, Gion Matsuri draws visitors and spectators from various places around the country, as well as internationally. Since Yasaka’s identity is firmly entrenched in the annual Gion Festival, there seems no better time to conduct a study of the people’s views and perspectives of the shrine than during the festival month. Because of the wide range of localities and regions is represented during the festival means that a study done during this time can provide a nice sample of the Japanese population, but it may also mean that people are more likely to admit religious motivations as they get swept up in the festival.

**Project Outline**

This study will address the issue of personal motivation and shrine attendance. In particular it will look at shrine visits and attendance at various shrine activities in an
attempt to understand how the new generation perceives the role of Shinto in contemporary urban society. This study will add to the existing literature on Shinto and provide a foundation upon which additional studies can build.

Because Shinto has been used repeatedly in the past to foster feelings of nationalism and promote state agendas, historically academics have approached Shinto from a political point of view. More recently, the literature has focused on modern aspects of Shrine Shinto such as festivals, rituals, social cohesion, identity, and aesthetics. However, little attention has been paid to how the age of the actor is related to his/her participation in Shinto and shrine related activities. Indeed, little work has been done on how age relates to the level of involvement in the Shrine and how members of different age groups understand and conceptualize Shinto. Assuming that Japanese religious behavior is not the same for all Japanese citizens, this thesis examines how people in different age groups perceive the role of Shinto in contemporary society, and the extent to which there are age-related conceptions of religious identity.

This study is based on the interviews and observations of ten informants from Kyoto city, in combination with surveys of 85 individuals present at Yasaka Shrine during the month of July and first half of August 2009. Both interview and survey subjects are divided into two primary age groups. The first group includes informant narratives and survey responses from individuals aged 35 and younger, representing the young and emerging perspectives and views on Shinto and the shrine. The total number of respondents in this age group is 47 people, or roughly 55 percent of the total survey population. The second group includes subjects aged 36 or older and includes 38 respondents, or 45 percent of the survey population.
The age grouping used in this study does not follow conventional groupings for most age cohort studies. However, when looking at the data there was a continuity of behavior that seemed to break at the age of 35, and thus this age was used as the boundary between the younger and older age groups. Since family/martial status was not one of the questions asked of respondents it was decided that all people under the age of 35 should be grouped together regardless of whether they are single, married, divorced, no children, etc. Similarly, all respondents over the age of 35 are grouped together as well.

Interview subjects were chosen using a snowball sampling methodology starting from a few initial acquaintances in both age categories that were established upon arrival in July 2009 in Kyoto Japan. A snowball sample is a chain-referral technique for recruiting future subjects from among the acquaintances of an initial subject. Thus the sample group grows like a rolling snowball. Survey subjects were chosen through a convenience sampling method. Two people were chosen each day at random times and locations on Yasaka Shrine grounds.

Children and persons under the age of 18 were excluded as survey subjects to avoid the difficulties associated with gaining parental permission. Persons not present at Yasaka Shrine, or surrounding Gion district temples and shrines, during the time of this study were also excluded. Only adults who were at Yasaka Shrine or adjacent shrines and temples were selected as survey subjects.

This study represents a mixed methods approach to ethnographic investigation. For six weeks in July and August 2009, multiple semi-structured interviews and close observations were conducted during Gion Matsuri with visitors and spectators at Yasaka

36
Shrine in Kyoto City. The survey data will serve as a primary data set, with narratives from a number of residents and spectators supplementing the themes generated from the survey data.

The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to encourage rich informant narratives. Often the survey questions were used as a starting point for informants to elaborate on themes and ideas that arose from the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted on shrine grounds, over dinner, at personal residences, and at festival events and varied in length and subject. Informants were asked a variety of questions concerning their reasons for being present that day, their regular involvement with the shrine and/or festival, their thoughts on Shinto and the shrine in general, and suggestions for helping Shinto stay relevant to contemporary Japanese.

In addition to the interviews, visitors and spectators were observed. Each day observations were recorded at the shrine documenting the activities that were taking place, how many people were attending, and if the activities differed across age groups. Field notes describing behavior at Yasaka Shrine and surrounding sites were recorded in a field journal. Additionally, various trips to other shrines and temples in Kyoto city were taken with one or two informants as a guide. Conversations and behavior at these shrines were also recorded. Short follow-up interviews with informants were conducted at these times to clarify any ambiguous concepts or understandings.

Surveys of the visitor population were conducted in person. Subjects were asked to answer 15 questions, and the survey took less than 10 minutes. The questions were read aloud, and answers recorded manually. This avoided requiring the participant to handle paperwork and encouraged candid responses.
All interviews were conducted informally. Transcriptions and translations of the interviews were typed up following each day’s activities. Additionally, field notes and interview transcriptions were backed up using a USB removable storage device, and a triplicate copy was sent to a secure email address. All files, records, and names were kept confidential by securing the data in a password protected folder, and pseudonyms were used when preparing this thesis.

Data analysis began upon return to the United States during the fall of 2009 and includes two primary techniques. Survey data has been entered into spreadsheet format using SPSS 17, and has been coded to facilitate statistical analysis. Simple descriptive crosstab analysis was performed to show the distribution of age groups in relationship to other categories. Interview data was then used to supplement and highlight the themes and ideas generated by statistical analysis.

The results are divided into three chapters, each with its own presentation of data and discussion. Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of how different age groups use the shrine itself. Chapter 6 focuses on ritual behavior and levels of involvement and participation. Finally, Chapter 7 draws attention to how the shrine plays into personal and national identities of the younger generation.
Chapter 5: Visitation: Motives and Frequency

By looking at the survey data and talking with informants it was immediately clear that Yasaka Shrine, and most likely shrines more generally, play diverse roles for people of different ages. In general it seems that the younger generation perceives both Shinto and shrines in a less religious but nonetheless important role than the older generation. Many factors may go into how and why this is so and a more detailed discussion will be presented at the end of this section, but it would be wise to start with the data itself.

The first set of survey questions involved how often and why people visited Yasaka Shrine (the primary location for data collection). There is a clear difference between the numbers of first time visits between the two age groups. In the younger group (18-35 years of age) 64 percent of respondents were first time visitors, whereas only 13 percent of the older group (36-65 years of age) made their first visit to Yasaka Shrine on the day of the survey. Additionally, of those who had visited this shrine before, only 13 percent of the younger group says they visit Yasaka frequently compared with 74 percent of the older group. This can easily be attributed to the fact that the older group has lived longer and thus has had more opportunities to visit, or perhaps life style, work load, and financial considerations limit the available opportunities for the younger generation to visit Yasaka on a regular basis. It is also possible that the variation observed here can be due to simple random chance. However, what are more interesting are the differences in motivations for visiting the shrine.
In this research, one of the first questions focused on Yasaka Shrine. Respondents were asked the question “Why are you here at Yasaka Shrine today?” and were given the option to choose between “tourism”, “meeting friends”, “participate in a ritual”, “on a date”, or “other”. The results (Table 1) show a clear difference in how and why the two age groups attended the shrine. For example, in the younger group the majority of respondents had visited Yasaka shrine for tourist purposes, with “on a date” as the second most common answer. Together these answer categories make up 85 percent of total responses, and represent a less “religious” relationship with the shrine. In contrast, 50 percent of the older group was there to participate in a ritual, and 24 percent were there for other purposes including fortune telling, purchasing omamori (talismans), or other shrine related activities. The latter two categories comprise 74 percent of the total sample population of 36-65 year olds, for the younger group the number was 15 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tourism</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>On a Date</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-35</td>
<td>30 (64%)</td>
<td>6 (13%)</td>
<td>10 (21%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-65</td>
<td>10 (26%)</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings were supported by similar results when asked a more general question (Table 2). When people were asked why they go to shrines in general, not just for this shrine in particular, the majority of the younger group (88 percent) indicated tourism and dates as their reasons for visiting shrines (77 percent and 11 percent respectively), suggesting a less religious conceptualization of the role of the shrine in their lives. The results for the older group also supported earlier findings with 76 percent
of all respondents for this category listing ritual as their primary motivation for visiting shrines.

**Table 2. Informants response to “Why do you visit Shrines in general?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tourism</th>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>On a Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>18-35</strong></td>
<td>36 (77%)</td>
<td>6 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36-65</strong></td>
<td>9 (24%)</td>
<td>29 (76%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The role of Shinto and Yasaka Shrine can also be inferred by the frequency of visitation of shrines more generally. A myriad of possible factors can have influence an individual’s likelihood of attending Yasaka Shrine. However, annual patterns of visitation to shrines more generally sidestep issues of timing, finances, and location of shrines, allowing for a stronger argument than the data on Yasaka Shrine in particular.

Respondents were asked how often they visit Shinto Shrines in general (Table 3), and here again there is a strong difference associated with age groups. The 18-35 year olds almost exclusively (98 percent) visit shrines yearly meaning they go to a shrine maybe once or twice a year. Conversely, over half of the 36-65 year olds (63 percent) visit shrines on a monthly basis. These results suggest that shrines are more prominent in the lives of the older age group.

**Table 3. Informants “Frequency of Shrine Visitation in General”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>18-35</strong></td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>46 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36-65</strong></td>
<td>24 (63%)</td>
<td>14 (37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It seems feasible to suggest that there is a more religious aspect to the older group’s relationship with shrines when compared to the younger group. The predominant reasons for visiting the shrine for the younger group were tourism and dates. This affirms the role Shinto has in heritage tourism and what Nelson (1996b) describes as a desire to view a peaceful and serene environment that is perhaps like looking through an hourglass to get a glimpse of what “traditional” Japan was like. The latter reason, dating, implies an interesting dynamic that is perhaps best explained by looking at informant narratives. To some degree the younger generation may see the shrine as an object within the social landscape that offers a unique experience, but may have little direct impact on one’s life course at this stage in life.

In comparison the older age group visited primarily for ritual and other shrine related activities that provide life direction. This is not to argue that either generation is more or less religious in general. However the data does seem to suggest that the older generation has a far more religious relationship with the shrine as an active (or more regular) co-agent in the creation and maintenance of the individual’s reality.

The survey data is supported by narrative themes from the informal interviews. One informant, a middle-aged man with a young family, said he goes to the shrine much more now than when he was younger. He used to go every now and then as a young adult to ask for good luck on exams or good fortune, even though he didn’t believe this had much effect. Now that he has a family he goes on a regular basis to pray for the health and happiness of his family. He said that the shrine became much more important after having children and starting a family. It is important to note, however, that this man lives in the float-cart neighborhoods. That is, he lives within the boundaries of neighborhoods
that participate annually in the Gion Matsuri. Not only that, but he is also employed as a traditional costume maker. So it seems that his relationship with the shrine may be affected by the role he plays in the neighborhood and the festival.

The day after Gion Matsuri’s main procession, Shimogamo Jinja (Shimogamo Shrine) held a sacred river ceremony. In this ceremony patrons take off their shoes and socks, roll up their pant legs, and go trudging through a shallow stream that runs through the shrine grounds. They pay a small price to purchase a candle which they light in alcoves along the stream, and they place the candle on a shelf at the end with all the candles from other patrons. Here they perform a small ritual where they bow twice, clap twice, and bow again to make a wish or prayer before getting out of the stream. At the end is a small tent for vendors who are selling talismans and prayer plaques, and there is an opportunity to drink from a cup of sacred river water. It’s a remarkable sight to see locals and foreigners alike, young and old, single people and small families go trudging through the cold water holding a candle in one hand and a video camera in the other.

It was here than an elderly lady talked about her trip to Shimogamo. She mentioned that she comes every year around this time. Now that she is getting older the veins on her legs are starting to show and she wants them to go away. So she comes every year to walk through the water to heal her legs. In fact, she said she brought a friend along this year who had never been to this ceremony to show her how great it was for leg and foot health. In this scenario not only is this specific shrine so important to her that she never misses the ceremony, but she is also giving testimonials to her friends and getting them to come along. She is sharing the experience with people she feels close to, attempting to share the benefits of this shrine and this particular ceremony.
At first glance, the narrative data from the younger generation contrasts sharply with those from the older age group. A good example of this is one informant who discussed shrine and festival participation over an iced mocha from Starbucks, less than one block away from Yasaka Shrine. He was a young man in his early twenties who worked as a bartender just off of Kiyamachi Street (the prime spot for Kyoto nightlife). He said he has lived in Kyoto for a few years now while attending college, and just graduated last year. His first year here he visited Yasaka during the Gion Matsuri and he watched the festival float procession and various other festival activities. However, after his first time, he stopped going and he has not really given the shrine much thought since then. As he puts it, “It’s not really something people my age do when they’re single.” His initial participation in the festival and its associated rituals can be seen as a sort of cultural or heritage tourism; i.e. seeing the sights and enjoying the experience of something new and unfamiliar yet still “traditionally” Japanese. However, since he is not married he has not had a reason to build any sort of personal relationship with the shrine. It is also possible that he considers participation in Gion’s festival events a local custom, and since he is not from Kyoto he does not identify with the festival or shrine. For him then, it had more or less just some entertainment and recreational value. He has little interest in regularly going to the shrine or attending festival activities there.

Similarly, another young informant mentioned that he seldom thinks about Shinto at all. He said people his age don’t really think much about Shinto and shrines. When pressed about the age issue he commented, “Older people have much more experience. They go to the shrine to give thanks for the good things in life, and to fight off the bad things.” In his mind, going to the shrine is something done by older people or people with
more life experience. The shrine, or perhaps praying to the kami, is not a behavior most young single people engage in regularly. However, he then shared pictures of his collection of ceremonial tools. Over time he has acquired numerous hammers, mallets, tools, et cetera that hold great ceremonial significance, and his interest in these objects shows great respect for religious artifacts. The younger generation’s conceptualization of the shrine nevertheless does not just see it as a relic of the past; equal in value to something like a Ming Dynasty vase.

In fact, another young man was present during a visit to Ginkakuji, a popular Buddhist temple. There, they hand out a piece of paper with a sutra on it along with the admission ticket. The sutra is given out to protect one from the spirits that may wander the temple grounds. During the visit, the informant was walking and talking with a friend, and at one point he stopped mid-sentence and gasped. On the ground in front of him lay a sutra someone had dropped. He immediately picked it up and started looking for its owner. Of course at such a popular temple many people come through there in a short time, and it was a futile attempt. He finally stopped, and held on to the sutra saying, “I will hold onto it and hope no spirits find its owner.” His behavior did not seem extraordinary or strange to his friend who had come along. Rather they both seemed to accept it as typical Japanese behavior.

While the behavior described in the preceding paragraph may not necessarily show any personal attachment to this particular temple (or with Shinto shrines at all), it does suggest that, for this young man and his friend at least, there is more associated with shrines and temples than just pure entertainment. In a similar experience, another young man was sharing his recommendations for shrines to visit while in Kyoto. He listed a
number of familiar shrines and temples, including Yasaka Jinja, but failed to mention one that was in the top ten of many guidebooks. In southern Kyoto City there is a shrine called Fushimi-Inari. It is the head shrine for the kami Inari who is the deity of rice, agriculture, fertility and foxes. Today, Inari has become the kami of business and prosperity. Because of this, many businesses donate torii (wooden gateway) to the shrine, and Fushimi Inari boasts thousands of vermilion torii lining the passageways up, down, and around the mountainside behind the main shrine. When the topic of Fushimi-Inari was brought up this informant became serious. He said:

It’s scary! You know the torii right? One torii is the gateway to the [kami] world. When you cross through they have the power to affect you. Fushimi has many, many torii making the influence of the [kami] very strong!

There was a bit of fear, and maybe a hint of excitement in the way he talked about Fushimi Inari. Nevertheless, he had not gone there and had purposefully omitted it from his recommendation perhaps because of its connection with the supernatural. If the shrine were simply a relic of the past or held only cultural or heritage value, why would he have been so worried about the spirits there?

These two previous narratives show that even though the younger generation may not be as actively involved with Shinto and shrines, they can have a complex understanding of what these places mean and the roles they play in Japanese life. Rather than see the shrines as just a repository of cultural heritage, for these informants the shrines also serve as an intermediary between the physical world and the realm of spirits. Why then is the older generation more likely to actively seek divine intervention from the kami? Why are older people
more involved with shrines and related activities if the younger group can be just as religious?

One thing is clear from the survey and the informant data. The older age group is more frequently involved in rituals and other shrine related activities. On the surface, it seems that the younger generation is less religious than their elders, a statement which one would be hard pressed to measure (if it can be done at all). What becomes clear only from examining the informant narratives from both age groups is that the younger age group is in fact no less aware of the supernatural components of Japan experience. Informants from the younger age group may in fact choose not to participate in rituals and festival activities perhaps not because they are young but because they are single. Or it could be simply that these men are not locals and are not tied to festival communities. However as Roemer (2006 and 2007) points out there are still plenty of opportunities for single people both young and old to get involved in festival activities, especially as mikoshi (portable shrine) carriers or float-cart pullers. This would suggest then, that where there is a desire to participate there is a way, and these informants lack that desire.

This is confirmed in what one older informant said about how the role of the shrine has changed for him over time. For him, as his family grew the importance of shrine and ritual changed. When he was younger he seldom went to a shrine. Now that he has a family he has begun to visit Yasaka Jinja and other shrines more regularly to pray not only for himself but for his family as well. In this case the establishment of a family with new goals and values initiated a change in his participation in shrine events. It seems clear that Shinto and shrines...
play an important role for both age groups but that this role that changes over time. Thus, Shinto and Shinto shrines play different roles throughout an individual’s life. How these roles influence an individual’s identity is discussed in Chapter 5.
Visits to shrines and belief in spirits and an afterlife are not the most visible characteristics of religious behavior in Japan. What are more obvious are the rituals and ceremonies in which many Japanese people participate. In fact some scholars (see Reader and Tanabe 1998) argue that belief is simply a western notion of religiosity, and other types of religious experience need to be considered when studying Japan. In fact, Reader and Tanabe posit that in Japan what one does is more important then what one believes. In Japan religiosity can be equated with practice and ritual. For this reason it is important to consider claims about Shinto in relation to actual practice and behavior of the informants.

Before a discussion of the statistics and results, the different types of ritual will be introduced. The survey included a few questions about the types of rituals the informants perform, how often they perform them, and in what capacity. The question concerning types of rituals was open-ended and was intended to map out the variety of rituals in which people participate. However, only three rituals were given as answers to this question: saijitsu, oharai, and matsuri. Matsuri, as discussed before, is also the word used for festival. In this context, it simply means rituals associated with festivals. Saijitsu is a general term used for rituals that occur annually, or at regularly scheduled intervals (sometimes every 12th or 20th year, or perhaps two or three times a year at harvest, full moon, new moon etc). It can also mean “festival day” or “national holiday”. These rituals are usually performed in large groups and can be related to specific neighborhoods.
and communities. Oharai is the honorific form of harai which means “purification” or “exorcism”. In this context, oharai is meant as rituals pertaining to purification both physical and mental. While these three categories are not mutually exclusive (one ritual can be both saijitsu and oharai), they were the only three answers given by 86 survey respondents. However, the data shows that there is a difference between the two age groups as to the types of rituals they participate in, their level of involvement, and the frequency with which they participate.

According to initial results, the 18-35 year old responses were evenly distributed across all three types of rituals (Table 4), while a 63 percent majority of the 36-65 year olds responded that they participate in regularly scheduled rituals (saijitsu). These results may seem to say very little, they become more interesting when combined with the responses to other survey questions. The next question, following the one above, asked if respondents participated in other kinds of rituals, and if so what kinds. Less than half (47 percent) of the young age group reported participating in other kinds of rituals while an overwhelming majority (87 percent) of the older age group said they participate in other rituals as well (Table 5). These results show that members of the older age group more commonly participate in multiple kinds of rituals. This suggests that the shrine and its associated rituals play a more active role in the lives of the older age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Informants response to “Rituals one most commonly participates in”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saijitsu (regularly scheduled)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18-35</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36-65</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If taken in combination 34 percent of the 18-35 year olds claim to participate in regularly scheduled rituals (saijitsu), and 35 percent participate in self purification (oharai). This stands in stark contrast to the 63 percent and 87 percent of 36-65 year olds respectively (Table 6). Saijitsu may be largely a social event, but they happen at regularly scheduled intervals. Since a large percentage of the older age group responded that they participated in saijitsu, this suggests that the older age group tends to attend rituals on a regular basis. Regular attendance at saijitsu would reinforce the idea that shrines and Shinto are active agents in the lives of the older age group. Additionally, a large percentage (61 percent) of the older age group claimed to participate in self purification (oharai), whereas only 36 percent of the younger age group did the same. More of the older age group also participates in oharai, a ritual of self purification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oharai (self purification)</th>
<th>Matsuri (festival related)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-35</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>21 (45%)</td>
<td>22 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-65</td>
<td>19 (50%)</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
<td>33 (87%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only ritual where 18-35 year olds seem to participate more than 36-65 year olds is matsuri (festival related). However, participation in matsuri rituals often stems from the individual’s position within the social hierarchy (Traphagan 2004). For this
reason, it has been suggested that the elderly play larger part in matsuri rituals because they have had a longer time to establish social status (Traphagan 2004). At first glance this data seems counterintuitive to Traphagan’s argument since 77 percent of 18-35 year olds claim to have participated in matsuri rituals compared to only 38 percent of 36-65 year olds. However, this can be explained by looking at the level of involvement the two age groups have with rituals in general.

Respondents were asked “in what capacity are you normally involved in rituals?”, and response categories included “observer”, “participant”, “sponsor”, and “other”. Results are shown in Table 7. Results show that more than half (66 percent) of 18-35 year olds claim they most frequently participate in rituals as observers. In contrast a large majority (89 percent) of 36-65 year olds claim they are predominantly participants in rituals. It is possible then that the 18-35 year olds who claim to have been part of matsuri rituals were doing so as just observers. During a matsuri, there are various rituals being performed in various places through the community at different times. It is not uncommon for the public rituals to draw hundreds of thousands of spectators and tourists who witness the event (Roemer 2006). This can explain the unexpected number of the younger age group who were involved in matsuri rituals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Informants “Level of Involvement in rituals”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A large majority of the older age group said they participated in rituals, while a much smaller number of the younger age group said the same. This shows the relative differences in the role rituals and by extension the shrine plays in their lives. The younger age group is involved mostly as observers to rituals. They tend to get involved more as tourists, newcomers, or as simply young adults who have yet to achieve high enough social status to participate more directly in shrine activities. Conversely, older age group members more commonly are active participants in rituals. Repeated involvement in a shrine’s rituals reinforces feelings built up over time and have been attached to the ritual, the shrine, and the community. Whether the rituals affect life’s direction, buttress social status, or provide an environment for social exchange, the shrine and its rituals play a larger role in the lives of the older age group.

But the shrine is more than just a forum for socialization. To some extent, the perceived efficacy the rituals continue to bring members of the older age group back every year. For example, the woman at the Shimogamo sacred river ceremony said she goes there every year to heal her feet and legs. One could question the efficacy of this ritual by pointing out that she believes she must return time and time again to achieve a healthy outcome. Nevertheless she is so convinced at the ritual’s efficacy that she recommends it to her friends and brings them along. Thus, the shrine is not just a place where she can meet and chat with other members of her age or interest group. It is place where she can petition the kami to intervene in her life and the lives of friends.

Members of the younger age group seem to care less about the shrine or at least what it means religiously. Data was collected on a trip to Fushimi Inari in southern Kyoto where two salesmen participated in the following discussion. The two worked at the same
place and said they often spent time together outside of work. The young man was dressed semi-casually while the older gentleman was dressed in normal business attire. The two of them claimed to have come to the shrine directly after their workday ended, but the younger man showed obvious signs of attention to appearance. When asked their primary reason for coming to the shrine, their answers were very different. The older man said this was one of his favorite shrines in Kyoto, and he likes to come and spend time there every now and then. The young man quite directly said he was there only to meet girls.

This informal interview was conducted at the entrance to the shrine and afterwards the two men walked off together into the main area. Both stopped to wash their hands and face as is customary before entering the shrine. They then proceeded to walk past the various shrine buildings. The older gentleman stopped at each one to bow, clap, and pause before moving on, while the younger man’s attention seemed elsewhere the whole time. After about ten minutes, the young man was sitting down smoking while the older man continued to walk around.

At the beginning of their visit, both of these men had performed the short purification ritual before entering the shrine grounds. While not a mandatory ritual, purification is nonetheless a customary behavior upon entering a shrine, and it is a behavior requested by the shrine. Not everyone in attendance stops to wash their hands and faces, but it is often the first thing individuals do before moving into the shrine area. The importance of the ritual may be understood differently, and some potentially may not understand its significance at all. As well, the older man performed a small short ritual of
bowing and clapping before each shrine structure within the shrine grounds, whereas the younger man seemed mainly bored and irritated at his lack of success in finding girls.

There is clearly a difference in how the two men relate to this particular shrine and rituals, and this perhaps hints at how their attitudes toward shrines differ more generally. The older man identified Fushimi Inari as one of his favorite shrines. It is unclear if he felt that this shrine was simply aesthetically pleasing, serene, or if he is more involved with this shrine and its associated activities. However, the shrine was clearly meaningful to him because he performed the usual rituals throughout his visit. The younger man’s behavior suggests that the shrine itself as a spiritual site is less important than the social opportunities it presents to him. He apparently thought of the shrine as a good place to meet girls his own age. His failure to perform traditional ritual behaviors and lack of interest in shrine activities suggests that this informant sees the shrine mainly as a meeting place.

Regardless of age group, rituals still play a part in the lives of the average Japanese citizen. Japanese people often admit to owning small Shinto shrines (kamidana) in the household, and to visiting shrines and temples of holidays and various occasions (Roemer 2006). While survey and interview results seem to indicate that the older age group plays a more active role both in frequency of participation and level of involvement, it is not as if the younger age group do not participate in these activities too. Figure 5.1 shows that the younger generation does participate in rituals, but much less

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6 Both of the men were aware that further observations were taking place after the interview. Therefore it can be argued that the actions observed were a performance. However, the younger gentlemen did not give the same performance, or exhibit the same attention to ritual detail. If this is not an observation of religious intent, it could be an evaluation of the degree to which the older gentleman felt inclined to adhere to normal social conventions in the face of an outside observer, while the younger gentleman had no imperative to do so at all.
frequently and in a much less religious capacity. Why this is the cause for this is not certain, the data collected on shrine visitation and ritual behavior indicates that the younger generation views the religious or spiritual aspects of shrines and rituals as secondary to other factors like social interaction with others.
Chapter 7: Identity

This chapter is perhaps the most provisional. However, it seems the role of Shrine Shinto in contemporary Japanese society is not only based on the mere presence of a natural environment within an urban setting, it is also rests on ritual processes. Ritual invites participants to get involved in actively creating reality. The physical nature of ritual and its repetition can also create a sense of continuity with the past; one that can connect contemporary Japanese society with the past and “traditional” values (Nelson 1996a). When one engages in a ritual that is perceived as unchanged for hundreds of years, one can feel as if he/she is continuing a tradition passed down from past generations. In some way ritual connects those in the present with their ancestors; a sentiment expressed by informants in other studies (see Roemer 2007) as well as anthropologists and other religious studies scholars alike (see Ashkenazi 1993, Schnell 1999). This has a particular “force” in Japanese society because the line drawn between the living and the dead is different than what we believe exists in Western society.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Traphagan (2004) argues that ritual activity can be a conduit for personal and collective concern. This can range from a student writing on an ema (wooden prayer plaque) for good luck on test scores to asking for a healthy baby for his/her pregnant neighbor. Since the ema is hung in public in the shrine for the whole community to see, this represents a public (social) form of concern over wellbeing which can take either personal or selfless forms. As Traphagan argues, it is the elderly within the community whom have established the social status that allows them access to certain
rituals that would otherwise be closed off to them. This solidifies the elderly individuals’ roles as the primary caregivers (and enactors of both social and individual concern) since only they have a full range of access to various rituals (Traphagan 2004).

Traphagan (2004) also argues that the roles individuals take during the festival often blend into their other social roles and that festival roles, in this way, become part of their everyday identity. This occurs most frequently with individuals who have achieved a leadership position in the community or in festival rituals. When an individual plays a leadership role within the ritual, over time people come to associate this role with his/her everyday identity. In this sense, as individuals age they may find themselves increasingly involved in important festival and ritual activities. With this status shift, coupled with retirement and newly available free time, it is likely then that elderly citizens will become more involved in religious activities, and thus have a more personal commitment to the shrine. It is possible that this increased involvement in ritual activity can lead to a greater involvement in, or empathy for, the established religious institutions like Shinto.

Often festival rituals and participation in them is exclusive to a locality or neighborhood, so this may not explain a general age trend and would also ignore the impact of sex and gender (since women are often not allowed to participate in public rituals), and also does not account for people who aren’t involved in rituals. However since age itself conveys status in Japan, it could possibly account for why older gentlemen take a more active role in rituals and festivals, and this in turn leads to a mutually reinforcing relationship between age and status. As men age in Japan, they may be more likely to be invited to participate in exclusive rituals in a leadership position. According to Traphagan (2004) these leadership roles merge with everyday identity.
giving these individuals a higher status as leaders within the community. It would then make sense for them to embrace ritual and religion to buttress their social position.

It can be argued that the festival and shrine are often key factors in Japanese identity formation. Reader and Tanabe introduce the idea of “social religious geography” (1998:50), which says that people tend to go to the most easily accessible shrines – the ones nearest near to where they live. Typically, in Japanese urban areas everything people need can be found within their neighborhood. This includes shrines and temples. Thus, people tend to identify with those shrines and temples in their local (city) and regional (prefecture) neighborhoods (Reader and Tanabe 1998). If it is true that local and regional identity takes precedence over affiliation with a particular religious sect (Reader and Tanabe 1998) families living in a festival neighborhood could primarily identify with the religious festival, but only peripherally with the neighborhood shrine itself, or other religious sects.

Reader and Tanabe support this claim by introducing a couple from Osaka that travels to perform rituals at various shrines in the regional area. They are regular patrons at various shrines in Osaka, Kobe and the surrounding regional area regardless of their sectarian affiliation, because these shrines mean something special and particular to them. This shows that shrines can be seen as integral to the creation of religious identity and this is reinforced through participation in shrine rituals and festivals. Or as Reader and Tanabe put it, “these networks of temples and shrines constitute a form of social religious geography and a sense of religious identity that relates to location” (Reader and Tanabe 1998: 50). The festival becomes part of who an individual is, and how they identify with a local or regional neighborhood, and it is these festivals and rituals which create feelings
of closeness, intimacy, and communal identity (see Kawano 2005; Roemer 2007; Schnell 1999; Traphagan 2004).

To evaluate the range of Yasaka and the Gion Matsuri’s geographical “pull”, and thus their level of influence on identity, let us turn to a few questions from the surveys that address this issue. Admittedly, the sample population is small and is only as a preliminary attempt to address the situation. Nevertheless, the results can serve as a starting point for further investigation. Respondents were asked where they live in order to get a sense of how far they traveled to be at Yasaka and the matsuri. Of the total respondents 53 percent lived in Kyoto (Table 8) (see figure 6.1) with the largest number of outside visitors from Osaka city (18 percent) and Shiga prefecture (12 percent) both of which are relatively close to Kyoto in the southwest and northeast (respectively). While visitors also came from Kobe, Fukuoka, and Tokyo, much further away, they represent a small portion of the total sample population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Distance (mi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyoto</td>
<td>45 (53%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osaka</td>
<td>15 (18%)</td>
<td>27 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiga*</td>
<td>10 (12%)</td>
<td>6 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobe</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
<td>40 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukuoka</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td>320 mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>231 mi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Shiga is a prefecture not a city
(a prefecture is like a state)

While the majority of the sample population lives in Kyoto city, this data does suggest that the festival and Yasaka Shrine appeals to others further away. Fukuoka is
approximately 320 miles, and Tokyo is roughly 231 miles, from Kyoto city. These results are not a surprise given that Gion Matsuri has long been one of Japan’s most famous festivals drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors from throughout Japan. In fact, it is more surprising that these are the only locations reported in the survey. However, what is even more striking is what happens when you look at how these figures break out by age groups.

These results (Table 9) show a distinct difference in the percentage of people coming from outside Kyoto in both age groups. A clear majority (74 percent) of the 36-65 year olds surveyed were residents of Kyoto city, compared to 36 percent of 18-35 year olds. In total, 63 percent of 18-35 year olds came from outside Kyoto and this age group is also the one that travel the farthest to attend the festival. This suggests that the “social religious geography” for the younger age group has a much wider range than for the older age group. While this could be a consequence of heritage tourism, the younger individuals also associated themselves with a larger network of shrines and festivals. For example, one young man from Osaka (about a 30 minute train ride from Kyoto and Yasaka Shrine) mentioned that he has come to the Gion Matsuri every year since he was a teenager. And although he does not know much of the history behind the occasion, he claims he is never absent from attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. “Respondent Location by Age Group”</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>18-35</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>36-65</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
While the 36-65 year olds are more likely to visit shrines and participate in rituals, the data suggests they are less likely to travel long distances. This may be due to many factors ranging from health and aging issues, to finances and logistics. Nevertheless the 18-35 year olds show a substantial increase in geographical range. According to Reader and Tanabe’s argument about social religious geography, the shrines one visits regularly become part of the individual’s identity. This suggests that the younger age group may identify with a larger network of shrines and festivals across Japan, rather than just those located near home or in their neighborhood. However, as discussed previously the younger age group may have a less religious tie with shrines and rituals that stems from a different way of interacting with these shrines. How then does this wider geographical range play into identity formation?

Traphagan (2004) argues that modern transportation and technology have expanded the social religious geography of Japan. The data from this study seems to support this conclusion. It shows that the younger generation is more likely to travel long distances to visit shrines and festivals. If shrines and festivals are indeed linked to an individual’s personal identity, by extension one can assume that the younger generation has come to identify personally with a larger network of shrines than their mothers and fathers.

It seems that while the network of shrines that an individual associates with may be expanding for the younger generations, the level of personal identification with those shrines may be shallow. It is possible that since they travel to shrines farther away, they do so less often than they would if they were visiting shrines in their locality. The data suggests that younger individuals are choosing to forego association with shrines on a
personal (or neighborhood) level while interacting with Shinto and shrines as a form of heritage tourism. If shrines are then relegated to tourist attractions, social forums, or simply forms of entertainment, this places the younger age group at a greater distance from them religiously or spiritually. The way the younger age group incorporates shrines into their identity formation appears to be quite different from that of the older group.

As the range of shrine networks is expanding for the younger generation, they seem to be identifying with the shrine on a less religious basis. However, one could argue that their emphasis on the shrine as a tourist attraction can still reinforce their Japanese heritage. It is possible then that the shrine encapsulates the image and values of what it means to be traditionally Japanese, and is thus a symbol of national identity. While the older generations identify more spiritually with the shrine and its rituals and make them an active part of their life, the younger generation identifies with them more on a more national level. The 18-35 year olds may see Shinto shrines as a part of what makes them Japanese, but not as something they identify with spiritually.
Chapter 8: Conclusions

This thesis has taken a look at how Japanese individuals of two different age groups use Shinto and associated rituals in their daily lives. While the data in this study comes from a small sample, it nevertheless suggests that age differences play an important role within the Japanese religious context. It is clear that there is a strong difference between the younger and older generations in frequency of participation and level of involvement with both rituals and shrines in general. The data from this study, limited as it may be, seems to show that marriage and family are possible mechanisms for change in the transition from using the Shrine as a site for heritage tourism, to an active agent capable of affecting life’s outcomes.

The role that Shinto rituals play in an individual’s life is likely to change as an individual moves through the life cycle. It is probable that multiple factors will affect this relationship over an individual’s lifetime. The data also suggests that throughout an individual’s life cycle, a member of the younger age group will become part of the older age group and appreciate or relate to Shinto and shrines more religious. Eventually, the ability of Shinto and shrines to provide support for the various needs of individuals at different stages in the life cycle helps merge the different ways of relating to Shinto into continued support and interest in the institution.

Of particular interest is the ways the younger generation differs in how they relate to Shinto and how they participate in ritual. This study has shown that the older generation is both more frequently active in ritual participation and also more likely to
take on more involved roles, or simply to see their roles as more involved. What was perhaps more interesting was that for some young people, the religious and spiritual aspects of the shrine were secondary to its social aspects.

In the final chapter, this study looked at these trends and how they relate to the formation of Japanese identity. While the results for this section are just suggestive, it appears that the older generation identifies with fewer shrines and it does so on a more religious basis. The older generation considers specific shrines to be part of their family (and neighborhood) heritage and their personal or neighborhood identity. In contrast, the younger generation tends to identify with a much larger network of shrines, but much less religiously. While the spiritual and religious aspects of the shrine may be less important to the younger generation, Shinto and shrines more generally represent a part of their national heritage.
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Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Ema – These are small wooden plaques on which Shinto worshippers write their prayers or wishes. The ema are then left hanging up at the shrine, where the kami receive them.

Kami – Kami refers to the primary deities of the Shinto religion. Kami can range from natural phenomena such as hurricanes, monsoons, plagues, or the ocean to spirits of the ancestors or important figures such as the emperor or Benjamin Franklin.

Kyoto – Kyoto City is the location where the data for this study were collected. Kyoto also happens to be the name of the prefecture (like a state) in west central Honshu (the main island of Japan) where Kyoto city is located (much like New York City, New York).

Matsuri – The word for “festival”, in some cases this term also refers to rituals primarily associated with festivals (as in “matsuri rituals”).

Mikoshi – Bronze plated portable shrines (see a picture in appendix B). Mikoshi are used as a temporary resting place for the shrine’s kami during festivals and festival rituals. The mikoshi are used so that the kami can be paraded through the town or neighborhood for various purposes including purification.

Oharai (Harai) – “Oharai” is the honorific form of the word “harai”, and refers to rituals of cleansing and purification.

Omamori – These small amulets dedicated to particular kami. Omamori are made of cloth, and enclose paper or wood with prayers written on them. They are often specialized and can be bought for purposes such as good luck, safe child birth, good test scores, travel safety etc.

Shinto – Literally translates to “way of the gods”. Shinto is one of Japan’s main religious and is the topic of study for this thesis.

Yasaka Jinja – This is the name of the shrine that was the primary location of data collection for this study.
Appendix B – Sample Surveys

(English Version)

Prompt: Excuse me, can I have a moment of your time? My name is Michael Kostelnik and I’m a student at an American University. I am studying Japanese Shrines and Shinto, may I ask you a few questions?

1. A. Is this your first time visiting this shrine?  Yes  No

B. How often do you come to this shrine?
First time  2-5 times  6-10 times  Often

C. What is your reason for coming here today?
Tourism  Participate in ritual  Meet with friends  On a Date

2. A. In general, how often do you visit shrines?
Every Day  1-6 times a week  Monthly  Annually

B. In general, why do you visit shrines?
Tourism  Participate in ritual  Meet with friends  On a Date

3. A. Have you ever participated in a ritual or ceremony?
Yes  No

B. What kind of ritual? (for example, Oharai, Shiawase, Saijitsu etc)
_________________

C. In what capacity did you participate?
Observer  Participant  Sponsor  Other:_______

D. How often do you participate?
Every Day 1-6 times a week Monthly Annually

4. A. Do you participate in other shrine activities? (Matsuri, Oharai, etc)
Yes  No
B. [Yes] What kind of activities? ___________________________

5. A. Do you feel that the Shrine is relevant to the average Japanese citizen?
I think so  Slightly  Not Very Much  Not at all
B. Do you feel that Shinto Priests are relevant to the average Japanese citizen?
I think so  Slightly  Not Very Much  Not at all

6. A. Do you ever consult with a Shinto priest when there are good or bad things in your life?
Yes  No
B. [Yes] How often do you consult with them?
Often  Sometimes  Not Very Often  1-2 times
C. [No] How likely are you to consult with a Shinto Priest in the future?
Definitely  Maybe  Unlikely  Never

7. When you want to know more about kami or Shinto, who do you talk to?
Shinto Priest  Miko  Friends  Family  Books  Teacher  Nobody
Other: ________________
8. Finally, If I may ask some personal information?

What year were you born? ______  Male/Female

Where do you live? ______
ちょっとすみませんけど、(ちょっと失礼しますけど)わたくしはマイケルコセルニックで、アメリカからの大学院生です。いま、日本の神社と神道の研究をしていますが、ちょっとご質問を聞かせいただけませんか。5分ほどで匿名です。ご自由に答えてもよろしいです。

1. A. この神社には、初めてですか。 はい、いいえ
   B. この神社に来たのは、何回目ですか。
      初回 2-5回 6-10回 何度も
   C. 今日、神社に来た目的は 何ですか。
      観光客 儀式を参加する 友達に会う デートする

2. A. 一般的に神社にどれくらいの頻度で来ますか。
      ほぼ毎日 週に1-6回 月に数回 年に数回
   B. 神社に来る目的は何ですか。
      観光客 儀式を参加する 友達に会う デートする

3. A. あなたは今までに神式の儀式に参加した事がありますか。
      はい いいえ
   B. それはどんな儀式ですか。(たとえばおはらい、幸せ、祭日 etc)
       ＿＿＿＿＿＿
   C. どんな立場参加しましたか。
      観察者 参加者 主催者 (その他) ＿＿＿＿
   D. どれくらいの頻度で参加しましたか。
      ほぼ毎日 週に1-6回 月に数回 年に数回 全くしない
4. A. 他の神社の活動に出席しますか。祭りや、おはらい、出席します)
はい  いいえ
B. 「はい」それは、どのような活動ですか。

5. A. 神道の神社は、現在の日本人に役にたつと思われますか。
そう思います  ややそう思います  あまりそう思いません  そう思いません
B. 神主さまは現在の日本人に役にたつと思われますか。
そう思います  ややそう思います  あまりそう思いません  そう思いません

6. A. 生活のとてもよい事か悪い事があったとき、神主様と相談したことはありますか。
はい  いいえ
B. 「はい」どれぐらい相談しましたか。
よくします  ときどきします  あまりしません  1−2回
C. 「いいえ」とても良い事か悪い事がありましたら、将来に神主様と相談する可能性がどれぐらいでしょうか。
相談します  相談するかもしれない  相談しません  ぜひ相談しません

7. 神様が神道をもっと知りたい場合は誰にお聞きにしますか。
神主様  巫女  友達  家族  本  先生  誰にも聞きません
他（具体的に誰ですか）

8. 最後にちょっと2つの基本情報の質問があります。
何年生まれましたか  （性別）男性／女性
今、どこの県か府に住んでいますか。
「京都」京都市に住んでいますか。