

Q1. In my opinion the Japanese religious structure is really fascinating and amazing. It is a great part of Japan's cultural lifestyle. There is more than one religion as well that are greatly known and practiced, just like there are also some religions that are there but not really practiced. I like how their religious structure is very different from my own, or from the ones I had knowledge about. Their structure on religion is really clear and centralized to certain beliefs, it was interesting to see that some of the religions will not take part of certain activities. For example, their Shinto religion has to do with life, and it is interesting to know that they do not take care or handle any of the services in relation to a death, or funeral. The Shinto by nature have their own places where it is known for people to go and pray, do offerings, etc. These places that holds these activities are called Shinto Shrines. Japan has a great amount of these all over. The people in this religion tend to focus on present-day life and honor it. One animation we saw in class had to do with the Shinto religion. A Kami can be related to nature or just a person, in this case it was a force of nature that was shown in the movie. Kami can keep a person possessed and it was kind of what we saw in this animation. Possession over a force of nature, a rainbow that had to be fulfilled. He was better right after he touched it, and the movie ended. This is common in the Shinto religion, and this animation provided us with what it is like living within this religion. A similar but different religion is famously known to be Buddhism. Buddhism is the kind of religion one can go to in case there is a loss in the family. By loss, I mean death. Buddhism does provide and take care of the funeral services. It is popular in Japan that if a person that is in the Shinto religion suffers a death by a close family member, or loved one, usually a person changes religion to Buddhism. Buddhism just like Shinto offers places for people to go pray and do offerings, these places are known for temples. There is also a big number of temples all over the

Japan region. Japanese Mythology is really interesting as well, for example Japanese society believe in Kami, which are deities, and also a part of the Shinto religion. They believed that anything can basically become a Kami, and then when it is eventually becomes one, you honor and appreciate it. This was quite interesting to learn because this is something that I have never heard or had knowledge about. In class we watched a movie in relation to this, Kami. A young man that has the honor to see a Kami and was not afraid because this was seen as a part of his daily routine. Only he was able to see them because he formed part of the religion, and since it was a part of his life he was not afraid to see them, or see in what he could help them with. Once he helped out the Kami young girl in what she needed to do, she then disappeared forever. This animation taught us about religion because it gave us an insight on what it is like to see the life of a person that can see a Kami and that is not afraid as well. Another part of Japanese culture and religion is pilgrimage. People practice this by going to temples that are located in an island and at each temple they pray, and they are also welcomed to buy something at every temple. In class we talked about how there is an island that has about eighty temples and many people go there, although some might not be able to complete the whole island some come back another time and complete it. There are a number of people that go every weekend and continue their pilgrimage, others decide to come back in later times. Onmyodo is a part of religion as well. This takes a part in an individual valuing what they have present-day. In class we discussed how it can be can be something that has reached over one-hundred years of use. I found these religion types to be amazingly different from anything I was aware of. People in Japan live life differently to Americans in the form that Japan is richer in religion and culture. It has more people actually involved in their religion practices and culture. Religion in America is not practiced as much as

in Japan. In America, there are also a number of religions and beliefs, as well as unique places to go and pray and do offerings, but it is not really seem much. What I have seen that is practiced more in America is Christianity, and Catholicism. Also, their way of saying goodbye to a person that has passed away is really touching. In American culture, you do not see a person fixing your loved one to either get buried, or cremated, you only get to see them once they are already fixed. That was another difference between Japanese and American culture and religion.

Q2. Japan also has some religious perspectives on some activities. Take as an example Aikido, this is a form of martial arts, but not used in or against for something. It is not used for violent purposes. Rather for self-cultivation purposes. It is used to find a sense of your own inner spirit. As stated in the textbook, “is the development of mind-body harmony and an increase in ki energy” (Carter, 2008, p.31). This is viewed positively because it discards all negative energy, and competition. This is valued because it calls for positivity and harmony in sports as well. It screams peace and it performs it as well. Another important thing is Japan that has great value in religion is their landscape gardens. The book states, “the values which the garden teaches-the suchness or intrinsic value each thing, connectedness,harmony, tranquility, and the sacred as the everyday, as something directly underfoot” (Carter, 2008, p. 70). This tells us that the gardens help a person not get caught up too much on their next thing, rather than focus on what is going on right now, and appreciate life. These gardens are appreciated by both religions Shinto and Buddhism, because this is where the people also do some sort of finding their inner harmony, and they get to be at peace within themselves. This informs me that Japanese people care about appreciating and taking care of nature. The maintenance of these gardens and the vibe it provides to people attending is wonderful, and peaceful. Making tea to Japanese society has great value as

well, it is a way of life for them. Carter states, "To make tea is an act of increasing spiritual awareness" (Cartes, 2008, p.75). This informs us readers that to society making tea was much more enjoyed because it had a meaning to make it, and also it gave the opportunity for people drinking it to reflect on their life. It was helpful because it helped them get at ease with themselves. Tea was also a form of communication with society, it was a chance to sit down and talk to someone peacefully and enjoy some delicious tea. It helped them figure out what they wanted to do and see what their aspirations were.

Q3. In this section of religion I learned a lot about Japanese religion. Maybe not everything, but at least the basics enough to complete my opinions about it. I found it interesting how Japanese religion can be based on life and death, and some maybe just on life itself. With the film we saw in class, Departures, I saw something different about their cultural lifestyles. They see death of course as something, hard and hurtful, but it was also something positively different for the family to see how they were fixed. The people that would pass away would get fixed to be how they were in life. For example, in the movie there was a boy that would dress up as a girl, and when he was getting fixed, they fixed him up as a girl because that was how he liked to dress. This was something new to me, my culture is not like that, we do not get to see a person in the process of being fixed, we just see them once they are already set. To me this felt insightful, since I have had a loved one pass away, I felt touched by the fact that the family was there to say if the encoffiners were not doing a good job at fixing their loved one. I feel that this is something really nice of Japanese culture, because only the family truly knows what that person looked like in life, and what and how they liked to be either dressed up, or fixed. In the movie, also the wife of the encoffiner was not happy with her husband's job because she felt that it was not an

honorable job. This tends to happen, but only certain people will value this profession, because although to some it might seem “not good enough” it is actually good because you're fixing and helping another person leave the world how they wanted to. Her view on his job was negative, but his view on it was not, so he kept on doing it. There is positives about it, that feeling of helping out a family in great pain, or wanting to do a good job at leaving that person stunning and being able to do so, I can imagine is a good feeling. Here we see that her view on death is more of a fear of being contaminated rather than the positive aspect that her husband sees death as. At the end her view changes and reached to see death as a positive as well because when the person is fixed to how they used to be, she learns to appreciate her husband's job, because he helps the person look peacefully beautiful and also helps the family feel some sort of resignation.