LOCALITIES OF SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION AND MEANING:
TEMPLES AND SHRINES OF KYOTO, JAPAN

by

Emily Ann Teresa Laninga

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2009

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Interdisciplinary Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Okanagan)

June 2013

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Abstract

Cultural practices are maintained by passing knowledge down throughout the generations, yet they also are simultaneously in a process of transition. Influenced by societal requirements, specific aspects of culture are taught and learned. Over time, some qualities are altered, adapted, dismissed, or are auxiliary to the creation of new practices. A prime example of this process is Japanese culture and its symbolic meanings in relation to Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples; milieus which are sacred spaces that contain polysemic modes of symbolic expression. In this thesis, I examine a variety of customs where localities of temples and shrines act as multifaceted outlets of symbolic expression and meaning for the people who visit them. In particular, I am interested in exploring how people use objects and view actions that occur within the context of shrines and temples. Objects are physical, material artifacts that are representative of something, some examples of objects being architecture, artwork, statues and monuments, or a talisman. Actions take place as a physical means of representation, acted out in order to initiate a desired effect; such actions include ritual behaviors, ceremony, dance and offerings. By analyzing objects and actions, this thesis shows how people’s interactions within shrines and temples not only mark these locations as meaningful places, but reveal how people’s understandings of the meanings of symbolic forms within these sites are changing in contemporary times. This thesis is shaped from data collected using participant observation, open-ended interviews, questionnaires, and photo journaling during a four month period of fieldwork (Mid-September 2011 until early January 2012) in the city of Kyoto, Japan. My research suggests that, as Japanese society continues to change, contemporary Japanese youth are losing some traditional knowledge of symbolic representations found at shrine and temple sites, signifying a general gap in traditional knowledge between generations. This indicates that
symbolic forms are either changing, or possibly that the youth of today are not learning about current or past symbolic meanings in the first place. Moreover, the reasons for visiting temple and shrines are increasingly due to specifically non-religious purposes such as tourism or entertainment.
Preface

This research required an ethics approval, which was provided by the UBC Okanagan Behavioural Research and Ethics Board, certificate number: H11-01589.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ ii

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ iv

Table of Contents ..................................................................................................................... v

List of Tables .............................................................................................................................. viii

List of Figures ............................................................................................................................. ix

Abbreviations and Conventions ............................................................................................... xii

Glossary ....................................................................................................................................... xiii

Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................... xvii

Dedication .................................................................................................................................... xviii

Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1
  Background and Setting of Study .............................................................................................. 1
  Quick Introduction to Shinto and Buddhist Presence in Japan ............................................. 3
  Structure of the Thesis ............................................................................................................. 6

Chapter 2: Methodology .............................................................................................................. 9
  Research Design ...................................................................................................................... 9
  Study Area ............................................................................................................................. 12
  Data Collection and Analysis ................................................................................................. 12
  Limitations ............................................................................................................................. 15

Chapter 3: Matters of Meaning ................................................................................................. 17
  Symbolism .............................................................................................................................. 18
  Interpretation ......................................................................................................................... 22
  Context ................................................................................................................................... 26
List of Tables

Table 1: Age groups and gender of questionnaire respondents. ........................................ 14
Table 2: Responses regarding frequency of site visits ...................................................... 15
List of Figures

All photography contained in this thesis is © Emily Laninga, 2012.

Figure 1: Map of Japan with the City of Kyoto. © Google Maps, 2012 ................................................. 1
Figure 2: 'Power Spot' at Seimei Jinja shrine.............................................................................................. 41
Figure 3: Ichijō Modori-bashi, ‘returning bridge’ at Seimei Jinja shrine......................................................... 41
Figure 4: Kurama-dera Temple’s central 'power spot' .................................................................................. 42
Figure 5: A carved figure of a guardian shishi ............................................................................................ 45
Figure 6: A carving of Baku ......................................................................................................................... 46
Figure 7: Torii gate over street in front of Heian Jingu shrine ..................................................................... 47
Figure 8: Torii gate at Nonomiya-jinja shrine ............................................................................................. 47
Figure 9: Torii gates lining a path at Fushimi Inari Jinja Shrine ................................................................. 48
Figure 10: Shimenawa and shide ................................................................................................................. 48
Figure 11: Special location at Kamigamo Jinja shrine used for ritually blessing new vehicles... 49
Figure 12: Koma-Inu guardian statues ......................................................................................................... 50
Figure 13: Tiger and Fox guardian statues ................................................................................................. 50
Figure 14: Temizuya .................................................................................................................................... 51
Figure 15: The kagura-den at Hirano-jinja ................................................................................................. 52
Figure 16: One of the auxiliary shrines ........................................................................................................ 53
Figure 17: A Niō guardian at Ninnaji temple ............................................................................................... 54
Figure 18: Pagodas ...................................................................................................................................... 55
Figure 19: Sign instructing visitors how to use the Temizuya .................................................................... 57
Figure 20: Waters at Kiyomizu-dera temple ............................................................................................... 59
Figure 21: Display of sake offerings at Matsuo-Taisha grand shrine........................................................... 61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>One of the ox statues at Kitano-Tenmangu shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Images of the four guardians associated with the cardinal directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The Seiryu-e Matsuri at Kiyomizu-dera temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Seiryu, the blue dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Omikoshi displayed at Kitano-Tenmangu shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Shishi figures in the Zuiki Matsuri festival procession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Zuiki Omikoshi “Taro stalk portable shrine”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The larger Omikoshi from Ninnaji temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>The ox at Nishiki-tenmangu shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Statues of the deity Ōkuninushi and the rabbit at Jishu-jinja shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>A Horse statue with enclosed structure, and offerings of carrot in front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Amulets and Talisman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Ema, votive tablets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dissolving ‘troubles’ as written messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Omikuji, paper fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>The omokaruishi ‘heavy light rock’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>The “Deity Stone” at Imamiya Jinja shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Jishu Jinja love stones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>An arrow fortune telling at Matsuo Jinja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Incense at entrance of the main hall at Kurama-dera temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Daruma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Hayama from Kitano Tenmangu shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Giant Hayama at Kamigamo Jinja shrine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 45: One of the oxen statues ................................................................. 108
Figure 46: The peach statue at Seimei-jinja ....................................................... 109
Figure 47: An altar display with offerings at Jishu jinja shrine ............................. 111
Figure 48: Representations of Jizō, with votive bibs ........................................... 112
Figure 49: Offerings and prayers at the worship hall of Kitano Tenmangu jinja shrine .... 113
Figure 50: Bell attached to a rope at the worship hall at Kitano Tenmangu jinja shrine ...... 114
Figure 51: The bell being struck at Chion-in temple on New Year’s ......................... 117
Figure 52: Momiji (Japanese Maple) ................................................................... 129
Figure 53: A night ‘light-up’ at Kiyomizu-dera temple .......................................... 130
Figure 54: A light show, displayed at night in the garden at Kodaiji temple ............. 131
Figure 55: The ‘picture slide’ fuda, at Seimei-jinja .............................................. 132
Abbreviations and Conventions

Any Japanese names given throughout this thesis are formatted in typical Japanese order; that is, surname first with given name following. I have chosen to use pseudonyms (alternate names) so as to not make the identity of interviewees and participants known; this approach is as per recommendations of ethics procedures. The first time that a Japanese word is given, it is written in italics with an English definition following in brackets. After which, if same word is given it will be provided using the Japanese vocabulary in italics. Such introduced vocabulary is also provided in the Glossary for further reference. Some Japanese words with double (elongated) vowels that are common to English vocabulary will be provided without the macron above the o, or u, such as with the words Shinto and Kyoto. Less common words will be provided with this indication of an elongated vowel; for example the word jingū.

SKP………………Study in Kyoto Program
UBCO…………..University of British Columbia Okanagan
UNESCO………..United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
# Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ahokashi-San</th>
<th>the “Deity’s Stone”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amai</td>
<td>sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baku</td>
<td>a beast in Japanese mythology that resembles an elephant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhas and bodhisattvas</td>
<td>coarsely translated as gods or goddesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bukku</td>
<td>food offerings directed to hotoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butsudan</td>
<td>Buddhist altar in a Japanese home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go-shintai</td>
<td>a sacred object in which a kami resides, or a temporary repository of kami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bonshō</td>
<td>temple bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daikichi</td>
<td>‘greatest luck’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ebi</td>
<td>shrimp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daikyo</td>
<td>‘great bad luck’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daruma</td>
<td>‘good luck’ doll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ema</td>
<td>votive tablet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fuda</td>
<td>talisman, amulet, paper charm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gohei</td>
<td>a sacred wand with shide paper strips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haiden</td>
<td>where people can make offerings and perform rituals to the kami.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hamaya</td>
<td>evil-destroying arrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hanami</td>
<td>literally ‘flower viewing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happi</td>
<td>a type of short cotton over-coat with large sleeves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hatsumōde</td>
<td>first visit to shrine and/or temple, and prayer of the New Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hi-matsuri</td>
<td>a fire festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Word</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>hitogata barai</td>
<td>exorcism doll/purification doll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honden</td>
<td>main hall (or sanctuary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotoke</td>
<td>deceased ancestor or Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jidai matsuri</td>
<td>festival of ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jinja/jingū</td>
<td>shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joyano-kane</td>
<td>bell toll on New Year’s Eve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kagami</td>
<td>mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kagami-mochi</td>
<td>‘mirror’ rice cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kagura-den</td>
<td>open (viewable) stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kami</td>
<td>deity or spiritual being/force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kamidana</td>
<td>(Lit. “god shelf”) Shinto altar in Japanese home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansai</td>
<td>region that includes the prefectures of Nara, Osaka, and Kyoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karaage</td>
<td>deep fried chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karai</td>
<td>salty (or spicy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koma-Inu</td>
<td>(Lit. “Korean Dogs”) stone guardians at entrance to shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kondō or butsuden</td>
<td>main hall (or sanctuary) at a temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kyōzō</td>
<td>where artifacts and sutras, along with other texts, are kept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matsuri</td>
<td>festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mikan</td>
<td>Japanese orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mikoshi</td>
<td>portable shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mizuko kuyo</td>
<td>a memorial service for lost children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mochi</td>
<td>pounded rice cake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>momiji</td>
<td>Maple (tree); also used to refer to the autumn foliage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ni-ō guardian statues
niōmon or sanmon. temple entrance gates
okonomiyaki grilled pancake-like meal made with mixed batter of cabbage, vegetables and meats
omamori amulet, pouch/packet charm
omikoshi Matsuri the ‘portable shrine festival’
omikuji paper fortune
omokaruishi, ‘heavy light rock’
oni demon spirits, or sometimes ‘goblins’
osechi-ryori traditional foods eaten on New Year’s Day
tera/dera temple
sake rice wine
sakura cherry blossoms
sandō the pathway leading visitors to the other areas of the grounds
seiryu-e Matsuri Blue Dragon festival
setsumatsusha smaller auxiliary shrines
shide white zigzag strips of paper
shichi-go-san (Lit. seven-five-three)
shimenawa twisted straw rope that denotes a sacred space or presence of kami
shinsen food offerings to kami
shishi lion-dog
shōrō belfry (structure which holds the temple bell)
shushōe. temple bell ringing ritual
takoyaki  balls of battered and fried octopus

temizuya  water fountain for purification

Tenjin  venerated deity

tō  a pagoda

torii  an entrance gate at Shinto shrines

tōrō  stone lanterns

ume  Japanese apricot (often referred to as plum)

wasshoi  a type of cheering, like ‘hurrah’

Yomi  the under-world in Japanese mythology

yukata  summer kimono

zōni  soup made with an assortment of vegetables and containing a large piece of mochi (rice cake)

zuiki Matsuri  taro stalk festival

zuiki Omikoshi  taro stalk portable shrine
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge those who have assisted me and made the completion of this thesis possible. First, I would especially like to thank my supervisor Dr. Naomi McPherson for her continued inspiration, intellectual support and encouragement throughout the entire process. Second, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Christine Schreyer, who always provided me with positive and motivational critique in regards to my writing; and Professor Nina Langton, with whom I first began my journey in learning Japanese as a second language and Japanese cultural studies.

I would also like to thank Tanaka Kaori for being so diligent in aiding me with the transcriptions of my consent forms and questionnaires. And, of course, many thanks are due to all the people who answered my questions and to those who participated in my interviews and questionnaires while I was in the field, which have contributed to the data of this thesis. The kindness and insight you have shared with me will always be remembered.

Finally, it is important that I acknowledge the enduring support of my family. If not for their blessings, encouragements, and occasional monetary provisions, this journey would not have been possible. To you I am deeply grateful.
Dedication

To my best friend and fiancé, Elliott Hardy; the one who brings me happiness and laughter each and every day. Without your enduring support, both emotionally and financially, I surely would not have made it this far. Words cannot fully describe how appreciative I am to you for being so loving and persevering during my academic studies these past years. Thank you.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Setting of Study

The concept for this study originated when I was finally able to fulfill my lifelong dream of visiting Japan in 2009-2010. The opportunity arose during my undergraduate studies when I was a participant in the University of British Columbia’s “Go Global” program, and was selected to partake in an exchange at the Ritsumeikan University, located in the city of Kyoto (see figure 1). While at Ritsumeikan, I had the opportunity to study in their intensive language course program and expand my knowledge of Japanese culture. It was here that I first discovered my considerable interest in Japan’s temples and shrines. During my free time, I visited many temples and shrines and observed symbolic and mythical themes depicted in the delicately carved architectural frameworks of the building, as well as in artwork, statues and monuments, gardens and merchandise. In addition, I sought out any oral or written narratives about how specific deities came to be enshrined in a specific location, along with any written and pictorial brochures or books about the history of

Figure 1: Map of Japan with the City of Kyoto. © Google Maps, 2012.
the particular shrine or temple I visited.

My interest in the shrines and temples did not fade once I returned to Canada. So, I began to think about how temples and shrines, and cultural patterns observed within them, were interpreted and understood by Japanese people. I would ask my Japanese friends at the time (male and female, aged 18-24) questions about Japanese mythology and I received responses from, “Umm… well I think I know about such-and-such story, but I don’t know really,” to a surprised expression from a male who once said, “What? We have a mythology?” During subsequent trips to Japan, and visits with my friends’ families, I discovered that for the most part their parents and grandparents did have answers to questions regarding the things I observed at shrines and temples. On occasion, my enquiries provided a learning opportunity for my Japanese friends as well. At the time I had been astonished to discover that in a culture with such a rich and dense history of mythology and symbolism, it appeared as though the youth of contemporary Japanese society had some difficulty in explaining to me examples of mythic and symbolic knowledge from some aspects of their cultural heritage. So, after hearing many similar replies from my friends, I began to wonder not only how Japanese people were learning about symbolic expression occurring in temples and shrines and what meanings they understood from them, but also, whether there really was a large difference in the amount and type of knowledge arising between older and younger generations. It appeared to me that, because shrines and temples are tied to key aspects of Japanese mythology and culturally symbolic representations, and the fact that they are places visited by almost all people at some point in their lives, then, the average person should have knowledge regarding such matters. Shrines and temples have an especially significant presence in Kyoto city; thus, these spaces were an optimal medium through which to search for the answers to my questions.
Quick Introduction to Shinto and Buddhist Presence in Japan

While there are a variety of religions practiced in Japan, the focus of my study happens to involve the two primary religious systems of Japanese culture, which are Shintoism and Buddhism. In this section, I provide a very brief introduction to Shinto and Buddhist practice in Japan. Since these two religious systems are not the direct focus of my study, I do not delve too deeply, as they are too vast and complex to be discussed thoroughly in these pages. However, because they are associated with and are an integral part of the context within which symbolic forms of my study are found, some background information is necessary.

Shinto can be translated literally as “way of the gods” and is often labeled as Japan’s main ‘indigenous’ religion. However, it is important to note that what constitutes today’s notion of “Shinto” has not always been the same in the past. Originally, the immense and varied practices that fit under the concept of Shinto were in fact multiple and unknown as a singular practice and did not acquire the name ‘Shinto’ until it was required, by imperial rule, to be shown as a distinct practice unique to Japan in order to differentiate it from Buddhist practice (Doughill 2006:37; Matsumoto 1996:15). Buddhism was introduced from Korea to Japan in A.D. 552 (Casal 1967:2; Tamaru 1996:44) and was proclaimed an official religion by Empress Suiko (593-628) in A.D. 621 (Casal 1967:2). Leaders in the Meiji period (1868-1912) named the vast practices of indigenous religious folk belief as Shinto (Wittenberg 2002:40), in an effort to propagate the divinity of the Emperor and retain an image of Japan as a nation of homogeneity.

A fundamental component of Shinto practice is the acknowledgment of natural features of the earth and environment as being animistic. This means that certain aspects of nature – such as the sun and moon, trees, unusual rock formations, rivers and mountains – are understood as containing or being a receptacle for a spiritual energy. These spiritual essences are referred to as
kami (deity or spirit) and include a spectrum of figures, from mythological beings to humans, who have been venerated to deity status after their death. Kami are typically enshrined and worshiped at, but not limited to, Shinto shrines, called jinja or jingū. Shrines vary in size, ranging from large sections of land and accompanying architectural structures run by priests and attendants, to shrines in the form of a small mountain roadside altar that is maintained by the local people (Breen and Teeuwen 2010; Reader 1991). For the most part, shrines are physically and visually distinct from Buddhist temples. A prominent feature that denotes the location of a shrine is the torii gate (a gate that is somewhat shaped like the Greek letter π). Torii gates are often (but not always) painted a bright vermilion, which is also painted on fences and buildings within shrine complexes. The torii happens to be one of many symbolic forms, which I will discuss in further detail later.

While Shintoism is a combination of beliefs and practices indigenous to Japan, Buddhism was an introduced religion and its practice did not become widely popularized until the 8th century (Havens 2006; Reader 1991; Stone 2006). Today, Buddhist practice in Japan is an adapted and modified form that differs from but still shares some similarities and connections with Buddhist religious practices in India. In Japanese Buddhist practice, worship usually occurs at temples, called tera (or dera – a phonetic variation, or alternate reading of the character) and sometimes the suffix –ji is also used. It is at these places that Buddhas and bodhisattvas (roughly translated as gods or goddesses) are the figures of worship (Ashkenazi 2003; Reader 1991). Moreover, due to the extensive history that Shinto and Buddhist practices share together in Japan, it is not uncommon for shrine and temple locations to be good examples of religious syncretism; that is, there is a blending or a combination of elements from each religion which have adapted certain customs or practices from each other; thus, they also share some symbolic
expressions. Some locations are even physically presented together; for example, one has to also enter the grounds of Kiyomizu-dera Buddhist temple in order to access the popular Jishu Shinto shrine, which is well-known for all aspects having to do with ‘love.’

One significant contrast between Shinto and Buddhist beliefs and practices is that Shinto is mainly concerned with matters regarding life, nature, and purity, while Buddhism deals with aspects of death and embraces the concept of an afterlife. As Tamaru states, because it was “bound to families and clans through ancestral rites, Buddhism gradually reached a point where services for the dead became one of its most significant functions” (1996:47). However, in spite of (and perhaps because of) this contrast, an individual’s religious practices may be carried out at both shrines and temples throughout a person’s lifetime. That is, culturally, Japanese society does not hold strong opposition to or stigmatize practicing more than one or using a combination of aspects from diverse religions by an individual. Furthermore, combining or ‘picking and pulling’ from diverse religious systems as suits the individual is not frowned upon. Actually, there is a popular phrase, “born Shinto, die Buddhist,” which refers to the fact that many Japanese people receive Shinto blessings as newborns, are married at Shinto shrines, and use Buddhist temples at times of death, for practices such as funerals rites (Reader 1991:7). Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples are places which Japanese people, as well as non-Japanese people, visit at other times too, and for a variety of reasons, which I will discuss further later. As this thesis will show, visiting both Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples is a part of Japanese culture, and both these places act as localities where Japanese people are learning and experiencing contextually specific cultural symbolic expression. Now that I have highlighted some prominent features of Shinto and Buddhism in Japan I will turn to the structure of my thesis.
Structure of the Thesis

The research in this thesis is interdisciplinary as it draws from several academic branches, including Cultural Anthropology, Japanese Cultural Studies, Sociology and Hermeneutics. This interdisciplinary approach provides insight into the existing situation of interaction between people and symbolic objects and actions in a contextualized relationship within shrines and temples of Kyoto. As such, I consider this thesis, by its very nature as only a small reflection of practices in contemporary Japanese society. This thesis also contributes to a topic somewhat understudied in Japanese society – that is, the cultural shift occurring in people’s knowledge specific to these places in regard to understanding elements of symbolic meaning present at temples and shrines. This type of research is important because most writing having to do with Japanese religions and Japanese society is typically focused on either the historical aspect of a particular religion itself, or on a specific location’s history (Ellwood 2008; Kasahara 2001; Kasulis 2004; Kitagawa 1987; Littleton 2002; Nelson 1996; Swanson and Chilson, eds. 2006; Yoshiro 2000). There is a need to explore concepts of how these places are being experienced and how cultural phenomena are understood by people of contemporary Japanese society. I also suggest that emerging contemporary understandings, or lack thereof, about Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples are being highly affected by global and fast-paced technological cultural adaptations. My focus here is to examine how things are ‘now,’ and is not necessarily an examination about how things ‘used to be.’ While I acknowledge that many of the elements discussed below are a continuance of ‘traditional’ practices, this thesis examines the presence of symbolic forms which I observed during fieldwork; as such, I have included characteristics encompassing both the traditional and emergent. Hence, this thesis, in examining the current usages of symbolic meanings, contributes to and expands upon current anthropological research
in the interpretive study of symbolic expression in a specified facet of Japanese culture.

Additionally, for the purposes of this thesis, when I use the word ‘shrine,’ I am referring to Shinto; likewise, the word ‘temple’ is correlated with Buddhism.

The chapters in this thesis are divided and grouped into related aspects of the study. This chapter (chapter one) provides a background for my study: a brief and very much abridged introduction to Shinto and Buddhism in Japan, and the structure of the thesis. Chapter two contains information regarding methodology, including my research design, the study area (city of Kyoto), how I obtained my data, and limitations regarding my study. Chapter three discusses matters of theory related to the four interacting factors of my research: symbolism, interpretation, context, and experience. Chapter four offers support to my theory in understanding how place and meaning are interconnected and illuminates how these factors create meaningful experiences for Japanese people during their visits to temples and shrines. With chapter five, I begin to present my research data collected while in the field. I cover symbolic aspects regarding the sacred spaces of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and factors of architecture, purification and mindset, meaningful connections to place, affected behaviour, and how elements of sacred space and place are, in some cases, extended and utilized beyond the boundaries of an initial temple or shrine. Chapter six is where I further discuss the variety of forms of symbolic expression that I encountered during my fieldwork research. I explore this aspect through the use of actions and objects, to show how each type performs and is used by people who visit the temples and shrines in Kyoto. Here, I also include some of the opinions and knowledge of those whom I interviewed and who answered questions during participant observations. In chapter seven, I consider certain additional aspects from my research, which stand out to me, regarding contemporary issues in the continuation of symbolic meaning and traditions. Chapter eight comprises the conclusion to
my thesis, which includes how certain symbolic expressions are used and understood by people of contemporary society, and how, as places, Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples create a vast network of meaning and understanding, as well as experience and sentiment, for people. Now that I have outlined the structure of the thesis, I will begin with the discussion of the methodology behind my research.
Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter will now begin the discussion of the methodological factors involved in my research. In the first section I state the aim of this thesis and describe my research design, which includes information about the methods I used, what types of questions informed my research, my time spent during fieldwork and several initial hypotheses to be used for further investigation. The second section provides a few background facts about the history of Kyoto and its concentration of shrine and temples. In the third section, I discuss my methods of data collection, which include participant observation, interviews and questionnaires and my process of analysis. And finally, the forth section describes a few of the limitations which were encountered during the study.

Research Design

My research was designed to explore the variety of symbolic elements that are observable at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples by utilizing an anthropological focus and ethnographic methods in order to gain a holistic perspective. The research behind this thesis is a combination of information gained from the process of a literature review, data collection during my fieldwork and my experiences while living in Japan. The focus of this thesis is to examine the ways in which people of contemporary Japanese society interact with and understand symbolic forms at shrines and temples; places which are localities that act as multifaceted centres, or convergences, and, through the use of objects and actions, portray symbolic expression. Shrines and temples are a deep part of Kyoto’s history and currently continue to be locations that are rich in polysemic symbolic expression. Moreover, these shrines and temples are located within the context of a bustling city, where culture is steeped in traditional forms while melding with the modern.
My thesis is informed by questions pertaining to how symbolic expressions are represented at shrines and temples and what the symbolic forms signify to the people who visit them. During my fieldwork, I carried out participant observations, semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and collected fieldnotes (I will explain these in further detail below). In addition to my observations, I practiced photographic journaling as a means of capturing forms of symbolic expression and for site comparisons. Furthermore, the application of Grounded Theory (as per Corbin and Strauss 2008) provided me with the approach to develop theory about my research, through and from the analysis of my data. Initially, I began with some unfocused observations, which then led to questions that formed further focused participant observations, which formed a substantial portion of my data (Fife 2005). In this way, and by coding my data as I worked, certain behaviours within the shrines and temples emerged as key components of my research.

During my four months of fieldwork, I was also simultaneously participating in my second exchange at Ritsumeikan University. While enrolled in their Study in Kyoto Program (SKP), I was taking intensive language classes five days a week to improve my Japanese language skills and, when my class schedule permitted, I undertook my research. Overall, I visited sixteen shrines and nineteen temples, for a total of thirty-five separate locations. In some instances I visited specific locations more than once or twice. For example, I visited the Kitano-Tenmangū shrine on six separate occasions: the shrine is located close to my dormitory and Ritsumeikan University, enabling me to attend the first and last days of a five day festival, and this same site is also a popular location for visitors during the New Year celebrations period. The locations of my study were chosen randomly because I did not want to take a general tourist track, as I felt doing so may bias my study towards a more touristic perspective. The locations I
visited were based on recommendations from my Japanese peers at the University, disembarking a bus at random stops, or personal interest. Choosing which shrine and temples to visit by means of varying the distance between sites, along with their rank in status or popularity or size, allows for a higher chance of encountering Kyoto locals, and permits observing if certain aspects are related to only a specific district of the city. The locations that I visited are also situated in an assortment of environments: from central shopping streets, to more remote village areas located in the mountains. In addition to the thirty-five locations I visited in Kyoto, I also went to the Kyoto Imperial Palace (centrally located) and the Byodo-in Temple located in the city of Uji, which is immediately south of Kyoto. Nonetheless, I want to clarify that I view the city of Kyoto as its own unique situation, which includes factors such as a substantial concentration of temples and shrines, an influential historical past and large volumes of tourist traffic, all of which contribute to the outcome of my research data. Thus, while numerous other shrines and temples located in cities, towns, and villages outside of Kyoto do share aspects relevant to my study, this thesis is focused specifically within the city’s boundaries.

Near the beginning of my research, I hypothesized that several aspects of symbolic knowledge would be revealed, such as (1) some temples and shrines share symbolic forms and, moreover, some of their related mythological deities, gods and goddesses and symbolic objects are expressed in multi-faceted ways throughout sites; (2) what is meaningful to visitors of the sites and the symbolic meanings of observed actions and objects would relate to contemporary society; and finally, (3) not only is there a disproportion between generations in the amount of symbolic knowledge a person might have, but also, due to society’s continual adaptations and cultural change over time, there is a difference between the way generations use and understand shrines and temples (that is, how they experience these places).
Study Area

The city of Kyoto is located in central Japan, in what is referred to as the Kansai region of Honshū. The population is almost 1.5 million (Kyoto City Web 2011b; Perrins 2002). It is an ancient city, with a history spanning 1200 years, and was Japan’s capital long before Tokyo of today. Kyoto was the location where the imperial family and its court resided from 794 to 1868. With its clusters of new and old architecture, the city of Kyoto is a prominent example of the mixing of traditional and modern Japanese culture. The city’s webpage boasts that Kyoto is home to “literally thousands of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines,” many of which are also officially recognized as world heritage sites (Kyoto City Web 2011a). Truly, one does not have to venture very far in order to come across one of these locations. For an area that is 827.90 km² (Kyoto City Web 2011b), Kyoto is indeed a highly concentrated area of religious sites. Many of Kyoto’s shrines and temples are locations that attract high volumes of tourists, both national and international, because of their cultural and structural histories. In fact, at least 39 of these locations are considered to be National Treasures, and 171 are classified as Important Cultural Properties (Kyoto City Web 2011a), which means they have been designated at either the national or city level as important items of Japan’s cultural heritage, along with items that range from artifacts to architectural structures. Furthermore, a few are designated as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sites; meaning they are considered to be World Heritage sites. With such a high density of potential fieldwork sites, Kyoto city is undeniably a prime location for the focus of my research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Fieldwork allows for the researcher to have the opportunity to witness events, some planned, some spontaneous and others unexpected. Wardlow writes that, even “trivial incidents –
perhaps particularly the ones that put the anthropologist on the spot – can be ethno-graphically useful, for they can be employed to make people’s tacit cultural logics and values more explicit” (2006:101). The key method of my research involved participant observation, which serves two purposes in this study. First, it allows me to participate in viewing shrine and temple ritual activities alongside other visitors. Second, it allows me to observe people and their behaviors in relation to the activities at hand. Fetterman (2010) points out, “participant observation combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data” (37).

During my fieldwork period, I conducted five semi-structured interviews and had a total of eighteen questionnaires completed and returned both via paper and online formats. I analyzed most of my data using MAXQDA 10, a qualitative software package, in combination with Grounded Theory. As identified by Corbin and Strauss (2008), in Grounded Theory, the practice of reflective reading throughout the process of coding and analyzing the collected data is to create inquiry "that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (23). This means that the collection of data and its analysis may proceed simultaneously. Because the analysis involved ‘thick description,’ as well as providing insight from the point of view of the participants, Grounded Theory aides in determining which factors are most prominent and permitted further revisions throughout the development of my research questions. I provided questionnaires to people at random, people I met at either the university or festivals and events where I was doing participant observations. Three university students and two university instructors kindly participated in open-ended, semi-structured interviews. The interviews took place in a setting chosen by the participant, usually a coffee shop or cafeteria and one took place on location at a temple. Because the ages of participants varied, I was able to compare and
contrast the answers somewhat generationally, which I placed into age groups: 19 to 29, 30 to 49, and 50 years of age and above (see table 1). Table two shows questionnaire responses regarding whether a visitor goes alone or with others to shrines and temples, in addition to whether or not they make visits regularly. As can be seen, shrine and temple visits are most likely to occur with family members and friends. However, as people do visit shrines and temples alone too, this approach shows that visiting shrines and temples can occur as individual or group experience. The frequency of visits occurring with friends and family members also shows the location as being a source of entertainment, or way to casually pass time, as will be reflected later on in the thesis.

Table 1: Age groups and gender of questionnaire respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-29</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Responses regarding whether a visitor goes alone or with others to shrines and temples, and whether or not they make visits regularly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Visit Regularly</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Regularly</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

As with all such work, this study has its limitations. First, the scope of my study is vast and, due to my limited time for fieldwork, there is still ‘undiscovered’ territory, which I can further expand upon in my future research. Second, while I do have an advanced-intermediate comprehension in listening, speaking and reading the Japanese language, I am not a native speaker. Thus, my language limitations have to be considered with regard to my research as not all participants spoke English and I may not have understood the full nuances of what they told me. (In instances where I provide my own translations, I will note this throughout the thesis). Last, many Japanese people who I met at shrines and temples were happy to answer my questions; however, I did experience some rejections to participating in questionnaires. I quickly
discovered that, while people were enthusiastic about answering at that moment and face-to-face, one or two questions about what was happening around them, when confronted with an “intimidating” consent form, they chose to decline to fill them out. After handing out numerous questionnaires but only nine people completing the paper format of my questionnaire, I suspected that the reaction was due to potential respondents regarding the consent form as a serious matter and too formal. I later adapted my questionnaire format to an online survey (at the very end of my fieldwork) and collected nine more completed questionnaires.

In this chapter I have covered the topics of my research design, provided information about the city of Kyoto, the forms of data collection and research analysis, and finally some of the limitations involved in my research process. In the following chapter, I delve into the theoretical framework behind my research.
Chapter 3: Matters of Meaning

This chapter explores the theoretical components of interpretation, hermeneutics and phenomenology that are used in my research. It is intended to explain how I analyzed my data collection, as interpretative methods are vital in coming to an understanding of the symbolic elements that I discovered during my research. Following this, I discuss the foundation of context in connection to meaning, and how it affects people’s experiences, thus what is understood or / and remembered by the individual.

More specifically, the first section discusses symbols and symbolic interpretation. The second section discusses matters regarding interpretation and hermeneutics. It is my objective to discuss several topics that are essential to the practice of hermeneutics in relation to anthropological research. I argue, first, that it is the goal of the anthropologist to reach a level of understanding in interpreting the meaning underlining the phenomenon of their study and, afterwards, to be able to display their interpretations to the best of their ability. This first measure involves the process of understanding a ‘truth.’ What I mean by the term ‘truth’ involves understanding what is interpreted from an emic point of view, or how a phenomena is understood by the people who practice it. My second stance is that in order to arrive at a ‘truth,’ there are two key factors that are required – context and experience – in order to develop and acquire a ‘correct’ analysis. I suggest that they are not separable from one another and, furthermore, that the interpretation of these two factors is what will lead to a truthful, honest, anthropological understanding of the phenomenon being researched.

In the third and fourth sections I discuss the role of context and experience and how they relate to my research. My research involves the examination of cultural practices and encompasses aspects of phenomenology with regard to human experience and embodiment of
place. As a discipline, phenomenology is the study of human experience, how experience is structured through understanding how things are experienced from a (typically) first-person perspective. For the purposes of my research, the experience(s) of the people involved during their visits to shrines and temples, occurring at both an individual and collective level, needs to be included because it is necessary when examining the aspect of embodiment of place.

**Symbolism**

My research examines the use of symbolic meaning as transferred through actions and the use of objects occurring at shrines and temples. Simply put, a symbol is a marker that signifies something else, either physically or abstractly. Symbols are embedded in all aspects of human life and they are “the language of religion, magic, and expressive culture, including art, literature, theater, music, festivals, and sporting events” (Womack 2005:1). Symbolic expression is present in all cultures and in numerous ways. One remarkable characteristic of symbols is that their use is truly effective as a means of communication. However, the meaning of a symbol is generally not cross-culturally understood because symbols are created and used in their specific cultural contexts. Womack concisely shows that there are “two important issues to the study of symbols: (1) the meaning of symbols is arbitrary (culturally assigned), and (2) the interpretation of symbols is a subjective process” (2005:34). Furthermore, one essential point in understanding symbols is that they are different from signs. Signs and symbols are both forms of communication; however, signs mean only one thing, while symbols are polysemic (Womack 2005:3), that is, they have multiple meanings. For Peirce:

> every thought is a sign without meaning until interpreted by a subsequent thought, and interpretant. Thus the meaning of every thought is established by a triadic relation, an interpretation of the thought as a *sign* of a determining *object*. (1991:7)
Langer (2002) provides an in-depth analysis and explanation of the role of symbolic expression and how symbols are critical for human thought, due to our understandings coming from a constant act of interpreting our world. Langer also expands upon the role of signs and symbols by showing that they are two different modes of interpreting and conveying meaning, as she classifies signs as being logical and symbols as psychological. Peirce (1991) states, “There is to be such a physical connection between every sign and its object” (141). Similarly, Langer explains that signs can be understood as either natural or artificial forms and that objects will also be, always, somehow associated with its logical pair (e.g., frost on a widow signifies that it is cold outside; a ringing bell can signify that someone is at the door, the telephone, or classes starting at school). She states, “To each sign there corresponds one definite item which is its object, the thing (or event, or condition) signified” (139). Symbols, on the other hand, as Geertz (2000:91) also suggests, are “vehicles for the conception of objects” (141; italics in original), symbols do not directly signify an immediate thing, but stimulate concepts of other meanings. Thus, Langer states, “the sign is something to act upon, or a means to command action; the symbol is an instrument of thought” (143). She also sums up the concept of “meaning” as being composed of three elements: signification (“the thing, event or condition signified”), denotation (“the complex relationship … to an object”), and connotation (“the conception it conveys”), each dependent upon the next (139-144). While I have thus far shown some views regarding what symbols are, and their differentiation from signs, I turn to more profound influences of the work of Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner on symbolic interpretation.

Perhaps the most well known and influential in the study of symbolic anthropology is Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) and his work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (2000), a collection of
essays which changed the way cultures were studied and understood. He termed his viewpoint as
semiotic interpretation and explains:

The concept of culture I espouse … is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in
webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental
science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions
on their surface enigmatical. (2000:5)

Undoubtedly, the most relevant essay related to my research, is Religion as a Cultural System
(2000) in which Geertz theorizes about the function of religion in cultures, defines religion as a
system of sacred symbols and meaning, and gives an analysis of symbolic action. He defines
religion as being comprised of symbols that evoke moods and motivations in people by
providing them with awareness of the order of things in their world, and states that sacred
symbols function in such a way as to make religious meanings and experiences feel real to the
participant (2000:90) because they produce emotional expressions and inspire people to act upon
them (96-98). Geertz defines a symbol as “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which
serves as a vehicle for conception – the conception is the symbol’s ‘meaning’” and includes a
statement that symbols are “tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed
in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs”
(91).

Geertz explains that symbols are “extrinsic,” in that they bring about understandings that
are not inherent genetic traits of human beings (92). Thus,

unlike genes, and other nonsymbolic information sources, which
are only models for, not models of, culture patterns have an
intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective
conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by
shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves. (2000:93)
Geertz argues that people come to adopt a ‘religious perspective’ through ritual action, and, by acting out moods and motivations through rituals, a set of symbols provides an ethos, or way of making ‘real’ those aspects that are abstract, hence afterwards affecting people’s understandings of a ‘common-sense’ world, which is a powerful point in religious thought.

Another prominent figure in symbolic and interpretive anthropology is Victor Turner (1920-1983). Turner’s work with the Ndembu of Africa remains an influence in symbolic interpretation theory. While Geertz views symbols as transmitters of cultural meaning, Turner examined the way that ritual symbols work as a force to “instigate social action” (Turner 1967:36), and he emphasizes that “symbols are essentially involved in social process” (20). Turner also states, “The way a symbolic object is used… forms an important part of its meaning” (1967:49). This is how I viewed objects during my own research, as an object’s function ties into the significance of context, and the generated experience upon the user. Turner states that

the symbol becomes associated with human interests, purposes, ends, and means, whether these are explicitly formulated or have to be inferred from the observed behavior. The structure and properties of a symbol become those of a dynamic entity, at least within its appropriate context of action. (1967:20)

Correspondingly, symbols and symbolic expression are linked to the experiential side of human behaviour; by any associated meanings in their display and through peoples’ understandings, symbols are, thus, also capable of being embodied by an individual or group.

Ortner (1973) also adds to the concept of symbolic analysis with her illumination of ‘key symbols’ and their use in anthropological symbolic interpretation. According to Ortner (1973) there are two main categories of key symbols including summarizing symbols and elaborating symbols. Summarizing symbols – or sacred symbols – are objects, which are complex and
condensed in meaning. Elaborating symbols are logical and create order. Elaborating symbols are also subdivided into ‘key scenarios’ and ‘root metaphors,’ effectively, thought and action; concepts also mirrored in Langer’s stance on the logical and psychological patterns of signs and symbols. Elaborating symbols aid in ‘sorting-out’ the complex symbols and make them understood more easily. Ortner breaks down the process of how to first find ‘key symbols’ and effectively discusses how they are likely to be presented in a culture by providing five main points that she suggests indicate key symbols. These five points include 1) the locals inform us that “X” is important, 2) people are inclined to have either a positive or negative reaction to it, 3) “X” is a highly concentrated source of cultural expression that occurs in many different contexts, and that 4) there are a higher frequency of culturally appropriate, as well as 5) a higher frequency of culturally taboo behaviours associated with “X” (1973:1339). As every culture has a few main ‘key symbols,’ Ortner shows that these can be analyzed in order to determine how a particular culture and society functions. Once symbols have been identified in a culture, the next step is then how to go about interpreting them. The following section discusses interpretation as stemming from hermeneutics.

**Interpretation**

Hermeneutics has evolved mainly through the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), and Clifford Geertz (1926-2006). The roots of hermeneutic interpretative methods lay in ‘Biblical Hermeneutics’ and the practice of textual analysis, which was required as a set of “precise procedures for the accurate interpretation of the Bible” (Dilley 1999:14). The next development in hermeneutics, Philosophical Hermeneutics, dealt with interpretations of the self; primarily with understanding ‘being’ (Heidegger1962).
And, hermeneutics became tied to Phenomenology and subsequently, to Semiotic Interpretation or the understanding of signs; predominantly theorized by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) with his work on *signification* (Hoopes 1991). Heidegger made great strides in hermeneutic and phenomenological theory by examining the ways in which human thought is shaped by language (Watts 2011:viii). And, contemporary hermeneutics continues to advance in a “combination of empirical investigation and subsequent subjective understanding of human phenomena” (Woodward 1996:555) and this is of use to anthropology because it aids in understanding cultural phenomena from an emic perspective; it is a perspective that is also applied to many other fields of analysis.

The concept of hermeneutic thought has quite an extensive and historical record in philosophical understanding. Due to extensive varying theories in interpretive methods, there are thus many approaches through which to arrive at a ‘meaning.’ For the social sciences, this typically involves the application of qualitative as well as quantitative methods in gathering and analyzing data. As a discipline, hermeneutics can be said to be made up of two main components, the ‘art of understanding’ and the ‘theory of interpretation.’ This is also in correlation to the qualitative and quantitative methods in the social sciences. Gadamer further adds that

> hermeneutics refers, first of all, to a practice, an art, that requires a special skill. This points to a further Greek word, namely *techne*. Hermeneutics is the practical art, that is a *techne*, involved in such things as preaching, interpreting other languages, explaining and explicating texts, and, as the basis of all of these, the art of understanding, an art particularly required anytime the meaning of something is not clear and unambiguous…[and] what hermeneutics accomplishes, then, is this bringing of something out of one world and into another, out of the world of the gods and into that of the humans, or out of the world of a foreign language into the world of one’s own language. (2006:29)
Hermeneutics arose from the need for interpreting and understanding biblical texts, after which it developed into other philosophical modes of understanding, such as, more recently, the technique of interpretive anthropology. Indeed, Geertz in his use of hermeneutics, significantly impacted anthropology as well as other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. He applied hermeneutic theory to symbolic interaction of various peoples, thus developing a mode of comprehending the numerous ways people “understand and act in social, religious, and economic contexts” (Woodward 1996:557).

While hermeneutics has its foundations in textual analyses and its related linguistic aspects, the practice of interpretation is also essential to anthropologists, for it is through the interpretive process that anthropologists gain an understanding of other cultural systems and cultural beliefs, peoples and their worldviews. Anthropology, in this sense, is concerned with hermeneutics because

understanding another culture is like reading, and interpreting, a text. And difficulties in formulating and communicating that understanding are as much as anything problems of writing. (Barnard and Spencer 2002:678)

Olsen (1990) also states, “Material culture can be seen as analogous to text, or, rather, it can read as text” (164). Anthropologists “deal above all in interpretations” (Barnard and Spencer 2002:676), and as Geertz highlights, “second and third ones [interpretations] to boot” (2000:15).

Hobart explains that as a method in anthropological practice:

interpreting has come, profligately to embrace any activity from expounding the meaning of something abstruse, making clear, to giving a particular explanation. In short, it is what anthropologists do. The word [interpretation] has a more specialist sense: the method, goal or subject matter of hermeneutics. (1999:107)
Ethnographic methods are, for anthropologists, a significant technique because what they do is inscribe and interpret cultural information. Furthermore, through the act of recording, or writing down cultural phenomena, ‘culture’ thus becomes a form of ‘text.’

The concept of viewing a culture as a text is perhaps most recently influenced by the work of Clifford Geertz and his 1973 publication of *The Interpretation of Cultures* (republished in 2000), especially within North America (Womack 2005:36). Geertz’s work had led to what is now well known as interpretive anthropology. He states that

> the essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and to include them in the consultable record of what man has said. (2000:30)

In other words, unlike the reasons for interpretive methods in biblical and philosophical studies, in which the goal was learning about ‘oneself’ or was directed towards gaining a meaning and understanding of one’s own society and culture, the intention of anthropological interpretation is in learning about other ways of living and understanding the different modes and variations of the ways by which humans live in, create meaning about, and interpret their world. These different perspectives are what makes hermeneutics expand beyond its foundational purpose.

The anthropologist studying another culture is attempting to learn that culture, mainly through methods of participation, observation, conversation and interviewing. However, this creates a problem whereby the other culture is being filtered through the cultural meanings of the observer, and raises a key methodological point in anthropology: the anthropologist must do his or her best to understand the other culture by using an emic perspective; that is, viewing that culture through its own eyes, to understand it as it is understood by the people, so as “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of *his* world” (Malinowski
Thus, during the practice of participant observation, as one gains insight into the lives and daily practices of another society’s lifestyle, it is extremely important that the anthropologist learns to understand how life is interpreted by the people whose life practices and worldview the anthropologist is studying.

Information acquired from people who are members of the society being observed is essential in gaining insight into the lives of the people, yet the process of gathering information and then interpreting it is a challenging task. A culture is complex and layered and requires “thick description,” signifying that there are multiple cultural aspects occurring at once, and additionally, that some actions may also have more than one meaning; or rather that they can be interpreted in more than one way (Geertz 2000:6). Furthermore, it is important to note that the meanings associated to some things have the potential to, and do, shift over time. As a result, it is appropriate to sort out the new meaning of the phenomena being interpreted. In agreement with Schmidt’s statement that “hermeneutics as a formal theory concerning successful interpretation will continue in the future as long as human beings reflect on the question of understanding” (2006:170), I believe that the act of reflexivity is an essential component that requires people to always be associated with their understandings of the world which surrounds them. In sum, hermeneutic theory, because of its focus with interpretation, is an important method and tool for cultural anthropological research. I turn, now, to the significance concerning the concept of ‘context’ in my research.

**Context**

Before proceeding with any form of interpretation, the phenomenon that is under investigation needs to be contextualized. Josephides states that “a single event has a number of different messages (‘meanings’) that are not independent of each other because they influence a
whole series of events both following and preceding them” (1991:147). That is, the phenomenon in question requires the inclusion of those other objects and actions that exist in connection to it. Context is employed as an analytical device, especially in the case of social anthropology, where interpretation is necessary in depicting societies or cultures. Dilley remarks that “context is, then, the device in this perspective by means of which anthropologists are able to reveal hidden meanings and deeper understandings, or to forward certain kinds of interpretation in particular forms of explanation” (1999:3). In order for this to happen, what needs to be determined is a “comprehensible, meaningful frame” (Geertz 2000:30).

As a discipline, hermeneutics also takes into account the temporal aspect of human understanding. However, there are two factors to be taken into account when examining the context in which a phenomenon takes place; these are the spatial and the temporal. Hall (1983) divides and explains the difference between different types and conceptions of time, due to cultural and temporal placements and understandings. He bases division of different kinds of time on the concept of a mandala, and two types of time that he describes which are particularly important to this thesis are that of ‘sacred time’ and ‘profane time.’ Hall explains that sacred time is:

imaginary – one is in the time. It is repeatable and reversible, and it does not change. In mythic time people do not age, for they are magic. This kind of time is like a story; it is not supposed to be like ordinary clock time and everyone knows that it isn’t. … When American Indian people participate in ceremonies, they are in the ceremony’s time. They cease to exist in ordinary time. … By putting themselves in sacred time, people subconsciously reaffirm and acknowledge their own divinity, but by raising consciousness they are acknowledging the divine in life. (1983:24-25)
Tim Ingold (1993) shows that the notion of temporality also involves the concept of two subcategories which are “chronology” and “history” and, furthermore, that these subcategories are “in a relation of complementary opposition” (157). He states that

by chronology, I mean any regular system of dated time intervals, in which events are said to have taken place. By history, I mean any series of events which may be dated in time according to the occurrence in one or another chronological interval. Thus the Battle of Hastings was an historical event, 1066 was a date (marking the interval of a year), and records tell us that the former occurred in the latter. In the mere succession of dates there are no events, because everything repeats; in the mere succession of events there is no time, as nothing does. (1993:157)

Spatial and temporal perceptions vary among cultures, as well as in the actions of the historical or contemporary peoples of said culture. Consequently, thoughts, ideas, concepts and meanings are situated in linguistic and cultural forms of expression from the ‘time’ of their creation. These features affect questions of how and why particular modes of expression are chosen, utilized and understood by people in the society being studied. When examining the meaning behind a symbolic form, it is crucial to remember that the contextual temporal setting is inseparable from it because whenever the context of that symbolic form changes, there is an effect on its meaning(s) as well. Likewise, the contextual spatial setting, which leads to the connection of place and the experiences of people, will also affect a symbol’s meaning(s). For instance, if one person visits a temple or shrine to perform religious rites, then the context of a symbol and that person’s experience(s) will differ from a person who visits the site as a form of tourist attraction. Some of this I encountered during my fieldwork research.

A typical perception of Japan held by foreigners is that the country is an exotic, very ‘traditional’ land, historically rich in culture, when in fact Japan is, for the upcoming generations of contemporary society, very much influenced by capitalism, materialism, globalization, and
ever-present forms of electronic media. The so-called ‘traditional’ or ‘older’ customs are not necessarily being abandoned immediately by society; rather, they are adapting and in a state of transition. Japanese youth are certainly growing up in a different ‘world’ than their grand-parents or, for that matter, their parents.

Whether the perception of people today is due to living in a society affected by modernization and globalization or whether the perception held is one of a more traditional framework, my research is intended to show a specific contextual setting and considers how meanings are perceived and experienced by the people I encountered during my fieldwork. I now turn to that aspect of my research regarding experience.

**Experience**

Interpretation also involves the aspect of phenomenology, or the study of human experience. Kockelmans (1994) explains that the aim for Husserl’s theory was for phenomenology to be a ‘new science’ and that it is “characterized…as a critique of knowledge” (11). Because human experience shapes our worldview, the analysis of such experiences of participants is a crucial way to gain cultural insight, and come to a more accurate explanation of a ‘truth.’ It also increases understanding from an emic perspective. As experiences play a role in shaping who we become, and as our many individual and collective experiences compound over time, they provide us with our understanding of the world that surrounds us. Experience is what builds our perceptions. As Dilthey explains, reality only exists for us “in the facts of consciousness … given by inner experience” (1976:161). And McGrath points out that according to Heidegger, Western philosophy from Descartes to Husserl is obsessed with theoretical knowledge to the extent of forgetting or suppressing the understanding natural to life. Phenomenological truth is found not in theory but in a delicate
analysis of understanding that resists translating fore-theoretical and contextual thinking into abstract concepts. (2008:28)

Experience is also 'self-referential'; it includes 'feelings and expectations' (Bruner 1986:4). Furthermore, "an experience is more personal, as it refers to an active self, to a human being who not only engages in but shapes an action" (1986:5). Thus, ‘experiences’ and ‘concepts’ are inseparable; however, they differ in that

‘experiences’ are immediately and really lived, yet internally sensed and unselfconsciously practiced… [whereas,] ‘concepts’ are abstract and symbolic (somehow nonreal) and yet self-consciously and meaningfully used. The former are closer to one’s body, so to speak, whereas the latter are closer to one’s mind. (Papagaroufali 2008:114)

As people are experiencing what they do, through what they observe and what they feel emotionally, they are imprinting these experiences in their memory. Therefore, combining an analysis of the experiences of participants in relation to the phenomena of study (in this thesis it is symbolic forms), is an indispensable approach towards gaining insight and a truthful understanding of the meaning underlying such cultural phenomena.

A prominent factor of my interpretive method is to consider the contextual setting of a cultural phenomenon. As a method or tool, the practice of interpretation needs to examine the context in correlation to the experience of the participants because it is through experience that meaning is created and understood. This connection between interpretation and experience links the discipline of hermeneutics to the discipline of phenomenology. Certainly there exists a deep connection between the two disciplines. This is posited by Ricoeur who notes:

on the one hand, hermeneutics is built on the basis of phenomenology and thus preserves that from which it nevertheless differs: phenomenology remains the indispensable presupposition of hermeneutics. On the other hand, phenomenology is not able to establish itself without a hermeneutical presupposition. (1975:85)
Undeniably, interpretation is required to understand another person’s experience; as one person cannot directly experience what it is that another has experienced firsthand. Whether or not an experience is shared, what each individual observes, what they hear, what they feel, what they remember, and what they think about that experience will differ to some degree. It is this aspect of phenomenology through which the researcher attempts to empathize with the subject as a means of trying to comprehend the experience, as closely to the first person’s perspective as is possible. This is done so in order to attempt to arrive at some level in comprehending what the other person is experiencing, or has already experienced (Wojnar and Swanson 2007).

Similar to my discussion of ‘context‘ above, experience also involves a consideration of the spatial and temporal aspects of the subject. This means that the space and place in which a phenomenon is situated, and the time frame during which it occurred or transpired, is also examined. Cultural aspects are fluid, that is, they are historic but also contemporary as they develop and are adapted to the needs and purposes of the people who practice or utilize them throughout the generations. Friedrich Schleiermacher, who expressed the need to view the text through the eyes of the author (Schmidt 2006), also parallels Geertz’s emphasis on the emic perspective. Experiences can vary among participants depending on their positioning in relation to the phenomenon, and the anthropologist not only asks the participant what is happening, but also observes what they do. In his essay on Balinese cockfighting, Geertz (2000) provides an ethnographic example of participant observation and the benefits of such methodology towards gaining a deeper insight to the true functions and symbolic meaning of cultural behaviors. In terms of ‘doing’ ethnography, Geertz affirms that cultural phenomena are not to be viewed through textual means alone, placing emphasis on the significance of coming to appreciate the emic perspective when learning another culture; that is, to view cultural behavior through the
eyes – or worldview – of the persons native to that culture. Geertz states that “the culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the Anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom [these texts] properly belong” (2000:452). He also touches upon the issue of reflexivity with regard to ethnographic writing. He shows that the cockfight is (among other things) a ‘deep’ metaphorical reenactment of hierarchal and kinship interactions of Balinese society.

The contextual frame is required for the interpretive method when taking into account human behaviours. Consequently, the subject must be contextualized. It is a process during research of determining the boundaries, or rather including and excluding factors that are either related or unrelated to the phenomenon. It is essentially a framing of the subject matter. For anthropologists, determining the appropriate context is fundamental to discovering concealed meanings and expanding upon previous understandings. A hermeneutic stance is therefore a useful interpretive method through which to examine the interplay of context and experience.

This chapter has discussed symbolism and the theoretical framework of interpretative methods. This chapter has also shown that interpretative methods also require an understanding the interconnectedness of context and human experience when examining cultural phenomena. The next chapter will now discuss theoretical matters that shape my own understanding of the concept and meaning of ‘place.’
Chapter 4: Matters of Place

During the development of my study, I came to realize that my research is comprised of my understanding of the interconnectedness between a triangular effect involving three main factors: symbolism, place, and experience. Viewing the concept of ‘place’ in an anthropological perspective provides insight into how the localities of shrines and temples act as localities that are not only ascribed meaning, but also are localities from which meaning is derived. The key to creation of ‘place’ is that it is intrinsically bound by the ‘experience(s)’ people have and the meanings connected to that place. In this chapter’s first section, I begin with some discussion of what space and place are, and how they relate to my research topic. The second section provides information regarding how place and meaning are interconnected and illuminates how these factors create meaningful experiences for participants, which includes the embodiment of place, as shown in the third section.

Spaces and Places

Places are instrumental in contributing to shaping human life experiences, memories, and learning; all of which affect society as a whole and aid in the creation of varying unique perspectives for individuals. A prominent feature of my research involves the application of the anthropological perspective on ‘place.’ Places are where people converge and places are a source of learning and, thus, foundations in the creation of experience and, consequently, meaning. This thesis requires an understanding of the concepts of space and place in order to view shrines and temples as converging points or sources of meaning(s) that find expression in multi-faceted ways. Specifically, I examine how shrines and temples are facilitators of symbolic expression as a medium through which meaning is contained and portrayed. I show how shrines and temples, and the entities which transpire within their boundaries, enable people to build and add meaning
to places of significance in the current physical landscape, either ‘natural’ or ‘modified.’ Additionally, shrines and temples are places set apart from the mundane as materializations of sacred place. Sacred spaces are commonly conceptualized when locations are altered by changing them through the application of their functions, for instance, through strict rules regarding proper and taboo behaviour. Moreover, shrine and temple sites habitually denote a place with mythical symbolism and meaning, as well as setting aside a location as being supernatural or having to do with the worship of ancestors or deities.

First, I begin by designating space and place as the foundations of where meaningful landscapes are situated. Indeed, the topics of space and place were once primarily covered by philosophers and human geographers; yet, for the past few decades these concepts are increasingly studied in the discipline of anthropology as well. The focus of physical geographers is in researching natural landscapes (i.e., the physical conformities of the earth’s surface), while on the other hand, cultural or human geographers study places which have been created and tailored alongside the historical and societal conditionings of the human interactions that have formed them (Tuan 1991:684).

Tuan (1977) describes space as a term to illustrate the distance between one place and another. He also explains that while space is more abstract than place, space becomes place as people interact within that space and assign meaning to certain areas of it. Tuan points out that space would not exist without place nor place without space (6). Casey (1996) defines space as “a natural, pre-given medium, a tabula rasa onto which the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed, with place as the presumed result” (14). He also bestows great importance upon the role of the body in the creation of place, since the body is inseparable from place. This is because of how a person functions and interacts with the world which surrounds them, which
makes a place “more of an event than a thing” (26), since it is people’s actions in a space that create a place. Furthermore, Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) add to the concept of body and place by stating that “the space occupied by the body, and the perception and experience of that space, contracts and expands in relationship to a person’s emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural predispositions” (2). Hence, an important factor in understanding place is revealed: space does not become a place without the meaning that people ascribe to it – places happen (Casey 1996:27). From these descriptions, human experience is essential to the creation and allocation of space and place, which is also why there is a phenomenological aspect to my research. In my view, space is a broad term describing a regional expanse made up of interconnecting, overlapping and independent sub-sections, termed places. Therefore, places are networks of being that make up space, specific and contained within a space; they are, in essence, embodied divisions of a space. Places are where objects of use or cultural importance reside and are enacted through forms of human physical and intellectual expression. A main distinction between what constitutes space and place is that place has an emotional attachment for people, as they sense place through their physical and intellectual being in a place (Bender 2006; Basso 1996; Casey 1996; Faulstitch 1998; Feld and Basso 1996; Tuan 1977; Ingold 1993). Together, places make up a vast network which encompasses knowledge and meaning, and the experiences and sentiments held by people. Furthermore, a place may be experienced on either an individual or collective level.

The interpretations of a place and its meaning can also differ greatly among people within a culture or community and, most certainly, cross-culturally (Bender 2006; Feld 1996; Basso 1996). One space may be a place for me and not for you or someone else; or that same place may, in fact, hold different types of meaning among people who are members of the same
societal group – it can signify different elements and feelings – because people experience place differently (Bender 2006). Furthermore, there is also an aspect of scale in the relation of place and space, because place acts in both the temporal and spatial sense: spatially, because people are moving around and interacting together within a place as well as between places; and temporally, because people are assigning meaning to and interpreting meaning from place continually throughout one’s life and across generations; with people’s actions overlapping each other historically.

In sum, a space exists and within that space human experience gives meaning to one expanse of that space and thus creates a place; after which, additional meanings are given to that place. Meanwhile, more places are being created and any supplementary experiences which occur within them become layered with varying, or similar, meanings. It is my contention that the next step following space and the creation of place is that specific points inside a place are culturally made to stand out against the other uses of the place, and it is these points of differentiation where landscapes occur.

**Landscapes: Meaning in and from Place**

One key dynamic of my thesis is that shrines and temples are places that accommodate meaning and are sources of cultural knowledge for people of Japanese society. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) focus on “how experience is embedded in place and how space holds memories that implicate people and events” (13). As Japanese people visit the spaces of shrines and temples, for varying reasons ranging from worshiping to festival events, the experiences they have transform these locations into meaningful places. These sacred sites act as human shaped landscapes, which signify cultural knowledge. When people visit a shrine or temple, they are exposed to a cultural environment full of symbolic meaning. As a person walks through the
grounds, they are simultaneously submerging themselves in a sensory experience, which includes sounds, smells, sights, touches, and sometimes even tastes. Some modes of symbolic expression may be consciously acted upon, or otherwise passed by, as it is the individual who chooses most of what they do and what they interact with during their visit; for instance, stopping to participate in rubbing a statue for health benefits, or directly making an offering in prayer or thanks to the deity. In any case, as they go about their visit, they are also creating memories and gaining meaning in the particular instances that make up their experience as a whole. During their visits to shrines and temples, their experiences become embedded in place as that place is then also embedded in a person’s understanding of their experience. Again, the connection between place and experience is highlighted here. In the case of shrines and temples, many of the ‘things’ signified are tied to religious beliefs; yet, it is important to note that not everyone who visits these sites does so with the initial or distinct intent of performing religious duties. As I will discuss in further detail later, many people visit for other, non-religious, purposes. Moreover, many Japanese people do not classify themselves as being ‘religious.’ While the emplacement of symbolic expression in the landscapes of shrines and temples does provide the opportunity for transference of cultural knowledge for other people, it does not guarantee it because people have different aims and make individual choices during their visit. Hence, landscapes, similar to places, are dependent upon people’s creation of them, as well as their interpretation(s) of them.

In an anthropological sense, the term landscape refers to the location or area within a ‘place’ where embodiment through human interaction occurs. Landscapes are cultural formations implicit with meaning. They contain not only what can be seen, but also what is sensed as being there; for instance, the presence of a spirit being (Santos-Granero 2004). As Tilley (1999) states, “Places form landscapes and landscapes may be defined as sets of relational places each
embodying (literally and metaphorically) emotions, memories and associations derived from personal and interpersonal shared experience” (177). Landscapes include physical and also abstract (see Ingold 1993) representations of cultural knowledge, which make landscapes containers of information, and therefore entities which have the potential to pass on knowledge, or signify meaning, to other people.

As Bender states, “There is never *a* landscape, always many landscapes. And landscapes are not passive, not ‘out there,’ because people are always engaging and re-engaging, appropriating and contesting the sedimented pasts that make up the landscape” (1998:25). People use landscapes as descriptors of life and society’s interactions contained within place. While Cosgrove (1993) takes landscape to be the surface of the natural grounds of the earth and, as such, differs from an anthropological view, Faulstitch’s outlook on landscape is that it is “fluid,” “an active medium of communication, embodying not only values and ideals, but directly influencing perception and behaviour” (1998: 201). Hirsch (1995) views landscape as a form that includes the “foreground” and “background” of societal life. He further asserts that, even though landscapes have been thought of as “a distinct cultural idea and analytical concept, it is in fact difficult to isolate …[landscape] from a number of related concepts, including place and space; inside and outside; image and representation” (4). Tilley (1999) explains that metaphors, as they are expressed throughout landscapes, provide people with important understandings of social constructions and how people may observe reality. He also expresses that landscapes are outlets for symbolic expression and provide a place of lived and embodied experience (1999). Consequently, landscapes are similar to places, in a sense, because their creation and existence are dependent upon people’s actions and sense of place.

To clarify, landscapes are specific points within a place that people interact with and vice
versa. Moreover, landscapes are not just simply geographical objects standing alone, as a segregated thing, nor are they a type of scenery. Landscapes are not passive (Bender 1998; Cosgrove 1993), because people interact with them, while at the same time landscapes are interacting with people. They work like a two-way street transferring knowledge and experience between people and place. Furthermore, just as places are not places without people, Ingold (1993) adds to the discussion by explaining that landscapes are not landscapes without the people that occupy them. Bender acutely states, “Landscapes are created by people – through their experience and engagement with the world around them” (1993:1). Also, landscapes are cultural structures because, as people are interacting within them, they are also building upon and creating meaningful place. The role of landscape predominately contributes to numerous aspects of human society and life; however, landscape is being pointed out here because my focus is on how people interact with, and attribute and interpret meaning in and from place. This now brings me to the element of phenomenology, that is, the experiences of people and how place can become embodied by people.

**Embodiment of Place**

Another important element is that landscapes hold feelings and a sense of identity for people (Barrie 1996; Bell 2003; Feld and Basso 1996; Faulstitch 1998). Our physical bodies are a key factor, even when just walking through a place: “the role that our bodies play in meaningful interacting with our environment should not be underestimated” (Barrie 1996:7). As people interact with, and within, their environments, they are acquiring and experiencing cultural knowledge, which leads to the embodiment of the landscape. People’s experiences become ingrained in them, and that experience thus becomes connected to the place in which it occurred. This sense of place creates and forms individual and collective identity, the interaction itself
providing a means of cultural learning and emotional experience through the landscape. And, as I mentioned briefly above, although cultures place a profound value on the visual, the ‘feeling’ of the land is taken in through all of the human senses; sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste (Feld and Basso 1996; Faulstitch 1998; Feld 1996). As receptors of information, our senses also are detectors of meaning (Papgaroufali 2008:115-116).

Similarly, places are created when people’s feelings bring a place into being (Basso 1996). Experientially, emotion is a pivotal factor in many types of experience and emotion functions on both the mental and physical level. Emotion thus also tends to be a factor as to why people’s understandings of places differ, for the simple fact that people interact differently upon and within place: what is meaningful varies between people (Bender 2006); hence, “the self-conscious experience of place is inevitably a product and expression of the self whose experience it is” (Basso 1996:107). Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003) define embodied space as the “location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form” (2). This means that as people are interacting within a space, they make that space meaningful and it then becomes a place, therefore creating a tangible location, a setting that could also be shown to others who could also possibly gain meaningful experience(s) from it as well.

One instance of a unique case of the embodiment of place occurs at several select locations in Kyoto, which are referred to as “power spots.” They are locations where forms of energy are strongly in tune with the earth and nature. This type of natural energy can be felt and experienced by some visitors; I say some here because a person needs to have the ability (or open mind) to feel this type of energy. This type of spiritual energy is also the same concept that is used in Reiki healing, which utilizes a person’s inner energy in calming the mind or relieving pain (this process can be done to another person or on one’s self). Some visitors who call upon these
locations can receive the benefits of calming their mind, reducing stress, absorbing positive energy, or and relief of some types of ailments.

*Seimei Jinja* shrine, founded by the famous astrologer, Abe no Seimei, is one of two such locations that I visited. While the whole space of this shrine is considered to be a ‘power spot,’ there are focal points within it. One is a sacred tree (*kusu-no-ki*), which people may rest their left and right hands upon and feel the spiritual energy flow from the tree and into their hands (see figure 2 above). Another

Figure 2: ‘Power Spot’ at Seimei Jinja shrine.

Figure 3: Ichijō Modori-bashi, ‘returning bridge’ at Seimei Jinja shrine.
interactive object at this shrine is a bridge, called *Ichijō Modori-bashi*, which is a threshold between the human and sacred realm. The name of this bridge means ‘once more returning’ and likewise, it is said that if a person crosses the bridge then they will return at some point in the future. The figure which sits beside it is also representative of the legend that Abe no Seimei was successful in banishing 12 *oni* (demon spirits/goblins) (see figure 3 above); and thus, the bridge is another polysemic object.

The second ‘power spot’ location that I visited is the *Kurama-dera* Temple in the northern mountains of Kyoto city. This temple is located in a natural forested setting and in front of the main hall of the temple is an octagonal shaped stone plateau (see figure 4). Sometimes people may bring small objects with them, such as stones or crystals, and place them in the center of this spot to recharge the ‘energy’ of the object. People likewise may also stand, or lie down (weather permitting), on this center spot to feel the natural and spiritual energy flow through their body. In the instances of ‘power spots,’ people are feeling the landscape, in essence a part of the place is then carried with them when they leave. And, in the instance of healing (whether mental or physical) that location is also bound to their memory as being a meaningful place.

![Figure 4: Kurama-dera Temple’s central ‘power spot.’](image)
This chapter has discussed what constitutes space and place, landscapes, and the important factor of the embodiment of place. As will be shown in this thesis, the embodiment of place is an enduring and reoccurring theme throughout. The following chapter begins to examine symbolic expression and symbolic meaning in relation to aspects of place. Furthermore, it will show features of how some symbolic features are applicable in the context of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples; instances which, in modern day Japan, are an example of a shifting symbolic landscape.
Chapter 5: Sacred Spaces, Symbolic Places

This chapter discusses the aspects of symbolic expression which are connected to sacred space, or sacred places. In the first section, I begin with the concept of architecture as a mode of symbolic expression. In the second section, I describe the typical layout of a Shinto shrine, symbolic forms found at the shrine entrances, and the common structures or buildings. The third section briefly shows elements commonly found at Buddhist temples, such as the layout and structures. Then in the fourth section I touch upon some purifying elements and their importance in the context of sacred spaces. In the fifth section I show how the placement of a shrine or temple is symbolically connected to its physical location, which is determined by a person’s or a deity’s experience in a place, and I discuss associated symbolisms with the cardinal directions. Then in the sixth section I demonstrate how entering sacred space affects people’s behaviours and causes them to act in concert with their environment. Finally, in the seventh section, I discuss aspects in regard to how sacred space and symbolic expression are extended or used outside of sacred grounds, while maintaining cultural meaning and religious purpose, thus creating a connection to sacred place.

Architecture

In the context of shrines and temples, architectural forms are utilized as a mode for the expression of symbolic meaning. Barrie defines sacred architecture as, “places built to symbolize the meanings and accommodate the rituals of the particular belief system of its time” (1996:1). Taken as such, temple and shrine buildings, their grounds and those things contained within, are entirely shaped according to cultural constructions of religious expression and meaning, as well as representing an image of the society that existed during the period during which they were constructed. In addition, symbolic architectural designs and their use are not only reflections of
past societies, but are also acting in the present as markers by which people of contemporary society are navigating and adapting. Furthermore, some aspects which contain sacred symbolic meaning are not necessarily always restricted to the containment of a physical building of a shrine or temple, but may also be positioned along paths within a place. Moreover, some symbolic aspects may extend the initial boundaries of the initial physical shrine or temple location, such as spiritual pilgrimages or by bringing sacred objects into the home (I will discuss this aspect in further detail later).

Architectural features contained in sacred spaces are an example of how people construct and deconstruct elements in their landscapes. Barrie (1996) explores how sacred places are created and used in different locations, as well as over time. In sacred architecture, “sites are an overt representation of aspects of religion, expressed either pictorially or symbolically” (5). Thus, “meaning is interpreted at a deeper, abstract level… symbolized and enacted by rituals and ceremonies, and there is often a close correspondence between the ritual and architectural form” (5). Architectural structures found within temple and shrine grounds in Japan also share the above characteristics through the use of buildings, boundary markers and gardens.

Figure 5: A carved figure of a guardian *shishi*, which protrudes from the beams on the roof corners of the offering hall at *Nishiki Tenmangu Jinja* shrine, located in a popular shopping arcade downtown.
Moreover, the layout of architectural entities in juxtaposition to one another may also be representative of symbolic expression.

The design of an architectural structure also suggests expressions of meaning, notably, through carved symbolic figures that protrude from the eaves of shrine and temple buildings. One common figure is the guardian shishi (lion-dog) used as a means of warding off malevolent spirits (see figure 5 above) and I return to this iconic and symbolic figure in further detail later. Another figure associated with both Shinto and Buddhist locations is Baku, a beast in Japanese mythology that resembles an elephant (see figure 6). Baku is thought to consume unpleasant dreams and due to its connection with the elephant’s size, carvings of this figure are also used as a way of shielding a building from fire and in generating rain due to the elephant’s connection with water (Ashkenzazi 2003:118). Dragons are also another popular figure represented through carvings on buildings and commonly seen as decorative water spouts for temizuya (water purification) stations.

In the next section, I discuss architectural features of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and the typical features found at each. Although there are typical layouts and structures found at shrines and temples, the sizes and forms vary given space constrictions or the historic period during which the shrine or temple was constructed. Buddhist and Shinto syncretism turns up in
shared elements of architectural designs and objects, such as a Shinto torii gate at a Buddhist location.

**At a Shinto Shrine**

The first identifier of sacred space on a Shinto site is the presence of a torii gate (see figure 7). The torii is usually made of wood, and painted in a bright vermilion, which symbolizes “the sense of brightness and life associated with Shinto” (Reader 1991:138). Some torii gates are constructed of stone, cement or other artificial materials. At the Nonomiya-jinja shrine, located near the entrance to the bamboo forest in the Arashiyama district, the torii is made of a plastic or resin-like material, which was textured and coloured dark brown to resemble natural timber (see figure 8).

The torii is not only a symbolic icon and object of Shinto, but is also a part of symbolic action. As a person passes through and across its threshold, he or she is made clearly aware they are entering a sacred space; thus, passing through, visitors begin to prepare mentally and to adjust their behaviours accordingly. Passing through a torii gate is a first act of purification. In some cases, the location of a shrine is so small that one cannot physically pass through a gate, such as with a roadside shrine; however, a torii can still be found either directly in front of the alter, or represented in a small figurine or painted carving that has been placed on a ledge. It is also common to see more than one torii at a location, such as at the

![Figure 7: Torii gate over street in front of Heian Jingu shrine. This is also one of Japan’s three largest torii.](image1)

![Figure 8: Torii gate at Nonomiya-jinja shrine.](image2)
Shimogamo-jinja and Kamigamo-jinja shrines, both of which have several large torii reaching across pathways, for people to walk through on their way to the main shrine. There may be additional torii found upon entering the shrine complex as well. The Kamigamo-jinja shrine includes numerous smaller shrines, each with its own torii; an ever present reminder to the visitor that they are in a sacred space where kami (deity/spirit) are present (Reader 1991:138). Finally, the most famous location for torii gates is at the Fushimi Inari Taisha grand shrine, where there are tunnels of torii gates spanning the walkways (see figure 9).

![Figure 9: Torii gates lining a path at Fushimi Inari Jinja Shrine.](image)

Shinto shrines also predominantly display shimenawa, a twisted rope made of straw. The shimenawa is used to identify and mark spaces and objects as being sacred. Often, the shimenawa is also accompanied by shide, white zigzag strips of paper, which hang down from the straw rope symbolizing purity (see figure 10). It is common to observe a shimenawa with or without shide strips tied to it, encircling a significantly old large tree, or on an unusually shaped stone, or “any piece of nature which, through age, peculiar shape, or some miracle, has obtained the sacred respect of the people, and is believed to be inhabited by a particularly
vigorous spirit” (Casal 1967:9). The shimenawa also hangs from a torii or on the front of a main hall building where people make offerings and prayer to the kami. And, at some locations, square sections of the ground are also partitioned, on all four sides, by shimenawa and shide, marking them as sacred spaces that are used in the burning of objects in a ritual ceremony (such as used amulets and talismans) to ‘free’ the enclosed spirit. These ropes also mark off areas where new vehicles are blessed by Shinto priests for travel protection (see figure 11). The presence of shimenawa and shide denotes that space or object as a sacred space or a location that a kami inhabits. If the kami is not present, the kami will actually descend upon the location when called upon, usually by clapping the hands twice, as sound is used to gain the attention of the kami. This also connects with my previous discussion of how experience and physical stimuli can aid in the creation of place; or the embodiment of place.

At Shinto shrines, there are guardian statues iconic of the Chinese lion (shishi), which are

![Figure 11: Special location at Kamigamo Jinja shrine used for ritually blessing new vehicles.](image)
commonly referred to as *Koma-Inu*, or ‘lion-dog’ (see figure 12). The purpose of *Koma-Inu* is to ward off evil by repelling any malevolent spirits that might attempt entry to the holy realm.

*Koma-Inu* figures are usually present in combination with *torii* gates as they stand guard in front and can also be seen at various locations within shrine complex.

They are presented in pairs; a male figure with mouth open in the ‘*ah*’ position, the “primal first sound,” and a female with mouth closed in the ‘*un*’ position, in the “final sound” (Ashkenazi 2003:209). Together, the pair’s open and closed mouths represent a beginning and end of the universe. It is interesting to note here that the male represents the beginning and that female represents an end, when typically females are seen as the ones who bring life into being. It is also common to see a cub with the female, either under her paw or at her side.
Koma-Inu images are also embodied by different iconic forms; yet, their symbolic meaning remains the same. At the Fushimi-Inari-Taisha grand shrine in the south-eastern region of Kyoto, the Koma-Inu takes the form of the fox, which is a messenger to the deity Inari (see figure 13). And, at the Kurama-dera temple, situated in its namesake village nestled in the northern mountains, the guardians take the form of the tiger, also a messenger to the deities in that locale (also see figure 13). Koma-Inu guardian figures are often depicted carrying objects in their mouth, or upon which they are resting their paw. The objects they carry or hold are often symbolic objects relevant to the shrine where they guard the entrance. For example, with foxes at Fushimi-Inari-jinja shrine, “most often this is a jewel and key, but it may be any combination of jewel, key, rice sheaf, scroll, or fox cub” (Smyers 1999:93). Smyers mentions that these objects are symbolic of fertility and “spiritual or material treasures” (142-143).

Although the actual boundaries and shape of shrine grounds can greatly differ from one another, there are typical structures and buildings that form the basis of a general layout.

Figure 14: Temizuya.
Top - Heian-jingu shrine.
Bottom – Matsuo-taisha shrine.
Upon entering the shrine grounds, passing through the torii and by the koma-inu, the next visible station is the temizuya (water fountain for purification), a place to wash one’s hands and rinse the mouth (see figure 14 above). I will discuss the temizuya in further detail in the purification and pollution section below.

Next is the sandō, the pathway leading visitors to the other areas of the grounds. There is a main hall (or sanctuary) called the honden, which is typically closed off to the public, and only priests will enter for the purpose of performing rites. This is the most important building, and is a focal point of the entire shrine complex. The main hall (honden) is where the main deity (or deities) resides in a temporary repository called go-shintai, an object that is usually in the form of a mirror, but may also be made of natural materials such as stone. The mirror (kagami) is symbolic and first appears in the mythology of the sun goddess Amaterasu-ō-mikami when she goes into hiding in a cave from which she is lured with the use of a mirror. The mirror, along with a sword and jewel, are also a part of the sacred imperial regalia. Metal mirrors are also visibly displayed at shrines as they are symbolic of the spirit of the enshrined kami (Ueda 1996:34).

Next, a type of fencing that surrounds the honden is called Tamagaki and is traditionally made of wood, but can also be made of stone or concrete. In front of the honden is the haiden, a worship hall. Unlike the honden, which is off limits and closed to the public, the haiden is where
people can make offerings and perform rituals to the *kami*. Most locations also contain a structural building, more like an open (viewable) stage, called *kagura-den* (see figure 15 above), which is where sacred *kagura* dances are performed by *miko* (shrine maidens). It is also common to observe additional, smaller auxiliary shrines, collectively known as *setsumatsusha*, within the grounds (see figure 16 above). The auxiliary shrines also range in size depending on the location. Finally, in addition to the buildings mentioned above, there are other architectural features such as stone lanterns, called *tōrō*, and a stand or pegged rack used for hanging *ema* (votive tablets), that I will discuss below as I turn now to features related to a Buddhist temple.

**At a Buddhist Temple**

Similar to Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples also have gates found at their entrances called *sanmon* or *niōmon*. Usually, a visitor walks up some stairs to enter the gate, which “is a symbolic ascent to the realms of the holy” (Reader 1991:139). These gates can vary in size between locations and are covered by an angled roof above the doors and a threshold beam; one interviewee mentioned that this threshold beam must be stepped over and should never be stepped on. The gates to Buddhist temples (as well as the Shinto *torii*) are markers of a threshold symbolic of the liminal space between sacred and profane.
Comparable to the Shinto Koma-Inu, there are guardian statues called ni-ō (two guardian kings), which preside at main gate entrances to Buddhist temples (see figure 17). They are tall, fierce looking, carved wooden statues with glass eyes, symbolic of warding off evil. Ni-ō share many similar attributes in symbolic features with the Koma-Inu, such as the open and closed mouths, and they carry symbolic objects (like swords and trident spears). Ashkenazi provides an explanation of their origins:

many centuries ago a certain king’s wives bore him sons after word of the Buddha’s preaching had reached his ears. The first wife bore a thousand sons, whom the king wished to have attain perfect enlightenment. The second bore only two sons. One of these two vowed to turn the Wheel of the Law for his thousand Brothers; the other vowed to protect the first while he worked. The first was Misshaku, the second Kongō. The Ni-ō represent the duality in union of the material and spiritual, and they are in reality (say Buddhist believers) a single god known as Misshakukongō who lives on Mt. Meru and can manifest himself in a myriad of ways. (2003:225)

Entering through the gates, one follows a pathway (also called sandō) and may encounter a ‘washing station’ (temizuya) similar to those found at Shinto shrines, for washing hands and mouth. Temple complexes are varied and their layout is somewhat dependent upon the
physicality of the landscape. Again, as with Shinto complexes, the design and layout also differ from place to place; however, there are still some common buildings that are a part of each, often in different combinations. The types of buildings and their purposes range, depending on the sect of Buddhism which the temple represents. The main hall (or sanctuary) at a temple is called the *Kondō* or *Butsuden* and is where objects of worship, usually a statue representative of Buddha, is housed. Another popular and distinct feature of some Buddhist temples is the *tō*, a pagoda that may have three, five, or seven levels and is said to enclose relics of Buddha (see figure 18).

There is also a belfry, called a *shōrō*, which holds the temple’s bell, called a *bonshō*, and a building called the *hondō* or *hattō*, where priests read Buddhist scriptures. And, finally there is a *kyōzō*, where artifacts and sutras, along with other texts, are kept.
**Purification and Calming the Mind**

The concepts of pollution and purity are factors relevant in many religions, and this is also true in the case of Buddhist temples and, especially, Shinto shrines. Nadeau (1996) examines the concept of ‘sacred space’ in Shinto and focuses on how it relates not only to Japanese religious life, but also to aspects regarding nationality, community, residence, home, and the individual person (109); all of which express a need for the segregation of what can be viewed as either “pure” or “impure,” or the ‘sacred and the ‘profane,’ and he uses the example of the torii to show how these boundaries are also reflected in Japanese society. Reader (1991) also notes that visiting a shrine or temple is marked with symbolic forms that demarcate the place as a holy area. Entrance to these holy areas is the first part in preparing and ‘cleansing’ oneself before connecting with the deities or bodhisattvas. Ueda (1996) explains, “In kami worship, purification of the body is accompanied by inward purification, a restoring of the heart to its original uprightedness” and during the rites “the body represents the spirit in such a way that physical purification may become a symbolic, spiritual purification as well” (33). Nadeau correspondingly points out that “the prayers and rites performed at the shrine do not cleanse the self, which is inherently pure, but they are exorcistic, in that they eradicate the outer pollutions that cloud one’s inner virtue and light” (1996:111, italics in original). The purification rituals are engaged in both while entering and once within the temple or shrine grounds and “are performed to eradicate the pollutions of the mundane so as to symbolically bring humans closer to the realms of the kami” (Reader 1991:27). Purifying elements are typically expressed through the use of water, salt, alcohol and fire. The process of ‘purifying’ oneself often begins upon entrance to the grounds, but even so, one can also begin to prepare oneself mentally before arrival. The
process of ‘purification’ occurs in progressive phases as one prepares to connect with the deity or Buddha.

The first step occurs by passing through the gates, thus making a person aware they are entering a holy or sacred place. If provided, the next step is to visit the temizuya to perform the purification ritual of washing the hands and mouth with water. The temizuya is usually a type of stone trough or basin, with a guardian figurine representative of the site, for example, a dragon or an ox, and bamboo ladles with long handles that rest on the edge of the basin (again, see figure 14 above). The process is to take one of the ladles in the right hand, dip it into the water, and then pour the water over the left hand. This is repeated to then cleanse the right hand. Finally, one pours a new ladle of water into the left hand and brings it to the mouth to rinse (the water is expelled afterwards). The step of rinsing the mouth is not strictly observed, some people do it and some do not, as it is left to the discretion of the visitor. At some locations I noted that there are signs posted warning visitors not to drink the water for safety reasons. And some locations provided a sign (in Japanese, seldom in English), which gave visitors instructions in how to proceed with the ritual (see figure 19). Nedeau points out that “this act of purification affirms the division between the inner and outer, both in physical space and in the human body” (1996:112). The

Figure 19: Sign instructing visitors how to use the Temizuya.
Temizuya purification ritual is another way through which temples and shrines combined with the experience of the visitor, through the connection of physical action with a symbolic intent in preparation to make a prayer to the deity, also becomes an embodiment of place.

The prominence of water as a source of purification is seen in the Nihongi (Aston 1972), which is one of the first written recordings of history in Japan. In the origin mythic narrative of the primordial beings, Izanagi and Izanami first create the islands of Japan. After giving birth to other numerous deities, Izanami gives birth to the kami of fire and dies a result of becoming so badly burned. In despair from mourning her, and frantic to save her, Izanagi decides to follow Izanami to Yomi (the under-world), but he discovers her in a horrific state of decay and she attempts to catch him and keep him there with her. Izanagi flees, narrowly escaping the confines of the underworld, and after having done so he says, “Having gone to…a hideous and filthy place, it is [now] that I should cleanse my body from its pollutions” (Aston 1972:26). Izanagi then enters the ocean in order to purify himself from the contaminants of his contact with the underworld. And, as he bathed, his pollutions were stripped from him, one after the other. And from these pollutants came the creation of various spirits of evil nature, as well as many spirits of protection against the latter’s ill will, and the creation of deities of rapids and whirlpools.

Water is also present at some shrines and temples in the form of creeks, streams, and ponds. And some of these waters are said to be beneficial to one’s health if consumed, such as at the Sanzen-in temple in Ohara and the Kiyomizu-dera temple in the east, where many visitors try

1 The Nihongi was contracted by the first Emperor, Jimmu, to be written as a means of documenting and proving the divinity of the Imperial line, and the emperor as a direct descendant of Amaterasu (the goddess of the sun). This Imperial rule was forced out by the democratic rule imposed by the American government in 1945; although the emperor remains as a figurehead.
a taste for themselves. The waters at these places are sprung from the natural surroundings and are symbolic of their place. The name Kiyomizu even translates as ‘pure water’ (see figure 20). Thus, people who consume some of the water at such places are also taking in the sacred and symbolic essence of place in association with the temple or shrine. This leads to a symbolic connection to the physical location of a shrine or temple, which I will now discuss.

Figure 20: Waters at Kiyomizu-dera temple, which people drink for good health and long life.
Symbolic Connection to Physical Location

Understandably, many locations have a physical connection to the place chosen as a site to build a shrine or temple. Examples from my research show how the placement of a shrine or temple was determined by people’s (or even a deity’s) experience(s) in a specific place. Ueda also mentions that

the Japanese understanding of sacred space involves more than the shrine itself. It includes the natural surroundings as well. Many shrines are far removed from human habitation. They are located in the natural landscape: sometimes on a mountain, near a waterfall, or on a remote island. In such situations nature itself may be viewed as a kami symbol. Even where cities and towns have grown up around previously distant shrines, or where shrines have been established in populated areas, the general rule is to provide a natural setting, at least symbolically. A pond with miniature mountains and a pathway often suggests the beauty and mystery of nature. (1996:32)

In the three examples below, experience is a strong connection between people and the creation of place. Often the location of a shrine or temple has a legend or origin story explaining an event, or things which make the place important, and are built upon afterward (see also Reader 1991:137). Commonly, a site has been constructed within a natural setting, such as a treed area with a stream, to show a connection with nature. This is especially so in Shintoism where specific natural features, such as unusual stones or waterfalls, have been designated as sacred and a place where kami reside, and then a shrine is built around that focal point. Nature is an important theme for Shinto shrine locations as the shrines and temples of Kyoto provide people an escape to a natural environment, a quiet place for contemplation and a calming experience starkly contrasted with the outside world. During my visits I often noted that, even though a location was set directly in a busy, high traffic area, once inside the grounds, the bustling city noises were nearly blocked out; as though one is truly transported to another realm.
One interviewee mentioned that she would sometimes meet with a friend for conversation at a shrine or temple because of the quiet and natural atmosphere.

Legends and mythologies are told to this day and the narratives below are paraphrased from a combination of information found on a location’s website, in brochures handed out at the location, and by signs posted within the complexes (both in Japanese and English). The first legend (or myth) is from the Matsuo-Taisha shrine, located in the western part of Kyoto, which tells the story of a waterfall: it is said that a lord of the Hata clan stopped to drink at a stream and while doing so, he saw a tortoise at the foot of a waterfall. The water was so clear and pure that he decided this was where a shrine should be built. The tortoise is symbolic in Japanese culture, representing good health, long life, and good fortune. Today, the waters that spring here are still said to be pure and clean, and providing good health. In fact, to this day,
water is taken from here and used by sake (rice wine) brewers and miso paste manufacturers for its benefits. There is also a large display of barrels of sake offered by the breweries, showing their gratitude to the deities (see figure 21 above). The tortoise is a reoccurring feature around the shrine grounds, from a temizuya fountain spout to stone figures (which are also rubbed by visitors for good luck). The waterfall can be seen near the back of the shrine grounds where a narrow pathway leads up a slope, with the stream to the left and, at the top, stands a torii gate with a smaller shrine altar just behind it.

In another legend, the Kitano-tenmangu shrine is dedicated to the spirit of Sugawara no Michizane. Michizane was an advisor to the imperial court and greatly known for his poetry. Due to slander, he was exiled to the southern island of Kyūshu where he passed away while in exile. Sometime after this, there was a series of misfortunes and tragedies for the court. People began to think that Michizane’s spirit was not at rest and was the cause of their misfortunes; thus, it was decided his body should be brought back to Kyoto where his spirit could be at peace. The legend states that, while the body of Michizane was being transported by an ox-pulled wagon, the ox suddenly collapsed and would move no further. This was interpreted to be a message from Michizane’s spirit that this was the location where he desired to be laid to rest.

Later on, many plum (ume) trees were planted there because they were Michizane’s favourite and people wanted his spirit to be contented. Nowadays, during the ume season, people flock to this location to view the two-hundred plus trees in bloom. The association of the ox with this location is strong, as the ox also represents education, and Michizane was born in the year of the ox and renowned for his scholarly intelligence. There are numerous oxen statues, standing alone or with a calf, or in subsidiary altars present on the grounds (see figure 22 below). These statues will also be discussed in chapter 6.
The next legend example tells of the beginnings of the Kiyomizu-dera temple. A monk named Enchin had a dream depicting a golden stream. He went out in search of this place and came across an old man named Gyoei, who was sitting on a log. Gyoei informed Enchin that he had been there for a very long time in prayer. The old man told Enchin that the log would be a great source to create a statue in the image of Kannon and that he wanted Enchin to wait there while he continued on a pilgrimage. Kannon is one of the most popular female Bodhisattvas of worship, and thus is represented in many ways. She is most commonly associated with mercy and is renowned for assisting people in all aspects of life. When the old man did not return, Enchin went in search of him and, upon climbing the mountain, found a pair of shoes left behind. Enchin realized that the old man was none other than Kannon and he went back to the log and created the image of Kannon, as was suggested. The statue was housed beside a waterfall, which later became the beginnings of the temple. These stories show how the locations were decidedly built upon from people’s experience in place, as well as how a place can become sacralized.

Another feature of a shrine or temple’s location is its relationship to the four cardinal directions of north, south, east and west. Each cardinal direction is associated with mythical beings that are seen as protecting Kyoto and its inhabitants (see figure 23 below). These beings
are adapted from Chinese cultural influences and are related to Shi Tenno, the “four heavenly kings who protect the world of Buddhism from evil” (Ashkenazi 2003:247). According to my notes taken at various temples, each directional guardian represents a season, an element and a color. The north is represented by a tortoise (sometimes portrayed in combination with a snake)

Figure 23: Tiles with the images of the four guardians associated with the cardinal directions. Displayed at the Seimei Jinja shrine.
and represents winter, water and the colour black. The south guardian is the phoenix and represents summer, fire and the colour red. To the west is the white tiger, symbolizing autumn, metal and the colour white. Finally, in the east is the guardian dragon, which represents spring, the element of wood, and the color blue (or green) (see also Ashkenazi 2003; Joly 1967).

However, one additional bearing, the north-east, is a direction from which evil can enter. It is called the *kimono* (‘devil’s gate’) (see also Reader 1991:145). Respondents explained to me that this corner on buildings may be cut out (as an indented square), or that guardian emblem plaques will sit on this side of a building, so that evil cannot enter from this direction. As a final point, the eastern guardian dragon *Seiryu* is portrayed in a festival, called *Seiryu-e*, which I illustrate later in Chapter 6.

**Effect on Behaviour**

An interesting characteristic of place is that it will generally affect people’s behaviours in prescribed ways as different cultural restrictions are placed upon them. Mary Douglas makes this connection and differentiates between a ‘social body’ and a ‘physical body,’ as she states,

> the physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experiences so that each reinforces the categories of the other. As a result of this interaction the body itself is a highly restricted medium of expression. The forms it adopts in movement and repose express social pressures in manifold ways. (2003:65)

Hence, how a person behaves in a particular place also indicates symbolic expression through frame of mind and constrictions. Correspondingly, many ritual practices are held only within the constraints of sacred place. Likewise, many actions that may be acceptable outside of temple and shrine grounds will not be appropriate within. I often noted that people’s moods and the types of
behaviour accepted by other visitors changed when in the context of festivals; for example, some people would become rowdy, sometimes from being under the influence of alcohol, or there were groups of people (not necessarily media press) using step ladders in their efforts to get better photographs of the events. The festivals include visitors who are either participants or spectators and the stance of either undoubtedly changes the outcome of possible experience(s) for them and others, and would thus affect how a place could be viewed.

In another instance, I observed the image of the Shinto torii as a means of restricting taboo behaviours outside of the sacred space of Shinto shrines. I noticed a building on a street corner that had small, 'cute' torii gates made of wood and painted bright vermillion hung on the outer lower sides of its wall. I later discovered that they were not there for religious purposes or, for that matter, even for aesthetics, but instead, for the purpose of obstructing unwanted behaviour – to prevent males from urinating on the walls. After all, urinating on a sacred symbol would show disrespect to the kami. After I learned of this, I started noticing these torii in more places, such as shopping arcades and down back alleys. Here, the symbol of the torii, and thus its association with the sacred, is being used in a profane context for a purpose that is not typical of Shinto grounds. The following section discusses other ways that symbolic meaning is represented through extensions of sacred space, in the context of religious meaning.

Extensions of Sacred Space and Place

Not all symbolic expression and related meaning is limited to, nor bound by, the borders of temple or shrine grounds. Some aspects, or behaviours, also extend or are used beyond the sacred grounds, while still retaining cultural meaning and religious purpose(s). These instances create a connection with sacred space and people outside of that primary space. Objects and actions, and their associated meanings, are being brought into the home or are kept on the
person. One significant way that this occurs is through rituals in the home around ancestor worship. Traditionally, a Japanese home will contain a *butsudan* (Buddhist altar) and a *kamidana* (lit. “god shelf,” Shinto altar). There is only one *butsudan* in a family and it is passed down in a hierarchical fashion, typically residing in the home of the eldest living generation, and in the case of siblings would reside in the home of the first-born. Jeremy and Robinson explain that

> the Shinto shrine is the focus of immediate wellbeing for the family, the house, and the community. The Buddhist altar, on the other hand, is a reminder of *ie* lineage, of duty and responsibility, and a comforting link with the deceased. Together they secure the living and console the dead. (1989:58)

The *butsudan* is typically an elaborate wooden cabinet made with decorative carved wood paneling, and stands in height a little above a person sitting on bended knee in front. Inside the *butsudan* there is usually a representation of Buddha, and tablets that memorialize ancestors. In addition, fresh offerings (in small quantities) such as sake, rice and fruit are made daily. There may also be a small vase of flowers. Before making their prayers to ancestors, a household member first rings a ‘singing bowl,’ and ignites a few sticks of incense, placing them in a holder.

The Shinto altar (*kamidana*), is placed high up on the wall. On this shelf rests offerings to the *kami*, such as sake and a small vase with evergreen branches. In addition, there is a *shimenawa* rope with strips of *shide* and a *hamaya* (evil-destroying arrow). Jeremy and Robinson also remark that the combination of a *butsudan* and a *kamidana* in the Japanese home, “often in the same room, is a tangible representation of the syncretic and complementary reputation of religious observance in Japan” (58).

Another way in which symbolic forms are extended beyond a sacred space is that symbolic objects can be purchased at a shrine or temple and then brought back to the home or carried on a person. For example, one may purchase an amulet and place it in important rooms of the home,
such as the kitchen (to avoid fire destruction), or perhaps carry a talisman for safe child birth and a healthy child. Or, one could purchase a small package of sacred gravel from a shrine and then sprinkle it around the perimeter of their home as a means of warding off evil spirits and preventing them from entering; this practice is essentially done as a means of purification. Whether or not the user views such actions an extension of sacred space depends upon the context of the object’s use and sometimes due to the motivation of the person for purchasing a specific object. For instance, a visitor who purchases an item with the intention of protecting their home from fire holds a different attitude to that item than might a visitor who purchases that same item as a souvenir of their visit. I will discuss this aspect in further detail in chapter 7.

In a larger form of display, festivals create an extension of sacred space through the festival procession that meanders through small back roads as well as main streets, at times alongside high levels of traffic. I observed three such festivals, which are annually occurring events: the zuiki matsuri (vegetable festival), from the Kitano-tenmangu shrine; an Omikoshi matsuri (portable shrine festival); and, the jidai matsuri (festival of ages), that begins at the Imperial Palace grounds and ends at the Heian Jingu shrine, and is approximately two kilometers in length. In these instances, symbolic meaning is extended to areas surrounding or connected to the shrine, as well as providing the opportunity to display some items normally hidden from view; thus, making symbolic meaning available outside of the normal boundaries of sacred space. More interestingly, there are also times when an enshrined deity is physically and symbolically transported from one location to another. In essence, the deity is able to temporarily ‘leave’ its normally inhabited area. I will discuss both the zuiki matsuri and the omikoshi matsuri in detail during my discussion of festivals, ceremonies, and rituals below.
In more recent times, some shrines and temples are also making services, which traditionally require a physical visit to the location, available to people at home, by providing online resources, compact discs for use with a personal computer, or picture slides that can be carried in a wallet and used anywhere. These forms I will discuss in further detail in the chapter 7 ‘Continuing Traditions and Shifting Motives.’

This chapter has covered aspects of symbolic expression which are connected to sacred space, or sacred places. These include architectural features and the typical layouts of shrine and temple grounds. Also, I have touched upon purification and how one’s state of mind and behaviour is affected when entering into these sacred spaces. Then, I discussed symbolic connections to the land and the creation of place as a result of human experience. Furthermore, I showed how the symbolic expression is extended beyond the initial place of shrines and temples. In the next chapter I will show additional varieties of symbolic expression through actions and objects which I observed in the context of shrines and temples.
Chapter 6: Varieties of Symbolic Expression

The modes of symbolic expression present at temple and shrine grounds are diverse and allow for a degree of variance in interaction for visitors. Some actions and objects are present at all locations, such as the temizuya and shishi (in the case of shrines); however, some actions and objects are unique to one location, such as the lighting of a straw rope at Yasaka-jinja shrine at New Year, which people carry home with them to light the ‘first hearth fire’ of the year. Typically, a symbolic item that is found at numerous locations might share either direct or similar symbolic meaning(s) between locations. On the other hand, a symbolic form found at more than one location might represent newer, transformed meaning(s), and hence different meaning(s) between locations. In most instances, however, locations build upon previous symbolic meaning(s), and by doing so expand the polysemic dynamic of a symbolic form.

As discussed, any objects that are interacted with and any actions that are performed or viewed by a visitor vary not only with the choices of an individual, but also with each visit an individual makes, either to the same or a different location, as each experience builds upon the previous. This factor plays a role in what type of experience(s) an individual has during any visit, and how a space may become a place to a person. Furthermore, the reasons behind each visit may differ as well, which adds to the dynamic of different meanings held by an individual.

In this chapter, I discuss the variety of symbolic forms, expressed through actions and objects, which I encountered during my fieldwork. I include examples from my observations and show an expansive assortment of actions and objects through which symbolic expression and meaning are portrayed, used, contained, and transferred or acquired through temple and shrine grounds, either individually or through shared practice. This chapter is used to show some of the more common ways that people are interacting within the localities of shrines and temples. I
have chosen to sub-divide this chapter into two main categories, ‘Actions’ and ‘Objects.’ Together, these sections show how human actions and material objects are modes of cultural expression by explaining what each entity symbolizes and what meanings are contained in their use. Moreover, actions and objects often take place in conjunction with one another, that is, symbolic objects are used in symbolic action and vice versa. In the first section, I present actions, which include festivals, ceremonies and rituals, in the context of three festivals and two annual practices in Japanese culture. The second section illustrates objects which are found at temples and shrines, how they are used and what their respective meanings are.

Actions

As a mode of symbolic expression, ‘actions’ work in two ways: they can be experienced either as an active participant, or by viewing the actions of others. Actions that happen at shrines and temples are primarily expressed through means such as ritual behaviour, ceremony, dance, prayer and offerings made to deities and Buddhas. The utilization of symbolic actions by people who visit shrines and temples offers them a mode through which to observe symbolic forms and the opportunity to engage in symbolic meaning.

I begin with three festivals (matsuri) I observed during my fieldwork; Seiryu-e Matsuri (blue dragon festival), the Zuiki Matsuri (taro stalk festival) and an Omikoshi Matsuri (portable shrine festival). In addition, I include two annual events that are common to Japanese culture since they are practiced throughout Japan and are not restricted to Kyoto city. These two examples are shichi-go-san (lit. seven-five-three), and hatsumōde (first prayer of the New Year). These two events show several ways that symbolic action is connected to place – the shrines and temples – and how people experience place and symbolic meaning as a group.
There are numerous festivals in Kyoto that are connected to shrines and temples and they occur throughout the year on a cyclical basis. Some events, of course, are more popular than others and draw in significantly large crowds of visitors and spectators. Often their popularity is due to a long standing tradition and thus they are well known to residents of Kyoto; or, the event is advertised throughout Kyoto with informative posters, well in advance of the date. Many of these festivals have been taking place for hundreds of years; nonetheless, newer festivals also emerge because of a felt need at a shrine or temple location. During my fieldwork, I happened upon several locations holding festivals, all of which included an interesting and public display of symbolic expression. In the following sub-sections I provide synopses of three such festivals, all of which are examples of what Ueda (1996:40) states is a “symbolic tour” of the kami or bodhisattva. The first festival is an account of a more recently created temple event, the second describes a shrine festival that is spread over a five day period, and the third is of an event that takes place as a residential community environment.

**Honouring the Dragon**

I visited the Kiyomizu-dera temple in mid-September to observe the Seiryu-e Matsuri (‘Blue Dragon festival’). This festival is relatively new as it began only seven years ago when it was initiated by the temple to both celebrate the more than 1200 year history of the temple and to honour the dragon Seiryu. This dragon is one of the four directional guardians (the others being tiger, phoenix, and tortoise with snake) and is said to arrive every evening to drink from the Otowa waterfall located within the temple complex grounds. Seiryu is also the guardian of people who reside in the eastern region of Kyoto, protecting them from any ‘evil’ or malevolent spirits, which may attempt to cause misfortune.
The sound of conch shells announces the beginning of the festival. At the front of the main entrance to the temple grounds is a gate with a large flight of stone stairs directly below where people gather. I sat myself down near the front along with the other spectators. Again the conch shells sounded as they announced the departure of Seiryu from the main hall (honden). The dragon does not appear immediately, which adds an element of suspense around its arrival.

First, there is a procession of people who come down the stairs. The attendants (mostly male) blow conch shells at intervals as they descend the steps, followed by men dressed in samurai-like armored clothing and carrying weighted walking staves. Then Buddhist priests, in grey robes, descend the steps in pairs. They position themselves at intervals to the left and right of the steps leading up to the gate. Two priestesses in orange robes and golden masks (which cover the top half of the face), descend half way and stand to the left and right, in between the priests (see Figure 24: The Seiryu-e Matsuri at Kiyomizu-dera temple.)
The conch shells are blown again and then the dragon appears. The dragon (see figure 25) is about fifteen meters long and is a giant marionette held in the air by poles maneuvered by temple attendants. The dragon dances down the stairs. Once at the bottom, the dragon and the people maneuvering it begin a dance for the spectators while the priests chant and clang together hand-held wooden blocks. When the dance is complete, the dragon rests ‘on the ground’ and the two priestesses come down and begin to walk in front of the audience. They carry long thin wands and bowls of sacred water; they dip the wand into the sacred water and flick the droplets onto the crowd (most of whom are kneeling on the ground and have their hands clasped together with head tilted slightly downwards in prayer) in an act of purification and blessing. The procession then begins a short journey, chanting and dancing with the dragon throughout the nearby streets. Later, the dragon returns to the temple and does another dance in front of the main hall on the stage.

On this day the festival attracted a fair number of visitors, some there specifically for the event and others just people who just happened to visit the temple on that day. In this festival, the dragon is a mythical being, also considered to be an incarnation of Kannon, and represents mercy. The dragon used in the festival ceremony is also symbolic because texts from Buddhist sutras have been placed inside each of its scales; thus, the dragon carries the prayers throughout
the community. Held twice annually in the spring and autumn seasons, the festival is a symbolic gesture of prayer for the people of Kyoto. Water is also symbolic in this ceremony as a means of purification and to protect the spectators and participants from misfortune. Also symbolic are the water droplets dispersed into the crowd by the two priestesses, the sacred water is purifying and gives the attendees a ritual blessing. The dragon marionette is a physical representation of the temple’s connection to the bodhisattva Kannon. Because this festival also leaves the temple grounds, it is a ritual of the extension of sacred space, bringing with it symbolic meaning into the surrounding community.

**Taro Stalks and Vegetables**

The second account is of the Zuiki Matsuri (taro stalk festival), which is an annual event held over a five day period at the beginning of October (usually, the 1\textsuperscript{st} – 5\textsuperscript{th}). During the harvest season, this festival takes place at Kitano-Tenmangu shrine and its performance is dedicated to the enshrined deities. The festival involves a procession that brings three sacred palanquins

![Figure 26: Omikoshi displayed at Kitano-Tenmangu shrine.](image)
(carriers for portable shrines) to a secondary shrine, where they will sit beside the *Zuiki Omikoshi* (taro stalk portable shrine). The body of the *Zuiki Omikoshi* is elaborately constructed of vegetables from the harvest season, most notably the roof is fabricated from taro stalks, from which the name of the festival is derived.

Items carried in the procession are displayed within the shrine grounds before the festival (see figure 26 above). On the first day of the festival, the shrine priests perform a ritual ceremony for a group of children who will be participating in the festival procession. The children are dressed in Heian period (794 to 1185) costume and standing in a row, girls on one side, boys on the other. The children’s mothers stood behind them dressed in formal kimono. The children, approximately 4 to 10 years of age, are participating in a blessing ritual, called *harae*, being performed by a priest and an assistant priest. Ueda (1996) states that this is a “highly symbolic act,” which represents and effects “an inward cleansing from all sin and pollution” (34). In this act, the head priest uses a purification wand, called *haraegushi* (wooden wand with *shide* paper strips bundled and hanging from the end) by waving it from left to right in front of the children. This process is performed to remove any negative energy about the person and is a purifying ritual action. After this, the priest and assistant placed an *omamori* (amulet) attached to a long cord, around the neck of each child. The children would wear their amulet during their time in the parade as a means of protection offered by the shrine deity for their health and safety. It is interesting to note that these children are in a very honourable position and a child’s chance of getting a spot in the procession is quite limited, often requiring several interviews, as well as a donation from their parents to the shrine. It was quite evident that the mothers, who would walk with them in the parade, and other family members, who would be spectators, were very happy and proud that their child was in the parade. Likewise, the children in the parade would smile
and wave to their family members. The parade commenced after the blessing ceremony with the children was complete. The order of the procession involved a good deal of organization, and as I walked to the entrance of the shrine, I could see and hear organizers directing groups into their proper order. There were approximately two hundred participants in the procession, all dressed in Heian period costume. The act of portraying members of the procession in period specific costume acts as a connection and as a remembrance of the origins of the ritual festival. The costuming in effect supports a connection between the society of the past and the society of contemporary time. As members were being adjusted into their groups, two shishi went around to people in the ‘audience.’ As mentioned, the shishi, or ‘lion-dog,’ is a guardian figure typically represented by carvings and statues; yet, this time it was being represented through action. Each shishi is made up of two people, one controlling the head, the other the body. The shishi costume is made up of a large head, from which the bottom jaw is maneuvered to open and close the mouth, and a decorative coloured robe (one was red and the other green) covering the second person underneath (see figure 27). At the start of the procession they do a shishi-mai, or ‘lion dance,’ after which people of all ages walk up to one of the shishi to bend their heads down towards its mouth. The shishi would then open its jaw and put its mouth onto the person’s head and take a gentle ‘bite.’ Then the shishi would pull away from the person and mimic a chomping gesture in the air as if eating something. A member of the audience explained to me that this gestural biting is a
symbolic purifying and cleansing for the person, as a means of clearing away illness or, in the case of children, to make them ‘smarter.’ It is also possible that either meaning is applicable to the recipient of this gesture, regardless of age.

The festival procession followed behind the shishi, down through narrow back streets and onto busy, high traffic roads until it reached the secondary shrine. This temporary shrine is where the two Zuiki Omikoshi are. These portable shrines are elaborately decorated with an assortment of other seasonal vegetables and dried plants (see figure 28). The main Zuiki Omikoshi on display in the viewable roofed structure was accompanied by a pre-recorded audio track that explained some of the aspects of the Zuiki Matsuri and the vegetables and items used in the construction of the Omikoshi. Finally, a small booth was set up where visitors could make a donation to the shrine, after which they could write their name on paper hung on fencing at the site, to show their sponsorship. These Omikoshi stay there for four days and, on October 5th, are carried back, along with the palanquins, to Kitano-Tenmangu.
shrine. Information was also made available to visitors through an audio track and posters containing pictures of items and information on the types of vegetables used.

**Orikoshi Matsuri**

The third festival example is a community organized event called *Orikoshi Matsuri* (the ‘portable shrine festival’). This festival is also a show of gratitude for the harvest season and a way through which people in an area, which is connected to a local shrine, come together in a fall celebration. The community organization for the area where my dormitory was located invited us international students to participate and experience Japanese culture. It was very gracious of them to do so, as it was truly a unique experience.

On October 16th, I participated, with a group of students, in carrying an *Orikoshi* to celebrate a festival performed in thanks for the harvest season. This festival has been held annually for over nine hundred years. In this event, the *Orikoshi* was brought to the district from a ‘daughter’ shrine, *Fukuōji-jinja* shrine, which is also connected to a significantly larger *Orikoshi* carried on the same day in a procession ending at *Ninnaji* Temple (located down the street from *Fukuōji-jinja* shrine). As participants, we dressed in festival attire, which in this case included a *happi* (a type of short cotton over-coat with large sleeves) and a head bandana made from twisting a rectangle of cotton fabric.

A couple from the neighborhood association brought us a few short blocks from the dormitory to where the *Orikoshi* was set up. The portable shrine was set up on wooden beams with a table in front displaying *sake* and monetary offerings from the locals. The *sake* was an offering to the deities (and used and consumed throughout the festival day), and envelopes containing money would be donated to the shrine. Extending from the *Orikoshi* to the front were
two long ropes with attached rounded ‘jingle’ bells. Children played on a taiko drum while more people wearing happi coats gathered in the narrow street.

As the starting time approached, women began handing out cups containing a small amount of sake, as part of a purification of the body. Some sake was also sprayed onto several parts of the Omikoshi, especially where it was bound by ropes to the wooden beams used to carry it around. People were in a joyful mood and then it was time to begin. A group of Japanese men were the first to carry the Omikoshi, while some people walked behind. Others, including children, walked at the front of the procession while holding onto the ropes. The excitement increased as the calls of “Wasshoi, Wasshoi!” began (a type of cheering, like ‘hurrah’). These calls were repeated when the Omikoshi was carried down and around the streets and the louder and more energetic the cheering, the better the festival is. (After all, this is a celebration of a successful harvest). Then, at the first corner, the men started to shake the Omikoshi up and down, and side to side, which made its bells and ornaments jingle and chime.

In order to bring the deity into the community where it can bless the homes, the Omikoshi was carried and shaken about throughout the narrow streets of the immediate residential area. Because the Omikoshi is very heavy, the groups of people carrying it around changed and there were rest stops along the way. At the rest stops, community members who were not carrying the Omikoshi that day had prepared drink and food for everyone. At the end of the procession, the portable shrine was brought back to where we had started. Now there were tables and mats lined up all the way down a side street: a place for everyone to sit and eat together after the event to celebrate the ‘harvest’ and the coming together of the community. It happened that, after eating and visiting, another (separate) procession came down the side street and the children ran to the shishi to receive a symbolic ‘bite.’ Again I was told how very important it was to make them
smarter because education is critical. This procession was connected to the bigger Omikoshi procession happening at Ninnaji temple, which was of a much larger scale than the one we had carried in the community run event (see figure 29). Carrying Ninnaji temple’s Omikoshi involved over 250 people, and when it needed to be carried up the stairs of the temple gate, it was quite an event because of the Omikoshi’s great size.

Figure 29: The larger Omikoshi from Ninnaji temple.

During the harvest season, Omikoshi festivals are held all over Kyoto and, as each neighbourhood is connected to a local shrine or temple, the neighbourhood association organizes their own local event. The Omikoshi is a temporary holder of the local shrine or temple deity, and the festival is a time when that deity is brought out of a sacred space and taken into the surrounding community. This may also provide a chance for people who are unable to pay a visit to the shrine to engage in prayer, and show gratitude to the deity.
Of these examples above, the symbolic expression is based through extending meaning to areas outside of sacred space. Meaning is thus able to be understood by people who either would not normally visit that place, or to those who may not be physically able to visit. Thus, the festivals act as a connective thread between people and place, also allowing for a connection between people and the deity, Buddha or bodhisattva. Festivals create an opportunity for the transference of symbolic meaning and can allow the extension of place and landscapes, even if temporarily. Festivals also draw visitors together and permit a community, or group of people to have a shared experience, which also creates meaningful place. As people cooperate to create a festival either through its organization, participation or observation, people are sharing in a symbolic communication with one another. And for the younger generation (or perhaps for the older generation at times as well) a festival allows for the possibility of the teaching and learning of cultural practices as they are expressed.

There is a common theme which runs through all three of the events described above: they all occur in relation to ceremony and ritual. Festivals are centred on ceremony, and ritual practices that symbolically express meaning are performed as an act in which to express gratitude to, and receive favor from deities or bodhisattvas. However, ceremony and rituals do occur outside of annual festival events as well. In a sense, the festival is an extension of sacred space connecting people to the deities, Buddhas or bodhisattvas, outside of the usual boundaries.

There are also ceremonial and ritual practices that are held and performed within the sacred space of shrines and temples by Japanese people in accordance with cyclical time. To show how this occurs, I explain two other types of lifetime events that are commonly practiced by Japanese people: first the ceremonial blessing of children at the ages of three, five, and seven years, and then customs involved in celebrating the New Year. Ceremonies and rituals are a way
through which people experience sacred place and through each experience they are building a relationship to specific places. For instance, many Japanese people will travel back to their home town during the New Year to visit family and return to their local shrine or temple. I will discuss these next.

**Seven-Five-Three**

Numbers are symbolic, and specific ones are selected and marked as being ‘lucky’ or ‘unlucky.’ In Japanese culture, the numbers 3, 5, and 7 are considered to be ‘lucky.’ In contrast, the number 4 is ‘unlucky’ due to the fact that its phonetic pronunciation makes it a homonym to the word *shi*, which means ‘death/die.’ Moreover, if the sequence of 3, 5, and 7 is reversed, this adds a magical essence to its symbolic meaning. Throughout history, the health and survival of children has been a vital and important factor. In Japan, when children reached pivotal intervals of childhood, their health and survival was celebrated and the child would be brought to a local shrine to receive a ritual Shinto blessing. This ceremony is called *shichi-go-san* (seven-five-three), which serves as a means of blessing children, and helps to ensure the protection of the deities for the child’s continuing good health. This ceremony has carried on into modernity where it is held at shrines and is typically celebrated throughout the month of November. During the *shichi-go-san* ceremony, children are brought to a shrine dressed in elaborate and formal kimono attire; their parents also dress formally but typically in western attire. During the ceremony, children are taken into the main hall (accompanied by their parents) and are then blessed in a purification ritual performed by the Shinto priest. The parents usually take pictures or video record their children around the shrine grounds afterwards. At some locations, I noticed that, afterward, the child would be given a small bag of fun goods; a factor that undoubtedly also makes the experience a pleasurable and memorable one for the child, as well as creating a
different meaning for the child compared to the meanings and importance of completing the ceremony for the parents.

**The New Year**

The New Year is a significant period for Japanese people and almost everyone participates in the ritual of *hatsumōde*, which is when people visit a shrine to make the first prayer of the year. While the first visit is usually held sometime during the first three days of the new year (January 1st-3rd), most visitors celebrate by first visiting a temple on New Year’s Eve, after which they may then go to a shrine. The New Year period is also a time when Japanese families get together, usually traveling back to their home town. On New Year’s Eve, a family will eat a meal together while they watch the annual programme by the Japanese national broadcaster NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*) that features performances by celebrities and singers. One part of the meal is *soba* (buckwheat) noodles. This is because eating long noodles is symbolic of living a long life; if you eat the noodles, then you will likewise live a long life. This and other New Year foods share in this type of symbolism as being a type of sympathetic magic, which is when a connection is made through one item to produce a similar result in another. After dinner and around 11:30 p.m., people go to their local temple to view the bell ringing (discussed below), as way of cleaning the slate for the New Year. They also may go directly to a shrine, or they may attend the next day, to perform *hatsumōde*.

On the morning of the first day of January the family will eat a special meal called *osechi-ryori*, traditional foods eaten on New Year’s Day. Traditionally, the mother of the household spends 3 or 4 days preparing this meal, which is served cool in three stackable boxes with separated compartments, and shared in a type of ‘communal’ feast. This was the case in my experience; however, as more women of contemporary society are entering the workforce, the
family may purchase this traditional meal from a local grocery store. Good quality sake (rice wine), symbolic for its purifying qualities, is also consumed by the family. Traditionally, this food is meant to feed the family for several days, as it is taboo to use a hearth and cook meals during this time, although a special zōni soup is allowed – this soup is made with an assortment of vegetables and contains a large piece of mochi (rice cake). Items contained within osechi-ryori are symbolic objects in themselves and typically have to do with long life, fertility or joy. For example, ebi (shrimp) are symbolic of living a long life because their form is curled up, and hence, resembles the curved back of an ‘old person;’ likewise, pouches of fish roe are symbolic of children and fertility.

After the first meal of the New Year, children play traditional games. Later, the family may travel to a local or head shrine (which the family is connected to) where they will participate in hatsumōde ritual. This ritual involves making a monetary offering at the worship hall of the shrine and a prayer, which is symbolic of the year to come and provides a fresh start for a person’s life. After the first prayer, people will purchase an amulet or talisman, and a paper fortune (these are discussed in more detail below).

**Objects**

In addition to actions, the utilization of objects is a primary mode of symbolic expression. And, although they are often a part of a person’s actions, they can be somewhat ‘stationary;’ that is, an object may be viewed, or may just sit on a shelf in the home, only being handled or interacted with occasionally. In the context of shrines of temples, the objects that I describe are interesting as they are created by people for the sole purpose of demonstrating symbolic meaning. In this section, I use examples of those objects observed during my research and explain what their forms and functions are, and their symbolic meanings.
Animals

The presence of animals is a running theme throughout all of the shrine and temple locations that I visited. Animals are typically featured through statues and artwork, and due to Chinese influences on Japanese culture, usually have connections to the twelve animal representations of the Chinese zodiac system. In addition to the animals described below, the shishi or koma-inu discussed in the second section of Chapter five, Shinto Shrine section above could fit into the category of objects as well. Animal representations are often symbolically associated with the location where they are found. Some animals may be shown at more than one location; this shows that any meanings represented in their forms can be both shared and unique to each place.

For instance, statues of the ox (or bull) figure displayed throughout the shrine complex at Kitano-tenmangu are symbolic of education and knowledge. This same ox figure present at the Nishiki-tenmangu shrine is also symbolic of success in education (see figure 30). The ox has other meanings, as Casal has noted that the bull and cow in many cultures symbolize fruitfulness and birth. He goes on to say that the “animals [are] connected with water as a source of life, and with the moon, inhabited by the goddess over life and death, whose crescent looks like their horns” (1967: 85). Several of the oxen statues at Kitano-tenmangu shrine are represented with a calf or two at their side. They are also symbolic of fertility, and many had been offered red votive bibs, with names written on the front. (I will discuss the use of votive bibs further below).
At the *Kurama-dera* temple, the tiger signifies the repelling of evil and, together with the centipede, is a symbolic messenger to the *bodhisattvas*. The animals are also typically used in place of the traditional *koma-inu*. The use of different animals in lieu of the standard *shishi* or *koma-inu* can give a location a unique aspect and set it apart from others. Symbolic meaning can usually be further portrayed through objects which are depicted with the statue. For example, at the *Otoyo-jinja* shrine, along the famous ‘philosophers’ path’ on the eastern side of the city, two mice guardians are depicted, with one holding a drop of sake, which means purity and long life, and the other holding a scroll meaning study. There are other locations that use the zodiac image of the rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, bird, dog and boar. Other common animals include fox and deer, which are depicted in other parts of Japan as well.

Occasionally the animal represented is associated with a location’s mythology. At *Jishu-jinja* shrine, the deity Ōkuninushi, who is revered for ‘love’ and ‘matchmaking,’ is also shown in the presence of a white rabbit (see figure 31). In the narrative, a rabbit is caught in trickery and is skinned by his avengers. In great pain and unable to heal, the rabbit meets the elder brothers of Ōkuninushi. He asks the men what can be done to help him. The men, deciding to torture the rabbit further, tell the rabbit the cure is to go bathe in the sea and then lie on a hill to dry. This, of course, only caused the rabbit greater pain and distress. As the

![Figure 31: Statues of the deity Ōkuninushi and the rabbit at *Jishu-jinja* shrine.](image-url)
rabbit lay on the hill suffering, Ōkuninushi, a kind hearted soul, came upon him. He saw the rabbit and took pity, advising it “to bathe in river water and roll in the pollen of river grass to restore its pelt” (Ashkenazi 2003:228). After being cured, the rabbit and Ōkuninushi became friends, and today the rabbit is viewed as Ōkuninushi’s messenger.

In most instances where an animal is presented at shrines and temples, it is shown through statues and figurines. In some cases, a real animal is present during festival periods. For example, oxen will often pull wagons in festival processions. Or, in the case of Seiryu-e, animals will be manifested through other means such as costuming. Yet another representation is the presence of a white horse at some shrines during the New Year. Horses are also embodied as painted, life-size statues to resemble a real animal, and they will even have their own small roofed structure that encases them (see figure 32). In some cases, this enclosure will have an offering box, where people may make prayers to them. In one instance, located at the Fushimi Inari Jinja shrine, carrots had been left as an offering (also see figure 32). Reader mentions that the horse in mythical terms [is] both a messenger and a mount of the kami. Horses play a part in many important Shinto rituals, when they symbolically bear the kami in procession or are paraded during rituals to symbolize the presence of the kami. (2007:91)

In all cases, animals represent a connection to a deity, bodhisattva or Buddha and act as symbolic forms that create and build a distinction for people in place. Many times the animal at a
location is supplicated with offerings, which are monetary or food items, and can be prayed to directly as another means of reaching out to, or being ‘heard’ by the deity, bodhisattva or Buddha. In another symbolic facet animals are also represented as being a source of healing, as I will discuss further in the “Healing and Protective Figures” below.

**Amulets and Talisman**

The use of amulets and talismans is found in many cultures. Amulets and talismans are objects believed either to hold a type of magical power or to be enriched with spiritual essence. However, there is a distinction: an amulet is used to repel ‘evil’ or avoid undesirable or potential negative occurrences and a talisman is used to draw in what is viewed as being beneficial to the user (Gaster 2005:298; Reader 1991:175; Rhum 2002:15). For example, talismans easily recalled to the Western mind are the four leaf clover or rabbit’s foot, which are thought to bring good luck to the holder. In the case of temples and shrines, the types of amulets and talismans are plentiful and readily available to purchase for a nominal fee, usually starting at ¥300 (approximately CAD 3.75 at time of writing).

Douglas (2003) explains that

> magical rules have always an expressive function. Whatever other functions they perform, disciplinary, anxiety-reducing, or sanctioning of moral codes, they have first and foremost a symbolic function. (2003:37)

Amulets and talismans are also symbolic of specific times or events in people’s lives, or they may act as reminders of personal goals and spur peaceful thoughts and provide an ease of mind. Pieces are created and then infused with the essence of the site’s related kami or bodhisattva(s) through rituals performed by the Shinto priests or Buddhist monks (Reader 1991:177-178). People ‘use’ an amulet or talisman by placing it somewhere of importance in the home or by
carrying it with them, such as in a purse or wallet. Amulets for ‘traffic safety’ usually have a string attached so they can be hung from a rear view mirror, or may come with a small clear suction cup so that it can be stuck onto the window of the vehicle. And, an amulet for ‘success in education’ might be placed on a student’s desk where they study. No matter the definitive purpose of the amulet or talisman, it is generally understood that the powerful effects of the piece will only last for one year (see also Reader 1991:178); after which the owner is obliged to return it to the shrine or temple from which it came and where it will be officially burned in ceremony by the priests or monks. Having returned an amulet, the person may begin the cycle again with the purchase of a new one. In the setting of Japanese temples and shrines, amulets and talisman can be divided into three categories: omamori, fuda, and ema.

The word omamori is also connected to meaning as it is a derivative of the Japanese verb mamoru, which means ‘to guard, to protect’ (Reader 1991:177). Omamori, the most abundant type of amulets and talismans I observed, are typically created in the form of a small fabric packet or pouch, enveloping a small piece of wood or heavy cardstock, and decoratively embroidered with a design (see figure 33). The design usually depicts an image symbolic of the place where it is purchased, whether iconic or written, with writing indicating the ‘type’ of power it holds. It is important that the pouch is securely closed and never opened, so that the essence remains intact; otherwise, the power within would escape.

Figure 33: Amulets and Talisman. Left – Classic Omamori. Center – Small Omamori with strap. Right – Traffic Safety Omamori as a sticker.
Omamori are not restricted to this pouch style, but are also available in different forms such as necklaces and bracelets, or cell phone charms; one type I saw is in the form of stickers, typically intended for ‘traffic safety,’ which are applied to bumpers on cars or even bicycles (see figure 33). Omamori are implemented as both amulets and talisman; their range of uses is wide.

Typical emblematic themes are Love, Beauty, Child, Victory, Business, Study, (Good) Luck, Health, Travel Safety, and Hobby. Even with such a range, there are still others that are unique to a specific place. The popular type, or theme of amulet found at a site, tends to be heavily influenced by an associated deity or bodhisattva and their respective qualities, enshrined at that shrine or temple. In addition, however, there is typically an assortment of varying forms that represent one theme. There are amulets for education available in different colours, and sizes, as well as stickers. For example, the Kitano-Tenmangu shrine is revered for the Tenjin (venerated deity) Michizane, who is associated with education due to his renowned intelligence and his talent in poetry. Around exam period, large groups of students of all ages descend upon the grounds to purchase amulets for ‘successful examination’ results, often in addition to making an offering to the deity and a prayer at the main worship hall.

Below I present my translation of an interview, which was primarily in English with Japanese interspersed, as one young woman described her understanding of omamori.

Emily: When you go to the temple or shrine, do you buy things like omamori or ema?

Hitomi: I used to, like when I was young, on New Year’s Day. But usually if you have a lot of omamori it is not good. If you want to get a new one the next year you have to give them back. Then you should pick one, but I didn’t really do it. And then it’s also kind of like you can’t find them [at the year’s end] and they don’t go back [to the temple]. It’s just buy and buy. And they are all the same. And it’s really kind of just for kids.
E: Oh? How so?

H: Yeah. Well actually, if you have something really important, for example with the omamori, they have so many meanings. Different ones. So, sometimes people will get one omamori, say for just their car so that it won’t end in an accident. Or sometimes, if you have a really important exam, say for getting into university, you’ll get one for that year. Maybe once in your life. But… before that I just remembered… another story about the gods.

E: Well that’s great!

H: Well, it’s another omamori thing. I just told you it’s not good to have so many omamori. You know why? ‘Cause it’s got a god in one, each omamori is supposed to be one, if you have many, the gods can fight with each other.

E: Really?

H: That’s how I was told.

In this short yet informative description, Hitomi explains multiple points about purchasing and using omamori. She clearly had made up her mind that having many omamori at one time was undesirable. Yet, she also expressed that they could be used at special or significant points in one’s life. In one respect, when omamori are purchased and not returned to the temple, as ought to be done, they end up being misplaced, or merely accumulated, in essence becoming just another commodity and losing the initial meaning in the process. This aspect is also applicable to the purchase of amulets and talismans by tourists. She also mentions that conflict may arise between ‘gods’ (or their spiritual essences) contained in different omamori, although I often observed many people purchasing more than one amulet or talisman at a time. This might suggest that, while an omamori are symbolic of a sacred power or essence, omamori are also becoming a commodity item in an increasingly consumer world, being purchased for other
purposes than customarily intended. Indeed I did witness people buying them as souvenirs and I will come back to this later.

Another common form of amulet or talisman, called *fuda*, is characteristically made from a piece of light wood, wrapped in white paper and bound with string, with writing on it describing its function. Similar to *omamori, fuda* represent an array of purposes. Some are taken home and placed in the *kamidana*, or private Shinto altar (lit., ‘god shelf’). Sometimes they are hung on the exterior door or in specific rooms of the home, with the intention of fending off disaster such as fire or disease, or as a means of repelling malevolent spirits or entities and preventing them from entering the home. For the most part, I observed *omamori* being purchased more frequently than *fuda*; however, the presence of *fuda* increased visibly just before and during the New Year period, both at temples and shrines and on doorways to homes.

Another item found at shrines and temples is an *ema*, a votive tablet that symbolizes a wish or desire. *Ema* tablets are made of wood, about the size of a hand, and attached to a corded string, with a painted image on the front (depicting something symbolic or representative of the site) (see figure 34 below). One may write anything they want to on the tablet. And the topics do range from light-hearted and easy going wishes, such as for happiness or to pass an exam, to matters that are more serious in nature; for example, I saw one written by a woman who wished that a person who had been stalking her would cease doing so.

After purchasing an *ema*, one writes a desire or a wish on the backside and then hangs it up in an allotted space (usually a type of pegged rack) within the shrine or temple grounds. Here, the presiding *kami* or *bodhisattva*(s) will be inclined to ‘read’ the wish or desire and hopefully respond favourably to the request. The use of *ema* is another way to communicate requests to powerful deities, similar to the practice of making a monetary offering and prayer at the main
hall of the shrine or temple. Often people may do one or the other, or any combination of the options available (i.e., omamori, fuda, ema, prayer, etc.), thus ‘doubling’ one’s chances of being ‘heard’.

Reader provides an interesting account of history about the development of the ema:

the name ema means ‘horse picture,’ and derives from the traditional Shintoesque concept that horses were messengers and mounts of the kami and could readily transmit entreaties to them. Presenting a horse to the kami as a part of a ritual, or to accompany an important request, was the most prestigious and efficacious offering one could make, yet in early Japanese society this was an extremely expensive matter, beyond the reach of all but the very rich. Consequently the practice of substituting a horse figurine or, later, a picture of a horse (ema) developed: excavations have shown that this custom was extant by the eighth century. The practice of submitting petitions to the kami on wooden boards depicting a horse became standard, spreading also to Buddhist temples, and gradually the symbols inscribed or painted on the ema
themselves became diversified, with the shrines and temples producing their own for the benefit of visitors. (1991:179)

The use of an *ema* is an interesting example of how the written word can be seen as a type of power that can be used to ‘attach’ or combine things.

I would also like to note that many *ema* are written in different languages, typically left by tourists. I observed wishes written in Chinese, Korean, English and French, just to name a few.

I was curious as to how Japanese deities, that I assumed would thus also communicate in the Japanese language, could understand *ema* that are written in a language other than Japanese. Two people informed me they thought that, while the deity did primarily understand Japanese, in the case of other languages, the ‘essence’ or feeling of the person who wrote the wish could be relayed to the deity. This concept would also be applicable to people who make a prayer in a language other than Japanese, at the main worship hall. The presence of different languages portrayed on *ema* could also be a contemporary adaptation to tourism, but it also highlights the use of *ema* mainly to subdue worries or bring a calming sense to the person who leaves an *ema* for the deity. Thus, if it is the case that the *ema* could not be ‘read’ by the deity, it
is not without benefits to the person who left it there, as the deity can ‘read’ the essence of the person. In another variation, the written word can also serve as a cleansing. At several temples and shrines, I saw a small area with a small or medium-sized wooden barrel, cut in half and containing water, a small donation box and a shelf or tray with special thin (dissolvable) paper and pens. For instance, this type of ‘station’ is present at the Jishu-Jinja shrine. To make a donation, the petitioner takes a sheet of paper in the shape of a doll, called hitogata barai (exorcism doll/purification doll), then writes their ‘trouble’ on the paper (for example something they no longer want to be in their life), then places the paper onto the water. Eventually, the water dissolves the paper along with the written message (see figure 35 above). Symbolically, as the water liquefies the paper, the person’s trouble will also ‘dissolve’ or disappear. In this instance, the water both literally and symbolically washes away the writing and one’s trouble in a type of sympathetic magic.

Aside from their symbolic meaning, there remains the fact that the sale of amulets and talismans is an important source of income for temples and shrines. Pieces generally range in price from ¥300 - ¥700 (CAD 3.75 to CAD $8.70 at the time of writing), but can go much higher. Reader states that most religious centers provide an immense array of talismans, amulets and other religious paraphernalia that can be acquired as symbols and representations of the religious power and protection of the Buddhas and kami … although, the religious centers themselves prefer to see this as a form of merit-making and receiving, in which a donation is made and talisman given in return. (1991:175)

While some people purchase amulets and talismans as a form of reciprocity between them and the deities, I suggest that, over time, at least in some locations, pieces that are originally symbolic in religious meaning have become part of the consumerist side of modern Japanese
society, similar to other commercial products (i.e., sold for a profit). Moreover, at almost every site I visited, prices were clearly stated just as they would be in a shop, whereas donations are generally meant to be determined by the donator. This notion of ‘sale’ versus ‘donation’ is further supported by the fact that people are buying pieces for reasons other than their intended purpose (which I discuss later on). Additionally, the stickers that are applied to cars and bicycles could be viewed as minor displays of advertising for the associated temple or shrine. After all, people who see them are at least reminded of the site’s existence and are thus inclined to think about it, which could result in a potential visit, as well as further ‘sales.’

During our conversations, Hitomi commented on this growing trend by noting that, “It’s just buy and buy. And they are all the same.” Not only does she mean that people are buying an amulet or talisman for a specific purpose, but also that people may purchase additional ones which are meant for the same ‘theme;’ that is, a person may buy an amulet for success in education at three separate locations, or they may purchase three amulets in different forms at the same location. This may be done because they want to ‘double’ up their ‘luck’ or they were attracted to its form and thought it was pretty or ‘cute.’ Likewise, people are increasingly purchasing amulets not only for themselves, but also for friends or family members. The purchaser’s intention is not for ritualistic purposes, such as bringing good health or aiding in avoiding misfortune, but instead amulets are purchased as a kind of souvenir to be gifted. I did observe this on a regular basis; with a few people even purchasing a handful of amulets at a time.

One more example shows the purchase of amulets and talismans as ‘sales’ and not ‘donations.’ At one location, where the shrine was targeting foreigners directly, there was a paper sign (printed in English) displayed below a wooden box holding rows of ema tablets. It read, “It’s okay to buy and bring home as souvenir.” Admittedly, I bought one of these tablets for
my own collection of artifacts, but only after seeing this sign. This sign made me feel as though I had permission to buy an amulet and ‘take it away’ from its original context as a souvenir and not a religious object. In this sense, ‘taking a piece’ of the shrine away with you also creates a connection to that place and can be a reminder of experience(s) in that place.

Two of my interviewees expressed thoughts that contradicted what I was witnessing—amulets being purchased as souvenirs. The interviewees are of different generations (youth and retirement age groups) and had similar views about buying amulets or talismans as souvenirs, or buying too many for oneself, as being a negative thing. In one case, I explained to a senior woman the English sign, which was enticing people to buy ema as souvenirs; she laughed and then adamantly exclaimed “But it’s not a souvenir!” This shows a form of symbolic expression which is undergoing change in contemporary Japan. This change concerning the use of objects found at temples and shrines can vary not only place to place but also, profoundly, on an individual basis. And as Reader (1991) writes, “Prayers, ema, fuda and omamori in many respects act as mirrors and barometers of contemporary social movements, worries, insecurities and preoccupations, for one of the most striking things about the content and the themes they express is the degree to which they remain in step with the changes and advances of contemporary society” (190). The use of amulets and talismans purchased from temples or shrines serve as a form of symbolic expression and provide a connection to kami or bodhisattva(s) represented both materially and in the thoughts of the owner.

**Fortune Telling**

Paper fortunes called omikuji (see figure 36) are a very popular item and available at both shrines and temples. They can be purchased at any time of the year, during any visit, and more than once throughout the year. The most symbolic and important is the first paper fortune
purchased during *hatsumôde* (first visit to a shrine / temple at New Year), as it foretells what is to come for the whole year. *Omikuji* purchased during other times of the year are generally seen to represent a shorter and more imminent span of time.

There is also a scale of ‘luckiness’ that one receives in an *omikuji* that ranges from ‘greatest luck’ (*daikichi*) to ‘great bad luck’ (*daikyo*). While it is a lucky thing to select a *daikichi*, it is actually not the worst thing to receive a fortune bearing the mark of *daikyo*. Even though it is an unlucky fortune, it suggests that things can only get better from there on, and therefore signifies change, a new beginning. There is a variety of ways that *omikuji* are presented and supplied to visitors, making the experience of reading them exciting and fun. The usual process of selecting an *omikuji* is through a numbered draw. Commonly, a tall octagonal shaped box with a small slit in the top containing slender numbered sticks (for example from 1 to 200) is used to determine which fortune will be given. The person seeking their fortune directs their thoughts inward to themselves or to their current situation, while shaking the box up and down or side to side. When the person feels ready, they tip the box upside down until one of the sticks protrudes through the slit revealing a number. The person then reads the number on the tip of the stick to the shrine or temple attendant who takes a small slip of paper from a small drawer which has the corresponding number of the stick written on it.

![Figure 36: Omikuji, paper fortune. Daikichi (greatest luck).](image)
Another popular method of delivery is an *omikuji* box filled with folded paper slips. The fortune seeker puts the stated fee into the money compartment of the box and then reaches into the main compartment that holds the paper fortunes to randomly pull one out. The *Nishiki Tenmangu* Shrine has an entertaining form of *omikuji* delivery. A plexi-glass enclosed stand contains a mechanical puppet shaped and dressed like a *shishi*. Once the 200 yen fee is paid, the petitioner then selects the appropriate buttons to purchase the fortune (some options are a focus on love or children) and furthermore which language: English, Chinese, or Japanese. It is of interest to note here that this inclusion of different languages, and the fact that the shrine is located in a popular shopping arcade, shows that the shrine is targeting not only native Japanese but also foreigners with the aim of reaching tourist visitors. Music starts and the *shishi* puppet begins to dance and then grabs a folded paper slip with its mouth and drops the *omikuji* into the drop box from where the fortune can be retrieved. In one other unique method, at the *Kibune-jinja* shrine, there is a well-known ‘water-fortune’ where the fortune seeker purchases a sheet of paper, places it in a nearby fountain, and reads the writing which appears as water is absorbed by the paper.

After reading the fortune and advice written on the slip of paper, there are two options. If the fortune is considered to be a good one, then it can be kept by the recipient as a means of ‘holding onto’ the luck. However, if the fortune is unfavourable, it can be tied onto ropes in a special area meant for *omikuji* in the shrine or temple, or tied around the branches of trees or bushes. By doing so, the fortune is left behind as a way to ask the deities to turn the fortune towards an improved outcome. When tied to tree branches, the natural energy, or life force, of the tree is in connection with the deities and thus can aid in making a fortune’s outcome better for the person who tied it there. This can also be viewed as a more direct way of communicating
one’s wishes to the deities because in Shinto religion all natural objects are seen as repositories for the *kami*.

Another form of fortune telling found at temples and shrines is the use of stones. In those I observed, a prediction of a successful outcome of hopes or desires could be determined by the weight of the stone. At the *Fushimi Inari* shrine, there are two stone lanterns; atop each is a separate rounded stone shaped to create the image of a wishing jewel (a symbolic icon at the shrine). The stones are called *omokaruishi*, which means ‘heavy light rock’ (see figure 37). A monetary offering is made along with a wish, made silently to oneself, and then the stone is lifted. If the stone feels heavy, then the wish will be a challenge or will not be granted. On the other hand, if the stone feels light, then it is likely that the wish will easily come true. I noticed that people generally experienced lifting the rocks with a level of lightheartedness and some laughter. It is not that one stone is heavier than the other, but that each person does feel it differently. I observed that some people lifted the stone easily and fast, while others barely were raising the stone off of the platform. Additionally, results of the stone being heavy or light did not appear to be affected by the fortune seeker’s sex or age as results are random for either stone.

In the northern ward of Kyoto city at the *Imamiya Jinja* shrine, another wish granting stone rests under a small, low, wooden roofed structure. This stone is called *Ahokashi-San*, the “Deity’s Stone,” and rests on a fabric pillow, which sits upon a small platform (see figure 38).
The process goes a bit differently than the ‘heavy light rock’ at Fushimi Inari. The seeker’s first step is to tap the stone lightly three times. Next, the seeker picks up the stone and lightly replaces it on the cushion, makes a wish and rubs the stone again, three times. Finally, the stone is picked up once more. According to the shrine’s brochure (in English), “It is believed if the deity’s stone becomes light, then one’s wish will come true.”

At the Jishu-jinja shrine, there is a pair of famously known stones called ‘love-fortune-telling’ stones (see figures 39 below). They sit about seven meters apart from one another, and the seeker touches the first stone and then walks to the other stone with eyes closed. If the seeker makes it to the other stone without looking, then they will find love quickly and easily. If, however, the seeker does not make it with eyes closed, then it is likely their hope for love will not be
realized. Nonetheless, if a seeker keeps their eyes closed but require some guidance from another person, then love will likely come through the aid of a friend or family member.

Finally, one other variety of fortune telling I observed, takes place at the Matsunō-taisha grand shrine. Here there is a booth that contains three sake barrel halves painted to look like bulls-eye targets (see figure 40). A person stands in front of the booth and, using a ‘toy’ bow, shoots an arrow, aiming for the middle of the sake barrel. The fortune received is determined by where arrow lands.

**Incense**

A noticeable characteristic when visiting temples is aromatic incense which permeates the air. Temples will have a stand or little table from which people can
purchase incense by donation. Beside this, the temple will have a large cauldron-style container filled with fine sand where lighted incense is placed (see figure 41). The incense smoke and aroma are actually an essential part of ritual when preparing to make a prayer to a Buddha or bodhisattva. One interviewee explained to me that its use is important in ceremony because as the aroma fills the space, or location, one becomes surrounded in the purifying properties. The aroma thus calms the mind and brings serenity. She described it as a feeling which is highly “connected to your brain” as the smoke “enters your body.” In this way it becomes more than just an object, because its effects become a part of you. The aroma and use of incense is actually a significant place-making experience for Japanese people as the sense of smell can trigger an embodiment of place as well.

After a person lights their incense, they waft some of the incense smoke in their direction. Sometimes, the smoke is wafted towards a specific body part, such as the head, for making one more intelligent through a clearing of the mind, or in cases of ailments, to any other problem area, such as a sore leg. One interviewee recalled a childhood memory with incense during temple visit on New Year’s Eve. She stated, “I was told by my parents ‘because you will be smart’. So my sister and I did it, but my parents didn’t do it.” She comments that she was instructed by her parents, who explained why the action would be done, but also that her parents did not participate in this action with her. This is an interesting interchange because there is an important element of knowledge being passed down through generations. If a parent tells a child to do something and then does not act similarly, it is likely that survival of the knowledge and its practiced counterpart may not be passed on or may suffer some loss over time, either through inexperienece or even disinterest.
**Daruma**

The *daruma* doll is a polysemic object that is usually purchased at the beginning of the New Year (see figure 42). The *daruma* figurine ranges in size from a doll that will fit in the palm of your hand, to enormous dolls that can be as tall as a person. Typically, dolls that will fit on a shelf at home are more common in size.

*Daruma* are often used by business owners as well, displayed near the front entrance of a business or shop. The *daruma* is made from a type of papier-mâché and has a ceramic weighted bottom. The doll has a round shape, with no arms or legs. Traditionally the body is painted red; however, nowadays one can find them in all sorts of colours, each signifying a different theme: gold signifies wealth, purple good health and white harmony. One may even see more contemporary hues, such as neon pink or green, used purely for aesthetic purposes. On the front, the *daruma* has a round face painted white, with two round blank spaces left for eyes. The custom is to paint in one eye and make a wish. Later, if the wish comes true, the other eye is painted in to retain the good luck or success for the remainder of the year. If the wish does not come true then the other eye remains blank.
The *daruma* is fashioned after Dharma, a Buddhist monk who, it is said, sat in a cave and meditated for such a length of time that his limbs atrophied and fell off. This is why the *daruma* doll, in his likeness, is presented limbless. However, because of the weighted bottom, if the *daruma* is tipped to one side, it will right itself again and thus is symbolic of staying strong, being balanced and determined, and accomplishing goals. The majority of *daruma* are manufactured in Gumma prefecture, north of Tokyo, but *daruma* are made with slight differences relative to the region in Japan where they are made. In this sense, the *daruma* also acts as a connection for people to specific places. The face of the *daruma* is also symbolic, as the design painted on for cheeks and beard is representative of the turtle and crane, both animals symbolic of good luck and longevity. The ‘animal’ represented in the beard and cheeks can also change depending on the region where it is made. Usually, there is a Japanese character written on the front of the body, for instance a character meaning ‘victory’ or ‘success.’

The *daruma* is a type of talisman because it acts as an object that, with the help of spiritual powers, creates or brings luck to a person. Moreover, if obtained, this luck or successful goal can then be captured in a sense and become bound to the person, thus being held on to. Another characteristic shared by amulets and talismans is that the *daruma* is brought back to the shrine or temple at the end of the year as the sacred powers or spiritual essence are thought to be effective for only a limited time. The returned *daruma* is ceremonially burned by the priests to release the spirit held within. A new *daruma* will be purchased at the New Year, and the cycle for a new desire or goal begins again. As with other magical objects, the *daruma* is not seen as being powerful in and of itself or having the ability to make something happen for a person; instead, it is a reminder to the person, who sees it every day in their home, of their goals, thus instilling a sense of determination or motivation to the user. It is thought-provoking to visit a
shrine at the end of the year and see a large container for returning sacred paraphernalia like *omamori, fuda,* and *daruma* – some with both of their eyes drawn in, thus signaling success, and some with one lonely eye drawn in, signifying unachieved goals. The cycling of this practice, bringing new items home and returning older ones, also aids in the maintaining connections to place for people while they are away from that place.

**Hamaya**

The *hamaya* is an arrow, typically purchased at a shrine during *hastsumōde,* the first prayer of the New Year (see figure 43 above). *Hamaya* are generally made available in two different sizes, and they also come with an attached *ema* which has an image painted on the front depicting the new Chinese zodiac animal for the upcoming year. *Hamaya* are taken home and placed on the *kamidana* (shrine altar) to ward off evil or malevolent spirits from entering the home and causing misfortune. The arrow is symbolic of warding off evil because *oni* (demons or malevolent spirits) are afraid of pointed objects.

*Hamaya* are also brought back at the end of a
year and ceremonially burned, in a process similar to omamori, fuda, and daruma. During the New Year, it is common to see gigantic hamaya at the front of shrine gates, or main halls (see figure 44 above).

**Healing and Protective Figures**

Some locations have objects that are reputed to aid in healing aches and pains or other slight health issues. There is usually a small offering box into which coins are inserted as offering and in some cases a short prayer may follow this. The seeker then rubs a specific part of the object, typically in the form of a statue, transferring their pain to the statue. These kinds of statues are fashioned after the forms of important people, bodhisattvas and animals. One example is the carved and polished stone oxen statues at Kitano-Tenmangu shrine in the northern district of Kyoto city (I have seen these statues at other locations in Kyoto as well).

As mentioned, the venerated deity at Kitano-Tenmangu shrine is associated with success in education. At several of the location’s main statues, people will rub the ox’s head and then their own, as a symbolic transference of the
ox’s reputed ‘cleverness’ to themselves. I have also witnessed people rubbing other parts of an ox’s body, such as the ox’s leg and then their own leg, as a means of relieving ailments; likewise also with the mouth, back, and feet. The symbolism attached to the ox’s strength is a factor here (see figure 45).

Another instance of a statue which people physically interact with is a peach located at Seimei-jinja shrine (see figure 46), which is thought to ward off misfortunes. The peach is also portrayed in the tale Izanagi and Izanami outlined above. During his escape from Yomi, Izanagi threw peaches at the demons chasing him, contributing to his escape.

**Offerings**

Offerings made to a kami, or hotoke (deceased ancestor or Buddha), are essentially all part of showing gratitude and part of an act of reciprocity between the profane and sacred. The forms and types of offerings made are also context dependent and display symbolic meaning. Offerings may be shown through monetary donations or food items displayed on an altar in a Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple’s main hall or at a home altar. Moreover, food choices are dependent upon the receiver (kami, hotoke, or bodhisattva). As Cobbi (1995) explains, some items are given to kami and not hotoke and vice versa, due to their symbolic meanings. Cobbi examines the use of foods that fall into two categories, either ‘salted’ or ‘sweetened,’ as she argues that “the presence of salt [is] in the kami’s proximity and sugar within the hotoke’s world”
(202). Cobbi (1995) also shows that food offerings to *kami*, called *shinsen*, typically include three elements: salt, water and uncooked rice, while food offerings directed to *hotoke*, called *bukku*, are strict in the exclusion of meat, *sake* (rice wine), and *goshin* (five strong-tasting plants—ginger, leeks, chives, garlic, and shallots) (202-203). Other forms of food offerings distinct to Shinto and Buddhist practices are the use of tea, cooked and uncooked rice, *kashi* (pastries/seasonings/sweet fruits), and *manjū* (sweet cakes with bean paste) (204-205). The presence of salt has significant symbolic meaning as it is used as a means of purification in Shinto practice, but is only a recent and atypical addition to Buddhist practice. Figure 47, below, is a representation of how offerings are displayed in front of an altar at Jishu shrine. There are the guardian figures of the fox, which are representative of and messengers to the Shinto deity *Inari* (and used in many locations outside of *Fushimi Inari Jinja*). Behind the guardian figures, in the center of the photo, one can see the placement of *gohei* (a sacred wand with *shide* paper strips that, in this case, are made from a shiny golden paper). To the left and right of these are branches of evergreen with *shide*, and in behind this is a somewhat less visible, small round mirror, all of these symbolic sacred objects that signify the presence of *kami*. In front, there are three stands each holding different objects. On the left are a (western) orange, daikon (Japanese radish), carrot, and banana. Any foods become sacralized once they are offered. In the middle are three ceramic dishes that most likely contain water, sake, and salt, which are purifying substances. Finally, to the right is *kagami-mochi* (mirror rice cake), with a *mikan* (Japanese orange) resting on top. *Mochi* is made from pounded rice and is eaten as a sweet. Circular rice cakes are pounded and shaped in thick round disks that resemble a mirror, which is a symbol of purity and the dwelling of a *kami*. 
Offerings of food are also used at the Buddhist temples, but there is another way one can make an offering. Pairs of straw sandals are often observable at the main gates of temples, which are given to the Ni-ō guardian statues because their feet are bare of any protection. Thus, a person can provide the sandals as a means of entering into the reciprocal relationship with the sacred entity; it works as a way to say, “Thank you for your protection. Here is some protection for you while you do your duty”. Ashkenazi also mentions that Ni-ō “have the power to protect babies as well as offering protection against thieves” (2003:225). This is one reason people would want to show their appreciation and give thanks to the Ni-ō. Other common sights at temples are the red bibs and wool hats placed on Jizō statues. Statues and effigies of this character can be found at all kinds of places (see figure 48 below), such as lining mountainside roads, at crossroads, hidden in back allies in the city, and at various shrines.
Jizō is a bodhisattva from Buddhism and is commonly perceived as a protector of children as well as travelers (Reader 1993:49), although the former is most popular. Jizō is, easily, the most recognizable symbolic image of a service known as Mizuko Kuyo, which memorializes children lost due to miscarriage, stillbirth and, more recently, abortion. The conception of “fetal personhood” equates to “fetal agency” through which the fetal spirit “has the ability to haunt and torment those who brought it into being and ‘sent it back,’ to use the Japanese understanding of abortion” (Law 2009:260). This belief is a manifest part of Mizuko Kuyo because the unborn or lost child’s spirit remains linked to the family in this world and thus is believed to have agency in producing trouble, such as illness or financial difficulty, for living family members out of an act of vengeance (Harrison and Midori 1995:72). Therefore, the ceremony of Mizuko Kuyo plays an important function for a mother, not only to appease her
mizuko, her deceased infant, but also to serve as a protection for her other relatives and, in turn, to relieve her sense of grief and guilt towards the loss of a child².

It is with such statues and effigies that parents or other family members can “perform simple rites—largely bowing, observing reverential silence, lighting a candle, and maybe saying prayers or chanting. Some temples have an alcove filled with dolls and other items that in their own way relate to the departed child or fetus” (LaFleur 1994:148). In addition, statues of Jizō are commonly seen surrounded by childhood items such as pinwheels, hats, handmade sweaters, and most commonly, the red votive bibs. These bibs are placed by worshipers and are meant to keep the spirits of children “happy.” Sweaters and hats keep Jizō warm and names are sometimes written on the bibs to remind Jizō of which child’s soul is to be saved (see also Reader 1993:49-50). Thus, together with a physical form of infancy and material goods of childhood, the Jizō figure becomes both a strong image of a caring and helpful deity and a child to be remembered.

Finally, another process of offering is

Figure 49: People making offerings and prayers at the worship hall of KitanoTenmangu jinja shrine.

² The emotional characteristic of Mizuko Kuyo has been subject of a variety of criticism as well, largely regarding political and gender focused issues, and also of the role of religion and how it plays a part in the controversial issue of abortion (Shimazono 2006: 228).
performed during prayer. A wooden offertory box with angled and slated beams placed across the top sits in front of the worship hall at both temples and shrines (see figure 49 above). Visitors toss coins into the box before prayer. The amount and monetary value of the coin is determined by the visitor as a donation and an offering to the kami, hotoke and bodhisattva. Often though, the five yen coin is the chosen donation because of the symbolism of the number 5, which is considered to be a lucky number and hence, able to enhance the likelihood of the prayer being answered. Sometimes, people will put in more, such as a five hundred yen coin (approximately CAD 5.50 at time of writing), endeavouring to increase their chances of success. It is also the practice that, if successful, the petitioner will return to make another offering and a prayer in gratitude to the respective kami, hotoke and bodhisattva.

Bells

One of my interviewees commented on the difference of sound use at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, explaining that the space of Shinto shrines was associated with sound and the space of Buddhist temples as not being associated with sound (in a typical everyday sense), common to how Shinto shrines use sounds during prayer while Buddhist temples do not. To a certain extent this is correct, since bells are used in both temples and shrines, albeit somewhat differently. In the Shinto environment, there is usually a large round jingle bell attached to the top of a twisted colourful rope, which is shaken to make sound to attract the attention of the deity (see figure 50).
In part of the Shinto process of prayer, people clap their hands together twice as well, or they may do this when a bell rope is not present or is unavailable because it is being used by another person. Also, on the omikoshi that are paraded through neighbourhoods, or during festival events, there are numerous jingle bells attached to the corners of the structure, as well as to the ropes that people hold while guiding it. Again the bells serve to attract and guide the attention of the deity(s).

As mentioned in the ‘Architecture’ section above, Buddhist temple grounds have a belfry (shōrō) that holds a bonshō, the temple’s bell. This raised structure is prominently displayed on the temple grounds, complete with roof and base, often with a small set of steps. The bell is made of a large copper casting and is quite large and heavy. On the outside, near the top, the design of the bell has circular reliefs that represent the one hundred eight human and earthly desires that are marked out in Buddhist belief as preventing people from obtaining enlightenment and thus affecting the cycle of reincarnation. Also, the design of the bell typically contains historic inscriptions and a circular striking pad in the shape of a lotus petal that is struck by a wooden beam suspended by ropes.

The bell is sometimes made available to the public and in such an instance, a visitor can sound the bell using a log beam hung from ropes. There is another rope that hangs down from the beam’s midsection that is used to pull back and let the log hit the center of the beam. The bells used are often quite large and produce long, deep, reverberating tones; indeed, some bells are revered for their particularly unique tone. When the bell is made available for public use, not everyone will try it out but, from my observations, those who did so did it for entertainment; regardless, no matter who sounds the bell, it does have significance to those people who make a prayer beforehand.
The *bonshô* is not used often and the most important use of the bell is during a ceremony on New Year’s Eve called *Joyano-kane*, when the temple bell is struck one hundred and eight times, with the last strike occurring at the stroke of midnight. With each ring of the bell, another earthly sin is cleansed from the people who are present to hear it. In this ceremony, sound is used as a means of purifying visitors, thus providing them with a clean slate, or a fresh start, for the New Year to come.

Indeed, temples are busy on the last day of the year and the more well-known temples do draw in large crowds who come to see and hear the bell being rung. At some locations, if people arrive early enough, they can line up for the opportunity to ring the bell themselves. I have twice had the opportunity to sound the bell whilst living in Japan. During my fieldwork, I was quite fortunate to visit the *Chion-in* Temple, which is perhaps the most popular location for temple bell ringing, and observe a ritual ceremony called *Shushôe*. I waited in a river of people (hundreds!) streaming down the main street in front of the temple, and managed to gain entrance a bare five minutes before it would be closed for entry. The temple has a cut off time at 11:45 p.m., as there are so many people and the line up so long, anyone entering after this time would not get to the bell tower before the one hundred and eight strikes were completed, thus, they would not be part of the ceremony at all. At first, the number of people was somewhat overwhelming, but as seems always to be the case in Japanese festivals and public events, people are generally well behaved and proceed slowly but surely, directed by police officers and assistants at the location, taking their turn when it arose. The experience one has during the bell ringing may also be altered, based on whether the person just views the act or is able to ring the bell directly. Likewise, the degree to which one will participate in making place will also be affected by individual interaction. This is not to say that viewing the bell ringing is of a ‘lesser’ quality than actually
ringing it oneself, just that the experiences differ and, thus, place will mean different things to
the individual.

With the Shushōe at Chion-in temple, the sight is indeed breathtaking. The bell is reputed
to be the largest in Japan measuring 3.3 metres high and 2.7 meters in diameter, and weighing a
staggering seventy tons (Chion-in website 2012). The ringing of the bell involves a ritual
chanting of sutras and a team of seventeen monks who strike the log beam onto the bell (see
figure 51). It is a spectacular display. A leader with a rope near the front of the bell braces his
bare feet on the wooden beam of the bell housing and lets his body drop down (backwards),
swinging with all his effort to produce the force required to strike the bell. The other sixteen
monks are in front of the bell, each monk with his own rope to hold back the log beam after the
bell has been struck, to stop it from prematurely hitting the bell a second time.

The sound produced by the bell when struck is difficult to describe in words, but such a

Figure 51: The bell being struck at Chion-in temple on New Year’s.
large bell produces a significant tone. While waiting in line, visitors can hear the ringing echo out and down and beyond the road. Yet, once beside the tower when the bell is struck, you not only hear the ringing but also the tone as it resonates a low bass hum within the bell as well as your body, in a continual vibration that just as it slowly begins to fade, is renewed again with another strike of the bell. In this physical respect, it becomes clear how sound is used to cleanse and purify the body and mind of those nearby. Thus, bell ringing is a source of sound as embodiment for people who visit shrines and temples.

**Summary**

This chapter on actions and objects has meant to show the varieties of symbolic forms which I encountered during my research. Through the use of actions and the use of objects, shrines and temples express and make available symbolic meaning to those who visit their grounds, and those who view shrine or temple annual processions. By interacting with symbolic objects found at temples and shrines, people are actively engaging in the perpetuation of symbolic meaning and adding to the making of place. Hall’s statements on sacred and profane time – that they are ‘imaginary’ and that “by putting themselves in sacred time, people subconsciously reaffirm and acknowledge their own divinity, but by raising consciousness they are acknowledging the divine in life” (1983:24-25) – are also applicable to ceremonial time in many Japanese festival events, as people are re-creating imagery and repeating actions which not only have been practiced throughout history but are also, in some instances, representative of mythic narratives. I would also suggest that as people are entering a sacred space they are also entering into sacred time, and when regarding a specific location, those people then add to the repertoire of other actions which happen within that place. Similarly, at the same time they are leaving a space of the profane. In chapter four, section one, I explained that shrines and temples,
and the entities which transpire within their boundaries, enable people to build and add meaning to places of significance in the current physical landscape, as either ‘naturally occurring’ or ‘modified.’ This also corresponds to the festival events which happen in shrine and temple grounds, or which happen as a procession outside of regular boundaries.

Throughout this thesis the embodiment of place is a reoccurring theme. Symbolic actions and objects which are contained within shrines and temples act as anchors for people through the experiences that they have with those actions and objects and hence create meaningful places. As mentioned earlier, Casey states that the role of the body in the creation of place is essential. This is because when a person functions and interacts with the environment surrounding them, that person makes a place “more of an event than a thing” (1996:26). Furthermore, the actions and objects which I observed during my study also parallel the idea that place has an emotional attachment for people, as they sense place through their physical and intellectual being in a place (Bender 2006; Basso 1996; Casey 1996; Faulstitch 1998; Feld and Basso 1996; Tuan 1977; Ingold 1993).

Also, similar to Lawrence-Zúñiga’s (2003) focus on “how experience is embedded in place and how space holds memories that implicate people and events” (13), as Japanese people visit the spaces of shrines and temples, for varying reasons ranging from worshiping to festival events, the experiences they have transform these locations into meaningful places. During their visits to shrines and temples, their experiences become embedded in place as that place is then also embedded in a person’s understanding of their experience. Additionally, the actions and objects found at shrines and temples create unique landscapes laced with symbolic meaning, and thus generate a place which works like a two-way street, transferring knowledge and experience between people and place.
Of course, the symbolic meaning contained in the actions and objects, which occurs at shrines and temples, is also dependent upon human interaction and indeed the body is a key factor in the visiting of these places. And this is even shown in the case of amulets and talismans, and in the example of the shrine ‘slide’ card (in the next chapter), when a connection to a place can occur without the physical visit to the shrine or temple. Perhaps this is also a newer form of the embodiment of place as well. Moreover, they way a person conducts themself while in sacred place also is indicated through their frame of mind and constrictions on their behaviours.

Actions and objects also form a connection between people and *kami*, *hotoke*, and *bodhisattva*. In the case of amulets, talismans and *fuda*, sacred objects offer a protective element for people in their everyday lives and help them to feel that the *kami* is continually in their presence and aiding them, thus providing a degree of ease of mind. In the case of *ema*, a person can directly contact the spirit in the hopes of obtaining their wish. Incense aids in the calming of the mind and helps a person to prepare themselves before connecting to Buddha or *hotoke* before prayer. Additionally, whether monetary or food items, offerings perform the act of reciprocity between people and the *kami*, *hotoke*, or *bodhisattva*, furthering a cyclical bond.

This chapter has included descriptions, explanations of use, and symbolic meaning contained in actions and objects occurring at shrines and temples. The actions discussed were several festivals: the *Seiryu-e Matsuri*, the *Zuiki Matsuri*, and an *Omikoshi Matsuri*. Also, I included two examples of ceremony and ritual common in Japanese culture; *shichi-go-san*, and *hatsumōde*. In the section regarding objects I covered animals, amulets and talismans, fortune telling, incense, *daruma*, *hamaya*, healing and protective figures, offerings, and finally, bells. The next chapter provides some details on issues which became evident to me during my
research regarding contemporary understandings of symbolic expression and meaning occurring at shrines and temples of Kyoto, Japan.
Chapter 7: Continuing Traditions and Shifting Motives: Transference, Transition, and Adaptations

In the context of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, certain customs and ritual practices are expressed through symbolic actions and symbolic objects. These actions and objects are facilitators of symbolic meaning, which may or may not be significant to different individuals who visit such locations. While a visitor may learn of, and come to understand, certain symbolic factors relating to a symbolic form (for instance, that the bull is symbolic of intelligence and education, or strength), the degree of importance which a person places on that action or object is entirely dependent upon the factors of their own experience(s). Some people may find certain symbolic aspects to be personal, or significant in meaning, while others may find the same phenomena to be a source of momentary enjoyment. This variance also adds to the expanse of interwoven layers which make up place.

The sacred spaces of shrines and temples of today are visited for a variety of reasons. And the purposes for visiting are not all entirely based on strict religious belief or practice. Furthermore, it is common for people of contemporary Japan not to consider themselves as ‘religious,’ in a strict sense, even though they may visit shrines and temples for specific practices that occur in religious contexts. This being said, it is also highly probable that residents of Kyoto have visited at least one or two religious sites in the past. Moreover, even those who claim to ‘never’ visit shrines or temples have done so, most likely do participate in the annual event of hatsumōude (when people make a visit to a shrine for their first prayer of the New Year). The motives behind people’s visits to shrines and temples vary drastically. In my questionnaires and interviews, the common reasons for visiting include but are not limited to prayer, visiting a
family tomb, festivals, nature, recreational activity, accessible location, annual events, and life cycle rituals and ceremonies such as a blessing a new born, shichi-go-san (seven-five-three), weddings and hatsumōde (first shrine / temple visit of New Year).

This chapter looks at three issues that emerged during my research and were highlighted to me as being important when regarding contemporary components and their role in the continuation of symbolic meaning and ‘tradition.’ The first section deals with cultural knowledge being passed down through generations to touch upon people’s differing experiences at shrines and temples, relative to their generation. The second section uncovers the element of shrine and temple locations with a component of entertainment in the several ways shrines and temples are used in non-religious terms, such as tourism and seasonal attractions. Finally, in the third section, I discuss the contextualization of shrines and temples in contemporary Japanese society, which is influenced by the influx of capitalism and technological advances.

**Shifting knowledge**

In Japan, traditions are passed down, from one generation to the next, through ritual and verbal instruction over a child’s life into adulthood (Wittenberg 2002:39). However, Japanese society is an excellent example of how ‘new’ concepts from foreign cultures can be and are adapted and melded into the ways of Japanese life; for example, fashion, food, popular culture and especially new forms of media. As Japanese culture continues to experience change and continues adapting characteristics that resemble a move towards an ever-increasing “Western” lifestyle, younger generations may be losing some of their culture’s mythic and symbolic knowledge.

Although visiting locations with family members should be a strong indication of a source for learning, replies to my questionnaires and during interviews showed that the majority of
respondents expressed the contrary. In one question, I asked if there was anything meaningful about their visit and if they had learned anything during their visit. I had anticipated detailed responses and was surprised that in the group of people between 19-29 years of age, only one person responded to this question. This respondent had gone to a specific shrine to do some research for a school report and presentation. Out of all the other respondents, there are only six (all of whom were in the age groups 30-49 and 50 or above) who mention something that was meaningful to them (including hatsumōde, offerings to ancestors, visiting a grave, and momiji viewing). Four respondents stated that they had learned something during their visit and cited ‘history,’ and one respondent also reported ‘customs’. The remaining people left no response to these two sections. This suggests that the younger generation is experiencing the localities of temples and shrines differently from their elders. It is also possible that even though family elders may be instilling traditional knowledge, it may be ignored by youth due to a lack of interest or their feeling that they have no need for such knowledge. One of my interviewees expressed that she felt her parents had ‘forced’ her to participate in temple and shrine activities when younger even though she did not want to, and to this day, she cannot explain a lot of what happens or is present at these locations.

Shrines and temples offer a space where people can learn by doing. Learning occurs through being exposed to phenomena, such as those actions and objects discussed above. It is the experience of interacting with symbolic action and symbolic objects which creates a deeper sense of connection to place, and makes the sacred space of shrines and temples meaningful. And while I noticed a significant result in youth not knowing ‘what to do’ or how to use certain objects, there were elder adults who knew little about it too, and there were a few youth and elders who were unable to relate any information to me about their actions or objects around
them. For the most part, when I asked younger visitors of shrines and temples about the particular objects and actions in which they were engaging or observing at that moment, they would tell me that either they did not know what something was meant for, that they were participating just for something to do, or that they were doing it because they thought it would be fun to try. Only a few youth could explain to me what it was they were doing.

Even though cultural practices are maintained by passing knowledge onto the next generation, customs and meanings are at the same time also in a process of transition as they are slowly shaped and adapted for use in current circumstances. This means that, if any change is occurring in youth culture, then the younger generation’s understanding of traditional customs, and the societal needs to which those functions serve, could be viewed differently from their seniors. Even so, I do not dismiss the fact that some customs are successfully passed from parent to child and understood or practiced in the traditional way, as many of them are. However, to a certain degree, some amount of change is understandably inevitable.

Some customs will alter slightly to fit the emerging purposes and needs of contemporary society. My research shows that there is a shifting, or loss, of knowledge occurring with regard to shrines and temples and the ways that these sacred localities express symbolic meaning; the younger generation is expressing a different understanding of or interest in the objects and actions taking place at temples and shrines. While shrines and temples are traditionally religious spaces, they have adapted and will continually adapt to contemporary times, especially as sources of enjoyment or ‘entertainment.’

The responses to my questionnaires showed that many people do visit temples and shrines somewhat routinely, with the majority making a visit one to three times in a calendar year and doing so with other people, mainly family members or friends. The reasons they listed for visits
were not strictly for religious purposes but showed a range of possibilities which included the proximity of the shrine or temple to their work, family connections (such as visiting a grave for worship and ritual cleaning of the tombstone), to aid a friend in success for an exam, to show places to tourists or for personal sightseeing, to purchase a fuda, to visit the head shrine of an omikoshi, to do research for a school project, to observe a festival, such as the temple bell ringing on New Year’s Eve, and for hatsumōde. Even this short list of responses shows the reasons for people’s visits to shrines and temples can vary drastically. Hence, shrines and temples do act as places that are polysemic in functions, or, rather, they serve different purposes for people of contemporary society. Thus, some usages are shared by many people in society while others are individualistic. At the premises of a site, people will select which aspects to engage in and may perform some ritual practices and disregard others. Likewise, those aspects they choose to interact with will in turn form and build upon their experience of place. Finally, as they interact through the various objects and participate in ritual practices within shrine and temple grounds, they are also provided the opportunity to learn about the meanings behind the symbolic expressions that are represented within the respective objects and practices. Next, I turn to the aspect of shrine and temple locations as being sources of forms of ‘entertainment.’

**Entertainment Factor**

Due to its long history, Kyoto is an area with a high concentration of world heritage sites, and the shrines and temples within the city are profoundly influenced by tourism. Tourism was another consideration during my research. Indeed, at any one shrine or temple within Kyoto, many of the other people there are participating in tours or are sightseeing, and at more popular destinations, tourists are arriving by the bus load. Japanese people commonly travel within their own country, and Kyoto, as a symbol of Japan’s traditional cultural heritage, is a highly
frequented destination for both nationals and foreigners. Accordingly, many of the Japanese nationals visiting shrines and temples are doing so in a touristic manner and not with the intention of performing a religious action, although they may participate in religious practice or custom while they are sightseeing. Also, because of the high concentration of temples and shrines, it may be expected that the people who reside in Kyoto are more likely to be exposed to these religious institutions. Nonetheless, Kyoto residents might not visit them regularly.

Moreover, shrines and temples are a large part of the culture of Kyoto, and the city caters to thousands of tourists every day. The city promotes an active sense of sightseeing at shrines and temples, and also provides city bus maps (available in English, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese languages) showing famous temples and shrines as landmarks. Bus routes often have these locations noted specifically as the main destination for the route.

Shrine and temple festivals are an example of times when people come out in droves and many visits to shrines and temples by residents are made into an outing for the day. There are three well-known annual festivals which take place in Kyoto. The Gion matsuri is a festival held near the namesake area and celebrated over a one month period with a highlight week of viewing floats and dressing in yukata (summer kimono), and a massive parade procession of the historical floats. The Jidai matsuri is a ‘festival of the ages,’ a parade in which just over two thousand people participate by dressing in costumes that represent important people of Kyoto’s history and portrays the different ages dating back to the Heian period (794 to 1185). The third festival is the Kurama hi-matsuri, a fire festival which takes place in the small village of Kurama where huge pine torches are lit aflame and men in traditional attire carry them up and down the streets as a means of directing kami on their way to the local Yuki-jinja shrine.
Although there are important festivals and ritual ceremonies that occur at shrines and temples throughout the year, often the majority of people who come to these festivals do so purely as spectators and for amusement. Another thing that is hard to ignore is the number of people there for a photo opportunity. It is common to see men and women with large professional quality cameras and zoom lenses in hand, perched upon step stools and short ladders to view the activities from over the other spectators’ heads in order to have a clearer path of vision. I would suggest that these people fit into their own category of observer, as they experience the event differently from other spectators, and most certainly differently from the participants, because they are only focusing on selected ‘screens’ or frames of their choosing. Their actions add ‘hobby’ to the list of reasons for temple and shrine visits as a definite form of amusement. Moreover, the visitors who view an entire festival through a camera lens position themselves in such a way that alters the effect of embodiment of place. They are experiencing the event in a different way and, as they ‘watch’ the festival proceedings, they are analyzing what they see in a specific manner; i.e., framing the shot. Those aspects on which they focus their viewfinder will be highlighted while others are ‘blocked out’. A person viewing the festival through a camera lens is thus witnessing only selected points and with a focus on the visual aspects of the event.

Aside from festival events, nature is another theme that attracts visitors. The locality of many shrines and temples provides a quiet atmosphere where one can be surrounded by nature while escaping the very modern city where parks are few and far between. A prime example is during the spring and autumn seasons. In the spring, Kyoto becomes awash in the whites and pinks of the *sakura* (cherry) blossoms. During autumn, it is the fiery array of *momiji* (Japanese maple) leaves in a spectacular display of reds and yellows that people seek out (see figure 52).
During these seasons, temples and shrines advertise their locations as being ideal for observing natural beauty and thus attract visitors from all over. In the fall, Japanese people enjoy *momiji-gari* (literally, ‘maple leaf hunting’) when they go out specifically to see the autumn colours. In the spring, they go for *hanami* (literally ‘flower viewing’). They meet with friends and family, sit on tarps and blankets enjoying the *sakura* blossoms while drinking alcohol, eating special foods, and acting in a festive manner. During these times there is a significant increase in visitors to all shrines and temples, and the Arashiyama (to the west) and Higashiyama (to the east) regions are so filled with people it is difficult at times to visit a shrine or temple comfortably. Many locations normally have specific day time hours when they are open to the public, but during this time provide a special evening opening of the grounds. These events are called a “night light-up” or “illumination.” The temple or shrine will have trees lit up with spotlights and lamps from below. The effect creates beautiful scenery with the colours being vividly exhibited against the night sky (see figure 53 below).

Locations which are popular during the *momiji* and *sakura* seasons undoubtedly see a significant increase in the number of visitors, and a corresponding increase in entry fee income, and possible sales of items such as *omamori*, *omikuji*, and *ema*. When taken in context, the money that religious institutions receive through donations in an offering box or through sales of
religious paraphernalia is, in some ways, an economic process and in other aspects is not. While a number of visitors who come during a ‘light-up’ event do participate in some ritual practices – using the *temizuya*, praying, or buying *omikuji* and *Omamori* – the majority are there simply to view the sites/sights. There are a few well-known ‘light-up’ locations, such as *Kiyomizu-dera* and *Kodaiji* temples (see figures 53 and above and 54 below), and some locations will even charge a higher fee for the night time viewing than if you were to visit during their regular daylight hours. This is interesting to me, seeing as how whole sections of a shrine or temple grounds are not accessible to visitors due to the darkness and poor visibility at night. Thus, a visitor’s options of how to experience the environment are also affected. In a way this may also change the options for learning about a place, because the way the shrine or temple can be experienced is directed by and limited to the location’s discretion, as well as being an enticement for sightseeing.

With regard to experiencing place, one of the first themes that came up in interviews and questionnaires was that people visiting sites are not aware of or make no conscious effort to remember even so much as the names of the places. This would be understandable given the instance of visiting an obscure location or perhaps many sites in one day for touristic purposes.
After all, if a place is not of significant meaning or connection to a person then they are less likely to remember those names. Yet, even some who referred to their family temples (for ancestor worship) had trouble recalling names, something that occurred on a greater scale with the responses of youth. But on another level it could be that the name of a place was not considered to be essential, as they did know the location and could have, or did, visit when they desired. This occurred, for example, when a site was located in close proximity to school, work, home or, in some instances, to popular or favorite tourist locations. While this does certainly contrast with the view that memorable places have names and that those names are important in the experience and understanding of a place (see Basso 1996:238), my research shows that actual

Figure 54: A light show, displayed at night in the garden at Kodaiji temple. The display depicts two dragons, which represent the zodiac animal for the New Year.
places can be remembered by experience and remembering those places does not necessarily require a name.

**Technological and Monetary Traits**

Shrines and temples are also catching up with the technological advances of modern society. Perhaps, due to the high concentration of tourism that occurs in Kyoto, many locations try to reach more people through electronic media. A number of locations are providing information about their temple or shrine through the use of online media. Many have their own websites, which are often made available in more than one language in efforts to reach beyond Japanese nationals. The websites contain a variety of material ranging from access to material with maps to full accounts of the location’s history, enshrined deity, Buddha, or bodhisattva; what types of amulets and talismans can be purchased; fees and worship services – all complete with photos. Thus, shrines and temples are using newer media to attract and inform, or provide services to potential visitors.

As mentioned above, one aspect of temple and shrine visits where change is occurring, no doubt influenced by contemporary mainstream capitalistic society, is that it is common nowadays for people to buy amulets and talismans for friends and family or because they think the amulet is cute. There are also newer kinds of items available for purchase and ways to have a connection to the deity without actually being present at a location. At Seimei-jinja shrine,
alongside amulets and talismans, there is a bookmark size thick stock paper with an inset ‘slide’ that has the image of the shrine’s worship altar (see figure 55 above) which people can purchase for about ¥1200 (CAD 15.00 at time of writing). They keep it with them and in the future at times when they are unable to make a physical visit to the shrine, they can hold this ‘slide’ up to the light to view the image and make a prayer, simulating the experience of being there in actuality. They are in essence ‘bringing’ the shrine with them wherever they go. This is also another interesting form of the embodiment of place. Through the use of this form of fuda, a person can not only carry the ‘place’ with them, but also experience that place in a new way, which differs from an actual visit.

In a more controversial example at the famous Yasaka-jinja shrine, in the Gion district, the shrine faced extensive criticism from other shrines and stopped its sales of a CD-ROM amulet, which people could purchase and use on a personal computer at home to “enjoy a Shinto rite to exorcise evil spirits and recitations of Shinto prayers by animated priests” (Mainichi Daily News 2000), because of the idea that one could not contain a deity in a computer. Evidently, attempts are being made to accommodate a growing population of media users, and perhaps create new forms of monetary gain.

Also commonly present at shrine and temple festivals are food stalls, which serve Japanese foods such as okonomiyaki (pancake like meal made with mixed batter of cabbage, vegetables and meats), ramen noodle soup, karaage (deep fried chicken), takoyaki (balls of battered and fried octopus), potato fries and candied fruits on a stick. Furthermore, other vendors sell handmade goods or market foods such as seasonal vegetables and fruits or tea leaves, and still others provide mini ‘carnival’ games for children to play to win candy and toys. While these stands are not run by the shrine or temple, but by members of the community, they do add a
monetary factor to the experience of visiting a shrine or temple. There are even two very popular, and extraordinarily large, flea markets held at Kitano-tenmangu shrine on the 25th of each month, and at Toji temple on the 21st of each month. These two sites draw large crowds who come in search of local and antique goods – everything from furniture, to ornaments, to kimono pieces. Furthermore, the touristic pull of many well-known shrines and temples has created an environment where the entire street before the location is lined with shops and restaurants, which survive on catering to the visitors, both national and foreign. In these ways, the locations themselves are further intertwined with the capitalistic side of modern society.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Shrines and temples are localities where Japanese people come into contact with symbolic expression through actions and objects, from which they can gain meaningful experiences; thus, these sacred spaces are sources where people can create meaningful places. Viewing the concept of ‘place’ in an anthropological perspective provides insight into how the localities of shrines and temples act as sites that are not only ascribed meaning, but also are sites from which meaning is derived. Places are specific and contained within a space; they are, in essence, embodied divisions of a space. Places are where objects of use or cultural importance reside and are enacted through forms of human physical and intellectual expression. Together, places are a vast network which holds meaning and understanding, as well as experience and sentiment for people. Throughout an individual’s life, these places are also influenced by societal requirements and, therefore, specific aspects of place are taught and learned, altered, adapted, dismissed, and may also become the source of newer contemporary meanings.

As people visit shrines and temples and walk within their grounds, whether the nature of their visit is motivated by religious purposes or not, people are concurrently being exposed to cultural information through a symbolic environment. This means that the temple and shrine grounds provide the visitor with an opportunity to learn about the history of the enshrined kami, Buddha, or bodhisattva of the location. Furthermore, symbolic elements are not only introduced visually, but are also received through senses of sound, smell, touch and taste. This can occur through phenomena such as the aroma of incense that is symbolically calming of mind and body, or the act of rubbing a statue as a means of transferring symbolic healing, or placing one’s hands on a sacred tree to feel the energy that resides within, or by participating in a tea ceremony or other food related festivals.
Near the beginning of my research and personal encounters while living abroad, I assumed that several issues would be evident. First, due to a heavy amount of syncretism experienced between Buddhism and Shinto practice in Japan, I suspected that many symbolic forms would be present (or shared) between locations, as well as in multi-faceted ways such that some symbolic forms might have slight characteristics unique to a place, while simultaneously sharing fundamental meaning(s) with other places. For instance, the guardian pair of statues at entrance ways, *Koma-inu*, are typically found in the form of *shishi*, but may take the shape of other animals, such as with the fox messengers at the *Fushimi-Inari* shrine, depending on the mythology of the site.

Secondly, I expected to learn about which aspects are meaningful to visitors in contemporary society. Many people visiting the sites are learning about the symbolism of objects and actions while interacting through the sacred spaces. This means that the shrine or temple grounds act as a source from which people can learn and build upon meaningful experiences that they encounter during their visit. Furthermore, it is important to note that the meanings of some things can and do shift over time and, as a result, it is appropriate to sort out new meanings of the phenomena being interpreted. While shrines and temples are traditionally religious spaces, they are continually adapting to contemporary times, especially with regard to acting as sources of enjoyment or ‘entertainment.’

Many Japanese people do not consider themselves to be ‘religious.’ But they do interact with objects and participate in rituals within the religious and sacred contexts of shrines and temples. Moreover, it is socially acceptable for Japanese people to ‘pick and pull’ from one or more belief system according to their needs, as this is not perceived as a negative quality. Likewise, people may simply practice a different religious belief, and when asked why the
person visited a temple or shrine, the answer was, “I am a Christian, so the purpose is sightseeing. When I go for a walk I stop by. There is no meaning or reason for my visit” (my translation). As Tuan precisely points out:

> objects and places are centers of value. They attract or repel in finely shaded degrees. To attend to them even momentarily is to acknowledge their reality and value. (1977:18)

In instances where people are visiting a temple or shrine for sightseeing, they are exposed to symbolic meaning, and knowledge can still be gained throughout a visit, even if they do not “practice” it. Sometimes, signs are present to instruct the visitor how to perform ritual practices, such as the use of *temizuya* or the procedure to worship. I often witnessed people standing in front of the worship hall discussing with one another how to perform the actions of prayer, whether they are supposed to ring the bell and then clap, or clap and then ring the bell. Or, for that matter, how many times do you clap and bow? On one occasion I witnessed a man perform a prayer, and he was noticeably unsure of what order to do it, and having a laugh with his wife afterwards when she pointed out a sign (in Japanese) explaining how to do so, not only three feet away from him. Correspondingly, not all symbolic expression and related meanings are limited to, nor bound by, the borders of temple or shrine grounds. Some features, or behaviours, also extend or are used beyond the sacred grounds while maintaining cultural meaning and religious purpose(s), such as the *Omikoshi Matsuri* (portable shrine festival). These instances create a connection with sacred space and people outside of that initial space.

Each experience that a visitor has at a temple or shrine builds upon the last. A person may not know how to do a prayer at a shrine, but through performing the actions they learn how and the next time they visit, they are that much more knowledgeable. Moreover, each person’s experience is individual to them as selected objects may be consciously acted upon or passed by;
it is up to the individual to choose most of what they interact with and what they do. People sometimes commented that, “You know a lot about Japanese culture,” or “You are more Japanese than me!” showing that while we may have grown up in or were enculturated into a certain culture, we may still need to ‘study or learn’ cultural specifics. We all tend to take some things that we “know” for granted within our own culture, so much so that when asked to explain to a foreigner why such-and-such is the way it is, we easily are confronted with the realization that it is difficult to explain, or that we simply do not know enough to do so. In other words, although Japanese citizens are exposed to and visit shrines and temples, for various purposes, they still learn about what they encounter during their individualistic and shared experiences.

Thirdly, I wanted to learn what degree symbolic or traditional knowledge is being understood across generations. As it turned out, it is evident that contemporary generations of youth are in the process of losing some knowledge of symbolic representations found at shrine and temple sites, thus signifying a general gap in traditional knowledge between generations. In this respect, the younger interviewees and respondents to my questionnaires appeared to be lacking traditional knowledge regarding these spaces, while the elder generation expressed more knowledge and showed an increased appreciation for their traditional knowledge, as well as the history related to shrines and temples. This suggests that, although people may not have as much interest in these spaces during their youth (perhaps due to an increase in interests outside cultural influences and modern technologies that take up their time), they may come to have more initiative to learn later in life as their needs and desires change. For instance, they may become interested in a location’s history and mythologies, or they reflect on the places with a different mindset. However, if the youth of contemporary society choose not to learn, now or later, they
are at risk of losing cultural and traditional knowledge. And this is reason enough to clarify the importance of learning things now rather than later, because later may come too late.

This thesis has highlighted a variety of symbolic elements in the form of actions and objects that are present at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Kyoto, Japan. In addition, I have begun to explore how these symbolic expressions are used and understood by people of contemporary society. I showed examples of actions – such as ritual behaviors, ceremony, dance and offerings – as a physical means of representing something that is performed to initiate a desired effect. Additionally, the presence of objects and their symbolic expressions of meaning are available to visitors through architecture, statues and monuments, amulets or talismans. This research also suggests that, as Japanese society continues to change, contemporary youth is losing some knowledge of symbolic representations found at shrine and temple sites, signifying a general gap in traditional knowledge between generations. This may be linked to the increase of shrine and temple locations being used as a means of entertainment or amusement.

I have examined these various components of Kyoto’s Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples with a combination of theoretical and methodological frameworks that incorporate an understanding in aspects of space and place, meaning in and from place, symbolism, interpretation, experience and context. For the aforementioned reasons, there is no doubt that the dynamic interplay of the objects and actions creates an environment where people might have meaningful experiences, and in more recent times provides an occasion for amusement or entertainment. The extent to which changes will occur at shrines or temples and to the degree of symbolic knowledge that is held by a visitor, is something that only time will reveal.
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Appendices

Appendix A - Consent Form: Interview

Consent Form:

Expressions of Japanese Mythology:
Symbolism and Meaning at Temples and Shrines of Kyoto, Japan.

Interview

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Naomi McPherson
Associate Professor, Community, Culture, and Global Studies
+1-250-807-9325
naomi.mcpherson@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator:

Emily A. T. Laninga
Graduate Student, Community, Culture, and Global Studies
+1-250-448-7878
redlime2@interchange.ubc.ca

This research will be a part of Emily A. T. Laninga’s thesis for a Master of Arts Degree, which will be a public document. Your identity will remain confidential; however, information provided by you will be used in the thesis.

Purpose:

The Purpose of this study is to examine the existence and use of symbolic cultural phenomenon in the areas of material objects and human action, specifically regarding symbolism linked to mythology, found within the context of Japanese temple and shrine grounds in Kyoto, Japan.

The goal is to identify how symbolic factors are being used within cultural contexts and further, to comprehend what meanings people are ascribing to the symbols in contemporary Japanese society.

You are being invited to participate in this interview because I believe you have knowledge and
insight useful to this study.

Study Procedures:

This interview will take about one hour and will be conducted at a place that is convenient and comfortable for both of us. For example, we may meet at a coffee house or at a shrine or temple of your choosing.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

With your permission, this interview will be digitally recorded on an audio device. Please check the appropriate box below along with your signature for consent.

Potential Risks:

There are no known risks associated to this study.

Potential Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you in the participation of this study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. This means that you will not be identified by name in any written work, unless you request otherwise. I will be using pseudonyms (false names) for anything that I write and/or publish. This includes my thesis, and any future conference papers or scholarly journal articles based on this research.

In addition, paper copies or audio recordings of the interview will be stored and locked in a cabinet in the co-investigator’s apartment in Kyoto, and is only accessible to the co-investigator. Any digital forms of information will be kept in a password-protected computer. Additionally, the principal investigator will have access to data, and this will be stored in a locked and secure file cabinet kept in her office in Canada, and is only accessible to her.

You may wish to have your name used as an indication of your participation in this study. If so, we can mark the appropriate box on the consent form.

Remuneration:

As token of my appreciation, I will provide you with a beverage for you to enjoy while we talk.
Contact for information about the study:

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding this study, please contact me via email at redlime2@interchange.ubc.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Naomi McPherson (English Language only) at +1-250-807-9325.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at +1-604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or toll free +1-877-822-8598. You may also contact the UBC Okanagan Behavioral Research Ethics Board at +1-250-807-8832.

Consent:

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study and indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

☐ Please check this box if you give consent to audio recording of this interview.
☐ Please check this box if you do NOT consent to audio recording of this interview.

Use a pseudonym:

___________________________________________________
Participant Signature                  Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

Use my real name:

___________________________________________________
Participant Signature                  Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Appendix B - Consent Form: Questionnaire

Consent Form:

Expressions of Japanese Mythology:
Symbolism and Meaning at Temples and Shrines of Kyoto, Japan.

Questionnaire

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Naomi McPherson
Associate Professor, Community, Culture, and Global Studies
+1-250-807-9325
naomi.mcpherson@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator:

Emily A. T. Laninga
Graduate Student, Community, Culture, and Global Studies
+1-250-448-7878
redlime2@interchange.ubc.ca

This research will be a part of Emily A. T. Laninga’s thesis for a Master of Arts Degree, which will be a public document. Your identity will remain confidential; however, information provided by you will be used in the thesis.

Purpose:

The Purpose of this study is to examine the existence and use of symbolic cultural phenomenon in the areas of material objects and human action, specifically regarding symbolism linked to mythology, found within the context of Japanese temple and shrine grounds in Kyoto, Japan.
The goal is to identify how symbolic factors are being used within cultural contexts and further, to comprehend what meanings people are ascribing to the symbols in contemporary Japanese society.

You are being invited to participate in this questionnaire because I believe you have knowledge and insight useful to this study.

**Study Procedures:**

This questionnaire will take about 5 - 7 minutes to complete.

**Potential Risks:**

There are no known risks associated to this study.

**Potential Benefits:**

There are no direct benefits to you in the participation of this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. This means that you will not be identified by name in any written work, unless you request otherwise. I will be using pseudonyms (false names) for anything that I write and/or publish. This includes my thesis, and any future conference papers or scholarly journal articles based on this research.

In addition, paper copies or audio recordings of the interview will be stored and locked in a cabinet in the co-investigator’s apartment in Kyoto, and is only accessible to the co-investigator. Any digital forms of information will be kept in a password-protected computer. Additionally, the principal investigator will have access to data, and this will be stored in a locked and secure file cabinet kept in her office in Canada, and is only accessible to her.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

**Remuneration:**

There is no remuneration for participating in this study; however, I would like to thank you for your time. It is greatly appreciated.

**Contact for information about the study:**

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding this study, please contact me via email at redlime2@interchange.ubc.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Naomi McPherson (English Language only) at +1-250-807-9325.
Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at +1-604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or toll free +1-877-822-8598. You may also contact the UBC Okanagan Behavioral Research Ethics Board at +1-250-807-8832.

Consent:

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study and indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

___________________________________________________  ______________________
Participant Signature                       Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Questionnaire:

Expressions of Japanese Mythology:
Symbolism and Meaning at Temples and Shrines of Kyoto, Japan.

This research will be a part of Emily A. T. Laninga’s thesis for a Master of Arts Degree, which will be a public document. Your identity will remain confidential; however, information provided by you will be used in the thesis.

Purpose:

The Purpose of this study is to examine the existence and use of symbolic cultural phenomenon in the areas of material objects and human action, specifically regarding symbolism linked to mythology, found within the context of Japanese temple and shrine grounds in Kyoto, Japan.

The goal is to identify how symbolic factors are being used within cultural contexts and further, to comprehend what meanings people are ascribing to the symbols in contemporary Japanese society.

You are being invited to participate in this interview because I believe you have knowledge and insight useful to this study.

Study Procedures:

This questionnaire will take about 5 - 7 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire can be found online at the following link:  
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q97T8PW

Thank you,

Emily A. T. Laninga  
Graduate Student, Community, Culture, and Global Studies  
+1-250-448-7878  
redlime2@interchange.ubc.ca
Appendix D - Interview Form

Interview Script (A):

Expressions of Japanese Mythology:
Symbolism and Meaning at Temples and Shrines of Kyoto, Japan.

Background Information

Place of Residence: _________________________________  □ Male  □ Female

Age group:  □ 19 ~ 29  □ 30 ~ 49  □ 50 +

1. How often do you visit shrines or temples in Kyoto?

2. Which shrine or temple did you last visit?

3. Could you briefly describe why you visited this shrine

4. Can you name shrines or temples that are significant to you? Why are these significant? What is special about them?

5. Do you visit shrines or temples with another person, or do you go by yourself?

6. Can you tell me which shrine or temple event in Kyoto is the one that stands out for you most or is your favorite?

7. Do you ever visit events such as festivals or ceremonies held at a shrine or temple in Kyoto city?

8. Can you name any events that you have visited during the past year, and where they took place?

9. Can you tell me about the purpose of the event?

10. Can you tell me about your personal experience of your visit?

11. What do you learn when you visit a shrine or temple?

12. Are you aware of any mythology that may be related to a shrine or temple that you visit?
13. Do you know of any story or myth associated to a shrine or temple that you would like to share with me?
14. Are there any specific object(s) present at a shrine or temple as being meaningful for you?
15. If so, can you give me any examples?
16. Is there anything that I have forgotten to ask you that you think is important for me to know about regarding visiting shrines or temples?
Open-ended Questionnaire:

Expressions of Japanese Mythology:
Symbolism and Meaning at Temples and Shrines of Kyoto, Japan.

Background Information

Place of Residence: ________________________________________  Male  Female

Age group:  19 ~ 29  30 ~ 49  50 +

1. Do you visit a shrine or temple regularly?
   □ Yes   □ No (Go to Question 3)

2. If Yes, how often do you visit shrines and/or temples in Kyoto city?
   □ 1 or 2 times per month
   □ 3 or more times per month
   □ 1-3 times per year
   □ 4-5 times per year

3. Do you visit shrines or temples with another person (or people), or do you go by yourself?
   □ Alone
   □ With other people
   □ Sometime alone, sometimes with other people.

Who are these other people? E.g., kin, friends, elders, or children.
4. Which shrine or temple did you last visit?

Why did you visit this one?

5. Is there a specific shrine or temple *event* (e.g. Festival or ceremony) in Kyoto that you have visited in the past year?

☐ Yes  ☐ No (You are now finished the questionnaire)

What is the name of this event?

Is there one event that you go to every year?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

6. If yes, where was the event held and what was the name of the event?

7. Can you tell me of anything during your time at this event that was particularly meaningful for you, and why?

8. Did you learn anything about the location when you visited?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, what kinds of information did you learn about? (Eg. History, Mythology, Customs, etc.)