

IN-HOUSE SHRINES IN JAPANESE CORPORATIONS AND THEIR BACKGROUND

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Abstract. *This paper illustrates the tradition of displaying an in-house shrine (kamidana) at Japanese organizations, focusing on the roles of spirituality and purpose in Japanese traditional organizations. The paper further describes how Japanese organizations and employees value tradition, spiritual connections with their legacy business while trying to innovate on products and services, transform business models, operations and revamp strategy.*

Keywords: *Innovation, Organization, Culture, Purpose, Sustainability, Strategy, Management, Japan*

I Introduction

Upon visiting corporations in Japan, it is not uncommon to encounter shrines within the premises, known as *kamidana*. *Kamidana* serves as a place of worship in the Shintoism, the ethnic religion in Japan. Encountering a *kamidana* is prevalent in a variety of professional settings, from traditional businesses and older industries to modern sectors such as information technology, and it extends even to maritime vessels operated by the current Japanese Navy (Kuno, 2014). A comparable practice exists within the Christian tradition with chaplains, and among Orthodox adherents, icons are similarly enshrined in corporate environments. Notably, *kamidana* are erected for practitioners of Shinto as well as in workspaces where there are people of other religions. Additionally, Shinto rituals like ground-breaking ceremony remain integral to the inauguration of new corporate structures and public thoroughfares alike; intriguingly, even computers are not exempt from these rites, as documented in textbooks on *norito* (Ono and Kaneko, 2004:10). Details of *norito* will be described in section II 3.

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While the melding of Shinto and Buddhism can be attributed to syncretic influences, it is essential to note that the polytheistic nature of Buddhism fostered a higher degree of compatibility. Despite this, issues regarding the transgression of religious liberty were seldom broached in the wake of Christianity's decriminalization. Noteworthy is the absence of debate on this topic, with a singular instance in 1932 where a *kamidana* being installed within Sophia University—a Christian institution—sparked protests as documented by Nakamura (1986). Nevertheless, such instances of conflict were anomalies and did not escalate to widespread animosity even with the assimilation of Christian practices.

This paper will investigate the implications of introducing *kamidana*, an emblem of Shintoism indigenous to Japan, in professional environments. Unlike more expansive in-house shrines usually positioned on company's premises or on the roof, *kamidana* are smaller fixtures located indoors. For clarity, corporate-managed shrines will henceforth be referred to as in-house shrines from now on.

II What kind of religion is Shintoism?

In regards to Shintoism, it must be acknowledged that it is a faith without an unequivocal genesis, its foundation lies not in doctrine but mythology¹ and tradition². Predominant among its characteristics is an animistic perception held by its followers. However, it is the long-standing belief that both the sovereign and citizenry are progeny of deities which has engendered the customary practice of enshrining ancestral gods—a practice deeply rooted since antiquity. (Nishimuta 2005:4) The Shinto religion's context is highly ethnocentric, presenting challenges for interpretation by non-natives, further compounded by the linguistic constraints faced by missionaries, as noted by Ono (1963:6).

The 6th-century introduction of Buddhism to Japan heralded a syncretic period where Shintoism and Buddhism coalesced, paralleling the amalgamation of Roman and Greek deities in antiquity. It was not until the 18th century that Japanese scholars, spurred by the colonial aspirations of Western European nations in Asia, advocated for a resurgence in authentic Japanese cultural practices and beliefs. The initiative to restore Shintoism as it existed prior to the advent of Buddhism was championed by Norinaga Motoori. This movement gained momentum from the mid-19th century up until the Meiji Restoration, specifically post the promulgation of the Shinbutsu Bunreiri (Ordinance Distinguishing Shinto and Buddhism) in 1868, which sought to reestablish Shintoism as the fulcrum of indigenous Japanese ideology.

Nevertheless, this demarcation faded concerning public devotion, and there was no sustained effort to distinctly separate the two religious practices over an extended period. For instance, the concept of ancestor veneration is absent in Buddhism. Yet, contemporary Japanese Buddhists frequently continue to honour their ancestors, under the belief that they safeguard the living.

¹ Originally, the history of the country was treated as history, b"shed in 712) and "Nihon Shoki" (established in 720) as written papers. Before that, it was communicated orally. "Jindai hen" relates myths, and in recent years, evidence has been unearthed that a part of that myths actually occurred.

² There are two types of sins, Tianjin sin and Kunitsu sin, but they are different from the concept of sin in monotheism religions. In monotheism, it is a breach of contract with God, whereas in Shinto, sin refers to something that people dislike or are ominous.

1. Kami (God)

Turning to theological perspectives, “Kami” in Shintoism and monotheistic “God” exhibit divergent characteristics.

Monotheistic deities represent a singular absolute entity, whereas Shinto adopts a relational interpretation. Norinaga Motoori elucidates that in Shinto, phenomena evoking reverence or awe are not perceived as ordinary events. Such uniqueness is mirrored in the Japanese term “shinkyo (supernatural),³” denoting skills that are unparalleled and unreplicable. In linguistic comparisons—such as “Dumnezeu” in Latin languages or “Herr” in Germanic—the divine is distinctly separate from humanity. In contrast, Japanese deities are addressed with familiar honorifics like “Yebisu-san” or “Daikoku-san,” connoting an intimacy closer to familial relations than formal titles.

Analysing texts like “Kojikiden Jindai Ichinomaki,” one observes that while monotheism often embodies dualistic relationships epitomized by Cartesian dichotomy—good god versus evil devil—Shinto includes deities with tumultuous origins such as Susanoo-no-Mikoto who may transition into benign patrons of enterprise. According to this interpretation, the divine has a rough side (Aratama) and a peaceful side (Nigitama), even within a single deity⁴. The term aratama can denote the tumultuous spirit associated with natural calamities or warfare, as well as the spirit of an individual who has passed away. On occasion, a shrine may be erected to appease this spirit. Furthermore, the Japanese ethos is characterized by facets such as Sakimitama, which bestows blessings like bountiful harvests upon people, and Kumishitama, known for imparting wisdom (Yoshimura 1906:68-80). This illustrates the profound diversity inherent in these beliefs.

Additionally, in monotheistic traditions, God is perceived as the Creator and humans are His creation, with salvation dependent upon adhering to His covenant, despite human imperfections. By contrast, Shintoism posits a continuum between deities and humans. Humans are innately considered descendants of deities and it is believed that deities reside within individuals, even in adversarial relationships. This underpins the Japanese perception of Shinto gods as intimately familiar entities.

Chapter 3 analysis the treatment of the deceased. Regarding the treatment of the deceased, monotheistic religions typically assert that souls will ascend to heaven or descend into hell subsequent to divine judgment after death. In traditional narratives such as the “Nihon Shoki” and “Kojiki,” the depiction of the afterlife is limited to the realm of Yomi⁵, with specific accounts focusing on deities like Izanami and Izanagi⁶.

In Shintoism, however, the lines between the world of the deceased and that of the living are notably blurred⁷. A salient feature of this religious tradition is the deification of ancestors post-mortem.

³ Kojikiden Jindai Ichinomaki

⁴ In Japanese, “Hashira” is the term used when counting gods.

⁵ Or just go to the world of the root country, the bottom world. The influence of Buddhism is accounted for saying that you are evaluated for your deeds during lifetime and go to paradise or hell after death.

⁶ It is similar to the Gilgamesh epic, but in the case of Japan, it is a story where a husband who runs away escapes to the end.

⁷ For example, according to the second volume of “Makibashira” by the famous theologian Atsutane Hirata, “There is no boundary between the invisible world of the dead and the visible world of the world. The soul goes to a shrine or shrine or is in a graveyard. “See Kobayashi (2017:103) for details.

The Yasukuni Shrine venerates those who perished subsequent to the Meiji Restoration as deities; this incorporates not merely military personnel but also non-combatants who lost their lives during conflicts⁸. This tradition has also been passed down to the current Japanese Navy, and Kamidana is present unless it is a very small ship (Kuno, 2014). Such a tradition suggests the crew is regarded akin to an extended family or local community. Worship at these altars is not obligatory for the crew members, and the existence of a kamidana aboard does not appear to provoke any religious discord.

Furthermore, it is not unusual for local contributors to be posthumously honoured as divine entities in shrines—this is sometimes done with the intention of ensuring that such individuals do not return as malevolent spirits.

2. Kamidana

There is little research on kamidana, and its origins remain somewhat ambiguous.

It is presumed that the consistent installation of kamidana in private residences began in the 18th century⁹. Prior to this period, they were traditionally placed outdoors, being brought inside only temporarily for specific rituals. Picture 1 displays a miniature shrine situated outdoors. These shrines vary in size, ranging from approximately 30 cm in height to those sizable enough for an adult to enter.

Kamidana were typically found on the grounds of comparatively substantial homes, businesses, or factories. Within the Shinto faith, it is believed that deities inhabit these sacred spaces. Historically located at the communal level, it is noted in chapter 5 that regional protective deities (Ujigami)¹⁰ and their associated deities are venerated within these structures.

This discourse includes all forms of kamidana installations – even those positioned externally as depicted herein.



Picture 1 Hokora (small outdoor shrine)

⁸ In the official website of Yasukuni Shrine, it is written that "people who died due to official duties to protect their homeland are gods." <https://www.yasukuni.or.jp/history/detail.html> (Yasukuni shrine 2022/12/22)

⁹ "Shinto Dictionary" Linchuan Bookstore July 19, 1937, 356 pages out of 1474 pages

¹⁰ According to Ono (1958:166), Ujigami was traditionally the guardian deity of a specific family based on blood relations, but in rural areas it was not uncommon for the entire village to have blood relations, so it is sometimes equated with the god of the land.

Picture 2 presents the simplest one for indoor use. The same is true of the small shrine, but it is shaped like a house, and a talisman is placed inside it. It is made of wood and is a *yorishiro* (*yorishiro*)¹¹ of God. In that respect, *kamidana* represents divine presence analogous to icons or crosses in other religions. At shrines, these talismans can be rented for a fee and are considered to embody the shrine's enshrined deity's spirit, customarily replaced annually with new ones from the shrine itself. Typically comprising three tags honoring *Amaterasuomikami* (the foremost earthly deity)¹², *Ujigami* (a guardian deity), and *Suukeishin* (other revered deities)¹³



Picture 2. Kamidana

Picture 2 illustrates a *kamidana* set before an edifice-like structure with a circular mirror and where offerings are placed: typically rice, water, salt, and sake¹⁴. Distinctions between sacred and profane spaces are marked by evergreen plants and paper cords. In places where *sakaki* (*Cleyera japonica* Thunb) leaves are scarce, alternatives such as bamboo or pine are used signifying vitality through their persistent greenery.

The dimensions of domestic *kamidana* extend from approximately 30cm up to nearly 2 meters – reflecting household affluence. Upon relocation, it is usual to acquire a new *kamidana*; hence some have been in use for over two centuries while others might be custom-ordered or inexpensively purchased at home improvement stores.

Within these practices lies particular importance attributed to the mirror element. In the "Age of the Gods" volume of "Nihon Shoki," also known as "The Chronicles of Japan," there exists a segment titled "Hokyohosai no Shinchoku". This refers to a divine message conveyed by *Amaterasu Omikami*, the preeminent deity in Shinto belief, to *Ninigi no Mikoto* upon his transformation from divinity to humanity.

The oracle instructs, "My progeny, when gazing upon this mirror which represents treasure, do so as if you are regarding me. Place this reflective object within your abode as my embodiment and utilize it during religious ceremonies."

Such a directive intimates the Shinto perspective that humans are God's progeny and innately possess the facility to discern moral correctness. This notion constitutes the

¹¹ It means the object in which God dwells.

¹² *Amaterasu Omikami* is the highest god and goddess on earth.

¹³ A revered god is the God that you most respect or feel close to among the many gods.

¹⁴ At the shrine, rice, ear of rice plant, sake, mochi, fish, birds, sea vegetables, vegetables (onions, garlic, etc. with a strong smell are avoided), fruits, sweets, salt (natural coarse salt taken from seawater), and water are offered.

foundational principle underpinning the Japanese concept of innate moral virtue. In contemplating one's reflection, an individual is implored continually to evaluate their ethical alignment as a divine descendant.

3. Religious service

In relation to sacred rites within this context, 'Nikkusai' embodies the routine homage paid to deities. This term signifies devotion and is enacted through offerings. Specifically, households with a 'kamidana,' or Shinto shrine, engage in worshipful acts after awakening and then again post-employment activities.

Meanwhile, 'Norito,' denoting prayerful utterances, supports ad hoc invocation irrespective of structure. Nonetheless, it has been historically proscribed to solicit individual advantage through prayer; rather, supplications traditionally orient towards civic administration and societal tranquillity, agricultural bounty, and familial well-being. For example, Atsutane HIRATA (1811) recommended the following method of prayer.

"Many gods in heaven, many gods that have descended to earth, and a thousand and five million gods that are in various shrines, large and small, all over Japan. Even in the presence of the hundreds of millions of gods who follow that god, the gods of Edamiya Edisha¹⁵, and Sohodo no kami¹⁶, (we) should be modest and respectful, and if (we) make mistakes, we will review and listen to them, each person will understand, follow God's merits, receive grace and happiness, and give achievements in the way of God. We convey our profound veneration unto you."

It is articulated that while the substance of norito—Shinto prayers—may vary according to necessity, based on Hirata Atsutane's¹⁷ scholarly works pertaining to Shintoism dated early 19th century, such prayers ought to primarily invoke national tranquillity. Subsequently, should those beseeching commit errors, they seek guidance from the divine entity to enlighten them about their missteps.

This concept arises from the notion that human actions in the tangible realm and the deeds of various deities in the intangible dimension intersect, which can result in Amatukuni transitioning into Yominokuni¹⁸ based upon the binary moral assessment (Kobayashi 2016:166).

Contemporary emphasis often lies on extracting immediate benefits from the corporeal world; notwithstanding, it is deemed prudent to fulfil human obligations and defer to the divine verdict hereafter or to supplicate for divine vigilance in recognition of earnest future endeavours.

This aspect is markedly divergent from monotheistic faiths such as Christianity and Islam, where adulation of the deity is central.

In Shinto practice, petitions to divinity (Norito) are vocalized explicitly. Norito distinctly contrasts with monotheistic invocations due to Shinto's belief in the inherent

¹⁵ A branch office to the head office of the shrine. It is a shrine that was set up by dividing spirits.

¹⁶ "Tamatasuki. According to Volume 6 " 2 of Atutane Hirata, Sohori is the deification of the scarecrow: the god of rice fields, the god of agriculture, and the god of land.

¹⁷ Hirata, Atutane "Tama Tasuki" vol.6 p.28 (1819? Year of publication unknown)

¹⁸ There is an explanation that the kingdom of Tianjin is heaven and the kingdom of Yomi is hell, but the old Shinto belief means that the kingdom of Tianjin is a wonderful place in the country where the gods live, and the kingdom of Yomi is an ominous place as the afterlife.

indwelling of divinity within humans and that by uttering words one imbues them with spirit. This spiritual concept is explored further in a different study.

4. Rituals based on agriculture

Shintoism is fundamentally intertwined with agricultural activities, particularly those surrounding the cultivation of rice. The importance of rice cultivation extends beyond its mythological narratives. It is an agriculturally efficient practice, supporting a greater population per unit area than wheat farming or pastoral agriculture, while demanding significant human labour inputs. In Japan, where the distinction among the four seasons is pronounced, individual management of key agricultural tasks such as water regulation, sowing, pest control, and harvesting is not feasible. Despite Japan's generally abundant rainfall, there are periods, such as summer, when water is scarce, necessitating cooperative management of this critical resource among adjacent rice paddy owners. This collaborative approach extends to pest control; isolated efforts are futile unless carried out community-wide. A lack of collective participation in these agricultural tasks can adversely affect crop yields for all surrounding farmers—hence the necessity for unified action from preparation through to harvest time¹⁹. This communal interdependence also reflects in fiscal matters; villages were taxed as a whole entity. Consequently, any inability of individual villagers to fulfil their tax obligations imposed a collective liability upon the entire village community to compensate for the shortfall. The obligation to sustain sharecroppers inevitably rests upon the landlord, who, in the final analysis, must assume responsibility. Accordingly, the dynamic between Japanese landowners and sharecroppers diverged substantially from the European model of gentry and serfdom.

Annually, over ten rituals and ceremonies are observed at the village shrine, affirming a strong bond akin to a community of shared destiny.

5. Treatment of the believers

For believers of Monotheistic faiths, this aspect presents considerable difficulty in comprehension. The fundamental principle is to safeguard all denizens within the precincts venerating the ujigami. The ujigami serves as the tutelary deity of a specific region or village, with each locality honoring a distinct principal deity. As such, both Buddhists and Muslims fall under the protection of the ujigami. The inclusive nature of this practice does not shun those considered pagans, nor does it seek affirmation from individuals about their personal convictions. Unlike other religious traditions, there is no requisite rite or ceremony signalling confession of faith or formal admission, nor an expectation for renunciation. Irrespective of one's personal beliefs in Shintoism, one is considered to be under the protection of a deity. Those who are members of the faith are termed parishioners, and their status is equivalent to that of practitioners only if they reside within the local domain. Relocation leads to a transfer from being a parishioner of one's current location to that of the new domicile.

This indicates that the deities safeguarding an individual are affiliated with the community to which they belong. As previously noted in section III, this is presumed to have a profound influence on the role and placement of kamidana within corporations.

¹⁹ Because the seeds are washed away by water when planted directly in the paddy field, it is necessary to grow them into seedlings of about 15 cm before replanting them in the paddy field.

6. Ujigami and Ujiko

Consequently, it becomes imperative to reevaluate the role played by ujigami. While parishioners may be regarded as believers out of necessity, their role should not be conflated with that of adherents belonging to other religions. In this context, 'clan' refers to an extended family group, and 'child' denotes offspring. Therefore, ujigami represents the parental figure, whilst ujiko symbolizes a filial connection.

According to Ono (1958:173), these can be delineated into five distinct classifications:

1) Individuals residing within the jurisdictional boundaries of a shrine are automatically considered as part of its domain.

2) Original inhabitants (indigenous settlers) and newcomers (new settlers) establish ties with the local ujigami.

3) Collaborative efforts by settler groups result in the establishment of a communal ujigami.

4) A ruler may adopt an extant ujigami belonging to former inhabitants as their own protective deity.

5) Individuals can be bestowed with the ujigami associated with a principal family through mechanisms such as servitude or enslavement.

Within the context of a contemporary, the traditional notion of (1) working in an office has evolved into a state of congregation, (2) the dynamic between incumbent employees and new recruits is redefined, and (3) the establishment of a corporation is characterized by the founder's selection of a congregation member. (4) In situations involving takeovers, (5) it is notably observed when a subsidiary venerates the tutelary deity venerated by the parent company.

III Corporate Shrines

1. The beginnings of Japanese Corporations

Research on the existence and role of corporate shrines within Japanese corporation is surprisingly low. For instance, in Nakamaki and Hioki's 2009 publication, considerations in Shinto studies appear to concentrate on differentiating residential from professional realms with no significant exploration of corporate shrines.

Up until around 1870 in Japan, businesses operated exclusively as private ventures due to an absence of any legal framework governing corporations. Typically, these businesses were family-oriented, managed by the proprietor together with his family members and domestic workers. Particularly, child labourers known as 'Decchi', initiated into work life approximately from age ten, were simultaneously educated in literacy and arithmetic by their employers. During this apprenticeship phase, they were treated akin to adopted kin. Upon serving roughly a decade, these apprentices would ascend to 'Tedai', or middle management positions. Subsequently, after an additional decade or more, only the most exemplary amongst them would rise to 'Bantou', which signified senior management roles; notwithstanding, the instances of such advancements were rare.

Individuals who belonged to the merchant class and remained in service from their thirties to forties were typically compensated with severance pay that enabled them

to establish their own ventures through 'noren-wake' or noren splitting²⁰. Considering that life expectancy during that era hovered around fifty years, this arrangement signified an almost lifelong professional association. In the sphere of business relations, the bond shared between corporate entities and their employees notably mirrors the intimacy of a domestic environment, rather than the formalities of a contractual agreement. This paradigm persisted into the early decades of the 20th century, approximately until the 1930s. The dynamics akin to those in a master-servant relationship, which are closely related to parental filial interactions (as discussed in Watahiki's 2017a and 2019a works), have historical roots that extend into contemporary Japanese management practices.

2. Corporate Entities and Local Community

Concerning Corporate Entities and Local Community Interactions, it was not until the promulgation of legislation in 1890 that Japan saw widespread adoption of the corporate model. Similar to trends observed globally, share transfers were conducted with relative freedom. However, distinct from industries necessitating substantial capital investment—like shipbuilding or railroad companies—there persisted a tendency for geographic concentration of shareholders, wherein up to 90% resided within a vicinity of 10 kilometres, (Watahiki 2017b). During this era, textile manufacturing took precedence as the industry's nucleus with sericulture as well encapsulating spinning and weaving processes. For an extensive duration, these activities remained ancillary occupations for agriculturalists, characterizing them as home-based crafts. A settlement bank is created for that purpose. To facilitate these endeavours, communal banks materialized analogous to farmers' cooperatives where all designated officers and examiners were from an area not exceeding a 400-meter diameter.

The onset of the 20th century saw technological advancements such as steam engines augment industrial capacity; this transitioned these homebound crafts into semi-industrialized factories processing locally-sourced silkworm cocoons. These burgeoning industries that required modest capital injections typically comprised of financiers and executives primarily from proprietorial classes; yet contributions from smallholder landowners and independent farmers were significant as well.

During the period in question, the class of landowners exhibited a hierarchical composition akin to familial relationships, suggesting that within local societies, there existed intricate ties among employees, enterprises, and their managers, much like the bond between parent and child (Ariga 1943, Soga 1992). This is evidenced by the prevalence of landlord figures who simultaneously occupied positions as corporate executives and major shareholders. Despite the assignment of a small cadre of engineers from other locales, these individuals did not engage in conflict with local communities; rather, they were seamlessly integrated into them.

3. Corporate Shrines in contemporary Japan

In this chapter we shall look into the current situation of the matter. In contemporary Japan, post-World War II reforms initiated by the General Headquarters (GHQ) resulted in a comprehensive excision of Shinto influences from public life. This

²⁰ It means that a servant is allowed to open a store by his master's house. Similar signs and store names are allowed. It has a character like a free franchise, but there is a big difference between the noren division of Edo period and the modern franchise system in terms of business object, contract relationship, status relationship, etc.

purging involved three primary actions: the eradication of moral instruction predicated on Shinto principles; the emancipation of sharecroppers; and the dismantling of the zaibatsu conglomerates. Regarding zaibatsu, their dissolution was due in part to their family-centric governance structure—a structure which, despite operating within joint-stock company models, was insular and operated under closed networks that inadvertently marginalised Shinto traditions. Although official policies targeted the public manifestations of Shintoism for removal, extirpating long-established beliefs and practices from the private sector proved challenging.

Numerous Japanese enterprises, some of which have been producing sake and soy sauce for centuries, maintain in-house shrines that date back to historical times. Moreover, it is not uncommon for even newly established companies to erect such shrines.

Currently, businesses of all ages, from those with rich historical backgrounds to recent start-ups, feature in-house shrines. For instance, Mitsukoshi Department Store has enshrined the Mikoshi Shrine²¹, while Subaru honours Nishinomiya Shrine within its premises.

Japan is recognized globally for its numerous enduring corporations. This phenomenon parallels rice agriculture; the intention is not purely to maximize profits but rather to sustain the company as a means of generating sufficient income for livelihood.

IV Case Studies

As explained in chapter III.1, there is little research on in-house shrines in corporations and it remains a fact that there is no specific scholarly work addressing which particular companies host certain types of shrines within their precincts. This subject remains deeply private within the corporate sphere, and larger companies often seclude their sacred sites from public view—placed away from areas like the CEO's office or other easily visible spots. In fact, larger sanctuaries might be situated in locations off-limits to non-employees, such as atop corporate buildings or ensconced amidst other structures. As such, these shrines have sparked interest among business executives seeking to balance tradition with modern management practices.

This phenomenon is elucidated in academic discussions and public dissemination, as seen in special features or editorials in widely distributed magazines. An illustrative work accessible to lay readers is "Aoki ed (2014:114-115)," which details the shrine custodianship practices of several corporations. Such practices are systematically categorized into four distinct types:

Classification

1.1 Type of Founder's Ujigami

This category pertains to shrines where deities held in esteem by the founder, or the *ujigami* (clan gods) associated with the founder's family, are venerated. Traditionally, *ujigami* were deities bearing the family name (*ujina*) and represented familial lineage deities. Historically revered solely within the *ujijin* (clan community), these deities often embodied ancestral spirits.

²¹ Mitsukoshi, Limited is a department store founded in 1673.
<https://www.mitsuipr.com/sights/spots/009/>

1.2 Chinju - The Patron Deity of a Locale

Chinju refers to deities presiding over specific territories, safeguarding both the land and its inhabitants. Following the Heian period, with the advent of the shoen (manorial estate) system, private domains under aristocrats, samurai control, and religious institutions were established, precipitating a decline in ujigami worship as clan society dissipated. Consequently, shoen proprietors began venerating local patron deities to protect their estates.

Given that Japan's agricultural society did not engage in nomadic or pastoralist practices during this era, movement was minimal. It was common for chinju and ujigami to be conflated within these stable environments.

1.3. Profession related kami (gods) type

Within the pantheon of Japanese deities, there is a prevalent linkage between divine entities and specific professional spheres. The divinities exemplified by such associations include Amaterasu Omikami as the deity of weaving, Susanoo no Mikoto associated with arboriculture, Inari no Kami—potentially synonymous with Ukanomitama or Ukemochi no Mikoto—as the deity of agriculture, along with Okuninushi no Mikoto. Further examples envelop Amenouzume as the deity of the performing arts, and Oyamatsumi, who oversees mining or ferrous metallurgy. These associations derive from foundational texts such as the "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki". Nevertheless, some mythological figures have had occupations retroactively applied in a manner that could be construed as contrived.

1.4 Business luck/founder's worship type

In the context of commerce, Inari no Kami is often revered as a tutelary god of business prosperity, alongside deities such as Yebisu and Okuninushi no Mikoto. Despite the lack of extensive empirical data, it is observed that in an era where relocations are commonplace and local communities weaken in cohesion, there is a diminished reliance on local guardian deities (Chinju-kami), coinciding with an increased prevalence of corporate shrines.

1.5 Employee/Achiever type

With respect to workplace dynamics and employee recognition, Aoki ed (2014) has posited four distinct categories to date. However, it is feasible to contemplate additional categories. Companies may establish memorials to honour employees whose efforts have significantly advanced or individuals who tragically perished in work-related incidents. Instituting regular commemorative ceremonies not only serves to memorialise those individuals but also acts as a conduit for reinforcing awareness regarding workplace accidents and promoting occupational safety education. This assists in relaying the core policies of a corporation by crafting dialogues concerning its originators and the personnel who have accomplished notable achievements.

It appears that this model adopts a form where the principal divinity is positioned foremost and venerated jointly, rather than idolizing the company's founders and employees.

1.6. Non-classifiable

One might also consider retrospective classifications. For instance, it is plausible that the local deity of the founder's place, the deity esteemed by the originator, and the

patron god of their profession could coincide. Inari-kami would be a typical example of this. Originally, Inari-kami was revered as a deity of cereals and agriculture; however, it is presently recognized as a protector of all sectors, encompassing trade and industry. This broad scope defies placement within categories 1-4. Hence, there is an inherent challenge to ascertain any unintended amalgamation or deliberate intent in such installations. An individual may become capable of discerning the installer's intended purpose through verification.

Table 1 Examples of major Japanese corporations with their respective in-house shrines

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
1	Mitsubishi Group ²²					Tosa Inari-jinja Shrine	The shrine was established within the storeroom residence of the Tosa Domain, marking the origin of the group's founder, Yataro Iwasaki.
1	NIPPON STEEL CORPORATION	1934	52,205	Japan's premier crude steel manufacturer and ranks fifth worldwide. Revenue 3,487.7 billion yen	2-6-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Takami-jinja Shrine	The Takami-jinja Shrine serves as the guardian deity of the erstwhile Hachiman Village and honors 19 deities, including Empress Jingu.
1	Kao Corporation	1887	33,603	Excelling as Japan's leading corporation in the production of detergents and toiletries and securing second place in cosmetics sales nationally while attaining seventh in the global market share for cosmetic and toiletry companies. Revenue 1,502,241 million yen	1-14-10 Nihonbashi Kayabacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo	Kao Shrine	Kao Shrine venerates both Toyokawa Inari and the company's founder along with employees and martyrs who fell in wartime.
1	Shiseido Company, Limited	1872	39,035	It dominates the domestic cosmetics market at first place and holds fifth place globally. Revenue 920.88800 million yen	1-6-2 Higashi-Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Success Inari-jinja Shrine	The Success Inari-jinja Shrine originated from Toyokawa Inari with acknowledgment under Mankin Ryujin Success Inari(Success Inari) with acknowledgment under Mankin Ryujin Success Inari(Success Inari)
2	Hitachi, Ltd.	1920	368,247	Hitachi covers various sectors including IT, energy, industry, mobility life statement to automotive systems and metals. Revenue 10,264,602 million yen	6-6 Marunouchi Ichichome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Kumano-jinja Shrine	Kumano-jinja Shrine was enshrined following factory expansion.

²² The Mitsubishi Group includes kameyamashachu, which was established in 1865, but is now merging with the Mitsui Group.

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
2	SEKKEIKAN SAKI CO.,LTD	1637	365	It is engaged in crafting alcoholic beverages chiefly Japanese sake along cosmetics and bath salts aligned with food and beverage operations. Revenue 23.4 billion yen	247 Minamihama-cho, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture	Inarisha	Their head office serves as the protector deity for Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine.
2	SUZU MOTOR CO., LIMITED	1916	44,299	It has become world's second-largest entity by volume within medium-sized trucks sector. Revenue 2,514,291 million yen	1-2-5 Takashima, Nishi-ku, Yokohama	Suzu Shrine	It was built approximately 50 years ago within the Fujisawa factory by the factory manager from that time. The deity enshrined is Amaterasu Omikami.
2	OJI PAPER CO., LTD.	1910	Undisclosed	5th largest paper company in the world. Revenue 239,315 million yen	4-7-5 Ginza, Chuo-ku, Tokyo	Oji Shrine	Shrine it offers divine protection over land development mountain forestry residing within main Tomakomai Factory vicinity.
2	TOSHIBA CORPORATION	1875	116,224	Japanese general electronics manufacturer. Revenue 3,389,871 million yen	1-1-1 Shibaura, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Chinju shrine and others	A guardian shrine is enshrined at each factory and office. Izumo Shrine remains in Lazona Kawasaki, the former location of the company's headquarters.
2	TOYO SUISAN KAISHA, LTD.	1953	4,880	Trade and export of marine products and manufacture and sale of processed foods instant noodles. Revenue 417.5 billion yen 11.00 million yen	2-13-40 Konan, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Koinari Shrine	It started when it was separated from the Chinju-jinja Shrine.
2	TOYOTA MOTOR CORPORATION	1933	372,817	The world's largest car company. Revenue 29 trillion 929 billion 9200 million yen	1 Toyota-cho, Toyota City, Aichi Prefecture	Toyooko-jinja Shrine	It enshrines the three pillars of Atsuta • jingu Shrine, Kanayama Hiko-no-kami and Kanayama Hime-no-kami, the guardian deity of iron.
3	ASAHI BEVERAGES, LTD.	1949		The company ranks 2nd in the Japanese market with a share of more than 40%. Revenue 725.13200 million yen	23-1 Azumabashi Itchome, Sumida-ku, Tokyo	Asahi-jinja Shrine	It enshrines the three gods of Ise Jingu Shrine, Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, the god of business prosperity, and Matsuo Taisha Shrine, the god of sake.
3	Japan Airlines Co., Ltd.	1953	35,423	It has a history as the longest airline in Japan. Revenue 682.71300 million yen	4-11 Higashi-Shinagawa Nichome, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo	Nikko Katori-jinja Shrine	It was built in the Narita Airport maintenance area to pray for the safety of the sky.
3	NIPPON EXPRESS CO., LTD.	1872	72,366	The largest comprehensive logistics company in the industry in Japan.	2, Kanda Izumi-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Shoichii (Senior First Rank) Wire Mesh Inari	As the guardian god of the Hikyaku wholesaler of the predecessor of Nippon Express, it began to enshrine a branch spirit of Fushininami Inari Taisha.

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
3	Shoda Shoyu Co., Ltd	1873	425	Manufacturing, sales and research and development of soy sauce brewing and processed seasonings. Revenue 25.2 billion yen	3-1 Sakae-cho, Tatebayashi City, Gunma Prefecture	Shoda Inari-jinja Shrine	It was founded about 500 years ago and was later transferred from the town to the Shoda family. It is enshrined on the grounds of the brewery.
3	Showa Sangyo Co., Ltd	1936	2,899	Manufacture and sell a wide range of food materials and foods such as flour, cooking oil, pasta, glucose, feed, and frozen foods. Revenue 255,997 million yen	2-2-1 Uchikanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Inari-jinja Shrine	Because it was a company that handled grain, it was split up from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine, which has the divine virtue of bountiful harvests.
4	TOKYO GAS CO., LTD.	1872	16,697	Notable gas company, holding a significant market share in the metropolitan Tokyo district as well as surrounding areas, which consist of strategic urban centers within one city and six prefectures located in the Kanto region. Preeminent city gas operator on a global scale. Revenue 1 trillion 9,252 billion 3,500 million yen	5-20 Kaigan Itchome, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Inari-jinja Shrine	Inari-jinja Shrines are enshrined at the factories in Negishi, Sodegaura, and Ogishima.
4	TOPPAN INC.	1908	52,401	In addition to printing, it also focus on digital image processing and electronic products that apply printing technology, liquid crystal color filters used in color liquid crystals, and photomasks used as raw plates for semiconductor manufacturing. Revenue 1,466.93,500 yen	3-3, Suido Itchome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo	Myozen Inari Okami	When it was founded, it was separated from Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine. It occupies a revered presence not only within central offices but also throughout factories across the country.
5	The Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd	1872	1,900	Publishing, printing and sales of newspapers, magazines, books, etc. (Morning edition) About 195.0 million copies 4th place in Japan. Revenue undisclosed	1-1-1 Hitotsubashi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo	Mainichi-jinja Shrine	It enshrines an amulet that was sent to the Mainichi Shimbun's Airplane Nippon-go, which succeeded in global circumnavigating.
5	Mazda Motor Corporation	1920	48,750	In the fiscal year of 2021, it reported worldwide sales reaching a volume of 1.25 million vehicles. Revenue 3,120,349 million yen	3-1 Shinchi, Fuchu-cho, Aki-gun, Hiroshima	Inari-jinja Shrine	The Inari-jinja Shrine was erected as a tribute to commemorate employees who perished in a devastating fire.

Classification	Name of the corporation	Year of establishment	Employee number	Company profile	Location	In-house Shrines	Overview
6	KIKKOMAN CORPORATION	1917	7,645	It secured its position as an industry leader in the realm of seasonings and processed foods, with its core product being soy sauce. Revenue 468,119 million yen	250 Noda, Noda City, Chiba Prefecture	Kotohira-jinja Shrine	It was established following its separation from Kompira-gu Shrine located in Kagawa Prefecture. The shrine also serves to solicit prosperity for Noda Town—the location of the company's headquarters.
6	Hazama Corporation	1889	2245	Corporation activating within the construction and civil engineering sector, merged into Ando-ma. Revenue 197,899 million yen	2-5 Toranomon Nichome, Minato-ku, Tokyo	Magumi Guardian Shrine	Reputedly inaugurated during the Taisho era, it venerates both Magumi-jinja and Magumi Inari-jinja as protective deities.
6	TOKYU RAILWAYS Co., Ltd	1922	24,655	Operates across multiple sectors including railway services, real estate management, transportation solutions as well as hotel and resort operations complemented by lifestyle service offerings. Revenue 935.927.00 million yen	5-6 Nanpei-cho, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo	Toyoko-jinja Shrine	It was founded by separating from Ise Jingu Shrine. A memorial service is held to comfort the spirit of the person of merit and the martyr.
6	OMRON Corporation	1948	28,254	Major electrical equipment manufacturer. Achieving unrivalled market dominance for products including automatic ticket gates and home-use electronic blood pressure monitors. Revenue 655,529 million yen	801 Minamifudo-cho, Shiokoji-dori Horikawa Higashi-iru, Shimogyo Ward, Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture	Inari-jinja Shrine	Inari-jinja Shrine is located behind the head office, the exact year of its establishment is unknown.
6	Wakodo Co., Ltd.	1953	Undisclosed	Grocery and baby goods brand. It is a long-established store of domestic baby food and the largest in the industry. Revenue undisclosed	4-1 Ebisu Minami Nichome, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo	Wako Inari-jinja Shrine	Originally it was on the roof of the head office building, but now it has been moved to the site next to the head office.

Table drafted by the author based on AOKI.ed (2014:118-119)

2 Cases

2.1 Automotive parts manufacturer business luck/founder's worship type

This parent corporation originated in 1946 with the manufacture of timepiece components and speedometer parts before segueing into liquid crystal display production and information technology. One particular enterprise, post its demarcation from the original information technology department in 1985, presently boasts a workforce numbering 500.

An in-house shrine within this company's domain contains an emblem from Hakkaizanzon-jinja Shrine. The deities venerated here encompass Kuni no Sazuchi no Mikoto, Amatsuhikohononinigi no Mikoto, Konohanasakuyahime no Mikoto, Oyamazumi no Mikoto, and Yamato Takeru no Mikoto.

The rationale for instituting such shrines within the company grounds can be traced back to the founder of the parent company who received a significant insignia from a highly esteemed shrine. Historically located within office precincts, this shrine saw employees partaking in "in-house shrine visits" on the day designated for salary disbursements at year-end²³. These rituals involved no one other than the office personnel and were voluntary; compulsion towards worship did not feature.

Presently, this shrine resides within the confines of the president's office. It remains under his direct oversight; reportedly, he commences each morning by performing rites there.

To date, there has been no recorded dissent concerning these practices of veneration within company space.

The Human Resources Manager interviewed exhibits a pre-existing familiarity with the notion of a company shrine, having been encompassed by such influences potentially before his professional engagement commenced. Consequently, it is mysterious why the author become interested in in-house shrines as such establishments were a natural scene in the workplace.

2.2 Food Processing company business luck/founder's worship type

The enterprise was established in 1975 and it currently sustains a workforce not exceeding 300 individuals. In close proximity to the corporation resides the venerable Inari-jinja Shrine, whose foundations date back at least 1,300 years. Despite the precise year of its construction remaining elusive, this shrine notably harbours an auxiliary spirit derived from a distinct sanctum. his subsidiary shrine venerates two primary deities: Takeminakata, attributed with a role in Japan's foundational history, and Yasakatomenokami, his consort.

Pertaining to the identity of deities revered—whether Tajimamori no Mikoto, the deity of confections; Inari, or Okuninushi no Mikoto, associated with commerce—the response elucidates that Inari is symbolically linked with foxes, perceived as creatures adept at deception within Japanese folklore and deemed Inari's messengers. It's probably a joke made by the president.

What appears to be whimsical commentary by the company president underscores his Nagano Prefecture origins—a region mythologically significant for national genesis—insinuating reverence for a specific deity aligned with his ancestral roots.

The president assumes as self-evident the incorporation of an in-house shrine within the company structure, prompting him to question the author's inquiry regarding such a practice.

The corporation's operational ethos augments religious observance by permitting employees unrestricted access to venerate independently at the company's shrine.

²³ The last business day of the 12th month.

2.3 Corrugated board manufacturing company business luck/founder's worship type

This is a corrugated board manufacturing entity instituted in 1938 that engages in production of paper packaging materials. As part of its supply chain network are purveyors of paperboard, adhesives, and entities offering die cutting services. A diverse array of clients ranging from prominent confectionery producers to agricultural distributors and electronics manufacturing sectors constitute its clientele. In Myoko City within Niigata Prefecture circumscribed by 1967 stands another corporation-affiliated Inari-jinja Shrine. Adjacent amenities under corporate ownership complement this sanctuary. Traditionally entwined with this establishment is veneration for long-serving employees posthumously recognized within sacred grounds.

This corporation's leadership along with top-tier representatives from principal partner firms convene biannually to commemorate traditional festivals during spring and fall seasons exclusively. Practitioners possessing credentials related to Shinto rites assemble en masse; these ceremonials are orchestrated according to established ritualistic frameworks. Subsequent festivities involve neighbourhood participants converging on premises eventually transitioning into Naorai—a convivial assembly inviting executives spanning industries from locales within a 300km ambit for extensive intersectoral networking. Documented records suggest nearly forty distinct companies participating meaningfully through events including communal overnight lodging arrangements and subsequent day-time leisure pursuits such as fishing or golf contests.

Oversight responsibilities for shrine management were relegated to the General Affairs Department's superior officer. This setting also served as an innovative platform wherein employees directly engaged in developmental processes partook in new product presentations reinforcing internal communication channels alongside external stakeholder relationships.

V. Impact of In-house Shrines

This chapter considers the impact of in-house shrines within corporate settings. While the three examined enterprises did not articulate any specific influences of their in-house shrines, it is conceivable that religious sensitivities may preclude such discussions. Consequently, this paper will approach the subject from a religio-cultural anthropological perspective.

1. A symbol of the company

According to Aoki (2017:119), as emblems of corporate identity, in-house shrines serve as critical embodiments and repositories of a company's founding principles, visions, and values. For example, during the inaugural General Assembly of a bank founded in 1890 in Yamagata Prefecture, oratory praises not only lauded the institution's establishment but also projected regional development aspirations and its pivotal role within the community. Such declarations of corporate mission and prospective trajectories often find themselves inscribed in anniversary commemorative notes and are revisited during such celebrations.

As part of reinforcing corporate culture, founder's calligraphy—executed in brushwork—is usually displayed adjacent to the shrine (kamidana), thus fostering continuous visibility and reminder to employees. This practice appears instrumental in communal assimilation of core corporate policies and ideologies, particularly prominent amongst organizations characterizing "Employee/achievement type" as per Aoki's

previous categorization (Aoki 2017). In particular, this trend is likely to be strong when praising the previous classification 5 "Employee/achievement type."

2. The shrine as a reflective surface reinforces self-examination (Aoki2017:119).

Let's go back to the mirror topic mentioned in II 2. This earlier analogy of a mirror—envisioning deity within it to promote self-worship— fosters a belief that humans, conceived as divine progeny, can achieve societal harmony and personal well-being by eschewing selfish ambitions.

Herein lies an implication that worship serves as a solemn introspection into whether one's actions are righteous or detrimental towards others' interests— an approach entailing significant conscience-checking decisions reminiscent of glancing at oneself in a mirror.

3. Commitment to objectives and gratitude for realized successes informs Shinto prayer practices (Aoki 2017:120).

Contrary to simply acquiescing to divine will, traditional Shinto orations involve articulating pledges to deities for personal commitments while seeking their protective benevolence. Ono and Kaneko (2004:66) emphasized that such devotions are often framed requesting business prosperity through altruistic contributions towards worldly welfare and societal enrichment.

Subsequently, these invocations are complemented by expressions of gratitude for divine safeguarding.

4. Intertwining corporal identity with employee cohesion and community outreach through shrines is highlighted by Aoki (2017:120).

Consider Case 3's business model: establishment of both an internal shrine on corporate premises and an external larger shrine situated approximately 50 kilometres away radiates its ethos outwardly. By hosting bi-annual grand festivals with local villagers participating along with interactions with visiting executives from afar and leveraging local commerce connections—these engagements implicate unique interlayering as distinct from Christian traditions.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" John 2:13-16

V. Summary

Individuals with experience residing in Japan may frequently encounter phenomena they perceive as unusual. The country exhibits a syncretism of its indigenous Shinto traditions alongside the globally diffuse Buddhism; post-war, Christian practices have additionally gained traction. To the Japanese, such a melding of religious customs is not deemed peculiar. Analogously, one might express astonishment at the deep affinity many employees harbour towards their corporations, perceiving them akin to a familial abode. The nexus between Japanese workers and their employers mirrors more closely the interconnectedness found within local, kin-based communities than that characterized by contractual agreements.

This dynamic can be partially attributed to the historical evolution of entities such as 'Nippon Co., Ltd.' which originated directly from agrarian sideline occupations—for instance, from sericulture to yarn spinning, weaving, and subsequently to textile processing—with supporting financial institutions having emerged predominantly within the familiar confines of a 3 kilometres radius from the farmers' locations, thereby entailing a longstanding operation by local inhabitants who served as both investors and directors (Watahiki 2017b, 2019b).

Although Table 1 delineates this paradigm through specific instances, it's noteworthy that such traditions persist even within multinational corporations. For the Japanese populace, Shinto represents the foundational operating system (OS) essential for managing each societal construct, atop which markets and legislations function. Emblematic of this symbiosis is the presence of sanctuaries within corporate establishments.

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